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### THE BOOK OF SANTA BARBARA : Macduff Everton's photographic work pays homage to local places, people

By KARNA HUGHES, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER  
February 27, 2011 10:33 AM

To write anything about travel photographer Macduff Everton and writer and artist Mary Heebner is to tell a love story.

The couple has had a long and fruitful history together as creative helpmates and champions of each other's work.

But their newest collaboration, "The Book of Santa Barbara," draws not only on their fertile working relationship but their love for the city where they've lived for more than four decades.

The two worked feverishly for about a year to put together the 234-page, full-color coffee table book (Tixcacalcupul Press, \$49.95), which was released last fall. He was the eye behind the lens, and she, the voice, writing short captions that convey the area's rich cultural and natural history.

Mr. Everton will be the guest speaker at the Channel City Camera Club's meeting March 15 at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol Road.

While the 60-something photographer is paid to take pictures of exquisitely beautiful places, he hadn't picked up his camera much at home.

"It's very difficult to be working an eight-hour job and also take off and do photography while you're working," he told the News-Press last month.

"When you're on the road, you're on assignment. And sometimes you really need the down time. There's a certain luxury in seeing really nice light and not running with a camera to photograph it."

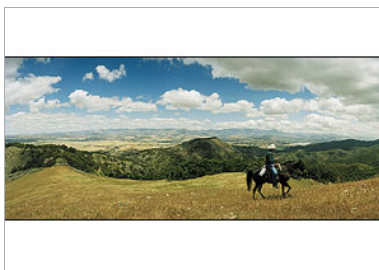
He and Ms. Heebner were sitting in the book-filled dining room of their Samarkand home a few days before he left for Patagonia.

Jetting around the world to far-flung locations is normal for Mr. Everton. He spends up to 200 days a year, sometimes accompanied by his wife, on assignment for publications like National Geographic Traveler, Life, Time, Newsweek, Condé Nast Traveler, Smithsonian, Fortune, Outside, Saveur, Vogue, House & Garden and Islands magazine.

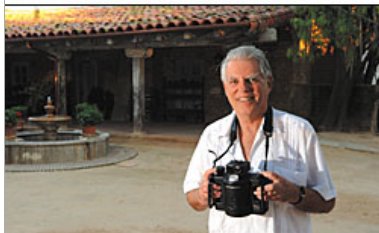
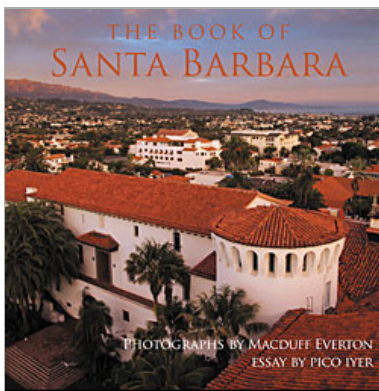
However, when he had to get knee replacement surgery, he knew he'd have to slow down for a while and regain his momentum. Finally, he could stay put and produce a book of local photography.

Capturing the essence of Santa Barbara's places, people and celebrations involved rediscovering his own backyard. (Here, Santa Barbara is writ large and includes the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes, Santa Ynez vineyards, Goleta's shores, Santa Cruz Island and more.)

"We gave ourselves the assignment of Santa Barbara, which really meant that the photography and following the light took priority," Mr. Everton said. "It meant not having dinner engagements before dark. It meant 'Can we go to a movie?' 'Let's see what the light is like.' We really had to make a conscious decision: This is an assignment."



Chuck Falzone rides his horse in the Santa Ynez hills looking out to Lake Cachuma in an image from Macduff Everton's "The Book of Santa Barbara." Below center, "The Book of Santa Barbara" (Tixcacalcupul Press, \$49.95). (Courtesy photo) At bottom, Macduff Everton, seen here at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum, uses a Noblex panoramic film camera. Only six shots can be taken per roll of film.  
MACDUFF EVERTON PHOTO



THOMAS KELSEY / NEWS-PRESS PHOTO

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The book, which measures 12-by-12 inches, is not the average collection of postcard shots. About 100 people are featured in the tome, including foreword writer and sometime Santa Barbara resident Pico Iyer. Their portraits are interspersed with images that evoke an ineffable sense of place, with sweeping, almost cinematic vistas.

Familiar faces are mixed in with the lesser known. There's architect Jeff Shelton chatting with sculptor Andy Johnson, and a few pages later, the clerks behind the counters in the neighborhood markets on Milpas Street and the Westside. There's Mayor Helene Schneider, dressed up for the 2010 Solstice Parade, but also fishermen, rodeo riders, academics, movie directors and farm workers.

Did they leave out people they felt should have been included?

"Oh, God. Tons. Tons," said Ms. Heebner, who's in her 50s. She explained that some of the people they reached out to weren't available or had conflicting schedules.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg. That's why we're thinking in a little bit of time there might be a second book ... This is just to give a flavor of how rich and diverse this place is, not only in the landscape but in the people."

