Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6029

Lyons, Molly

(1911 - 2012)

Born	19111118, Whangarei North Island New Zealand
Died	20120101, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Photographer

Summary

Molly Lyons was an amateur photographer. Working in the Pictorialist style, she is best known for her travel photography.

Details

Molly Lyons was born Molly Augusta Winifred Rye in New Zealand. She married John Hanssen Rees in Pitt Street Congregational Church in October 1933. John Rees was accidentally electrocuted in April 1942. They had two children.

She married the photographer Leo Aloysius Lyons in Wollongong, New South Wales, 1944. The couple lived in Port Kembla, near Wollongong, NSW.

Lyons took up photography following her marriage and the couple travelled extensively throughout the world with their children. Her husband's interest in chemistry, metallurgy and vulcanology took them to Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. They photographed their travels and sold their work to a variety of publications such as *Walkabout*, *Australian Women's Weekly* and also to photographic journals. In 1949, one of Molly Lyons' photographs of *Port Arthur, Tasmania*, was featured on the front cover of *Australasian Photo-Review*.

They also collaborated in writing articles such as Molly's photograph *Smokes of Industry*, c.1947, which accompanied an article written by her husband, entitled 'Industrial Pictorialism.' The photograph depicts a train travelling on a curved railway track through an industrial locality. The track divides the photograph into two: on the right side is the dark factory and on the left, rock formations. The photograph constructs an ambient scene. Softly focussed, the smoke bellowing out of the chimneys replaces the mist usually found in Pictorialist work.

Some of her other works were influenced by urban life and contemporary artistic trends. *Metropolis*, a shot of Liverpool Street, Sydney, was photographed from above and may have been influenced by Fritz Lang's 1926 film, *Metropolis*. Lyons' photograph *Cubist Monster* is a close up architectural shot taken upside down, so that it appears as an 'image of random angular shapes' (Kerr 210).

Lyons observed that she 'always approached photography for the fun I got out of it. My work was aimed at the beauty of pictures. I loved Pictorialism and worked very hard to do something different from Leo – he was a lot more interested in technical, architectural kinds of work' *(Design and Art Australia Online)*.

The Lyons participated in many exhibitions, exhibiting in and judging amateur photography competitions. They also taught photography, but were not members of any photographic society. Lyons received a certificate of merit at the Adelaide International Salon in 1947.

After the death of her husband in 1984, Molly Lyons continued her travels and photographic practice. She died in 2012 (probate notice in *Sydney Morning Herald* 10.10.2012).

Collections

National Library of Australia

Events

1947 - 1947
Molly Lyons was awarded the Certificate of Merit at the Adelaide International Salon.

1899 -
Molly Lyons' work featured in Photography Salon(s)

1947 - 1947
Molly Lyons' work featured in the Adelaide International Salon.

Published resources

Journal Article
Tasmanian Travelogue, Lyons, Leo A. and Lyons, Molly, 1948

Magazine article
Net fishing from an ocean beach,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article44553937

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

Resource Section
Alison McMaugh b. 1928, Mendelssohn, Joanna, 2012,
https://www.daao.org.au/bio/alison-mcmaugh/biography/

Book Section
Molly Lyons, Riddler, Eric, 1995

Edited Book
Heritage : the national women's art book, 500 works by 500 Australian women artists from colonial times to 1955, Kerr, Joan, 1995

Archival resources

New South Wales State Records
NSW Marriage Records

NSW Marriage Records

Author Details
Anne Maxwell (with Morfia Grondas and Lucy Van)

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