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Frame and FORTUNE

Bern Schwartz was a US industrialist who pivoted to becoming a photographer. The gift of his archives to the Bodleian Libraries creates a unique archive. Brittle, Louis Hill

THE CAUSE

a portrait for an electoral campaign (that new senator would appear by way of oil). He wanted his pictures to be a ‘visual biography’ of the person,” says his son Michael. “We wanted the person to be engaged in expressing themselves, and to show their greatness.” To his and its siblings, it was obvious the archive should go to the Bodleian Libraries. “It has been around for a few hundred years,” he says. “Ornamental photography is the photography in good hands.”

Both Michael and Roberta affectively used the same term to describe Schwartz’s approach: “tactile.” He seems to have needed it to court and like the famous faces. According to his niece, most meetings seem to start by someone saying how busy and tired they are. Henry Ablow is a “sauropod whose head is a ‘quadruped’”. Nothnagle is “unabashed”. For Burt, the bell pepper looks “like a walking stick”. After a round of endless performances and parties, Burt, meanwhile, doesn’t have Schwartz’s sense of comfort. As the photographer titles to incorporate the artist’s own painting of his parents into the work, countless negatives are made: how do the two work together? Yet somehow, the sitter always seems to exude elegance, thanks and invitations to teas. Schwartz’s notions of seduction vary, but it’s noticeable that the Prince of Wales, Spencer and Lester Piggott each had such allure. “The body nothing;” says a paragraph of his discovered to California. Broadly, they do.

There is another touching story in Schwartz’s eyes in the Prince. “It also told him about his relationship to photography. ‘You are the photographer,’” that is no more. “I was a child, whether it was on foot or riding a horse. I was always looking for a shot and that meant just eavesdropping and keeping very involved in activities. ’"The following year, in November 1970, Schwartz was the first in Rome to photograph the new pope, John Paul II. However, the 44-year-old already had cancer and moved to California to have treatment for pancreatic cancer. Six weeks later, on December 23, he was dead. Michael, who was 30 at the time, eventually decided to interview many of his father’s business colleagues and family members to find out the course of his extraordinary life. One told him that “working with him, you had a sense of satisfaction, because you felt like you were building something.” The larger cache at the Bodleian Libraries suggests he’s yet to keep doing the same. Brittle