

# GUIDE TO DIGITAL AND PHYSICALLY DISTANCED ART



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*Ancient Shrines and Half Truths*, Melbourne Fringe Festival 2019.  
Photo by J Forsyth.



Well, 2020 sure is one wild ride.

This document is here to help you out with Fringe in 2020. It's part of a set of two! If you're looking for **general guidelines** for Melbourne Fringe in 2020, take a look here:



**click me!**

And **talk to us** – email, phone, Zoom (put your pants on, please) – we're ready and waiting to find out how you rise to the challenge of Melbourne Fringe Festival 2020.

# What this guide covers

Yuck Circus, Melbourne Fringe Festival 2018.  
Photo by J Forsyth.



While the world might feel upside down right now, with so many maybes and uncertainties, Melbourne Fringe has been dreaming about what comes next. Sure – the Melbourne Fringe Festival 2020 won't be business as usual. But then again, there's nothing usual about Melbourne Fringe.

Yes, the unknown still looms – but whatever shape or form our Festival comes in, we're determined to get your art into the world and we are here to help you the whole way (see more details in our [Guide to Fringe in 2020](#)).

This guide is aimed at helping artists and producers consider what it means to make and present digital and physically distant art. Within this guide we cover our new:

- Categories of “pants on” and “pants off” events
- Physically distanced rating system
- Some tech ‘know how’ for creating and presenting online
- Fringe’s top tips for live-streaming
- Fringe’s top tips for digital accessibility
- Examples of digital and physically distanced art

The Patternmakers “Audience Outlook Monitor” survey shows that 75% of audiences are participating in online arts and culture activities and online participation is also allowing audiences to discover new works with 29% having discovered a new artist, artwork or performance online. For information on how arts-goers are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, check out the initial results from Patternmakers [“Audience Outlook Monitor” here.](#)

# What is physically distant art?



## So what is physically distanced art?

‘Physically distanced art’ is a term that we conjured up at Melbourne Fringe HQ in the midst of a global pandemic (shout out to COVID-19!)

To sum it up – physically distanced art is art that can be enjoyed remotely (i.e. from the comfort of your home) or in a physically distant way (e.g. with 4 square metres of space around audience members or on a solo walk through your neighbourhood). Basically, the term covers all events that can be experienced whilst complying with social distancing rules.

**To be super clear – making and presenting your Melbourne Fringe Festival event should not compromise the safety of you or those around you.**

It is super important that you follow the intention of the restrictions outlined by the Victorian Government, and practice safe social distancing where required. This applies from now until showtime – both while rehearsing and creating your show and putting on your performance later in the year. Finding a loophole (like calling your performance a funeral) might make it legal... but could still put your audience in unnecessary risk. You can keep up to date with the latest government advice here: <https://www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>.

# Categories – “Pants Off vs Pants On”

All events in the 2020 Melbourne Fringe Festival will fit into one of two categories of work – “pants off” and “pants on”. Your digital or physically distanced event will still select a genre (e.g. Experimental, Cabaret, Music, etc) but it will also have this additional bit of information that lets audience know how they will experience your event

## Why is it called “pants off”?

The audience member won't see anyone in real life, so what they wear from the waist down is up to them (just remind them to be mindful if their camera is on and they get up for a glass of water during an interactive event). This is content that can be fully experienced by anyone from the comfort of their home and could be pre-recorded, live or interactive work.

## Why is it called “pants on”?

The audience member needs to leave the house and interact with the world to attend your event, so wearing something from the waist down is probably required... if they want to avoid being arrested for indecent exposure. This is content in theatres, galleries, bars, shop windows and on the street – basically anywhere that requires some covering up down there.

The key question to ask yourself is:

### **Does my event require the audience to leave the house?**

If you answered NO, you've got yourself a “PANTS OFF” event. That means you can register from 1 June.

If you answered YES, you've got yourself a “PANTS ON” event. That means you can register from 1 July

## Pants On: Art you can experience in the outside world

Some events that might fit into this category are:

- A performance held onstage where the venue has reduced seating and spaced audiences at an appropriate distance
- Gallery exhibitions with limited capacity to comply with social distancing rules
- Interactive activities that involve having to leave the house
- An artwork or installation in public space
- A performance taking place behind a shop-front window
- A silent disco in a park or outdoor space where the audience are in physically marked areas or zones
- An immersive boot camp or other outdoor activity
- A sound walk or audio tour through a neighbourhood
- A drive-thru or drive-in performance
- A VR or AR experience in public space

... here we're talking about art that engages with the outside world in some way. It might be a guided walk to the river or an audio tour in the supermarket. Think about art that encourages audiences to engage with their surroundings and their neighbourhoods in a new and exciting way.

