

Occasionally through the viewfinder: a consideration of Geoffrey Powell's photography

Abstract	2
Introduction: Powell an elusive subject	3
Powell's negative collection	5
Resources to understanding Powell's photographic oeuvre	6
The Young Modernist Photographer (1936-1938)	
The Interrupted Years (1939-1944)	9
The cost of notoriety	10
Searching for Powell revisionist attitudes	12
Attempts to rebuild and wartime realities	10
Resurrection as a Working Photographer (1944)	14
Introduction as a newspaper photographer	
A social consciousness	
Cranstone and Powell two leftwing views	17
The Miners' federation 1947 Amenities Campaign	18
The maturing of Powell's documentary (1964-1969)	20
Authentic recreations: documentary by another name	
The documentary oeuvre of Geoffrey Powell	23
Doctrinal limitations of a leftwing photographer (1945-1946)	25
Influences toward Ideals and Outcomes	26
Recognition and Consequences	28
Conclusion: Where is Powell now	29
Notes and References	32
Bibliography	58
Acknowledgements	62

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Abstract

Geoffrey Powell, a filmmaker and later radio personality, began his working life through photography. After his death in 1989, Powell left behind a large archive of material relating to his professional lives. The photographic holdings were quite small, including only a relative handful of prints, some poor quality negatives, but most importantly scrapbooks which contained clippings of his published photography. The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) began collecting examples of Powell's prints from 1984. That institution's interest in the photography of Geoffrey Powell fostered newfound awareness of his previously latent imagery. Notwithstanding this attention, significant academic research of Powell's oeuvre has been restricted to just one conference paper presented by Helen Ennis in 1991. Suffice to say, despite Powell's name being connected within the locale of Sydney's photographic scene of the 1930s and 40s, a detailed understanding of his practice as a photographer remains incomplete. Misconceptions about the role Powell played as a photographer and the extent of his practice persist.

A study of Geoffrey Powell, 'the photographer', presents the researcher with some difficulties. The disrupted nature of Powell's practice in photography is foremost amongst the reasons behind this reality. That practice was primarily confined at the fringes of mainstream activity. Evidence of Powell's photographic record is, for all practical purposes, confined to a number of obscure publications, much of which is under anonymous authorship. As a consequence of these factors the photographic work of Geoffrey Powell is characterised not only by its scarcity but also by its inaccessibility.

Powell's photography is primarily remembered through the provocatively titled article, 'Photography-A Social Weapon'. Published late 1946, in the first issue of *Contemporary Photography*, this places Powell within the setting of Post-War Documentary Movement. Powell is also recalled through participation in the 'Australian Photography 1947 Competition'. Through this forum, a bronze plaque award was presented for 'Family Group' (1945), an image that became Powell's most published and hence best-known photograph. By the time Powell's photography began to be recognised through a wider mainstream audience he had however, completely moved on from the medium.

Throughout his formative years from 1936 to 1940, Powell became a somewhat notorious personality about Sydney's photographic scene. However, his early practice in the medium of photography placed him at the forefront of the great generational debate over pictorial salon photography, verses the ascendant 'modern' photography'. As was the fashion during the mid to late 1930s, the young photographer experimented with surrealist imagery and photomontage. During his early development, Powell demonstrated promise, gaining a junior assistants position with Max Dupain in 1937. It was a big break, but one which Powell failed to capitalise on professionally. Some months later Powell prematurely cut short his 'apprenticeship' at Dupain's studio on a dubious promise of youthful-adventure and a desire for greater personal notoriety. In this he succeeded, but at the cost of his photographic career. Thereafter Powell largely disappeared from the photographic scene but maintained an small intermittent presence as an itinerant photographer. In 1944 Powell eventually remerged as a newspaper staffer with Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*. Shortly after, he obtained a position with the Communist Party biweekly newspaper, *Tribune*. The switch from the mainstream printed media to the far left fringe saw Powell reinvigorated as a photographer with a social conscience. Via this leftwing milieu Powell was introduced to documentary film-makers who soon become influential. Eventually this association heralded Powell's premature departure from professional stills photography.

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Introduction: Powell an elusive subject

A study of Geoffrey Powell 'the photographer' is somewhat involved. Complications stem from the fact that Powell undertook a bewildering assortment of jobs and vocations throughout his lifetime and these often overlapped with intermittent practice in photography.¹ The resultant confusion over Powell's role as a working photographer has precipitated erroneous conclusions to be made about the nature and depth of his practice in the medium. Where possible some of these misconceptions are dealt within this essay.

A cursory mention of Powell may be found throughout the modern literature which concerns itself with Australian photo-history of the 1930s and 1940s.² A measure of this profile undoubtedly emanates from the months the young photographer spent at Max Dupain's famous Bond Street studio, Sydney.³ Powell's time employed as a junior assistant to Dupain, during 1937-38, although brief was fondly remembered.⁴ It was Damien Parer, subsequently famous for wartime film-work, who took over tenure of Powell's position at Bond Street. Parer was older and had mature political and religious beliefs allowing him to fit more readily into the cultural milieu for which the studio was noted.⁵ To a certain extent Powell's reputation is entwined into the experience of Parer, not so much his own. Through his memoirs, Powell did elaborate on his experiences, and these were quite different to those of his successor.⁶ Powell is best recalled to the medium of photography through later contributions to the first issue of *Contemporary Photography* and also the Australian Photography 1947 competition, respectively.⁷

To date no comprehensive academic assessment of Powell's photographic work has been conducted. Having been ignored by photo-history, Powell came into the consciousness of photo and film historians during the 1980s.⁸ Powell's long forgotten photography firstly figured in Charles Merewether's research for the 'Art and Social Commitment', exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (1983).⁹ However, Powell was not included in the show.¹⁰ Typically, Powell's photography and practice has been viewed more by way of his writings, as opposed to his body of imagery.¹¹ Canberra based academic, Helen Ennis, made the first substantive attempt to deal with the photographic output of Geoffrey Powell in a conference paper presented in 1991.¹² Addressing Powell from the perspective of prevailing art historical standards, Ennis canvassed some of the reasons why this photographer has remained in the wings, as it were. The scope of Ennis' research primarily concerned itself with the product of exhibition prints, and was therefore constrained within a particular didactic framework. Suffice to say, Powell produced very few exhibition standard prints and fewer still have survived to the present. Moreover, those rare remaining examples do not fit within the definition standards of a 'fine-print' suitable for exhibition.¹³ For the most part they are perhaps best described as 'proofs', held onto by the photographer as mementos.

There was simply little incentive for Powell to produce large volumes of high quality prints.¹⁴ The primary contributing factor to this attitude was undoubtedly the absence of a collectors market for fine-art photography during the 1930s and 40s. This situation helped reinforce the direction Powell took with his photography. As a working photographer, Powell's product was predominantly utilitarian. He was not overly concerned with the craft aspects of image making for its own sake and demanded by fine-print production.

Approximately forty or so of Powell's original prints are known to have survived through to the present day. The bulk of these are now housed within the permanent collection at the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), Canberra.¹⁵ It should be noted, at the time of writing, many of the dates for Powell's prints published by the NGA on their website, are inaccurate and require updating in accord with recent and detailed evidence. The current situation with the NGA's online records helps promote confusion over the chronology of Powell's photographic practice, impeding a more precise understanding as to the extent and nature of his work.¹⁶

Beyond a few extant prints, evidence of Powell as a photographer is all but restricted within the pages of the printed media. Ostensibly a photojournalist the primary outlets for Powell's photography were the stocks of the trade; newspapers and periodic journals. Moreover, a good proportion of that published record is confined to a number of little known publications.¹⁷ Most notable is that of Powell's leftwing social conscious imagery from the mid 1940s, which is overwhelmingly concealed within the relative obscurity of the leftwing press.¹⁸ Nearly all of this material was published without a by-line credit to Powell, its authorship appearing under the publisher's identifying authority, or as anonymous. As a consequence, it has largely remained hidden from mainstream view

Powell's low profile as a photographer during his working life has ensured a level of anonymity until gradual recent rediscovery of his imagery. While undoubtedly Powell demonstrated some considerable talent through his photography, he was not a prolific worker. As such, no substantial archive of material was ever accumulated.¹⁹ This reality stems from the fact that his early development was critically interrupted, and that once re-established, Powell at the relatively young age of 28, prematurely ceased working professionally in the medium.²⁰ At the end of the day, only a few short years was ever dedicated to serious professional photography. That restricted practice was later bolstered through personal street reportage from South East Asia.²¹ Importantly, any discourse of Geoffrey Powell as a photographer, must be conducted within a framework that appreciates the real limits of his overall output, both in Australia and in South East Asia.

Powell's negative collection

An assortment of negatives relating to Powell's days as a photographer was uncovered from within his estate in 2001 and 2002.²² Photographic material represents but a minute portion of the larger miscellany accumulated throughout his life, the bulk of which is dominated by audiotapes from his radio work. The photographic artefacts recovered were given no special treatment or storage and had been left untouched since Powell had packed them away.

Within the collection itself, that portion corresponding to Australian photography contains a fraction of Powell's overall local output. Holdings number less than one thousand unedited frames.²³ The reason behind the disparity between known production and the numbers of negatives personally held by the photographer, relate to the nature Powell's practice. The greater extent of which was produced as a direct consequence of his employment at; the *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney (1944), and the official Communist Party newspaper *Tribune* (1945).²⁴ As an employee of these newspapers, the photographer naturally did not retain rights over the imagery produced.²⁵ The negative collection holdings within Powell's estate are, therefore, denuded of his predominant news work.²⁶ One might reasonably assume photography from Powell's professional assignments was archived along with the negatives. A search of relevant archives for Communist organisations, for example, failed to turn up any original material by Powell.²⁷

During the 1940s and 50s the Communist Party of Australia was seen as a subversive organisation, of interest to the national security services. This notoriety generated an underground mentality within communist run organisations. It would seem logical that a culture of document retention and filing was not highly developed within such a negative atmosphere. Furthermore, the traditional low status of the medium of photography in general, meant little consideration was given to archiving photographs once their original purpose was achieved.²⁸ The passage of time is a powerful editor of photographic artefacts and it appears Powell's photography is a model example of those forces at a play.

A feature of Powell's negative collection is that it retains substantial quantities of poor quality material of no practical use, and that which other photographers would normally discard. That is to say, the material largely exists in an unedited state and was never organised or catalogued. For a large part, the collection comprises the seconds, best described as segments of film rolls from which the principle images were cut, together with examples rejected for original publication. Powell was a great hoarder and in the habit of maintaining almost everything. A good example is illustrated by the presence of negatives relating to the 1945 'Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition'. The principle negatives and prints were forwarded on to the commissioner of the photography, the Department of Post-War Reconstruction.²⁹ Still represented within photographer's files are a number of poor quality frames chiefly demonstrating grossly failed exposures.³⁰

Powell also spoke of his "box of good stuff", that which was kept separate.³¹ This turned out to be a small cardboard (chess piece) box filled with an assortment of 127 format rolls and cut negatives. The general nature of this additional material was regrettably similar to the rest of the collection. Fortunately, the "box of good stuff" did also contain some samples of the photographer's more noteworthy imagery. For example, those negatives corresponding to the three images submitted to the Australian Photography 1947 competition.³² Also found were a relatively few frames that bear-witness to Powell's collaboration in the Miners' Federation 'Amenities Campaign' of 1947.³³ It appears that Powell set aside and personally retained a few select negatives from work derived through official assignments and commissions.

It may be helpful to review Powell's archive of photographic material against those of selected comparable contemporaries. American documentary photographer Marion Post-Wolcott, a lesser known member of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) team, compiled a personal file containing in the order of 5000 pictures.³⁴ Although her name is not immediately recognisable in connection with the FSA, Post-Wolcott worked for that organisation over a period of about four years, a similar timeframe to Powell's activities in fulltime practice. Even so, Powell's entire unedited oeuvre obviously culminates as a fraction of Post-Wolcott's, FSA edited picture file.³⁵ Like Powell, French photographer Robert Doisneau became recognised late in his career for just one image, 'Le Baiser de l'Hôtel de Ville'. In Powell's case, 'Family Group' became his photographic namesake.³⁶ Doisneau left 450 000 carefully archived negatives compared against Powell's two or three thousand assorted frames loosely kept in biscuit tins.³⁷ Importantly also, is the fact that not all of Powell's negative collection represents material that is suitable for printing or reproduction. Nor does Powell's archive compare with that of recognised local photographers. It has been claimed that Powell's archive contains "many thousands" of negatives.³⁸ In as much this alludes to a substantial holding, which cannot be materially supported, it also does not take into account the character of the collection as described above.³⁹ We should not equate Powell's collection of negatives with the more extensive, meticulously catalogued and maintained archives of notable Australian working photographers such as, Max Dupain, Wolfgang Sievers or David Moore, for example.⁴⁰

Resources to understanding Powell's photographic oeuvre

From a standpoint of understanding Powell's career as a photographer, surviving prints and negatives do not form a particularly significant resource. However, Powell did assiduously maintain scrapbooks containing clippings from publications in which his photography appeared. The scarcity of original material leaves these scrapbooks as essential source material with which to comprehend his practice. Unfortunately the original scrapbooks, held within Powell's estate, have not survived to the present, and only a bound set of photocopies now exists within the research library at the NGA, Canberra.⁴¹ It is only through this important document that Powell's photography can be followed up through original published sources, and a more mature appraisal of productivity ascertained.

Inspired by academic interest in his previous photographic and film work, Powell began writing his memoirs during the 1980s. Entitled, *Worms in a Tin*, the manuscript is held within his estate and only exists in early typed draft form.⁴² It is, by and large, a forum where Powell presents his side of the story for events surrounding his film and radio careers. The tenor of *Worms in a Tin* is an emotive personalised reminiscence of the trials and tribulations of his life. A relative minor portion of the script deals with his photographic work and small segments of this are often dispersed within the greater text. In particular, the sections covering his early development in co-operation with Lawrence le Guay provide an insight into the photographic scene of the mid to late 1930s from the perspective of a young photographer.⁴³

The existence of what remains of Powell's negatives, in conjunction with his typed draft memoirs, *Worms in a Tin*, and the copies of his scrapbooks, became the catalyst for this research. In addition, access to miscellaneous primary documents held by the estate of Powell and contained within his personal ASIO file, enabled the author to collate an accurate chronology of his life and work.⁴⁴ This background research helped facilitate, a mini-retrospective of Powell's photography made between 1936 and 1947.⁴⁵ Enough negative material of sufficient quality was available from within Powell's estate to provide a reasonable cross-section of his Australian made oeuvre. The exhibit selection presented Powell's two most recognised images, and introduced examples that have never previously been seen, or had been long forgotten.⁴⁶ Somewhat misleadingly titled 'Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell: Australia's forgotten documentary photographer,' this small show comprised seventeen posthumously printed images. Unfortunately the title, coined by the author, aids in perpetuating the myth that Powell's primary mode of a photographic expression was through documentary. Neither does the scope of the exhibition fully support the chosen title. Less than half the exhibited prints reflect what may be termed 'documentary style' and only three examples correspond to actual documentary works.

The Young Modernist Photographer (1936-1938)

Powell was one of a select few, predominately young Australian photographers of the late 1930s committed to the new vision offered by modernist art-photography aesthetics. Geoffrey Powell's initial practice was closely associated with that of future noted Sydney commercial photographer, Lawrence le Guay. It was le Guay, who at the beginning of 1936 encouraged Powell to take up the pursuit of photography. Together they joined the Photographic Society of New South Wales and the two young photographers, "soon developed a reputation for being rebels amongst the conservatives."⁴⁷ Informed predominantly by European journals, both Powell and le Guay

philosophically joined that other rebel of the Society, Max Dupain, in enthusiastically embracing the 'new photography' and principles of the New Objectivity Movement.

Powell unequivocally shunned the prevailing salon aesthetic which dominated Sydney's organised photography establishment. The Pictorialist Movement defined photography as art within the constraints of a traditional nineteenth century discourse. For the Australian pictorialists, their art was a distinct entity discretely separated from other avenues of practice in the photographic medium. For example, Henri Mallard's ostensive 'straight photography' produced to record the construction of Sydney's Harbour Bridge.⁴⁸ This photography is seen as the equal of more recognised industrial inspired imagery made by Mallard's contemporaries, save for 'straight' photographers working in continental Europe and America.⁴⁹ However, authentic photography for Mallard, and the other senior stalwarts of the Photographic Society, lay with the painterly potential offered by such control processes as carbon transfer and E. J. Wall's Bromoil.

