For more than 50 years, Robert Adams (born 1937) has made compelling, provocative, and highly influential photographs that show the inherent beauty and fragility of the American landscape — and the inadequacy of our response to it. Working in Colorado, California, and Oregon from the 1960s to the present, he has photographed a wide variety of subjects, including suburban sprawl, strip malls, highways, homes, and stores as well as nature itself — its rivers and skies, forests and fields, the prairie and ocean. What unites this broad body of work is the almost palpable silence that permeates his art. Adams creates photographs that reveal both the silence the beauty of nature can instill in us — the quietude born of awe and reverence, hope and redemption — and our own silence in the face of its desecration.

Celebrating a half century of work by this seminal American photographer, this exhibition examines the theme of silence in pictures he made between 1965 and 2015. A sense of the sacred graces these photographs of the American West. Adams transforms what he refers to as “the silence of light” — seen in pristine natural landscapes and in those altered by humans — into pictures that not only capture beauty but also question our silence to its destruction through consumerism, industrialization, and lack of environmental stewardship. Together, the three sections of this exhibition — The Gift, Our Response, and Tenancy — reveal that while Adams’ art is a lament for what has been lost, it is also a paean to what remains and to what can give us hope.

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington. It is made possible through the leadership support of the Trellis Fund and a generous gift from Jane P. Watkins.

All of the works in the exhibition are gelatin silver prints unless otherwise specified.
There are at least two kinds of silence that define us. One is the eloquent silence of the world as we were given it—the silence of light and beauty, the silence that holds a promise. It is a stillness especially audible on the prairie or next to trees, but it can be heard in many places throughout the country.

Theodore Roethke spoke of this quiet when he wrote that “hope has its hush.” It asks us to care.

There is also sometimes a dark silence within us, one that results from willful blindness and deafness. We struggle against it.

What will America be? Will it accord with the stillness of sunlight?

Robert Adams, 2021
After people live awhile in a place to which they’ve laid waste, it gets to be easy to hate a great many things.

Robert Adams, 2006
When Adams began to photograph in 1963, he searched for scenes that revealed his conception of nature’s gift — its beauty and the peace it inspires in us. His love of nature began as a child, exploring the woods with his father and picnicking with his mother and younger sister near their homes first in New Jersey and then Wisconsin. When the family moved to Colorado (Wheat Ridge, a town outside Denver) in 1952, his experience of nature widened as he and his father hiked in the foothills and canyons of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains and scouted the state’s eastern plains. There, he discovered different kinds of natural beauty — not only the magnificent grandeur of the Rockies, but also the minimal, seemingly empty beauty of the plains where one had to learn to “watch better,” as he said, to see its many wonders.

Unlike earlier 20th-century American landscape photographers such as Ansel Adams (no relation), who recorded the sweeping majesty of the West’s mountains and national parks, Robert Adams has focused on vast vistas of sparse, fragile prairies and quiet, often overlooked corners. The photographs in this room were made in Colorado and Oregon between 1969 and 2000. They reveal Adams’ understanding of “the silence of light” and show how light articulates forms, bathes the natural world in grace, and gives us “courage and...hope,” as he has asserted. They create “a quiet so absolute that it allows one to begin again, to love the future.”
Many of the photographs in this room were made with a 4 x 5 inch camera resting on a tripod, which allowed Adams to record the beauty of nature in great detail. He published several in his 1988 book *Perfect Times, Perfect Places*. It expressed the sense of joy and peace that can be experienced when walking through such places as the Pawnee National Grassland in Weld County, Colorado, especially in the company of loved ones, human or canine.

Some of the pictures that hang along this wall were made as Adams walked through the landscape holding a 35mm camera fitted with a wide-angle lens. By recording the same scene only a few seconds or minutes apart, his pictures show how different the world can look depending on the vantage point and shifting light, whether dappled through the foliage of a tree or reflected off the delicate stems of grass.
Our Response
Early Hispanic and Plains Communities

How have Americans responded to the potential and the vulnerability of the West? Divided into several thematic groups and arranged roughly chronologically, this section examines that question, beginning with Early Hispanic and Plains Communities.

After spending several years in California, Adams and his wife, Kerstin, returned to Colorado in 1962. Discouraged to find the natural environment he so loved sadly degraded, he found direction in photography and in studying the art, architecture, and culture of the Hispanic communities along the state’s southern borders and the white immigrant settlements on the eastern plains. He wanted to document these settlements because many were abandoned or being transformed by developers. In high school he had taken an architectural drafting course that instilled in him a fascination with the way the built environment shapes our lives and expresses our values. It also inspired him to make his first significant body of photographs.

When he made these pictures, Adams acknowledged the importance of infrastructure to life on the prairie — the gravel roads and farmhouses, the stores and churches. But he also made clear the ways in which early settlers, both Hispanic and white, attempted to achieve a unity with nature, and the important role that faith played in their lives. The Hispanic immigrants, he noted, demonstrated in their art and architecture “an acceptance of the natural world, and…a faith that enabled them to accomplish what [writer Leo] Tolstoy called ‘the most difficult thing…to love life, to love it even while one suffers.’”
When Adams first began to photograph in the 1960s, he took advantage of the library of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, near Colorado College where he taught English. There, he learned about the work of several 20th-century American photographers — particularly Paul Strand and Adams’ colleague Myron Wood — whose art and ideas would inform his own. Strand’s pictures made in New England in the early 1940s and Wood’s photographs of the Southwest made in the 1950s and 1960s gave Adams models for recording the art and architecture of Colorado’s eastern plains and southern Hispanic communities.

