WARREN DUNCAN EXHIBITION: AUSTRALIANS IN 1970'S CHINA

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture
澳华艺术文化研究院

Whitlam Institute
WITHIN WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

20 November 2023 to 23 February 2024









Gallery Opening Hours: Monday – Friday (9:30 am – 5:00 pm)
Address: Building EA.G.03, Parramatta South Campus

Foreword

When Warren Duncan was assigned to Beijing by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, it was as foreign correspondent not as photojournalist. But we are very lucky that he was in fact also a committed and highly accomplished photographer with a great eye for people moments. He captured what can now be seen as a most valuable visual record of people and events in the Australia-China connection over the time of his Beijing assignment from 1975 to 1978.

The Australian community in Beijing at that time was tiny. It included the Embassy staff and families, our foreign correspondents, a handful of students, some teachers and other foreign experts employed by the Chinese government. As a result, the correspondents were part of the Australian family and much more closely involved, professionally and socially, with Embassy people and with our official and unofficial visitors from Australia than might be the case in other places. Warren had an excellent vantage point from which to observe and record the lives of Australians in Beijing at work and play.

Uncommon about this collection, at least in the public domain, and what I find invaluable, are the informal, almost domestic, images — from candid photos of leaders and officials on state occasions, to Australians relaxing in the monumental places of Chinese antiquity like the Imperial Palace, the Ming Tombs and the Summer Palace.

There is often a humorous or ironic edge to his visual observations. One of my favourites is of former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in mid-1976 after he had been deposed and was the Opposition Leader, his hand resting on the ancient bronze statue of a crane, his head held up, like that of the crane, imposing, elegant, defiant.

Elsewhere in the collection there are ‘self-sendup’ images of Warren himself, as in his attire for a famous picnic in the grounds of the Ming Tombs at the end of 1976.

I am pleased he has included images of the visit to China of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in 1976. There are so many photos of Whitlam and other

critical people and events in our relations with China that it is almost forgotten that Fraser's visit was itself a landmark. It signalled a definitive burial of the Coalition's anti-China stance and the bipartisan adoption of the China policy Whitlam had introduced when he first won office in 1972. You can see from the images that Fraser seems to be enjoying himself. And I can affirm that both in Beijing and when we went out west to Taiyuan and then Xinjiang he did enjoy himself. Many years later, when I ran into him at a meeting, he recalled that visit and said to me, "It was fun!" His sister-in-law said when I told her later: "Malcolm?! Fun?!" But Warren has given us a glimpse of that.

The Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture (IAC) at Western Sydney University has been very active and proactive in enhancing arts, culture and people-to-people exchanges and mutual understanding between the two countries. I congratulate IAC, its director Professor Jing Han, and Warren Duncan for having produced this wonderful and significant exhibition.



Dr Stephen FitzGerald AO
first Australian Ambassador to China (1973-1976)
5 November 2023 in Sydney



Stephen and Gay FitzGerald's farewell, Ming Tombs, 1976

Introduction

Warren Duncan arrived in Beijing in 1975 to take up his post as the second ABC China correspondent, the only English-speaking broadcast journalist in the Chinese capital at the time. The 1970s saw the breakthrough in Australia-China relations, with the historic visit by Gough Whitlam as the Leader of Opposition in 1972 which led to Australia's recognition of the People's Republic of China later that year. It was the establishment of diplomatic relations that enabled Australian journalists to report on China on the ground and offered Warren a life-changing opportunity and experience. Warren was one of the first Australians to witness the momentous changes taking place in the early years following the establishment of bilateral relations between the two countries.

China in the 1970s was not widely seen by the world and was very different from the China of today. At the time the country was still in the thrall of the Cultural Revolution. Access to information and contact with ordinary Chinese people were tightly controlled. During his posting Warren covered 1976, the fateful year in modern Chinese history when first China experienced the shock of the sudden death of Premier Zhou Enlai and then the Tangshan earthquake, the deadliest in China's history. The death of Mao Zedong that followed shortly afterwards shook China to its core. Then came the fragile installation of Hua Guofeng, the fall of the Gang of Four, and finally the resurrection of the paramount leader Deng Xiaoping who eventually altered the path of China. 1976 also marked the historic visits to China, first by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, then by the former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

