

ROBERT ADAMS

OUR LIVES AND OUR CHILDREN

MAY 16 - JULY 29, 2018



Robert Adams, Untitled, *Our Lives and Our Children*, 1979-1982

Press preview: Tuesday May 15, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Opening: Tuesday May 16, 6 – 9 p.m.

FONDATION HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON
2, impasse Lebouis - 75014 Paris





Robert Adams, Untitled, *Our Lives and Our Children*, 1979-1982

« What I hope to document, though not at the expense of surface detail,
is the form that underlies this apparent chaos. »

Robert Adams

New Topographics. Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape, 1975

ROBERT ADAMS

OUR LIVES AND OUR CHILDREN

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CURATOR

The exhibition is curated by Agnès Sire, Artistic Director of Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson.

PUBLICATION

Originally published by Aperture and out of print for more than thirty years, a revised edition of *Our Lives and Our Children* is being published by Steidl this year. In connection with the *Robert Adams A Right to Stand* exhibition shown at the Fondation A Stichting in Brussels from January 28 to March 18, 2018, Hartmann Books published *Hope is a risk that must be run*, in 2018.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERS

The exhibition is organised in collaboration with the Centre National des Arts Plastiques in Paris, the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain in Saint-Étienne, Matthew Marks Gallery in New York, Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco and Fondation A Stichting in Brussels.

THE EXHIBITION

MAY 16 - JULY 29, 2018

« My conviction remains as it was in 1983 ; if humanity does not find a way to establish a just world government and thereby rid itself of the supposed need for nuclear weapons, what is probable will one day happen. »
Robert Adams

The Robert Adams – *Our Lives and Our Children* exhibition is being shown at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson from May 16 to July 29, 2018. Robert Adams (born in 1937) is known for his photographic oeuvre on the changing landscape of the American West and his environmental conscience. This is the first exhibition in Paris to show the entire *Our Lives and Our Children* series, one of the photographer's most striking visual essays on environmental destruction. One day, in the 1970s, the photographer noticed a column of smoke rising above the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant near Denver, Colorado and decided to document the potential destruction of a nuclear disaster.

Armed with a Hasselblad, hidden behind a shopping bag, he paced the town and its suburbs, parking lots and shopping malls, photographing people shaped by the consumer society and living their lives under this threat. He was particularly interested in the visible ties between people in the grip of a potential danger, known but invisible. Hidden beneath the apparent tranquillity of these women, men and children, there's a taut line between the chance that seems to bring them together and the almost imperceptible danger of a nuclear disaster which Robert Adams believes is inevitable.

In 1983, Aperture published the first edition, now out of print, of this series of photographs taken between 1979 and 1982 under the title *Our Lives and Our Children, Photographs Taken Near The Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant*. In 2003, Matthew Marks Gallery in New York presented an exhibition and catalogue featuring a second series of unseen works entitled *No Small Journeys, Across Shopping Center Parking Lots, Down City Streets*. The new expanded edition of *Our Lives and Our Children* published by Steidl in 2018 includes some of these photographs.

A teacher of American literature, with a strong interest in certain romantic authors and film, Robert Adams turned his full attention to photography when John Szarkowski bought four of his prints for the MoMA collections in 1969. He then participated in major group shows including *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* by William Jenkins in 1975 at George Eastman House alongside Lewis Baltz and Stephen Shore. Szarkowski included him in the MoMA exhibition, *Mirrors and windows: American photography since 1960*, and wrote the introduction to a significant book in the photographer's career, *The New West* (1974). Adams has authored many writings that distil his "redemptive concept" of art, such as his essay *Beauty in Photography*, (Aperture, 1981) published in French (Fanlac, 1996) or *Why people photograph* (Aperture, 1994).

The exhibition is curated by Agnès Sire, Artistic Director of Fondation HCB and organised in collaboration with the Centre national des arts plastiques in Paris, the Fondation A Stichting in Brussels, the Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco and Matthew Marks Gallery in New York. This is to be the last exhibition by Fondation HCB before moving to rue des Archives next Autumn.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK

OUR LIVES AND OUR CHILDREN

American nuclear and thermonuclear bombs are equipped with plutonium detonators manufactured at the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant. The factory is located ten miles upwind from Denver, Colorado. Plutonium, which is among the most toxic elements known, ignites spontaneously in contact with moist air; there have been more than two hundred fires at the plant, many of them involving plutonium. [...]