Adams’ faith was also an important element in his art. Raised by liberal Methodist parents, he considered becoming a minister until he was about 20 years old and organized religion began to seem narrow, both theologically and culturally. But he never lost his belief in many Christian tenets. Indeed, once he saw Alfred Stieglitz’s pictures and understood that photography could find metaphors in the “service of both truth and hope, of fact and possibility,” a number of his convictions deepened. His faith, coupled with his fascination with architecture, prompted him to study churches. He was especially drawn to austere structures, such as the adobe buildings he found in Colorado’s Hispanic communities, which used light to instill a sense of silence and the sacred.
Our Response
Our Imprint on the Land

In the late 1960s and 1970s Adams faced a crisis. The Colorado—and indeed the West—that he had loved since childhood was rapidly disappearing. As the population increased sharply, the impact on the once pristine landscape was dramatic, so much so that Adams asked himself if “the big views, the ones you instinctively associate with the word ‘West,’ [had] been eroded to the point where there is no grandeur left?” Were the suburbs, “those almost wholly man-altered places,” the sole thing that “constituted the American geography? And if so, were words like ‘majesty,’ so common in 19th-century vocabulary, now without application except for views of clouds?”

Adams explored these questions in a series of pictures made along the Missouri River around the time of the 1976 bicentennial of the United States, a moment of national reflection on the past and assessment of the present. While he recognized that many people thought landscape photographs should only depict the wilderness, he determined “not to lie” and “to include in the photographs evidence of man.” It was an easy prerequisite to follow, he noted, “since our violence against the earth has extended even to anonymous arroyos and undifferentiated stands of scrub brush.”

His aim, however, was not to show the violence but to see if there was still any beauty in this landscape that 19th-century explorers had considered sublime and redemptive. “Was there remaining in the geography,” he asked, “a strength that might help sustain us as it had them?” Was there something that might give us hope?
Adams began his exploration of the new American landscape at the Missouri River, the boundary in the 19th century between settled areas in the East and the frontier in the West. He did not, however, photograph famous sites along its banks (such as the starting point for Meriwether Lewis and William Clark’s *Corps of Discovery* in 1804). Instead, his pictures record nondescript spots where the fabricated and the natural are inextricably intertwined. He did make photographs of “the big views” we customarily associate with the West. But they often depict a landscape that had changed utterly in only a few years, laying bare the moral responsibility this New West posed to those who saw clearly the environmental consequences of such unregulated growth.

As he examined a new kind of beauty, one profoundly different from 19th-century myths of glory, he looked to the work of earlier artists and writers. Just as Henry David Thoreau studied New England’s Walden Pond to draw larger truths from its simplicity, so too did Adams search for places that had been “dismissed as banal, unimportant or even hopelessly damaged” but still had “a sense of grandeur, even a sense of the spectacular.” He also scrutinized the work of Timothy O’Sullivan, observing how the photographer recorded nature as “the antitheatrical puzzle it is—a stage without a center.” By placing the nominal subject—the spring in *Sou Springs, Pah Ute Range, Nevada*—in the middle ground, O’Sullivan indicated space and emptiness. Adams does something similar in *Abandoned Car, Carbon County, Wyoming*, on the wall to the left. Here he highlights the deserted car (a barely visible dark patch in the middle of the picture), encouraging us to carefully examine the vast, empty vista.
Our Response
A New West

Adams’ challenge in the late 1960s and 1970s was to determine how to record not only an altered natural landscape but also the new suburbs that were rapidly transforming the West. Concluding that well-reasoned argument, not passionate outcry, was the most effective approach, he resolved to make pictures that were documentary and apparently neutral. But how could he do so in an environment he saw as brutalized, and how could he transform those scenes into something promising, something more universal?

To accomplish this goal, Adams realized that he needed to radically change his style. He abandoned the nostalgic tone of his earlier pictures of rural communities. Instead, he drew on photography’s seemingly uncritical acceptance of everything in front of the lens and made pictures that appeared transparent, that seemed to shed the prejudices of their maker and reveal “a hidden order.”

He also abandoned his large 4 × 5 inch view camera, which rested on a tripod, and used a handheld camera that allowed him to photograph more rapidly: “The suburbs can be hostile,” he explained, “and you have to keep moving.” He no longer tried to capture a full tonal range but sought to convey the intense light of the West through brilliant highlights and dense blacks. He printed many of these photographs small, not quite 6 × 6 inches, to encourage close viewing and to mimic the size of amateur snapshots. Finally, he embraced an unapologetically new subject matter: gas stations, highways, housing developments, parking lots, strip malls, truck stops, abandoned and littered fields, cars and trucks. All these elements were radically transforming the physical look and character of the suburbs and the lives of their inhabitants.
In 1976 Adams expanded his investigation of the new suburban landscape by photographing at night. It was a challenging endeavor as the poorly lit streets were sometimes dangerous, his presence aroused suspicion, and motorists occasionally targeted him. He realized, though, that it provided an opportunity to capture some of the anxiety of the place as well as its wonder and stillness.

