Frontier and Metropole, Science and Colonisation: The Systematic Exhibitions of Richard Daintree

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To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2020.1788233

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Published online: 10 Aug 2020.

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Frontier and Metropole, Science and Colonisation: The Systematic Exhibitions of Richard Daintree

Martyn Jolly

Richard Daintree is well known as an Australian colonial photographer and geologist. I look at six international exhibitions he created from 1872 to 1879 that promoted the colony of Queensland by systematically integrating spectacular grids of painted photographs with displays of scientific samples. By analysing installation views, I argue that the popular success of these exhibitions came from the use of various new photographic technologies within the space of the exhibition, where the frontier directly interacted with the metropole. Further, I argue that Daintree’s personal passion for the science of geology profoundly structured the colonialist narrative of his exhibitions, which combined the latest apparatuses of scientific knowledge and imperial communication, revealing him to be an innovative and internationally significant creator of synthesised exhibitionary experiences.

Keywords: exhibitions, colonialism, Australian photography, painted photographs, Richard Daintree (1832–78), John Percy (1817–89)

The Queensland Annexe

The eastern gallery of London’s International Exhibition stretched over six hundred feet from the rear of the Albert Hall southward along Exhibition Road (where today Imperial College London stands). In 1872, visitors strolling through the gallery towards the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) would have passed glass case after glass case containing examples of the ‘special manufactures’ invited to that year’s Exhibition: on their left, jewellery; and on their right, musical instruments. About halfway down they may have noticed between the cases a modest set of doors leading to the refreshment buffet of Spiers and Pond, which was featuring a selection of Australian wines for the duration of the exhibition. Before entering the buffet, however, they would have passed through the ‘Queensland Annexe’, a small timber building lit from above by a large skylight.

A photograph of the pod-like annexe taken by the Heliotype Company of Regent Street reveals that its entrance off the eastern gallery was surrounded by polished samples of Queensland woods, and topped with a display of ‘native weapons’ flanked by two almost life-sized photographic enlargements of ‘Queensland Natives’ (figure 1).1 An illustration in the Australasian Sketcher reveals that the facing wall featured matching fossils of the prehistoric creatures the diprotodon and the nototherium, and a large map of the geology of Queensland, above glass cases containing arrangements of stuffed birds and

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The floor was loaded with samples of cotton, coral, polished stone, gold nuggets, and tins of preserved meat, all surrounding a bust of the Queen, after whom the colony had been named.

These piles of objects would have been familiar to many of the visitors in 1872, who perhaps had visited previous similar exhibitions such as the Great Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 or the International Exhibition of 1862, also in South Kensington. Those exhibitions were object lessons in capitalist wealth, ocular demonstrations of imperial destiny. They were part of what Tony Bennett has called ‘the exhibitionary complex’.
an ensemble of disciplines and techniques of display that had been developed within the previous histories of museums, panoramas, Mechanics Institute exhibitions, art galleries and arcades [translated] into exhibitionary forms which, in simultaneously ordering objects for public inspection and ordering the public that inspected, were to have a profound and lasting influence on the subsequent development of museums, art galleries, expositions and department stores.3

However, the ordering of these ‘exhibitionary forms’ was far from total. The displays could be a baffling experience for individual visitors. Dickens had found that he was ‘used up’ by the Great Exhibition of 1851, where ‘so many things bewildered me’.4 Others feared that the crowds, coming from a range of class backgrounds, could get lost in sensorial immersion, rather than benefitting from rational education. Reviewing the 1862 Exhibition, the Practical Mechanic’s Journal noted ‘the expression of vacant bewilderment of the vast majority of those who wandered around the exhibition, like sheep without a shepherd, dazed and confused by innumerable objects […] to thousands thus the Exhibition had been a dazzling, but meaningless phantasmagoria’.5

Accordingly, it was proposed that the series of annual London International Exhibitions of the 1870s, of which the 1872 exhibition was the second, would be more selective in their exhibits because, as it was put in The Times, ‘The experiences of 1851 and 1862 are alike in showing that an universal exhibition is simply bewildering to the majority of visitors, and that an infinite diversity of attractive objects prevents the bestowals of profitable attention upon any’.6 In the meantime, the visitors to exhibitions had become even more differentiated and demanding as urbanisation and industrialisation increasingly divided the public into competing socioeconomic and political interests, and the telegraph and the railway widened every class’s access to new entertainment and consumerist experiences. At the conclusion of the 1872 exhibition, The Times noted that the earlier public enthusiasm had given way to a ‘growing feeling of indifference mingled with impatience on the part of the bulk of practical men, and to a feeling of scepticism and disappointment on the part of a great number of thinking men’.7 The great problem for exhibitions, it admitted two days later, ‘is to discover what will “take” with the public. […] It cares, as a rule, little about either manufacturing or commercial specimens, not much about machinery unless in motion, but it attaches itself to all objects of direct human interest’.8

It was in the context of these broader developments within the ‘exhibitionary complex’ that the Queensland Annexe, paid for by the colonial government to attract emigrants to Queensland rather than the rival colonies of Victoria and New South Wales, made its distinct contribution. Unlike other displays, it was explicitly ordered and systematic. On its walls were tightly packed sets of brightly painted photographs, framed into uniform grids of six. ‘The beautiful coloured photographs’, reported the Australasian Sketcher, ‘have always been amongst the greatest objects of interest. This is largely due to the novelty of the scenery and its vegetable products to English eyes, and the manner in which the characteristics of Australian landscapes are brought before them’. The grids were ‘arranged in geological sequence, beginning with the alluvial soils and ending with the volcanic’, and ‘Underneath each photograph is a case containing the productions of the kind of soil represented above. For instance, under the views of alluvial country are exhibited cottons, tea, coffee, tobacco, arrowroot, maize, sugars, and little trays of alluvial gold’.9 The photographs therefore served two functions. Firstly, individual images were informative for prospective emigrants to the colony. For instance, some images of families and servants in front of squatter homesteads were ‘calculated to dispel the idea, if entertained by any home-loving Briton, that the homesteads of the new Southern world are deficient in comforts or architectural qualities’.10 But,


5 – Ibid., 233.

