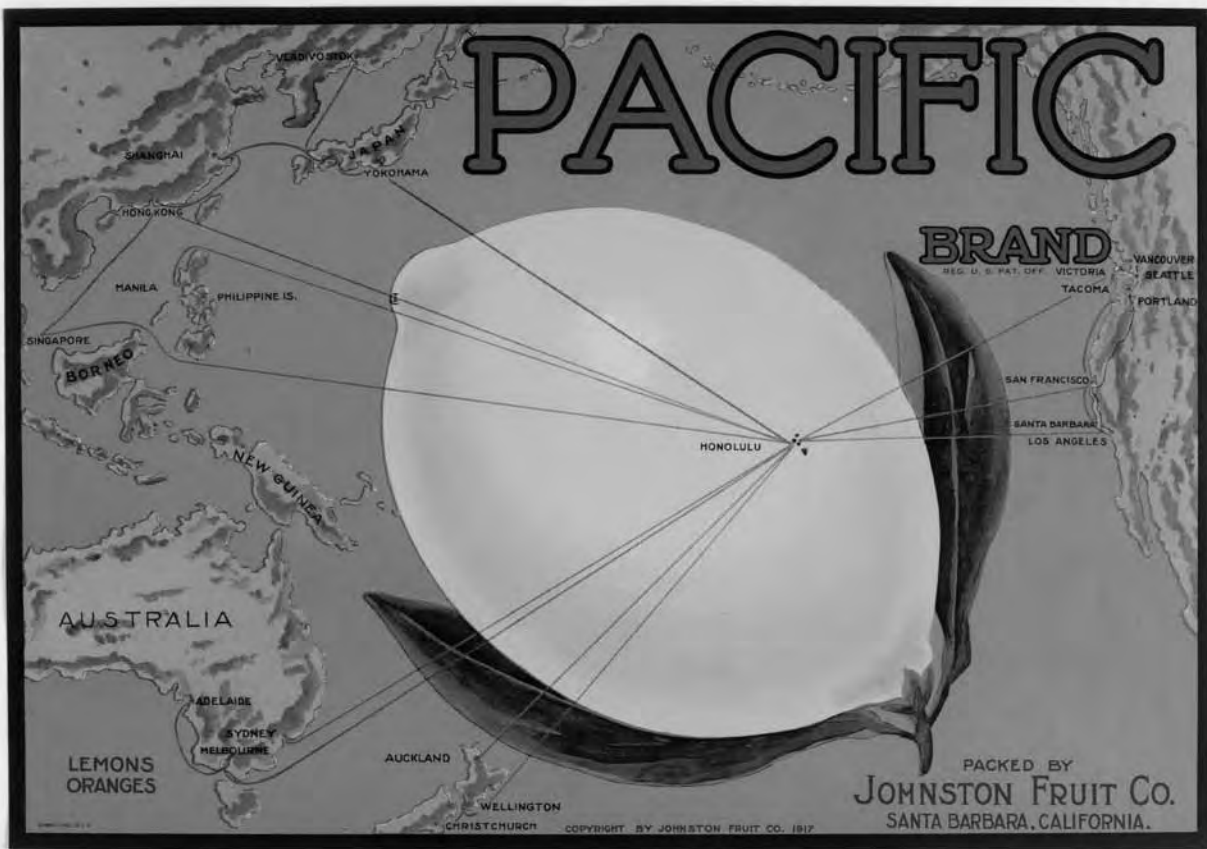


Images of the Pacific Rim



Images of the Pacific Rim

AUSTRALIA AND CALIFORNIA,
1850–1935

by Erika Esau

POWER PUBLICATIONS

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Australian Studies in Art and Art Theory

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Back cover: Glendora Brand citrus label, c. 1925. Courtesy of The Jay T. Last Collection. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Frontispiece page 2: Pacific Brand label, Johnston Fruit Co., Santa Barbara, California, 1917. Courtesy of The Jay T. Last Collection. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

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FOR GEORGE

Auf welches Instrument sind wir gespannt?

Und welcher Geiger hat uns in der Hand?

O süßes Lied.

—Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘Liebes-Lied’, 1907

When the spin meister of post-modernity Jean Baudrillard laid out his 1986 exegesis of America's West, he conjured up a place with no there *there*. California, and particularly its southern reaches, was a mere simulacra of every American sensual desire, domestic fantasy and nature-loving mantra. Witless California, filled up with suburban sprawl and theme parks, was the final, glorious result of America's 'mythic banality'. California was a lost land so joyfully mindless it would never savour the soulful pleasures of Old World angst.

What Monsieur B experienced as absence was in fact a seductive illusion created by California's unique and defining industry—the lucrative business of building a secular paradise. After the woeful losses of the Civil War and environmental abuses of robber baron industrialists, America needed an Eden to restore and preserve treasured Protestant ideals of society in harmony with an untouched nature. California delivered big by offering, literally and metaphorically, a ray of sunshine to restless inhabitants living in the moral darkness of Chicago, New York and Boston.

