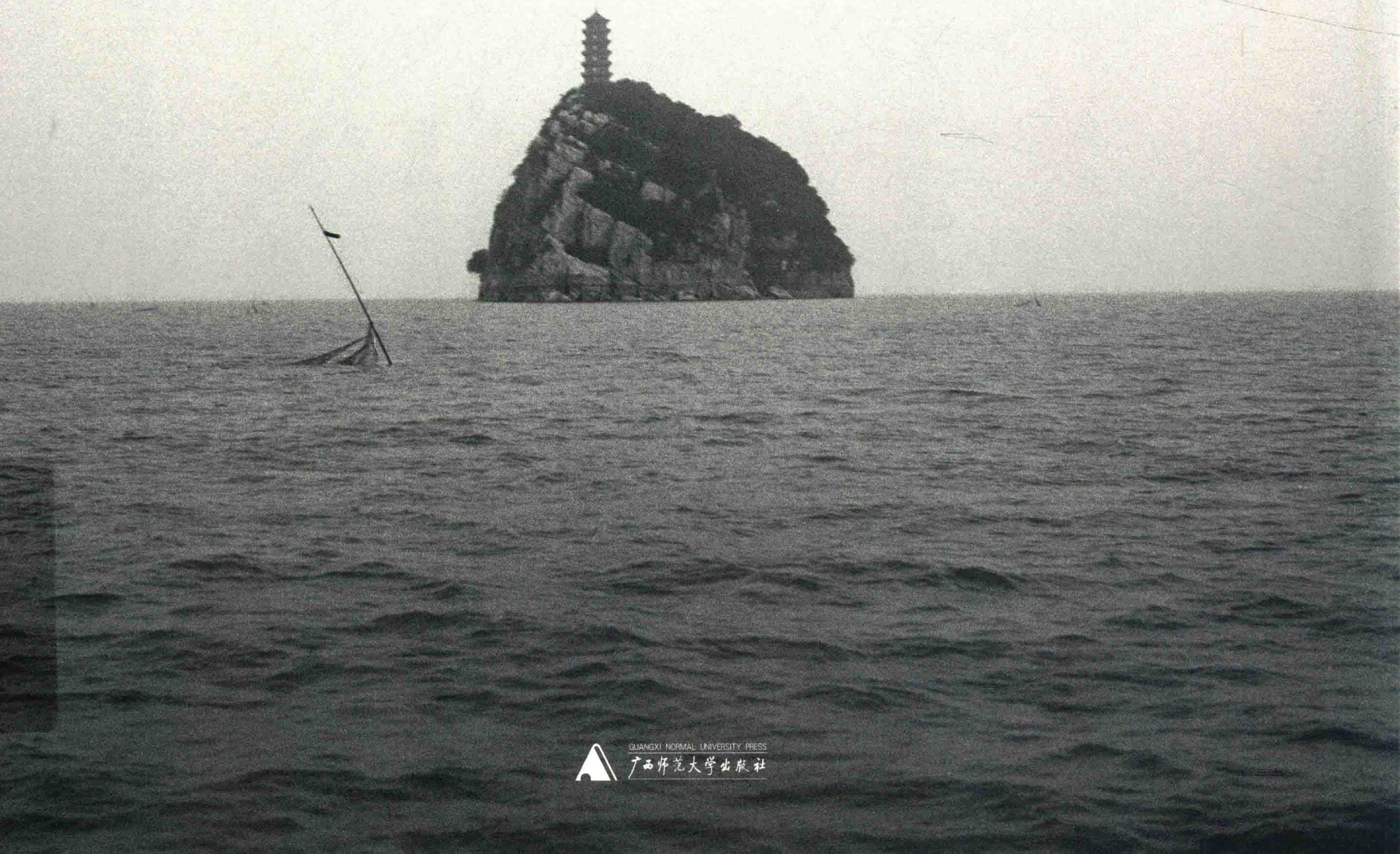


大国志

C o u n t r y o f A m b i t i o n

严 明

Y a n M i n g



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广西师范大学出版社

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决定性气氛

严 明

超越瞬间

好的照片，应该拍出气氛。

气氛是什么？《现代汉语词典》的解释是：“气氛，一定环境中给人某种强烈感觉的精神表现或景象。”布列松的“决定性瞬间”理论，其实强调了关键的时机和位置，它无疑想把事态体现得“恰如其时”，抓住情况的高潮；我认为“决定性的气氛”对一张照片来说要更高级，更至关重要，它是“恰如其氛”。它是意境和情境全在的共同高潮，它在呈现关键事态的同时，附加了更动人、夺人的感染力。是气氛将表达从“看”送至“感”的层面，将“难得”变成“难忘”。