He also explored insights he had gleaned from Edward Hopper, particularly the way light—or its absence—can imbue pictures of everyday life with a poignancy and enveloping silence. By focusing on the cool light of dusk, when the sky throbs with intensity, or in the dense black of night, Adams infused these pictures with a sense of beauty and mystery.
In 1970, while Adams was living in Wheat Ridge, he and his wife saw smoke rising near a nuclear weapons plant 10 miles upwind from Denver. Frightened that they were witnessing a nuclear accident, they passed several anxious hours before learning that the fire was outside the plant. Throughout the 1970s, community opposition to the facility escalated as reports indicated significant contamination to the surrounding area, and experts warned that if a fire burned through the roof, Denver would suffer a major catastrophe.

In response, Adams decided to photograph the most important thing that would be lost if such an event occurred — quite simply *Our Lives and Our Children*, as he titled his subsequent book. He determined to capture people unawares because he knew that if they saw his camera, they would alter their behavior. To do so, he walked through suburban Denver hiding a 2¼ inch camera equipped with a wide-angle lens behind a bag of groceries. When he saw people and scenes with potential, he quickly shifted the bag to his other arm and released the shutter without looking through the viewfinder or adjusting the focus or exposure. As a result, these pictures are sometimes blurry, with odd juxtapositions and occasional light flares — imperfections that sometimes suggest the photographer’s sense of urgency and infuse the pictures with a sense of authenticity.

Adams carefully sequenced the photographs when he published them in *Our Lives and Our Children* so that the people depicted display an increasing sense of agitation and anxiety. The final pictures show people looking over their shoulders or up into the sky with great alarm, as if they were witnessing a cataclysmic event. He also cropped the final pictures, changing them from squares or verticals to thin horizontals in order to further emphasize this shift in tone. Together these decisions created a deeply moving work whose power resides more in the cumulative effect of sequenced images than in any single photograph.
This gallery brings together pictures from *Our Lives and Our Children* and books published by Adams, who (like many 20th-century photographers) made books an integral part of his practice. In the 1960s and 1970s, few museums regularly exhibited photographs, and books were one of the few ways he could make his work more widely known. With a PhD in literature and as a former English professor, Adams also recognized that a carefully constructed sequence of photographs could convey a rich story. Throughout his career he has worked closely with his wife, Kerstin, to create more than 45 books, often writing brief statements for them that powerfully summarize the issues his pictures address.
Our Response
Southern California

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Adams returned to California after an absence of several years, he was distressed to see that it had changed profoundly. Operating on the principle that you should “go to the landscape that frightens you the most and take pictures until you’re not scared anymore,” he determined to photograph it. His pictures show the same discordant vistas he had recorded elsewhere in the West, but they often have a harsher or more melancholic edge, coupled with an unmistakable moral outrage. They also vary in tone. He discovered, much to his surprise, that although the area was under a pall of air pollution, “the light that filters down through that smog is extraordinary.” He wrestled with the dilemma of making beautiful pictures of something as damaging as smog, but he found that the polluted light softened shadows and pervaded the scene with an overall luminosity and an unmistakable elegiac quality.

He published many of these pictures in his 1986 book *Los Angeles Spring*, its title a nod to Rachel Carson’s groundbreaking 1962 book *Silent Spring*. Just as Carson predicted that our profligate use of chemicals would result in a time when birds sang no more, so too did Adams reflect on the profound catastrophe he saw unfolding around him. In the introduction to *Los Angeles Spring*, he lamented: “Southern California was, by the reports of those who lived there at the turn of the [20th] century, beautiful…. Even now we can almost extrapolate an Eden from what has lasted…. Whether those trees that stand are reassuring is a question for a lifetime. All that is clear is the perfection of what we were given, the unworthiness of our response, and the certainty, in view of our current deprivation, that we are judged.”
Our Response
A Mythic Forest

In 1997, Robert and Kerstin Adams moved from Longmont, Colorado, to Astoria, Oregon. There, they discovered the extent of the destruction of Oregon’s once majestic forests, and the impact that clearcutting had on people’s psyche. In response, he decided to photograph these clearcuts. From 1999 to 2003, he and Kerstin drove and hiked through some of the remains of Oregon’s forests. It was not an easy endeavor: the roads were without signs and not intended for public use, and the ground was sometimes piled high with debris that made walking difficult and occasionally dangerous. As they persisted, they came to believe that the once remarkable rain forests had become “the site of one of the major ecological disasters on this continent.”

When Adams photographed the remains of Oregon’s forests, he once again set several ground rules for himself: “Not to use the sky, on those rare occasions when there is one here in the Northwest, to rescue the land. Not to be seduced into celebrating the power of men and machines, which can have a Satanic beauty and heroism about it. And not to aestheticize the carnage.”
To make his most dramatic pictures of clearcutting, Adams immersed himself in the landscape, showing scenes composed entirely of stumps. He also suggested the extent of the destruction by depicting the carnage stretching as far as the eye can see. In other pictures, he centered the massive, heroic remains of old-growth trees in his frame and occasionally posed Kerstin next to them. Sometimes she rests her hand on the side of the remnants, as if to give comfort.

