

## Shaun Gladwell - Artist's Statement



SHAUN GLADWELL  
2009 Venice Biennale

For the 2009 Venice Biennale, Shaun Gladwell will present a new major body of work in the Australian Pavilion. Gladwell's project will consider the overall pavilion site, both interior and exterior.

The project, entitled *MADDESTMAXIMVS*, began in 2007, and has continued with a series of recorded performances and sculptures that investigate representations of landscape and the mythological figures that are projected into these spaces. The installation at Venice will consist of several projects that intersect each other through various locations and performances.

Extending Gladwell's ongoing engagement with extreme sports, *MADDESTMAXIMVS* relocates inherently urban activities to the natural environment. This displacement encourages unique interpretations of the performances, while simultaneously activating the landscape with performing bodies and actions.

The Australian hinterland and desert regions are the fields in which obscure activities take place. The activities are highly charged: roadkill kangaroos are found on the side of highways by a black leather clad motorcyclist and given a ritualistic burial, a figure surfs a vehicle as it moves through desert roads, an individual rapidly paints and subsequently erases images of the/a universe in open arid settings, and a group of figures spin against natural rock formations.

Rather than picturing landscapes, Gladwell's project constantly questions the history and representation of the landscape. Introduced with local references, these questions offer international and widespread identification and relevance. Through performance, Gladwell re-imagines familiar territory, negotiating works within the conventions of art history and traditional landscape painting. This meditative investigation articulates Gladwell's discursive approach to contemporary art and structures the project as a free, contemplative space.

In the Australian Pavilion, evocative images are projected alongside sculptures that question function and the object's relationship to the moving image. Performance locations are reflected in sculptural works that interrogate mortality: an interior human skull is intimately investigated – the entire installation operating as a vanitas or memento mori.

Tania Doropoulos, 2009

