‘WHITE AUSTRALIA’ IN THE DARKROOM: 1915–41

In his review of the 1922 Photographic Society of New South Wales (NSW) exhibition for the *Australasian Photo Review*, critic Alek Sass alluded to some of the incongruities associated with Australian–Japanese photographic relations in the interwar period. While praising the two Japanese exhibitors, Sass commented wryly that their participation in the local photography scene ran counter to the racially exclusionary aims of Australian immigration policy:

> By way of diversion, the White Australia policy in the dark-room seems to be in danger; I refer to the work of Messrs. K. Ishida and K. Yama. They have eyes to see and things to say, those men … Very thoughtful work, gentlemen.¹

Kiichiro Ishida and Ichiro Kagiyama were among the approximately 300 Japanese living in NSW during this period.² These two men were active members of the Photographic Society of NSW and regularly exhibited and published their work alongside leading Australian photographers at a time when the ‘White Australia’ policy was testing diplomatic relations with Japan. Sass’s review and the exhibition itself highlight how the political and personal photographic relations between Australia and Japan tell quite

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² There was an increase in Japanese residents in NSW from 126 (118 male and seven female) in 1911 to 308 (289 male and 19 female) in 1921, largely due to the growth of Japanese merchants in Sydney (H.A. Smith, *The Official Year Book of New South Wales 1922* (Sydney: NSW State Government, 1924), 246). For more on Kagiyama see Melissa Miles, ‘Through Japanese Eyes: Ichiro Kagiyama and Australian-Japanese Relations in the 1920s and 1930s’, *History of Photography* 38, no. 4 (2014): 356–58.
distinct, even incompatible stories. While Australian politicians concerned about perceived Japanese military and economic threats sought to limit Japanese immigration and photographic activity, Japanese photographers developed thriving practices and social relationships in Australia.

Extending the previous chapter’s discussion of how Australians interpreted the Australia–Japan relationship symbolically in photographs, this chapter examines how conflicting aspects of this relationship were negotiated up close through interpersonal relations and the creative practices of Anglo-Australian and Japanese photographers in the pre–World War I (WWI) and interwar period. Several Japanese photographers developed thriving businesses and practices in different parts of the country from the late nineteenth century to WWII, including in the remote West Australian town of Broome. By focusing largely on the work of two Japanese photographers in Sydney, this chapter examines how their commercial, personal and artistic practices were also entangled with international trade, diplomacy and fashion.

Japanese Photographers and ‘White Australia’

Kagiya's and Ishida's entries into ‘White Australia’ differed significantly. The absence of arrival documents for Kagiya clouds his early years in Australia in mystery. Although some historians suspect that Kagiya landed in Sydney illegally as a teenager in 1906 or 1907, Kagiya provided a very different story to immigration officials in 1934. In a statutory declaration, Kagiya noted that he was born in Gifu Prefecture in 1890 and that he came to Thursday Island as an infant when his father took work in the pearl shell industry. Kagiya described being taken to live with family friends in Mackay on the eastern coast of Queensland after his father's death in 1897 or 1898. At this time, many of Queensland's 3,247 resident Japanese were encouraged to move south from Thursday Island to Queensland's sugar growing regions, including

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5 NSW Branch Department of Immigration, 'Ichiro Kagiya [Applicant for Exemption from the Dictation Test under the Immigration Act and for Admission of His Wife into the Commonwealth], 1934–5', National Archives of Australia (NAA) SP42/1 C1934/4618.
around Townsville and MacKay, where employment opportunities were more plentiful. It is telling that, when Japan established its first consulate in Australia in March 1896, it chose to locate it in Townsville in the region favoured by Japanese immigrants and indentured labourers. Kagiyama claimed that he spent 14 years in Mackay before moving to Adelaide for one year, and then Sydney around 1913, where he remained resident until he returned to Japan in 1941 amid rising tensions between his homeland and the Allies.

The disparity in arrival dates between those suggested by historians and that described by Kagiyama is significant; Japanese people were subject to a very different set of immigration laws in Australia in the mid-1890s and 1907. The time that Kagiyama claimed he and his father arrived at Thursday Island coincided with a period of relatively relaxed travel requirements, when the movement of individual indentured labourers was not well documented. During the mid to late 1890s, anxieties about Japanese control over the pearl shelling industry were growing and some Queenslanders feared that Thursday Island was in danger of becoming a Japanese colony. After 1898, no Japanese were permitted to land in Queensland without a passport. The Immigration Restriction Act imposed more stringent restrictions on Japanese immigration, described in the previous chapter, including requiring non-Anglo Europeans to sit a complicated European language dictation test. Further changes in the law in 1904 allowed Japanese tourists, students and merchants to enter for one year on passports without being subject to the dictation test. Applications could be made for a Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDT), which allowed Japanese people to stay in Australia for up to three years. Kagiyama’s 1934 interview and statutory declaration were part of his application for a CEDT—the first such application from him on record—which coincided with his first return trip to Japan.

The absence of immigration documents for Kagiyama’s initial arrival in Australia, and current restrictions on accessing personal family records in Japan that could verify the time and place of death of

Kagiyama’s father, make it impossible to confirm the veracity of his story. A descendant of one of Kagiyama’s friends in Takayama, where he returned after WWII, suggested that he arrived in Australia illegally as a young man. Whether it was a carefully planned fabrication designed to obscure his illegal entry into Australia or the truth, Kagiyama’s explanation of his time in Australia satisfied immigration officials enough to allow him to remain resident.9

Ishida had a very different experience, arriving in Sydney in 1919. As an employee of the Okura Trading Company (a subsidiary of the large Okura-gumi), Ishida was one of a ‘new breed of company men’ who were sent to work in branch offices in ports around the Asia-Pacific.10 Japanese firms such as Kuwahata, Kanematsu, Nakamura and Iida all had offices in Sydney, and their senior merchants were well connected with the Japanese consul and Sydney society. The nature of Ishida’s work meant that he lived in Sydney for a relatively short period between 1919 and 1923. Cremorne and the adjoining north shore suburb of Mosman became popular homes for Japanese merchant families. Kagiyama’s environment was not as salubrious as that enjoyed by Ishida and his fellow merchants. During the mid-1910s, he worked as a laundry worker, presser and dyer in Cowper Street, Waverley, later starting his own commercial photography studio in Woollahra. Yet, the two men found common ground through their shared love of photography and became valued members of the Photographic Society of NSW. Although neither man left behind written accounts of their perspectives on Australia and its photography, their photographs and those of their peers offer valuable insight into the complexity of the Australia–Japan relationship in this era.

