

La Motte

a culture of excellence

Deurdagte Reis – 'n viering van vrouekunstenaars Thoughtful Journey – a celebration of female artists

Kay is in 1886 in Greystones, Country Wicklow, Ierland gebore, as afstammeling van die Elvery-familie, wat lank reeds met die kunste geassosieer word. Sy het in 1900 aan die Dublin Metropolitan School of Art en die Royal Academy School gestudeer. Tydens haar studies het sy talle reise na Parys onderneem.

In 1910 het sy na Suid-Afrika verhuis, waar sy met dr. Hobart Kay in die huwelik bevestig is. Hulle het drie dogters en 'n seun gehad. In 1916 het die Kay-egpaar hulleself in Port Elizabeth gevestig, waar hulle albei by kunsangeleenthede betrokke was. Danksy die liefde vir die kunste was Kay 'n stigterlid van die Eastern Province Society of Arts and Crafts. As gedissiplineerde kunstenaar het sy baie tyd in haar ateljee deurgebring met werk vir haar eerste solo-uitstalling in Grahamstad in 1922. In 1924 is sy tot lid van die Royal British & Colonial Society of Artists verkies. Teen daardie tyd het sy ook begin ets en in 1926 het sy met haar loopbaan as illustreerder by die tydskrif *Outspan* begin. Haar werk by dié tydskrif het meer as 2,000 swart-en-wit sketse ingesluit.

In die jare wat gevolg het, het sy baie reise in Suid-Afrika sowel as oorsee onderneem, met haar sketsboek altyd aan haar sy. Sy was bekend om haar opdragportrette van generaal Smuts, Harry Wolhuter, Bishop McSherry en verskeie inwoners van Port Elizabeth, met inbegrip van leëpersoneel. Sy het in 1940 ook by die Unie-regering opdrag gekry om 'n rekord van oorlog-aktiwiteit aan die tuisfront vas te lê vir uitstal in die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Oorlogsmuseum, Johannesburg. Ses jaar later is haar man oorlede.

In 1957 is twee van Kay se werke eervol vermeld by die uitstalling *Portrait of a Woman by a Woman* in Sydney Art Gallery in Australië. In 1960 het sy by die Tweede Vierjaarlikse Uitstalling van Suid-Afrikaanse Kuns en by die South African Graphic Art Exhibition in Joego-Slawië en München uitgestal, gevolg deur die Sao Paulo en Venice Biennale (grafies) gedurende 1961 tot 1964.

Die eerste oorsig-uitstallings van Kay se werk is na haar dood, in 1966, in die Pretoriase Kunsmuseum en die Durbanse Kunstgalerie gehou. In dieselfde jaar is haar werk tydens die Republiekfees in Pretoria uitgestal. Publieke opdragte sluit die muurskilderye vir die Reserwebank, General Motors in Port Elizabeth en die SABC in Grahamstad in.

Kay was 'n toonaangewende persoon in veral die kunslewe van die Oostelike Provinsie, waar sy volgens 'n Engelse Akademiese tradisie gewerk het en in later jare na sterker realisme oorgeskakel het. Eers later in haar loopbaan, teen die vyftigerjare, het Kay nasionale erkenning as 'n kunstenaar in Suid-Afrika gekry. Sy is in 1964 in Port Elizabeth oorlede.

Kay se dogter Marjorie Reynolds het twee boeke oor haar moeder se memoires gepubliseer en Kay se totale persoonlike versameling van skilderye, sketse, afdrukke, ens. – bekend as *The Kay Bequest* – aan die Iziko Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Galery bemaak.

Kay was born in Greystones, Country Wicklow, Ireland in 1886, into the Elvery family, who have long been associated with the arts. In 1900 she studied at Dublin Metropolitan School of Art and the Royal Academy School, during which time trips were undertaken to Paris.

In 1910 she moved to South Africa and married Dr. Hobart Kay. They had three daughters and a son. In 1916 the Kay couple settled in Port Elizabeth, both involved in artistic affairs. Thanks to this affinity for the arts, Kay was a founder member of the Eastern Province Society of Arts and Crafts. As a disciplined artist, she spent much time working in her studio for her first solo exhibition in 1922 in Grahamstown. In 1924 she was elected as a member of the Royal British & Colonial Society of Artists. By that time she also started to etch, while beginning with her career, in 1926, as an illustrator for the *Outspan* magazine. Her work for this magazine included more than 2,000 black-and-white drawings.

During the years that followed she undertook many travels throughout South Africa as well as abroad, with her sketchbook always by her side. She was well known for her commissioned portraits of General Smuts, Harry Wolhuter, Bishop McSherry and various Port Elizabeth citizens, including South African army personnel. In 1940 Kay was also commissioned by the Union Government to render a record of war effort on the homefront, for display in the South African National War Museum, Johannesburg. Six years later she lost her husband.

In 1957 two works by Kay were highly commended at the exhibition *Portrait of a Woman by a Woman* at Sydney Art Gallery in Australia. In 1960 she exhibited at the Second Quadrennial of South African Art and at the South African Graphic Art Exhibition in Yugoslavia and Munich, followed by the Sao Paulo and Venice Biennale (graphic) during 1961 to 1964.

The first retrospective exhibitions of Kay's work were held after her death, in 1966, at the Pretoria Art Museum and the Durban Art Gallery. During the same year her work was exhibited at the Republic Festival in Pretoria. Public commissions include the murals for the Reserve Bank, General Motors in Port Elizabeth, as well as the SABC in Grahamstown.

Kay was a leading figure in, especially, the art-life of the Eastern Province, working in an English Academic tradition and changing to heightened Realism in later years. Only later in her career, by the 1950's, Kay gained national recognition as an artist in South Africa. She passed away in Port Elizabeth in 1964.

Kay's daughter Marjorie Reynolds published two books of her mother's memoirs and, in 1992, bequeathed Kay's entire personal collection of paintings, drawings, prints et al – known as *The Kay Bequest* – to the Iziko South African National Gallery.

Bronne / Sources:

Berman, E. 1983. *Art & Artists of South Africa*. AA Balkema: Cape Town.
Revisions website. 2015. Dorothy Kay, by Hayden Proud. Available: www.revisions.co.za
Photo: Dorothy Kay. Courtesy of SANL (Cape Town) - MSB 932 [4] Dorothy Kay Collection.

Dorothy Kay (1886 – 1964)



Kay, Dorothy (1886 – 1964)
Die Spookhuis, [s.a.]
Olieverf op bord / Oil on board

Versameling / Collection:
Rupert Kunststifting / Rupert Art Foundation, Stellenbosch