As he made these pictures, Adams likened his work to war photography. He noted the similarity between the violence revealed in his photographs and those by George Barnard, Alexander Gardner, and Timothy O’Sullivan of Civil War soldiers and trees felled in battle. Adams published his works in his 2005 book *Turning Back: A Photographic Journal of Re-exploration*, one of his sharpest critiques of American land management to date.
Tenancy

Merging the themes of hope and despair, beauty and desecration, that run throughout Adams’ work, American Silence ends with a selection of pictures from his 2017 book Tenancy: Between the River and the Sea; The Nehalem Spit, the Coast of Oregon. This series of photographs made between 2013 and 2015 along the Nehalem Spit, a two-mile-long promontory on the Oregon coast, is divided into three parts. The first, The River’s Edge, examines the eastern side of the spit where massive tree stumps have washed up on the banks, brutal evidence of the clearcutting farther up the Nehalem River. The second part looks at the spit itself, a fragile sanctuary of small trees, meadows, and dunes. The third depicts the ever-changing beauty and wonder of the ocean to the west, as well as the people who visit it, seeking to be restored by that beauty.

Signaling that Tenancy addresses not just a place or even the more specific act of clearcutting but something more fundamental, Adams began the book with a definition of the title word: “tenancy, the temporary possession of what belongs to another.” Aptly named, both the book and this section of the exhibition call out the dangers that imperil the land, yet they also allow us a sense of promise and remind us “of a mystery,” as Adams once said, “greater than our failures.” The pictures convey Adams’ belief that we are only temporary occupants of the earth that nourishes and sustains us.
The Nehalem River originates in a timber-producing region of the Oregon Coast Range and flows parallel to the Pacific for two miles before they finally merge. When he made the photographs in *The River’s Edge*, Adams sometimes placed Kerstin beside the giant stumps to indicate their massive size, proof of their age and the power of the river. Potent reminders of the costs of greed, these remnants are, Adams wrote, the “result of clearcutting and the accelerated run-off and erosion that are its by-products.” This “radically heedless” practice “attacks the physical and spiritual health of everything that lives.”

The second section of *Tenancy* examines the interior of the spit, an area that rests perilously near a large geologic fault. In these photographs, a soft, moisture-laden marine light caresses the delicate grass and shrubs, emphasizing the quiet tranquility of the spit and its fragility.

Taken along the ocean side of the spit, the final group of pictures in *Tenancy* shows the magical interaction of sand, surf, sky, and light. Some of these photographs are nearly abstract views of wet sand, breaking waves, and luminous skies. Others include towering, sunlit clouds. Striving to evoke metaphors for “the whole of creation” (as years earlier Adams had said he wanted to do), some have lens flares that cause both streams of light and brilliant sunbursts.
Kerstin Enjoying the Wind, East of Keota, Colorado
1969, printed c. 1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Sally, Weld County, Colorado
1984, printed 1990
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Mary and David Robinson

Weld County, Colorado
1984
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
The Ahmanson Foundation and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Weld County, Colorado

1981, printed 1987
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

“It is a mistake to concentrate upon the earth when describing
the plains. The sky is what defines them.” Robert Adams, 1978

Weld County, Colorado

1981, printed 1988
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Northeast of Keota, Colorado

1969, printed 1981
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Adams has a special affinity for trees. He believes, as others have noted, that we would achieve a more equitable balance with nature if we would occupy the land as trees do—taking nutrients from it but replenishing it as well. In 1994 he wrote: “Cottonwoods can seem human. They seem to rejoice, and they seem to suffer. But they also seem to know a stillness that we can’t experience, not for long. . . . The example of trees does suggest [however] a harmony for which it seems right to dream. A friend, a Native American, told me recently that the Lakota refer to cottonwoods as ‘the dreaming tree,’ a place for visions.”

Weld County, Colorado

1992
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
**Irrigation Canal,**  
**Larimer County, Colorado**

1995  
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and  
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

“Cottonwoods have been our friends for a while. The Arapaho believed, for instance, that the stars come from cottonwoods, from the glistening sap at the joints of twigs. The Hidatsa believed that the shade from cottonwoods was healing. Everything about the tree in fact struck Native Americans as beneficent. They saw that even their horses survived the winter by foraging its inner bark. As, for that matter, did horses belonging to whites. And in other seasons immigrant wagon trains followed along from one grove to the next, with cottonwoods serving as landmarks, shelter, and fuel. But the human side of this friendship has weakened. Agribusiness now wages war on cottonwoods because the trees compete for water, and suburban developers replace them with conveniently small but ecologically disruptive species like Russian olive.” Robert Adams, 1994

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**North of Keota, Colorado**

1973  
Private collection, San Francisco
Garfield County, Colorado
1987
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

In his book *Prayers in an American Church*, 2012, Adams equates respectful viewing of the landscape with religious experience and his act of photographing it with a prayer intended to focus our attention on a blessing. In it, he quoted this song from the Hopi people of northeastern Arizona:

*There!*
*There!*
*Beautiful white-rising has dawned.*
*Beautiful yellow-rising has dawned.*
*There!*
*There!*
Garfield County, Colorado
1987
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane, a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Boulder County, Colorado
1987
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane, a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Boulder County, Colorado
1987
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane, a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund
**Poplars, Harney County, Oregon**  
1999  
photogravure  
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Linda Hackett and Russell Munson Fund  
and Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund

This picture and the three adjacent ones are photogravures, a printing process prized for its rich, subtle tonal range. At the turn of the 20th century, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz included photogravure reproductions in his acclaimed periodical *Camera Work*. When Adams first began to photograph in the 1960s, he studied *Camera Work* (all 50 issues) and embraced not only the case it made for photography as a powerful mode of pictorial expression but also the high standards it set for design and reproduction.
Poplars,
Harney County, Oregon
1999
photogravure
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Linda Hackett and Russell Munson Fund
and Alfred H. Moses and Fern M. Schad Fund
Baker County, Oregon

2000
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

[Illustrate with Strand 1991.216.39]

PAUL STRAND
Town Hall

1946
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Southwestern Bell Corporation Paul Strand Collection
© Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

[Illustrate with Myron Wood]

MYRON WOOD
Saint Geronimo Church,
Taos Pueblo

1964
Courtesy of Special Collections,
Pikes Peak Library District, 002-1418
Main Street, Chama, Colorado

1972
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

“To visit this church in the brilliance and heat of a July day is to discover stillness.” Robert Adams, 1974

Adobe Chapel, Medina Plaza, along the Purgatory River, Colorado

1964, printed early 1970s
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Adobe Chapel, Viejo San Acacio, Colorado

1972
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

“Mystery is a certainty. There is everywhere silence—in the call of doves, in the flat, soft ring of sheep bells, even in the closing of a pickup door.” Robert Adams, 1978
Presbyterian Mission School, Mogote, Colorado

1967
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Log Addition to an Adobe House near San Luis, Colorado

1972
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

The caption for this picture in Adams’ book The Architecture and Art of Early Hispanic Colorado, 1974, describes in detail the log addition, with its timber “dressed with a broad ax and arranged in subtle rectangles,” its “course of stones” that “reinforces the impression of a powerful box,” and its “elegantly proportioned round steps” confirming “that nothing was achieved by accident.”
**Sandstone Grave Marker, Walsenburg, Colorado**

1972

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

“This small lamb with big ears would have caused a six-year-old to smile, as its maker must have wished. To adults it offers a consolation; the direct gaze and neatly folded legs suggest the peace of innocence.” Robert Adams, 1974

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**Vegetable Garden and San Raphael Chapel, Paisaje, Colorado**

1972

Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane, a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

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**Clarkville, Colorado**

1972

Private collection, San Francisco

“We are building — spare, white, and isolated — testify to our hope and its vulnerability.” Robert Adams, 1978
[DEX 225] [Cat. 30]

**Arriba, Colorado**
1966, printed 1981
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

[DEX 8] [Cat. 31]

**Store, Elizabeth, Colorado**
1965, printed 1988
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

[DEX 7] [Cat. 32]

**Catholic Church, Winter, Ramah, Colorado**
1965, printed 1982
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Catholic Church, Summer, Ramah, Colorado
1965, printed 1981
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Genoa, Colorado
1970
Private collection, San Francisco

“Even architecture in town finds its reference point at the end of streets, at the horizon; we sense there an expanse so empty that it can almost seem to spin.” Robert Adams, 1978
**Movie Theater, Otis, Colorado**
1965, printed c. 1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

When Adams was a teenager, he discovered Edward Hopper’s paintings and etchings, which spoke strongly to him of the commonplace scenes he had experienced as a child in New Jersey. Just as Hopper recognized the expressive possibilities of everyday, often empty, urban vistas, so too did Adams come to see, as he later acknowledged, that all structures and “all places were interesting.” Hopper’s works also encouraged him to explore that “sense of quiet in American life.”

**Schoolyard, Ramah, Colorado**
1968
Private collection, San Francisco
Boys in a Pickup,  
Simla, Colorado  
1970, printed 1991  
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and  
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Summer, Early Morning,  
Immigrant Cemetery,  
North of Bethune, Colorado  
1965  
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and  
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

TIMOTHY O’SULLIVAN  
Sou Springs,  
Pah Ute Range, Nevada  
1867  
albumen print  
Library of Congress, Washington,  
Prints and Photographs Division
**Concrete and Ice, Missouri River, Clay County, South Dakota**

1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

**Missouri River, Clay County, South Dakota**

1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mary and Dan Solomon and Patrons’ Permanent Fund

**Quarried Mesa Top, Pueblo County, Colorado**

1978
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons’ Permanent Fund
Arkansas River Canyon, Colorado
1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Lou and Di Stovall

Boulder County, Colorado
1983
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Looking toward the Mountains in Smog, Weld County, Colorado
1983
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Interstate 25, Weld County, Colorado
1983
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Along the Missouri River, North of Kansas City, Missouri
1979
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Nebraska State Highway 2, Box Butte County, Nebraska
1978, printed 1991
**Garden of the Gods,**  
**El Paso County, Colorado**  
1976  
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and  
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams  

A peaceful gathering place for centuries for many Native peoples, including the Apache, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Lakota, Pawnee, Shoshone, and Ute, the Garden of the Gods was given its English name by white settlers in the 1850s. With towering red rock formations, the area was a spiritual site for the Ute, who also paid homage to the healing and holy powers of nearby Manitou Springs. By depicting bright headlights attempting — and failing — to illuminate this sacred, mysterious place, Adams exposed the limits of modern technology.

**Abandoned Car,**  
**Carbon County, Wyoming**  
1977  
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and  
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Larimer County, Colorado
1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Jeffrey Fraenkel and Alan Mark

Highway 287, Larimer County, Colorado
1977
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Umatilla County, Oregon
1978
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons’ Permanent Fund
Northeast from Flagstaff Mountain, Boulder County, Colorado
1975
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

East from Flagstaff Mountain, Boulder County, Colorado
1975
Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco
Depicting a landscape that had changed utterly in only a few years, this picture shows a grove of trees in the foreground and, beyond, Boulder’s never-ending suburban sprawl.

