

ANSEL
ADAMS
THE
MASTERWORKS

EXHIBITION
PROSPECTUS



Ansel Adams (1902 – 1984), *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, 1941, gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 ½", Collection of Virginia Adams Mayhew,
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// POINT OF CONTACT

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// EXHIBITION TOUR

Available 2019 and on.

// EXHIBITION CONTENTS

Ansel Adams: The Masterworks, presents 32 framed black and white photographic prints by Ansel Adams from the private Museum Set of Virginia Adams Mayhew, the artist's granddaughter. The prints span four decades of Adams' work and feature some of his most iconic subjects: the vast landscapes of California and New Mexico, Yosemite, Mormon Temple and the stunning moonrise over Hernandez, New Mexico.

// INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS

Text for labels, an introductory panel with pictures and a gallery guide. A master list of photographs is also provided for easy reference.

// SPACE REQUIREMENTS

Approximately 130 feet of wall space, with a wall height of 10 feet.

// EXHIBITION FEE

\$15,000 for 16 weeks.

// ADDITIONAL COSTS

Prorated packing and crating, shipping, and etcetera.

// CREDIT

Collection of Virginia Adams Mayhew, © Artwork: Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust.

// Exhibition Description

Ansel Adams: The Masterworks includes 32 black and white gelatin silver prints, spanning four decades of photography. **The Masterworks** showcases the skill and talent through which Adams captured the majesty of National Parks, the unique peoples of New Mexico and the ever changing landscapes of America. As Adams once said in "A Personal Credo" (*American Annual of Photography*, 1944): "A great photograph is a full expression of what one feels about what is being photographed in the deepest sense, and is, thereby, a true expression of what one feels about life in its entirety." **Masterworks** contains some of Adams' most well-known images, such as *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*; *Aspens, Northern New Mexico*; and *Winter Sunrise, The Sierra Nevada*. This exhibition invites the viewer to see and feel how Adams experienced America: a place of vast natural wonder, breathtaking beauty and worthy of environmental protection.

Of the 32 prints in this exhibition, 30 are from a Museum Set. Philanthropic collectors would select a number of photographs to create such a set. These collectors agreed to eventually donate the Set to a museum or educational institution. Adams and gallery owner Margaret Weston, wife of photographer Cole Weston, originated the concept of The Museum Set. For Adams, late in his career, The Sets helped meet the demand of museums and galleries who wished to exhibit his work. Originally conceived as containing 2,500 prints of 70 different photographs, Adams was not able to fully complete this vision before his death. Typical Sets range from 25–50 prints, with the largest Sets being around 75.

The Sets also served as gifts to Adams' descendants. These photographs were personally selected, hand printed, signed and gifted by Adams to his family. This Museum Set has been loaned by Adams' granddaughter, Virginia Adams Mayhew, so that her grandfather's legacy, and this important family gift, can continue to inspire others.

// Subjects and Themes

As an environmentalist, **Nature** was a deeply important subject for Adams. In *Aspens, Northern New Mexico*, Adams focuses on a small group of trees. Lit from the side, the trees' edges glow a ghostly white, while the dark background shows a forest covered in shadow. Adams possessed a poetic vision of nature. After reading James Mason Hutchings' "*In the Heart of the Sierras*," Adams, only 14, convinced his parents to vacation in Yosemite National Park. Adams used a Kodak Brownie camera to take his first images of the park. He joined the Sierra Club in 1919, and spent six summers as a trip photographer. Adams sometimes acted as caretaker for the Sierra Club's LeConte Memorial Lodge. The Sierra Club was the first to publish Adams' photographs in their 1922 *Bulletin*. They also inspired Adams to advance the cause of environmental preservation. In **Masterworks**, Adams' love of the natural world is reflected in his photographs of Yosemite, Death Valley and the Sierra Nevada. Adams' attention to detail is masterful, as is his control of light and tone, perfected through his use of the Zone System.