Personal Photographic Encounters

As a member of the Photographic Society of NSW from around 1914, Kagiyama refined his skills by working with some of Sydney’s most accomplished practitioners, including Harold Cazneaux and Monte Luke. The society was established in 1872 in response to the growing popularity of photography among amateurs. As its name suggests, it was driven by social interaction between photographers. Members exchanged photographs, gained feedback on their work and attended monthly meetings at which they would ‘receive hints and otherwise improve

9 NAA SP42/1 C1934/4618.
10 Frei, Japan’s Southward Advance and Australia, 118.
their knowledge of the art’. At this time, the Photographic Society of NSW was heavily focused on pictorialism. This mode of photography was popularised in Europe, the US and Britain in the 1890s and soon gained a wide following in Australia. Motivated by the desire to fulfil the artistic potential of photography, pictorialists used control processes including bromoil, carbon pigment, oil prints or gum bichromate to subdue details, lower or raise tone and strengthen highlights in their photographs. Although pictorialism has now become synonymous with aesthetic qualities such as low-tone and soft, romantic ‘fuzzy’ effects, in early twentieth-century Australia the term referred more broadly to the art of photography.

The society also organised social gatherings and excursions to the beaches, parks and bush surrounding Sydney so that members could practice their craft and consider questions of lighting, subject matter and composition together. A photograph taken by Cazneaux on one of these excursions around 1915 shows a young, dapper Kagiyama posing among a large group of members with their photographic equipment in tow (see Figure 2.1). Kagiyama also took photographs of his fellow photographers during these outings and kept these photographs in his (recently rediscovered) personal album, indicating that the social aspect of such excursions was as important to him as the opportunities they afforded to photograph new subjects. Other photographs assembled in this rare album capture Sydney’s York Street, the Queen Victoria Market, the Art Gallery of NSW, the Domain, Hyde Park, the University of Sydney and St Mary’s Cathedral, and collectively create the impression of a roving photographer eagerly exploring the city. These city views stand in contrast to the ‘tourist gaze’ described by John Urry as a means of controlling the unfamiliar world from afar and ‘combining detachment and mystery’. As a resident of Sydney, Kagiyama was no tourist. His photographs demonstrate that he was thoroughly immersed in the city, part of the crowd on a curbside, in a park or amid the throngs in Central Station.

13 The album was found by the authors in Takayama, Japan in the possession of a descendant of one of Kagiyama’s friends, who inherited it upon Kagiyama’s death.
Kagiyama’s personal photographs also capture the intercultural friendships and relationships that flourished in Sydney and highlight the way that photography operated as a medium for building social connections.\textsuperscript{15} Relationships between Anglo-Australian women and Japanese men were not uncommon in Sydney in the early to mid-twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16} Kagiyama himself married an Anglo-Australian woman named Cicelia Howard Walker in 1916. Cicelia was 19 years old and Kagiyama was still working as a cleaner and presser at the time of their marriage. The couple had a daughter who died in infancy and then a son, Harno, who was born in 1920. Some of Kagiyama’s photographs depict other unnamed Japanese men, their Australian wives and their children (see Figure 2.2), or show Anglo-Australian and Japanese people picnicking together in a national park. The act of huddling together as a social or familial unit and posing for the camera was part of the social activities that connected Kagiyama to his sitters.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\textsuperscript{16} Oliver, ‘Japanese Relationships in White Australia’, 5.16.
Figure 2.2. Attributed to Ichiro Kagiyama, *Untitled [Portrait of Japanese-Australian Family]*, c. 1915.

Source: Private Collection.
In 1915, Kagiyama photographed Hideo Kuwahata, his English-born Australian wife Mary, their sons Thomas and Frederick, and other unknown Japanese guests at the family home, Mikado Farm. After Kuwahata came to Australia in 1888, he established a small import business in Sydney. He soon expanded the business to supply shipping companies Nippon Yusen Kaisha and Osaka Shosen Kaisha and the Japanese Navy. Mikado Farm in Guildford, NSW, became Kuwahata’s home in 1908. It also operated as a nursery specialising in Japanese plants. The farm was an important social space for Japanese residents and visitors to Sydney who would visit Kuwahata’s home for weekends of fishing, photography and picnics. According to Pam Oliver, ‘over 80 per cent of sailors off Japanese ships at Sydney and Newcastle before 1920 gave this farm as their shore address’.17 As well as being behind the lens, Kagiyama appears with the family in some of his photographs of Mikado Farm, suggesting a personal relationship. One photograph featuring Kagiyama, Hideo and Mary Kuwahata and an unidentified guest has been hand coloured in an effort to communicate some of the vibrancy of Kuwahata’s gardens (see Figure 2.3). Although the result is somewhat crude, the use of this time-consuming process to colour the flowers, grass, trees, bridge, greenhouse and clothing worn by the sitters speaks to the value that this place held for Kagiyama.

Photography and Japonisme

Compellingly, these cross-cultural social relationships flourished amid a public culture in which Japanese racial stereotypes ran deep. Kagiyama lived and worked in a city enamoured of things Japanese. Described today as part of a European trend known as Japonisme,18 the fashionable presence of Japanese-inspired decorative arts, kimono, floral arrangements and silks in Sydney’s shops and visual culture provided inspiration to several local photographers and shaped the reception of Kagiyama’s work. The popularity of Japanese art and goods from the mid-1910s to the mid-1930s followed an earlier wave of Japonisme, which was fostered by the enthusiastic reception of the Japanese courts and products at the

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18 For more on Japonisme see Lionel Lambourne, Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West (London and New York: Phaidon, 2005); Toshio Watanabe, High Victorian Japonisme (Berlin and New York: Peter Lang, 1991).
Sydney and Melbourne International and Intercolonial exhibitions of 1875, 1877, 1879 and 1880. The ready availability of Japanese goods in Australian stores further fed this burgeoning market, and Japanese motifs and aesthetics soon found their way into Australian art, such as Charles Condor’s paintings *Bronte Beach* (1888) and *A Holiday at Mentone* (1888), and Tom Roberts’s portrait *Mrs L. A. Abrahams* (1888). The second wave of *Japonisme* in the early twentieth century was the product of several additional factors including increased Australian tourism to Japan and strengthening political, military and trade relations.

This trend was strongly evident in Sydney’s photography culture. From 1911, the Sydney-based publication *Harrington’s Photographic Journal* often included illustrated articles on the delights promised by Japan as a travel destination for the photographer and the latest Japanese photography journals and books that could be purchased.  

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annual *Photograms of the Year* disseminated the work of Japanese photographers internationally from 1914. Read eagerly in Australia, this publication also routinely featured the work of Australian pictorialists including members of the Photographic Society of NSW. The Japanese photographs selected for publication were dominated overwhelmingly by imagery of bathhouses, pagodas, geishas, bamboo and idyllic rural scenes. These clichés were so entrenched that in 1915 they inspired a protest by photographer H. Yahagi in one of his regular written contributions to *Photograms of the Year*:

> I would like to preface my remarks about the pictorial photography of Japan by drawing attention to the fact that we, as a nation, deeply regret the misunderstanding that exists with regard to Japan and its people. It seems strange that in these days of travel, when the nations of the world are linked together by steamboats and Continental railways, there should still be a lingering idea in the world that Japan is only a half-civilised land, the principal attraction of which is the questionable Geisha, the old dreamy pagoda rearing its head above the pines, the Ronin of a bygone age, and the feathery bamboo groves—sure symbols of a primitive people. Such are to be seen, but they do not constitute the things that enable one to get to the heart of modern Japan. 20

Yahagi went on to cite the many admirable qualities of modern Japan, including its education system, respect for modern science and interest in international affairs. However, his plea fell on deaf ears, as *Photograms of the Year* continued to publish photographs based on a very limited range of stereotypes for decades to come.

Not only did Kagiyama encounter such stereotypes on spectacular display in Sydney, he also turned them into subjects for his own photographs. In 1915, Kagiyama took three photographs of the Japanese Village in the White City amusement park, which operated in the Sydney suburb of Rushcutters Bay between 1913 and 1917 (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5). Sydney’s White City was one of dozens of similarly named amusement parks established in the US, Britain and Australia. Inspired by the White City and Midway Plaisance sections of Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exhibition of 1893, White Cities typically combined entertainment with ‘educational’ displays and experiences such as a ‘native village’.

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Figure 2.4. Attributed to Ichiro Kagiyama, *Untitled [White City]*, c. 1915. 
Source: Private Collection.

Figure 2.5. Attributed to Ichiro Kagiyama, *Untitled [White City]*, c. 1915. 
Source: Private Collection.
The promise of a ‘real’ Japanese encounter recurred in press coverage of Sydney’s White City. The *Truth* promoted the Japanese Village as one of the most interesting attractions:

> There has been no attempt at artifice in the creation of this model village—everything is real and directly imported. Real Japanese houses, flower gardens, museums, temples, workshops, lily ponds, and the innumerable crazy, curved, and twisted bridges, without which no Japanese picture would be correct.21

The presence of acrobats, contortionists, sword swallowers and ‘Samurai sword-dualists’ did not dampen enthusiasm for the supposed realism of the village.22

Kagiya’s photographs of the Japanese Village suggest that this supposedly ‘authentic’ cultural encounter was underpinned by familiar stereotypes. The photographs show the large crowds of Anglo-Australians who flocked to the Japanese Village, its teahouse, kimono-wearing women attendants, Japanese garden and pond, decorative bridge, and buildings adorned with flags and lanterns. Murals crudely interpreting Japanese prints, and screens depicting a sailboat and a figure with irises, form evocative backdrops. It is intriguing to imagine how Kagiya made sense of this spectacle. His photographs seem to treat the village and its hordes of visitors as a curiosity; they are photographed in a somewhat stark manner, rather than as a subject for creative expression to be artfully composed. One photograph (Figure 2.5) centres on a house in which kimono-clad Japanese women sell fans, bowls and mobiles to visitors. Kagiya deliberately includes the large sign proclaiming ‘this is an actual Japanese House built in Tokio’, which could have easily been cropped out of the photograph. He perhaps found these claims for authenticity amusing.

Australian stereotypes of a feminine, artistic and childlike Japan were perpetuated in the press, and in turn shaped the experiences of other visitors to the village. In the ‘Woman’s Page’ in the *Freeman’s Journal*, a writer described the village as ‘very fascinating’ and ‘truly Japanese’:

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Several Japanese families are in actual residence there, and one may wander through the quaint little houses and carry on a conversation with the inmates … There is a tea-house where a charming Madame Butterfly dispenses tea in truly Japanese fashion, whilst her little son, six or even seven years old, talks to the visitors and begs them to come again with a perfectly delightful accent.\(^{23}\)

The author’s reference to Madame Butterfly underscores the importance of theatre in propagating impressions of Japan. David Belasco’s play *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* toured Australia early in the century, while Puccini’s opera, which was based on the same story, made its Australian debut in 1910. Other immensely popular Japanese-inspired performances of this period include *The Mikado*, *The Geisha*, *Moonlight Blossom*, *The Japanese Nightingale* and *The Darling of the Gods*.\(^{24}\) These performances helped to cement romantic notions of Japan as a feminine and artistic land in the minds of many Australians.

