



Geelong Gallery's façade transformed with contemporary art



Geelong Gallery's rear façade overlooking Johnstone Park has been transformed with a newly commissioned artwork by contemporary artist Jon Campbell. The commission is launched ahead of Campbell's solo exhibition, *yEAH/dUNNO*, opening at the Gallery in March 2026.



Geelong Gallery, exterior view with Jon Campbell's *DUNNO* 2025

With his use of words and phrases as imagery, Campbell captures aspects of popular culture that are both lived and observed, that are local, national and international and that can be spoken, written, sung and read. Campbell works across paintings, banners, neon lighting, flags and songs to demonstrate his love of suburbia and its vernacular. His works define not only the look of the world in which he lives, but the accent and humour of its language.

The five panel work *DUNNO* wraps neatly around the Gallery's rear façade, revealing itself to passersby depending on their route through Johnstone Park. In the tradition of the Aussie vernacular, like 'yeah nah', it speaks to uncertainty and ambivalence. In his bold and graphic style, Campbell affirms that art is everywhere around us: in the words we use or overhear, and on the buildings we regularly pass by.

The exhibition in March 2026 will include an additional street activation on the Little Malop Street façade as well as a selection of works displayed in the Gallery that provide further insights to Campbell's practice and its focus on the complex and specific qualities of contemporary Australian language. With humour and optimism, he eschews strident nationalism in favour of an inclusive celebration of the small, the overlooked and the everyday.

Geelong Gallery Director & CEO Humphrey Clegg says: 'Geelong Gallery is excited to be presenting the work of Jon Campbell, who is one of Australia's most highly regarded artists. We are delighted that Campbell's work will challenge our visitors' experience of the Gallery, with a bold intervention on the heritage facade. We are looking forward to visitors embracing the sentiment of the work before their arrival and we love that Jon has empowered them to say 'dunno'.'

Jon Campbell says: 'My art has been mainly text based for the last 20 years. It's an ongoing exploration of the visual potential of words through the use of vernacular language and popular culture. In recent paintings, snippets of conversation, argument and dialogue are transformed using the conventions of formal abstraction and graphic design to both confuse the original function of the words and phrases and elevate them to a pictorial object. The viewer becomes part of the work as they unravel the word or phrase ... in this case around the building's architecture.'

Curator of the exhibition, **Geelong Gallery Assistant Director, Curatorial Lisa Sullivan** says: 'Jon Campbell is an artist with a strong connection to the west of Melbourne and our region, so it's wonderful to share this new commission with the Geelong community ahead of his exhibition next year. With all its informality as a contraction of '(I) do not know', *DUNNO* is a fun and engaging word to install on the formal architecture of an imposing civic building. If you've ever been unsure about whether a gallery is for you—perhaps even thinking 'dunno' yourself—we hope the humour and boldness of Jon's work will entice you into the building to see more!'

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