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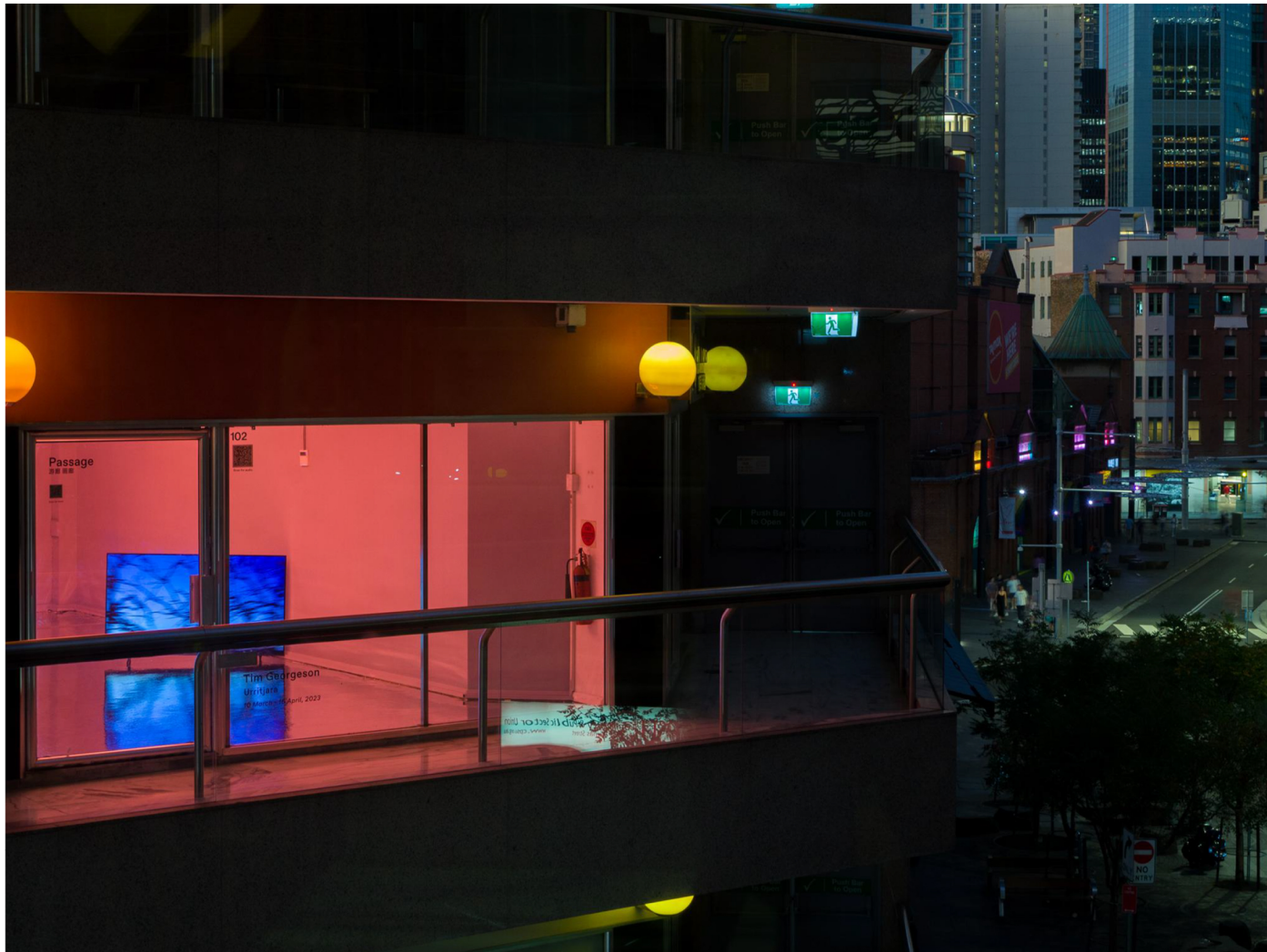
24/7 art gallery opens in Chinatown Sydney: Passage | The Australian

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The Sydney art gallery that never sleeps

Passage is a 24-hour art gallery that is shaking up the art world.

By GEORDIE GRAY



Passage Gallery, Haymarket, Sydney. Picture: Supplied

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There's a pink neon light casting a glow over diners gorging on silky braised eggplant and plump pork dumplings at Chinese Noodle House in [Sydney's Haymarket](#). The source is Passage, an installation gallery open 24-hours a day in the Prince Trade Centre.

Passage, a non-commercial gallery which is funded by a grant from the [Australian Council for the Arts](#), opened in January with artist Eduardo Wolfe-Alegria's "Opening Ceremony". It will show eight exhibitions running through until September.

Gallery director Ashleigh Jones-Fernandez, who runs Passage alongside Marco Rinaldi and Patrick Madden, says it was born out of the burnout she suffered from years working in commercial galleries.

"When you are a lover of art and are passionate about artists, seeing art in the context of monetary value can get

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tiring,"
she says.

"Galleries and the business side of art don't tend to be too different to each other. They tend to follow the model of a commercial gallery. That always confused us," she says. "In this world of creativity,



Passage Gallery glowing over diners at Chinese Noodle House in Haymarket, Sydney. Picture: Supplied


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how can galleries — the brick and mortar of the art world — not shake things up?”

So she and Rinaldi set out brainstorming a “utopian gallery” that they felt Sydney was missing. It would focus on exhibitions by installation artists who, Jones-Fernandez says, have few opportunities in Sydney because the work is hard to sell.



From left: Marco Rinaldi, artist Eduardo Wolfe-Alegria, Patrick Madden and Ashleigh Jones-Fernandez.

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Passage, which is a non-commercial gallery, pays its artists a \$1000 showing fee, and uses the grant money to pay for materials needed to “world build” the gallery space.

The gallery doesn't make any money, Jones-Fernandez says, but is about "paying the artists, and putting on great programs for Sydney."

Currently showing is 'Urritjara', the award-winning dance film by artist and director Tim Georgeson in collaboration with actor and performance artist Derik Lynch, filmed at Lake Bumbunga in South Australia. To capture the essence of the salt lake's mirage, Jones-Fernandez, Rinaldi, and Madden spent a week laying down a mirrored floor.



'Urritjara' by Tim Georgeson, currently showing at Passage Gallery, Haymarket, Sydney.

The 25-square metre space, located in the thick of Chinatown — the beating heart of the otherwise sepulchral Sydney — is open 24-7, and exhibitions can be viewed from a wheelchair-accessibly balcony window. "We feel that's a human right, living in a metropolitan city like Sydney, that culture should always be on offer."

An old mall is a wacky space to open an art gallery, the idea, Jones-Fernandez says, came to her over dumplings. "We looked up at that beautiful building, with its 1970s glory, and it had a really theatrical feeling to it."

“The way it’s concaved, and all the restaurants that constantly bustle downstairs feel like the play or the stage. There’s drama in that building. It has a real yesteryear feeling about it.”

Passage hosts an ongoing ‘Dumplings with the Artists’ series, where, after each exhibition opening, the audience has a chance to connect with the artist over a meal.

“The act of eating together is intimate, creates camaraderie and inclusivity. Oftentimes commercial galleries have artists dinners but it’s usually for the top collectors to get wined and dined. This is a chance for us to engage the public with art, and close that gap.”

The grant received from the Australian Council for the Arts will sustain the gallery until the end of 2023, and Jones-Fernandez is in the process for applying for more grants, with the hope of keeping it open in the years to come. “We want Passage to be in Sydney for a very long time.”

Passage Gallery is located at 102/8 Quay Street, Haymarket.

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