Journal of the Austrian Association for American Studies
vol. 7, no. 1, 2026, pp. 99–131
doi: 10.47060/jaaas.v7i1.247

Pictures at an Environmental Exhibition: Reflections on the Art of Photography Curation

Steven Hoelscher and Stephanie Zeller

ABSTRACT

During the 2023–24 academic year, we worked together at the Harry Ransom Center, a major humanities research center and museum at the University of Texas at Austin, to organize "Visualizing the Environment: Ansel Adams and His Legacy." The exhibition, which ran from late August 2024 through early February 2025, presented Adams's photographs in a broad historical and geographical context that drew from our shared but distinct perspectives. During the process of working on this exhibition, we have often reflected on the experience of conceiving, researching, and presenting photographs in a way that is both visually striking and intellectually invigorating – in short, on the art of photography curation. In this article, we share some of those reflections, as we discuss the relationship between creative work, scholarship, and museum collaborations. Critiquing an exhibition is not the same as creating it, even though we have sought to bring our scholarly experience into our complementary roles as exhibition curator and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) creator.

KEYWORDS

Museums, Ansel Adams, public humanities, GIS

Reflection One

The first time I encountered the photography of Ansel Adams wasn't in a museum gallery but during a college course. I remember the moment, in 1985, well. The course,

Wilderness and the American Mind, introduced me to that critical, contested concept through a wide range of memorable texts. In good American studies, interdisciplinary fashion, we dove into writing by Henry David Thoreau, of course, but also by the novelist Willa Cather, the poet Gary Snyder, the biologist Rachel Carson, the historian William Cronon, the philosopher Carolyn Merchant, the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan – and the photography of Ansel Adams. As much as anything that I read in that course, the 35 mm slides that I viewed affected me in far-reaching and unpredictable ways. I became aware, probably for the first time, of photography as an art form. But my fascination with Adams's photographs was deeper and, I think, more interesting than that; rather, I was seeing images that inspired me, that moved me, that made me want to explore the natural world in a way that art previously hadn't. (S. H.)

During the 2023–24 academic year, we worked together at the Harry Ransom Center, a major humanities research center and museum at the University of Texas at Austin, to organize "Visualizing the Environment: Ansel Adams and His Legacy" (Figure 1). The exhibition, which ran from late August 2024 through early February 2025, presented Adams's photographs in a broad historical and geographical context that drew from our shared but distinct perspectives. Trained in history and geography, Steven Hoelscher is Faculty Curator of Photography at the Ransom Center and Stiles Professor of American Studies and Geography at the University of Texas at Austin, while Stephanie Zeller, a PhD candidate in the Department of Geography and the Environment also at Austin, has training in studio art, computer science, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Our specific roles may have been different (Hoelscher served as the exhibition's curator and Zeller created the companion GIS), but we were collaborators throughout, sharing ideas, reading each other's work, providing critical feedback.

During the process of working on this exhibition, we have often reflected on the experience of conceiving, researching, and presenting photographs in a way that is both visually striking and intellectually invigorating – in short, on the art of photography curation. It is notable that, for one of us, the earliest encounter with Ansel Adams's photography came via an academic setting and in the context of cultural and environmental history. For the other, Adams's photographs were so pervasive that they had become part of the cultural ether.

Since then, we have both learned a lot about Ansel Adams, and we have a much better sense of why his photographs can move people so profoundly. We came to understand how his work both fits into the canon of photographic history and serves as an inspiration for the environmental movement. And we have seen the magical power of Adams's fine art prints: how they, more than any other format like a

computer screen or an oversize poster, present his photographic images in exquisite detail.

Figure 1: Entrance to exhibtion "Visualizing the Environment: Ansel Adams and His Legacy" at the Harry Ransom Center, September 2024. Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

In this article, we share some of those reflections, as we discuss how our exhibition was created and describe its contents. Previously, we have assisted with collection acquisition, campus and public outreach, development and public programming; we have taught classes on photographic history, and we have studied and written about that history. But creative work that is directly in the realm of public humanities – like curating an exhibition, which draws on traditional humanities scholarship, yet imparts its findings in very different ways – is another matter. Creating an exhibition is not the same as critiquing it, though we have sought to bring our scholarly experience into our complementary roles. The first part of this article explores the fertile terrain between criticism and creation, as it simultaneously reflects on the experience of conceiving and mounting an exhibition; this includes discussing the relationship between visual art and spatial data. In the second part, we provide a narrative walkthrough of the exhibition itself. Along the way and at different points in the article, we each reflect on our personal experiences of creating this exhibition. Altogether, we hope that this article sheds light not only on the interdependency of photography and American environmental awareness, but also on how scholars can productively contribute to a timely discussion.

Reflection Two

I can't recall the first time I encountered Ansel Adams's photos of Yosemite. They are so ubiquitous, so connected to the identity of that place in the American imaginary, that disentangling my personal experience of one from the other seems impossible. Moon and Half Dome *merged seamlessly with my mental image of the valley, and not until I wandered through Cook's Meadow, squinting up at the great hunched slab of granite, did I truly understand the transmutation of aesthetic experience that Ansel had accomplished through photography. There, in front of me, was the object of Ansel's obsession, and though I felt the gut-punch of wonder and unsurpassed beauty, I could not replicate the emotional experience of looking at* Moon and Half Dome, *the image. Reconciling these aesthetic attitudes substantially altered my then-limited view of the role and purpose of photography. Ansel had captured not only Half Dome, the object, but also Half Dome as a character, exerting a kind of timeless agency on the surrounding place. (S. Z.)*

From Cultural Critic to Cultural Creator in the Museum

Organizing an exhibition on the photography of Ansel Adams presents immediate opportunities and challenges. The prints themselves, exquisitely wrought by Adams in his personal darkroom or by an assistant working under his direct supervision, show his work as we know the artist wanted and in a manner that continues to command attention. His photographs of "pristine" nature – captured with razor-sharp focus – display subtle gradations of light and dark, with deep recessions of space. Often created with a grand, operatic vision of an ideal natural world, they remain some of the most iconic environmental images of our time (Figure 2).

Within both the history of photography and of American popular culture more generally, overstating Adams's significance is difficult. But, as images – reproduced for decades on countless calendars, postcards, and posters – they have so flooded the visual marketplace to become commonplace. Moreover, they have been exhibited so frequently and in so many of the world's leading museums that the question immediately arises: how to present them anew, and in a way that make them feel fresh and meaningful? Our approach has been to lean into our expertise as historical and geographical scholars.

Unfortunately, that is not as easy as it sounds. The road from cultural critic to cultural creator can be challenging, for the goals and approaches can be different. Though the Academy and the Arts were once entwined, functionally and culturally – as in the Salons of Paris, London, and Vienna – today they diverge along a schism of criticism and practice. This separation serves an important practical purpose: With some distance from the work, scholars are better able to critique; conversely, without

the specter of critique, artists are more able to focus on the work. The separation improves both criticism and practice, allowing them to bolster each other. The double edge of these positive effects, however, has become sharper in recent years. Academic critics often face reproach for an excess of deconstruction, losing track of the freedom of play many see as a necessary condition for producing good art, including the creation of exhibitions.

Figure 2: Ansel Adams, *Yosemite Valley, 1933,* printed 1970; Gelatin silver print. 19 x 24.7 cm (image). Harry Ransom Center Photography Collection, 2015:0036:0001, Gift of Stephen and Joyce Latimer Hunt.

