with increasingly less to see that is genuinely new and fresh. Perhaps this explains why a side-product of the tourism project, *Bored Couples* (1993), contains one very intriguing image—a self-portrait of Martin and Susie Parr enduring a continental breakfast in a hotel. For here Parr is photographing his own life, and despite the fictive quality that his "bumped-up" color imparts, he too must endure (or enjoy) the experiences that give it meaning.

By 1995, Parr had begun to realize that his concentration on the *décors* of consumption was too broad. It set the scene, but the action was elsewhere—in the objects, the details of consumerism itself: "I had to look more closely at the flotsam and jetsam of consumer society." To do this he changed his approach once more, picking up the techniques of medical photography (a 35mm camera with a close-up "macro" lens and a shadow-free "ring flash") to deliver the visual goods. Accumulating commissions (which included one on "European clichés" from the National Museum of Photography in Bradford, West Yorkshire), he set out to record in forensic detail as much of the ambiguity of modern life as he could. The images in *Common Sense* and *Think of England* (2000) make up "a fiction based on reality," in Parr's terms, their vivid intensity accumulating a "statement which has at its heart a contradiction or ambiguity—between trash and tradition, between love and hate—all the things we are normally confronted with, because we are torn between the two extremes. We want to find a sort of middle ground. The ambiguity is inherent in the subject matter."

> "Inevitably, I am a tourist too. In the end you are just one more bum on a seat or bed in a hotel."

Much of Parr's visual technique relies upon the juxtaposition between the crass and the genteel, the beautiful and the ugly, high and low class, high and low culture. "In the Benidorm food pictures there is a visceral quality, an unappetizing ugliness that I wanted to convey," he observes. "Food is such a wonderful metaphor for culture; it is something I've looked at very closely in the last five years. It was something nobody else had looked at before, a new field to exploit."

After a career of 30 years in photography, Martin Parr remains active on many fronts. "I do TV, I do fashion, I do advertising, editorial work. There is nothing I won't do, because it is all equally interesting, it is all a way of bringing imagery into the world." He is in the forefront of those photographers who have proved how hollow is the outmoded distinction, still being proposed quite recently by figures like Peter Galassi at such conservative art institutions as New York's Museum of Modern Art, that there is something differentiating the motives that lie behind the making of "vernacular" as opposed to "art" photographs. Parr's work relies and trades on the genres and conventions of "vernacular" commercial photography. Its widespread acceptance by curators and other cultural intermediaries throughout the world demonstrates how misguided the vernacular/artistic distinction can be. "They miss the point entirely. These barriers have now totally evaporated. I'm the first one through the fence, perhaps, but I really like the idea of spreading myself around and not sticking to one department. The whole idea of crossover between culture and photography is fascinating to me."

The Barbican Art Gallery in London will honor Parr with a major retrospective exhibition in 2002. Yet it is not certain that he will be ploughing the same furrow by then. He is fascinated by America, "an underphotographed country," and by the relative backwardness of its photographic culture. As if to demonstrate his appetite for the New World (honed, it must be said, by many visits over the last 20 years to such Parr-esque venues as Las Vegas), he showed me his new artist's book. It offers almost 500 machine-prints of scenes from the delightful town of Boring, Oregon. In its attention to the unconsidered but essential features of American life, this work is a clear indication of Parr's contention that the visualization of American society and culture is ripe for the same shake-up that he gave Britain in the 1980s and 1990s. All I can say is, Watch out America: Parr is coming.

Recent publications by Martin Parr include, from Dewi Lewis Publishing, Autoportrait *(2000),* Common Sense *(1999), and* The Last Resort *(second ed., 1998); also, from Phaidon Press,* Think of England *and* Boring Postcards USA *(both 2000) and* Boring Postcards *(1998). His prints are available in New York at Janet Borden. His Web site is <www.martinparr.com>.*

***Peter Hamilton** is a historian, sociologist, and curator of photography, and the author of several monographs on photographers and their work.*

The Idea of John Szarkowski

by Mark Haworth-Booth

(Fig. 1) (Left) John Szarkowski, *Screen Door, Hudson, Wisconsin*, gelatin silver print, 1950. All photographs courtesy Pace/MacGill, New York.

John Szarkowski has had a vivid impact on photography as a curator and writer for 40 years and is still going strong. In 1970, I saw a show curated by him that completely changed my view of the medium. *Bill Brandt: Photographs* was the first photography exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London. A generation of British exhibition-goers realized, for the first time, that photography could be a vehicle for the imagination. No subsequent Brandt show has caught the essence of the photographer's vision quite so well.

My second epiphany came with *Walker Evans*, a catalogue published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1971. Szarkowski's essay reminds me now of a book in my grandfather's library: a version of *The Bible Designed To Be Read as Literature*. The introduction to Evans was art history written with the gusto and finesse we hope to find in any writing—aside from letters from the bank and law reports. The critical eye and compelling prose were formidable attributes in a curator. (One has to be on one's guard, though, when reading Szarkowski. Jokes arrive without warning. Ill-suppressed snorts of laughter can be embarrassing in confined spaces like airplanes.)

This article is about the making of John Szarkowski in the late 1940s and 50s, prior to his arrival at the Museum of Modern Art as director of the department of photography in 1962—plus a glance at what he has been doing since retiring from that position in 1991. Why write such an article now? There is a great reason: Szarkowski's book *The Idea of Louis Sullivan* has just been reissued.[1] It first came out in 1956. I have known the book for years, but not until now did I read the texts and photographs together and the whole volume cover-to-cover. (Superb printing in the new edition, by the way.) The book is a revelation about Sullivan—but also about Szarkowski, whose outstanding work as a photographer disappeared for years behind his own curatorial shadow. Now we can see the young Szarkowski with clarity. We can recognize that the youthful photographer was father to the mature curator—and also to the even more mature photographer of recent years.