"In the second volume, we'd like to include more of Cuyama, Guadalupe, Lompoc," said Mr. Everton.

As in his images of the Taj Mahal, icebergs in Iceland, and America's Badlands, Mr. Everton revitalizes local haunts with his unique perspective, no matter how many times they've been caught on film before.

Shot primarily with his handheld Noblex panoramic film camera (each roll captures a mere six frames), his images are like living tableaux, bristling with energy and movement.

In one, dentist Chuck Falzone peers out at Lake Cachuma atop his horse in the Santa Ynez hills. The clouds loom so closely overhead one can almost feel their shadow.

A tangled sprawl of oak trees off a trail in Douglas Family Preserve evokes the feeling of being deep in nature. And a heron hunting off Devereux Beach, amid a swaying patch of eel grass, reveals the quiet, kinetic beauty of the coast.

The heron picture is one of the couple's favorites. Since there's no zoom lens on his camera, the photographer stood about eight to 10 feet away from the seabird.

"It was so intent on fishing that I could walk right up to it," said Mr. Everton.

His attention to light and color and his evocation of moods are reminiscent of paintings of old masters. Perhaps it's no surprise that his mentors while growing up weren't photographers so much as "dead painters," like Vermeer, Constable, Turner, van Gogh and Gauguin.

(His own images are in public and private collections, including the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City, Museum of Modern Art in New York and Los Angeles County Museum of Art.)

But the way Mr. Everton sees is also influenced by his adventurous youth. The son of former Trinity Episcopal Church pastor Clyde Everton, he left town with a surfboard under his arm to travel around the world at 17. He had a cheap tourist camera and by the time he got to Japan, after making his way across Europe, he'd already sold his first shots.

After returning to Santa Barbara to complete his education (both he and Ms. Heebner are alumni of UCSB's College of Creative Studies), he did stints as a mule packer in the Sierras and as a white-water river guide in the upper Kern, while saving up money for photography trips.

Spending time in the backcountry sharpened his peripheral vision. "People tend to look at what's directly in front of them and don't tend to look at the edges," he said. In the wilderness, "you really have to pay attention to what's around you."

It also "made me very aware of the weather patterns." The skills served him not only in the wild but in his imagery.

"Sometimes people ask, 'How do you get these incredible skies?' Part of it is when you see something start to form, you can make an informed judgment of what might happen... Most of it is you just have to put yourself there. I'm not talking about storm chasing ... but just a willingness that if it's raining, that you stay in the rain rather than going inside if you think there might be a break."

His outdoor jobs were a means to finance his first major personal project, to document the indigenous Mayan culture in the Yucatán in photographs. Beginning in the late 1960s, he spent more than 20 years creating an ethnographic record of families whose traditional ways of living and supporting themselves (for example, by harvesting chicle, a natural gum) were being encroached on.

In 1991, University of New Mexico Press published "The Modern Maya: A Culture in Transition," a book of his images with his written commentary. He's working on a new version of the book, due out in spring 2012, this time adding a more personal narrative and depicting the further changes to the region.

Some parts have been so decimated they're like ghost towns, he says. "I need to finish up. These people allowed



Photographer Macduff Everton and his wife, Mary Heebner, share a laugh at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum. The two collaborated on "The Book of Santa Barbara."  
THOMAS KELSEY / NEWS-PRESS

Above, a boy dressed as Juan Diego pays respects at the shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe in Guadalupe.  
MACDUFF EVERTON PHOTO



A heron hunts in the eel grass off the shore of Devereux Beach.  
MACDUFF EVERTON PHOTO



me into their lives. I became part of their family in so many ways. I feel a duty and obligation to tell their stories."

In the '60s and '70s, no one knew what he was up to. "I was pretty much treated as a village idiot." But as he made return trips over the years, he started giving some of the villagers photographs he'd taken of them. They had no cameras themselves.

It moved one man so much that he said, "My kids have already forgotten their (deceased) grandmother but because of the photographs you've taken of me, my kids will know who I am and their kids and their kids' kids," recalled Mr. Everton. "You know what? You've made me immortal."

That appreciation has been expressed in other words by some of the local residents featured in "The Book of Santa Barbara," including one woman who teared up when she saw her portrait.

One of the most gratifying things to come out of the book is hearing people say, "This is my Santa Barbara," said Mr. Everton.

"Saying, 'God, this is the town I know,' " added Ms. Heebner. "Saying, 'I can show this to my grandchildren.' "

"It's almost like a validation of their life, that they could give this to their kids or their grandkids," he said.

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**IF YOU GO**

Macduff Everton, author of "The Book of Santa Barbara" (Tixcacalcupul Press, \$49.95), will be the guest speaker for the Channel City Camera Club at 7p.m. March 15 in Farrand Hall at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol Road. The program is free and open to the public. For more information, go to www.cccameraclub.com.

"The Book of Santa Barbara" (Tixcacalcupul Press, \$49.95) is available at many local bookstores and gift shops.

For more information, go to www.thebookofsantabarbara.com.

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