## Pants Off: Art you can experience inside your house

Some events that might fit into this category are:

- Digital events
- Interactive livestreams
- Digital exhibitions
- Panel discussions and conversations
- Pre-recorded shows
- Text and phone experiences in your house
- Sound walks in your house
- Pod-plays, video-plays and radio-plays
- Home games and home-delivered art
- Pervasive theatre experiences (think mystery boxes and letters delivered to your door)
- Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) experiences in your house
- Interactive activities such as virtual day spas and virtual dining experiences

... you see the common thread here? We're talking about any kind of art (be it digital or physically distant) that someone can experience remotely!

## Further reading

No Proscenium have created a [directory of remote and online experiences](#). Give it a read (or even better, attend an event) for some inspiration on what kind of projects people around the globe are creating!

## Need help?

If you have an idea but you're not quite sure where it fits... reach out. Our Participant Services Team are available to help you categorise the pants-level or brainstorm ways to make your dream show COVID-19 safe! Get in touch with our Participants Services team at [artists@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:artists@melbournefringe.com.au) to chat through your ideas and we can arrange a time to phone or Zoom (pants preferred but tbh who's going to know?)



## But what about social distancing restrictions?

Good question! Things are changing rapidly and we don't know when social distancing restrictions will be completely lifted by the Victorian government (our crystal ball is in the repair shop).

Even as we move into restrictions being eased, we encourage you to think clearly about how you could

- a) create your performance for a digital or physically distant space; or
- b) convert your live performance to comply with social distancing restrictions if required.

For example, if you're doing a pants on event – think about how you could perform it in a way that is COVID-19 safe and complies with physical distancing restrictions:

- Where would your event take place?
  - » Indoors or outdoors?
  - » In a theatre venue or an empty store?
- Where would your audience view the event from?
  - » Would your performers be behind a screen guard or a shop front window?
- How would you manage physical distancing restrictions?
  - » If your event is in an outdoor venue or space – could your audience be positioned 1.5 metres apart?
  - » If your event is in an indoor venue, could you space seats 1.5 metres apart? How would this affect the venue capacity?
- How would you manage cleaning and hygiene requirements?
  - » Would you require audience members and/or performers to wear gloves or face masks?
  - » If so, have you included these costs in your budget or negotiated this in your venue agreement?

TIP: Be prepared to adapt your show to comply with social distancing rules. We recommend keeping up to date with Live Performance Australia's work health and [safety guides here.](#)

# So you're going digital...

Femme Fresh, Melbourne Fringe Festival 2018.  
Photo by Teresa Harrison.



Digital content is everywhere, and streaming an event is now an option for anyone with a smartphone, tablet or laptop. This section will take you through different live streaming platforms, and some things you might need to consider before deciding to register a digital event.

A few things to consider when deciding whether to make your event digital:

- What tech do you need? Is the entire event on a GoPro or smartphone or do you require a professional camera set-up?
- Is the event live or pre-recorded?
- If live, what is being added by hosting the event live (i.e. is there an interactive element or would it work just as well to upload the file as pre-recorded content)?
- What platforms would you use (i.e. Zoom if it's an interactive show? Whatsapp if it's a text experience)?
- What time would you schedule your event? Is the time of day convenient for your audience?
- Will the event be archived?
- How will you make your digital event accessible?

Check out Emerging Writers' Festival's [great resource](#) that covers online events, interactive community management and digital projects if you're thinking of registering a digital event in 2020.

# Livestreaming

It's no secret that creating a professional and engaging live-stream contains MANY moving parts. At a time when social distancing prevents gatherings of large groups IRL, live-streaming your event helps more people get together in virtual space and allows you to connect more audiences to your work (like your Aunty Pam who lives in New Zealand).

Livestreaming an event or performance might feel unattainable or confusing – but there are low-cost and low-tech options for everyone. As with any new skills – especially those involving technology – things will likely go wrong. But as our old mate Albert Einstein said... “a person who never made a mistake never tried anything new!” And now, more than ever, is a great time to experiment and bust the form.

To get you started, here are a few things to consider when deciding if you should livestream your event:

- Where would you perform your event from (i.e. in your loungeroom, in a studio or in the forest? If it's in a forest... is there a stable internet connection?)
- What is your plan if your internet drops out? Do you have a 4G enabled device as a backup so that your performance can continue?
- What access to video cameras and equipment do you have? Have you included this in your budget?
- Will you use a single or multi-camera set up?
- How can you engage the audience with the livestream?
- What are the protocols in place for your audience (i.e. do they have the option to turn their cameras off if they want to be a voyeur or to turn their cameras on if they want to participate in the event?)
- Do you have a technical manager or someone who can assist you with technical difficulties during the show (believe us – you will need one!)



