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Bernice E. Rogowitz
Thrasyvoulos N. Pappas
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Photographing the range of light: Works by Ansel Adams and John Sexton

John Sexton*

John Sexton Photography (United States);

ABSTRACT

In 1979, Ansel Adams published a collection of his photographs titled "Yosemite and the Range of Light." [1] Ansel, more than many photographers, realized that light falling on a scene is both a challenge, as well as a creative opportunity. The challenge being that one-size-fits-all automation of scene capture cannot handle the great changes in light intensity. Creative opportunities, with variations from deep shade with uniform illumination to strong direct sun and dark shadows, can make photographs more interesting and compelling. During my many years working closely with Ansel, I realized that the true subject matter of a successful photograph is indeed light. Ansel codified the techniques of capturing and rendering the natural scene with his Zone System of exposure and development. The key element of Adams' Zone System is the ability to visualize within the limits of the photographic materials. This talk will illustrate through Adams' photographs, and my own images, the importance of interpreting - rather than mere recording - in creative photography. It will include examples of photographs before and after the resourceful steps involved in expressive printmaking, which create an image that not only is a representation of what we see, but also what we feel.

Keywords: photography, zone system, rendering the natural image

1. AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Using photographs by Ansel Adams and the author, this talk describes the capture and rendition of the natural scene.

The images used in this talk can be found in a series of books:

Ansel Adams,

“The Eloquent Light”, 1963 [2]

“Photographs of the Southwest” 1976 [3]

“The Portfolios of Ansel Adams”, 1977 [4]

“Yosemite and the Range of Light”, 1979 [1]

Ansel wrote a series of technical manuals that described the details of the Zone System.

Ansel Adams,

“The Camera: The New Ansel Adams Photography Series/Book One”, 1980 [5]

“The Negative: The New Ansel Adams Photography Series/Book Two”, 1981 [6]

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“Natural Light Photography: Basic Photo Four”, 1956 [8]

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“Polaroid Land Photography”, 1978 [10]

Ansel described the circumstances and techniques he used in making his most celebrated images:

Ansel Adams,

“Ansel Adams: Letters and Images, 1916-1984”, (1988) [11]

“Examples: The Making of 40 Photographs”, (1989). [12]

Ansel’s biography, written with Mary Alinder provides different insights into Ansel’s works:

“Ansel Adams: An Autobiography”, (1996) [13]

The images by the author can be found in the following books:

John Sexton,

“Quiet Light”, (1990) [14]

“Listen to the Trees”, (1994) [15]

“Places of Power: The Aesthetics of Technology”, (2000) [16]

“Recollections: Three Decades of Photographs”, (2006) [17]

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