For scholars engaged in exhibition curation, the critic-creator divide is therefore a site of both possibility and tension. To explore this relationship further, consider how geographic knowledge is negotiated *through* works of art that feature spatial content. In her recent survey, Harriett Hawkins finds that this negotiation is not merely incidental but necessary. "We need," she argues, "to appreciate how the sites of science (here read geographical knowledge making) are being redefined and contested by these relations between creativity and research" (7). Tension often anchors in what Hawkins calls "the appreciation of geographical research methods as forms

of both reportage (of an existing world), and of world-making" (9), where scientific and creative practices blend.

This can leave the curating scholar in a difficult position. Rigorous research practices, particularly in the social sciences such as geography, are often understood to be in opposition with the creative arts. Hawkins argues, however, that we should consider the value of creative practices *beyond* their role in engaging the affective and sensory dimensions of subjective experience. Rather, these practices should be appreciated for how they might epistemologically reorient us toward the dynamic relationship between researcher and world. This empirical shift, she says, "replaces what we could think of as an extractive model – a going out into the world, collecting data and returning to write up/report – with an experimentalism that uses creative practices to create conditions for intersecting research and the world in ongoing and emergent ways" (Hawkins 9).

Hawkins is not alone in troubling and reorienting the gap between cultural critic and cultural creator. Indeed, many aesthetic theorists have long championed the moral and social merits of creative practices which go beyond the affective and the sensory. Art, after all, is about more than just beauty; it "challenges us, changes our worldview, mobilizes us toward a certain action, nurtures valuable sensibilities like sympathy, generosity, and respect, and, last but not least, helps move a society in a certain direction" (Saito 80; see also Till 99). These features of the fine arts, as we understand them, are not necessarily in opposition to academic work but can be mutually amplifying (Barad 77). In moving from exhibitions that emphasize passive appreciation of artworks and objects to exhibitions that foreground critical inquiry and experimentation, scholars might challenge the artificial divisions that too often separate creative practice from the work of scholarly research.

Hawkins describes this shift in methods as a "non-propositional approach." By that, she means that "the exhibition does not seek to be a presentation of findings or a final statement on a topic, but rather where the relation between curator, exhibition, audience, and social context is an active site of knowledge production" (Hawkins 213). Rather than advancing a fixed interpretation on the exhibition objects and materials, a non-propositional method allows museum visitors to develop a plurality of equally valuable readings. This effectively engages visitors in a negotiation between the diversity of subjective experience and the concrete particulars of the objects on view.

We found this approach to be a fruitful way to conceive our work on the exhibition. But there was another divide to bridge, perhaps best described by Peter Vergo in his seminal *New Museology.* Based on both his experience as a critic of exhibitions and a creator of several, he distinguishes "aesthetic exhibitions" from "contextual

exhibitions." The former presents historical or art objects with little additional information – knowledge formation regarding the objects is largely experiential. The latter includes heavy interpretation of each display, which is framed by "informative, comparative and explicatory" material (Vergo 48–49). While research-oriented exhibitions would tend to follow the contextual format, we sought to make ours *both* aesthetic and contextual. We tried to demonstrate how Vergo's two approaches can work together to create impactful displays that are also simultaneously non-propositional. Preceding any approach, of course, are the objects themselves.

Conceiving an Exhibition: Research and Concept

Exhibitions at a humanities research center rightfully emphasize the center's collection, which for the Ransom Center are substantial. Through the generous gift of Joyce Hunt, and her late husband Steve, the Ransom Center greatly expanded its holdings of Ansel Adams's photographs (Figure 3). With this important acquisition, beginning in 2015 and concluding in 2024, the time seemed right to consider an exhibition dedicated to his work. But several questions remained: How would such an exhibition contribute to our understanding of this artist? To be engaging and to provide a fresh perspective on seemingly well-known material, an exhibition (whether aesthetic or contextual or non-propositional) needs a perspective; that is, it needs an angle. Unlike a scholarly article, the exhibition's position would be presented through visual juxtaposition, sequencing, and limited text. A question that immediately arose was, how, in practice, could we deploy a non-propositional approach to the creation of our exhibition?

To answer this question, a first step – as with any scholarly project – was to do a literature review. We read widely, not only the vast primary and secondary source materials by and about Ansel Adams but also the content and perspectives of previous exhibitions. From that research, we learned how opinionated Adams was, what a prolific writer he was, and how articulate a spokesman he was for what he was doing.[1] One concept stood out from his own writing and became the theoretical focus of our exhibition.

Over the course of his long career, he often spoke about "visualization" as central to how he made photographs. In his book, *The Negative*, Adams puts it this way: "[T]he first step toward visualization – and hence toward expressive representation – is to become aware of the world around us in terms of the photographic image" (2). This resonated with us as a way to describe his artistic vision, but it also became clear

[1] Some of the most important scholarship on Adams, which informed our thinking include Senf, Alinder, Szarkowski, and Spaulding. An important, recent exhibition, *Ansel Adams in Our Time*, which appeared at the Fine Arts Museum of Boston and the de Young Museum in San Francisco, provided inspiration for ours.

that Adams was providing a potential framework to describe a general picture-making process. In fact, this early research revealed that what we found most interesting about Adams was how his photography was part of a broad continuum that extends from the nineteenth century to the present. This insight built on Hoelscher's article in which Adams was part of a long history of visualizing the US-American environment ("American Environmental Photography" 305). His photographs were extraordinarily influential, but they also and more interestingly became a point of departure for many photographers who deployed the concept of visualization quite differently. Beginning with Adams as our conceptual starting point, we were interested in how photographers have shaped multiple visual narratives of the US-American environment. This includes both those who came before him and whose legacy he embodied and transformed, and those who came after and who worked in the long shadow cast by his exceptionally influential career.

Figure 3: Joyce Hunt in her Austin, Texas, home before her 2024 donation of photographs to the Ransom Center. This followed donations in 2015 and 2018. January 2024.
Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

The next step, also familiar to scholars, was to draft a proposal that would be reviewed by a team of experts, both internal to the Ransom Center and external in the form of blind peer review. This required consolidation of the thesis and

parameters of the exhibition and an argument for its original contributions; it needed to demonstrate how it would differ from other exhibitions; it had to set forth its objectives, intended audience, and learning outcomes for student visitors; it also had to include a budget. The plan of work would also identify preliminary items from the collection to be considered (Figure 4), as well as possible loans; it would highlight objects that might need extensive conservation work; and it had to reflect on design elements, education, and outreach.

Figure 4: Reviewing and researching possible exhibition objects in the Ransom Center's photography archive. The shown materials are from the Rephotographic Survey Project Photography Collection. November 2023. © Mark Klett. Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

Mounting an Exhibition: Planning and Design

Once the final selection of objects had been made – a process that took roughly nine months – we finalized a checklist for the exhibition that contained the artist's name (and very brief bio), dates of creation, title, dimensions, credit lines, accession number, and thumbnail image of the object. The checklist of nearly 100 objects in the exhibition is a key working document for a curator – like a detailed chapter outline for a book that you are writing. The checklist, which was coded into a spreadsheet, underwent more than 100 revisions and was necessary for both organizational and creative purposes.

