

MICHAEL ZAVROS

The Sunbather 2015

Collection learning resource

This learning resource is designed for a broad range of audiences.
Information can be adapted to suit your student's needs.



Michael ZAVROS *The Sunbather 2015* oil on canvas 180.0 x 180.0cm Purchased 2016 Newcastle Art Gallery collection Courtesy the artist and Starkwhite

**NEWCASTLE
ART GALLERY**



Collection learning resource to support the exhibition
MAGIC MIKE: MICHAEL ZAVROS
4 March – 28 May 2017

General information

nag.org.au |  | 

Newcastle Art Gallery, 1 Laman Street Newcastle
02 4974 5100 | artgallery@ncc.nsw.gov.au
Open: 10am - 5pm, every day except Monday

This exhibition is supported by the NSW
Government through Arts NSW



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MICHAEL ZAVROS

born 1974 Brisbane, QLD

Lives and works in Queensland

CONTEMPLATE AND IMAGINE

Michael Zavros is one of Australia's leading contemporary artists working across painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking and film. He is represented in the Newcastle Art Gallery collection, public and private collections nationally and internationally and is supported by Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane and Starkwhite, Auckland.

Zavros draws and paints in a hyperrealism style, a technique achieved through his mastery of various mediums. Like many other contemporary artists, Zavros is intrigued by contemporary society's obsession with beauty, vanity and self-image. As a skilled draughtsman Zavros is able to execute work that reveals the surfaces and texture of objects in great detail.

My own working out regime is akin to my painting regime - a set of repeated gestures. Working out has an accumulated effect, like painting.

Michael Zavros quoted by Laurence Simmons 2017, *MAGIC MIKE* catalogue essay p.7.

Zavros considers himself a creative director. He constructs his pictures from various objects, which he then photographs. He then paints from the photographs with impeccable attention to detail using a technique with oil paint and Liquin medium that evokes the slickness of a glossy fashion magazine. The objects represented in his paintings are mostly highly valued items and other collectable and exotic contents from around his own family home. Zavros references the art historical tradition of *memento mori*. His works of art symbolise a cultural lifestyle of luxury and beauty that society may aspire to attain.

Like advertising what is being created in a Zavros painting is not so much an object, a type of physical thing, but rather an artificial need or desire.

Laurence Simmons 2017, *MAGIC MIKE* catalogue essay p.8.

Newcastle Art Gallery's collection contains three works of art by Zavros; the etching *Disappear here* 2011 and two paintings *The Mermaid* 2015 and *The Sunbather* 2015.

Zavros' *The Sunbather* was first displayed in 2016 at Art Los Angeles Contemporary Art Fair. It was acquired into the collection of Newcastle Art Gallery in the same year, especially for display in the *MAGIC MIKE* exhibition.

The Mermaid, is an intimately scaled portrait of the artist's eldest daughter Phoebe (age 11) looking up from the water's surface of the family's swimming pool. This work sits extremely well as a companion piece to the much larger *The Sunbather* where Zavros paints himself alongside the same pool gazing into his reflection in the water. The painting pays homage to the work of Michelangelo Merisi Caravaggio's *Narcissus* 1597-9 and references David Hockney's LA poolside painting *The Sunbather* 1966.



Michael ZAVROS *The Mermaid* 2015 oil on board 22.0 x 30.0cm
Purchased 2016 Newcastle Art Gallery collection
Courtesy the artist and Starkwhite

VISIT AND DISCOVER

MAGIC MIKE: MICHAEL ZAVROS

Newcastle Art Gallery, 4 March - 28 May 2017

About the exhibition:

Zavros' collected works in *MAGIC MIKE* span from 1999 to 2017 and include painting, drawing, photography and film. Co-curated by the artist, the exhibition re-contextualises earlier works alongside his recent practice, and new works made for *MAGIC MIKE*.

MAGIC MIKE articulates Zavros' interest in exploring the idea of the body beautiful in art, and concepts of male beauty. The images of self and the self as mediated through his daughter offer a glimpse of the Zavros through an inward looking lens.

The exhibition's title playfully references virtuoso painting and 'magic' realism but also the 2012 film of the same name, the much-lauded comedic dramatic expose of a troupe of male strippers. *MAGIC MIKE* follows one stripper in particular, played by Channing Tatum whose dancing steals the show. Tatum is the pop culture contemporary equivalent of an ancient Adonis: the male form perfected.