I discussed Szarkowski's photographs with him last summer at his house in East Chatham, New York, and subsequently by e-mail. (From here on I hope the reader will be content if I refer to our subject as JS.) It struck me that the Sullivan photographs—of which more in a moment—were so accomplished that something pretty good must have preceded them. I knew that JS had settled on a photographic career at an early age. "I considered myself a photographer from the time I decided, no, I was not a clarinet player, which was probably when I was 16."[2] A year later, at 17, he enrolled as an art history major at the University of Wisconsin, where he studied from 1943 to 1948. It was a fine department, headed by Oskar Hagen and harboring two other distinguished professors, James Watrous and John Fabian Kienitz. Of course, in those days the history of photography was not part of art history, nor was it offered in the studio art department. However, as JS put it in a BBC interview we recorded some years ago,

> One could sit in a dark room and look at pictures, and I thought that might be useful. I didn't have a carefully wrought theory of why it would be useful, but I thought it might be good for somebody that wanted to make well-made pictures to look at other people's well-made pictures. And then, of course, one got interested in not only the fact that they were well made, but that they were about various interesting ideas, and that they were parts of interesting traditions, and that they had a family life.[3]

I recently asked if I could see some of his early photographs and JS sent me copies. I was particularly struck by *Screen Door, Hudson, Wisconsin* (1950) (fig. 1) and *School, Town of Lincoln* (1951). I scented a connection with Walker Evans. When, I asked, had JS first come across Evans's *American Photographs* (exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1938)? Had it been a holy book for him? His reply confirmed my guess, but then took off in an unexpected and fascinating direction:

> I knew *American Photographs* before I knew anything to speak of about Sheeler or Weston; an art history professor of mine named John Fabian Kienitz told me to go buy it, probably to keep me quiet for a while about photography. The book mystified me completely. It seemed to me all facts and no art, except for the one of the woman in the striped blouse in front of the barber shop—I could see the cleverness in that one. More than half a century later, the book is still getting better for me.
>
> In about 48 or 49 I invested a major part of my liquid assets in *Fifty Photographs by Edward Weston* [ca. 1947], a very great book which had a

> much more immediate effect on me than Evans, because of the physical seductiveness of the work. Both *Screen Door* and *Schoolhouse* have more to do with Weston's marvelous *Church Door, Hornitos* [1940] than with Evans, although without looking first at Evans I might not have understood it.

It's too late now, of course, but if you had seen the screen door photograph without knowing its author, to whom would you have attributed it? The significance of extreme edges in the picture, like the planks at the base, might remind you of Walker Evans, and the sensuous textures of Edward Weston. However, perhaps you agree with me that it does not resemble a Weston photograph so much as the work of one of his young followers in the 1940s, someone like, say, Minor White. The photograph is not a descriptive document but an imaginative space, or if it is partly the former, this is mainly in service of the latter. Once inside the zinc mesh, those rough planks become planed and painted porch boards. The play of light and shade is beautifully done, but the key to the image is the clever overlapping of the two light-toned shapes at the lower left. A fret-worked lozenge (part of the screen door) floats around the oval of a doormat to make a third form. This strange entity flutters within the space for a moment until we disentangle the elements. I would guess that the negative was exposed and developed precisely to allow the print to capture this moment of light confusion (as well as, of course, to provide a tonally convincing treatment of all the other features of the subject). It is a young man's investigation of the art of picture-making—inspired by Weston's *Church Door, Hornitos*, perhaps, but not really like it, and already belonging to a new sensibility. If this early photograph is a mirror, reflecting the mind in an act of perception, the book that followed resembles a critical window.

In his preface to the new edition of *The Idea of Louis Sullivan*, JS explains how the work began: "I had been captivated by Sullivan's *Kindergarten Chats* [1901–02], brought back into print in 1947 by Paul Theobald—an act that was surely crucial to other lives than my own. I think that the book was brought to my attention by my great, now late, friend Arthur Carrara, the Chicago architect; he was in any case my guide to Sullivan's great book, and the one who encouraged me not to be concerned about the passages of windy rhetoric but to get on to the good parts." In 1951, JS set himself the task of photographing Sullivan's 1894–95 Guaranty (now Prudential) Building in the city of Buffalo, New York. His portfolio of 15 prints of that building formed the basis of a successful application to the Guggenheim Fellowship for funds to complete the book. The story of that application and—in the course of garnering support for it—his visit to Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin is one of JS's most hilarious pieces of writing.

(Fig. 2) (Right)
John Szarkowski,
The Guaranty (now Prudential) Building, Buffalo, New York, 1894–95, gelatin silver print, 1951.
From *The Idea of Louis Sullivan*, p. 119.

(Fig. 3)
(Opposite page)
John Szarkowski,
The Guaranty (now Prudential) Building, Buffalo, New York, 1894–95, gelatin silver print, 1951.
From The Idea of Louis Sullivan, p. 117.

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The way JS photographed Sullivan's Guaranty Building was new. A dozen of the Guaranty Building photographs appear in the book (fig. 2 and fig. 3), and they justify a claim made in the "Photographer's Foreword" reprinted from the 1956 edition. The first paragraph heralds the now-familiar Szarkowski style: "The building was old and dirty and largely lost among its newer, larger neighbors. Like a diamond in a pile of broken glass, it stopped few passersby." However, his text also anticipates a style of thinking:

> Obviously it was necessary to photograph the building immediately, before it was further defaced. As I be-

(Opposite page, clockwise from top left) (Fig. 4) John Szarkowski, *The Wainwright Building, St. Louis, 1890*. gelatin silver print. From *The Idea of Louis Sullivan*, p. 64.

