

**Forged under the Hammer and Sickle: The Case of Geoffrey Powell, 1945–1960**

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# **Forged under the Hammer and Sickle: The Case of Geoffrey Powell, 1945–1960**

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# Synopsis

*Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960* is a multimodal exhibition and exegesis that concerns the post-war production of photographer-turned-documentary-filmmaker Geoffrey Powell (1918–1989). It re-evaluates Powell's production through the prism of his socio-political evolution from *reactionary* to Marxist. Within the photo-historical literature, he is defined as a participant in the mainstream Post-War Documentary Movement in photography.

However, my research has revealed that Powell belonged to a cross-disciplinary nexus of creative thought. He was a member of the Australian Communist Party and his photographic production was all but confined to Socialist Realist journals. This Marxist affiliation imposed strictures on the way in which he engaged with subjects as well as the aesthetics of his work.

He was also an active participant on the *progressive* 'Arts Front'. An interest in expository film by the *progressive* Left tweaked a curiosity in Powell, which ultimately encouraged his move into documentary filmmaking. Through the patronage of *progressive* film producer John Heyer, Powell became employed at the Department of Information (DOI) Film Unit as a cinematographer from March 1946. At the DOI, he was a member of the Heyer documentary group that embraced the notion of "dramatising within the realm of reality". In keeping with the Leftist cultural element that operated within the film unit—that engaged with outside radical film production for militant labour unions—Powell assisted the Miners' Federation in the production of photography for their Amenities Campaign in 1947.

Powell's film ethos increasingly became concerned with editing as the primary documentary filmmaker's tool. He took this knowledge with him to the embryonic ABC television service and was involved in the establishment of a film production unit at the national broadcaster's newly completed Gore Hill facilities in 1959.

## **Statement of Originality**

*This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.*

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## Table of Contents

Synopsis	i
Statement of Originality	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
Table of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Introduction	
The Structure of this Thesis	1
Research Methodology and Rationale	2
Chapter 1: Epistemological Disjuncture within the Literature on Geoffrey Powell	
The Literature and Powell's Photography 1945–1950	5
Powell and Academic Interest	12
Art and Social Commitment and the Quest for Powell	14
Chapter 2: Social Commitment	
Conservative Beginnings to Social Consciousness	21
The Communist Movement, Photography and Editorial Métier	28
Dramatising a Marxist Reality	32
Powell's Mode and Soviet 'Factography' Compared	39
An Erstwhile Communist in the DOI Film Unit	
Extramural Activity, Communist Propaganda	41
Extramural Activity, Militant Labor Unions	42
Photohistory and Amenities Campaign Photography	44
The Tour of the New South Wales Coal World May 1947	47

The Polemics of <i>How to Get More Coal</i>	50
Chapter 3: Powell, Film and the 'Documentary Idea'	53
Factional Identity, 'Left-wingism' and the DOI Film Unit	55
Powell on Film, Influences	60
Dramatising within the Realm of Reality	63
A Maturing of the 'Documentary Idea'	64
Chapter 4: Exhibition Strategy	
Precursors to This Project	68
Exhibit Methodology	74
Exhibition Space Structure and Rationale	83
Conclusion	
Representing Powell Visually	84
Bibliography	86
Official Records and Publications Consulted	105
Government Publications	106
Official Published Records of the ACP/CPA	
Constitutions	107
Congress Resolutions	108
Photographic Archives and Collections	109
Exhibitions Lists	110
Filmography	
Powell Filmography	113
Films Referred to and Consulted for this Exegesis	117
Appendix 1: Photo-Historical Literature Overview	121
Appendix 2: Publication History and Photo-Production, 1944–1950	125
Appendix 3: Exhibition <i>History of Labor Movement 1945</i>	132
Appendix 4: Summary of Powell Film Credits	136





# Table of Figures

Figure 1	Powell and Art and Social Commitment	15
Figure 2	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Radio and Screen Actress Elaine Hammil</i> 1938	22
Figure 3	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Plumber's Apprentice</i> 1945	30
Figure 4	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Delegates at Political Conference</i> 1945	33
Figure 5	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Family Group Awaiting Eviction</i> 1945	36
Figure 6	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Family Group Awaiting Eviction (alternate frame)</i> 1945	37
Figure 7	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Retired Mineworker, Helensburgh, NSW</i> 1947	45
Figure 8	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Untitled, "Old Hand at Crib, Kandos No. 2 Colliery, New South Wales"</i> 1947	46
Figure 9	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Untitled. "Sanitary Facilities Pacific Colliery</i> 1947	50
Figure 10	Amenities Campaign Photography, Social Amenities, Housing	51
Figure 11	Amenities Pictorial Political Bias	52
Figure 12	Geoffrey Powell, <i>Self Portrait, Bailing Walter</i> 1938	71
Figure 13	Craig Hoehne, <i>After Powell's Making A Speech</i> 1945 2014	76
Figure 14	Sergei Senkin, <i>Under the Banner of Lenin for the Second Five Year Plan</i> 1932	78

Figure 15

Alexander Rodchenco, and Varvara Stepanova, "Parachute"  
*USSR in Construction*, 1935

79

## List of Tables

Table 1 The New South Wales Amenities Fact-Finding Tour

48–49

Table 2 Overview of Powell Film Credits 1945–1960

54

## Introduction

### Thesis Structure

*Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960* is composed of an exhibition comprising photographs, documentary film, digital projection of montages, and an exegesis regarding the career of Australian photographer and filmmaker Geoffrey Powell (1918–1989).

The objective of both is to distil and demystify Powell, in order to reconnect his work back to its creative production base and identify its place within art and media histories. Although supported by argument, historical research, and documentation, the project is essentially a creative work. This work is designed as a multimodal exposition comprising three integrated components:

- A catalogue of photomontage supported by mini essays summarising the career and socio-political development of Powell;
- An exhibition of photographs by Powell that I have printed from researched negatives subtitled *Our Story in Pictures, Photography of Conditions in the New South Wales Coalfields, May 1947* (2004); and
- A projection of Powell's films with themes that form expressions around post-reconstruction that demonstrate key stages of his development as a documentary filmmaker.

The exegesis provides an in-depth background and rationale toward the exhibition as well as providing historical resources that elucidate Powell's life and work.

The exegesis argues for Powell as a Leftist (Marxist) whose photo-production during the 1940s was informed via a socio-political affiliated arts milieu, which also shaped his interest in documentary film. As I will discuss in Chapter 1, although Powell is recognised as a Leftist, photo-historical orthodoxy establishes his output within a mainstream social-documentary ideal. This exegesis challenges this by instead locating Powell's work firmly within a nexus of Leftist creative thought.

My project seeks to overcome two key obstacles to accessing Powell for the purposes of exhibition:

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

1. His surviving oeuvre is fractured and important elements have been lost.
2. The ambiguity surrounding the Socialist Realist influence on his photographic output from 1945 to 1946.
3. The determination of Powell's commitment to the Communist Movement and how this influenced or shaped the character of his production.

My exegesis re-evaluates Powell as a member of an internationalist *progressive*,<sup>1</sup> cross-disciplinary, cultural nexus formed out of a loose affiliation of artists, photographers, and filmmakers, who were dedicated to engaging socio-political concerns in their work. I argue that Powell's affiliation with orthodox Marxist-Leninism was a contributing impetus toward his appreciation of Socialist Realist modes of journalistic photography and that this milieu inspired his switch in career direction from photography to expository filmmaking.

## Research Methodology and Rationale

Three rudiments shape the research methodology for this project and the chapters of this exegesis, 1) the epistemological disjuncture within the literature on Powell; 2) Powell's commitment to the Communist movement; and 3) the continuing Left influence in Powell's film work.

The epistemological dichotomy that exists within the photo-historical literature is that, on the one hand, Powell is seen as a social documentary photographer (Ennis 1991, 1992, 2007; Gobé 2006; Lovell 2006; Newton 1988; Willis 1988), and on the other, that Powell was "producing his photography within a particular political and social ideology" (Jolly 1984, 2–3).

An impediment to a more informed discourse on the subject of Powell's commitment to the Communist Movement has arisen from his insistence that assignments from the Communist newspaper *Tribune* were accepted only as part of a wider freelance practice. Furthermore, he claimed to have been member of the Communist Party for only a few months. This stance, reiterated to art historians in the 1980s,<sup>2</sup> was originally publicly expounded by Powell's evidence before the Royal

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1. Please note, Marxist terminology is indicated by italics throughout this exegesis.

2. For the sake of clarity, any archives-based references are given as footnote citations. These conform to the citations conventions of the collections institution concerned. Geoffrey

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Commission on Espionage, to which he was called as witness, in December 1954.<sup>3</sup> Despite this, Powell's ostensible 'freelance' activities were conducted out of the *Tribune* offices at Marx House in Sydney—the national headquarters of the Australian Communist Party (ACP)<sup>4</sup>—from April 1945 to March 1946.<sup>5</sup> This intriguing fact points to a more engaged commitment to the Party.

Chapter 1 of this exegesis reviews how published literature has dealt with Powell in regard to his political affiliations and the nature of his output. I reconsider key points made by Ennis (1991, 1992) concerning the aesthetic qualities of Powell's imagery and compare them against critical reaction to *Art and Social Commitment, An End to the City Of Dreams 1931–1948* (1984–1985), an Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) touring exhibition curated by Charles Merewether.

Powell's trajectory towards a Marxist stance is outlined in Chapter 2, which discusses the shaping of a growing social-political awareness, which was consolidated by ensuing exposure to Communist doctrine. Powell's diverse photographic mode is evaluated alongside the early Soviet form of documentary known as 'factography'. His development as a documentary filmmaker and the continuing Left sensibilities to his work are discussed in Chapter 3, which also supports the film and photography programme for my exhibition. My interest here focuses on how Powell's left-wingism was reconciled within his place of work; i.e., the politically sensitive Department of Information (DOI) Film Unit.

Chapter 4 considers my previous archives and exhibition work on Powell and outlines how research outcomes for this project have shaped the curation of works

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Powell, copy of correspondence with Charles Merewether, September 17, 1981. Miscellaneous un-catalogued documents Powell estate; Albert Moran, Geoffrey Powell interview conducted at his residence, Cedar Creek via Beenleigh, Qld. May 1983. Hereafter cited in text as 'Moran interview 1983'; Geoffrey Powell, "Papers of Geoffrey Powell," National Gallery of Australia, 1984–1989, Archive (MS 44); Powell, "Chapter 25, Reputation," in "Worms in a Tin," autobiographical draft manuscript, nominally four volumes, Cedar Creek via Beenleigh, Queensland, ca. 1988, 1–42 (hereafter cited in the text as 'Powell ca. 1988'). Heading and pagination format varies.

3. Royal Commission on Espionage, "Evidence by G. B. St. A. Powell," in Royal Commission on Espionage, Official Transcript of Proceedings, taken at Sydney on Wednesday, 1st December 1954 (Canberra, ACT, Government Printer, 1954), 1627–35. Hereafter, cited as Royal Commission on Espionage, *Official Transcript of Proceedings* (1954).

4. Marx House was originally established at Dakin House, 24 Rawson Place, in March 1943, before its relocation to 272 George Street, Haymarket. From September 1944 to January 1950, it was more famously situated at 695–697 George Street.

5. Royal Commission on Espionage, *Official Transcript of Proceedings* (1954), 1931, par. 630; Royal Commission on Espionage, transcripts of interview and associated file documents contained in Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, "Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell." NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612. Digital copy of item with barcode 813052.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

for the exhibition, *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960*. This chapter also outlines how gaps in knowledge on Powell are addressed in this project.

In summary, my exegesis concerns the creative impulse for Powell's production of the 1940s, which was primarily informed by a growing a socio-political awareness that manifested through his engagement of topics around post-war reconstruction. The depth of political inflection imparted differs for the respective media outputs. His photography—in all cases created for Communist editors—promulgated the view that 'winning the peace' required a new reconstructed social framework that provided more equitable outcomes for 'ordinary people'. By comparison, his film work—produced through the auspices of the mainstream DOI, Shell, and ABC film units—is inflected by ideals of nation building and depictions of national identity, and these outputs are more tempered in their political overtone.

# Chapter 1: Epistemological Disjuncture within the Literature on Geoffrey Powell

The first section of this chapter reviews the literature on Powell's creative production from 1945 to 1950. Emphasis is placed on how these texts have responded to the political considerations behind Powell's oeuvre.<sup>6</sup> This is followed by an historical review of academic interest in Powell. The final section draws on reference made to the Studio of Realist Art (SORA), to which Powell was a contributing member, in Charles Merewether's exhibition *Art and Social Commitment, An End to the City of Dreams 1931–1948* (1984–1985).<sup>7</sup> Critical reaction to this exhibition is surveyed and compared against observations made by photo-historian Helen Ennis (1991, 1992), with regard to the aesthetics of Powell's Leftist photography. My objective in this chapter is to form an overview of how 'the political' underpinned the aesthetic choices made by Powell.

## The Literature and Powell's Photography 1945–1950

Powell has primarily received cursory mention within photo-historical literature. His name mostly appears in texts where the primary subject is other photographers, such as Edward Cranstone (Jolly 1984), Alex Poignant (R. Poignant 1992) and Jeff Carter (Houlihan 2000), or in anthologies such as survey exhibition essays (Ennis 1988; Newton 1988), as well as extended exhibition captions by Claire Gobé and Natasha Harth (2005), and photo-history books (Willis 1989; Ennis 2007). Powell has also formed the principal subject of conference papers by Helen Ennis (1991, 1992); a short biographical essay (Gobé 2006);<sup>8</sup> a library magazine

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6. Appendix 1 of this exegesis tabulates how the literature has intersected with Powell.

7. *Art and Social Commitment, An End to the City of Dreams 1931–1948* 1984–1985, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Project Area, Sydney, September 22–October 28, 1984; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, November 15, 1984–January 6, 1985; National Gallery of Victoria, Banyule Gallery, Heidelberg, January 6–March 3, 1985; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, March 26–April 28, 1985.

8. This citation, a reference prepared by curatorial assistant Claire Gobé, is an internal Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) collections management document A4 printout. It pertains to biographic essays and extended exhibition captions derived from the exhibition *Exposure, Australian Photography from the 1930s and the 1950s* 2005–2006, co-curated by Natasha Hart and Claire Gobé. Courtesy QAG 2007.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

article (Lovell 2007); and several of my texts and talks (Hoehne 2004, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2012).<sup>9</sup>

The literature can be summarised into three categories: in the first, there is no acknowledgment of the political in Powell's work; in the second, there is acknowledgement of Powell as a Leftist that does not extend to aesthetic implications and *métier* of his output; and in the third, there is an attempt to classify Powell's practice as belonging to Socialist Realism, as distinct from mainstream Social Realism.

The photo-historical literature on Powell is also marred by significant factual inaccuracy. In particular, Ennis (1991, 1992, 2007), Gobé (2006), and Lovell (2006) credit him with noteworthy volumes of photojournalism/documentary photography that were never produced. This aspect of photo-historical attention is canvassed by my extended essay "Occasionally through the Viewfinder, A Consideration of Geoffrey Powell's Photography" (2006), an interim account drafted prior to a fuller understanding of the political implications behind the aesthetic choices adopted by Powell.

Ennis's view on Powell (1992, 2007) is contextualised, on the one hand, by the propaganda objectives and aesthetic conformity of wartime government agency photography and, on the other, by Powell's 'left-wingism'. That dialogue considers Powell among the ranks of official government agency photographers:

Edward Cranstone, Max Dupain, Jim Fitzpatrick, and Geoffrey Powell were amongst those employed by the Department of Information [Photographic Branch] to record various activities on the home front. ... Their subject matter was prosaic—confined to images of those involved in the war effort and scenes of daily life—but the propagandist role of their images was obvious. (Ennis 2007, 91)

Within this framework, Powell's Marxist oeuvre is believed coexistent to primary government work and to form part of wider freelance activity through contributions to a variety of publications. These include the Communist journals *Tribune*, *Australia's Progress*, and *Common Cause* (Ennis 1992). Ennis does not recognise Powell's photo-production of the period as exclusively residing within a Marx House milieu. I argue that Powell's presence in that locale resulted in production that was

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9. My prior exhibition and archive work on Powell is canvassed in Chapter 3 of this exegesis.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

responsive to the dialogue of the Marxist Left and conformist to its *progressive* metier.<sup>10</sup>

This exegesis explores the circumstances behind, and the political authority underpinning, Powell's production created from August 1944 to March 1946 and May 1947. The particulars of that production are incorporated into a catalogue of annotated montages for exhibition. This exhibition element (discussed more fully in Chapter 4 of this exegesis) describes the development of socio-political consciousness in Powell and how this shaped the character of his output.

A measure of interest in Powell stems from his brief association with the Bond Street studio of Max Dupain (1911–1992).<sup>11</sup> A more fulsome discourse is found in the literature that concentrates on his late 1940s intersection with photography. Photohistorians have understandably taken a conventional discipline-centric approach, which has promoted an accepted view that locates Powell's output within the mainstream Post-War Documentary Movement. Established primarily through Ennis (1988, 1992, 2007), orthodoxy has been taken up by numerous others (Newton 1988; Willis 1989; Hoehne 2004; Gobé 2006; Lovell 2007). Willis discusses Powell under the book chapter section "Documentary after World War II", and likewise Newton in "The Documentary Movement 1940s–1950s". These texts form a discourse on mainstream activity, which acknowledges the Leftist affiliation of Powell and Cranstone. Previously, I have also followed orthodoxy,

After the war, Powell was enticed back into freelance practice where he became committed to social documentary photography. Through his involvement in such work, Powell established himself as a respected and vocal participant in Australia's post-war documentary movement. Other protagonists prominent in documentary photography at this time included Edward Cranstone (1903–1989), David Moore (1927–2003) and David Potts (1926–). The main outlet for Powell's documentary work of this period was primarily Leftwing journals and magazines. (Hoehne 2004, 2–3)

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10. A tabulation of Powell's employment and photographic production from 1944 to 1950 is provided in Appendix 2 of this exegesis. These data are formulated from a survey of Powell's production based on clippings from his scrapbooks dated 1944–1950. This survey is supported by my ongoing comprehensive investigation into his biography, which is intended to serve as a definitive resource covering Powell's life and employment history (see Hoehne 2007a).

11. See Appendix 1.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Lovell develops a career path narrative that claims for Powell noteworthy bodies of documentary from the late 1930s, which, it is said, "foreshadowed Powell's participation in the social documentary photography movement following World War II" (Lovell 2007, 8). Gobé also views Powell as being among "photographers of his generation, notably Dupain, Edward Cranstone, and Alex Poignant, [who] turned to documentary photography during the war. ... Powell had a keen interest in Australian workers and their conditions during this period and predominantly used a documentary approach" (2006, 2, 9ff.).

Orthodoxy is chiefly described through Powell's article "Photography—A Social Weapon" (Powell 1946a), published in the first issue of Laurence le Guay's journal *Contemporary Photography*. Despite its Socialist Realist-inspired title, the article is afforded considerable prominence within the mainstream discourse. A recent expression of that prominence is seen in a timeline (AGNSW 2015) created to accompany the AGNSW exhibition *The Photograph and Australia* curated by Judy Annear in 2015.<sup>12</sup> This timeline includes the appearance of Powell's article among key moments in the history of the photographic medium since the colonial period. Ennis (1991; 1992), Newton (1988), Willis (1989), and Houlihan (2000) address it within the framework of the mainstream photo-documentary discourse that appeared in subsequent issues of *Contemporary Photography* (1947–1950). For example, Ennis notes:

In the immediate post-war period the case for documentary photography was argued in articles and pictures in *Contemporary Photography* magazine edited by Laurie le Guay ... [such as] Geoffrey Powell's contribution to the first issue (November – December 1946) [that] was titled 'Photography—A Social Weapon':" (Ennis 1991: 3–4ff.; 1992: 40).

Ennis subsequently draws attention to the radical perspective of this article as manifesting the personal impact of the war experience on photographers, which encouraged a change in attitude to an engaged concern with the realities of life:

Geoffrey Powell was one of the few who proceeded from a radical position. In 1946, in an essay aptly titled "Photography – a Social Weapon", he argued that photographers have a responsibility to draw attention to societies current

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12. *The Photograph and Australia*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, March 21–June 8, 2015; Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, July 4–October 11, 2015.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

problems, including 'the atrocious living conditions of the less privileged'.  
(2007, 93)

Curator/historian Roslyn Poignant offers a dissenting view to photohistorical orthodoxy in a footnote reference that elucidates Powell as "a socialist realist ... who, in 'Photography a Social Weapon', wrote on the social relevance of documentary" (1992, 201n23).

Willis provides a contextualising analysis of the documentary debate carried out by *Contemporary Photography*:

One would not want to exaggerate the importance of the documentary philosophy of in *Contemporary Photography*. For Le Guay, documentary was not important because of a belief in the pressing need for social reform or the inequity of the capitalist system; it was important because it challenged the gentle pictorialism still prevalent in camera club photography. (1989, 193)

Powell's "Photography—A Social Weapon" denotes a continuing intellectual interest in photography as a potent Realist medium with which to engage social issues. At the time of publication, he had withdrawn from photographic practice. His stated preference at this time (in Moran 1983, tape 2) was for the greater potentiality offered by documentary filmmaking. Furthermore, I argue that "Photography—A Social Weapon" signifies that, although he was disaffected from Marx House from late 1945 onwards, Powell continued to identify with the Realist notion of 'Art is a Weapon' in the *struggle of the classes*. Significantly, nowhere does Powell refer to his photo-work as 'Documentary' but instead unswervingly prefers the terminology of the Left; i.e. 'Realist' or otherwise "socially conscious".

I employ the term 'Realist' throughout this exegesis as artists on the political left (working in the 1940s) commonly used it and whose work was allied to *progressive* values. These were espoused by cultural organisations such as SORA and New Theatre, which had links to the ACP. That is to say, 'Realist' is used throughout my exegesis in its period Marxist context and not to be confused with its broader art theory meaning. Modern histories classify these artists as the Social Realists. My argument is for Powell as a Socialist Realist photographer and whose work was aligned to the dialogue of the (Social) Realist painters. Social Documentary photography (a form of social realism in art theory) was a movement not allied to the ACP and its discourse on creative expression.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

In the next chapter, I consider "Photography—A Social Weapon" as a continuation of the Realist photo-discourse initiated by Powell through the Socialist Realist Arts and Sciences journal *Australia's Progress*, via his articles "Are Photographers Artists?" (1945b) and "Camera Art" (1945c).

Notwithstanding orthodoxy on Powell, an acknowledgment of his left-wing political commitment is evident throughout the literature. Ennis qualifies this commitment by an "involvement with the ACP for brief six-month period in the early 1940s" (1992, 39). However, in *Photography and Australia*, Ennis (2007) draws Powell's Leftist outlook into the 'Modern Photography' milieu of the 1930s. She discusses Australian photographers' adoption of Modernist trends from overseas, but notes that, unlike workers from the USSR and Germany, that curiosity was not wedded to any revolutionary ideology. However, Ennis notes that "an exception was Geoffrey Powell who worked at the Max Dupain studio in the late 1930s, he belonged to the Australian Communist Party." (2007, 76)

Powell's socio-political outlook is explored in my project as a gradual evolutionary process. He conformed to a conventional middle-class archetype of the day and, throughout the 1930s, unquestioningly accepted the *reactionary* position of his upbringing. Like many wide-eyed middle class *intellectuals* of his generation, Powell was subsequently drawn to the Communist Movement during the latter war years. Powell's working ethos of the 1930s was allied to his close confidante le Guay (1916–1990) and mentor Dupain. Thus, his creative stance of the 1930s was in complete accord with Ennis's following statement:

Australian photographers were generally far more attracted to the freedom and energy they saw in certain aspects of modern life, as well as the New Photography movement's innovative forms of expression that enabled them to overthrow the 'olde worlde' effects of Pictorialism. (2007, 76)

Powell's own comments on the Pictorial stalwarts from the Photographic Society of New South Wales, such as Harold Cazneaux (1878–1953), Mons Pereier (–), Monte Luke (1885–1962), Henry Metcalf (–), Montgomery Dunne (–), and Henri Mallard (1884–1967), found in his memoirs, illustrates his position:

They were mostly exponents of the 'bromoil' technique of photography, producing those beautiful portraits and landscapes that looked so much like etchings. ... The results were fantastic in a very conservative sort of way and

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

were no doubt worth every minute of the hours of work that would go into the production of a print. ... But to me, even in my ignorance, they seemed to be a phoney form of art. These were all only 'would-be' artists who were not good enough draughtsmen to create their basic image with a brush or pencil but had to depend on the mechanical lens to do that for them. Then they would add their 'artistry' on top of the camera's initial image. ... I can't say that those older men of the Society did not influence me in my development as a photographer. They did, albeit in a negative rather than a positive influence. ... I went the other way. Like Laurie [le Guay] I concentrated on a more purist approach, insisting that a photograph should be just that a photograph. And NOT [*sic*] an imitation painting, etching, sketch or what-you-will. ... I tended to look for unusual subjects that (I thought) had not been photographed before.<sup>13</sup>

Confining her discussion to the Post-War era "Documentary Movement", Newton remarks, "... other photographers were more socially committed in their Documentary work [for example] Edward Cranstone and Geoffrey Powell were involved with left wing politics and stressed the dignity of work and the plight of the socially disadvantaged" (1988, 123). Meanwhile, Martyn Jolly notes "Powell, politically active of the Left produced his photography within a particular political and social ideology" (1984, 1–2), and differentiates his philosophical approach from those of contemporaries Damien Parer (1912–1944), Cranstone, and Axel Poignant (1906–1986), the latter of whom were two fellow Communists. Houlihan's (2000) mention of Powell notes his presence alongside other photographers working from a socially conscious standpoint—i.e., Cranstone, Le Guay, and David Moore (1927–2003)—but, unlike Jolly (2004), does not differentiate the divergent philosophical approaches of those photographers. Roslyn Poignant (1992) considers the recognition afforded to the radical imagery of Alex Poignant and Powell in *Australian Photography 1947*. The background semiotics to one of Powell's submissions, *Delegates to Political Conference 1945* (figure 4), is appropriated to articulate its depiction of Leftist sentiments. Powell's delegation is posed in front of large murals—possibly prepared for the ACP's forthcoming *History of Labor* exhibit—carrying slogans of the Left: "Allied unity has liberated Europe" and "The future

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13. Geoffrey Powell, Chapter 12: Developing A Potential," in *Worms in a Tin*, ca. 1988, 2–3ff.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

belongs to the people". As Poignant argues, in the immediate post-war era, these sentiments were embraced by a "broad social consensus that believed the inequities of the pre-war era should not be allowed to recur". As previously cited, Poignant clarifies Powell as a Socialist Realist. In a previous publication, I contend that Powell's "photography of the period was politically charged, conforming to the precepts of Socialist Realism" (Hoehne 2007c, 12), and elsewhere indicate that the primary outlet for his production was left-wing publications (Hoehne 2004). Lovell's article "The Camera Art of Geoffrey Powell" (2007) disregards his political standpoint altogether.

## Powell and Academic Interest

According to former NGA curator Gael Newton, Powell first came to the attention of photo-historians during the 1980s, as part of a desire to seek out the aging Modernist photographers who had worked during the 1930s and 1940s so as to secure the period and its protagonists for posterity (pers. comm. 2003). Consequently, Powell fell into the scope of investigations made by Ian North and Martin Jolly. At this time, the ANG also began accepting examples of his work in their permanent collection. Ennis, the Gallery's curator of photography from 1985 to 1992, had, by 1988, expanded on the groundwork of her predecessors. Powell's work began to be represented in ANG exhibitions; e.g. *Shades of Light, Photography and Australia, 1839–1988* (1988), *Facing Facts, Documentary Photographs* (1988), and *Artists in Hospital* (1991).<sup>14</sup>

Ennis's conference paper titled "Geoffrey Powell, A Worker Photographer" (1991), presented at the Art Association of Australia annual conference, marks the first substantive attempt to address Powell's photography, albeit forming a preliminary treatise where he is qualified as the "ostensible subject" (Ennis, pers. comm. August 2011). A slightly revised version, re-titled "A Quest for Geoffrey Powell" (Ennis 1992), was presented at the Centre for Contemporary Photography conference, "SHOT", a year later.<sup>15</sup> The substantive body of the text forms a "digression to use Powell's documentary work to articulate changes in Australian photographic practice that occurred during World War II and more importantly to

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14. Rose Montebello, pers. comm. NGA, July 2007; NGA, summary of Powell images from the collection with notations on those exhibited from data base. Courtesy, Rose Montebello, Coordinator Collection Study Room (CSR), NGA, Canberra.

