

Lena Gushul

“Hold still. Don’t move.” Lena Gushul is about to take your picture.

Under the natural sunlight of the studio’s glass-paned ceiling stand a bride and groom. And there, frozen in time, will slowly materialize faces, a smile, a moustache, a crown of hair, a veil.

Lena Gushul’s camera recorded the Crowsnest Pass weddings, funerals, baptisms, children, and family poses. Such portraiture was exhausting and demanding, and both Gushuls often worked late into the night. For a time, they kept two studios, one in Blairmore and one in Coleman. Lena Gushul would walk the four miles of rail line between the two towns, hauling a sled heaped with laundry or books for her children.

Photography equipment was hard to come by and the Gushuls had to improvise, washing their prints and negatives in a handmade sluice box in McGillivray Creek. When the holes of the sluice box clogged and the box overflowed, the children would chase prints downstream.



Lena Gushul
Glenbow Archives NA-4279-4

As alive now as they were then, Lena Gushul’s portraits smile out of a sepia past.

Lena’s Portraits of Children

Many of Lena Gushul’s portraits were of children. Starched, itchy collars and waist pinching wool pants meant that a young subject was more likely to fidget than quietly wait for the photograph to be taken.

Lena used toys – a doll, squeaky mouse, teddy bear, or stuffed mountain goat – to attract children’s attention and capture the impulsive smiles and unselfconscious gestures flashing in front of her lens.

Born: 1898 – Died: October 12, 1981

Additional Resources

- **University of Lethbridge | Gushul History**
<https://www.uleth.ca/fine-arts/community/gushul-residencies/gushul-history>

Our Collections

Glenbow Museum

<https://www.glenbow.org>

Glenbow Western Research Centre | Glenbow Library and Archives

<https://libguides.ucalgary.ca/glenbowlibraryandarchives>

Glenbow Library and Archives | Digital Collection

<https://digitalcollections.ucalgary.ca/asset-management/2R340826N9XM?WS=PackagePres&Flat=1>