

“There’s a sense of realness”: Marrickville, the cultural heart of Sydney’s inner-west

[ELICIA MURRAY](#) WRITER MAY 4, 2018

Every Saturday morning, a small group of artists meet in a former mousetrap factory in [Marrickville](#) for life drawing sessions.

Elsewhere in the neighbourhood, there’s a warehouse where people can use metal, ceramic and other equipment (Makerspace & company), artist-run community spaces (Join the Dots), a collective of self-publishers (The Rizzeria) and a growing band of galleries and studios.

Carmel Byrne runs Scratch Art Space, where the life drawing sessions are among a varied line-up of art classes, in addition to a gallery and fine-art studios.



Carmel Byrne is the founder of Scratch Art Space in Marrickville. Photo: Scratch Art Space

“I chose Marrickville in 2003 because as an artist I already knew that creatives were being pushed out of Surry Hills,” Byrne says. “And I knew they would need to colonise somewhere else.”

Marrickville, with its vast industrial spaces near regular train services at Sydenham station, made perfect sense.

Instead of being cooped up in places like Newtown, a lot of people are coming down this way. It’s a really nice village.

Elizabeth Howard, local

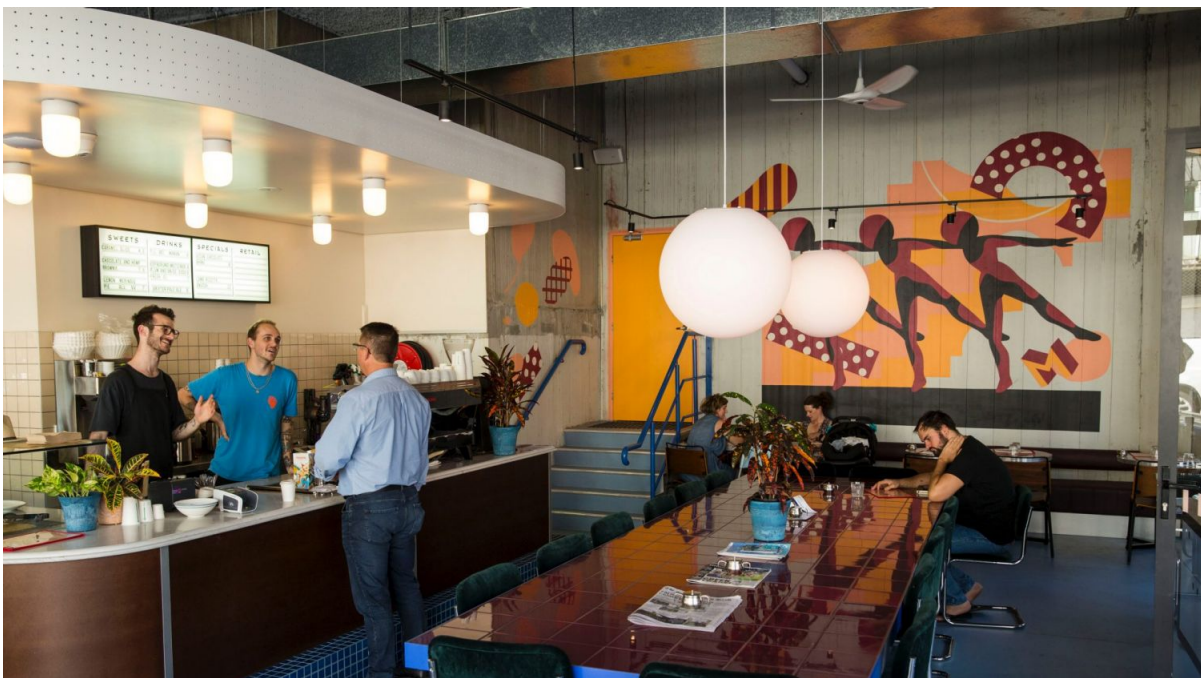
“There were already artists in the area at the time but not many. Now it’s an open, creative environment with people working in different disciplines. What I like about it is that it’s a very mixed bag and veers toward being an inclusive culture rather than an exclusive one.”

Matinee Coffee is a new addition to the suburb’s already humming cafe scene. Photo: Dominic Lorrimer
Seven kilometres south-west of Sydney’s central business district, Marrickville is a huge – and hugely diverse – suburb. It’s the biggest suburb by land area in the inner west and still has plenty of commercial and light industrial zones.

House hunters can find freestanding residences, semis, old and new apartments. Federation and Art Deco styles are especially popular.

- Related: [The perfect Saturday in Marrickville](#)
- Related: [Suburbs that will change this year](#)
- Related: [Who really lives in Newtown now](#)

Richardson & Wrench Marrickville senior sales consultant [Richard Perry](#) says the suburb has come a long way in the past few years.



Marrickville’s Field to Feast market is a local highlight. Photo: Steven Woodburn

“Going back six to eight years ago, we were one of the cheapest quadrants within the inner west,” Perry says. “Now it’s a suburb of choice. There’s a sense of realness within Marrickville. It’s a good suburb in terms of mix of culture and mix of age groups.”

Foodies will find a lot to love about this inner-west hood, with restaurants serving up everything from hearty Vietnamese noodle broth (Eat Fuh) to chipotle pulled jackfruit burgers (Two Chaps). Coffee-lovers are spoilt for choice and there are even a few breweries, not to mention a clutch of hip bars, pubs and food stores and Marrickville Metro shops.

Compared to Newtown, traffic in Marrickville tends to be lighter, block sizes more generous and parking easier to come by. There are fresh food markets on Sundays, a recycling centre and community gardens.



With greenery, industrial spaces and a bustling shopping strip, Marrickville is an eclectic experience. Photo: Steven Woodburn

Expect to pay from \$630,000 for a decent two-bedroom apartment. Semis are fetching from \$1.15 million and single-fronted freestanding houses and terraces are trading for more than \$1.3 million.

“The majority of double-fronted houses are Federation-style. These are very sought-after, and you really need \$1.45 million upwards,” Perry says.

Like many parts of Sydney, stock levels have been well down this year. This undersupply has propped up sale prices.



Two Chaps is a particularly well loved cafe, offering the likes of chipotle pulled jackfruit burgers and quality brews. Photo: Steven Woodburn

The median weekly rent for houses was about \$800 per week in early 2018. The median weekly rent for apartments during the same period was closer to \$500. Most people drive or catch a train to work. By rail, the journey from Marrickville to Central takes 15 minutes.

Elizabeth Howard has lived in Marrickville for six years. Her husband, aged in his mid-60s, has lived in the suburb his whole life.

“His grandmother was Scottish and they were the first migrants,” Howard says. “First the Scottish came, then the Greeks, and it’s more mixed now.”



Local Elizabeth Howard characterises the suburb as friendly and diverse. Photo: Alex Doctor

Describing it as a friendly suburb, Howard says she loves the neighbourhood’s rich heritage, beautiful buildings and convenient public transport options, including the newly refurbished Marrickville train station and light rail at Dulwich Hill.

“Instead of being cooped up in places like Newtown, a lot of people are coming down this way. It’s a really nice village.”