

HIDDEN TRACES OF SHARED HISTORY:

RETHINKING ASIA
PACIFIC THROUGH 19TH
AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
PHOTOGRAPHS

SYMPOSIUM

29TH AUGUST 2016

MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF DESIGN
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE



This symposium brings together leading researchers who are working on 19th and early 20th century collections of Asia Pacific photographs. Alongside a broader consideration of the significance of the history of photography in the region, explorations of visual and built traces of identity formations, globalised trading and agricultural industrialisation, and the envisioning of modernity and nationalism during the late colonial era will be highlighted. The projects featured in the symposium demonstrate different modes of archival research and interpretation methods and a spectrum of geographical connections showcasing different pathways into the photographic collections. As a cross disciplinary platform of research exchange, the symposium aims to generate an overview of new approaches to research into the 19th and early 20th century history of the Asia Pacific region. These are developing through working with the era's arguably most captivating and rich visual traces.

The symposium is supported through the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning Research Development Grant led by Dr. Amanda Achmadi, Prof. Paul Walker, Dr. Karen Burns and Dr. Bronwyn Stocks. The symposium is co-organised by ACAHUCH (Australian Collaboratory for Architectural History, Urban and Cultural Heritage).



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HIDDEN TRACES OF SHARED HISTORY:
RETHINKING ASIA PACIFIC THROUGH 19TH AND
EARLY 20TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Venue:

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning,
The University of Melbourne

Japanese Room (401), Level 4,
Melbourne School of Design

MONDAY 29TH AUGUST

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 9:30-10:00 | REGISTRATION |
| 10:00-10:45 | WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
Dr. Amanda Achmadi
Dr. Karen Burns
Professor Paul Walker
"Rethinking Colonial Built Landscape in 19th and early 20th century photographs of Asia Pacific" |
| 10:45-12:15 | SESSION 1
Associate Professor Anne Maxwell
Early Women Photographers and the Built Environment of the Asia-Pacific

Gael Newton
Asia-Pacific photography: a View from Within |
| 12:15-1:30 | LUNCH |
| 1:30-3:00 | SESSION 2
Geoffrey Barker
Refracted Vision; Nineteenth-century Photography in the Pacific

Dr. Paul Fox
Hotels, Tourists and Photographers in the Pacific, 1870–1910 |
| 3:00-3:30 | Afternoon tea |

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HIDDEN TRACES OF SHARED HISTORY:
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EARLY 20TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS

3:30 – 4:15

SESSION 3

Judy Annear

The Photograph and Australia – a Case Study

4:15-4:30

General Discussion

5:30 – 6:30

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Venue:

Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning,
The University of Melbourne

Singapore Theatre (B-120), Basement,
Melbourne School of Design

Professor Geoffrey Batchen

Double Displacement: The Dissemination of the
Photographic Image

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DOUBLE DISPLACEMENT: THE DISSEMINATION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE

Professor Geoffrey Batchen

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

In the context of the current dissolution of both the photographic image and national boundaries, this paper will consider photography as a medium continually oscillating between presence and absence, the material and the immaterial. Focusing on the establishment of photography as a business in the 1840s, and in particular on the distribution of the work of Antoine Claudet in London and Douglas Kilburn in Melbourne, I will examine the manner by which their daguerreotype images were widely disseminated in the form of engravings and lithographs. Such an examination makes possible a better understanding of the commercial activities of photography studios in this period, and of how photographic images actually reached their multiple audiences, including in colonial Australia. But it also allows some reflection on the nature of the photographic image itself, as a kind of ghostly apparition made possible only by a double displacement, first from the world and then from the photograph. This paper will therefore be a contribution to a study of the lived experience of the processes of reproduction, as theorised by Walter Benjamin, and of dissemination, as articulated by Jacques Derrida, and may even constitute a kind of 'migration theory' for photography as a medium of representation.