Watch this webinar [“A Digital Playbook for the Arts”](#) by [Google Creative Lab](#) for a beginners guide to getting your productions online, covering everything from live-streaming to audience interactivity.

# Choosing a digital platform

OK. So you've brainstormed. You've done your sums. And now you've decided you want to livestream. What's next?

With so many options, and undoubtedly more to come, there is no single right way to stream your digital event or artwork. Each different platform and combination of equipment will effect the way your audience will experience and interact with your event. This might be the difference between an intimate one-on-one Zoom event, or streaming an audio-only experience on SoundCloud that your audience can listen to whilst they're in the bath.

If you're considering pre-recorded video or audio content, your digital work will be integrated directly into the Digital Fringe platform. We're still working on the specifics of this (i.e. whether it will be hosted through our own media player or using a third-party system such as Vimeo) - but we'll have an answer for you soon; for now you can just focus on how best to capture your pre-recorded art!

We encourage you to experiment with any platform you think might be a good fit for the type of work you make. It's only by testing each of the platforms that you'll figure out which one works best for you (and how each one changes the audience experience!)

Here are a few platforms we suggest that you experiment with:

Best suited to  
broadcast streaming:  
**Twitch**  
**SoundCloud**  
**YouTube Live**  
**Facebook Live**

Best suited to  
learning or interactive  
environments (and an  
invited or pre-paid audience)  
e.g. a multi-user video chat  
for workshops or interactive  
settings:  
**Zoom**  
**Crowdcast**

Best suited to  
mobile streaming  
from your smartphone or  
tablet:  
**Periscope (owned by  
Twitter)**  
**Instagram Live**

The Space has written a great article on "Live streaming for the arts: lo-fi and low cost options". We highly recommend you [read it here](#).

PCC Productions have prepared a guide to first time streaming! You can [read it here](#).

## Don't forget about copyright!

REMEMBER: Every platform has terms and conditions (including copyright clauses and community guidelines). It's YOUR responsibility to read these and comply with them.

- Find out more about copyright and your responsibilities on YouTube [HERE](#)
- Find out more about copyright and your responsibilities on Instagram [HERE](#)
- Find out more about copyright and your responsibilities on Facebook [HERE](#)

If you're considering streaming a live performance or event which includes music, you need to be speaking EARLY ON to see what music licenses you may be required to obtain. You can check out our [How to Use Music in Your Event](#) resource here for more info.

Other intellectual property considerations may also exist for digital work - for example, if you're paying rights for your work's script or book, make sure you check with the rights holder that digital presentation is okay



# Fringe's Top 10 Tips for Live-streaming

Fast-track to November and you're ready to live-stream your show as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 2020. YAHOO! Use these simple streaming tips to make sure your event runs as smoothly as possible:

- 1. Power up!** Charge all your devices and make sure you have enough plug points or USB slots to keep them charged.
- 2. Keep your setup simple.** Every piece of equipment you add increases complexity in your setup. And if one of these parts fails, then the success of your entire live show is at risk! It's always best to keep your setup simple to lower the odds of technical errors.
- 3. Have backup equipment available.** Even with a simple setup, there is still a chance your equipment may fail. It's always best to play it safe and keep backups of your gear whenever possible.
- 4. Ensure bandwidth availability.** Remember: streaming requires an upload (sometimes called upstream) bandwidth of between 500Kbps and 4Mbps. For video, at 720p you would require an upload speed of at least 4 - 8 Mbps. Be sure to [test your bandwidth before streaming!](#)
- 5. Don't forget about design!** It's important to create a setting for your live-streams. If you're using a dedicated room, dress and treat it like a theatre. With the right lighting, placement and camera angles, you can transform any space into an awesome set that will do wonders for your performances (plus, it's better than your background being an unmade bed littered with pyjamas).
- 6. Test your stream with a backup account.** A good way to test your stream before going live is to stream to a backup account. In Facebook, for example, create a new account with no friends and set all publishing notifications to private. While your backup account is streaming you can log into your main account and view your broadcast from the perspective of your audience.
- 7. Give yourself lots of pre-show prep time.** Getting prepared for a live show can eat up more time than you think! Make sure you remember to give yourself ample time to minimize room noise, test acoustics and more. Being organized and mentally ready is essential for delivering a top-quality live stream. Allow yourself more pre-show prep time to reduce stress levels and help ensure you deliver the best possible broadcast.
- 8. Have a technical support person.** Having an extra set of eyes on your live stream is very important! Having an extra set of eyes, ears and hands means there is someone there to troubleshoot any problems – including audio sync issues, choppy frame rates and any other technical issues.
- 9. Add an extra host or guest.** This is particularly fun for live comedy shows, variety nights and panel discussions. Having a guest on your live stream is also an excellent opportunity for cross-promotion (i.e. you promote the guest with your audience and the guest promotes your Fringe Festival show with their audience!)
- 10. Have a back-up plan!** Make sure you have a way to notify and apologise to your audience if things go wrong: monitoring and responding on social media platforms in real time is important.

