

Dealing in and exhibiting original works by Australia's most collectable young, mid-career and senior artists

**Christmas Trading**

Dickerson Gallery, Melbourne

closed 20 Dec - 11 Jan

Re-opening 12 Jan

Dickerson Gallery, Sydney

closed 21 Dec - 8 Jan

Re-opening 9 Jan

**Dickerson Gallery presents....**

**MAX DUPAIN & JOHN WITZIG**

**MELBOURNE 31 March – 17 April 2010      SYDNEY 28 April – 15 May 2010**

**Described as one of Australia's most revered photographers, Max Dupain's renowned beach images will, for the first time, be joined by Australian surfing photographer John Witzig's works in a historic 50-year look at Australia's beach culture. The exhibitions open at Dickerson Gallery in Melbourne on 31 March and in Sydney on 28 April 2010.**



*Bob Mc Tavish and the '48 Holden, Noosa (1966)*  
John Witzig

*Sunbaker 1937*  
Max Dupain

These exhibitions provide a historical snapshot of the evolution of Australia's identity now intrinsically centred around beach culture. Dupain's images capture life during the 30s and 40s when ladies and gentleman walked the promenade in dresses and suits, surf lifesavers regularly marched the shoreline and a day at the beach was more of a holiday treat.

Witzig's images capture the sub-culture of beach life during the 60s and 70s, a time when Australian surfers carved their names into surfing history with the introduction of the first short boards.

Dupain's photographs helped define Australian beach culture as an identifiable national trait. His famous and enduring images include Sunbaker (1937), At Newport (1952) and Bondi (1939), which will all be on show.

"Dupain captured the growth in Australia's identification with the beach, something which is now embedded in our national psyche and so intrinsically part of our everyday life." says Jill White, benefactor and developer of a large collection of Max Dupain's negatives.

Working with Dupain for over 25 years, White saw first-hand Dupain's work philosophy and dedication to his craft, combined with his natural, spontaneous flair and intuition for capturing poignant moments in time.

"He certainly had natural talent when he picked up a camera, but he also had a very strong work-ethic, that meant he was forever mastering his modernistic style," says White.

For John Witzig it was more a case of "being at a great place at a great time. I was taking photographs of my friends, surfing and hanging around. What I didn't know back then was, that time in history would turn into a period of significance," he says.

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## DICKERSON GALLERY NEWSLETTER

Witzig's friends, many of whom went on to become world famous surfers, forced their names into the history books when they took the infamous Malibu surfboards and started playing around with short boards.

"I had the good fortune over that decade to capture some iconic moments in surfing history and the evolution of short boards, which are now being seen as nostalgic memoirs of a time that's irrevocably passed," Witzig adds.

Society back then looked at surfing with a certain amount of disrespect and surfers were seen as drop-out hippies. Now surfing has become its own industry and a lifestyle in which millions of people participate and many millions more have a keen interest.

"I can see why there's interest in my images from a social history viewpoint, times have certainly changed from when I took these photos, but it still surprises me somewhat," says Witzig.

Witzig, a self-taught photographer, candidly accepts the superior quality of Dupain's work and is humbled to be shown beside him. "Dupain was a master; he had a brilliant eye and was obsessive about his craft. He was the most successful photographer in Australia," he says.

Director of Dickerson Gallery, Sam Dickerson says "This exhibition shows a fascinating insight into Australia's beach culture, how we see ourselves individually and culturally, as well as a narrative link to the remarkable changes that have taken place over time, reported by two very different photographers."



At Newport (1952)  
Max Dupain



Fresh Mullet, Angourie (c.1972)  
John Witzig



Bondi (1939)  
Max Dupain

## NEWS IN BRIEF...

### Dickerson Gallery Artists - Events and Achievements

**Damon Kowarsky, David Frazer and Regan Tamanui** were finalists in the Geelong Acquisitive Print Awards, 2009

**Honor Bradbeer** was a finalist in The Hutchins Art Prize

**Marc Standing and Filomena Coppola** were finalists in the Banyule City Council Art Award

**Jason Cordero** was highly commended in the Waterhouse Natural History Prize and the Heysen Prize for Interpretation of Place. He was also a finalist in the Tattersall's Club Art Prize.

