

FOREIGN INFLUENCES IN AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHY 1930-80

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Given the time at our disposal it is possible only to skim the surface of this challenging topic, looking at a selected range of areas and trying to assess their impact on Australian photography at its widest ambit. Film, photographic publications, exhibitions, photographers both immigrant and emigrant, and world politics all have their part to play in this examination.

It is perhaps useful to set out some caveats before commencing on this topic. As an undergraduate student of Cypriot archaeology many years ago, I learned, through the none-too quiet insistence of Professor James Stewart, that the inhabitants of Cyprus did not go to bed one night in Early Bronze I and awake the next morning to find it was Early Bronze II. Indeed he insisted that, apart from the odd cataclysmic earthquake, artistic styles have never changed abruptly in either place or time anywhere. I was, and remain, a dutiful student and thus do not subscribe to any notion that there was any orderly progression in photography from Pre-Raphaelites through Pictorialists etc to whatever post-modern “ism” is the “in” thing with critics today. Photographers, it seems to me, are not only constantly seeking to break new ground in the way they perceive and present the world but they are constantly revisiting the styles, techniques and processes of the past to assist them in that challenge. If one sought a simple example for this, those of you who visit the National Gallery will be able to compare Dupain’s superb Madonna-like portrait from New Guinea made during the war with the great iconic Sunbather made some years earlier.

Photography, perhaps more than any other visual art form, suffers from the vicissitudes of “fashion” - fashion imposed by curators, by dealers and, since the 1970s, by speculators. Who is or is not a “good” photographer, what constitutes a “good” photograph in a critical sense? Many fine photographers have been forgotten in few short decades, many present day “icons” will hopefully suffer the same fate. Fortunately this lecture will only address individual photographers in so far as they or their careers illustrate a particular point and in that sense they are all equally important.

While I have set 1930 as the terminus post quem, a slight digression is necessary to settle another firmly held view, namely that Australian photography between the wars was solidly Anglo-centric and admitted of nothing else because it knew of nothing else. While we have long known of the still unidentified Australian subscriber to the great *Camera Work*, that is hardly enough to undermine the view that Australian photography was largely ignorant of happenings in America or Europe at that time. However what is now clear is that American photographic magazines and annuals such as *US Camera* and *Modern Photography* were routinely imported into Australia. Thus Ansel Adams’ seminal article on The New Photography and “the necessity of sharp and distinct photography as opposed to the vague and blurred effects which imitate painting” that appeared in *Modern Photography 1934-35* was accessible to Australian photographers.¹ Similarly German photographic publications such as *Das Deutsches Lichtbild*, and a flood of publications in English supported by Ernst Leitz were also imported into Australia by booksellers or distributed by the camera importers. *Deutsches Lichtbild* for example had a prominent place in the library of Max Dupain while Axel Poignant got his copies from his aunt in England. At that time living in Perth, Poignant later recalled that the work of Cartier-Bresson was available to photographers in Perth in

¹Adams, Ansel. *The new photography*, “Modern Photography 1934-5, The studio annual of camera art”, The Studio Publications Inc., New York, nd., pp 9-18.

magazines during the 30's and that the work of photographers of the Farm Security Administration was also known.²

Perhaps more importantly, a search of American and European publications of the 1920's and 30's shows that Australians were relatively prolific in their submissions to and acceptance by foreign exhibitions. A few examples suffice. Peggy Clark appearing with platinum prints in the 1922 Pittsburgh Salon; Mallard, Eutrope and Wakeford selected for 5th International by a panel including Edward Weston; Le Guay, among others, selected in the 1939 *US Camera Annual*. Finally it is interesting to note in this context that Dr Julian Smith was given pride of place with the lead article "My aims and methods" in *The American Annual of Photography 1941*.³

Both at amateur and professional levels, Australian photographers had some continuing awareness of and opportunity to participate in a wider range of photographic experiences and styles than simply those offered by British artists, institutions and publications. That the majority continued to emulate British models, especially those of the English Pictorialist School was, I suggest, a reflection of the taste and understanding of the wider Australian public and a matter of preference, rather than one of ignorance, on the part of Australian photographers.