The Eden that California built was voracious. The state rendered what it had and what it received as inevitably Californian. The result was an infamous eclecticism, a forgiving world where the woodsy, Arts & Crafts bungalow shaded by Australian eucalypti was as welcome as a sun-filled Spanish revival *hacienda* in a garden of English perennials. To some, California appeared culturally indiscriminate. But that was the point: Everything and everyone had to be welcome in a profitable heaven on earth.

As Erika Esau reveals with literary élan, California sold its alluring dream through images received by way of cultural osmosis and capitalist strategies. The intersection of a national need for a California and the rapid evolution of printing technology, combined with new modes of distribution, made possible a proliferation of imagery at a speed unimagined. It is no wonder given the early histories of media production illuminated in these pages that California welcomed the movies and Silicon Valley.

America's 31st state teeters on an earthquake shelf along the Eastern length of the Pacific Rim. Already by the 1860s prescient entrepreneurs understood that California was not at the edge of America; it was mid-globe, positioned to engage with parts known and parts to be known. To the East was the other America, with tens of thousands of disenfranchised citizens who fled to the Pacific when railway tickets got cheap. To the West was Asia and, most pertinently, a continent with English-speaking folks: Australia.

If there is any place left today for destiny, manifest or not, then Australia and California are destiny's children. Both were maligned, sunny outposts under the thumb of old paternalistic cultures. Both needed to define their place in the world and both accomplished the task through interpretation and appropriation. How images assisted in the cultural definition of these lands is told here by a native Californian, who, not surprisingly, found herself at home in Australia.

Sam Watters is the author of *Houses of Los Angeles, 1885-1935* and other books and articles on American culture. He lives in Venice, California.

FOREWORD

Australia and California have shared much in environment and history. The export of Australian eucalyptus trees in the nineteenth century both contributed to and reflected a shared cultural history, and made certain aspects of Californian and Australian cultural landscapes seem more similar than before European settlement. From the time of the Victorian gold rushes that began in 1851, Californians have visited and sometimes stayed in this land, making contributions to Australian politics (including at the Eureka Stockade revolt of 1853), culture (cartoonist Livingston Hopkins among others) and business (the example of coachmakers Cobb and Co. is famous in Australia). More recently, American popular culture in the form of music and film has invaded Australia and adapted to local circumstances. The deeds of pioneers in gold digging and irrigation technology and enterprise have been told many times, and no one would be surprised to hear that the impact of the United States upon Australia has been large in the late twentieth century. But the story of the many Californian influences in the nineteenth century on Australian popular culture remains partly hidden.

Erika Esau's *Images of the Pacific Rim: Australia and California, 1850-1935* contributes to a growing understanding of these cultural connections. Her book is the first to focus squarely on visual representations of Australian and Californian landscapes and culture in transnational perspective. This is a story of the circulation of images as commodities made possible by the era of mass reproduction and consequent "portability" of commercial art and design, and even architecture.

This Pacific Rim exchange was made possible by improvement in communications. The age of fast sail in the mid-nineteenth century—soon complemented and then superseded from the 1880s and beyond by regular steamship services—carried miners, and other people on the make in both directions. These links encouraged an itinerant class of artists and photographers whose work circulated widely. Technology, however, was key to the increased velocity of circulation—the lithograph, the camera, mass-market magazines and the like proliferated. Esau incorporates in her work the widely-dispersed visual resources encouraged by these technological and communications changes. She has sought out precious and obscure images from journals, posters, commercial advertising such as fruit-box labels, and popular art magazines. A feature is the vivid and little-known illustrations that do more than embellish the text; Esau's documentation of iconographic images is informed by critique and analysis as well as assiduous research. In her career as an art historian, Esau has herself lived the trans-Pacific life and is almost uniquely well-qualified to comment on shared experiences and perceptions. *Images of the Pacific Rim* is a labour of love, a delight to the casual reader, and a rich resource for future cultural historians to explore.

Ian Tyrrell is the Scientia Professor of History, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. He is the author of *True gardens of the gods: Californian-Australian environmental reform, 1860-1930*.

