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J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM ACQUIRES 25 ANSEL ADAMS PHOTOGRAPHS



Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, negative 1941; print 1980. Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984). Gelatin silver print The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Carol Vernon and Robert Turbin in Memory of Marjorie and Leonard Vernon. © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust



Mt. Williamson, Sierra Nevada, from Manzanar, California, negative 1944; print 1981. Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984). Gelatin silver print The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Gift of Carol Vernon and Robert Turbin in Memory of Marjorie and Leonard Vernon. © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust

“The Museum Set” includes landscape and portrait prints from the iconic California photographer

LOS ANGELES—The J. Paul Getty Museum today announced a generous donation of 25 photographs by acclaimed 20th century photographer **Ansel Adams** (American, 1902–1984). A gift of Carol Vernon and her husband Robert Turbin in memory of Marjorie and Leonard Vernon, “The Museum Set” was purchased from Adams by Vernon’s parents, with the understanding that they would one day be donated to a museum. Having been in the same hands since their initial purchase, the photographs are in pristine condition, and greatly enhance the Getty’s existing collection of 40 photographs by Adams.

In 1979, near the end of his seven decade career, Adams began to produce what he called “The Museum Set,” a project initiated with the help of Maggi Weston of Weston Gallery in Carmel, California. From over 2,500 of his negatives, Adams selected 75 images, which included photographs from as early as 1923 to as late as 1968. Collectors could purchase a “complete” set of 75 prints, or they could select their own set of 25 that Adams himself would print for purchase. Each set was called the “Ansel Adams Museum Set” and was purchased on the condition that the buyer would eventually donate their set to a museum.

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"'The Museum Set' is significant in several ways, the first being that it helps us understand how Adams evaluated his work, and how he wanted future generations to view it," explains Judith Keller, senior curator in the Getty Museum's Department of Photographs. "The set was initiated around the same time that Adams began writing his autobiography and within a few years after he co-founded the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson, Arizona, so this project can be seen as one of self-reflection after a long and successful career."

The acquired set was purchased in 1981 from the Weston Gallery by Leonard and Marjorie Vernon, residents of Los Angeles, who began buying photographs in 1976 and amassed an important collection of 19th and 20th century photography. As the collector who purchased each museum set was given the chance to select their own set of 25 prints, this particular grouping comprises the choices that the Vernons made, and is different from every other set in existence.

A large number of the prints feature two locations—Yosemite (nine prints) and the Sierra Nevadas (three prints). The collection also contains two prints from Alaska, three from Northern California, including an image of the "Golden Gate" in San Francisco Bay taken in 1932 before the bridge was constructed, and three from the Southwest, including *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* (1941), which once held the record for the highest price ever paid for a photograph at auction. Although the majority of the prints are landscapes, the set does include two portraits—*Georgia O'Keeffe and Orville Cox at the Canyon de Chelly National Monument* (1937), and a close up of the face of Jose Clemente Orozco, taken in New York City in 1933.

About Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984)

Ansel Adams was born in San Francisco in 1902. His first trip to the Yosemite Valley in 1916 coincided with his first photographs, taken with his father's Brownie camera. He would return to Yosemite every year thereafter for the rest of his life. In 1920, at the same time that he started working for the Sierra Club, Adams began to take up photography more seriously. Upon meeting Paul Strand in 1930, Adams decided to devote himself to a career in photography and in 1932 he became a founding member of Group f/64, a circle of photographers, including Imogen Cunningham and Edward Weston, that practiced a particular visual aesthetic—using large format negatives, sharp focus, and no re-touching or manipulation in the darkroom—in their photographs. Adams met Alfred Stieglitz in 1933 in New York and a solo exhibition of his work was held there in 1936. That same year Adams

lobbied congressmen in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the Sierra Club for the establishment of Kings Canyon National Park in California. While teaching at Art Center School, Los Angeles, in 1941, Adams developed his "Zone System" technique of exposure and development of negatives. In 1946 Adams received a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (he would receive three in his lifetime) to photograph national parks and monuments. He also founded the Department of Photography at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco (later San Francisco Art Institute), as well as The Friends of Photography in Carmel (which later moved to San Francisco).

Adams received several honorary degrees and fellowships in the later decades of his career. In 1970 he received the Chubb Fellowship from Yale University, and in 1974 he received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Adams was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain in 1976, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Carter in 1980, and in 1981 received an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from Harvard University. Adams's photographs have set records for photographs sales (a mural-sized print of *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, sold for \$71,500 in 1981, the highest price ever paid for a photograph at the time). Major exhibitions of his work include *The Eloquent Light*, a retrospective exhibition at the De Young Museum in San Francisco in 1963, *Recollected Moments* at SFMOMA in 1972, *Photographs by Ansel Adams* initiated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974–1977, and more recently *Ansel Adams at 100* organized by SFMOMA in 2001. Adams died in 1984 at the age of 82.

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