Having dealt with those important but perhaps extraneous matters lets us commence our proper task not with photography but with politics, albeit briefly. In the early 1920's Russia had been transformed by a people's revolution and it seemed likely that Germany, ravaged by the effects of the Versailles Treaty was on the verge of another. The new social order demanded a new artistic canon to replace the now outdated symbolism and expressionism, a synthesis of the arts and crafts in an industrial context. In the new USSR the central theme of Soviet photography was the performance and meaning of work in the spirit of the Party.⁴ To varying degrees the New Photography⁵, as it came to be known, was characterised by the use of strong diagonals, sharp focus, extreme view-points including close-up and strong up and down-shots, the often violent displacement of the image within the frame and low angle perspectives to raise the human figure to heroic proportions. All were designed to challenge, indeed to overthrow conventional viewpoints and perceptions of reality.

The rapid spread of this new doctrine was transformed in major ways in the 1930's by the rise of the National Socialists in Germany and the overthrow of the Spanish Republic by General Franco. In Germany in particular this led immediately to the dislocation of artists and the forcible closure of teaching establishments, most notably the Bauhaus. While it is now more clearly evident that the stylistic elements of the New Photography that were the art of socialism were easily, indeed seamlessly, adapted to needs of fascism, such was not the contemporary view. The political events that saw Soviet photography shown widely in the United Kingdom and Australia in the period of the Second World War, then suppressed as the Cold War followed, would influence photography in both those countries as we shall discuss.

²Newton, Gael. *Shades of Light: Photography and Australia 1839-1988*, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, 1988, p. 111 and Laurence Le Guay (ed.) *Australian Photography - A contemporary view*, Sydney, 1978.

³Smith, Dr Julian, *My aims and methods*, *The American Annual of Photography 1941*, American Photographic Publishing Co. Boston, 1940.

⁴Kozloff, Max, *Looking backward on the USSR in Construction*, in "The Utopian Dream, Photography in the Soviet Union 1918-1939", Laurence Miller Gallery, New York, 1992, p.12.

⁵*The New Vision: A Revolution in photography 1920-1940*, Australian National Gallery exhibition catalogue, 1987.

The photography of fascist Germany, in which we now see such strong parallels with Soviet photography, was reviled and suppressed.

An immediate consequence of these political events was a wave of emigration of artists from Germany to Britain, America and Australia. Here I acknowledge that from the outset the history of Australian photography is replete with individuals who immigrated to this country and either took up photography here or brought the skill with them.⁶ But while not exactly a wave, certainly not in numbers, it was those photographers who migrated to Australia, commencing in earnest with those fleeing Nazi persecution in Germany in the early 30's and soon after from most of Europe, who were to exert the most profound influence. These photographers brought with them not only a different canon of photographic style but a different discipline and methodology. Moreover they came, for the most part, from vastly different cultural backgrounds, certainly different from the basically Anglo-Celtic society that was pre-war Australia. Strangers, and viewed with that then-typical Australian suspicion of everything foreign, it is not surprising that they sought the company of and worked with other immigrant artists in a wide range of disciplines, reinforcing and augmenting each other's art.

Foremost among this first wave of immigrant photographers were Wolfgang Sievers in 1938, Margaret Michaelis and Helmut Newton in 1939 and Heinz Tichauer (Henry Talbot) in 1940. Helen Ennis provides us with a revealing portrait of this quartet in her article *Blue hydrangeas. Four émigré photographers*.⁷ Of the four Michaelis was already an established photographer when she arrived in Australia. Although originally trained as a graphic artist in her native Austria, Michaelis had worked in photographic studios in both Vienna and Berlin before opening her own studio in Barcelona where she lived from 1933 to 1937. In Barcelona Michaelis was involved in documenting the living conditions of slum dwellers in the Chinatown district for a group of progressive Spanish architects. The failure of the Spanish Republic saw her moving to England and then being selected for a berth under the Assisted Passage Scheme to Australia. On arrival she opened her own studio in Sydney where she attracted a mostly European, often Jewish, clientele. Michaelis specialised in portraiture and stage photography, including many of the early publicity photographs for the Bodenwieser Ballet. It is difficult to explain the very sharp difference in her photographic perceptions between Barcelona and Sydney, moving from architectural and documentary photography in the former to portrait and stage in the latter. Certainly, Michaelis was increasingly restricted by the growing official concerns with security, especially as her studio looked to the distant naval base at Garden Island. While she continued for a short time after the war, failing eyesight was to see her contribution to Australian photography cease in 1952. Notwithstanding her admitted feelings of isolation and immense loneliness in her new place of abode, Michaelis subsequently became an Australian citizen

