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“The Unity of All Things”: Ansel Adams in a New Light

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“The Unity of All Things”: Ansel Adams in a New Light

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Abstract

“The Unity of All Things”: Ansel Adams in a New Light

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This paper looks closely at Adams’ photographs alongside his published writings on photography, his correspondence with other photographers, and his personal notes to consider how he constructs an aesthetic of unity. Through the analysis of a set of photographic works from the 1930s through the 1960s, I demonstrate that with specific compositional decisions Adams depicts a unified, coherent, and idealized vision of the world. Many scholars have acknowledged the unifying aesthetic in his work, but little research has been done to examine how abstract qualities like unity, universality, harmony, and rootedness actually translate from theory to practice in Adams’ photographs. My intervention is to examine how these abstract concepts can be seen formally and specifically in a wide variety of Adams’ photographic prints, from natural subjects to scenes of industry. The first half of the paper is concerned with taking up the aesthetic of unity, how it is formally exemplified in photographs of nature and industry, and how it is related to other concepts in the literature on Adams. The latter half focuses on the complications presented by this kind of artistic vision, considering how Adams’ emphasis on unity in the twentieth-century was so fixated on and entrenched in ideals of the past that it never fully evolved with new interpretations of the present.

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Introduction

In Robert Adams' review of Ansel Adams' autobiography, the Colorado-based photographer argues that Adams streamlines his life story to match the aesthetic of unity found in his photographic work.¹ Robert Adams writes that in the autobiography Adams (1902-1984) represents his life with surprising uniformity.² Adams wanted to construct a narrative that was harmonious, complete, and showed every action he took as a contribution to his overall goals as a photographer and environmentalist. But, as Robert Adams notes in his review, a commitment to unity in Adams' case gave way to simplification:

The autobiography makes clear ... something more remarkable than the disparities and contradictions – he believed, with proper modesty, that the different aspects of his life had come to a kind of whole. It is perhaps not surprising that he did, since as an artist and an ecologist he found unity in what at first seemed only diverse; when he photographed a landscape, no matter how intricate, he stressed its coherence, and by implication, the relatedness underlying nature.³

Robert Adams classifies Ansel Adams' belief in unity as a “forced affirmation.”⁴ He explains: “It is as though [Adams] felt his life should appear as simple and effortless as does his art, and thus that controversies and doubts should be forgotten. But the sense of forced affirmation is sometimes uncomfortably evident.”⁵

¹ Robert Adams, *Why People Photograph* (New York: Aperture, 1994), 113-18. In Robert Adams' 1994 book *Why People Photograph*, placed between short essays on photographers Michael Schmidt and Dorothea Lange, there is a review of Ansel Adams' autobiography, *Ansel Adams: An Autobiography*, which had been published nine years earlier.

² For a consideration of correlations between Robert Adams and Ansel Adams see Allison Kemmerer's “Reinventing the West” in *Reinventing the West: The Photographs of Ansel Adams and Robert Adams* (Andover, MA: Addison Gallery of American Art, 2001), 10-21.

³ Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 114.

⁴ Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 117.

⁵ Ibid.

What interests me about the concept of “forced affirmation,” which I will from here on refer to as forced coherence, is that it calls attention to the means by which Adams carefully crafted an aesthetic of unity through his photographs and published works. I use the term “coherence” over Robert Adams’ chosen “affirmation” because it better conveys the effort to *construct* unity in Adams’ work. This paper is concerned with looking closely at Adams’ photographs alongside his published writings on photography, his correspondence with other photographers, and his personal notes to think about how an aesthetic of unity is constructed and imposed on the subjects Adams photographs. Through the analysis of a specific set of photographic works, I hope to demonstrate that with specific compositional decisions Adams depicts a romanticized, idealized vision of the world, where every individual form or object exists in relation to a larger whole. Many scholars have written about Adams’ unwavering romantic vision, and have acknowledged the unifying aesthetic in his photographs, but little work has been done to examine how abstract qualities like unity, universality, harmony, and rootedness actually translate from theory to practice in Adams’ work. My intervention is to examine how these abstract concepts can be seen formally and specifically in a wide variety of Adams’ photographic prints, from natural subjects to scenes of industry. The first half of the paper is concerned with taking up the aesthetic of unity, how it is formally exemplified in photographs of nature and industry, and how it is related to other concepts in the literature on Adams. The latter half focuses on the complications presented by this kind of artistic vision, considering how Adams’ emphasis on unity in the twentieth-century was so fixated on and entrenched in ideals of the past that it never fully evolved with new interpretations of the present.

“The Unity of All Things”

As a young photographer, Adams thought deeply about the relation of parts to a larger, grander whole: of man to nature, of peaks to a mountain range, of motor to machine. In the 1920s, he became engrossed in a book by Edward Carpenter called *Towards Democracy*,⁶ in which Carpenter describes the synecdochic relationship of man to his surroundings: “Out of all creatures, cloud and mountain and river: / Exhaling, ascending! / From plant and bird and man and planet up-pouring: / Thousand-formed, One...”⁷ The reader can hear strong echoes of Carpenter in a letter Adams wrote to his future wife, Virginia Best in 1925. Here, Adams expands on Carpenter’s words, describing matter as a product of the mind. He suggests that external matter is shaped internally either in the “Cosmic Mind” or in the mind of man:

The commonplace growth of weeds beneath a pile of refuse appear to shine with the divine light when you know the meaning of the world and sense the unity of all things. In a great city the buildings, the machinery, the works of art, everything produced by man, are naught but the material expression of ideas. We look on lines and forms and masses of what we call matter, and we know these things existed in the mind of man in the form of ideas before they were expressed in the physical world in the form of matter. I look on the lines and forms of the mountains and all other aspects of nature as if they were but the vast expression of ideas within the Cosmic Mind, if such it can be called. With that outlook, I am assured there is nothing in the Universe that is not the expression of mind or of life. The sense of unity is enormously increased.⁸

Inspired by writings on Transcendentalism and artworks of the romantic period, Adams in his letter talks about the divine communicated through the particular. Not only does

⁶ Anne Hammond, *Ansel Adams: Divine Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 8-11. Hammond cites the influence of Carpenter on Adams, writing: “His [Carpenter’s] *Towards Democracy* was a profound resource for [Cedric] Wright and Adams in its call for a return to the good relation of human being to human being, and of human beings to nature, which was, for Carpenter, a spiritual reunion. The ‘democracy’ of his title meant a sense of communality exemplifying the universal in humanity, the diversity in unity of souls” (ibid., 8-9).

⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918), 380.

⁸ Ansel Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images, 1916-1984*, ed. Mary Street Alinder and Andrea Gray Stillman (Boston: Little Brown, 1988), 23.

Adams write about this belief of the “unity of all things” in his letters and autobiography, but he also demonstrates it visually in his photographs. Adams sees unity in the landscape of Yosemite and the Sierras and finds ways to translate that vision of unity into the photographic image. As John Szarkowski writes “artists of the wild landscape might be thought of as a community of inventors who, generation by generation, produce and revise an evolving sketch of order out of the great farrago.”⁹ Adams’ photographs are nothing if not tight, ordered, and controlled.

Print Survey

In the photographs that follow, Adams provides visual representations that propose the possibility of man and nature existing harmoniously beside industrial structures. Adams is able to set up this unified, harmonious view by formally rhyming natural and industrial structures, pairing them as he would with two trees or a pair of mountain peaks.¹⁰ In this way, he reveals basic, universal forms that underlie his natural and industrial subjects. Adams also seems to suggest, in these works, that the best technological and industrial advancements are those that build off the forms already available in nature and that work *with* it rather than against it. When one looks at Adams’ photographs of nature and industry alongside each other, these shared structures should be evident.

The majority of the photographs in my chosen set have been selected from Adams’ later working period, in the 1950s and 1960s. Though these later photographs are not Adams’ most prolific, they clearly depict his early assertion in 1925 that all forms,

⁹ John Szarkowski, *Ansel Adams at 100* (Boston: Little Brown, 2001), 18.

¹⁰ As in *Trees, Illilouette Ridge, Yosemite National Park, California* (1945).

natural and industrial, exist in relation to a greater order, molded either by the “Cosmic Mind” or the mind of man.¹¹ It is during this period that Adams’ efforts of forced coherence become the most transparent. As I will demonstrate, there are hints of this enforcement in earlier work but it clearly presents itself in the later photographs, when Adams diversified his subject matter through fine art photographs and commercial work. Adams began to photograph a wider range of subjects, including manmade and industrial forms. Coupling new subjects with old, Adams attempts to reconcile new advances in industry with natural forms through compositional strategies like pairing and patterning.¹² In the 1950s and 1960s, Adams started to historicize and compile his work and photographically he repeats and simplifies a lot of his earlier moves.¹³ He wrote at the end of his autobiography, “I have often had a retrospective vision where everything in my past life seems to fall with significance into logical sequence.”¹⁴ Just as Adams began to think and write about his life in terms of a seamless, logical sequence, so too did he begin to photograph a diverse array of subjects with the same patterning logic. With a “retrospective vision” that placed everything in “logical sequence,” Adams photographed the overlapping exit and on ramps of freeways in Los Angeles like the twisting roots of banyan trees he had seen in Hawaii. Natural and industrial forms visually rhyme with one another and underlying universal patterns emerge.