15. This typed draft paper was found within Powell's estate holdings in 2001 and is unpaginated.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

pluralise the notion of the documentary aesthetic as it was practiced in the mid to late 1940s" (Ennis 1992, 38). The dialogue engages in a mainstream wartime photo-historical account constructed as a framework into which Geoffrey Powell is inserted. The copy of Ennis's "Geoffrey Powell, A Worker Photographer" paper found among the effects of his estate in 2001, cited herein, contains the handwritten inscription; "tape of Powell lost from library 1991". This notation refers to a recorded interview held with Powell by (the then called Australian National Gallery [ANG]) curators Martyn Jolly and Ian North in 1984.<sup>16</sup> Both have subsequently clarified that no copies or transcription of this interview is extant (pers. comm. July 2007). Moreover, Ennis was denied access to Powell's drafted memoirs, which he mistakenly anticipated would be presently published.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to interest from photography curators at the ANG, left-wing art historian Charles Merewether had approached Powell in 1981 as part of comprehensive investigations toward the forthcoming AGNSW survey exhibition *Art and Social Commitment*. Powell was invited to contribute examples from his *Tribune* photography toward that programme showcasing Leftist art activity of the period.<sup>18</sup> As such, Merewether and fellow Leftist Roslyn Poignant stand as the only art history researchers to unequivocally recognise Powell as a figure whose photo-work responded to the dialogue and aesthetic ideology of the Left, while Jolly's fleeting mention (1994, 1–2) of Powell also confines his photography to a Leftist political and social ideology.

In summary, notwithstanding recognition of Powell's Leftist political affiliation, photo-historical orthodoxy delineates his production through a mainstream social-documentary ideal, or, in the parlance of the Left, *Bourgeois Realism*. For example, Ennis (1991, 1992) considers Powell's more substantive film career as an untimely intrusion to continued work as a documentary photographer: "Powell's career as a documentarian was not the only one that was short-lived. ... Cranstone like Powell became a cinematographer" (1992, 42). Ennis also notes, "In this capacity his [Powell's] 'personality' became even less visible as he was a member of a team" (1992, 42).

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16. The ANG was officially renamed the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) in 1992.

17. Powell, "Papers of Geoffrey Powell," 1984–1989.

18. Geoffrey Powell, correspondence with Charles Merewether, September 17, 1981.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

Within the film literature, Powell's achievements are overshadowed by more prominent figures. He gains cursory mention by FitzSimons, Laughren, and Williamson (2011) and by Tim Bowden (2006) in relation to early television documentary production at the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). Powell is given greater prominence by film academic Albert Moran (1987a, 1987c, 1988, 1991) through definitive research into the history of the DOI Film Unit. Moran's observations of politico-cultural factionalism in play at the Film Unit (1987b, 1987c, 1988) place Powell among a cohort of younger Leftist members who were dedicated to the aesthetic and social possibilities of the "documentary idea". Moran (1987a) also notes that these filmmakers were responsible for much of the Unit's innovative work in the 1940s. The Film Unit's complicity in outside Realist film production for militant labour unions is also noted within Moran's treatise (e.g. in 1987b), which is reiterated by Lisa Milner (2000), as a cultural artefact of the DOI Film Unit that blurred the boundaries between government filmmaking and other more radical film trends. Deane Williams's *Australian Post-War Documentary Film, An Arc of Mirrors* (2008) re-evaluates local documentary film culture as the product of a broad Leftist nexus. Notwithstanding that no mention of Powell is made, this text consolidates valuable background for my current project as a platform from which to re-examine Powell's praxis as harmonising with the contemporary *progressive* film milieu.

## **Art and Social Commitment and the Quest for Geoffrey Powell**

Although Powell's photo-documentary output was acknowledged as Leftist, photo-historical discourse overlooks the fact that it was wholly generated from within the *progressive* locale of Marx House, Sydney, through the auspices of Communist editors. That is to say, the editorial stance behind his work is not fully recognised. The editors setting the agenda for that work included the following prominent ACP personalities: H. B. Chandler (–), chief editor; L. Harry Gould (1914–), *Tribune* editor; Ernie W. Campbell (1909–), *Tribune* associate editor; Rupert Lockwood (1908–1997), *Tribune* associate/news editor; Rex Chiplin (1915–1990), *Progress* co-editor; Ray Oldham (1911–2005), *Progress* co-editor; John Oldham (1907–1999), designer and production manager for *History of Labor* (1945) and *Return to Civil Life* (1945); and Edgar Ross (1907–2001), *Common Cause* editor.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

A consequence of orthodoxy for Powell, the epistemological disposition of his photography is left unrecognised. This in turn serves to negate any discussion around aesthetic ideology, as well as prime métier. On the one hand, Ennis (1991, 1992) describes Powell as actively engaged through the ACP, where his work formed an analysis of class inflected through an internationalist perspective, while on the other, she puts forward a purist social realist perspective where notions of truth in Powell's photography are considered to present a "non-problematical concept, [relating] above all to an accurate depiction of contemporary social conditions" (1992, 40). She does not consider the distinction between the mainstream definitions of reality and Marxist-Leninist notions of reality.

Nevertheless, Ennis (1991, 1992) does provide pertinent observational insight to the aesthetics projected by Powell's photography and moots its Leftist overtone.

### Figure 1 Powell and *Art and Social Commitment*

## TRIBUNE

Official Organ of the Australian Communist Party

HARRY MADDEN is a typical pitman. His job is shown in this series of three photographs taken at a Sydney brickyard last week. He loads the skip, man-handles it and manually tips it into the mechanical skip which takes the clay to the crushers. He starts work each day at 7.15 a.m., finishes about three p.m. On piece work, his wages depend on the output of the yard in bricks. His average wage is £7 a week.



TRIBUNE—Tuesday, February 26, 1946

HARD WORK FOR BRICK-MAKERS



MECHANISATION of the brick-making industry would save arduous manual labor of the kind shown here. Strained face of William Neive, pitman, shows that loading shale into the skip is tough work.—Tribune photo.

TRIBUNE—Friday, March 1, 1946

Digital reconstruction after the Powell scrapbook page showing the imagery forwarded to Charles Merewether; i.e. this was the photography that would have appeared in *Art and Social Commitment*. As is illustrated, the imagery conforms to *Art and Social Commitment's* focus on depictions of the human form as a motif set within the urban landscape (Smith in Merewether 2000, 9).

The contribution of Powell's polemic news photography to *Art and Social Commitment, An End To The City of Dreams 1931–1948* (1984–1985) is shown in figure 1. The photographic negatives passed on to Merewether by Powell—

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

identified from detailed descriptions in correspondence<sup>19</sup>—were from a series depicting workers at a brickworks quarry undertaken for a *Tribune* assignment in 1946.<sup>20</sup>

The exhibition's brief was "to demonstrate the force and breadth of contemporary art throughout the period of the Depression and War years".<sup>21</sup> The gamut of curation recognised the various modes used in avant-garde art of the period and included displays of publication art displayed as supplementary screens (Merewether 2000). The formal exhibition proposal document states, "Two photographers Geoff Powell and Ted Cranstone will be represented. It will be the first time since the Forties that their work has been exhibited publicly, and their work represents major examples of documentary photography in Australia".<sup>22</sup>.

The *Art and Social Commitment* exhibition proposal also outlines a Realist and documentary film-screening programme that was intended to run concurrently to the exhibition, and newspaper advertisements for the AGNSW installation make specific mention of the film and photography programmes.<sup>23</sup> It appears, however, that a decision was made to cull the programme late in preparation, as it was considered unwieldy. Consequently, AGNSW Librarian Claire Eggleston confirms (pers. comm. April 2012), the film and photography programmes were removed. Powell was still obliquely represented within the supplementary screens displaying publication material, which included the issue of *Australia's Progress* that showcased the *Australia at War Art Exhibition 1946*,<sup>24</sup> Powell credited for the photo-reproduction of Realist artwork from the exhibition.<sup>25</sup>

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19. Geoffrey Powell, correspondence with Charles Merewether, September 1981.

20. Powell, in "Harry Madden is a Typical Pitman," *Tribune*, new series no. 192, Sydney, NSW, Australian Communist Party (Tuesday February 26, 1946), 7; Powell, in "Hard Work for Brick-Makers," in *Tribune*, new series no. 193 (Friday March 1, 1946), 6.

21. Janet Parfenovics, "Art and Social Commitment Exhibition Proposal," Australian and International Exhibition Management, September 7, 1983, 1.

22. Ibid. 2.

23. Sydney Morning Herald, "New South Wales Art Gallery, Art and Social Commitment," advertised in "Galleries," in *SMH Metro*. Published in association with *SMH*, no. 45782, Friday September 21, 1984, 10, and again in *SMH Metro*, Friday September 28, 1984, 10.

24. Janet Parfenovics, "Art and Social Commitment Screens," Art and Social Commitment exhibition documentation, Screen 3, Line 3, l. Courtesy Jin Wittington, Art Gallery of South Australia Library, e-mail correspondence and attachment, February 2012.

25. Geoffrey Powell, in "Australia at War Art Exhibition, Photography by Geoffrey Powell," in *Australia's Progress*, vol. 1, no. 31, Forest Lodge NSW, Australian Communist Party, Newsletter Printery (April 1946), 34–41.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Powell had been exposed to the art of the Realist painters featured in *Art and Social Commitment* through his work for Communist journals. As part of this work, he had produced the portraiture of *progressive* artists to support Bernard Smith's regular *Progress* "Artist of the Month" column and also reproduced their artworks for publication.<sup>26</sup> As noted by Rupert Lockwood, Powell moved in the same circles: "Geoffrey Powell ... moves among artists, writers, photographers, etc".<sup>27</sup> Moreover, among Powell's main confidantes of the period were the painter James Cant (1911–1982) and exhibitions designer John Oldham, both actively *progressives* and also founding Studio of Realist Art (SORA) executive members (Powell ca. 1988); Moran interview 1983, tape 1). Furthermore, *Art and Social Commitment*, particularly its un-bridged form, was a forum describing the *progressive* arts milieu that acted as the instructive locale to Powell's photography and filmmaking. As such, this exhibition forms a useful platform from which to discuss the character of Powell's production.

In this exegesis, I use reactions from contemporary art 'critics and connoisseurs' to the works of the Realist painters represented in *Art and Social Commitment* as a vehicle from which to consider the modality and aesthetics of Powell's Leftist photo-praxis. In addition to focusing on the radical social outlook of works represented, critical objection to *Art and Social Commitment* centred on the unattractiveness of the *progressive* artwork showcased, which bear parallels to Ennis' observations on Powell's contemporaneous photography:

Powell assumed an anti individualist unheroic stance [and] did not appear to develop a strong signature style. Perhaps this was due to his left-wing political beliefs that informed his particular documentary aesthetic rather than a lack of talent. ... Resolute in their ordinariness the photographs are—by prevailing art historical judgments—ultimately forgettable. (1992, 37–38)

Through his memoirs, Powell recalled the tenor of his work:

A lot of the reportage was very much run-of-the-mill, but every now and again there was the opportunity to show a bit of flair. ... These photographs would be commonplace today—but thirty years ago earned me a reputation

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26. Geoffrey Powell. "Geoffrey Powell, Quarto Scrapbooks, 1944–1950," vol. 2, extant as bound A4 format photocopies. Canberra, ACT, Australian National Gallery, 1989b. Hereafter cited as Powell, "Quarto Scrapbooks, 1944–1950"; NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

27. Royal Commission on Espionage, "Document J.26," 1954. Drafted by Rupert Lockwood, May 1953.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

and seemed to be built on what my photographs achieved, rather than the actual photographs themselves. ... Taken out of context, many were not worth much. But in their intended environment, right at the moment of truth, they were invaluable in the struggle of left against right.<sup>28</sup>

In his review of *Art and Social Commitment* for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, critic Terrence Maloon articulates his misgivings as follows: "it seems to me that there were too many artists who were long on compassion, sociological interest and ideological rectitude but short on aesthetic flair and even, in some cases, the most elementary competence" (Maloon 1984, 49). Elwyn Lynn, the art columnist for the *Australian* newspaper, takes a similar stance: "we all should know that art directed to service a social cause rarely does anything for art and it is doubtful if it does anything for the cause" (Lynn 1984, 15). Interestingly, Lynn's sentiments echo those of the *Sydney Morning Herald* art critic (perhaps Paul Haefliger) for the second annual SORA exhibition, held at the David Jones (retail store) Gallery, in 1947:

Here the organic function of art to heed its own laws and no others is scorned and replaced with the naive righteousness of a social message. ... Art is simply not the medium for propaganda. ... The narrow-mindedness which alone makes propaganda is in the work of J. Bergner, Roy Dalgarno, Herbert McClintock, Vic O'Conner, Roderick Shaw, and James Wigley. ("Exhibition by Studio of Realist Art" 1947, 7)

Paul McGillick was equally unequivocal in his sentiments for *Art and Social Commitment*:

As a rule, the more painting tries to deliver sermons the less people want to look at it. *Art and Social Commitment* demonstrated that point very well. [Since] Merewether is anxious to locate all the energy in Australian leftwing art ... it brought together artists whose work has lapsed into obscurity. ... Bergner, Alisa [Vic] O'Connor, Noel Counihan, Danila Vassilieff, and James Cant are now largely of interest to people who, like Charles Merewether, share their particular political prejudices ... they are less interesting as artists. (1985, 29–30)

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28 . Geoffrey Powell, "Chapter 25: Reputation," in "Worms in a Tin," ca. 1988, 34, 37–39ff.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

The above critics preferred the works of more recognised artists associated with the Angry Penguins Movement—namely, Sidney Nolan (1917–1992), John Percival (1923–2000), Albert Tucker (1914–1999), James Gleeson (1915–2008), and Arthur Boyd (1920–1999)—to the exclusion of the Social Realists who were aligned with the *Progressive Arts Movement*. The other camp of *Art and Social Commitment* critics, Terry Smith (1984, 1985), Phyllis Woollock (1985), and John McDonald (1985), were more considered in their reviews. The latter sums up the prevailing judgmentalism towards the politically conscious art-workers:

It is ironic that these works should suddenly receive the accolade of being exhibited in a major national gallery, when for so long, critics and connoisseurs had considered them ugly and inferior due to the extreme nature of their social concerns ... the art on display represented what had been lurking beneath the floorboards of Australian art history for years, and what some hoped would go away. (McDonald 1985, 15)

Perhaps it was due to contemporary ambivalence toward politically inspired content that swayed Ennis from the similarly uncomfortable truths behind Powell's photo-production. Ennis's "A Quest for Geoffrey Powell" (1992) acknowledges an attendant proletarian aesthetic to his imagery, yet seeks to constrain these qualities to mainstream orthodoxy. The result is an incongruous alignment of Powell, the *progressive*, to a *Bourgeois Realist* mode. The voices of his closest confidantes on the creative Left are absent in the dialogue. The creative milieu in which Powell operated served to impart a character on his output that has no photo-historical equivalent in the Australian scene.

The renewed academic interest in the early Soviet documentary canon known as 'factography' by researchers associated with the *October* journal is useful to appraise modal and epistemological considerations behind Powell's photography (in particular, Fore 2006a, 2006b; Dickerman 2006; Buchloh 1984).

*Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960* contends that Powell's output sat parallel to the local Leftist arts discourse emanating from cultural organisations with links to the ACP, such as SORA, New Theatre, and The Sydney Film Society. In addition to the activities of these *progressive* organisations, an earnest debate on proletarian art also took place via journals of the ACP; namely, *Tribune*, and *Australia's Progress*, but most prominently *Communist Review*, the organ of theory and practice of the Central

**Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

Committee. Powell was a contributor to that debate in *Australia's Progress* and through SORA.

## Chapter 2: Social Commitment

### Conservative Beginnings to Social Consciousness

This chapter explores the factors that encouraged the socio-political arousal of Powell, as well as how this became reflected in his output.

Born into a sheltered existence shrouded by Hobart's Masonic establishment, Powell received a customary Church of England Grammar primary school education. His upbringing instilled *reactionary* ardour that imparted distrust of both Catholic and working-class traditions. Following the death of his father John Farnworth Powell (1849–1924),<sup>29</sup> the family relocated to the mainland and finally settled at Cremorne on Sydney's affluent North Shore. Powell completed his formal education at the nearby North Sydney Intermediate Boys' High in 1933; he had been an average student but received good grades in mathematics.<sup>30</sup> He then embarked on a career in the Merchant Marine, serving as a deck-boy on the Howard-Smith cabotage freighters SS *Time* and SS *Macedon*. Having done his time, the opportunity of an apprenticeship with the Ellerman and Bucknall Steamship Co. augured promising prospects. The would-be ship's captain, however, failed the last required test, as Powell was technically colour-blind.<sup>31</sup> With career hopes dashed, the forlorn Powell was resigned to a warehouse job at Penney's, the popular shopping chain of shipping firm Burns Philp (Hoehne 2007a).

Around this time, he befriended old school colleague, le Guay—the future noted photographer—who convinced him to purchase a camera. The two aspiring photographers joined the Photographic Society of New South Wales and began submitting their work to salon shows and local journals.<sup>32</sup>

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29. "Deaths, Powell," *Mercury*, Hobart, Monday November 10, 1924, 1; "John Farnworth Powell, Last Will and Testament"—Proved in the Supreme Court of Tasmania, 9th January 1925—Will No. 15016, May 13, 1924, Archives Office, State of Tasmania, AD960/48; Cornelian Bay Cemetery (Hobart) Church of England Section EE, Site Number 23.

30. "Geoffrey Powell, Intermediate Certificate", issued by the Department of Education, New South Wales, November 1933. Miscellaneous un-catalogued documents, Powell estate.

31. It is somewhat ironic that he went onto to become a documentary filmmaker who predominantly worked in the colour medium.

32. Powell, *Quarto Scrapbooks*, vol. 1, 1936–1942.

Figure 2



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Portrait of Radio and Screen Actress Elaine Hammil* 1938  
Posthumous Silver-Gelatine Chloro-Bromide Print (2003)  
38 x 30.3 cm, on sheet 50.5 x 37 cm  
*Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* 2004, plate four.

Powell shunned the staid sentimentality depicted by Pictorialism (the dominant canon subscribed to by Sydney's photography establishment), and instead adopted the Modern style emanating out of Continental Europe. It was an attitude that helped him secure a job washing and glazing prints at the progressive commercial studio of Russell Roberts (1904–1999). He was also noticed by the well-known Modernist photographer Dupain and was subsequently invited to join him as a junior assistant. The bohemian atmosphere for which Dupain's Bond Street studio (operating between 1934 and 1941) became famous was a comfortable and stimulating milieu for the young photographer. Again, his duties concentrated on the basics of studio darkroom work, washing and glazing prints. At Bond Street, however, he also received on-the-job training in commercial illustration and, in his spare time, was tutored in avant-garde trends, such as Surrealism and New



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Objectivity (Powell ca. 1988; Dupain 1986). It was an opportunity of a lifetime and Powell's future as a photographer seemed all but secured.

Only sixteen months into his new career, Powell left his job at Dupain's photography studio, with emerging photographer/filmmaker Damien Parer replacing him. In the meantime, Dupain's annoyance at losing his young assistant is palpable in Powell's employment termination letter, his words proving prophetic:

Geoffrey Powell's immaturity is a handicap in so far as it is responsible for his lack of intense concentration. ... Full of hope and enthusiasm he will 'do things' in photography once he has mastered himself and realised that his work matters more than all else.<sup>33</sup>

Powell's motives to leave were driven by the anticipation of joining a round-the-world sailing expedition en-route to Batavia (Jakarta, Indonesia). The glamorous German flagged schooner MSY *Seeteufel* had quietly slipped into Sydney Harbour late on May 20, 1938 and was moored at Neutral Bay near Powell's home. The yacht belonged to the internationally famous First World War *Kaiserliche Marine* commerce raider, Count Felix von Luckner (1881–1966). Ostensibly conducting a private goodwill voyage, the Count was in reality bankrolled by the Nazi regime in Berlin, and charged with a propaganda mission.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the ship's compliment was drawn from the 'Brown Shirt' paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party and included cadres assigned as undercover watchdogs.<sup>35</sup>

The presence of Hitler's emissary on Australia's shores generated vigorous protest from the Left.<sup>36</sup> It is significant that Powell was not among their number. Rather, he viewed the celebrity of von Luckner as a means to build his profile as a

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33. Max Dupain, handwritten termination of employment reference on Max Dupain Studio letterhead, dated August 13, 1938. Miscellaneous un-catalogued documents, Powell Estate.

34. Reginald Finzel, Interpreter, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, "The Purpose of the Tour," in NAA, CRS, A367, C68808; Alexander Sperk, und Daniel Bohse, "Teil II, Luckner in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus," in "Gutachten, zur Einschätzung der Person Felix Graf von Luckner (1881–1966)," hinsichtlich Straßenbenennung in der Stadt Halle (Salle), November 10, 2005, überarbeiten und erweiterten Fassung, Juni, 2007, 9–43.

[http://www.halle.de/VeroeffentlichungenBinaries/527/519/luckner-gutachten\\_12052011.pdf](http://www.halle.de/VeroeffentlichungenBinaries/527/519/luckner-gutachten_12052011.pdf)

35. Sperk, und Bohse, "Gutachten, Felix Graf von Luckner," 2007, 28–29; footnotes 114–115.

36. Attorney General's Department, "Protests Against the Landing in Australia of Count von Luckner," NAA, CRS, A432, 1937/509; Department of Interior, "Count Felix Von Luckner," NAA, CRS, A1, 1937/5978; Len Fox, *Von Luckner Not Wanted* (Sydney, NSW: National Council, Movement Against War and Fascism, 1938).

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

photographer and additionally sought to join the Nazi expedition.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the *Seeteufel* already boasted a photography and film unit overseen by former theatre artist Hans Günther Oesterreich (1910–1990), from the Propaganda Ministry, and the services of the non-German-speaking Powell were not required.<sup>38</sup> Oesterreich's production included an ethnographic travelogue photo-slideshow, *The World Circumnavigation of the MSY 'Seeteufel' 1937–1939* (ca. 1940–41), and the feature film *The Lonely Isles* (ca. 1941), with original score based on native melodies. He went on to serve in the *Wehrmacht* with the German armed forces radio service, *Radio Belgrad*.<sup>39</sup>

Fixated on the vanity of joining von Luckner, Powell pursued the yacht overland to Cairns, North Queensland.<sup>40</sup> In an affidavit to police dated September 19, 1940, he clarified his motivations for seeking work on the yacht and the consequences of this action:

My purpose for going on the yacht was firstly adventure and to get to Batavia as a stepping off place to Europe where I hoped to do photographic work, and also because I thought I might pick up some information about the Count and make a decent story about him. I also hoped to get photos of news interest to send back to the Sydney papers [these aims however, remained unrealised].

I definitely have no Nazi sympathies. Neither am I a Communist, but I am interested in the form of government in Germany as I am interested in any political Move in any country, which is a Move [sic] for the betterment of its people.

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37 . For example, Geoffrey Powell, in "Count Felix von Luckner," in *The Home*, Sydney, NSW, John Fairfax and Sons (July 1, 1938), 21, 60–1; Clippings of same with von Luckner's handwritten dedication, in Powell, Quarto Scrapbooks, vol. 1, 1936–1942.

38. Commonwealth Investigation Service, "Count Felix von Luckner and Crew of 'Der Seeteufel'. C.G.C. Moore, H.M. Schwarze, Hans Oesterreich, Michael Hutt," NAA, CRS, A367, C68808; Radiobremen (website)

<http://www.radiobremen.de/unternehmen/chronik/oesterreich100.html>.

39. Radiobremen, "Auf Weltreise," in "Bremer Rundfunk-Chronic, Hans Günther Oesterreich." (website)

<http://www.radiobremen.de/unternehmen/chronik/oesterreich100.html>; Henning Bleyl, "Der Straßenfeger von Radio Bremen," in *Taz.de*, e-Paper, February 26, 2002.

<http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/?dig=2002/02/26/a0228>.

40. Geoffrey Powell, "Chapter VII: Count Felix Von Luckner," in "Worms in a Tin," ca. 1988, 1–30ff.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

I believe that my association with von Luckner has jeopardised my position as a photographer in Sydney and also in other ways.<sup>41</sup>

Powell's speculation on Nazism as a positive social force denotes a naive political temperament that was in keeping with his *reactionary* upbringing. Powell had been informed about the reality of life under National Socialism through Jack Glenn's farsighted newsreel exposé *Inside Nazi Germany* (1938). He had attended a screening of the film in the company of *Seeteufel* crewmembers. Glenn's sharply critical analysis of German life under Nazi doctrine included a 'behind-the-scenes' report of the repression and murder of political opponents, as well as the subjugation of religious minorities. According to Powell, his Fascist guests confirmed the film's factual accuracy.<sup>42</sup>

Over the following interlude, he found difficulty in securing employment and drifted aimlessly. Moreover, Powell's actions made him known to the Commonwealth Investigation Service (CIS), the forerunner to ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) (Hoehne 2007a). Maxwell Lawson, the managing director of Sydney's eminent auction house James R. Lawson, had reported to police that "Geoffrey Powell talks quite openly against all British interests and professes to have Nazi Sympathies."<sup>43</sup> In the Moran interview (1983, tape 1), Powell explained his von Luckner episode as being around the "time when I went mad".

It was not until the second year of World War Two and his induction into compulsory military service that Powell's fortunes began to change for the better. The war years marked a transformative epoch for Powell, serving to peel away attitudes of class privilege. Army service brought him into close contact with those from less fortunate backgrounds. In addition, a maturing social consciousness was informed through *SALT* (Sea–Air–Land–Troops) magazine, published by the Army Education Service. Articles questioning the establishment and its social attitudes made *SALT* popular among the troops, but, according to its editor Mungo MacCallum (1913–1999), "politically it was dynamite". The military establishment

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41. Geoffrey Powell, "Statement," typed affidavit made to police at Avalon Beach, NSW, September 19, 1940. Contained in NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

42. Geoffrey Powell, "Chapter VII: Count Felix Von Luckner," in "Worms in a Tin," ca. 1988, 25–26ff.

43. Maxwell Lawson, signed police informant's report on James R. Lawson letterhead, addressed to Mr Keith, Police Headquarters, Philip and Hunter Street, Sydney, June 12, 1940, 2. Contained in NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

tended to view their progressive publication with suspicion as left-wing trending and communist influenced.<sup>44</sup>

In 1944, Powell was relieved from active duty, allowing him to pursue a civilian occupation as a newspaper photographer with Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* (Moran interview 1983, tape 1).<sup>45</sup> As a photo-news-reporter, he was exposed to personal tragedies, such as workers on strike and families affected by unemployment. He also became cognisant of the editorial bias in news coverage at the *Telegraph*, which, according to Powell, reflected the paper's political aims: "I was only then slowly becoming, shall we say, socially conscious or politically conscious in the way things were being manipulated for particular ends" (Moran interview 1983, tape 1).

Around this time, Powell's photography began to show aesthetic preferences that complemented a more aware engagement. The impetus for this was a revelation shaped via imported pictorial news magazines. He argued, "the only real outlet for photographic journalism is in the pictorial magazine, where a series of pictures tell the story in conjunction with the presentation concise facts by a competent reporter".<sup>46</sup> In his memoirs, Powell recalled the photography of US photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White (1904–1971) in *Life* magazine as being "some of the most stringent socially-conscious photography to ever come out of America". He particularly admired *Picture Post*, remarking that it was "full of socially-conscious pictures, oozing with character".<sup>47</sup> A hallmark of the English *Picture Post* was its preference for available light rather than flash photography. Powell regarded that this imparted aesthetic qualities with more heart and warmth than the harsh brittle qualities produced by flash photography (Moran interview 1983, tape 1).

I recall being greatly influenced by the photographic style featured by *Picture Post* with the photographers' use of available light—as compared with the

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44. Mungo MacCullum interviewed by Robin Hughes, May 18, 1996, transcript of tapes 4 –5, from the Australian Biography Project. Aired as Australian Biography, series five, 1997, SBS Television. SBS (website), <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/maccallum>.

45. Powell, "Chapter 22: The Telegraph Year", in "Worms in a Tin," ca. 1988, 1–52ff.; Second Australian Imperial Force, "Powell, Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn," NAA: CRS, M, B883, NX126352.

46. Geoffrey Powell, in unidentified newspaper clipping, 1944, almost certainly from *Telegus*, the Consolidated Press staff newspaper. Contained in Quarto Scrapbooks, vol. 2, 1944–1950.