Professor Geoffrey Batchen teaches art history at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, specializing in the history of photography. His books include *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (1997), *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History* (2001), *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (2004), *William Henry Fox Talbot* (2008), *What of Shoes? Van Gogh and Art History* (2009), *Suspending Time: Life, Photography, Death* (2010) and *More Wild Ideas* (forthcoming in Chinese, 2015). He has also edited *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida* (2009) and co-edited *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (2012). In April 2016 his exhibition, *Emanations: The Art of the Cameraless Photograph*, opened at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, New Zealand. A book of the same name has been published by Prestel.

SESSION 1

EARLY WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Associate Professor Anne Maxwell
University of Melbourne

Because much photography in the nineteenth century was predominantly documentary in style, historians have been tempted to see it as a source of transparent knowledge about the past. But photography even at its most realistic has never recorded things accurately— by its very nature it is selective and there has always a subjective element at work in the way photographers have gone about getting their images. It is as well to remember this when looking at photographs of the built environment produced in the nineteenth century by both artists and studio operators.

This paper will examine the photographic works featuring built structures by five women photographers who were working in the Asia-Pacific in the mid to late nineteenth century. The women photographers whose images I examine were working in locations as far apart as California, British Columbia, China, Java, Australia and New Zealand and yet they were united by the similar problems they were facing as women working in a profession that continued to be dominated by men. They also experienced similar topographical and environmental changes as the Asia-Pacific region came increasingly under European colonial rule and as that form of economic enterprise that gave rise to the growth of towns and cities got underway. Selecting a cross section of subjects that includes ancient temples, civic buildings, fortresses mines, hospitals, asylums, and private houses, my paper examines the respective approaches these women took in their photographing of the built environment that was beginning to spring up around them. Besides asking obvious questions like for whom were these pictures made and under what conditions, it also asks did women photographers portray these structures as enhancing or clashing with the natural environment, and were any of the images used to suggest the superiority of European building designs over indigenous?

Anne Maxwell is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts' School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. She is currently researching a monograph on the history of women's photography in the Asia-Pacific. She is also researching the influence of Lavater on early portrait photography. Her most recent monograph is *Shifting Focus Colonial Australian Photography 1850-1920* (2015). She has published many journal articles and essays on British, and Australian and NZ Colonial literature, and on race theory and American Visual Cultures. She teaches Postcolonial and Global literature contemporary American literature and American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

SESSION 1

ASIA-PACIFIC PHOTOGRAPHY:
A VIEW FROM WITHIN

Gael Newton

In 2005 as Senior Curator, Photography National Gallery of Australia [NGA] I was charged with the building of a collection of 19th – mid 20th century photographs surveying the arrival, reception and acclimatisation of the photographic arts across the Asia-Pacific region.

The Gallery had achieved major collections of South and Southeast Asian textiles and some Pacific art, but emphasis on the Asia-Pacific would be increased under Director Ron Radford's 'A Vision for the National Gallery of Australia'¹.

My work on the Asia-Pacific collection began in late 2005 when it was found that barely two hundred photographs had any connection to Asia, a decade later there were over 10,000 additions with many being by Asian photographers.

Two large private collections were acquired in 2006-07; the Harold and Jane Ricketts collection of some 900 South Asian and Pacific photographs and the Leo Haks collection of some 4000 photographs 1860s-1940s from colonial Indonesia.

The first round of research enabled me to contribute entries surveying Southeast Asia to the 2007 Routledge *Encyclopedia of nineteenth century photography*. Two showcase exhibitions largely drawn from the NGA collection; *Picture Paradise: Asia-Pacific Photography 1840s-1940s* and *Garden of the East: Photography in Indonesia 1850s-1940* were held in 2008 and 2014.

This presentation traces the scope of the resulting NGA Asia-Pacific collection as it stood in 2014 at the time of the curator's departure from the NGA, specifically in terms of monumental architecture and vernacular urban images as resources for multi-disciplinary research and with a special focus on Indonesia.

Given the geographic and cultural diversity of the region, appreciating the integrated shape of photography in colonial era Southeast Asia remains a challenge.

What remains for the future is what Asia-Pacific photographic heritage as an entity might look like to scholars whose identity – like mine now – is as citizens of the Asia-Pacific.

