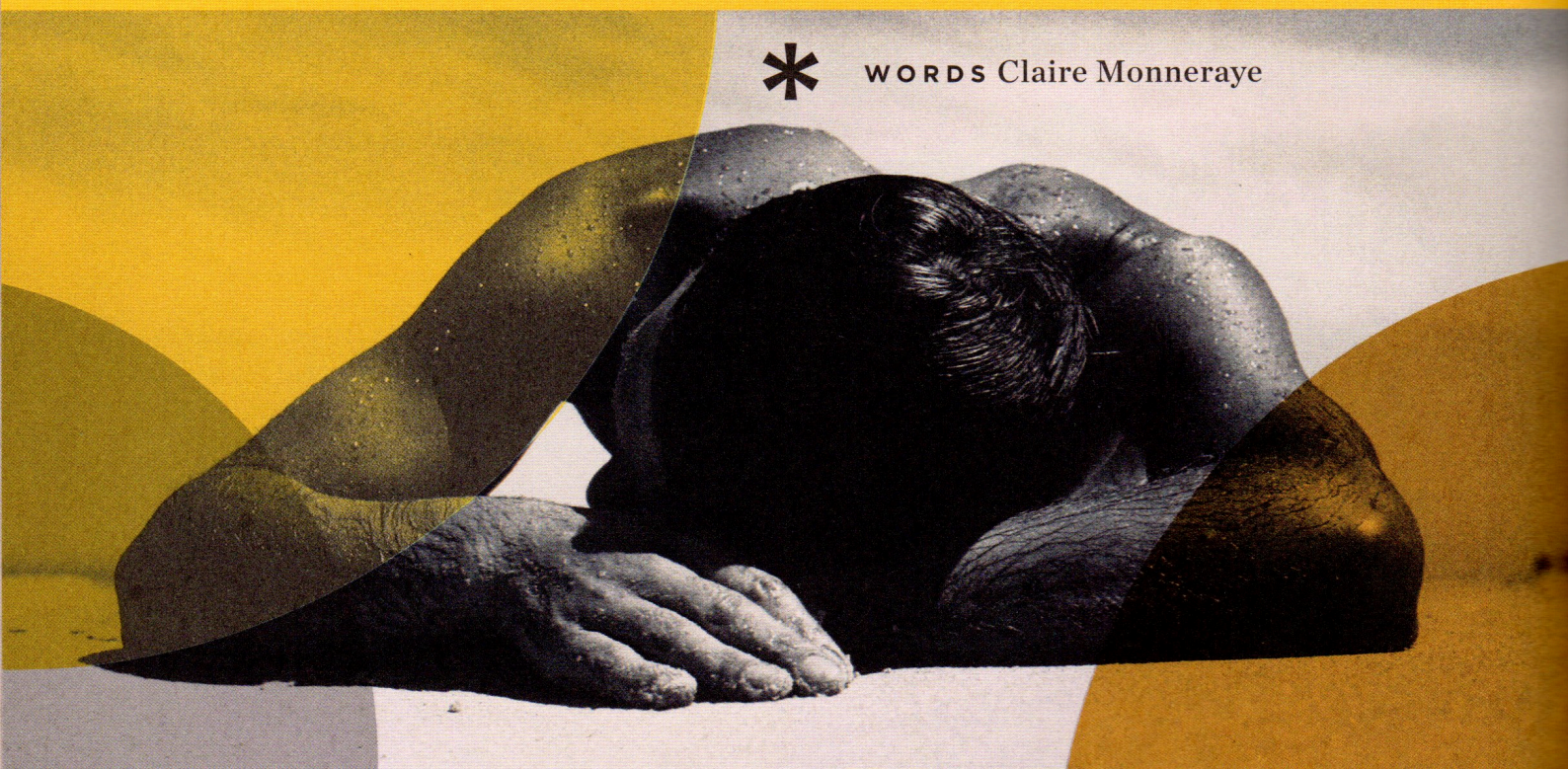




# UNDER *the* SUN



WORDS Claire Monneraye





## Max Dupain's *Sunbaker* has inspired an exhibition of contemporary and thought-provoking artworks.

Taken around 1937 by revered photographer Max Dupain (1911–1992), the *Sunbaker* entered Australia's consciousness in the mid-1970s to rapidly become a symbol of the country's identity and way of life. It was a time when photography was beginning to be recognised as an art form, and the 'new nationalism' was stimulating 'self-confidence, maturity, originality and independence of mind', to quote a 1973 speech by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in Ballarat. The purity of the form and the intensity of the subject matter in this photograph were an ideal trigger for imagination, admiration and identification.