47. Powell, "Chapter 22: The Telegraph Year", in "Worms in a Tin," ca. 1988, 4–5ff.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

more superficial presentation of subjects by the eternal flashlight pictures of the Americans in *Life*; an example of technical excellence overshadowing social content.<sup>48</sup>

Shortly after joining the *Telegraph*, Powell experienced the bitter taste of industrial action first hand. In October 1944, his union, the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA), was drawn into an industrial dispute between Sydney's four daily newspaper proprietors and the printing unions. The issue formed around the proprietors' collusion to print under a combined masthead, as a means to circumvent workplace negotiations with printers at Associated Press (Hagan 1973). The AJA insisted that its members work only for a particular imprint and it took umbrage that copy and pictorial began to appear in papers carrying the mastheads of competitors. The entire journalistic workforce of metropolitan Sydney's daily newspapers were then summarily stood down and locked out (Sparrow 1960).<sup>49</sup>

In the Moran interview (1983, tape 1), Powell recalled the manipulative machinations behind management's actions as an epiphany. With the assistance of the ACP, the newspaper unions responded by producing their own strike edition daily, *The News*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the Strike-and-Lockout, as the dispute became known, brought Powell to Marx House:

I got an introduction to the communists of Australia. I had never known they existed really. ... I found there was none of the great red bogies that we had always been taught about, these dreadful bloody communists, they didn't seem to exist. ... So when the strike was all over and we went back to work and things were never really happy I decided to go over and work for the *Tribune*, which I did as a photographer. (Moran interview 1983, tape 1)

Associate editor of the Communist newspaper *Tribune*, Rupert Lockwood, recalled something of Powell's aspirations at the time:

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48. Powell, copy of letter addressed to Charles Merewether, dated September 17, 1981.

49. Geoffrey Powell, "Chapter 22: The Telegraph Year," in "Worms in a Tin," ca. 1988. 10-30ff

50. AJA, and PIEU, *Newsletter Prints The News*, vol. 52, no. 23–no. 31, Sydney, NSW, Newsletter Printery, Australian Journalists' Association and Printing Industry Employees' Union, October 12, 1944–October 20, 1944.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Geoffrey Powell, who had been a photographer on the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and then got a job as a photographer on the *Tribune*—claiming that he wanted to leave the capitalist press and do 'honest work'.<sup>51</sup>

### The Communist Movement: Photography and Editorial Métier

This section discusses the hardening of Powell's outlook as a product of his exposure to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Semantics within the photo-historical literature over Powell's professed freelance standing for work produced for the Communist tabloid *Tribune* is a moot point. That work unequivocally followed the Socialist Realist editorial stricture of the paper and, moreover, was informed through his attendance at editorial conferences.<sup>52</sup> From April 1945 to March 1946, Powell was, for all intents and purposes, the official photographer at Marx House and primarily assigned to the ACP journals *Tribune* and *Australia's Progress*. Any outside commissions were rare. As Marx House's photographer, he held "undercover" Party membership status (Hoehne 2014). This requires some clarification. Undercover membership of the Communist Party was foremost an administrative arrangement not only to safeguard those engaged in important Party work but also to place them under central office control. Ordinary card-carrying members were administered through the Party branch structure. It did not necessarily follow that 'undercover communists' were agents involved in espionage. For example, Powell's associate through the AJA and Marx House, Edgar Ross (1904–2001), famously joined the CPA in 1933 as the undercover member whose public persona was the mysterious "Comrade Baldwin" (Ross 1993; Shields 2002).

The themes represented within the pages of *Tribune* during Powell's tenure as its photographer broadly reflected resolutions from the Fourteenth National Congress of the ACP. These were popularly expressed through the slogans "Jobs–Freedom–Progress" and "Jobs–Homes–Security".<sup>53</sup> Those broad themes formed a prime editorial focus and consequently held prominence in Powell's photographic

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51. Royal Commission on Espionage, "Document J.26," 1954. Drafted by Rupert Lockwood, May 1953.

52. ASIO Royal Commission Section, Transcripts of interview held at his residence Bruntnell Street, Chatham, Taree, NSW, November 15–16, 1954, 3. Contained in NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

53. See the list of ACP "Congress Resolutions" in the bibliography pages of this exegesis.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

output. The bulk of his *Tribune* work supported stories around the post-war housing shortage. Another important thread was the Indonesian Independence Movement depicted through events as they unfolded in Sydney (1945–1946) and that conformed to the editorial standpoint adopted from the Party platform of "Freedom for Oppressed Peoples". Other notable themes included the long-running steelworkers' strike, as well as activities on the *Arts Front*, particularly, New Theatre productions and exhibitions by Realist artists.

Powell's pictorial exposé on the rural-based ACP Richmond District Branch demonstrates the wholesale politicisation of his photography at this time. This work appeared as two consecutive weekly full-page spreads. The first, "Socialist Farmer Shares Profits", lionises the *progressive* ideals of farmer Robert Power, while the second, "Culture Flourishes among These Farmers of the Richmond District," showcases Comrades Corner, the district's Party Branch headquarters. These photo-essays portray a vibrant Communist culture within a rural setting away from the Party's industrial urban heartland and represent a local affirmation of the Soviet agrarian epitome.<sup>54</sup> Just as importantly, this depiction sits alongside the National Congress resolution on "Agrarian and Middle-Class Progress".

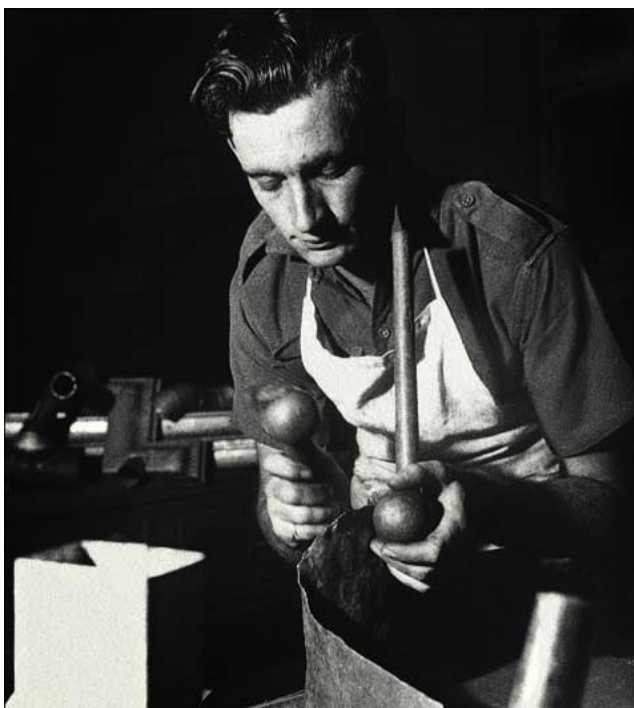
Powell's news picture *Plumber's Apprentice* (1945) (figure 3) is a case where his *Tribune* 'worker reportage' from the NGA collection has been appropriated as social documentary in recent exhibitions—most prominently *Facing Facts*, *Documentary Photographs* (1988). *Tribune* first published the image as part of its editorial interest on returned services rehabilitation. Before the war, Gonsalves was a plumber's apprentice, hence the title of the NGA print as provided by Powell in 1984.<sup>55</sup> This photograph represents an agitprop dynamic deployed as newspaper human-interest photography but that reflects a Soviet style of news depiction through politico-didactic uses of photography. Such use of photography helped to promote the ACP position in vital policy areas and was deployed as a demonstration of Communist concern and course of action.

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54. Geoffrey Powell, *Quarto Scrapbooks*, vol. 2, 1944–1950, which includes the following clippings; Powell, in "Socialist Farmer Shares Profits," in *Tribune*, new series no. 150 (Tuesday September 25, 1945), 5; Powell, in "Culture Flourishes Among These Farmers of the Richmond District," in *Tribune*, new series no. 152 (Tuesday October 2, 1945), 5. Citations provided for *Tribune* are corroborated through Powell's scrapbook as well as to a lesser extent his negative collection.

55. Powell, "Papers of Geoffrey Powell," 1984–1989.

Figure 3



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Plumber's Apprentice* 1945  
Original Silver-Gelatine Print  
31.6 x 30.3 cm on sheet 37.9 x 30.3 cm  
Acc. No. NGA, 84.1867  
Courtesy NGA

Rehabilitation, Pre-war apprentice plumber Phillip Gonsalves, 22, who saw service with ANGAU in New Guinea is doing full-time training under the Commonwealth Government's Rehabilitation scheme. Gonsalves pays £1 per week board at home, banks 15/- pension, and has £2 left out of his allowance to spend on clothes and amusement.<sup>56</sup>

Labour historian Rowan Cahill (1997) notes that Rupert Lockwood, *Tribune* associate-editor and Powell's immediate superior, believed a good journalist should act in dual capacity as a participant and observer. He preferred a type of journalism that merged reportage with commentary. Journalistic agitprop is a mode to which Powell also subscribed, as exemplified through serial photojournalism done for *Tribune's* sister publication, *Australia's Progress*. A prominent example is the photo-essay "Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs", which featured the Homebush meat-works complex and "shows where meat comes from and how slaughtermen work". Written and photographed by Powell, the essay's subject seemingly harmonises

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56. Powell, in "Rehabilitation," in *Tribune*, new series no. 121 (Thursday June 14, 1945), 6.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

with his reputed concern for "workers and their conditions". However, "Progress Goes to the State Abattoirs" goes further, highlighting the benefits of State-owned enterprise as a successful model that incorporated trade union participation in the workplace. Powell ends his article with "The NSW State Abattoirs are a complete answer to the critics of State enterprise in public service" (Powell 1946c, 41).

A different editorial style was deployed for "Progress Goes to School", photographed by Powell, which ostensibly described the neglect found throughout State schools in Sydney. The article calls on the government for apposite funding for the education system so as to better serve the interests of school children. A deep-etched cut-out of Powell's polemic composition *Truants* 1945 was deployed as additional illustration to support the argument of school pupils driven to truancy by unattractive educational environments (Powell 1946b). "Progress Goes to School" appeared during a pay dispute between the NSW Teachers Federation and the Schools Board, as subsequently reported by schoolteacher and prominent ACP member Hetty Ross in *Communist Review* (Ross 1945). It appears that "Progress Goes to School" was more directly politically inspired than its outward appearance suggests.

A review of *Progress* for *Communist Review*, written by its co-editor Ray Oldham (editor from October 1945 to July 1946), outlined the value and métier of the magazine.

*Progress* deals with important scientific and artistic events from a Marxist viewpoint. Art—and science—are a weapon [sic]. They are weapons that are used either for the benefit a small and privileged minority of finance capitalists or for the benefit of progressive humanity.

It is the responsibility of all progressive people to see that arts and sciences are a weapon used for the workers and against the exploiters. We can only do this if we know just what's going on in the field of arts and science. This is where the new *Progress* is important to you. In it many of the leading progressive scientists and artists deal with all current questions as they apply to the class struggle. (Oldham 1946, 190)

## Dramatising a Marxist Reality

An important adjunct to Powell's early *Tribune* photography was the production of polemic imagery for the *ACP Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Exhibition, History of Australian Labor Movement* (1945), otherwise simply referred to as *History of Labor*.

The self-laudatory *History of Labor* exhibition was mounted through the auspices of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Committee of the ACP and unveiled in Sydney alongside the celebratory milieu of the Fourteenth National Congress of August 1945 (Gould 1945a). The exhibit was fashioned as a polemic exposé that traversed the history, functions, and aspirations of the ACP, while simultaneously claiming hegemony over the Labor Movement (Gould 1945c). Billed as "showing the glorious history of the Australian people and their contribution to the world", the exhibit presented "Australian history in an unusual and interesting way by murals, paintings, photographs, original documents, and exhibits"(Gould 1945b). A range of evening short talks presented by leading Party functionaries, union leaders, and *progressive* theorists, served to embroider *History of Labor's* didactic métier (see Appendix 3). Communist organiser Adam Ogston (1905–1982), quoted in *Tribune*, noted the proletarian value of *History of Labor*:

This exhibit gives credit for the first time, to the unrecognised heroes of our democracy—the ordinary workingman and woman. It makes one realise that it was they who laid the foundations of the whole of present day democracy, our independence and our Australian Character. (Ogston 1945)

The exhibition included historic artefacts such as a musket carried by diggers at the Eureka Stockade of 1854; the leg irons worn by mining unionist Peter Bowling (1864–1942), imprisoned for conspiracy during the 1910 coal strike; and the underground printing press used to produce *Tribune* during 1940–1942, the period when the CPA was a declared an illegal organisation. Murals by Nan Horton (1917–1971) depicting early history and an exhibition of paintings by leading Realist artists also featured within the exhibition. Set within a late war timeframe, *History of Labor* projected idealised notions of Labour's wartime commitment to victory and aspirations for the post-war period. Powell's photography followed the exhibit's editorial focus on home front production and nation building. This work was integrated into the primary *History of Australian Labor Movement* annotated photo-

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

frieze. The adjoining right-hand side photo-frieze panel, entitled *The Headquarters Sydney at Work*, portrayed ACP figures actively engaged in Party work. An aspect of Powell's *History of Labor* photography was the depiction of historical working-class *struggles*. Such work entailed a polemic series of photocompositions and included *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945), *Delegates at Political Conference* (1945), and *Truants* (1945), as well as *Making a Speech* (1945). This imagery subsequently gained wider prominence in mainstream forums as submissions to le Guay's *Contemporary Photography* magazine and the *Australian Photography 1947* photography competition.

### Figure 4



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Delegates at Political Conference* 1945  
Posthumous Silver-Gelatine-Bromide Print (2004)  
30.1 cm x 30.2 cm  
*Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* 2004, plate ten

This posed photograph [*Delegates at Political Conference* (1945)] shows the necessity for observation power required to re-create an event so that its authenticity is accentuated. By developing this power of observation to its highest, the photographer is then able to 'recreate' the authentic atmosphere to pure photography.

For photography to become the highly specialised expressive medium, the manipulator of the camera must develop his mind and outlook to the world's

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

current problems. This will bring about a finer sense of observation, which will enable him to perceive new subjects with a new approach and produce pictures, which really mean something ... for the more constructive purpose of helping mankind. (Powell 1945b)

Powell's article "Camera Art" (1945b), written contemporaneously to *History of Labor*, concerned the potential for photography to transcend *escapist tendency* that permeated popular trends. Powell also noted the unsympathetic attitude of the mainstream press towards the "struggles of the working class", and he called for a reinvigorated photography deployed with social purpose and supported by *progressive* movements. Using his recent *Delegates at Political Conference* (1945) as illustration, Powell advocated for a new form of photographic expression underpinned by powers of observation in the application of posed compositions for photographic documentation.

In his interview with Moran, Powell clarified the composition of this photograph was crafted to dramatically reflect demographic diversity within the ACP:

*Delegates to a Political Conference* was a group of people, a cross section of people, sitting at what was a Communist Party political conference. Up on the back behind them was a big poster—something like "Unity is Strength". There was a youngish girl, an old man, and young man, the housewife type, and that sort of thing. (1983, tape 1)

Representational renderings of this type were a hallmark of Powell's Leftist photo-praxis of 1945–1946. The details behind the posed photocompositions *Delegates at Political Conference* and *Making a Speech* (both 1945) are expounded in his memoirs and expanded on in the Moran interview.

In *Australian Photography 1957*, le Guay lamented that too much documentary photography was skewed toward negative aspects of society, with little attention given to the good in life:

Young photographers everywhere seem drawn to slums like mice to cheese, whether the photographs have purpose or not. If more of us saved a few shots for some of the more pleasant facets of life, future historians might be less likely to suppose that life in 1957 revolved around tenements and soup kitchens. (le Guay 1957, 10)

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Le Guay goes on to cite Powell as a key influence of the day. It is a curious reference. By the time of le Guay's remark, Powell had long given up the pursuit of photography and was working in television at the ABC. His last published photography was dated from 1949, and many of those images were taken some years previous.

Le Guay can only be referring to Powell's image *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945) (figure 5), most prominently published under its less confronting title, *Family Group* (1945). This image represents the singular frame, from this photographer, to gain wider contemporary exposure outside the relative obscurity of Communist journals. The irony of le Guay's reflection is that as the editor of *Contemporary Photography* and influential figure to the selection committee of *Australian Photography 1947* (Gael Newton, pers. comm. June 2007), he stands as a pivotal personality behind the rebirth of Powell's *Family Group* and its prominence under the period mainstream appellatives "documentary" or "factual photography".<sup>57</sup>

In the Moran interview (1983, tape 1), Powell discussed his 'signature', image in detail:

I photographed this group, a couple of women and children hanging around—grubby kids and rather grubby mothers with a pram outside a very grubby house. It was in fact a very, very, old house that had been condemned. These were mothers that had been deserted by husbands with their family of kids. They had moved into this deserted house as some shelter. ... This helped me to follow a general theme. As a Communist, I suppose, I was exploiting this as the *Telegraph* would have exploited something else with their aims. We were doing the same thing. I called it "A Family Group Awaiting Eviction" because they were literally waiting for the council employees to come push them out and demolish the houses.

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57. Geoffrey Powell, "Family Group," in *A Portfolio of Australian Photography, A Selection of the 70 Best Prints which have Appeared in "Contemporary Photography" in Three Years of Publication* (Sydney, NSW, H. J. Edwards Publishing, 1949), 62; N. M. W. Mansell, "Documentary, Family Group by G. Powell," in "As Others See Us!" in *Contemporary Photography*, vol. 2, no. 3, Sydney, NSW, Official Organ the Professional Photographers' Association of Australia (March–April, 1949), 21; "Family Group" in *Australian Photography 1947*, vol. 1 (Sydney, NSW, Ziegler Gotham Publications, 1947), 49; Powell, "Photography—A Social Weapon," in *Contemporary Photography* (November–December 1946), 16.

Figure 5



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Family Group Awaiting Eviction* 1945  
Posthumous Silver-Gelatine-Bromide Print (2004)  
30.1 cm x 30.2 cm  
*Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* 2004, plate seven

The *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* scene actually depicts families who were squatting in a condemned tenement listed for demolition. The real story behind Powell's famous photograph was social dislocation caused by domestic breakdown. Through his memoirs, Powell provided little insight into the creation of his most successful photograph. The brevity of his comments convey coming across the scene when returning to the office while on a *Tribune* assignment.<sup>58</sup> The only contemporaneous *Tribune* pictorial news story that covered this type of theme was "Slums to be Abolished", a report on Council's announcement of plans to resume

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58. Records of the Royal Commission on Espionage, "Exhibit 288, Statement by G Powell concerning his association with the Communist Party," typed affidavit made at Bruntnell St. Chatham, Taree, NSW, November 16, 1954. NAA, CRS, A, A6201, 288. Copy contained in NAA, CRS, M, 6119, 612; Royal Commission on Espionage, "Geoffrey Bruce St. Aubyn Powell. Transcripts of interview between 09:30 am–10:30 am, Monday November 15, 1954, and again between 09:00–10:00 am, Tuesday November 16, 1954, conducted at his residence, Bruntnell St. Chatham, Taree," Sydney, NSW, ASIO Royal Commission Section, November 17, 1954. Copy contained in, NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

the Devonshire Street precinct of Surrey Hills for modern workers' apartments.<sup>59</sup> Pointedly, the Devonshire Street precinct is situated adjacent to Central Station and within easy walking distance to Marx House. The "Slums to be Abolished" story was accompanied by photography from O'Sullivan and Dawson Streets, which portray the circumstances facing the resident families and children, incidentally the same thematic focus featured in Powell's *Family Group* picture. This pictorial was also contemporaneous with preparations for the ACP Twenty-Fifth Anniversary celebrations planned for August 1945, for which Powell's polemic series was produced. In his memoirs (ca. 1988), Powell mentioned his polemic concept series in relation to the celebratory milieu generated around the Fourteenth National Congress, held August 10–12, immediately prior to the opening of the *History of Labor* exhibition on August 13, 1945, and which prominently featured his work. The last date for submissions to the keynote anniversary event *History of Labor* was advertised for June 30, 1945 (Gould 1945a). This may indicate prior timing for Powell's polemic series.

### Figure 6



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (alternate frame) 1945  
Posthumous Silver-Gelatine-Bromide Print (2004)  
30.1 cm x 30.2 cm  
*Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* 2004 plate eight

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59. Geoffrey Powell, in *Tribune*, new series no. 113 (Tuesday May 22, 1945), 5.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Never mentioned by Powell is the companion *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* frame (figure 6), discovered as a pair of negatives cut from a film roll in 2001 and discussed in a previous publication (Hoehne 2007a). In addition, this project's catalogue of montages illustratively speculates that the additional figures in the scene are ACP members who were perhaps introduced for the camera (see *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle* (2016), frame no. 040).

The subjects for Powell's polemic photocompositions occupy a representational space as opposed to forming literal observations. Creational syntax, as applied to Powell's photo-praxis, is encapsulated within Marxist concepts of reality, where adherence to any particular stricture of modality is immaterial. The primary concern of this photo-work resided within the topicality of subjects as they related to the *class struggle*. In the *progressive* scene, artworks that merely reflected conditions of social decay were frowned upon, as demonstrated by an adverse *Workers' Weekly* review given of a George Finey exhibition held at the Workers Art Club, Sydney, in 1932:

The inevitable impression must be Capitalism is a powerful monster against which it is useless for the workers to fight. There is no half-way house between bourgeois, and proletarian art—either an artist is proletarian or bourgeois. ... Finey can become one of the world's leading proletarian artists when he realises that the working class is the class that holds the future in its hand—is the builder of a Communist society. (Sharkey 1932, 11)

To hold validity, therefore, *progressive* creative endeavour must be aligned with a proletarian stance in the *class struggle* and not merely record a degenerate *bourgeois reality*, which was in denial of *working-class progress* (Blake 1946). As a Socialist Realist photojournalist, Powell affirmed and praised *progress in the struggle* from a working-class standpoint and his production was by definition inherently optimistic in tone. In response to le Guay's *Australian Photography 1957* comment that too much documentary concentrated on negative aspects of society, the vast extent of Powell's so-called 'documentary' photography actually dealt with the more pleasant facets of life. Most prominently, that photography portrayed worker cultural and leisure pursuits or otherwise depicted affirmative action taken by working class organisations. These subjects are far more prevalent throughout his



photo-oeuvre than those, to appropriate period Marxist vernacular, depicting 'working class oppression' and the 'crimes of capital'.<sup>60</sup>

## **Powell's Mode and Soviet Factography Compared**

Photohistorical orthodoxy for Powell serves to disable analysis of his Leftist photo-praxis; its collaborationist nature; its dialectic approach; its 'proletarianised' aesthetic presence; its modal flexibility that disregarded the strictures of any particular genre; and its interconnectedness with dramatised documentary film methodology. Powell's output variously took the form of serial photojournalism, straight news photography, reportage, and Leftist human-interest photography. These conventional modes sat alongside staged compositions derived from keenly observed facts and intended as authentic photo-recreations of an event. Powell's mode of 'authentic recreation' was most prominently deployed in polemical photo-friezes and collage storyboards for the exhibits *The ACP Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Exhibition, History of Labor* (1945) and *The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition, Return to Civil Life* (1945–1947), both artdirected by progressive exhibits designer John Oldham.<sup>61</sup> The modal diversity to Powell's output forms a seemingly disjointed oeuvre but exhibits canonistic similarities to the Soviet documentary concept of factography.

This canon was indifferent to the tenets of Western photo-documentary where the photographer acts as witness before the truth and works in the passive mode of an observer-recorder of reality. Soviet factography, dynamic and interventionist in demeanour, was advocated by those associated with the *Novyi Lef* (New Left Front) magazine published in the late 1920s. As researcher Devin Fore (2006a) clarifies, factography was not simply a Soviet form of documentary; the 'factographers' were Futurists by provenance, and thence Constructivists and Production artists in pedigree. The 'factographers' saw 'the facts' 'operatively'; i.e., facts were deployed as verbs and notions of truth were viewed as cultural constructs that represented malleable dynamics within socio-political realities. To borrow Devin

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60. Powell, Quarto Scrapbooks, vol. 2, 1944–1950, clippings from published work 1945–1946

61. *Tribune* pictorial of John Oldham's exhibits contained in, Powell, Quarto Scrapbooks, 1944–1950; Pictorial overview of the Sydney installation is provided in Ralph Gibson, ed. "ACP Anniversary Exhibition," in *The Guardian, Official Organ of the Victorian State Committee Australian Communist Party*, no. 212, Melbourne, Vic., Australian Communist Party (October 5, 1945), 5.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Fore's citation of Benjamin Buchloh, "Factographers engaged with bodies of collective social knowledge and networks of communication" (2006a, 3). This aptly describes the *progressive* nexus of creative thought that operated in the Sydney Realist scene during the 1940s in which Powell was a participant member.

For Powell, operating within a *progressive* milieu, the dynamic atmosphere that had grown out of imminent Allied victory in the Second World War, tethered to great expectations for the post-war era, was a ripe setting to engage parallel creative ideals to factography in his praxis. This is not to say that he was fully cognisant of avant-garde Soviet trends in photo-art from the late 1920s. Nevertheless, he clearly responded to the type of informed discourse that took place in local *progressive* circles. A vibrant arts discourse was conducted through the journals of the Left, the *SORA Bulletin*, *Australia's Progress*, *Communist Review*, and, to a lesser extent, *Tribune*. Here, Realist artists argued over the form that socially committed art should take in Capitalist societies.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the collective Leftist discourse in Australia placed preferential emphasis on the traditional art forms of literature, fine art, sculpture, and drama, but where there was some curiosity shown was in the new mode of documentary film. The potential of photography within the Realist discourse was largely neglected until canvassed by Geoffrey Powell (1945a, 1945b, 1946, 1948).

Powell addressed the ideals of Realist photography at SORA forums, debating Hal Missingham (1906–1994), on "Photography, Positive and Negative".<sup>63</sup> Through the Leftist cultural press, Powell sought to align photography with *progressive* movements. In "Are Photographers Artists?" he promoted its worth to the "man-in-the-street", and advocated for bringing photography directly to the people by showing "them on the wharves, in the factories, business houses, theatre foyers—anywhere people gather" (Powell 1945a, 8). This Soviet epitome was adopted by worker drama groups in Sydney (Milner 2003). A proletarian line of discourse was further taken up by Powell's now celebrated article "Photography—A Social Weapon".

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62. For example, Kathleen Watson, "Art and the Individual," in *Communist Review*, no. 31 (March, 1944), 223; Paul Mortimer, "Artists and the Class Struggle," in *Communist Review*, no. 78 (February, 1948), 59–60; John Oldham, "Picasso and the Arts Under Capitalism," in *Communist Review*, no. 73 (September 1947), 661–63.

63. SORA, "Photography—Positive and Negative, Discussion Between Hal Missingham and Jeff [sic] Powell at the SORA Studio, Sunday, December 9, 1945, at 8:00pm," advertised in *SORA Bulletin*, no. 7, Studio of Realist Art Publication (1945), 11.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Progressive artists today have become vitally concerned with conditions which surround our living. ... The artist today is primarily concerned with realism. He endeavours to interpret his appreciation of his environment, and more particularly the environment of his people. He has ceased to live in another world of attics and garrets and cellars ... and has concerned himself with the plight of his fellow man. ... And what more suitable medium is there for this interpretation of realism, than photography? ... Photography is the people's art medium. (Powell 1946)

### **An Erstwhile Communist in the DOI Film Unit Extramural Activity, Communist Propaganda**

Powell changed career direction to documentary filmmaking in late 1945, and formally commenced duties at DOI Film Unit in March 1946. The move signalled the cessation of his engagement with photography as a means of creative expression. Once settled in his new workplace, Powell began revisiting examples from his 1945 polemic photography, with submissions to mainstream forums where those images gained heightened exposure.<sup>64</sup>

Powell's now celebrated *Contemporary Photography* article "Photography—A Social Weapon" (1946a) was illustrated with *Truants* (1945) and *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945). These same images, along with *Delegates at Political Conference* (1945), were submitted to the *Australian Photography 1947* photography competition and received the accolade of acceptance for publication in the accompanying tome (Zeigler 1947). Furthermore, *Family Group Awaiting Eviction*, appearing as *Family Group*, was bestowed the honour of the bronze plaque award in the Factual Photography section, one of eight bronze medallions designed by sculptor Lyndon Dadswell (1908–1986) for outstanding entries in each category.<sup>65</sup> Powell followed up this success with "Photography Discovers the People" (Powell 1948), a short polemical piece appearing in the recently launched popular magazine *AM, Australian Monthly*, illustrated, and with *Delegates at Political Conference* and *Family Group Awaiting Eviction*.

To Powell's chagrin, *reactionary* commentator Frank Browne (1915–1981) adversely reviewed "Photography Discovers the People" through his self-published

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64. Supra note, 57.