6 – The Times (1 May 1871), 12. Henry Cole’s plans for what was initially proposed to be a series of ten exhibitions, but only made it to four, are discussed in detail in Peter H. Hoffenberg, ‘1871–1874: The South Kensington International Exhibitions’, in BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth Century History, ed. Dino Franco Felluga, available at www.branchcollective.org (accessed 1 April 2020).

7 – The Times (28 December 1872), 10.

8 – The Times (30 December 1872), 8.

9 – Australasian Sketcher (19 April 1873), 3.

10 – Cassells Guide, 76.
secondly, the geologically sequenced pictorial grids also structured the annexe as a whole, making it a single, systematic model of the entire colony.

**Richard Daintree’s Imperial Career**

Most of the individual photographs, and the design and installation of the annexe itself, were the work of Richard Daintree, Queensland’s recently appointed Agent General to London.\(^1\) Queensland was a young colony, so its displays focused on its primary production. Other more economically developed colonies were able to exhibit more refined goods and applied art, for instance an illustration of the sister Victoria Court shows visitors fingering cloth presumably woven from Victoria wool,\(^2\) while the metropolitan powers were keen to promote their latest machinery, advanced manufactures, and fine arts. However, Daintree was also a geologist and a surveyor, and his design was driven by his scientific approach. His innovation was to arrange Queensland’s displays of raw materials systematically, and to articulate them narratively with photographs.

Although he is known as an ‘Australian’ photographer, London was a crucial location for Daintree. He was born in England in 1832, and he died there in 1878. As a young man he himself may well have joined the six million visitors to the Crystal Palace in 1851. The following year, he left England to join the Victorian gold rushes but, with a passion for geology, soon abandoned the diggings, joining the Victorian Geological Survey in 1854. He returned briefly to London between 1856 and 1857 to study assaying at the Royal School of Mines, where he also learnt large format, panoramic, and stereographic photography in the laboratory of its Professor of Metallurgy, the photographer John Percy.

Back in Australia, Daintree worked as an explorer, surveyor, and geologist for the Victorian Geological Survey. When London’s International Exhibition of 1862 was proposed, Daintree was granted funds to make a photographic tour of the goldfields for Victoria’s display. The two medals he won at the Exhibition – one for his photographs of rocks and fossils, and the other for his extensive series of photographic views of Victoria – anticipate the pictorial structuring of his later Queensland work.\(^3\) In 1864, he moved to North Queensland with his family. His initial intention was to become a squatter, but he quickly began to make photographs of the geology of his district. By 1868, Daintree was once more a government geologist, this time for Queensland, making extended ‘traverses’ across its north, discovering mineral deposits and productive land.

Daintree saw mining as crucial to the development of Queensland because its infrastructure opened up the frontier for pastoralism and agriculture. With the London International Exhibition of 1871 looming, Daintree proposed to the Queensland government to:

\begin{quote}
place before the English public [in] as concise a manner as possible, photographs and specimens [and] to specially illustrate the maps of various goldfields completed by the late Geological Survey of the Colony [...] samples of the richest reefs & specimens will be procured [as well as] photographic views [...] to afford men of capital at home [in England] reliable information on any projects likely to be placed in the home market & also to give intending emigrants [...] the benefit of such information.\(^4\)
\end{quote}

In preparation for the exhibition he made new photographic tours across all of Queensland, from Cloncurry in the northwest to Brisbane in the southeast, before sailing for London with a large collection of specimens and glass negatives in late 1870.

This overview of Daintree’s biography shows that his career was not defined by migration from an ‘origin’ in Britain to a new ‘settler’ place in Australia, but by a mobility between Australia and Britain. His exhibitions were the product of what David Lambert and Alan Lester have called ‘imperial careering’, a phrase they use to capture a sense of ‘volition, agency and self-advancement’, as well as ‘accident,
chance encounter and the impact of factors beyond the control of the individual'. In imperial careers, 'life histories – indeed [...] life geographies – constitute meaningful connections across the empire in their own right'.

The London Metropole

In London, Daintree found himself at the heart of the construction of the new imperial exhibition spaces of South Kensington. The South Kensington Museum and the Science Museum, legacies of the Crystal Palace, had opened in 1857; and the Royal Albert Hall, the architectural gateway to the International Exhibition buildings, opened in 1871. He described this locality as 'the focus of English Technological Education where students of all branches of Art and Science congregate'.

