The National Portrait Gallery is a program of the National Library of Australia. It is supported by funding through the Arts, Heritage and National Broadcasting Division, Department of Communication and the Arts.

Acknowledgements
I am especially grateful to the following families, individuals and institutions for their support of the exhibition. Without their generosity and cooperation it would not have been possible to obtain the photographs for display.

Judy Annear, Art Gallery of New South Wales; Mrs Barbara Beck; Vivienne Blinn; Mrs Frances Boyd; Mrs Sue Brookman and Mrs Mary Alice Pelham Thomann; Janine Burke; John Cato; the Cazneaux family; Lady Drysdale; Mrs Diana Dupain; Mrs Ruth Goble; Richard Haese; Rex Maddock; Mrs Olive McKenzie; David Moore; Moris Moro; Gael Newton, National Gallery of Australia; Mike Paris; Peter Perry, Castlemaine Art Gallery; Roslyn Poignant; Jo Steele; Mark Strizic; Sarah Thomas, Art Gallery of South Australia; Albert Tucker; Susan Van Wyk, National Gallery of Victoria; Greg Weight; Rix Wright.

The project was initiated by Julia Clark, former Curatorial Manager, National Portrait Gallery, to whom I extend my thanks. I also warmly acknowledge the support of David André and Pamela Clelland Gray of the National Portrait Gallery.

Invaluable assistance was provided by staff at the National Library of Australia, especially Anne Willsford in the Exhibitions Branch, Sandra Martens in the Pictorial Section, and the Photographic Services staff led by Henk Brusse.

I am also most grateful to the following for their varied contributions: Roger Butler; Isobel Crombie; Nigel Lendon; and Andrew Sayers.

Helen Ennis

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

The reflecting eye: portraits of Australian visual artists.

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FOREWORD

It might excite a wider interest in our history and society. It might encourage us to learn the story of Australia and to better understand the story of our fellow Australians.

It might help us to understand what it is to be Australian and what it was to be Australian. What it is to be an Aboriginal Australian. An Australian woman. An Australian with your life hanging on a thread during the Second World War. A child living in Australia in 1814.

The Prime Minister at the opening of the National Portrait Gallery, Old Parliament House, 30 March 1994

The National Portrait Gallery was established to celebrate Australian achievement in all fields of endeavour. It sits at the crossroads of social history and art, and builds its programs around the relationship between these two disciplines. The National Portrait Gallery seeks to entertain, educate and engage the visiting public with a mix of all portrait media, formal and informal, ‘high’ and ‘low’. It is concerned to develop an identity which is appropriate for its time and place.

And now, with this exhibition, the National Portrait Gallery is reaching out into communities around the country, so that Australians everywhere can participate in the pleasure of the art of portraiture, and join the debate which portrait exhibitions raise on issues of contemporary national significance.


The National Portrait Gallery is a program of the National Library of Australia, which has been developing touring exhibitions for a number of years as part of its commitment to providing increasing access to its remarkable collections.

I commend to you *The Reflecting Eye: Portraits of Australian Visual Artists*. Guest curator Helen Ennis has assembled a lively exhibition of portraits of painters, printmakers and photographers from the turn of the century to the 1990s. In looking at formal photographic portraits, personal photographs and press images, the curator discusses how changes in photographic style and practice influence perceptions of the subject.

Warren Horton
Director-General
National Library of Australia
May 1996
Attributed to Talma Studio (est. 1893–1900)
Barak (1824–1903) at work on a drawing at Coranderrk c.1895
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Mrs Frances Boyd
There is a central thread that holds together the diverse photographic portraits in *The Reflecting Eye*. It is not, as one might expect, the subject—portraits of Australian visual artists, be they painters, printmakers or photographers. Nor is it simply the common medium—photography. It is in fact more fundamental: a belief in and commitment to a notion of the 'truth'. For the works in *The Reflecting Eye* share some basic assumptions about photography, portraiture and human identity. These are that a portrait can encompass an individual’s identity, and that photography can faithfully represent the external world. Thus a photographic portrait is regarded as a truthful representation of an individual.

The portraits in *The Reflecting Eye* span more than 70 years, beginning with a photograph of Aboriginal artist William Barak taken at the turn of the century. The focus on the period 1900s to 1970s is deliberate, as it appears relatively coherent in terms of photographic portraiture. A different story has emerged in recent years: its key elements include the sheer proliferation of visual artists (the baby-boom generation reaching maturity); the prevalence of informal modes of portraiture (a small selection of which is included in the final section of the exhibition); and the emergence of fabricated or fictional portraits.

*The Reflecting Eye* is structured around three kinds of portraiture, each of which is governed by its own modes of production, distribution and reception. The categories are treated equally and works from each are interspersed throughout the display.

The first, formal portraiture, comprises photographs that are generally produced on commission but have an independent life, that is, as exhibition-quality prints. Formal portraits are usually the domain of professional photographers, a significant number of whom are represented here. Jack Cato, Harold Cazneaux, Max Dupain, Margaret Michaelis, May and Mina Moore, David Walter Barnett (1862-1934) Arthur Streeton (1867-1943) and Nora Streeton (nee Clench), with Pat, the dog, at their Hill Road home, London c.1909 print from platinum photographic print National Gallery of Australia
Moore, Alec Murray and Athol Shmith were all recognised portraitists.

The most common venue for formal portraits is publications, especially magazines and journals but also books and exhibition catalogues. Harold Cazneaux's portraits were frequently published in the fashionable *Home* magazine; the image of Margaret Preston in her garden at Berowra on Sydney's North Shore was featured in a double-page spread on the artist and her home environment. Margaret Michaelis' photograph of the painter Weaver Hawkins appeared in *Australia: National Journal* in an essay on members of the artistic community at Mona Vale in Sydney.

Formal portraits are invariably made in full knowledge of the artistic or stylistic conventions of the day. Max Dupain, for instance, makes dramatic use of the modernist idiom in a striking portrait of fellow photographer Olive Cotton, taken in 1935. The composition is marked out by the strong vertical accents of the telegraph pole and Cotton's upright figure. On the other hand, Carol Jerrems' portrait of the painter Grace Cossington Smith is in a naturalistic style that was prevalent in the 1970s. Jerrems photographs her elderly sitter in a relaxed pose; the room is flooded with light recalling Cossington Smith's own light-filled paintings of domestic interiors.

The second group of photographs in the exhibition derives from reproductions, principally in newspapers. They often record a newsworthy occasion such as Lady Gordon opening Miss Dorrit Black's show in Adelaide in 1930, or Michael Brown, Ross Crothall and Colin Lanceley installing the second *Imitation Realist* exhibition in Sydney in 1962. The photograph of Bea Maddock sketching aboard the ship the *Ice Bird* in Antarctica was originally published in the *Weekend Australian Magazine*. In contrast to formal portraits, the authors of these photographs are rarely credited, and so are now generally unknown. Nor is print quality an issue: the photographic print exists only for the purposes of reproduction, not for exhibition.

*The Reflecting Eye* incorporates one other area of portraiture—*snapshots* which would normally be found within a family archive, framed on mantelpieces, in photograph albums or even stored in shoeboxes. These portraits usually speak of intimacy and privacy in accordance with the particular conventions of family photography (such as the use of medium-distance viewpoints and the adoption of happy expressions and so on). They come about because of an intimate relationship between photographer and subject and invariably show the artist as a participant in his/her own private life. Novelist and printmaker Barbara Hanrahan is photographed sitting in the garden in her favourite chair for writing; her face is suffused with light, her expression alert and engaging. The photograph of Russell Drysdale was taken by his son Tim; the artist is photographed without ceremony, shoes off, cigarette in hand, sketching materials at the ready. Artists like Drysdale and Albert Tucker have also been keen photographers, taking informal snapshots of their artist friends which convey a strong sense of community and camaraderie. Drysdale, for instance, photographed Jean Bellette, while Joy Hester, Sidney Nolan, Josl Bergner and Adrian Lawlor were among the many artists photographed by Albert Tucker.
To introduce a personal dimension to the exhibition, some photographs were chosen by the artists themselves or by members of their families. Vivienne Binns, for example, selected one of her favourite photographs, of herself as a young girl. It was taken by her elder brother Peter in the family lounge-room one Saturday morning—the young subject, her hair not yet bound up in braids, is artfully posed with one hand on a late Victorian vase. Jo Steele selected the portrait of his partner, Barbara Hanrahan. Regardless of their origin as formal portraits, newspaper reproductions or family photographs, all the portraits in The Reflecting Eye fulfil a representational function. They offer a visual image of individuals who might otherwise be known to us only by name. Additional information is offered in the numerous environmental portraits included in the exhibition. In them, artists are pictured in particular work or domestic environments rather than the unspecific space of a photographer’s studio. Those photographed at home include Arthur and Nora Streeton whose dog Pat is lovingly acknowledged in both the portrait and its title. ‘Stonygrad’, the stone house Danila Vassilieff built in the Victorian countryside, is the backdrop for the double portrait of him and his wife, Elizabeth. Ian Fairweather is pictured amidst the amazing clutter of his humble studio/home on Bribie Island off the Queensland coast.

