

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6025

Hodgson, Mattie

(1909 - 1998)

Born 19090406

Died 19981102

Occupation Photographer

Summary

Mattie Hodgson worked as a retoucher, colourist, and camera operator from the mid-1920s. She worked in Western Australia and London.

Details

Mattie Hodgson was born in 1909. Her family encouraged her to pursue her creative endeavours in the arts. Her aunt, Edith Ward, was an amateur photographer working in Bendigo. It was she who opened up the world of photography to Hodgson.

In 1924, at the age of 15, Hodgson acquired her first camera. In the following year she began working as a receptionist and retoucher at the Ruskin Studios in Perth. When Ruskin decided to retire seven years later, he offered to pass on the business to Hodgson. She declined the offer, as her main interest was in drawing and painting. Hodgson attended night classes at the Perth Technical School; by 1934 she was studying full time.

Hodgson won the Arts & Crafts prize at the West Australian Society of Arts annual exhibition in 1935, but with limited opportunities to become a successful artist her creative energies shifted to photography.

Hodgson took lessons in retouching from Mrs Lethbridge, and Mrs Wilmot taught her colouring. There were no photography schools at the time in Perth. Hodgson went onto work for many of Perth's large photography studios; in addition to the Ruskin Studios she worked at Webb and Webb, Langham, and John Hallam.

In 1936 Hodgson travelled to London and gained employment as a colourist with the Lenare Studios, famous at the time for their 'top society photographs.' Hodgson later recalled Lenare's distinctive style: '[t]heir trademark was all-white studio walls, never painted backgrounds, and they relied on lighting for effect. We made up our own highly secret colouring medium formulas, which were guarded very jealously from other studios, using Winsor and Newton oils, not the inferior Kodak ones' (Hall 70). Lenare's Kathleen Pilkington taught Hodgson the art of being a colourist.

Hodgson returned to Perth in 1938 and worked as a freelance photographer, sharing a studio with the sculptor Karen Tulloch. In the following year, 1939, she ran Susan Watkin's studio for six months, while Watkins recovered from exhaustion due to work pressure. During this time Hodgson developed her own freelance work.

Hodgson taught Hilda Wright photography and instructed Jill Crossley in negative retouching.

During WW2 Hodgson was in high demand as a retoucher, colourist, camera operator and negative developer. Over the years her photographs were published in *The Daily News* and *The West Australian* newspapers.

In 1937 she became engaged to John Frederic Corhe, of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia. The event was announced in *The Daily News* on 19 August 1937. Evidence showing that Hodgson continued to work as a photographer after her marriage is currently unavailable.

Events

1935 - 1935

The West Australian Society of Arts.

Published resources

Book

Australian Women Photographers 1840 - 1960, Hall, Barbara and Mather, Jenni, 1986

Newspaper Article

Awards by Art Society,

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article83657805>

Novel Beauty Parade,

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article83582819>

Photograph

[No Title], 1950,

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article47828598>

Author Details

Anne Maxwell (with Morfia Grondas and Lucy Van)

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