Gael Newton studied art history at the Sydney University Power Department of Fine Arts and graduated in art history and studio photography at Elam Art School, Auckland University in 1974. From 1975-85 she was foundation Curator of photography at the Art Gallery of NSW and then Visiting Curator Bicentennial Photography Project and later Senior Curator of Photography National Gallery of Australia until 2014.

From 2005-2015 Newton was engaged in building a collection surveying 19th-mid 20th century photographic arts across the Asia-Pacific region resulting in a collection of some 10,000 works and survey exhibitions 'Picture Paradise: Asia-Pacific Photography 1840s-1940s' in 2008 and 'Garden of the East: Photography in Indonesia 1850s-1940s' in 2014.

Since 2015 Newton has worked on international writing projects surveying 19th and early 20th century photography in Southeast Asia. She has a particular interest in the development of 19th to mid 20th century Asian photographers at home and abroad in the Asia-Pacific.

She is the author of 'Shades of Light: Photography and Australia 1839-1988' (NGA 1988) and other Australian and international photography catalogues and publications.

www.nga.gov.au/gardeneast

www.nga.gov.au/pictureparadise

1 See p.6 <http://nga.gov.au/AboutUs/IPS/pdf/NGAvision2005.pdf>

SESSION 2

REFRACTED VISION; NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE PACIFIC

Geoffrey Barker

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HIDDEN TRACES OF SHARED HISTORY:
RETHINKING ASIA PACIFIC THROUGH
EARLY 20TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS

Europeans following their hunger for adventure, knowledge and money made journeys to almost every island in the Pacific over the course of the nineteenth century. Some of these enterprising travellers wrote books or letters about their travels, others painted or sketched, but only a few took photographs.

By the end of 1850s, when travel photography was becoming viable, a loosely configured group of scientists, sailors, entrepreneurs, administrators, and missionaries had already established ports and settlements, opened up trading routes, established relationships with local Islanders, and set in place the myths which shaped European understanding of the Pacific throughout the nineteenth century.

This legacy constrained the photographer's ability to select a destination, talk to local Islanders, and filled their heads with preconceived notions of what they would see. In addition, particularly in the early years, most photographers who visited the Pacific at this time did so as explorers, naval men, missionaries, administrators, scientists and artists and for them photography was a secondary activity. These factors, when coupled with using complicated emulsions, poor lenses, and bulky cameras, made photography a challenging and often serendipitous project.

From 1839 to 1855, photographic records are extremely rare and when taken were more likely to be daguerreotype portraits than outdoor views. Initially only a few photographers used Talbot's alternative Calotype process but after 1855 paper negatives and collodion emulsions (wet and dry) on glass began to replace the one-off daguerreotype for outdoor work.

The introduction of dry-gelatine emulsions in the 1870s coincided with the opening up of the Pacific to new steam powered ships. While this does appear to have helped increase the number of photographs produced in the Pacific, there were still limiting factors, such a lack of coaling stations, which saw a proliferation of photographs in places on well-defined trade routes. As a result amateur photographers on naval vessels, who had produced many of the earliest outdoor views, continued to do so as their ships administered European law in the less accessible parts of the Pacific.

Another complicating factor is the way archives of surviving photographs have been shaped by collecting institutions, anthropologists and historians. Their writing and collecting around particular subjects, such as ethnographic images of Pacific Islanders, has shaped many contemporary attitudes about the makeup of this archive. In doing so, they have often sidelined other subject areas such as landscapes and images of European commercial activities. In addition the selective focus of some writers has in turn failed to discuss either the complete *oeuvre* of a photographer or in the broader context of photography in this region.

This talk is structured around the premise that for most practitioners, Pacific photography was a sporadic, technically difficult, and secondary activity for most of the nineteenth century. It will also address issues surrounding the selective activities of later scholars who, along with the collecting activities of major institutions, have shaped our understanding of extant archives.

Geoffrey Barker is Research and Collections Coordinator at Paramatta Heritage Centre. His publications include 'Carte du Ciel: The Sydney Observatory's Role in the International Project to Photograph the Heavens' *History of Photography*, Volume 33, Issue 4, 2009 and 'Analysing Context for Nineteenth-Century Pacific Photography' in *Shifting Focus: Colonial Australian Photography 1850-1920*, edited by Anne Maxwell and Josephine Croci, North Melbourne 2015.

