



LEWIS MORLEY

50 years of photography

ART
GALLERY
NSW

EDUCATION KIT

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ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES 5 JULY – 10 SEPTEMBER 2006

Lewis Morley (b1925–)

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Education kit outline

This education kit highlights key works, ideas and themes from the exhibition *Lewis Morley: 50 years of photography*, 5 July – 10 September 2006 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. It aims to provide a context for using the works and exhibition as a resource for Years 9–12 education audiences. It may be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition or as pre- or post-visit resource material.

The kit has been written with reference to the New South Wales Stage 5 and 6 Visual Arts and Photographic, Video and Digital Imaging syllabuses.

While this education kit specifically targets teachers and students it may also be of interest to a wider general audience.

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Introduction



Self-portrait, Sri Lanka 1977

I always felt guilty about photography. I mean, I worked purely by touch. I really knew nothing about the technicalities. I photographed what I saw, what I responded to emotionally. I was never analytical. Most of my work was reportage. I even approached interiors as reportages. So when I'm asked to talk about my photography, I think, 'What can I talk about?' Certainly not about technique.

Lewis Morley, Contemporary Australian Photographers, *WriteLite*, 1999

The exhibition *Lewis Morley: 50 years of photography* is the first time the Gallery has focused on Lewis Morley's career. It covers his work from the 1940s until now and includes 150 of Morley's photographs covering portraiture, fashion, theatre and reportage plus a large selection of contact sheets, magazines and ephemera.

The exhibition is an important opportunity to view the full range of his work and includes photographs of the great political protests of the 1960s as well as remarkable locations in Europe and Asia. The contact sheets for his theatre work and reportage show how Lewis worked and then how he might crop a chosen image.

Morley worked as a portrait and reportage photographer in London and in Sydney. He used his interest in street photography to enliven his fashion work. He worked for *Tatler*, *London Life*, *Go!* and *She*. Morley took the first fashion photographs of Twiggy and of Jean Shrimpton and, in 1963, took *that* picture of Christine Keeler, which has become one of the most iconic images of the 20th century.

His long term interest in the performing arts meant that he already knew many actors in London, such as Dudley Moore, Peter Cook, Barry Humphries, Albert Finney, Charlotte Rampling, Vanessa Redgrave and Susannah York. His encounter with Lindsay Anderson in 1959 led to Morley photographing more than 100 West End productions through the 1960s.

From 1962–64 Lewis was resident photographer for the wildly successful BBC-TV show, *That was the week that was*.

Despite Morley's extensive experience in London in the 1960s with the print medium, theatre, satire, television and film, and his travels in Europe, the US and Africa the scene was beginning to pall and he moved to Sydney in 1971.

From Morley's point of view, the fact that he was a self taught photographer was an asset. He could work out how to do things in efficient and interesting ways. In-between magazine work he continued to do his own work, having studied painting at art schools in England and Paris, whether with the camera or with objects.

In Sydney, Morley worked for style magazines shooting interiors all over the world for *Belle*, portraits for *Pol* and fashion for *Dolly*. He no longer did theatre photography, a genre in which he had excelled in London where he very ably reflected the gritty realist drama of the time and the exuberance of the satirical shows. In England it was as though he had completely disappeared until the late 1980s when the National Portrait Gallery in London held a retrospective of his work. For the last 15 years Lewis has been progressively 'rediscovered' both in Australia and in England and in 2005 the National Gallery in Canberra honoured Morley's 80th birthday.

Morley, who turned 81 in June 2006, continues to work steadily and his most recent photographs in the exhibition are from the last few years and include many location shots as well as portraits of British luminaries such as Beth Orton and Tracey Emin and Australia's Margaret Olley.

I don't like analysing photographs, I don't like analysing paintings. My whole attitude to life has been emotional and I depend on emotions to get my kicks. I always find myself resisting reading people's motivations for their work. It could so easily not be the truth. Lewis Morley

Commentary



Christine Keeler, London 1963



Sarah Lucas, artist, Berlin
late 1990s

The art of Lewis Morley: Right time/right place

Lewis Morley is considered one of the most resonant image-makers of London's Swinging Sixties, evoking the look, the feel and the smell of that giddy era. It was a time when people's beliefs and people's patterns of behaviour and social conventions were torn up like confetti, bursting like party balloons, or magnified like the details in the photographs in Antonioni's movie *Blow-up*.

