**Dupain, Maxwell Spencer (1911-1992)**

Australian photographer Max Dupain was pre-eminent in the fields of professional and art photography from the 1930s-70s. His earliest works were in the Pictorialist style but by the mid-1930s he was an ardent and articulate modernist, using sharp focus, bold, geometric compositions and contemporary subject matter. Important influences were vitalist philosophy and the work of Australian artist Norman Lindsay and writer D.H. Lawrence, as well as the photography of Man Ray, Margaret Bourke White and Edward Steichen. The son of Ena and George Dupain, Dupain lived in Sydney throughout his life. He joined the studio of Cecil Bostock in 1930, taking night classes at East Sydney Technical College and Julian Ashton School of Art. In 1934 he opened his own studio, quickly establishing his reputation in fashion, advertising and celebrity portraiture, and experimenting with photographic techniques. After World War 2 he reoriented his practice, working on assignment for industry and the government and favouring a documentary approach. During the 1960s-70s he specialised in architectural photography. Dupain’s photography is distinguished by its physicality and embrace of Australian sunlight and conditions, as seen in *Sunbaker*, his best-known work. He also regularly wrote on photography, contributing spirited reviews to the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. His work was widely exhibited and published and is held in numerous public collections.

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**Australian photography**

Australian photography is shaped by the complex interaction between local, national, international and increasingly globalised forces. Its beginnings were in the colonial period, with the first photograph being made in 1841, only 53 years after the British invasion of the Australian continent in 1788 and its establishment as a penal colony. The first photographers were short-term visitors or early settlers, mostly from Great Britain and Europe. They took up photography primarily for commercial reasons, taking portraits for a population that grew rapidly after the gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales in the mid nineteenth century, and views of the colonies that were triumphalist in their celebrations of the colonists’ achievements.

Outstanding works were evident from the outset – for example, by Frenchman Antoine Fauchery, American T.S. Glaister, Germans J.W. Lindt and Fred Kruger and the Englishmen Douglas Kilburn, Richard Daintree and Charles Bayliss – but Australian photography is also characterised by another far more modest stream of practice, one embedded in vernacular experience, in ordinary and everyday life.

By the late 1880s Australian photography had cohered into a substantial entity, supported by a middle class clientele, governments, businesses, and by the aspirations of photographers themselves. Locally born photographers, such as Charles Kerry, emerged for the first time. In the lead-up to the federation of the separate colonies in 1901 photographers contributed to a growing nationalist agenda, creating images conceived as typically and recognizably Australian (depicting the landscape, bush huts, eucalypts trees and tree ferns).

During the nineteenth century the international profile for Australian photography was principally through representation in the international colonial exhibitions held in England, Europe and the United States. By the early 1900s local photographers, especially those working in the highly aestheticized Pictorialist style, aspired to an international forum that foregrounded art rather than commerce. Inclusion in Photographic Salon exhibitions, especially in London was regarded as the pinnacle of achievement.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century calls grew for the development of a distinctively Australian approach to photography based on the unique qualities of Australian sunlight. This campaign, led by Walter Burke and Harold Cazneaux, also proved crucial to those modernist photographers who, from the 1930s onwards, were concerned with interpreting an international modernist style in local terms. In the work of Max Dupain and others, the beach appeared as a new arena for human action and concerns with the body and body culture were conspicuous. In the early modernist period women practitioners also became more prominent, examples being Ruth Hollick, May and Mina Moore and Olive Cotton.

Modernist practice, which was always closely aligned with the commercial world and the opportunities the burgeoning advertising industry presented, was reshaped during the late 1940s and 50s by influential Europeans who had fled fascism and persecution. Helmut Newton and Wolfgang Sievers were active in fashion and industrial photography respectively. In contrast to those who were locally trained, such photographers did not make a distinction between their commercial and personal or exhibition work; they were one and the same.

Documentary and other forms of straight photography remained dominant after the Second World War, with David Moore securing an international reputation as a photojournalist in the 1950s. New, diverse approaches began to emerge in the late 1960s, linked to the explosion of art photography and emergence of practitioners who defined themselves as artists rather than commercial photographers. Polish-born Stan Ostoja-Kotkowski was a notable exponent of abstract photography; and Robert Rooney and Peter Kennedy were among those exploring conceptual photography during the 1970s. Feminist photography was a particularly energetic area of practice, with important contributions from Sue Ford, Carol Jerrems and Micky Allan, and in the 1980s from Julie Brown-Rrap and Anne Ferran.

The campaign for the acceptance of photography as art culminated in its institutionalisation in the 1970s. Art museums started developing their collections and hosted significant international exhibitions (shows from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, were presented at the National Gallery of Victoria), and independent photography organisations, such as the Australian Centre for Photography, were formed. Commercial venues proliferated, sustained by a booming market for art photographs in private, corporate and art museum sectors. Around the country tertiary institutions introduced photography courses with the aim of training students as art photographers.

In the 1980s in the context of postmodernism, identity politics and postcolonialism Australian art photography was refigured by the entrance of indigenous practitioners, including Tracey Moffatt, Brenda L. Croft, Michael Riley and Ricky Maynard. Aboriginal people had long been photographed by settler Australians for commercial, anthropological and ethnographic reasons where they were generally represented as the ‘other’. Art school trained, urban-based Aboriginal artists have often used photography to engage with, and critique an historical archive in which their predecessors had no autonomy as subjects. In subsequent decades artists such as Darren Siewes, Brook Andrew and Michael Cook have continued to explore postcolonial concerns within the arena of contemporary art and globalised art practice.

Art photography has had its obvious successes with the national prominence of artists such as Pat Brassington and Rosemary Laing and the international profile of Bill Henson and Tracey Moffatt. Henson represented Australia at the Venice Biennale in 1995 and Simryn Gill in 2013.

The pluralism of styles evident in recent decades has coincided with the blurring of boundaries between different areas of practice – such as fashion and documentary photography – and a fascination with different kinds of photographies, produced for anthropological, scientific, forensic and other purposes.

In the early 21st century Australian art photography is in a seemingly paradoxical situation. The interest in its own history, and Australia’s specific historical circumstances and colonial legacy, are located within a globalised environment where the desire to create a uniquely Australian approach is no longer being viewed as relevant.

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