

# New Imaginaries and Possible Futures: A wander through Artspace's 2025 Visual Arts Fellowship

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It is Jeanette Winterson who states that “there is no such thing as autobiography, there is only *art* and *lies*.” Perhaps it’s a sentiment that reverberates the architecture of an exhibition itself: art left in absence, in the wake of the artist, the wall-text a seldom eulogy for the body behind the *created* body. A body brought forth by the hands of contemporary practitioners aided by the alchemy, the innate intelligence of the materials themselves and the boundaries between them. This is but a mere description of the visual nuances and delights present at Artspace’s 2025 *Visual Arts Fellowship (Emerging)* (VAF(E)) exhibition.

VAF(E), historically is a creative program running in partnership with Create NSW, which highlights the work of emerging and early-career artists working in and out of NSW. Each year a panel of esteemed industry peers shortlist finalists to work in and alongside new curators. It’s a connection threaded by collaboration and professional artistic development to nurture innovation. These finalists are encouraged to be expansive in their practise, to think outside of the box labelled ambition, and step into an artmaking that is akin to experimental risk-taking. Ultimately, it is a program dedicated to the creation of a boundary-pushing exhibition created by emerging artists. An exhibition to liaise with the critical ideas of our time.

And is it not an exhibit that does just this — liaise with the critical? The space is preluded with EJ Son's Ideas Platform work entitled *Fountain*, a Du-Champion portrait of a public voyeurism: a circle of toilets, bidets crossing their respective streams onto one another. A nod to bodily fluids and the abjection of said body. The white-noise of the streams and its public view from the street says something pivotal about gender as a force that polices the way in which we move through the world. From the window, a dozen supercharged bidets wave to a pedestrian in Woolloomooloo as if to say "...never heard of experimentation?"

From the six finalists — Ellen Ferrier, Ellie Hannon, Ali Noble, Vedika Rampal, Ali Tahayori, and Joel Sherwood Spring — protrude an exhibit that itself acts like a body. The 2025 VAF(E) works are works that thread together like limbs, a Frankensteinian apparatus of material. Here are bioplastics, moving, stretching, kinesthetic over time against the architecture of the space. Here is soft-form sculpture contrasted against the likes of a metal skeleton — the yellow carpet and likes of a cubby house only disturbed by the harsh angles of surrounding works. Refractory copper and obsolete red acrylic screening: the flash on a digital construction sign like a holding pattern. A data output of extracted processes depicting a list of exports from Israel and a modular canopy with outstretching limbs, inviting you in, asking to speak with you about the relationship you have with the spaces you occupy. The sound of the exhibit is what invites you in before you see it: the time-based work of separation and union to the likes of a hymn called *Kiss Me*.

What I speak of is an exhibit in which the materials act as active collaborators, and perhaps there is something a tad speculative about this. The idea that the material can speak for itself, that the artwork is as much of an artwork when the compounds haven't been given a name and a date. And perhaps, as EJ Son depicts, there is something *Du-Champion* about this entire concept: letting the objects, the materials, the forms themselves take the risks for the artists. An apparatus for experimentation, embodied and felt.

The diversity of alchemy, of material as a form of connection, connectivity to both the public view is ultimately an artistic body with moving, warm flesh. Artspace's 2025 VAF(E) exhibit is one that truly feels alive with a palpable, possible, futuristic body.

*Artspace's 2025 VAF(E) Exhibit is open from 22nd August to 19th October. You can find out more about the exhibit [here](#).*