Zavros riffs on the theme of the perfected form, turning the gallery into a gym, reflecting his own interest in the sociocultural phenomenon gym culture, narcissism and *vanitas*, as well as Newcastle's established gym culture. At designated times a performer will complete a gym routine alongside works in the exhibition, such as Zavros's 2009 painting *Echo*, which depicts shiny gym equipment in the Hall of Mirrors within the Palace of Versailles. When not in use the gym equipment functions as sculpture, creating a larger tableau of *vanitas*. This is reflected elsewhere in carefully rendered still life paintings of flowers and fruits, their youth and beauty frozen in time.

MAGIC MIKE is an exhibition that explores beauty as power, a contemporary currency revered above all else.



Michael ZAVROS *Disappear here* 2011 etching on paper (ed. 15 + 1 AP) 14.7 x 16.5cm Purchased 2011 Newcastle Art Gallery collection Courtesy the artist

CREATE

Recreate your impression of *The Mermaid* with your own photograph or painting of yourself laying in a pool of water.

View *The Sunbather*. Create your own version of *The Sunbather* 2015 by composing a poolside self-portrait photograph. Include in the composition your own watery reflection.

What objects can you find around your home that have a textured or decorative surface? Create a close-up section of these surfaces with a drawing or photograph in black and white that depicts detailed tonal variations and patterns.

Look at Zavros' etching *Disappear here*. View the work closely to see the artists' signature initials composed as a monogram design: MZ. Draw and design your own name as a monogram.

The mirror is a recurring visual and metaphoric device in Zavros' work. Think about all of the places you see your reflection mirrored back to you in your daily life. How do you act when you see your own reflection? Discuss and compare the way you act in front of a mirror or a reflection. Does it change when you are with others and when you are alone?

Make your own still-life arrangement by assembling materials that allude to beauty and luxury. Document the details of your work of art using drawing, photography and/or painting.

Consider new ways to help promote healthy body image to young adults on social media through humour, posing and wordplay. Design and create your own men's health or fashion style magazine cover that disrupts notions about the ideal body.

RESPOND

Research the story of Narcissus, finding out as much as you can about the mythology and history of this fable in art. Speculate on the reasons why Zavros uses this narrative in his painting *The Sunbather*.

Find out the meaning of the term *memento mori*. Compare Zavros' works to 17th century still-life paintings. Consider the similarities and differences in the composition, subject matter, pictorial realism and display of objects.

Visit *The Design Files* website link in the resources. View the photographs of inside the Zavros' family home. What objects can you see? Discuss what theme or concept connects all the objects?

Research the work of Max Dupain, and compare and contrast his photograph *Sunbaker* 1937 with David Hockney's painting *The Sunbather* 1966. Discuss the differences and similarities in these works of art to Zavros' *The Sunbather*.

Select your favourite work of art in the exhibition *MAGIC MIKE* either by visiting the exhibition or reading the catalogue. Have a discussion where you look at several examples of Zavros' works in detail. Discuss the difference or similarity in his hyperrealism style.

FURTHER READING

Newcastle Art Gallery resources

Simmons, L. 2017, *MAGIC MIKE: Michael Zavros* exhibition catalogue, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle.

www.nag.org.au/getattachment/Exhibitions/Future/MAGIC-MIKE/MAGICMIKE_catalogue_forweb.pdf.aspx

External Resources

Art Gallery South Australia, *MAGIC OBJECT*, 2016 (educ resource) Michael Zavros - The Phoenix (Accessed March 2017) pp 5-6.

www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Learning/docs/BNN_Education_Resource_DIGITAL.pdf

Feagins, L. 2012, *The Design Files, Michael Zavros & Alison Kubler* www.thedesignfiles.net/2012/10/brisbane-home-michael-zavros-alison-kubler/

Philip Bacon Galleries, 'Michael Zavros' (artist profile). www.philipbacongalleries.com.au/artists_and_stockroom?id=452541

Starkwhite, 'Michael Zavros' (artist profile). www.starkwhite.co.nz/michael-zavros-starkwhite

Tweed River Art Gallery, *The Glass Michael Zavros*, 2012 (educ resource) (Accessed March 2017). www.artgallery.tweed.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Art%20Gallery/exhibitions/Education%20Resources/TSC03915_The_Glass_TRAG_MZ_Education_Resource.pdf

Zavros, Michael (artist website). www.michaelzavros.com/