

MAX DUPAIN IN ILLAWARRA

There is a must-see exhibition of Dupain's prints currently on show at the Wollongong Gallery.

It will be a joy for all members to see how lovingly Dupain depicted our landscape in the 30s, 40s and 50s.

Another added delight is that some of the prints are either very vaguely labelled or the location has been simply guessed. It will be great for members to see if they can do better than the curator, who has made publicly calls for assistance with identifying locations more accurately.

For me, at least, the greatest interest was an image of a train passing through a landscape entitled 'Austinmer' but which, though exceedingly difficult to identify without the print in hand, appeared to me to be Coledale.

As for Dupain's iconic 'The Sunbaker' image, this current exhibition labels it "Culburra" whereas I got it from Dupain himself in the late 1980s that it was actually an image of a recent English immigrant lying on Stanwell Park beach.

What I did not know then, but which Joseph Lebovic (at whose then Oxford Street Gallery I fleetingly encountered Dupain) has since pointed out is that "In 1937, Dupain took several photographs of a 'sunbaker'. In 1947, one of these images, showing the 'sunbaker' with his right hand closed, was published in Dupain's book, but subsequently the negative for this image was lost. In the 1970s, another negative from the same series was used for an exhibit of Dupain's work at the Australian Centre of Photography. This negative showed The Sunbaker with his right hand open, and it is this image which has now become an icon in Australian photography."

From what Lebovic explains there is thus every possibility that of the several 'sunbaker' images originally taken one, as Dupain informed me, may well have been taken on Stanwell Park beach. The only problem is that unless one has a very strong knowledge of sand particle size on various south coast beaches, it's going to be difficult to determine which precisely is the beach where the image was snapped.

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