In summary, the plutonium triggers built at risk to Denver become part of a worldwide system so open to error and malfunction that it is reasonable to believe many of us will, at a scarcely imaginable but exact time, die from them.

If we confront this conclusion we want almost at once to give up, to be free of what seems impossible hope. When we can find in ourselves the will to keep asking questions of politicians, it is, I think, after we have noticed the individuals with whom we live. How mysteriously absolute each is. How many achieve, in moments of reflection or joy or concern, a kind of heroism. Each refutes the idea of acceptable losses.

Robert Adams

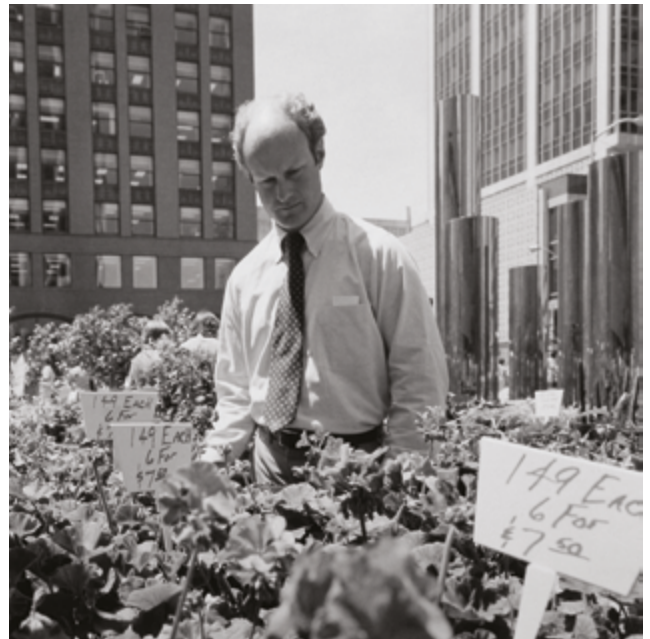
Extracts from the afterword of *Our Lives and Our Children*, Aperture, 1983

The history of America's guardianship of its nuclear weapons is traced by Eric Schlosser in his book *Command and Control* (Penguin, 2013); in it he shows that we have been spared accidental nuclear war by sometimes nothing more than luck.

My conviction remains as it was in 1983; if humanity does not find a way to establish a just world government and thereby rid itself of the supposed need for nuclear weapons, what is probable will one day happen.

Robert Adams

Extracts from the foreword of 2017, from *Our Lives and Our Children*, Steidl, 2018



Robert Adams, Untitled, *Our Lives and Our Children*, 1979-1982

« It is the responsibility of artists to pay attention to the world, pleasant or otherwise and to help us live respectfully in it. (...) More than anything else, beauty is what distinguishes art. Beauty is never less than a mystery, but it has within it a promise. In this way, art encourages us to gratitude and engagement, and is of both personal and civic consequence. »