In addition to Mallard, Powell recalled the "old masters" of the Photographic Society; Harold Cazeaux, Mons Pereier, Monte Luke, Henry Metcalf, Montgomery Dunne etc:

"They were mostly exponents of the 'bromoil' technique of photography, producing those beautiful portraits and landscapes that looked so much like etchings. ...The results were fantastic in a very conservative sort of way, and were no doubt worth every minute of the hours of work that would go into the production of a print. ...But to me, even in my ignorance, they seemed to be a phoney form of art. These were all only 'would-be' artists who were not good enough draughtsmen to create their basic image with a brush or pencil but had to depend on the mechanical lens to do that for them. Then they would add their 'artistry' on top of the camera's initial image."⁵⁰

"I can't say that those older men of the Society did not influence me in my development as a photographer. They did, albeit in a negative rather than a positive influence"⁵¹

Within the small and relatively isolated Australian photographic community, the staid sentiments advocated through pictorial photography sustained an inertia which continued to frustrate the new arrogant breed of photographers. They were dedicated to modernist notions of photography and its relationship measured against the traditional graphic art forms.

"Greatest retarding influence on development of modern photography in Australia has been the tendency to copy the painter's technique. ...With artificial colour, portraits make poor imitations of painter's work. Intricate chemical processes are used to imitate the etcher. Sitters are posed and lit 'in the manner of' some bygone famous artists."⁵²

"I went the other way. Like Laurie [le Guay] I concentrated on a more purist approach, insisting that a photograph should be just that a photograph. And NOT an imitation painting, etching, sketch or what-you-will."⁵³

The nature of the imagery produced by Powell in the mid 1930s was:

"...certainly not the sort of photography that Australians were accustomed to seeing in those days before the war ...I tended to look for unusual subjects that (I thought) had not been photographed before."⁵⁴

One of Powell's more interesting early photographs to which he alludes, was exhibited at the Photographic Society of New South Wales in May 1936. The exposure made from beneath an old car, utilises the mud encrusted on the axle as suitable photographic material. The brash choice of subject, combined with a square composition presented as an oversized twenty-inch glossy print, was quite radical for that time. This seemingly simple image, was controversial enough to the conservative ranks of the Photographic Society for a heated discussion to develop over its value as art. The ensuing furore was reported in a column of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper as, 'The Third Eye' versus 'The Blurred Eye'.⁵⁵ Three years previous, Max Dupain's early modernist image, 'Silos Morning' (1933), had enjoyed a similar negative reception by the elders of the Photographic Society.⁵⁶ Powell's 'Muddy Axle' (1936) is strikingly reminiscent of Paul Strand's 'Wheel Organization' (1917).⁵⁷ This revolutionary close-up of the mechanical parts of a Lozier car wheel formed part of Strand's extended experiments in abstraction of machinery and commonplace objects. This imagery graphically emphasised stark reality of form through contrasts in light and shade. Like Strand, Powell composed his close-up using an unconventional camera angle to achieve a distinctly styled image that symbolised well the 'New Photography'. It is unlikely however that Powell was aware of Strand's seminal work made in New York nearly twenty years before.⁵⁸ Despite the success of his 'Muddy Axle' it remained a solitary image, as Powell did not elaborate further on objective abstract themes. His interests lay elsewhere.

In order to cement his status as a maker of "true art", as he saw it, Powell aspired to photograph the female nude. Influenced by Lawrence le Guay and Max Dupain, several of Powell's nudes were incorporated into surrealist inspired photomontage. Typically, these portrayed naive emblematic themes, such as antiwar and man-and-nature narratives.⁵⁹ This is the first instance where Powell explored the potential of applying photography as an extended medium beyond the normal aesthetically pleasing singular image. It was a fairly brief experimental flirtation and Powell never went on to produce a substantial body of surrealist imagery. One of Powell's last surrealist inspired images figured the portraits of two young women, one of whom was Australian film actress, Elaine Hamill. The identity of the second woman is not known. The composite montage incorporated a portrait in negative overlaid with a solarised-positive image of Hamill. The composite matrix was then copied to film so as to allow for multiple printings. This was a technique Powell also used for his celebrated 'Victory' montage, which is discussed below. The dual portrait was later published by Brisbane's *Teleradio* magazine under the title of "portrait of Miss Elaine Hamill, radio and film player."⁶⁰

The main influences for Australia's dalliance with photomontage and surrealist photography in general, came from photographers working in Europe at the time, and in particular Man Ray. Around 1935-36 Dupain had already begun experimenting with surrealism. This fresh vision gained a receptive audience, and Dupain incorporated the style into his commercial work with great success. In his memoirs, Powell recalled receiving rare international recognition for an Australian photographer, through publication of his 'Victory' (1937) photomontage in the 1938 annual of *Photographie*.⁶¹ This basic image existed in slightly different forms and was also published locally under different titles.⁶² The naive satirical antiwar montage came to be made iconic by virtue of its mimicry by commercial photographers and magazine illustrators during the early years of the Second World War. Ironically, Rob Hillier usurped the general composition, while sanitising the nudity element so as to portray wholesome patriotic nationalist sentiments in support of the war effort.⁶³ The original influence for these has long since been forgotten.

The Interrupted Years (1939-1944)

In August of 1938, Powell made what turned out to be a fateful decision to prematurely resign his assistant's job at Max Dupain's studio. As a young photographer in his late teens, Powell showed promise but became distracted by the illusion of fame and adventure.⁶⁴ The roots of discontent predate his foray into photography. After leaving school he had intended to embark on a career in the merchant marine, beginning work as a deckhand on coastal freighters. However, colour blindness denied his calling to become a ship's captain. Retaining a latent yearning for shipboard life, Powell found some solace by taking up the camera. His attentions throughout the latter half of 1938, and mid 1939, were preoccupied with an overriding aspiration to gain passage on foreign flagged sailing ships. In a vain attempt to realise these desired aims, Powell turned to his photographic skills, producing free publicity for; *Der Seeteufel*, a suspected Nazi spy ship, and later the American schooner, *Henrietta*.⁶⁵

The *Seeteufel* was at anchor in Sydney Harbour for a two month long waylay from June 1938, and Powell began frequenting the ship, considering it a great opportunity. He befriended a number of junior crewmembers most notably, Colin Gray Moore a New Zealand national. While in Sydney, Moore had been passing on information about the make up of the Nazi crew and related their activities to the Commonwealth Intelligence Service. Powell soon became keen to emulate Moore's undercover activities but was not taken seriously by the authorities and nothing came of his attempts to enter the world of espionage.⁶⁶

The cost of notoriety

Nonetheless, Powell did gain notoriety through his association with the 'Seeteufel' and her Master, Nazi emissary Graf Felix von Luckner. Formerly a commander in the German Imperial Navy and Australian first war POW, the Count was a household name both here and in Europe. Von Luckner's presence in Australia was controversial and the visit generated unparalleled levels of protest. Against all good advice, the young Powell ignored the signs happening around him. Powell had already become seduced under the charm of the amiable Count, who had lavished praise on him for his photography. For a period thereafter, Powell was said to have vocally espoused Nazi sympathies.⁶⁷ This naiveté was to impart a ruinous effect on Powell's working life destroying any chance of him successfully perusing a photographic career in Sydney.

"I believe that my association with von Luckner has jeopardised my position as a photographer in Sydney and also in other ways."⁶⁸

Powell had already built up a considerable reputation for attention seeking.⁶⁹ His erratic behaviour, in concert with a perception that he lacked sufficient commitment to photography, left the promising young photographer on the outer of Sydney's respectable photographic scene.⁷⁰ Effectively ostracised, these became difficult economic times, seeing Powell largely destitute and reliant on the charity of family and friends.

Without regular income, Powell's development as a photographer took a backseat. There were simply insufficient resources available with which to more fully explore the photographic medium. Circumstance had forced Powell's hand, as photography now became a useful skill that he was able to revert to when the odd opportunity arose. Calling on contacts within the publishing media, in particular Sydney Ure Smith, Powell did manage to achieve some productivity in the way of self commissioned assignments.⁷¹ Powell also managed to maintain a

published presence by submitting self promotional articles and earlier photographic work to his friend's pocket literary magazine *Pertinent*. However, Powell was not paid for his contributions to *Pertinent*.⁷² Commissioned assignments were scant and included that photography made for the Poultry Farmers Co-operative plus illustration work submitted to *Teleradio* magazine, Brisbane.⁷³ That is to say, photographic work was hard to come by and only supplemented income from a variety of other odd jobs. In an attempt to make ends met, Powell resorted to writing articles.⁷⁴ He also pursued an interest in radio plays at the ABC, Sydney. Radio-features was an activity Powell routinely revisited throughout his life.⁷⁵

The general approach of Powell's photography, now beyond Dupain's guiding influence, became progressively less concerned with modernist formalism. The resultant imagery assumed an increasingly raw descriptive aesthetic which is perhaps best described as photo-journalistic in style. This suited the requirements of daily newspapers and journals on which Powell relied as the only potential outlet for his photography. That photography actually produced over a very lean period is also characterised by a lack of direction and discipline. Neither was all such photography necessarily successful from a technical standpoint. A typical example is that of the Gunnewarra cattle station photography, where few usable negatives were secured.⁷⁶ Powell found himself at Gunnewarra in October 1938, as part of his North Queensland von Luckner saga. The life and work on a far north Queensland pastoral property should have been ripe material for an extended photographic essay. A golden opportunity for Powell to fully capitalise on his situation through photography was, however, squandered. The only photographs that recall Powell's experiences at Gunnewarra are some casual snapshots made around his camp and those self-portraits made to while away the time.⁷⁷ Despite evidence to the contrary, a myth that Powell documented the life and work throughout North Queensland continues to persist.⁷⁸ A single frame cut from the roll of film Powell exposed during his time spent at Gunnewarra contains an image of a murri stockman standing-by, as a white stock-hand attends to a horse. This negative is of particularly poor quality and all but unprintable by conventional means. As mentioned above, Powell had allegedly adopted Nazi sympathies; it would seem unlikely through such a political frame of mind that he could have been philosophically capable of fully engaging a topic such as, the life and work of aboriginal stockmen. Powell did not have the maturity or presence of mind to produce works of the calibre seen with Axel Poignant's documentary of aboriginal communities, for example.⁷⁹ Interestingly, Powell later revisited his Gunnewarra story for the *Australia National Journal*, but his article was published with Herbert Fishwick's photography, not his own.⁸⁰ The mixed bag of imagery assembled throughout these 'interrupted years', coalesce in the form of a visual diary of Powell's misadventures.⁸¹

Searching for Powell; revisionist attitudes

Rebecca Edwards, in her review of John Slater's book *Through Artists' Eyes*, cites Queensland Art Gallery, Research Curator of Queensland Heritage, Glenn Cooke, as counting Geoffrey Powell amongst;

“...significant artists working in Queensland between the 1920s and 1940s. ...Charles Lancaster, Vida Lahey, Vincent Brown, Rose Simmonds, Geoffrey Powell and Stanley Eutrope.”⁸²

From all the available evidence any connection between Powell's practice in photography to a Queensland milieu is highly tenuous.⁸³ Powell's photography was unequivocally grounded within the Sydney scene. Over the timeframe encompassed by Edwards' article, Powell did visit Queensland on two occasions, the latter for a period of about six months. It was a time, however, when Powell was for all intents and purposes unemployed. Powell himself illustrated the dire situation he found himself in since leaving Max Dupain's employ.

“...I found difficulty in getting employment. I hitch-hiked to Brisbane and lived on the charity of friends mainly, doing an odd photographic job here and there and a bit of writing.”⁸⁴

Powell also later conveyed how he resorted to begging for food whilst in Brisbane during the latter part of 1939.⁸⁵ He simply could not materially support himself, let alone afford the price film with which to actively engage photography in a meaningful or significant way. Throughout Powell's working life, even by the standards of his own restricted practice, any photographs made in the State of Queensland are particularly rare.⁸⁶ Moreover, those odd examples do not form a cohesive body of imagery. The most memorable of Powell's photography made over the 1938-1940 period include the self-portrait 'Bailing Water' (1938) and an informal portrait of a young man draped over a silky oak table bedecked in beer bottles, thought to be one of Geoff's bohemian flatmates, 'Max' Osborne (1939).⁸⁷

In so much that Edwards laments the Sydney-Melbourne centric view of *Through Artists' Eyes*, Powell's celebrated 'Families Awaiting Eviction-1945' is proffered as an image overlooked in Slater's book. It should be well recognised that this particular photograph is unequivocally linked to Sydney's inner working-class neighbourhoods, not Brisbane's. Only two of Powell's photographs from Queensland could have possibly satisfied Slater's urban brief; the construction of the Story Bridge image (1939) and the portrait of flatmate, Spring Hill (1939). Both these previously unknown images were discovered by the author as late as 2002. They only came to light via the *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* exhibition held in Brisbane in January of 2004. It is worth noting that these were specifically selected for the show so as to include local material for a Brisbane regional audience.⁸⁸ Moreover, as Powell is perhaps more recognisable through his work in motion film and the broadcast media, Slater may be excused for not having this artist's largely latent photography in mind.⁸⁹ Any contribution made by Powell to Queensland's cultural life came much later, and incontrovertibly lies within the domain of radio-features and radio announcing.⁹⁰

The Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) has acquired seven of Powell's images in the form of recently produced posthumous prints. These were made in 2005 from original negatives, three of which relate to Queensland; the 'Portrait of Miss Elaine Hamill: radio and film player' originally published in *Teleradio* magazine 1939,' (in all probability produced earlier in Sydney and simply sold the Brisbane based publication) 'Untitled' construction of the Story Bridge, Brisbane (1939) and 'Untitled' portrait of flatmate, Spring Hill, Brisbane' (1939).⁹¹ Interestingly Powell's most recognisable Queensland image 'Bailing Water' (1938) is conspicuously absent from the QAG's collection.

The self portrait of Powell bailing well water into drinking trough for cattle is easily his most compelling photograph of the time and deserves further discussion. The image first came to light after it was bequeathed by the artist to the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), Canberra, in 1984.⁹² It was included in the 'Shades of Light' Bicentenary Exhibition (1988) and a reproduction appears in the companion book.⁹³ This exposure was followed up in 1997 with, 'The Image of Man: photography & masculinity 1920-1950', exhibition.⁹⁴ A typographical error

made during transcribing Powell's indecipherable handwriting saw 'Bailing Water' exhibited and published under the title "Boiling Water". The photographer later corrected this error in correspondence with the NGA⁹⁵ However the incorrect title still appears on the gallery's web site.⁹⁶

It is an interesting image for Powell in that the style of 'bailing water' evokes a sense of documentary. It must be noted, however, that Powell was only introduced to, and began practising documentary photography in the latter half of 1945. The aesthetic of 'Bailing Water' (1938) may have been purely incidental as Powell had no tripod and rested his camera on the ground to make the exposure. This provided a low camera position shaping a strong composition which mimics the visual mode most associated with experimental Soviet photographer Aleksandr Rodchenko. It is doubtful that Powell was aware of Soviet photography at this time. That understanding only came when he began working for the Communist Party newspaper *Tribune* some several years on. Through that environment, Powell also became acquainted with Edward Cranstone, a photographer who was intimately aware of Soviet photographic discourse.⁹⁷ One cannot discount an influence from Powell's friend Hans Oestereich, the Seeteufel's official photographer. Oestereich who was Luftwaffe trained would undoubtedly have been cognisant with modernist propaganda imagery being pioneered in Germany and the Soviet Union. This hypothesis is, however, conjecture. Despite the compositional success of the image Powell never exploited the technique again. 'Bailing Water', therefore remains an aberrant lone image. Given definitive evidence now revealing the nature and extent of Powell's photographic practice, no relationship between 'Bailing Water' with his later documentary work and understanding can be drawn.

