

TIMELY, TIMELESS AND TRUE!

Audrey Hepburn

Audrey Hepburn passed away in 1993 at the age of only 63. However, she continues to captivate, charm and change the world. Indeed, a beautiful new book and an exciting documentary demonstrate she's as relevant as ever.

By Imogen A. Rose

Audrey's elder son, Sean Hepburn Ferrer, speaks exclusively to Imogen A. Rose about the life and legacy of his mother.

There are thousands of famous actors, and even more celebrities, but very few real icons - individuals whose influence is so great that they transcend place and time, becoming part of an almost permanent cultural landscape.

A screen legend, a fashion pioneer, and above all, a mother and humanitarian, Audrey's enduring and universal appeal has never wavered. Importantly, her legacy continues to generate awareness of critical, humanitarian causes.

Audrey first captured the world in an Oscar winning performance alongside the legendary Gregory Peck in 1953's superb *Roman Holiday*. She made some 27 films (as well as performances on stage) and astoundingly, appeared on an estimated 650 Magazine covers. She is also one of only 15 individuals to have earned an Emmy, a Grammy, an Academy Award and a Tony.

Audrey communicated a classic and timeless beauty. Her unique look developed through her collaboration and life-long friendship with leading French designer, Hubert de Givenchy. Indeed, fashion is inextricably entwined with the name of Audrey Hepburn. It was as though the fabric of cloth and life interwove seamlessly.

Audrey had charisma and charm unlike any other. She didn't just represent the magic of movies in a golden age but projected a warmth beyond the reel that made her feel real. What's more she had the strength of spirit that enabled her to survive the Second World War – enduring tremendous deprivation – without bitterness for what she had lost, but rather with a genuine determination to live a good, grateful, generous and gracious life.

And it is her life that is her greatest gift. Following a magnificent career and the immense joy she found in motherhood, Audrey devoted the final chapter of her life to UNICEF. Her sincere empathy and her unstoppable quest to end the devastating, immoral and preventable suffering of so many of the world's children remain a cause that her family continues today. Thoughtful, courteous and reflective, Sean Hepburn Ferrer, is an intelligent, multilingual and talented individual with a proven record as a writer, film producer and editor. He made the decision some thirty years ago to dedicate his life to supporting, continuing, and promoting his mother's powerful legacy – one that he is now proudly passing on to his children.

Over the years Sean has created and collaborated upon a broad range of charitable projects. Most recently, Sean and his wife, Karin Hepburn Ferrer, co-authored *Little Audrey's Daydream: The Life of Audrey Hepburn*. Significantly, Audrey Hepburn died from a rare form

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Continued on page 20



of cancer, Pseudomyxoma Peritonei, and the author proceeds are being donated to EURORDIS, The European Organisation for Rare Diseases.

Sean was also instrumental in the realization of the documentary, *AUDREY: More than an Icon*, produced by internationally acclaimed Salon Pictures – the team behind *Churchill* and the BAFTA nominated *McQueen*.

Sean describes the project as “the ultimate reveal of the woman, with the will of steel, behind the ingénue”. The film has the dual drawcard of being an exceptional documentary within the smooth delivery of a mainstream feature. Directed by Helena Coan, it is an insightful and engaging window into the life, love and legacy of Audrey Hepburn. Producer Nick Taussig

believes “There is something extraordinary in someone who is able to choose love in the way that Audrey did — most of us lack the strength of intent, the conviction”. *AUDREY: More than an Icon* is not just a great cinematic experience, it’s a reminder that each of us has value, that life is precious and that the greatest gift one can give and receive, is unconditional love.

In 2019, Sean unveiled *Intimate Audrey*, in Brussels, Audrey’s place of birth, in celebration of what would have been her 90th Birthday. It’s an exhibition that “focuses entirely on the woman - not the icon” and became the genesis for *Little Audrey’s Daydream: The Life of Audrey Hepburn*. It was the decision to create a catalogue for children – chronicling the life of the little girl and the person behind the image – that enabled Sean to

realize he had the heart of a marvellous children’s story. Thus, the book captures the spirit of Audrey and the essence of her touching life.

The result is an enchanting and empowering story – a charming fable meets fairy tale with a poignant timeliness given the current global pandemic. Sean had the memory and experience of his close bond to his mother to draw upon, “I was fortunate to have a great relationship with her but also a great friendship”. It is through the conversations he had with his mother, about her childhood, about UNICEF, about what mattered most to her, that he could write with such heartfelt sincerity and authenticity.

The book is a clever balance of life and art. It’s a story about a little girl trapped in a war who uses her imagination for escape and to retain positivity and hope for her future. It encourages children to relish their imagination, to dream, to believe, and ultimately, to think of others. Sean says, his mother’s life “really was like a fairy tale” and included, “the good and the bad”. He knew that he had “all of the pieces”. It was just a matter “of honing it and focusing it”. Karin, who is also Sean’s business collaborator, was instrumental in this process. Together they have written an engaging and endearing

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book that will connect with children in an inspiring and purposeful way. The narrative is appropriately paced with suspense, wonder and excitement. It successfully imbues the fantasy of dreams with an understanding of the real world that has particular significance for children today.

Furthermore, the story works on its own merits, without reader awareness of the biographical reality, though the latter certainly adds significance.

The story has been delicately and delightfully illustrated by Dominique Corbasson and François Avril with evocative images - gentle, whimsical, traditional, yet modern and magical - that intensify the creative colours of the text. Tragically, Dominique died of cancer shortly after she completed this project. Sean says, "it acquired even greater depth because of this".

For many, Audrey is an inspiring symbol of hope and happiness, and for the recipients of her legacy, her memory is life-changing. Audrey possessed an irrepressible joy and lived a life worthy of example. Beyond the magnetic beauty, the figure, the elegance, and visionary fashions was depth, a strength of character and a special quality within. She never lost her faith in humanity or swayed from her conviction in the rights of the child.

She also had a remarkable capacity to identify the very heart of any problem and however complex, to provide a simple, direct and relevant analysis. She frequently dispelled the deliberately deceptive layers of politics by providing clear, clinical and concise insight. She advocated the need for the "humanization of politics" rather than the "politicization of humanitarian aid". In 1989 during a speech at the United Nations in Geneva she exposed the cruel, preventable and unjust reality of poverty when she said "less than half of one percent of today's world economy would be the total required to eradicate the worst aspects of poverty". The problem was, she continued, not a "deficit in human resources" but a "deficit in human will". She did not believe in "collective guilt", rather "collective responsibility".

Although she maintained that what she did was "very little", the impact of her work at UNICEF and the enormity of her connection with the public was arguably unprecedented. As Sean says, within five years the organization had "doubled in size and doubled in staff".

Sean conveys his mother's belief that "everything is connected". Never could this sentiment be more relevant than with the impact of Covid-19, which has highlighted the interconnectedness of humanity.

Audrey demonstrated the power of the individual to create change. She had a magnanimous spirit that ignited the hearts and minds of others. She chose to live with love and emanated a resounding, resilient radiance. What better time to embrace and celebrate an extraordinary woman whose legacy is a powerful force for good.

AUDREY More Than An Icon
Available now instore and online



Little Audrey's Daydream: The Life of Audrey Hepburn
Available at all good independent bookstores and online



ABOUT /

Imogen A. Rose

Imogen A. Rose is a writer and producer based in Brisbane. She works across a broad spectrum of genres and is a Director of Rose Media. She is currently researching and writing a book about Audrey Hepburn.



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