Daintree also found himself in the middle of a boom in the proliferation of new, spectacular, photographic technologies. At the Royal School of Mines he had been trained in processes developed in the early 1850s – collodion-on-glass negatives and albumen-on-paper prints, a reliable combination that was not superseded until the widespread adoption of dry-plate glass negatives in the 1880s. Although, while travelling through the hot, dry backblocks of Australia in the 1860s, Daintree had experimented with an early form of 'dry plate', albumen and gelatine preserved with eucalyptus gum. Back in London in 1870, photography seemed to be entering what the *Photographic Art Journal* called 'a new era', when 'Never were such facilities offered as now to the artist and amateur for the practice of photography'. These 'new facilities', dispersed across different factories, retailers, and studios in London, were not so much related to the negative as to the print, and were not so much about capturing an image as reproducing and displaying it. They delivered four hitherto elusive qualities to photographs: large size, bright colour, automatic reproduction, and guaranteed permanence.

The pages of the inaugural March 1870 issue of the *Photographic Art Journal* were full of advertisements for companies producing Woodburytypes (patented in 1864), photolithographs, collotypes, and half-tone engravings, all of which could mechanically reproduce photographs in ink through a printing press, 'without the agency of light'. Other companies, such as the Autotype company formed in 1868, were advertising multiple prints in permanent carbon pigment. Photographic suppliers, including Solomons, were selling new oil paints manufactured specifically for colouring photographs, while artists such as Joseph Grant advertised their services as photographic colourists. Grant emphasised his 'long experience [...] in the course of which he has painted photographs for the Royal family and the Nobility, and most of the most popular and high class London establishments'.

Another apparatus, in use since the 1850s but progressively improved throughout the 1860s and 1870s, was the solar photographic enlarger. Mounted into the wall or roof of a darkroom, a mirror – often driven by a clockwork motor to follow the sun – reflected solar rays through its condenser lens, then a photographic negative, and then an objective copy lens, to project the enlarged image onto a sensitised surface. In the *Photographic Art Journal*, John Sanford offered such 'solar camera enlargements' on paper or stretched canvas prepared for oil painting for a pound at a size of 24 inches × 19 inches, and a pound and five shillings at a size of 26 inches × 20 inches. Finally, London framers such as J. Rorke, a carver, gilder, and decorator, were able to frame the painted photographic enlargements in elaborate gilt frames, and in quantity.

Daintree applied all of these London resources to the stereographic, panoramic, and full-plate negatives he had brought from Queensland. Carbon enlargements mounted on board, or albumen enlargements mounted on canvas, were hand painted and then gilt framed at a cost to the Queensland taxpayer of only three to four pounds each.


16 – Quartermaine, 'International Exhibitions and Emigration', 49.


18 – *Photographic Art Journal* (April 1870), 1; (March 1870), 8.

19 – *Photographic Art Journal* (March 1870), np.

20 – The frame around a Daintree painted photograph in the collection of the State Library of Queensland has a stamp from J. Rorke, who operated a framing business at Lambeth in the 1870s.

21 – Quartermaine, 'International Exhibitions and Emigration', 49.
These painted photographs have been regarded by historians as an important part of Australian colonial photography since the mid 1960s, when Geoffrey Bolton first recognised that Daintree 'pioneered the use of photography as a tool for research and a medium for publicity'. Twenty years later, in an important article that was itself pioneering, Peter Quartermaine pointed out that 'though their unique quality was often commented upon by contemporaries', Daintree's exhibitions 'have not been fully recognized for their innovatory nature'. My purpose now is not only to understand exactly how Daintree 'pioneered' innovative exhibitions across distant imperial sites, but also to understand how his exhibitions themselves became a distinctly new spatial experience for international audiences.

Daintree's Systematic Exhibition Space

The timber annexe itself had only cost Queensland six hundred pounds, and it was put to use again in the following summer of 1873 when Daintree further developed the systematic structuring of his exhibition (figure 3). Daintree told the Colonial Secretary back in Brisbane that even those with limited literacy, who were just visiting the exhibition to indulge in what The Times had called 'the infinite diversity of attractive objects', would learn about Queensland. He would make ‘the information there as plain and easily understood as possible’ so that ‘without the aid of a catalogue, practical information must be acquired by all who visit our annexe, with the least idea of obtaining it’.

A comparison with other international and intercolonial displays produced at a similar time reveal Daintree’s innovations. The photographer William England’s cabinet card views of the rest of the 1872 London International Exhibition document many crowded galleries intermingling pictures and objects, but none with the overall systematic structure of the Queensland annexe. Other colonies had previously used groups of photographs of pastoral scenery and new public buildings in their displays, hoping they would directly attract migrants and investors. For instance, they can be seen mounted in grids within large wooden frames in T. Ellis & Co.’s installation views of the Ballarat and Tasmanian courts in the Australian Intercolonial Exhibition, which was held in Melbourne between 1866 and 1867. As the Australian News for Home Readers recognised, photographs like these furnished ‘a correct idea of […] several

Figure 3. ‘The Queensland Annex in 1873’. Collection: Queensland Museum, JE250.
localities, and render any letterpress description almost unnecessary. But the selection and arrangement of the prints was indiscriminate, and the large wooden frames were suspended at random among the other exhibits. Even by 1875, this ad hoc approach to colonial photographic display had not changed much in the colonies. Commenting on Charles Nettleton’s installation photographs of that year’s Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne, Peter Quatermaine noted that ‘many of the small items “exhibited” would actually have been invisible without the aid of a telescope or a large stepladder; the overall impression of such pyramids of products was no doubt impressive, even decorative, but it was certainly not informative.

Back in London, Daintree made use of one, clear overarching system for structuring his inculcation of ‘practical information’ into those who visited his annexe ‘with the least idea of obtaining it’. That system was geology:

The upper portion of the fourteen different bays, into which the court is divided, will serve as a catalogue, for there, in white letters on a black ground, will be the description of what is below. Each geological formation in the colony will be represented by a division in the court; and under the emblazoned description of rock, soil, and products of each will hang representative photographs of its physical character, below these again, the rocks, soils, and products themselves will be seen. Attached to the whole, a map of the colony will indicate by a representative colour the area of the formation in question.