The writing for this exhibition took a very different form than the genres that scholars are more familiar with, notably research articles, critical essays, or books. Different also was the readership, which was much broader than for a typical academic work. We had to make it accessible for the visiting public, who may not know anything about Ansel Adams, but who care about the environment, while also making it interesting for those with detailed knowledge of photography. The two new genres we had to quickly master – wall text and captions to go with the object's label – had to be concise and avoid academic jargon. More than anything that we have ever written, the exhibition's text was put through the editorial wringer, and we think it is all the better for that painstaking work.

Some of that work included editing Adams's own writing and then presenting those words in audio format. Much of what is known about Ansel Adams's photographic approach is based on his reflections and published work, including his 1983 *Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs*. This book is especially revealing as Adams describes, often in considerable detail and with poetic insight, the different factors that led to the creation of some of his most iconic photographs. After securing permission from the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust to include excerpts from ten descriptions, we edited them for length and had them read by Dr. John St. Lawrence, a historian and university colleague. Visitors would later be able to access these recordings by QR codes attached to labels in the gallery and beyond, via our companion GIS, which we describe below.

While we were writing, we were simultaneously engaged with several other components of exhibition planning and design. One of the most important focused on designing the layout of the galleries. Spatial constraints limited the number of objects we could include, but the three connected galleries also provided a kind of built-in organizational structure. Our colleague at the Ransom Center, Mary Alice Harper, became a true collaborator in helping create mockups of each gallery wall. Our work together ensured that our goal of creating something with both visual interest and

scholarly depth, something that was provocative and non-propositional, could be achieved (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Mary Alice Harper with gallery mockups of the locations and spacing for each of the exhibition's objects. January 2024. Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

While our budget and timeline limited the number of works beyond the Ransom Center collections that we could bring into the exhibition, we believed it necessary to include an example from the photographer whom we felt best exemplifies the complicated nature of Adams's reach. Richard Misrach, one of the most influential photographers working today, is well known for his large-scale photographs of US-American landscapes, especially those landscapes that have borne the brunt of environmental change. When Hoelscher conducted an oral history interview with Misrach for the Archives of American Art, the photographer spoke eloquently about how Adams was a powerful influence but also how his own work moves in a very different direction (Hoelscher, "A Collision" 481). We were delighted when Misrach offered to loan us a print. When combined with another loan by environmental photographer Robert Polidori, Misrach's photograph significantly enhanced the exhibition's visual argument about the multiple ways that sensitive photographers can visualize the environment (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Ransom Center Registrar Ester Harrison, who oversaw the loan of Richard Misrach's, *Burnt Forest and Half Dome, Yosemite*,1988. May 2024.

During this period, we also began working with Ransom Center colleagues from Preservation and Conservation, who studied every object in minute detail to determine if its condition was sufficiently stable to be shown and, if so, under what conditions. Lighting in the gallery and length of time that an object can be on display before causing damage were central concerns. This is a very technical area, where chemistry reigns supreme. During our four, two-hour-long Conservation Assessment meetings, we also made decisions about frame and matting size/color, as we considered the tone of each photograph, and where it would be placed in the gallery (Figure 7). Colleagues took detailed notes, recording the relative degree of fragility and special lighting considerations for each object.

This information was vital for the installation itself. Led by the Ransom Center's Creative Director, Leslie Ernst, we had already made decisions about the colors, fonts, and images that would create the exhibition's "identity." Putting all this together in the gallery – the layout's spacing and grouping, wall texts and labels, lighting, cases for ancillary objects, and the framed artwork itself – felt enormous (Figure 8). Fabrications had to be made for several objects, and everything had to be installed securely

to protect against theft and with proper lighting. But once the walls had been prepared, the installation proceeded rather quickly over a two-week period. Although Hoelscher visited the gallery daily and continued to make curatorial decisions that persistently arose, the work was largely out of our hands and accomplished by the Head of Exhibition Services, Rob Hay, and his team (Figure 9). Part of our daily review included overseeing the installation of the vinyl artwork and text that had been created by an offsite vendor (Figure 10). It also involved fruitful discussions with Ashley Park, Head of Communications and Marketing, about strategies for outreach and media.

Figure 7: Conservation analysis of each exhibition object. From left to right, Rob Hay, Heather Hamilton, Diana Diaz-Cañas, and Erica Nunn-Kinias. March 2024.
Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

Figure 8: Hoelscher with Associate Director of Exhibitions, Erica Nunn-Kinias, preparing one of the exhibition's object cases during installation. August 2024.
Photograph by Ashley Park/Ransom Center.

Figure 9: Head of Exhibition Services, Rob Hay, and Chloe Gise, Preservation Technician, measuring and setting light for each object in the galleries during installation. August 2024.
Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

Figure 10: Affixing vinyl artwork and lettering during installation. August 2024.
Photograph by Ashley Park/Ransom Center.

Well before the exhibition's installation, we discussed how to enhance visitors' experiences. We thought that a geographic rendering of the locations and settings for the exhibition's pictures might be a helpful way for visitors to deepen their understanding of environmental photography. With his concept of visualization, Ansel Adams unwittingly provided us with both the exhibition's organizing concept as well as a way to think about a potential online enhancement. "Visualization" is not only an expression that Adams used to describe his (and other photographers') creative process. It is also a term employed by contemporary geographers who use GIS to view and manage information about geographic places. "Visualization," in GIS, is a way of displaying spatial data as maps or three-dimensional spaces. Rather than a traditional exhibition catalogue, a GIS companion would allow viewers to explore the exhibition's photographs in a unique and lasting way.

Expanding Beyond the Gallery Walls: The Integration of Visual Art and Spatial Data

The initial concept of a GIS exhibit companion grew out of our recognition that maps can be an integration point between visual art and spatial data. Since we were interested in putting gallery objects in visual conversation, it followed that integrating the geographic concept of place, historical context, and aesthetic description in a digital, interactive space could enhance the exhibition. A wealth of recent scholarship in creative geographic praxis supports this idea: namely, that using maps as a connection between visual arts and spatial data can be enlightening for viewers. Kelly et al., for example, note that "[m]aps have the potential to not only act as representations of phenomena, but to be active participants in the production of knowledge." Art and geography, in this view, are not opposed, but rather mutually reinforcing ways of intervening in and probing at existing technological systems (Kelly et al. 382).

ESRI's (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc., a US-based geographic information system software company) StoryMap web-based program is perhaps the most popular, widely available, and easy-to-use option for interactive digital mapping. Its popularity has increased as its user interface has become more accessible, and its capabilities have expanded to include real-time data display, dashboards, 3D imagery, animation, and user-driven exploration (Cope et al. 1–9). The software allows users to quickly and easily integrate a map created in ArcGIS (ESRI's widely-used cloud-based GIS and visualization software) with a seamless web page, which in turn permits site visitors to interact directly with the mapped data. The program emphasizes storytelling, as it presents spatial data in an engaging, media-heavy format. Several studies have demonstrated the advantages of the StoryMap software, showing that it can enhance spatial thinking, creativity, and learner engagement with the

subject matter; that it encourages inquiry-based, student-centered learning; and that it promotes digital literacy in the context of understanding the characteristics of the environment (Tusam et al. 643–55; see also Gieseking 641–48).

