

Andrew Smith Gallery, Inc.
Masterpieces of Photography

P R E S S R E L E A S E
F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E
May 16, 2012

Ray K. Metzker

Shadow Catcher

Exhibit Dates: June 28 to August 7, 2013

Andrew Smith Gallery at 122 Grant Ave., Santa Fe, NM 87501 next to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, celebrates our 2013 summer season with the exhibit "Ray Metzker - Shadow Catcher" by the American Master Ray K. Metzker. Now in his early 80s, Ray Metzker has long been recognized as one of America's leading photographers for his innovative street scenes and experimental urban composites. Characterized by profound shadows, crisp geometry and dramatic lines of light, Metzker's photographs blend contemporary life with the camera's creative possibilities and are regarded as one of the greatest achievements of modern American photography.

The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, the Portland Art Museum and the Musee d'Lysee in Lausanne, Switzerland, among others have all had major exhibitions of Metzker's work in the last decade. His photographs are in most of the world's top museum and private collections.

The public is invited to an opening reception at Andrew Smith Gallery on Friday June 28 from 5-7 to view a collection of photographs by Ray Metzker. The exhibition continues through August 7, 2013.

THE CHICAGO LOOP SERIES - 1956 - 1959

Metzker first gained national recognition for the photographs he produced for his master's thesis, "My Camera and I in the Loop," at Chicago's Institute of Design (Chicago Bauhaus). In 1959 Edward Steichen, curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art, visited Chicago, viewed Metzker's thesis portfolio, and subsequently purchased 10 prints. That same year Metzker's photographs were exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the George Eastman House, and as a one-person show at the Art Institute of Chicago. The following photographs from this body of work are on exhibit.

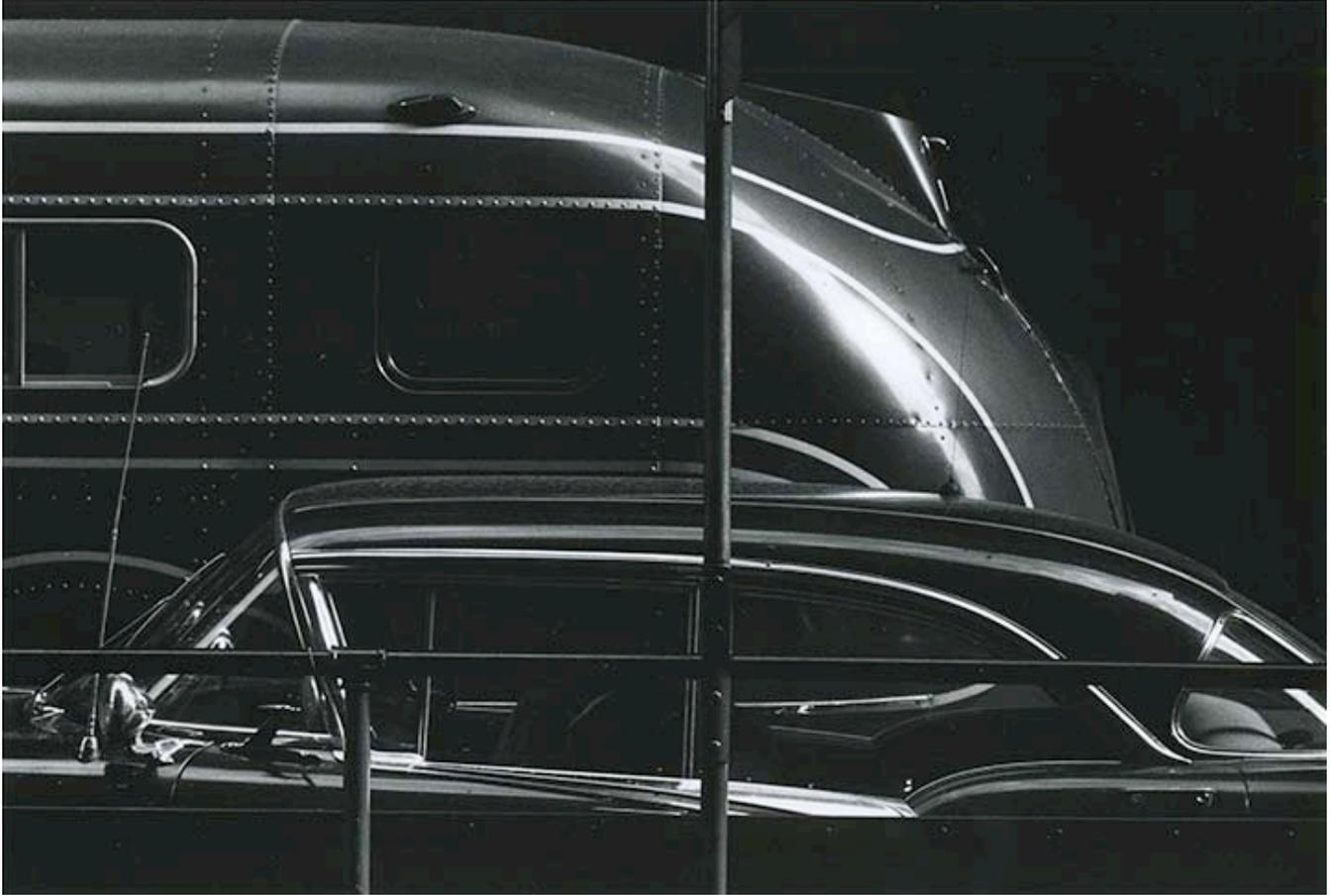
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"Chicago 1958", Negative Date: 1958, Print Date: 1994
5.8" x 8.3", Silver Gelatin Print