Aspens, Northern New Mexico, 1958, gelatin silver print, 21 x 16", Collection of Virginia Adams Mayhew, © Artwork: Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust

Nature is not the sole subject. Adams' command of landscape photography is seen across his work, and it is through his careful composition of landscapes that Adams approaches architecture and the **Monumental**. *Mormon Temple, Manti, Utah* is an architectural study in which Adams is able to delicately balance the composition by framing the hilltop edifice between the gilt points of a gateway, seen in the lower foreground. The building shines out from the grey background. The dramatic framing of the scene presents an impression of power and religiosity.

Masterworks also showcases some of Adams' **Portraits**. Adams carefully frames his subjects, imparting on them a sense of grandness tempered with intimacy. *Spanish-American Woman, Near Chimyo, New Mexico*,

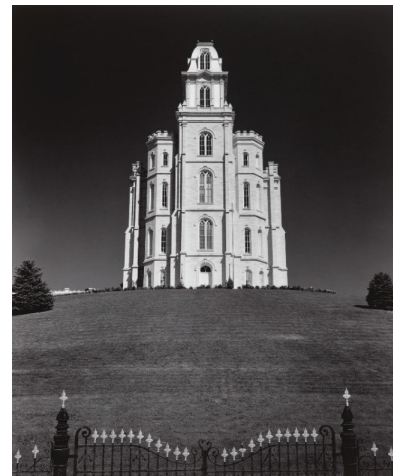


Spanish-American Woman, Near Chimyo, New Mexico, 1937, gelatin silver print, 10 ½ x 14 ½", Collection of Virginia Adams Mayhew, © Artwork: Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust

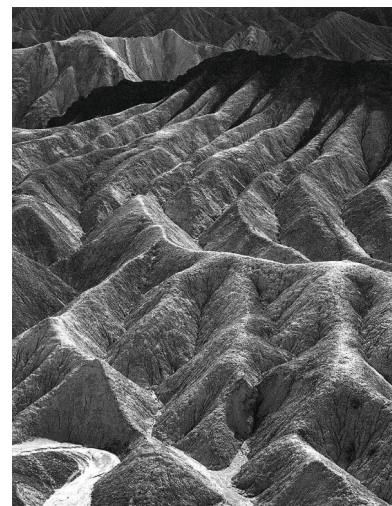
Near Chimyo, New Mexico is a portrait of an older woman, her hair wrapped in a dark shawl. Adams' attention to detail, most notably advanced through his work with Group f/64, is here fully realized. The photograph is sharp, with a rich depth of field. The lines of the woman's face stand out in stark clarity as she serenely looks off to the side. Adams has set her to the left third of the photograph, balanced by a white, wooden beam on the right. The composition directs the viewer to compare the texture of her wrinkled skin to the old, wooden beam. Her face is compared to the grain of wood, further tying the figure to **Nature**, transforming her into an almost mythical figure.

Patterns and abstract shapes are explored by Adams. As photography developed alongside Modernism, the medium's ability to abstract a scene through careful composition and lack of color, due to black and white film and print processing, allowed artists to create works that examined the **Monumental** architecture and **Nature**. *Zabriskie Point, Death Valley National Park, California* presents rocky hills stretched out into the distance. Adams' vertical composition restricts the landscape, which now appears to zigzag up into the dark corner of the image. The photographic plane collapses the distance, softening the rocky hills. The photograph is no longer representational. Instead, Adams emphasizes the vast, and impressive, natural **Pattern** found in the landscape.

This exhibition invites guests to appreciate **Nature**, and the human condition, as Adams once did. **Masterworks** presents Adams' personal vision of the vast Western landscape, a world of feeling, emotion and intensity that transforms the prints into something more. In viewing them, we more fully appreciate the natural world in which Adams surrounded himself, and these emotive prints provide a glimpse into his creativity, vision and philanthropic spirit.



Mormon Temple, Manti, Utah, 1948, gelatin silver print, 19 x 15", Collection of Virginia Adams Mayhew, © Artwork: Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust



Zabriskie Point, Death Valley National Monument, California, ca. 1942, gelatin silver print, 20 ½ x 16 ½", Collection of Virginia Adams Mayhew, © Artwork: Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust