

Preview  
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# HOTA Than Hell

STIRRING IN THE BOTTOMLESS  
PIT OF QUEENSLAND'S  
SURFERS PARADISE, THERE'S A  
REFORMATION AFOOT. ART IS  
BEING RESURRECTED FROM THE  
FLOODS, FIRE AND PESTILENCE  
OF THE COVID YEARS; IT'S BEEN  
BUBBLING AWAY ON THE GOLD  
COAST FOR SOME TIME BUT NOW  
IT'S IN READINESS TO BE BORN  
AGAIN. HALLELUJAH!



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01 Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran, *double-sided avatar with blue figure*, 2020, installation view at Home of the Arts, photo Alex Chomicz

02 William Robinson, *The Rainforest*, 1990, oil on canvas, 188 x 492.5 cm, collection of HOTA Gallery, acquired with funds from Gold Coast's business and art loving community, 1991

Surfers Paradise: an amalgam of Florida, Las Vegas and Disneyland, it's Australia's playground for everybody, a sunny retirement destination for the well-heeled from southern states, and a surfing mecca that's produced five world champions. Sin also appears to be popular here. From between the high-rise monoliths, sand, and kitsch tourist tack oozes surf, sun and sleaze. Scrolling by the M1, gaudy adrenaline-fuelled rollercoaster tentacles and heart-stopping amusements reach into the landscape from this arterial approach to the 'Glitter Strip.'

For me, part of the attraction of the Gold Coast has always been its embrace of the highbrow and the lowbrow. At the moment the Gold Coast is experiencing something of a cultural reboot in the shape of HOTA – an ambitious cultural complex right in the centre of Surfers Paradise where music, performance and the visual arts are all catered for at an international level. Sustained philanthropic support from a variety of sources, complemented by continuous commitment from local government, has made this project a reality. In a way, this commitment to culture is an anomaly in the face of frivolity and the 'good times' brand this coastal vacation strip is renowned for, but at the same time the acronym HOTA – Home of the Arts – is quite a statement of intent and typically Gold Coast: it's cocky, slick, and to the point.

HOTA Gallery is the centrepiece of the broader precinct masterplan that takes up almost seventeen hectares of landscaped parklands on the banks of the Nerang River. While HOTA's outdoor stage and parklands have been operating since 2018, the HOTA Gallery is set to open to the public on 8 May 2021. Coming in at 60.5 million dollars, the purpose-built facility has been specified to international standards and will be the largest public gallery in Australia outside of a capital city.

Designed by ARM Architecture, Melbourne, the outward appearance is of a wonky deconstructed Rubik's cube informed by a psychedelic, microscopic 3D wire model of a leaf. It is a quantum shift from the previous Gold Coast City Gallery that had the appearance and ambiance of a 1970s RSL club (sans pokies); it is playful



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*"The experience of serious art should be communal, deeply transcendent and enlightening"*

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and celebratory, and in deference and reference to the Gold Coast, it looks and feels right at home.

Several new major artworks have been commissioned for the immediate public spaces including a 6-metre sculpture by Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran which welcomes patrons at the HOTA entrance; it's an astute choice, unconventional enough to challenge the conservative viewer but edgy enough for those who expect more of a challenge. Ramesh is a colourful man of the moment and this artwork cleverly timestamps the era this precinct opened – but more importantly, just like the 'Goldie,' it is loud, playful and brash.

The inaugural exhibitions focus on the region and the City Collection. Both opening on 8 May, 'SOLID GOLD: Artists from Paradise' is on message and will showcase new work by regional artists with a national reputation including Michael Candy, Libby Harward, Samuel Leighton-Dore, Abbey McCulloch and Hiromi Tango, alongside locally known artists and collectives. The exhibition offers many pleasant surprises and is diverse yet cohesive, taking up the vast

main gallery. Showing at the same time is 'HOTA Collects,' an exhibition of over 100 artworks from the impressive \$32 million City Collection reflecting key developments in Australian art over the past fifty years.

Like every modern public gallery, HOTA also includes a dedicated Children's Gallery. Working with Queensland artists Lowana Skye-Davies and Alinta Krauth, 'World Upside Down' is the launch project and will be an immersive space filled with interactive art and hands-on making activities inspired by the themes found in the first two major exhibitions, 'Solid Gold' and 'Lyrical Landscapes.'

'Lyrical Landscapes: The Art of William Robinson' kicks off in July. Coinciding with Robinson's 85th year, the exhibition is curated by Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO and will see Robinson's entire and monumental 'Creation Series' landscapes presented together for the first time.

Demonstrating the Gallery's capacity to present important international exhibitions, 'Contemporary Masters from New York: Art from the Muhrabi Collection' opens in November and will

bring seventy works from artists including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring, Jeff Koons, Richard Prince and Andy Warhol to regional Australia.

With its 2000 square metres, HOTA Gallery is not simply about entertaining people, it is a cathedral to visual art. The experience of serious art should be communal, deeply transcendent and enlightening. While a significant swathe of greater Surfers brazenly chases down empty entertainment or sinful indiscretion, this place offers something more. Gallery staff must be in curatorial purgatory, finding it difficult keeping the smiles off their faces while simultaneously being terrified at how they will continue to keep all this divine space occupied ... it's heaven sent and HOTA than hell! ■

@hotagc

 [hota.com.au](https://www.hota.com.au)

03 Michael Zavros, *Zeus/Zavros*, 2018, oil on canvas, gifted by the citizens of the Gold Coast to future generations, 2018

04 Judy Watson, *Standing Stone, Grevillea*, 2020, acrylic, aquarelle, and graphite pencil on canvas, 247 x 181 cm

05 HOTA Gallery, photo Scott Chrisman

Courtesy the artists, Phillip Bacon Gallery, Home of the Arts, Pixletape Media, Starkwhite