In this brooding, dreamlike photograph composed mostly of black and dark gray tones, an African American man sits on a bench, casting a shadow on the wall behind him. A few feet away a young girl in a dress dashes through an open doorway. The setting is enigmatic and it is unclear if this is an outdoor or interior space. Strong, hard-edged shadows devour much of the detail at the top, bottom and right hand side. A window and a doorway open into a shallow space and a brick wall with two identical windows.

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"Chicago, 1958" Negative Date: 1958, Print Date: 1985, 5.7" x 8.4" Silver Gelatin Print

This intensely high contrast photograph is an abstract study of inky black tones and shining white lines. The streamline metal forms of a railing, a sedan and a bus are all sandwiched together by the viewfinder as if occupying the same plane, transformed into glowing gestural lines and dashes in the darkness.

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"Chicago Loop," 1957, Edition 12/20, 8 x 10" Silver Gelatin Print

This wry photograph was taken of an elderly woman on a city street wearing a dark scarf. Against the overall dark tones of the photograph her face floats like a white mask, mirroring the shapes of glowing overhead lights seen through large windows.

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PHILADELPHIA, 1962-64

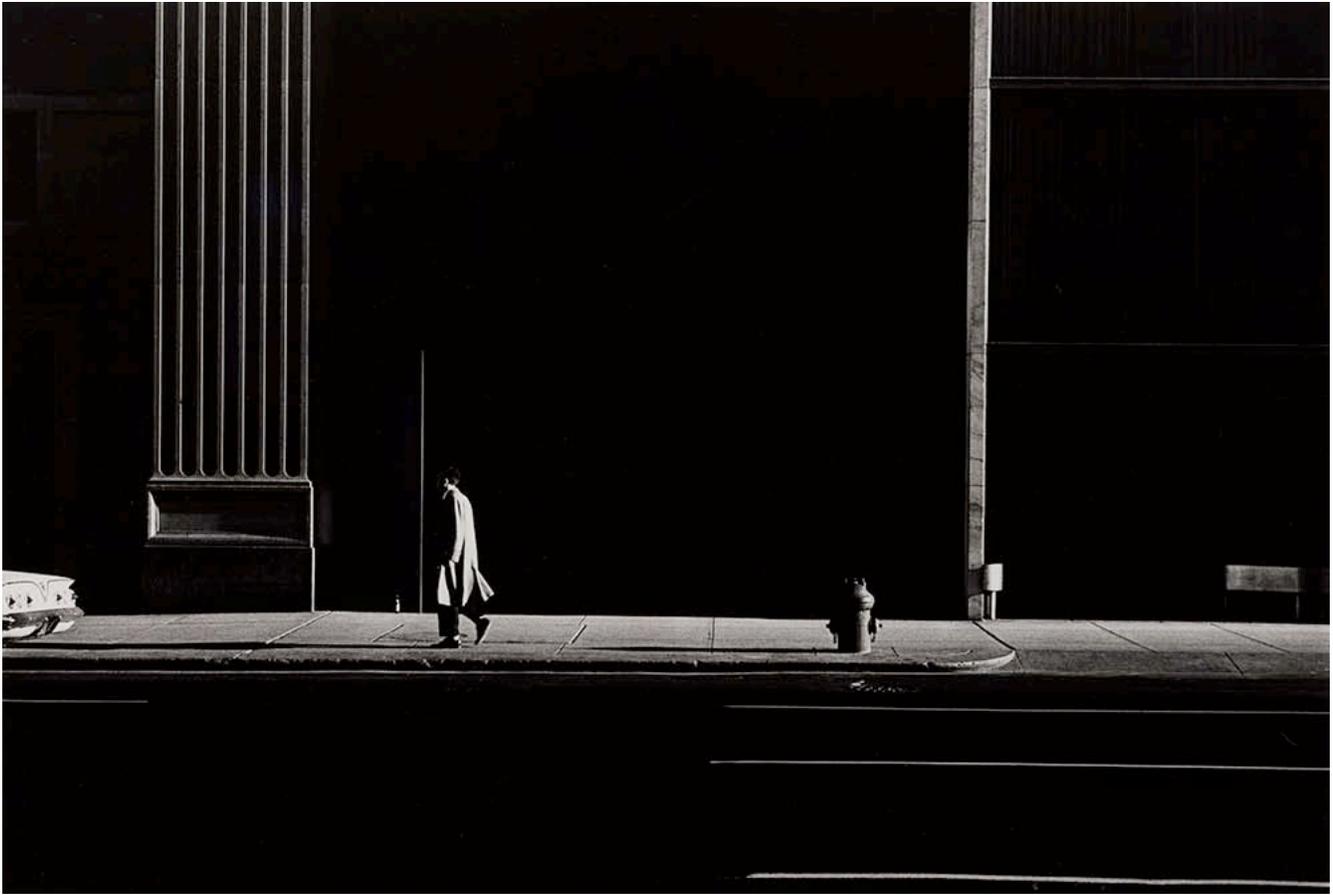
Metzker moved to Philadelphia in 1962 where he photographed the old central section of the city with a 4x5-inch view camera and a 35mm camera, transforming commonplace streets and pedestrians into uncanny and beautiful conjunctions of light and shadow.



"62 CZ-13: Philadelphia", Negative Date: 1962, Print Date: 1969 ca., 6.25" x 9" Silver Gelatin Print

Against a massive pitch black wall two small children make their way. The boy is nearly obscured in shadow, while the little girl in a bright hooded coat holds out her delicate hand as if feeling her way forward, or grasping an invisible doorknob. Above the children float inexplicable shapes; squares, rectangles, and solid geometric lines that belong to objects we cannot identify, other than a large window fan above the girl's head.

