The Australian
Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6011

Kennedy, Jan

(1906 - 1981)

Born	19060101, Pingelly Western Australia Australia
Died	19811205, Nedland Western Australia Australia
Occupation	Photographer

Summary

Jan Kennedy was best known for her photography of children, as well as for photographing society people, and for her cinematic work with Stuart Gore.

Details

Jan Kennedy was born Grace Webb in 1906. The Webb family lived in Pingelly, Western Australia, and the children were educated there. Both father and mother were originally from Sydney, where her father had been a chartered accountant and her mother a milliner.

Kennedy had a romantic nature and loved poetry, ballet and photography. In particular, she was fond of using oil paints to tint her photographs. When she turned 18 she moved to Perth and worked with the photographer Axel Poignant at his Hay Street studio (which subsequently moved to London Court, off the Hay Street Mall). The studio specialised in child photography and photography of women. Working at the studio she became proficient in all aspects of photography, including camera use, tinting, and darkroom work. During the war years she took over the Axel Poignant Studio and changed her name from Grace Webb to Jan Kennedy.

The press admired Kennedy's photographs for their human element, 'in which character and expression are important pictorial features … Many of her subjects possess the power of suggesting emotion by facial expression' *(The West Australian)*. She became well known for her photographs of children and society people, and exhibited her work in international photography salons held in Germany, South Africa, Britain, India and Belgium.

Kennedy married the photographer Stuart Gore, who was known for his aerial photographs and pictorial landscapes. The couple collaborated on projects and made a number of documentary films. These documentaries were the first sound and colour films to be made in Western Australia.

Gore and Kennedy travelled across Australia for eight months and produced the *See Australia First* film series, which depicted the Great Barrier Reef, the pearling industry, life on cattle stations, and aspects of Aboriginal tribal life. These films were independently funded and produced, and subsequently screened in many locations around Australia, including at the Derby Leprosarium. The couple received a great deal of press coverage for their work at the time.

Gore and Kennedy also toured the films across America, England and South Africa. In 1950 the couple successfully sold them to the London County Council Film Education Board and Green Lanes Film Productions in the UK.

During their time in London, Kennedy worked at studios in the West End where she tinted photographs and painted miniatures.

In 1968 the couple returned to Australia. In 1981 she died of leukaemia at the age of 75.

Technical

Jan Kennedy used a Leica camera for her 'at home' pictures of children, and used an Aldis lens on a quarter plate reflex camera with which she produced her best work.

She was interested in cinema and experimented with colour, including Finlay colour, Dufay colour, as well as a Kodachrome movie camera.

Collections

Stuart Gore Collection, State Library of Western Australia

State Records Office, Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia

Events

1899 -
Jan Kennedy exhibited her work in international photography salons held in Germany, South Africa, Britain, India and Belgium.

Published resources

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

Newspaper Article
Filming West Australia,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article148655294

Filming Way Round Australia,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article96216179

See Australia First,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article75553731

Skill with Camera,
http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article47823918

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