But it is not only information about particular individuals that the photographs in the exhibition provide, fascinating as that is (especially when it caters to the contemporary interest in private rather than public lives). As a group the portraits have other stories to tell—about the changes in photographic practice that occurred in the period 1900s to 1970s and about the changing image of the artist in Australian society. The former can be seen in the move away from studio or formal portraiture to more informal modes, especially as subjects become more used to being photographed. The photographs from the 1920s and 1930s are remarkably similar in stylistic terms, recalling traditional portraiture in oils. The subject is generally positioned centrally within the composition, extraneous details are eliminated, the lighting is well controlled and the tones of the print beautifully modulated. These are works by name photographers, such as Jack Cato, Harold Cazneaux and May and Mina Moore, whose professionalism was marked by consistency of style.

A taste for drama can be seen in the portraits of the 1940s and 1950s which employ unusual poses and theatrical lighting. Athol Shmith’s portrait of Mirka Mora is deliberately reductive, directing all attention to Mora’s striking profile. By the 1960s a greater informality is evident in the preference for outdoor settings, for immediacy, action and animated gesture. Mark Strizic’s relaxed photograph of John Olsen and Clifton Pugh at work in the bush at Dunmoochin in Victoria is just one of a whole series produced there. David Moore, who brings to his portraiture his rigorous photojournalistic training, shows Michael Johnson in the process of spray-painting his canvas. The photographic exchange between Axel Poignant and Arthur Boyd has all the spontaneity of a conversation, one in which Boyd is shown in full flight.

The changing photographic conventions are a reflection of complex, subtle changes in Australian society, particularly in relation to the role of the artist. In the earliest portraits the
Olive Cotton (b. 1911)
Max Dupain (1911–1992) 1938
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Mrs Olive Mclnerney
valorising of respectability can be seen in images of the well-dressed 'gentleman' and 'lady painter', self-absorbed and serious. On the other hand, the flamboyant portraits of thoroughly modern women—Daphne Mayo, Hilda Rix Nicholas and Thea Proctor—are still charged with daring. Bohemianism is celebrated in photographs of the group of artists associated with John and Sunday Reed at Heide in Melbourne. From the 1960s onwards the images are more disparate, ranging from David Moore's workmanlike Fred Williams, Upwey to the highly self-conscious portrait of the much photographed painter Brett Whiteley. Contemporary portraits of Jeffrey Smart and Emily Kame Kngwarreye by Greg Weight are deliberately studied, making reference to more traditional modes of portraiture.

Many of the portraits in The Reflecting Eye are concerned with representing the artist at work: teaching, as in Cazneaux's portrait of Julian Ashton, but mostly in the act of making art. Tools of the trade—palettes, paint brushes, easels, sketchbooks, canvases—are visual cues used to establish the artist's profession. So too is the environment in which the artist is pictured. Aside from the studio, it is the landscape that appears as a favoured location for Australian painters: Barak, Elioth Gruner, Hans Heysen, John Olsen, Clifton Pugh and Fred Williams are all presented en plein air. A twist to this theme is provided by Bea Maddock who appears in the unexpected location of Antarctica.

There is one other aspect to the portraits in The Reflecting Eye that, although unanticipated, cannot go unnoticed. It is the almost palpable sense of discomfort which runs through so many of them, especially those from the turn of the century up to the 1950s. Many sitters show little enthusiasm for being photographed, adopting self-conscious poses and tightly controlled expressions. Their participation, one suspects, has come reluctantly—out of duty, rather than
desire. This may in part be related to the fact that very few of the portraits have been initiated by the artists themselves. More often than not, they have come about in response to external requests—from dealers, publishers and others involved in the circulation of images (of both artworks and their makers).

And so, the encounter between photographer and artist— even if known to each other—may have nothing happenchance about it. But the discomfort that distinguishes many of these portraits cannot be simply explained in terms of 'advance warning' about the photographic session. More significant is the fact that, at the moment of being photographed, the artist is acknowledging an audience. It is the audience's implicit presence as readers of the publication, or as viewers of the exhibition that instils the session with gravitas.

All the portraits in The Reflecting Eye are made in good faith and regarded as truthful representations of their subjects. Ultimately, however, they reveal very little about individual identity. There is one other irony. The work for which these visual artists is known has invariably been made in private, often in solitude and over a long period of time—none of which can be pictured.

