

1403 Banks  
Houston Tx

Dear Laura Gelpin,

Thought you might  
like to see the  
enclosed review.  
Did you also know  
that a picture of  
yours was recently  
reproduced in one  
of the Airline Magazines.  
Sorry I don't seem to  
have saved a copy to  
send, though I thought I  
had.

Best for New Year

Anne Twister





Mike Mandel photographed Laura Gilpin in Santa Fe for his series of "baseball cards" featuring fine art photographers.

## Museum acquires three paintings in U. S. show

Three paintings exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts' show "Modern American Painting 1910-1940" have been acquired by the MFA, it was recently announced.

Balcombe Green's 1936 "Vertical Angles," John Graham's 1929 "Still Life with Pipe" and Ilya Bolotowsky's 1940 "Construction in a Square" have been purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts matched by contributions from Mr. and Mrs.

## Gilpin, 86, shooting fifth book

BY JOHN SCARBOROUGH

Chronicle Staff

SANTA FE, N.M. — Laura Gilpin was mad. At 86, she'd just had her first toothache.

"It wasn't even my fault," the veteran photographer of the Southwest said recently at the gallery she's opened here. "I had an impacted wisdom tooth out and they cracked another one doing it. But I'm glad I never bothered with toothaches before. This one's knocked my schedule into about 20 cocked hats."

Despite her age, Miss Gilpin's "schedule" currently consists of driving about 300 miles and lugging her 8x10 view camera up into the cliffs to photograph Arizona's Canyon de Chelly, where she says she's found habitat ruins tracing back 2000 years. The results will form her fifth book.

"I still like the large cameras," she admits. "Even the old Kodak Medallist II. But I'm doing a little 35-m.m. now because it's versatile and I like the color, which the new book will be."

Miss Gilpin, an extraordinary woman who came to Santa Fe on V-J Day and stayed to photograph in and around its environs, supported herself until recently as a working photographer, eschewing Social Security even though "it's tough to make a living around here." She missed out on the major recognition that came to others around the '40s because she says the source of it, Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, "didn't like my pictures. I never knew why."

Gingerly pulling out platinum prints she made about 1910, she smiles wryly. "That cabinet there sat around for 50 years full of my old platins, and I couldn't even get anybody to look at them. Then Lee Witkin came by and flipped and gave me a show at his New York (Witkin) gallery, and (photographer-curator) Anne Noggle helped me mount a show at Santa Fe's Museum of New Mexico. (That show toured to Austin's Laguna Gloria Art Museum last summer.) I thought what the heck and opened my little gallery, and I was amazed at the response. It's all part of that magic thing that's happened in the last few years."

Despite slightly dim hearing, and the occasional need for a cane or crutch, Miss Gilpin still roams from room to room carefully showing visitors countless silver or platinum prints from various periods, all meticulously

protected in archival boxes by overmats. Yet her attitude is breezy. "Anything on the walls you want to look at, just haul it down," she commands. "The other day I got everybody's photographs of that church up in Taos together. Prints by Ansel (Adams), Paul (Strand), me, any and everybody and studied the differences. Learned something, too."

Miss Gilpin, whose four books include one, "The Enduring Navajo," reprinted at the University of Texas, is the only photographer of her generation who still works in the platinum print medium and has continued to straight through. "It never dawned on me to do portraits any other way," she explains. "I even have portraits of the Gish sisters made years ago at a theater in Colorado City. But it's getting tougher. I notice the younger photographers taking it up have trouble getting rich blacks. They don't make strong enough negatives, and ferric oxalate, the light sensitizer, is hard to get and to keep fresh. When I started out, it was easy. But then there weren't any light meters, so it all balances out. I just always seemed to hit them right."

Some of Miss Gilpin's oldest platins utilize the gauzy, pictorial conventions of early schools — "I came to photography when soft-focus was the 'in' thing" — but her long-term work in the New Mexico and surrounding countryside is sharply detailed and straightforward, reflecting her love of that brilliant high mountain country light.

Recently she's also experimented with copying her old Lumiere Autochrome process plates, some made as early as 1910, on modern color film and says the results might inspire yet another book. She's also resumed doing portraits with a new skylight setup in her small studio and is "getting behind printing things for everybody." And there are a lot of negatives I now want to go back and print in platinum. There's no paper anywhere as beautiful as that."

As yet, she's not sure what she'll do with the whole oeuvre when she decides to place her lifetime archives, but she's leaning strongly toward giving them to the Amon Carter Museum in Ft. Worth, which recently staged a show of her work from its permanent collection. But she still has more immediate concerns.

"I've got to get up to the canyon," she frets. "I've still never caught the darn thing during a heavy rain."

## Smithsonian

The Contemporary and Houston's Museum of Science will cosponsor educational lectures called Smithsonian February.

Under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution's National Program, the evening lecture, "Man's Quest," will be given by Hermann Park on February 11.

## SPEND N

Come Fly With



FOR MUSIC OPENS PHON

Group Dates, 20 or More, 572-0701  
PERFORMANCE DATES Dec. 30 8 p.m.  
Jan. 4 8 p.m. Jan. 5 8 p.m. Jan. 6 8 p.m.

## 'Bottoms Up' never really changes

Perhaps the most aptly titled musical revue ever to hit the boards, "Bottoms Up" never really changes.

But Breck Wall knows the value of spice. His show features — on just such terms — a fat lady, a sultry