¹¹ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 23.

¹² Szarkowski, *Ansel Adams at 100*, 29. These are strategies that Adams frequently used in the 1920s and 30s. I argue that it is also used in later photographs for a unifying effect.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 40, 44. Szarkowski writes, “During the decade of the fifties Adams seems to have come to view himself as a historic figure” and at the time he organized the 1963 exhibition *The Eloquent Light* with Nancy Newhall “as an artist and as a critic of photography, he became reduced to replaying a severely abridged version of his earlier self.”

¹⁴ Ansel Adams, *Autobiography*, ed. Mary Street Alinder (Boston: Little Brown, 1985), 324. Also cited in Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 114.

Beginning as early as 1932, with *Factory Building, San Francisco*, photographs of industrial subjects appear in Adams' portfolio.¹⁵ Other examples from the 1930s include *Pipes and Gauges* (1939), *Statue and Oil Derricks, Signal Hill, Long Beach, California* (1939), *Snow-Covered Telephone Wires* (1938), *Aermotor Windmill Spinning, Owens Valley, near Independence, California* (1938). The real surge of photographs that include industrial forms alongside natural ones first start to appear in the late 1930s and early 1940s, with a work like the lesser known *Untitled* (1940) [Fig. 2]. Adams also shoots photographs of Boulder Dam in the early 1940s. Industry gains an increasing presence in Adams' photographs from the 1950s onward, in close-up detailed portraits such as *Engineer* (1956), in vistas like *Tom Reed Mine, near Oatman, Arizona* (1952), *Silos, Sacramento Valley, California* (1952), and in detailed studies such as *Transistor Assembly* (1956). For the first time in the 1950s as well, industry is repeatedly pictured on a grand scale in Adams' photographs, as in *Standard Oil Tanker and Depot* (1953), overtaking the landscape in which it is situated. Finally, in the 1960s, Adams shoots a number of aerial photographs, including *Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles* (1967), that demonstrate how the American landscape had been drastically altered by the growth of industry and expansion of urban centers. *The Embarcadero, San Francisco, California* (1961), though not an aerial view, is another photograph from the period that thematizes the rapid growth of industry. During these later years, Adams closely observes how technology had changed the way people encountered nature, both obscuring the landscape and allowing individuals to move expediently through it.

¹⁵ It is possible that Adams was looking to a photograph taken just a few years earlier by Edward Weston called *Plaster Works, Los Angeles* (1925).

Despite his growing interest in the later years in photographing industrial subjects, Adams was always drawn back to nature, his first muse. After visiting Yosemite for the first time in 1916, Adams returned every summer, photographing or teaching workshops in the high sierras.¹⁶ Here, one might imagine, Adams conceived of the image of man firmly rooted in nature. Rootedness is a term that often appears in the scholarship around Adams' work.¹⁷ The term itself conjures up images of stability and strength, as in the well-known rocky slopes and forests of Adams' iconic mountain photographs. It is also tied to symbolic ideas of permanence and the relationship of parts to whole (as in roots to a tree), or in Carpenter's notion of the "Thousand-formed One."¹⁸ In the 1944 book *Born Free and Equal*, Adams suggests how a firm grounding in nature renews the subject, through a kind of spiritual force. Nature supplies a source of rebirth and regeneration on which man can build new foundations. He writes: "I believe that the acrid splendor of the desert, ringed with towering mountains, has strengthened the spirit of the people of Manzanar."¹⁹ For Adams, towering mountains and redwood trees have an anchoring force on people who carry out their everyday lives in the presence of these massive forms. In his photographs, Adams intended to convey this underlying force and the rootedness of man in the natural world.

¹⁶ Jonathan Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 30. Spaulding also writes: "Yosemite would remain the symbol of health, freedom, and renewal throughout his life." (ibid., 27)

¹⁷ See, for instance, Hammond, *Divine Performance*, 107-8; and David Peeler, *The Illuminating Mind in American Photography* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 319.

¹⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918), 380.

¹⁹ Ansel Adams, *Born Free and Equal: Photographs of the Loyal Japanese-Americans at Manzanar Relocation Center, Inyo County, California* (New York: U.S. Camera, 1944), 9.

Constructing the Print

Visualizing how man could be rooted in an increasingly industrialized world was more of a challenge for Adams, but he found ways to do so. In his constant tie to the natural, yet emerging interest in the new forces of industry and technology, Adams began to make photographic statements in the 1930s idealizing the relationship between man, nature, and technology.²⁰ This newly conceived relationship is visible in *Self-Portrait, San Francisco* (1936) [Fig. 1]. Shot not long after Adams began his photographic career, the image depicts him taking a self-portrait with his view camera. Taken straight on, at waist level, the image shows the view camera sitting on the top ledge of a bookshelf, Adams in profile to the right with his left hand resting on the base of the camera, and a matted print above. These three elements: the camera, Adams, and the print, form a triad at the center of the image. Adams' composition of this triad also suggests that the three things are interconnected through the photographic medium. Jean-Louis Baudry provides a valuable perspective on this matter. Baudry remarks: "Equally distant from 'objective reality' and the finished product, the camera occupies an intermediate position in the work process which leads from raw material to finished product."²¹ We could read the camera in *Self-Portrait, San Francisco* as a mediating tool that allows the photographer to express what he sees out in the world in the photograph, or the "finished product."²² The presence of the camera signals that the technological was always implicated in Adams' work, because the camera itself is a mechanized, technological apparatus.

²⁰ Photographic examples of this shift that come to mind include not only *Self-Portrait, San Francisco* (1936) but also *Golden Gate before the Bridge, San Francisco, CA* (1932), which represents an older relationship between man and nature before heavy industrial development.

²¹ Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Quarterly* 28 (1974-75): 40.

²² Ibid.

In the foreword to *The Print*, part three of Adams' technical series on photography called *Basic Photo*, he describes the mediating role of the camera as follows:

The concept of the photograph precedes the operation of the camera. Exposure and development of the negative follow technical patterns selected to achieve the qualities desired in the final print, and the print itself is somewhat of an interpretation, a performance of the photographic idea.²³

Although the photographer must have technical mastery of the camera, this alone, for Adams, would not suffice in the making of a good picture. Jonathan Spaulding notes that Adams was likely influenced by his early and intensive musical training at the piano, understanding that good technique is one part of being a musician, but it required vision to turn technique into significance.²⁴ Spaulding writes: "Throughout his career, Adams reiterated that technical skill was an essential means to the goal of creative expression, not an end in itself."²⁵ Wallace Stegner repeats this thought when he remarks, "Though Adams was a consummate technician, capable of instructing even such a master as Weston, he never valued technique for itself. He would have agreed with Weston that it was only a way of seeing."²⁶ Understanding how to implement the camera to achieve maximum effect was, for Adams, about learning to communicate the photographer's vision through the material qualities of the print. Technical facility, when paired with expressive force, could produce powerful visual statements. (Technique for technique's sake, would never yield expressive results.)

²³ Adams, *The Print*, v. These ideas are also expressed in Adams' "A Personal Credo" (*American Annual of Photography* 48 [1944]: 7-16).

²⁴ Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape*, 31.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wallace Stegner, foreword to *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images, 1916-1984* by Ansel Adams, ed. Mary Street Alinder and Andrea Gray Stillman (Boston: Little Brown, 1988), viii.

Returning to *Self-Portrait, San Francisco*, this photograph gives the viewer a general arc of the photographic process from start to finish, in the intentional staging of artist, technological tool, and print next to each other. In this way it shows the mastery of the modern artist over the process of creation, while also revealing the transformative nature of the photographic medium. Through the composition of this image, in which Adams, the print, and the camera all neatly overlap into the others' space, Adams draws connections between these disparate elements. It is his position as a photographer that allows him to do this. Baudry remarks that it is the "transcendental self" that has the ability to make meaning out of a discordant life.²⁷ He notes: "The transcendental self unites the discontinuous fragments of phenomena, of lived experience, into unifying meaning. Through it each fragment assumes meaning by being integrated into a 'organic' unity."²⁸ Though Baudry here is speaking about the way images are stitched together in film, one could also think of Adams as the "transcendental" subject who is able, in his position as an artist, to represent the unification of nature and of man in nature through the technological apparatus of the camera.²⁹ In *Self-Portrait, San Francisco*, all of the components of the image are brought together in "'organic' unity," appearing, through the constructedness of the image, to suggest that they have been naturally brought together.³⁰ The viewer clearly understands the marked transition between camera, photographer, and print. This image represents a straightforward aesthetic of unity but is

²⁷ Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," 46.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 233. Adams would likely not argue with a categorization of himself as a "transcendental photographer." He writes to Edwin Land in 1956, saying, "I think the word we have been seeking to describe the kind of photography people like Weston, Strand, and yours truly are trying to do may be – TRANSCENDENTAL."

³⁰ Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," 46.

not a forced coherence. The unified aesthetic is achieved through Adams' compositional strategies.