Lakewood, Jefferson County, Colorado
1976
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
South of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant, Jefferson County, Colorado
1976
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Adams once said that he tried to create pictures that capture the past, present, and future—or as he phrased it, “ghosts and the daily news and prophesy.” This photograph does just that. Depicting tire tracks, a road, cars, and telephone poles, along with age-old geological formations, it records a landscape of the sort Adams once described as “disordered...confusing...discordant [and] drastically contradictory. If you walk out there, if you look down at the ground, you find fragments of vegetation and dirt and rock, but you also find plastic, scrap metal, grease, chemicals that you dare not speculate about.... The simplest walk can...induce a turmoil of emotions.”

Wheat Stubble, South of Thurman, Colorado
1965, printed 1988
Collection of Jeffrey Fraenkel and Alan Mark
EDWARD HOPPER

Nighthawks

1942
oil on canvas
The Art Institute of Chicago,
Friends of American Art Collection, 1942.51
© Heirs of Josephine N. Hopper / Licensed by
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Sunday School Class,
Church in a New Tract,
Colorado Springs

1969
Collection of Jeffrey Fraenkel and Alan Mark

Basement for a Tract House,
Colorado Springs

1969
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Frame for a Tract House, Colorado Springs
1969, printed 1984
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Mary and David Robinson

Mobile Home Park, North Edge of Denver
1973, printed 2005
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Mary and Dan Solomon and Patrons’ Permanent Fund

Arvada, Colorado
1974
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
The Ahmanson Foundation and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
**Next to Interstate 25, Denver**

1973, printed 1991
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
The Ahmanson Foundation and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

By the time Adams made this photograph in 1973, the once brilliant light of Denver was often gray with the unmistakable heaviness of pollution and devoid of the radiance he had previously captured. Surrounded by trash, a fence, an overpass, and Interstate 25, the tree is almost humanlike in its steadfast determination to lay claim to this spot of ground.

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**Pikes Peak Park, Colorado Springs**

1969
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund
Lakewood, Colorado
1973, printed 1979
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Tract House,
Longmont, Colorado
1973
Collection of Frish Brandt and August Fischer
Longmont, Colorado
1973
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Longmont, Colorado
1973, printed 1988
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Lakewood, Colorado
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
**From Interstate 25, North Edge of Denver**

1973
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

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**Longmont, Colorado**

1977
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982
Boulder County, Colorado
1974
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982

“I began making pictures because I wanted to record what supports hope: the untranslatable mystery and beauty of the world. Along the way, however, the camera also caught evidence against hope, and I eventually concluded that this too belonged in pictures if they were to be truthful and thus useful.” Robert Adams, 2010

Colorado Springs
1969
Private collection, San Francisco

Longmont, Colorado
1973, printed 1981
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982
Newly Occupied Tract Houses, Colorado Springs
1968
Private collection, San Francisco

Longmont, Colorado
1973, printed 1990
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
The Ahmanson Foundation and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Lakewood, Colorado
1970, printed 1981
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982
North Edge of Denver
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Highway,
Northeast Denver
1973
Stephen G. Stein Employee Benefit Trust

North Denver Suburb
1973, printed 1981
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982
New Tract Housing, Colorado Springs
1968, printed 1981
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982

The intense light of the West was a constant source of inspiration to Adams. It was “like a surgical instrument,” he said, sculpting shadows with sharp precision while burning the detail off surfaces. When he was able to photograph this light, “it’s as though the whole world is alive.”

Lakewood, Colorado
1974, printed 1981
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982

Colorado
C. 1973
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
**Colorado Springs**
1968 – 1971
Private collection, San Francisco

The duality between hope and despair, present in all of Adams’ work, is especially evident in this picture. He once said this scene shows “the saddest kind of isolation.” But he continued, “raining down . . . onto the roof and the lawn is glorious high-altitude light . . . . It’s a splendor that has no explanation [and is] a kind of forgiveness.”

**New Housing, Colorado Springs**
1969, printed 2005
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

**Colorado Springs**
1968, printed 1983
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mary and Dan Solomon and Patrons’ Permanent Fund
Walking to a Shopping Center, North Edge of Denver
1970 – 1974
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1982

New Apartments, Arvada, Colorado
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane, a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Denver
1970 – 1974
Yale University Art Gallery,
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund
**Strip Mall, Boulder, Colorado**
1970 – 1974
Yale University Art Gallery, Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

**Longmont, Colorado**
Private collection
Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs
1969
Private collection, San Francisco

Topping 14,000 feet, Pikes Peak has figured prominently in many people’s lives. The Ute, whose history says they were created there, call it Tavakiev, the Sun Mountain, because it is the first summit to be illuminated by the dawn’s light. Katharine Lee Bates, a young college professor who rode to the top of the mountain in 1893, was so inspired by the view that she wrote the lines of a poem that would become one of the country’s unofficial anthems, “America the Beautiful.” Some 76 years later, Adams also drew inspiration from this mountain when he took this picture. Made at the beginning of the modern environmental movement, it contrasts the 19th-century myth of America as a pristine frontier promising renewal and redemption with the present-day reality, and it questions how we have cared for the beauty of this country.