Incorporating such a GIS into the visitor experience struck us as an ideal way to help make our exhibition more non-propositional, open-ended, and educational. When Ansel Adams and his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors photographed the environment, they were thinking about landscapes not only as geographic spaces but also as visual variables – forms that could be manipulated within the picture-plane to produce a compelling image. But the extent to which photographs are "visualizations" can be difficult to conceptualize without some point of comparison. Here is where the exhibition GIS proved helpful. The GIS could geographically contextualize each image, both on a large, aerial scale, and on a personal, perspectival scale. This approach would allow viewers to orient themselves *both* spatially *and* bodily relative to the images.

Our GIS took the form of a comprehensive web interface, which included an interactive aerial map of every photo location. We began the project by systematically reviewing our image archive, grouping photographs by region and period. Many of our photographs depict now-recognizable landmarks, predominantly in the Western United States – especially California – and most are named for their locations. Using these titles as guides, we navigated between Google Earth Engine's 3D model and ArcGIS to locate the approximate viewpoints from which each photo was taken, placing markers at each point along with corresponding metadata. This method worked well for recognizable landmarks but, as we soon discovered, was far from straightforward, especially for many of Adams's peers.

It also included interactive, three-dimensional visualizations, which were displayed alongside the photos themselves. Such a GIS, we hoped, would encourage website users and museum visitors to explore beyond the image in two complementary ways. First, we wanted viewers to see more clearly the extent of artistic choice and dark room manipulation that contributed to the final photograph. And second, we hoped that viewers would better understand the raw material the artist encountered: the range of *potential* images, the composition of the surrounding landscape, and how one *particular* image emerged through the artist's applied skill. Users would be able to walk through the entire exhibition online in a narrative structure at once guided and non-propositional.

The GIS component, as we envisioned it, would encourage viewers to consider photography not only as a tool for documenting the environment but also as a creative process. It would allow them to make a visual and temporal comparison between the original image and the current appearance of the same location (Figure 11). Our goals

were to help viewers reflect on how photography can both obscure and reveal nature-culture histories, and to consider what sits outside the picture plane that we do not see in the photograph. Overall, this portion of the exhibition project aimed to engage with the relevance of spatial, historical, and cultural context – not only in scholarly work but also in the applied arts (Zeller and Hoelscher).

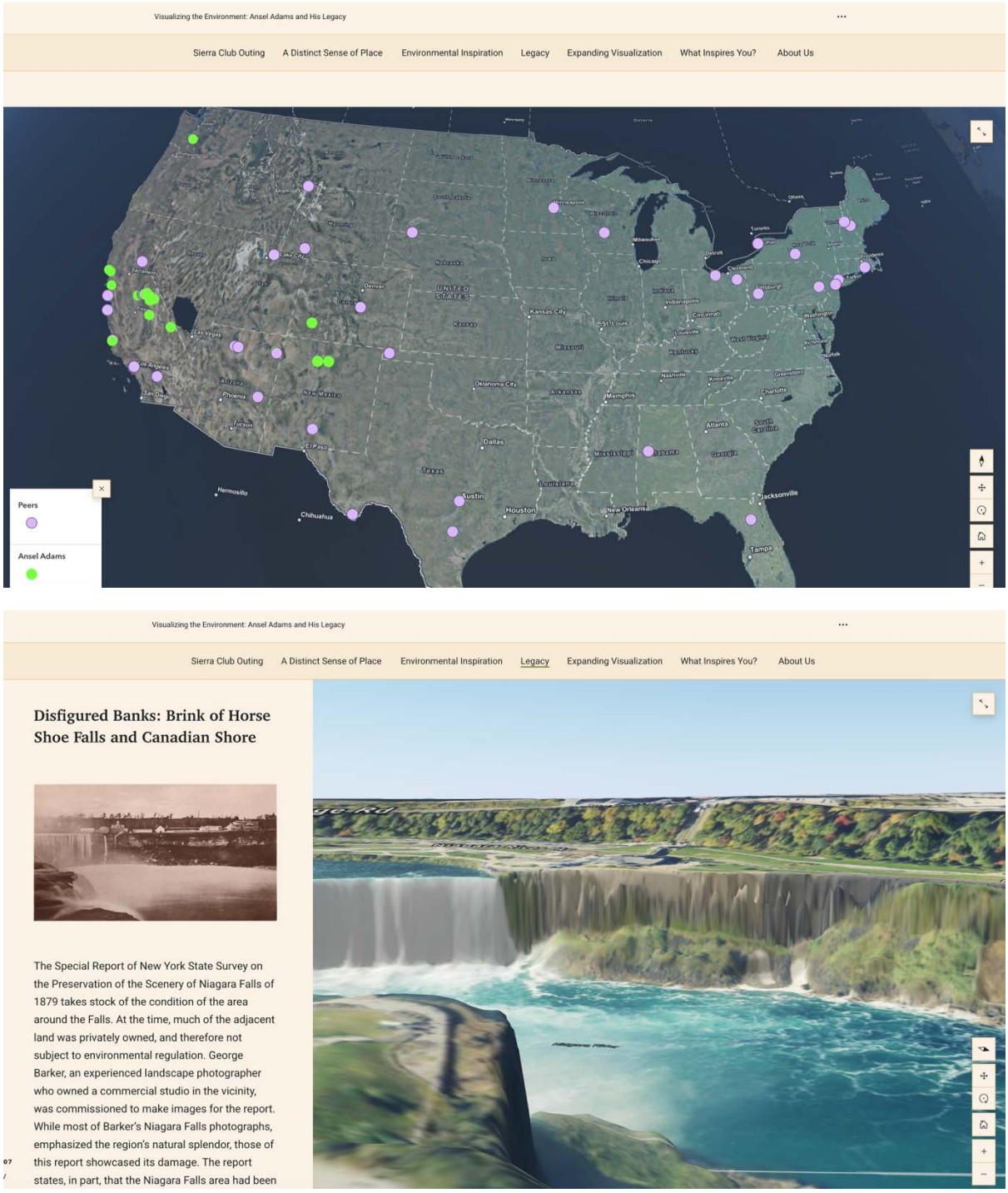

Figure 11: Map of locations for photographs in exhibition and GIS StoryMap of one site. The full exhibition companion may be viewed at: Ransom.Center/GIS.

Reflection Three

In art school, I learned that any creative project, especially those involving technology, will almost always require more negotiation with the material than one might initially expect. In other words, the path from the idea to its actual manifestation is rarely linear. This rule certainly held true for the GIS companion. Wrestling with the StoryMap software to produce not only a specific set of interface-focused outcomes but also an aesthetic and design that matched both that of the exhibit and *the various display and rights requirements imposed by each individual image, was a sufficiently challenging start-up. Through many meetings and cooperative effort, we managed to produce a satisfying compromise between our early aspirations and ESRI's software. I assumed, hubristically in retrospect, that the next step – locating the photo locations in virtual space – would be relatively straightforward, particularly for Adams's work. I quickly came up against a now-familiar yet still-disorienting feature of the modern world: In an age of overwhelming, instantaneous information access, I could find very little* geographic *data on the images in our exhibition. How strange! One would imagine, as I certainly did, that images with place-based content would be especially likely to have figured in geographic inquiry. Instead, I was pushed to engage in methods that looked and felt like traditional, archival, and field-based work but entirely within the digital "space." The result turned out to be both instructive and enriching in unexpected ways. The method itself mirrored the core ethos of the exhibition: that creative work and scholarly research can be mutually constitutive. (S. Z.)*

Pictures at an Exhibition: A Gallery Walkthrough

Our exhibition was divided into three sections, each with its own gallery and different photographic approaches: Ansel Adams himself, those photographers who came before him and whom we might consider the legacy that influenced him, and those photographers who subsequently expanded his visualizations of the environment.