瞬间是摄影的重大魅力。初迷恋上摄影的人，包括我，都是“决定性瞬间”理论的忠实信徒。我们都曾为那些巧妙瞬间寻猎街头，为之精心预判，为之苦苦蹲守，只为抓取到被猎者到达正确的位置、出现最佳神态。本着“得之我幸，不得我命”的态度，乐此不疲地做着瞬间收集工作。我们为“抓到”了什么而暗爽或欢呼，一次次成功的“抓捕”已然让我们优于外行并收获同行的赞叹。

后来发觉，巧妙瞬间的照片仍然可能是“死”的照片，总觉得缺少些什么。就像我们面对一个女子，发现她五官部件都长得没有问题，可总觉得“差点意思”，这点意思是什么？也会觉得一些照片很好，好

在哪里，就是说不出来。要素齐集、位置精妙之外，还有一个撬动人心的隐而未露的力量，这股子劲让人觉得它“神”，耐看。

终于发现，好的照片在信息要素之外，还有一种整体的情绪，它是味道和腔调。这个东西，就叫气氛，是它在默默完成了作品层次的提升。对于那女子来说，差的那点“意思”可能是五官的协调性、灵秀气，更可能是勾人的性感。极致的美丽，是没法说出具体标准的，所以有“美艳不可方物”这样的话。拍到了、拍巧了的照片还不能成为好照片，拍神了的照片才是。堆放在地上的固态的烟花还不叫烟花，还需将它引燃，绽放在空中。照亮人们惊喜的脸，映在人们脑海中的，才是烟花。

注意并利用气氛是摄影的必须。跟一部电影相比，摄影师只提供一帧画面，而一部电影往往有几万帧画面，它可由演员来反复表演，可剪辑修改，有情节对白辅助，有音乐一直在烘托……与一部两小时长度电影相比，摄影作品被观看、领会的过程很短，往往在几秒之内即告完成，这让我们紧张和不甘。摄影需要在短时间内解决问题，而这个短时间，长期以来被我们误认为就是瞬间。我并不是说画面内容和瞬间情节不重要，而是“内容”在场之外，还要有气场，即与内容相辅相成的气氛。眼前的现实会转换成影像中包含摄影者情绪的现实，这才会引领观者进入现实的深处。比如一张照片拍出了宁静、拍出了凄清、拍出了紧张，这些都是让客观带了“感”，就是气氛营造的代入感，超越了瞬间，超越了物之边界，超凡入圣。

无聊的高清

这些年，影视进入高清时代，我们每天可以看到屏幕上洁无纤尘的清晰人脸。皮肤的汗毛、衣服的线条孔都能数得清楚，视觉好坏仿佛迎来了一个清晰度的标准。清晰让人看了带劲，可让人觉得带劲的不

完全是清晰。视觉科技的进步痛扫观影障碍，可是无障碍通道把我们引向的可能还是个精神空洞。清晰真切反而暴露了很多的假，我想这也给化妆界带来了灾难，剧中的古人怎么看都是崭新的今人，连乞丐都是豪华版的了，这都是高清带来的新尴尬。

摄影中也有同样的情况。许多人会钟情于准确的色彩还原、丰富的层次、更多的细节……至死不渝，完全不顾目的，或许他们追求的那些即是终极目的。他们不知道，这世界的美，不仅是单一的清晰的美，除了真真切切，还有隐隐约约、依稀仿佛、亦真亦幻、如烟似雾、镜花水月，它们都可以是存乎一心的至美。整体的情境被忽略是可惜的，只剩下“超清晰”、“贼清楚”，却并没有说明问题，而对的气氛给我们传达的意味是无尽的。

