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Available Light: Photographic Techniques For Using Existing Light Sources



Synopsis

Emphasizing how to work with natural light rather than using supplementary lighting to create an artificial environment, photographers can use these simple techniques to mold existing light into the desired quality and shape. All situations are discussed, including overcast and sunny days, backlighting and flare, window light, daylight studios, natural reflectors, and studio lighting at home, offering a plethora of ideas for finding, diffusing, and creating light. As photographers learn the advantages of shooting with available light—no set up, more spontaneity, more time to concentrate on the subject, and the ability to capture preexisting relationships—they not only become better photographers but gain confidence and an increased awareness of their artistic medium.

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Customer Reviews

The beautiful thing about this book is that almost all of the images look like studio-quality lighting. And, yet, they were all made without any fancy (or costly, or intimidating, or hard-to-transport) gear. Marr does a great job of showing you how to achieve this. He works through a variety of tricky lighting situations (dappled lighting, direct sun, etc.) and shows step-by-step images that allow you to follow along with the effect that each technique is actually having on the subject's lighting. And the result is always a lovely image. My favorite sections are on using unexpected natural light sources. For example, Marr uses a giant backlit mall map as a softbox for a portrait that is soft and lovely (and if not for the pull-back shot provided, you'd never guess it was taken at a mall!).

This is a refreshing book. The author shows what can be done with just a camera, a few reflectors

and a good understanding of the light that exist all around us. While the images aren't quite as polished as photos done in expensively equipped studios he does a good job explaining how to augment and control existing light and how to maximize your ability to make good portraits just about everywhere. I particularly liked a section that is done outdoors with a square of translucent white material suspended over a model, a piece of white board being directly illuminated from the sun and another white board bouncing light into the model. It looks just like a "white out" background shot that so many struggle to get just right in the studio but it is a method that can be set up quickly and for very little money. A great book for a beginner who may find buying a lot of lighting equipment intimidating.

This is a book big on technique with the goal of making the best images with nothing more than what is available. I was intrigued by how even available light can be manipulated to obtain the images exemplified. Each chapter was interesting and confidence building in that any situation can be entered with positive results. Such cases include different times of day, overcast and sunny conditions, using natural reflectors and even natural lighting for the studio. Because of the broad range of content and the fact that natural light is the most dominant form of light, this is a book suitable for all photographers.

Donn Marr's "Available Light" is a simple, straightforward book that immediately changed the way I see light and the way I photograph using natural light. You often hear the idea of "taking your photography to the next level." This book doesn't itself make that claim, yet it is one of the few photography books that can actually deliver that result. It is short, easy to read and to understand, and immediately applicable to your work. Many books discuss the qualities of light and how photographers need to be keenly aware of them, but often leave it up to you to figure out the details through experience and practice. You may or may not be able to then figure it all out on your own. This book actually guides you in exactly the right direction and truly helps to open your eyes to the intensity, direction, and quality of natural light, and then teaches you to work with it and modify it to create the softness/ hardness, direction, color, and intensity you want, whether you are working on an overcast day, at high noon, inside, outdoors, or any other type of situation. It makes one suddenly aware of the existence and potential use of natural reflectors everywhere which will help give you the lighting you want: a wall, the ground, a pole. And it explains the important concept and effective practice of subtractive lighting, used to even-out or create the desired lighting instead of turning to flash to artificially add to existing lighting. The author does not just guide you in finding

and creating good light in any situation, but in light that fits your subject and the way in which you wish to portray them. The concepts in this book are so obvious and intuitive I didn't even write down a single note while reading it the first time. Then the next week I used what I learned and took one of the nicest, best lit spontaneous portraits I have ever taken. While many are happily joining the Strobist camp, this book offers a refreshing and viable alternative to that never-ending accumulation of equipment and techniques, and should be read by off-camera-flash fans as well so they can learn to look for beautiful natural lighting alternatives that will give them as-good or even better images, before setting up their lighting equipment and knocking down the natural light in order to rebuild it artificially. However the author is not against the (limited) use of flash, and certainly not against reflectors, and discusses their use in different situations. I highly recommend this book to photographers of every level. It is a wonderful book for beginners or intermediate photographers so that they can be aware of, understand, and use these concepts from the start, and it is just as helpful for advanced photographers who may intuitively practice some of the techniques, but will certainly become aware of even greater potential and opportunities in the use of available light.

I had always heard that an overcast day means the clouds are acting like a giant diffuser, so it is a great day for taking photographs. So why did my photos fail to be stunning? And why were the photos I took in front of large windows so amazing? Why was my most favorite photograph of my children taken under a large porch overhang on a beach-grey deck? This book will help you understand the answers to these sorts of questions. This book is just fantastic for anyone who is just starting to learn about light. You will learn how to use reflectors, diffusers, flags and scrims to shape the light. You will learn how to make the most use of the light that is available. You will learn how to find good spots outside. Regarding the sample photographs - they are quite useful, particularly the wide angle ones that show you how the author set up a shot. But there are not very many "Wow!" photographs in the book. They are very natural shots, not formal or glamorous. Do not let that deter you from a purchase - the information in this book is great. One more thing, the author lets you know about inexpensive alternatives to expensive photography props, which I appreciate, but I do wish he had mentioned inexpensive alternatives to those tripod holders that he has in so many photographs holding diffusion material or reflectors or what have you. Looks like I may have to shell out the bucks for those. Anyway, did you know the answer to the questions above? It has to do with the direction of the light.

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