Gallery I: Ansel Adams

Our exhibition began with Ansel Adams and an early project that is both formative and seemingly unusual (Figure 12). His 1929 *Sierra Club Outing* is an initial example of a format that he came to value greatly: a portfolio of unbound photographic prints. Comprising a series of original, fine prints, painstakingly produced in the darkroom by Adams (or, in later years, by an assistant under his direction), portfolios became Adams's preferred means of distributing his pictures. They were also crystallizations of his artistic vision. Critics view his portfolios as some of the most intimate expressions of his work (Szarkowski, *Portfolios* x). With prints of a portfolio, Adams intended for them to be viewed slowly and close-up, a goal we also adopted. Most of

the twenty-five photographs from this 1929 portfolio were taken during the Sierra Club's annual "outing" – a month-long hiking and camping trip in the mountains surrounding Yosemite. One year earlier, Adams had been appointed the trip's official photographer, his first commissioned assignment. In many ways, it resembles a kind of personal experience of a hiking trip, showing scenes in camp, along the trail, and from an ascended mountain peak.

Figure 12: Exhibition introduction and first gallery wall dedicated to Adams's 1929 *Sierra Club Outing* portfolio. On the far right is Adams' 1927 *Monolith, the Face of Half Dome*, which most scholars agree is his first masterpiece. Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

The portfolio also shows two contradictory formal/stylistic impulses: bold shapes and clean lines that celebrate a modernist sensibility, while the matte, slightly textured paper gives the pictures an almost hazy appearance. Adams would soon turn the corner on such experiments, but the one photograph from these early years stands out: the 1927 masterpiece, *Monolith, the Face of Half Dome* (print on far right of Figure 12). The photograph represents an important early milestone in Ansel Adams's long career. Standing on a granite shelf 4,000 feet above the Yosemite Valley floor, Adams used a red filter to deepen the tone of the sky to almost black. The result was what he later described as his "first true visualization" in which he "had been able to realize a desired image: not the way the subject appeared in reality, but how it felt to me and how it must appear in the finished print" (*Examples* 5).

After this introductory section, we divided the Adams gallery into two related sections. The first focused on Adams's visualizations of the place that came to mean

more to him than any other: Yosemite National Park. He first visited Yosemite in 1916 and, as he often said, the encounter changed his life. "I *knew* my destiny," he wrote many years later, "when I first experienced Yosemite" (*Autobiography* 67). The place became his spiritual, social, and economic center, and for the rest of his life he returned as often as possible. Like many middle-class Americans, the fourteen-year-old Adams brought a camera on that momentous 1916 trip: a Kodak Brownie, his first camera. The pictures he made – snapshots intended to serve as mementos of a memorable family vacation – might not be considered "art," but they reminded him of a location that became central to his professional and personal life.

Over the years, Adams developed a deep sense of place with Yosemite that became the foundation for his photographic work. The high mountain peaks, wildly rushing waterfalls, changing atmospheric conditions, and lush valley floors became the source material for a new way of making environmental visualizations: landscapes of pictorial patterns, shapes, and gradations of tone that evoked Adams's own deeply personal affiliation with the place.

While Yosemite remained important throughout Adams's long career, he also photographed landscapes beyond the iconic California national park, presented in our second Adams section. Travels throughout the American West, including to other national parks, provided opportunities to expand his photographic subjects. By the early 1940s, with the benefit of these new experiences, his visual approach changed considerably, becoming what is now recognized as his mature style.

In this new approach, Adams departs from the warm, intimate look of his 1929 portfolio, creating instead a more dramatic visualization of the environment. A sense of awe and astonishment became signature qualities of his photographs. He was drawn to environments that showcased visible weather patterns like theatrical clouds and snowstorms; to landforms that emphasized intense effects of light and dark; to waterways and forests that, in very different ways, contained a dynamism and sense of energy.

For Adams, focusing on the pristine quality of such environments kept the impact of people on the natural world at a distance, largely removed from the scene. And, of course, his photographs have nothing to say about the original inhabitants of this land, or their forceful removal. This was quite intentional, and this critical choice had a profound effect on his work. In his photographs, Adams transformed what he saw in the environment into what he hoped would be an inspirational work of art. "A great photograph," he believed, "is one that fully expresses what one feels, in the deepest sense, about what is being photographed" (qtd. in Schaefer 3). What Adams felt was an intense, some might say mystical, experience of being in the natural world. Our non-propositional approach encouraged viewers to connect their own thoughts,

feelings, and experiences of being in the natural world with the photographs before them.

Translating those feelings into political action eventually became a key, complicated element of Adams's work. The constructed, artistic nature of his photographs did not stop Adams from enlisting them for environmental purposes. In his brand of environmental photography, aesthetics can be a political tool. Adams said, with great conviction, that "[r]esponse to natural beauty is one of the foundations of the environmental movement" (*Role of the Artist in Conservation* 5), a quote that adorned one of our gallery's walls. It was certainly on vivid display in his 1960 book, *This Is the American Earth*, to which we devoted a substantial display case in the middle of the gallery.

Published by the Sierra Club and distributed by New York publishing giant Alfred A. Knopf, the book was the culmination of a six-year collaboration between Adams and curator Nancy Newhall. The book, exquisitely printed and bound at a large 14 × 11 format, was the first in the Sierra Club's exhibition format series. It follows a chronological narrative, beginning with biblical creation to contemporary America beset by environmental destruction. Newhall's text, an environmental manifesto in free verse form, provided a narrative structure that paralleled the photographic images. Adams and Newhall selected 43 of his own photographs, nearly all of which showed his characteristic focus on the beauty of the natural world. The other half of the book – forty-one photographs in total – drew from the visual archives of thirty other photographers. Rather than end with apocalyptic destruction, it concludes with a plea to conserve "the crucial resource": the US-American natural environment (Adams and Newhall 72).

This Is the American Earth proved to be remarkably successful, selling approximately 75,000 copies. With the financial support from the industrialist and conservationist Max McGraw and the McGraw Foundation, the Sierra Club sent copies of the book to all Members of Congress, as part of a campaign to pass the Wilderness Act. 184 newspaper editors and editorial writers received a copy as well. When the Wilderness Act was passed four years later, it seemed to demonstrate that photography could play a crucial role in environmental activism (Adams, Archival Materials).

Gallery II: Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Legacy

Ansel Adams's environmental visualizations exemplify the photographic practices of two centuries. On one hand, he mastered the techniques and equipment of nineteenth-century photography, with its frequent use of large-format cameras and the creation of individual prints for public distribution. At the same time, he became an articulate twentieth-century spokesman for photography to be treated as a fine art.