Robert Adams

ROBERT ADAMS

CHRONOLOGY

- 1937 Robert Adams is born on 8 May in Orange, New Jersey.
- 1952 The family settles in Wheat Ridge, in the suburbs of Denver, Colorado.
- 1956-1962 Studies English at the University of Redlands, in California, then begins postgraduate study at the University of Southern Carolina.
- 1960 Marries Kerstin Mornestam, a naturalised citizen from Sweden. Is given a copy of *This Is the American Earth*, including photographs by Ansel Adams, amongst others.
- 1962 Begins teaching as an assistant professor of English at Colorado College in Colorado Springs and finds disturbing urban changes in Colorado that have occurred during his absence.
- 1963 Begins taking black-and-white photographs, mostly of nature and architecture with a 35 mm camera.
- 1964 Educates himself about photography by reading complete sets of the photographic journals *Camera Work* and *Aperture*. Myron Wood, a professional photographer dedicated to documenting Colorado, teaches him photographic technique.
- 1965 Awarded a Ph.D. in English by the University of Southern California. Buys a new view camera and returns to Colorado where he photographs Hispanic cemeteries along the southern border and soon turns to scenes on the eastern prairies.
- 1967 Decides to teach part-time to dedicate more time to photography. His pictures are often rejected for publication or exhibition and often returned to him damaged, much to his dismay.
- 1968 Travels to Germany and Scandinavia with his parents and his wife Kerstin. Begins photographing the new suburban landscape along Colorado's Front Range.
- 1969 After meeting John Szarkowski, Curator of Photography at MoMA, the museum buys four prints from the *Colorado Springs* series. Adams returns to work with renewed commitment.
- 1970 Teaches for the last time at Colorado College and leads a symposium on film and literature, highlighting the importance of the works by Virginia Woolf, Yasujirō Ozu and Jean-Luc Godard. His pictures are rejected for publication for the third time by the Aperture Foundation. Publication of his first book, *White Churches of the Plains* (Colorado Associated University Press). The group show *Acquisitions* at MoMA features some of his photographs bought the previous year.
- 1971 Moves to Longmont, Colorado. First solo exhibition at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.
- 1973 Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, which facilitates shooting and lab work resulting in the books *denver* and *What We Bought*.
- 1974 Publishes *The New West: Landscapes along the Colorado Front Range* prefaced by John Szarkowski (The Colorado Associated University Press).

ROBERT ADAMS

CHRONOLOGY

- 1975 His work is included in the exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* created by William Jenkins at the George Eastman House, Rochester, New York. Marking a turning point in the approach to documentary photography, this exhibition features the work of ten photographers who together define a new concept of landscape, including Lewis Baltz, Nicholas Nixon, Stephen Shore and the German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher.
- 1976 Solo exhibition at the Galerie Castelli Graphics, New York.
- 1977 Publishes *denver: A Photographic Survey of the Metropolitan Area* (Colorado Associated University Press) and gives a lecture at the International Center of Photography, New York.
- 1978-1979 *Prairie* exhibition, at the Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado and MoMA, New York.
- 1978 Takes photographs of Wyoming, Utah, California and Colorado for a documentary project on the American landscape which is published by Aperture in 1980 under the title *From the Missouri West*. His work is included in the exhibition *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960* at MoMA, where he presents a lecture.
- 1979 Begins taking photographs that will appear in the 1983 monograph entitled *Our Lives and Our Children: Photographs Taken near the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant* (Aperture).
- 1980 Awarded a second Guggenheim Fellowship.
- 1982-1983 Photographs in the Los Angeles basin. Publishes an introductory essay in Daniel Wolf's *The American Space: Meaning in Nineteenth-Century Landscape Photography* : "The end of the American space is related, in ways mostly beyond the scope of this essay, to the two principal threats to life on earth : overpopulation and nuclear war."
- 1983 *Our Lives and Our Children* is published by Aperture.
- 1985 Begins a retreat in Astoria, Oregon. Writes the essay "In the American West Is Hope Possible?"
- 1986 Returns to Colorado in the autumn and continues a series of vertical 35 mm photographs of mostly anonymous landscapes he has loved throughout his life.
- 1989 Retrospective exhibition *To Make It Home: Photographs of the American West, 1965-1986* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and publishes a catalogue of the same name.
- 1990 Photographs the beaches at the Columbia River mouth, the westernmost point reached by the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805.
- 1991-1992 *Robert Adams* exhibition at the Photo Gallery International in Tokyo, Japan and the Centre d'Art Contemporain in Brussels.
- 1994-1994 Awarded a MacArthur Fellowship and the Spectrum International Prize in Photography. Publishes *Why people photograph: Selected Essays and Reviews* by Aperture.

