Shortly after World War II the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) in San Francisco hired renowned photographer Ansel Adams to establish one of the first fine art photography departments in the United States. The CSFA’s photography program, established by Adams and taught by Minor White, also included as guest instructors, some of the great photographers of the time. Top names such as Edward Weston, Dorothea Lange, Imogen Cunningham, Lisette Model, Nancy and Beaumont Newhall, and Homer Page. The newly enacted G.I. Bill enabled all veterans to attend the college or trade school of their choice. For many this opened the door to an educational opportunity which would have otherwise been unavailable to them. This exhibition showcases the work of some of those early students.

The accompanying book The Golden Decade focuses on CSFA’s photography department between 1945 and 1955, and is the result of a collaboration between three former students of Adams and White, William Heick, Ira H. Latour, C. Cameron Macauley, and editors (and local residents) Ken Ball and his wife Victoria Whyte Ball (whose father, Don Whyte, had bequeathed them an abundance of negatives and contact prints from his student years at CSFA). Together this team embarked on an important journey into photography’s past that is embodied in this book.

The Golden Decade presents imagery from over 32 photographers, among them Pirkle Jones, Ruth Marion Baruch, Philip Hyde, Rose Mandel, David Johnson, Gerald Ratto and John Upton.
Bay Meadows Racetrack, CA  1949  C. Cameron Macauley

The Orient Express  1952  Ira H. Latour

Hats  Seattle, Washington  1951  William Heick

Winter Forest Near Badger Pass, Yosemite National Park, CA  1948  Philip Hyde

Dancing at a Joint in the Bayview District, San Francisco  1957  David Johnson

San Francisco, CA  1953  Bob Hollingsworth

San Francisco, CA  1948  Pat Harris

High resolution images are available on request. Please contact Ken Ball or Victoria Whyte Ball