65. Additional awards included one Gold Plaque and five Silver Plagues.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

gossip sheet *Things I Hear*. Browne pointed out the published images were made when Powell was working on the Communist newspaper *Tribune*. Browne further asserted them to be "communist propaganda shots and taken as such". He mischievously went on to question how it was that a Film Division employee could be peddling Communist propaganda (Browne 1948, 2). The sardonic tenor of Browne's review was certainly inflammatory and, according to Powell (in Moran 1983, tape 2), led to his dismissal from the DOI Film Division on the pretext of poor quality film work. The alleged offending footage, however, turned out to be the work of the chief cinematographer Bill Terise (1898–1987), a hard-bitten professional who learned his trade in the old-school tradition of hard knocks (Ansara 2012, 43). Stanley Hawes (1905–1991) considered Terise "a first rate cinematographer, difficult to get on with, but a perfectionist" (Australian Cinematographers Society 2016). Suffice to say, the Department's attempt to expunge the Leftist Powell from its ranks was abysmally bungled and only supported their intended victim's claim that his dismissal was politically motivated.

It wasn't the only instance where Powell was summarily dismissed from the DOI. While little is forthcoming about the details behind the other occasion, Powell could recall colleagues successfully petitioned for his re-instatement (Moran 1983, tape 2). He further related in his memoirs (ca 1988) that all members of Film Unit signed with the exception of two prominent conservative Catholic figures, Hugh Alexander (1913–) and Hugh McInnes (1911–2004). It is possible that this incident was precipitated by Powell's extramural work for the Miners' Federation. It was reported in the Miners' Federation journal *Common Cause*—edited by prominent Communist journalist Edgar Ross—that Geoffrey Powell had been responsible for recently published photography of conditions in the coalfields (Ross 1947e). To the politically sensitive DOI, the prospect of one of their film officers moonlighting for a Communist labour union would have undoubtedly raised eyebrows and courted consequences.

## **Extramural Activity, Militant Labor Unions**

This section reappraises Powell's photo-work for the Miners' Federation, conducted in May 1947, as a manifestation of factional Left cultural forces that existed within the DOI Film Unit and that supported industrial campaigns of militant labour unions. Prominent examples are the complicity of DOI Film Unit personnel in

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

the Realist film productions *Indonesia Calling* 1946 (waterfront unions); *Coaldust* 1947 (Southern District Miners' Federation); and *Hewers of Coal* 1958 (Miners' Federation). Left-wing film distributor Rob Gowland recalls Stanley Hawes's interest and assistance that he provided to director Eddie Allison for the filming of *Coaldust* in 1946 (Gowland, pers. comm. 2014). In addition to loaning equipment and a vehicle, DOI personalities Catherine Duncan wrote the script and cinematographer Edward Cranstone to shoot the film (Milner 2000). This kind of collegial patronage was later extended to the loan of specialist lighting equipment for filming underground sequences in *Hewers of Coal* (Milner 2003). In his interview with Moran, Powell recalled that he assisted with postproduction on *Indonesia Calling* (Moran 1983, tape 2). Since he was a member of the Leftist 'documentarist' faction at the DOI Film Unit, it was culturally consistent for Powell to assist the Miners' Federation in their industrial campaign drive on working and social conditions, known as the Amenities Campaign.

By the final stages of filming *Coaldust*, Powell had already begun collaborating with the national office of the Miners' Federation with the supply of photography depicting underground mineworkers, which was derived from early DOI film work. Powell's scrapbooks contain published examples from this work, some of which subsequently appear in the Miners' Federation periodical *Common Cause*.<sup>66</sup> A much more substantive contribution followed in May 1947, with the production of a large body of photography depicting conditions found throughout the coalfields communities of New South Wales.<sup>67</sup>

In March 1947, Edgar Ross was appointed the Miners' Federation's Amenities Officer. It was announced that he was to be sent on a fact-finding tour of the New South Wales coal districts "to collect material for colourful presentations in *Common Cause*" (Ross 1947a) Powell was engaged to photographically document the tour (Ross 1947f). He was an associate of Ross's through the AJA and Marx House (Powell ca. 1988). During the course of Ross's fact-finding tour, around two hundred photo-frames were produced. Half this imagery was progressively published in *Common Cause*, from issues May 1947 to August 1948, and consumed

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66. Geoffrey Powell, in *Common Cause*, vol. XII, no. 10 (Saturday March 15, 1947), 1; Powell, in *Common Cause*, vol. XII, no. 17 (Saturday May 3, 1947), 1.

67. Otherwise known simply as "amenities photography".

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

a staggering page presence exceeding 1200 column inches.<sup>68</sup> Further examples from Powell's amenities imagery were used as a basis for a thirty-two-page pictorial booklet, *How to Get More Coal*, published in October 1947.

## Photohistory and Amenities Campaign Photography

Specific discussion of Powell's amenities photography is latent in the photo-historical literature from the 1980s and 1990s. Ennis (1992) makes oblique reference to contributions made to *Common Cause*, which, it is viewed, formed part a freelance practice concomitant with employment at the wartime Department of Information [Photographic Branch].

While employed by the DOI [Photographic Branch] Powell also worked freelance contributing photographs to a variety of publications including the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Women's Weekly*, as well as *Progress*, *The Tribune*, and *Common Cause* (the organ of the Miners Federation of Australia) ... He finally gave up still photography in 1948 after a year spent as a photographer for the *Daily Telegraph*. ... Powell had joined the Film Division of the DOI in 1946. (1992, 39, 41–2)

In matter of fact, Powell was formally employed at Consolidated Press from August 1944 to May 1945 and was assigned as photographer to the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* as well as the *Australian Women's Weekly*. Following on from this employment, Powell worked for the ACP from April 1945 to March 1946, where he was assigned to their journals *Progress* and *Tribune*. As part of this engagement, he assisted fellow Communist John Oldham with photography for the Department of Post-War Reconstruction informational installation *The Servicemen's Reestablishment Exhibition, Return to Civil Life* (1945–1947). Powell's sole government agency employment was as a cine-cameraman at the post-war incarnation of the DOI Film Division from March 1946–January 1950. While employed at the DOI Film Unit, Powell undertook one extramural photo-assignment, i.e. that for the Miners' Federation, in May 1947, and which work was progressively published in *Common Cause* from May 1947 to August 1948 (Hoehne 2007a).

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68. A printing industry standard unit of measurement used to indicate the amount of published content for multiple column publications. During the 1940s, *Common Cause* used a five-column tabloid newspaper format. A column inch is a unit of space one column wide by one inch (2.54 cm) high. Column inches are also used to estimate the relative importance of a news story.

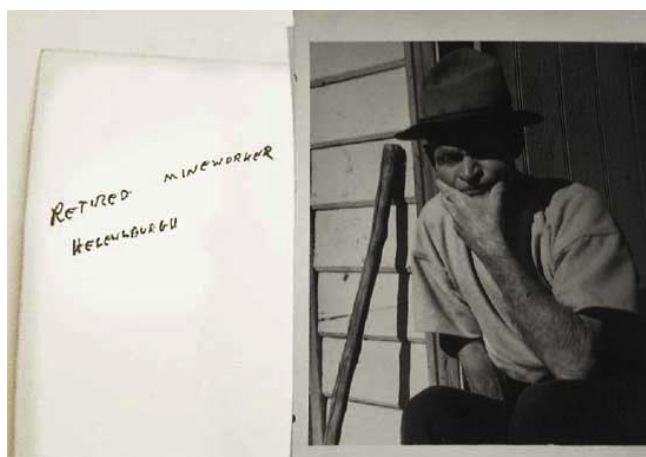
## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Curator for the QAG exhibition *Exposure: Australian Photography from the 1930s to the 1950s* 2005–2006, Claire Gobé (2006) in addition to NLA intern Jennifer Lovell (2006), are those couple of writers alerted to the existence of Powell's amenities photography; specifically from two examples showcased in the retrospective exhibition *Re-Introducing Geoffrey Powell, Australia's Forgotten Documentary Photographer* 2004. These images were subsequently acquired into the respective collections of QAG:GOMA and the NLA.

Gobé's treatment of subject mirrors that of Ennis's (1991, 1992, 2007), in its reliance on familiar mainstream historical discourses into which Powell's imagery is interwoven. The unpublished amenities frame depicting a retired mineworker sitting outside his modest dwelling at Helensburgh, New South Wales, is appropriated to construct a cross historical dialogue about working conditions and the nearby Metropolitan Mine.

Powell produced *Untitled (Coalminer at Home, Helensburgh)* under commission for the Coal Miner's Federation 1947 Amenities Appeal [which] depicts a miner from the Metropolitan Colliery outside Helensburgh. [sic] ... The photograph was first published in a 1947 issue of *Common Cause* [sic]. (Gobé 2006, 8–9ff.)

### Figure 7



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Retired Mineworker, Helensburgh, NSW* May 12, 1947  
Amenities Campaign Photography, Social Amenities  
Vintage Silver-Gelatine Print  
5"x5" (12.7 x 12.7cm) on Whole-Plate Sheet  
NBAC, ACSEF, N144/1125.  
Courtesy CFMEU Mining and Energy Division.  
Digitally Combined Image.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Nevertheless, the Metropolitan Colliery did not feature in the editorial brief that governed subject engagement for Powell's amenities photography (see Table 1). The themes depicted from Helensburgh were constrained to social amenities within the township, i.e. the poor quality of worker housing, the need of recreation facilities, and the town's lack of reticulated water (Hoehne 2008). As is reproduced in Figure 7, the inscription, in Edgar Ross's hand, verso of the *Common Cause* photo-archive vintage print, plainly states "Retired Mineworker Helensburgh". The vintage print is physically cropped at the right, which perhaps indicates Ross's intent to publish it, as a number of published amenities prints are cropped in this way. However, this image was not published. Editorial from Helensburgh points to cost of the dust problem prevalent in Southern District mines: "There are more men 'on the comp' in Helensburgh than paying for it, and the biggest organisation is the Retired Mineworkers" (Ross 1947b, 5).

### Figure 8



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Untitled*, "Old Hand at Crib, Kandos, NSW" May 15, 1947  
Amenities Campaign Photography, Pit Amenities  
Vintage Silver-Gelatine Print  
5"x5" (12.7 x 12.7cm) on Whole-Plate Sheet  
NBAC, ACSEF, N144/1125.  
Courtesy CFMEU, Mining and Energy Division.



## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

Lovell skirts the socio-politicisation of Powell's amenities photography, which, it is considered, constituted a "commissioned series" made within the scope of a wider "freelance practice, which began to show a more singular interest in documentary photography as a means of effecting social change"; an epitome "that illustrates Powell's commitment to social documentary photography" (2006, 9–10). The amenities example used by Lovell (figure 8) depicts an old hand taking crib (a meal break) on the pit top at Kandos No. 2 Colliery.

This frame forms part of a discrete series depicting underground mineworkers sitting around the "Tree of Knowledge" for midday crib. The attendant *Common Cause* editorial celebrates the progressive attitude of mine management in bringing underground workers to the surface at crib times, where the provision of a canteen service and freshly brewed tea was made available (Ross 1947e).

Depictions of the coalminer in the clichéd photo-documentary mode of the 'stoic worker' are noticeably absent in Powell's amenities photography. Mineworkers, when represented at all, are pictured within the immediate environmental context of social or workplace amenities and most typically shown at crib breaks and in bathhouses. The editorial focus behind the imagery was placed on the provision of these basic amenities.

## **The Tour of the NSW Coal World May 1947**

Ross's amenities fact-finding tour, with Powell in tow, entailed a gruelling five-day road tip that took in the three main coalfield districts of New South Wales. The result is one of the most extraordinary photo-documentary undertakings attempted in Australia to that date and perhaps since. From this one thousand-odd kilometre road tour, over two hundred photo-frames were generated, with no fewer than thirty coalfields towns and twenty collieries represented. As Ross reports: "Of course, I did not see every pit in New South Wales ... but I saw its twin, and my agile colleague of the camera [Geoffrey Powell] in effect shot them all" (Ross 1947g, 5).

**Table 1 The New South Wales Amenities Fact-Finding Tour**

**Fact-Finding Tour Day One, Monday May 12, 1947**

**New South Wales Southern District Coalfield**

<b>Township</b>	<b>Colliery</b>
From Sydney to;	
Mt Kembla	
Wollongong	
Corimal	
Bulli	
Thirroul	
	Excelsior Mine
Austinmer Beach	
Coledale	
Scarborough	Scarborough Mine
Coalcliff	Coalcliff Colliery
Stanwell Tops	
Helensburgh	
Return to Sydney	

**Fact-Finding Tour Day Two, Tuesday May 13, 1947**

**New South Wales Northern District Coalfield**

**Lake Macquarie and Greater Newcastle Region**

From Sydney to;	
Catherine Hill Bay	Wallarah Colliery
Wallsend	
Whitegates Housing Commission estate	
Minmi	Browne's Mine (abandoned)
West Wallsend	
<i>Teralba</i>	Pacific Colliery

**South Maitland Region**

Abernethy	
Kearsley (overnight destination?)	Abermaine No. 2 Colliery

**Fact-Finding Tour Day Three, Wednesday May 14, 1947**

<i>Cessnock</i>	Caldon Open-Cut Mine
	Aberdare South Colliery
Neath	Neath Colliery
Stanford Myrther (South Kurri Kurri)	
Kurri Kurri	
Weston	Hebburn No.1 Colliery
Abermain	
Fan Hill	

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

East Greta                                      East Greta No. 1 Colliery (abandoned)  
*Rylstone* (overnight destination?)

### Fact-Finding Tour Day Four, Thursday May 15, 1947

#### New South Wales Western District Coalfield

Kandos    Kandos No. 2 Colliery  
Rylstone side trip to visit Kandos Lodge President Fred Riley

*Clandulla/Carbon*                              Haystack Colliery  
*Blackmans Flat*                                  Western Main Colliery  
Huon mine  
Wallerawang Colliery

Portland  
Portland Cement Works

Lidsdale

#### Lithgow Region

Lithgow (confirmed overnight destination)  
Workingmen's Club

### Fact-Finding Tour Day Five, Friday May 16, 1947

Duration Housing at Littleton and Brownfels, Lithgow  
Mort's Estate

Steelworks Colliery  
State Coal Mine  
Vale of Clwydd                                  Vale of Clwydd Colliery

Return to Sydney

*Italics indicate locality visited but from which no photography is known.*

Powell's amenities photography addressed four primary editorial threads: pit (mine) amenities, crib (meal beak) facilities, sanitary facilities and bathhouses; social amenities, recreational facilities and housing; historical review; and environmental concern. The resultant oeuvre forms a discrete study encompassing the breadth of regional industrialised urban New South Wales, which is encapsulated in a moment in time. Formed around the cultural complex of a particular dominant industry, Powell's amenities photography stands as a noteworthy and unique contribution within the context of the Australian photo-historical landscape (Alan Davies, curator of photographs, State Library of New South Wales, pers. comm. 2011).

Creation of this imagery was collaborationist and built around Ross's editorial metier; i.e., Powell did not undertake, in the classicist photo-documentary mode, an assignment to record conditions in the New South Wales coalfields as he found

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

them. In the modern vernacular, he was embedded with the Miners' Federation amenities fact-finding tour and unequivocally adopted a partisan stance. Moreover, in his memoirs, Powell (ca. 1988) later expressed pride in the assistance he was able to provide the miners' cause.

The greater body of amenities imagery conforms to straight photojournalism, which is, however, dispersed with some obviously posed imagery. A prominent example is shown in figure 8, a photograph of the sanitary facilities at Pacific Colliery, where Edgar Ross is whimsically depicted in the shadows availing himself of the dilapidated amenities on offer.

**Figure 9**



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Untitled*. "Sanitary Facilities Pacific Colliery,  
Lake Macquarie, Northern District NSW" May 13, 1947  
Amenities Campaign Photography, Pit Amenities  
Silver-Gelatine Print  
5"x5" (12.7 x 12.7cm) on Whole-Plate Sheet  
NBAC, ASCEF, E165/56/271  
Courtesy CFMEU Mining and Energy Division.

## The Polemics of *How to Get More Coal*

In addition to the publication of his work in *Common Cause*, thirty-five examples of Powell's amenities photography formed the basis of *How to Get More*

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

*Coal* (1947).<sup>69</sup> He was also responsible for the photomontage artwork of the cover design, the layout of which is preserved in his scrapbooks.<sup>70</sup> The editorial theme of *How to Get More Coal* asserted the key to increasing production lay with improving conditions, both in the mines and throughout the coal communities. These aims, according to the Miners' Federation, could only be achieved by wholesale nationalisation of the coal industry.

**Figure 10**



Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
Edgar Ross, 1904–2001  
*How to Get More Coal* Page Design  
Amenities Campaign Photography, Social Amenities, Housing  
Courtesy CFMEU Mining and Energy Division.  
Digitally Manipulated Image

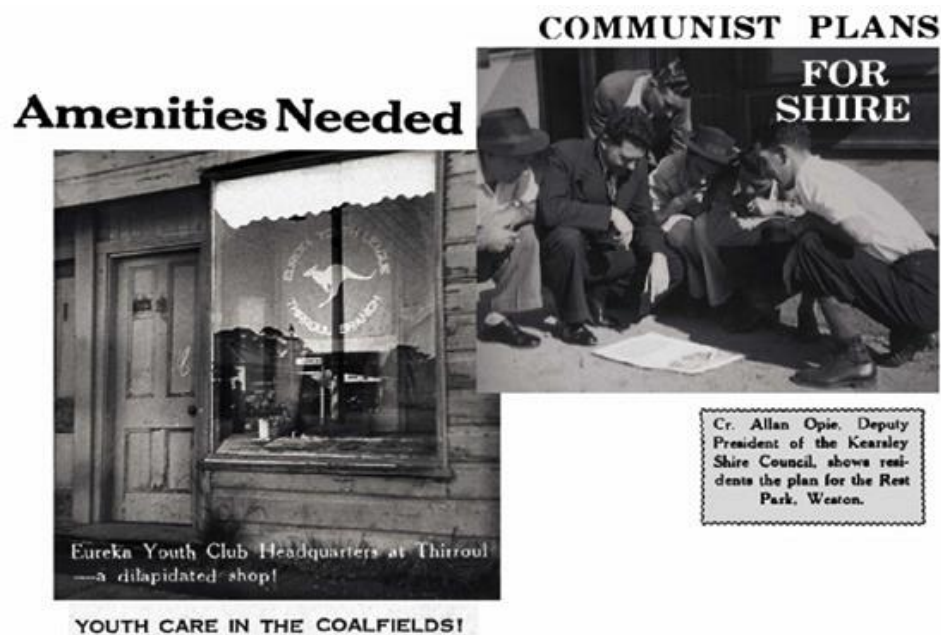
The double-page-spread layout of the booklet illustrated in figure 10 was graphically intensive and incorporated local amenities photographic material, supported by supplementary material obtained from official and corporate sources; namely, the United Kingdom Information Office; Department of Labour and National Service, Industrial Welfare Division; and Zinc Corporation Ltd. The comparative showcase format of *How to Get More Coal* was an ideal platform from which to form a polemical discourse. Polemic treatment, as shown in figure 10, is demonstrated by the depiction of the modern Whitegates Housing Commission Estate, at Wallsend, as an exemplar of what could be achieved in the coalfields. This is highlighted

69. See Ross 1947d: cover montage, frontispiece, 2, 5, 7, 9–13, 16–19, 21, 24–25, and 29.

70. Powell, Quarto Scrapbook, vol. 2, 1944–1950.

against the predominance of dilapidated miners' dwellings that shaped the historical backdrop under private enterprise.<sup>71</sup>

Figure 11 Amenities Pictorial Political Bias



Geoffrey Powell (1918–1989)  
*Untitled*. "Eureka Youth League, Thirroul Branch, Southern District NSW" May 12, 1947  
Vintage Silver-Gelatine Print  
5"x5" (12.7 x 12.7cm) on Whole-Plate Sheet  
NBAC, ASCEF, N144/1125

Geoffrey Powell (1918–1989)  
*Untitled*. "Cr. Alan Opie, Weston, Northern District NSW" May 14, 1947  
5"x5" (12.7 x 12.7cm) on Whole-Plate Sheet  
NBAC, ASCEF, N144/1125

Courtesy CFMEU Mining and Energy Division

The *progressive* editorialised mode for Powell's amenities photography also promoted some isolated examples of political bias, as shown in figure 11. The dilapidated Eureka Youth League (EYL) headquarters at Thirroul, on the New South Wales south coast, was highlighted as suffering from the same neglect as other social amenities across the coalfields.<sup>72</sup> The paradox presented is that the EYL was, for all practical purposes, the youth arm of the ACP (Evans, Ferrier, Rickertt 2004). In addition, specific review of the role that municipal authorities played in the urban renewal of coal communities was rare within Amenities Campaign pictorial. One

71. Ross, photography by Geoffrey Powell, "Modern Towns with Amenities—Not Shacks and Potential Slums," in *How to Get More Coal* (1947d), 18–19.

72. Powell, in "Youth Care in the Coalfields," *Common Cause*, vol. XII, no. 28 (Saturday July 19, 1947), 1; Geoffrey Powell, vintage print, NBAC, ANU, ACSEF, N144/1125.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

prominent example is provided by a pictorial of Kearsley Shire deputy president, Councillor Alan Opie, who is depicted in the fashion of a people's representative on the street with residents of Weston.<sup>73</sup> Not mentioned was the fact Opie was a Communist alderman. The Kearsley Shire, now part of the City of Cessnock, held the distinction of being a majority Communist Council from 1944 to 1949. Opie hailed from Victoria's Wonthaggi coalfield and was sent to the South Maitland during the war, as a cadre to help ensure the continuity of coal production (Mowbray 1986).

As outlined above, Powell's re-visitation of the photographic medium while working as a cine-cameraman at the DOI Film Unit was consistent with his Socialist Realist past, but it created difficulties within his place of work. The following chapter contextualises Powell's development as a filmmaker, set against his left-wingism and how this was reconciled through his film work. Although the political expression of the film work Powell was involved in was generally tempered by the prerogatives of his superiors, it is evident that when provided the opportunity, he tended to revert to his Leftist (*Marxist/progressive*) instincts.

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73. Powell, in "Cr. Allan Opie, [sic] Deputy President of the Kearsley Shire Council," in *Common Cause*, vol. XII, no. 25 (Saturday June 28, 1947), 4; Powell, vintage print, NBAC, ACSEF, N144/1125.

## Chapter 3: Powell, Film and the 'Documentary Idea'

It is necessary to introduce this chapter by considering the production context of Powell's film oeuvre. As can be ascertained from Table 2, half of Powell's film work was closely connected to that of renowned film producer-director John Heyer. In addition, half of Powell's film work went un-credited.

**Table 2. Overview of Powell Film Credits 1945–1960**

Credits	Film Title
Producer-Director (ABC TV)	<i>Shirley Abicair in Australia</i> 1960
Writer-Director (Shell) (un-credited)	<b><i>Shellubrication</i></b> ca. 1951 <sup>i</sup>
	<b><i>Rankin's Springs Is West</i></b> 1950
(DOI) (un-credited)	<i>Canberra through the Seasons</i> ca. 1950 <sup>ii</sup>
(un-credited)	<i>From Orchard to Can</i> 1949 <sup>ii</sup>
not-released	<i>Parliament and You</i> 1948 <sup>ii</sup>
Director	<i>The Selection Interview</i> 1947
DOP-Cinematographer	<i>From Sunny Pastures</i> 1949
	<i>Talk It Over</i> 1949
	<i>Richer Than Butter</i> 1949
	<i>The Lighthouse Keeper</i> 1949
	<b><i>Turn the Soil</i></b> 1948
	<b><i>Journey of a Nation</i></b> 1947
'Production-Assistant' (un-credited)	<b><i>The Valley Is Ours</i></b> 1948 <sup>iii</sup>
(un-credited)	<b><i>Men and Mobs</i></b> 1947 <sup>ii</sup>
(un-credited)	<b><i>Born in the Sun</i></b> 1947 <sup>ii</sup>
(un-credited)	<b><i>Australia To-Day</i></b> 1946 <sup>iv</sup>
'Postproduction' (Ind.) (un-credited)	<b><i>Indonesia Calling</i></b> 1946 <sup>ii</sup>

i Powell, "Quarto Scrapbooks," vol. 2, 1944–1950; Powell, "Chapter 26, The Past Catching Up," in "Worms in a Tin," draft autobiographical manuscript, ca. 1988, 1–51ff.

ii Moran interview, May 1983.

iii NFSA, Title No. 458163.

iv Moran interview, May 1983; Royal Commission on Espionage, "Evidence by G. B. St. A. Powell," in *Royal Commission on Espionage, Official Transcript of Proceedings, taken at Sydney on Wednesday, 1st December 1954*, 1627–35; Powell, Quarto Scrapbooks, vol. 2, 1944–1950.

Bold indicates John Heyer as producer or director. See Appendix 4 for a comprehensive film list.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

The vast bulk of Powell's early film practice, 1946–1948, was conducted via the Heyer documentary group at the DOI Film Unit. In November 1948, Heyer left to join the Shell Film Unit, first travelling to England to work with the parent film company before taking charge of the Australian unit in June 1949. Powell subsequently moved over to Shell in January 1950. In Moran (1983, tape 2), Powell relayed about Heyer, "we had our understanding, I think he knew I was thinking along parallel lines otherwise, he would have never offered me a job with the Shell Film Unit after he went there". Without wishing to diminish appropriate credit from their author, Powell's latter films, those films produced and directed by him—*Canberra through the Seasons* (ca. 1950), *From Orchard to Can* (1949), *Rankin's Springs Is West* (1950), and *Shellubrication* (ca. 1951)—owe a natural allegiance to the Heyer style. Both filmmakers made a conscious break from the classical documentary, which was the preferred style at the DOI (Moran 1987c). Discussion of the adoption of the classical documentary style in Australian film practice of the 1940s and 1950s is well-traversed territory by Moran (1987c, 1991), and FitzSimons et al. (2011), and need not be reiterated here.

The main reason behind so many un-credited titles in Powell's filmography resides with the organisational culture of the DOI Film Unit during its insipient years. The Heyer documentary unit adopted a generalist approach whereby the emphasis was placed on a cooperative group ethos. Moran (1987a, 79) cites Heyer from the Andrew Pike interview as defining himself "not as not as a director or producer but a filmmaker differentiating the wholeness of approach".<sup>74</sup> Moran also mentions historian Allan Lovell in his discussion of British documentary and the unreliability of many on-screen film credits because many hands might be turned to a particular task or a member of the film crew might undertake various tasks outside their official designation. This point is reinforced by Powell (Moran 1983, tape 2), when he mentions the example of *Journey of a Nation* (1947) where he is credited as a cinematographer but also performed un-credited roles in editing and the collection of sound. Furthermore, photographic negatives corresponding to a scene from the film indicate he also made a photographic 'stills' record for *Journey of a Nation* 1947.<sup>75</sup>

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74. Presumably, Andrew Pike, Graham Shirley, and Ray Edmondson, interview with John Heyer, October 31–November 3 1979. NFSA, Title No, 219420.

75. Geoffrey Powell, Un-catalogued 120-type roll film cut negatives, 465 format, Powell estate.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Furthermore, *From Orchard to Can* and *Canberra through the Seasons* were simply released without on-screen credits. During late production of *Shellubrication*, Powell was dismissed from the Shell Film Unit over a controversy that its members were involved in the production of the 'anti-Dutch' film *Indonesia Calling* (1946). Both Powell and Heyer were, of course, associated with the film but only Powell admitted culpability and was dismissed. In the event, Heyer completed *Shellubrication* and Powell was not provided credit for his work (Moran interview 1983, tape 1).<sup>76</sup>

## Factional Identity, Left-Wingism, and the DOI Film Unit

It is significant that Powell came into the Film Division at the beginning of 1946, when there was still considerable public sympathy for Australia's wartime ally the Soviet Union. He did so as an open Communist who was working on Party's biweekly tabloid *Tribune* (Moran interview 1983, tape 1). These facts aside, Powell's relationship with the Marx House was, at this time, an ambivalent one (Moran interview 1983, tapes 1, 2).

The Petrov Royal Commission, 1954–55, to which Powell had been subpoenaed as witness, highlighted ACP complicity in espionage for the Soviet Union. Interestingly, a Soviet Embassy document, designated by the Royal Commission as Document G.5, referred to Powell as an undercover Party member.<sup>77</sup> In his interview with Moran (1983, tape 1, 2), Powell expanded on his Royal Commission evidence, clarifying that he had been approached to engage in espionage at the behest of the Party, whereby he was encouraged to supply *Tribune* photography to the CIS as a means to infiltrate the organisation. It is evident from evidence tendered at the Commission that Powell had fallaciously claimed he spied on visiting Nazi Felix von Luckner for the CIS in 1938. It seems that the Party and the Soviet Embassy anticipated Powell could prove useful to their espionage aims. He, however, recoiled at the offer and left Marx House permanently:

I thought to myself, oh goodness I don't want get involved in this. That's not what I joined this organisation to do, to become involved and supplying

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76. *Shellubrication* ca. 1951, NFSA, Title No, 710124.