ROBERT ADAMS

CHRONOLOGY

- 1997 Adams and Kerstin move to a house in Astoria, Oregon.
- 1998–2003 Works with Kerstin in support of Measure 64 aimed at restrict clearcutting in the State of Oregon; the initiative is unsuccessful. Photographs clearcuts in forests near his home and in neighbouring counties.
- 2003 Exhibition *No Small Journeys* at Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, organised by Jeffrey Peabody accompanied by the book of the same name featuring unseen photographs taken between 1979 and 1982.
- 2005 Publishes *Turning Back* co-edited by Fraenkel Gallery and Matthew Marks Gallery and shows photographs from the book at the Haus der Kunst in Munich and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The book goes relatively unnoticed, especially in his region.
- 2006–2007 Publishes several essays including *Along Some Rivers* by Aperture, a collection of interviews with art historians, curators, photographers, students, writers and teachers. A French version is published the following year by the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain and Actes Sud entitled *En longeant quelques rivières*.
- 2007 The Fondation Cartier organises his first major exhibition in Paris, *On the Edge*, accompanied by the book *Time Passes*. The photographer and director Raymond Depardon produces a filmed portrait.
- 2009 Works on a revised edition of *denver* and *Summer Nights*, two of his previous monographs, and prepares two collections of recent pictures for publication. Awarded the Hasselblad Prize in San Francisco.
- 2010–2014 *The Place We Live* exhibition in Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia. This retrospective is shown across the world: at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery, Fotomuseum Winterthur and Jeu de Paume in Paris under the title *L'endroit où nous vivons*.
- 2011–2013 Publishes several books of unseen photographs and continues to photograph forests and the seashore near his home.
- 2014 *A Road Through Shore Pine* exhibition at the Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, accompanied by the book of the same name.
- 2015 Exhibition at the Galerie Thomas Zander entitled *Robert Adams: Buildings in Colorado 1964–1980 & Rudolf Schwarz: Architecture and Photography* and a book of the same name.
- 2017 Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, presents *Robert Adams: Trees* which includes some thirty photographs taken between 1968 and 2014. Publication of the book *Art can help* (Yale University Press). Revised edition of *Our Lives and Our Children* by Steidl.
- 2018 Individual exhibition at The Fondation A Stichting in Brussels entitled *A Right to Stand* curated by Joshua Chuang and Jean-Paul Deridder and a publication by Hartmann Books : *Robert Adams, Hope is a risk that must be run*.



Robert Adams, *Untitled, No Small Journeys*, 1979-1982

« Given the darkening world, our terribly reckless president, and the terrible nature of nuclear weapons, anything we can do to awaken public opinion is surely a step in the right direction. »
Robert Adams

PRESS VISUALS

TERMS OF REPRODUCTION

The use of press visuals is permitted and exempt from royalties solely for the purposes of promoting the exhibition at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson. Cropping is not permitted and only three visuals per medium can be published.

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Robert Adams, Untitled, *Our Lives and Our Children*, 1979-1982

© Robert Adams/Collection Centre national des arts plastiques/Photo: Yves Bresson. MAM Saint-Étienne Métropole, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York



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Robert Adams, Untitled, *No Small Journeys*, 1979-1982

© Robert Adams, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York



011

Robert Adams, Untitled, *No Small Journeys*, 1979-1982

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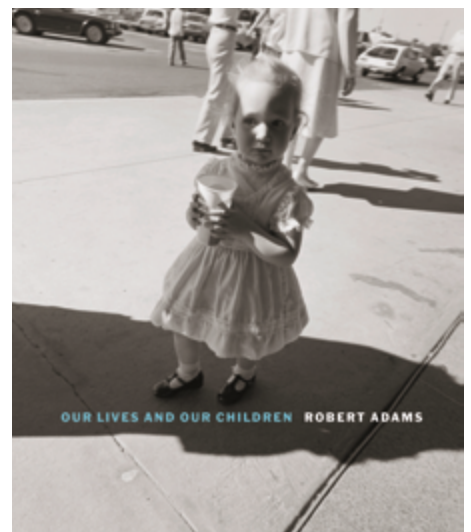
Robert Adams, Untitled, *No Small Journeys*,
1979-1982

© Robert Adams, courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San
Francisco and Matthew Marks Gallery, New York