A project that has taken nearly 10 years to complete and that traverses the Pacific Ocean engenders debts of gratitude as enormous as that ocean. Ten years have also made inroads into my memory, so I first beg forgiveness to all those who contributed to this study but whom I may have forgotten to mention here. First and foremost, my deepest thanks must go to the entire staff of The Henry E. Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens (The Huntington), San Marino, California, where I found the ideal setting in which to carry out research, find images and write. What a marvellous resource and what a splendid environment! Its serendipitous location near Pasadena also enabled me to fulfil a childhood dream of living there in a bungalow. Roy Ritchie, W. M. Keck Foundation director of research, oversaw the committee that awarded me two Andrew W. Mellon Library Fellowships, in 2001 and 2003, without which I would never have been able to move to California. I will be eternally grateful to Alan Jutzi, Avery chief curator, Rare Books, who by welcoming me into The Huntington ‘family’ made it possible to illustrate this book so richly. Special thanks must also go to the following curators and staff for their advice both practical and scholarly: Peter Blodgett, Sue Hodson, Erin Chase, Jean-Robert Durbin, Mario Einaudi, Jennifer Goldman, Dan Lewis, David Mihaly and Jenny Watts. Library volunteer Bob Herman has also shared his knowledge of Los Angeles history and offered an ear over many lunches. Within The Huntington scholarly community, I have appreciated the sage advice of Bill Deverell, director of The Huntington–USC Institute on California and the West, and leading voice on all Californian topics. In the Art Collections, I consulted Amy Meyers and her successor Jessica Smith, curators of American art; and Jacqueline Dugan, registrar, offered assistance. Linda Zoeckler, former librarian of the Art Collection Library, gave me free rein in that now-merged collection. Ann Scheid, curator of the Greene & Greene Archives, has been particularly generous with her knowledge about Pasadena architecture.

While The Gamble House staff are not an official part of The Huntington, the ties are so close that I want here to thank Ted Bosley, director, and curator Anne Malik for their support and advice on the subject of Arts & Crafts in California. Marian Yoshiki-Kovinick, formerly archivist at The Huntington’s office of the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art, remains along with her husband Phil Kovinick an invaluable source of information about Californian art. In the botanical gardens, I talked to the late Michael Vasser, Gary Lyons and Kathy Musial on questions about Australian plants in California; Melanie Thorpe kindly allowed me access to the Botanical Library. Over the years, several fellow Readers have offered enlightening opinions and shared resources. I am particularly grateful to Jared Farmer, Greg Hise, Barbara Donagan, Timothy Erwin, Roberto Alvarez, Nicole Rice, Malcolm Rohrbough, Beth Haas and Veronica Castillo-Muñoz. Finally, my most heartfelt appreciation at The Huntington must go to my colleagues in Reader Services, who have offered friendship, employment and tremendous support throughout this long process. I list them here alphabetically: Christopher Adde, Romaine Ahlstrom, Meredith Berbee, Phillip Brontosaurus, Jill Cogen, Bryan Dickson, Juan Gomez, Kadin Henningsen, Leslie Jobsky, Claire Kennedy, Susi Krasnoo, Anne Mar, Mona Nouredin Shulman, Laura Stalker and Catherine Wehrey.

My research has, of course, led me to many other institutions and individuals. In the initial stages of this project (in 1998!) I was lucky enough to meet with Dr Kevin Starr, then California state librarian and now professor of history at the University of Southern California. Dr Starr has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of my topic, for which I am immensely grateful. I owe my introduction to Dr Starr to my friend and fellow Santa Barbaran, Peter Detwiler, staff member for the California State Senate and networker extraordinaire. Peter also introduced me to Gary Kurutz, curator of Special Collections at the California State Library in Sacramento; Gary and his staff at the History Room have been particularly helpful from the beginning. Other important scholars on California studies that I have consulted include the late Peter Palmquist, leading collector and authority on photography of the American West; Graham Howe, Pasadena, an Australian-Californian, founder of Curatorial Assistance and keeper of the E. O. Hoppé estate; Joan deFato, former librarian at the Los Angeles County Arboretum; Sue Rainey, expert on Picturesque publications; Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, author of important books on Californian art; Michael Dawson, proprietor of Dawson's Books and a great source on the history of Los Angeles culture; Karen Sinsheimer, curator of photography at The Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Drew Johnson, curator of photography, Oakland Museum of California, who in turn put me in contact with Tom Horning, descendant of Isaac Wallace Baker; Romy Wylie, California Institute of Technology, an expert on Bertram Goodhue; John G. Ripley, indispensable researcher at the Pasadena History Museum and archivist of Pasadena architects; Julie Armistead, curator of the Hearst Gallery, St Mary's College, Moraga, California, who shares my enthusiasm for eucalypts in Californian art; Scott Shields, Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, who has written about northern Californian artists; and Barbara Beroza, curator, Yosemite Museum National Park Service. My former professor at Bryn Mawr College and friend Barbara Miller Lane kindly read a draft of the chapter on bungalows and offered great ideas and corrections. I must also thank my advisor Steven Levine of Bryn Mawr who invited me to speak on my research at the college's Visual Culture Colloquium in 2002.

My affection for good librarians, archivists and curators was furthered by getting to know people such as Elise Kenney, archivist, Yale Art Gallery, who went to extraordinary lengths to help me with questions about Frederic Schell; Janene Ford, Holt-Atherton Special Collections Library, University of the Pacific, Stockton, California, and her staff for working with me in their John Muir Collection; Kim Bowden, librarian, Haggin Museum, Stockton, California, who ferreted out unknown Batchelder photographs; Simon Elliott, Department of Special Collections, Library, University of California, Los Angeles, offered aid and a serene attitude; and Patricia Keats, Library Director, Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco, whose many kindnesses have furthered this work. John Wickham at the Theodore Payne Foundation, Sun Valley, California, deserves thanks for allowing me access to Payne's archives on eucalypts.