## Digital Accessibility

At Melbourne Fringe, we recognise the need to make art as accessible as possible for ALL our artists and audiences. This includes those who are homebound and regional/international audiences who might not be able to attend your events IRL.

More digital events are being made as a response to COVID-19, and this has meant that art is even more accessible to some people with disability.

Just like your IRL events, it's important to make your digital events accessible. Here are a few quick tips, plus some further reading to help you get started:

1. Make sure to provide access information in your show's listing on the Melbourne Fringe Festival website, on social media and at the start of your digital event – after the acknowledgment of country.
2. Don't forget that Auslan interpreters (for Deaf audiences and artists) and audio describers (for blind and low vision artists and audiences) can still be used in your digital events - make sure you engage with them early. Visit Auslan Stage Left and Description Victoria for more info.
3. Consider live-streaming with captions or recording events and publishing with transcripts.
4. Use ample lighting so your performance is easy to see.
5. Avoid bright or flashing lights if you can. If your show involves bright lights, make sure to include a content warning!

Arts Access NSW has produced a quick guide with 10 hot tips to help you make your digital content and online events more accessible and inclusive. Check it out here.

If you've got any questions about how to make your event more accessible, you can get in touch with our Access and Inclusion Coordinator – Carly Findlay by emailing [carly@melbournefringe.com.au](mailto:carly@melbournefringe.com.au).

Technology has long provided us with the opportunity to experience the world in innovative ways. And through the coronavirus pandemic, society has finally embraced the benefit and importance of access.

- Priscilla Sutton



# Example work

Cult Melbourne Fringe Festival 2015  
Photo by Theresa Harrison

Before COVID-19 hit, many artists and arts organisations around the world were already thinking about virtual and remote spaces as sites for performance.

This list includes artists performing in both virtual and physical environments and focuses on performance works that are made without the use of expensive equipment or access to spaces (although there are some exceptions!)

For convenience, we have used our categories and physical distance ratings to help artists and producers think about how your project might be made or adapted for a physically distanced or digital context. Here are some of our favourites:

**Pants Off Shows** (with a 100% physical distance rating – i.e. enjoyed in the comfort of your home)

- Candlehouse Collective, [collection of works](#) (phone art) – 2018 –
- Tom Salamon, [Hangout 2022](#) (one-on-one cyber performance) – 2020 –
- [Hunt a killer](#) (home delivered art) – 2020 –
- Lauren McCarthy, [SOMEONE](#) (webcam) and [LAUREN](#) (livestream surveillance) – 2019\*
- Georgia Banks, [Intercourse with the artist](#) (phone experience) – 2018
- Jeremy Bailey, [The Web I Want](#) (augmented reality, YouTube) – 2015
- Genevieve Bellveau, [Gorgeoustaps and The Reality Show](#) (Facebook) – 2011
- Ann Hirsch, [Scandalishious](#) (YouTube-based performance) – 2008 – 2009
- Wafaa Bilal, [Domestic Tension](#) (livestream) – 2007\*

**Pants On Shows** (with a 75% physical distance rating – i.e. involves leaving the house – for example, going for a walk or going to locations)

- Janet Cardiff, [Her long black hair](#) (art walk) – 2014 –
- Robert Walton, [Vanitas](#) (artist made app) – 2015
- onestepatatimelikethis – [en route](#) (pedestrian-based live art event) – 2009 –

**Pants On Shows** (with a 50% physical distance rating – i.e. involves being gathered with others – for example, one on one performance or limited capacity audiences; physical distance between audience members)

- Riptide, [The Lucky Ones](#) (part theatre; part video game; part escape room) – 2018
- Rotozaza, [Etiquette](#) (audio experience) – 2007

# Useful resources

Church of Burt, Melbourne Fringe Festival 2019  
Photo by Duncan Jacob

[Creative Connections](#) is an online series curated by Australia Council for the Arts offering practical, accessible and useful content by industry experts on key topics and emerging themes (including exploring digital and arts practice adaptation). We highly recommend you tune into these webinars! They're free and you can watch them back at any time. Here's a few we love:

- [First Nations protocols in a digital space](#)
- [Platforms for distribution and experiencing of digital works](#)
- [Collaboration: the good, the bad and the ugly](#)
- [Tips for an independent artist](#)
- [Understanding the technology for non-technology people](#)

[NAVA Weekly Workshops Online](#) as part of their advocacy programme. Discussions and professional development around arts, policy, media, political and public engagement.