Selecting the images for this exhibition from Warren's collection of thousands, in all types of formats, was a daunting task. Thanks to his determination and extraordinary dedication, we are very pleased with our final choice of photographs that capture incredible and illuminating historic moments that were not seen in the public domain, revealing the interactions between Australians and Chinese, including state leaders, diplomats, high ranking officials and ordinary people, and reflecting how China looked to

arriving Australians. The photographs are displayed in six groups. The first group shows images of the former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visiting China in July 1976. The second group includes photos of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser visiting China in June 1976. The third group presents other eminent Australian visitors in China during 1975-1978. The fourth group features Warren's interactions with Chinese people, including his much envied visit to Tibet. The fifth group reveals the fun time enjoyed by the Australian Embassy staff, correspondents and students in China. The last group provides a glimpse of China in the 1970s.

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of Gough Whitlam's historic visit to China as the first Prime Minister of Australia. This exhibition is to commemorate the ongoing significance of that visit to both Australia and China. The photographs shown in this exhibition humanise an exceptional time in history, making it an exhibition not to be missed.

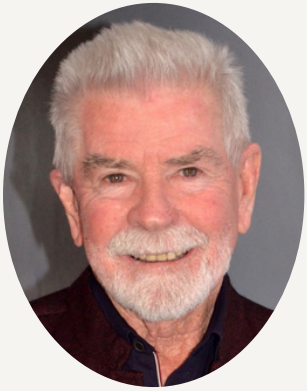


Professor Jing Han
Director, Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture
Western Sydney University



Warren Duncan, Lhasa, 1978

About Warren Duncan



Warren Duncan was born in Townsville, Queensland in 1944. He began his long career in the media when he joined the local commercial radio station 4AY as a cadet journalist and then moved to the ABC at Rockhampton in 1965 while completing a diploma course in journalism at Queensland University. He worked for several years on current affairs programs on both radio and television before moving to Sydney in 1969 where he joined the newly established national team producing the ABC radio programs AM and PM. He was sent to Canberra as the political correspondent for AM and PM and would remain there for almost six years until he was posted to Beijing in 1975 as the ABC's second foreign correspondent following the return of its first, Paul Raffaele.

It was a momentous time to land in China and Warren covered dramatic, world-defining events including the death of Premier Zhou Enlai, the political upheaval and power struggle that followed, the unprecedented earthquake in Tangshan, the death of Mao Zedong and the fall of the Gang of Four. During his posting, he also covered the visit by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in June 1976, and former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's visit in July 1976.

As the only English-speaking broadcaster in Beijing for most of that time, Warren's voice reports were picked up and used by many other international news agencies and he was often called by radio programmes around the world for live interviews. In 1977 he was invited to Oslo to deliver a major paper on the changes happening in China to the annual assembly of the International Press Institute.

In 1980 Warren published with the ABC a photographic record of key moments from his posting, entitled *China: A Three-Year Assignment* which offers both a window into unfolding major events as well as intimate moments of everyday lives in China. The book was launched in Sydney at an exhibition of his photographs by Margaret Whitlam. Warren then toured the exhibition to a dozen different galleries around Australia.

Warren later worked in South America for a number of international broadcasters including the BBC as well as the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Canberra Times* newspapers. He also worked on the ABC's documentary series *Sweat of the Sun, Tears of the Moon* which portrayed the life of the Latin American republics for the first time for Australian audiences. From Argentina he moved to London and then to Spain where he continued his work as a foreign correspondent and photographer.

In 2021 he joined with 24 other Australian journalists who had worked in China to produce *Beijing Bureau*, a history of Australian reporting of China up to the departure of the last two journalists from there in the same year. He now works as media director with the Children's Festival and the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools.



