

Montecito Frame and Gallery: Birgitte Aarestrup: Documenting the Elegance of Old Spanish Days



Untitled by Birgitte Aarestrup

By ANDRIA WATSON / CASA

TAKING VIEWERS BEHIND THE SCENES of the Annual Fiesta celebration, Birgitte Aarestrup's black and white

photographs freeze the moments of an elegant era long-gone. Her exhibit is on view at Montecito Frame and Gallery through September 1st, with a reception on Saturday, July 26th, from 5 to 7pm.

"I love capturing that special moment you only see once. You can feel it in the atmosphere right before the photograph is taken," Aarestrup shared. "This exhibit is about going back in time, that's why I decided on black and white images."

For her show at Montecito Frame and Gallery, Aarestrup has compiled 24 photos; two years of Fiesta photographs that document the preparation of the event, and the largest equestrian parade in Santa Barbara.

"I've always been in love with horses; I raised jumpers in Sweden. As soon as I feel a mood from the animal, like I did while shooting the Fiesta, I take the photo," Aarestrup explained. "The

horses and children were a big part of why I decided to document the Fiesta experience. Their personalities are so unique."

Aarestrup is looking forward to the Fiesta Performance at the Mission for this year's 84th Annual celebration, where she will be capturing the colorful moments on her traditional Hasselblad and Nikon cameras.

"I never use artificial light, and I never ask for my subjects to pose," Aarestrup shared. "I'm interested in a natural, genuine state that allows the viewer to feel like they're there, because

the image is relaxed; inviting."

The photos in Aarestrup's exhibit hold the eye of the viewer and silently urge them to see the details of a culture's tradition; the bold, dramatic makeup and soft expressions in the eyes of the people and in the eyes of the horses.

Born in Sweden, Aarestrup moved to Santa Barbara in 1983. It was after she and her husband travelled around the world together taking photographs that she realized photography was something she wanted to pursue.

After a year, Aarestrup went to study with famed Danish photographer Jorn Freddie, where she learned fashion, portrait, and documentary photography for two years.

Having always been attracted to the Arctic because of its purity, Aarestrup ventured from inland Norway to the Ice Sea just below the North Cape, Norwegian Lapland, where she documented the Swedish Sami, and caught rare glimpses into survival on the edge.

Aarestrup is currently working on a photo journal for her upcoming book about the Sami reindeer herders in Padjelanta.

"I want to preserve what is left for the next generation," Birgitte shared. "I am able to do that through photography."

Montecito Frame is located at 2173 Ortega Hill Rd in Summerland, and is open Mo-Fr from 9 to 5:30pm.



Birgitte Aarestrup



Untitled, 11" x 17" by Birgitte Aarestrup