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MONASH UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART  
MEDIA KIT

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# JUAN DAVILA: THE MORAL MEANING OF WILDERNESS

4 AUGUST - 1 OCTOBER 2011

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 **MONASH** University  
Museum of Art

Ground Floor, Building F  
Monash University, Caulfield Campus  
900 Dandenong Road  
Caulfield East VIC 3145 Australia

[www.monash.edu.au/muma](http://www.monash.edu.au/muma)  
Telephone +61 3 9905 4217  
[muma@monash.edu](mailto:muma@monash.edu)  
Tues–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat 12–5pm

Juan Davila, *Australia: nuclear waste  
dumping ground 2007*  
oil on canvas, 185.0 x 235.0 cm  
© Juan Davila, courtesy Kalli Rolfe  
Contemporary Art



## INTRODUCTION

*The Moral Meaning of Wilderness* features recent work by Juan Davila, one of Australia's most distinguished artists. The exhibition sees Davila turn to the genres of landscape and history painting, at a time when the environment is as much a political as a cultural consideration. With technical virtuosity, Davila's striking representations of nature achieve monumental significance, depicting beauty and emotion while addressing modern society's ambivalence to nature and increasing consumerism.

*The Moral Meaning of Wilderness* represents a radical shift in Davila's practice, whilst continuing to explore art's relationship to nature, politics, identity and subjectivity in our post-industrial age. Davila pursues his exploration of the role of art as a means of social, cultural and political analysis.

While many contemporary artists turned away from representation of the landscape, due to its perceived allegiance to outmoded forms of national identity and representation, Davila has recently sought to revisit and reconsider our surroundings *au naturel*.

His paintings are, at first view, striking representations of nature. The paintings, created since 2003, are undertaken *en plain air*, a pre-modern technique based on speed of execution in situ, and the use of large scale canvases characteristic of history painting. He has also employed other techniques such as studio painting and representations of the landscape with reference to the sublime, the historical, memory and modernity.

Presented in association with Drill Hall Gallery, The Australian National University, and Griffith University Art Gallery.

## EXHIBITION DATES

4 August - 1 October 2011

**Opening function: Saturday 13 August 2011 3-5pm.**

With opening remarks at 4.00pm by Shane Carmody, Director, Collections and Access, State Library of Victoria.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

***Painting, an act of faith: Kate Briggs on Juan Davila***

Wednesday 3 August, 12.30 – 1.30pm  
Faculty of Art & Design lecture theatre, G1.04  
Monash University, Caulfield campus

All events free entry. Bookings essential: [muma@monash.edu](mailto:muma@monash.edu) or 03 9905 4217.

For further details and additional public programs see [www.monash.edu.au/muma/events](http://www.monash.edu.au/muma/events).





## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Juan Davila was born in Chile in 1946 and moved to Melbourne in 1974. He soon established himself as a significant presence on the Australian and international art scene. His work was the subject of a survey exhibition at the Drill Hall Gallery, in Canberra in 2002, and a major retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney in 2006 and National Gallery of Victoria in 2007.

Davila was a contributing curator in the recent exhibition *Primary Views: Artists Curate the Monash University Collection* in 2008; and his work has featured in a wide range of significant group exhibitions nationally and internationally, including the prestigious *Documenta 12*, in Kassel, Germany in 2007.

Juan Davila's work is extensively represented in the collections of the Australian National University, Griffith University and Monash University, and we are especially pleased to collaborate as university art museums to present this major exhibition focusing on new developments in Juan Davila's oeuvre.

## MEDIA

For all media enquiries please contact Rosemary Forde on 03 9905 4360 or [rosemary.forde@monash.edu](mailto:rosemary.forde@monash.edu).