Attempts to rebuild and wartime realities

Throughout 1939 and 1940, efforts by Powell to find gainful employment proved fruitless.⁹⁸ A hopeless situation was ameliorated during the later part of 1940, as gradual attempts were made to re-establish himself as a photographer within a studio setting. The impetus for this renewed activity was a commission to photograph a Beauty Expo held at Sydney's Royal Showgrounds. Powell now conducted his photography from a shared space located at 26 Hunter Street, Sydney. Once up and running, access to a studio gave Powell the foundation necessary to demonstrate some solid commercial photography.⁹⁹ In addition to the customary studio-based work typical of the period, nudes of the girlfriends of disembarking soldier's formed a regular sideline. However, the vast extent of The Powell Studio's production was dominated by his earlier Beauty Expo commission. Despite the promise seen through the quality of his photography, The Geoffrey Powell Studio was not a particularly productive business.¹⁰⁰ During its operational life, circa April 1940 to October 1942, merely a little over one hundred negatives were generated through the studio.¹⁰¹ Powell himself admitted that he neglected to dedicate the necessary vigour required to make the venture a commercial success.¹⁰²

From mid August 1940, Powell also found himself drafted into periodic Militia, or CMF (Commonwealth Military Force) service. This undoubtedly further interrupted his studio activities but paradoxically saved him financially. Powell had earlier attempted to enlist in both the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Australian Air Force, but had been rejected.¹⁰³ After an initial period of seeing out his the Militia duties, Powell eventually enlisted with the AIF (Australian Imperial Force) in October 1942. Primarily serving with bomb disposal units stationed in New South Wales and Queensland, Powell's war record was undistinguished. Importantly, he did not work in the capacity of an official military photographer.¹⁰⁴

Outside Powell's personal experiences, the onset of the Second World War provided an impetus in the field of applied photography promoting hitherto unparalleled activity for a new generation of photographers. Specialist military photographer personnel were joined by a considerable number of their civilian counterparts seconded from the Department of Information (DoI).¹⁰⁵ To name a few better-known examples, Cliff Bottomley, Frank Hurley, Damien Parer, Jim Fitzpatrick, George Silk, Lawrence le Guay, and William Canty, are amongst those who saw service overseas, providing valuable coverage of the war. While photographers such as, Herbert Fishwick, Colin Ferguson, Max Dupain and Edward Cranstone were formerly engaged to record aspects of the war effort on the home front. Cranstone, in particular amassed an impressive file of homeland wartime imagery. Initially Cranstone worked under the auspices of the DoI as its head photographer, before transferring to the Public Relations Department of the Allied Works Council (AWC).¹⁰⁶ Through the forum of the war, domestic photographers were finally given unprecedented widespread exposure. The character of that photography also transformed the way in which Australians viewed the medium. This change in attitude saw the beginning of the end for pictorial practice which had long dominated the national scene.

Although not engaged as an official photographer, Powell was certainly aware of government initiated wartime photographic projects undertaken by his photographer colleagues.¹⁰⁷ It is clear that he responded in accord to this influence. Isolated from the main activity Powell had to content himself as an interested sideline spectator. A full expression through the adoption of such an aesthetic narrative had to wait until the opportunity arose to resurrect his photographic career. A few examples of what may be described as overt 'wartime imagery' were made by Powell, but are confined to a small number of 127 format roll films.¹⁰⁸ Noteworthy, are those negatives depicting bomb disposal operations. These exposures date from late 1943 and were made while Lieutenant Powell was stationed on the Atherton Tablelands in far north Queensland.¹⁰⁹ Purely a personal exercise, it is doubtful that the photography was ever officially sanctioned. This may explain why the imagery was never actually printed up. The film rolls remaining buried within the photographer's negative archive until discovered and identified by the author in 2002. The documentary of bomb disposal procedures is not extensive, but is of interest to Powell's development as a photographer. Stylistically distinct, this imagery pre-empts a general approach later adopted through subsequent newspaper photography during 1944 and 1945.

Ennis enlisted Powell amongst photographers such as Edward Cranstone and Max Dupain who were engaged by government ministries and produced large bodies of wartime documentary.¹¹⁰ The more recent discovery of further evidence corrects previous perceptions about Powell's occupation and role as a photographer during the war years, and also his documentary practice.¹¹¹ Powell's photography throughout the course of the war was exclusively connected within a civilian context, initially via his part-time commercial portraiture business, afterwards and more significantly, confined to standard daily newspaper work. Photography produced by the local news media outlets was constrained under wartime austerity measures, where availability of photographic materials for civilian use was governed by rationing. Powell recalled that photographers at the *Daily Telegraph* were issued with just two sheets of film and one flash bulb per assignment. The work produced during Powell's tenure at Consolidated Press and then subsequently the Communist Party's Newsletter Printery, was not exceptional and equated with that of other civilian newspaper photographers operating at similar employment levels.¹¹² It is worth noting; beyond regular news and human interest assignments, Powell did not undertake specific documentary assignments until after the war.¹¹³ Neither was Powell ever employed or engaged by the Department of Information (DoI) in the capacity of a stills photographer. He only began working for the DoI from March 1946, and employed as a cinematographer, Grade 1, attached to the film unit of the News and Information Bureau, at Burwood.¹¹⁴

Resurrection as a working photographer (1944)

Introduction as newspaper photographer

Typified by boredom, Powell's time in the army had its frustrations. Fortunately for him the war effort consumed much of the nation's photographic talent. Short staffed, pictorial editor at Sydney's Consolidated Press, Bill Brindle, approached Powell with an offer of a position at the *Daily Telegraph*. This provided Powell with the incentive to escape the tedium of his army experience, together with the prospect of resurrecting his tattered photographic career. In order to take advantage of this window of opportunity Powell sought and secured a discharge from active service. He was placed on the Reserve of Officers, on the 28th of July 1944, free to pick up a civilian life again.¹¹⁵

Over the next nine months Powell remained respectably employed as a daily metropolitan newspaper photographer.¹¹⁶ Primarily assigned to the, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Sunday Telegraph* newspapers, Powell was also entrusted with a prestigious assignment for Consolidated's, *Women's Weekly* magazine. For this he was sent to Canberra to cover the arrival of the new Governor General, the Duke of Gloucester.¹¹⁷ Having rebuilt his credentials as a working photographer, Powell's introduction as a cameraman for a daily metropolitan proved unfulfilling.

“...I found the work at the Telegraph restricted that is to say, some photographs which I thought were very good were not even published and either if published, might be chopped about which is a dampener on any photographer, who is an artist at heart.”¹¹⁸

Powell also fought against the bland uniformity of the imagery produced by on-camera flash, a mode of practice unyieldingly enforced by local pictorial editors of the day. Imported publications alerted Powell to a different more sophisticated way of portraying news.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Powell complained that the work of local newspaper photographers was undervalued by press proprietors and editors.

“Overseas pictorial magazines give credit lines to their photographers whether photographs have been contributed or taken by staff men.

In Russia, daily newspapers acknowledge the work of their camera reporters.

In Australia photographers on newspapers work longer hours than, and are paid the same wages as a “C” grade journalist. Publishers seldom give the photographer credit for his work.”¹²⁰

The momentum for Powell's conversion toward producing socially aware photography, for which he has become most associated, originated from influences outside the medium.

A social consciousness (1945-1946)

The greatest single influence on Powell's life and work came in the final months of the war, the Australian Communist Party (ACP).¹²¹ Armed with a camera, the early missed opportunities now firmly in the past, Powell found himself in the right place at the right time. His photography at this juncture became fundamentally aligned with organisations at the far left of the political

spectrum. As a direct consequence of this affiliation the imagery simultaneously took on a socially aware and class-conscious stance. The adoption of a broad leftwing outlook was abrupt and a marked departure from Powell's traditional practice, which had been inherently self-reflecting. Further to this, an association with those on the political left lead to an invaluable introduction to some of Australia's foremost post-war documentary filmmaker's.¹²² In due course, this imparted a profound inspiration over Powell's photographic understanding, and became reflected through his stills imagery. At cursory glance, the more politically charged leftwing newspaper photography appears aesthetically seamless against Powell's previous *Daily Telegraph* work. Owing to the respective divergent editorial slants, however, these two bodies of imagery are delineated philosophically and as a consequence are quite distinct.¹²³

Initially, Powell appears to have been open about the fact that he left the *Telegraph* to work as the *Tribune's* staff photographer.¹²⁴ He was later to profess that contributions to *Tribune* were purely made on a freelance basis.¹²⁵ This position is most certainly a convenient revision, concocted in 1948 in an effort to distance himself from accusations of Communist leanings. Rupert Lockwood, News Editor for the *Tribune*, was unequivocal about Powell's employment by the Communist paper.¹²⁶ The character of the *Tribune's* photography tends to support Lockwood's assertions, linking Powell as the ACP's official in-house photographer. In the first instance, Powell operated exclusively from a darkroom in the basement at Marx House, for which he payed no rent.¹²⁷ Furthermore, all photography produced by Powell over the period, May to late August 1945, was for the *Tribune*. While it is true that a number of outside jobs were executed thereafter, the vast extent of Powell's output resulted directly through *Tribune* assignments.

Powell's best-known image, 'Family Group' (1945) together with 'Truants' (1945), stand out as examples with which to illustrate the shift in emphasis toward a more socially conscious posture.¹²⁸ The respective titles for these particular images is also symbolic of Powell's newfound defiance against social indifference. Powell cited 'Families Awaiting Eviction-1945', as his preferred full title, which was invariably sanitised to 'Family Group' when published. The adjunct of the year '-1945' was also seen as quite important. Its inclusion signified a wartime image, and the photographer's attitude to what he saw as crude commerce and profit-making, while the families' missing menfolk were presumably away fighting in the war.¹²⁹

A reference within Powell's ASIO file links the origins of 'Families Awaiting Eviction' and by association 'Truants' to the political fabric of the Australian Communist Party. It appears these images initially formed part of a broader leftwing concept series, together with 'Delegates at a Political Conference' and 'Making a Speech'.¹³⁰ This photography was produced specifically for a display exhibited at Marx House over the course of the ACP's Sydney Branch Congress of 1945. It is known that at least 'Delegates at a Political Conference' and 'Making a Speech' were "recreations" posed expressly for the upcoming Congress.¹³¹ That is to say, they were elaborate posed compositions made beforehand, and are not a photographic record of actual events. This mode of working uniquely adopted by Powell is discussed in more detail below.

'Making a Speech', was directly inspired by and stylistically based on the iconic American illustration, 'Freedom of Speech' by Norman Rockwell (1943). Powell found Rockwell's painting in an old issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* and adapted the basic composition for the Communist Party.¹³² Unfortunately, no original examples of Powell's 'Making a Speech' are known to have survived. The author has also been unable to locate a published reproduction of this image. Interestingly, a print fitting the general description, signed "Geoffrey Powell", was seized from Marx House by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in July 1949. It is possible, therefore, that this print does survive somewhere within the National

Archives. The type on the verso of the seized print denotes the rhetorical editorial framework through which the image was made.

“This member of the Australian Communist Party is using his right of freedom of speech at a Party Branch meeting. The Australian Communist Party is built on more democratic lines than any other political party in this country.”¹³³

Regrettably, little detail about the exact makeup series is known. Nevertheless, through an extrapolation of period Communist doctrine, a plausible narrative encompassed by the series may be envisioned; failure of education, ‘Truants’, failure of low cost housing, ‘Families Awaiting Eviction’, articulation of these social problems through ‘Making a Speech’ and political redress via democratic socialism at work, represented by ‘Delegates at a Political Conference’.

Powell was particularly proud of the series, considering it his best work of the period.¹³⁴ They are among examples from his body of “*Tribune*” work that the photographer personally held onto. None of these images were actually published in the *Tribune*. After the congress, the shared identity of the series was lost with some images later revisited and assuming significance outside the activities of Marx House. In particular, ‘Families Awaiting Eviction’ was reinvented within the genre of social documentary and under that guise became the image by which the photographer is best connected.¹³⁵

Collectively with Axel Poignant, Edward Cranstone, Max Dupain, and later David Moore and David Potts, Powell is seen as part of the Documentary Movement in photography that arose during the immediate post-war years. Initially, Powell’s photography of this era was fundamentally located within the setting of his official news work for the Communist Party’s mouthpiece, *Tribune*.¹³⁶ While select examples of this news reportage may nowadays be viewed as documentary, significant discrete examples of documentary work was only subsequently produced for the leftwing journal *Australia’s Progress*.¹³⁷ The vast bulk of Powell’s so-called ‘social conscience’ photography exists only as reproductions within the obscurity of leftwing journals, and has received almost no recognition since it was initially published. Just three examples represented Powell’s 1945 leftwing imagery within the broader contest of the contemporary mainstream; ‘Truants’, ‘Delegates to a Conference’ and ‘Families Awaiting Eviction’.¹³⁸ That is, those images originally from the Communist Party’s 1945 Congress series. Through a greater period media penetration, it is these few uncharacteristic examples that have now received disproportionate attention against the photographer’s more substantive body of work.

Powell’s reputation as a documentary photographer is largely predicated on the visibility of a solitary image, ‘Families Awaiting Eviction’. With its original purpose buried and mostly forgotten, the style portrayed in ‘Families’ was fashionable for the time. In particular, publications edited by Lawrence le Guay supported the image as exemplar to the new documentary genre of modern photography.¹³⁹ The urban poverty theme depicted also helped define that type of documentary attractive to young up-and-coming photographers of the post-war era.¹⁴⁰ Consequently it is the only image by Powell that has endured, and for example, was easily recalled many years later by one of those young photographers, David Moore.¹⁴¹ Despite an unusual aesthetic as measured against his general practice, it grew to become Powell’s signature photograph. That is to say, although intimately associated with the photographer, ‘Families Awaiting Eviction’, is an atypical example of Powell’s photography from the time. Powell rarely employed the stylistic technique of isolating his subjects from their general environmental situation. An additional frame depicting the same scene, which was never printed or released for publication, is more in tune with the style of Powell’s broader environmental

focus. This negative contains valuable contextual information edited from the more stylised known 'Families Awaiting Eviction' image.¹⁴²

Although Powell's repertoire of news work did occasionally touch on aspects of urban poverty, subject matter of this nature was never pursued directly for its own sake. When portrayed at all, it was covered purely as a consequence of capitalist industrial endeavour by way of the socialist doctrinal position of his editors. That is to say, Powell's social conscious voice is largely spoken via the politics of his Communist employer. Powell himself appears to have been reluctant to take on independent self commissioned documentary work at this time.

Cranstone and Powell: two leftwing views

For obvious reasons Geoffrey Powell and Edward Cranstone, are sometimes seen as fellow travellers, photographers working within the discourse of a documentary mode from a leftwing perspective. It is clear, that while a shared communist belief is manifest throughout the respective bodies of imagery, certain contrasts can be drawn. One distinction relates to the different working foci adopted. It is worth noting, that this was in each case governed by the directives of assignments or commissions for which the imagery was produced.

The documentary of Edward Cranstone, and in particular that made for the AWC, forms a broad motif describing the 'greater goodness' of industry as viewed through wartime infrastructure projects. The establishment of the AWC for the fast tracking of urgently need infrastructure was not without controversy and above all viewed with suspicion by the union movement.¹⁴³ As such, it became paramount for the government to project the AWC's activities in a positive light. The labour of the individual was to be seen as an important contribution on the home front, integral with the greater national war effort. Cranstone's approach to documenting the workingman for the AWC from 1942 fulfilled these propaganda objectives.¹⁴⁴

Powell too was conversant with the notion of propaganda as a potent instrument for education and aware also of its potential to achieve desirable political and social ends. He advocated the use of photography as a "social weapon" for the working class. However, the general emphasis of Powell's conviction was aimed toward more of an individualist perspective; "...photography is the people's art medium. ...the general public must be educated to an understanding of photography as being the purest medium known to reveal us to ourselves."¹⁴⁵

Though assignments undertaken for *Tribune* Powell's photography subtly denoted wider working class concerns. The factory floor news material, for example, evokes work ethic sentiments portraying the dignity and pride derived from one's labour. What is more, part of Powell's imagery concentrated on negative consequences of industry and commerce. Individuals were not just the anonymous 'engine-rooms' of a functioning economy, but at times victims of it. Powell's photography unmask the anonymity of the worker's perspective.¹⁴⁶

Beyond the contrasts in editorial stance, the respective styles adopted are also not directly interchangeable. A good deal of Cranstone's photography produced for the Department of Information, assumed a particularly straight documentary aesthetic. However, by the time he began working for the AWC the imagery had evolved to become irrefutably distinctive. Employing the technique of low camera angles, resolute forms are fashioned so as to loom into the frame. Subjects are typically accented by strong raking light, adding further to the boldness of the imagery. This stylistic mode helped Cranstone portray his human subjects as heroic metaphoric statuesque figures.¹⁴⁷ The individual assumes herculean proportion dominant over

their relationship to the general environment. The treatment of wider environment is such that it is largely relegated to a secondary structural image element. Cranstone's photography bears heavy influence from 1940s European propaganda delineations of the worker and the soldier. Echoes of socialist realism are evident, bringing to mind iconic Stalinist poster art. Above all, the material is sympathetic to the photography emanating from the Soviet Union at that time.