One image in particular has become the lightning rod for the zeitgeist energies engulfing Britain at the time – the most notorious picture of the period – a naked Christine Keeler on a fake 'Arne Jacobsen' chair. At the height of the Profumo Scandal, this softly-lit image of sex and power has become part of the collective memory, and a lasting artefact of public consciousness.

Because an iconic image like this one is so universally compelling – generating endless copies and rip-offs – it has overshadowed Lewis Morley's other work, astute observations of many of the personalities – models, writers, comedians, musicians, filmmakers and theatre actors who were the emerging idols of the new society. These included media man David Frost, playwright Joe Orton, Charlotte Rampling, Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, the first published photo of fashion models Twiggy, Jean Shrimpton and the young actor Michael Caine. Brian Epstein, Judi Dench, Lindsay Anderson, Peter O'Toole, Vanessa Redgrave, John Cleese, Francois Truffaut, Salvador Dali and Barry Humphries – indeed, almost everyone who was on 'The Sixties' contact-sheet.

And yet while that decade established Morley, his career spans 50 years and covers most genres of photography, even interior and food photography. In 1971, as Swinging London faded and Britain entered a recession, Lewis and his family emigrated to Australia, where he worked extensively for Australian design and fashion magazines. He continued his reportage and portrait work including artists Lloyd Rees, Brett Whiteley, Sarah Lucas and Tracey Emin.

In 1989 the National Portrait Gallery in London created an exhibition and catalogue *Lewis Morley: Photographer of the Sixties*. His autobiography *Black and White Lies* was published in 1992 followed by a retrospective of his work *Right Time, Right Place*

at the State Library of New South Wales in 1993. A selection of his work was also published in the Australian Contemporary Photographers series in 1999. The National Portrait Gallery in Canberra hosted his retrospective *Myself & Eye* in March 2003, simultaneously with the digital film documentary *Lewis Morley, Photographer*.

Lewis Morley was born in 1925 to a Chinese mother and an English father. He first visited Australia when he was 15, but returned to Hong Kong, a then British colony. A year later his family was abruptly interned by the Japanese for the duration of World War II.

When Morley was a teenager, his photography was only a hobby practised on a Box Brownie camera. What really interested him was drawing and painting with watercolours. During his captivity he claims he used to swap cigarettes for paints and paper. 'My drawings weren't very good but it was a start. I still have some of those pictures.'

At the end of the war they repatriated to London. His art school studies in England were punctuated by visits to Italy and France through his twenties.

Following marriage in 1954 and birth of son Lewis Morley Junior in 1957, he was given a six-page profile in Norman Hall's *Photography* magazine titled 'Lewis Morley, Painter/Photographer', the pictures taken with Exakta and Leica cameras. (Norman Hall was a West Australian with a central role in the international photography scene of the time)

In 1958 – at 33 years of age – Morley took up photography full-time and bought himself a Rolleiflex 6x6. Soon he was working on magazines assignments for *Tatler*, *Go!* and *She*.

In 1961 he became friendly with the waspish comedian Peter Cook, (considered the father of the British satire boom) who offered him studio space above his decidedly anti-establishment nightclub in Soho, called The Establishment. (Dudley Moore's jazz trio played regular gigs in the basement). Thus by good luck Morley became resident photographer at the hub of a group of talented people (including Barry Humphries and the *Private Eye*



Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett and Jonathan Miller in *Beyond the fringe*, Fortune Theatre, London 1961



Kashmir, India 1977

team) who were pushing the social and artistic boundaries, while dismantling the British class system. For example, Peter Cook's devastating satire on the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, as a blundering old fool. *What were we to do when we received the four minute warning of an atomic attack?* Macmillan: 'Some people in this great country of ours can run a mile in four minutes'. Peter Cook was to later play the deliciously hip Devil in the movie *Bedazzled* (1967).

These new stars of the television, rock n' roll and magazine worlds could capture unprecedented new audiences in the millions.

