

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6022

Massingham, Madge

(1895 - 1978)

Born 1 January, 1895, Geelong Victoria Australia

Died 31 December, 1978, Caulfield Victoria Australia

Occupation Professional photographer

Summary

Madge Massingham was a professional photographer who operated her own studio. During WW2 Massingham became involved in the Women's Air Training Corps' photographic section.

Details

Madge Massingham was born c.1895 in Geelong, Victoria. Her father was George Leake Massingham, a professional photographer, and her mother was Mary Ellen McWilliams. The couple had seven children, one of whom died at birth. After arriving in Australia from England, her father established himself as a travelling photographer, an occupation he continued after his marriage. He travelled throughout country Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, setting up studios along the way. The family ended up moving with him, travelling to Sydney, Narrandera, Bendigo, Newtown, Geelong and Deniliquin.

From an early age Madge began assisting her father in the darkroom, developing prints of landscapes and portraits. Her first camera was a Box Brownie; as she became more experienced began using her father's camera.

During the early 1930s she began working as a printer for Kodak in Victoria. She then established a studio and darkroom of her own at the family home in Preston.

Around 1938 Massingham travelled to Tasmania. Initially the purpose of the trip was a short holiday, but she stayed there for seven years following the outbreak of WW2. She enlisted in the Women's Air Training Corps (WATC) in 1941 and became the first section leader in Australia to set up a WATC photography section, where she trained women photographers for the Department of Air during the war years.

Massingham enjoyed travelling and photographed what she encountered on her trips. She documented the weir at Yarrawonga (1936) as well as the mining town of Queenstown, Tasmania (1938).

In 1945 she returned to Melbourne and continued her work with the Department of Air, as well as pursuing her own photographic work.

After she retired, Massingham devoted her time to craftwork and gardening. She died in Caulfield, Victoria, c.1978.

Technical

Massingham's first camera was a Box Brownie.

Collections

National Gallery of Australia

Events

1920 -

1981 - 1981

Madge Massingham's work featured in *Australian Women Photographers 1840-1950*

Published resources

Book

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

Exhibition Catalogue

Australian Women Photographers 1840-1950, 1981

Newspaper Article

Camera Conscious,

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article25884204>

Kangaroo Flat State School,

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article89437416>

Resource

Family Group Record for George Leake Massingham, Bellarine Historical Society,

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/20541/20050614-0000/www.zades.com.au/geelong/gdphotmg.pdf>

Author Details

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