The aim was to have the attractions of Queensland for potential colonists immediately legible as their eyes vertically scanned the different layers of signification – from the descriptive, to the pictorial, to the material – and as their bodies horizontally moved through a virtual Queensland represented by its geology. The design worked. Frequent newspaper reports indicate that it was not just the proximity to the refreshment buffet that pulled the crowds. For the Birmingham Daily Post, the annexe ‘forms of itself a most perfect and interesting museum, showing at a glance, by means of upwards of two hundred large and beautifully coloured photographs […] all the natural characteristics of the colony’. Even ‘a brief inspection of the Court would afford a better idea of Queensland than is possessed by many persons who have lived in that country half their lives’, reported the Graphic, while the London Evening Standard declared it:

a perfect model of what such a display should be, and mirrors forth the various features of the colony with singular accuracy and completeness […] Mr Daintree made skilful use [of them] in taking his photographs of the scenery. Throughout the annexe these coloured photographs are conspicuous for their graphic excellence and beauty.

The problem raised by early exhibitions that the poorly educated might simply plunge heedlessly into a ‘phantasmagoria’, was answered by Daintree’s system. As Joseph Beaumont of the Royal Colonial Institute noted:

It was so arranged as to attract the attention, not only of those who were already well-informed or observant, but even of the ignorant […] the interest was greatly helped by the numerous pictures, drawing, and maps, which attracted and even commanded attention. Then, when the mind had realized not only where the place was but something of what it was and what it was like, they had the different productions presented in something like order, an order which pleased the mind, excited the fancy, and taught people what they did not know.

Daintree’s Geological and Dioramic Photographic Spaces

Not only was the display as a whole spatially systematised, but the imagery within the spectacular grids of enlarged and painted photographs was also systematically classified. The first photographs Daintree made in Queensland, when he was

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27 – Australian News for Home Readers (27 November 1866), 6.

28 – Charles Nettleton, ‘Rotunda’ and ‘Main Hall’ of the Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition, 1875, albumen silver photographs mounted on card, State Library of Victoria, accession numbers H4995 and H5062.


30 – Ibid., 47.

31 – Birmingham Daily Post (9 June 1873), 6.

32 – Graphic (11 October 1873), 338.


trying life as a squatter immediately after 1864, were taken intimately and deeply within the landscape itself. Later, working as a government geologist exploring North Queensland from 1868, his images continued to be primarily geological and, because many were originally shot as either stereoscopic pairs or panoramic negatives, symmetrical in composition. They literally foregrounded the various stratigraphic and morphic features that might reveal deposits of gold or copper, or future agricultural or pastoral country. When they appear at all, human figures, either European or Aboriginal, were included primarily as scale markers. Later, from 1869, as he had travelled even further afield in Queensland taking photographs specifically intended to attract emigrants from England, he tended to arrange his photographs into tableaus. Different classes of mostly male colonists, from the new small-holding free selector to the established squatter, were arranged in front of different classes of habitation, from hut to homestead. Miners were pictured at work with new mining technology such as the gold cradle, or at rest in front of bark huts (figures 4 and 5), while wool-carrying teamsters were pictured on the road with their bullock drays.

In their essential pictorial logic, Daintree’s often stiffly posed tableaux of different types of colonial worker, colonial habitation, and colonial labour predict the full-size dioramas of taxidermied, plaster, or wax figures which became a feature of exhibitions later in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Some ‘stuffed animals and ethnographic figures’ had been introduced into exhibitions in the rebuilt Crystal Palace in 1855. As Lynette Russell argues in her discussion of one of the earliest exhibition dioramas, a ‘native camp scene’ built by the colonial Victorian government for London’s Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1885–886, the diorama ‘articulates the midpoint between a live exhibit and the planar view of the photograph […] A photograph of a diorama also looks like a photograph of a real live moment’. Another colonial photographer, the German-born J. W. Lindt, was also working at the same time as Daintree in what could be called a ‘dioramic’ mode. In his studies of Aboriginal people and settler types such as miners, shearers, and loggers, made in his studio in the northern New South Wales town of Grafton in the early 1870s, he posed them with their weapons and tools beside papier-mâché rocks and in front of painted backdrops.

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36 – Lynette Russell, “Wellnigh impossible to describe”: Dioramas, Displays and Representations of Australian Aborigines’, Australian Aboriginal Studies, 2 (1999), 37. According to Russell, the American National Museum of Natural History may have included human figures in its dioramas from 1873, about the same time as Daintree and Lindt. Ibid., 39.
Within Daintree’s exhibitions the emerging logic of the museum diorama was even reverse engineered into the original photographs within the process of hand painting. In some instances, painted sheep, kangaroos, and emus were added to the base plate of a ‘geological’ photograph, in the way a taxidermied specimen might be added to a museum diorama. For instance, painted emus were added to a print from the negative originally exposed in Betts Creek to compose the picture Desert Landscape, Betts Creek, while the same negative was used, without emus, for a geological engraving (figures 6, 7, and 8). Five sheep were optimistically painted into the foreground of what had initially been a stereograph of volcanic country for an exhibition, but are absent from the same image’s book reproduction (figures 9, 10 and 11).