(Fig. 5) John Szarkowski, *Stayman Winesap from Barn*. gelatin silver print, 1997.

(Fig. 6) John Szarkowski, *Back Scratcher, near Mullen, Nebraska*. gelatin silver print, 1999.

> gan to work I found, to my own surprise, that I was seeing this building not with the decorous disinterest with which a photographer is supposed to approach a work of formal architecture, but as a real building, which people had worked in and maimed and ignored and perhaps loved, and which I felt was deeply important. I found myself concerned not only with the building's art-facts but with its life-facts (Louis Sullivan had claimed they were the same). This concern began to show in the photographs, and the idea grew.... In our own day perhaps the best architectural photographs have been the casual products of the photographer-journalist, where the life that surrounds and nourishes the building is seen or felt. If to such an approach were added an understanding of architectural form, photography might become a powerful critical medium, rather than a superficially descriptive one.

Could the shabby and bewildered building in fig. 2 really be the magnificent structure, like an avenue of cedars, that we see in fig. 3? Or look at the book's cover picture, in which the graceful aspirations and ornamental generosity of Sullivan's Wainwright Building in St. Louis (built in 1890) are critically contrasted with the architectural mediocrity around it, whether monumental or meager in scale (fig. 4). The camera is aimed with a sniper's precision. Generously conceived, visionary buildings fall on hard times, as is shown with rueful irony in such pictures as that of the Schiller (later Garrick) Theater, Chicago, 1891–92. It stands like a democratic giant stranded among febrile commercial pygmies—stood, rather, until it was demolished in 1961.

The book presents us with the interactions between Sullivan's grand vision and urban actuality, plus another series of interactions between selected texts by Sullivan and others and the photographs of his buildings. Thus, from the beginning of his career, JS has worked in an imaginative space where words and images meet. His photographs show that, like George Eliot of *Middlemarch*, he has an overriding interest in another meeting place: that between individual vision and social circumstance, or the would-be absolute and the necessarily contingent. It seems obvious now, but JS was a curator from the start—beginning as curator of Sullivan's buildings and reputation. He did what curators do: preserve, present, interpret, and champion.[4]

Post-retirement in 1991, JS produced another deft compilation of found words and his own photographs—*Mr. Bristol's Barn* (1997). This book paired images of an old timber barn on his property with a Civil-War era diary by a neighbor. *Stayman Winesap from Barn* (1997; fig. 5), made too late for that book, continues the story of the barn and the seasons. It is as elegant and resonant as Walt Whitman's short poem "A Farm Picture," which begins, "Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn...." I am glad to report that JS has taken his 5x4-in. camera on a number of photographic forays in recent years. With his nephew, the Houston photographer John Childs, and his old friends Richard Benson and Lee Friedlander, JS photographed Big Bend, Texas, in 1998, Nebraska in 1999, and Upper Michigan in 2000. We close with a new photograph of great simplicity from these travels (fig. 6). Let us put alongside it these lines from Wallace Stevens: "...the bride/Is never naked. A fictive covering/Weaves always glistening from the heart and mind." We read a picture like this in the light of all we know of its maker, and everything he has given us in words and pictures.[5]

[1]John Szarkowski, *The Idea of Louis Sullivan*. With an introduction by Terence Riley. Boston, New York, and London, 2000.

[2]Mark Haworth-Booth, "Interview: John Szarkowski," *History of Photography* 15/4 (Winter 1991), pp. 302–06.

[3]Ibid.

[4]The story of how JS joined the staff of the Museum of Modern Art is entertainingly described by Douglas Nickel in "John Szarkowski: An Interview," *History of Photography* 19/2 (Summer 1995), pp.135–42. The architectural strand in JS's career keys to that of his wife, Jill Anson. She has worked for many years at the Municipal Art Society of New York, which played an important role in the preservation and subsequent refurbishment of, among other buildings, Grand Central Station. How wonderful it would be if Sullivan's grandest public space, the Chicago Auditorium, could similarly enjoy such a renaissance.

[5]My thanks to John Szarkowski for all his help on this article. The "Idea of John Szarkowski" can also be traced in another new book by him: *Atget*, published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Callaway, 2000.

Mark Haworth-Booth *is curator of photographs at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. His next exhibition is* Rural England through a Victorian Lens: Benjamin Brecknell Turner, *which opens in April and will travel to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, January–March, 2002.*

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Szarkowski

Seeing Adams in new light

DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS
DENVER, CO
THURSDAY 376,342
AUG 2 2001

By Kim Curtis
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The first comprehensive exhibition of Ansel Adams' work since he died in 1984 reinforces his status as America's foremost nature photographer and secures a place for his work on museum walls.

"The idea of the exhibition is to try to show Adams as an artist, not as a conservationist or a politician or a photography teacher," said John Szarkowski, who knew Adams and curated the show, which opens Saturday at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Szarkowski spent nearly four years going through a dozen public and private collections looking for the best prints of Adams' finest photos. He came away with a new understanding of how Adams saw the world.

"The great central gift that Ansel made to the rest of us is the realization that the natural world is not a static thing," Szarkowski said. "It's not fundamentally a matter of geology. It's a living, changing, organic thing."

