

EMBARGOED UNTIL 19 SEPTEMBER 2009

## Smalltown

**A photographic journey through out-of-the-way parts of Australia  
Exhibition opens 10 October at Museum of Sydney**

A new exhibition opening 10 October at the Museum of Sydney features stunning colour photographs of rural and remote Australia by Martin Mischkulnig, together with text written by award-winning author Tim Winton.

Winton and Mischkulnig's collaboration is the creative force behind a large format coffee table book and a major exhibition touring nationally after its launch in Sydney.

Journeying across Australia's interior over several years with nothing but swag to sleep in at the end of the day, Martin photographed remote towns in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Mischkulnig's photographs depict the unsentimental, harsh realities of small towns, but offer beautiful, distinctively Australian views of the fascinating places and characters who live in them, evoking feelings conveyed in Winton's novels.

From redbrick motels and tacky dining interiors, to dilapidated racetracks and playgrounds with ever-present plastic chairs and corrugated iron, these scenes hint at a sense of impermanence and a make-do approach.

Winton asks why the architecture of rural and remote Australia is so often ugly and unsympathetic to human sensibilities, providing provocative arguments about the challenges facing Australian rural life.

Winton, who lives in a small rural town in Western Australia, speaks from the heart on this subject, "I love small towns — the sense of sanctuary they offer, the possibility of intimacy they retain, the way you can keep an entire community in mind as a distinct group of faces and traits and characters rather than as an abstraction, for such are the virtues of smallness."

Martin's photographs do not romanticise the places they document, but challenge us to consider the physical and social isolation of small town life and the incredible resilience of the people who live there.

The child of Austrian immigrants who arrived in Australia in the 1960s, Martin grew up in small towns like Port Augusta and Bordertown in South Australia where his parents ran small roadside motels.

Inspired by towns that made an impression on him in his formative years, Martin set out to revisit these places, exploring the idea that these were never destinations in themselves, but places on the way to somewhere else.

"The motels were mostly just out of town so we always lived on the fringes. It gave me strong feelings of freedom and space, but also a curiosity about where the highway out front would lead to. But it wasn't until after travelling around Europe and returning that I really noticed these places for the first time. Because I travelled and changed myself, these childhood places were so vivid and strange that I had to document them before they changed."

"I feel that a lot of photography shown to other countries about Australia has been polished and is idealistic. My photos are a rebellion of that probably because of the towns I grew up in and the realities of those towns. I always wondered what it must be like for tourists who have been shown beautiful documentaries and books about Australia to then come and drive around outback locations," says Mischkulnig.

Martin Mischkulnig works as a professional photographer and teaches at The Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney. Graduating in Hotel Management, he travelled around Australia and Europe, working for a while as a toilet attendant at London's Savoy Hotel. His clients include magazines, design and advertising agencies and newspapers around the world.

***Smalltown* is at the Museum of Sydney, cnr Bridge & Phillip Sts, Sydney, 10 October 2009 – 14 February 2010, open daily 9.30am–5pm. [www.hht.net.au](http://www.hht.net.au) The book, published by Hamish Hamilton, is available at all good book stores.**

*The Smalltown exhibition is proudly sponsored by Nikon Australia & The Grace Hotel in Sydney*

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