一味追求细节是低级的，不必要的细节和元素应该去除。细节会给“玩摄影”的人致命吸引，心心念念想去表现它，甚至去炫耀它。投入了大量时间精力金钱去解决一个又一个小问题，始终避开大问题，真的以为摄影是“看”的艺术，一直徘徊在“看”而不是把传递“感”放在首位。眼中有，心中无，就只能做一个细部视觉奇观爱好者。真正的艺术家总在触摸精神性的东西，艺术是要表达、传情的，技术只是一厢情愿，只有通情才会达理。

我们看了一张照片后夸赞拍得清晰，就像听了别人朗诵后说他口齿真清楚、夸奖一个跳舞的身材好、表扬一位写作者文笔很好，有没有觉得这些评价荒唐、残忍？残忍的是我们拥有了基本条件之后事实上什么都还没有做。

顾局部不顾整体，讲手段不讲实效，只埋头拉车不抬头看路……人在努力中会犯着这样的错误。摄影最终是精神乐趣，不是好勇斗狠的竞技运动。情怀和情感，不是金钱和技巧可以弥补的。炫耀是最虚弱的暴露，甚至让人疑惑其动机到底是什么。死钻细节，始终迷失，找不到门，这算哪门子摄影呢？

“如果你拍得不够好，那是因为你离得不够近。”罗伯特·卡帕指导报道摄影的一句话让几代摄影师一直崇奉。我却习惯离得远，发现好情境时的反应却是“抓起相机就往回跑”。我不怕把被摄对象拍小，

我是想把环境氛围拍大。中国古代山水画很智慧地运用了“远”，远，给人一种感受空间，远消除了形质的局限。让观看有了视觉延伸，将观看转移至想象，将一切推向妙境，方寸万里。

气氛很容易被忽略，尽管我们在拍照的时候，通常是被包括环境气氛在内的情景所感动，于是才决定拍摄。可是一旦开拍，很容易就一味地逼近去刻画、表现，这样会抓小丢大。道法自然，气氛是来自大自然的响应，是可用的力气。近与清晰帮不了你的时候，试着跳出来看看，向大自然借力，经营一种气象，一个让别人更愿意停留的梦。

胸中有了整体，减法就被提上了议事日程。简单最美，大道至简。许多人为了避免错误而把事情变复杂，导致更多错误。就像话多的人容易说得多错得多一样，我们会劝诫他“沉默是金”，摄影也是同样的道理。“简单是复杂的千锤百炼。”苏联“波波莎”冲锋枪设计者说过这样一句话：“把事情变得复杂非常简单，把事情变得简单非常复杂。”简约最容易统一，让观看者感受集中，要敢于空。空是灵，远是灵，它起到的效果叫做“胜却人间无数”。

用直觉做艺术

人类活在这世上，乏味得很，加上对未来的隐忧，故而一直渴望通灵。

通灵自然不易，人类前仆后继想了很多高招也不见实效，到头来仍旧俗是俗仙是仙。庙堂里香烟缭绕、烛光摇曳、敲钟打磬，都是人类想要通灵的努力，但它们最终停留在仪式的层面上，并未升仙。那么，在摄影上，在平面、无声的世界里，我们能做什么呢？创造或把握气氛，即是为观者准备的最真诚的仪式。我们当然也不能靠图片通灵，让观看者欲仙欲死，但我们可以通过“灵”达成互通，相知相感。既然我们不得不用沉默说话，我们就要把握最有力的语言。气氛是瞬间的无声话语，是对观看者最后的陈词。

照片中的气氛，来自适合的天气、光线、影调等，它可以来自当时的观察，也可以是相机、镜头、相纸提供的风格和调子。它的核心是摄影师了解这一切后的临场把握，做“入眼又入心”的选择。摄影师看到了什么，取决于内心有什么与之呼应。这种呼应是眼和心的双重激荡，是个瞬间“带感”的过程。如果确定达不到“带感”，干脆就不要拍它。这样的话，观察的标准提升了，有了筛选的能力，被选取的就会都是动人的。形成了这种直通，就进入了用直觉工作的境界。