Some of these stereotypes informed the work of Kagiyama’s peers in the Photographic Society of NSW. Monte Luke’s photograph *The Girl in the Kimona* (c. 1919) was published in *Harringtons’ Photographic Journal* in 1919 (see Figure 2.6). Now known only through this magazine reproduction, this full-length portrait of an Anglo-European woman wearing a sumptuous embroidered kimono diverges from Luke’s more well-known landscape photographs and portraits. Wearing chrysanthemums in her hair and clutching an arrangement of chrysanthemums and wheat, *The Girl in the Kimona* embodies contemporary perceptions of Japan as the delicate, feminine and exotic ‘Land of the Chrysanthemum’, made famous decades earlier in Pierre Loti’s book *Madame Chrysanthème* (1888). The dramatic stance of Luke’s model mirrors the posture of popular Japanese dolls sold as tourist souvenirs and collectables, and photographed later by Kagiyama (see Figure 2.7). So familiar were audiences with these highly stylised signifiers of Japan that they crystallised as truth; the editors of *Harringtons’ Photographic Journal* proclaimed that Luke’s model’s ‘bend of the knees gives the true Japanese effect’.\(^{25}\)

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23 ‘Woman’s Page’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 1 January 1914, 29.
Wartime Ambivalences

While these Japanese-inspired photographs and the enthusiastic public reception of White City’s Japanese Village suggest broad public support for Japan, behind the scenes Japan’s growing military might and participation in WWI generated significant political anxiety and diplomatic tension. Kagiyama was a keen observer at Sydney’s public celebrations of Japan’s military capacity. Six photographs in his personal album focus on military parades in which Japanese flags decorate the city among the flags of other Allied nations. One of these captures the celebrations as crowds watch a passing convoy of cars decorated with Japanese national flags, naval flags and flowers (see Figure 2.8). Kagiyama stood in the thick of the parade, at street level between the procession and long line of spectators. The exaggerated perspective that results heightens the atmosphere so that we can almost hear the cars rattle and rumble past the cheering crowd.
However, news reports in the Japanese press about its future southward expansion and ongoing diplomatic disputes about Australia’s efforts to limit Japanese immigration fuelled official concerns about Japan’s motives for supporting Britain during WWI. 26 One fear was that Japan would seek rewards for its wartime service and pressure the Commonwealth to allow its citizens to enter Australia freely. The Australian government was also troubled that Japan could secure former German territories in the Pacific, leaving Australia vulnerable to future attacks from the north. Japanese Consul General Shimizu urged his audience at a gathering in Sydney in 1915 to ‘most earnestly disabuse your minds of the suspicion that we have an ulterior or sinister objective in view’. 27 However, those suspicions continued to rise, and were reinforced by a major Naval

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27 ‘Japan’s Loyalty’, *Western Champion*, 29 April 1915, 29.
Board survey of Japan’s status as a strategic threat. One Japanese diplomat commented on the effects of this atmosphere on Japanese photographers: ‘If they see our tourists taking photographs in the streets, they immediately think that they are spies. They fear Japan in the way you fear a bogeyman in the dark.’

In the aftermath of WWI, the cumulative success of Japan’s military and its seemingly inevitable place as one of the world’s great powers exacerbated anxieties about maintaining a ‘White Australia’. Japanese photographers were again placed under suspicion. Captain Longfield Lloyd, a member of Army Intelligence commented:

The use of cameras by Japanese ship officers is proverbial, and indicates either a most remarkable liking for photography on the part of the Japanese, or a careful and consistent encouragement in the use of the camera by their Government.

Lloyd described how, at the end of the war, there was ‘an epidemic of photography by the officers of Japanese vessels in Sydney’. These officers were typically placed under surveillance, and if they were seen photographing within the Port of Sydney the War Precautions Act 1914 was invoked to seize their cameras, destroy their negatives and forward their empty cameras to the Japanese consul general with a written reprimand for the captain and crew. Lloyd was concerned that:

With constant photography on the part of almost every Japanese officer who comes to the port, some negatives at least would be valuable to an Intelligence Bureau engaged in building up a complete system of local knowledge.

According to Henry Frei, ‘Australian Japanophobia rose to a crescendo’ at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, the year that Ishida arrived in Sydney. Prime Minster Hughes fought to quash Japan’s proposed racial equality clause in the League of Nations preamble, resist Japan’s claims to the German possessions in the south-west Pacific and secure those islands as what the Weekly Times described as ‘White Australia’s Bulwarks’

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31 Frei, Japan’s Southward Advance and Australia, 109.
against Japan. Suspicion of Japanese intentions towards Australia escalated, so much so that during celebrations for the emperor’s birthday at the Japanese Consulate in Sydney in 1920 a senior political dignitary, R.W. Caldwell, made an apology to the acting consul general in front of the assembled politicians, diplomats, businessmen and military men:

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my deep regret and shame at the recrudescence of anti-Japanese prejudice, which has taken place in Australia since the conclusion of the late war. So many of the prognostications of anti-Japanese prophets were disproved by the faithful performance of her treaty obligations by Japan during the great struggle that her detractors have had to take a new position. They deny that Japan did anything at all during the war, or assert that, if she did, she did it from interested motives.

Tensions were exacerbated by a postwar naval arms race between the US and Japan that raised renewed fears of war on Australia’s doorstep. However, the situation changed at the Washington Conference of 1921–22. The resultant Four Power Treaty between the US, Japan, the British Empire and France involved an agreement to respect one another’s possessions and dominions in the Pacific, while the Five Power Treaty eased the pressure of the arms race by limiting naval construction until 1936. The conference ushered in a new period of optimism and confidence towards Japan. In the wake of this event, Defence Minister George Pearce declared in parliament that Australia was beginning a new era of peaceful relations with the ‘Far North’. Pearce noted that while ‘Australians were Europeans in race they were geographically in Asia’, and that it was therefore critical that peace in the Pacific was maintained.

