

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Rebecca Eckland, Director of Communications and Marketing, 775.398.7263, [rebecca.eckland@nevadaart.org](mailto:rebecca.eckland@nevadaart.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**NEVADA MUSEUM OF ART ONE OF TWO VENUES TO SHOWCASE WORK BY  
INFLUENTIAL AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT ADAMS**

*National Gallery of Art, Washington, May 29–October 2, 2022*

*Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, October 29, 2022–January 29, 2023*

*American Silence: The Photographs of Robert Adams* is an exhibition that explores some of the most profound questions of our time, including our responsibility to the land, and the moral dilemmas we face as a consequence of progress. The issues raised by this exhibition are especially relevant when wildfires ravage the American West, temperatures reach record highs, and pollution muddies once-clear skies. For over 50 years, Adams' compelling, provocative, and highly influential photographs have shown us the wonder and fragility of the American landscape, its inherent beauty, and the inadequacy of our response to it.

Organized by the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC in cooperation with the artist, this exhibit will travel to the Nevada Museum of Art where it will be presented in Reno from October 29, 2022 through January 29, 2023. The Nevada Museum of Art will be the only institution on the West Coast to display this exhibition.

The Museum eagerly participated in the tour given its history and interest in the work of Robert Adams. "The photography of Robert Adams is foundational to the Carol Franc Buck Altered Landscape Photography Collection at the Nevada Museum of Art," said David B. Walker, Museum CEO. "We are honored and excited to be the only West Coast venue to host this important exhibition that is aligned with our institution's longtime commitment to exploring creative interactions with natural and built environments."

Photographs by Robert Adams were among the first works acquired for the Museum's *Altered Landscape: Carol Franc Buck Collection*. Since its establishment in the early 1990s, the collection has included images that address and engage issues related to land use and the changing landscape. *Altered Landscape* is the Museum's largest focused collection and features more than 1,000 contemporary landscape photographs.

Capturing the sense of peace and harmony created through what Adams calls "the silence of light," which can be seen on the prairie, in the woods, and by the ocean, *American Silence* features some 175 pictures, made from 1965 to 2015. Other images on view question our moral silence to the desecration of nature's beauty through consumerism, industrialization and lack of environmental stewardship. Divided into three sections—*The Gift*, *Our Response* and *Tenancy*—the exhibition

includes works not only from the artist's most important projects, but also lesser-known ones that depict suburban sprawl, strip malls, highways, homes and stores, as well as rivers, skies, the prairie, and the ocean. While these photographs lament the ravages that have been inflicted on the land, they also pay homage to the beauty that remains.

In an epigraph included in the exhibition catalogue, published by the National Gallery of Art and Aperture, Adams explains that, for him, silence has varied meanings:

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....

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?

The first section of the exhibition, *The Gift*, shows selected works from Adams' career that reveal the silence and the concomitant beauty, peace, and spiritual harmony that can be found in the landscape itself. Through presentations of work from early publications such as *Prairie*, 1978, along with mid-career books such as *Perfect Times*, *Perfect Places*, 1988, and *Listening to the River*, 1994, and the more recent *Pine Valley*, 2005, and *This Day*, 2011, these pictures reveal Adams' exceptional ability to find the sublime in both the vast vistas of the sparse, fragile American West and in its quiet, often overlooked corners.

The second section, *Our Response*—the largest of the exhibition—examines how Americans have responded to both the potential and vulnerability of the West. This section includes work from some of Adams' earliest publications, such as *White Churches of the Plains*, 1970, and *The Architecture and Art of Early Hispanic Colorado*, 1974, as well as *Prairie*, that show the respectful nature of older, more traditional settlements, which attempted a unity with nature instead of dominating over it.

These pictures stand in stark contrast to those in the next two groups, *Our Imprint on the Land* and *A New West*, which include pictures from Adams' seminal early publications *The New West: Landscapes Along the Colorado Front Range*, 1974; *denver: A Photographic Survey of the Metropolitan Area*, 1977; *What We Bought: The New World, Scenes from the Denver Metropolitan Area, 1970-1974*; and *From the Missouri West*, 1980. These quiet but rigorous photographs address the construction of a new kind of American environment, one dominated by cars and highways, cheaply fabricated homes and commercial developments, and one in which isolation replaced a sense of community.

*Our Response* continues with pictures of people living in the shadow of Rocky Flats, a nuclear weapons plant northwest of Denver, where Adams sought to reveal what would be lost in a nuclear disaster, and it ends with "Southern California" and "A Mythic Forest," which show the destruction of the fragile landscape around Los Angeles in the early 1980s, and the timber industry's exploitation of the Northwest forests.

*American Silence* concludes with a selection of works from one of the artist's recent books, *Tenancy: Between the River and the Sea; The Nehalem Spit, the Coast of Oregon* (2017). Divided into three parts, this series of photographs was made between 2013 and 2015 along a two-mile promontory on the Oregon coast, the Nehalem Spit. It addresses Adams' belief that we are only the temporary occupants of the land that nourishes and sustains us.

Merging the themes of hope and despair, beauty and desecration that run throughout Adams' work, *American Silence* is curated by Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs at the National Gallery of Art. Organized with the artist's full cooperation, the show is accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue with an essay by Dr. Greenough, which is the first examination of the evolution of Adams' art. The catalogue also features an afterword by the noted conservationist, Terry Tempest Williams, excerpts from Adams' own writings, and an extensive illustrated chronology.

*The Washington Post* commented that *American Silence* "...is one of the most moving and important exhibitions in a long time. It convincingly demonstrates that Adams is not just an important photographer with a significant impact on contemporary art, but also a great artist whose nearly seven decades of work are an essential document of the national consciousness, and a thing of majesty."

## ABOUT THE TOUR

Organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in cooperation with the artist, the exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated, 332-page catalogue published by the National Gallery of Art and Aperture, New York. The exhibition and catalogue are made possible through the leadership support of the Trellis Fund and a generous gift from Jane P. Watkins. The exhibition is also made possible in part by The Shared Earth Foundation. Additional support is provided by Randi and Bob Fisher, Wes and Kate Mitchell, Nion McEvoy, Greg and Aline Gooding, and the James D. and Kathryn K. Steele Fund for Photography.

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Robert Adams

*Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs, 1969*

gelatin silver print

image: 14 x 14.9 cm (5 ½ x 5 7/8 in.)

Private collection, San Francisco

© Robert Adams, Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

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**###**

**The Nevada Museum of Art** is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally-recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at [nevadaart.org](http://nevadaart.org).

#### **Land Acknowledgement**

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 27 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.