77. Royal Commission on Espionage, *Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage, 22nd August 1955* (Sydney, NSW, Government Printer, 1955), 238–9, 405, Appendix 1, G.5.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

photographs to security services and spies. I don't want to be involved in that at all. So I decided to get out of *Tribune*. (Moran interview 1983, tape 1)

After this incident, my relations with other members of the Party became noticeably cooler and later Bruce Bull of New Theatre and the AJA informed me that Rupert Lockwood had alleged I was a security pimp.<sup>78</sup>

There is no doubt that Powell was a sincere Communist but he did not endorse the ACP taking directives from the Soviets (Moran interview 1983, tape 2). Despite his experience, it is also evident he retained firm *progressive* views.

The next point for consideration is how Powell's Leftist attitudes influenced or otherwise find expression through documentary filmmaking at the DOI. This was a more problematic situation compared to his photo-work at Marx House, where he was a Communist working for Communist journals that expressed Communist ideals. The DOI Film Unit was a politically factionalised workplace and in the general official sense, distrustful of all things Left.

Powell identified with the younger filmmakers at the film unit who were animated by 'the documentary approach' and were generally Leftist in their politics. As listed by Moran (1987a, 136), this group included Heyer, senior producer; Geoff Collings (1905–2000), senior producer; Powell, cinematographer/production assistant; Lionel 'Jim' Trainor (1921–2011), production assistant; Malcolm Otton (1917–), production assistant; Bern Gandy (1912–), production assistant; Lee Robinson (1923–2003), production assistant; and Catherine Duncan (1915–2006), research assistant/scriptwriter.

Through his association with Heyer – whom he had first met at Marx House – Powell was headhunted for the incipient government film production unit at the end of 1945 despite his having no previous film experience. Before being accepted, he was sent out to produce test footage, which proved successful.<sup>79</sup> After a meeting with Ralph Foster, executive head of the Film Division (1945–1946), Powell officially commenced duties as a cinematographer on March 22, 1946.<sup>80</sup> Film Unit colleague Lee Robinson recalled, "this is a period when we were asked to take

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78. ASIO Royal Commission Section, transcript of interview with Geoffrey Powell, November 30, 1954, 2, par. 12. Contained in NAA, CRS, M, 6119, 612.

79. Royal Commission Section, *Official Transcript of Proceedings* (1954), 1933, par. 685; Moran interview, 1983, tape 1.

80. ASIO Royal Commission Section, record of "Telephone Message," re subject's DOI employment, November 8, 1954. Contained in NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

the oath of allegiance to the then Prime Minister—all the unit except Geoff Powell, he refused to take it".<sup>81</sup>

In the Moran interview (1983, tape 1), Powell recalled: "looking back [at the DOI] we would have to admit there was a left-wing influence at work". For example, Heyer's curiosity in the journal *Experimental Cinema* is viewed by academic Deane Williams to "indicate an American left influence on his ideas" (2008, 95–96). Laughren provides a qualifying analysis, noting that although a keen student of Soviet cinema, "Heyer's interests were more in the international language of cinema than in ideology" (in FitzSimons, Laughren, and Williamson 2011, 54). When asked by Moran whether Heyer was a member of ACP, Powell's response was non-committal: "He was apparently a member of the Communist Party" (1983, tape 1). Heyer earned Commonwealth security attention by virtue of his association with Communists.<sup>82</sup> Through a security informant, the Heyer group was referred to as the "half-pie Comms" and reputedly included Powell, as well as fellow cinematographers Cranstone and Alex Poignant (1906–1986), Lionel Trainor, Malcolm Otton, and Bern Gandy.<sup>83</sup> Those Film Division staff who were actually suspected Communists and held the dubious badge of honour of having Commonwealth security files included Heyer, Duncan, Otton, Poignant, Cranstone, and Powell.<sup>84</sup> Another security informant reported, "A bosom pal of Heyer is one Geoffrey Powell who openly admits that he is the official photographer for the *Tribune* [and] said to be employed by the Department of Information."<sup>85</sup>

Powell considered his film work a natural extension of previous photojournalism, stating:

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81. Film Australia's Out Back DVD; Interview with Lee Robinson. [http://www.filmaust.com.au/outback/attachments/faoutback\\_leerobinson.pdf](http://www.filmaust.com.au/outback/attachments/faoutback_leerobinson.pdf). Accessed September 2012.

82. ASIO, "Heyer, John Whiteford," NAA, CRS, M, A6126, 487.

83. Reported in H .D. Brown, "The Department of the Interior Film Division, Brief History also Some Past and Present Personalities," December 4, 1958, 2, par. 3 (C). Contained in "Heyer, John Whiteford," NAA, CRS, M, A6126, 487, and "Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell," NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

84. ASIO, "Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell." NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612; ASIO, "Heyer, John Whiteford," NAA, CRS, M, A6126, 487; ASIO, "Poignant, Harold Emil Axel, Volume 1." NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 3691; ASIO, "Duncan, Catherine," NAA, CRS, M, A6126, 17; ASIO, "Cranstone, Ted (Edward Leonard) Volume 1," NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 4621; "Otton, Walter Malcolm," NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 2301; *ibid.* 2302.

85. ASIO Royal Commission Section, "Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn," extract of précis from file record, ca. April 1954. Contained in NAA; CRS, M, A6119, 612.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Documentary film only enabled me to bring out what I felt in a more concrete way and accomplishing far more than it was possible to do as a newspaper photographer. ... The documentary filmmaker uses an interpretive mind to underline and emphasise to bring about an emotional reaction to make a person to sit up and take notice. But you have to inspire people to take some sort of action, if you like, protest. I [began working along these lines] in my photography at the *Telegraph* and I developed it even further as the photographer at the *Tribune*. (Moran 1983, tape 2)

However, the hallmarks of Powell's Communist presswork, with coverage of themes around the political and the benefits of public enterprise, were prohibited at the DOI Film Unit. He remarked, "if anything smacked of socialist enterprise should we say, or government controls, well that was definitely not on" (Moran 1983, tape 2). The government film agency, therefore, offered limited opportunity to appropriate from Powell (in Moran 1983, tape 2), "to say what we wanted to say—not spouting communist propaganda—but the sort of stuff to make people aware of what was going on". Film historian Lisa Milner helps clarify the point through comparative observation between Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit (WWFFU) productions and those of the DOI; "explorations of class and industrial relations—which form the focus of WWFFU films—are largely absent in DOI films" (2000, 134).

Powell's film *Parliament and You* (1948)—or more specifically, reaction to it—marks the case in point. As he explained to Moran (1983, tape 3), the intention was to commission a film portraying the workings of Australian democracy for which he was given production responsibility. As a Leftist, he naturally adopted a dialectic approach to "analysing the question of parliament and you and how the votes counting system worked".

In my analysis—probably because of my slightly leftwing attitudes and social outlook—I was willing to be convinced from my reading that the only reason we all have a vote is because of the activities of the Suffragettes and others who fought for democratic representation in their day. Down through the years it wasn't given to us, our vote; it had to be fought for. ... I could see no reason why we should not introduce the film by giving a colourful analysis of how it is that you come to have a vote. Then go into how the founding fathers come about the particular type of voting system we have. The method of vote counting and what the results can be. Well the deeper I got into this thing,

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

the more I realised that it wasn't quite as straightforward as you might think. It came about through struggle. (Powell, interview with Moran 1983, tape 3)

Powell had made arrangements with the then Federal Minister of External Territories Eddie Ward (1889–1963)—"who was fairly well respected, as I thought, on all sides of parliament" (Moran 1983)—to make a statement on camera at the regular Sunday public soapbox forum held in Hyde Park, Sydney, that would open the film. According to Ward's biographers Elwyn Spratt (1965) and Arthur Hoyle (1994), "The Firebrand of East Sydney", as Ward was commonly known, carried a formidable repute as the indefatigable champion of the working class. Moreover, he was a parliamentary figure cast in the old-school Laborite tradition and remembered as an uncompromising combatant who broached no pretence of collegiality with Labor's opponents and those he considered betrayers of the working class.

To both the public and most members of the opposing political parties Ward was a one dimensional man who passed his time in parliament in a cloud of invective, strident advocacy for a socialist Australia and constant attacks on the wealthy and privileged. (Hoyle 1994, 249)

The selection of such a controversial figure set the tone for *Parliament and You*, which, Powell explained to, was formed around a comparative critical analysis of Australia's preferential voting system.

In the commentary, I didn't say that the things I portrayed were good or bad, I just pointed them out for what they were and how it worked. I was up to the viewer, an audience, to decide whether it was good or bad. ... [but] that film never ever was shown.

It is apparent from Powell's description, had *Parliament and You* actually been released, it was quite likely to have created far-reaching political ructions. Powell ruminated:

I think that the motivation for the film was a very good one. I enjoyed having it handed to me on a slate and we actually finished it, if I remember rightly. If it were shown subsequent to my handling, it would have been changed from the way I did it. (Moran 1983, tape 2)

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Of his film *Canberra through the Seasons* (ca. 1951),<sup>86</sup> Powell commented, "it was hardly a documentary, it was newsreel kind of thing; a pretty film about how pretty Canberra is" (Moran 1983, tape 2). It was a film, however, where extolling State enterprise was permissible; for example, the off screen voiceover proudly announces, "The Department of the Interior as landlords of nearly all property in the Capital Territory sets the highest standard of maintenance in the land." The Department's role in the arboreal beautification of the nation's Capital is favourably featured, and through the Yarralumla Nursery, the film promotes the freely available provision of garden plants to Canberra's residents. Mention is also made of the establishment of the "Commonwealth Brick Works which supplies local builders with bricks as good as any in Australia". The tone of the dialogue recalls Powell's subject treatment for the NSW State Abattoirs in the communist journal *Progress*, which promoted state enterprise as the social ideal (Powell 1946c).

## Powell on Film: Influences

In a discussion of the film culture at the DOI Film Unit, Powell enthused:

We had all been members of the Sydney Film Society. We had all read about documentary films. We all had a common social conscience, if you can put it that way. We all looked at documentary films and dreamed of being great documentary filmmakers. We looked at Pare Lorentz's films from America and if we could have made something like these films, oh that would be ideal. We all lived for that. (Powell, interview with Moran 1983, tape 2)

On the subject of attitudes to film and filmmakers, Powell provides an interesting critique by asking the reader to consider the "success of some early Continental film men like Fritz Lang [1890–1967] and Ernst Lubitsch [1892–1947]. Could it be that the virtual failure of their [later] Hollywood epics was due to a slackening of their integrity, a digression from pervious sincerity" (1950, 32).

Powell's DOI documentary affiliation and membership of Sydney Film Society served to expose him to a wide gamut of international film works, which formed influences. Hugh McInnes (1911–2004)—one of the industry 'old hands' at the DOI and Heyer documentary faction detractor—in an interview with Martha

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86. One of Powell's last DOI films completed 1949–1950 but probably released at a later date circa 1951–1952. Richard Carter, NFSA, pers. comm. November 2014. The script is listed as created 1949. NFSA Title No. 724142.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Ansara in 1990, sardonically commented of the Sydney Film Society and Heyer, who "... got films from overseas and he, Bern Gandy, and Geoff Powell locked themselves up and screened them a hundred bloody times. Then they would go out and create" (Ansara 1994). Powell particularly admired the films of Pare Lorentz (1905–1992), Robert J. Flaherty (1894–1951), and Joris Ivens, as well as the masters of early Soviet film cinema Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) and Vsevolod Pudovkin (1903–1953).<sup>87</sup> A film that resonated greatly with him was *The City* (1939), directed and photographed by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, with concept outline by Lorentz. He stated:

*The City* was the big one for me. It was wonderful to see this film because I lived in the city of Sydney, a muck of a city, and here was Pare Lorentz with a documentary film showing us [figuratively] how to reorganise the city of Sydney. I just felt in those days, if only we could show this film to every person, every politician, every minister of religion, kid at school, and we'd have a better Sydney. (Moran interview 1983, tape 1)

According to film academic Deane Williams (2008, 79), for Steiner and Van Dyke, the conventional city is the product of out of control capitalism, which serves to condition lifestyle and alienate people from community. *The City* proposes the chaos of the industrial mechanised city, could be replaced by a modernised ideal built around the pre-industrial semi-rural village.

The extrapolation of a Leftist discourse should not be overstated in relation to Powell films such as *The Lighthouse Keeper* (1949); however, some observations are pertinent. This film is an illustrative example to discuss respective documentary ethoi in play at the DOI Film Unit and Powell's position within that broader creative milieu. He straddled two primary streams of documentary thought; on the one hand, he embraced the art aspects of documentary film, and on the other, he embraced a stream of documentary that philosophically engaged with its socio-political potential.

*The Lighthouse Keeper* was entirely shot on location by a two-man film unit consisting of director Trainor with Powell as the cameraman. Both were connected to the Heyer group whose working ethos was cross-disciplinary and collaborative. Regardless of their official designation, they saw themselves as filmmakers, not merely as directors, production assistants, or cinematographers. Powell noted that

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87. See Powell 1950, 32; Moran interview May 1983, tape 3; Powell ca. 1988, 1–52.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

that on *The Lighthouse Keeper*, he was provided considerable autonomy, adding, "we worked together as a team and pulled together" (in Moran 1983, tape 3). To appropriate from renowned documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens, this kind of documentary culture embodied the notion of "a small collective of people who understood each other" (Mundell 2005).

Production oversight for *The Lighthouse Keeper* was the responsibility of Masyln Williams (1911–1999) who, Moran mentions (1987a), was not directly aligned with other members of the documentary group discussed above but was probably a patron to Trainor. It is perhaps pertinent that *The Lighthouse Keeper* is referred to as a Geoff Powell and Lionel Trainor film (Moran 1987a, 1987b). Nevertheless, a review of some general comparative remarks on Masyln Williams is warranted here. His film work trended along more personal humanistic portrayals that, like the Heyer group, pushed beyond classic documentary boundaries and accepted the use of dramatisation (FitzSimons, Laughren, and Williamson 2011; Moran 1987c). Moran (1987b) notes Williams's more aesthetic observational approach to dealing with daily life and the impact of the natural environment, a description that is equally suitable for the creative treatment given *The Lighthouse Keeper*. Yet, this film also fits within a mode that Maslyn Williams referred to as the 'social political' stream, represented by Stanley Hawes: "by showing how things worked, how a workman [in this case, the lighthouse keeper] was part of the whole state machinery" (cited in Moran 1987a, 138, 156–157; and 1991, 42). Moran concludes, "the finished film is an uneasy compromise between documentary in a more the lyrical, observational mode on the one hand and one which tends toward giving 'a picture of the whole scene' on the other" (in both Moran 1987a, 170; and 1987b, 74).

Another way in which *The Lighthouse Keeper* diverges from the more typical DOI Film Unit classical documentary style is through formalist tropes in cinematography and editing, which are deployed to delineate the mood for various phases of the storyline. For example, the methodical treatment around process in the main life and work sequences provides a steady rhythmic quality that evokes Joris Iven's systematic analysis of the movements of a railway bridge for his lyrical masterpiece *De Brug* 1928 (Mundell 2005). This orderliness of 'methodicality' is starkly broken by the excited energy of the 'sheep chase' sequence. The mood then switches to an energised foreboding for the 'approaching foul weather' sequences,

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

while the scenes depicting the arrival of the stores ship coalesce around the competing emotions. Announced by blasts of the supply ship's steam whistle, an atmosphere of excitement is brought on by a break in the monotony of routine but later tempered by a contemplative mood with the departure of old friends and the arrival new faces.

A more overt Leftist reference for *The Lighthouse Keeper* is found in Powell's article "A Film Tells the Story of Our Lighthouses", which details a forthcoming film, specifically the Sandy Cape lighthouse photo-caption: "Sandy Cape (Queensland) lighthouse keepers have left this old shack to live in new fibro homes. They drive three miles to the beach in a jeep to pick up stores" (Powell 1949, 28). The expressed sentiment harks back to Powell's *Tribune* news coverage on workers' housing and the need to resume slums for modern homes.<sup>88</sup>

## Dramatising within the Realm of Reality

As an acolyte of Heyer, Powell was inducted into a broad Left-orientated film fraternity that advocated for a dramatised form of documentary and included international luminaries such as Joris Ivens (1898–1989) and Harry Watt (1906–1987). Both had worked in Australia during the 1940s, and forged links with local *progressive* filmmakers and arts organisations.<sup>89</sup>

Powell's filmmaking ethos of "dramatising within the realm of reality" used figurative interplay between sound and visual cues. For the documentary *From Orchard to Can* (1949), he argued for supplementary sound-over of a train to be placed into the visual space of people travelling in car. The intention was to prompt anticipation of forthcoming scenes at a country railway station. However producer-in-chief Stanley Hawes—who was a member of the Griersonian classical documentary phalanx—could not accept this kind of non-literal treatment (Moran 1987a, 1987b).

The use of similar cinematic techniques is also found in *The Lighthouse Keeper*. The most prominent instance appears at the end of the 'sheep chase'

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88. Geoffrey Powell, *Tribune* clippings, 1945–1946. Contained in Quarto Scrapbook, vol. 2, 1944–1950.

89. For example, as reported by SORA, "The Influence of Realistic Groups, Written after a Lecture by Harry Watt at SORA on the 28/10/1945m" in *SORA Bulletin*, no. 8, Studio of Realist Art Publication, 1945, 8–12; SORA, "The Film Here and Now, Written after Joris Ivens' Lecture," in *SORA Bulletin*, no. 9, 1946, 3–6.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

sequence, where sound-over of thunder is introduced as a pointer to upcoming dialogue of approaching foul weather which is itself a filmic construct. The filming location, Maatsuyker Island, situated off southwest Tasmania, had only offered up cold blustery and variously overcast but generally fine conditions.<sup>90</sup> Nonetheless, the island's tempestuous reputation was required for the film's narrative. This aspect of existence on Maatsuyker, therefore, had to be crafted by the filmmakers. The background visuals, while picturesque, are not particularly convincing and the chapter is carried by expository elements of adroit scripting.

### A Maturing of the 'Documentary Idea'

Powell's earliest film work as a cine-cameraman concentrated on achieving handsome cinematography. He had after all been trained as a studio photographer and photojournalist, where the ultimate aim and all the effort were toward 'getting the shot'. Having joined the ranks of the Film Division on the strength of test footage showing grape harvesting at a vineyard in the Hunter Valley, Powell remarked, "they [the DOI Film Division] were very pleased with it and offered me a job. I must admit it was some of the best cinematography I ever did, I never did as well again" (Moran 1983, tape 1). Powell's first credited assignment was as a cinematographer on Heyer's acclaimed *Journey of a Nation* (1947). Film historian Judith Adamson praises the film as "one of the greatest triumphs of the polemical documentary [that] takes an obscure subject, uniform rail gauge and presents it in terms of great contemporary relevance and in a highly dramatic fashion" (MIFF [1991] 2016). Powell related how his work as a cameraman was subordinated in the film's editing:

I filmed a shot at Albury [NSW], the front of the train engine leaving the station for Sydney at twelve o'clock midnight. As it came out under the fog, on the screen a light spot developed, which was the headlight of the train. It got bigger and bigger as the train got closer and closer until it finally enveloped the whole screen. Out of the fog came the image of the big engine. Then I panned with it and we saw the wheels churning and panned

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90. See Hoehne, "The Lighthouse Keeper Research Resource Booklet," Appendix II, Maatsuyker Island Weather Conditions, 2015, 37–40. Compiled from "Maatsuyker Island Lightstation Log Book," NAA, CRS, P781, Sep 1945–Dec 1948. To decode the standard quick-hand used, consult *Instructions to Lightkeepers, Commonwealth Lighthouse Service* (Melbourne, Vic., Commonwealth Lighthouse Service, January 1917, with amendments to 1954), 25.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

further as it disappeared into the fog. It was beautiful shot and it lasted for about half a minute. It finished up as about four seconds on the screen because the film had to be cut down and you couldn't leave that beautiful picture in. The shot in the film just had to be a train leaving Aubrey. V-oomph it came out of the mist and that was it. (Moran interview 1983, tape 2)

Having come into documentary filmmaking as a raw cinematographer, Powell had gained practical experience in all aspects of filmmaking through the Heyer group. He came to the understanding that effective documentary filmmaking was predicated not so much on "wonderful" photography but on film editing:

The documentary filmmaker has a power to use in editing to recreate to underline and emphasise. He's using an interpretive mind to build on fact to bring about an emotional reaction to make a person sit up and take notice [by putting] forward arguments. ... The conflict is always there in the documentary filmmaker as to how far you can stretch actuality into a re-creation to make it look like reality. (Powell in Moran interview 1983)

He went on to advocate for on-screen imagery to follow the spoken word. That is to say, Powell's preference was for the film-cut to be predicated on the original scripted dialogue. He further commented that there was no point going out and taking wonderful cinematography for its own sake, because it would be subjugated by the commentary (Moran interview 1983, tape 2).

Another important aspect to Powell's documentary philosophy was the use of available light as a tool "to establish a basic honesty". With Moran (1983, tape 2), he argued theatrical film sets for documentaries ought be lit to mimic available light. For his Shell film *Rankin's Springs Is West* (1950), Powell insisted that available light from kerosene lamps be used to "re-create the complete and absolute atmosphere of a country dance in hall" (In Moran 1983, tape 2).

Powell made two films for the Shell Film Unit; namely, *Rankin's Springs Is West*, and *Shellubrication*. These films fit the mould of local Shell productions as contributions to promoting an appreciation of Australian life through canvassing solutions to national problems; e.g. *Shellubrication* is an innovative promotional film that looks at automotive safety and the need for regular servicing.<sup>91</sup>

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91. "Star Part for Car," unidentified film related newspaper clipping contained, in Quarto Scrapbooks, vol. 2, 1944–1950.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Deane Williams (2008) provides insight to the relationship of Australian documentaries to an international nexus of film appreciation where the influence from overseas models is evident. Moran (1991) also cites the reference to Pare Lorentz's classic *The River* (1938) in Heyer's *The Valley Is Ours* (1948). Williams (2008) calls such referencing "mirroring", where the inflection of national character is imparted, rather than the films being mere imitations of overseas productions. Powell's *Rankin's Springs Is West* sits among those Australian documentaries that borrow from international films and is particularly evocative of Joris Ivens's comparative lifestyle film *Power and the Land* (1940), most prominently canvassing the adoption of new ideas that promise to enhance lifestyle. As Powell noted,

Ivens was commissioned to tell the advantages of electricity brings to farmers of the American West. What better way than to show a family living without the comfort and convenience of modern power and the effect electricity has on their lives when it is installed on their farms. (Powell 1950, 32)

In the same fashion as in *Power and the Land*, Powell used local inhabitants to play out the storyline, illustrating the rituals of daily life in small isolated rural community of Rankin's Springs, in the Riverina district of New South Wales.

The *Rankin's Springs Is West* film was to me a beautiful film of Australian life in the outback. There was no electricity or gas. It was telling a story of the basic Australian way of life [showing] people living with fuel stoves and backward life compared with the great new life they could have with kerosene as source of power in the outback. (Moran interview 1983, tape 2)

The film sets out by introducing the community, leading into depictions of a traditional lifestyle devoid of the convenience provided by modern appliances. In the vein of Shell's mission statement for its films to contribute to solutions for national problems, *Rankin's Springs Is West* promotes the idea that state-of-the-art kerosene fuel appliances offer a viable alternative for those living in isolated communities where conventional reticulated power services are not available.<sup>92</sup> The narrative contrasts the arduous daily existence inherent of the old ways against the enhanced quality of life that is made possible through the adoption of kerosene appliances,

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92. "Shell Films," reported in *Border Watch*, Mount Gambier, SA, Tuesday, November 8, 1949, 6. National Library of Australia Trove (website) <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article78636455>.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

such as lamps, refrigerators, cookers, heaters, and hot water systems. Powell's film, like *Power and The Land*, portrays the overcoming of conservative reticence of rural people to abandon the true-and-trusted for newfangled ways. *Rankin's Springs Is West* consolidates its message around preparations for a community dance, focusing on how kerosene appliances contribute to making the occasion a memorable success.

Powell's last film for the DOI, *From Orchard to Can* (1949) marks a further attempt to move away from the classical documentary mould and was "written so no music was required", relying instead on the strength of dialogue supported by a sound track composed of effects and passages sound-on-film. The narrative is built around the experiences of an English migrant who arrived at fruit growing district of Shepparton, Victoria to work in the Goulburn Valley orchards.

After Powell had moved to television production with the ABC, he was more able to apply his theories on editing, whereby the film edit closely followed the original written dialogue (Moran interview 1983, tape 2). This approach was adopted for the *Shirley Abicair in Australia* series, produced and directed by Powell, that went to air in 1960. According to a *Women's Weekly* exposé, the concept was formulated by expatriate entertainer Shirley Abicair (1930–) while on a visit to the Snowy Mountains; she reportedly said "I got the feeling of such vigour and progress. ... I thought I'd like to do show about it with a filmed documentary background" (in Musgrove 1960, 75).

## Chapter 4: Exhibition Strategy

### Precursors to this Project

This chapter discusses the rationale and strategies employed for the production of a multimodal exhibition titled, *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960*. The works showcased include keynote examples of documentary film and photography drawn from Powell's immediate post-war oeuvre. Each of these retrospective elements forms an expression of ideals around post-war reconstruction. A catalogue of thematic montages that trace influences toward Powell's political radicalisation and how his work was moderated through his editors supports the retrospective programme. The production of Socialist Realist photography contemporaneously sat alongside documentary film intended for mainstream distribution. *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle* reflects the case that these seemingly philosophically disparate outputs belonged to the same cultural locale; a film milieu that was Leftist in outlook and variously concerned with the aesthetic and social potentiality of documentary. Powell straddled these two streams of documentary thought operating within the DOI Film Unit in its early years. The works curated for this exhibition demonstrate that position.

The genesis of my interest in Powell was stimulated through a dinner conversation fifteen years ago with Powell's son Warwick. The discussion was around Dupain's celebrated Bond Street studio, together with the influence imparted on their work by the surrealist photographer May Ray (1890–1976). Dupain's known assistants from the time were Olive Cotton (1911–2003), Damien Parer, and David Moore, but I had not heard of Geoffrey Powell. Three other notable figures were mentioned as colleagues—Laurence 'Laurie' le Guay, Edward 'Ted' Cranstone, and Axel Poignant—names generally not heard outside academic discourses. Cranstone was a favourite photographer of mine, in particular his Allied Works Council photography from 1942–1944, denoted by its 'Rodchenkoesque' formalist framing. I was keen to discover more about this Powell. At this time, knowledge of him was confined to a relative handful of academics and curators. The following list also provides dates for the interest shown in Powell: Leftist art curator Charles Merewether (AGNSW), 1981–1983; film academic, Albert Moran (Griffith University), 1983; photography curators Ian North and Martyn Jolly (ANG/NGA),

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

1984; and subsequently Gael Newton, and Helen Ennis (ANG/NGA), 1988–1992; and Judy Annear (AGNSW), 1997.

On reflection, I had previously been exposed to the work of Powell, primarily through the few prominent examples of his photography appearing in photohistorical books (Dupain 1986; Edwards 1999; Willis 1989; Newton 1988). His *Self-Portrait, Bailing Water* (1938), reproduced in Newton's book (though with the incorrect caption of *Boiling Water*), which depicts Powell bailing well water into a drinking trough for cattle, became something of a metaphor both to the physical state of Powell's personal archive and also the imprecise rendering provided him by recorded photo-history.

Through my meeting with Warwick Powell, I learned that "the negatives of Powell's work were under the house in Rockhampton" (pers. comm. December 2000). The prospect of effects wrought by tropical humidity on sixty-year old photographic materials was an immediate concern. In due course, I was presented with a dishevelled silverfish-infested corrugated cardboard packing box, redolent in its mustiness and filled with an assortment of photographic prints and negatives in deplorable condition, together with a miscellany of equally musty documents.