Gough Whitlam, Richard Whitington and Warren Duncan, Tianjin, 1976



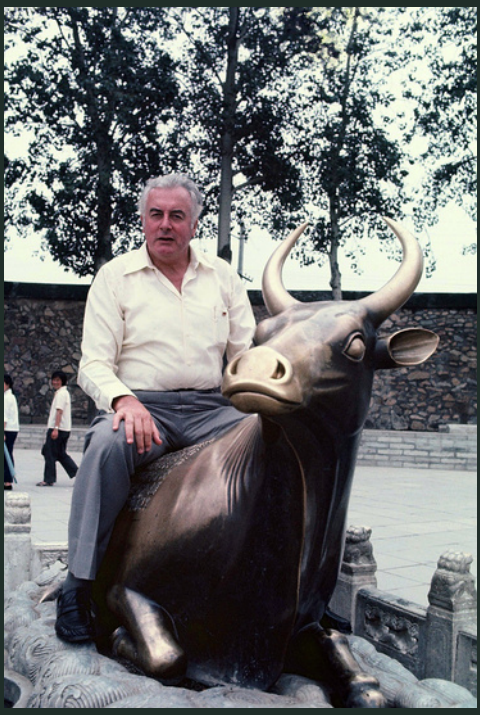
Gough Whitlam, Tianjin, 1976



Gough Whitlam and Stephen FitzGerald, Old Summer Palace, 1976



Gough Whitlam, Old Summer Palace, 1976



Gough Whitlam, Beijing, 1976



Gough Whitlam,
Summer Palace,
1976



Stephen FitzGerald and Gough Whitlam, Summer Palace, 1976



Gough Whitlam, Summer Palace, 1976



Stephen FitzGerald and Gough Whitlam, Summer Palace, 1976







Gough and Margaret Whitlam, Tianjin, 1976



Malcolm Fraser, Beijing, 1976



Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Tammy Fraser and Chairman Hua Guofeng, Beijing, 1976



Malcolm Fraser and Hua Guofeng, Beijing, 1976



Malcolm Fraser, Beijing, 1976



Malcolm Fraser, Beijing, 1976



Malcolm Fraser, Beijing, 1976



Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock and Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, Beijing, 1976





Malcolm Fraser, Forbidden City, Beijing, 1976



Australian Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock and Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, Beijing, 1976



Malcolm Fraser, Forbidden City, Beijing, 1976



Great Hall of the People, Beijing, 1976



Malcolm Fraser, Great Hall of the People, Beijing, 1976



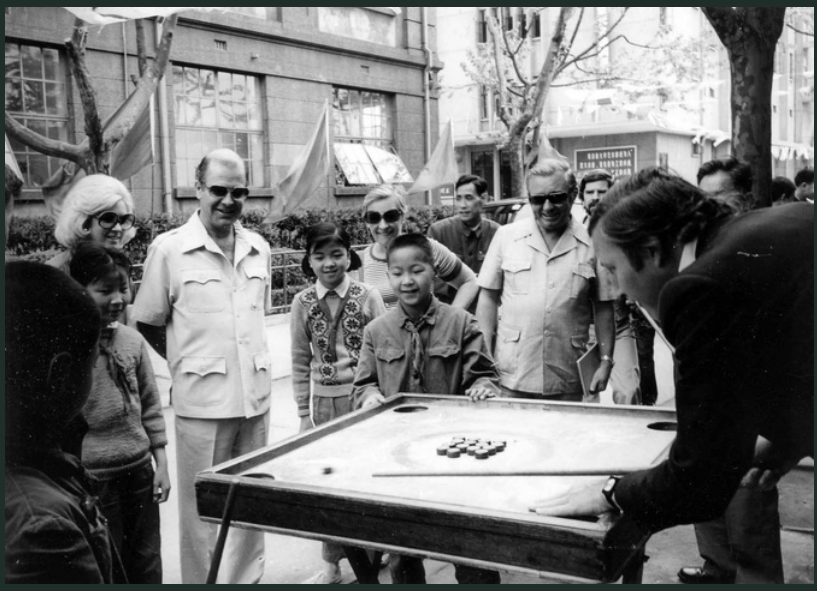
Malcolm Fraser, Xinjiang, 1976



Malcolm Fraser,
Great Hall of the People,
Beijing, 1976



Bill Hayden, Leader of the Opposition, Beijing, 1976



Phillip Lynch and Leah Bridgid Lynch, Garry Woodard and Helen Woodard, Shanghai, 1978



Yvonne Preston, Warren Duncan, John Morgan and Chinese officials, Shanghai, 1977



Yvonne Preston, Jana Wells and Warren Duncan with Australian media editors and Chinese officials, Beijing, 1977



Australian Foreign Minister Don Willesee and Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, Beijing, 1975