The aesthetic of spontaneity was much discussed in the 1960s. And of course spontaneity is a quality that is inherent in photography itself. Morley absorbed the lessons of Henri-Cartier Bresson (1908–2004), who pioneered the use of the smaller camera to take candid shots on the street, and who sought what he called 'the decisive moment', which aimed at fixing in a fraction of a second the key organisation of forms.

But Morley's all-time favourite was a photographer from twenty-five years before, Jacques-Henri Lartigue (1894–1986), for his zestful participating in the flux of experience. All the shifting visual elements – figures, shadows, foreground and background – are quickly configured during an instant exposure of light to film, striking something buoyant, rather than clairvoyant within the frame. It was a less grand, and a more fun kind of reportage. Lartigue is more innocent, dynamic and playful. He also records more personal scenes, as does Morley. (see John Szarkowski, *The Photographs of Jacques Henri Lartigue*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1963.)

Even a commission in 1961 to take publicity portraits for the *Beyond the fringe* satirical revue led to another memorable picture – of the comedian and musician Dudley Moore. "I was photographing the four boys and I looked around and Dudley was lagging miles behind," recalled Morley. "I shouted, 'For Christ's sake, Dudley, come on!' and suddenly he hunched over and posed like the Hunchback of Hyde Park and I snapped it." It's the snapping that was part of this aesthetic of spontaneity.

And the iconic picture of Keeler which looks as calculated as can be: "It was the very last shot on the roll," Morley told *Myself and Eye's* curator, Magda Keaney. "I was walking away and turned back. She was in a perfect position and I just snapped it."

The drama added to Morley's portrait and fashion photography by quirky relations between subject and environment is also apparent in his reportage. Reportage as a term struggles for meaning in the 21st century: it is associated with photojournalism and at its simplest is the reporting of news or information of general interest ... But by the late 1970s the rise of television had effectively strangled magazine and newspaper reportage, leaving a photographer such as Morley to continue as he had begun in the 1950s, always alert to curious and moving details.

Judy Annear, Senior Curator of Photography AGNSW



Christine Keeler 1963

A modern icon: *Christine Keeler* 1963

What makes an image an icon? Cultures need myths and icons, and generally recycle them for a new era. Icons communicate directly, like pop standards, and yet sometimes carry surplus meanings. They become part of our collective memory, channelling emotion in certain ways. They get cross-indexed in our brain, and address some universal issue.

The Keeler image has been compared to Edouard Manet's radical painting *Olympia* of a century before. The direct gaze of the courtesan confronts the viewers, yet manages to be tentative and confronting, modest yet unapologetic. The tension is the basis of desire: "the urge to diverge and the urge to merge", the fumbling of concealment and revelation in seduction. (This ambivalent merging of strength and vulnerability can be found in other icons like Marilyn Monroe or James Dean).

Visual icons require this abbreviated design (the symmetry of her limbs and the hourglass shape of the chair) made more abstract by the dramatic lighting and deep blacks.

The photo took on another lease of life in 1989 with the release of the film about the Profumo affair entitled *Scandal*.

Lewis Morley recalling the photographic session:

This photograph was one of a series of publicity shots for an intended film which never saw the light of day. It was not until 1989 that a film of the 1963 happenings was released under the title *Scandal*.

During the session, three rolls of 120 film were shot. The first two rolls had Christine sitting in various positions on the chair and on the floor, dressed in a small leather jerkin. It was at this point that the film producers who were in attendance demanded she strip for some nude photos. Christine was reluctant to do so, but

the producers insisted, saying that it was written in her contract. The situation became rather tense and reached an impasse. I suggested that everyone, including my assistant leave the studio. I turned my back to Christine, telling her to disrobe, sit back to front on the chair. She was now nude, fulfilling the conditions of the contract, but was at the same time hidden.

We repeated some of the poses used on the previous two rolls of film. I rapidly exposed some fresh positions, some angled from the side and a few slightly looking down. I felt that I had had shot enough and took a couple of paces back. Looking up, I saw what appeared to be a perfect positioning. I released the shutter one more time, in fact, it was the last exposure on the roll of film. Looking at the contact sheet, one can see that this image is smaller than the rest because I had stepped back. It was this pose that became the first published and most used image. The nude session had taken less than five minutes to complete. It wasn't until I developed the film that I discovered that somehow I had misfired one shot and there were only eleven images on a twelve exposure film. How this came about is a mystery to me.

