

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE6002

Nash-Boothby, Elizabeth

(1890 - 1964)

Born 1 January, 1890, Camden New South Wales Australia

Died 31 December, 1964, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Occupation Professional photographer

Summary

Elizabeth Nash-Boothby was a professional photographer known for her portraiture studies and her high society clientele.

Details

Elizabeth Nash-Boothby was born c.1890 into a middle class Methodist family of six girls and three boys, in Camden, NSW. She did not like being called Alma and was nicknamed 'Gran' by her brother due to her quiet and sedate manner (Marshall 1), as well as her 'stately airs' (Australian Women Photographers 24).

Initially the family moved to Cootamundra where it became evident that she had above-average abilities and wanted to pursue a career as a musician, with an intention to study abroad. Her father did not believe in women furthering their education and her mother was not keen on her leaving, so the family moved to Sydney to provide her with greater opportunities as a musician as she was a talented piano player.

During 1908-1909 Nash-Boothby travelled to Fiji to teach the girls in one of the mission stations. She kept a diary of her life there, recording her observations of the inequalities experienced by the natives, the Indian Fijians and the colliers. She was particularly concerned by the exploitation of women. She returned to Fiji in 1910 and was greatly influenced by the humane and farsighted opinions of Rev. J. W. Burton, who provided her with a solid grounding in politics and the economics of colonialism.

On her return to Sydney she was not satisfied with being a 'home girl' and wanted to pursue a career of her own. She moved to Melbourne where she trained as a portrait photographer at Mina Moore's studio in 1913 and also worked at Ruth Hollick's studio.

Nash-Boothby went on to set up her own studio, the Nash-Boothby Studio at 361 Collins Street, Melbourne, which attracted the 'cream of Melbourne society' as well as glamorous actors from J. & N. Tait Productions (Australian Women Photographers 24). She also took numerous photographs of soldiers who were heading off to war.

She was well known for her portraiture, which had been greatly influenced by her training with Mina Moore; it was said that her work was 'modern with crisper, cleaner outlines.' Her photographs appeared in magazines and newspapers of the time, including *The Age*, *Table Talk*, *Punch*, and *The Argus*; these were used as part of advertisements and to illustrate articles. They were also used in a number of publications of music scores.

The American actor Guy Bates Post, as well as Sara Allgood from Dublin's *Abbey Theatre* encouraged her to move to the USA, claiming her talents were being wasted in Australia. She had started making plans for her trip when she met Eric Marshall in 1916, and the following year, on 15 March 1917, they married. Nash-Boothby cancelled her travel plans, and the couple remained together for 47 years.

Soon after her marriage she ceased her photographic work, settling in Camberwell, a leafy eastern suburb of Melbourne, Victoria. Here, she turned her focus and energy into becoming an activist and socialist. She was a member in a number of community groups, assisting and organising the unemployed (in particular women) during the Depression. She was involved in advocating, and rallied against the Australian Government's post-war deportation of Indonesian nationals. Nash-Boothby also was actively involved in the foundation of the Australia-China Society.

Elizabeth Nash-Boothby died in 1964.

Collections

National Gallery of Australia

Part of Eric Milton Nicholls collection [picture]. [c.1910-1966] National Library of Australia
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn3700063-s7> (Last accessed 7 Oct 2015)

Events

1913 - 1918

2000 - 2000

Elizabeth Nash-Boothby's work featured in *Mirror with a Memory: Photographic Portraiture in Australia*

1981 - 1981

Elizabeth Nash-Boothby's work featured in *Australian Women Photographers*

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

That Soothing Serenade was Just Written for me., De Costa, Harry, 1918

Dumpty-deedle-dee-dum-dee, Donaldson, Walter and Crane, Hal, 1918

By the Big Blue Billabong: Australian Rag, Hall, Frederick, Cole, P. C. And Nash-Boothby, Elizabeth, 1919

It Pays to be White, Marshall, Eric, 1973

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

Exhibition Catalogue

Australian Women Photographers 1840-1950, 1981

Mirror with a memory: photographic portraiture in Australia, Batchen, Geoffrey and Ennis, Helen, 2000

Resource Section

Elizabeth Nash-Boothby,

<http://www.daa0.org.au/bio/elizabeth-nash-boothby/>

Author Details

Anne Maxwell (with Morfia Grondas and Lucy Van)

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