Helen Ennis
Exhibition Curator

EXHIBITION NOTE
The photographs in The Reflecting Eye have been selected from a wide range of sources, including public and private collections, and publications such as newspapers, magazines and exhibition catalogues. The final selection of artists was determined to some degree by the availability of photographic material; individual images were chosen according to their visual interest.

Due to the length of the exhibition tour and the variety of venues, The Reflecting Eye comprises copy photographs rather than original photographic prints. Prints have been made either from pre-existing negatives or from pre-existing prints. In the case of the latter, all care has been taken to replicate the original in terms of size and print quality. The majority of photographs were printed by the National Library of Australia's photographic staff.

The mounting and framing of the photographs reflect the three categories of photographic portraiture outlined in the essay. Formal portraits are presented in traditional window mounts and frames; photographs reproduced from publications are printed to the edge and presented in clip frames; and informal photographs are affixed to their mounts with photo-corners as in the conventional family photographic album.

FURTHER READING
**LIST OF WORKS**

(Type C photograph refers to a colour photographic print made from a negative. Direct positive colour print refers to a colour photographic print made from a transparency.)

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<th>Name</th>
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*Direct positive colour print refers to a colour photographic print made from a transparency.*
Richard Beck (1912–1985)
Roger Kemp (1908–1987) c.1975–78
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Greg Weight (b.1946)
Emily Kame Kngwarreye (born c.1916) 1992
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Harold Cazneaux (1878–1953)
Norman Lindsay (1879–1969), the etcher 1921
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Bob Finlayson (b.1939)
Artist Bee Maddock (b.1934), Antarctica c.1987
As published in the Weekend Australian Magazine, 28 February–1 March 1987

Photographer unknown
Daphne Mayes (1895–1982) and her cure for
giddiness, Brisbane 1927
As published in Woman’s World, 1 October 1927

Photographer unknown
Max Meldrum (1875–1955) c.1945
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Arthur Shmith (1914–1980)
Mick Mora (b.1928) 1954
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Mika Mora

Photographer unknown
Albert Namatjira (1902–1959) c.1945
Photograph by Australian Information
Service
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Photographer unknown
Hilda Dix Nicholas (1884–1963) painting in
the Cobargo area 1927
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Bill Wright

David Moore (b.1927)
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Mark Strizic (b.1928)
John Olsen (b.1928) and Clifton Pugh
(1923–1980), Dummoochin 1969
type C photograph
Collection of Mark Strizic

John Delacour (b.1948)
Parr family (Mike Parr (b.1943), Felizitas
and Adrian Parr) 1977
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Mike Parr

Mark Strizic (b.1928)
John Perceval (b.1923) painting ‘Vernica
and the Conspirators’ 1967
type C photograph
Collection of Mark Strizic

Harold Cazneaux (1878–1953)
Margaret Preston (1875–1963), Berowra
1937
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of the Cazneaux family

Bernice Agar (1885–1976)
Thea Proctor (1878–1966) 1927
As published in the House, 1 October 1927

Max Dupain (1911–1992)
Lloyd Rees (1895–1988) 1979
print from gelatin silver photograph
Art Gallery of New South Wales, gift of
Lord McAlpine, 1995

Elizabeth Mahoney (working 1926+)
Tom Roberts (1856–1931) c.1926
print from gelatin silver photograph
Castlemaine Art Gallery

Richard Beck (1912–1985)
Jan Senbergs (b.1930) 1978
gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Miss Barbara Beck

Greg Weight (b.1946)
Jeffrey Smart (b.1921) 1992
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Walter Barnett (1862–1934)
Arthur Streeton (1867–1943) and Nura
Streeton (nee Clench), with Pal, the dog, at
their Hill Road home, London c.1909
print from platinum photographic print
National Gallery of Australia

Photographer unknown
Albert Tucker (b.1914) on the left bank of
the Seine opposite the Île Saint Louis,
Paris 1951
print from gelatin silver photograph
Collection of Albert Tucker

Photographer unknown
Danila Vassilieff (1897–1958) and Elizabeth
Hamill at Stonygar, Victoria 1947
print from gelatin silver photograph
Courtesy of Felicity St John Moore

Jack Cato (1899–1971)
Napier Waller (1893–1972), artist,
Melbourne c.1929–32
gelatin silver photograph
Collection of John Cato

Greg Weight (b.1946)
Brett Whiteley (1939–1992) 1973
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

David Moore (b.1927)
Fred Williams (1927–1982), Upwey 1968
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia

Greg Weight (b.1946)
Salvatore Zoffra (b.1946), painter 1968
print from gelatin silver photograph
National Library of Australia