Towers and Trees: Nature and Industry

Not only does Adams use these strategies to unify elements in *Self-Portrait*, but he also employs compositional means to reinforce the ideal of unity in *Untitled* [Fig. 2]. This photograph, taken in 1940, enforces a resemblance between nature and industry. *Untitled* is shot from below, picturing a transmission tower and power lines beside a tree and its branches. The angle at which the photograph was taken, from below, produces a correspondence between the transmission tower and the tree. In its angle, Adams' photograph is subtly avant-garde, perhaps reminding one of the dramatic camera angles used by Russian photographer and artist, Alexander Rodchenko. Though the angle that Adams uses is nowhere near as sharp or extreme as any of Rodchenko's, he does present the viewer with a new and slightly unusual point of view. Perhaps, if photographed straight on (what Rodchenko condescendingly termed the "belly-button" view),³¹ the correspondence between tower and tree would not be so apparent to the viewer. But from the angle at which Adams takes the photograph, they appear to be of about the same height and stature. From this perspective, the viewer sees them as equals, with the form of the tower – its wider base and outstretched arms – mirroring the form of the tree. The subtle repositioning of the camera produces a resemblance between the two objects photographed. This photograph exhibits an idealized image of harmonious balance between nature and industry. Compositionally structured as equals, the tower and tree in

³¹ Alexander Rodchenko, "The Paths of Modern Photography," trans. John E. Bowlit, in *Photography in the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940*, ed. Christopher Phillips (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Aperture, 1989), 259. Previously published in *Novyi Ief* 9 (1928): 31-39.

the print are pictured working alongside each other, neither one fully encompassing or obscuring the other.

It is important to pause on the motif of the tree, as it is one of the most commonly photographed natural subject in Adams' work. In *Edward Weston, Carmel Highlands, California*, Weston is pictured sitting at the base of a massive tree, straddling its roots.³² His legs mimic the movement of the spreading roots and his torso is backed by the enormous trunk of the tree, reinforcing the idea of man anchored in nature. It is a pose that suggests a deep harmony with the natural environment. Thinking back to the self-portrait from 1936, one might notice that man and tree are equated but the camera from *Self-Portrait, San Francisco* (1936) is missing. Instead, that technological tool is merely implied in the presence of the photographer, rather than explicitly shown. In the *Making of 40 Photographs*, Adams describes how he came to photograph Weston in this way, visualizing the picture before it was even made. He writes:

At first I was not satisfied with the location and I began to explore nearby. Edward sat down at the base of the tree to await my decision. A picket fence nearby offered a good possibility, and I walked back to the tree to get him. When a few yards from the tree I suddenly saw the inevitable image, a quick visualization of a very successful photograph. The relatively small figure at the base of the huge tree, the convoluted roots, and the beautiful quiet light—what more could I hope for?³³

By controlling this “quiet light,” Adams focuses on Weston's form in front of the tree. He did so with the aid of the Zone System, a method of measuring light in order to produce desired tonal values in the print.³⁴ The Zone System, invented by Ansel Adams and

³² Hammond, *Ansel Adams*, 106-107. Hammond puts this image side by side with the *Roots, Foster Gardens* in her chapter “Expression as Equivalent”.

³³ Ansel Adams, *Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs* (Boston: Little Brown, 1983), 145.

³⁴ For reference, see: Minor White, *Zone System Manual: Previsualization, Exposure, Development, Printing: The Ansel Adams Zone System as a Basis of Intuitive Photography* (Hasting-on-Hudson, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1968).

photographer Fred Archer, organizes the gray scale into ten zones, with zone 10 being the brightest white and zone 0 the blackest black.³⁵ As a photographer makes an exposure, his goal is to balance the highlights and shadows to achieve the best tonal range and desired amount of detail. The Zone System was designed to assist with this process. When one looks at the photograph of Weston, one can see how Adams balances highlights and shadows to bring out Weston, in his white shirt, who appears to be illuminated by light from above, while the tree on which he sits spreads back behind him, deepening into richer blacks and grays.

Ira Latour has rightly observed that the Zone System and visualization were the two most important principles for Adams' photographic technique.³⁶ Adams himself writes in *The Negative*: "We *feel* the whiteness and the darkness and the grayness of our subjects, and we visualize a print in which these values are expressed in an emotional relationship with one another."³⁷ For Adams, these compositional strategies and techniques represented ways to harmonize different elements within the photograph, more successfully communicating the photographer's ideas in the print.³⁸ The Zone System was a method of organizing all values of light to make the best photograph of

³⁵ Michael Adams, "Ansel Adams: A Son's Perspective" (lecture at the Booth Museum of Art, Cartersville, GA, November 14th, 2015).

³⁶ Ira Latour, "Ansel Adams, the Zone System and the California School of Fine Arts," *History of Photography* 22 (1998), abstract.

³⁷ Ansel Adams, *The Negative: Exposure and Development* (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1968), 19.

³⁸ Hammond, *Ansel Adams*, 11. It has been postulated that the Zone System was inspired by the compositions of Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915), who devised a related experiment in music: the "mystical chord." As Anne Hammond writes: "According to him [Scriabin], this chord [the 'mystical chord'] held the potential of every form of triad—major, minor, augmented, and diminished—its extreme range of dark and light sounds signifying the cosmic oneness of all nature." Here, one could think of "dark and light sounds" in relationship to dark and light hues in a photograph. Additionally, Szarkowski notes: "When he [Adams] talked about 'chords of tone' in the photographic print, and about the idea that the chords of tone in the dark end of the photographic gray scale should be in tune with the related chords of tone in the high end of the gray scale, I believe that he was describing a personal ideal of photographic craft that may have derived from the harmonic vocabulary that is the basis of Western music" (*Adams at 100*, 42).

nature possible. Recall Robert Adams' remarks on landscape photographers, like Adams, who were focused on the act of reconciling differences, finding a way to frame and order a scene before the camera. For Ansel Adams, the Zone System represented a technical method of achieving an aesthetic of unity because it allowed him to balance light and forms in the photograph to make a unified, coherent image.

The motif of the tree returns in *Banyan Roots, Foster Gardens, Honolulu, Hawaii* (1948) [Fig. 4]. Although the theme of rootedness is certainly present in *Edward Weston, Carmel Highlands, California*, one might say that, out of all the images I have considered thus far, rootedness as a visual and symbolic concept emerges most centrally in this photograph. Taken from an elevated perspective, the photograph shows the large, twisting roots of a banyan tree in Hawaii. The roots intersect and branch off from the central trunk. Although not pictured in the photograph, the viewer can imagine the trunk's position by tracing the path of the roots. Smaller roots resemble the arms of an octopus, while larger ones call to mind the thick, smooth body of a constrictor snake. Delicate clover plants border the area surrounding the roots, while a tuft of tall grass shoots up in the upper left-hand corner of the photograph. Light is reflected off the tops of the roots, showing their unusual and intricate detail. Deep pockets of shadow dramatize the form of the coiled roots. The roots of this tree recall those of *Edward Weston*, though the roots here exhibit a careful, manicured tidiness as opposed to the unruly wildness that Adams saw in the eucalyptus tree roots next to Weston. In the portrait of Weston, the massive form and uncultivated roots of the eucalyptus tree overshadow the manmade picket fence in the background of the image. In the photographs that Adams shot during the 1950s-1960s, man's encroachment on nature

becomes more and more visible. It becomes more necessary for Adams to tidy manmade scenes in his photographic compositions to uphold an aesthetic of unity for all aspects of life; simultaneously, the imposition of coherence becomes more profound and apparent.

Unity, Beauty, Enforcement

In industrial photographs from the 1950s-60s, Adams represents the industrial through the lens of the natural, picturing it as unified and coherent. He remains guided by the belief that all material matter is unified by the “Cosmic Mind” and the mind of man (in this case, the artist).³⁹ However, an artistic vision entrenched in values of its nineteenth century past – with an emphasis on unity, coherence, and ultimately the unique potentials of the artist to essentially form this vision out of nothing – could not adequately evolve with or respond to, the present. Adams took his vision based in romantic values of unity, the Carpenter-influenced “monist” philosophy, and applied these to a wide variety of subjects: including industrial ones. And for Adams, the relationship to industry is complicated. By this later period of his photographic career, Adams was beginning to confront the rapidly changing American landscape, which even in his cherished West became imprinted with the marks of industrial technology. Though he was largely ignorant of other social and political issues at the time,⁴⁰ Adams was aware of, and at times actively fought against, industrial forces that were rapidly shaping the U.S. Yet, in the photographs that follow, Adams provides visual representations that propose the possibility of man and nature existing harmoniously beside new industrial structures. Adams argues against heavy industrial development in his environmental,

³⁹ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 23.

⁴⁰ David Peeler, “The Art of Disengagement: Edward Weston and Ansel Adams,” *Journal of American Studies* 27 (1993): 309.

activist work, but presents a different view of industry in his photographs, one that is tame, ordered, unthreatening – even beautiful.