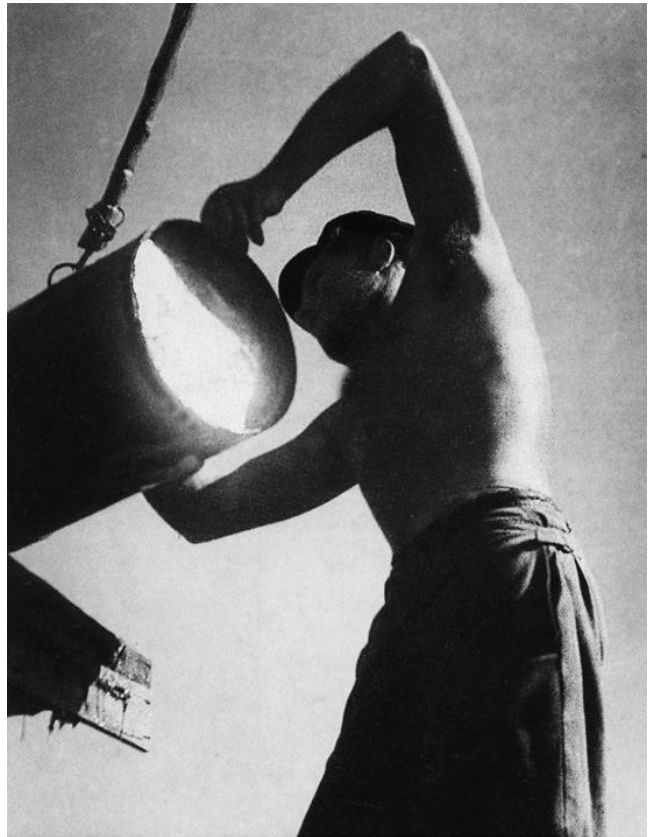
Holding the negative for Powell's *Bailing Water* against the light and pondering its sad condition—the mirrored sheen of its silvering image contrasted against a mottled greenish-pinkish discoloured nitrate film base with delicate gelatine layers that had served as sustenance for mould infestation and, additionally, decorated with cockroach excrement—I debated the successful printability of this frame and the likelihood of extensive retouching. I recalled a distant reminiscence of previously standing before this picture—at the ANG Bicentenary *Shades of Light* (1988) exhibition—a print that somehow stood out by virtue of its intriguing aged patina. I was drawn to the dichroic shimmer from its silvering image and associated split-toned aesthetic. The imparted aesthetic beauty of this print that made it stand out was also testament to advanced stages of image degradation.<sup>93</sup>

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93. *Shades of Light, Photography and Australia 1839-1988*, a Bicentenary photography exhibition project, curated by Gael Newton, ACT, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, February 20–May 22, 1988.



Figure 12



Geoffrey Powell 1919–1989  
*Self Portrait, Bailing Walter* 1938  
Silver-Gelatine Print  
24.6 x 18.6 cm  
NGA, Acc. No. 84.1865  
*Shades of Light* (1988), 128.

Behind its prematurely aged condition sat a latent story that was yet to be told. I consulted the *Shades of Light* catalogue (1988, 123, 128) to find this picture, which is illustrated in support of text about Powell as a noteworthy photo-documentarian. The image appears as *Boiling Water*, the result of a simple transcription error that had endured in the National Gallery's records but which significantly changed the connotation of Powell's *Self-Portrait, Bailing Walter*. Presented alongside a social documentary discourse in the NGA exhibitions, *Shades of Light, Photography and Australia 1839–1988* and also *Facing Facts, Documentary Photographs*,<sup>94</sup> this self-portrait was emblematic of how photohistory had intersected with Powell, largely misinterpreted and contextually misaligned.

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94. *Facing Facts, Documentary Photographs* 1988, photography exhibition, Gallery 11 and 11a, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, August 6–November 20.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

My initial interest in Powell was narrowly focussed, primarily archive and photohistory based. The question before me was one of what was to be done with all this, if anything? My initial assessment tended to agree with Ennis that Powell's photographs were "resolute in their ordinariness [and]—by prevailing art historical judgments—ultimately forgettable" (1992, 38). I subsequently came to appreciate there was a syntax behind this imagery underpinned by a sophisticated art discourse. This is mooted by Ennis (1992, 37–38) but not otherwise embraced by photohistorians.

In 2001, I proposed a conservation strategy for Powell's photographic effects as a prelude to producing posthumously printed exhibitions from his original negatives.<sup>95</sup> Beyond the immediacy of the *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell, Australia's Forgotten Documentary Photographer* (2004) exhibition, however, the custodians of Powell's estate did not further adopt its recommendations. The exhibition, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, was jointly funded by Arts Queensland and my Whole-Plate Camera Studio through in-kind contributions,<sup>96</sup> and was produced in association with the family of the artist who subsequently went by The Geoffrey Powell Archive Inc. name.<sup>97</sup> The rationale for mounting a retrospective exhibition of Powell's photography was twofold: firstly, I saw it as a forum through which to enhance Powell's profile by showcasing the few better-known examples of his imagery alongside works that had remained latent since the 1940s. Prior to this, Powell had primarily received passing mention in the literature (see Appendix 1). Secondly, I hoped that this new exposure would help generate an interest base from which to preserve important imagery within his 'in danger' negative collection. The conservation strategies report cited above had been drafted toward that aim.

However, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* ultimately served to perpetuate the myth of Powell as a noteworthy social documentary photographer. Image selection reflected the fractured nature of his extant negative archive, which is denuded of work from 1944–46, i.e. the period of his most significant intersection with the

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95. Craig Hoehne, in consultation with Caroline O'Rourke, and Detlev Luth, "The Geoffrey Powell Archive Negative Collection, Initial Assessment Conservation Strategies Report." Annerley, Qld. The Whole-Plate Camera Studio, in association with Conservation Art Consultants, April 2001.

96. Arts Queensland, March 2002 Major Grants Round; awarded to signatories Craig Hoehne, and Warwick Powell.

97. Registered as an incorporated association October 16, 2002 and ratified at the inaugural general meeting February 9, 2004.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

medium of photography. The full title *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell, Australia's Forgotten Documentary Photographer* played on Powell's reputation as a documentary photographer. The exhibition was, nevertheless, primarily built around the strength of earlier modernist works from the 1930s and concentrated on more polished large format imagery. This base was supplemented with available examples from Powell's photo-oeuvre spanning 1941–1947, including important better-known images such as *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945), *Truants* (1945), and *Delegates at Political Conference* (1945). For the first time, the two companion frames for *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945) were displayed together. In hindsight, this exhibition followed orthodoxy and I thereby contributed to continuing the existing perception of Geoffrey Powell (Hoehne 2004). Warwick Powell further embroidered the importance of his father to a mainstream social documentary discourse in promotion for the exhibition (see Appendix 1).

One of Australia's greatest photographers, the late Geoffrey Powell, ... like his school friend, Laurence le Guay had become of Australia's greatest post-war photographers ... establishing himself as one of this country's foremost documentary photographers.<sup>98</sup>

Gobé (2006) and Lovell (2006) subsequently adopted the documentary myth for Powell's *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945). For example, Gobé deployed the better-known version (figure 5) in a discourse about Great Depression as a "demonstration that economic hardship was still prevalent well into the 1940s" (2006, 6), while Lovell viewed Powell's *Families Awaiting Eviction* (figure 5) as evidencing his "commitment to social documentary photography" (2006, 9).

I followed up the mini retrospective *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell* with *Our Story in Pictures* (2004), a posthumously printed exhibition drawn from surviving photographic negatives from Powell's Miners' Federation photography of May 1947. *Our Story in Pictures* was essentially a miners' heritage archive project

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98. Warwick Powell, via Trent Dalton, "Past in Focus, Images from one of Australia's Greatest Photographers Geoffrey Powell," in *Brisbane News*, Brisbane, Qld., Queensland Newspapers (February 4–10, 2004b), 28; Wayne Sanderson, *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell*, Exhibition Promotional Interview with, Warwick Powell, ABC 612 Local Radio, Brisbane 4QR, January 31, 2004c; see also, Powell, in "Powell, Geoffrey, Photography Related Ephemera Material Collected by the National Library of Australia, Australian Photographer Files, Correspondence, Acquisition Proposal and Photocopied Images," National Library of Australia, 2005–.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

commissioned by the CFMEU, Mining and Energy Division. An exhibition preview was held at my studio in Brisbane in December 2004.

The experience of working on Powell's photography prompted me to undertake a Master's that would do justice to the archives I had resurrected. Importantly, at the time of these exhibitions, understanding of Powell's photography of the 1940s was still imprecise. It is the aim of this project to address that knowledge gap.

Given a premise that a conventional retrospective or survey exhibition of art performs a museological function to inform something of the artist's work, traditional modes of exhibition in Powell's case have fallen short of accurately relating his photo-work to its creational circumstance. This prompts enquiry as to how best represent Powell within an exhibition context. This in turn prompted my re-visitation of Ennis (1991; 1992):

In fact, Powell is one of those refreshingly elusive figures whose work cannot be readily claimed for the purposes of art history. ... Since Powell's death [Brisbane; September 16, 1989] I have been asking myself—this paper is part of the process—should he and his work be acknowledged more fully (shaped somehow, given some form, some identity)? And if so, how? ... The answer to the first question is 'yes' but I still can't confidently answer the second. I suspect, that Powell and his work will come to occupy spaces other than those of the museum and art history. (1992, 43)

My current exhibition project seeks to resolve Ennis's dilemma. A key challenge before this objective is the resolution of a methodology that concisely, but adequately, illuminates the story behind Powell's creative production; a clarification of his praxis through recognition of his photo-production of the 1940s as attendant with a growing social and political awareness. That awareness was ultimately radicalised with Powell's exposure to Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Foremost is the impediment that Powell presents in the relative dearth of surviving original artefacts from which to draw on traditional curatorial methodologies such as retrospective exhibition. Examples of original photographic prints, or negatives, from Powell's important 1940s' news work and Leftist photojournalism are scarce. The archives for this work either cannot be located or have not survived; i.e., the Consolidated Press, Sydney, and *Tribune* photo-

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

archives, respectively (Alan Davies, pers. comm. 2006). Furthermore, as Powell related in his memoirs (ca. 1988), while he was residing in Macau (1962–1970), white ants ravaged his negatives. To paraphrase Ennis (1992, 36), much of his output is not retrievable for those of us dependent on the photographic print as an object. His photographic oeuvre now largely exists only as magazine and newspaper reproductions. It is a similar story for much of Powell's later film work and in particular that produced for the ABC, 1960–1962, remains unidentified and in all probability has been destroyed. The *Shirley Abicair in Australia* 1960 series produced and directed by Powell does, however, survive (Ellis 1999). In addition, Powell's important, through controversial, DOI film *Parliament and You* (1948) was completed but never released and is presumed lost. *From Orchard to Can* (1949) is another important Powell DOI film that was presumed missing, but it has recently been located by Richard Carter of the National Film and Sound Archive (pers. comm. November 2015).

## Exhibit Methodology

For this exhibition project, published material from Powell's photographic oeuvre is appropriated into digital montage, as a means to facilitate a visual discourse around significant work and junctures within his personal history. This strategy provides a comprehensive background that clarifies and demystifies Powell through his work. That clarification opens possibilities for an informed discourse via retrospective exhibition of works from his oeuvre.

Such a methodology additionally allows for the reconstruction of important lost imagery; for example, Powell's *Making a Speech* (1945) for which there is neither a known surviving original nor a published reproduction. This lost image, however, is supported by ample word-based documentation that describes its creational form and métier. The composition was directly inspired by and stylistically based on Norman Rockwell's iconic American illustration *Freedom of Speech* (1943), which Powell had found in a past issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>99</sup>

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99. Booth Tarkington, "Number One of a Series Depicting Four Freedoms for which We Must Fight, *Freedom of Speech*," illustration by Norman Rockwell, in *Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 215, no. 34, Philadelphia, PA, Curtis Publishing (February 20, 1943), 12–13.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Powell adapted Rockwell's composition for the purposes of the ACP and employed prominent Communist Plumbers' Union organiser Eddie Maher (–) to act out the leading role.<sup>100</sup>

### Figure 13



Craig Hoehne  
*Powell's Making A Speech 1945*  
Digital Montage, 2012  
After Geoffrey Powell and Norman Rockwell  
ASIO, NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612

Norman Rockwell, 1894–1978  
*Freedom of Speech 1943*  
*Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 215, no. 34,  
(February 20, 1943), 12–13

Geoffrey Powell, 1918–1989  
*Shop Stewards 1945*  
Silver Gelatine-Print  
30.20 x 30.20 on sheet 37.9 x 30.2 cm  
NGA, Acc No. 84.1869  
Courtesy NGA

Ruth Mary Hallock, 1876–1945  
*The American Flag 1914*  
Book Illustration  
Flickr (website)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/katinthecupboard/8220194525>

Furthermore, a signed print of *Making a Speech* had been confiscated from Marx House in the July 1949 police raid, which took place in the turmoil surrounding that winter's General Coal Strike. Fortuitously, a transcript of the type found on the verso of the seized print was recorded and is preserved in Powell's security police

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100. Powell ca. 1988; Moran, interview, May 1983, tape 1; ASIO, Royal Commission Section, Transcripts of interview, November 15–16, 1954. Contained in NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

file. The text denotes the editorial rhetoric through which the image was made. It is the only surviving original caption for Powell's series of polemic photocompositions that includes *Family Group Awaiting Eviction* (1945) and *Delegates at Political Conference* (1945), among others.

This member of the Australian Communist Party is using his right of freedom of speech at a Party Branch meeting. The Australian Communist Party is built on more democratic lines than any other political party in this country.<sup>101</sup>

For my digital montage work, I became interested in how avant-garde Soviet designer/artists working in the late 1920s to the early 1930s employed photomontage as a means to distil complex ideas pictorially. An epitome of this canon is the illustrated journal *USSR in Construction*. Founded by Maxim Gorky (1868–1936) and published during 1930–1941, *USSR in Construction* responded to the expansion of Soviet enterprise through the aegis of the Stalinist era Five Year Plans. The journal sought to "reflect in photography the whole scope and variety of the construction work now going on the USSR" (University of Saskatchewan Library n.d.). The thematic format of *USSR in Construction* conferred each issue with the scope to elaborate on particular propaganda narratives based around the topicality of social progress in the cultural sectors of Soviet life; e.g., issues on the "Fortieth Anniversary of the Moscow Art Theatre" and "Soviet Cinema" (Troshin 1938a, 1938b).

*USSR in Construction* brought together leading Soviet photographers. Among those to feature were former members of *Octiabr* (Association of Artistic Labour),<sup>102</sup> Dmitri Debabov (1900–1949), Eleazar Langman (1895–1940), Alexander Rodchenko (1891–1956), and also the celebrated Soyuzfoto picture agency photographers Max Alpert (1899–1980), Arkady Shaikhet (1898–1959), and Sergei 'Solomon' Tules (–). Design artists, such as El Lissitzky (1890–1941), Nikolai Troshin (1897–1990), and Alexander Rodchenko (1891–1956), assumed editorship of particular issues and deployed the wealth photo material available to them into sumptuous page designs.

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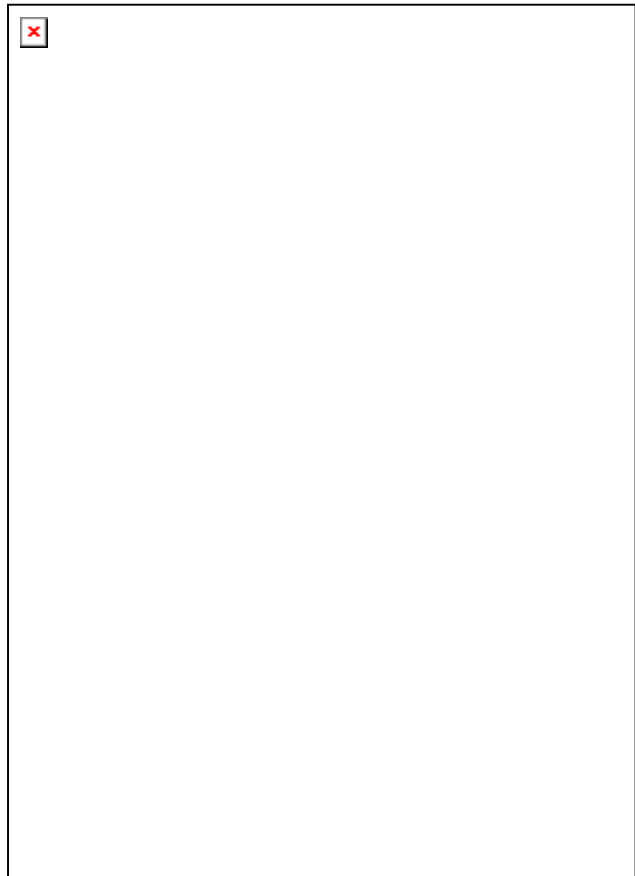
101. ASIO, "Geoffrey Bruce St Aubyn Powell," précis of file reports, 1954, point 2 (a). Contained in NAA, CRS, M, A6119, 612.

102. October, Association of Artistic Labour, active 1928–1932. The October group represented the avant-garde radical-left within the Soviet aesthetic art discourse, and noted as protagonists for new forms of artistic representation in the construction of the new Soviet society.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

In addition to the Soviet artist/photographers, El Lissitzky, and Rodchenko, the work of their lesser-known contemporaries also caught my attention; namely, Gustav Klutssis (1895–1938) and Sergei Senkin (1894–1964), particularly their adoption of photomontage as a mass communication medium. The most compelling epitomes are perhaps the agitprop posters designed to mobilise the population behind the Five-Year Plans and celebrate the grandiose vision of the construction programmes and their monumental feats (figure 14).

**Figure 14**



Sergei Senkin, 1884–1962  
*Under The Banner of Lenin for the Second Five Year Plan*  
1932  
Lithograph  
139.7 x 100.3 cm  
Brown University Library (website) <http://tuvok.services.brown.edu/adoredjatoka/viewer.html?filename=122050784484625.jp2>

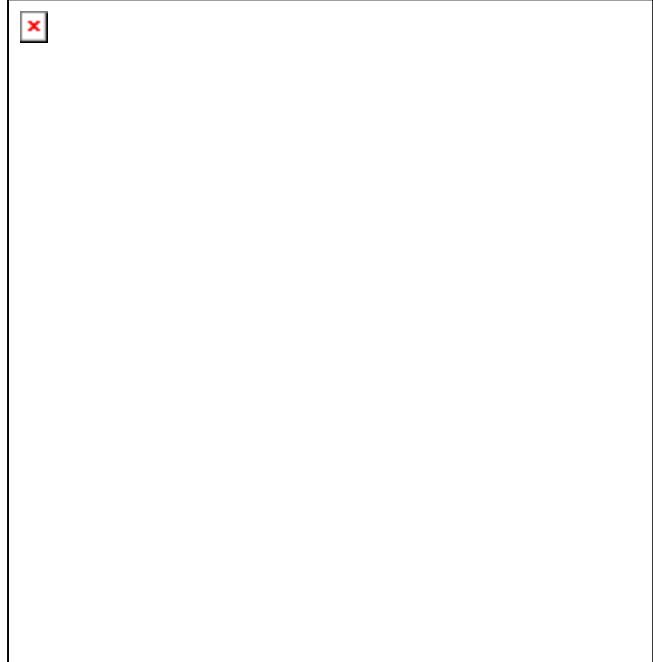
As with the publication art of *USSR in Construction*, the poster art was supported by contextualising text distilling complex narratives into easy-to-consume bites of information.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

The idea of deploying unfolding pages to progressively reveal sections of a narrative was taken up by Rodchenko (figure 15) for an issue of *USSR in Construction* dedicated to Soviet achievements in parachuting.<sup>103</sup>

**Figure 15**



Alexander Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova, ed.  
"Parachute"  
*USSR in Construction*, no. 12, English Edition (1935)  
International Center of Photography (website)  
[http://emuseum.icp.org/view/objects/asitem/People\\$00403564/32/primaryMakerAlpha-asc/dateBegin-asc?t:state:flow=c04c5e09-3ecd-470e-8216-ebeceadd7606](http://emuseum.icp.org/view/objects/asitem/People$00403564/32/primaryMakerAlpha-asc/dateBegin-asc?t:state:flow=c04c5e09-3ecd-470e-8216-ebeceadd7606)

Another work of interest in this canon is the celebrated catalogue, devised by Lissitzky, for the Soviet Pavilion at *Pressa*, the International Press Exhibition held at Cologne in 1928.<sup>104</sup> Built into the main catalogue is a supplementary multi-page accordion type foldout, which progressively unveils the famous *Pressa* installation photo-frieze; its title is couched in Marxist rhetoric, "The Education of the Masses is the Main Task of the Press in the Transitional Period from Capitalism to Communism", and it was a work of collaboration between Klutsis, Senkin, and

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103. Alexander Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova, et al. "Parachute," issue, *USSR in Construction*, no. 12 (December 1935).

104. El Lissitzky, ed. *Union der Sozialistischen Sowjet-Repupliken, Katalog des Sowjet-Pavillons auf der internationalen Pressa-Ausstellung Köln 1928* (Köln, Rpz, DR, Deutschen-Werkbund, Kölnpublications, 1928). NGA, Acc. No. 93.2051. Accessed National Gallery of Australia, CRS, July 2007.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Lissitzky (Tupitsyn 1996).

Reference to early Soviet-era montage techniques has helped me to ground the construction of an unfolding dialogue taken from Powell's life and work. Using the Soviet example also confers an epistemological continuity of discourse between the formulation of this project and that of Powell's working locale and the influences on his work; specifically, the ACP and the allied Realist Movement in the Arts.

My montage works are deployed as a thematic chronology in order to demonstrate the history behind the development of a social consciousness in Powell and that this influenced the direction of his work. A catalogue incorporating extended captions supports this visual material. Designed as a discrete multi-functional exhibition element the montages can also be used as a slide show to support an oral presentation with discussion to an audience. I have designed the montages to convey the spirit of Leftist enthusiasm of the period. The frames are purposefully 'fabricated' to aesthetically convey the unpolished feel produced in period hand-done montage techniques. The attendant catalogue lists and documents the material deployed in the montages.

The discrete components of my exhibition are designed as the following integrated elements:

- Exhibition Element 1: The Catalogue. A filmic presentation of montage works titled *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell, 1945–1960*.

This introductory element forms a storyboard that explores the life and work of photographer/filmmaker Geoffrey Powell (1918–1989). The programme is composed of subject-related photomontages, supported by brief explanatory paragraphs of text in the exhibition catalogue. The flow from frame to frame is via a 'cut' as opposed to 'fades' as a means to pay homage to DOI Film Unit stricture from Stanley Hawes to avoid cinematic artifice such as 'fades' (Moran 1983). These form a chronicle that describes Powell's development as a camera artist, which grew from his emerging social consciousness. For this present exhibition, the montage sequences will also be displayed via an LCD monitor.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

- Exhibition Element 2: Retrospective Exhibition of Photography and Film.

These elements explore the scope and inflection in tone of Powell's engagement as a camera artist during the immediate post-war years. The works on show are drawn from the documentary film milieu in which he operated over the 1946–1950 interlude. Also included is an example from the *Shirley Abicair in Australia* (1960), a seminal ABC television documentary series. The film titles showcased represent:

(a) Examples of Powell's work in the genre of documentary that are responsive to ideals around post-war reconstruction;

(b) Examples that trace Powell's development as a filmmaker; specifically, his appreciation of the primacy of film editing to the success of documentary filmmaking. The zenith of Powell's ideas on editing are demonstrated in the *Shirley Abicair in Australia* series.

- Exhibition Element 2a: *Our Story in Pictures, Photography of Conditions in the NSW Coalfields*:

*Our Story in Pictures* is a traditional photography exhibition comprising sixteen examples drawn from twenty-five silver-gelatine prints that I printed in 2004 from Powell's original negatives. In producing these prints, I wished to remain true to the period aesthetic. Therefore, I used traditional photographic darkroom methods, which were as close as possible to a period 1940s archetype. Speciality period-style printing papers were imported, the characteristics of which included set paper grade emulsions, and paper-base *sans* optical brightener. Processing was done using traditional formulae and techniques. The only concession made was the use of up-to-date archival printing methods and chemistry for print fixing and washing. The completed exhibition was first showcased in December 2004, as a preview held at my former photographic and framing studio, The Whole-Plate Camera Studio, in Annerley, Queensland.

With the exception of the examples showcased at the *Our Story in Pictures* exhibition preview, the vast extent of Powell's photography for the Miners' Federation Amenities Campaign (1947) has sat latent within the relative obscurity of the pages of the Federation's publications and its pictures archive. As such, outside the labour union that commissioned the photography in the first instance and that

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

responded to my efforts for its preservation, this extraordinary body of work remains largely unrecognised.<sup>105</sup> The CFMEU Mining and Energy Division, the owner of the exhibition, has generously agreed to make the pictures available for this project.

It is timely for Powell's amenities photography to be considered alongside wider contemporary *progressive* creative activity. The *Our Story in Pictures* photography forms a backdrop to Powell's contemporaneous documentary film work, which constitutes the second element of the retrospective component of the exhibition.

- Exhibition Element 2b: *Post-War Documentary film*:

This film programme consists of three benchmark documentaries from Powell's film oeuvre, namely:

- *Journey of a Nation* (1947) (cinematographer), an eleven-minute black-and-white documentary, produced by the DOI Film Unit for the Australian National Film Board;
- *The Lighthouse Keeper* (1949) (director of photography), an eleven-minute black-and-white documentary, produced by the DOI Film Unit for the Australian National Film Board and sponsored by the Department of Immigration;
- *Shirley Abicair in Australia, On The Snowy* 1960 (producer and director); thirty-minute, black-and-white, television documentary series episode, produced by the ABC Film Unit for the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

These films have been discussed in connexion with Powell's film career in the previous chapter.

The structure of the film programme outlined here can be run either in sequence, as would be the case with a traditional film festival format, or concurrently via digital projectors set on continuous loop. For this present project, *The Lighthouse Keeper* and *Journey of a Nation* films shall be screened via means of

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105. For completeness, two examples from *Our Story in Pictures* (2004) were additionally exhibited in *Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell, Australia's Forgotten Documentary Photographer* 2004. These examples of Powell's 'amenities imagery' from this curation form elements of the National Library of Australia, and Queensland Art Gallery collections of Powell's photography; NLA.Obj-150067077, and QAG/GOMA, ACC. No. 2005.717, respectively.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

state-of-the-art digital cinema facilities of the Griffith Film School (GFS). Exhibition of *Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Snowy* 1960 shall be via LCD TV monitor set within a conventional exhibition space of the GFS Cinema foyer.

The rationale for the exhibition treatment of these works follows from the ethos adopted for production of the posthumous printing for *Our Story in Pictures* 2004; i.e. those prints were produced, as close as practicable, to provide a viewer experience that reflect a 1940s period aesthetic. *The Lighthouse Keeper* and *Journey of a Nation* were intended as films to be screened in cinemas and both gained theatrical release. Thus, for this showing, that original intent is reflected through cinema screening. By contrast, *Shirley Abicair in Australia*, although shot on 16mm film stock in the mode of a Powell's earlier documentaries, was intended as a television series of programmes. Therefore, in this exhibition, it shall be displayed via a TV monitor set with the exhibition space.

The main film and photography programme of my current exhibition forms an interconnected narrative drawn from Powell's immediate post-war oeuvre. The works on show are concerned with expressions of ideals around Australian post-war reconstruction; specifically, the photography of conditions found in the NSW coalfields communities addresses the miners' concerns for post-war renewal, while *The Lighthouse Keeper* belongs to a series of DOI films that portray Australian life through showcasing interesting Australians at work. The remainder of the film programme conforms to that which film historian Albert Moran (1991) classifies as films concerned with national building. *Journey of a Nation* proposes a unification of the states through the construction of a standardised national rail network; *Shirley Abicair in Australia, On The Snowy* is an episode that looks at the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme as a grand project of nation building forged in the spirit of progress. In the presenter, Shirley Abicair's words; "when [previously] visiting the Snow Mountain Scheme, I got the feeling of such vigour and progress" (in Musgrove 1960, 74).

The other curatorial thread for the film programme concerns Powell's attitudes to filmmaking through editing. Keynote titles have been selected that reflect influential films toward his understanding of the primacy of editing in documentary film production, the culmination of which is represented by *Shirley Abicair in Australia*. Powell strenuously disagreed with Hawes's practice of cutting completed films back to shorter running times in order to tighten up their film work. Rather, he

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

insisted that the film be tightly scripted at the outset and made to predetermined running duration. He further came to insist that the scripted dialogue determine the cut in film editing; i.e., the film cut is shaped by the duration of commentary sequences. This was the methodology adopted for production of *Shirley Abicair in Australia* series (Moran interview 1983, tape 3). For this exhibition, it is intended to introduce this aspect of Powell's film development when introducing the films.

