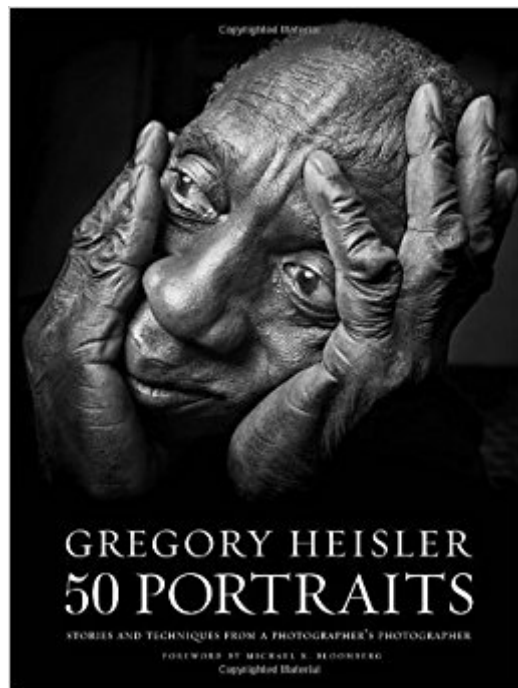




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Gregory Heisler: 50 Portraits: Stories And Techniques From A Photographer's Photographer



Synopsis

In this first-ever showcase of his work, Gregory Heisler, one of professional photography's most respected practitioners, shares 50 iconic portraits of celebrities, athletes, and world leaders, along with fascinating, thoughtful, often humorous stories about how the images were made. From his famously controversial portrait of President George H.W. Bush (which led to the revocation of Heisler's White House clearance) to his evocative post-9/11 Time magazine cover of Rudolph Giuliani, to stunning portraits of Julia Roberts, Denzel Washington, Hillary Clinton, Michael Phelps, Muhammad Ali, and many more, Heisler reveals the creative and technical processes that led to each frame. For Heisler's fans and all lovers of photography, Gregory Heisler: 50 Portraits offers not only a gorgeous collection of both black-and-white and color portraits, but an engrossing look at the rarely seen art of a master photographer at work. With a foreword by New York City mayor Michael R. Bloomberg.

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Customer Reviews

“There is no photographer alive I'd rather see a book from, period.” David Hobby (Strobist)

Gregory Heisler has been described as having “the eye of an artist, the mind of a scientist, and the heart of a journalist.” Renowned for his technical mastery and thoughtful responsiveness, he has photographed more than seventy cover portraits for Time magazine, which reside in the

permanent collection of The National Portrait Gallery. His iconic images and innovative visual essays have also graced the covers and pages of Life, Esquire, GQ, Sports Illustrated, ESPN, Fortune, and The New York Times Magazine. As a sought-after speaker and educator, he has taught at the International Center of Photography, the School of Visual Arts, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Geographic Society, as well as scores of workshops and seminars throughout the country and around the world. He is currently Artist-in-Residence at the Hallmark Institute of Photography. He can be found at GregoryHeisler.com.

'50 Portraits: Stories and Techniques from a Photographer's Photographer' is remarkably open and honest, both from emotional/personal and technical/photographic points of view. And as beautiful as the photography is, you will not find the pictures the main takeaway from the book. That last sentence feels strange and somehow sacrilegious to write, but it is absolutely true. And the title is actually a good representation of the book's focus. The pleasant surprise is that he is actually a very good writer, and you can hear him sitting and talking with you as you read it. This is not a lighting book. Although, to be sure, there is a lot of lighting information in it. Perhaps more value in lighting education than any book I have ever read. What this is, is a 360-degree experience. Each of his fifty portraits gets its own little mini-chapter. The segment leads off with the photo, run full-page if vertical and double-truck if horizontal. The accompanying copy begins with the thought process leading up to the photo -- all of the thousand little things that happen before you press the shutter. You are there, with him, inside his thought process. And in so many of the portraits, I could see the multiple instances in which I would have failed to come up with the solutions to make great pictures. It's disheartening, in a sense. Like watching someone effortlessly navigate all the way through a video game that had repeatedly stopped you. Except, it's not effortless. What you get from this is a true sense of the work ethic (or "thought ethic?") that being a great photographer requires. And there is so, so much pre-thinking that goes into consistently being able to make great photos. That may be the biggest takeaway from this. It has already changed the way I prepare to shoot. There is also an emotional openness that is required for intimate portrait photography. This is so alien to me, and I am slowly learning that it is something I need to nurture. On the other hand, it is gratifying to see the hard work and thought that goes into making these photos. It would totally suck if there was just a "great photographer" gene, and I didn't have it and never would. The second written portion in each segment is "Thoughts on Technique," to which many here will be tempted to skip ahead. But don't. The first section sets it all up -- it puts you there, and gets you thinking. Only then are you ready to consider the more technical and photo-related solutions. Finally, Heisler includes what he unofficially

