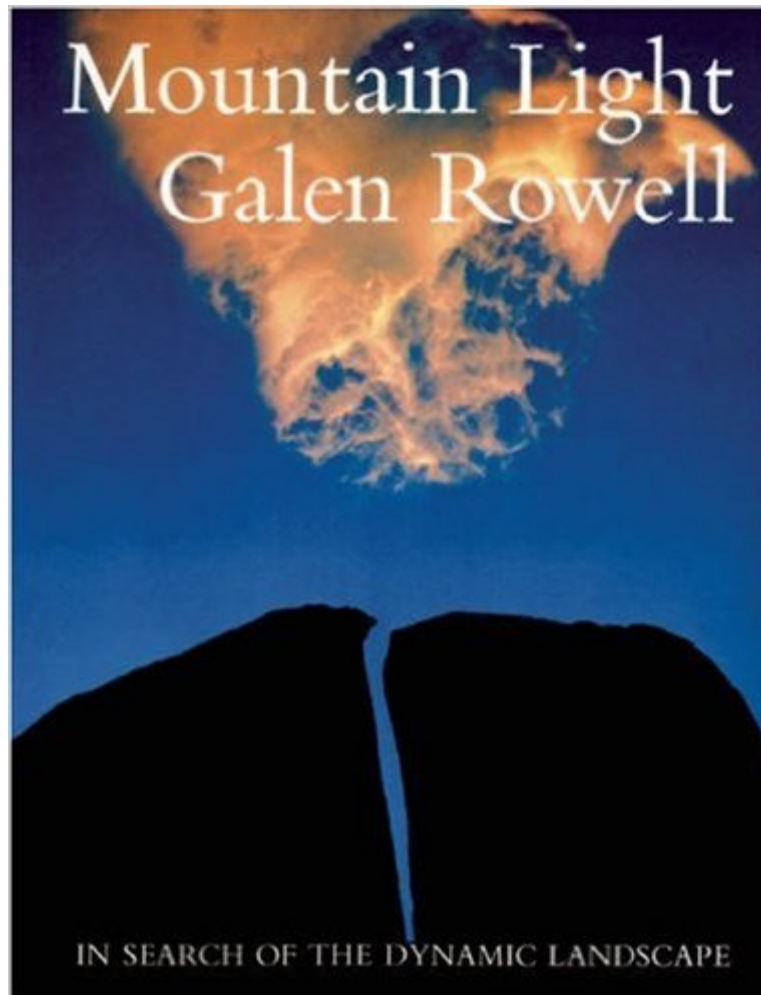


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Mountain Light: In Search Of The Dynamic Landscape, Tenth-Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

This best-selling classic, which the New York Times called "the classiest how-to" text on landscape color photography ever published, captures the unique artistic vision of the late Galen Rowell, one of America's greatest outdoor photographers. Here Rowell assembled eighty of his finest images, along with the stories behind them; what he was after and how he achieved it. The photographs (and the details of their creation) are arranged in eight exhibits according to visual themes, reflecting Rowell's fascination with the infinitely varying qualities of light found in mountain landscapes. He explains how film and the human eye see differently, how he selected and composed the content of his work, how he worked with optical phenomena and natural light, and how equipment and adventure interact in the field. The engaging text also recounts Rowell's development as a photographer, his philosophy and techniques for creating "dynamic landscapes" and his adventures in remote, dangerous, and beautiful places; from California's Yosemite Valley to almost-inaccessible peaks in China.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read probably 20 books on photographic instruction, leafed through at least a hundred more, spent countless hours on web articles, sites, talking to people, and at least as much time taking pictures, but this is first time I can truly say that something changed my perspective of the craft. After reading each chapter I would shoot a roll of film with more confidence and better artistic and technical results. What is most striking to me is how generous Galen is with information. He explains

how things work, not by telling you what to do, but by relating what HE did, which helped me draw my own conclusions and understand the material more thoroughly. For example, most photographers know that polarizers increase color saturation, cut down on glare, etc. but Galen goes the extra step of integrating the explanation with his style of photography and use of light. My appreciation for the utility of polarizers increased tenfold. He does a similar job of demystifying many other aspects of photography. I really can't say enough about Galen Rowell's messages, whether they are technical, artistic, or even philosophical. Everything made sense. After reading between the lines I realized it's not just for photography instruction, but a way to approach life itself. Read his thoughts about "Luck" and you will know what I mean. Thank you Galen!