Longmont, Colorado
1976
Private collection, San Francisco
Berthoud, Colorado
1976
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with funds contributed by
Marilyn L. Steinbright, 1985

Fort Collins, Colorado
1977, printed 1985
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Purchased with funds contributed by
Marilyn L. Steinbright, 1985

Longmont, Colorado
1979, printed 1985
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Mary and David Robinson
Backyard, 
Longmont, Colorado
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Shopping Mall and 
Parking Lot, Denver
1974, printed 1980s
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Outdoor Theater, 
North Edge of Denver
1973 – 1974
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Adams’ work, wrote photography curator John Szarkowski in 1974, has a moral: “the landscape is...the place we live. If we have used it badly, we cannot therefore scorn it, without scorning ourselves. If we have abused it, broken its health, and erected upon it memorials to our ignorance, it is still our place, and before we can proceed we must learn to love it.”
**Alameda Avenue, Denver**
1968 – 1971
Private collection, San Francisco

**Longmont, Colorado**
1973 – 1974
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

**North Edge of Denver**
1973 – 1974
Yale University Art Gallery,
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund
ROBERT ADAMS,
with a foreword by
THOMAS HORN BRY FERRIL

*White Churches of the Plains: Examples from Colorado*
(Boulder, 1970)
National Gallery of Art Library,
David K. E. Bruce Fund

For his early books, such as *White Churches of the Plains* and *The Architecture and Art of Early Hispanic Colorado* (adjacent), Adams wrote texts that discuss the history of each subject; captions also give further details about the objects depicted and the people who made them. His love of architecture, coupled with his spiritual concerns, prompted him to focus on pictures of churches in both books.

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**ROBERT ADAMS**

*The Architecture and Art of Early Hispanic Colorado*
(Boulder, 1974)
National Gallery of Art Library,
David K. E. Bruce Fund
ROBERT ADAMS
*From the Missouri West*

(Millerton, NY, 1980)
National Gallery of Art Library,
Anonymous Gift

*From the Missouri West* includes photographs Adams made between 1975 and 1978 in Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, California, and Oregon, along with an incisive statement he wrote. A quoted passage from Loren Eiseley prefaces the volume: “Nothing is lost, but it can never be again as it was.” Together the pictures posit a new kind of landscape photography that looks not for the pristine wilderness, which even then largely existed only in parks, but at the impact of humans on the land.
ROBERT ADAMS

*The New West: Landscapes along the Colorado Front Range*

(Boulder, 1974)

National Gallery of Art Library,
David K. E. Bruce Fund

The frontispiece in *The New West* illustrates the battle Adams saw, as he wrote in the introduction, between our desire to live “harmoniously” with the land and our struggle to live with “our own creation, the city, and the disgust and nihilism it breeds.” Street signs in the foreground indicate that *The New West* begins at the intersection of Querida Drive (the Spanish word for a female romantic partner) and De Cortez (possibly referring to the Spanish invader Hernán Cortéz). This amalgam of love and conquest, desire and brutality, resonates with Adams’ assertion that although early settlers thought the American West was “sublime… as a practical matter most people hoped to alter and exploit the region.” Yet floating above this desolate scene are several brilliantly white clouds whose irregular and seemingly lighthearted forms contrast with the mechanical rigidity of the structures below. As Adams wrote, “All land, no matter what has happened to it, has over it a grace, an absolute persistent beauty.”
Although Adams published *denver* only three years after *The New West*, the two books are quite different. Whereas the title *The New West* immediately conjures up notions of a mythic 19th-century past, *denver*, with its lowercase spelling, suggests not a specific but a generic place, one that could be easily replicated elsewhere. And whereas the section titles in *The New West* sketch out the route of a 19th-century settler heading west, those in *denver* document the impact of our past and present incursions on the land and predict our future desecrations, for example, “Agriculture Land in the Path of Development.”
Denver
1980
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Denver
1981
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
**Commerce City, Colorado**
1981
Robert and Kerstin Adams,  
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

**Longmont, Colorado**
1981
National Gallery of Art, Washington,  
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and  
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

**Longmont, Colorado**
1979
Robert and Kerstin Adams,  
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco
**Denver**

1981

Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

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**Denver**

1980

Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

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**Denver**

1981

Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

As Adams wrote in his afterword to *Our Lives and Our Children*,
1983, we can “find in ourselves the will to keep asking questions of
politicians” only “after we have noticed the individuals with whom
we live. How mysteriously absolute each is. How many achieve, in
moments of reflection or joy or concern, a kind of heroism. Each
refutes the idea of acceptable loss.”
Denver

1980

Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Denver

1981

Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Denver

1981

Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco
Longmont, Colorado
1980
Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Denver
1980
Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Denver
1980
Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco
Denver
1980
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Denver
1981
Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Denver
1981
Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco
Denver
1980
Robert and Kerstin Adams,
Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Adams included this excerpt from W. H. Auden’s “The Shield of Achilles” as the frontispiece to his book *Our Lives and Our Children*:

She looked over his shoulder
For vines and olive trees,
Marble well-governed cities
And ships upon untamed seas,
But there on the shining metal
His hands had put instead
An artificial wilderness
And a sky like lead.