## **Exhibition Space Structure and Rationale**

The use of the GFS Cinema as an exhibition setting opens the possibility of integrating two modes of exhibition—i.e., a conventional cinema screening and providing a traditional exhibition environment that can facilitate a small multimedia show. The foyer space and sheltered external public environs provide ample space for attendees to gather in a cordial informal ways for refreshment etc., and as a 'podium' from which to conduct an open forum or to orchestrate forums conducted by guest speakers. Exhibition timetable and layout diagrams are provided in Appendix 5.

## Conclusion: Representing Powell Visually

This current exegesis toward my exhibition aims to address the shortcomings of art history's intersection with Powell from the 1980s and 1990s; namely, the unrealised consideration of his photography as Socialist Realist and as sitting alongside Realist artworks, and Realist film. My project follows on from the unfulfilled promise for exhibition of Powell's work in *Art and Social Commitment*,<sup>106</sup> as well as the questions raised by Helen Ennis (1991) in her seminal photo-historical conference paper.

The current exhibition project, supported by the argument articulated in this exegesis, re-evaluates the output of Powell as the product of an evolving social consciousness. His post-war output is presented as coexistent with a creational context belonging to nexus of Leftist thought. This curatorial position is supported by previous knowledge and new lines of investigation that seek to address outstanding areas of understanding concerning the operative milieu through which, it is argued, Powell made his most significant contributions to Australian photo and film histories.

My current project looks at Powell through the tenor of his socio-political awareness toward a Leftist outlook. This prompted further background original research into the circumstance of his relationship with the ACP. His photo-production 1944–1946 has been tabulated through a survey of Powell's scrapbooks and is provided as Appendix 2. It is evident that Powell's photo-production from April 1945 to March 1946 was intimately connected to the political agenda of the ACP. That production, I argue, was additionally influenced through streams of *progressive* creative thought. Powell's photography is also considered as holding a filmic dimension through its reference to documentary filmic mode and collaborationist nature.

The manifestation of Powell's political outlook is considered in this project against the specifics of his production and the milieu through which that production was made. This line of investigation clarifies apparent discontinuity between Socialist Realist photography produced contemporaneously with ostensible mainstream film production; i.e., that photography completed for the Miners' Federation Amenities Campaign.

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106. E.g., Smith in Merewether 2000; Merewether 1985b; Burn 1985.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

The retrospective component of my exhibition showcases works that reflect Powell's creative concern through his engagement of subjects around themes dealing with post-war reconstruction. The film programme additionally describes influences that informed Powell's appreciation of film editing as a primary device available to filmmakers for the production of compelling documentary films.

This project has implemented a holistic curatorial approach that addresses the various modes of Powell's production. The aim is to demystify that production, which, it is argued, belonged to a Leftist discourse that influenced aesthetic considerations but that was simultaneously reflexive of creative circumstance. Powell's mode was responsive to the perspectives of the commissioners of his work. In relation to film work, his role in production and the degree of autonomy personally enjoyed was, of course, an important consideration and promoted moderating inflections to his personal Leftist perspective.

In conclusion, my current project challenges photo-historical orthodoxy by demonstrating that Powell is a complex figure but one who is definable within the context of established Australian art history. This research has also confirmed that there are still outstanding research areas to be pursued in relation to Powell; for example, identifying his ABC film work (1959–1962) and following up the preliminary examination into his film-work stills photography. This Master's project has gone some of the way towards answering questions about this noteworthy figure in Australian photographic and film history, but there is more to do in this research area. It is hoped that the exhibition and accompanying body of research material I have produced will revive interest in this interesting figure.



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## Photographic Archives and Collections

Outside the remnants of Powell's photo-oeuvre contained in Powell's estate, extant original examples his work is held in the public collections of Miner's Federation photo-archives, Noel Butlin Archive Centre, Canberra (1947); National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (1937–1949); National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra (film stills 1946–1950, un-credited, and yet to be researched); National Archives of Australia, Sydney and Canberra (photographic film stills; prints and negatives respectively 1946–1950, mainly un-credited and yet to be fully researched); and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (1944). Further examples of *Tribune* photography (1945–1946) may also be held in the archives of the Waterside Workers' Federation, however; this has not yet been investigated.

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## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

*Australia's Progress*. 1945–1946. Australian Communist Party. Sydney, NSW.

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## **Exhibitions Lists**

This list consists of exhibitions mentioned throughout this exegesis and also includes a comprehensive guide to exhibitions in which Geoffrey Powell's photography has been represented.

\* Indicates exhibition attended by the author.

## **Powell Represented in Group Exhibitions**

*Facing Facts: Documentary Photographs* 1988. Australian National Gallery, Gallery 11 and 11a, Canberra, ACT. August 6–October 2. Curated by Helen Ennis.

*Shades of Light: Photography and Australia, 1839–1988* 1988. Australian National Gallery Bicentenary Project, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, February 20–May 22. Curated by Gael Newton.\*

*Australian Photography 1947* 1947. A City of Newcastle Sesquicentenary Event, NESCA House, King and Auckland Streets, Newcastle, NSW. Curated by the *Australian Photography 1947* Committee, September 5–September 20, extended to October 4. Thereafter toured nationally.

*SORA Christmas Party Exhibition* 1946. Studio of Realist Art, 214 George Street, Sydney, December 18.

*City Exhibition of International Works* 1938. The Salon London, n/a.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

*Photographic Society of New South Wales* 1936–1938. Photographic Society of New South Wales Members' Rooms, George Street, Sydney, NSW.

*Modern Photography Exhibition* 1936. The Exhibition Hall, George Street, Sydney, New South Wales.

## **Powell Represented in Posthumous Group Exhibitions**

*150 Years: Photography in Queensland from the Gallery's Collection* 2009.

Queensland Art Gallery Queensland Art Gallery: Gallery of Modern Art, Artists' Gallery, South Brisbane, Qld. June 27–October 4. Curated by Michael Hawker.\*

*VIP: Very Important Photographs from the European, American and Australian photography Collection 1940s-1940s* 2007. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT, May 26–August 19. Curated by Gael Newton, and Anne O'hehir, as assistant curator.\*

*Exposure: Australian Photography from the 1930s to the 1950s* 2005–2006.

Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery 15, Brisbane, Qld. December 1–July 31. Co-curated by Claire Gobé, and Natasha Harth.\*

*Perception: The Daryl Hewson Collection* 2005. Queensland Centre for

Photography, 33 Oxford Street, Bulimba, Qld. July 23–August 14.\*

*Images from the Collection* 2003, Cold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers

Paradise, Queensland, April 17–June 29 (four posthumous prints on loan).\*

*The Image of Man: Photography and Masculinity 1920-1950* 1997. Art Gallery of

New South Wales, Sydney, NSW. February 7–April 6. Curated by Judy Annear.

*Artists in Hospital* 1991. Australian National Gallery, Drill Hall, Pod Gallery, Kingsley

Street, Acton, ACT. April 3–June 30. Curated by Andrew Sayers, assisted by Christopher Chapman.

## **Posthumous Solo Exhibitions**

*Reintroducing Geoffrey Powell: Australia's Forgotten Documentary Photographer a Posthumous Retrospective Exhibition of his Best Photography, 1936–1947*

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

2004. Gallery 482, Brunswick Street, New Farm, Qld. January 30–February 25, extended to March 17. Curated and produced by Craig Hoehne.\*

*Our Story in Pictures: Photography of Conditions in the New South Wales*

*Coalfields, a preview of Geoffrey Powell's Amenities Campaign photography, May 1947* 2004. Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union: Mining and Energy Division, and The Mineworkers' Trust. The Whole-Plate Camera Studio, Ealing Street, Annerley, Qld. November 29–December 12. Curated and produced by Craig Hoehne.\*

## **Powell Represented in Public Informational Exhibits**

*The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition: Return to Civil Life 1945–1947*

Department of Post-War Reconstruction Public Relations Division. Premiered at the Sydney Country Council Showrooms, George Street, Sydney, NSW. Layout and design by John Oldham. Produced by John Oldham, and Kevin M. Lynch, November 28–December 19. Thereafter toured extensively nationally.

*ACP Anniversary Exhibition: The History of Australian Labor Movement 1945,*

Australian Communist Party Central Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Committee, Premiered at Marx School and Auditorium, Marx House, 695 George Street, Sydney, NSW. August 13–September 7. Layout and design by John Oldham. Produced by John Oldham, and Kevin M. Lynch. Toured: Canberra Hotel, Edward and Anne Streets, Brisbane, Qld. September 27–October 5; South Melbourne Town Hall, Bank Street, South Melbourne, Vic. October 31–November 9.

## **Art Exhibition Proposal for Inclusion of Powell's Work**

*Art and Social Commitment: An End to the City of Dreams, 1931-1948* 1984–1985,

Art Gallery of New South Wales. Premiered at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Project Area, Sydney, NSW. September 22–October 28, 1984. Curated by Charles Merewether. Toured to the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, SA. November 15–January 6; National Gallery of Victoria, Banyule Gallery, Heidelberg, Vic. January 24–March 3; Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, Qld. March 18–April 15.

## Filmography

This filmography is a guide to film credits of titles cited, or reviewed, in the course of my research for this project. All reasonable measures have been undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, which it is intended to be comprehensive. Supplementary information on cast members is provided where these have not previously been published in collated form. International productions are indicated; otherwise the origin of production is Australia. Online sources for films are provided as URLs for select titles.

### Powell Filmography

*The Three Goats of Macao* ca. 1965. 10 mins. black-and-white. Written and produced by Geoffrey Powell. Cinematography by Geoffrey Powell. Portuguese Overseas Province of Macao. 16mm print held by Powell's estate.

*Cockpit Drill* 1962, 7 mins. colour/black-and-white, Commonwealth Film Unit for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Australian Road Safety Council. Producer John Martin-Jones, directed by Rhonda Small; sound Alan Anderson; opening narration un-credited; commentator Geoffrey Powell as the voice of David Mackay. NFSA, Title No. 21299.

ARSC (website) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cprDiYIL\\_yY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cprDiYIL_yY)

*The Club and The Community* 1961. 30 min. black-and-white, Dennis Hill Productions for Ainsworth Industries. Produced by Geoffrey Powell and Dennis Hill; photography by Dennis Hill; edited by Geoffrey Powell; script and narration by Geoffrey Powell. (*Australian Films* 1969, 8).

*Shirley Abicair in Australia* 1960, six 30 min. episodes, black-and-white, television documentary series, ABC Film Unit for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, British Broadcasting Corporation and subsequently sold to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Produced and directed by Geoffrey Powell from original concept by Shirley Abicair. Assistant director H. K. Nichols; camera by Gordon Lansdowne, and William Constable; continuity by Felicity Forster; editing by Rodric Adamson, and Geoffrey Holmes; script by Ralph Peterson; narrator/presenter Shirley Abicair; sound by John Bracken. *Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Snowy* 1960, 30 mins. DVD, courtesy ABC Archives.

*Shirley Abicair in Australia, In Sydney*, aired ABC TV ABN2, 7.30 pm, Friday September 23, 1960. <*Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide*, Monday September 19, 1960, 2>

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

*Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Murray*, aired ABC TV ABN2, 7.30 pm, Friday September 30, 1960. <*Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide*, Monday September 26, 1960, 2>

*Shirley Abicair in Australia, At the Adelaide Festival*, aired ABC TV ABN2, 7.30 pm, Friday October 7, 1960. <*Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide*, Monday October 3, 1960, 2>

*Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Gold Coast*, aired ABC TV ABN2, 7.30 pm, Friday October 14, 1960. <*Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide*, Monday October 10, 1960, 2>

*Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Snowy*, aired ABC TV ABN2, 7.30 pm, Friday October 21, 1960. <*Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide*, Monday October 17, 1960, 2>

*Shirley Abicair in Australia, On Palm Island*, aired ABC TV ABN2, 7.30 pm, Friday October 28, 1960. <*Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide*, Monday October 24, 1960, 2>

*Shellubrication* ca. 1950–1951, 10 mins. black-and-white, Shell Film Unit (Australia). Produced by John Heyer; written and directed by Geoffrey Powell (un-credited); co-direction John Heyer; director of photography Ross Wood. NFSA, Title No. 710124.

*Rankin's Springs is West* 1950, 22 mins. black-and-white, Shell Film Unit (Australia). Produced by John Heyer; written and directed by Geoffrey Powell; production assistant Gorge Hugh; director of photography Geoffrey Powell; cinematography by Ross Wood, editing by Gus Lowry; sound by Mervin Murphy. NFSA, Title No. 11952.

*Canberra through the Seasons* ca. 1950, 10 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Directed by Geoffrey Powell; composer Martin Long. (NAA, CRS, C4765, 1107090); No film credits, NFSA, Title No. 1366162.

NFSA (youtube channel) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_uyJh-CX7g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_uyJh-CX7g)

*From Orchard to Can* 1949, 10 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Directed by Geoffrey Powell, No further credit details available. NFSA, Title No. 1412633.

NFSA (youtube channel) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LVupcV1qhg>

*From Sunny Pastures* 1949, 20 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Australian Dairy Produce Board, and Department of Commerce and Agriculture. Produced by Stanley Hawes; directed by Hugh McInnes, director of photography Reg Pearse; cinematography by L. A. Handy, William Trerise, and Geoffrey Powell; narration by John Sherwood. NFSA, Title No. 15992.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

*Richer than Butter* 1949, 9 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Agriculture. Produced and directed by Hugh McInnes; director of photography Geoffrey Powell. NFSA, Title No. 19256.

*Talk it Over* 1949, 10 mins. black-and-white, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Commonwealth Office of Education. Produced by June Havoc; production Supervisor Stanley Hawes; directed by Jules Feldmann and Breerton Porter, director of photography and cinematography by Ted Cranstone, and Geoffrey Powell; musical score by Joseph Mozart Post; music performance by Grayson Hugh. NFSA, Title No. 9185.

*The Lighthouse Keeper* 1949, 10 mins. 30 secs. black-and-white, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Department of Immigration. Produced by Ronald Maslyn Williams with supervision by Stanley Hawes; directed by Lionel Trainor; cinematography and director of photography, Geoffrey Powell; stills photography by Geoffrey Powell (uncredited); musical score by Robert W. Hughes; sound by Alan Anderson, and Don Kennedy. NFSA, Title No. 13976.

Cast appearing as themselves, Maatsuyker Island; Andy C. Mitchell (Head Keeper), Mrs. M. E. Mitchell (spouse), Len Jackson (Second Keeper), Mrs. Jackson (spouse), Pauline Jackson (teenage daughter), Graham Jackson (young son), Glenn Seymour (Third Keeper), Mrs. Seymour (spouse), Mrs Seymour (mother/grandmother), Colleen Seymour (young daughter), Fred Smithem (replacement Third Keeper). North Reef Light Station, Queensland; Jim Pearson (Head Keeper), Archie Butler (First Keeper), Arthur Lemon (Second Keeper); The Chief Officer and other unidentified personnel from Lighthouse Service vessel *Cape York*, and Goose Island Lighthouse Station, Bass Strait, Tasmania, also appear in the film.

*Parliament and You* 1948, n/a, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Written and directed by Geoffrey Powell. Unreleased title. (Powell, ca. 1988; Moran interview, 1983 tape 2).

Cast appearing as themselves, Minister for External Territories Eddie Ward, and Constable Robert Darken (NT Police).

*The Valley Is Ours* 1948, 35 mins. black-and-white, Department of Information Film Unit for the Australian National Film Board. Produced and directed by John Heyer with supervision by Stanley Hawes; assistant director Malcolm Otton; research by John Murray, and Jules Feldmann; director of photography Reg Pearse; cinematography by Edward Cranstone, Jack Rodgers, and Geoffrey Powell (un-credited, NFSA Title No. 360768); directing and editing assistant Jennie Blackwood (un-credited, NFSA, Title No. 458163); narration by Nigel

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Lovell; musical score by Sydney Kay; sound by Alan Anderson, and Don Kennedy. NFSA, Title No. 11169.

NFSA (youtube channel)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ribEg8wZtxA&index=170&list=PLYjU0Xph-Gj4mPMHxZD1dxa3S6dchO829>

*Turn the Soil* 1948, 20 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Agriculture. Produced and directed by John Heyer with supervision by Stanley Hawes; director of photography and cinematography by Ted Cranstone, and Geoffrey Powell; script by Lee Robinson; narration by Jim Wood, music by John Antill. NFSA, Title No. 11134.

*The Selection Interview* 1947, 10 mins. black-and-white, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction. Produced by Ron Maslyn Williams; directed by Geoffrey Powell; director of photography Jack Fletcher. NFSA, Title No. 2817.

*Born in the Sun* 1947, 15 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Agriculture. Produced and directed by John Heyer. Assistant Producer Bern Gandy; director of photography Edward L. Cranstone; cinematography by Reg Edwards (un-credited); Geoffrey Powell assistant (un-credited, Moran 1983, tape 2.); script by Lee Robinson; research Catherine Duncan; narration Jim Wood. (Williams, 2004). Music by Ludwig van Beethoven, *Pastoral Symphony*, Symphony No. 6 in F major, Opus 68, (Moran interview 1983, tape 2); sound by Mervin Murphy, credited as Supreme Sound Studios. NFSA, Title No. 11148.

NFSA (website) <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/blog/2013/02/14/mildura-time-capsule/>

*Men and Mobs* 1947, 20 mins. colour, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Sponsored by the Department of Commerce and Agriculture. Produced by John Heyer assisted by Bern Gandy; directed by John Heyer. Cinematography by Edward L. Cranstone; Geoffrey Powell assistant (un-credited, Moran 1983, tape 2.); research by Catherine Duncan; music by Esther Rofe. NFSA, Title No. 13234.

*Journey of a Nation* 1947, 11 mins. black-and-white, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Produced and directed by John Heyer; production assistants Bern Gandy, and Lionel Trainor; director of photography Frank Bagnall; cinematography by Geoffrey Powell; written by Catherine Duncan; narration by Jim Wood; musical score by Sydney John Kay. NFSA, Title No. 16682.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZNmQMMye1KM>



## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

*Australia To-Day* 1946, 34 mins. colour / black-and-white, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Full credits not available; cinematography by Geoffrey Powell (un-credited); narration by John Dudley. FAC shots list.

<http://nfsa.gov.au/collection/film-australia-collection/library/Title-Details.aspx?tid=1005>

*Indonesia Calling* 1946, 22 mins. black-and-white, Australasian Film Syndicate for the Water Front Unions of Australia. Produced by Joris Ivens; direction by Joris Ivens, Eddie Allison, and Marion Michelle; cinematography by Eddie Allison, John Heyer, Marion Michelle, Harry Watt; written by Catherine Duncan; narration by Peter Finch; sound by John Sendoek, and John Soedjono; post-production and editing by Joris Ivens, and Joan Fraser, assisted by John Heyer, John Soedjono, Soendardjo, Soeparmin, Geoffrey Powell (Moran 1983, tape 2), Edward Cranstone, and Axel Poignant (Moran 1991, 34).

Cast appearing as themselves, Clarrie Campbell (India Seamen's Union in Australia, ISUiA), Eliot V. Elliot (Seamen's Union of Australia, SUA), Abdul Rehman (ISUiA), Ted Roach (Waterside Workers' Federation, WWF), Allan Murray (WWF), Jim Healy (WWF), Dasrath 'Danny' Singh (ISUiA), Max Sekantu ("Indonesian Seamen's Union." Sarpelindo), John Soedjono, Tukliwan (Sarpelindo), Jan Walandouw (Sarpelindo), Fred Wong (Chinese Seamen's Union).

## **Films referred to or consulted for this exegesis**

\* Indicates film works given particular mention by Powell (1950; 1983; and ca. 1988).

*I, Spry* 2010, 57 mins., colour, Blackwattle Films. Produced by Anna Grieve, and Peter Butt; written and directed by Peter Butt; director of photography, Calvin Gardiner; narration by Hugo Weaving; sound by Leo Sullivan; score by Theo Vidgen. Aired on ABC1, Thursday November 4, 2010, 9:25pm, and repeated Thursday May 19, 2011, 8:30pm.

*Indonesia Calling, Joris Ivens in Australia* 2009, 90 mins., colour / black-and-white, Early Works. Produced by John Hughes, and Andrea Foxworthy; written and directed by John Hughes, edited by Uri Mizrahi, graphics and design by Uri Mizrahi; music by Brett Aplin. Aired on ABC2, Sunday December 5, 2010, 7.30pm.

*Infamous Victory, Ben Chifley's Battle for Coal* 2008, 55 mins., colour, Film Australia Limited. Produced by Perry Stapleton; directed by Geoff Burton; written by Geoff Burton, and Bob Ellis; narration by Heather Mitchell. Aired on ABC1, 8:30 pm, Thursday November 4, 2008.

## **Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960**

*The Archive Project* 2006, 98 mins., colour / black-and-white, Early Works.

Produced by Philippa Campey, and John Hughes; written and directed by John Hughes; narration by John Hughes; co-directed and edited by Uri Mizrahi; art director Uri Mizrahi; sound by Keith Thomas.

*Hewers of Coal* 1957, 22 mins., colour / black-and-white, Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit for the Miners' Federation of Australia. Produced by Norma Disher, Keith Gow, and Jerome 'Jock' Levy (the film unit); director, the film unit; content supervisor George Neilly (Miners' Federation of Australia); cinematography by the film unit; narration by Leonard Teale; titles art by Roderick Shaw.

Maritime Workers' Union (website) <https://vimeo.com/20194508>

*The Coalminer* 1955, 11 mins., black-and-white, Department of the Interior Film Unit for the Australian National Film Board. Produced by Eric Thompson, directed by Peter Diamond; cinematography by John Leaks; sound by Alan Anderson. NFSA Title No. 10428.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAG4sQRdHbU&index=142&list=PLYjU0Xph-Gj4mPMHxZD1dxa3S6dchO829>

*Coaldust* 1947, 10 mins., black-and-white, Realist Film Unit (NSW) for the Southern District Miners' Federation. Concept by Joris Ivens, and Edmund Allison; produced and directed Edmund Allison; script by Catherine Duncan; cinematography by Edward Cranstone.

*School In the Mail-Box* 1947, 19 mins., black-and-white, Department of Information Film Division for the Australian National Film Board. Produced, written and directed by Stanley Hawes; director of photography and cinematography by J. William Trerise; assistants Alan Anderson, Hugh Alexander, Jules Feldmann, and W. P. Goodwin; music by John Antill. NFSA Title No. 227711.

*Beautiful Melbourne* 1947, 16 mins., silent black-and-white with live commentary, Realist Film Unit (Melbourne) for the Brotherhood of St Lawrence. Produced by Ken Coldicutt, and J. G. Fitzsimons; cinematography by Ken Coldicutt, J. G. Fitzsimons, and Bob Mathews; live narration by Fr Gerard Tucker, et. al.

An abridged ten-minute duration clip of this film is available through the Brotherhood of St Lawrence. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dt3os7ys1ZE>

*The Overlanders* 1946, 91 mins., black-and-white, Ealing Studios. Produced by Michael Balcon, and Ralph Smart; written and directed by Harry Watt; cinematography by Osmond Borradaile; edited by Inman Hunter, and Beresford Hallett; music by John Ireland. United Kingdom.

*The Proud City, A Plan for London* 1946, 25 mins., black-and-white, Greenpark Productions for the Ministry for Information. Associate producer Edgar Anstey; written and directed by Ralph Keene, assisted by Peter Rice;

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

cinematography by Peter Hennessy; edited by Peter Scott; music by William Alwyn. United Kingdom.

*The Valley of the Tennessee* 1944, 29 mins., black-and-white, United Films for the Office of War Information. Directed by Alexander Hammid; music by Norman Lloyd. United States.

*The Memphis Belle, A Story of a Flying Fortress* 1944, 45 mins., colour, First Motion Picture Unit of the United States Army Air Forces for the Office of War Information. Directed by William Wyler; written by Jerome Chodorov, Lester Koenig, and William Wyler; cinematography by Harold J. Tannenbaum, and William H. Clothier; music by Gail Kubic. United States.

\**Power and the Land* 1940, 38 mins., black-and-white, United States Film Service. Sponsored by the Rural Electrification Administration, and US Department of Agriculture. Directed by Joris Ivens, with supervision by Pare Lorentz; written by Stephen Vincent Benet, Joris Ivens, and Edwin Locke; director of photography Floyd Crosby; cinematography by Floyd Crosby, and Arthur J. Ornitz; editor Helen van Dongen; narration by William Adams; score by Douglas Moore. United States.

<https://archive.org/details/gov.fdr.352.2a.3>

\**The City* 1939, 43 mins., black-and-white, American Documentary Films Inc. for the American Institute of Planners. Directed by Willard Van Dyke, and Ralph Steiner; concept by Catherine Bauer with outline by Pare Lorentz; written by Henwar Rodakiwicz, and Lewis Mumford; cinematography by Willard Van Dyke, and Ralph Steiner; edited by Theodore Lawrence; music by Aaron Copland; narration by Morris Carnovsky. United States.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nucvcpnysjU>

*Inside Nazi Germany: March of Time* 1938, 16 mins., black-and-white, The March of Time: Time Inc.. Produced by Louis de Rochemont. Directed by Jack Glenn. Written by James L. Schute. United States.

\**The River* 1938, 31 mins., black-and-white, Farm Security Administration. Produced, written, and directed by Pare Lorentz; director of photography, cinematography Floyd Crosby, Willard Van Dyke, and Stacy Woodard; edited by Lloyd Nosler, and Leo Zochling; score by Vigil Thompson. United States.

<https://archive.org/details/TheRiverByPareLorentz>

\**The Plough That Broke The Plains* 1936, 31 mins., black-and-white, Farm Security Administration. Sponsored by the US Department of Agriculture. Produced, written, and directed, by Pare Lorentz; cinematography by Leo T. Hurwitz, Ralph Steiner, Paul Strand, and Paul Ivano; edited by Leo Zochling; narration by Thomas Chalmers; sound Joseph Kane; score by Vigil Thompson. United States.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arRmz4kUisE>

*New Earth* 1933, 36 mins., black-and-white, Capi-Holland. Written and directed by Joris Ivens; cinematography by Helen van Dongen, John Fernhout, Piet Huisken, Joris Ivens, and Eli Lotar; edited by Helen van Dongen, and Joris Ivens; music by Hans Eisler. Netherlands.

*Night Mail* 1933, 25, mins., black-and-white, GPO Film Unit. Produced and directed by Harry Watt, and Basil Wright, with supervision by John Grierson; written by W. H. Auden; cinematography by Chick Fowle, and Jonah Jones, Basil Wright, Alberto Cavalcanti, and Richard Q. McNaughton (un-credited); sound W. H. Auden, Benjamin Britten, and Alberto Cavalcanti; sound recording by Pawley, and Sullivan; music by Benjamin Britten. United Kingdom.

*Man with a Movie Camera* 1929. 68 mins. black-and-white silent, All-Ukrainian Photo-Cinema-Directorate (VUFKU). Written and directed by Dziga Vertov; cinematography by Dziga Vertov. Soviet Union.

*De Brug* 1928. black-and-white silent, Capi-Holland. Written and directed by Joris Ivens; cinematography by Joris Ivens. Netherlands.

\**Battleship Potemkin* 1925, 75 mins., silent black-and-white, Mosfilm. Produced by Jacob Bliokh; directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein; written by N. F. Agadzhanova-Shutko, and Sergei M. Eisenstein; director of photography Edward Tisse; cinematography by Vladimir Popov (uncredited); edited by Sergei M. Eisenstein. Soviet Union.

<https://archive.org/details/BattleshipPotemkin>

\**Nanook of the North* 1922, 79 mins., silent black-and-white. A Film by Robert J. Flaherty, and Pathé Exchange. Produced, written and directed by Robert J. Flaherty; director of photography Robert J. Flaherty; edited by Robert J. Flaherty, and Charles Gelb. United States.