Sandra Phillips, SFMoMA's senior curator of photography, added that "Some of the pictures we all know, but fully a third of them will be unknown. I think it will be a starker show, a more visually complicated but interesting show," she said.

Adams' black and white images were highly detailed and unusually lighted. He often cropped out the sky or the foreground and chose instead to focus on a stump or a boulder field or a sheer granite wall.

He worked much of his magic in the darkroom, often printing the same negative hundreds of times to try to imbue the photo with the passion he felt for its subject matter.

In *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, considered by many to be Adams' masterwork, a nearly full moon in a darkening sky looks down on an ethereal glow from the setting sun on the crosses in a small cemetery.

Adams actually took the photo in midafternoon, says Mary Street Alinder, who co-wrote Adams' autobiography and said she has the only "straight print" of the original. The sky was actually light blue and dotted with clouds, and the foreground appears to be flat.

Eric Risberg/Associated Press

John Szarkowski, director emeritus of the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, stands by an Ansel Adams photograph taken in 1949 titled "Yosemite Valley Thunderstorm," at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

"What Ansel wanted is not just the reality of what came through the lens of his camera," she said. "He wanted to take it to another level."

A companion coffee-table book featuring 137 prints is in bookstores this week to commemorate the centennial of the birth of Adams, a San Francisco native whose images "motivated the country to get on a preservation path," says Bruce Hamilton, conservation director for the Sierra Club.

Adams was born Feb. 20, 1902, the only child of Charles Hitchcock Adams, a businessman, and Olive Bray. He may have been hyperactive or dyslexic when he was young and did not do well in school. He was essentially self-taught, and his formal education ended with the equivalent of eighth grade.

His first visit to Yosemite Valley was with his family in 1916. He took about 30 photographs using his new Kodak Brownie, his first camera.

"There was nothing very unusual in 1916 about a 14-year-old child of a middle-class family making snapshots on the family vacation," Szarkowski writes in *Ansel Adams at 100*, available in bookstores today. "Nor did the first snaps of the young Adams indicate any special genius, although one might say they were neatly framed. The snaps were memory aids. ... Yosemite took hold of the child, and for the rest of his life he returned as frequently as he could."

Adams did show early promise as a pianist, though, and by 21 he considered himself a professional musician. It wasn't until 1930 that he turned instead to photography — and Yosemite.

He moved from San Francisco to a home and studio overlooking California's Big Sur coast, south of Carmel, in 1962. His phone number was always listed, his door always open, and he found himself spending most of his time teaching.

Experts agree that the bulk of Adams' best work was done in the 1930s and early 1940s.

"Those are the years when he was really an original figure," SFMoMA's Phillips said. "Later, he was interested in making his work accessible for very good reasons, because the environment from which he drew inspiration ... was being threatened."

Adams was a tireless proponent of photography as art, co-founding the world's first museum department of photography in 1940 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

"He stood up and said, 'This is a beautiful art medium on its own,' " Alinder said.

While he long enjoyed fame, Adams achieved financial stability through his work only a few years before his death.

The Gallery: An Ansel Adams Centennial

He was accused of ignoring the Depression, World War II and many social issues. ... "But he felt beauty can give something that nothing else can. He felt it was at the toughest time in the human condition that we need beauty to help get us through, to remind us of the great things in life that are beautiful."

The Ansel Adams Trust, which oversees the production of books, posters and calendars, sells more than 500,000 Adams pieces a year, trustee William Turnage says. "It's the most successful single-artist publishing program in the country," he said.

Adams' photographs have never been more in demand, according to Sotheby's auction house. Prices range from less than $10,000 to as much as $60,000.

"That doesn't include prices that private galleries have gotten that may be a good deal higher," said Chris Mahoney in Sotheby's photograph department.

And, artistically, Adams remains a strong presence among contemporary photographers.

"All landscape photographers measure their achievement even today either by their rebellion against Ansel Adams or by their creative emulation of his work," said Robert Adams, best-known for his photographs chronicling the urbanization of the Colorado Rockies, and no relation to Ansel. "If we feel uneasy in our love of Ansel Adams' art, it's because his art doesn't always seem adequately to acknowledge, much less to reconcile, the unpleasant aspects of contemporary life."

Many of Adams' contemporaries believed he was taking pictures of the wrong things at the wrong time and saw his work as irrelevant. He was accused of ignoring the Depression, World War II and many social issues.

"He was criticized for taking pictures of rocks while the world disintegrated around him," Alinder said. "But he felt beauty can give something that nothing else can. He felt it was at the toughest time in the human condition that we need beauty to help get us through, to remind us of the great things in life that are beautiful."

LEISURE & ARTS

The Gallery: An Ansel Adams Centennial

A Birthday Show Avoids His Big, Later Prints in Favor of Earlier And Far More Intimate Ones

By DAVID LITTLEJOHN

San Francisco

THE FACT THAT HE WAS BORN in this city a century ago next February is the stated reason for "Ansel Adams at 100," an exhibition of 114 photographic prints that just opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. It will proceed, after it closes here in January, on one of the grandest tours any art exhibition has been given since the treasures of King Tut: to the Art Institute in Chicago, the Hayward Gallery in London, the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

To win that sort of an itinerary one must come up with a better justification for an exhibition than a birthday, especially of an artist already so widely visible and perhaps too popular for his own good—even before his death in 1984. In fact, John Szarkowski, who put together this exhibition—as he did the 1979 Adams retrospective at MoMA—refused to mount one more show of Adams's Greatest Hits. Like many people in the contemporary art scene, he seems eager to distance himself from the "later" Ansel Adams—the burly, bearded sage of Point Lobos who all but abandoned taking pictures in favor of making large, high-contrast (and high-priced) prints of his earlier work, advising presidents on wilderness preservation, socializing, teaching, writing letters and managing his estate and his image.

