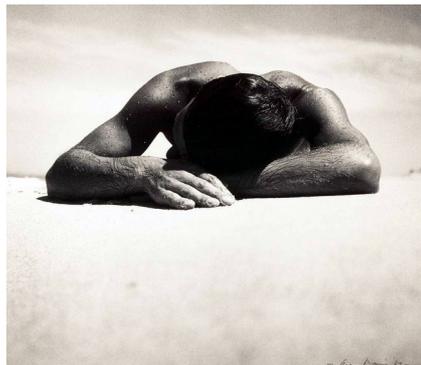
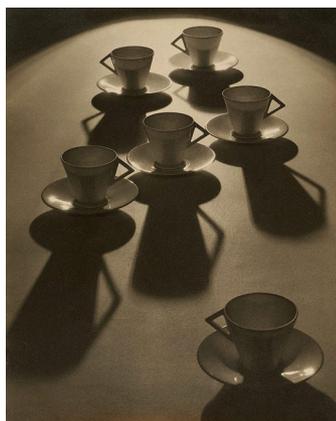


Max Dupain & Olive Cotton

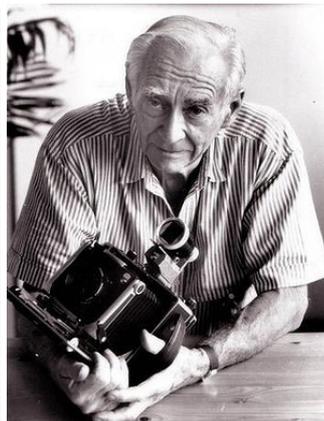
Notable Photographers by Grant Gillespie



Sunbaker by Max Dupain (1937)



Tea Cup Ballet by Olive Cotton (1935)



Max Dupain in 1979



Olive Cotton by Max Dupain (1937)

Maker of *Sunbaker* (1937), 'Australia's most admired photograph' Max Dupain made the news last month, when a collection of his photographs sold for over \$1 million. His son Rex said, "They should be out there in institutions and on people's walls", having been in storage for the past 8 years.

Max's first wife was Olive Cotton. *Tea Cup Ballet* was her signature image, acknowledged on a stamp commemorating 150 years of photography in Australia in 1991. Childhood friends, she ran his studio while he was away during the war, calling herself the Assistant, as everyone was expecting a male photographer.

Both born in 1911 and modernist influenced, their 30s & 40s work experienced resurgences in public popularity in the 70s & 80s which continue today.

Dupain

Max Dupain's got his first camera at age 13. Within 5 years he joined the Photographic society of NSW and a year later in 1930 served a 3 year apprenticeship under Cecil Bostock, learning studio photography, discipline and attention to detail.

In 1934 he opened his commercial photography studio in Sydney producing fashion, portraiture and illustrative photography for clients such as David Jones, the Australian Broadcasting Commission and prestigious magazine, *The Home*.

Dupain continued to absorb 'modern' ideas from Europe and America, the doctrine of 'vitalism', admired the writings of DH Lawrence and Norman Lindsay, and found the beach and 'the body' his setting to portray physical vitality (*Sunbaker*). His beach culture images still sell in California because they are reminiscent of American beach culture.

1930s-60s the bulk of Dupain's work was portraiture, Hollywood-style glamour and documentary-style images of Sydney-siders. WWII affected him deeply and he moved toward 'truth in documentary', 'photography without pretence' and 'creative treatment of actuality'. He abandoned the 'cosmetic lie' of fashion and advertising, and began documenting everyday interactions of people.

"Modern photography must do more than entertain, it must incite thought and by its clear statements of actuality, cultivate a sympathetic understanding of men and women and the life they live and create."

1960s, Dupain focussed on modern and historic

architecture and was considered Australia's top Architecture photographer. He had a long-standing friendship with well-known Australian architect, Harry Seidler and took thousands of photographs of the construction of The Sydney Opera House.



Brisbane street scene, Dupain 1946

In 1975 a retrospective exhibition brought *Sunbaker* into Australia's collective consciousness.

Cotton

Age 11, Olive Cotton and her father, made the home laundry into a darkroom, processed film and printed her first black and white images. 1924 holidaying at Newport Beach, met Max Dupain and became friends, with a passion for photography.

Completing a B.A. in English & Mathematics at the University of Sydney in 1933, she also studied music and was an accomplished pianist. Cotton joined The Sydney Camera Circle & Photographic Society of New South Wales, gaining instruction and encouragement from important photographers such as Harold Cazneaux.

In the 1930s she photographed visiting celebrities or interesting objects in the studio. *Tea Cup Ballet* was exhibited locally, in the London Salon of Photography in 1935.

In 1939 Olive Cotton married her longtime friend Max Dupain. They separated in 1941 and were divorced in 1944.

Cotton received numerous commissions in 1945, including photographs of winter and spring flowers for Helen Blaxland's book *Flowerpieces*, and many commissions for various art publications.

In 1947 Cotton went to live near Cowra, New South Wales, with her new husband. She taught Mathematics at Cowra High School for five years until 1964 when she opened a small photographic studio in the town, producing portraits and wedding photographs. She was unknown on the postwar city art scene until a retrospective exhibition in 1985. ■



The Budapest String Quartet, Cotton 1937

Further Reading:

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