I thank as well the staff of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; North Baker Research Library, California Historical Society, San Francisco; Seaver Center for

Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County; the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts; Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University, New York; Photographs Collection, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Research Library, San Diego Historical Society, Balboa Park, San Diego; the Santa Barbara Historical Society Library; the Architecture and Design Collection, University of California, Santa Barbara; Tuolumne County Historical Society, Sonoma, California; Madera County Historical Society, Madera, California; the San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco; and the Central Library of the Los Angeles Public Library. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art's library staff deserves special recognition, particularly Susan Trauger and Alexis Curry, for hiring me and thereby giving me access to amazing archival materials. Also at the museum, I thank Bruce Robertson, formerly chief curator of American Art, for his conversations about the challenges of comparative art history.

In Australia, my gratitude list is even longer. First I must thank my colleague and old Bryn Mawr friend Roger Benjamin from The University of Sydney (and former director of the university's Power Institute), for asking me to submit my book proposal for application to the Getty Grant program. Mention should be made here of The Getty Foundation of the J. Paul Getty Trust in Los Angeles, whose award of a publications grant to the Power Institute (their publishing section, Power Publications) made this book possible. Thanks also must go to the Nelson Meers Foundation, Sydney, for its grant to Power Publications to assist in publishing the book series of which this volume is a part. Since then, the publishing process has been almost entirely in the hands of Victoria Dawson, managing editor at the press, now with assistance of Emma White and guidance from Anita Callaway. Kirsten Krauth did a splendidly efficient job of copy editing. I would also like to thank the anonymous readers of the manuscript, who offered such detailed and insightful suggestions.

At the Australian National University, where this project began, many colleagues, some now at other institutions, offered advice and intellectual conversation over the years: Margaret Brown, Sasha Grishin, Paul Duro, John Clark, Rico Franses, Andrew Montana, Nicolas Peterson, Ian McCalman, Ian Farrington, Elisabeth Findlay, Jill Matthews and Christopher Forth, the latter now Jack and Shirley Howard Teaching Professor in Humanities and Western Civilization at the University of Kansas. I am also grateful to the university's Humanities Research Centre; as a Visiting Fellow there in 2001, I was able to begin formulating my ideas on the topic and presented the results at a symposium. Other venues in which I presented aspects of this research include the 2001 Conference of the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) and, in 2002, the Biennial Conference of the Australian-New Zealand American Studies Association (ANZASA) at Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria. As a living example of cross-cultural exchange himself, Terry Smith, now at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh and formerly at The University of Sydney, also deserves thanks for allowing me to present a talk at his session on Pacific exchange at the 2004 College Art Association Conference in Seattle.

Other ANU colleagues at the Art School were particularly thoughtful in our discussions of

Australian art and photography; I thank especially Martyn Jolly, Helen Ennis, Nigel Lendon and Gordon Bull for lively exchanges on the nature of Australian culture. My students at the ANU taught me much of what I know about Australian life and provided me with a forum in which to present my ideas—I hope the influential ones know who they are. Amongst my graduate students, Chiaki Ajioka has remained a friend and intellectual confidante; and Peter McNeil, now professor of design history at the University of Technology, Sydney and fashion history phenomenon, continues to support and share. For carrying out research once I had left Australia, I thank Charlene Ogilvie Smith, Canberra, and Lee Sanders in Sydney. Ian Tyrrell, Scientia professor of history, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, generously offered advice and has written the Australian foreword here. Other scholars who offered an exchange of ideas, read drafts of chapters, and were generally interested in what I was doing include Tony Hughes-d'Aeth, Senior Lecturer, English and Cultural Studies, University of Western Australia; Prue Ahrens, lecturer in art history, The University of Queensland; Robert Freestone, professor, Planning and Urban Development Program, School of the Built Environment, The University of New South Wales, Sydney; Christopher Vernon, senior lecturer, School of Architecture and Fine Arts, The University of Western Australia; and Mike Butcher, heritage officer for the City of Bendigo. I am grateful for having in Canberra the example of an independent scholar in the person of Robin Wallace-Crabbe, who shared much of his prodigious knowledge about Australian literature. I most especially want to thank my good friend Gael Newton, senior curator of photography at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, and her husband Paul Costigan. Gael has been unstinting in her support of this project, offering words of encouragement, sharing her expertise and providing images as well. She made me believe the book was a worthy endeavour despite the sacrifices it required.