当摄影师通过某种途径与现实建立某种联系的时候，这种气氛的传达才产生可能。当我们事后分析照片时，受到其中气氛的感染，也许会分析、划定出其风格、流派、技术、文化、时代、器材，反推摄影师拍摄的种种可能，其实这些形而下的解构是无法探寻其真相的。摄影师对气氛的把握完全是一种形而上的感觉，一种瞬间的触动。一张看似“精确打击”的图片，背后往往有一个“模糊控制”的秘密。灵的画面，来自于灵妙的选择，源自于心有灵犀的人。创作是非常主观的事情，它并不是多神秘的事情，只是它不属于器材攻坚派和技术分析师。

爱因斯坦说过：“直觉，是上帝给我们的神圣礼物，而理性思考是它忠诚的仆人。我们的社会居然把一切荣耀归于仆人，却忘了礼物的存在。”

“好东西不费劲。”我实在是喜欢这句话。

气氛的作用是情境暗合、里应外合，给人带来的是松绑，是自由，是解放。我们在摄影中不只是凝固瞬间，而是通过气氛把瞬间释放，把紧张化解，将情境幻化。

终于，我们可以从一切“可预期”的习性中出来了。我们要珍视这种解放，它灵光一点，价值千金。

如果能像一个孩子一样，纯真而坦率；像个信仰者一样，行走在朝圣的路上，你应能感到一种上苍眷顾的荣幸，轻取每次快门响动的意义。因为那不再是为了记录而搜集，这是一个过程，摄影师只是这个过程的参与者，跟画面中的一切要素一样是其中某一角色，一个忘我的存在。这时，我们要走的路，跟之前走过的所有路都有关，一点也不会孤单和为难。

只待尘世迎面扑来。

安塞尔·亚当斯说得再清楚不过，值得谨记：

“我们不只是用相机拍照，我们带到摄影中去的是所有我们读过的书、看过的电影、听过的音乐、爱过的人。”

The Decisive Atmosphere

By Yan Ming

Transcending the Moment

Good photos should capture the atmosphere.

What is atmosphere? According to the dictionary definition, atmosphere is “a sight or mental manifestation that produces some form of intense feeling in a particular environment.” Cartier-Bresson’s theory of “the Decisive Moment” stresses the significance of timing and positioning. It strives to convey the momentary and seize hold of the situation at its climax. I believe that “the Decisive Atmosphere”—that which conveys the atmospheric—is still more critical. It is the crux between mood and setting, and as it presents the critical scene it simultaneously adds an additional appeal that is more moving and beguiling. It is atmosphere that turns *seeing* into *feeling*; *unobtainable* into *unforgettable*.

The Moment is one of the great charms of photography. Those who become obsessed with photography (including myself) are all faithful followers of the theory of the Decisive Moment. In search of that marvelous moment we have prowled the streets, made the most meticulous preparations, endured the most arduous of stakeouts. All in order to seize hold of our prey in its optimum position

and pose. Accepting that “success is luck; failure is fate” means never growing tired of one’s job as an accumulator of moments. When we do manage to seize something we cheer, or we feel inner relief; so many successful captures have placed us beyond the layman, and earned us the praise of our fellow professionals.

Eventually I realised that the photos of these marvelous moments may still be dead, that they always seem to be missing something. Just like facing a girl and discovering that—while there may be nothing wrong with her features—it feels as though something else is absent. What is this *something*? We feel certain photos are good, but what makes them good is that which cannot be expressed. There is some power, besides the presence of all the essential elements and the perfect positioning, a hidden power that can touch the heart and make one feel a photo has spirit, is worthy of appreciation.

At last I discovered that aside from the essential information that good photos convey, there is also a unified emotion, comprising flavour and tone. This what we call atmosphere, and it is atmosphere that quietly elevates a work. As for the aforementioned girl, the missing something might be some kind of harmony in her features, or refinement, or—most likely—sexual attraction. We cannot express any specific criteria for the epitome of beauty, which is why we say that true beauty defies comparison. Cleverly shot photos can never be good photos; good photos can only be shot with spirit. A heap of unlit fireworks on the ground are not fireworks—they only become fireworks when they have been ignited, when they burst into the sky and illuminate the faces and the minds of all the keen spectators.

