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Ansel Adams, *Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, from Lone Pine, California*, 1944/ca. 1970. Gelatin silver print. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Margaret Weston.



Ansel Adams, *The Tetons and the Snake River*, 1942/ca. 1970. Gelatin silver print. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Margaret Weston.

Peering Beneath the Surface

Exhibition Presents Recent SBMA Acquisitions with *Ansel Adams over Time*

On View April 7 – June 24, 2007

“To photograph truthfully and effectively is to see beneath the surfaces and record the qualities of nature and humanity which live or are latent in all things. Impression is not enough.”

— Ansel Adams

March 26, 2007 — Continuing a series of exhibitions devoted to California artists, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art presents *Ansel Adams over Time: Recent Photographic Acquisitions* on view April 7 – June 24, 2007. The exhibition ranges from early, delicate prints of the 1920s, to elegant images of the Grand Tetons and the Sierra Nevadas originally made in the 1940s, to a heroic mural-size photograph of ranchland in Petaluma from the early 1950s. All images on view are from the Museum’s permanent collection, including several recent acquisitions.

Adams once said, “A photograph is usually looked at — seldom looked into.” But this intimate exhibition encourages its audience to carefully look *into* each of the photographs and to evaluate

Adams' changing vision over the course of his eighty-two years. The oldest prints in the exhibition date from Adams' very early days as a career photographer. Until 1927, he waffled between becoming a professional photographer or a professional pianist. Ultimately, it was Adams' affinity with nature and the outdoors that led him away from a city-based musical career. Knowing the depth of his photographic genius as we do now, it seems he chose wisely.

An exhibition of Adams' images is especially fitting here as the Santa Barbara Museum of Art was at the forefront of recognizing his talent, presenting a solo exhibition of his work in 1946 — right around the time he founded the department of photography at the California School of Fine Arts (known today as the San Francisco Art Institute) and secured the first of his three Guggenheim Fellowships. In that same year, Adams captured images of Santa Barbara such as *Refugio Beach*, a work found in this exhibition.

The more recent prints of the 1970s — of images initially taken in the 1940s — are some of Adams' most iconic, including *The Tetons and Snake River* and *Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, from Lone Pine, California*. These are brilliant culminations to a long career which nearly single-handedly popularized photography as an art form among the twentieth-century general public.

The exhibition also includes several of illustrations of Adams' enduring affection for Yosemite. From his first visit with his family as a young boy of fourteen to his final years, the grandiosity and beauty of this national park remained forever an inspiration. These images have, over time, come to define for the American and the international public what Yosemite is and what wilderness should be. During the Great Depression and World War II, Adams was criticized by some for merely taking “pretty pictures” rather than documenting social and political troubles, but many others saw his compelling contribution to society in the beauty of the images he created. In effect, he reminded unemployed and penniless Depression-era Americans of better days to come and of the beauty of the surrounding landscape; he reminded World War II-era Americans of what our nation was fighting for and the land to which our young men were dreaming of coming home.

Born in San Francisco just after the turn of the twentieth century in 1902 and dying near Carmel in 1984 shortly before the end of the century, Adams and his photographs have been called “anachronisms,” or belonging to another era, perhaps most notably by John Szarkowski — Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York from 1962 until 1991. Szarkowski observed that “Adams' pictures...are perhaps the last confident and deeply felt pictures of their tradition...It does not seem likely that a photographer of the future will be able to bring to the heroic wild landscape the passion, trust, and belief that Adams has brought to it.”

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that provides internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA. Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday. Free every Sunday. 805.963.4364 www.sbma.net