Forced coherence between nature and industry, and the strange, yet compelling beauty of industrial objects, is revealed in *Rails and Jet Trails, Roseville, California* (1953) [Fig. 5]. In this image, one sees railroad tracks that, like the roots of a great tree, have now been embedded in the American soil. Large steel or iron, and possibly wood structures rise up vertically to the sky. Thin, barely perceptible power lines in the background connect electric poles. Adams must have particularly liked the way the line between the two poles at either edge of the photograph (in the background) registered with the division between the whitewash of clouds in the bottom third of the sky and the clear sky in the middle third above. In this clear, grey, middle area of sky, trails of jets overlap with clouds, creating an abstract pattern that echoes the twists and turns of the train tracks below. One especially large vertical pole extends into the sky with a circular disc at top, intersecting the lines of the jet trails as it stretches up to touch the edge of a cloud group in the upper third of the sky. This pole serves as the unifying element in the image, connecting rails to jet trails. The photograph communicates a harmonious view of man and nature working together through mirrored natural and industrial structures. However, despite the fact that the objects in the image are ordered, balanced, and unified, the large, central vertical pole – rising perhaps hubristically toward the sky, its circular disc leaning slightly to the left and appearing to emanate light like an eclipsed sun – may hint at the possibility of disorder. Industrial elements in the landscape ruin the idealized, picturesque photograph of nature untouched, and must be carefully worked into the composition to uphold an aesthetic of unity and impose coherence on the landscape. Read

more critically, without attention to the photograph's ordered style and rhymed patterns, one might say that in contrast to Adams' landscapes, this photograph produces an image of a barren landscape, where steel poles replace trees and even the sun's rays are occluded by industrial forms.

If the industrial forms in *Rails and Jet Trails* in any way obstruct views of the natural, then *Standard Oil Tanker and Depot* (1953) [Fig. 6] eliminates them almost entirely. Instead of Adams' usual natural vistas, what *Standard Oil Tanker and Depot* presents is a completely industrial landscape. Here, Adams depicts an intricate convergence of oil lines, docks, drums, lights, and California Standard ships along the coast. What most clearly comes across from Adams' composition is the strange beauty of industrial forms. The oil lines, for instance, captured at a curve, look like the variegated rings of Saturn or some other cosmic structure. Spaulding, like Robert Adams, comments on Adams' consistent approach to widely differing subject matter: "On [the] same trip in which he made his sublime *Moonrise*, [Adams] also carried out a commercial assignment for the U.S. Potash Company in Carlsbad, New Mexico, rendering with the same powerful style its huge processing plants, belching locomotives, and underground mines."⁴¹ In the 1950s, Adams photographed industrial subjects in the same manner that he made photographs of nature. Through the camera lens, he created correspondences between natural and industrial forms, part of his aesthetic project to see man rooted in both the natural and industrial worlds. Adams saw both the beauty of industry and the beauty of nature, and he emphasizes this in his photographs of each. He took on the view of Edward Weston, who, when asked about why he made photographs of Gulf Oil in Port

⁴¹ Jonathan Spaulding, preface to *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), xiii.

Arthur, Texas, responded: “Because of its exciting combination of contemporary form and textures.”⁴² One also senses, in the *Standard Oil* photograph, that Adams was drawn to the skill and craftsmanship of industry, which he saw paralleled in the field of photography.

But the potential for harm that new technologies and industries brought could not be ignored. Adams attempted to harmonize nature and industry in his photographs, without compromising his naturalist ethics. Adams was guided by a belief in the “purely aesthetic,” an idea which he communicates to Edward Weston in a letter from 1934.

Adams writes to Weston:

I think it is up to such as you and I to maintain our conception of art as expressed through our medium. You and I differ considerably in our theory of approach, but our objective is about the same – to express with our camera what cannot be expressed in other ways – to trust our intuition in respect to what is beautiful and significant – to believe that humanity needs the purely aesthetic just as much as it needs the purely material.⁴³

The “purely aesthetic” for Adams was a term that referred to the beauty of intellectual, artistic creation. It is related to the idea of purism in modern photography, of an appreciation for forms and textures captured by the camera. It connects back to the aesthetic of unity in that Adams’ desire to see manmade elements as unified and coherent caused him to produce aestheticized, beautified depictions of industrial landscapes, where form and texture are emphasized over social message.

Adams was also actively involved in conservation efforts through groups like the Sierra Club. In a 1965 letter to the President of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, Michael A. Haider, Adams wrote:

⁴² Amy Conger and Edward Weston, *Edward Weston Photographs: From the Collection of the Center for Creative Photography* (Tucson, AZ: Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, 1992), xvii.

⁴³ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 73-74.

You are undoubtedly aware of the very considerable negative public opinion on the proposed Oil Refinery of the Humble Oil Company of Moss Landing in northern Monterey County, California. There is very strong feeling in our County (and in the adjacent areas) on the potential damage to agriculture and, as well, to the educational, esthetic, and recreational values. Those who think of “progress” only in terms of financial and material gain, increased property values and greater tax return, etc., believe that the refinery would be of great benefit to the community – in spite of admitted hazards. They do not realize that development of the appropriate industries and enterprises will provide as much – and more – prosperity, without violating the basic characteristics of the area.⁴⁴

Two things bear consideration in Adams’ letter to Haider. The first is that he includes aesthetic value in his defense of Moss Landing. The second, as the letter (to Haider) reveals, is that Adams has a vision of what he calls “appropriate industries.” He uses the word “appropriate” again, later in the letter, when he says, “Opponents of the refinery are strongly in favor of appropriate industrial development in the County, such as food products, electronics and light manufacturing.”⁴⁵

This serves as an example of Robert Adams’ characterization that Adams had the tendency to “pick the lesser of the grossest evils” when it came to environmental harm.⁴⁶ Adams thought there was a place for industrial development in the West, but that it should be regulated and controlled. Although the letter does clarify Adams’ position towards industrial development, the photograph is still puzzling. It pictures an oil depot in California, the “heavy industry” that Adams protests in his letter. However, Adams’ “purely aesthetic” approach produces a contradictory attitude toward the industrial scene

⁴⁴ Ansel Adams to Michael A. Haider, September 18, 1965, Ansel Adams Archive, AG31, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

⁴⁵ Ansel Adams to Michael A. Haider, emphasis added.

⁴⁶ Robert Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 117. The full quote is: “Adams’ opposition to the destruction of the environment is inspiring.... [But] he wasn’t right on everything – he had a tendency to believe one always had to pick the lesser of the grossest evils.” Mary Street Alinder also writes in her biography of Adams that “Ansel walked a fine line between his working life as a commercial photographer and his activity as an environmentalist.” Mary Street Alinder. *Ansel Adams: A Biography* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 271.

pictured before the camera. As David Peeler observes, Adams “claimed that advocacy of any kind was never among his intentions when he made one of his creative photographs, and that when he photographed he was always more interested in beauty than politics.”⁴⁷

In a letter to Alfred Stieglitz, written two years after his letter to Weston and nearly thirty years before the letter to Haider, Adams muses on the harm but also what he calls the “magnificence” of industrial forms that have begun to pop up in the landscape around him. He remarks:

As I sit writing to you I see out of my window the two enormous towers of the Golden Gate Bridge and I can visualize the still larger Bay Bridge going up to the east. I am wondering what these bridges will do to our local civilization. They will open up a vast territory in which all the miserable fungus of “development” will flourish. And yet, the bridges are magnificent in themselves...⁴⁸

By the time Adams writes his letter to Haider in 1965, he had already chosen the “lesser of two evils,” favoring local, light manufacturing to heavy industry on a national scale. His attitude in the 1960s seems to be closer to the general view that since new industries and technologies had been introduced, one might as well find a way to live with them.

As one can observe in photographs such as *Standard Oil Tanker and Depot* and *Rails and Jet Trails, Roseville, California*, Adams finds the “purely aesthetic” potential of industrial forms. Just as he makes correspondences between natural and industrial forms, he also depicts technicians rooted in, or comfortably inhabiting, these environments, as he did earlier in his career with subjects in natural landscapes. When Adams turns to individual technicians, he conveys the impressiveness of their work and the feeling of them being at home in these settings. *The AT&T Cable Splicer* (taken in the 1950s) [Fig. 7], for example, shows a man skillfully working with cables. The elegance

⁴⁷ Peeler, “The Art of Disengagement,” 331.

⁴⁸ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 83. (Ansel Adams to Stieglitz, March 15, 1936.)

and harmony of Adams' natural subjects are still visible in this industrialized scene. The cable splicer, with his hand arched up and over the wires, delicately plucks the cables apart, like a guitarist strumming his thumb against the strings of his instrument. He manages to hold his stylus-tool and a pair of scissors in his right hand, guiding his work. His left hand is likely somewhere behind the mass of tangled wires that occupy the foreground of the photograph. The cable splicer wears a headset and protective glasses, and through the lenses of the glasses we see his eyes turned down, meditatively focused on the task at hand. The matted and tangled wires that unfurl into the foreground of the image are reminiscent of roots, both appearing messy but each ordered by a larger system. Like the photographer, this cable splicer has developed a highly skilled craft. Even though a viewer may see the wires in the photograph as a tangled mess, the cable splicer knows how to navigate them, as he is familiar with them according to their own system. However, unlike the photographer, the technician remains at the level of craft (or technical skill), not rising to the level of artistry. For Adams, artists have the capability to generate a broader, encompassing representation of reality, while technicians remain tied to the production of a single activity. The artist is granted a totalizing vision; technicians can only glimpse a part of the whole. Adams does not specifically write about this kind of hierarchy between artists and technicians, but in the way he wrote about the role of the artist, and in the representation of technicians in these photographs, this interpretation seems viable. Though Adams finds something artistic about the way the cable splicer works, it is only the artist who can represent this scene in its entirety through the photographic image.