Paying attention to and making use of atmosphere is an essential prerequisite of photography. To compare with a movie: a photographer need only provide a single frame, whereas a movie comprises tens of thousands of frames; but a movie is augmented with the repeat performances of the actors, the

extensive editing, the plot and the dialogue, the accentuation of the music. Compared with the two-hour length of a movie, the duration in which an observer can appreciate a photograph is brief—often no more than a matter of seconds—and this makes us anxious and incontinent. The photograph must resolve the problem in this short timeframe, and for a long time this brief length of time has been misinterpreted as the Moment. I do not claim that the contents of the image or the circumstances of the Moment are not important, but that in addition to the manifest contents, it is also necessary to have charisma: that is, the complementary enhancement of contents and atmosphere. The perceived reality can become an image that contains the reality of the photographer's feelings, and this is the only means by which the observer can be inducted into reality's true depths. A photo can capture calm, for example, or cold, or tension, and these are all feelings that can be conveyed to the observer: surrogate feelings that have been created by atmosphere, transcending the Moment, transcending the physical realm, and attaining enlightenment.

Dreary High Definition

Film and television have recently entered the HD era. Every day, we can see crisp faces on the screen without the slightest hint of the granular. We can enumerate the hairs on skin or the seams of clothing, and clarity has become the sole criterion determining visual quality. Clarity is exciting to look upon, but it is not just the clarity that excites. The development of visual technology has swept away all impediments to the viewer, but an unimpeded passage may be leading us towards a spiritual vacuum. Perfect clarity in fact reveals artifice, which I believe has proven a calamity in the world of cosmetics.

The characters in period dramas always end up looking like the pristine people of today; even beggars look sumptuous—and this awkwardness has been introduced by high definition.

The same applies to photography. Many are obsessed with the perfect colour reproduction, the richness of gradation, the abundance of details and so forth. Single-minded, they pursue them regardless of purpose—or perhaps the pursuit is their ultimate purpose. They do not realise that the beauty of the world is not merely the beauty of a uniform clarity, but that there is also the vague, the dimly discernible, the semi-unreal, the hazy, the illusory, and that they too have their own lingering beauty. It is a pity when the unified situation is neglected, and all that remains is super HD and hyper-clarity—which fail to resolve the problem, whereas the significance that can be conveyed through the correct atmosphere is inexhaustible.

The blind pursuit of details is rudimentary; unnecessary details and elements should be excised. Details fascinate those who play at being photographers; they yearn to display them and even flaunt them. They invest a great deal of time, energy and money into dealing with one minor problem after another, while constantly evading the major questions; treating photography as though it is no more than the art of looking, always stuck on *looking* without ever prioritising *feeling*. If the eyes are replete but the heart is empty, one can never be more than a dilettante of spectacular details. The true artist always strives to touch the spiritual. Art is expression, is the conveyance of emotion; technique is self-indulgence. The only true principle is the sharing of emotion.

Praising a photo for its clarity is like praising an orator for the timbre of their voice, or a dancer for their shapely figure; like commending an author for having a nice way with words. Is such an appraisal not absurd and cruel? Cruel, because it acknowledges nothing beyond the most rudimentary prerequisites.

Paying attention to isolated parts and not the whole, paying attention to the method and not the effect, striving only to pull the cart and not raising one's head to look at the road: these are the kind of mistakes we make in the midst of our exertions. Photography is ultimately a spiritual pleasure, not a fiercely competitive sport. Money and technique are no compensation for emotion. To show off is to reveal one's weakness, and we might wonder what its true motivation might be. Fixating on details, getting lost and failing to find a way in: what kind of photography is this?

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough" – so says Robert Capa's guide to photography, canonised by several generations of photographers. But I have grown accustomed to distance. Whenever I discover a promising situation, my reaction is to grab my camera and run backwards. I am not worried about the subject of the photograph being too small—it is the surrounding atmosphere that I want to enlarge. Traditional Chinese landscape painting made wise use of distance: distance gives a sense of space, and eliminates the limitations of form. It elongates the viewer's line of sight, transforming *watching* into *imagining* and turning everything otherworldly; thousands of miles inside one small square.

It is easy to neglect atmosphere—even though it is often the inherent atmosphere of the scene that moves us to take the photo in the first place. Once we start to shoot, however, it is tempting to blindly focus on depiction and expression; thus we manage to seize hold of the minor, but the major eludes us. According to Laozi, atmosphere is a response that comes from nature, and a force that we can utilise. When closeness and clarity are of no use to you, try taking a leap and see if you can borrow some of nature's power to create an ambience, a dream within which others will want to linger.