Librarians, archivists and curators on this side of the Pacific also offered enthusiastic aid and common sense. I thank particularly Linda Groom, Sylvia Carr and their staff at the Pictures Collection, National Library of Australia, who I have known since my first days in Australia. Also at the National Library, Paul Hetherington offered me the chance to write about Cazneaux, and Michelle Hetherington, now at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, is responsible for introducing me, through her exhibition of travel posters, to the Northfield poster that started me on this path. Megan Martin, senior librarian and curator, The Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collections, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney, was exceedingly generous with her time and resources. Alan Davies, curator of photographs, State Library of New South Wales, introduced me to Merlin & Bayliss (amongst others) and the phrase 'You Bewdy!' Robert Lawrie, manager of the archives of the Parliament of New South Wales, Sydney, supplied previously unseen materials about the *Picturesque atlas of Australasia*. At the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, I worked with Jill Chapman, archives; Charles Pickett, curator of social history; and Eva Czernis-Ryl, curator of decorative arts and design. Anne Higham, heritage architect/NSW Chapter, Australian Institute of Architects, personally escorted me on tours of Sydney architecture and

has graciously provided documents and images; I also thank Noni Boyd, heritage architect, for her insights and advice, and Roy Lumby and David de Rozenker-Apted of the Twentieth Century Heritage Society of NSW, Sydney. I appreciate the efforts of Howard Tanner, Tanner Architects, Sydney, who helped with James Peddle images. Annabelle Davey Chapman, who wrote the only thesis on Peddle, has been tremendously generous in providing more information and images. Peter Barrett, Architectural Conservation Consultants, Melbourne, was always available for discussions of American–Australian architectural exchange. For the wonderful images of the Perth campus and information about its development, I must thank Gillian Lilleyman, University of Western Australia, Perth. Stuart Read, heritage officer with the NSW Department of Planning, shared his work on Max Shelley at Boomerang. Harriet Edquist, Professor of Architecture and Design, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), sent early versions of her book on Australian Arts & Crafts and offered insights into Victorian architecture. I also consulted with Miles Lewis, Professor in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne and the leading expert on prefabricated building. In the National Archives of Australia, Canberra, I thank Melanie Harwood and Anne McLean. Other librarians who were especially helpful were Arijana Hodzic and Moya Lum, PTW Architects, Sydney; and Gael Ramsay and Anne Rowland, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat, Victoria. Further afield, colleagues in New Zealand also contributed opinions on the history of Arts & Crafts in the antipodes; I must acknowledge Walter Cook, librarian, Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington; John Adam, Auckland, who knows everything about New Zealand’s garden history and connections to California; and fellow Bryn Mawr graduate Ian Lochhead, associate professor in art history, School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury in Christchurch.

My greatest appreciation—for their contributions to this study and to my mental well-being—is, of course, reserved for my family and friends. In Australia, Chris Bettie, formerly director of art at the Australian Parliament House, read many chapters and did his own digging for information and contacts on plants and architecture; his long letters were a blessing. To the following Australian friends, I hope you know how much your conversations meant to me: Bruce and Diane Swalwell, Sydney; Andrew and Deb Bowman, Canberra and Corryong, Victoria; Pam Frost and Dennis Tongs, Canberra and Melbourne; Carol Croce, Canberra; Diane Carey, Canberra; and Roger Moloney, Melbourne. In California, I must thank again Peter and Carrie Detwiler, Sacramento, for offering continuous encouragement, their house and their great California contacts; and David Levine and Joanna Weinberg, Berkeley, for similar kindnesses. Bob Smith of Oakhurst, California, was a treasure when it came to computer questions. Colleen Paggi, Tulare, California, was a tenacious researcher on all things genealogical. Finally, I must thank all my Canberra and Pasadena friends who, by their efforts in seeking a design for living over the last decade, have enhanced my own life journey—this book would not have been written without their support.

To Sam Watters—who I met while examining the same architecture photographs at The Huntington—I owe more than I can express here. At least two chapters of this book would have been far thinner without the benefit of Sam’s insights and urbane opinions, and his guidance through the rough waters of the publishing process have been inestimable. I was particularly delighted that he was willing to contribute such an insightful foreword from the Californian perspective for this book. That I have had someone to talk to who shared my views on art and life, and who gave me so much stalwart support both moral and intellectual, has made all the difference.

My sister Robyn Holland allowed me weeks of solitude at her house in Oakhurst to compose and write (and gave me the companionship of her cats). My son Max—the real Aussie in this family—had just left for college when I started working on this book; he is now in graduate school. He has always brought me down to earth when I strayed too far from the task at hand; I treasure our conversations. My husband’s family provided enthusiastic readers of the entire book; I am touched that Gloria and Stan Yalof, Escondido, California, found the time to read it and made such thoughtful comments. In many ways, Chapter 1 can be dedicated to my father-in-law, George Boeck, Sr, Professor Emeritus of American History, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado; I am so happy that he was impressed enough to read and offer opinions about every chapter. And finally, to my husband, George Albert Boeck, Jr, this book is dedicated. He has been throughout my muse, my mentor, my rock; without George and our ‘duprassness’, without his willingness to share in our adventures and to support me in every way, none of my achievements would have been possible.

—Pasadena, California, 2008.

Whatever our official pieties, deep down we all believe in lives. The sternest formalists are the loudest gossips, and if you ask a cultural-studies maven who believes in nothing but collective forces and class determinisms how she came to believe this doctrine, she will begin to tell you, eagerly, the story of her life.