Engineer (1956) [Fig. 8] is a portrait that presents another figure at work in an industrial environment. Here, Adams confronts the figure of the engineer, the mastermind of the industrial age. Surrounded by masses of wires, the engineer works carefully with his left hand on a knob at the master board and his right hand on his tool, which has been inserted in the circuit of wires behind him. The engineer is shown in profile, his eyes intensely focused on the master board, exemplifying what contemporary Canadian photographer, Jeff Wall, in an interview with Martin Schwander called the worker “engaged in his occupation and not paying any attention to, or responding to the fact that he is being observed by, the spectator.”⁴⁹ His knowledge of this system is evident in the fact that he can execute two separate actions with different hands at once. One can imagine him adjusting values on the master board while moving around his tool, not even having to look to see where he must place it.

Like the cable splicer, the engineer is represented by Adams as a figure of high technical ability. Adams called for professional standards and adequate training in the field of photography to generate the same kind of standards that were already present in communications and engineering.⁵⁰ In his essay “The Profession of Photography,” Adams wrote: “I am convinced that both academic and professional standards for photography are essential; it should be as important to an individual to be called a photographer, as to be known as an Architect, Engineer, or Physician!”⁵¹ Adams aligns photographic standards with those in engineering and medicine. He does, however, in his

⁴⁹ Jeff Wall, “Restoration: Interview with Martin Schwander” in *Jeff Wall*, ed. Thierry de Duve et al. (London: Phaidon, 2002), 126-27. Also cited in Michael Fried, “Jeff Wall and Absorption: Heidegger on Worldhood and Technology,” in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 38.

⁵⁰ Ansel Adams, “The Profession of Photography,” in *Aperture Magazine Anthology—The Minor White Years 1952-1976*, ed. Peter C. Bunnell (New York: Aperture, 2012), 92-93.

⁵¹ Adams, “The Profession of Photography,” 98.

photographs, draw a distinction between the work of the photographer and that of the technician. Whereas the artist could inhabit many different worlds through his creative activity (the studio or darkroom, the museum gallery, and in Adams' case, the outdoors), the technician only operates in one, as Adams shows in *Cable Splicer*. A distinction should be made here between the cable splicer, however, and the engineer: for Adams, the engineer occupied a higher status than the cable splicer (a technician). The engineer, like the photographer, designs, devises and invents. He has more generative and creative power than the cable splicer, and is thus shown engaged in multiple tasks rather than just one.

The Artist as Creator of Unified Worlds

In the same *Aperture* piece from 1952, Adams states, "The photographer can record, interpret, and create various worlds about and within him."⁵² Adams thought that the all-encompassing vision of the photographer should not go to waste on inferior projects or sub-standard techniques. The photographer should instead harness his power to create images that would be both "sources[s] of experience" and "the reflection of spiritual awareness of the world and of self."⁵³ These thoughts about photography's purpose are reflected in the qualities of other photographers' work that Adams admired – such as Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, and Minor White. In a tribute to White, Adams chooses two of his own photographs, *Banyan Roots*, *Foster Gardens*, *Honolulu, Hawaii* and *Clouds Above Golden Canyon*, to accompany his remarks. Anne Hammond comments on the tribute in *Divine Performance*:

⁵² Ibid., 97.

⁵³ Ibid., 93.

The image of clouds was the one he had described as his apotheosis of Stieglitz. Now he transferred it, with all due respect, to White. But he did this while asserting the rooted vitality of the banyan tree, perhaps consciously referring to his portrait of Edward Weston.⁵⁴ If Stieglitz's head was in the clouds, Weston's body was rooted in the earth.⁵⁵

Hammond points to the fact that Adams valued Weston's rootedness as well as Stieglitz's mystical aesthetic. Through the two photographs Adams selects for his tribute, he makes the statement that the photographer can picture both the earthly and the divine in his images. The uniqueness of the artist's point of view is that he has an understanding of both the particular and the transcendent, of individuated and universal experience.

This understanding of the artist's point of view is a highly romantic claim. Paul de Man, in the *Rhetoric of Romanticism*, describes how Romantic poets wanted to create verse that would have the stability and naturalness of earthly things, yet constantly struggled against the inherent vice of their working material: the artificiality and transient nature of language.⁵⁶ Despite this, poets thought that perhaps through their creative faculties they could design poems which would cross the boundary from the earthly to the spiritual, gaining a kind of permanence or generative power in the spiritual realm.⁵⁷ It is precisely in this movement from the earthly to the spiritual, that "the poetic word," de Man writes, becomes "the offspring of the sky."⁵⁸ Poetic word, through a series of intensified poetic techniques, becomes a product of nature. One might also view Adams' photographic process in this way, in his attempt to construct an aesthetic of unity and in

⁵⁴ Hammond here is referring to the photograph *Edward Weston, Carmel Highlands, California* (1947), which she places side by side with *Banyan Roots, Foster Gardens, Honolulu, Hawaii*. In "Expression as Equivalent," Hammond writes that Adams chose two photographs to accompany his tribute to Minor White: *Banyan Roots, Foster Gardens, Honolulu, Hawaii* and *Clouds Above Golden Canyon*. Hammond, *Ansel Adams*, 106-107.

⁵⁵ Hammond, *Ansel Adams*, 107-8.

⁵⁶ Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 4-5 and 8.

⁵⁷ de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 15.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

his efforts to represent both the individual and universal experience in the photographic print. Viewed alongside Adams' photographic imagery, Paul de Man's comments also help to show how entrenched the photographer's beliefs were in a nineteenth-century, Romantic point of view.

With de Man's remarks in mind, consider again Adams' claim: "I have often had a retrospective vision where everything in my past life seems to fall with significance into logical sequence."⁵⁹ I repeat this comment from Adams because it demonstrates his belief that photographers, as artists, understand the significance of discrete events and can represent those events within the frame of a larger narrative. The photographer, according to this theory, captures experiences from a particular position, yet is able to represent them with a universal point of view. In a letter to David McAlpin, written on February 7th, 1941, Adams reveals that he was, early on, thinking about the role of the photographer in this way. He writes: "I am trying to judge 'experience' in terms of something universal, and again, in terms of an individual."⁶⁰ According to Adams, photography had the ability to "present a positive means of establishing identity with the *external* world and the *internal* cosmos of the spirit," suggesting that the outer world always has its origin in the inner life of the mind.⁶¹

Adams' commitment to the vision of the nineteenth-century landscape tradition in photography meant that he imagined himself as a romantic artist who communicated ideas about individual, as well as universal phenomena. Adams generates these dual points of view through various compositional strategies, and one set of photographs that

⁵⁹ Adams, *Autobiography*, ed. Mary Street Alinder, 324. Also cited in R. Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 114.

⁶⁰ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 129.

⁶¹ Adams, "The Profession of Photography," 93.

shows the attempt to represent both the individual and the universal very clearly is the *Fiat Lux* series from the 1960s. This series was made in 1963 for the University of California. The California Museum of Photography at UC Riverside writes:

In March of 1963, Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall accepted a commission from Clark Kerr, then President of the University of California, to produce a book to commemorate the centennial celebration of the University. Adams and Newhall agreed on the spot, and four years later, *Fiat Lux: The University of California* (McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967) was published.⁶²

Fiat Lux pictures cultural and educational institutions in Berkeley and Los Angeles beside farms and industrial areas in rural California. The authors of *Unseen Ansel Adams*, a recent publication which reproduces the photographs from this collection, helpfully chart Adams' progression from visualizing man rooted in the natural world to the industrial world through the structure of their book, which crucially begins with "Pacific Coast," "Natural Beauty," and "Forest Flora," and ends with sections on "Aerial Views," "Suburban and Agribusiness," "Science," and "People." Although not the most well-known body of work, the more commercially oriented photographs for the *Fiat Lux* collection embody his aesthetic attitude, and speak to his larger concerns as an artist.

The photographs that I have chosen from *Fiat Lux* represent three different subjects – rice fields, a freeway interchange, and Berkeley students working on a city model – but when one places them beside each other shared patterns emerge. Curved, tangled, and twisted forms echo throughout this photographic series. Through his camera lens, a lens that produces coherence, Adams creates relations between diverse forms. These repeated, universal patterns and forms are rendered by Adams in either deep or shallow space. The more surface, or shallow space, that a photograph depicts, the more

⁶² "Background Information on Permanent Collections: Ansel Adams Fiat Lux," University of California Riverside, California Museum of Photography, accessed March 9th, 2016, <http://138.23.124.165/mainFrame/collections/guides/adams/default.html>.

easily it can be mapped onto other structures or forms. Depth and detail complicate an image's universal applicability in that they pin the image down to a unique context or situation, tying it to a unique and individual position. By contrast, the top-down angle of the camera organizes disparate objects together and interprets them as surface, making them more easily legible by smoothing out their individual character.

Another way that one could assess the photographs I have selected from *Fiat Lux* is through the idea of “retrospective vision”.⁶³ In their visual construction, these prints join separate objects and points of view in the photographic image. The prints demonstrate on a formal level Adams' attempt to join inner and outer, particular and universal through his work as an artist. The notion of “retrospective vision” adds valence to that of a unifying vision, because it signals Adams' more pronounced tendency to produce visual representations of unity later in his life, looking back. The aerial view in two photographs that I will discuss, *Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles* and *Sacramento Valley Rice Fields*, is crucial to the idea of photographing retrospectively, because it conveys the idea that the photographer is seeing the whole rather than the part, or rather converging separate parts into a unified whole. Adams, the photographer, has a toolbox of compositional and technical strategies that he can use to unify a scene or vista before him. The Zone System, aerial perspectives, other camera angles, non-specific imagery, and pairing or patterning of forms are all examples of these. The visual strategies go hand in hand with Adams' belief that the photographer identifies with both “the *external* world

⁶³ Adams, *Autobiography*, 324.

and the *internal* cosmos of the spirit,” generating an aesthetic of unity between these two points of view in the photographic prints.⁶⁴

Sacramento Valley Rice Fields (1966) [Fig. 9] is a photograph from *Fiat Lux* that presents non-specific imagery through the distance of the camera from its subject, transforming the rice fields into a universal form through this compositional decision. The rice fields are abstracted through a wide angle, aerial perspective. In *Sacramento Valley Rice Fields*, the aqueduct stands in for a natural river, mimicking its movement and form. The silvery white curving lines of the aqueduct taper and thin at the top of the image, creating some sense of depth, but overall the photograph has a shallow depth of field. Unlike other photographs of rice fields from *Fiat Lux*, this one has the most severe top-down perspective, and was most likely shot from a higher altitude, with a more extreme camera angle. This compositional decision gives the photograph a more two-dimensional effect. Adams’ choice to render depth as surface makes the viewer focus on the patterns created by the lines in the photograph rather than the things represented. In fact, the photograph’s subject, depicted in sharp tones of black and white, would be difficult to read without the title or the particular knowledge of what a rice field looks like from above. A high tonal contrast, from zone 10, the lightest register on the zone scale, to zone 0, the darkest, is seen in the white parallel lines of the aqueduct and the dark flooded fields, marking the aqueduct out as the focal point of the photograph. From the perspective at which the photograph was taken, the pointed ends of the rows of rice look like they could be small boats, leaving behind them a line of waves in the water. The non-specificity of this image is important to my argument about the correspondence

⁶⁴ Adams, “The Profession of Photography,” 93.

Adams makes between natural and manmade forms. Whether it reminds one of boats tracing paths in water or a river bend, the forms and patterns it presents are ones that are universal and endlessly repeatable – in photographs of tree roots (*Foster Gardens*), to photographs of highways or urban planning maps. What Adams brings into view with his camera are the underlying harmonies of natural and manmade forms.

Compare this now to *Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles* (1967) [Fig. 10].

Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles formally rhymes with the 1940s photograph, *Foster Gardens*. Adams photographs both subjects (as with *Sacramento Valley Rice Fields*) from a top-down angle. One could almost map the twists and turns of the concrete overpasses onto the patterns of the eucalyptus roots of *Foster Gardens*. The roads form twisting pathways that traverse each other, funneling the small white dots of cars from point A to point B. Cars pile up in traffic on one side of the freeway but flow smoothly on all other roads. With this aerial shot, Adams abstracts a familiar image of daily commute. Like *Banyan Roots, Foster Gardens, Honolulu, Hawaii* and *Sacramento Valley Rice Fields*, in this photograph the form of the highway is thrown into relief against the muted landscape with a bright, gleaming light. The land is a leveled field for the freeway. The shadows in the image yield depth, but overall the photograph reads more as surface. Despite Adams' usual emphasis on natural subjects, the grass, dirt, and vegetation surrounding the freeway shift to the background while the structure of the oblong, crisscrossing, figure-eight shaped freeway is highlighted against them. However, like *Foster Gardens, Freeway Interchange* demonstrates the theme of rootedness, or embeddedness, in the earth. The roads of the freeway in Los Angeles are a more or less permanent part of that landscape in the same way that the roots of *Foster Gardens* are.

Adams sees an “‘organic’ unity” between the two subjects.⁶⁵ At least for *Fiat Lux*, Adams’ aerial photographs of cities and agriculture influence his photographic style for other images in the collection. The top-down, abstracting perspective used to create many of these photographs produces a view that stresses overarching formal connections between seemingly disparate elements. The non-specificity of this view generates coherence between universalized forms, making the transition from natural to manmade environments seamless and easy for the viewer. Adams persuades the viewer to take on his point of view, embracing an aesthetic of unity through these tactful compositional decisions.

Graduate Students from the College of Environmental Design Working on an Urban Renewal Project, UC Berkeley (1967) [Fig. 11], another photograph that Adams took for the *Fiat Lux* collection, combines individual and universal perspectives. In the photograph, two young men, one seated, one standing, work at the head of a long table. They are working on a relatively small, poster sized map in front of them, while an enormous model of the city, complete with miniature buildings and topographical data, stretches out before them on the table. Similar to the aerial perspective of *Freeway Interchange*, except here with a model, Adams shows interest in a broad, encompassing view of the city – just like the student designers, who must have this larger vision in their minds in order to structure the urban renewal project. As opposed to the cable splicer or technician, the work of the environmental designer here might be more closely aligned with that of the photographer or the engineer. The major thoroughfares on the model, perhaps coincidentally, line up with the right hands of the two student designers. Other

⁶⁵ Baudry, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” 46.

students or professors work behind them, but the student designers remain undisturbed, concentrating on their assignment. These two figures, however, encompass less than half of the image. Adams, through a low, long shot, instead places emphasis on the large model of the city. Like an airplane above the city, Adams' camera hovers over the model, depicting the small boxes of buildings and sweeping freeways as if from a high altitude. The model of the city in the photograph reads as surface, but the image taken as a whole, shot with a long focal range, has more of the depth that Adams became known for with his expansive landscape photographs. However, what this photograph shows is that from a distance, objects become simplified, sometimes even abstracted, and the larger whole is more easily graspable.

As I have shown in the above examples, Adams makes correlations between natural and technological environments through compositional strategies such as pairing and patterning. Through these correlations Adams produces an aesthetic of unity. In his role as photographer, Adams organizes and frames a scene to demonstrate how harmony might be achieved between man, nature, and industry. He presents the viewer with vistas that have coherence imposed upon them, but these scenes are proposed as an image more of what life could be than a true depiction of what it was. With his photographs of industrial landscapes, it is specifically through general patterns and non-specific imagery that Adams is able to make the most successful correlations between the natural and industrial worlds, reminding his viewer with a photograph like *Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles* of the roots from *Foster Gardens*. By pulling back from his subjects, as he does with the images I've illustrated from *Fiat Lux*, Adams can make easy correspondences between disparate things through abstract and universal forms. In cities and on farms,

roots and rivers are replaced by highways and aqueducts, but through Adams' eye, this industrial architecture still has a correspondence with the natural forms that preceded it. The correspondence is, to some degree, already there before Adams takes a photograph, but his photographs, through their careful construction, heighten this relationship.

In a photograph taken of Ansel Adams in 1942 by his childhood friend, Cedric Wright, one can imagine him visualizing this ideal world in the ground glass, uniting elements of the landscape through his camera lens from a highly elevated point of view. *Ansel Adams Photographing in Yosemite* [Fig. 12] shows Adams positioned on top of his car, which he nicknamed Helios IV,⁶⁶ with his tripod and view camera. Adams had outfitted the car with a platform so that he could climb atop his vehicle whenever he wanted to take a photograph from a higher perspective.⁶⁷ Pictured here in Yosemite, where Adams made his first and many of his most famous photographs, Adams is depicted by Wright as an artist engaging in the activity of making. Adams' position on top of his car, from the camera's perspective, places him above even the peak of Half Dome, the rocky outcropping to the right. Elevated to be on par with the heights of the clouds, one of which passes directly behind him, Adams here embodies the vision of the artist who, as he believes, can see and capture what others cannot. Wright, too, emphasizes this sense of transcendent vision in his photograph of Adams, which is taken from an angle (below Adams) that places him even closer to the sky. This photograph portrays the all-encompassing vision of the artist. The photographer occupies a unique position, in that, through the mediating tool of the camera, he can open up new vistas, new worlds to the viewer. When Adams told his parents that he had decided to take on

⁶⁶ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 228.