When our minds are integral, subtraction is brought to the agenda. Simplicity is beauty; the laws of nature are the simplest. Many people introduce complexity in their efforts to avoid making a

mistake, which results in even more mistakes—just as someone talkative is more likely to say something that is incorrect. We might tell him that silence is golden, and the same principle applies to photography. Simplicity is what remains after complexity has been tempered a thousand times. The designer of the Soviet PPSH submachine gun said: “to make something complicated is extremely simple; to make something simple is extremely complicated.” Concision makes integrality easy, and focuses the feelings of the observer. We must not be afraid of emptiness: emptiness is sharp, distance is sharp, and they result in innumerable triumphs over the mundane world.

Creating Art Through Intuition

The dreariness of human existence, combined with our anxieties about the future, means we are have always longed to communicate with spirits.

Of course, communication with spirits is far from easy. Mankind has come up with numerous stratagems, all to no avail. Ultimately, mortals are mortals and immortals are immortals. Within temples there are winding clouds of incense smoke, flickering candles and sonorous bells—all the results of man’s effort to contact the dead, none able to transcend the ritual they have become and attain immortality. So what can we do in the two-dimensional, silent world of photography? The creation or the mastery of atmosphere is the truest ceremony that can be prepared for the observer. No, we cannot transport the observer to some blissful realm where they are able to communicate with spirits—but we can come to a mutual understanding, a mutual empathy between spirits. Since we can only speak in silence, we must master the most powerful language we have available to us. Atmosphere is the wordless

language of the Moment; it is our final address to the observer.

The atmosphere of a photo comes from the appropriate weather, lighting, shade, and so on. It can come from the observation in the moment, from the style and tone imparted by the camera, the lens, or the film. In the essence, it is what the photographer is able to grasp on the spot, having come to an understanding of all of this, so as to make a decision that pleases both the eye and the heart. What the photographer sees depends on what echoes inside of him. This echo is the dual surge of eye and heart, and it is part of what conveys the emotion of the Moment. If there is no way of conveying the emotion, one should not bother to take the photo. This way, the standards of one's observation will rise; having the power to be selective means that the subjects of selection will be more moving. This direct route is the only way to enter a world in which we work with our intuition.

Only when a photographer has found some way to establish some connection with reality does the conveyance of this atmosphere become a possibility. When we analyse the photo later, influenced by its atmosphere, we might analyse and take note of the style, genre, technique, culture, era, and equipment, and infer all the possible ways in which it was shot. In reality, this deconstruction of what is tangible will never get at the truth. A photographer's mastery of atmosphere is entirely a feeling of intangible metaphysics, a nudge in the Moment. In the background of a photo which appears to be a precise shot there is often a secret in the control of the blur. A sharp frame comes from smart choices, requiring an incisive mind. Creation is a subjective matter—it is not especially mysterious, but it does not belong to the equipment fanatics or the dissectors of technique.

Albert Einstein said: "The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift."

"It is never strenuous to make something good." I love this saying from bottom of my heart.

Atmosphere serves to integrate the situation, harmonise internal and external forces; it allows one to relax, to feel free and liberated. Photography is not just the freezing of the Moment, but also the liberation of the Moment—thanks to atmosphere—the dissolution of anxiety, the magical transformation of circumstances.

Finally, we can emerge from all our predictable habits. We must treasure this liberation: one glint of its halo is worth a heap of gold.

If you can be as pure and candid as a child, and if you can take the first steps of a pilgrimage like a true believer, then you should be able to feel the privilege of divine tenderness—something that far outweighs the significance of the sound of the shutter. Because then it is no longer a matter of keeping a record: it becomes a process, and the photographer is just a participant in this process. He plays a role in the photo just like all the other elements of the frame: an oblivious existence. All the paths we have yet to take are connected to all the paths we have walked before, and there can be no loneliness and no difficulty.

We are only waiting for the onrush of the mortal world.

Ansel Adams could not have made it more clear:

“You don’t make a photograph just with a camera. You bring to the act of photography all the pictures you have seen, the books you have read, the music you have heard, the people you have loved.”