



Contact: Katrina Carl
805.884.6430
kcarl@sbma.net



Alice Burr, *Elsie with Book*, c.1910. Gelatin Silver print.
Overstreet Collection.



Alice Burr, *In Foreign Port*, c. 1920-25. Bromoil
print. Overstreet Collection.

Family Ties Produce Views of the World **SBMA Exhibition Provides Rare Photographs from the Female Perspective**

September 21, 2006 – The exhibition *Alice Burr: A California Pictorialist Rediscovered*, organized in conjunction with the artist's family, features approximately 27 prints drawn from the strongest known works of Alice Burr's career from about 1920-1925. Independent, and oriented toward the artistic development that later led to her painting, printmaking, and film, Alice Burr worked as a Pictorialist photographer for only a relatively brief time. This exhibition, on view October 21, 2006 – January 7, 2007, provides the opportunity to view rare photographs that have been known only to her family and a handful of curators and friends.

The artistic legacy of Alice Burr, as evidenced by this exhibition, represents the most public facet of her creative life. But her role as a daughter, sister, cousin, and aunt in a remarkable family, and her challenges as a single woman pursuing an artistic career in turn-of-the-century San Francisco, also deserve recognition.

Born into a San Francisco family with strong New England ties, Alice Burr (1883-1968) was an accomplished member of the amateur movement in photography that flourished in early twentieth century California. Both she and her relatives were avid photographers. In the studio behind her

family home, Alice took formal portraits and worked at her art photography in the darkroom built for her by her father. Through the Burrs' ownership of multiple homes throughout Northern California, and their relationship with the Stanfords, the families would often take extended "day trips" confirming an ingrained sense of adventure and curiosity, and a willingness to endure the rigors of travel to enrich their lives.

Alice's family tended to be intense observers and chroniclers of their surroundings, in both domestic and exotic spheres. Detailed writings are complemented by descriptions of remote locations in Europe, Africa, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the Far East. They convey the mood of location by describing, in great detail, the sights, sounds, and textures of landscapes and peoples. Alice's photography provides a natural extension of this propensity to capture the details of travel and home. Her work in silver and pigment prints, autochrome, and other media, while characteristic of the time, is exceptional, but also displays a distinct artistic personality - the embodiment of the pictorialism style.

Amateur Photographer, April 10, 1902, published an account of this movement as follows: "This American movement is...an attempt... to produce pictures by means of photography. Pictures, that is to say, which shall stand the test of criticism; that one would apply to a picture in any other medium; that shall be satisfactory in composition, colour quality, tone and lighting; that shall have esthetic charm and shall involve some expression of the personal feeling of the photographer."

As well as her involvement with family and travel, Alice Burr's was a life of many pursuits. Having lived through the San Francisco earthquake and both World Wars, she was an active volunteer for the Red Cross and the Society for Christian Work, and was an early organizer and leader of the League of Women Voters. And, of course, she was active in the lively photographic circles of her day and exhibited in her teens and 20s in salons in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland.

The present exhibition celebrates the role of Jeanne Slate Overstreet and her late husband Alan Burr Overstreet, Alice Burr's nephew, who together saved many Burr family papers and photographs. More recently, Mrs. Overstreet supported the considerable work necessary to bring this little known California Pictorialist photographer to the attention of the public once again. It is the fifth in a series of showings of the artist's work on both the east and west coasts.

The exhibition has been organized, and the catalogue written, by independent curator Thomas Weston Fels, and has been generously sponsored by Mrs. Kathleen Barrows.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that provides internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA. Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday. Free every Sunday. 805.963.4364 www.sbma.net