**Samantha Everton** has been busy delivering workshops to primary school students in Melbourne and regional Victoria for the Moran Arts foundation, following her highly commended in this year's Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize. The workshops cover basic photography skills, composition, lighting and telling a visual story. "The children love it and I have met some wonderful budding photographers who have had their world opened up through the workshop," says Sam.

**Sharon Billinge** is currently on a residency at Laughing Waters, Eltham – her third residency for the year. Sharon has been conducting teaching workshops and has been invited by Nilumbik Shire Council to do some teaching there next year.

**Mark Dober** recently returned from a travels to London, Paris and Canberra. However, it's the countryside around Gundagai which is Inspiring his latest works depicting rural landscapes.



What will tomorrow bring?

Jason Cordero

Highly Commended in the Waterhouse Natural History Prize



Standing Figure  
Damon Kowarsky

## In Conversation with... DAMON KOWARSKY

One of the highlights for Dickerson Gallery's exhibition calendar next year will be a solo show by prolific Melbourne artist, Damon Kowarsky. He recently sat down with Melbourne Gallery Manager David Hagger to explain what motivates and inspires his work. This is an edited extract - the full interview can be seen at [www.dickersongallery.com.au/december-2009](http://www.dickersongallery.com.au/december-2009)

**DH: How important is travel for your art practice, and more importantly, how important is it to entrench yourself into the local way of life of each location?**

DK: Travel is extremely important to my practice. It has allowed me to see an incredible range of cultures, peoples and architectures and bring back some of the things I have seen to my studio in Melbourne. These ideas and drawings underpin all my work whether painting printmaking or drawing. I am not sure that I live the local way of life in each place any more than I do in Melbourne but I do very actively try to get involved with local cultural institutions and meet local artists.

**DH: In Pakistan under Murad Mumtaz and Mahreen Zuberi, you studied miniature painting. How was this experience for you?**

DK: Again incredible. I had long admired the miniature tradition and spent much of 2004 looking through the NGV's Asian Art collection with curator Carol Cains. The elegance and economy of line was something I had long admired both within this tradition and in artists like Hockney and Picasso [at least during his Neo-Classical stage]. So it was something I was already interested in and sought to bring to my work. It was also good to be exposed to a teaching practice that is so heavily rooted in an understanding of a body of knowledge and skill. I used to play music and one thing I always felt absent from my art school education was any equivalent to the scales that make up such an important part of a musician's practice. So working from a tradition actually felt very comfortable. Of course it is then up to the artists to take the work in their own direction but at least you do so with some basis in the formal handling of materials and techniques

**DH: This is increasingly overlooked these days. Many universities push their focus towards conceptual, rather than practical teachings.**

DK: True, and while the other system is not always perfect – cold hearted technique is its own vice – I would much rather look at the work of someone who has nothing to say but paints well than someone who has nothing to say and paints not at all.

**DH: You have worked in a number of mediums, mostly etching. Are your works taken from pen and ink or pencil drawings rather than straight onto the plate?**

DK: I always work from drawings rather than directly onto the plate. Part of this is because travelling with copper plates is impractical [I cannot yet afford porters!] but mainly it is because very few of the drawings I make end up as prints. I like the ability to edit, filter and discard my drawings. I know there is a school which insists you should work directly on the plate [as if this were a 'truer' way to work] but I found the miss rate was too high and modifying a drawing once it is on a sheet of copper is just hard work. I also found editing meant I was able to push my practice along as I would only use what I considered the best drawings rather than what happened to have been made that day.

**DH: I feel your distinct linear style comes through eliminating certain details; where the subject becomes a suggestion. In your New York City works for example, you concentrate on establishing building heights to accentuate the sheer scale in levels of the city, rather**

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**'...I would much rather look at the work of someone who has nothing to say but paints well than someone who has nothing to say and paints not at all...'**

*Cities and Desire I*  
Damon Kowarsky



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### We're online

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### than the finer details of each building.

DK: The paring down of detail is more a matter of skill and time than anything. The NYC drawings you refer to took about two hours of fierce concentration while standing on the roof of a building to make. Adding detail would take another twenty hours. But I do try to push my abilities – the cities I drew on the last trip were far more complicated than ones I had drawn previously. I find I don't think of it as a style, just the best response I can make to a given scene or artistic problem.