calls the "Moron Section" in the back of the book. (As in, "For more on this photo...") There you'll find camera types, lenses, film, exposure, lighting gear specifics, etc.: '50 Portraits' feels like Heisler is writing to his twenty-year-old self. It's the book you'd write if you wanted to put all of the important stuff into one place, as opposed to just another book on photo technique. You're a photographer. So the first thing you'll do is flip through it and look at the photos. You'll see many of his most famous images, interspersed with ones you have never seen before. Or have seen, and did not know Heisler took them. After that, the challenge is this: Do you pop a cold beer and blow through it in one long sitting? Or do you read (and re-read) it slowly, learning as much as you can from one chapter at a time. I'd vote for the latter. In fact, I am going to slowly go through it at the rate of one photo a week. And just for the record, if I were teaching a photo class in college, this would be my text and I would teach it in chunks, drawn out over the semester. '50 Portraits' is the opportunity to rent the brain of perhaps the best living portraitist today -- and to do so to a remarkable extent. That this book costs less than \$25 is almost ridiculous. Be glad it doesn't cost what it is worth.

Years ago, when I was starting out as an adventure photographer, I asked a mentor of mine to recommend a book. He suggested Galen Rowell's "Mountain Light". I read and I read, looking for hard, technical information that I could replicate on my own adventures and came up utterly empty. How could a photography book be so devoid of this valuable information? It was only years later, after I'd gotten over (or at least more comfortable with) my obsession with the technical bits of photography and going back to that book, that I began to understand the opportunity I'd missed. Heisler's "50 Portraits" is exactly that sort of book. Though you can get the technical info by digging into the back, you would totally miss the best this book has to offer in doing so. The real gift is reading Heisler's words. Image by image, he tells the story behind every capture in intricate detail. From the initial assignment call and pre-visualization of the concept, to the stomach-churning stress of the sometimes chaotic moments preceding the final capture, when all of his plans seemed to be falling down around him like the fractured walls of an dilapidated building - this is the insight that no quantity of cookie-cutter workshops could ever provide. Subject interaction, achieving the proper emotion, selecting the context to match the sitter - all of this and more are what makes up the real value of this book. There is no shortage of info out there about light modifiers, daylight balancing, broad lighting vs. short lighting and so on. But great photography is about so much more than that - it's about the whole creative process and knowing which of all those tricks will work best to compliment a person or an environment and why. While at times I selfishly wish he was more targeted in his story telling, speaking exclusively to an experienced photographic ear, I found those

gaps easily back-filled by the richness of the overall info conveyed. In "50 Portraits" Heisler is letting you inside his head to hear his meticulous creative process and to be a fly on the wall, on-location (and before), while he captures some of the most evocative portraits of our time.

The words are more important than the pictures. It may sound odd to say, especially about a book on Photography. But it's the truth! Heisler's description on his thought (process) is worth every single penny spent on this book. Building trust with the sitter (subject) is key beyond lighting, camera and everything else. The photos are very good. In fact, you may have seen many of them before -- but the knowledge imparted is exquisite. All in a quite beautiful and large-sized book. Yes, I would have liked to have seen portraits of ordinary people, not just mostly famous personalities. But maybe that will be in the next book. Don't think twice. Do get this book if you want to learn more about the artist and if you are looking to stop, pause and reflect upon yourself.

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