Sievers had not only completed his photographic education at the Contempora School of Applied Arts in Berlin, an establishment which in part provided short trade courses for those who might seek to leave Germany, but by the middle of 1938 was employed there as a teacher. His identity as a photographer was already well established with a considerable body of work including advertising and portraiture created during a year-long stay in Portugal and a major body of material on the work of the Neo-classical architect Karl Schinkel. Although

⁶Not least Axel Poignant from Britain or Hans Hasenpflug who arrived from Germany in the early part of the 20th century.

⁷Ennis, Helen, *Blue hydrangeas. Four émigré photographers*, in *The Europeans, Émigré artists in Australia 1930-1960*, Roger Butler (ed.) National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 1997.

Sievers had arranged to emigrate to Australia⁸, he was still called up for the Luftwaffe and had to flee Germany at short notice though not before he had sent all his photographic equipment to Australia. On arrival he set up a modern, well-equipped studio in South Yarra and had established himself as a specialist industrial photographer before the outbreak of war.⁹

Talbot and Newton, on the other hand, had none of this prior expertise or experience. Newton had had an apprenticeship with the celebrated Berlin studio of Else Simon, otherwise known as Yva, while Talbot's studies in graphic arts had been abruptly curtailed by the threat of Nazi proscription. Newton came to Australia via Singapore; Talbot, as an enemy alien, arriving in good company on the now-infamous *Dunera* with nothing save the clothes he was wearing.

The efforts of Australian security and suspicion of 'enemy aliens' that had largely denied Michaelis the opportunity to work to her potential during the war saw her three contemporaries serving their time in the Australian Army, Sievers and Talbot in Employment Companies and Newton as a truck driver. Several of Australia's leading artists and art critics of the period were either openly anti-semitic or derisive of the new art forms being introduced by émigré artists. Some went so far as to assert in their reviews that the exhibitions of these artists 'proved that Australian culture was at least 50 years ahead of Europe'

Following demobilisation, Sievers soon re-established his studio, this time in Collins Street, initially drawing many of his clients from fellow migrants including the architects Frederick Romberg, originally from Germany, and Ernst Fuchs who had arrived from Vienna. But he gradually abandoned architectural work, believing that there was little that was innovative in contemporary Australian architecture. Sievers' images of the post-war industrial boom of the 1960's reflect something of the aspirations of the Bauhaus philosophy that the dignity of traditional craftsmen might be retained through a union between workers and industrial production. The serenity and confidence of the individual worker is a frequent motif in these imposing photographs of massive industrial sites. Sievers married the ideals of the New Photography to a more humanist vision with the physical relationship between people and machines, between people and industrial products being central to his style. It was a style that was to inform and indeed shape industrial photography in Australia over the next two decades.

After the war Talbot recommenced formal studies in graphic design only to leave a year later to join his family in Bolivia. Here Talbot pursued his interest in photography, winning a gold medal in the Bolivian Salon two years later. Returning to Melbourne in 1950 Talbot worked for Peter Fox Studios, run by yet another émigré, originally Peter Fuchs, before moving to La Trobe Studios to take over Hans Hasenpflug's position in 1954. Talbot joined Newton in 1956, taking over his studio when Newton moved to England in 1959.¹⁰ Talbot was to have a

⁸One of his sponsors was the English-born photographer, Axel Poignant, then living in Western Australia.

⁹*The Life and work of Wolfgang Sievers*, Australian National Gallery exhibition catalogue, 1989.

