

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00719

Francis, Iris Duncan

(1913 - 2004)

Born 21 January, 1913, Fremantle Western Australia Australia

Died 2 June, 2004, Perth Western Australia Australia

Occupation Artist

Summary

Iris Francis was born in Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1913, into a family with a long history of involvement in the arts. Her grandfather and father (who died when Iris was a week old) had sketched and carved, and her aunt, Pansy Francis, was an accomplished woodcarver. Iris studied at Perth Technical College, gaining a diploma in commercial art, after which she worked at Gibbney & Sons, a commercial art firm. In 1935 she was offered a permanent position at Perth Technical College, where she taught for twelve years until marrying Thomas Wilkinson. During World War II, Francis made topographical maps from aerial photographs for the army. She was also an accomplished cellist.

Francis was a member of the Perth Society of Artists, the West Australian Women's Society of Fine Arts and Crafts, and the Studio Club, a group of six or seven women who met weekly to paint together and constructively critique each others' work. They also exhibited together regularly, and Francis's first exhibition was at the Newspaper House Gallery, Perth, in 1934. She worked in a variety of media, including oils, watercolour, ceramics, and linocuts. Melissa Harpley described her as 'a fearless experimenter with technique and medium, subject-matter and modes of representation', noting that 'her clear graphic style was strengthened by her work as a commercial artist, as well as her ongoing experiments with the language of modernism.' Iris Francis died in Perth on June 2, 2004.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Catalogue

Aspects of Perth modernism, 1929-1942: a catalogue for the exhibition organised by Julian Goddard and the Centre for Fine Arts at the University of Western Australia, Bromfield, David [ed.], assisted by Melissa Harpley and Pippa Tandy, 1986

Beyond the Image: Western Australian Women Artists 1920-1960, Harpley, Melissa, 1990

Approaches To Modernism: The Art Of Portia Bennett, Elise Blumann And Iris Francis 1930s To 1950s, Quin, Sally, 2004

Edited Book

Heritage : the national women's art book, 500 works by 500 Australian women artists from colonial times to 1955, Kerr, Joan, 1995

Author Details

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