In stark contrast, Powell's photographs are much less powerful in appearance. Individual images are characteristically unembellished to the point of the everyday snapshot. The photographs are, as aptly described by Ennis, "resolute in their ordinariness..."¹⁴⁸ Powell's subjects are not portrayed as heroic or iconic. Acutely concerned with real people depicted within the setting of their day-to-day experience, Powell's imagery concentrated on the mundane. It is empathetic and personal, with figures intimately connected to their extended environment. Each image element, figure and environment, is treated with like importance. Importantly, also is the fact that Powell's subjects were often the people themselves. As a result, the photographs tend to be very up close and personal. This is not an unexpected consequence from the work of a news photo-reporter. Human interest pictorial was as important to *Tribune* as any other newspaper.

Powell's wider vision was not about exploiting the power of the moment where "the truth" was succinctly encapsulated within a single frame. Rather there was more the reliance on a broader medium as depicted throughout his general body of reportage. It was this extended medium which served as the tool for provoking the desired impact.

"...these photographs would be commonplace today – but thirty years ago earned me a reputation."¹⁴⁹ "...the reputation seemed to be built on what my photographs achieved, rather than the actual photographs themselves. ...Taken out of context, many were not worth much. But in their intended environment, right at the moment of truth, they were invaluable in the struggle of left against right."¹⁵⁰

The general style of Powell's photography is not too dissimilar to that of Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographer, Marion Post Wolcott, and in particular her 1940 documentary of Faulkner County, Arkansas. This work also champions a particularly literal aesthetic.¹⁵¹

This basic environmental approach adopted by Powell can be seen throughout the pages of *Tribune*, new issues, April 1945 to May 1946.¹⁵² Powell also contributed similar pictorial to the leftwing journal, *Australia's Progress*, from November 1945 to February 1946.¹⁵³ The majority of Powell's total output over this period was published by either of these two Communist Party journals. Responsibilities for the gathering of such news pictorial, took Powell to a variety of workplaces in the Sydney area. While hardly significant in terms of volume, the resultant photography from these assignments does assume a unique stance within the national context. While official home-front photography was concerned with military production, aircraft fabrication and munitions manufacture etc., a heavy emphasis also lay with Australia's primary production capacity, as seen in the documentary produced by Ferguson and Cranstone.¹⁵⁴ Powell's material on the other hand, fundamentally exists against an urban civilian backdrop.

The Miners' Federation 1947 Amenities Campaign

Powell maintained and expanded on his literal environmental attitude for the 'Amenities Campaign' photography, undertaken for the Miners' Federation, circa February 1947. Following

the Great Depression, Australia's coal mining industry had suffered a prolonged period of neglect. Badly lacking in investment essential for modernisation, some pits defied recognition within the context of a highly developed industrial age. Much coal production was still achieved manually with pick and shovel, conceding little in the way of modern mechanised aids. Adequate mine ventilation was a luxury ignored at numerous pits. In all too many instances, working and living conditions for the miners could only be described as primitive. As a consequence of these deplorable conditions, protracted industrial conflict seemed inevitable at a time when the reliable supply of coal was essential to the national war effort. After June 1941, the Miners' Federation, under Communist Party control, became an instrumental player in subduing miner dissatisfaction, whilst ensuring wartime production quotas were met. This conciliation was offered in return for a "New Deal" on behalf of the nation's mining communities once the war was won.¹⁵⁵

In early 1947, the Federation began pushing for the promised improvements and required photographs to illustrate their arguments.¹⁵⁶ The responsibility for this task was handed to Edgar Ross, editor of the union's journal, *Common Cause*. Consequently Ross obtained imagery from international sources and engaged local photographers, such as Geoffrey Powell, to document the local scene.¹⁵⁷ At the time, Powell was employed as a fulltime cinematographer with the Department of Information, but nonetheless dusted off his Rollei stills camera especially for this extramural photographic assignment. As cold-war tensions escalated, political pressures within the DoI's Films Division also built up. This situation made moonlighting for a communist run union a risky undertaking on Powell's part.¹⁵⁸ Even considering the delicate politics involved, Powell still covertly accompanied the staunch Stalinist, Edgar Ross to various coalmining regions surrounding the greater Sydney area. The townships of Helensburgh, Catherine Hill Bay, along with mines and communities in the Hunter Valley, and also regions to the west of the Blue Mountains and Lithgow, were visited and documented.

The photography incorporated into the Amenities Campaign was seen by Ross as a straightforward evidential device, intended simply to present inalienable facts. Under Ross's direction the Campaign contrasted the dilapidated national coal mining scene against international norms and standards experienced throughout other local heavy industries. The facilities found within selected communities and pits were targeted, illustrated as a setting to the mineworkers' plight. Heavily influenced by the thinking prevalent within the documentary film faction at the Department of Information, Powell's vision went beyond the Federation's requirements. Powell's Amenities Campaign material assumes high level documentary value above that needed for basic documentation. It was a real project one the likes of Powell had been unable to secure while actually working as a photographer. This was something substantial enough for him to get his teeth into and to fully explore. The imagery produced reveals much about the environment inhabited by coalminers and their families, amply demonstrating their standards of living. In contrast to much of Powell's previous photography, individual images stand alone while maintaining their contextual significance.

Progressively published in support of Ross' regular editorial, over one hundred examples of Powell's photographs appeared in *Common Cause* throughout 1947 and 1948.¹⁵⁹ In addition, a small illustrated booklet, *How to get More Coal*, was produced by the Federation, in which Powell's photography formed a substantial component.¹⁶⁰ The union campaign served its intended purpose, which was ultimately a prelude to, and overshadowed by events leading into the bitter 1949 national coal strike.¹⁶¹ The Amenities Campaign along with the legacy of the imagery made for it was thereafter forgotten.

Commissioned by a labour union, as opposed to a government ministry, the photography produced for the Amenities Campaign is exceptional within the national post-war context. It was only after Powell's scrapbooks came to light in 1990 that the pictorial contributions to the 1947 Amenities Campaign has again been uncovered and introduced to Australian photographic history. Only now has the authorship, of at least some of that photography, been revealed. So that this important body of work may be fully appreciated within its intended context, it should preferably be considered as a whole, rather than as a conglomeration of dislocated single images.¹⁶²

Importantly for Powell, the Amenities Campaign project constitutes his most substantive singular photographic undertaking. It represents the only truly significant body documentary produced by this photographer but also marks his last assignment. Given Powell's repute as "Australia's forgotten documentary photographer", it is unfortunate that this work is not more widely appreciated and fully recognised.

The maturing of Powell's documentary (1964-1969)

After a hiatus of over a decade, a business opportunity in the area of tourism promotion rekindled Powell's interest in photography. He himself made much of the commercial imagery needed for the job. Additionally, from around 1964 through to 1969, Powell undertook a widespread photographic essay of his adopted home, the Portuguese Overseas Province of Macao. South East Asia presented a new environment seen through fresh eyes, offering abundant scope for documentary. This personal work concentrated on leftwing perspectives for street reportage. Well represented are images which depict aspects of the Cultural Revolution, particularly as it overflowed from Mainland China and impacted on the tiny island city of Macao.¹⁶³ Following on from the character of his Amenities Campaign photography, there is maturity and depth to this work. Discretely detached from, and unencumbered by outside editorial dictates of professional practice, the imagery is easily differentiated from Powell's previous Australian photographic endeavours. By this time Powell had also modernised his equipment with Canon FT 35mm SLR cameras, and also began shooting colour negative film stock in tandem with his traditional black-and-white practice. The productivity of Powell's street photography equates to approximately forty to fifty unedited rolls of 35mm film exposed over a period of six years.¹⁶⁴ By Powell's standards this was quite productive undertaking.

After 1969, Powell's personal and work life became disrupted, necessitating a move from Macao to Thailand. In a revision of the past disruptions, Powell's worm had ominously turned yet again. This signalled the end of his street reportage work and Powell never again returned to photography as work, or as a tool for a serious mode of creative expression. Unfortunately, the photographer maintained the habit of a lifetime by not fully following through with the project.¹⁶⁵ Save for a few examples, these South East Asian negatives were never printed beyond small lab proofs. The imagery produced was never revisited or completed. The negatives remaining enclosed within their original processing lab negative sleeves. Unfortunately some of this material was lost due to attack from white ants.

Authentic recreations (1945) : 'documentary' by another name

The 'Re-establishment Exhibition' photography, commissioned by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction Public Relations Division, in September 1945, assumes an environmental

aesthetic typical of that with Powell's contemporaneous *Tribune* reportage.¹⁶⁶ Here also, human figures appear as recorded within the context of their immediate situation. In this instance, however, the figures were actors and all the images posed to foretell a story.¹⁶⁷

During the concluding months of the Second World War, Australia's military machine began planning for the arduous task of demobilisation. The Department of Post-War Reconstruction was charged with informing service personnel about the processes involved before their re-establishment back into civilian society.¹⁶⁸ As part of a raft of measures, 'The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition', was established. Powell obtained the commission to produce the required photographs through a leftwing connection, John Oldham.¹⁶⁹ As large numbers of those serving in the AIF were also Communist Party members, the welfare of returning service personnel was of concern to the political wing of the ACP.¹⁷⁰ That is to say, Powell's outside work for the Department of Post-War Reconstruction was in full accord with Communist policy at the time.

Designed as a multimedia touring exhibit, 'The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition' sought to educate servicemen and women, prior to disembarking from a military life. The project brief required thirty negatives and prints. These were used as a storyboard to illustrate some key procedures, for example; dental and medical check ups, TB x-rays, employment counselling, and final pay.¹⁷¹ Production of the photography involved the use of models selected from the ranks, carefully chosen to give a representative sample of personnel across the respective military branches. For example, an attractive young AWAS (Australian Women's Army Service) and former Sydney photographic model represented the various auxiliary women's corps.

Despite the fact that the photography produced for the 'Re-establishment Exhibition' was deliberately pre-engineered, it assumes a definite 'documentary chic'. Nonetheless, the contrived compositions prepared before-the-fact precludes this imagery from being considered a valid recorded document. From the perspective of a strict purist methodology its value is also diminished for documentary as art. 'The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition' was fundamentally a commercial advertising project that suited well the descriptive style of Powell's photography. This approach served its intended purpose and contrasts official documentary instigated to cover post-war demobilisation. For example, army photographer Lance Corporal, Ernest Mc Quillan's documentary series depicting the complete demobilisation procedure experienced by Staff Sergeant, E. W Tame.¹⁷²

It is around the time of the 'Re-establishment Exhibition' commission that Powell articulated an advocacy for contrived photography through staged compositions.¹⁷³ Given Powell's current reputation as a purist documentary photographer, judged against the standards and attitudes prevailing at that time, this was a controversial stance. The broad scale elaborate posing of scenes and events was a mode of working that more renowned documentary photographers would not have subscribed. "...pure record not propaganda" was the call by Walker Evans for the work done through the Resettlement Administration (later the FSA), under Roy Stryker's stewardship.¹⁷⁴ The 'purity' of the FSA photography did at times however, come under criticism. The photography of Evans' colleague Arthur Rothstein has been challenged through the understanding that he dramatised events depicted in some key images. Interestingly, Rothstein later refuted such claims, stating that the charges related to confusion from the images being published out of context.¹⁷⁵

"I think the pictures were all honest. There was a great deal of honesty in these pictures. Roy [Stryker] was a great believer in the integrity of a photograph. He would never countenance any kind of fakery in the photograph..."¹⁷⁶

In contrast to the steadfastly purist working values of his North American counterparts, Powell, referring to his 'Delegates at a Political Conference' (1945) photograph, commented:

"This posed photograph shows the necessity for observation power required to re-create an event so that its authenticity is accentuated."¹⁷⁷

"By developing this power of observation to its highest, the photographer is then able to "recreate" the authentic atmosphere necessary to pure photography"¹⁷⁸

Sentiments expressed by Powell, also contradict renowned Australian photojournalist, David Moore's conviction, "once you start altering facts within a picture, you undermine the strength of photography."¹⁷⁹ Even worse still, some of Powell's recreations pre-empted the facts, as actual events had taken place after the photograph was made.

The roots of Powell's understanding appear to be a literal interpretation of documentary filmmaking methodologies. British filmmaker, John Grierson's definition, "Documentary is the creative treatment of actuality", sits comfortably within the language of photography as it relates to notions of the medium's inherent suitability for the recording of reality with great accuracy.¹⁸⁰ It also lends scope to the photographer as a creative image-maker. It is this expressive ingredient that distinguishes "documentary" from a more sterile objective technical approach demanded in straight documentation.

"When you say "documentary" you have to have sophisticated ear to receive the word. It should be documentary style, because documentary is police photography of a scene and a murder. ...That's a real document."¹⁸¹ "The so-called documentary approach in photography is the addition of lyricism."¹⁸²

In discussing Grierson's famous definition, Dupain illiterates the key documentary filmmaking aims.

"Applied to the motion picture as Grierson intended it infers the photographic re-enactment of well observed facets of life in such a way that that the subject is penetrated to its very depths...observing the factors of its derivation and maybe its outcome in perspective. ...All penetrating and because penetrating, dramatic."¹⁸³

Powell, who at this time was heavily influenced by documentary filmmakers, seems to have simply transposed a motion-film discourse directly over to stills photography. "...necessity for **observation** power required to **re-create an event** so that its **authenticity is accentuated.**" [Emphasis added] The danger is that such a treatment conflicts with immutable modernist convictions over the proper distilling of 'the truth' through the medium of documentary photography. The contention, as approached via a contemporary dialogue, relates to whether 'truth' can be posed by a stills photographer and therefore "recreated", as Powell maintained. Grierson's documentary film colleague Paul Rotha commented that;

"Documentary defines not subject or style, but approach..."¹⁸⁴

A divergence of approaches between the two documentary media within a contemporary discourse is appropriate, as the respective dialogues are not indistinguishable. The intent of the photographer becomes all important stylistic treatment of the subject is a secondary

consideration. A contemporary critique of Powell's trademark image, 'Families Awaiting Eviction / Family Group', provides some insight to prevailing progressive attitudes and expectations for documentary photography: "While I don't greatly admire this particular sample (I suspected some "posing"...), I am deeply interested in photography as a documentary medium".¹⁸⁵ The comment appears to convey the perception that deliberate out-of-camera intervention by the photographer effectively serves to dilute the authority of documentary.

On the one hand, Powell's photography through the use of available light techniques projects the impression of a straight aesthetic, thereby implying a particularly purist's mode of working. Conversely, from a strict modernist doctrinal position, this sits in uncomfortable juxtaposition against the photographer's advocacy that "pure photography" can be created even before-the-event, as seen with the 'Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition' series and 'Delegates to a Political Conference' picture, for example. The extent to which Powell's theory of "authentic recreation" is carried throughout his wider practice is not known. In advocating for posed compositions, it may be argued that's Powell's working philosophy conforms more to that of a commercial photographer, who is able to mould an image for a particular purpose. After all, Powell's early training was grounded in commercial studio practice. Furthermore, as a working photojournalist Powell at times was seduced by the trade requirements to return impactful imagery to his editors. These imperatives inevitably clashed against Powell's desire to emulate the work of recognised overseas purist documentary and magazine photographers.¹⁸⁶ It may be argued that, Powell was not so much a dedicated documentary photographer, but rather superficially drawn to a particular creative style and aesthetic.

The documentary oeuvre of Geoffrey Powell

The literature is confused over Geoffrey Powell's efforts to establish a career in photography, in the first place, and the role he eventually played within the documentary genre. *Shades of Light* discusses Powell within the context of the Post-War Documentary Movement yet uses an early self portrait, 'Bailing Water' (1938) to illustrate his photography.¹⁸⁷ Powell has also been appropriated by Ennis as a photographer who produced large amounts of documentary during the war years.¹⁸⁸ Jennifer Lovell, in 'The Camera Art of Geoffrey Powell' also relates Powell's photography through a romanticised career path narrative. Rather than "uncovering the career of Geoffrey Powell" as declared, Lovell embellishes Powell's practice which serves to perpetuate existing myths about his work which ignore the context of events unfolding around him. The evidence, including Powell's actual oeuvre, does not support assumptions relayed by Lovell and Ennis.