Aesthetic Relations Between the Wars

Despite the tensions of the Peace Conference, Ishida received a warm welcome into Sydney’s photography community after arriving in 1919. Ishida brought a camera with him so that he could send snapshots home to his parents, but took up photography seriously after meeting Kagiyama

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33 ‘Japan. The Emperor’s Birthday. Relations with Britain’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1920, 8.
and receiving some lessons from his new friend. Kagiyama invited Ishida to join the Photographic Society of NSW and by 1920 Ishida was successfully entering his photographs in national and international competitions, exhibitions and salons including the 1920 London Salon. President of the Photographic Society of NSW, D.J. Webster, encapsulated Ishida’s dramatic rise to prominence when he described him in 1922 as ‘that photographic meteorite from the East that swooped down in our midst with hurricane suddenness’. In another article dedicated to Ishida, published the same year in Harrington’s Photographic Journal, Webster wrote glowingly of the photographer:

I do not know of one who is more versatile or more consistently prolific … He is keen, enthusiastic and receptive, with an aesthetic temperament, that I am sure will carry him even higher up the pictorial ladder.

Ishida quickly mastered the control processes that the pictorialists admired, especially bromoil. This technique allowed practitioners to limit their photographs’ tonal range and eliminate detail, leaving a soft, matt surface. Ishida’s work so impressed Sydney’s leading photographers that in 1921 he was invited to become a member of the exclusive Sydney Camera Circle. It is telling that Australian journalists covering the 1922 and 1923 London Salons of Photography described Ishida as one of the Australian exhibitors. Practically and aesthetically, he was an Australian photographer. Ishida learned about composition and lighting from members of the Photographic Society and Sydney Camera Circle, and on group outings they photographed beach scenes, pastoral idylls and bush landscapes. Ishida’s photographs unsurprisingly bear similarities to the work of his peers. A White Gum (c. 1922) (see Figure 2.9), which Ishida presented in the 1922 Photographic Society of NSW exhibition, reflects the popularity of photographing single, majestic gum trees in Australian pictorialism. Such photographs were often given patriotic titles, such as John Kauffmann’s The Battler, The Survivor and Victory (all published in his 1919 monograph The Art of John Kauffmann), Eutrope’s Guardian Gum (c. 1920–30) and Eaton’s In Stately Splendor (1929). Although Ishida did not opt for such a title, he similarly framed A White Gum in

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37 D.J. Webster, ‘Mr K. Ishida’, Harrington’s Photographic Journal, 1 September 1922, 23.
Figure 2.9. Kiichiro Ishida, A White Gum.

Source: Catalogue of an Exhibition Camera Pictures by the Photographic Society of N.S.W., 1922 (Sydney: Photographic Society of New South Wales, 1922), plate V.
a manner that monumentalises the tree. The use of bromoil to soften the scrubby undergrowth accentuates the pictorial authority of the tree and emphasises its thick trunk and enormous branches.

Looking at the variety of Ishida’s work from this period, which included photographs of industrial workers, city scenes, portraits, landscapes and still life, it is not surprising that Webster described him as ‘one of Australia’s leading Pictorialists’. Webster continued, ‘when we consider that Australia has such camera artists as Cazneaux and Smith, of Sydney, Kauffman and Temple Stephens, of Adelaide, this is a great compliment to our little friend from Japan’. Webster’s description of Ishida as ‘our little friend from Japan’ will likely be jarring to contemporary readers. Although Ishida was respected by the photography community in Sydney as one of its own, Webster’s allusion to stereotypes of the childlike Japanese highlights how old, entrenched racial prejudices can nonetheless seep into supposedly positive, personal and artistic relations.

As well as sharing characteristics of Australian pictorialism, the work of Ishida and some his Anglo-Australian peers reveal evidence of a common interest in Japanese compositional devices. As seen in ukiyo-e woodblock prints, Ishida’sMountain Decoration(see Figure 2.10) features branches and foliage that act as a screen through which the distant landscape is viewed. Ishida’s use of light, shade and contrast also works to reduce the Australian mountain range to a series of imbricated planes in a manner that recalls Japanese sumi-e black ink scroll paintings. It is not clear whether Ishida was consciously imaging the Australian landscape using Japanese composition or applying photography lessons that he learned in Australia. Cazneaux’s landscape The Bidding of Spring (later retitledSpring Time) (c. 1919), Kauffmann’sThro’ the Fog(c. 1919) and Stanley Eutrope’sWinter’s Curtain(c. 1922) (see Figure 2.11) affirm that Australians were experimenting with the Japanese ‘photography of hanging branches’ before and after Ishida’s arrival in Australia. Eutrope used bromoil inWinter’s Curtain to dissolve some of the detail of the distant river and bridge, and flatten and radically simplify the pictorial plane. Seen through the ‘curtain’ of weeping winter foliage, the view and its watery reflection seem to merge into one space. Ishida may

Figure 2.10. Kiichiro Ishida, *Mountain Decoration*.
Source: *Photograms of the Year 1923* (London: Iliffe & Sons Ltd, 1924).
Figure 2.11. Stanley Eutrope, *Winter’s Curtain*, c. 1922.
Source: Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane.
have also seen these techniques in *Photograms of the Year*, particularly in US photographer Rupert Lovejoy’s own *Mountain Decoration* published in 1919.

Although today’s curators and commentators have noted these links between modernist Australian photographs and Japanese prints, when Cazneaux’s and Eutrope’s photographs were originally published and exhibited in Australia their nods to Japanese art went unmentioned.41 J.T. Farrell, editor of *Harringtons’ Photographic Journal*, described Cazneaux’s *The Bidding of Spring* in 1919 as ‘a creation of the fancy, with delicate tone values and light tracery symbolical of the artist’s conception of the impression of Spring’.42 Similarly, when Eutrope’s photograph was published in *Cameragraphs of the Year 1924*, Cazneaux praised the bromoil for its rendition of the ‘tender passage of light’ and made no mention of a Japanese influence.43 The fact that this two-way exchange of Australian and Japanese compositional devices was unremarkable at the time suggests they were part of a relaxed and open exchange of pictorial ideas and images that were not necessarily fixed to national identities or clearly delineated patterns of cross-cultural appropriation.

