

Basic Detail Report



ANMS1089[006]

Title
Portfolio 4- Pre-War Surfing Photographs by Don James -
Bluff Cove 1937

Date
2004

Primary Maker
Don James

Medium

Soy based UV inks on 100% cotton rag 290 GSM acid-free paper mounted on acid-free 4-ply board

Dimensions
Overall: 218 x 285 mm

Name
Photograph

History
Pre-War Surfing Photographs At the end of the Depression and before the beginning of WWII, James and a small group of friends lived a charmed life in Southern California. When school was out, they roamed the undeveloped Eden-like coast from Malibu to San Onofre, scraping together gas money for their worn jalopies, lugging 90-pound wooden boards to the ocean, sleeping in lifeguard huts and makeshift tent camps in the sand. They lived hand-to-mouth, plucking an endless supply of abalone and lobster from the ocean and raiding nearby orange and avocado orchards at night. What spending money they had came from guiding rumrunners to secluded coves, selling fresh fish to local restaurants, lifeguarding in posh beach clubs in Santa Monica, or acting as stuntmen and extras for Hollywood films. At that time, there were fewer than 200 surfers in the entire state, and James and his friends were inventing a beach/surf culture that would endure for decades. In 1936, at 16 years old, James began chronicling those days with his father's folding Brownie camera. For water shots, he would place the camera in a homemade semi-waterproof pine box, rest the box atop his board, and paddle out to the calm water adjacent to the surf. Focal range of the Brownie was limited, and James preferred to keep his frame uncluttered, so many of the photographs have a similar weight and balance. The images in Pre-War Surfing Photographs are the result of his preliminary endeavours, the works that mark the beginning of James's career. Throughout his life, James continued to perfect his skills going on to take a multitude of elegant surfing photographs, for which he became famous, until his death in the 1990s. Introduction by Matt Warshaw.