Don Willesee and Australian delegation, Beijing, 1975





First tennis match between the two countries, Beijing, 1977



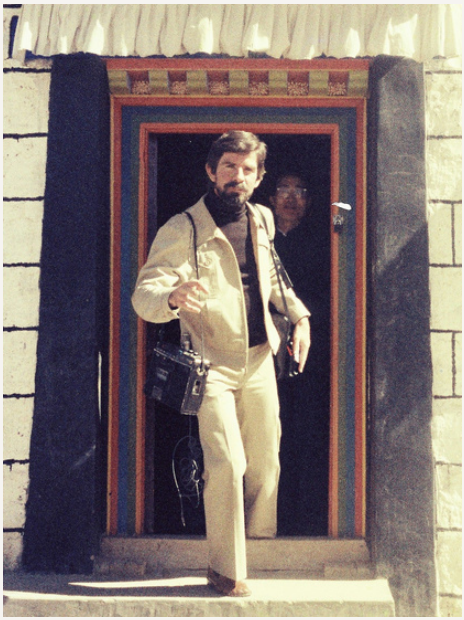
Australian tennis players, Roy Emerson and Ken Rosewall,
at the first tennis match between the two countries, Beijing, 1977



Australian and Chinese national soccer teams in the first match between the two countries, Beijing, 1975



Women's Weekly journalist Jana Wells, Ming Tombs, 1977





Warren Duncan, Lhasa, 1978



Warren Duncan and ABC cameraman Willie Phua, Beijing, 1975



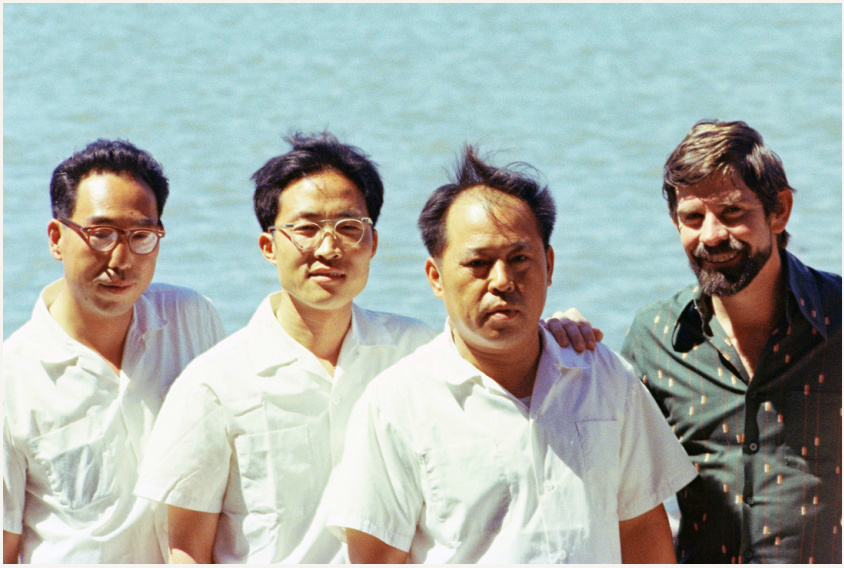
Warren Duncan, Lhasa, 1978



Warren Duncan, Lhasa, 1978



Warren Duncan and Chinese workers, Changchun Auto Factory, 1977



Warren Duncan and ABC Beijing Office staff, Beijing, 1978



Embassy staffer Rosslyn Jackson, Beijing, 1977



Melbourne Cup, Australian Embassy, Beijing, 1976



Warren Duncan at the FitzGeralds' farewell, Ming Tombs, 1976



Warren Duncan, Embassy staff and students, Ming Tombs, 1976





Diplomat Ross Maddock, Guangzhou, 1978





Stephen FitzGerald, Embassy staff and students, Australian Embassy, Beijing, 1976