The creative and interpersonal exchange between Ishida, Kagiyama and Sydney’s leading photographers continued after Ishida’s departure in December 1923. Before he left, Ishida donated 10 pounds to the Sydney Camera Circle and asked that in return each of its members give him some prints as a memento. Ishida took 25 of their prints back to Japan, along with prints by Kagiyama, and exhibited 15 of them at the Shiseido Gallery in Ginza in March 1924 with 31 of his own photographs. The exhibition was highly praised and works by Sydney Camera Circle members were subsequently published in the Japanese periodical *Asahi Camera* in 1926 and 1927. A Japanese translation of a profile on Monte Luke written by US photographer and critic Sigismund Blumann was also published in *Asahi Camera* alongside examples of Luke’s work in May 1926, exposing Japanese audiences to the work and reputation of this Australian.44

41 For example, see the discussion of Cazneaux’s *Spring Time* in Judy Annear, ‘Kiichiro Ishida and the Sydney Camera Circle’, *Look*, December 2003, 19.
The Home and the 1930s

The open exchange between Kagiyama, Ishida and the amateur photographic society in the 1920s contrasts with the fetishisation of Kagiyama’s Japanese vision in his early contributions to The Home. Before Kagiyama took work with The Home in 1935, the magazine developed an established record for promoting Japanese-inspired art and design to its readers as the height of modern fashion. Produced in Sydney by the artist, publisher and high profile figure in the Australian art world, Sydney Ure Smith,45 The Home aimed to raise the tastes of Australians by presenting the best products and people using the best production values.46 The cover of the first issue of The Home in 1920 featured a woman holding a Japanese umbrella, and was followed by several cover designs in the coming years inspired by Japanese woodblock prints.47 The cover of the summer 1921 issue, designed by Bertha Sloane, draws on the simplicity, crisp outlines and bright colours of Japanese woodblocks to image a stylishly dressed Australian woman enjoying time at the beach with her children (see Figure 2.12). She sits beneath a bamboo-framed Japanese umbrella decorated with colourful blossoms, which occupies the central focal point of the composition. Readers of The Home were also able to witness the impact of Japanese woodcuts on Thea Proctor’s fashion illustrations and fan designs, and on Margaret Preston’s still life paintings.48

Other issues throughout the 1920s and 1930s featured photographs by Max Dupain and Spencer Shier of Australian society ladies and models wearing kimonos or clutching sprigs of cherry blossom, and articles promoting the art of Japanese floral arrangement or design.49 Cazneaux took a number of jobs for The Home in the 1920s and 1930s in which he photographed the homes of significant figures in Australia–Japan relations. In the late 1920s, he travelled to Mikado Farm to photograph Hideo Kuwahata’s gardens. Cazneaux’s photographs of Kuwahata’s bonsais featured in the same issue as his photograph of the iris pond

45 Although Ure Smith sold The Home to John Fairfax & Sons Ltd in 1934, he continued to act as editor until 1938.
47 Other Japanese-inspired covers were featured in the February 1920, December 1921, December 1922 and January 1932 issues of The Home.
48 See The Home, March 1923; June 1934; December 1934.
49 The Home February 1926; July 1935; April 1937; May 1932.
Figure 2.12. Cover design for *The Home*, December 1921.
at ‘Rivenhall’, the Japanese-inspired home and garden of Arthur Sadler in the upper north shore suburb of Warrawee. Sadler was professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney between 1922 and 1947, and known for his collection of Japanese art.

The prevalence of Japanese motifs in *The Home* was complemented by articles and photographic portraits of Japanese dignitaries, including Madame K. Inoue, the wife of the former Japanese consul general in Australia; Count Kato, the prime minister of Japan; Japan’s new princess Shigeko, Teru-no-Miya; and Iemasa Tokugawa, the first Japanese minister to Canada and his family. This promotion of Japan reflects Ure Smith’s longstanding interest in Japanese culture. The publisher was a supporter of the Australia-Japan Society and socialised with Sydney’s Japanese merchants, diplomats and Japanophiles. As a guest at Japanese consul events, including official celebrations of the emperor’s birthday in 1930, 1931 and 1932, Ure Smith mixed with the consul general and senior Japanese merchants of Sydney, as well as figures like Sadler. In 1935, Ure Smith also undertook discussions ‘with a Japanese authority’ in the hope of leading to an exchange of Japanese and Australian art exhibitions.

It is likely that Ure Smith’s interest in Japan led him to hire Kagiyama as a photographer for *The Home*. By this stage, Kagiyama had opened his own studio, counting as clients the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Atlantic Union Oil Company among other firms. Although Kagiyama’s photographs of contemporary Sydney contrasted with the Japanese-inspired imagery that pervaded *The Home*, the fashionable interest in Japan initially framed the publication of his work. A spread of photographs of shrines, temples and bustling streets in contemporary Tokyo—taken in 1934 during Kagiyama’s first return trip to Japan since arriving in Australia—was included in the May 1935 issue. Kagiyama’s first contribution of photographs of Sydney was published in November that year. Despite living and working in Sydney for well over 20 years, Kagiyama’s photographs were presented as a foreign encounter under the headline ‘Sydney—Seen Through Japanese Eyes’ (see Figure 2.13).

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50 Cazneaux’s photographs of Sadler and his wife in their Japanese home and garden appeared in the February 1928 and July 1932 issues.
52 *The Home*, August 1922; May 1926; June 1926; November 1931.
53 ‘Relations with Japan. New Society Formed’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 October 1928, 12.
Figure 2.13. Ichiro Kagiyama, ‘Sydney—Seen Through Japanese Eyes’.
Apart from the spread’s attention-grabbing headline, the brief introductory text made no mention of Kagiyama’s Japanese heritage or its potential impact on his view of Sydney. Kagiyama’s photographs were praised for capturing the true ‘character of Sydney’ and described as the result of ‘the discriminating eye of the artist and each picture is a perfect little composition’. The phrase ‘perfect little composition’ recalls the tendency to describe the Japanese and Japanese culture as little, dainty, artistic or delicate, as in the description of Ishida as our ‘little friend from Japan’. Other allusions to stereotyped visions of Japan were evident in the selection and placement of Kagiyama’s photographs. The largest photograph at the bottom of the first page and another placed prominently at the centre top offer views of the city framed by hanging branches from a Morton Bay fig tree. This compositional device would have been familiar to readers as a signifier of quintessential Japan seen in tourist advertising and contemporary photographs inspired by Japan. Indeed, there is a striking compositional similarity between Kagiyama’s photograph of Sydney Harbour Bridge and the image of ‘Japan the Fascinating’ in an NYK Line travel advertisement published in The Home earlier the same year (see Figure 2.14).