It is claimed by Lovell that Powell, "...had a knack for being where the action was."¹⁸⁹ As the cited examples of Powell's exploits attest, he often courted controversy from which he gained some personal notoriety. These anecdotes make for a good storyline, but mask the reality that little in the way of significant photographic work was produced from them. The facts are that through such antics Powell effectively found himself professionally sidelined; his failed attempts to build a fruitful career in photography are more accurately defined by that which he did not do. Powell was not, for example, invited to join the Contemporary Camera Groupe, and did not participate in the 1938 David Jones Gallery exhibition. More significantly from a documentary viewpoint; out of over 130 official second war photographers listed by the Australian War Memorial, Powell's name is conspicuously absent against those of the colleagues with whom his name is often associated; Lawrence Le Guay, Edward Cranstone, etal.¹⁹⁰ Nor was Powell considered for home-front photographic duties, in contrast to photographers such as his former boss Max Dupain. Coverage of the war, and arguably the activities of the Contemporary Camera

Groupe, signalled defining moments in Australian Modernist photography. Far from being where the action was; after August 1938 when he left Dupain's Studio, to August of 1944 where he reappeared as newsman for Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, Powell looms as an almost invisible figure within the photographic scene.

It is true to an extent that Powell did; "...established himself as a respected and vocal participant in Australia's post-war documentary movement."¹⁹¹ The foundation for an understanding of Powell as a documentarian stems directly from his written work, and in particular, *Photography - A Social Weapon*.¹⁹² This article appeared after Powell had effectively ceased working as a professional photographer. As mentioned above, Powell's photography prior to this was dominated by formal assignments to the *Tribune*. Powell's documentary is viewed in large part to exist via the 'Trib's' pages. This notion fails to appreciate the actual character of the communist biweekly, as it was not a platform through which documentary photography was showcased per se.¹⁹³ Throughout its long and troubled publication history the *Tribune* unswervingly acted as the mouthpiece of the Communist Party of Australia. Its defining role was to present Communist Party policy and leftwing news editorial to its readership.¹⁹⁴ Powell's responsibility to the paper was as an ordinary photo-reporter under the direction of his senior editors. That is to say, the *Tribune* was organised along similar lines to Sydney's other daily newspapers. This operational reality does not change even if one accepts at face value Powell's revision that he worked freelance for *Tribune*. Powell was not a free agent who submitted material off his own bat rather he was given specific news assignments which he dutifully covered.

Distinct examples of documentary by Powell only appeared in *Tribune's* sister paper, *Progress*. These were undertaken at the end of Powell's tenure as a fulltime professional photographer. A year later, Powell came out of retirement and followed up with the more substantial Amenities Campaign commission. Personal work of documentary nature was only conducted while Powell resided in South East Asia during the 1960s. These photo-essays are undeniably documentary works and are less cluttered by the ambiguities presented through earlier news photography. This more significant body of Powell's documentary work has to date, however, primarily been overlooked by researchers and commentators of Powell's photography.

The photography resulting from Powell's leftwing news assignments and editorial has historical significance and select examples may be legitimately co-opted as documentary. Referring to his 'Female factory machinist' image Powell claims that "I took a lot of this sort of thing as freelance for *The Tribune*".¹⁹⁵ However, a review of the photography actually published by the *Tribune* shows that similar subject matter did not figure prominently. Nor are significant quantities of factory floor reportage contained within Powell's personal negative collection. It should be remembered that knowledge of this work is overpowered by the enhanced visibility of images from the Communist Party Congress series, in particular 'Families Awaiting Eviction' (1945).¹⁹⁶ The semantics of documentary definitions aside, elements of Powell's 1945-1946 news reportage may, in hindsight be collectively viewed as a treatise on social issues affecting the working class. This said, it should be noted that Powell's assignments did not cut across the sectarian political divide that separated the Catholic working class aligned with the 'Groupers' and Catholic Action, from Communist Unionists. As an employee of the *Tribune* Powell's imagery concerned itself with the 'worthy poor' for whom the Communist Party was their undisputed champion. The material is also very much grounded to the notion of time and place. Existing within a Sydney based context during the final months of the Second World War. Given the geographical limitation, together with a specific temporal locality, perhaps these seemingly disparate images should be regarded as a discrete entity. Although restricted in volume, it may be

argued that elements for the various assignments undertaken do ultimately come together as a discreet body of work.

Together the combined news reportage and documentary works of Powell constitute a small but distinct dissertation of blue-collar labour and broader working class concerns. Prima-facie, select portions of Powell's leftwing oeuvre shares some common ground with purist North American photographers, and their activities in documenting the effects of the Great Depression. While in opposition, Powell's support of contrived compositions call to mind Robert Doisneau's Paris, and that photographer's *modus operandi* in the romanticised 'recording' of ordinary life in that city. "I don't photograph life as it is, but life as I would like it to be."¹⁹⁷

Doctrinal limitations of a leftwing photographer (1945-46)

To complicate matters further, an apparent inconsistency existed within Powell's supposedly dogged leftwing agenda of 1945 and 1946 in that, it co-existed with a small amount of material contributed to the glossy pages of the respectable printed media and in particular, Sydney Ure-Smith's, *Australian National Journal*. After some months working as the *Tribune's* photographer, Powell lost the confidence of key Communist Party officials; most conspicuously, that of news editor, Rupert Lockwood, who considered him to be a "security pimp."¹⁹⁸ It was Lockwood's understanding, that while Powell was working for the *Tribune* he had also co-operated with security police as an informant against the Communist Party.¹⁹⁹

This state of affairs placed Powell in an invidious position and it was inevitable that he would need to move on from Marx House. In an effort to break away from his Communist press duties, Powell began to take on outside commercial jobs. He had hoped to set himself up independently as a mainstream commercial photographer and resign from the *Tribune*. This commercial work entailed a photographic series of antiques and collectables together with portraits of prominent figures within Sydney's mainstream society.²⁰⁰ Included within Powell's repertoire of commercial portraiture, was the American Consul and his wife at their official Vaucluse residence, and Lloyd Ring Coleman, the American boss of J. Walker advertising agency.²⁰¹ High society personalities was a new subject, but not without some parallels to his 1941 part-time studio enterprise. This freelance material sits in anomalous union against the political idealism of his leftwing news material.

"Even so, the memorable photographs I took in those days were not the portraits of advertising magnates and diplomatic consular people, but the photographs of ordinary people doing ordinary things."²⁰²

Powell's stated practice sits well with Arthur Rothstein's comments that "The documentary photographer finds it worthwhile and satisfying to use his camera in immortalizing the common lives of ordinary people."²⁰³

However, the above is a simplistic appraisal. Powell's Communist Party was a diverse organisation comprised of people from all walks of life. The 'Communist Intellectual' (1946), relaxing on Bondi Beach with pipe in hand, sits comfortably against the backdrop inhabited by the fellow's blue-collar comrades at the factories and workshops.²⁰⁴

Notwithstanding the documented betrayal of his comrades to the security services, Powell paradoxically also considered the Communist Party to be a legitimate part of normal Australian

society.²⁰⁵ As the *Tribune's* cameraman, the primary emphasis of his photography was to demonstrate that fact. Although directly connected with those of leftwing persuasion, Powell's photography does not attempt to overtly eulogize communists. The rhetorical symbolism usually associated with the Communist Movement is largely avoided.²⁰⁶ The general tone of the imagery is subtly compassionate, evoking humanist sensibilities, with Party members recorded at work and during relaxation, ordinary people in ordinary everyday situations. People-based news and human interest imagery for '*The Trib*' served to record the "real" communist movement as experienced by the rank and file.

The awkward impasse at Marx house was eventually resolved satisfactorily in March 1946, after John Heyer head-hunted Powell as cinecamera operator for the Department of Information.

Influences toward Ideals and Outcomes

Influences for Powell's photography over the years were varied. Dupain was obviously instrumental to Powell's early development. However, once Powell left the Bond Street studio this previously overriding authority became increasingly distant. The commercial studio setting gave way to what may be best described as photo-journalism. Powell preferred small manoeuvrable cameras for reportage, producing much of this type of photography with a Sports Rolleiflex.²⁰⁷ Introduced by Franke & Heidecke in answer to the Leica, this was a 4x4 cm format version of the famous Rollei 6x6 twin-lens-reflex camera. Such equipment is naturally suited to a documentary approach, and its use by Powell guided him in the direction ultimately taken with later newspaper work. Powell's choice of small format also lends a 'gritty edginess' to his 1945 social reportage, which sits in contrast against the more technically polished formalism of the *Telegraph* news work and that produced under Max Dupain's tutelage, back in 1938.²⁰⁸

A conversion to dedicated social conscious photography was not outwardly predictable for Powell. Like many of his industry contemporaries with whom he had associated, Geoffrey Powell came from a sheltered middle class background. Accordingly, he had no affinity with working class people prior to his involvement with the ACP. Indeed, as a youth he was initially drawn to Nazism. Powell's dissociation from working class sensibilities and culture was to lead to open conflict on more than one occasion. The assignments provided by his later leftwing connections, introduced Powell to a side of society that was initially alien, but furnished him with a body of subject material to which he would otherwise not have had access.²⁰⁹ In true Australian character, Powell sympathised with the idea of a 'fair go' for all. Confronted with evidence contrary to the great national myth of an egalitarian society, this realisation became reflected in his photography.

The possibilities of using photography as an applied tool with which to engage contemporary issues confronting society, was appealing to Powell. In this he was informed by newsmagazines, such as *Life*:

"Margaret Bourke-White produced some of the most stringent socially-conscious photographs to ever come out of America, via *Life*."²¹⁰

However, Powell preferred *Life's* English counterpart *Picture Post*, and the type of work it promoted was a key influence on his direction.

“Their issues were full of socially-conscious pictures, *oozing with character*.”²¹¹

“I recall being greatly influenced by the photographic style featured by ... ‘*Picture Post*’ with the photographers’ use of available light – as compared with the more superficial presentation of subjects by the eternal flashlight pictures of the Americans in ‘*Life*’. An example of technical excellence overshadowing social content.”²¹²

Powell was also very much a man of his time, and concern for those marginalised within society was effectively embodied within contemporary socialist doctrine. Powell’s compassion did not extend to the disadvantage of Australia’s indigenous communities, for example. This attitude contrasts against enlightened photographers of the period, and in particular Axel Poignant.²¹³

Immediately subsequent to Powell’s newfound social consciousness came an influence that was to have a profound impression, namely the genre of documentary motion picture films. These introduced a fresh conceptual approach to image-making. A basic technique adopted, was the incorporation of carefully crafted curtailed passages, tightly edited so as to fit seamlessly into the narrative. The classic but perhaps cliché example, is provided in Sergei Eisenstein’s seminal ‘The Odessa Steps’ sequence from ‘*Battleship Potempkin*’ (1925). Appreciation of this filmmaking methodology extended beyond other progressive cinematographers, also engendering a resonance with tuned-in modernist still photographers.

Following the path taken by other photographers before him, most notably Parer, Dupain, Cranstone, and Poignant, Powell too became interested by the way filmmakers dealt with issues confronting rapidly expanding industrial societies. This more sophisticated way of seeing was initially introduced to Powell via his involvement with The Sydney Film Society, a communist front organisation run by up-and-coming film director, John Heyer. Sydney’s Film Society was formed in 1945 to promote film as a creative medium through the screening of features and documentaries not carried by the commercial cinemas. Public screenings were conducted twice a month and were well attended. Much of Powell’s understanding of documentary came from his close friend John Heyer, with influences from other filmmakers on the left, for example, Joris Ivens, Ralph Foster and Stanley Hawes.

Through Film Society screenings, Powell came to admire the work of American filmmaker Pare Lorenz, who produced such masterpieces as ‘*The River*’ (1930), the New Deal film ‘*The Plough that Broke the Plains*’ (1937) and ‘*The City*’ (1939) directed by Willard Van Dyke. Powell also responded positively to the works of the great Russian masters of film, Vsevolod Illarionovich Pudovkin as well as Eisenstein.²¹⁴ This milieu reinforced an internationalist, class oriented philosophy that supported Powell’s photography at that time. Powell’s own mind-set was articulated through his writing on photography in the leftwing media.

“For photography to become the highly specialised expressive medium the manipulator of the camera must develop his mind and outlook to the *world’s current problems*. ... and pick up his lenses and film for the more constructive purpose of *helping mankind*.”²¹⁵ Emphasis Added

The photography, about which Powell wrote, was unequivocally aligned with the internationalist tenet that underpinned communist understanding of the day. His vision existed within the rigid parameters of a particular political and social ideology defined through established socialist traditions and dogmatically enforced by his Communist Party editors. This position markedly differs from the documentary produced by liberal Australian photographers of post-war period. Perhaps the best example is provided by Powell’s former employer, Max Dupain. His

documentary assumed a broader social focus within a Griersonian nationalist context. It is also worth noting that Dupain's documentary was informed by catholic (and therefore anti-communist filmmakers) namely; Damien Parer and through him, Ron Maslyn Williams.²¹⁶

A considerable proportion of Powell's photography represents the mere 'bread-and-butter' miscellany resulting from the schedule of a newspaper reporter.

"When I look at the negs to-day, I feel that all that makes them different from other work at the time is the different [available light] technical approach."²¹⁷

"A lot of the reportage was very much run-of-the-mill, but every now and again there was the opportunity to show a bit of flair."²¹⁸

The burst of energy and enthusiasm evident in Powell's photography from the middle of 1945 was ultimately not sustained beyond a relatively few short months. Later in that year, Powell's participation in the production of 'Indonesia Calling', the controversial Waterside Workers Federation's film, signalled the transition from photographer to filmmaker. The drifting away from dedicated photographic practice had already begun.²¹⁹ Powell's introduction to leftwing photojournalism, it seems in hindsight, served as the training ground for subsequent motion picture work. As filmmaking became dominant in Powell's professional life, his beloved Rolleiflex became relegated to occasional use as a basic information gathering tool for film-making. A few negatives from this type of work survive in his estate. Beyond the odd family snaps, over the next decade and a half, Powell demonstrated little interest in the medium of still photography. Ultimately, Powell was to embark on a career in the broadcast media. Interrupted by a few years working in promotions, this line of work was continued both in South East Asia and on his return to Australia in 1976. Powell retired in 1980 after pioneering the talkback format for the ABC in Brisbane.²²⁰

In the final analysis, as a working photographer Geoffrey Powell was reliant on his cameras to earn a living. After leaving the comfort of Dupain's studio in 1938, photography strictly became a day job. The quintessential professional photographer striving to eek out a return from the fringes of mainstream activity, Powell did not possess the luxury to be wedded to any particular doctrine or genre. His practice, by necessity was opportunistic with a malleable working ethos that could be tailored to suit the shifting dynamics of any given economic situation.

Recognition and Consequences

Importantly, when considering current consciousness of Powell within recorded photo-history are his contributions to contemporary debates over the direction photography should take in this country. The first foray into this dialogue was 'Camera Art', a disjointed article published by the Communist Party's arts monthly magazine, *Australia's Progress*. Showcasing Powell's 'Delegates to a Political Conference' image, the text rallies against a myriad of evils holding back the advancement of Australian photography.²²¹ Most notably, however, Powell is best recalled through his authorship of 'Photography-A Social Weapon'. Published in the inaugural issue of *Contemporary Photography*, this provocatively titled article, illustrated with 'Family Group' and 'Truants' (1945), was released late in 1946.²²² This local industry journal, edited by Lawrence le Guay, amongst other things came to be a de facto forum for documentary photography. *Contemporary Photography* was, however, introduced some months after Powell

had already changed careers, and all but moved on from the medium of stills photography altogether.

The same three images mentioned above, were later submitted to the 'Australian Photography 1947, Competition' sponsored by publisher Oswald Ziegler. As part of a series of awards, Powell received a bronze plaque for 'Family Group' (Families Awaiting Eviction).²²³ On the back of this success the 'Families' and 'Delegates' pictures were then contributed to the recently launched *AM magazine*.²²⁴ Through these high profile mainstream outlets, Powell began to receive wider recognition for his 1945 leftwing photography. All the same, by June 1948, the time when Powell received the honour of his Australian Photography bronze award, his days of peering down the viewfinder of his Rolleiflex were well behind him, at least as far as so far as this country was concerned. It is somewhat ironic that Powell had abandoned serious practice in the medium of photography, just as the recognition he had so dearly craved was forthcoming.