⁶⁷ Adams, *Autobiography*, 213.

photography over music as a professional career, his mother responded with shock. She said: ““But Ansel, the camera cannot express the human soul,”” to which he replied:

““But Mother, perhaps the photographer can.””⁶⁸

Wright’s photograph shows Adams in Yosemite, making exposures of a sublime natural landscape. In this paper, I have considered Adams’ photographs of natural subjects alongside his portraits of figures and images of industry, works for which he is less well known. In these photographs, Adams postulates the potential collaboration of man, nature, and industry. Through various compositional strategies, Adams pictures all three coming together as a whole, united by the photographer’s vision. He envisions man being just as rooted in a new age of industry as he was in the landscape of the West. Adams writes, in 1962, five years before the publication of *Fiat Lux*, ““What we really need is a revival of the Walt Whitman spirit – the acceptance of the WHOLE of humanity.””⁶⁹ This meant acceptance of the good with the bad, of nature with technology and at least ““appropriate”” industries.⁷⁰

Further Perspectives

In a 1937 letter to Cedric Wright, the man behind the camera in *Ansel Adams Photographing in Yosemite*, Adams writes about how photographs generate beauty, poignantly describing the photograph’s relationship with beauty as a reciprocal one. He writes:

⁶⁸ Mary Street Alinder, *Group f.64: Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, and the Community of Artists Who Revolutionized American Photography* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 58.

⁶⁹ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 281. (Ansel Adams to Dorothea Lange on May 15, 1962.)

⁷⁰ Ansel Adams to Michael A. Haider, September 18, 1965, Ansel Adams Archive, AG31, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Art is both love and friendship, and understanding; the desire to give. It is not charity, which is the giving of Things, it is more than kindness which is the giving of self. It is both the taking and giving of beauty, the turning out to the light the inner folds of the awareness of the spirit. It is the recreation on another plane of the realities of the world; the tragic and wonderful reality of earth and men, and of all the inter-relations of these.⁷¹

For Adams, photography makes a tie between the earthly and the divine, as a “recreation on another plane of the realities of the world,” capturing the spiritual and transcendent qualities of things in the world via the photographic print. Adams hoped that the power of a beautiful photograph would help viewers to recognize the beauty of the things represented in the image, and to go seek them out in person. His book *Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail*, for instance, featured striking photographs of the West that influenced Interior Secretary Harold Ickes and President Franklin Roosevelt to name the Kings Canyon region of the Sierra Nevada a national park.⁷² Adams writes, “The National Parks are truly symbolic of America and our national life.... The grandeurs and intimacies of Nature as presented here will, I hope, encourage the spectator to seek for himself the inexhaustible sources of beauty in the natural world around him.”⁷³

Yet, Adams’ aesthetic of unity in photography, through which he brings together the natural and the industrial, the particular and the universal, the internal and the external, had its limits. Through this aesthetic, Adams’ orders and beautifies subjects in front of his camera, often so committed to an idealized representation that the real conditions of the situation or scene that he photographs do not come through. The understanding of photography’s relationship to beauty that he writes about to Wright is in

⁷¹ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 95.

⁷² “History: Ansel Adams,” The Sierra Club, accessed November 15th, 2014, <http://vault.sierraclub.org/history/ansel-adams/>.

⁷³ Adams quoted in Jonathan Spaulding, “The Natural Scene and the Social Good: The Artistic Education of Ansel Adams,” *Pacific Historical Review* 60 (1991): 37.

line with ideas of the “purely aesthetic.” And the belief of modernist photographers like Adams in the “purely aesthetic” is heavily criticized by authors like Susan Sontag and Walter Benjamin. Sontag refers to it as “the modernist’s belligerent stance of aesthetic purism.”⁷⁴ Whereas Adams thought the photograph could open up one’s eyes to see the beauty around us, Sontag writes of the consequences of photographic seeing. She quotes Walter Benjamin, who stated in 1934: “The camera is now incapable of photographing a tenement or a rubbish-heap without transfiguring it. Not to mention a river dam or an electric cable factory: in front of these, photography can only say, ‘How beautiful.’”⁷⁵ Sontag continues by noting: “The aestheticizing tendency of photography is such that the medium which conveys distress ends by neutralizing it.”⁷⁶ Adams’ photographs of industrial subjects including *Rails and Jet Trails, Roseville, California, Standard Oil Tanker and Depot*, and *Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles* mitigate the distress from the start.

Sontag also criticizes the so-called “revelatory” vision of the modernist photographer. She writes: “According to heroic modernists like [Edward] Weston, the photographer’s venture is elitist, prophetic, subversive, revelatory.”⁷⁷ The belief that a photographer has transcendent vision is one that Sontag finds elitist and against photography’s democratic traditions. Elevating the photographer’s role and promoting beauty as an aesthetic standard in photography puts “value [in] appearances,” Sontag remarks.⁷⁸ This has the unfortunate result of having photographs that invite “an

⁷⁴ Ibid., 77.

⁷⁵ Sontag, “The Heroism of Vision,” 83.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 67.

acquisitive relation to the world that nourishes aesthetic awareness and promotes emotional detachment.”⁷⁹ Much of Sontag’s inspiration in “Heroism of Vision” is derived from Walter Benjamin’s 1934 essay “The Author as Producer.” In this text, Benjamin characterizes certain modernist photographs as “articles of consumption” rather than images that inspire action.⁸⁰ Consumption and emotional detachment, promoted by a politics of the “purely aesthetic,” disable the viewer from having a critical engagement with what is at hand, or rather what is depicted in the photographic image. As Benjamin and Sontag both note, photography’s strength lies in its ability to disclose the conditions of modernity.⁸¹ Yet, a photographer like Adams turns away from the uncertain conditions of modernity in the postwar period to instead represent the forceful, unchanging patterns of nature and the strength of industry. Adams’ photographs do not disclose present conditions as much as they envision the ideal conditions of modernity.

Although Weston was guided by a similar set of aesthetic ideals to Adams (e.g. the “purely aesthetic”), there are clear distinctions between the work of the two photographers that need to be acknowledged. Adams’ commitment to unity is not replicated in Weston’s work. In Weston’s photographs, the viewer senses tension and notices the seams and parting lines where things do not match up. Where one sees unity represented in Adams’ photographs, with Weston one will find disjointedness and disruption. Adams emphasized the relatedness underlying nature,⁸² while Weston draws attention to the strange, mutating organicism of natural forms. Weston shocks the viewer with his photographs of nature, while Adams invites the viewer to feel a part of the whole

⁷⁹ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁰ Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1983), 97. Sontag uses this phrase: see Sontag, “Heroism of Vision,” 85.

⁸¹ Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” 100; Sontag, “Heroism of Vision,” 71.

⁸² Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 114.

he has created. Sontag writes of Weston: “Between 1930 and 1932 Weston’s diaries of *Daybooks* are full of effusive premonitions of impending change and declarations of the importance of the visual shock therapy that photographers were administering.”⁸³ By contrast, if one were to attempt to describe a photograph taken by Adams, “visual shock therapy” is probably the last phrase that would come to mind. A photographic example will make this point more clearly. Consider, for instance, Weston’s *Hot Coffee, Mojave Desert* (1937). A large coffee cup advertising hot coffee disrupts what in an Adams’ work would be a pristine vision of the mountains and desert. Charles Traub writes about this photograph:

Stieglitz and other photographers were beginning to be aware that less and less unspoiled, primeval landscape could be found in twentieth-century topography. Edward Weston’s famous photograph of the three-dimensional coffee-cup sign monopolizing a Western landscape is an example of the change that was taking place. This image of man and nature juxtaposed against each other was the new vista that posed a problem for photographers to solve harmoniously.⁸⁴

Weston, in *Hot Coffee*, lacks any qualms about representing the disruption of this change; Adams strives for what Traub calls the “harmonious” solution in his photographs, presenting a calmly held balance between man, nature and new forms of industry. What makes Weston’s photograph so shocking is the sense of scale, with the absurdly large coffee cup that sits in the foreground of the image, partially blocking out the landscape that recedes into the background.

Adams, by contrast, in photographs like *Untitled* (1940) [Fig. 2], shifts disparate elements of the landscape back into balance by using compositional strategies that produce correspondences between towers and trees or rails and jet trails. He writes on

⁸³ Sontag, “The Heroism of Vision,” 75.

⁸⁴ Charles Traub, “Thoughts on Photography in Conquest of the American Landscape,” in *Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art*, ed. Alan Sonfist (New York: Dutton, 1983), 220.

this topic in *Natural Light Photography*, another book from his technical series on photography, *Basic Photo*. In the following passage, Adams talks about the challenge of creating order out of a disorganized environment. He comments:

One phase of industrial photography that is very difficult to manage is minimizing the apparent dirt and disorder of the industrial environment. In many cases this perfectly understandable confusion may have intriguing photographic possibilities. In fact, a junkyard is a veritable gold mine of forms and textures.⁸⁵

Adams approaches industrial scenes with an understanding that they require a little tidying, but the possibility of finding new “forms and textures” presents exciting creative possibilities. Still, the task of photographing an industrial scene was not an easy one. It takes a lot of work on the part of the photographer to construct a photograph that will harmonize traces of disorder. Adams continues: “It is such subject matter [industrial scenes] that taxes the ingenuity of the photographer; he must literally create order out of chaos.”⁸⁶ But in this effort to impose order, Adams is clearly presenting an idealistic, as opposed to realistic, view of industrial environments. Alinder writes that Adams, at this point in his career, was already thinking about *which* reality the photographer should depict.⁸⁷ She notes: “Ansel was questioning exactly how ‘real’ should be defined: Is reality the scene before the camera, or the photographer’s vision as he looks at that scene?”⁸⁸ For Adams, the “photographer’s vision” won out.