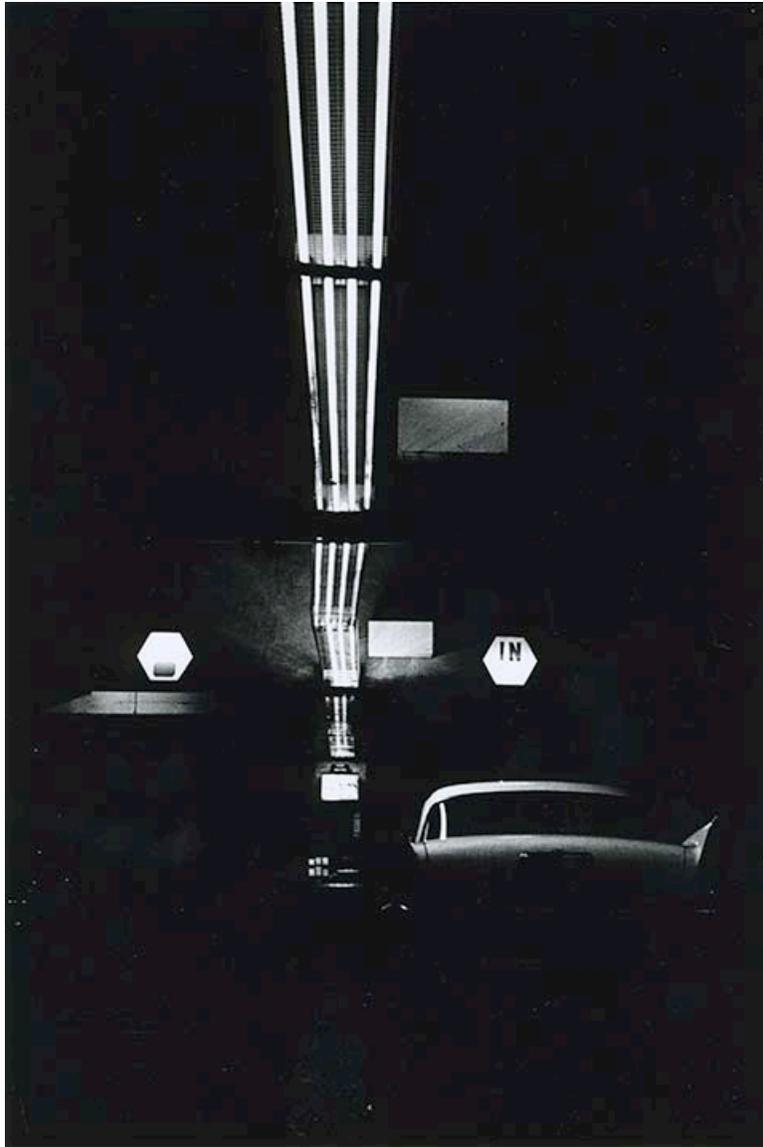
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"63 DO-43: Philadelphia", Negative Date: 1963, Print Date: ca. 1963, 6" x 8.75" Silver Gelatin Print

This vintage print epitomizes Metzger's masterful use of deep shadows, powerful geometry and elegant lines of light. The city street is primarily cast in black shadow against which a horizontal sidewalk reflects sunlight. The light illuminates the long coat worn by a man walking toward a car on the left and creates dramatic vertical lines in the columns of buildings.

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"Philadelphia, 1963" Negative Date: 1963, Print Date: 1963 ca., 8.75" x 5.8" Silver Gelatin Print

Pure white florescent tubes of light run from the top of the image three quarters of the way down, diminishing in size. Against the jet-black background the lights seem to float on the surface of the print. Four ghostly shapes hover in the center, one containing the block letters IN. A parked car with sharp fin tails orients us that this photograph was taken in a parking garage.

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"Philadelphia, 1963", Negative Date: 1963, Print Date: 1984, 5.9" x 8.75" Silver Gelatin Print

A picture of a man in a hat walking under the fluorescent lights in a parking garage has been reduced to nearly pure abstraction. A rectangle of solid black on the left borders a hard-edged white tube. The man in the hat is merely a dark silhouette. The narrow hat brim reiterates the shape of the fluorescent tubes overhead. The camera's viewfinder magnifies the size of forms in the foreground, while diminishing the scale of the man.

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"64 T-29: Philadelphia," 1964, Edition 20/20, 8,75" x 5.875" Silver Gelatin Print

Metzker shot this scene of a rain soaked street from a high vantage point, printing it in very high contrast. A man in a hat and coat strides purposefully through the puddles, his long shadow forming an upside down double on the glistening pavement.

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"63 AX-26: Philadelphia," 1963, Edition 3/5, 6" x 8.875" Silver Gelatin Print

In the darkroom Metzker eliminated so much detail from this scene that it takes a moment to determine the brilliant gestural lines are reflections bouncing off the side of a car.

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"63 HG-17: Philadelphia," 1963, Edition AP1, 6" x 8.75" Silver Gelatin Print

This vintage print is one of Metzker's most stunning masterworks. Against an immense black space, a white uniformed sailor carrying a duffle bag moves as gracefully as a ballet dancer on stage.

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"64 DD-2: Philadelphia," 1964, Edition 14/20, 8" x 10" Silver Gelatin Print

This photograph of several people inside a diner contains a profusion of architectural and advertising elements; a visual complexity that parallels Metzker's fondness for the broken, improvisational rhythms of jazz.

