



The Ship's Cat, 1913

photograph by Harold Cazneaux
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THE STATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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Looking at photographs from the years immediately before the First World War is a curious experience, because they seem at once close and yet also far away. Their closeness comes from their modernity, or more precisely from the actual medium of photography, which was a product of the modern era. The rise of photography was the result of complex interactions between science, technology, art, culture and commerce, and was dependent on the radical reorganisation of society that came with the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation fundamental to modernity. But while photographs from the early twentieth century are modern, most also appear old-fashioned. Their 'look', and the out-datedness of whoever and whatever is represented in them, calls up a hundred years of separation in a flash.

And yet, if we put aside individual photographs for the time being, photography from 1913 or thereabouts is in fact very similar to photography now. Nearly all the principal areas of practice were in place by then, though the level of activity in them varied. Scientific and medical photography, forensic, anthropological, snapshot, amateur and art photography, formal and celebrity portraiture were well established. Newspaper photography was becoming more conspicuous, as newspapers appointed their own photographers to cover topical events and sports.¹ Magazines too were beginning to make greater use of photography, mainly portraits and documentary photographs for non-fiction stories. The popular monthly magazine, the *Lone Hand*, featured photographs on the cover of a number of issues during 1913. But there was one conspicuous absence in the mix: advertising photography. In the pre-war period illustrators, rather than photographers, continued to provide the pictures in most advertisements published in newspapers and