



**ART BEAT**

/ words  
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# SYDNEY ON SHOW

*Get your fill of modern and contemporary art at Art Month Sydney (1–25 March), then explore two of the harbour city’s finest exhibition spaces*

While the iconic Opera House has the performing arts amply covered, a whole raft of venues is open to culture vultures dropping into town to get their fill of the visual arts. In keeping with the Opera House’s modern expressionist design, the opposite shore of Sydney Harbour is the home of some of the country’s finest postmodern artworks: the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA).

The MCA has been responsible for some of the most stimulating exhibitions of contemporary art in Australia since opening its doors in 1991. And if the wear and tear inflicted by hundreds of thousands of visitors was beginning to take its toll on the Art Deco-style structure, the museum is in the process of applying the finishing touches to a US\$56 million refit that promises a stylish extension and spacious new top-floor galleries.

Reopening on 29 March 2012, the expanded MCA will be placing a major focus on artwork collected since the museum’s founding, with Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders among 150 Australian artists featured in “Volume One: MCA Collection”. At the same time, the new galleries on the upper floor will house the museum’s inaugural international exhibition, “Marking Time”. Presenting major works by 11 artists from Australia, Brazil, Europe, Japan and the US, the exhibition unfolds over a 24-hour cycle, with some works only coming to life at night and others gradually materialising during the course of the two-month exhibition.

While the MCA is situated in the buzzing historic area of the city called The Rocks, Sydney’s prestigious Art Gallery of New South Wales is a walkable distance away in the equally evocatively named

locale known as The Domain, a large open space adjoining the Royal Botanic Gardens on the eastern edge of the central business district. Housed in a magnificent classical building completed in 1897, along with various extensions added more recently, the Art Gallery of NSW contains the state’s prized artworks, a collection comprising modern and contemporary art, colonial and 19th-century Australian works and European old masters.

With the sometimes-oppressive Australian sun baking the city at this time of year, an escape to the cool confines of the Art Gallery of NSW is a shrewd move, made all the more enjoyable, like the MCA, by the absence of charges to view the vast majority of artworks. The notable exception, but worth every cent of the AU\$25 admission fee, is the sublime Picasso exhibition currently occupying the ground floor of the gallery until 25 March 2012. On loan from the Musée National Picasso in Paris (whilst it undergoes renovations), the 150 sculptures, paintings and drawings celebrate some seven decades of Pablo Picasso’s prolific output, from the ashen portraits of beggars and prostitutes of his early Blue Period to the remarkable avant-garde masterpieces for which he became known.

When it comes to the appreciation of art, there’s no better time to be going Down Under, and with a famous surrealist Spaniard in town and the MCA’s highly anticipated reopening, the Sydney art scene is hard to beat.

**Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)**

140 George Street  
The Rocks  
mca.com.au  
Reopening  
29 March 2012  
Open every day  
10am–5pm

**Art Gallery of New South Wales**

Art Gallery Road  
The Domain  
artgallery.nsw.gov.au  
Open every day  
10am–5pm  
Late Wednesdays  
until 10pm (until 25 March)  
Saturdays: Picasso exhibition open until 7pm (rest of gallery closed)



Courtesy the Art Gallery of NSW