

MOP_____

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an impenetrably personal world deserve our attention. After all, we're in the grip of a population crisis - harangued constantly by a desperate throng of attention-starved images. Inevitably, resources will strain and dwindle. Yet, here we are, planted adoringly before Hodge's posthumous output. Why does Hodge's photography continue to patiently persuade our thinly allocated quota of eye-time?

Immediately we are struck by the banality of their content and yet we can't help but notice the enjoyed and appetizing meanings they seem to instigate. Our hunch is that Hodge's editing has a role to play. The photographs he left behind - the glossy geometry of a perfectly fried egg, a stack of spent oranges, a rude tree and a nice room - are paraded with an odd attention to a slow and wily joke. In this way looking at Hodge's work reminds us of a determined gleaner riffling through the oddly shaped and imperfect produce of an abundant reality.

However, it would be too easy a ride to make a simple appeal to the humane curiosity that the personal touch of these photographs turn on. If there's any justification for these pictures to be hung up on a wall, then this justification has to have evolved far enough to be able to travel with mobile legs. We should be able to look at Hodge's photography and climb beyond a pre-figured or decorative inheritance. After all, we all live lives full of romance, spontaneity and encounters with nature. Most of them just don't end up with the grandeur of curatorial choices.

The trick with viewing the work of a generalist like Hodge is to not take the details for granted. This involves avoiding premeditated eyes, refusing to fold each photograph back into the totality of a body of work, and never being content to rest on the luxury of style as an explanation for this man's interest and the hope through which it was transformed into art (here we are in an art gallery). To not take something for granted requires an investment of time, intelligence and attention. All of which suggests that you set your mind in motion and look again.

- Tom Melick & Ivan Ruhle

www.mop.org.au
www.samuelhodge.com





OH MY GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE?

SAMUEL HODGE

25TH MARCH - 11TH APRIL 2010

It is reported, and we are compelled to believe, that Samuel Hodge was last seen wading into the stormy waters of a blustering pacific ocean where, under the ominous hand of an uninvited storm, he disappeared from view. He has not been seen since - a terrible and tragic loss.

While it goes without saying that any moment of oblivion is mired in pathos and bound to remembrance, we should not overlook the opportunity presented by a recently vacated space. The obliging tragedy of Hodge's ignoble adieu has presented us with a sober but exploitable gift; the chance to reflect upon Samuel Hodge's photography in a world without Samuel Hodge.

So, before we set out on this investigation, there are a few items we would like to throw overboard.

The first is Hodge's camera - a time-traveling antique that idiosyncratically exposes light soaked snapshots - a tool that deserves neither veneration nor interpretive importance. The fact that Hodge chose analogue film as his medium explains nothing and illuminates even less. The second is genre, of which we know the captains: Goldin, Tillmans, Clark and Shore (among others), who slink through the everyday, bagging moments in time and presenting their returns for a captive and appreciative audience. Looking around, it would be fair to coat Hodge's photography with this notion of a private life drenched in poetry. Minted by history, photography of this caste is strangely beyond dispute - safely secured by its ubiquity - it remains protected by the terms of its production. That is to say: intuition, subjectivity, candour and the nuance of a lived in life are all difficult precepts to get to the bottom of. These terms presuppose that we accept an image for what it is, and feel comfortable in doing so.

All of this can go over the rails as well.

The next item of business is to admit that Hodge's images are baffling. Lopsided, gleefully anti-methodical, and thumbed with calculated amateurism; these pictures squirm under the warrant of inference. For, despite their assumed aesthetic unity, they refuse to be grouped together (albeit the literal grouping of images you see before you might suggest otherwise). They invite purposeful looking; a quizzical curiosity about the times, places, and people populating the neighborhood of Hodge's lens. And while we reserve the right to be wrong, we would suggest that no matter how dogged or patient our viewing, there is no grand motive to piece it all together. Somewhere along the way we lose the puzzle box.

While we are left waiting for the total project to make its appearance, we should query why these leisurely snippets of