<https://archive.org/details/nanookOfTheNorth1922>

## Appendix 1

### GEOFFREY POWELL (1918–1989) PHOTO-HISTORICAL LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Tabulation of Author Subject Area Engagement

1937–1942	1945–1948	1945–1947	1945–1947
MODERNISM	DOCO-MOVEMENT	LEFTIST / ACP	SOCIALIST REALIST
CONRAD (2003)		CONRAD (2003)	
CROMBIE (2004)			
	DAVIES (2004)		
DUPAIN (1986)			
EDWARDS (1999)			
ENNIS (2007)	ENNIS (2007)	ENNIS (2007)	
ENNIS (1995–2004)			
	ENNIS (1991–1992)	ENNIS (1991–1992)	
	ENNIS (1988)		
GOBÉ (2006)	GOBÉ (2006)	GOBÉ (2006)	
		JOLLY (1984)	
HOEHNE (2001–2003)	HOEHNE (2001–2003)	HOEHNE (2001–2003)	
HOEHNE (2004; 2006)	HOEHNE (2004; 2006)	HOEHNE (2006)	
HOEHNE (2007A)			HOEHNE (2007 A, B, C)
			HOEHNE (2012)
HOULIHAN (2000)			
O'HEHIR (2004)	O'HEHIR (2004)		
			POIGNANT (1992)
POWELL, W. (2004 A; B; C.)	POWELL, W. (2004 A; B; C.)		
	LE GUAY (1957)		
LOVELL (2006)	LOVELL (2006)		
			MEREWETHER (1981–
1983)			
NEWTON (2007)			
	NEWTON (1988)	NEWTON (1988)	
	WILLIS (1989)		

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

### ADDITIONAL STREAMS OF SUBJECT ENGAGEMENT

1938–1942	1942–1945	1939–1940
PRE-WAR DOCUMENTARY	OFFICIAL WWII DOCUMENTARY: DOI PHOTO BRANCH	PHOTOJOURNALISM IN QUEENSLAND
LOVELL (2006)	ENNIS (1991–1992; 2007)	GOBÉ (2006)

These texts are flawed in relation to Powell's employment histories and attendant production. Q.v. Hoehne (2007a), and references therein, for a detailed overview of Powell's employment circumstance.

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## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

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## Appendix 2

### Publication History and Photo-Production, 1944–1950: A survey of Powell Scrapbooks, Volume 2, 1944–1950 and associated publications

#### Consolidated Press Sydney ca. August 1, 1944, to May 11, 1945

Employment Status:	Staff
	Daily press photographer
Period of Employment:	Ten months full-time
Editorial Position:	Centre Right
Pictorial Editor:	Wilfred Charles 'Bill' / 'William' Brindle (1907–1984); non-aligned

Titles in which Powell's photography appeared:

<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	daily tabloid newspaper
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	tabloid weekend newspaper
<i>Telegus</i>	tabloid trainee/staff newspaper
<i>Australian Women's Weekly</i>	women's magazine
<i>Tribune, Official Organ of the Australian Communist Party</i>	

Production restricted to three extramural assignments undertaken in late April and early May 1945.

#### Australian Communist Party, Sydney May 14, 1945–March 21, 1946

Employment Status:	Official in-house staff photographer, Marx House, Sydney (disputed). Primarily assigned as a news photo-reporter on the bi-weekly tabloid newspaper <i>Tribune</i> , the official organ of the ACP, and also assigned to <i>Australia's Progress</i> , a socialist realist cultural later Arts and Sciences magazine.
Period of Employment:	Eleven months full-time

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Editorial Position: Socialist Realist

Titles in which Powell's photography appeared:

*Tribune, Official Organ of the Australian Communist Party*

Publication Format: Biweekly tabloid newspaper

Editorial Position: Socialist Realist

Editor: L. Harry Gould (1914–)

Associate / News Editor: Rupert Lockwood (1908–1997)

*Australia's Progress*

Formerly the weekly tabloid newspaper *Progress*, Official Organ of the SLP/ACP (1940–1944), became *Australia's Progress*, fortnightly popular culture magazine, and later expanded to a monthly Socialist Realist Arts and Sciences journal (1945–1946).

Publication Format: Arts Magazine

Editorial Position: Socialist Realist

Editors: Ray Oldham (1911–2005), Rex Chiplin (–), R, Smith (–); Communist

*The Guardian, Official Organ of the Victorian State Committee of the ACP*

Published presence limited to occasional reproductions of *Tribune* photography (1945-46).

*Qld Guardian, Official Organ of ACP Queensland State Committee*

Published presence limited to two reproductions of *Tribune* photography (1945).

## Non-Communist Journals May 1945–March 1946

*Labor News*, Trades Hall weekly tabloid newspaper

Published presence limited to a single photo-story on the Iron and Steelworkers' Strike reproduction of eight *Tribune* images.

Editorial Position: Centre Left

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

*Australia, National Journal*, John Fairfax, Sydney

Publication Format: Society Magazine  
Editorial Position: Conservative  
Editor: Sydney Ure-Smith (1887–1949), Conservative

Published presence occasional, ostensible mainstream freelance photography but curiously includes portraiture of identities of known Communist Party espionage interest.

### Photography for Propaganda Exhibits August–October 1945

Additional non-published photography was produced for two John Oldham exhibit designs:

#### ***ACP Anniversary Exhibition: The History of Australian Labor Movement***

Australian Communist Party Central Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Committee, Premiered at Marx School and Auditorium, Marx House, 695 George Street, Sydney, NSW August 13–September 7 Layout and design by John Oldham Produced by John Oldham, and Kevin M Lynch Photography Geoffrey Powell Toured Canberra Hotel, Edward and Anne Streets, Brisbane, Qld September 27–October 5; South Melbourne Town Hall, Bank Street, South Melbourne, Vic October 31–November 9.

Editorial Position: Socialist Realist  
Pictures Editor, John Oldham (1907–1999), and Kevin M Lynch (–), Communist  
Production: Circa thirty frames plus Mostly incorporated into photo-frieze designs and includes examples from earlier non-polemic file photography.  
Produced: May–July 1945

*History of Australian Labor* photography was also reproduced in *Tribune*, Sydney; *The Guardian*, Melbourne; *Qld Guardian*, Brisbane; *Australia's Progress*, Sydney. Work conducted as part of Geoffrey Powell's official Communist Party duties.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

### ***The Servicemen's Re-establishment Exhibition, Return to Civil Life*** 1945–1947

Department of Post-War Reconstruction Public Relations Division.  
Premiered at the Sydney Country Council Showrooms, George Street,  
Sydney. Layout and design by John Oldham (November 28–December 19),  
Thereafter toured extensively nationally (1945–1947).

Editorial Position: Centre Left

Pictures Editor, John Oldham (1907–1999), Communist; and  
Kevin M Lynch (–), Communist.

Photographers: Geoffrey Powell, Communist; and Lawrence  
Collings, progressive.

Powell's Production: Thirty frames Art directed photography  
fashioned as a serial storyboard to graphically  
describe a personalised story around armed  
services demobilization, and access to  
government re-establishment and  
rehabilitation programmes.

Produced: October–November 1945

*Return to Civil Life* imagery was also reproduced in *The Argus*, Melbourne,  
and *Australia's Progress*, Sydney.

*The Servicemen's Re-Establishment Exhibition, Return to Civil Life* was  
government informational display incorporating a photo-frieze storyboard.

### **Department of Information Film Division 1945–1950**

Employment Status: Fulltime Cinematographer Grade 1

Period of Employment: March 22, 1946–January 25, 1950  
Trial film work was conducted circa December  
1945–March 1946.

Editorial Position: Centre Left

Film Commissioner: Ralph Foster (–), progressive/Left

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

Producer in Chief, Stanley Hawes (1905–1991), progressive/Left

Senior Producer: John Heyer (1916–2001), progressive/Left

Foster had links to the Communist Party of Canada, and Heyer the Australian Communist Party.

## Department of Information Film Division Film 'Stills' 1946–1950

After leaving the *Tribune*, March 1946, Powell's photo-production was confined to film related photography. Examples from this work were occasionally submitted for publication, but not necessarily with the knowledge or approval of the Department.

Trial film work conducted for the Department, was undertaken in the Hunter Valley, NSW; and Brisbane, Queensland. Footage from these locations appears in the early Department of Information travelogue *Australia To-Day* 1946. Themes from these locations also contemporaneously appear published and clippings retained in Powell's scrapbooks.

Vineyard scenes and grape harvesting (NFSA FAC, Access No. 2388)

Pineapple plantation harvesting (NFSA FAC, Access No. 2396)

Powell in "Pineapples for the City," *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, Tuesday, April 9, 1946, 4.

Scenes from Brisbane landmarks (NFSA FAC, Access No. 2439, Access No. 2438.

127-type 4x4cm format negatives in Powell's estate.<sup>107</sup>

Scenes of underground coalminers drilling (NFSA FAC, Access No. 2478).

Corresponding stills photography appear as scrapbook clippings from an unidentified journal. Imagery includes underground miners filling skips, drilling, and setting charges. This photography was subsequently

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<sup>107</sup>. Powell did not take this camera (TLR Sports Rolleiflex 4x4, which used 127 format roll film), on his sojourns to Queensland made in 1938 and 1939–1940. (Hoehne 2007a)

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

published in *Common Cause* vol. XII, no. 10, Saturday March 15, 1947, 1; *Common Cause* vol. XII, no. 17, Saturday May 3, 1947, 1.

Stills Photography from Powell's work on the Department of Information short documentary *The Lighthouse Keeper* 1949; appear in a contemporaneous promotional article.

Powell, "A Film Tells the Story of Our Lighthouses," in *AM, Australian Monthly*, Sydney, NSW. Consolidate Press (April 1949), 28–9.

Examples of Powell's photographic skills work survive in the collections of National Archives of Australia; National Film and Sound Archive; and the National Gallery of Australia, which holds one example, ie. *Worker on a Queensland Pineapple Plantation* (1949), NGA, Acc. No. 84.1866.

## Extramural Photography 1945–1950

Miners' Federation of Australia

Employment Status: One off commission undertaken while on annual leave from the DOI.

Period Worked: May 12, 1947–May 16, 1947

Editorial Position: Socialist Realist

Editor: Edgar Ross (1904–2001); Communist

Publication:

*Common Cause, Official Journal of the Miners' Federation*, Sydney, NSW. Issues May 1947–August 1948.

*How to Get More Coal* (Sydney, NSW: Miners' Federation 1947).

*Tribune, Official Organ of the Australian Communist Party*.

Published presence limited to occasional reproductions of *Common Cause* photography (1947, 1949).

*The Guardian, Official Organ of the Victorian State Committee of the ACP*.

Published presence limited to occasional reproductions of *Common Cause* photography (1947).



## Appendix 3

### *ACP Anniversary Exhibition, History of Australian Labor Movement 1945*

#### Sydney Season Programme Schedule, August 13–27, 1945

##### "Short Talks at the Exhibition"

	Floor Talk Theme	Presenter
Monday, August 13	Opened by NSW Trades and Labor Council President Guy Anderson, introduced by ACP General Secretary J. B. (John Bramwell) Miles.	
Tuesday, August 14	Struggle of the Depression Days	Mick Ryan
Wednesday, August 15	The Birth of the ACP	Ted Decker
Thursday, August 16	Journalists' Night	L. Harry Gould
Friday, August 17	Trade Union Night	J. R. "Jack" Hughes
Saturday, August 18	Services Night	Bob Mitchell
Sunday, August 19	Party Founders' Night	various speakers;
	"The Story of Australian Struggle for Progress", lectures by: John Bramwell Miles, Tom Wright, Sheet Metal Working Industrial Union, Katherine Susannah Pritchard, Hetty Ross, Women's Committee and Teachers' Federation, Paddy Drew.	
Monday, August 20	Youth Night	Hal Alexander
Tuesday, August 21	Peoples' Night	Open Public Forum
Wednesday, August 22	Marx School Night	Syd Mostyn
Thursday, August 22	Women's Night	Delia Nichols
Friday, August 24	Tribune Carnival followed by a visit to the Exhibition	
Saturday, August 25	Antifascist Night	Max Thomas
Sunday, August 26	Veterans of Labor Night	n/a
Monday, August 27	War Workers Night	Bill Smith <sup>108</sup>

108. Harry Gould, ed. "Short Talks at the Exhibition," in "What's On," in *Tribune*, new series no. 138 (Tuesday August 14, 1945), 8; "What's On," in *Tribune*, new series no. 139 (Thursday August 16, 1945), 8; "What's On," in *Tribune*, new series no. 140 (Tuesday August 21, 1945), 8; "What's On," in *Tribune*, new series no. 141 (Tuesday August 23, 1945), 8.



## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

### Brisbane Season Programme Schedule, September 26–October 5, 1945

#### "Talks at Exhibition"

	<b>Floor Talk Theme</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
Wednesday, September 26	Official Opening by Prof J. V. Duhig.	
Thursday, September 27	Rehabilitation Services	Syd Davis, ACP/NTL
Friday September 28	Importance of Trade Unions	Jack Hanson
Saturday September 29	Where to Youth?	Ron Brown
Sunday, September 30	What Eureka Means to Australia	Claude Jones, ACP State President
Monday, October 1	Struggle of the Depression Period	Jim Slater, ACP
Tuesday, October 2	War Criminals of History	Max Julius, Communist barrister;
Wednesday, October 3	Communism in History	G (Gilbert) Burns, ACP Executive
Thursday, October 4	Women's Role in Australian History	Myrtle Ridgeway
Friday, October 5	Birth of the Communist Party	John C Henry <sup>109</sup>

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109. "Talks at Exhibition," in *Qld Guardian, Official Organ of the Australian Communist Party, Queensland State Committee*, vol. 2, no 38, Brisbane, Qld., Australian Communist Party (September 28, 1945), 4.

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

### Melbourne Season Programme Schedule October 30–November 7, 1945

#### "Special Features at Australian Labor Exhibition"

Tuesday, October 30	Opening Night:  Exhibition opened by Professor R. M. "Max" Crawford (1901-1991), Professor of History Melbourne University (1937 to 1971), at the South Melbourne Town Hall, October 30, 1945, the official birthday of the CPA/ACP. Opening address given by J. D. (John David) Blake (1909-1991?), prominent left-wing author and Victorian ACP State-Secretary.
Wednesday, October 31	The Role of Art, With Lanternslides.
Thursday, November 1	Talks on Labor History by Well-Known Veterans
Friday, November 2	Youth Night, Dramatic Presentation on Union History
Saturday, November 3	Trade Unions, Lecture by Don Thompson
Monday, November 5	Literature and Poetry
Tuesday, November 6	Drama Night, from the writing of Henry Lawson by New Theatre League
Wednesday, November 6	The Russian Revolution and its Relation to Australia, lecture by Ralph Gibson, ACP State-President and editor of <i>The Guardian</i>
Thursday, November 7	Open Forum, All invited to give an opinion on the Exhibition <sup>110</sup>

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110. Ralph Gibson, ed. "Special Features at Australian Labor Exhibition," in *The Guardian, Official Organ of the Victorian State Committee Australian Communist Party*, no. 215, Melbourne, Vic., Australian Communist Party (October 26, 1945), 5.

## Realist Artists and Artworks Represented

### Sydney Based (SORA) artists

Roy Dalgarno (1910–2001)	<i>Death in the Morning</i> 1940s
Roderick 'Rod' Shaw (1915–1992)	<i>Unemployed Shack</i> 1945
James Cant (1911–1982)	<i>Centre of the World</i> 1940s
	<i>The Breadline</i> 1945
Harry McDonald (ca. 1915–1978)	<i>Kings Cross Riot</i> 1945
Ray Wenban (1893–1990)	<i>The Tolpuddle Martyrs</i> 1945
Herbert McClintock (1906–1985)	<i>The Oath of Eureka</i> 1945

### Melbourne Based Artists

Victor 'Vic' O'Connor (1918–2010)	<i>The Dispossessed</i> 1940s
Noel Counihan (1913–1986)	<i>The Liberal</i> 1945
Ambrose 'Amby' Dyson (1908–1952)	
Alisa Donaldson (1921–1980)	
Jim Wigley (1917–1999)	
Peter Graham (–)	
Yosl (Vladimir) Bergner (1920–)	<i>The Dead Jews</i> 1940s
Raymond 'Ray' Jones (1925–1987)	

### Murals

Nan Horton (1916–1971)	<i>The Story of Australian Labor History</i> 1945. Series of six murals highlighting early history. Exhibited in the Marx School Assembly Hall, Sydney. <sup>111</sup>
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### Main Photo-Frieze Photography

Geoffrey Powell (1918–1989)	<i>The Headquarters Sydney at Work;</i> <i>History of Australian Labor Movement</i>
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111. Harry Gould, ed. "Fine Exhibition of Australia's Labour History," in *Tribune, Official Organ of the Australian Communist Party*, new series no. 137, Sydney, NSW, Australian Communist Party, (Thursday August 9, 1945), 5; "Unique Exhibition Will Glorify Australian Labor's Achievements," in *Tribune*, new series 136, (Tuesday August 7, 1945), 6; J. and R. O. (John and Ray Oldham), "Communist Party Buys Paintings by Prominent Artists," *Tribune*, new series no. 156, (Tuesday October 1945), 5; Ralph Gibson, ed. "ACP Anniversary Exhibition," in *The Guardian, Official Organ of the Victorian State Committee Australian Communist Party*, no. 212, Melbourne, Vic., Australian Communist Party, (October 5, 1945), 5.

## Appendix 4

### Summary of Powell Film Credits

<b>Credits</b>	<b>Film Title</b>
Producer Director (Television)	<i>Shirley Abicair in Australia</i> 1960
Writer Director	<i>Shellubrication</i> 1950–51
	<i>Rankin's Springs Is West</i> 1950
	<i>Canberra through the Seasons</i> 1950
	<i>From Orchard to Can</i> 1949
	<i>Parliament and You</i> 1948
	<i>The Selection Interview</i> 1947
Cinematographer	<i>The Lighthouse Keeper</i> 1949
	<i>From Sunny Pastures</i> 1949
	<i>Talk It Over</i> 1949
	<i>Richer Than Butter</i> 1949
	<i>Turn the Soil</i> 1948
	<i>Journey of a Nation</i> 1947
Un-credited Role	<i>The Valley Is Ours</i> 1948
	<i>Men and Mobs</i> 1947
	<i>Australia To-Day</i> 1946
Postproduction Assistant	<i>Indonesia Calling</i> 1946

### Film Producers Worked Under

<b>Producer</b>	<b>Film Title</b>
Stanley Hawes	<i>From Sunny Pastures</i> 1949
John Heyer	<i>Shellubrication</i> 1950–51
	<i>Rankin's Springs is West</i> 1950
	<i>Turn the Soil</i> 1948
	<i>The Valley Is Ours</i> 1948
	<i>Journey of a Nation</i> 1947
Ronald Maslyn Williams	<i>The Lighthouse Keeper</i> 1949
	<i>The Selection Interview</i> 1947
Hugh McInnes	<i>Richer Than Butter</i> 1949

## Forged Under The Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960

June Havoc

*Talk It Over* 1949

Joris Ivens

*Indonesia Calling* 1946

## Film Directors Worked Under

### Director

John Heyer

### Film Title

*Journey of a Nation* 1947

*Turn the Soil* 1948

Lionel Trainor

*The Lighthouse Keeper* 1949

Jules Feldmann

*Talk It Over* 1949

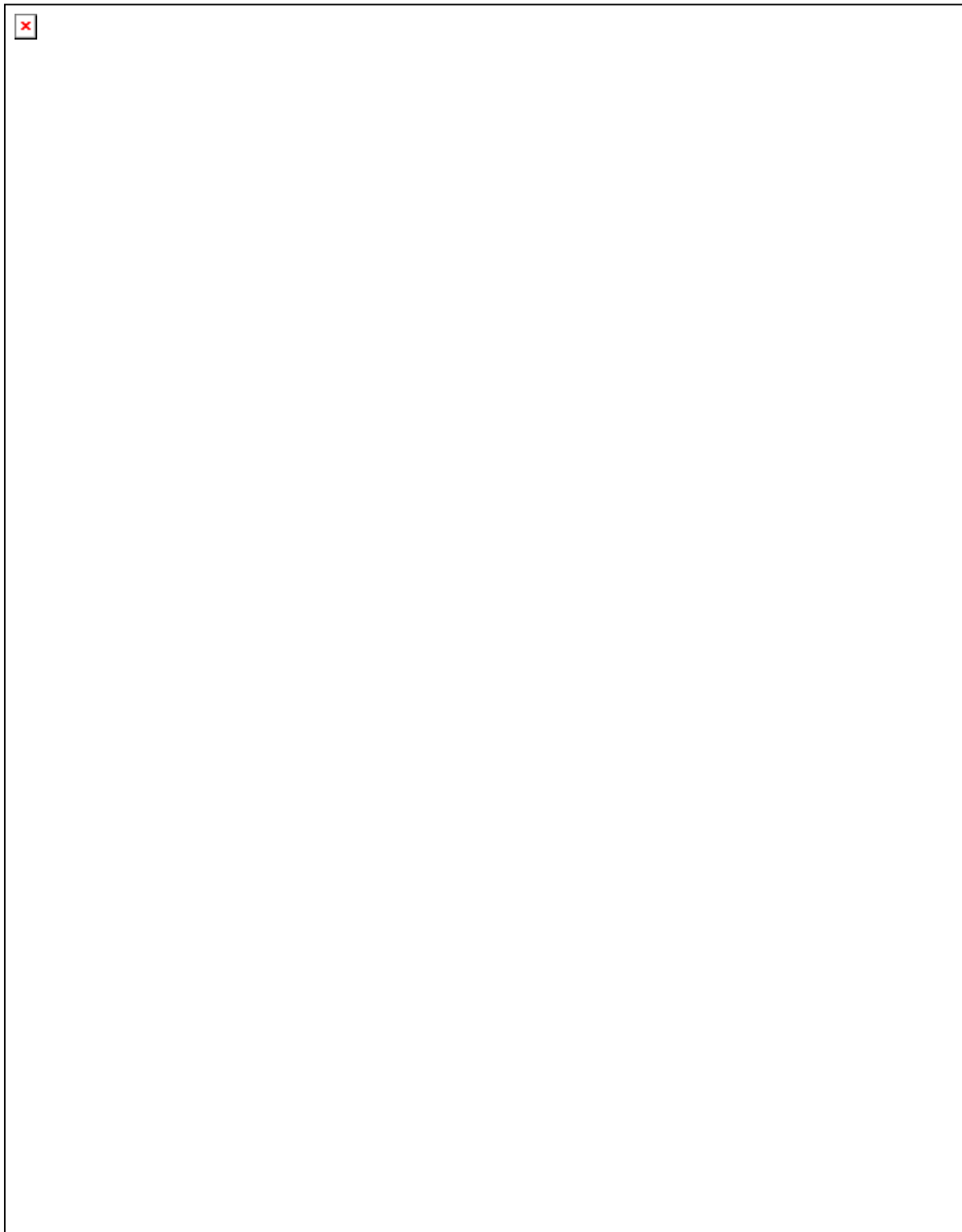
Hugh McInnes

*From Sunny Pastures* 1949

*Richer Than Butter* 1949

## Appendix 5

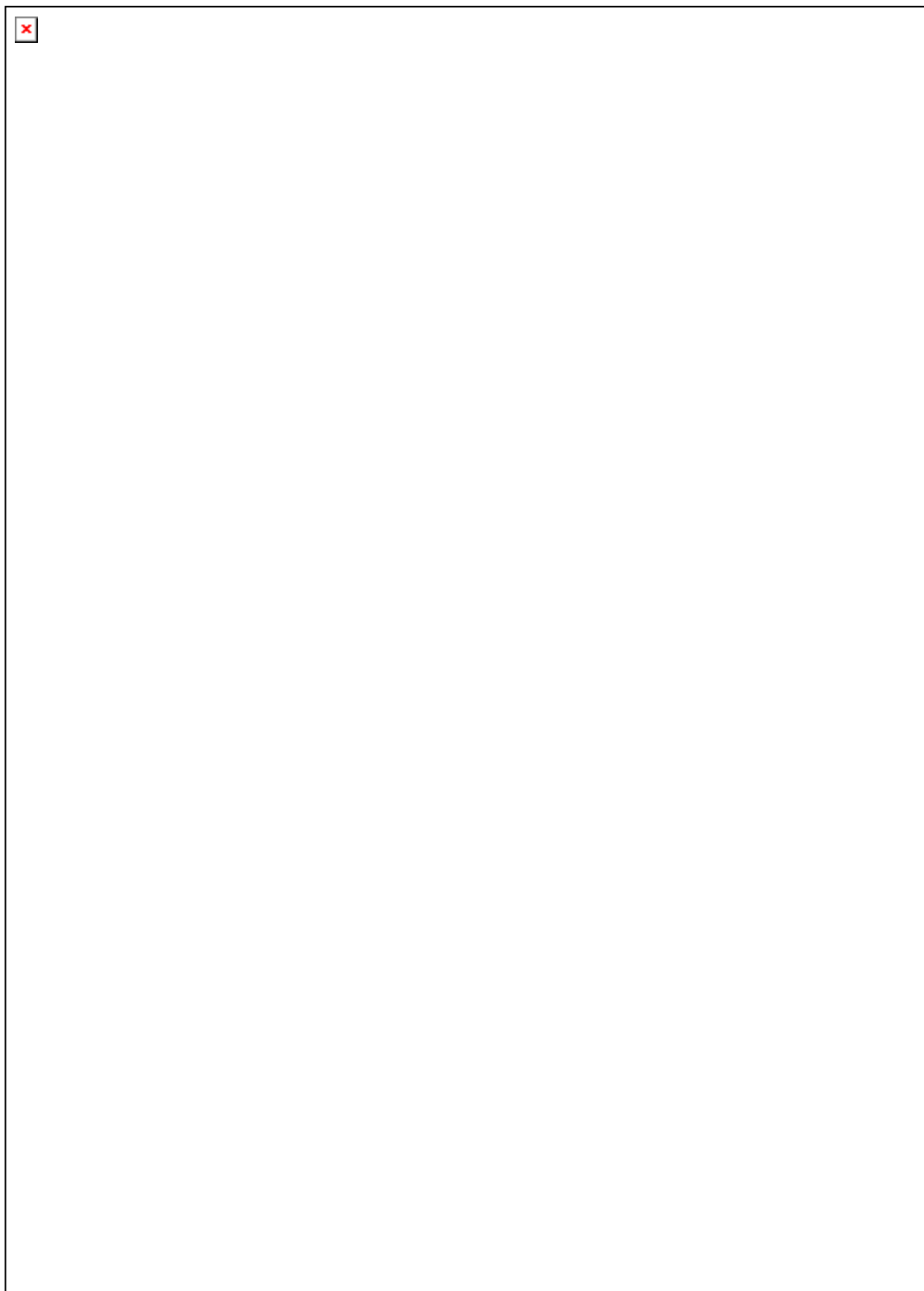
### Exhibition Structure and Installation





**PHOTOGRAPHY INSTALLATION DIAGRAM**

**GFS Cinema Foyer**





## **Exhibition Installation Note Points**

The exhibition, *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960*, utilizes the GFS Cinema Foyer as a gallery space that also provides a visual supporting environment for the cinema based film programme.

- Existing historic film editing and projection equipment shall remain in situ as part of the installation environment.
- The existing wall hanging spaces and infrastructure shall be utilized for the mounting of photography programme (see PHOTOGRAPHY INSTALLATION DIAGRAM).

The photography shall be 'double hung' thus forming thematic blocks. The design is anchored by a 'single hung' keynote image. The 'double hung' works are spatially separated by 15cm; the keynote image spacing within the block is at 7cm.

- The panels of framed photography (subtitled *Our Story in Pictures, Photography of Conditions in the NSW Coalfields 1947*) are supported by:
  - (a) A two-panel essay, which addresses the works on show.
  - (b) Printed copies of the exhibition checklist, which includes caption information, will be made available to audience. This method ensures maximum personal access to supporting information and prevents the intrusion of captioning clutter within photographic wall panels.
- Existing framed film posters shall be temporarily demounted according to the direction of GFS staff and in accordance with Griffith University Workplace Health and Safety protocols.
- The display of the montage narrative titled *Forged under the Hammer and Sickle, The Case of Geoffrey Powell 1945–1960*, shall be via the existing monitor located at the Foyer desk.
- An additional TV monitor, supplied by the Griffith Film School, shall be brought in for screening of *Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Snowy* 1960, on a continuous loop, The rationale for this screening method is to play homage, as close as practicable, this film's provenance as a television documentary programme.

The exhibition programme also allows for a supplementary screening of *Shirley Abicair in Australia, On the Snowy* in the cinema context, where audience demand warrants this addition.

**Exhibition Programme Schedule**

<b>6:00 pm</b>	<b>Opening festivities</b>
<b>6:15–6:30 pm</b>	<b>Introduction of the exhibition</b> <b>Introduction of CFMEU guest speakers as a prelude to discussion to Amenities Campaign photography</b>
<b>6:45 pm</b>	<b>Introduction to the film programme</b> <b>Screening,</b> <b><i>The Lighthouse Keeper</i> 1949 (11 minutes)</b> <b><i>Journey of a Nation</i> 1947 (11 minutes)</b>
<b>7:45 pm</b>	<b>End Screening Programme</b>
<b>8:30 pm</b>	<b>End of Official Programme</b>