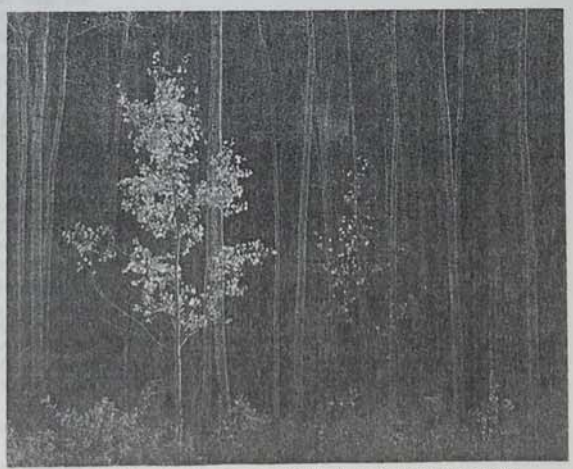
In his attempt to win Adams back to the world of serious art lovers from the peddlers and purchasers of his posters and calendars, Mr. Szarkowski has generally avoided what he regards as the oversize, overdramatized prints made by Adams and others over the last 40 years. Instead, he looked for what are called "vintage prints"—those made by the photographer soon after a picture was taken. (Adams often made these the same size as the negatives.) Only six of the 114 prints here are listed as having been made after 1970; only six of the pictures were taken after 1950.

This selective approach means that museumgoers are obliged to examine dozens of small works mounted behind glass and hung close together, in four coolly lit galleries that are likely to become very crowded. (Only about a quarter of the prints are larger than 8 by 10 inches.) To accompany the exhibition, Little, Brown has published a $150, 13-by-15-inch catalog with reproductions (most of them full-size) of such extraordinary quality that one can sometimes see more detail in the inked print on the page than the chemical print on the wall. A smaller, soft-cover version costs $50.

Adams's microscopically sharp detail—achieved by means of long exposures through tiny apertures—tempts us to want to see enlargements of his pictures, so we can gasp over the precisely etched pine needles, leaf veins and granite cracks, the fine detail of distant objects. Big posters on sale in the museum shop allow one to indulge this craving—while making clear that, even for epic panoramas, bigger is not necessarily better.

Mr. Szarkowski has included two pairs of early and later prints made from the same negatives. In a version of "Aspens, Northern New Mexico" made soon after it was shot in 1958, a palisade of slender white tree trunks is almost lost in shadow, as is the base of foliage in the front. The semitransparent, light-struck leaves of two foreground trees stand out in handsome contrast. In a 1976 print, the wall of trunks leaps forward, the foliage looks spotlit, and the foreground leaves appear to be lit by electricity rather than the sun. In a similar pair of prints of "Mount McKinley and Wonder Lake," the more popular 1978 version—which Mr. Szarkowski has called "egregiously inferior" to the 1949 version that hangs alongside it—looks almost computer-created, so aggressively unnatural are its shadows, reflections and contrasts.

But exaggerated, "unnatural" contrasts of black and white—pitch-black earth, sky or shadows set against whiter-than-white clouds, snow, spray or stone—were an essential part of Adams's aesthetic from the start. In a photograph Adams took at age 16, in 1918, of a dark, cubistic, house-size rock off Land's End in San Francisco, at once battered and caressed by ocean surf, his tastes for stark, primal contrasts of tone and minute textural detail are already evident.



Ansel Adams's *'Aspens, Northern New Mexico' from 1958.*

And those tastes never changed. If photography forced us to resee and redefine the world in black, gray and white, he would give us the blackest blacks, the whitest whites, the most dramatic range of grays—even if it meant many hours in the darkroom correcting nature's inadequate tones. Patience and technology allowed a tripod-fixed 8-by-10 view camera to capture far more detail than any human eye could see; so Adams shows every sunshot pockmark on a boulder, every wavy striation on a dead stump or mountain wall.

Adams was quite candid about his unfaithfulness to "nature," his manipulation of the subject in front of his lens, whether it was the Grand Canyon or a scattering of pine needles in a pond. He would wait hours for the precise arrangement of clouds and sunlight he needed. Sunrise and moonrise, threatening or clearing thunderstorms served him spectacularly well. Selected rays of sunlight could (if you were lucky or waited long enough) illuminate just the place you wanted, while dark clouds or skies left adjacent areas in deepest grays or blacks. You or I could go back to Yosemite for 60 consecutive years (as he did), and yet never see the thin thread of waterfall struck by light that he discovered in a valley of shadows; or the sharp prow of El Capitan illumined by the finest line of silver.

Admirers of Adams's work generally fall into one of three categories. The first and largest group are the nature lovers—people who regard inaccessibly high mountains, crashing ocean waves and very old rocks and trees as what 18th-century writers called the Sublime. Mr. Szarkowski argues that the innermost impulses behind Adams's visions of nature were not so much artistic as spiritual, in a vague, nonreligious, pantheistic way. He saw, if not the hand of God, at least evidence of the transcendental in the ancient, untrod reaches of America's Western wilderness (no human presence ever defiles his landscapes), as well as in close-up, exquisitely composed images of a dead tree stump, pine needles in a pond, wildflowers growing out of a crack in the rocks.