DOUBLE FRAMES AND COMPOSITES, 1964–84

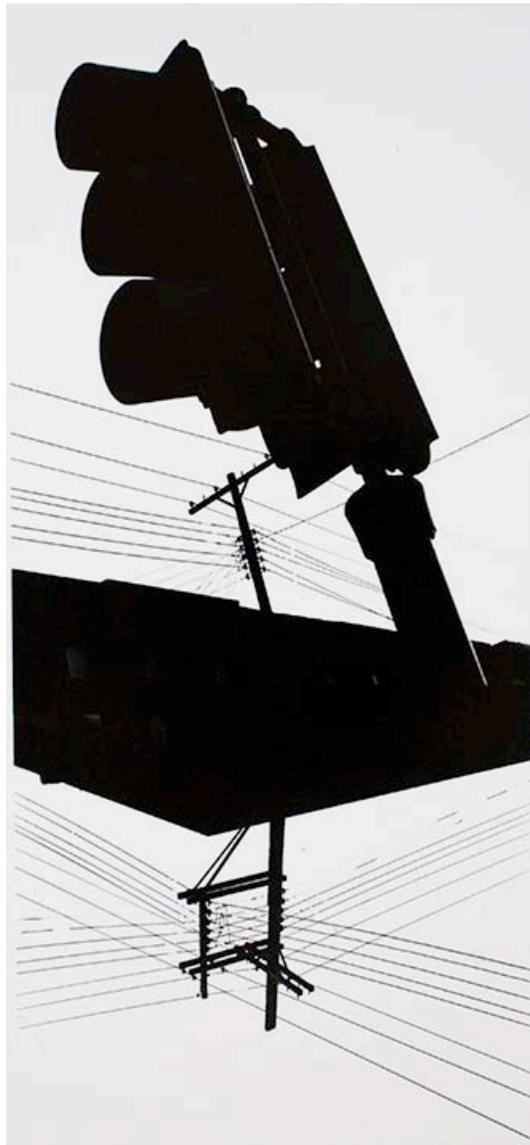
Metzker is well known for his Double Frames and Composites, a style of image making he literally invented after deciding that a single art work could be created from an entire roll of film. From a distance, these works read as dense, abstract, graphic patterns, but seen close up they are made of individual small pictures, which can be read both simultaneously and sequentially.

In the 1960s Metzker became so fascinated by modern kinetic sculptures and the percussive rhythms of early twentieth century composers that he began to look for ways of fracturing his photographs into multiple images designed in grid shapes. He moved away from static single images to explore dynamic multiple and composite works in an effort to create a field of basically equal pictorial units from original photographic prints. These works recall Walker Evans' "Photographer's Window Display, Birmingham, Alabama," 1936, in which hundreds of small portraits are grouped together in regular grids. They also relate to Eadweard

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Muybridge's Animal Locomotion sequences of people and animals in motion represented in grid form, which were the first example of gridded sequence in photography's history. In some cases, Metzger composed nearly identical repetitions of single or similar pictures. In others he created a single work from an entire roll of film. The smallest is less than 13 inches square, the largest more than six feet tall and three feet wide. Metzger received the first of two Guggenheim Fellowships for this series in 1966, which resulted in a one-man show of his Composites at the Museum of Modern Art.

In his Double Frame images Metzger printed portions of adjacent frames of 35mm film together or overlapping exposures to produce new, unexpected arrangements of pictorial space, works that were a major conceptual innovation in creative photography.



"Philadelphia" [1025], Negative Date: 1965, Print Date: 1972 ca., 9" x 3.875 Silver Gelatin Print

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Printed in solid black and white tones the photograph is a whimsical construction of a city traffic light and telephone poles. Contrasting the pencil thin phone lines with the bulky mass of the traffic light, Metzker also reduced the size of the telephone pole against the giant traffic light, making the commonplace familiar objects nearly unrecognizable.



"Composite - 1105 Window", Negative Date: 1965, Print Date: 1965, 26.5 x 13.75" Silver Gelatin Print

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In "1105 Window" Metzker adhered 12 sheets of paper printed from strips of film exposed inside his apartment looking out of a window shot at a slight angle. At first glance each scene appears identical, but on closer inspection there are slight variations in each image, as if Metzker shot the same scene but from a slightly different position. He would expose the film, rewind it partially and then re-expose it, doing this over and over again, eliminating the frame line and bringing the entire image into a vibrating whole. Although composed from an entire role of film, it functions as a single and delightfully abstract work.



