

Santa Barbara Historical Museum

Portraits in Paradise:

The Photography of Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill, 1906-1944

By **JEANETTE CASILLAS** / CASA

INTIMATE PORTRAITS capturing a person's "smile with the eyes" set apart the work of two local photographers in the early 1900's, Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill. A sample of their lives' work will be on display through June 10th at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum in an exhibition titled, *Portraits in Paradise: The Photography of Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill, 1906-1944*.

"One of the goals of this exhibition that Barbara Vilander, Ph.D (Guest Curator), Staci Gem Sheiwiler (Catalog Essayist), and I tried to focus on was to bring more of the spotlight on Carolyn Gledhill," shared Gabriel Ramirez-Ortiz, SB Historical Museum Curator. "These portraits are often referred to as only Edwin Gledhill's work, but it was Carolyn

who was the professional photographer behind the camera....Many of the photographs chosen for the exhibition reflect Carolyn's control of the sitter's mood and character, which she composed alongside Edwin. Ultimately, it was Carolyn who chose the final prints, as is explained in the catalog essay."



Barbara Vilander, Ph.D, Guest Curator and **Gabriel Ramirez-Ortiz**, SB Historical Museum Curator

The exhibition, co-curated by Ramirez-Ortiz and Vilander, opened last week for Trustees and Museum members. At the opening SB Historical Museum Executive

Director, David S. Bisol, acknowledged Ramirez-Ortiz with a promotion from Curator of Collections to Curator and also featured a lecture by the Gledhill's grandson, David Gledhill. Gledhill offered insight into the lives and career of the duo.

"[Edwin and Carolyn] met in a bookstore in 1907. He was 19 and she was 36...It was love at first sight," shared Gledhill. Soon after they met Carolyn and Edwin married and together established "The Gledhills Portraits" studio on lower Chapala Street near the luxurious Potter Hotel. The studio was destroyed by the 1925 earthquake. "The portraits that they took include a cross section of personalities that were either visiting or lived in the area from 1907 through the 1940's."

Upon entering

the room, the Gledhill's own Kodak Camera (c.1900) is on display and serves as the centerpiece of the exhibition. Along the lushly colored magenta walls are 34 examples of the two photographer's art, plus three autochrome color plates. Not in chronological order, the images were strategically placed to compliment one another.

"This exhibition is representative of their work... bringing Carolyn's work to light," shared Vilander, Guest Curator. "Putting these photographs in juxtaposition adds new resonance... Gabriel could have done this on his own. I was merely tagging



Margaret Wheeler Gledhill, 1936, gelatin silver print, 13.125" x 10.125" by **Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill**

along for the ride." *Portraits in Paradise* provides a glimpse into the cultural and social elite of Santa Barbara's past through the lenses of Carolyn and Edwin.

Some of those included in this list are industrialist George J. Kaime, artist Diego Rivera,

Sarah Fleischmann of the Fleischmann's Yeast company, and William Boeing, founder of the Boeing Aircraft Company.

"This exhibition takes a look at the Gledhills' portraits in two ways," noted Ramirez-Ortiz. "First, as a visual documentation of some of Santa Barbara's important individuals, and second, as works of art in their own right."

Gledhill noted that Carolyn and Edwin's collection



Jeanne Martin, Ph.D; **Eleanor Van Cott**, President, Board of Trustees; and **Keith J. Mautino**, Trustee

includes thousands of photographs. "My father Keith Gledhill went through my grandfathers prints, catalogued them, and gave many of them away," shared Gledhill. "He wanted to make sure they were well cared for." Gledhill and his father Keith also published a book titled *Gledhill Portraits* to "memorialize their work."

The exhibition features portraits from private collections, UCSB Art Museum, and the Historical Museum's own collection.

The Santa Barbara Historical Museum is located at 136 E De La Guerra St and is open Tu-Sa 10am-5pm & Su 12-5pm. Admission is Free. For more information call 966-1601 or visit www.santabarbaramuseum.com.



Diego Rivera, 1941, gelatin silver print, 13.5" x 10.5" by **Carolyn and Edwin Gledhill**



Patti Jacquemain, **David Gledhill**, and **Joe Knowles**



Herb Tews, **Erin Graffy**, and **Karen Tews**



Frank Cosenza, **Nancy Cosenza**, **Charlotte Williams**, and **Ron Williams**



David S. Bisol, SB Historical Museum Executive Director; **Barbara Vilander**, Ph.D, Guest Curator; and **Dane Goodman**



Shelley Bookspan and **Marsha Bailey**

Gift of Edwin Gledhill to SB Historical Museum

Gift of Keith Gledhill to SB Historical Museum