¹⁰Newton had opened his own studio in 1946 in Melbourne, specialising in fashion photography. Newton's association with the studio continued with it being re-named *Helmut Newton and Henry Talbot* in 1959.

much more direct influence on emerging Australian photographers with his appointment as head of the Photography Department at the Preston Institute of Technology in 1973.¹¹

It is interesting to note the impact of these photographers on Australian applied photography, indeed their domination of fashion, industrial and architectural photography in the decade or so after the war. Both Sievers and Michaelis, the latter the only woman member, had joined the Institute of Photographic Illustrators in 1950. The Institute, which had been established in Sydney in 1947, sought to “raise the standard of photography in Australia and to foster a creative approach in the use of the camera in advertising and illustration”¹². Both Michaelis and Sievers were included in the Institute’s second exhibition in Sydney in 1950. In a similar spirit, and with even greater impact, was the 1953 exhibition mounted by Sievers and Newton in Melbourne. Reflecting the principles of both Bauhaus and Soviet New Photography, that the artist should be directly involved in modern industrial production, the introductory display panel to the exhibition declared that “the aim of the exhibition was to demonstrate, through actual work done, the potential of industrial and fashion photography as a means of better promotion and sales in business today”.

From the same time frame as the New Photography came another movement that was to have a profound impact on Australian photography during and immediately after the Second World War, the new concepts of documentary film¹³. These came to Australia from two quite distinct sources. The first came from the Soviet Union through books and films offered by the Australia-Soviet Friendship League. The second came from Great Britain initially through the writings of John Grierson published in *Cinema Quarterly*¹⁴, and the films of Harry Watt and others.¹⁵

On the Soviet side, the most significant publications were *The Cinema as graphic art* by Vladimir Nilsen and V. I. Pudovkin’s *Notes on a film director*, both of which were available in English. As with the dictates of the New Photography, Nilsen’s book broke new ground especially in dealing with the selection of camera angle and in espousing the elimination of middle distance in shots. Pudovkin was also closely studied, albeit somewhat covertly, for its explanation of the ‘Golden’ measure of film editing interspersed with Soviet polemic.

Nor were these techniques of interest solely to Australian film makers. The technique of using carefully selected, photographed and edited shots, each without movement, but taking on new functionality when correctly placed in the smooth grading of shots had direct implication for the still photographer. The impact of these new concepts is clearly seen in the still photography of Edward Cranstone and in the motion picture work of Damien Parer and Ray Bean to cite but some of the better known examples. Cranstone, who had learned his photography from John Kauffmann, joined the Department of Commerce in 1937 and was the head photographer when that department became the Department of Information in 1939.

¹¹Photographic education was centred in Melbourne at this time with the Prahran College of Advanced Education introducing a full-time course in photography in 1968. Athol Shmith became head of the department in 1972 being joined by John Cato in 1974.

¹²Gael Newton, op. cit. pg. 129.

¹³I am indebted to Mr. Roland Beckett for information on documentary film in Australia especially the role of the Melbourne Film Society, the Documentary Film Group and the Olinda and Newport Film Festivals of 1952.

¹⁴*Cinema Quarterly*, Winter, 1932, pg. 69. The French pre-war periodicals *La Revue du cinema* and *Cahiers du cinema* were also available in Australia.

¹⁵While the work of Robert J. Flaherty (*Nanook of the North* etc.) and Pare Lorentz (*The River* etc.) are classics of the genre it is not known if these were screened in Australia prior to the war.

Early in 1942 he was transferred as head photographer to the public relations department of the newly established Allied Works Council (AWC). The AWC, which was an Australian counterpart of the Soviet Stakhanovites, and the American Civil Construction Corps, was responsible for the construction of strategic aerodromes, roads, bridges and the like often in the most remote parts of Australia using conscripts aged 35-55, many of whom had been rejected for military service.

Cranstone has remarked on the impression that Soviet films that he had seen in Melbourne during the war made on him. Moreover he would have seen examples of Soviet imagery published in the newspaper, *The Tribune*, during 1939 and 1940. Indeed Cranstone also contributed photographs to *The Tribune* from 1944¹⁶. Some 500 of Cranstone's AWC images were shown in 1944 in a travelling exhibition which toured Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Regarded by the photographer as his most important body of work, Cranstone's AWC photographs reflect all of the stylistic canons of Soviet film and photography of this period - the iconisation of the subject using low viewpoint, the flattening of the background into a single planar 'drop-cloth', the use of extreme diagonals with the subject often severely truncated by the frame. Perhaps not surprisingly, Cranstone became a film maker after the war, working with the Commonwealth Film Unit until he retired in 1966.