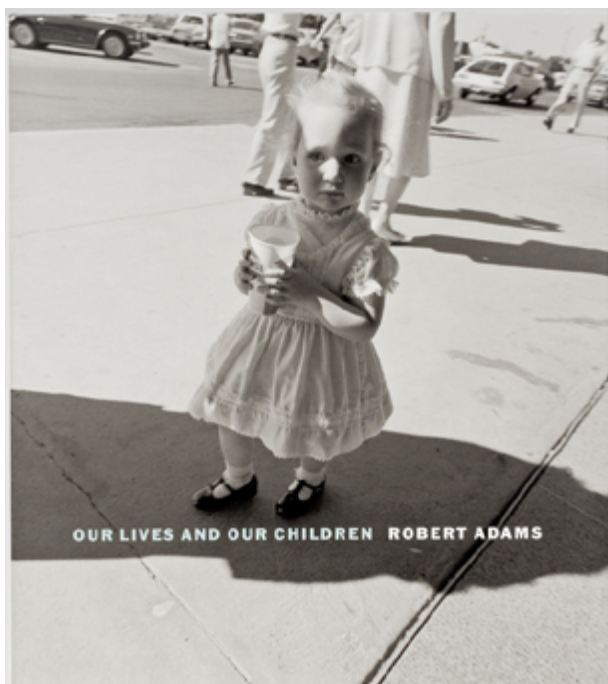
013

Cover of the Robert Adams book, *Our Lives and Our
Children*, Steidl, 2017



PUBLICATION

STEIDL



Robert Adams
Our Lives and Our Children
Steidl

22.8 x 26.6 cm
104 photographs
128 pages
48 €

ISBN 978-3-95829-097-6



EVENTS

CONVERSATIONS

A cycle of bi-monthly conversations around photography at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson led by Natacha Wolinski, art critic.

The Fondation HCB celebrates fifteen years. Achievements and plans for the future.

Agnès Sire, Artistic Director and François Hébel, Director.

Tuesday June 5, 2018, 6.30 to 8 pm

> Free admission but spaces limited, booking required: contact@henricartierbresson.org

THE FONDATION HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON SYMPOSIUM

Mobilities: a cycle of four events proposed by Jean-François Chevrier, art historian, professor at the Paris School of Fine Arts and exhibition curator. Today, more than ever, the study of artistic forms and particularly photographic works calls for an historic and critical examination of the forms and language of mobility. The four events show how photography can play a part in this project when it is associated with social experimentation as well as with the arts of the image and the body in motion.

BORDERLAND

With Melik Ohanian, focusing on his current developments in cinematic approach presented at the Biennale de Lyon 2017.

Wednesday May 2, 2018, 6.30 to 8.30 pm

This last event will take place in the "amphithéâtre des Loges" at the École des beaux-arts of Paris, 14 rue Bonaparte (6e).

> Free admission but spaces limited, booking required: contact@henricartierbresson.org

WEDNESDAYS ARE FREE!

Every Wednesday, from 6.30 to 8 p.m., admission is free for all visitors to the exhibitions at the Fondation.

> Free admission

SATURDAY GUIDED TOUR

On the last Saturday of every month, the Fondation offers a guided tour of the exhibition at 11.30 a.m.

> Last Saturday of each month at 11.30 a.m.

> Free on presentation of entry ticket

> Booking required: médiation@henricartierbresson.org

The Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson sincerely thanks Olympus, partner of the Rencontres events, for its support.





Robert Adams, Untitled, *Our Lives and Our Children*, 1979-1982

USEFUL INFORMATION

PRESS BREAKFAST

We are delighted to invite you to a press preview on Tuesday May 15, 2018 between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m.

RSVP : Emilie Hanmer / +33 1 56 80 27 03 / emilie.hanmer@henricartierbresson.org
or online : [sign up here](#)

ADDRESS

2, impasse Lebouis, 75014 Paris
01 56 80 27 00
www.henricartierbresson.org

OPENING HOURS

Tuesday to Sunday: 1 – 6.30 p.m.
Wednesday (free nights): 6.30 – 8.30 p.m.
Saturday: 11 a.m. – 6.45 p.m.

TICKET PRICES

Full rate 8€/Concessions 5€
Free for Friends of the Fondation HCB
Free on Wednesday nights (6.30 – 8.30 p.m.)

FRIENDS

Friends of the Fondation benefit from a year's unlimited access to exhibitions, invitations to openings, bookshop reductions, priority registration for Rencontres events and private tours of exhibitions with the curators.

Full Member Rate: 100 euros Student/Concessions: 60 euros

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PARTNERS

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