Bridging these two centuries was Adams's belief in the power of photographic visualization to inspire reverence for the natural environment, a view that set him apart from most of his nineteenth-century precursors. Many of their photographs, by contrast, focused on presenting topographical or commercial views of the landscapes (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Entrance to the exhibition's second gallery, beginning with a photography of Adams at work by his colleague Cendric Wright (left), and dedicated to the photography legacy that Adams drew from. Featured here are photographs by F. Jay Haynes and Timothy O'Sullivan. © Cedric Wright Estate. Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

A good example of the topographical views are those photographs intended for railway companies to advertise scenic wonders along their lines (Figure 13, center photograph). In 1876, F. Jay Haynes, for example, began his work for the Northern Pacific Railroad, providing publicity photographs and stereoscopic views of sights along the railway and construction activities. This commercial work caught the attention of the superintendent to the recently created Yellowstone National Park, who offered Haynes the position as the park's first official photographer. His job was to provide a comprehensive survey of the park's astonishing, seemingly alien features that had only been drawn and written about. Beginning in 1881, Haynes spent considerable time in the park capturing its notable sites, including Minerva Terrace.

Around the same time, between 1867 and 1879, four "Great Surveys" were commissioned by the US government to provide geographic information about newly acquired land in the American West (Figure 13, right photograph). Organized by the US War Department, each employed photographers such as Timothy O'Sullivan to

document environments that might require military intervention. Central to that project was the forceful colonization of contested land, a point vividly described in the text to accompany his 1873 photograph of Cooley's Park in Arizona's Sierra Blanca Range:

> It is only within the last few years that the whites, except in large bodies, have been able to enter the Sierra Blanca region, on account of the hostile Apaches who were at home there. In the early part of the year 1873 they were finally subjugated by General Crook, in a continuous war of several years. After their conquest they were put under discipline upon different reservations, on one of which the accompanying picture is located. There, through the agency of General Crook . . . , they have been instructed in the various arts of peaceful self-support . . . Up to the present date, however, the fruits of their labors have not been sufficient for their sustenance, and they have been dependent on the Government for supplies of food (O'Sullivan, plate 9).

Only by reading the extensive caption adjacent to this picture does it become evident that photography, far from a neutral source of documentary illustration, was a principal technology of what US historians today identify as settler colonialism (Blackhawk 4–5). Rather than making this point through didactic text, our non-propositional approach provided the detailed caption next to the O'Sullivan photograph, allowing viewers to come to their own conclusions about the relationship between photography, the environment, and war.

A slight variation, our second example, were government entities working in collaboration with corporate interests, such as the California State Geological Survey in 1865. When Carleton Watkins became the official photographer, he was not taking pictures of Yosemite (which would later make him famous) but rather documenting the industrial-economic fallout of the gold rush. One image from 1871 of the North Bloomfield Mining and Gravel Company work site, which operated a hydraulic gold-mining outfit at the Malakoff Mine beginning in 1866, provided reference for the company's then-enormous size, expense, and output. When viewed today as part of his larger body of work, Watkins's mine photographs stand out as early testaments to dramatic environmental change (Watkins; see also Palmquist 46).

Third are photographs intended for individual and corporate businesses to satisfy middle-class demands for visual information about US-American environments, especially in the mass production of stereographs. William Henry Jackson, whose long career focused largely on environments of the American West, stands out as exemplary. This included Colorado, where he opened a commercial photography studio in Denver in 1879. Before that, he worked for the Union Pacific Railroad and several US surveys of the West, such as the 1871 survey led by Ferdinand Hayden, which played a prominent role in establishing Yellowstone National Park. Jackson produced scores of stereographs but also photographs of a rather different genre. In his youth,

Jackson was trained as a painter, a skill he brought to this photograph of the gateway to Pikes Peak (Figure 14, left photograph). For a brief period, before the invention of new processes to create color photographs, artists such as Jackson hand-painted their prints to make them more "realistic" and appealing to potential clients.

Figure 14: A portion of the nineteenth-century gallery dedicated to individual and corporate businesses to satisfy middle-class demands for visual information about American environments, especially in the mass production of stereographs.
Photograph by Steven Hoelscher/Ransom Center.

Gallery III: Expanding Environmental Visualizations

We located a third portion of the exhibition in what we called the contemporary gallery. We began by noting how, that very summer, the US Postal Service commemorated Ansel Adams's work with the release of sixteen Forever stamps featuring his photographs. This is only the latest testament to his enormous impact on US-American visual culture. But his immeasurable influence on both the photographic and environmentalist worlds began early – and did not go unchallenged. Even at the beginning of his career, as Adams was developing his recognizable style, other photographers visualized the environment in quite different ways.

For many contemporary photographers, Adams's legacy represents both a debt and burden. Contemporary landscape photographer Mark Klett describes how Adams helped both raise environmental consciousness and prove that photography could be a powerful medium for that project. At the same time, by removing evidence of the human impact on the earth, Adams presented a romanticized vision of a lost world, an aesthetic with few contemporary adherents. Klett puts it this way: "The

landscape is not so much a paradise to long for (some say a paradise lost) as it is a mirror that reflects our own cultural image . . . The reality of place is quite different than what one sees in an Ansel Adams photograph" ("Legacy of Ansel Adams" 72).

Trying to visualize the environment in ways that represent myriad realities of "place" has become a hallmark of photography in recent decades, and is in many ways a direct critique of Adams. The photographs on display in the contemporary gallery illustrating this key point took on many forms and address a wide range of topics, including destruction and degradation, change over time, the connection of home to place, historical memory, and aesthetic beauty. In nearly every case, rather than separating cultures and societies from the environment, contemporary environmental visualizations explore their connection. They visually exemplify historian William Cronon's once-controversial, now-famous dictum that wilderness is the wrong nature to get back to (7).

We focused on several of these environmental, photographic interventions. One seminal example originates with the Rephotographic Survey Project during the late 1970s (Figure 4). Organized by Mark Klett, he and four colleagues traveled to the same locations documented by photographers of the nineteenth-century surveys of the American West. There, they made new photographs at those sites. For Klett and his colleagues, "'rephotography' meant accurately repeating the original image's camera position, the visual composition, framing, time of year, and time of day of the original photograph while also acknowledging the participation of the photographer in making [aesthetic] choices" ("Rephotographic Survey Project", see also Klett et al.). The results say a great deal about how environments have changed over a hundred years of human interaction, and how visualizations are always cultural products.

One striking example is Rick Dingus's rephotograph of A. J. Russell's original photograph of Hanging Rock (Figure 4). So much has changed that the landscape on the far side of the overhanging rock appears not only unfamiliar but somehow physically improbable. "I was most interested in using repeat photography to investigate not just how the camera could help us record the world changing through time," Dingus said, "but also to examine how both the photographer and the medium of photography distort the world by rendering it as an image" (Dingus).

Roughly ten years later, South Texas native Sharon Stewart published *The Toxic Tour of Texas*, a photographic journey through a state that, as she puts it, "prides itself on being the biggest, the best. And it is. Texas has the largest concentration of oil refineries and chemical plants in the nation. Texas ranks first in the United States in the amount of known or suspected carcinogens released into the environment" (Stewart).

Her photograph of Chevron's uranium waste dump site is as much a work of beauty as it is a document of environmental destruction. Simultaneously, the accompanying text provides competing interpretations of the site. The Co-Chair of Panna Maria Concerned Citizens would seem to corroborate the contents of the image, while the Uranium Operations Manager at Chevron asks viewers to trust the corporation's promise of innocence and not what the photograph would seem to show. Stewart's work encourages viewers to closely consider the relationship between beauty and devastation.