Paradoxically, the consequences of an enhanced profile for his photography were ultimately negative. The notoriety generated by the belated 'coming-out' of Powell's leftist photographs, only served to inflame cold-war tensions that pervaded his place of work, the Department of Information film unit, at Burwood. The film unit was responsible for the production of high national security status material. Prominent voice for Catholic Action, Frank Browne, and publisher of *Things I hear*, highlighted the dangers of communist leanings within the sensitive department. In reviewing Powell's 'Photography Discovers the People' piece, Browne pointed to the fact that the 'Delegates to a Political Meeting' picture was actually a photograph of a Communist Party Congress. He went on to argue that the published images, credited to a Department of Information employee, Geoffrey Powell, were "Communist propaganda shots".²²⁵ Strictly speaking Browne was correct, as their original intent was as promotional material for the 1945 Sydney Congress. What Browne was not in a position to anticipate was that the works, rightly or wrongly, had moved on to represent broader values within the emerging documentary genre. The *Things I Hear* commentary provided ammunition against Powell, who soon found himself a vulnerable target from those keen to purge the DoI of perceived far-left influence.²²⁶ The hapless Powell had no defence against his accusers. Many of his supporters at the Film Unit were committed communists, Catherine Duncan, Edward Cranstone and John Heyer. However, he had also become persona no grata at Marx House. It is doubtful that Powell would have retained the confidence of his friends had they been aware of his alleged seditious conduct while working for the Communist Party. Powell who had been able to ride out his Nazi past, found his communist yolk less easy to cast aside. It was to haunt him for years to come.

Conclusion: Where is Powell Now

A splintered career path in photography undoubtedly inhibited Powell from being more generally recognised within the professional establishment of his day, and ultimately to Australian photo-history. While Powell may not assume the mantle of one of Australia's more significant photographers, his involvement in the medium co-existed with two areas of interest to the development of photography in this country. Specifically, the initial push to break away from pictorial salon traditions, which so dominated the medium over the 1930s. Powell's photography also later became associated with the Post-War Documentary Movement. Concerning the latter, with Powell's conversion to communist philosophies, came a motivation behind his photography as it finally had a greater purpose. A renewed energy, absent since the experimentation of his early practice is now evident. Furthermore, a stint of military service followed by time spent

dealing with the rigors imposed by daily newspaper work, combined to instil a sense of discipline previously lacking in Powell's life. Through these dynamics, Powell eventually found himself as a photographer in what transpired as a short but relatively productive phase.

Photo-historians have had difficulty in ascribing Powell with a signature style.²²⁷ The factors behind the art community's uncertainty are multifaceted. In the first instance, a sufficiently large volume of imagery was never accumulated. As public art galleries are primarily concerned with original prints as collectable artefacts, this situation is compounded by the limited amount of surviving material available with which to assess the full oeuvre of Powell. Ambiguities resulting from the paucity of surviving artefacts have been exacerbated by a lack of reliable information regarding his career path. This latter point in particular, has cultivated a degree of confusion as to the real roles Powell played as a photographer. Further to this, Powell's life was characterised by the impulse of moving on. That reality fosters complications in tracing his movements which are reflected by dislocated participation levels.²²⁸ Earlier images were routinely revisited in later publications, or became published down the track, appearing after Powell had already changed direction to do other things.²²⁹

In many respects, Geoffrey Powell defies conventional devices required to pin him down within an appropriate recognised art-historical space.²³⁰ Given what is now understood about the specifics of Powell's practice in the medium of photography, claims such as "Geoffrey Powell was one of Australia's leading modernist and documentary photographers during the 1930s and 1940s" is certainly an optimistic appraisal and should be viewed within the commercial context in which it was made.²³¹ Powell was not a particularly innovative photographer, rather one who followed trends set by others. Powell's brief experimentation in surrealist compositions and photomontage directly resulted from the influences of Dupain and le Guay. Initially isolated from the main activity, Powell's introduction to documentary photography came late to the scene and only received a restricted audience via the leftwing printed media. The sole example of Powell's photography that gained the exposure necessary to become influential on others in the long term was, 'Families Awaiting Eviction'. This image has become associated with a purist methodology generally expected of 1940s documentary. However, coloured to a certain extent through its original unveiling in association with Communist doctrinal cant, the image carries a degree of ambiguity as a documentary archetype. In so far as championing progressive contemporary attitudes towards photographic realism, Powell also appears as a lone voice in advocating for posed compositional recreations of reality. Moreover, Powell's photography is constrained by the quantitative limitations of his output. The variety of works created coalesces as an incoherent body of work. As a working photographer, Powell most certainly made significant contributions to this nation's photographic heritage. However, one must appreciate the qualifications that unlay that significance.

In 1991, Ennis concluded her conference paper with a question;

“...-should Geoffrey Powell be acknowledged more fully, (shaped somehow, given some form, some identity)? And if so, how?

I have to answer to the first part of the question –yes- but I still can't confidently answer the second.”²³²

The above relates to Powell's photographic work which is viewed in isolation. Powell is of course professionally recognised for the parts he played in filmmaking and the broadcast media. It is only natural that his intermittent forays into photography take a back seat to his more fully developed careers in these areas. That said the photography made by Powell certainly deserves more detailed attention and thorough objective assessment.

If epithets are appropriate to Geoffrey Powell 'the photographer', he is perhaps best described as a commercial photographer and photojournalist. Beyond these inadequate labels, the overarching element that unites the incongruent character of Powell's photographic practice is undoubtedly his portraiture. Where the opportunity presented itself, Powell excelled at people photography and fine examples of the art can be found throughout his body of work from 1938 onwards.²³³ Perhaps, if there is one to be found, the legacy of Powell's photography is that he succeeded in "revealing us to ourselves."

In conclusion, the small amount of available imagery tantalises the viewer into wanting more. Wolfgang Sievers summarily ended a long and successful career after obtaining, that which he considered the perfect image. In his mind there was nothing left to say photographically. There is no romance in the stark finality of the Sievers' story.²³⁴ Powell, on the other hand presents a degree of mystery, as issues are left unanswered. Part of the charm of Geoffrey Powell's photography is the complexities his practice presents. Just like a good movie ending, questions remain for the viewer to ponder.

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Craig Hoehne 2006

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Introduction: Powell an elusive subject

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- 9 Powell, Geoffrey, letter (copy) to Charles Merewether, 17th September 1981: Powell estate, Brisbane
- 10 Meriwether, Charles, ed., *Art and Social Commitment An End to the City of Dreams, 1931-48*, companion exhibition publication, AGNSW, Sydney, (1983)
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- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Three original prints of ‘Discussion’ Max Dupain and George Hoyningen-Huene (1938) are known to exist;
Dupain Collection: National Library of Australia nla.pic-an23235880
Powell Collection: National Gallery of Australia (x2); NGA Accn No 82.1852 and NGA Accn No 89.2192

This seems to be a rare instance where Powell, in conjunction with Max Dupain, printed multiple exhibition quality prints.

- 15 The vast majority of these prints, totalling 33 in number, are now held within the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
other known examples include;
‘Discussion’ (1938): National Library of Australia, Canberra, *op. cit.*
‘Clair Simpson with Violin’, (c1942); The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; attributed to Powell.

A few, mostly low quality examples or work proofs, remain within Powell’s estate, Brisbane.
Some higher quality prints are also held in the private collection of family members from his first marriage, Sydney.

16

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17 for example;

Batt, Leon, ed., *Pertinent*, self-published pocket literary magazine, Pertinent Publishing Co., Sydney, (1940-1946)

18 Chandler, H.B., ed., *Tribune*, Sydney, Australian Communist Party, Sydney, New Series, No. 107 (April 26, 1945) to New Series, No. 211 (May 7, 1946)

‘Progress Goes to School’, Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia’s Progress*, Vol. 1, No. XXVIII, Chandler H. B. Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW, (January 1946) pp. 35-43

Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs’ Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia’s Progress*, Vol. 1 No. XXIX, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW (February, 1946)

Ross, Edgar, ed., Amenities Campaign editorial, *Common Cause*, Miner’s Federation of Australia, Sydney, (Vol. X11 No. 8 March, 1, 1947 – Vol. XIII No. 32, August 21, 1948)

Ross, Edgar, ed., *How To Get More Coal*, Miners’ Federation of Australia, (October 1947) pp. 1, 5, 7, 9-13, 16-19, 25, 29 and cover art montage

19 uncatalogued negative collection: Powell estate, Brisbane

see also;

Powell Scrapbooks, 1936-1949, bound photocopies, two volumes: National Gallery of Australia, research library, Canberra

20 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell: an annotated chronology of his life and work*, *ibid.* (revised 2005)

21 uncatalogued negative collection: sleeved 35mm format colour and b+w negatives and lab proof prints (1964-1969); Powell estate, Brisbane

Powell’s negative collection

22 At the time of writing only a small handful of images, those directly relating to the city of Brisbane, Queensland, had received full cataloguing. The remainder of the material had been organised to an advanced level of collation (till August 2004), thus allowing usable access for this research.

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- ²³ Smith, Craig, and O'Rourke, Caroline, (ed) *The Geoffrey Powell Archive negative collection: Initial Assessment Conservation Strategies Report*, CAC, The Whole-Plate Camera Studio, unpublished, Brisbane, (April, 2001); NGA Geoffrey Powell File, No. 117, pp. 6-7

This report provides a preliminary assessment of the Powell's negative collection including the total number of negatives for each format represented. A small quantity of additional material from Powell's "box of good stuff" was found after the release of this report. The additional material included 127-format rolls and negatives cut from full rolls.

- ²⁴ Powell Scrapbooks, 1936-1949, photocopies, Vol.1 and Vol. 2, *ibid.*

- ²⁵ Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*

Where, Powell recalls discussing copyright issues with intelligence agent Bill Barnwell, Martin Place, Sydney. According to Powell, Barnwell had offered to purchase copies of Powell's Tribune photography for the Commonwealth Intelligence Service (CIS) Communist Party dossier.

- ²⁶ Powell did personally retain a number negatives from his employers and formal commissioners of assignments, ie. Consolidated Press, *Tribune*, and *Common Cause*.

Powell negative Collection, Powell estate, Brisbane

It is also recorded that Powell forwarded an undisclosed "quantity of negatives", personally retained from his *Tribune* work, to ASIO officers assigned to the 1954 Royal Commission on Espionage. This select material is said to have contained pictures of Communist personalities that "may be of interest" to the security services.

Williams, W. C., 'Memorandum for: Regional Director', File No. R/G.55/11, Attorney-General's Department, D Branch, Newcastle, NSW, 18th January 1955: Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Central Office, 'Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell', personal files; alpha-numeric series A6119, (1940-)

- ²⁷ The Tribune (Communist Party of Australia newspaper), collection of photoprints ca. 1900-1991; Mitchell Library, Sydney
The Tribune (Communist Party of Australia newspaper), featuring party members and party activities ca. 1885-1945; Mitchell Library, Sydney
Common Cause Library, Photo Collection, CFMEU, Sydney.

- ²⁸ This is most certainly the case with the Miner's Federation, Amenities Campaign materials. telephone conversation, Paddy Gorman, (current editor, *Common Cause*) Aug 2005

- ²⁹ Department of Post-War Reconstruction, Public Relations Division, purchase order 45/46-71, September 27, 1945; Powell Scrapbooks, *op. cit.*

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- 30 note:
Nine surplus prints from 'The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition' commission were also retained by Powell and these now form part of the Powell collection at the NGA, Canberra
"Return to Civil Life"-series; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Accn Nos NGA 84.1854, through 84.1862
- 31 pers. comm. with Warwick and Winnie Powell, Yeppoon, Queensland, 2001
- 32 see;
Ziegler, Oswald, Ed., *Australian Photography 1947* *ibid.*, (1948), p. 44, 49 and 171
- 33 Out of over one hundred images produced, Powell personally retained twenty eight negatives from the Miners' Federation's, Amenities Campaign, commission. Some represent published imagery, the remainder were off-cut seconds not used for publication.
- 34 Doud, Richard, 'Interview with Marion Post Wolcott', transcript; Oral History, Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Mill Valley, California, January 1965
Post Wolcott, Marion, 'Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Collection' Library of Congress: Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division Washington, DC
- 35 Powell Scrapbooks: 1936-1949, photocopies, Vol.1 and Vol. 2; *ibid.*
- 36 The following is a complete list of the published record for 'Family Group' (1945)
Powell, Geoffrey, 'Photography – A Social Weapon', Le Guay, Lawrence, ed., *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 1 No. 1, November – December, (1946), p.17
Ziegler, Oswald, ed., *Australian Photography 1947* (annual) Ziegler Gotham Publications, Sydney, (1948), p. 49
'Photography Discovers The People', *AM: The Australian Magazine*, Consolidated Press, Sydney (July, 1948) 'Family Group Awaiting Eviction', p. 34
'As others see us!', compiled by NMW Mansell. Le Guay, ed., *Contemporary Photography*, Vol.2 No.3, March-April, (1949), p 21
Le Guay, Lawrence, ed., *A Portfolio of Australian Photography*, H. J. Edwards, Sydney (1949) p. 62
Willis, Anne-Marie, *Picturing Australia-A History of Photography*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, (1988) p. 194
Ennis, Helen, 'A Quest for Geoffrey Powell', *SHOT*, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, (1992), p. 36

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- 37 Deroudille, Francine, and Doisneau, eds., *Robert Doisneau: Paris*, Editions Flammarion, Thames & Hudson, (2005)
- 38 Powell, Warwick, 'The Geoffrey Powell Archive Inc.' in Powell, Geoffrey, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell: Australia's forgotten documentary photographer*, accompanying exhibition pamphlet, privately published, Brisbane, (Jan 2004), p.1
see also;
<http://gallery482.com.au/index.php/artist/16/>
where it is asserted:
"He left an archive of several thousand negatives in bad condition"
- 39 Powell negative collection: Powell Estate, Brisbane, Queensland.
- 40 David Moore estate, Max Dupain and Associates, Sydney manages Dupain's commercial archive, The Wolfgang Sievers archive, is housed at the Nation Library of Australia.
As an example;
The NLA's Sievers Archive holdings currently contain some 13,700 photographic prints and 51,700 negatives and transparencies.

Resources to understanding Powell's photographic oeuvre

- 41 Powell Scrapbooks: 1936-1949, *ibid.*
- 42 Powell, Geoffrey, *Worms in a Tin*, unpublished autobiographical typed draft manuscript, (c1986): Powell estate, Brisbane.
- 43 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Developing A Potential'. *Worms in a Tin*, *ibid.*
- 44 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell: an annotated chronology of his life and work*, *ibid.* (revised 2005)
- 45 Powell, Geoffrey, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell; Australia's forgotten documentary photographer*, Gallery 482, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, (January-February 2004)
- 46 The recognised images are;
 'Families Awaiting Eviction-1945' (1945); plate: seven
 'Discussion' Max Dupain & George Hoyningen-Huene (1938); plate: six
Powell, Geoffrey, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell: Australia's forgotten documentary photographer*, , accompanying exhibition pamphlet, privately published, Brisbane (Jan 2004); Mitchell Library, NSW

The Young Modernist Photographer (1936-1938)

- 47 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Developing A Potential', *Worms in a Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 1
- 48 Mallard, Henri, '*Building the Sydney Harbour bridge: The photography of Henri Mallard*', Sun Books, Melbourne, (1976); and also;
Henri Mallard, 'Portfolio: Building the Sydney Harbour Bridge', *Photofile*, Vol. 63: Built, August (2001) pp. 2 and 13-17.
- 49 Willis, Anne-Marie, *Picturing Australia-A History of Photography*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde (1988) p. 153
see also;
Hine, Lewis, *Men at Work: Photographic Studies of Modern Men and Machines*, Macmillan and Co, New York, (1932) reprint, Dover, (1977)
- David Moore related that he printed Mallard's Harbour Bridge negatives in the 1970s as he knew how. That is to say, according to his usual practice with silver gelatine printing papers.
Moore, David, pers. comm. with the author and Shaunnagh Dorsett, McMahons Point, Sydney, June 2002.
Mallard himself may have intended a different printed vision more in accord with pictorial aesthetics? Mallard's Sydney Harbour Bridge imagery printed by David Moore is held at the Australia Centre for Photography, Sydney.
- 50 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Developing A Potential', *Worms in a Tin*, *ibid.*, pp. 2-3
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Camera Art', Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia's Progress*, Vol. 1 No. XIX, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW, (7/9/1945), p. 16
- 53 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Developing A Potential', *Worms in a Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 3
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 *Daily Telegraph*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, Friday 8th May 1936
- 56 Newton, Gael; *Max Dupain*, The David Ell Press, Hunters Hill, (1980), p. 21
- 57 Hambourg, Maria Morris, *Paul Strand Circa 1916*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, Harry Abrams, NY, (1998), plate 55

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- 58 Nowhere in his writings does Powell mention Paul Strand.
- 59 Examples of Powell's early surrealist montages were published in; *Tooth's KB Chronicle*, *Man Junior* and *Design* magazines, 1937-38.
Some were also later revisited in Leon Batt's, self-published pocket literary magazine, *Pertinent*, 1940-1946.
Powell scrapbooks, *ibid.*, *op. cit.*
These are the only remaining record of Powell's surrealist photomontage work.
- 60 'Miss Elaine Hamill radio and film player' *Teleradio*, Brisbane, July 1 1939, p.29
- 61 The *Photographie* reference mentioned in Powell's memoirs could not be located within Australian libraries.
A poor quality contemporaneous half-plate format copy negative, made of the original 1937 print, is the only known extant example of this image: Powell estate, Brisbane
- 62 'Civilisation', in *Design*, (November 1937), p. 9
'Freedom' *Man Junior*, (December 1938), p. 45
clippings; Powell Scrapbooks Vol. 1, *op. cit.*
- 63 Hillier, Rob, Portfolio Albums ca. 1933-63: State Library of New South Wales
see also
Reilly, Virgil, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, (September 13, 1941), cover art

The Interrupted Years (1939-1944)

- 64 Dupain, Max, hand written employment termination reference, on Max Dupain Studio letterhead, 13th August, 1938: Powell estate, Brisbane
- 65 Powell Geoffrey, 'Count Felix von Luckner', Ure-Smith, Sydney, ed., *The Home*, John Fairfax and Sons, Sydney, (July 1, 1938), pp. 60-61 and p. 21
'Looking Down The Mast', *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, May 1, 1939
'Schooner Henrietta was film boat in "Captain Courageous"', *Telegraph*, Brisbane, May 1939
'Sailing around the world, *Courier Mail*, Brisbane, May 1939
Newspaper clippings; Powell Scrapbooks: Vol 1, *ibid.*
- 66 Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell, ASIO, personal files, *op. cit.*

Count Felix Von Luckner & Crew of “Der Seeteufel”, Correspondence files, A367 series, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

67 Signed police informant’s report, written on private company letterhead, 12 June, 1940: ASIO, personal files, op. cit.