—Adam Gopnik, ‘Will power’, *The New Yorker*, 2004¹

This book is in many ways the story of my life. Its themes grew out of my own history, my ruminations about art, ‘home’ and an aesthetics of place. I was born and raised in California, the daughter of a native son. I grew up amidst eucalypts and on the beach. Having left the state to go to college after high school, I have only now, more than 30 years later, returned to live here. In the intervening years, I lived and worked, an itinerant scholar, in every region of the United States except the south-east. With every move, I tried to absorb as much as possible of the visual signifiers of those places. I spent several intellectually stimulating years in Germany and Vienna, grounding myself in the culture of the Old World. My academic training and intellectual predilections prepared me for a professional life as an art historian on European topics.

Then, in 1990, freezing in the upper Midwest, I got a call to interview for a teaching position in Australia. When I arrived, direct from subzero temperatures to full summer in Canberra, a trip to the botanic gardens there convinced me that this was a place where I could happily live. The familiarity of the landscape—and the smells!—spoke to me of ‘home’ in a visceral and aesthetic way. Intellectually, teaching art history at the Australian National University was also transformative. Since one requirement of the position was to teach the history of Australian art, I immediately switched course, relegating research in German art to the background to concentrate on Australian topics and the history of photography. My appointment to teach Australian art at one of the country’s leading universities had not gone unnoticed by local pundits, of course. The writer Humphrey McQueen even complained in print, indignantly asking the question, ‘How can an American who wrote a dissertation on an obscure Austrian painter teach our art history?’² Indeed.

My family and I were successful transplants. We took up Australian citizenship as soon as it was allowed. We learned all the verses to *Advance, Australia fair* and we followed every incident in cricket and three different football codes, none of them gridiron (as Australians refer to American football). We revelled in the magnificent birdlife and the beautiful beaches. After a few years in Canberra, I was commissioned to write, along with my husband, the *Blue guide Australia*, a cultural tour guide of the entire country.³ We considered the book, which took seven years to complete, a love letter to our new country.

The *Blue guide* project necessarily focused my attention on the whole question of cultural identity and how a ‘new’ Western-oriented country like Australia developed its own aesthetic vision and its own national icons. As an art historian, I was particularly aware of cultural iconographies and the process by which images are absorbed into a society’s everyday aesthetic as part of the construction of its visual world-view. When I began looking deeper

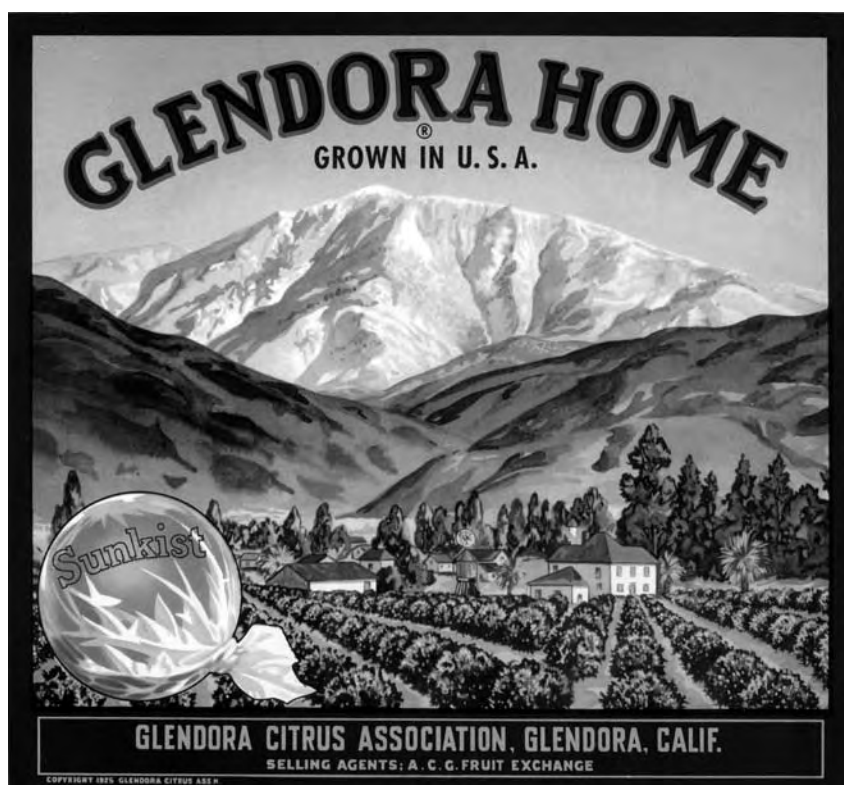
for the roots of these iconographies, I kept seeing, if only vaguely, affinities between image-making practices in California and Australia. I discovered images, especially popular and reproduced ones, that reminded me again of that visual template formed in my childhood. At the same time, I found very little substantive academic work on the connections between Australian and American (especially western American) art production. While some comparative work has been done in history—I am thinking particularly of David Goodman’s *Gold seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (1994); Philip and Roger Bell’s *Americanization and Australia* (1998); and Ian Tyrrell’s *True gardens of the Gods: Californian–Australian environmental reform, 1860–1930* (1999)—very little work considered the *aesthetic* interaction between photographers, illustrators and artists of the two places. *New worlds from old*—the joint exhibition organised in 1998 by the National Gallery of Australia and Hartford’s Wadsworth Athenaeum—focused, rightly so, on a comparison of nineteenth-century landscape painting and presented some interesting arguments about ‘high art’ affinities.⁴ I wanted to know more about ‘lesser’ aesthetic practices, where the similarities appeared to be most striking.