In fact, Daintree had taken many of his Queensland photographs in a period of extreme frontier violence as the Gudjala people defended their land. The interactions of the invading British with Aboriginal people was a complex mixture of police ‘dispersal’ and capture, often with the participation of the Aboriginal members of the Native Police; extrajudicial murders, rapes, and massacres; the use of male Aborigines as servants, guides, and translators; and the use of female Aborigines as sexual possessions. Daintree did not photograph this, nonetheless some of his images, such as From Top of Mt Walker (figure 12), complicate the usual colonial ‘promontory view’. On frontiers such as northern Queensland, the colonists could not have penetrated Indigenous-owned land without the participation, either ‘voluntary’ or coerced, of individual Aboriginal people who served as guides. Here, one such guide is photographed standing familiarly with two Europeans. In one sense, this image is a classic ‘promontory view’, extending their vision to the distant horizon. But Daintree makes a propagandistic point by putting all three figures on a supposed equal footing as they survey the expanses of ‘new’ land beneath them. Then, in classic Daintree style, he literally grounds this colonialist fantasy within Queensland’s geology, which fills up half the frame in masses of what he identified in one of his albums as red clay. Bush Travellers, Queensland (figure 13), where a young Aboriginal man performs the role of servant, and Gold Diggers Sale (figure 14), where a European man stands with an Indigenous woman and child, further suggest the complicated entanglements, if not the violent encounters, of the frontier.

The Scottish-born Brisbane carte de visite photographer Daniel Marquis took the two images of Aboriginal men that Daintree had enlarged to almost life size, painted, and hung in the annexe across from the fossils (figure 1). The negatives, perhaps sent to Daintree in London, were also made into lantern slides for his lectures (figures 15 and 16). The men, who may already have lost many of their connections to their original tribal life, have their heads clamped in posing braces with a few branches scattered at their feet. Although they were lithe and strong as they were posed with their weapons, which were also on display on the wall between them as trophies, they were turned into static museum specimens by the photographs, part of an increasing appetite for ethnographic tableaux that had begun at the Crystal Palace with the display of life-sized ‘cultural models’ and was to continue in the 1880s and 1890s with the display of live indigenous people at various World Fairs. Although, as types, the men were placed within standard racist hierarchies by commentators, as unnamed individuals they were nonetheless a powerful physical presence within the exhibition (figure 1). The guide to the 1872 exhibition described them as ‘ethnologically interesting, if not very admirable as examples of the beauty of the human form and countenance’, while several years later in Vienna they were described as having ‘an almost horrifying natural truthfulness’. 

Figure 7. Richard Daintree, Betts Creek, ca. 1868. Painted albumen photograph mounted on board. Queensland Museum, Richard Daintree Collection, H27941. Image courtesy of Queensland Museum, Peter Waddington.

Figure 8. Richard Daintree, 'Fig. 5. – Section of “Desert Sandstone,” Betts Creek, Northern Queensland'. Engraving in 'Notes on the Geology of Queensland', Quarterly Proceedings of the Geological Society, 28 (1872), 277.
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Figure 9. Richard Daintree, untitled stereographic negative, ca. 1868. Collection: Royal Historical Society of Queensland, PLD203.


Figure 11. Richard Daintree, ‘No. 6. Volcanic Downs. Agricultural Land 15 s. per Acre’, ca. 1868. Photomechanical reproduction in *Queensland Australia, Its Territory, Climate and Products, Agricultural, Pastoral and Mineral, etc etc, with Emigration Regulations*, 1873.
As Penelope Edmonds discusses in her analysis of Melbourne’s 1866–67 Intercolonial Exhibition, such ‘extinction narratives’ in colonial exhibitions were fed by a supposed ‘four stage’ theory of human development from hunting, to pastoralism, to agriculture, and, ultimately, to commerce. The role of the painted photographic figures within this logic was to construct Aboriginal people and their culture as a ‘living stone age’ in contrast to the modern advances of the colony, and to use the classical poses and spatial isolation of their bodies within an ethnographic frame as a Darwinian sign of

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47 – Penelope Edmonds, “‘We Think That this Subject of the Native Races Should be Thoroughly Gone into at the Forthcoming Exhibition’: The 1866–67 Intercolonial Exhibition”, in Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan, and Elizabeth Willis, Melbourne: Monash University Press 2008, 4.1–4.21.
the historical inevitability of European domination. However, as the indigenous curator and historian Michael Aird points out, in the current political context early photographs such as those taken by Marquis and Daintree now ‘play an important role in how Aboriginal families publicly state their connection to country’.

**Daintree’s Proliferating Meanings and Audiences**

As well as exhibitions, Daintree also promoted Queensland and its geology in books, journals, albums, and magic lantern shows. When his glass negatives left Queensland, they entered a whole new slippery world of transformation, duplication, and multiplication. As well as being turned into enlarged, painted photographs in carbon or albumen, stereoscopic, panoramic, or full-plate negatives became lantern slides, wood, or steel engravings, or mechanical reproductions. For these purposes, smaller negatives were copied onto larger glass plates as new duplicate negatives or duplicate positives, and were made into carbon prints, book illustrations, or card sets.
Just as their form changed, so the meaning of the photographs also multiplied. Depending on the narrative in which it was inserted, the same photograph could be scientific evidence of past geological change, a characteristic sample of a particular category of land, or a tableau of future prosperity. The images also became geographically mobile. Daintree returned sets of painted photographs to Brisbane for a future Queensland museum, and reserved others in London so that they were available for British museums. Daintree also requested and received supplementary negatives taken by other photographers in Queensland, for enlargement and painting in London. All the while, he, or his associates, requested and received money from Brisbane to make new sets of enlargements for exhibitions in Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Paris (1878), and Sydney (1879).

