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 in this room 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.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2045#

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 twentieth-century American photographers — particularly Paul Strand and Adams' colleague Myron Wood — whose art and ideas informed 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.

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Adams began his exploration of the new American landscape at the Missouri River, the boundary in the nineteenth 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 nineteenth-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 right. 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.

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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 — the way light can become a palpable presence in a work of art, imbuing pictures of everyday life with a majesty and poignancy. By focusing on the cool light of dusk, when shadows grow heavy with a palpably moist atmosphere and the sky throbs with intensity, Adams infused these pictures with a sense of **beauty and mystery.**

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2051#

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.

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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.

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This gallery brings together pictures from *Our Lives and Our Children* and books published by Adams, who (like many twentieth-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.

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