

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian artists take off for Venice Biennale

Innovative video artist Shaun Gladwell and four of Australia's most promising up and coming artists will be farewelled tonight, as they set off for one of the world's most prestigious contemporary art exhibitions – the 53rd International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia.

The Venice Biennale runs from 7 June to 22 November 2009, where Australia will be represented by video works from Shaun Gladwell and *Once Removed*, a curated exhibition from four early career artists.

Shaun Gladwell will present his captivating *MADDESTMAXIMVS* at the Australian Pavilion in Venice's Giardini della Biennale. *MADDESTMAXIMVS* is a compelling suite of five thematically interrelated videos with sculptural and photographic elements, influenced by outback Australian landscapes and the iconic *Mad Max* movies.

Shaun's exciting works blend contemporary urban culture and personal history through video, painting, sculpture and performance. He was one of three Australian artists selected to participate in the *Think with the Senses Feel with the Mind* exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2007. His works have been shown in major national and international exhibitions, including the Sao Paulo, Busan, Taipei and Sydney biennales and Yokohama triennale. He has undertaken residencies and commissions in Europe, Asia and the Americas, and was awarded an Australia Council fellowship in 2006.

Also representing Australia at the Venice Biennale 2009 will be four early career artists in the *Once Removed* exhibition at the Ludoteca in the Castello district. Curated by Felicity Fenner, *Once Removed* will feature a series of installations brought together by themes of Aboriginality, environment and displacement. The works presented are Indigenous artist Vernon Ah Kee's *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, Australian-based Japanese artist Ken Yonetani's *Sweet Barrier Reef*, and *Life Span* by collaborators Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro.

Doug Hall AM, Commissioner for the Australian delegation at the Venice Biennale, said that the nation was putting its best creative foot forward at the event.

'The Australian presence at the Venice Biennale 2009 will showcase some of the most exciting artists to emerge from Australia's contemporary art scene in the last decade. Their urban, Indigenous, political and culturally diverse styles show sides of Australia that many international observers may not have seen. They represent the new face of Australian contemporary art,' said Mr Hall.

The Australia Council for the Arts has managed and funded Australia's representation for more than 30 years. Past Australian representatives have included Sir Sydney Nolan (1954), Imants Tillers (1986), Arthur Boyd (1988), Judy Watson, Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1997), Howard Arkley (1999), Patricia Piccinini (2003), Ricky Swallow (2005), Susan Norrie, Daniel Von Sturmer and Callum Morton (2007).

A farewell event will be held tonight, Wednesday 6 May at 6:15pm, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. It will feature presentations by Shaun Gladwell, Doug Hall AM, Australia Council Chairman James Strong AO and Neil Balnaves from The Balnaves Foundation.

More information is available at www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au/

High resolution images are available at www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au/media-centre-docs

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