Nor was interest in the documentary school confined to the east coast. Axel Poignant, an Anglo-Swedish migrant to Sydney in 1926, had settled in Perth in 1930. By 1935 Poignant had begun to experiment with the photo-essay format and the Leica camera alongside working in 16mm film making. Poignant joined forces with Hal Missingham, later to become Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, to hold a joint exhibition in 1941 in the gallery of *The West Australian* newspaper in Perth. The foreword to the catalogue set forth a succinct statement of the role of photography in modern society in the terminology of the New Photography. It is probable that this exhibition was the first held in Australia to present the documentary philosophy in photography.¹⁷ A more direct contact with the British Documentary Movement came with the arrival of Harry Watt towards the end of the war to film *The Overlanders* for the British Ealing Studios. Poignant recalls that for him, as for the other Australians involved, working with Harry Watt during the nine months shooting "was a turning point in my professional development".¹⁸

In his capacity as head photographer of the Department of Information, Cranstone recruited Damien Parer, whom he had met some years earlier at Kauffmann's, and the brash young New Zealander, George Silk. In an interview with Martin Jolly, then with the National Gallery, Cranstone recalled that Parer was also greatly influenced by the ideals of the documentary film makers in both these camps and had followed Grierson's writings in *Cinema Quarterly*. Parer's professional still photography had been show-cased in the *Contemporary Camera Groupe* exhibition held at the David Jones' gallery in 1938 and largely organised by Dupain. The most significant aspect of this somewhat mixed exhibition, was the inclusion of the work of the younger professional photographers of the modernist school Le Guay, Cotton and Roberts alongside the doyens of the Pictorialist school, Cazneaux, Buckle and Bostock.

¹⁶Martin Jolly, *Edward Cranstone, Photographer, Photofile*, Autumn, 1984, pg. 3.

¹⁷*Axel Poignant - Photographs 1922-1980*, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1982.

¹⁸Axel Poignant in *Australian Photography - A contemporary view*, Sydney, 1978, pg. 8

The influence of foreign photographic books and publications in the development of Australian photography between the wars has already been mentioned. Of the major Australian photographic publications during this period, *Harrington's Photographic Journal* and *The Australasian Photo-Review*, the former had ceased publication in 1927, only the AP-R had sought to promote both the New Photography and the Documentary movement, going so far as to note in 1931 that the 1930 *Das Deutsches Lichtbild* annual contained photography that "goes well beyond the bounds of orthodox pictorial work...a department that seems to have come to a standstill." The debate between the Pictorial School and members of the New Photography school, such as Max Dupain, was also continued in both *The Home* and *Art in Australia*.¹⁹ The years immediately prior to the war had produced two Australian magazines, *Walkabout*²⁰ and *Pix* that seemed to offer an outlet for those working in the tradition of the photo-essay but both either lacked the enthusiasm to pursue that objective or saw it as secondary to their main.

The Second World War wrought a profound change in photography in Australia. A considerable number of photographers saw service overseas providing photographic coverage of the war. Pictorialism as still practised by Frank Hurley was not wanted, either by editors or by the public. Graphic, bold indeed heroic images were what was wanted and provided by the likes of Parer, Ferguson, Le Guay and others. With the entry of the Americans into the war and the stationing of US troops in Australia, US magazines such as *Life* and *Look* became more readily accessible, not only exposing Australian photographers to a different canon of photography but introducing Australian audiences to a totally different style of photographic reportage as well as a different styles of photography in advertising, sports and fashion.

David Moore is perhaps the most important of those Australian photographers who left to develop their creative abilities, returning not only to build a successful career but to exert a significant influence on the development of photography in all its aspects, an influence that continues to this day. David Moore had been introduced to the works of Edward Weston in his teenage years and was hooked on photography. By the time he went to work for Max Dupain five years later he was literate in the images of great American and European photographers.²¹ Attracted to photojournalism, Moore undertook an extensive photo-reportage on the activities surrounding the arrival, berthing and departure of the P&O liner *Himalaya*. The local agents gave him every assistance with the ten-day project but nothing came of it in Australia. Arriving in England in 1951, Moore was able to sell the photo-essay to Sphere which published it in December of that year although he was not credited with either text or pictures.²² Moore was a strong advocate of realism, of a direct capturing of the event before him. As he later said "once you start altering facts within a picture, you undermine the strength of photography."²³ Assignments with *Life*, *Time*, *Look* and *The Observer*, took Moore to Europe, Africa, the United States and the UK before he returned to Australia in 1958 to specialise in the American industrial and magazine markets. But perhaps his most enduring contribution to Australian photography will be seen to be the major role he

¹⁹Gael Newton, op. cit. pg. 111.

