



ANMS1406[154]

Title

Negative depicting the construction of EMPRESS OF AUSTRALIA

Date

1962-1964

Primary Maker

Gervaise Churchill Purcell

Medium

Cellulose (nitrate or acetate) negative, black and white

Dimensions

Overall: 204 × 62 mm

Name

Negative

History

Gervaise Churchill Purcell was born on 2 November 1919 of McMahons Point in Sydney and became interested in photography from the age of about 12 while attending North Sydney Boy's High School where he took photographs for the school magazine. During the 1930s, Gervaise's passion for photography was nurtured by his uncle and amateur photographer Theo Purcell, who encouraged the teenager to use his darkroom. Gaining employment at the Sydney office of John Lee from Studio Sun of London, England in 1938, he was recruited for his ability to print both black and white photographs as well as colour. In 1940, Gervaise enlisted in the Militia or Citizen Military Forces at North Sydney, more recently known as the Australian Army Reserve. Within a year he was seconded by the army to work in Canberra under a Professor William Dakin, Director of the Defence Central Camouflage Committee. In Canberra Gervaise join an elite group of famous artists and photographers, Sydney Ure Smith, Max Dupain and Frank Hinder researching and

experiment with various camouflage methods. In 1943, Gervaise was transferred to the Royal Australian Air Force bases in Townsville, Queensland, Darwin and the Northern Territory. In the same year, The Canberra Times featured articles on his first solo exhibition which he had initiated to raise money for the Prisoners-of-War Fund featuring colour prints of land and seascapes and portraits of animals and children. After the war, Gervaise was recruited by Monte Luke before he decided to set up his own studio in 1952 in Underwood Street, Sydney. From the late 1940s, Gervaise focused his career on fashion photography often his photographs would appear in publications such as the 'Australian Women's Weekly'. Gervaise also worked on other commissions involving maritime links to the swimwear manufacturer, Jantzen and the cruise ship operators, the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O). He also worked for retailing giants David Jones and Hordern Brothers, radio technology manufacturer Amalgamated Wireless Australasia (AWA) and tourism operator Ansett Airways.