

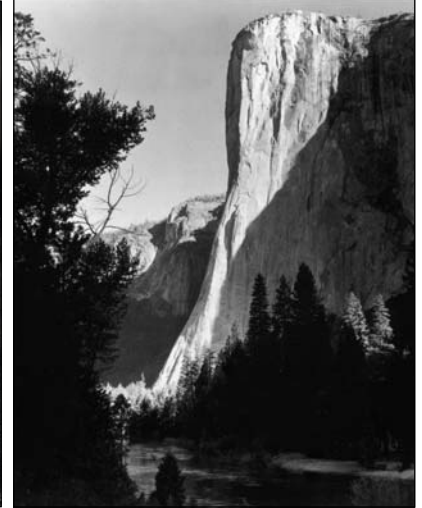
ANSEL ADAMS: EARLY WORKS



Trees and Snow, 1933



Storm, Yosemite Valley, California, 1938



El Capitan, Sunrise, 1956

"I knew little of these basic problems [of environmental conservation] when I first made snapshots in and around Yosemite. I was casually making a visual diary – recording where I had been and what I had seen – and becoming intimate with the spirit of wild places. Gradually my photographs began to mean something in themselves; they became records of experiences as well as of places. People responded to them, and my interest in the creative potential of photography grew apace. My piano suffered a serious rival. Family and friends would take me aside and say, 'Do not give up your music; the camera cannot express the human soul' ...I found that while the camera does not express the soul, perhaps a photograph can! ...Stieglitz's doctrine of the equivalent as an explanation of creative photography opened the world for me. In showing a photograph he implied, 'Here is the equivalent of what I saw and felt.' That is all I can ever say in words about my photographs; they must stand or fall, as objects of beauty and communication, on the silent evidence of their equivalence."

-- Ansel Adams

Ansel Adams – photographer, musician, naturalist, explorer, critic and teacher – was a giant in the field of landscape photography. His work can be viewed as the end of an arc of American art concerned with capturing the “sublime” in the unspoiled Western landscape. This tradition includes the painters Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole and Thomas Moran, and the photographers Carleton Watkins, Timothy O'Sullivan and William Henry Jackson.

For much of his early adulthood, Adams was torn between a career as a concert pianist versus one in photography; later, he famously likened the photographic negative to a musical score, and the print to the performance. Yet most museumgoers are only familiar with the heroic, high-gloss, high-contrast prints that Adams manufactured to order in the 1970s-80s, coinciding with the emergence of the first retail galleries devoted to photography; as performances, these later prints were akin to “brass bands.” Much less familiar are the intimate prints, rich in the middle

tones – the “chamber music” – that Adams crafted earlier in his career. The present show focuses on the masterful small-scale prints made by Adams from the 1920s into the 1950s. Already in this time period there is quite an evolution of printing style, from the soft-focus, warm-toned, painterly “Parmelian prints” of the 1920s; through the f/64 school of sharp-focused photography that he co-founded with Edward Weston and Imogen Cunningham in the 1930s; and, after the War, towards a cooler, higher-contrast printmaking approach.

Several singular examples are included in this exhibition. The print of Frozen Lake and Cliffs is considered the finest vintage print extant; it was the announcement for the recent blockbuster show “Ansel Adams at 100,” curated by John Szarkowski. *Monolith, the Face of Half Dome* is represented by two contrasting examples: the vintage 6x8 inch Parmelian print from 1927, and a rare transitional 16x20 inch matte-surface print from the early 1940s which shows Adams first experimenting with scale but not yet consistently committed to glossy paper stock. *Clearing Winter Storm, taken from Inspiration Point*, is Adams 's most celebrated Yosemite view. We are pleased to feature the earliest known vintage print of this seminal image (a 1938 date appears on his original typewritten label), which just surfaced in 2005. Hitherto this photograph had generally been dated “circa 1944”; it is noteworthy that such an iconic image can be redated in this manner by a full six years.

EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Number of photographs: approx. 50
Frame sizes: 14 x 18 inches to 24 x 30 inches
Linear feet: 170
Rental fee: \$8500 for 8 weeks

Additional weeks may be booked for an extra 10% per week.