IF you love the mountains and the feeling they give you as you take in their grandeur...or if you love photographing these majestic places, this book will likely become one of your favorites. As a landscape photographer, I've poured over literally thousands of landscape photos - in books, slides and magazines - but the work of Galen Rowell stands alone in the realm of mountain landscapes. As Arthus-Bertrand has mastered photography from above (aerial) and Doubilet from below (undersea), Rowell has mastered the mountains. If you pay attention to his photos and read what Rowell has to say about the making of each, you will begin to "see the light" - quite literally. No one captures the ethereal like Galen Rowell. He has the rare ability to sense and then photograph those fleeting moments that most (even many photographers) only daydream about. His photos will not only impress your eyes but they will tug at your soul. If ever a collection of photographs defined the majesty and mystery of mountains, this is it.

Like Galen Rowell, I am a professional photographer specialising in landscape and mountain subjects. Also like him, I am what is sometimes called 'self-taught' - which, of course, means we never took college courses in photography, but have learned from many people, both in person and from books. (Has there been a genuinely self-taught photographer since Fox Talbot?) In my case, one of the most - perhaps the most - significant books has been 'Mountain Light'. There are other photographers who are as good as Galen Rowell, but very few who can write so clearly and illuminatingly about the creative and technical processes involved. Ansel Adams, of course, is the towering exception, but he was principally concerned with black and white large format photography. Galen Rowell speaks directly to those who work in colour and with smaller cameras. Adams is essential reading, but so is Galen Rowell.

Galen Rowell's "Mountain Light" teaches beginning, intermediate and even advanced landscape photographers more about "seeing" than any other landscape photography book I have read. Unlike many other great photographers who cannot explain their craft with great clarity (including the incomparable Henri Cartier-Bresson who simply says it is "geometry"), Rowell is articulate and explains what he is doing technically, but more important artistically. Rowell has often been compared to the American landscape portrait artist Thomas Cole--but Thomas Cole on his best day could never have produced the quality of art that Galen Rowell gives to us every day. A lot of books can teach you technique; Rowell shows technique as a part of art. The art drives the technique and not the other way around. Everyone can learn something useful from this book. A tour de force.

Galen Rowell was a world-class mountaineer and photographer. He passed away with his wife in an airplane crash on August 11, 2002. He was a master of color landscapes and had the knack of catching unique combinations of light in the memorable photos that can be seen in his Mountain Light Gallery. Interestingly, he eschewed the large format cameras used by Ansel Adams and used exclusively 35mm cameras from Nikon (thus thoroughly debunking the orthodoxy that 35mm cannot be used for serious landscape photography). In this book, Rowell lays out his relation to mountains, his artistic vision and his photographic techniques, in an engaging and lively style alternating between theoretical text and more illustrative intermezzos with detailed descriptions of the story behind each image (reminiscent of Ansel Adams' Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs). Like Ansel Adams, he was a member of the Sierra Club, but ecological preoccupations are woven subtly in the text. He shows a photo taken near a 4900 year old bristlecone pine that was felled by a botanist who couldn't be troubled to special-order a core sampling borer from Switzerland. The photos in the book are gorgeous, but this is no mere coffee-table book (it is too affordable to be one, for starters). All in all, I believe this book is a must-read for anyone interested in landscape photography, even if you are not into the strenuous physical style he favored.

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