

"Contemporaries: A Selection of Portrait Photographs" on exhibit

September 10, 1980

La Jolla resident Bern Schwartz began studying photography at age 60, after a long and successful business career. Schwartz died of cancer four years later, but in that short period of time he established himself as a fine craftsman whose subjects included Rudolf Nureyev, Margaret Thatcher, Henry Kissinger and Pope Paul VI.

"Contemporaries: A Selection of Portrait Photographs," the first West Coast exhibit of Schwartz's work, will open October 6 in the East Room of the Mandeville Center at the University of California, San Diego.

The exhibit will be open from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday until October 30. More than 80 of Schwartz's photographs will be featured, including many which have never before been published.

The works mentioned above will be shown, along with portraits of C.P. Snow, Lord Mountbatten, Golda Meir, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Arthur Rubinstein, Laurence Olivier, Andres Segovia and sculptor Henry Moore, among others.

Schwartz took up portrait photography when he moved to La Jolla. He received guidance from another La Jollan, photographer Antony di Gesd, then sought instruction from Phillippe Halsman, an authority in the field of portraiture. The two became close friends and Halsman ultimately pronounced Schwartz "a gifted colleague."

In 1977, Schwartz undertook one of his most ambitious projects as a photographer. He prepared an exhibition of portraits of 91 eminent British subjects in conjunction with the Queen's Silver Jubilee, with all profits donated to the Jubilee Fund. This exhibit was shown in London's prestigious Colnaghi Gallery.

Schwartz's work has been shown in Jerusalem and in the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. and is permanently installed in the Bryn Mawr College gallery.

Much of Schwartz's success in portrait photography was due to his ability to establish a rapport with his subject. He would do extensive research on his subjects before each session and during a sitting would involve his subject in conversation. Characteristic of his portraits are the spontaneous expressions and gestures that Schwartz was able to capture on film.

"My goal," Schwartz once wrote, "is to create pictures that are true to the personality of each subject, and will stand the test of time, both for what the subjects have accomplished and because of the manner in which I have been able to present them, by means of my camera."

Admission to the exhibit is free.

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