68 Powell Geoffrey, typed statement, to Intelligence, HMA, Naval Establishments, Garden Island, Sydney, 19th September, 1940: ASIO, personal files, op. cit.

69 Newspaper clippings; Powell Scrapbooks: Vol 1, ibid.

70 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Count Felix Von Luckner’, *Worms In A Tin*, chapter VII, ibid.

71 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Vertigo in Sydney’, *Australia National Journal*, Sydney Ure Smith, (March 1, 1939) pp. 56-57

72 Powell, Geoffrey, *Worms in a Tin*, ibid.

73 *Red Comb Bulletin*, Poultry Farmers’ Co-operative Society, Brisbane, No. 134, (July 1939), and No. 135, (August 1939)

Powell’s poultry photography was made in the best of modernist traditions and deserves wider appreciation.

also;

‘Miss Elaine Hamill radio and film player’ *Teleradio*, Brisbane, July 1 1939, p.29, see, *Re-introducing Geoffrey Powell*, exhibition pamphlet (2004), plate: four

Teleradio, section 1: Home Interests, Brisbane, July 8, 1939, p. 5

Teleradio, section 1: Home Interests, Brisbane, July 22, 1939, p. 22

74 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘I stowed Away with Count von Luckner’, *Pertinent*, November, 1940, pp. 5-9

Powell Geoffrey, ‘Cattle Country’ photography by Herbert Fishwick, Ure-Smith, Spencer, eds., *Australia National Journal*, Sydney Ure Smith, Sydney, March 1st, 1942, pp. 57-59

Powell Scrapbooks, Vol 1, ibid.

75 for example;

Wells, E., ABC, Sydney, typed reference, (1940); uncatalogued original documents; Powell Estate, Brisbane

ABC, rehearsal notices, Sydney and Brisbane, (1937-1940 and 1954); uncatalogued original documents; Powell Estate, Brisbane

ABC payment advice slips (1940 and 1954); uncatalogued original documents; Powell Estate, Brisbane

Powell, draft Radio Play scrips: uncatalogued original documents; Powell Estate, Brisbane

Colin G. Moore, Powell, G.B., Application for the registration of copyright in a dramatic work, 'The Fifth Collum', (28 June 1940): National Archives of Australia, Canberra

76 Powell negative collection: Powell Estate, Brisbane.

77 see

'Bailing Water', (1938) Powell Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, (Boiling Water) [sic] Accn No: NGA 84.1865

78 Lovell, Jennifer, "The Camera Art of Geoffrey Powell" *NLA News*, Volume XVI Number 7, April 2006, p. 8

Smith J. Craig, The Geoffrey Powell Archive, Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell: "The Forgotten Australian Documentary Photographer" (A chronology of his life and work from 1918 to 1956) NGA Powell File 107-112

Note: this document, compiled by the author in 2001, is an early draft and was intended only as a preliminary guide. Many of the details and assumptions contained therein have since been found to be incorrect and are not supported by the greater body of evidence now available. Researchers should refer to following completed and referenced document;

Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell: an annotated chronology of his life and work*, unpublished research notes (revised 2005)

The logo masthead containing Powell's signature and self-portrait, identifies the early version. This graphic was later adopted by "The Geoffrey Powell Archive Incorporated" (2003). No connection between this author's research on Geoffrey Powell and information provided via that organisation should be inferred.

79 see

Willis, Anne-Marie, *Picturing Australia-A History of Photography*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde (1988) pp. 202-204

80 Powell Geoffrey, 'Cattle Country' photography by Herbert Fishwick, Ure-Smith, Spencer, eds., *Australia National Journal*, Sydney Ure Smith, Sydney, March 1st, 1942, pp. 57-59

81 Powell scrapbooks: Vol.1, *ibid.*

Searching for Powell; revisionist attitudes

82 Edwards, Rebecca, 'Forgotten Territory', Books Arts Movies, *The Courier Mail*, on-line, Brisbane (28 Jan 06)

83 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell, A Chronology of his Life and Work*, *ibid.*, and references cited within.

84 Powell, Geoffrey, Typed Statement, 16 November 1954: ASIO Personal Files, *op cit.*

85 Powell, Geoffrey, *Worms in a Tin*, *ibid.*

86 Those few instances where Powell's undertook commissioned photographic assignments in the State of Queensland have been identified.

see;

supra note 73

and also;

Socialist Queensland Pineapple Farmer; assignment, Chandler HB ed, *Tribune*, *ibid.* (1945)

Powell Scrapbooks, *op. cit.*

As have all of Powell's negatives from Queensland, see Powell negative collection: Powell estate, Brisbane;

Quarter-plate format sheet film, Cairns, (September 1938)

Assorted cut negatives, 120-645 format, Gunnewarra Station, Mt Garnet, North Queensland (October-December, 1938)

Cut negatives, 120-645 format, Brisbane (May-December, 1939)

127 form roll films, bomb disposal operations, Atherton Tablelands, North Queensland, (c October 1943)

127 format cut negatives, (three) BCC-4KQ 'children's day' Stones Corner, (1954)

Note: The 1947 Miner's Federation, Amenities Campaign, for which Powell worked as photographer, included collieries in the Rosewood area of South East Queensland. The respective photography published in *Common Cause*, cannot definitively be attributed to Powell, or any other photographer.

Surviving original prints from Powell's Queensland photography include just;

'Bailing Water' (1938): Powell Collection NGA; *op cit*

'Worker on Queensland pineapple plantation' (c1938) [sic] 1945: Accn No NGA 84.1866

87 'Bailing Water', self portrait (1938); *op cit.*

'untiled' portrait of flatmate, Spring Hill, Brisbane'; *Re-introducing Geoffrey Powell*, exhibition pamphlet (2004), plate: sixteen

88 Powell, Geoffrey, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, accompanying exhibition pamphlet, privately published, Brisbane, (Jan 2004), plates fifteen and sixteen

It has been reported (and repeated elsewhere) that;
“the late David Moore selected the images presented in this publication.”

The author of this comment, Warwick Powell has misunderstood the processes involved in putting together the 2004 retrospective of his father’s photographic work. Moore at the time was dealing with a prolonged illness and preoccupied with his own, much more substantial retrospective for the NGA. Nevertheless, despite his other commitments Moore generously made himself available for consultation and his views were taken into account. This involvement should not necessarily be broadly interpreted as an indorsement by David Moore of Powell’s photography. While Moore was particularly interested in Powell’s photojournalism imagery he was also quite critical of other aspects of his work. Neither, Warwick Powell or The Geoffrey Powell Archive Inc. were directly involved in the production of the ‘Re-Introducing Geoffrey Powell Exhibition’ or the image selection process for it.

Powell Warwick, ‘The Images’ in, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, accompanying exhibition pamphlet, privately published, Brisbane, (Jan 2004)

89 Geoff Powell, Oral Sound recordings; Screen Sound Australia National Screen sound Archive

Moran, Albert, O’Regan, Tom ed, ‘Australian Film in the 1950s’, Nation Building: The Post-War Documentary in Australia (1945-1953) *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture*, Vol. 1 No. 1, (1987)

Albert Moran ‘Documentary Consensus: The Commonwealth Film Unit: 1954-1964’; in, T. O’Regan & B. Shoosmith eds. *History on/and/in Film*. Perth: History & Film Association of Australia, 1987, pp. 90-100.

Film Australia, ‘Outback’ interview with Lee Robinson

‘Biographical cuttings on Geoffrey Powell: former radio announcer,’ Ozlife, Powell Geoffrey, Australian National Library, Canberra.

90 Hoehne, Craig, “1954 (December) to 1955 (October), and 1980”; in *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell, A Chronology of his Life and Work*, *ibid.* (revised 2005)

91 ‘Collections Acquisitions’ Queensland Art Gallery *Annual Report 2004-2005*, Appendixes, (2005) p 41

92 (boiling water) [sic] self-portrait, ‘Bailing Water’, (1938); Powell Collection NGA, Canberra: Accn No: NGA 84.1865

93 Edwards, Zeny, Newton, Gael, *Shades of Light: Photography and Australia, 1839-1988*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, (1988) p 128

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- 94 'The Image of Man: photography & Masculinity 1920-1950', a visual Arts event in the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, New South Wales Art Gallery (February-April 1997)
- 95 Correspondence; Powell file, NGA, Canberra
- 96 <http://cs.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?WorkID=99053>
- 97 Jolly, Martyn, 'Edward Cranstone, Photographer', *Photofile*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Autumn (1984), pp. 1-4

Attempts to rebuild and wartime realities

- 98 Typed job references (1940); uncatalogued original documents: Powell estate, Brisbane
- 99 for example;
 'untitled' women holding a magazine, (1941) Powell Collection NGA, Canberra, Accn No NGA 89.2189
 'untitled' women wearing long floral dress, (1941) Powell Collection NGA, Canberra, Accn No NGA 89.2288
 'Reg Johnston', *Wireless Weekly*, cover, 28 June 1941
 'soldier and girlfriend', *Woman*, cover, 20 October, 1941
see also;
 4x5 sheet film negatives, commercial studio portraits (1940-1942) Powell estate, Brisbane
- 100 Powell Scrapbooks: *ibid.*
- 101 see;
 'Sheet Film Formats: 4x5" format sheet film' Smith, Craig, O'Rourke, Caroline, *The Geoffrey Powell Archive negative collection: Initial Assessment Conservation Strategies Report*, CAC, The Whole-Plate Camera Studio, unpublished, Brisbane, (April, 2001): NGA Geoffrey Powell File, No. 117, p. 6
- 102 Powell, Geoffrey, *Worms in a Tin*, *ibid.*
- 103 Commonwealth of Australia, Deputy Director general Operations, Sydney, NSW, 8:30 to 10:30 am, 15th November 1954 and 9:00 to 10:00 am, 16th November 1954 Bruntell Street, Chatham, Taree, NSW, Transcript of interview, 17th November, 1955: ASIO, personal files, *op. cit.*, Note; poor quality document reproduction.

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- 104 Commonwealth of Australia, military service record, NX 126352, Lt POWELL Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn
- 105 see;
Encyclopaedia: 'Listing of official war photographers by conflict': Second World War, Australian War Memorial, Canberra
web reference; http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/official_photo/list.htm
- 106 Much of Cranstone's Department of Information photography is held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and also the National Archives of Australia, Canberra. Cranstone's seven personal ring bound portfolios are held by the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. These contain over 350 prints that span his full career, including that photography made for the AWC.
- 107 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Camera Art', *Australia's Progress*, *ibid.*, p. 16
- 108 127 roll film format, uncut negatives; uncatalogued negative collection: Powell estate, Brisbane.
- 109 Commonwealth of Australia, military service record, N.X. 126352, Lt POWELL Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn

Resurrection as a working photographer (1944)

- 110 Ennis, Helen, 'Geoffrey Powell: A Worker Photographer', paper presented to the Art Assoc. of Aust. Conference, September 22, 1991
- 111 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell, A Chronology of his Life and Work*, *ibid.*, (revised 2005) and references cited therein
- 112 Powell, scrapbooks: *ibid.*
- 113 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs', Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia's Progress*, Vol. 1 No. XXIX, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW (February, 1946)
'Amenities Campaign editorial', Ross, Edgar, ed. *Common Cause*, Miner's Federation of Australia, Sydney, Vol. XII No. 8 (March 1, 1947), to Vol. XIII No 32 (August 21, 1948)
- 114 ASIO, Act, transcript of telephone message, 8/11/54, request employment details subject 'Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell's', DoI employment record. ASIO personal file, *op. cit.*

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- 115 Commonwealth of Australia, military service record, N.X. 126352, Lt POWELL Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn
- 116 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell: an annotated chronology of his life and work*, *ibid.* (revised 2005)
- 117 ‘Preparing Home for Duke and Duchess in New Home’, *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, (December 16, 1944), pp. 12-13
‘Mothers Help Run This School’, *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, (December 25, 1944), p. 17
‘Canberra, The Gloucester’s New Home Town’, *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, (February 3, 1945), pp. 16-17
‘Duke and Duchess in New Home’, *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, (April, 14, 1945), p. 16
- 118 Commonwealth of Australia, Deputy Director general Operations, Sydney, NSW, 8:30 to 10:30 am, 15th November 1954 and 9:00 to 10:00 am, 16th November 1954 Bruntell Street, Chatham, Taree, NSW, Transcript of interview, 17th November, 1955: ASIO, personal files, *op. cit.*
- 119 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘The Telegraph Year’, *Worms In A Tin*, chapter 22, *ibid.*, pp. 4-5
- 120 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Camera Art’, *Australia’s Progress*, *ibid.* p. 16

A social consciousness (1945-1946)

- 121 see;
Hoehne, Craig, ‘Powell’s Communist Party’, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell biographical notes*, unpublished research notes, (2003)
- 122 namely;
Ralph Foster, Stanley Hawes, Joris Ivens and John Heyer.
- 123 see;
Daily Telegraph, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Tribune* newspaper clippings, Powell scrapbooks: Vol. 2, *op. cit.*

¹²⁴ References asserting the view that Powell was employed by Tribune are common throughout his personal ASIO file.

for example;

“...one Geoffrey Powell who openly admits he is the official photographer for “Tribune.”

internal agents report compiled from transcripts of earlier informants report 11/6/1952, *ibid.*

¹²⁵ Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Central Office, ‘Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell’, alpha-numeric series A6119, (1949-) Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell, Royal Commission on Espionage investigation file documents (1954-55)

Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Reputation’, *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.* (c 1986)

Powell, Geoffrey ‘TRESURE TROVE !’ Typed letter addressed to Helen Ennis, curator pf photography Australian Nation Gallery, 22 February 1989, NGA Powell file 84/667

¹²⁶ Lockwood Rupert, J series Documents, J 26 and J37 (c 1945-46); transcripts of Petrov Papers: Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Central Office, ‘Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell’, alpha-numeric series A6119, (1949-)

see;

document J26 transcript; *supra* note, 188

¹²⁷ Powell Geoffrey, Typed Statement, 16 November, 1954: Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Central Office, ‘Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell’, alpha-numeric series A6119, (1949-)

¹²⁸ see;

Ziegler, Oswald, Ed., *Australian Photography 1947* *ibid.* (1947), p. 49 and 44 respectively

¹²⁹ Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Reputation’, *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*

¹³⁰ In discussing about the ‘Making a Speech’ photograph with ASIO investigators, Powell explains that it was one from a series done for “*Tribune*”.