The second group of admirers includes serious photographers. Whatever they may think of Adams's preferred subjects and effects, they still learn a great deal about their craft from his wise, conscientious, painstaking methods. His subjects may now seem less timeless than 19th-century-romantic, his taste in contrast and detail exaggerated, even melodramatic. But no one knew better than he did where, when and how to shoot a picture, how to frame and compose, how to bend light and shadow to suit one's own ends and then bend them still further in the darkroom.

As neither a photographer nor a Sierra Club pantheist, I fall into the third and most critical category of Adams's admirers, the art lovers. In both this exhibition and its catalog, I found myself taking note of his tonal preferences and studied effects, and admiring his meticulous craft, instead of responding with the emotional complexity and inner dialogue one expects from serious art.

Other dissatisfied critics have called his works "too perfect," and in one sense they are. Their composition and detail are so finely wrought that they leave little room for any response other than stunned contemplation. After a while, the nonbeliever tires of the transcendental sublime.

Even so, I love the big catalog and found no fault whatever with 36 works taken and printed between 1935 and 1950. These include the blown-spray series of five Old Faithfuls and five Yosemite waterfalls; a tree detail and a Zen lake; a stand of aspens in Colorado; Grand Canyon from Point Sublime; a dark strut of Rainbow Bridge; two elongated, glacier-polished slabs; the famous sun-struck field of stones out of Manzanar; and "Rocks, Alabama Hills," a mysterious, otherworldly image I had never seen before.

CAMERA MAINICHI, Tokyo November 1974

II

Looking At Photographs
By John Szarkovski
-100 Pictues from the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York-
Photo album "Looking At Photographs" is compiled by John Szarkovski, director of photograph section of the New York Museum of Modern Art.
100 pieces of picture arts produced since 1968, and his comment are compiled. In the album, one may see Szarkovski's intellectual look fulled with affection, profundity and modesty in his comment.

Book Review

Ansel Adams at 100

By John Szarkowski
Little, Brown, $150

Ever affable, Ansel Adams was not an especially rigorous critic of his own work. He often showed his worst work next to his best. Documenting Sierra Club outings in the late 1920s, Adams offered members prints at a dollar apiece from any negative not wholly overexposed, allowing them to choose what they liked by sorting through massive albums of proofs.

Now, 100 years after his birth, Adams finally has the editor he deserves: John Szarkowski, former director of the photography department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the curator of the recent Ansel Adams retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. For the retrospective's catalogue, Szarkowski selected over 100 prints, early and late, covering the Yosemite territory and beyond. He also contributed an introductory essay discussing not only Adams's innovations in printing but also the effect of his training as a concert pianist on his art. It's one of the first fresh views in years of the overexposed photographer's work.

And that's just the start. In keeping with the high standards of reproduction Adams helped establish six decades back (some readers still assume that he tipped original prints into his books), the publisher has used a tritone process to lay down plates rich in shade and sharp in detail on imported French paper. Adams would have been ebullient. **J.S.K.**

The New York Times
Book Review
December 3, 2000

Szarkowski

Photography

By Andy Grundberg

ATGET. By John Szarkowski. (Museum of Modern Art/Callaway, $60.) EUGÈNE ATGET: Paris, 1857-1927. Essay by Andreas Krase. Edited by Hans Christian Adam. (Taschen, $39.99.) Szarkowski's book on the work of Eugène Atget, published this year, is one of the best new books to advance the notion that photographs we think of as works of art are satisfying not only on their own terms but also because they engage the world of ideas. In the case of Atget, the early-20th-century documentarian of Paris and its environs, the pictures are so vividly direct that they invite ruminations of the sort Szarkowski is well equipped to deliver. "Atget" beautifully reproduces 100 pictures from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, each paired with a commentary by the author. The format is much the same as that of Szarkowski's classic text "Looking at Photographs" (1973), but concentrated on a single artistic sensibility.

Luckily, Atget's sensibility and Szarkowski's are entirely consonant, and the intellectual meanders of the author prove to be of the same order as the perambulations of the photographer. Who else could begin a commentary about a picture of a cottage cistern by noting, "We now have pumps so deep-reaching and powerful that we can draw down even the Oglala aquifer, the ocean of fresh water underneath the Great Plains, which once seemed inexhaustible"? Or conclude, in writing about a picture of an apple tree in bloom, "If the tree grew in the right part of Normandy the distillate could be called Calvados, but it was doubtless also good in other neighborhoods"? True, Szarkowski's prose style has become increasingly mandarin since "Looking at Photographs," but it remains mesmerizing — and his insights into Atget's world are, as he says of the photographs themselves, "as plain and as nourishing as good bread."

Szarkowski's "Atget" is not to be confused with another volume, "Eugène Atget," edited by Hans Christian Adam, which is less faithful in its reproductions but equally edifying. Part of an impressive photography series from the Taschen publishing house that includes books on Karl Blossfeldt, Edward S. Curtis, Man Ray and others, it delivers a great deal of information at a budget price. There are more than 250 reproductions, a succinct introductory text that incorporates the latest Atget scholarship, and biographical and bibliographical entries. The pictures come from a variety of museum collections, most of them in France, and the texts are printed in German, French and English, making this an international enterprise. Taschen's series seems particularly aimed at students, but in a way that should not exclude anyone.

A street vendor selling lampshades, 1899-1900; from "Atget," by John Szarkowski.

NEW YORK AUGUST 20, 2001

Szarkowski, John

15. ハエのいる空部屋（ニューヨーク）1974

NEW YORK AUGUST 20, 2001

Szarkowski, John

15. ハエのいる空部屋（ニューヨーク, 1974）

NEW YORK AUGUST 20, 2001

Szarkowski, John

LOOKING AT PHOTOGRAPHS

BY JOHN SZARKOWSKI

カールトン・E・ワトキンズ

アメリカ 1829~1916

アルプツス・メンジエシイ・ブルシュ 1861?

