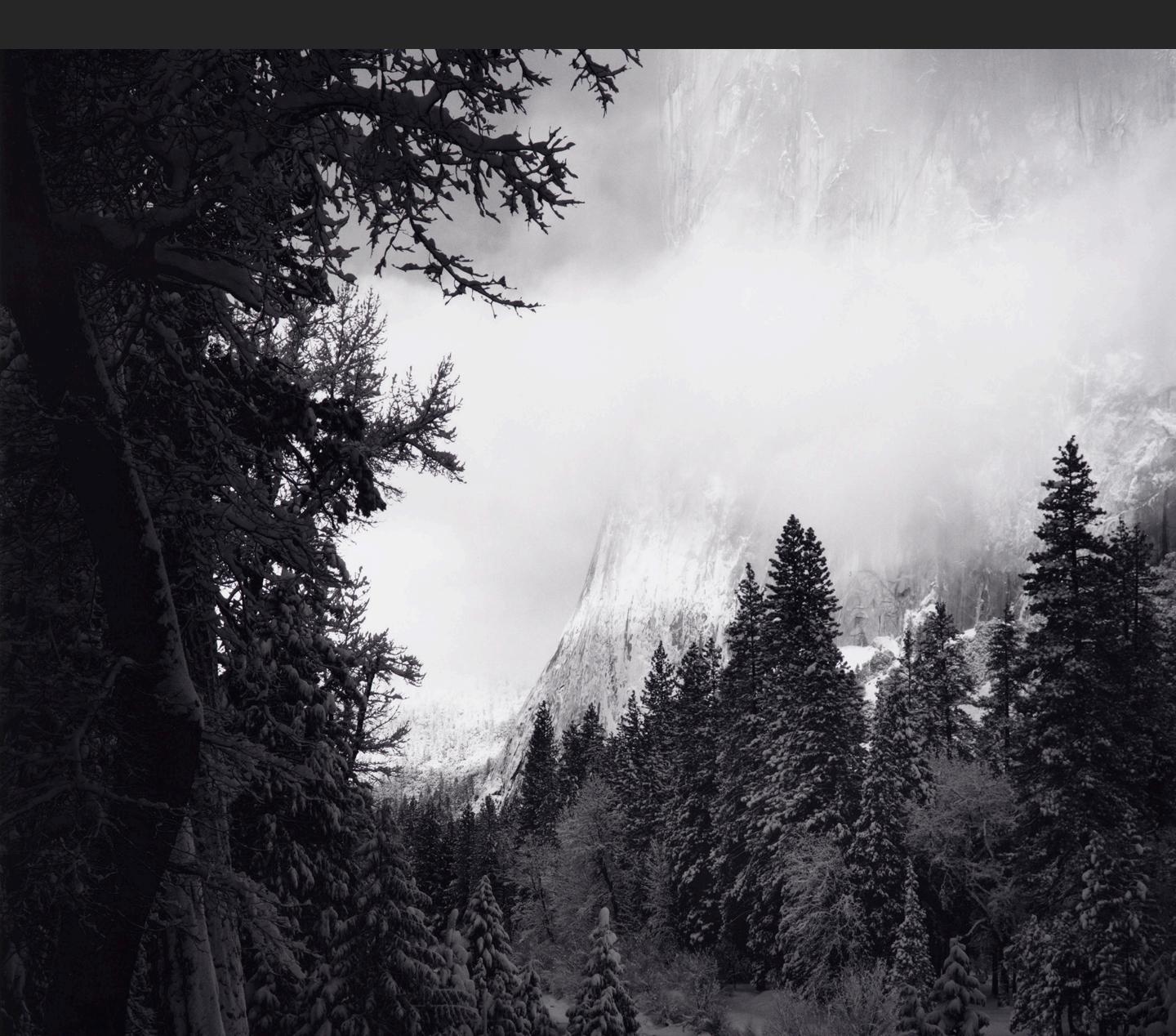
CONTERPIECE MINUTE



Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute on Virtual SDMA. I'm your host today, Cory Woodall, Assistant Curator at The San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in every other Friday at 10am to pick up a new mini talk led by SDMA curators and special guests spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

This week, we'll look at one of photography's most familiar figures, Ansel Adams and the early inspirations that motivated him to create his iconic landscapes in America's National <u>Parks, especially in Yosemite.</u>

Ansel Adams was born in San Francisco in 1902 to a well-to-do family, and from a young age he showed an inclination to the outdoors. Young Adams was frequently ill, and spent

much of his bedrest reading, especially about the vast wildernesses of the United States. The most alluring of these environments for Adams was Yosemite, located in the Sierra Nevada Mountain region and a reasonable trip by car from his home. At his pleading, the Adams family finally visited Yosemite on a vacation, and Adams instantly became enamored with the place. It was on this trip that Adams received his first camera, a common amateur device by Kodak called a Brownie, which would plant the seed for Adams' lifelong passion for photography. Included in those first snapshots

was an image of El Capitan, the impressive granite cliff that he would revisit in numerous photographs.

Adams' reverence for Yosemite was cemented in 1919, the year of a serious pandemic known as the "Spanish Flu". Adams took ill and was confined to his bed for weeks. Against the advice of his physician, Adams convinced his parents to allow him to go to Yosemite and continue his recovery in the place he loved so dearly. Adams credited this change of scenery with his cure. The improvements to his health were made most clear with his summiting of half-dome just two weeks after his arrival to the park, which is no small feat for any person, let alone for someone recovering from a serious

illness. From then on, Adams returned again and again to Yosemite, and served as a park custodian for several years.

As we look at El Capitan, Sunrise Winter, made when Adams had fully matured as a photographer, one can feel the monumentality of this natural wonder, emerging from the valley of Yosemite, its bright granite cliff face overlooking the shadowed and snowy foreground. Capturing the emotional impact of nature was just as important to Adams as a faithful depiction of the scene, and previsualization of the final print was essential to his practice. He developed his own systematic technique for anticipating the tonality of his final prints, which he called the "Zone System".

Adams was a perfectionist at all stages of his photo-making, consistently delivering crisp, clear, and tonally rich imagery.

Adam's love and respect of nature is reflected in his lifelong body of work, of which we have four examples in the exhibition "Masters of Photography: The Garner Collection", which will reopen in December of this year.

This has been Assistant Curator Cory Woodall with Masterpiece Minute. Thanks for joining us here on Virtual SDMA!

BALBOA PARK THE SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF ART