



Brett Weston: Significant Details

April 17–September 11, 2016



Torn Leaf, Hawaii, 1978. Silver gelatin print, 10 ¾ x 12 inches. The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy Christian Keese Collection, 2016

Pasadena, CA — One of the most celebrated and prolific photographers of the twentieth century, Brett Weston (1911–1993) is best known for his striking scenic images, yet the bulk of his work ranges from middle-distance scenes to close-up abstractions. The Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is proud to present *Brett Weston: Significant Details*, the first museum exhibition to focus on Weston’s close-up photography. The works—over half of which are on view for the first time—share the high-contrast and graphic qualities of Weston’s panoramic photographs while emphasizing the “significant details,” the tendency toward abstraction and extremes in tonality that Weston explored through his nearly-60-year career. The exhibition further contextualizes Weston within the pivotal Group f/64 and highlights how intuition and a dedication to photography in its purest form guided his practice.

Although the teaching of his father, famed modernist photographer Edward Weston, was invaluable and his influence undeniable, Weston’s practice was largely shaped by instinct and informal training. He took up photography at the age of 14 when, on an extended trip to Mexico with his father, he started photographing the crew of the *SS Oaxaca* with the elder Weston’s Graflex camera. This trip also coincided with the end of his formal education; he was enrolled at an English-speaking school, but dropped out within two weeks. While in Mexico, Weston became part of the modernist milieu, socializing with and viewing the work of some of the greatest artists of the time, including David Siqueiros, Diego Rivera, and José Clemente Orozco.

Weston’s professional entry into the world of photography occurred during a shift from the East Coast Pictorialists and their accentuation of romantic effects to the West Coast photographic movement, which coalesced with Group f/64 and their sharp images that captured daily life. Like the members of Group f/64, which included Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, Brett Weston focused primarily on two types of images: close-ups and the scenic view. However, Weston’s approach was distinct, tending toward highly graphic images, with intense areas of dark and highlights, rather than mid-gray tones used by many, including his father.

By the age of 25, Weston’s work had been included in the landmark international photography exhibition *Film und Foto* and in a solo exhibition at the M. H. de Young Museum in San Francisco. Though he received critical acclaim and

PASADENA MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA ART

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Page 2/3

his reputation grew, Weston remained dedicated to art for art's sake and to creating pure, elemental photographs. He was a simple man and used the same equipment for most of his career. However, when health problems forced him to switch to a smaller camera—the Rollei—in 1968, he further experimented with close-up photographs, and his work became even more intent on exploring specific details and abstract qualities. In *Torn Leaf, Hawaii* (1978), for example, the brittle, curling leaf appears monumental on a black ground. It exists as a singular object, not fully contained within the composition, and the size is indeterminable without context.

The uncharted, close-up images that are the focus of *Significant Details* demonstrate the major themes present in Weston's work: a play on scale, the absence of the human presence, and a refrain from imposed order. This exhibition features 42 works spanning the period of 1926 and 1985, and brings to the forefront the unprecedented attention to form, texture, shadow, and light that was the distinctive characteristic of Weston's oeuvre.

The exhibition is organized by the Pasadena Museum of California Art, and is curated by Erin Aitali, PMCA Director of Exhibitions & Registrar.



Broken Glass, California, 1954. Silver gelatin print, 8 x 10 inches. The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy Christian Keese Collection, 2016;
Electrical Tower, Metal, c. 1975. Silver gelatin print, 8 x 10 inches. The Brett Weston Archive, Courtesy Christian Keese Collection, 2016

Related Programs

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are free with admission and free for PMCA members. No reservations required.

Exhibition Walkthrough: Zoom In

Saturday, May 7 • 3:00pm

Join Erin Aitali, PMCA Director of Exhibitions and curator of *Brett Weston: Significant Details*, for an exhibition walkthrough. Highlighting the distinct set of close-up, abstracted black and white photographs in the exhibition, Aitali discusses Weston's unique and unwavering vision as well as his place in the modernist history of photography.

Family Day

Saturday, June 25 • 3:00–5:00pm

Participate in fun art projects for the whole family based on our current exhibitions. All ages welcome!

Family Day

Saturday, August 13 • 3:00–5:00pm

Participate in fun art projects for the whole family based on our current exhibitions. All ages welcome!

PMCA 123 Monthly Programming

Free First Friday (12:00–5:00pm)

May 6 • June 3 • July 1 • August 5 • September 2

Second Saturday Docent Tour (2:00pm)

Claire Falkenstein: Beyond Sculpture

May 14 • June 11 • July 9 • August 13 • September 10

Free Third Thursday Evening (5:00–8:00pm)

April 21 • May 19 • June 16 • July 21 • August 18

Museum Information

MISSION

The mission of the Pasadena Museum of California Art (PMCA) is to present the breadth of California art and design through exhibitions that explore the cultural dynamics and influences that are unique to California.

HOURS

Open Wednesday–Sunday, 12:00–5:00pm; third Thursday of each month, 12:00–8:00pm; closed Monday, Tuesday, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

ADMISSION

\$7 for adults; \$5 for seniors (62+); \$5 for students & educators; free for PMCA members and children (12 and under); free the first Friday of each month (12:00–5:00pm); free the third Thursday of each month (5:00–8:00pm). Access for people with disabilities is provided.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

The museum is located at 490 East Union Street. From the 210 Freeway, take the Lake Avenue exit. Go south and take a right on Union Street. From the 110 Freeway/Downtown Los Angeles, follow the freeway until its end, then take Arroyo Parkway and turn right at Colorado, then left at Oakland to get to Union Street. Parking is available at the Museum.

DOCENT TOURS AND GROUP RATES

The museum offers docent tours on the second Saturday of each month (2:00pm; free with admission). Docent tours are also available Wednesday–Friday, 12:00–5:00pm, to private groups for a fee of \$75. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is due two weeks prior to the scheduled date. Self-guided tours for K–12 students are offered for free. We regret that we are unable to accommodate docent tours for groups larger than 35 people. Before requesting a tour, please check the exhibition calendar to see which exhibitions will be available during your visit.

A discounted group rate of \$3 per person is available for groups of 20 or more (K–12 student groups are free). Please call to notify us at least one week in advance for these special admission rates. For any questions or to make reservations for a tour or group rate, call our Bookstore and Membership Associate, Susan Wang, at 626.568.3665 x14 or email swang@pmcaonline.org.

For more information, please call 626.568.3665 or visit pmcaonline.org.