Sweeney/Rubin Ansel Adams Fiat Lux Collection 1987.0027

Finding aid prepared by Sonia Mehrmand
California Museum of Photography
2016
3824 Main Street
Riverside 92521
URL: http://www.cmp.ucr.edu/
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: California Museum of Photography
Title: Sweeney/Rubin Ansel Adams Fiat Lux Collection
Identifier/Call Number: 1987.0027
Physical Description: 31 boxes
Date (inclusive): 1963-1967
Abstract: The Ansel Adams Fiat Lux collection, created between 1964-1967, consists of approximately 6,700 negatives and 600 photographs. These photos were used in a book entitled Fiat Lux: The University of California, written by art critic Nancy Newhall and published to commemorate the centennial of the University of California system. Adams' task was to show the “next hundred years” of the UC system. Photographed over a span of three years and published in 1968, the Fiat Lux collection shows the University of California at a particularly pivotal moment in time, as well as the projected future of the university. Post-World War Two scientific advancements led to a newfound emphasis on innovation and research at the university, which is rendered visible in the work of Ansel Adams. In the collection, particular attention is paid to UC Berkeley, but the focus is primarily on research and architecture, rather than outspoken student life at a time when the university was the center of Vietnam War and free speech protests. For the University of California, these photos served as tools of boosterism, highlighting serene student life, academic research, and the university’s contributions to science, agriculture, culture, and the environment.

Biography
Ansel Adams was born in San Francisco in 1902 and became arguably the most famous photographer in the world. Adams made landscape photographs of the American West, and took commercial jobs, such as the Fiat Lux project, to support his personal interests.

Nancy and Beaumont Newhall played an important role in Ansel Adams’ life. Beaumont Newhall was a prominent art historian who served as the first curator of photography at the MoMA. His wife, Nancy Newhall, was also a curator and was well known for her work as a photography critic. Nancy wrote the texts for seven of Adams’ photography books, including the book that resulted from this body of work, Fiat Lux: The University of California. The Newhalls were both passionate about photography as art, and were prominent historians and interpreters in the field. Adams and Beaumont Newhall, who worked as a librarian at the MoMA, were responsible for the creation of the first American museum department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Scope and Contents
The collection is organized into 20 boxes of prints, labeled by campus, research station, and/or UC Extension Center, as well as 11 boxes of original negatives, and a mockup of Fiat Lux: The University of California. In these photographs, commissioned by Clark Kerr, the President of the University of California between 1958 and 1967, Adams seeks to render visible the “invisible product” of the UC system, knowledge. He does this by photographing students and faculty at work, as well as various UC research projects and achievements. Owing especially to his strengths in landscape photography, Adams was able to show many UC campuses situated within their natural landscapes. Many of Adams’ most dramatic landscape photographs of UC lands did not make it into the final published product, but remain in the collection. The photos featured in Fiat Lux: The University of California depict students on the various campuses, technologies developed through UC research, and the UC System’s contributions to science and agriculture. The prints contain images of the campuses of Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Riverside. It also depicts the Deep Canyon Desert Research Station, Hat Creek Radio Astronomy Station, Hopland Field Station, Richmond Field Station, Bodega Marine Station, and Meadow Valley Forest Station. Images of UC Extension Centers and programs are also part of the Fiat Lux collection, showing the reach of the university beyond its campuses.

Arrangement
Whenever possible, original order of this collection was maintained.

Conditions Governing Access
Series I (prints) is open for research, by appointment.

Immediate Source of Acquisition
This collection was transferred to the California Museum of Photography from the University of California Office of the President in 1987.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Adams, Ansel, 1902-1984
University of California, Berkeley--Pictorial works
University of California, Irvine--Pictorial works
University of California, Riverside--Pictorial works
University of California, Davis--Pictorial works
University of California, San Francisco--Pictorial works
University of California, San Diego--Pictorial works
University of California, Santa Barbara--Pictorial works
University of California, Santa Cruz--Pictorial works
University of California, Los Angeles--Pictorial works
University of California Agricultural Extension Service

Series I: Prints
Physical Description: 20 boxes

UC Extension 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

Lick Observatory, White Mountain Research Station 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

Desert Research Station 1963-1967
Physical Description: 2 boxes

Field Stations 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

Forestry, Arrowhead Center, University of California Extension 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

University of California, Berkeley 1963-1967
Physical Description: 3 boxes

University of California, Berkeley 1963-1967
Physical Description: 3 boxes

University of California, Davis 1963-1967
Physical Description: 2 boxes

University of California, Irvine 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

University of California, Los Angeles 1963-1967
Physical Description: 2 boxes

University of California, San Francisco 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

University of California, Santa Barbara 1963-1967
Physical Description: 1 box

University of California, Riverside 1963-1967
Physical Description: 2 boxes
Series I: Prints

University of California, San Diego 1963-1967
  Physical Description: 1 box

University of California, Santa Cruz 1963-1967
  Physical Description: 1 box

Series II: Negatives
  Physical Description: 11 boxes

  4x5 Negatives: UC Alumni Center, Berkeley, Davis, Extension, Irvine, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Francisco 1963-1967
    Physical Description: 3 boxes

  Medium Format Negatives: UC Berkeley 1963-1967
    Physical Description: 1 box

  Medium Format Negatives: UC Los Angeles 1963-1967
    Physical Description: 1 box

    Physical Description: 1 box

    Physical Description: 1 box

  Medium Format Negatives: UC Research Stations, Alumni Center 1963-1967
    Physical Description: 1 box

  Medium Format Negatives: UC Santa Cruz 35 mm Negatives: UC Berkeley, Davis, Extension, Irvine, Los Angeles, Research Stations, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Diego, San Francisco 1963-1967
    Physical Description: 1 box

  5x7 Negatives: UC Berkeley, Davis, Extension, Irvine, Los Angeles, Research Stations, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Diego, San Francisco 1963-1967
    Physical Description: 1 box

Series III: Fiat Lux: The University of California (mock-up)