²⁰*Walkabout* was a tourism-oriented magazine heavily subsidised by the Victorian Railways.

²¹David Thomas in *Contemporary Australian Photographers, Volume 1, David Moore*, Richmond Hill Press, Richmond Hill, Victoria, 1980, unpaginated.

²²David Rossi, *Naturalism and the establishment of photography as an art form in mid-century Australia*, unpublished thesis, University of Sydney, 1996, pg. 35.

²³David Moore, *Australian photographer*, vol. 1, pg. 38.

played in developing the concept for and guiding the establishment of The Australian Centre for Photography.

After the war change in the domestic scene was not long in coming. In 1947 Laurie Le Guay, recently returned from England, established the magazine *Contemporary Photography*²⁴. It was a curious mixture of the old and the new, Cazneaux conducted the print analysis of readers' submissions while Cranstone and Dupain provided articles on documentary photography. The magazine was the first attempt to provide a high quality magazine for showing the work of Australian photographers while seeking to further serious debate on the role and direction of photography in Australian society. Le Guay, in his editorial columns, provided strong support for the concept of photographers being formally qualified along the lines of the then-British system and strongly supported the work of newly arrived immigrant photographers. In 1950 he observed "while Australian photographers are inclined to gyrate in a deep rut when they have everything their own way, it wouldn't be a bad idea if they looked beyond the showcase of their nearest opposition from time to time....Is it any wonder that photographers from abroad have quickly risen to the top?"²⁵ While relatively short-lived, *Contemporary Photography*, did much to introduce Australian photographers to international best practice. It was to be the first of a series of initiatives by Le Guay to establish Australian photography on a sound footing both here and internationally.

With the demise of *Contemporary Photography* came a new venture which marks the commencement of a predominantly American influence on Australian photography, the launch of the Australian edition of the US *Popular Photography*²⁶ in December 1950. Published in Australia by James Coleman, and initially taking its content direct from its American parent, the journal was aimed squarely at the amateur market. With a decision to move to an all-Australian content in late 1961, the magazine broadened its scope to provide some critical assessment of material.

The two decades following the end of the war saw both a new wave of migration to Australia and an exodus of Australians overseas some never to return, others to make a lasting contribution to Australian photography. Among many others, Paul Cox and Ingeborg Tyssen from Holland, Ed Douglas and John Fields from the USA, John Hearder and Graham McCarter from the UK soon established themselves as photographers of note while some, like Ed Douglas, were to make a significant contribution to photographic education in Australia. Joe Mitchell, originally from the UK, was to play a significant role not only in the photographic retail trade in Sydney, but a major role in the technical education of amateur photographers²⁷, especially through his articles on colour photography in *Contemporary Photography*. As noted above, their success was not without some complaint from locals, shaken by the competition.

Two events in 1959 were to have a profound effect on Australian photographers and on Australian perceptions of photography. The first was the arrival of Steichen's epic *The Family of Man* exhibition which was shown in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, the second

²⁴ *Contemporary Photography* was first published in 1946, continuing until 1950.

²⁵ *Contemporary Photography*, vol. 2 no. 7, Jan-Feb 1950, pg. 11

²⁶ Le Guay was honorary editor for many years.

²⁷ Mitchell and Kevin Ashton were responsible for seeing into publication *The Beutler Technique*, Sydney 1957. The work written by Marcell Seidler, brother of Harry Seidler and an established architectural photographer, had a major impact on contemporary black and white photography.

the arrival of Robert Frank's book *The Americans*. Notwithstanding the strictures imposed by the theme of the exhibition, the size, 503 works, scope 63 countries including Japan and the USSR, and the magnitude of the display with most of the photographs enlarged to mural size made this headline news in those cities in which it was exhibited. For several Australian photographers seeing this exhibition provided the stimulus to forego existing careers and move to photography, Robert McFarlane being one who immediately comes to mind.