Beauty is also important for Dawoud Bey – but as it works to trigger a complicated cultural memory. Taking its title from a Langston Hughes poem, Bey's series *Night Coming Tenderly, Black* imagines the perilous journey of enslaved Black US-Americans moving north along the underground railroad, toward Canada and freedom. The photographs in the series were taken in Ohio, within fifty miles of Lake Erie – the final push to the border. The dark, rich hues of the tangled, inhospitable landscape seem to charge the atmosphere with a tension that is both lush and ominous. In the photograph, we see both a place and a cultural memory – a portrait of experience conveyed through suggestion. Bey asks us to consider the relationship between environments and the lasting imprints of the past. "The experience is visualized and imagined through their eyes," he says, "so while their black bodies may be literally absent from the images, their presence still informs the work in a visceral way" (Bey qtd. in Lee).

In the contemporary gallery, we also circled back to Yosemite to revive the visual conversation with Ansel Adams. It was in that national park, while teaching photography in 1976 at Adams's Photography Workshop, that the idea for Roger Minick's "Sightseer Series" came to him. Photography students, he later recalled, would gather at the famous Inspiration Point overlook,

> "prop their cameras on tripods, and wait for the grand man himself to move along the line bestowing his blessings on each student's composition and choice of exposure. A cacophony of clicking shutters would then follow, with the result of course that all the students ended up making nearly identical images."

It was not long, however, before he became aware of something else happening at this site. "Waves of tourists were continually arriving at the overlook's parking lot in cars, buses and motorhomes," he said, "thrusting their way through this gauntlet of photographers not only for a clear view of the famous vista but also for the obligatory snapshot of themselves proving they were there" (Minick). For the next several years, Minick dedicated himself to photographing what he describes as a new genus – "Sightseer Americanus." The result is a poignant series of how ordinary people interact with the natural environment (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Roger Minick's "Sightseer Series" was inspired by teaching an Ansel Adams Photography Workshop in Yosemite National Park. The photograph here became one of the exhibition's signature images. © Roger Minick. Photograph by Sandy Carson/Ransom Center.

Richard Misrach, who also taught at Adams's Photography Workshop, identifies Ansel Adams as having a major impact on his own career. Misrach is both generous and critical of Adams in a way that is quite productive. "You don't want people making more Ansel Adams pictures," Misrach says. "You want people to take your legacy and then build on it. He gave me the tools to go off and just do something completely, radically different" (Misrach). The tools are both technical (the use of large format cameras and what he calls a fetishism for the print), as well as conceptual: namely, an appreciation for the power of beauty to evoke feelings and political action. But the direction is entirely different. The photograph that he loaned us for the show – of Yosemite after a forest fire – demonstrates that quite well (Figure 6). Where Adams strove to visualize the environment through a prism of pristine nature, Misrach confronts the often-destructive ways that environments change, in this case, by a lightning strike one year earlier. The results, to our eyes, are evocative of the opportunities and stakes at the heart of environmental photography.

Reflection Four

The scholarship involved with conceiving, researching, and mounting this exhibition was as rigorous as any project I've worked on. And with scores of visitors coming

through the gallery every week, I think it's reasonable to assume that it will have greater impact than any book, article, or essay that I've ever published. The question remains how it should "count." Neither Google Scholar nor Academic Analytics – two widely-used data platforms that measure faculty productivity – include exhibition curation in its assessment. Faculty at research universities like UT-Austin are often evaluated by administrators deploying such metrics, so this matters. Nonetheless, as my experience demonstrated to me, organizing an exhibition at a place like the Ransom Center is itself a form of scholarly activity, even if that work does not appear in a data-mined index of productivity. The creative, logistical, and intellectual labor necessary to produce an exhibition is substantial and should be recognized as such. I discussed this with Paula Krebs, Executive Director of the Modern Language Association, during a campus visit in fall 2024, and also with Russell Wyland, Director of Outreach for the National Endowment for the Humanities, during a September 2024 exhibition walkthrough. We all agreed that the question about how to evaluate public-facing scholarship, especially in the humanities, is an urgent one. (S. H.)

Conclusion: Pictures on a Wall

In the end, nearly 20,000 people visited the exhibition, a number that includes both walk-in visitors and from docent-led tours. Many of those tours included educational groups, both K–12 and university. The dozens of university classes came from a wide range of subjects, including: "American History since 1865," "US Environmental Justice Movements," "Sustaining a Planet," among many others.

Not only were people coming to the exhibition, but they were interacting with it in ways that we had hoped. In her report of the exhibition, the Ransom Center's Head of Education and Public Programs, Anne Terrill, summarized what she saw in the gallery:

> Visitors responded movingly to Ansel Adams's works and the powerful images in the contemporary photography space. Dawoud Bey, Elliott Erwitt, Bruce Davidson, and Sharon Stewart provoked varied and thoughtful response from students. The structure of the exhibition allowed visitors to understand and develop their own ideas about Adams's style and approach to photography. The earlier history was very helpful for discussing how to look at and interpret photographic evidence (Terrill).

Combined with the large number of visitors, this was, of course, gratifying to hear. Moreover, Terrill's report concluded that one of our concerns – whether an exhibition that did not adhere to a strict chronology would be potentially confusing – was, in fact, one of its virtues. "The structure of the exhibition also worked well for larger tours, because groups could easily start at different points in the exhibition," she noted. "The non-chronological approach was very helpful for our goal of small group tours that engage closely with objects."

This returns us to our initial task of closing the gap between cultural critic and cultural creator, and how misunderstood that process can be for those who have never worked in the area. As one faculty colleague put it when we told him that we were considering such a project: "[W]hat could be more straightforward than hanging some pictures on a wall, right?" Although well-intentioned and offered in the spirit of humor, the comment landed flat. Such work, we anticipated, is anything but straightforward and our experience has borne out that hunch. But even more than we expected, the project was rewarding as it enabled us to work collaboratively with outstanding research center professionals, and to conceive our scholarship well beyond the ivory tower. It also seemed important. In a moment when faculty are increasingly called upon to make their research more widely and publicly available, now is a very good time to make sure that the public is aware of the critical, relevant work being done in the humanities. For more scholars to undertake such work, and to actively close the gap between the cultural critic and cultural creator, it really should be recognized as doing more than "hanging some pictures on a wall."

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the many colleagues who supported both the publication of this article and the exhibition it describes. Above all, are our superlative colleagues at the Ransom Center, including Stephen Enniss, Mary Alice Harper, Erika Nunn-Kinias, Rob Hay, Leslie Ernst, Diana Diaz-Cañas, Ashley Park, Chloe Gise, Daniel Zmund, Anne Terrill, Megan Barnard, Cathy Henderson, and Ester Harrison. We also thank colleagues for their feedback on earlier versions of this article at the 2024 Austrian Association for American Studies conference in Feldkirch, Austria, and the 2025 international workshop "Art, Beauty, and Visualizing Social Change: The Politics and Aesthetics of Environmental Photography" at Amerikahaus Munich, particularly Ingrid Gessner, Angelika Ilg, Kerstin Schmidt, and Christoph Straub. We are grateful for the excellent suggestions from the journal's peer reviewers and its editor, Cornelia Klecker. Finally, none of this would have happened were it not for the generous donation from Joyce Hunt and her late husband Steve of Ansel Adams prints to the Ransom Center.