History would prove that the *Sunbaker* was not just the 'simple affair' that the photographer described when asked about the notoriety of the image. The photograph of Harold Salvage, a British builder who was part of a group of friends on a surfing trip, has indeed been described as 'perhaps the most famous and admired photograph in Australia' (*The Age*, 13 December 2004) and 'probably the most widely recognised Australian photograph' (*Highlights*, Monash Gallery of Art, 2010).

The image did not appear until Max Dupain's first monograph was published in 1948. The negative was then lost and, in the 1970s, another version was printed for the first time. Not widely known, the *Sunbaker* gained fame when it was used as the poster for the opening exhibition of the Australian Centre for Photography in 1975. Over the years its ongoing resonance through numerous publications, exhibitions, examinations and reinterpretations has elevated the image to iconic status.

Almost 80 years on, the Australian Centre for Photography has commissioned 15 Australian artists to create new work in response to the *Sunbaker*.

Reflecting Australia's multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith nature, this exhibition probes the image's social and political implications and exposes the complexities at play in discussions of collective and national identity today.

Examining the legacy of the past and questioning the relevance this image might retain in the future, the immersive and thought-provoking works consider questions of representation and cultural pluralism. They also reflect on the depiction of the idealised body, and discuss gender issues, cultural and political ideas relating to immigration and colonisation, and our relationship with the land.

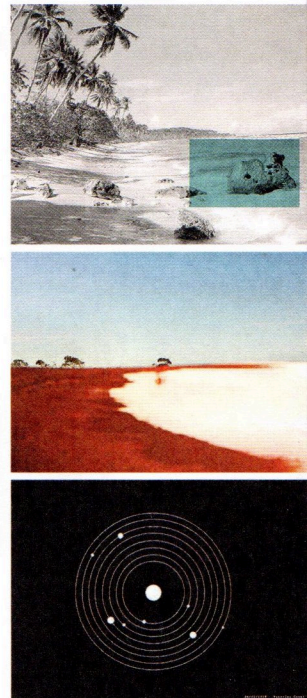
Taking Dupain's image and the medium of photography as a starting point, *Under the sun* also incorporates sculpture, video and installation-based works. In the Library's galleries, a bronze sculpture converses with Sufi dancers, black-and-white diagrams of the solar system bear witness to Australian colonial history, while colourful landscape photographs draw attention to invisible traces that tell the dramatic story of our land.

From Bondi Beach to Nauru, *Under the sun* reveals the complexities of an image that still inspires controversy and challenges simplistic perceptions of our culture and identity.

**Claire Monneraye, Curator,  
Australian Centre for Photography**

***Under the sun: Reimagining Max Dupain's Sunbaker* features new works by Peta Clancy, Christopher Day, Destiny Deacon, Michaela Gleave, Nasim Nasr, Sara Oscar, Julie Rrap, Khaled Sabsabi, Yhonnie Scarce, Christian Thompson, Angela Tiatia, Kawita Vatanajyankur, Daniel von Sturmer, Justene Williams and William Yang.**

**Presented by the Australian Centre for Photography in partnership with the State Library of NSW, the exhibition is at the Library until 17 April 2017.**



TOP TO BOTTOM:  
SARA OSCAR  
*PLEASANT ISLAND (THE PACIFIC SOLUTION)*,  
2016, C-TYPE PRINT  
COURTESY THE ARTIST  
PETA CLANCY  
*FISSURE 2* FROM THE SERIES,  
*FISSURES IN TIME*, 2017  
FRAMED PIGMENT PRINT  
COURTESY THE ARTIST  
MICHAELA GLEAVE  
*UNDER ONE SUN*, 2017  
SILVER GELATIN PRINT  
COURTESY THE ARTIST  
AND ANNA PAPPAS  
GALLERY, MELBOURNE  
OPPOSITE:  
NASIM NASR, ANGELA  
TIATIA, MICHAELA GLEAVE,  
SARA OSCAR, ARTISTS  
FROM *UNDER THE SUN*  
EXHIBITION. VIEW  
MAX DUPAIN ARCHIVES  
PHOTO BY JOY LAI  
*SUNBAKER*, 1937,  
MAX DUPAIN