Gay FitzGerald, Australian Embassy, Beijing, 1976



Embassy staff, Beijing, 1976





Beijing, 1977

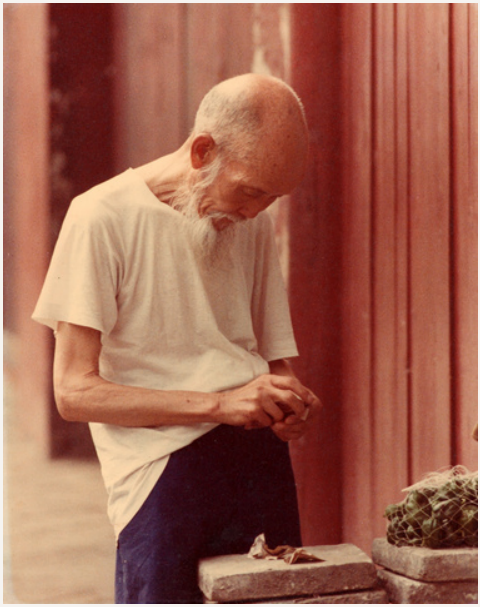




Beijing, 1978



Beijing, 1975



Beijing, 1978



Beijing, 1977



Beijing, 1977



Tachai model farm, 1977



Beijing, 1977



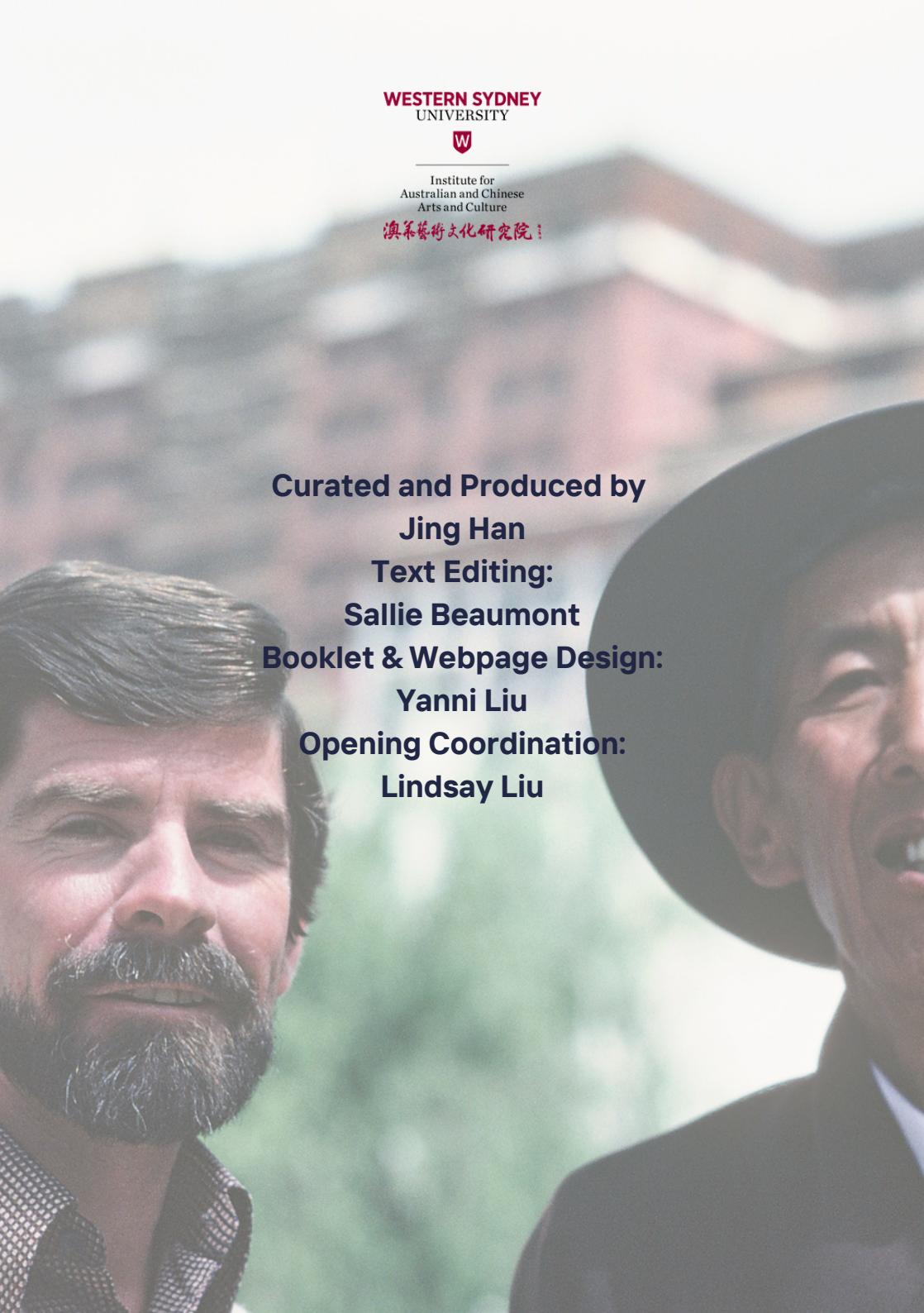
Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1978



Parade, Tiananmen Square, 1976

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