I can trace my decision to write this book in this form back to a single moment comparing two images. The first image was designed as a tourist poster promoting the newly created city of Canberra, produced in about 1930 and shown at an exhibition of Australian posters at the National Library of Australia.⁵ A precise description of this image figures in Chapter 7 (see page 310), so here I will point out only what so caught my attention at the time. I noticed especially the red-roofed buildings placed in the middle of the scene and the bird’s-eye view of the light-infused landscape with the hills in the background. Trying to think of what the poster reminded me of led to the other image, one of the thousands of pictures produced in the early twentieth century, for California’s citrus-box label industry. These labels, produced in enormous quantities in the first decades of the twentieth century and dispersed around the world, established the most enduring iconography of California: a perpetually sunny place, fertile and lush, often including a romanticised vision of the state’s Hispanic past. What struck me particularly about these labels was that one repeated object: a red-roofed house (or houses) placed in the middle of the orchards, with a sweeping vista back to the mountains. Here was the most vernacular imagery with an established iconography of salubriousness, prodigiously reproducible, distributed worldwide, and from the 1910s widely seen not only in California but in Australia as well.⁶



Fig. 0.02 James Northfield, Canberra, Federal Capital & Garden City, Australia, c. 1930. Colour lithograph. Courtesy of the James Northfield Heritage Art Trust ©.

Fig. 0.03 Glendora Brand citrus label, c. 1925. Courtesy of The Jay T. Last Collection. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.



Out of these vernacular images, with their pervasive visual icons of a specific landscape, and based on the visual mood that they evoked in me, I began to construct a framework to examine what I knew had to be there: some very real aesthetic connections between image-making on that other Pacific coastline, California, and the emerging colonies of Australia. This exchange and much of the distribution of these iconographies occurred through the reproductive arts of the mass media: photography, illustration and graphic design, often dispersed through journals, illustrations, posters, commercial advertising and popular art magazines. The so-called ‘high arts’ of painting and sculpture were available to so few in these frontier societies that aesthetic ideas were more readily accessible and understood through portable and reproducible artistic mediums. The significance of widely dispersed visual resources in these new cultures offers living testament to Walter Benjamin’s famous statement that the ‘[m]echanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art’.⁷ Linking these ideas back to Benjamin gave me a critical peg on which to hang my arguments about the absorption of pictorial information into modern, image-dependent societies.

From the 1850s, art and image-making in the Western world, and particularly in new ‘settler colonies’ such as Australia and Pacific America, are dependent on three important factors: the itinerancy of the artists and artisans producing images on the frontier and in the new settlements, moving from place to place with their own cultural baggage made visible through their creative production; the reproducibility of images, made possible by technological advances in printing and photography; and the portability of these images enabled by the processes of visual reproduction, across oceans and over great distances.⁸ With these factors in mind, the central question for consideration in this comparative aesthetic

analysis concerns both distinction and affinity: Can we see stylistic transformations in visual representation when Western artists and photographers confront a different place, a different culture, or different ideologies? What gets shared visually, and what remains distinct to each place? These two regions, geographically linked by their location on what would come to be called the Pacific Rim, and first tied together by their shared participation in the greatest social transformation of the nineteenth century, offer unprecedented opportunity to explore questions about the transmission and consumption of images in the modern age.

I have formulated my ideas as a series of essays as case studies, arranged in overlapping chronological order by decades and connected by the overriding assertion of aesthetic exchange dependent on itinerancy, reproducibility and portability. The overarching theme in these chapters is that the exchange of reproducible images and forms creates a specific aesthetic that eventually produces a modern 'Pacific Rim' style. This incipient style is most prevalent in vernacular image-making through which modernity, or more aptly aesthetic modernism, first appears in these 'cultures on the periphery'.⁹ The seven chapters cover a range of topics within these parameters. In each case, my arguments focus on one individual or several individuals as exemplars of the aesthetic processes discussed in the period: the photographer Benjamin Batchelder travelling to the gold regions on both continents; the entertainer Stephen Massett plying his music and his accompanying illustrations in San Francisco and Victoria; *Harper's* illustrator William T. Smedley and other Americans working on the *Picturesque atlas of Australasia* of 1888; the Sydney architect James Peddle bringing back bungalows from Pasadena in the 1910s; former Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin at the 1915 California Expositions; Theodore Payne and F. Franceschi embracing eucalypts as part of the Californian landscape; and English-born architect Leslie Wilkinson adapting Mediterranean architecture for Australians, with an eye focused on California's Spanish Style houses of the 1920s.