For a photographer like Robert Adams, another contrast to Ansel Adams, there was no conflict about which “reality” the photographer should depict. Robert Adams

⁸⁵ Ansel Adams, *Natural Light Photography* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 106.

⁸⁶ Adams, *Natural Light Photography*, 107.

⁸⁷ Alinder, *Group f.64*, 158. Here, Alinder discusses Adams’ thoughts in his essay “Landscape.”

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

thought that the photograph should have a clear and direct relationship to its referent.⁸⁹

This can be contrasted to Ansel Adams' understanding of the photograph as something which captures the spiritual, transcendent quality of the thing in the world. Yet the two photographers did share the belief that, as Robert Adams puts it, art "...is a discovery of harmony, a vision of disparities reconciled, of shape beneath confusion."⁹⁰ Both sought to order and harmonize scenes that they photographed, but the two photographers made different decisions about what would be included within the frame of the photograph.

Whereas Ansel Adams sought to "minimize" traces of disorder and the less glamorous side of industrial growth, Robert Adams called attention to their presence. Allison N. Kemmerer gives an example of the photographers' contrasting attitudes in her description of Robert Adams' *White Churches of the American Plains*. Kemmerer compares Robert Adams' photographs of churches in the West to Ansel Adams', and concludes:

Robert's churches often share the stark and empty space of the plains with the visual clutter of human settlement – propane tanks, telephone wires, and barbed wire fences. These inclusions and, more importantly, the acceptance of both the uplifting and mundane elements found in nature are what set Roberts' work apart from Ansel's and establish the tone for his later work.⁹¹

The photographs of Robert Adams demonstrate a way of contending with nature and industry, as Kemmerer relates in her description, without forcing one to cohere with the other. Although photographers like Robert Adams and Edward Weston in many ways share Adams' beliefs about photography, they do not go to the lengths that Adams does to present such an idealized, unified vision of the world. Yet one might hope that photographers after Adams still have the opportunity to make beautiful photographs that

⁸⁹ Adams, *Why People Photograph*, 146.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁹¹ Kemmerer, "Reinventing the West," 17.

“nourish aesthetic awareness” without causing the “emotional detachment” that Sontag and Benjamin loathe.⁹²

Conclusion

In July 1944, Adams writes up a compilation of the ways he was perceived to be to Nancy Newhall. I quote this in full because I think it presents a significant contrast to the contents of the autobiography that was published forty years later, and with which I began this paper. Adams writes to Nancy:

I was talked about because:
 I could play AND photograph (something immoral about that!!)
 I wore a beard
 I knew a lot of artists
 I did not dance
 I dared to question the status-quo
 I became engaged to Virginia
 I became dis-engaged to Virginia
 I had too many girlfriends
 I did not have enough girlfriends (something funny there, YES sir!!)
 I married Virginia
 I did not live in a garret
 I moved to Yosemite
 I liked Modern Art
 I charged too much
 I charged too little
 I always did like women
 Virginia should not have been so lenient
 Virginia should have “understood” (think she has done a very good job of that kind of “understanding”)
 I drink too much
 I can’t follow the Commie line
 I think expression is something in addition to politics and vice-versa
 I’m a radical
 I like to be reasonably precise (this seems to create immense annoyance)
 I read PM²
 I know Ickes
 I should be free

⁹² Sontag, “The Heroism of Vision,” 87.

I should have some real responsibilities
 I live in an ivory tower
 I am complex
 I am simple
 I am rich as all get-out
 I live off my wife
 I live off my father
 My work should be in line with my Tempo
 I don't like people
 I don't understand the BIG social problems of today
 I'm precious⁹³

If Robert Adams worries that Adams' autobiography was too clean, too uniform, then this statement of 1944 provides a more complex, and more disjointed picture. It draws us closer to Imogen Cunningham's portrait of Adams from 1953 [Fig. 13]. In Cunningham's photograph, Adams sits in Helios IV, drinking a Coca-Cola, resting in the driver's seat. His eyes are cast downward, his forehead wrinkled in thought. The viewer follows his eyes down to that distinctive crooked nose, wondering what is occupying the photographer's thoughts. Set in contrast to Wright's portrait of Adams photographing in Yosemite, here in Cunningham's photograph one observes not a godly vision of the artist but a tired man after a long day's work. This is the man that Adams describes in his 1944 letter to Newhall, weighted down by the realities of life and criticisms leveled against him, and this is the man who is conspicuously hidden from the 1984 autobiography.

In Adams' photographs, one finds a vision of what he wanted the world to be, but not what it was; his photographs represent reality in the ground glass, not reality "out there." As such, many of his so-called harmonious images are idealized worlds that only exist *in* the photograph but fail to represent the true conditions of reality.⁹⁴ His photographs are closest to reality when they depict nature, but when he points his camera

⁹³ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 152.

⁹⁴ This is the reason why so many contemporary documentary photographers, like Lange and Evans, were put off by Adams' photographs.

at technological and industrial subjects, Adams cannot help but neutralize and order the scene before him, organizing all of its parts into a unified whole. This is the largest problem with Adams' work. In his commitment to unity, Adams blurs out detail and smoothes over imperfections. However, Adams truly believed that there was "real social significance in a rock,"⁹⁵ and that his photographs were part of an effort to rescue scenes of beauty that would otherwise go unnoticed, or be wiped out. Adams constantly tried as an artist to aspire to something higher than the human. He wrote to Eldridge T. Spencer from Tucson in 1947, saying: "The face of most Art reminds me of a human face, bewildered, weak-eyed, with a skin of pallor and pimples. The relatively few authentic creators of our time possess a resonance with eternity. I think this resonance is something to fight for – and it takes tremendous energy and sacrifice."⁹⁶ This quote, I believe, says quite a lot about Adams' artistic values.

As this letter to Spencer expresses, Adams strove as an artist to represent eternal, universal, permanent qualities in his work. Looking through the photographs from his later years, of both natural and industrial subjects, it is clear that Adams remained tied to these ideals throughout his career. He is again and again drawn to universal patterns in natural and manmade forms, and in his photographs he attempts to make them cohere through the use of various compositional strategies. Charles Traub writes about this as the romantic nature of Adams' work. He states: "Ansel Adams, a throwback to the nineteenth century, reminds us of the majesty of the few untouched panoramas left in our American landscape. His is a romantic image."⁹⁷ As viewers, we must think about what Adams'

⁹⁵ Nancy Newhall, *Ansel Adams: The Eloquent Light* (New York: Aperture, 1980), 110.

⁹⁶ Adams, *Ansel Adams: Letters and Images*, 183.

⁹⁷ Traub, "Thoughts on Photography in Conquest of the American Landscape," 220.

claims for unity in the 20th-century mean. Adams, as it becomes very clear in his writings and photographs, is for permanence in an era where permanence was not a guarantee, when nothing could be set in stone or taken for granted. The post-war moment, especially, was a time of great flux. No matter the subject, Adams takes ephemeral moments and gives them a sense of permanence in the print. Adams places a hold on the 19th-century moment and the great moments of his career, but at the expense acknowledging – in his artistic work – the true conditions of the moment in which he lived. Ultimately, in Adams, we see a vision that remains tied to values of the past, rather than presenting conditions of the present. His vision of unity remains a beautiful, if unreal, depiction of what life possibly could be.

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Figures

[Image Redacted]

Figure 1. Ansel Adams, *Self-Portrait, San Francisco*, 1936.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 2. Ansel Adams, *Untitled*, 1940. Source: Center for Creative Photography

[Image Redacted]

Figure 3. Ansel Adams, *Edward Weston, Carmel Highlands, California*, 1940. Source: Center for Creative Photography

[Image Redacted]

Figure 4. Ansel Adams, *Roots, Foster Garden, Hawaii*, 1948.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 5. Ansel Adams, *Rails and Jet Trails, Roseville, California*, 1953.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 6. Ansel Adams, *Standard Oil Tanker and Depot*, 1953. Source: Center for Creative Photography

[Image Redacted]

Figure 7. Ansel Adams, *AT&T Cable Splicer*, 1950s. Source: Center for Creative Photography

[Image Redacted]

Figure 8. Ansel Adams, *Engineer*, 1956. Source: Center for Creative Photography

[Image Redacted]

Figure 9. Ansel Adams, *Sacramento Valley Rice Fields*, 1966.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 10. Ansel Adams, *Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles*, 1967.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 11. Ansel Adams, *Graduate Students from the College of Environmental Design Working on an Urban Renewal Project, UC Berkeley*, 1967.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 12. Cedric Wright, *Ansel Adams photographing Yosemite*, 1942.

[Image Redacted]

Figure 13. Imogen Cunningham, *Ansel Adams in a Truck, Yosemite Valley*, 1953.