About the Authors

Steven Hoelscher is Director of Liberal Arts Honors, Stiles Professor of American Studies and Geography, and Faculty Curator of Photography at the Harry Ransom

Center, at the University of Texas at Austin, USA. His research and teaching interests are wide-ranging and include: the history of photography; race and racism; North American and European urbanism; social constructions of space and place; and historical memory. His books include *Reading Magnum* (recognized as 2013 Photo Book of the Year by *American Photo Magazine*), *Picturing Indians* (winner of the 2009 Wisconsin Historical Society Book Award of Merit), *Heritage on Stage*, and *Textures of Place* (co-edited with Karen Till and Paul Adams), and he has published more than 60 book chapters, articles, and essays in such journals as *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, *American Quarterly, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Ecumene* (now *Cultural Geographies*), *Geographical Review, GeoHumanities, GeoJournal, History of Photography, Journal of Historical Geography, Public Historian, Rundbrief Fotografie, Smithsonian Magazine,* and *Social and Cultural Geography*. Most summers, since 2007, he has taught an education abroad course in Vienna, Austria, that combines these fields.

Stephanie Zeller is a PhD candidate in the Department of Geography and the Environment at UT Austin, USA. Her research and teaching interests center on interdisciplinarity and include philosophical aesthetics, climate visualization theory and methods, the cultural ecology of environmental data and imagery, environmental discourse and representation, ethics, and science literacy. She holds degrees in Fine Arts and Communications, and her work history includes two NASA centers, Los Alamos National Lab, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, the Texas Advanced Computing Center, and the Harry Ransom Center. Her work has been recognized for science communication excellence and has been published in several high-impact venues, including the White House.

Peer Review

This article was reviewed by the issue's guest editors and two external reviewers.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Works Cited

Adams, Ansel. Archival Materials for *This Is the American Earth*. Alfred A. Knopf Collection, Box 1291. Harry Ransom Center, 1960.

———. *An Autobiography*. Little Brown, 1984.

———. *Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs*. Little Brown, 1983.

———. *The Negative: Exposure and Development*. New York Graphic Society, 1948.

———. *The Role of the Artist in Conservation.* U of California, College of Natural Resources, Department of Forestry and Conservation, 1975.

———, and Nancy Newhall. *This Is the American Earth*. Sierra Club Books, 1960.

Alinder, Mary Street. *Ansel Adams: A Biography*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

Barad, Karen Michelle. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke UP, 2007.

Blackhawk, Ned. *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of US History*. Yale UP, 2023.

Cope, M. P. et al. "Developing and Evaluating an ESRI Story Map as an Educational Tool." *Natural Sciences Education*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1–9, doi.org/10.4195/nse2018.04.0008.

Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History*, vol. 1, no 1, 1996, pp. 7–28, doi.org/10.2307/3985059.

Dingus, Rick. "Photographic Works." *Internet Archive*, web.archive.org/web/20170630124745/http:/rickdingus.com/statement.php. Accessed 15 Jan. 2026.

Gieseking, Jen Jack. "Where Are We? The Method of Mapping with GIS in Digital Humanities." *American Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2018, pp. 641–48.

Visualizing the Environment: Ansel Adams and His Legacy. Harry Ransom Center, 31 Aug. 2024–2 Feb. 2025, www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/2024/visualizing-the-environment-ansel-adams-and-his-legacy/. Accessed 29 June 2025.

Hawkins, Harriet. *Geography, Art, Research: Artistic Research in the GeoHumanities*. Routledge, 2020.

Hoelscher, Steven. "American Environmental Photography." *The American Environment Revisited*, edited by Geoffrey Buckley and Yolonda Youngs. Rowman and Littlefield, 2018, pp. 295–321.

———. "'A Collision of Beauty and Ugliness': An Interview with Richard Misrach." *GeoHumanities*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2017, pp. 451–88, doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2017.1335606.

Kelly, Meghan, et al. "On Art and Experimentation as Geographical Practice." *GeoHumanities*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2023, pp. 380–410, doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2023.2187313.

Klett, Mark. “The Legacy of Ansel Adams: Debts and Burdens.” *Aperture*, vol. 120, 1990, pp. 72–73.

———. “The Rephotographic Survey Project.” 1977–1979, www.markklett.com/projects/rephotographic-survey-project. Accessed 29 Apr. 2024.

———, et al. *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project*. U of New Mexico P, 1984.

Lee, Winnie. “The Photographer Who Reimagined the Darkness of the Underground Railroad.” *Atlas Obscura*, 11 Mar. 2021, www.atlasobscura.com/articles/dawoud-bey-underground-railroad.

Minick, Roger. “The American Psyche on Display.” *American Suburb X*, 16 July 2015, americansuburbx.com/2015/07/roger-minick-sightseer.html.

Misrach, Richard. “Ansel Adams + Richard Misrach: Exploring Legacies.” Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 7 Apr. 2023, www.famsf.org/stories/ansel-adams-richard-misrach-exploring-legacies.

O’Sullivan, Timothy, et al. *Photographs Showing Landscapes, Geological and Other Features, of Portions of the Western Territory of the United States, Obtained in Connection with Geographical and Geological Explorations and Surveys West of the 100th Meridian, Seasons of 1871, 1872 and 1873.* War Department, Corps of Engineers, 1873.

Palmquist, Peter. *Carleton Watkins: Photographer of the American West*. U of New Mexico P, 1983.

Saito, Yuriko. *Everyday Aesthetics*. Oxford UP, 2010.

Schaefer, John P. “The Language of Photography.” *Basic Techniques of Photography: An Ansel Adams Guide*. Little Brown, 1992.

Senf, Rebecca. *Making a Photographer: The Early Work of Ansel Adams*. Yale UP, 2020.

Spaulding, Jonathan. *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape: A Biography*. U of California P, 1995.

Stewart, Sharon. “Toxic Tour of Texas.” 1989. *Sharon Stewart Photography*, www.sharonstewartphotography.net/portfolios/toxic-tour-of-texas/. Accessed 20 Mar. 2024.

Szarkowski, John. *Ansel Adams at 100*. Little Brown, 2001.

———. *The Portfolios of Ansel Adams*. New York Graphic Society, 1977.

Terrill, Anne. *Report on Visualizing the Environment Exhibition*. Harry Ransom Center, 2025.

Till, Karen. “Artistic and Activist Memory-Work: Approaching Place-Based Practice.” *Memory Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2008, pp. 99–113, doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083893.

Tusam, Mohamad, et al. "Arcgis Storymaps in Geography Learning: A Systematic Literature Review." *Abjadia : International Journal of Education*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2024, pp. 643–55, doi.org/10.18860/abj.v9i3.28779.

Vergo, Peter, "The Reticent Object." *The New Museology*, edited by Peter Vergo, Reaktion Books, 1997, pp. 41–59.

Watkins, Carleton. "Malakoff Diggens, North Bloomfield, Nevada County." 1871. National Gallery of Art, www.nga.gov/artworks/92347-malakoff-diggins-north-bloomfield-nevada-county. Accessed 18 Apr. 2024.

Zeller, Stephanie, and Steven Hoelscher. *GIS Companion to the Exhibition, Visualizing the Environment: Ansel Adams and His Legacy, Harry Ransom Center*, 31 Aug. 2024, www.storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/03beae46ad224629aa3fec55d6b531ad.