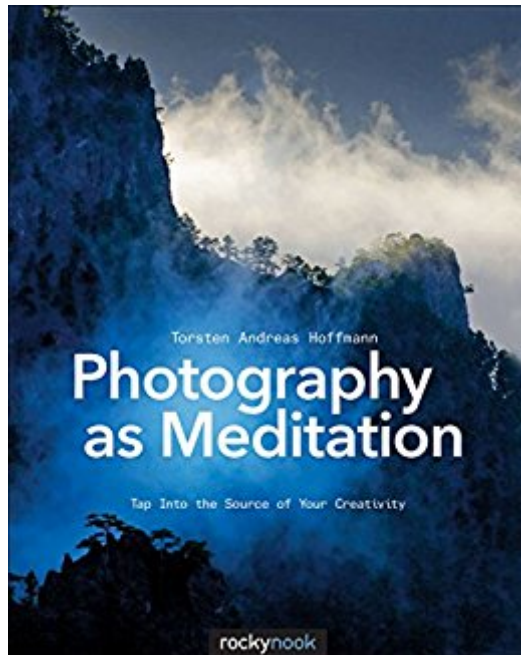


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# Photography As Meditation: Tap Into The Source Of Your Creativity



## Synopsis

For many people, photography serves as a form of meditation; a way to separate themselves from their stressful lives. In this book, Torsten Andreas Hoffmann explores an approach to artistic photography based on Japanese Zen-Philosophy. Meditation and photography have much in common: both are based in the present moment, both require complete focus, and both are most successful when the mind is free from distracting thoughts. Hoffman shows how meditation can lead to the source of inspiration. Hoffman's impressive images of landscapes, cities, people, and nature, as well as his smart image analysis and suggestions about the artistic process, will help you understand this approach to photography without abandoning the principles of design necessary to achieve great images. Photographing busy scenes, especially, requires an inner calm that enables you to have intuition for the right moment and compose a well-balanced image amidst the chaos. The goal of this book is to develop your photographic expression. It provides enrichment for photographers who believe that only technical mastery produces great images and shows how important it is to engage with your own awareness to act creatively.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I strongly suspect that if one were able to clear one's mind, as Zen Buddhism suggests, one might be able to focus on the world in such a way that one might capture better photographs, although at the same time perhaps those photographs might be better for the artist than for other viewers. The author of this book might agree with me. Early in the book the author suggests that he is not dealing with Zen as a religion but as a philosophy, and I might go a step further and say that he is considering a practice of Zen called zazen, a form of meditation that requires quiet contemplation. (I tread lightly to avoid offending those who practice Zen Buddhism.) By this form of meditation, it is said, one frees oneself from distracting thoughts to enable one to focus. This focus will allow you to see the world more clearly and therefore take or capture or visualize better images. The author suggests that zazen allows us to be free of the scientific, logical mind to engage the world. And yet he seems to see the contradiction here, since the process of creating an image requires technique to reveal content, both of which are aspects of the logical mind. To me, the suggestion of the title that photography can be meditation is misleading. It can be like meditation, in that many good photographers are focused on the image, but most do not show the detachment from the world that is a result of zazen. The main text consists mostly of two page spreads with plenty of white space that could probably be read in an hour if not for the photographs. These images appear to relate to the text although some times the image comment deals more with technique or content. Many of the images look like Chinese or Japanese brush and ink drawings, while others are overly dark and brooding.

The book is one part discussion on emptying the mind and one part discussion on photography. The author uses examples from his portfolio to illustrate various yoga or zen techniques to achieve the purpose of clarity of vision. If you want to focus on the basics of an image, free of distractions from your own mind, this might be a good read for you. But if you are of a more skeptical mindset, you'll find this to be a lot of hooey. As well, note that this is intended for mature, very experienced photographers, not beginner or intermediate. You can't clear your mind if you are trying to figure out settings for aperture or finding a comp. Contents: Thoughts on photography and meditation; Intriguing ideas about zen philosophy; Zen is not "light"; The practice of zazen; Mysticism and thoughts about the absence of God; Eastern and western thought; file drawers and direct experience; Anecdote; Is photography a life experienced second hand; Photography as a direct experience; Duality dissolved; Studium and punctum; Impression and expression; What is depth, or the secret of the night; Inner and outer landscapes; The alleged objectivity of photography; Basic moods expressed; Representing beauty without being shallow; Photography as a puzzle; Street

photography; Creating special magic; Photography as ink painting; Magic in the detail; Abstractions; What is creativity?; Image design perceived during meditation; Subsequent critical analysis and interpretation; The path to your own style. The chapters are only a few pages each with 1-2 page spreads of the author's photographs. Most discussions are about how the author uses Buddhist teachings, zen meditation, and yoga to clear his mind to see only the essence of an area and how to photograph it.

We can sum this up. Meditation and photography have a lot in common: both deal with the present moment, both demand the highest degree of awareness, and both are most attainable when the mind is empty and free from distractions. This is where the book, *Photography as Meditation* by Torsten Andreas Hoffmann, takes off, and its aim is show you how to tap into the source of your creativity and make meaningful photographs. How do you do that? The book describes a meditative approach to photography and the aim is to help you develop your own form of photographic artistic expression. The act of photographing, and the resulting photographs, can be very emotional, the author says, and the medium lends itself particularly well to capturing the variety of moods and feelings in the human range of emotion. There are instructions on how to meditate, the whole of Chapter 4 on the practice of Zazen does that, although the author explains that it is not his intention to convert anyone reading the book to any particular style of thinking, especially not a religion. The beauty of Zen is that it is a practice aimed at a deeper understanding of one's own mind and being, rather than a religious doctrine. This practice of honesty and openness is an excellent foundation for meaningful personal artistic expression. The purpose of Chapter 4's instructions is to bring you to that meditative state, that feeling of stillness which can be different and unique with every person. Meditation and contemplation are common to religions and cultural practices, including Christianity and Buddhism but in this book, the author relates mostly to Zen meditation, which he considers to be very interesting because it is free from dogma associated with any particular doctrine.

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