[Creative Alliance](#), [Theatre Network Australia](#) and [Auspicious Arts](#) are maintaining a very comprehensive list of all kinds of arts related online events and opportunities.

We also recommend you join these Community Facebook Groups to keep up to date with all the latest news and offerings:

- [Australian Arts amidst COVID-19](#)
- [Australian Actors Community Group](#)
- [Arts Tasker - work, skill and community sharing during COVID19](#)

For support:

- [Support Act](#) is supporting artists in these tough times. Hotline: 1800 959 500
- [Lifeline](#) is always there for anyone needing mental health support, online and on 13 11 14
- [Arts Wellbeing Collective](#) have a range of support resources online for looking after your physical and mental health during this crisis

# Glossary

**Physical distance rating:** A physical distancing rating gives audience members a better understanding of whether there is a physical element to your work and where they can access your work from. For example, whether the art can be experienced with pants off on the couch or whether the audience will have to engage with the outside world in some way. See our table on page 6 for more details about how to choose your physical distance rating.

**Pants on:** The audience member needs to leave the house and interact with the world to attend your event, so wearing something from the waist down is probably required... if they want to avoid being arrested for indecent exposure. This is content in theatres, galleries, bars, shop windows and on the street – basically anywhere that requires some covering up down there.

**Pants off:** The audience member won't see anyone IRL, so what they wear from the waist down is up to them (just remind them to be mindful if their camera is on and they get up for a glass of water during an interactive event). This is content that can be fully experienced by anyone from the comfort of their home and could be pre-recorded, live or interactive work.

**Digital Fringe:** The Digital Fringe platform is run by Melbourne Fringe and allows artists to host and ticket their work online. It will host all kinds of work, from embedded pre-recorded and live-streamed content directly into the platform, to providing a framework for audiences to access and pay for one-on-one interactive events that rely on third party software such as Zoom or Skype.

**Livestream:** Live Streaming is where you directly broadcast a video to a source such as Youtube Live or Twitch. It's essentially a live transmission of an event over the Internet - from where you are, directly to where the viewer is. Most live streams are delivered on Multicasting. Multiple users can tune in to a

single stream, so that the audio or video can be delivered to several locations at once. Isn't the inter-webs cool?

**Virtual reality:** Virtual reality (commonly known as VR) is a computer-generated environment which can be explored and interacted with. VR places the user inside the experience. Instead of viewing a screen in front of them, users are immersed and able to interact with 3D worlds – for example, by manipulating objects or performing actions. VR is mostly experienced through two senses: sight and sound. Whoa. Technology, right?

**Augmented reality:** Augmented reality (commonly known as AR) is a computer-generated environment which is overlaid on a real-world environment. Basically, it alters the physical world around you by adding 3D objects, sounds, videos and graphics to it. Pokemon Go is a popular video game that uses AR. GOTTA CATCH EM'ALL!

**Virtual tour:** A virtual tour is a 360° image of a particular location. It includes a sequence of videos or still images, so people can view an entire area without having to be physically present. Kinda like Google Street View. You can check some out here.

**Home-delivered art:** Home-delivered art is like Uber Eats but for art. It's art that is delivered to the audiences' door – whether by post, mystery box, message in a bottle or pigeon-mail.

**Phone art:** Phone art could take the form of a play via text message, phone conversation or 1800-dial-for-art number which the audience call... basically any experience where the audience uses a phone in order to experience your event.

**Radio play (or pod-play):** A radio play is like a play reading or performance that is broadcast or published on audio media. A radio play uses words, music and sound effects to tell the story.

It has no visual component. In the olden days, radio plays were broadcast on the radio (hence the name!) or made into a tape or CD. In this modern age, you could publish your radio play on SoundCloud, YouTube or any other medium. Or you could dust off your old tape recorder... whatever floats your boat.

**Pervasive theatre:** Pervasive theatre is the extension of a performance entering into the reality of an audience's life. This can happen in a large or a small way. For example, a 2 week long experience where the audience member is phoned or written to every day. A good example is [Riptide's The Lucky Ones](#).