Taken together, Daintree’s varied collections of geological views and dioramic tableaux drew a familiar arc of imperial destiny, where newly discovered geology inevitably led to economic prosperity. He referred directly to the evidence of these photographs when he sketched out this colonialist trajectory in his book, packed full with useful information for emigrants, *Queensland Australia, Its Territory, Climate and Products, Agricultural, Pastoral and Mineral, etc etc, with Emigration Regulations*, in which he classified his images into different classes of land, costing from five to fifteen shillings an acre:

> the future agriculturalist will take care to select a small patch of the richest agricultural land – ‘alluvial scrub’ or ‘volcanic’ – and with this as large a tract as his means will allow of forest land, such as depicted in Photographs Nos 11 and 1, on which to run his small but select herd of cattle, or his small but well woolled mob of sheep [...] The agricultural labourer leaving England with the idea of carrying on such a project, should not have cause to regret his determination. He will put up his slab hut, such as is here depicted, (Plate 12), from timber off his own land, fence in his selection, and then it will be his own fault if he has not plenty to eat and drink, and an increased balance at the bank from year to year.  

At the same time as he was advertising Queensland to emigrants, Daintree, who was also a geologist, was describing its geology to scientists. For instance, a key stereoscopic negative taken at Cave Creek was given the hand-painted treatment for an

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52 – Daintree is just one example of the close connection between photography, geology, and geological surveying. Examples in Australia include the English engineer and calotypist Benjamin Herschel Babbage, who was sent to South Australia to conduct a geological and mineral survey in 1851, and used the calotype during subsequent explorations there; see Roger Taylor and Larry Schaaf, *Impressed by Light: British Photographs From Paper Negatives 1840–1860*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art 2007, 287. Better-known examples in the USA include Timothy O’Sullivan and William Henry Jackson, who photographed on various geological surveys into the American West in the 1860s and 1870s; see Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History*, New York: Hill and Wang 1989.
Figure 17. Richard Daintree, untitled stereographic negative, ca. 1868. Royal Historical Society of Queensland, PLD290 or PLD275.

Figure 18. Richard Daintree, Cave Creek, Gilbert District, ca. 1868. Painted albumen photograph mounted on card. Queensland Museum, Richard Daintree Collection, H27921. Image courtesy of Queensland Museum, Peter Waddington.

Figure 19. Richard Daintree, ‘Fig. 3. Cliff and Outlier of “Desert Sandstone” at Cave Creek, Gilbert District’. Engraving in Richard Daintree, ‘Notes on the Geology of Queensland’, Quarterly Proceedings of the Geological Society, 28 (1872), 276.
Within the twin axis of their scientific and colonialist signification, the photographs seemed to encompass the ‘life’ of Queensland itself. Colonies spent money on international exhibitions expecting a return in the form of immigration and investment, but there was also colonial pride at stake, so the colonial press were eager for information on how their exhibitions were perceived overseas. The Australasian Supplement published a long report from a ‘Special Correspondent’ on the Universal Exhibition in Vienna. From the perspective of Vienna, and through Daintree’s ‘charming coloured photographs’, they were able to see Queensland as a whole:

They are so pretty and so instructive, without seeming to be so, that few people can pass them by without going steadily through them. They are of high interest to the geologist, while at the same time the person who is not a geologist will be just as much interested; for in addition to the regular sequence of views, commencing with the alluvial districts and the sugar plantations, and working up to the gold formations, there is so much life introduced into them that one feels that one is looking at Queensland through a camera.55

The large, brightly lit spaces of the 1876 Centennial World’s Fair in Philadelphia offered Daintree a chance to further elaborate his system. His health was deteriorating, ascribed by him to the effects of bush life in the colonies followed by worry and overwork in London,56 so he was too ill to attend in person, but he produced detailed plans for the installation. When the Australian commissioner arrived, he found that the British, ‘totally oblivious to the existence of Australia, and indeed all the colonies’, had hung English carpets on the walls of the Queensland Court, but once this ‘unsightly’ intrusion was removed, the system Daintree had planned became visible.57

The ‘Ground Plan and Elevation of Queensland Court’, reproduced in the Official Catalogue of the British Section,58 reveals the court to be carefully divided into nine geological ‘divisions’ along one side, with nine additional ‘divisions’ along the other side, announced by large statistical ‘tablets’ mounted above each division. Beneath the grids of gold-framed, hand-painted enlargements pertaining to each division were table cases that contained soil samples along with their scientific analysis, as well as other specimens. On the floor, leaning against the cases, were frames holding additional photographs. The familiar ‘trophies’ of raw materials were laid out in four sections – mining, agricultural, pastoral, and miscellaneous – and the whole display was bookended by the large maps, and the two ‘life sized’ painted photographs of ‘natives’.