There is nothing particularly Japanese about Kagiyama’s vision of Sydney in the other 12 crisp, sharply focused black and white photographs included in the spread. The photographs are a salute to modern Sydney, its iconic Harbour Bridge, shipping industry and bustling city. There is dynamism and energy in these images. Cars rush through busy streets lined with high-rise buildings, while electric tramlines mirror the sweep of the road overhead. The most dramatic photograph is on the second page: Kagiyama’s study of the British Medical Association building on Macquarie Street, completed in 1930 (see Figure 2.15). Kagiyama accentuates the soaring vertical lines and geometric finishes of the Art Deco architecture by framing it at a diagonal, which creates the impression of the building surging skywards. A window washer dangles precariously from a rope midway down as though the building is dragging him along for the ride. It seems as though the views through hanging branches were selected by the editors for the first page of the spread to accentuate the impression of an essentially Japanese vision.

56 Ibid., 38.
VISIT THE
COLOURFUL
ORIENT
BY N.Y.K. LINE

The colourful Orient with its modern tourist facilities well deserves the distinction of being the pleasantest of recreation lands affording unending interest and indescribable charm to foreign visitors.

ROUND TRIP FARES:
To Yokohama £90
To Hong Kong £76
(NO EXCHANGE)

Monthly sailings by
ATSUTA MARU, 8,000 tons
KAMO MARU, 8,000 tons
KITANO MARU, 8,000 tons

BURNS, PHILP
& CO. LTD.
Managing Agents in
Australasia

NYK
LINE

Sydney, Brisbane,
Townsville,
Thursday Island,
Auckland, Wellington.

NIPPON YUSEN KAISHA, HEAD OFFICE, TOKYO
Dalgety & Co. Ltd., Melbourne.
McIlwraith McEachern Ltd., Adelaide.

Figure 2.14. Advertisement for NYK Line.
Source: The Home, July 1935.
However, soon after Kagiyama appears to be treated like any other photographer. Over the following three years, *The Home* published many of Kagiyama’s photographs of Sydney and its suburbs, the Australian bush and the properties of well-known graziers without mention of his ‘Japanese vision’. The soft pictorialism seen in Kagiyama’s work from the 1920s had been replaced with crisp, clear photographs of Sydney and its people. In several photo essays, Kagiyama represented well-known Australian myths including the landscape tradition and the role of the bronzed lifesaver as a symbol of masculine, albeit Sydney-centric,
nationhood in the 1930s. A survey of 16 of Kagiyama’s photographs of Sydney’s modernist apartment buildings, which accompanied the article ‘Modernity in Flats’, reveal Kagiyama’s interest in working with different viewpoints, cropping and unusual angles in architectural photography. Night-time photography is his subject in ‘The Night Falls on King’s Cross Sydney’, in which he used car headlights snaking along wide city streets lined with neon signs, and the glow emanating from Art Deco shop fronts, bars and cafes to create the impression of an exciting, vibrant capital. Together, these photographs document a vibrant time in Sydney’s development.

As well as being a time for developing his profile as a photographer, the 1930s was a period of personal change for Kagiyama. His marriage to Cicelia ended in 1932 and their divorce was finalised in 1934. During his seven-month trip to Japan in 1934, Kagiyama married a woman from Takayama named in Australian immigration documents as both Sadako and Sata. Immigration restrictions meant that she was not permitted to accompany her husband on his trip back to Australia or to stay indefinitely. A 1905 amendment to the Immigration Restriction Act removed the provision for wives and children of non-Europeans residing in Australia to join their spouses, but exceptions could be made on a case-by-case basis for Japanese people who applied through the consulate. Upon Kagiyama’s return to Australia, the Japanese consul applied on Kagiyama’s behalf to have his new wife exempted from the dictation test. The request was granted in 1935. Kagiyama paid a substantial bond of 100 pounds as part of this process and, thanks to his connections to the Japanese trading networks, an unnamed ‘reputable Japanese merchant of Sydney’ accepted surety for that bond. His new wife eventually landed in Australia in August 1939, just two weeks before Great Britain declared war on Germany, bringing Australia as a British nation into WWII.

60 ‘In Divorce’ 1932, 10; ‘In Divorce’, 1933, 5; ‘In Divorce’, 1934, 8, NSW State Archives and Records 1127/1932 and 73/1933.
61 NAA A12508 32/128 and NAA C123 9904.
62 Immigration Restriction Amendment 1905 s 4c; Oliver, ‘Japanese Relationships in White Australia’, 5.5.
63 NAA SP42/1 C1934/4618.
64 NAA A12508 32/128.
The *Home* featured fewer articles and editorials about Japan from late 1937. As news reports of Japanese atrocities in the Second Sino-Japanese War spread throughout Australia from late September 1937, anti-Japanese sentiment began to rise. Torao Wakamatsu, the consul general of Japan who arrived in Australia in February 1937 to help finalise the details of the Japan–Australia trade arrangement, discussed his disappointment at Australia’s reaction to ‘the unfortunate China Incident’. He took issue with what he described as propaganda, false reports and misunderstandings published in the Australian press, including notorious photographs reportedly showing Japanese soldiers using the bodies of Chinese prisoners for bayonet practice. These photographs were discussed in Australian newspapers in late September 1937 and published around the world including in London’s *Daily Mirror*. In his farewell speech to the Japan-Australia Society, Wakamatsu was critical of how this coverage resulted in ‘public movements to boycott Japanese goods, in refusals by wharf labourers to load Japanese ships, and in other forms that threatened to disturb the friendship between the two countries’.  

