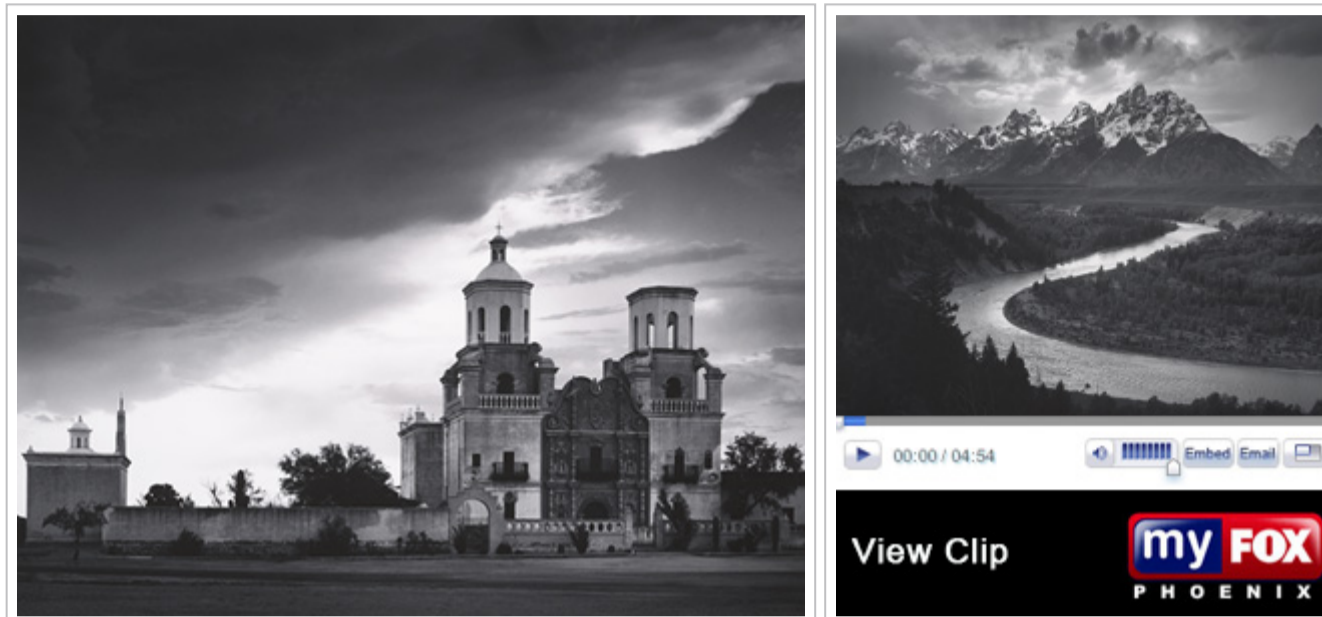




Ansel Adams: Discoveries



Steele Gallery January 31, 2010 – June 6, 2010

Ansel Adams will offer new insights into the photographer's greatest works, by bringing the vast holdings of the Center for Creative Photography's Ansel Adams Archive to light. The exhibition – featuring 120 photographs and dozens of archival documents including video footage, original correspondence, photographic equipment, proof prints, alternate views, negatives, and portraits of the photographer – allows for a richer understanding of Adams's beloved photographs.

The exhibition is organized around six aspects of Adams's career.

A Time: Early Work

His early work includes intimate-scaled Pictorialist prints made very early in Adams's photographic practice, including works from his first portfolio, Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras (1927). A key piece in the Center's Adams archive is his very first photo album (1916) made following his first visit to Yosemite, on family vacation. This album will be presented in a digitized version that allows visitors to see it in its entirety. A range of Monolith: The Face of Half Dome (1927) prints, on a variety of papers, will demonstrate how the choice of materials impact the appearance of an iconic image.

A Place: American Southwest

His work in the American Southwest, visitors will see photographs made throughout Adams's long career, including pictures of New Mexican Indians from the late 1920s, Canyon de Chelly, 1941, San Xavier del Bac, 1951, Aspens, New Mexico, 1958, and a number of views of the Grand Canyon. Adams's masterpiece Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941 will be presented along with the negative, Adams's printing notes, his dodging tools, and an alternate print that demonstrates the dramatic range of interpretations the photographer applied to this famous work. Visitors will also be able to see an original Timothy O'Sullivan photograph of the Canyon de Chelly's White House Ruins that inspired Adams to rephotograph the site in 1941.

A Medium: Color

An examination of Adams's color practice will feature a range of images originally made as color film transparencies. Many of these works, initially made for commercial assignments, appeared only as color reproductions. Now, with new digital printing techniques, it is possible to present color prints that replicate the vibrancy and luminosity of Adams's original transparencies. This section will address what color meant in Adams's career, show examples of his color photography, and demonstrate the dramatic changes in color printing technology, contrasting Adams's original transparencies, color prints made by the artist, and new prints made under the supervision of the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. A special focus on Adams's work for Arizona Highways will be presented.

A Theme: Environment

Adams's lifelong concern for the environment will be explored through his work in the National Parks. Many of Adams's most dramatic, awe-inspiring views of the wilderness landscape were made as part of an extended project to photograph America's national parks, from Alaska's Mount Denali to the Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. Adams's desire to share these photographs with a wide audience meant that he presented the works in a range of ways, including a portfolio and a book, both of which will be on view. Throughout his career, Adams offered an affordable series of original prints in Yosemite Valley, called Special Edition Prints, examples of which can also be seen in the exhibition.

Adams's body of work is richly populated with architectural views, from early works made on commission to personal studies of ghost towns. These images, that combine the landscape Adams is known for, with the built environment, allow us to explore an unexpected theme. In the 1940s, Adams photographed Alfred Stieglitz and his New York City gallery, An American Place, with the thought of publishing the works as a book. This group will be presented together along with Adams's writings about his ideas for the project.

A Role: Teaching

Adams's work as a teacher included publishing instructional manuals – the first, Making a Photograph, in 1935 – as well as a long-standing series of workshops, which began in 1940. Adams also taught at the San Francisco Art Institute and helped codify a method for negative and print exposure, called the Zone System, which is still taught today. Course descriptions, film footage, and photographs of the participants help suggest the experience of Adams's workshops, while examples of several of Adams's how-to books demonstrate his dedication to sharing his knowledge of the medium.

The exhibition is organized by the Center for Creative Photography and Phoenix Art Museum.

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Image Credit:

Left: Ansel Adams. Thunderstorm, Mission San Xavier del Bac, ca. 1948. Ansel Adams Archive. 84.90.193. © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Collection Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. Right: Ansel Adams. Grand Tetons and Snake River, 1942. Ansel Adams Archive. 84.92.542. © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Collection Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona

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