Santa Ana Wash, Redlands, California
1982
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

The largest river entirely within Southern California, the Santa Ana carries little water except during the rainy season, when it is prone to massive floods. Adams depicted the remnants of those floods in this picture, which shows a prehistoric boulder senselessly splattered with paint and surrounded by scrap metal, cardboard, a mattress, and a broom carelessly abandoned by a wasteful civilization.
Remains of a Eucalyptus Windbreak, Redlands, California
1982, printed 1990
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Introduced in California in the 1850s, eucalyptus trees were prized as windbreaks, sheltering orange groves and farmlands. This tall, fast-growing tree became so integrated into the landscape that the Los Angeles Times asserted in 1927 that the eucalyptus “seems more essentially California than many a native plant; so completely has it adopted California, and so entirely has California adopted it.” Yet by the 1980s when Adams made this photograph, the trees were being squeezed out by the expanding suburbs.

New Housing, Reche Canyon, San Bernardino County, California
1983
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with funds contributed by Ann and Donald W. McPhail and the Atlantic Richfield Foundation, 1986
**Eucalyptus Branch, Redlands, California**

1983

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of the Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1986

**Fontana, California**

1983

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

**Santa Ana Wash, Norton Air Force Base, San Bernardino County, California**

1977 – 1978

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and with matching funds contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Hauslohner and Harvey S. Shipley Miller, 1980
Broken Trees,  
East of Riverside, California
1983
Philadelphia Museum of Art,  
Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, 1986

Adams ended the powerful sequence of photographs in Los Angeles Spring with this picture. While the book as a whole indicts the mismanagement of the Southern California landscape, this image of a splayed tree with its verdant branches stretched out like the wings of an angel shows a beauty that cannot be destroyed.
Development Road,  
San Timoteo Canyon,  
Redlands, California  
1977  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and with matching funds contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Hauslohner and Harvey S. Shipley Miller, 1980

Edge of San Timoteo Canyon,  
Redlands, California  
1978  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mary and Dan Solomon and Patrons’ Permanent Fund

Firebreak, above  
East Highland, California  
1982  
For many years, Adams hung in his darkroom a poster reproducing French documentary photographer Eugène Atget’s *Saint-Cloud*. There, a statue seems to stand watch over the decaying park in Paris. In his pictures of the Los Angeles basin Adams depicted trees perched like sentries that nobly but vainly seem to guard a decaying civilization.
Spanish missionaries planted the first orange groves in Southern California in the 1760s. They thrived in the warm climate and by the late 19th century encircled Los Angeles, giving it the nickname the Orange Empire. By the 1920s citrus was second only to oil as the region’s leading industry. Although many groves were lost as the population grew, some were still in operation when Adams was in college and graduate school there in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the 1980s, they were all but gone.
**Interstate 10, West Edge of Redlands, California**
1983
Christine and Michael J. Murray

**Eucalyptus along Interstate 10, Redlands, California**
1978
Collection of Frish Brandt and August Fischer

**Old Estate Road, Redlands, California**
1983
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
GEORGE BARNARD
The “Hell Hole” New Hope Church, Georgia
1860s
albumen print
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Pfeiffer and Rogers Funds, 1970

Clearcut, Coos County, Oregon
1999
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams

Clearcut, Coos County, Oregon
1999
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Pepita Milmore Memorial Fund and Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
Adams later recorded quiet pockets of beauty that could still be found in a few small parks and published them in his 2012 book *Skogen*, the Swedish word for forest. Adams wrote *skogen* was evocative by its sound “of shadowed depths, and of our awe.”
Pacific County, Washington
2012
Yale University Art Gallery,
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund

Clearcut,
Clatsop County, Oregon
c. 2000
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,
Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

Kerstin next to an Old-Growth Stump,
Coos County, Oregon
1999
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,
Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser
**Clearcut, Clatsop County, Oregon**

C. 2000

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Robert and Kerstin Adams
**Clearcut, Coos County, Oregon**
c. 2000
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,
Gift of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser

**Columbia County, Oregon**
1999 – 2001
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,
Purchase through a gift of an anonymous donor

**Ecola State Park, Clatsop County, Oregon**
c. 2001
Yale University Art Gallery,
Purchased with a gift from Saundra B. Lane,
a grant from the Trellis Fund, and the
Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund
The River’s Edge
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein
The Interior of the Spit
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The River’s Edge
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The River’s Edge
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein
The Interior of the Spit
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein
The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein
The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The Sea Beach, Albatross
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein
The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein

The Sea Beach
2015
National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Stephen G. Stein
Tenancy ends with pictures of people walking and sitting on the beach, many quietly looking out to sea. “Their reasons for coming are personal,” Adams wrote, “but if one watches as they leave their cars and stare seaward it is a fair guess, I think, that many are looking to escape illusion and to be reconciled.”
This photograph is the last one in *Tenancy*. Adams placed these lines by the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova on the preceding page:

...the sun goes down in waves of ether
in such a way that I can’t tell
if the day is ending, or the world,
or if the secret of secrets is within me again.
For many years, Adams hung in his darkroom a poster reproducing French documentary photographer Eugène Atget’s *Saint-Cloud*. There, a statue seems to stand watch over the decaying park in Paris. In his pictures of the Los Angeles basin Adams depicted trees perched like sentries that nobly but vainly seem to guard a decaying civilization.

Eugène Atget, *Saint-Cloud*, 1926, albumen print, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mary and Dan Solomon and Patrons’ Permanent Fund