### DH: The vantage point is crucial tool for your composition. Your works of 2007-09 are mostly drawn from a high vantage point. Is this an intentional shift from the earlier works, which tended to be at eye level?

DK: The current series is all from above, though there are many in my sketchbooks at street level that I have not yet transformed. The use of a high vantage came about in Mexico City. It is very crowded [30 million people make it home] and sitting on the street was impossible. But there were some very interesting views from a look out tower in the centre of town and this led to curiosity about similar views in other cities. Also modern cities tend to be awful at street level [all those canyons and lack of ornamentation] but quite remarkable from above. Which does beg the question as to who or what the architects are building for. Certainly not the man on the street.

### DH: Obviously architecture is a great passion of yours. Who do you admire?

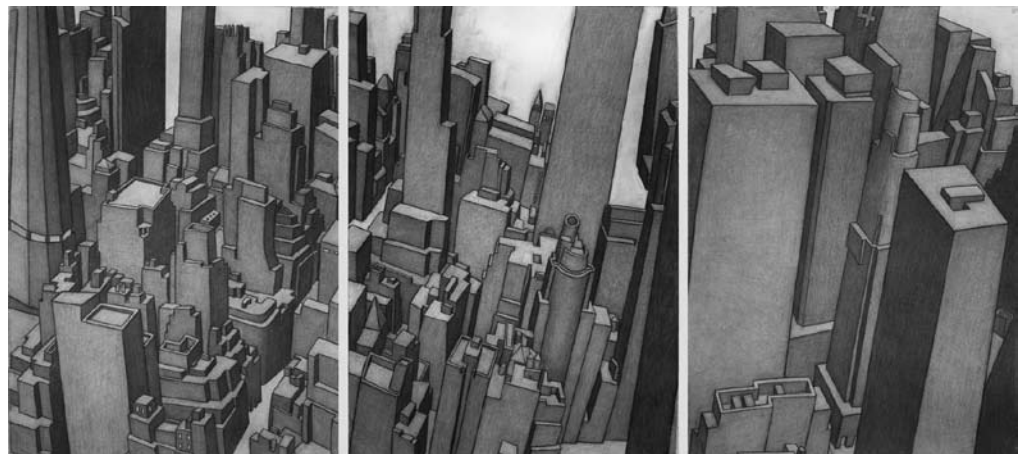
DK: Architecture is a passion but if I had to describe what drives me it would be people places and things. I have begun work on a series of etchings on the theme of transit featuring planes helicopters and ships. I tend to move around thematically over any given year. Not all of the works make it to exhibition as I find it better to keep any given show within certain thematic restraints.

### DH: Your figures are large and appear powerful, as if mythical creatures from a bygone era. They seem to have no distinct creed or colour, and are often represented as transparent within the landscape. Who are they, and what are they doing?

DK: In practical terms all the figures come from life drawing classes I attend in Melbourne. If they are without nationality it is because up to now I have preferred models that are slightly neutral. But as with my responses to cities much of this is because drawing is very difficult and achieving specific likeness challenging. There is also the matter that a slightly blank figure may sit better with a given scene – it is as much about balancing the needs of the picture as anything else. Though this is changing somewhat, and I am working to make my figures more distinct. It is a slow process though. As to what they are doing I am often not sure. More often than not a certain figure seems to need a certain scene, or one kind of city another kind of human interaction. The use of transparency was a formal response to try to balance increasingly complicated cityscapes with a figurative content.

### DH: I want to talk about your use of the diptych and triptych. Why divide your works into panels, rather than a single, continuous piece?

DK: The use of the diptych and triptych came from looking at Japanese prints which often span multiple plates and pages and do so very beautifully. There is an implied sense of narrative flow that comes from associations with graphic novels and comic books. And then there is the tension that arrives from chopping the image up. It gives you many more points to play compositional games with, to break the gaze and disturb the landscape. Finally there is the challenge of printing up to 8 pieces of copper perfectly on one sheet of paper. It is nice to make things hard for yourself and push your abilities and techniques.



NYC I  
Damon Kowarsky

Full interview at [www.dickersongallery.com.au/december-2009](http://www.dickersongallery.com.au/december-2009)