From: http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/photography/past_exhns/seeing/modern_icon/
Includes Lewis Morely's account of the appropriation of Christine Keeler, London 1963 in popular culture.

For further information about the chair on which Christine Keeler sat in the celebrated portrait session go to: http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/photography/past_exhns/seeing/chair/index.html

Biography

1925 Born 16 June to a Chinese mother and an English father, in Hong Kong.

1940 First visit to Australia, then back to Hong Kong.

1941 Interned by the Japanese at Stanley Internment Camp with his family for the duration of World War II.

1945 The Morley family is repatriated to London.

1946 Two years' national service with the RAF.

1949 First visit to Europe. Begins three years' study at Twickenham Art School, Middlesex.

1952 Studies life drawing at Académie La Grande Chaumière, Paris.

1954 Marries Patricia Clifford.

1957 Lewis Morley Junior is born. First photographs published – a six-page profile in Norman Hall's *Photography* magazine titled 'Lewis Morley, painter/photographer'.

1958 First photograph published in *Tatler*, where he becomes a regular. Morley takes up photography full-time.

1959 Lindsay Anderson invites Morley to try his hand at theatre photography by working on rehearsal photographs of *Sergeant Musgrave's dance*.

1960 Anderson invites Morley to photograph *Billy Liar* with the young Albert Finney for front-of-house. Over the next 10 years Morley photographs over 100 West End productions and dramatically changes the look of front-of-house photography.

1961 Photographs *Beyond the fringe*. Becomes friends with Peter Cook, who offers him studio space above his satirical club The Establishment. Morley becomes resident photographer for the club's revues and for *Private Eye*. Photographs Barry Humphries for The Establishment, and so begins a long friendship. Takes the first published photographs of Jean Shrimpton for a fashion feature in *Go!*.

1962 West End productions include photographs of young actors at the threshold of their careers: Susannah York, Tom Courtney, Michael Caine, Maggie Smith, Anthony Hopkins, Nicol Williamson and John Hurt, among many others. First solo show at Kodak Gallery, Regent Street. Photographs David Frost and *That was the week that was* for Ned Sherrin, and other Ned Sherrin productions for BBC TV (1962–64). First visit to New York.

1963 At the height of the Profumo scandal Morley photographs Christine Keeler for a film that is never made. Photographs many commercials for television – Blue Band margarine and Kellogg's cornflakes to name a few.

1964 Extensive fashion and style work for English newspapers, with Morley often utilising 'non-models' like Susannah York, Bobby Moore and Charlotte Rampling.

1965 Directs an extended film clip (now lost) of the Yardbirds performing as a promotion for their first US tour. *Lewis Morley: the reluctant photographer* is shot by Pathé Pictorial in the Lewis Morley Studios. The first photographs of Twiggy are published, taken by Morley for *London Life*.

1971 Emigrates to Australia with his family and finds extensive work with style magazines, often working in colour. His work appears in *Belle* from the magazine's inception until the mid 1980s (Morley photographed 33 of the first 75 *Belle* covers). Works with Babette Hayes and for magazines such as *Pol* and *Dolly*. Exhibits photography and mixed-media assemblages regularly in Sydney through the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

1978 Commissioned to participate with five other photographers (Mark Johnson, Jon Rhodes, Sandy Edwards, Graham McCarter, Micky Allan) in the CSR Centenary Photography Project.

1987 Morley sells his studio.

1989 His retrospective at the National Portrait Gallery, London, commences during the release of the film *Scandal* – on Keeler and Profumo.

1992 Publishes his autobiography *Black and white lies*, with an introduction by Barry Humphries.

1993 *Observer Magazine* publishes a nine-page cover feature on 'The man who shot the sixties'. Included in the exhibition *The sixties art scene* in London at the Barbican Art Gallery, London. The State Library of New South Wales hosts a retrospective of his work, *Right time, right place*.

1999 Appears in the Contemporary Australian Photographers series of publications. The Royal National Theatre, London, holds an exhibition *Caught in the act: the theatre photography of Lewis Morley*.