In keeping with the emphasis on the importance of reproducible images in this story of aesthetic exchange, illustrated magazines figure prominently in each chapter, as the most potent medium of the time for the delivery of these visual forms. *Harper's*, *Land of Sunshine*, *The Craftsman*, *Sunset*, *Century*, *Pacific Coast Architect*, *Touring Topics/Westways* from America; and *Australasian Sketcher*, *The Lone Hand*, *Building*, *Home* and *The Australian Home Beautiful* in Australia—amongst many other examples of the era's growing fascination with modern mass media, these journals play a pivotal role in the story of Australian-Californian aesthetic exchange.

After completing research in Australia, I returned to California to carry out work on that half of the comparative study. Landing in Los Angeles, the place felt immediately familiar to me, despite the years of absence. We settled in Pasadena, where, miraculously, we bought a 100-year-old bungalow around the corner from the very buildings that I had come to study. Personally, it was a homecoming. Intellectually, my assumptions that most scholarly work about Californian culture and art would have already been published proved to be optimistic. I found instead that California as a subject of cultural or aesthetic study is only now beginning to hit its stride. Much has been accomplished in recent years since the publication of Kevin Starr's magisterial series of books on Americans and the California dream; but the same parochial sense of inferiority that caused so much anxious soul-searching in Australia has

persisted in the American West, encouraging the idea in many that California has little history or culture worth studying outside of a regional context.¹⁰ In this attitude, my two homes on the Pacific continue to be linked culturally, making a comparison of their fascinatingly rich visual histories ever more relevant.

As the opening quotation suggests—despite whatever elements of the ‘cultural-studies maven’ I may have accrued after 30 academic years in America, Europe and Australia—my aims in writing this book are not primarily polemical. I want to tell an interesting story about the exchange of ideas between two new cultures, ideas manifested in images that people saw and buildings that they built. As a comparative study, I want to present new information about the deep aesthetic connections between these modern cultures—information that will contribute to a greater understanding of how Australia and California have interacted and influenced each other for the last 150 years.

NOTES

1. Adam Gopnik, ‘Will power’, *The New Yorker*, 13 September 2004, p. 90.
2. Humphrey McQueen, review article, *Australian Society*, June 1991, p. 42.
3. Erika Esau and George Boeck, *Blue guide Australia*, A & C Black, London, 1999.
4. Elizabeth Johns, *et al.*, *New worlds from old: 19th century Australian & American landscapes*, National Gallery of Art, Canberra, 1998.
5. *Follow the sun: Australian travel posters, 1930s–1950s*, National Library of Australia, 13 November 1999 to 30 January 2000. See also Michelle Hetherington, *James Northfield and the art of selling Australia*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2006.
6. In the context of vernacular images, as Richard White points out, Australia from the mid-nineteenth century looked to America for vernacular forms of culture, while Britain remained the source for those forms considered to be ‘high art’ such as painting and sculpture. See Richard White, “‘Americanisation’ and popular culture in Australia”, *Teaching History*, vol. 12, August 1978, pp. 3–12. See also my own essay on the exchange of fruit-box labels, ‘Labels across the Pacific’, in Prue Ahrens and Chris Dixon (eds), *Coast to coast: Case histories of modern Pacific crossings*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, forthcoming 2010.
7. Walter Benjamin, ‘Art in the age of mechanical reproduction’, in *Illuminations*, Schocken, New York, 1969, p. 234.
8. In the ‘2009 Call for Participation’ for the College Art Association’s 97th Annual Conference, two sessions refer to itinerancy. One focuses on ‘Artistic itinerancy in early modern Europe’; session convener Lloyd De Witt remarks that the work of itinerant artists in this period ‘fostered a dynamic cultural convergence between peoples and continents that is potentially far more revealing about the character of their age’, p. 6. The other session is even more cogent to the topics of this book: The Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art sponsors ‘The networked nineteenth century’, to speak of a ‘networked society’ and to analyse ‘the dynamics of a nineteenth-century art world shaped by global trade, technologies of exchange, and rapid dissemination of print.’ Anne Helmreich, session convener, p. 10.
9. For definitions of post-colonial studies terms such as ‘settler culture’ and ‘cultures on the periphery’, see Bill Ashcroft, *et al.*, *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998.
10. Kevin Starr’s books in this series are: *Americans and the California dream 1850–1915*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973; *Material dreams: Southern California through the 1920s*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1990; *The dream endures: California enters the 1940s*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997; *Endangered dreams: The Great Depression in California*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997; *Embattled dreams: California in war and peace, 1940–1950*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003; *Coast of dreams: California on the edge, 1990–2003*, Knopf, New York, 2004; and *Golden dreams: California in an age of abundance, 1950–1963*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009.