Frank's *The Americans* provided a startling, almost shocking contrast to the utopian vision of human society presented by Steichen, not least for the American public who had never before been presented with such a mirror to their society. Critically reviewed in overseas magazines at the time, Frank's examination of American society continues to be seen as a turning point in modern photography. Gael Newton tells the story of an Australian photographer so desperate to obtain a copy that he took the bus from Adelaide to Melbourne intent on appropriating the State Library's copy, only to find on arrival that it had already been stolen. A curious but no less telling example of the contemporary importance attached to this work.

If the 1960's were a period of transition in Australian photography from the high point of fashion, advertising and photojournalism of the previous decade to the highly personalised documentary work that will characterise the next, the latter part of the decade saw a number of significant undertakings which would become the driving forces for the internationalisation of Australian photography.

In 1967 the National Gallery of Victoria established a committee to oversee the creation of a Department of Art Photography which came into being with a staff of one, Jennie Boddington, in 1972 complete with a corridor on the top floor as its exhibition space. Nor was Sydney inactive with the establishment of the Australian Foundation for Photography, later the Australian Centre for Photography, being established finally in 1974 with Graham Howe as its first director. The Art Gallery of New South Wales established a Department of Photography specialising in Australian photography of the pictorial era in 1974 with Gael Newton as first curator and the Art Gallery of South Australia following suit three years later with Alison Carroll. It should be noted that the latter institution had in fact begun to collect photography as a distinct discipline as early as the mid-1920's. Regional galleries such as the Ewing at Melbourne University, South Australian Contemporary Art Society, the Museum of Modern Art, Brisbane, and galleries as far apart as Townsville and Shepparton exhibited photography in its own right. Finally the Australian National Gallery, as it was then named, though without a curator until the arrival of Ian North in 1980, had been relatively aggressive since 1972 in acquiring a foundation collection of Australian and international photography.

At the same time both commercial galleries specialising in photography and photographer-run galleries emerged in Victoria. Among the latter Brummels was established in 1972 by Rennie Ellis, and followed in 1974 by The Photographers Gallery and Workshop²⁸, and the commercial Church Street Gallery established by Joyce Evans in 1977.

In terms of foreign influence, these developments had an almost instant impact, with a veritable flood of exhibitions by major figures. Notable were the British Council exhibition of Bill Brandt in 1971, and the French Foreign Ministry's major exhibition of Cartier-Bresson in

²⁸Founded by Paul Cox, Ingeborg Tyssen, John F. Williams and Rod McNicoll, the Gallery was taken over in 1975 by photographers Ian Lobb and Bill Heimerman.

1974, both having extensive touring programs, the latter touring some nine public galleries throughout the country. These represented the first opportunity for Australian photographers, at least in the major cities, to see the work of major international figures in 'the original silver' in Australia.

But the overwhelming influence was American. The impact of exhibitions held by the NGV was reinforced by exhibitions of the work of Ralph Gibson, William Clift, Paul Caponigro, Duane Michals and Harry Callahan at The Photographers Gallery and by the series of lectures and workshops that the artists conducted during those exhibitions. Joyce Evans also organised important exhibitions during this period but again the focus was American with work by Minor White, Jerry Uelsmann, Les Krims and others. With the establishment of the Australian Centre for Photography, major shows of American photography, many of which toured extensively, became relatively commonplace. Australian audiences were treated to seeing the work of master photographers 'in the flesh' as it were with Farm Security Administration, Edward Weston - 50 Photographs, Erich Salomon, Robert Capa, Gerry Winogrand, William Eggleston and Andre Kertesz all visiting in the decade of the 70's. Never before had Australian photographers, still less the Australian public had access to such a concentration of international photography in such a variety of styles.