鶏卵紙・14⅝×21⅝インチ

Szarkowski, John

あたりまえのことですが、真に革命的な発明がなされたときには、その使いみちがすぐにわかるというものではありません。ダゲールが写真術を発明した１８３９年には、写真の実験者は何人かいましたが、写真家は一人もいなかったのです。しかし、それから10年もたつと、町と呼ばれるほどのところなら、ひとつやふたつのダゲレオタイプ写真館が必ずあるというほどになりました。こんなに大勢にふえた写真家たちの前歴は、まことにさまざまでしたが、写真の科学や芸術とはおよそ関係のないものが多かったのです。

カールトン・Ｅ・ワトキンズは、サンフランシスコのデパートの店員でした。1854年、ダゲレオタイプの写真家Ｒ・Ｈ・ヴァンスがサン・ホセに持っていた写真館に欠員が生じたので、そこで働くことになったのです。ほんの一時しのぎとして雇われたのでしたが、仕事を始めて一週間のうちに、写真術の初歩をマスターしてしまったので、ひきつづきその職場を与えられたのです。そして14年後、パリの万国博覧会で風景写真の一等賞を得ています。彼の活動期間は半世紀にもわたっているのですが、1906年、一生涯の作品をスタンフォード大学へ譲る交渉をしていたとき、サンフランシスコに大地震が起こり、彼のスタジオと、それまでの作品コレクションが全滅してしまいました。

当時、意欲にもえた大部分の写真家たちは、面白そうなテーマからテーマへと、主題を変えていったのですが、ワトキンズはガリフォルニアを離れることなく、毎年夏になると、ヨセミテと、マリポーザ森林の巨木を、18×22インチ以下さまざまなサイズのガラス板に写しとりました。彼がヨセミテへ行った初期のころには、12頭のロバが機材を運ぶために必要でした。

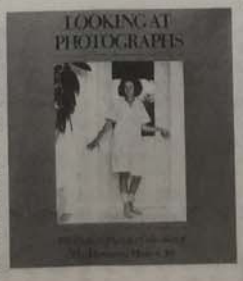
彼は自分の被写体をよく研究する人でした。ここにあげた写真のタイトルも、単に〝ストロベリー・ツリー〟としないで、学名を使っています。現在にまで残っているワトキンズの写真は、彼の時代とその場所の歴史的、学術的ドキュメントであり、明白で、正確、細密、しかも一貫性のある記録となっているのです。

彼のこのストロベリー・ツリーの写真は、日本の国旗のようにシンプルですが、辞書のように内容豊かです。

訳・秋山亮二

「ルッキング・アット・フォトグラフズ――ニューヨーク近代美術館コレクションから選んだ一〇〇枚の写真」は、同美術館の写真部門ディレクター、ジョン・シャーカフスキー氏の手になる写真集である。一八三九年のダゲレオタイプ発明の数年あとに撮られた、なんとも力強い「母と娘」（ウィリアム・シュー）から始まり、一九六八年のどうということのない道端の風景「アンタイトルド」（ヘンリー・ウェッセル・ジュニア）で終わる一〇〇枚の写真が、一枚ずつ右ページにおかれ、左ページにシャーカフスキー氏のコメントがおかれている。

序文によると、このアンソロジーを編む方針は、いわゆる傑作中心ではなかった。〝この美術館のコレクションは、評価の定まっている偉大な作品を収容しようというものではなく、このメディアがなしとげてきたもの、またその行いうる可能性を、より深く理解するための手がかりとなる作品を集めた。ものだからだ。〝写真とは何かということは、過去の偉大なる作家たちからだけでなく、大それた野心をもたず、無名に近かった写真家たちの、素朴で、根源的な写真からも答えがかえってきている〟という。



この写真集が貴重なものとなっているのは、写真と対向しておかれたシャーカフスキー氏の、解説、批評、写真（家）論、文学的想像をないまぜたコメントのゆえだろう。たとえ見慣れた、有名な写真であっても、新発見をさせられる喜びにはこと欠かない。ここには、写真というメディアにむけられた、筆者の優しくも、深く、つつましく、愛情にみち、そして知性に裏打ちされた眼差しがあるのだ。

NEW YORK AUGUST 20, 2001

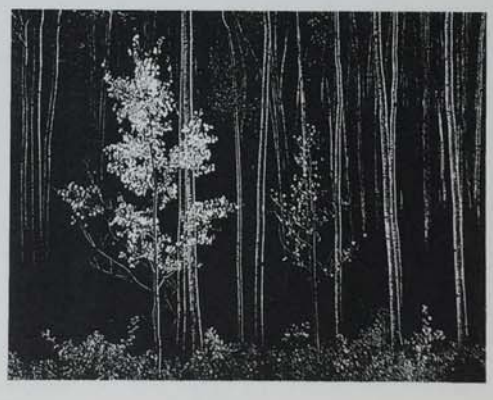
Szarkowski, John

THE MIX

In Print

Ansel-lary Rights

Even though John Szarkowski, the curator of **Ansel Adams at 100**, was a longtime director of MOMA's photography department, it won't be until July 2003, a year after Adams's centenary, that the preeminent nature photographer's retrospective makes its way to town from San Francisco. Until then, you'll have to content yourself with the companion book (Little, Brown, $150). Szarkowski's introduction precedes 114 superior prints of Adams photographs, from established classics to surprisingly intimate scenes (like *Aspens, Northern New Mexico, 1958,* pictured) and even a rare urban shot of Wall Street. Every copy comes with one framable print—though everyone gets the same 1937 photo of the Dolores River Canyon, so don't be shocked if your Ansel-loving friends all seem to have identical taste.



DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS
DENVER, CO
THURSDAY 376,342
AUG 2 2001

Seeing Adams in new light

By Kim Curtis
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The first comprehensive exhibition of Ansel Adams' work since he died in 1984 reinforces his status as America's foremost nature photographer and secures a place for his work on museum walls.

"The idea of the exhibition is to try to show Adams as an artist, not as a conservationist or a politician or a photography teacher," said John Szarkowski, who knew Adams and curated the show, which opens Saturday at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Szarkowski spent nearly four years going through a dozen public and private collections looking for the best prints of Adams' finest photos. He came away with a new understanding of how Adams saw the world.

"The great central gift that Ansel made to the rest of us is the realization that the natural world is not a static thing," Szarkowski said. "It's not fundamentally a matter of geology. It's a living, changing, organic thing."

Sandra Phillips, SFMoMA's senior curator of photography, added that "Some of the pictures we all know, but fully a third of them will be unknown. I think it will be a starker show, a more visually complicated but interesting show," she said.

Adams' black and white images were highly detailed and unusually lighted. He often cropped out the sky or the foreground and chose instead to focus on a stump or a boulder field or a sheer granite wall.

He worked much of his magic in the darkroom, often printing the same negative hundreds of times to try to imbue the photo with the passion he felt for its subject matter.

In *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, considered by many to be Adams' masterwork, a nearly full moon in a darkening sky looks down on an ethereal glow from the setting sun on the crosses in a small cemetery.

Adams actually took the photo in midafternoon, says Mary Street Alinder, who co-wrote Adams' autobiography and said she has the only "straight print" of the original. The sky was actually light blue and dotted with clouds, and the foreground appears to be flat.

Eric Risberg/Associated Press

John Szarkowski, director emeritus of the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City, stands by an Ansel Adams photograph taken in 1949 titled "Yosemite Valley Thunderstorm," at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

"What Ansel wanted is not just the reality of what came through the lens of his camera," she said. "He wanted to take it to another level."

A companion coffee-table book featuring 137 prints is in bookstores this week to commemorate the centennial of the birth of Adams, a San Francisco native whose images "motivated the country to get on a preservation path," says Bruce Hamilton, conservation director for the Sierra Club.

Adams was born Feb. 20, 1902, the only child of Charles Hitchcock Adams, a businessman, and Olive Bray. He may have been hyperactive or dyslexic when he was young and did not do well in school. He was essentially self-taught, and his formal education ended with the equivalent of eighth grade.

His first visit to Yosemite Valley was with his family in 1916. He took about 30 photographs using his new Kodak Brownie, his first camera.

"There was nothing very unusual in 1916 about a 14-year-old child of a middle-class family making snapshots on the family vacation," Szarkowski writes in *Ansel Adams at 100*, available in bookstores today. "Nor did the first snaps of the young Adams indicate any special genius, although one might say they were neatly framed. The snaps were memory aids. ... Yosemite took hold of the child, and for the rest of his life he returned as frequently as he could."

Adams did show early promise as a pianist, though, and by 21 he considered himself a professional musician. It wasn't until 1930 that he turned instead to photography — and Yosemite.

He moved from San Francisco to a home and studio overlooking California's Big Sur coast, south of Carmel, in 1962. His phone number was always listed, his door always open, and he found himself spending most of his time teaching.

Experts agree that the bulk of Adams' best work was done in the 1930s and early 1940s.

"Those are the years when he was really an original figure," SFMoMA's Phillips said. "Later, he was interested in making his work accessible for very good reasons, because the environment from which he drew inspiration ... was being threatened."

Adams was a tireless proponent of photography as art, co-founding the world's first museum department of photography in 1940 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

"He stood up and said, 'This is a beautiful art medium on its own,'" Alinder said.

While he long enjoyed fame, Adams achieved financial stability through his work only a few years before his death.

He was accused of ignoring the Depression, World War II and many social issues. ... "But he felt beauty can give something that nothing else can. He felt it was at the toughest time in the human condition that we need beauty to help get us through, to remind us of the great things in life that are beautiful."

The Ansel Adams Trust, which oversees the production of books, posters and calendars, sells more than 500,000 Adams pieces a year, trustee William Turnage says. "It's the most successful single-artist publishing program in the country," he said.

Adams' photographs have never been more in demand, according to Sotheby's auction house. Prices range from less than $10,000 to as much as $60,000.

"That doesn't include prices that private galleries have gotten that may be a good deal higher," said Chris Mahoney in Sotheby's photograph department.

And, artistically, Adams remains a strong presence among contemporary photographers.

"All landscape photographers measure their achievement even today either by their rebellion against Ansel Adams or by their creative emulation of his work," said Robert Adams, best-known for his photographs chronicling the urbanization of the Colorado Rockies, and no relation to Ansel. "If we feel uneasy in our love of Ansel Adams' art, it's because his art doesn't always seem adequately to acknowledge, much less to reconcile, the unpleasant aspects of contemporary life."

Many of Adams' contemporaries believed he was taking pictures of the wrong things at the wrong time and saw his work as irrelevant. He was accused of ignoring the Depression, World War II and many social issues.

"He was criticized for taking pictures of rocks while the world disintegrated around him," Alinder said. "But he felt beauty can give something that nothing else can. He felt it was at the toughest time in the human condition that we need beauty to help get us through, to remind us of the great things in life that are beautiful."

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