SESSION 2

HOTELS, TOURISTS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS
IN THE PACIFIC, 1870–1910

Dr. Paul Fox

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HIDDEN TRACES OF SHARED HISTORY:
RETHINKING ASIA PACIFIC THROUGH
EARLY 20TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHS

This paper explores the nature and role of hotels in the Pacific during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. It compares the frontier hotels of Fiji with the grand hotels of San Francisco and Melbourne, and the tourist hotels of New Zealand, to elucidate capitalism's transformation and visual codification of the frontier.

Hotels were places where alcohol, bodies, information and photographs were traded. They were also sites where settlers and tourists acquired, collected and organised photographs to remember local scenery and tell mythic narratives about Western superiority over indigenous peoples.

The history of photography and hotels are therefore related. Both capture and mask the transience and permanence of European settlement. Both record and codify exchanges between indigenous peoples, settlers and travellers. Both satisfy the human desire for sexual pleasure. Both enshrine the unequal relationship between (indigenous) Labour and (European) Capital. Both embody the ephemeral presents and speculative futures of global capitalism. And both remake contested colonial frontiers into playgrounds for local settler societies and distant imperial centres.

Dr. Paul Fox research interests include photographic and landscape histories. He is the author of *Clearings. Six colonial gardeners and their landscapes* (2004); articles on nineteenth century photography, and *Sweet Damp and Gossip: Colonial sightings of the Goulburn and North-east* (1994). He has been Museum Victoria's Thomas Ramsay science and humanities scholar, AGL Shaw scholar at State Library of Victoria and Alfred Deakin post-doctoral fellow at Deakin University. His latest research paper 'Architects and Garden Suburbs: The politics of Melbourne's interwar garden suburbs' will be published in *Landscape* in 2016.

SESSION 3

THE PHOTOGRAPH AND AUSTRALIA – A CASE STUDY

Judy Annear

A project called *The Photograph and Australia* was bound to raise great expectations. Determining how well it succeeded in meeting these will take time, maybe a decade or so. I was convinced as we moved steadily toward the arrival of the book and the exhibition that they would be disliked because of what was not covered – much, much more than could ever be included. To turn that around I was offering opportunities for others to pick up the baton and drill into the themes, the works themselves, and the activities of the photographers in order to make more substantial contributions. The very incompleteness of *The photograph and Australia* is a necessity and a virtue.

The paper will address the following points and indicate the confluence of local and global, social, political and scientific events:

The Photograph and Australia was the first exhibition to assess Australian photographic history drawing on collections nationwide since *Shades of light* in 1988 at National Gallery of Australia. The exhibition:

- was largely 19th century due to the dynamic between the evolution of Australian colonies and the photographic medium from the 1840s;
- comprised a major focus on how the colonies photographed themselves and presented these images to each other and globally at world fairs;
- considered how photography was harnessed to create the idea of an Australian nation in the 19th and 20th centuries;
- looked at the evolution of mass media (cartes de visité, illustrated press and so on) in the 19th century and at the digital revolution of today;
- presented clusters of photographs identifying people, where and how they lived, what they did; and included personal as much as public and official material;
- considered how our view of the world, ourselves and each other has been changed by the advent of photography;
- presented a contemporary perspective on the past;
- was thematic, not chronological.

Judy Annear is an independent writer and curator. She was senior curator photographs, at the Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney 1995-2016. In this role she established a collection program for the new photography gallery at the Gallery which opened in 2011.

Annear spearheaded important photography exhibitions that have furthered knowledge and exposure of the medium, and of Australian and international photographers. These include: *Len Lye* (2001–2) celebrating the centenary of the artist's birth, the first monographic exhibition of Man Ray in Australia (2004), a retrospective of Bill Henson – the result of a 3-year collaboration with the artist (2005), *August Sander* (2007) with the J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, *Alfred Stieglitz: the Lake George years* (2010) and *Photography & place: Australian landscape photography 1970s until now* (2011). She was the curator of the large-scale exhibition, *The Photograph and Australia* and author of the eponymous book in 2015.

NOTES

