

Abby Raeder

Portrait of a Photographer

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PORTRAIT OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

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Abby Raeder – Portrait of a Photographer

PHOTOGRAPHY AS CONTEMPLATION, INTUITION, AND SELF-DISCOVER

Before we ever speak about technique, location, or even subject matter, there are quieter questions that deserve to be asked. What does it mean to really see, not just to look, but to feel a place as it drifts through memory and emotion? Where does perception end and imagination begin? And what happens when photography becomes less about recording the world and more about entering into a state of attention that feels closer to dreaming than documenting?

These questions live at the heart of Abby Raeder's work. Her photographs do not announce themselves with spectacle or scale. Instead, they arrive softly, as if emerging from the edge of consciousness. Light dissolves into mist, form loosens into suggestion, and familiar landscapes take on the quality of something remembered rather than something simply observed. There is a gentleness to her seeing, but also a quiet certainty, a sense that these images are not constructed so much as received.

The dream-like quality that defines her photographs is not a stylistic affectation. It grows out of a deeply contemplative way of being in the world. Abby's relationship with the landscape is rooted in stillness, in slowing down enough for subtle transitions to reveal themselves. Fog lifting from a treeline, reflections trembling on water, a single leaf suspended against an empty sky, these are not moments to be seized, but moments to be waited for. Her process mirrors meditation more than pursuit. Presence comes first. The camera follows.



Matt Payne

Matt Payne is a landscape photographer and mountain climber from Durango, Colorado. He's the host of the weekly landscape photography podcast, "F-Stop Collaborate and Listen," co-founder of the [Nature First Photography Alliance](#), and co-founder of the [Natural Landscape Photography Awards](#). He lives with his wife, Angela, his son Quinn, and his four cats, Juju, Chara, Arrow, and Vestal. mattpaynephotography.com



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This contemplative approach is shaped by years of engagement with Buddhist thought and with teachers who speak of seeing as an act of awareness rather than acquisition. In that tradition, attention itself becomes a form of reverence. Abby's photographs carry this sensibility. They do not try to resolve the world into clarity. They allow ambiguity to remain. Edges soften. Light becomes atmosphere. Time feels suspended. The viewer is invited not to analyze, but to settle, to breathe, to inhabit the image the way one inhabits a quiet room.

From this stillness grows an equally important thread, her trust in intuition. Abby does not work from rigid formulas or pre-visualized outcomes. She listens for what draws her emotionally, even when she cannot yet articulate why. The choice to let motion blur, to embrace shallow focus, to allow reflections to fracture into abstraction, all of these are less technical decisions than emotional ones. They are ways of honoring how a moment feels rather than how it can be most clearly described.







In her images of water and light, of falling leaves and dissolving forests, there is a sense that the photograph is not meant to explain the scene, but to echo the internal response it provoked. The luminous bokeh around a single flower, the layered reflections in a stream, the softened shoreline fading into mist, these are translations of perception rather than transcriptions of fact. The camera becomes a conduit between outer world and inner state.

Over time, this way of working has led Abby toward something deeper than aesthetic consistency. It has become a form of self-discovery. Photography, for her, is not separate from life, nor is it an escape from it. It is a way of learning how she moves through the world, what slows her, what quiets her, what opens her. Each image is a small act of alignment, a moment in which attention, emotion, and presence briefly come into harmony.

The dream-like atmosphere that permeates her work is, in this sense, not about fantasy at all. It is about reality experienced without the usual rush to define it. It is about allowing the world to remain mysterious and allowing oneself to remain receptive. In a culture that often rewards sharpness, speed, and certainty, Abby's photographs offer another way of knowing, one grounded in softness, patience, and trust.

Seen together, her images form less a portfolio than a visual meditation. They remind us that photography can be a quiet practice, one that teaches us how to linger, how to listen, how to become more fully present to what is already here.

And in that lingering, in that listening, we may find that the most meaningful pictures are not the ones that show us what the world looks like, but the ones that reveal how it feels to be within it. Let us know in the comments - what do you appreciate about Abby's photographs and how do they leave you feeling?

Do you know someone you feel has yet to be discovered and should be featured here? [Reach out – I look forward to hearing from you.](#)



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on landscape

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