

**A world-first exhibition of Asia–Pacific photography opens at the
National Gallery of Australia**

PICTURE PARADISE

ASIA–PACIFIC PHOTOGRAPHY 1840s–1940s

11 July – 9 November 2008

Canberra only, free admission

The ground breaking exhibition *Picture Paradise: Asia–Pacific photography 1840s–1940s* will be opened tonight by prominent Australian photographer Bill Henson. Never before has a regional perspective surveying the first century of Asia–Pacific photography been exhibited.

Picture Paradise presents photography from India and Sri Lanka, Southeast and East Asia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands to the west coast of North America. The exhibition covers the succession of photographic processes and styles that flourished during this period, from gem-like unique daguerreotype portraits through to the revolution of the wet-plate and dry-plate negative-positive process.

This significant gathering of over 400 original photographs and albums features both pioneer nineteenth-century local photographers as well as European photographers working in the region. The majority of the works in the exhibition are from the Gallery's extensive photography collection. Most of the images of the Asia–Pacific region have been acquired in the past three years as part of the National Gallery of Australia's photography acquisition program. It is already the most balanced historical collection of Asia–Pacific photography in the world.

Highlights of the exhibition range from some of the rarest and earliest daguerreotypes made in the region to one of the largest wet-plate photography projects ever undertaken: the nearly 10-metre-long Holtermann panorama of Sydney Harbour taken in 1875. Thanks to special installation techniques and conservation, this mammoth work will be shown framed and up on the wall for the first time since its debut showing in America in 1876.

The exhibition features the most famous pioneer foreign photographers such as Scottish-born John Thomson who published the first travel photography books on Asia in the 1870s; as well as works by the first generation of indigenous photographers – Lala Deen Dayal from India, Francis Chit from Thailand, Kassian Céphas from Indonesia, Lai Afong from Hong Kong, Alfred Bock from Australia and Carleton Watkins from California. Their works are complemented by views and ethnographic studies by immigrants such as Armenian, Onnes Kurkdjian in Indonesia; German, J W Lindt, who migrated to work in Australia; and Alfred Burton, an Englishman who worked in New Zealand.

In showcasing the modern era, Surrealist photography work of the 1930s by Australian Modernist Max Dupain is shown in context with the work of Lionel Wendt from Sri Lanka and Osamu Shiihara from Japan.

An important feature of the exhibition will be the inclusion of a number of the first significant women photographers in the region including Hedda Morrison in China, Imogen Cunningham in California and Olive Cotton in Australia.

Picture Paradise: Asia–Pacific photography 1840s–1940s is the National Gallery of Australia's contribution to Vivid, the National Photography Festival taking place in venues around Canberra from 11 July to 12 October 2008. With 100 exhibitions hosted across 50 venues in Canberra, ranging from national collecting institutions to many smaller community organisations and galleries, Vivid will highlight the city's rich photographic collections through exhibitions and a wide range of events.

For more information and images please visit the exhibition website at:
nga.gov.au/PictureParadise

An 88-page exhibition book featuring over 75 images will be available from the NGA shop and selected bookstores. **RRP \$29.95 / Special NGA exhibition price \$24.95**

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