Although, as in London, the systematic layout meant that the photographs did not strictly require a catalogue, each photograph was nonetheless indexed as numbers 1–154 in the plan, and detailed descriptions could be found in the catalogue, typologically classifying the individual images:

In no. 102 we have depicted the ordinary rough accommodation of a prospecting party of digger. Their hut, constructed in 48 hours, though sufficiently comfortable for the climate, is certainly not luxurious in appearance, nor indeed in reality, but the miners themselves give evidence that the toilsome and rough life which they have chosen does not injure their health or temper. They are representatives of the stalwart men who are found in

55 – Australasian Supplement (2 August 1873), 2.
56 – Webb, Aspects of Place, 35.
57 – McKay, ‘A Good Show’, 34.
thousands preferring this work to that of any other, and rejoicing in what many would consider unbearable hardships. […] Nos 125–128. Here we have a typical view of an Australian squatter’s homestead. This is the kind of home formed by men who when once they have enjoyed the freedom and health giving qualities of this occupation to which their lives are devoted, rarely return to the restraints of civilisation with pleasure, or without a continual longing to return to their Australian homes.

Although these descriptions of the painted photographs may not have been written by Daintree himself, they nonetheless follow the twin dimensions of his exhibitions, first placing each view within a larger typological classification, and then adding incident and detail of ‘direct human interest’. Looking at the stereographs of Daintree’s installation taken by the Centennial Photographic Company we can see that, along with the samples of raw wool and polished wood, and the familiar bust of the Queen brought over from London, there were new additions that took advantage of the height and light of the Philadelphian gallery, such as a gold-painted, canvas-clad obelisk twenty-two feet high representing the quantity of gold exported from Queensland since 1867 (figure 20).

As a young colony, Queensland was still presenting itself mainly as a site for primary production, and mineral production was the most tangible and spectacular evidence of its wealth. Daintree even saw the fertility of Queensland for future agriculture and pastoralism in mineralogical terms. For example, as his health deteriorated, he had become passionate about microscopic petrology. Just as he had used London firms to enlarge and paint his negatives, he also had a London firm especially make a lathe to polish the slivers of rock he cut from the geological samples he had brought from Australia. He found analysing, and photographing, the microscopic structures ‘more enticing than even exploring new country’. Three circular microscopic photographs of Queensland basalt were enlarged, framed, and placed on the floor against the table cases in the ‘Volcanic’ division (figures 21 and 22). They were ‘added to show what the comparatively unaltered rock is composed of, and how rich it is in all the mineral ingredients required for the perfecting of grain and grasses’. Visitors were invited to admire the ‘micro-crystallic feldspathic and augitic base in which occur numerous isolated crystals and crystalline aggregations of augite, olivine, and magnetite’.

The Queensland that Daintree constructed in his exhibitions was a petrotopia, where his passion for the science of geology, with its intricate classification systems and its grand narratives of eruption, crystallisation, and sedimentation, fused
seamlessly with the progress of the colony, with its predetermined economic roles and its narrative of frontiers breached by gold, copper, and coal mines, building a way for future pastoralism and agriculture. His Queensland was a colony of rocks – animals were rarely seen, women were almost entirely absent, Aborigines were silhouettes from a superseded prehistory, and even colonists were reduced to being ‘characteristic’ mannequins, acting out their allotted typology in the colonial order.

Despite the addition of new scientific sights such as the abstract microscopic photographic enlargements of basalt, the painted photographs continued to dominate. International exhibitions of this period where rigorously stratified into hierarchies: displays of raw material, such as Queensland preferred, were lower than machinery or manufactures that demonstrated technical ingenuity, while the fine arts were quarantined from the applied arts. But to some visitors in Philadelphia, the sheer optical impact of what were now long, chromatically intense banks of brightly painted photographs, each in their own scalloped gilt frame, were beginning to exceed those received divisions. As one fan wrote to the Queenslander:

I have entered the department […] day after day, and am not yet tired of looking. The long, high walls are clothed with pictures – beautiful photographs colored to represent nature, as seen under the glowing sunlight of Northern Australia. The pictures are delightfully life-like, and as delightfully arranged. […] It has been said several times here that the picture section of the Queensland exhibits should have been in the art department, and, as a collection, they really deserve the honor.

These painted photographs continued to travel after Daintree died in June 1878. At the Paris Exposition Universelle they numbered two hundred, and their sheer retinal richness amplified the displays of mineral ore and natural produce piled into enormous conical ‘trophies’ in the Queensland Court. The Australian Town and Country Journal noted that ‘the general effect […] is glowing and gorgeous as a tropical forest’. The Prince of Wales had even visited twice, remarking that

64 – This narrative is still hotly contested in the current environmental politics of Queensland.

65 – Queenslander (29 July 1876), 21.
Daintree’s photographs ‘would make a charming decoration for a smoking room’. 66

In 1879, Daintree’s painted photographs were finally displayed in Australia itself as the centrepiece to the Queensland Court of the Sydney International Exhibition. In those long halls, much more elaborate than the small annex that had been used in South Kensington seven years before, the painted photographs still held their own. Daintree had been dead for over a year, and the photographs were no longer arranged in grids of six, as they had been back in London in 1872, and nor were they divided into their geological divisions, as they had been up until 1876. Instead, as can be seen in the photographs of the exhibition taken by the New South Wales Government Printer (figures 23 and 24), they were ranged in long panoramic banks, rising in the centre of the Court from between the glass cases, and curving over the heads of the visitors. Each chromatic field was topped with a sign announcing ‘The Daintree Collection’. The images, now almost ten years old, still prompted new journalistic encomiums, such as the following from the Sydney Mail:

Their subjects comprise lovely sketches of undulating open downs, of treeless plains stretching to the horizon; vistas in dense tropical scrub, in virgin forest, in romantic rocky glens; views of river reaches, of alluvial diggings, of pastoral homestead, farmer’s rough hut; of country on the long settled Darling Downs, and of the wild unreclaimed tracts in the far north. They show the explorers spelling their horses at midday, carriers in camp or in progress with their teams and drays, miners at their work, settlers clearing the forest; flourishing new townships are depicted, and the scenes of abandoned rushes. As photographs they are excellent; as pictures of life and still life, they are unrivalled; as effective advertisements of the colony they are incomparable. 67