Indeed the late 1970's saw the largest exhibition of world art, including photography, ever to tour Australia until the Bi-centennial Exhibition ten years later. The Australian National Gallery, still four years away from opening, assembled Genesis of a Gallery - Part II to showcase treasures from all areas of the collection and put it on tour around the nation. Works by Muybridge, Adams, Model, Kertesz, Evans and Cunningham were included to illustrate the newly acquired riches of the Department of Photography. For many in the more remote regions, it was to be their first encounter with overseas art, photography as an art form and the arts of Asia and Africa. It established a bench mark which sadly has rarely been reached since then.

Nor was the curatorial aspect of photography immune from American influence during this period. The NGV brought Barbara London and John Stringer out from MOMA to advise on the new department in 1972, sending Mark Strizic on a major tour of America soon after to look at conservation and collections management. The Australian Centre for Photography brought the influential John Szarkowski, Director of Photography at MOMA to Australia in 1974 to undertake a nation-wide tour lecturing, with mixed success he was to remark, to public institutions newly involved in building collections of photography and to Australian photographers. Many of the exhibitions that came to Australia had been organised by MOMA, including the Diane Arbus exhibition of 1977 which toured both Australia and New Zealand attracting record crowds.

Advances in formal photographic education have already been referred to briefly but the University of Queensland's single semester course in the history of photography in the 1970's should be noted in our examination of foreign influences, being conducted by Julie Brown, an art history graduate from Rochester, New York. Amateur photography also entered a new era with photographic instruction being largely taken out of the realms of camera clubs and print circles. Almost from the outset the Australian Centre for Photography established a wide range of workshops covering all levels of photography from basic black and white to colour film processing and Zone System with teaching staff who were practising professional

photographers. It was indicative of the new approach to photographic education. Technical colleges and CAE's were quick to maximise the utilisation of their photographic laboratories and staff by offering structured courses in all levels of photography, with most following American models. That many of the staff were new arrived immigrants from Europe and America soon became evident in the work of students, both full-time and serious amateur.

Apart from the Australian magazine already noted there were few opportunities for Australian photographers to see their work published. Oswald Ziegler's *Australian Photography, 1947*, was planned as the first in an annual series of high quality publications that mirrored the style of overseas annuals such as *US Camera Annual*. Despite the excellent design of yet another immigrant artist, Gert Sellheim who had emigrated to Australia from Estonia in 1926, the volume was neither one thing nor the other. It was damned as a wasted opportunity by the pictorialists lead by Cazneau, while Dupain and the documentary school lamented the inclusion of amateur pictorial work. For all that, it was to inspire a similar volume from Ziegler in 1957 and two more-tightly focussed works from Laurie Le Guay, *Australian Photography 75* and *Australian Photography - A contemporary view* two years later. In the same year, Australia saw the launch of its first photographic magazine that was clearly of international standard with Jean-Marc Le Pechoux's *LightVision*.

In the field of foreign photographic publications, the playing field was somewhat more even. For the Americans there was the duel between *Modern Photography* and *Popular Photography* for the amateur market with *Aperture* soon to become the leader for art photography. The Germans held the high ground for technical and illustrative photography, especially large format colour, with *Grossbild* and *Photo Technik* both available in English, the Swiss provided *Du* and *Camera* while the UK had *Amateur Photography* at one end and *Creative Camera* at the other. Books on photography, on photographers and photographs from America, Europe and England were not only of the highest standard of reproduction but readily available.

If there was a flood of foreign photography coming into Australia during the 70's, there was an ever increasing volume of first quality photography being produced in Australia and an acceptance of Australian photographers overseas. Australian photographers now had access to a range of professionally run facilities to exhibit their work and would soon have a high quality local magazine to publish that work on a regular basis.

What had begun as a trickle in the late 1930's was now a stream of many hues. Publications, magazines, television, exhibitions all combined to expose both the Australian public and Australian photographers to an immense range of photographic experience. Now the challenge was not to understand Pictorialism or the New Photography but to critically examine the whole universe of photography to inform and guide the development of the individuals visual vocabulary. Australian photography had become internationalised.

To finish where we had begun, it is perhaps no coincidence that the ferment of the 70's also saw the emergence of a serious study of photography's past with the publication of Bea Nettles' *Breaking the rules* and William Crawford's *Keepers of the light* which examined early photographic process bringing them up to date for contemporary photographers and George Tice's first forays into the glories of platinum printing. Perhaps it truly is the message not the medium that counts.