2003 *Lewis Morley, photographer*, a documentary film on his working life, is produced as a DVD to coincide with his retrospective *Myself and eye* at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra. Included in *Pol: portrait of a generation* at the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra.

2004 Included in *Art & the 60s: this was tomorrow*, Tate Britain, London, and international tour.

2005 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, honours Morley's 80th birthday. Morley is included in *A question of identity: self-portrait photographs 1855–2000*, at the National Portrait Gallery, London.

2006 Retrospective exhibition, *Lewis Morley*, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

Collections

Australian

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney
State Library of New South Wales, Sydney
The American Club, Sydney
Victorian Arts Centre Trust, Melbourne
Westmead Children's Hospital, Sydney

International

ADC Blue Print, London
Arena Performing Arts Library, London
Chelsea Arts Club, London
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
National Portrait Gallery, London
Theatre Museum, London
Victoria & Albert Museum, London
Wilson Centre for Photography, London

Glossary

Arne Jacobsen (1902–1971) The Danish designer architect who designed the 'Butterfly' chair, a copy of which Christine Keeler and Joe Orton sat astride. Made of thin laminated plywood, over four million were sold. The chair Morley used was an unauthorised copy identifiable by the rogue cut-out finger slot at the back.

Blowup A 1966 British-Italian art film directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, his first to feature an English language screenplay and also the first British film to feature full frontal female nudity. The story concerns a photographer named Thomas who may or may not have inadvertently preserved evidence of a murder, which may or may not involve a mysterious woman (Redgrave) who visits the photographer in his studio.

Box Brownie/Exakta/Leica/Rollei Types of cameras used by Lewis Morley.

Contact sheet A sheet of negatives printed onto paper (also called proofs) to create a set of mini prints for easy viewing

Cavern Club Opened on January 16, 1957, is a legendary rock and roll club at 10 Mathew Street, Liverpool, England, where Brian Epstein was introduced to the Beatles on 9 November 1961.

Dollybird A British slang term for a pretty girl.

Fashion photography Devoted to displaying clothing and other fashion items.

Icon An object of devotion or intense admiration

Olympia 1863 A painting by the French artist Eduard Manet of a famous courtesan. The painting stirred uproar when it first exhibited at the 1865 Paris Salon. Conservatives of the time condemned the work as "immoral" and "vulgar."

Photojournalism A particular form of journalism (the collecting, editing, and presenting of news material for publication or broadcast) that creates images in order to tell a news story. Photojournalism is distinguished from other close branches of photography by the qualities of:

Timeliness – the images have meaning in the context of a published chronological record of events.

Objectivity – the situation implied by the images is a fair and accurate representation of the events they depict.

Narrative – the images combine with other news elements, to inform and give insight to the viewer or reader.

Portrait A painting, photograph, or other artistic representation of a person. Portraits are often simple head shots or mug shots and are not usually overly elaborate. The intent is to show the basic appearance of the person, and occasionally some artistic insight into his or her personality.

Profumo Scandal A political scandal involving British Prime Minister John Profumo, a Russian naval attaché and a showgirl, Christine Keeler

Reportage A single journalist's report of news (especially when witnessed first-hand), distributed through the media. Reportage is the modern name for an eye-witness genre of journalism. This style of reporting is characterized by travel and careful observation. (See also Photo-journalism)

Resonant Evocative, enduring

Satire A literary technique of writing or art which exposes the follies of its subject (for example, individuals, organizations, or states) to ridicule, often as an intended means of provoking or preventing change.

Self-effacing Modest, not attention-seeking

Self-portrait Portrait of the artist taken by the artist

Self-reflexive Reflecting one's own self, having an image or reflection of one's self

Spectator An observer of an event

Spontaneity A state that is unplanned, impulsive

The Swinging Sixties The years from 1960 to 1969. The decade was labeled the Swinging Sixties because of the libertine attitudes that emerged, characterised by its lack of moral restraint, permissive attitudes and new-found social freedoms.

Zeitgeist The spirit of the time; the taste and outlook characteristic of a period or generation.

Selected references

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Go! 1961

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