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Brett Weston, *Merchall Glacier, Alaska*, 1973. Silver gelatin print.
The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy, The Christian K. Keese Collection.

SBMA Brings Brett Weston's Photography Out of the Shadow

Exhibition is Largest Retrospective in More Than 30 Years

On View May 2 – August 16, 2009

March 26, 2009 – The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is pleased to present the exhibition ***Brett Weston Out of the Shadow***, the largest retrospective of the artist's work in over 30 years. Opening May 2 and co-organized by The Phillips Collection and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art and curated by Stephen Bennett Phillips, the presentation surveys Weston's nearly 70-year career presenting more than 130 photographs that range from early vintage prints made in Mexico and California in the 1920s and 1930s; East Coast images from the 1940s; to later landscape and nature photographs as well as prints made shortly before his death in Hawaii in 1993.

While the exhibition provides an unprecedented view of the form, composition and contrast that remained constants in Weston's career, it also parallels the life of the artist, especially the familial and artistic relationship between Brett and his father, Edward. The presentation illuminates their influence on each other, simultaneously freeing Brett from his father's shadow and allowing him to take his own place in the pantheon of American photography.

Brett Weston seemed destined from birth to become a fine photographer. Born in Los Angeles in 1911, the second son of photographer Edward Weston, he had perhaps the closest artistic relationship with his famous father of the four Weston sons. In 1925, Edward took Brett to Mexico where the thirteen year old became his father's apprentice. Brett's formal education was limited, and after attending school in Mexico for two weeks, he quit. It was then that he took to photography full-time and never considered doing anything else, working exclusively in black and white throughout his life.

Brett took his subjects from the natural world – especially dunes, rocks, and tide pools of the California coast, close-ups of bark and kelp, and water in its many forms. Never manipulated with additional lighting or props, his photographs are distinctly abstract but tied to the real world.

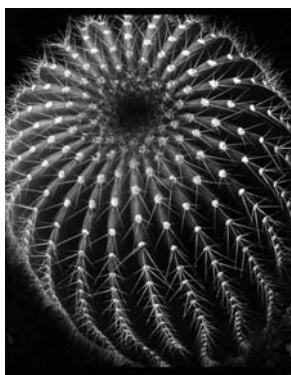


Brett Weston, *Dune Oceano* 1934. Silver gelatin print. The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy, The Christian K. Keesee Collection.

In 1926, father and son returned to California, where Brett was first to photograph the sand dunes at Oceano and the rocks and pools at Point Lobos, subjects that became favorites of Edward. In 1929, Brett exhibited 20 photographs alongside prints by Edward Steichen, Berenice Abbott, Man Ray, Imogen Cunningham, his father, and others, in the *Film und Foto* exhibition in Stuttgart. Edward wrote: “[Brett] is now one of the finest photographers in this country—which means the world.”

In 1952, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art organized an exhibition of Brett Weston’s sculpture and photography, but Brett himself had interrupted his career to print, under his father’s direction, a 50th anniversary portfolio of 12 Edward Weston prints in an edition of 100. Each of the 12,000 prints were produced in a darkroom, with his brother Cole, his second wife, Dody, and another photographer Morley Baer and his wife helping. It consumed most of the year.

By the mid 1950s, Edward was becoming increasingly ill with Parkinson’s Disease. There are accounts that he was selling his prints for \$25 apiece to buy needed medicine. Brett, again, undertook a heroic print project to raise the needed funds for his father by producing eight copies of “project prints” taken during the late 1930s consisting of 800 photographs each. Edward died on New Year’s Day in 1958.



Left image: Brett Weston, *Cactus Santa Barbara* 1931. Silver gelatin print. The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy, The Christian K. Keesee Collection.



Right image: Brett Weston, *Holland Canal* 1971. Silver gelatin print. The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy, The Christian K. Keesee Collection.

With the obligations to his father complete, Brett began to travel extensively, including an 8 month, 30,000 mile trip in Europe, Pacific Northwest, Baja, Japan, and countless other regions, producing rich portfolios of work. By 1980, Brett had had more than 100 solo exhibitions and he was financially doing well, after having struggled for decades.

Evidence of the immense gratitude and respect that he had for both his father and the art of photography, came in 1991, when, at the age of 80, he burned some of his own negatives - catching the attention of the media, including the *New York Times*. Brett never printed his father's negatives after Edward Weston died, and by destroying his own negatives, sent the message that no one can print or interpret another artist's work.

Brett Weston: Out of the Shadow has been co-organized by The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. and Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma City, O.K.

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

***Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.
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