“He [Powell] had taken it [Making a Speech] as part of a series for Tribune. He [Powell] passed them onto the “Herald” [sic, actually Consolidated Press] who subsequently published two of these in *AM*.”

Commonwealth of Australia, transcript of interview, Deputy Director General (operation’s) ASIO, Royal Commission Section, Sydney NSW, 27 November 1954

see;

‘Photography Discovers the People’, *AM: The Australian Magazine*, Consolidated Press, Sydney (July, 1948) p. 34

The two photographs published in *AM* were ‘Family Group Awaiting Eviction’ (more commonly published under the title “Family Group”), and ‘Delegates to a Conference’. This reference links ‘Family Group’ with the contrived compositions of ‘Making a Speech’ and ‘Delegates to a Conference’ and their origins as promotional illustrations for the 1945 congress of the Sydney ACP.

‘Truant’s’ was the only other of Powell’s images offered up for publication at that time. Given stylistic commonalities with the other known series elements one may hypothesize that ‘Truants’ too formed part of the Sydney Congress series.

see also;

Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Reputation’, chapter 25 and ‘The Past Catching Up’, chapter 26, *Worms In A Tin*, ibid.

131 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Reputation’, *Worms In A Tin*, ibid.

132 *The Saturday Evening Post*, Curtis Publishing Company, Philadelphia (February 20, 1943)

see also;

Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Reputation’, *Worms In A Tin*, ibid.

Therein, Powell describes how his “Freedom of Speech” aka ‘Making a Speech’, image was made.

133 Subject file documents 39 and 47, (1954) Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Central Office, ‘Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell’, personal files; alpha-numeric series A6119, (1949-)

134 Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Reputation, *Worms In A Tin*, ibid.

135 ‘As others See Us!’, compiled by, Mansill, N. M. W., Le Guay, ed. *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 2 No. 3, March -April (1949), ‘Family Group’, pp 20-21

136 Hoehne, Craig, *A timetable overview of Powell’s photographic career*, unpublished research notes (2003)

137 ‘Progress Goes to School’, Chiplin, Rex, and Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia’s Progress*, Vol. 1, No. XXVIII, Chandler H. B. Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, (January 1946) pp. 35-43

Powell, Geoffrey, ‘Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs’, Chiplin, Rex, and Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia’s Progress*, Vol. 1 No. XXIX, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW (February, 1946)

‘Amenities Campaign editorial’, Ross, Edgar, ed. *Common Cause*, Miner’s Federation of Australia, Sydney, Vol. XII No. 8 (March 1, 1947), to Vol. XIII No 32 (August 21, 1948)

138 see;

‘Photography-A Social Weapon’, Le Guay, Lawrence, ed., *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 1 No. 1, November – December, (1946), ‘Truants’ and ‘Family Group’ pp.16 and 17 respectively.

‘Photography Discovers the People’, *AM: The Australian Magazine*, Consolidated Press, Sydney (July, 1948) ‘Family Group Awaiting Eviction’ and ‘Delegates at a Political Meeting’, p. 34

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- 'As others See Us!', compiled by, Mansill, N. M. W., Le Guay, ed. *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 2 No. 3, March -April (1949), 'Family Group', p 21
- 'Family Group', Le Guay, Lawrence, ed., *A Portfolio of Australian Photography*, H. J. Edwards, Sydney (1949) p. 62
- 'Truants', 'Family Group' and Delegates at Political Conference', Ziegler, Oswald, ed., *Australian Photography 1947* (annual) Ziegler Gotham Publications, Sydney, (1948), pp. 44, 49 and 171
- 139 'Photography-A Social Weapon', Le Guay, Lawrence, ed., *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 1 No. 1, November – December, (1946), 'Family Group' p.17
- 'As others See Us!', compiled by, Mansill, N. M. W., Le Guay, ed. *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 2 No. 3, March -April (1949), 'Family Group', p 21
- 'Family Group', Le Guay, Lawrence, ed., *A Portfolio of Australian Photography*, H. J. Edwards, Sydney (1949) p. 62
- 140 Le Guay, Lawrence, 'The Modern Trend in Photography', Ziegler, Oswald, ed., *Australian Photography 1957* (annual) Ziegler Gotham Publications, Sydney, (1947), p. 10
- 141 Pers. comm, Mc Mahons Point, 22nd September, 2001
- 142 see;
- Re-introducing Geoffrey Powell*, *ibid.*, plate: eight

Cranstone and Powell: two leftwing views

- 143 Jolly, Martyn, 'Edward Cranstone, Photographer', *Photofile*, Vol. 21 No. 1 Autumn (1984), pp. 3-4
- 144 Willis, Anne-Marie, *Picturing Australia-A History of Photography*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde (1988) pp. 188-190
- 145 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Photography–A Social Weapon', *ibid.* (1946), p. 16 and 60
- 146 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs', Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia's Progress*, Vol. 1 No. XXIX, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW (February, 1946)
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- 147 Cranstone, Edward, seven ring-bound portfolios; Cranstone Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
- 148 Ennis, Helen, 'A Quest for Geoffrey Powell', *SHOT*, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (1992), p. 38
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- 153 'Progress Goes to a Picnic', Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia's Progress*, Vol. No. XXVI, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW (November, 1945), pp. 41-48
- 'Progress Goes to School', Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia's Progress*, Vol. 1, No. XXVIII, Chandler H. B. Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, (January 1946) pp. 35-43
- Powell, Geoffrey, 'Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs', Chiplin, Rex, Oldham, Ray, eds., *Australia's Progress*, Vol. 1 No. XXIX, Chandler H.B., Newsletter Printery, Forest Lodge, NSW (February, 1946)
- 154 Edward LF Cranstone, Australian War Memorial Collection, Canberra and Ferguson, National Archives of Australia, Canberra

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161 Ross, Edgar, *A History of the Miners' Federation*, Australasian Coal and Shale Federation., (1970)

162 see also;

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165 pers, comm. Suzi Miller (nee Powell) August 2005

Authentic recreations (1945)

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- 167 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*
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- 169 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*
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- 172 L. Cpl., Mc Quillan, Ernest, Photographic Collection, Australian War Memorial, Canberra
- 173 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Camera Art', *ibid.*, p. 17
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- 175 Rothstein, Arthur, transcript of interview with; Doud, Richard, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, New York, May 25, 1964
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- 177 Powell, Geoffrey, photograph caption notes, 'Camera Art', *ibid.* p. 17
- 178 *ibid.*, p.17
- 179 Moore, David, *Australian Photographer*, vol. 1, Black and White, Chapter and Verse, Sydney, (1988), p. 38
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- 181 Evans, Walker, 'Art in America' interview with Katz, 1971
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- 183 Dupain, Max, 'Factual Photography' in Ziegler, Oswald, ed., *Australian Photography 1947* (annual) Ziegler Gotham Publications, Sydney, (1948), p. 11
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- 185 Critique Comment 'As others See Us!', compiled by, Mansill, N. M. W., Le Guay, ed. *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 2 No. 3, March -April (1949), p 20
- 186 Powell, Geoffrey, typed letter to Charles Merewether, copy, 17th September 1981

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- 187 Edwards, Zeny, Newton, Gael, *Shades of Light: Photography and Australia, 1839-1988*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, (1988) p 128
- 188 Ennis, Helen, "A Quest for Geoffrey Powell" SHOT, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (1992), pp. 38-41
- 189 Lovell, Jennifer, "The Camera Art of Geoffrey Powell" *NLA News*, Volume XVI Number 7, April 2006, pp. 7-10
- 190 Australian War Memorial, Encyclopaedia: Listing of official war photographers by conflict: Second World War, Canberra, op cit.
- 191 Hoehne Craig A short biography of Geoffrey Bruce St. Aubyn Powell (1918-1989) in, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell; Australia's forgotten documentary photographer*, ibid (2004)
- 192 'Photography—A Social Weapon', *Contemporary Photography*, ibid., p.
- 193 *Tribune*, New Series, Newsletter, Sydney, op. cit. May 1945-May1946
- 194 ..see;
Fox, Len, *Broad Left, Narrow Left*, autobiography, Potts Point, NSW, (1982)
- 195 Image caption, Ennis, Helen, "A Quest for Geoffrey Powell" SHOT, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (1992), p. 41
- 196 'Family Group' and 'Truants' publication record, op. cit

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- 197 Doiseneau, Robert; in Follian, John, 'Romance & Reality', *Good Weekend, The Age Magazine*, John Fairfax, Sydney, February 4, 2006, p 29

Doctrinal limitations of a leftwing photographer (1945-46)

- 198 Sandovinkov, Petrov Papers, G Series 'Documents, G5', (c1948)
Lockwood, Rupert, Petrov Papers, J Series Documents, J26 and J37 (c 1945-46)
document transcripts; Subject file document, (1954) Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Central Office, 'Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell', personal files; alphanumeric series A6119, (1949-)
- 199 Lockwood, Rupert, 'transcript of Document J 26', Petrov Papers, J Series Documents, (c 1945-46), from Petrov Commission investigation (1954).
"GEOFFREY POWELL, who was with the Sydney 'Daily Telegraph' then got a job as a photographer with the Tribune, claiming that he wanted to leave the capitalist press, and do honest work, was exposed as a Security Agent. Powell admitted he had been working with the Security Police, but claimed he had recently given it up."
- 200 'Collectables', *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (August, 1945), p. 49 and 52
'Personality Parade' portrait of Professor and Mrs Dixon Wecter, chair of American History at the University of Sydney, *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (August, 1945), p. 34
'Personality Parade' portrait of Captain Anthony Kimmins, Chief of Naval Information for the British Pacific Fleet, *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (August, 1945), p. 36
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'Portrait of Lloyd Ring-Coleman', *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (September, 1945), p. 35
Powell, Geoffrey, 'The Charm of Old Buildings', *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (October, 1945), p. 45 and 46
'Personality Parade' Portrait of First Officer Margaret M. Bray WRNS, *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (October, 1945)

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- 201 see;
(Portrait of Man with Spectacles) (c1935) [sic] actual date of exposure (1945): Powell Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; NGA Accn No. 89.2193
first published;
'Portrait of Lloyd Ring-Coleman', *Australian National Journal*, Ure Smith, Sydney, (September, 1945), p. 35
- 202 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 35
- 203 Rothstein, Arthur, The Documentary Tradition, in Schunemen ed, *Photographic Communication*, chapter 5 The Photographer's Personal View Points and Philosophies, focal Press, London, (1971) p. 191
- 204 Powell, Geoffrey, (Young Communist) (Man), (c1948) [sic] [Powell's title, 'Communist Intellectual'] Bondi beach, Sydney [actual date of exposure] (1946): Powell Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Accn No NGA 84. 1864
see also;
'Amenities Campaign editorial', Ross, Edgar, ed. *Common Cause*, *ibid.*, op cit.
Chandler, C.H., ed., *Tribune*, *ibid.*, new series issues, op. cit.
'Progress Goes to a Picnic', *Australia's Progress*, *ibid.* (November, 1945), pp. 41-48
'Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs', *Australia's Progress*, *ibid.* (February, 1946)
- 205 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*
- 206 This cannot be said for Powell's South East Asian material from the 1960s, which contained numerous frames dedicated to Maoist and Cultural Revolution poster-art.

Influences toward Ideals and Outcomes

- 207 Powell's Sports Rolleiflex camera is held by one of his daughters, New South Wales; pers. comm. Suzi Miller, 2005
- 208 for example;
(Woman Fitter) also known by the title 'Female Factory Machinist' (c1948 [sic] actual exposure date c1945): Powell Collection: Australian National Gallery, Canberra; Accn No NGA 84.1868
see also;
'Discussion' Max Dupain and George Hoyningen-Huene; op. cit.
- 209 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 37

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- 210 Powell, Geoffrey, 'The Telegraph Year', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 4
- 211 *ibid.*, p. 5
- 212 Powell, Geoffrey, letter (copy) to Charles Merewether, 17th September 1981: Powell estate, Brisbane.
- 213 Poignant, Roslyn, 'The photographic witness?', Photogenic Paper, *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture*, Vol. 6 No. 2 (1991), p. 201
- 214 Powell, Geoffrey, 'The Past Catching Up', *Worms In A Tin*, chapter 26, *ibid.*, pp. 49-51
- 215 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Camera Art', *ibid.*, p. 17 [emphasis added]
- 216 Dupain, Max, 'A Note on Damien Parer' *Contemporary Photography*, May-June (1948), pp. 11 and 40
- 217 Powell, Geoffrey, 'The Telegraph Year', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 5
- 218 Powell, Geoffrey, 'Reputation', *Worms In A Tin*, *ibid.*, p. 34

Recognition and Consequences

- 219 Powell's second article for *Contemporary Photography* was concerned with filmmaking as opposed to photography.
Powell, Geoffrey, 'Film Technique for the Amateur' Le Guay, Lawrence, *Contemporary Photography*, Vol. 2 No. 9, June – July, (1950), p. 32
- 220 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell: an annotated chronology of his life and work*, *ibid.* (revised 2005)
- 221 Powell, Geoffrey 'Camera Art', *Australia's Progress*, *ibid.*, p. 16-17
- 222 'Photography—A Social Weapon', *Contemporary Photography*, *ibid.*
- 223 'Awards made', in 'Editors Note' Ziegler, Oswald, Ed., *Australian Photography 1947* (annual) Ziegler Gotham Publications, Sydney, (1948), p. 29
The 'Australian Photography 1947' bronze plaque awarded to Powell survives within the estate of Powell, Brisbane, Queensland

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- 224 'Photography Discovers the People', *AM magazine*, Consolidated Press, Sydney (July, 1948), p. 34
- 225 'GREAT STUFF', Browne, Frank, *Things I Hear*, series No. 89, independently published opinion sheet, Sydney, (12th July, 1948)
- 226 Powell, Geoffrey, 'TREASURE TROVE !' typed letter to Helen Ennis, Curator of Photography, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 22 February, 1989, pp. 1-2; NGA file 84/667

Conclusion: Where is Powell Now

- 227 Ennis, Helen, 'Geoffrey Powell: A Worker Photographer', *ibid.*, September 22 1991
- 228 Hoehne, Craig, *Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell, A Chronology of his Life and Work*, unpublished research notes (revised 2005)
- 229 Batt, Leon, *Pertinent*, self-published pocket literary magazine, Pertinent Publishing Co., (1940-1946)

Powell scrapbooks, *op. cit.*

Several of Powell's earlier (1930s) surrealist imagers were revisited with *Pertinent's* pages. After Powell joined the army in 1942 submissions to his friend's publication were credited under the by-line, 'Bruce St Aubyn', Powell's middle names. Powell was unpaid for his contribution to the magazine.

There are several instances here where published work surfaced after Powell had moved on in some way. For example, the *Common Cause* ran Powell's Amenities Campaign pictures into August 1948, nearly one and a half years after they had originally been made.

- 230 Ennis, Helen, "A Quest for Geoffrey Powell" *SHOT*, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (1992), p. 37
- 231 Gallery 482-Where art speaks for itself:
<http://gallery482.com.au/index.php/exhibitions/8/>
- 232 Ennis, Helen, "A Quest for Geoffrey Powell" *SHOT*, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (1992), p. 43
- 233 for example;
'Discussion', Max Dupain talking with George Hoyningen-Huene (1938): Powell collection: NGA and Dupain collection: NLA *op. cit.*

'Self Portrait', Bond Street Studio (c1938): original print: private collection, Sydney

'Portrait of Charley Muller', (Karl Müller), Sydney (1938) original print: Powell estate, Brisbane

'Bailing Water' self portrait, Gunnewarra Station, N. Qld (1938): Powell Collection, NGA, Canberra, op. cit.

'Untitled', Portrait of flatmate' (1939) posthumous print 2004, see, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, exhibition pamphlet, plate; sixteen

'Portrait of Soldier and Girlfriend', (1941) posthumous print 2004, see, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, exhibition pamphlet, plate; twelve

(Communist man) 'Communist Intellectual', (1946) Bondi Beach, Sydney: Powell collection, NGA, op. cit.

'Truants', (1946), op. cit.

'Untitled', portrait of a factory worker welding (1945) posthumous print 2004 see, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, exhibition pamphlet, plate: eleven

'Untitled', portrait of Lloyd Ring-Coleman (1945): Powell Collection, NGA, Canberra, op. cit.

Portraits and group portraits of coal miners from the Amenities Campaign (1947) posthumous prints 2004: private collection CFMEU Mining and Energy Division, Queensland, op. cit.

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Read, Gregory, director, *Photographers of Australia: Dupain, Sievers, Moore*, Documentary Film: Film Australia, (1992)