While the Sino-Japanese War continued, Japan went on the offensive. In June and July 1940, an exhibition of Japanese decorative arts toured Sydney and Melbourne, organised by the Australia-Japan Society, the Society of International Cultural Relations and the Japan Foreign Trade Federation. The exhibition was opened in Sydney by the Japanese consul general, Akiyama. Media coverage of the exhibition emphasised the ‘ancient crafts’, pretty dolls, ‘exquisite’ tea sets, fabrics, bonsai, kimonos and cultured pearls.  

Also featured was a large map of Japanese tourist sites including those in Japanese territories in China occupied as a result of the Sino-Japanese War. Kagiyama covered this exhibition for *The Home* as his final contribution in July 1940. His photographs of an ancient Japanese warrior figurine, dancing geisha doll, bamboo hand bag and shell-shaped cooking pot reinforced the message of the exhibition of Japan as ancient, doll-like, artistic and therefore non-threatening. Two months later, in late September 1940, Japan joined the enemy Axis Powers, Italy and Germany, in a formal Tripartite Pact.

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Rising Suspicions and Looming War

By the late 1930s, the Australian Department of Defence was keeping a close eye on Japanese activities in Australia. Surveillance activities increased exponentially from 1937. The names of Japanese residents of NSW were collected; Japanese social groups, clubs and businesses were scrutinised; and individuals were increasingly shadowed. Department of Defence documents reveal how Japanese photographers were of particular interest. Kagiyama was placed under surveillance in 1938. Although Kagiyama had photographed several sites that were later to become especially sensitive, including the Port at Newcastle, Fort Denison, Bradley’s Head and the navy base at Garden Island—the site where the HMAS Kuttabul was sunk by a Japanese submarine in May 1942—it was not his photography that attracted the attention of security officials. Instead, Kagiyama became the focus of an investigation after a neighbour who operated a tobacco kiosk under Kagiyama’s Kings Cross flat reported some unusual activities. Between October and December 1938, Kagiyama reportedly left a parcel on his doorstep each morning between 8 and 8.10 am. Another man collected that parcel between 8.45 and 9 am the same day. Containing wax cylinders for sound recordings supposedly of radio broadcasts from Tokyo, the contents were deemed to be cause for no further action. The Australian security report conceded that there was a possibility that coded messages were being exchanged through the cylinders, but noted that they were powerless to prevent it. There is anecdotal evidence that Kagiyama was ‘approached by the Japanese army to work as a spy and this he did’. However, gaining access to additional evidence that could either confirm or refute this assertion is currently impossible.

As tensions between Japan and the Allies escalated, including the US Government’s freezing of Japanese assets in retaliation for Japanese incursions into French Indochina, many Japanese merchants and diplomats returned to Japan. Kagiyama left Australia with his new wife.

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68 NAA SP42/1 C1934/4618.
69 Mitsuda, Modernism/Japonism in Photography 1920s–40s, 31.
on 15 August 1941 on board the Japanese repatriation ship the *Kashima Maru*, taking his photographs with him.\(^7^0\) Had the couple remained in Australia, they would have been arrested and interned in one of several internment camps where those classified as ‘enemy aliens’, including thousands of men, women and children of Japanese, German and Italian origin, where detained until the end of the war.\(^7^1\) Back in Takayama, Kagiyama was able to capitalise on the language and photography skills that he had developed in Australia. He worked as an interpreter for the forces of the American-led military Occupation of postwar Japan, in which Australia played a substantial role. The former mayor of Takayama, Shūzō Tsuchikawa, described Kagiyama as a significant support during these years:

> He was a gentle, earnest person with a strong sense of responsibility. The fact that the city of Takayama was well-liked by the Occupying Forces, and got by with no problems, was entirely thanks to this one man’s beautiful, passionate interpreting. I will never forget him.\(^7^2\)

Kagiyama also gave a presentation to the city council, presidents of neighbourhood associations, school staff and the head of the Ladies’ Association in Takayama regarding what to expect from the Allied occupying forces and how to interact with them, given their cultural differences.

The work of Kagiyama and Ishida in Sydney, and the cultural interest in Japan among their Anglo-Australian contemporaries, highlight some of the complexities of Australia–Japan relations in the interwar period. Australia’s relative proximity to Japan, and the ebbs and flows of international politics and diplomacy, ensured that Australian representations of Japan and responses to the work of these Japanese photographers were nuanced and transcended Orientalist clichés. Although stereotypes of diminutive, feminine, ancient and artistic Japan endured over time, they were reinvented and adapted continually with reference to specific political events, changing cultural values and the interpersonal relations among photographers. The dramatic fluctuations in Australian attitudes to Japan—from perceived threat to WWI ally,

\(^7^0\) NAA SP1148/2. In this ‘Passenger List – Outgoing Passengers’ document, the ship’s name is misspelled as Kasima Maru.
\(^7^2\) Shūzō Tsuchikawa, ‘Episodes from the War’s End (Shusen Kobanashi)’, *Hida Shunju*, August 1978, 434.
trading partner to bitter battlefield enemy—meant that these stereotypes took on divergent meanings in the first decades of the twentieth century. The belittling caricatures of Japanese men, used to infantilise Japan in conservative defences of ‘White Australia’, were just as likely to be invoked as a term of endearment to describe ‘our little friend’ Ishida, or to praise Kagiyama’s ‘perfect little compositions’. This process of reinterpreting and adapting familiar stereotypes gave Australian national identities a degree of porosity, allowing aspects of Japanese visual culture, and these two Japanese photographers themselves, to be viewed as both Australian and foreign. Yet, such simplistic ways of understanding racial and cultural differences also amounted to a form of symbolic violence that misrecognised the dynamic and complex character of individuals, societies and their modes of representation. Whether they were linked to friendship or enmity, the very persistence of these stereotypes ultimately gave them a longevity that continued through WWII and well beyond.