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"Composite - Anonymous", 1962/1993, [portraits] 13.25 10.75", Silver Gelatin Prints

For this particular work, Metzker mounted over 150 1" x 1" silver gelatin print portraits to form a 13 1/4" x 10 3/4" rectangle. Each portrait is of a different man or woman of various ages and races. In a few cases, more than one person appears in the frame. Many of the men wear ties, some of the women wear hats, but each is a unique person with unique features and clothing. The common factor is that thin lines of shadow, which acts as a subtle fragmenting feature, stripe each person.

BIOGRAPHY

Ray Metzker was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1931 during the Great Depression into a family with German roots. As a teenager during World War II Metzker and other members of Milwaukee's German community were especially affected by a war waged by Germany. As he grew up Metzker cultivated a love of classical music, U.S. history, and drawing, and was the first person in his family to go to college.

Metzker learned photography when he was twelve, developing prints in his bedroom that he had made with a medium-format folding camera and a 2 1/4 x 3 1/4 Crown Graphic press camera with a strobe flash unit. He studied the photographs printed in Life and Look magazines and in the local Milwaukee Journal, which happened to have one of the finest photojournalism departments in the country. His own photographs were soon winning high school competitions sponsored by Eastman Kodak.

Metzker entered Beloit College, Wisconsin and began doing photojournalist work for the college News Service. Working with a strobe flash to freeze action with hard-edged precision, he quickly learned about the graphic power of light and shadow to create drama and narrative. He admired the brooding, often high contrast documentary photographs of photojournalist W. Eugene Smith for whom photography was grounded in humanitarian ethics.

In 1953 Metzker was drafted into the army and stationed in Korea where he taught courses at the army base's Education Center in photography and music appreciation. After his military service he entered the graduate program at Chicago's Institute of Design, one of the most important photography programs in the U.S., and a training ground for artists and teachers. The avant-garde Hungarian artist and teacher, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, had founded the industrial design school in 1937. He hired Harry Callahan as an instructor and after Callahan became the head of the department he hired Aaron Siskind to join him on the faculty. Metzker studied with both these artists.

Callahan and Siskind encouraged Metzker and other students to seek out their own expressive style of photography. For his graduate thesis Metzker focused on Chicago's Loop district, an energetic business center of the city where elevated train tracks ran in a circle. Working with a 4 x 5-inch camera and then a 2 1/4-inch and 35 mm cameras he tackled the skyscrapers, the train tracks at different angles, commercial signs and storefronts, pedestrians, and car and bus traffic.

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Callahan and Siskind taught Metzker that a photograph should be a satisfying balance of fact and form, deliberately seen and beautifully crafted. According to Keith Davis in his essay "The Photographs of Ray K. Metzker" (2012), photography was to Metzker "a matter of a sustaining balance -- of finding inspiration and renewal in the play between the endless possibilities of the physical world and the language of picture making."

After graduating from ID Metzker spent nearly two years traveling through Europe, England and Scandinavia where he photographed continuously. He shot with a 35-mm Leica and processed his film in hotels rooms or set up makeshift darkrooms in various cities. He was hired as an instructor by the Philadelphia College of Art, a position he would hold for twenty years. In 1970 he took leave from his job for a two-year visiting appointment at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Metzker later described his time in New Mexico as the most challenging of his photographic career because the intensity and sensuality of light in the Southwest was so different than the "linear" light in Philadelphia.

Dates and locations of recent Ray Metzker exhibitions are: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, presented (in slightly modified form) at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, September 25, 2012 - February 24, 2013; and at the Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, September 22, 2013 - January 14, 2014. The original exhibition was on view at The Nelson-Atkins, January 15 - June 5, 2011

The Andrew Smith Gallery will also be exhibiting 7 mini-exhibitions of Ansel Adams master works from the David H. Arrington Collection on the second and third floor. More information on these exhibitions will be announced soon.

Gallery hours at 122 Grant Ave. (next to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum) are 10 - 5:30 Mon. - Sat. For more information please call Andrew Smith Gallery at (505) 984-1234, Fax (505) 983-2428. Visit us online at <http://www.andrewsmithgallery.com> to view photographs from ongoing exhibits. Our e-mail address is info@AndrewSmithGallery.com.

Liz Kay