These flights of colonialist fancy were prompted by images exposed on the frontier, enlarged in the metropole, and spectacularly grided together in the new international spaces of the ‘exhibitionary complex’. Throughout his career, Daintree’s contemporaries had universally admired his photographs. They had won awards at London in 1862, Vienna in 1873, Philadelphia in 1876, Paris in 1878, and Sydney in 1879. But perhaps the Queenslander of 29 July 1876 summed...
up his exhibitions the best. In their extended coverage of the triumphal Philadelphia Exhibition, they offered up the valediction: “To Richard Daintree, Esq., our late Agent-General, is due the honours that have been conferred upon this ‘court’, for its systematic conception, and on offering means of information and instruction with the least possible trouble.”

**Conclusion: Daintree’s Exhibitions Within Photographic Historiography**

This article has attempted to use Richard Daintree’s international exhibitions about Queensland to track a career, previously largely know to us as that of a ‘pioneer Australian photographer’, across national and media boundaries. Because the exhibitions were produced transnationally, their significance cannot be properly understood by analysing him as either ‘Australian’ or ‘English’. Within what Peter Quartermaine called, in 1983, the ‘innovatory nature’ of his exhibitions, we can no longer see provincial photographies such as that of Australia as merely ‘the disdained supplement’ to European or American photography, as Geoffrey Batchen more recently phrased it.

Histories of Australian photography, such as Judy Annear’s *The Photograph and Australia*, published in 2015, increasingly reinforce the formative power of colonialism for Australian photography right up until the present day. But my focus on Daintree’s transmedial exhibitions, which cannot be properly understood as either photography, science, or colonial propaganda, compels us to see that colonial Australian photography itself is characterised by more than just its ‘idiosyncratic qualities’ of ‘ordinariness and modesty’, as described by one curator. It was also a dynamic and formative part of larger scopic formations. Looking at colonial visual practices transnationally and transmedially allows us to extend our discussion of the history of Australian photography beyond the bases on which most recent histories have built it. Recent scholarship has successfully grounded the ongoing relationship between photography and the idea of ‘Australia’ in a continuing primal encounter with the sheer power of the land and its space, as well as unfinished business with its fraught racial entanglements. While never discounting those fundamental drivers, we can now bring other visual forces into the mix.

Daintree’s career decentres the centrifugal mode of much imperial historiography. As early as 1984, venerable historians of empire such as David Fieldhouse...
were urging that, rather than taking a ‘metrocentric approach’, it was ‘essential to see imperialism as a double-ended process, in which the colonies play as dynamic a role as the metropolis’.73 Daintree’s exhibitions not only collapsed the doubled ends of empire into the one, virtual, exhibitionary space, they then arced that space across the globe from London to Vienna, to Philadelphia, to Sydney.

As Tony Ballantyne points out, one of the key characteristics of the ‘new imperial history’ has been a growing interest in ‘networks, connections and webs’.74 Daintree’s prints were produced at the points where, and when, the nodes of different international networks – governmental, scientific, and personal – corresponded. These webs and networks were highly contingent, sending him to an early grave, but they also continued to transmit after his death, producing perhaps their most optically intense manifestation of ‘Queensland’ in an international exhibition mounted in the neighbouring colony of New South Wales a year after he died.

When his painted photographs have been included in recent exhibitions of Australian photography, such as the modest grid of six exhibited in 2015 by the curator Judy Annear at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in the large survey The Photograph and Australia, their thickly painted surfaces struck contemporary visitors as stiff and quaint. But remaining installation views of their first display in the 1870s allow us to pay attention not only to the materiality of the photograph, but the phenomenology of the exhibition.75 Recently, Geoffrey Batchen has suggested that ‘Breaking with the self-imposed ghetto of medium purity, photography’s history would at last engage the photographic image in all its various manifestations, wherever and in whatever form they appeared’.76 The ‘various manifestations’ of Daintree’s images were more complex than most. His negatives, some of which he may not have even have personally authored, were exposed in Queensland, but exported to London to be duplicated, engraved, enlarged, painted, collaged, and framed. And when framed and installed in long colourful phalanxes in London, Paris, Philadelphia, or Sydney, they were not simply original photographs that had been ‘painted over’, but retinal experiences central to the overall gestalt of the audience’s experience. Gridded above display cases and below announcement boards, they became optical fields – retinal experiences which were used to produce ‘place’ within the virtual space of the international exhibition. His installations, which matrixed together different levels of signification – from statistic, to image, to object – not only created virtual geographies within globally circulating exhibitionary spaces, but also prefigured the visual instruction and education movement as it emerged later in the century.77

Richard Daintree was not only a frontier photographer, and he was not only a metropolitan photographer – his work was the product of both spaces as they interacted within the new space of modern spectacle. The images were exposed right at the outer edge of imperial expansion, but they were produced into meaning right at is centre, integrating the very latest in display technologies within the most sophisticated of scientific systems. In many ways, therefore, they anticipate the future role of ‘the photograph’ over the 150 years that followed when, within increasingly sophisticated exhibition, publication, and, eventually, online digital spaces, photographs increasingly became retrievable polysemic units within a mobile dataset, and they were increasingly experienced as retinal events aggregated together into a synthetic optical field.

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