

Articles

Expand your photosphere ©2025 Joseph T. Sinclair

One of the best ways to expand your photography experience is to view the photos and art of both good photographers and artists. That means visiting shows, exhibits, galleries, and museums whenever possible.



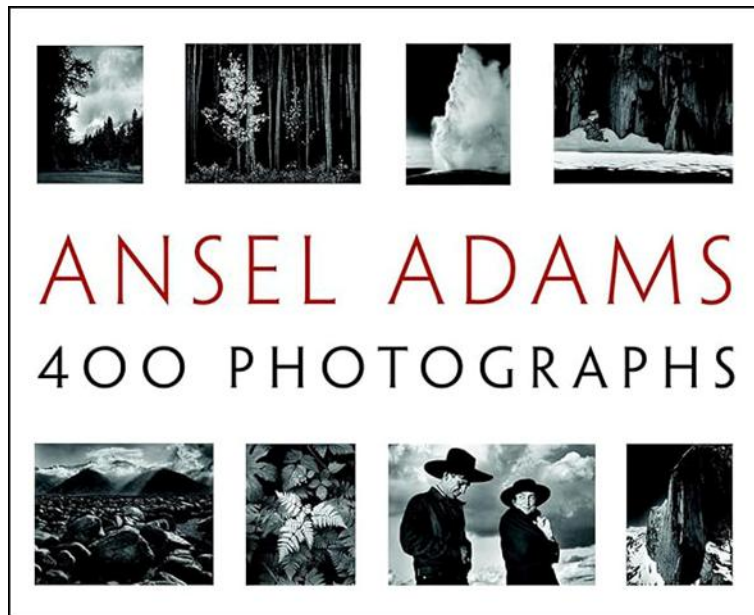


But perhaps a means overlooked by many of us are coffee-table books that contain photos and art. These are readily available in all bookstores. But they're expensive. Very expensive. An inexpensive way to acquire them is to buy them used.

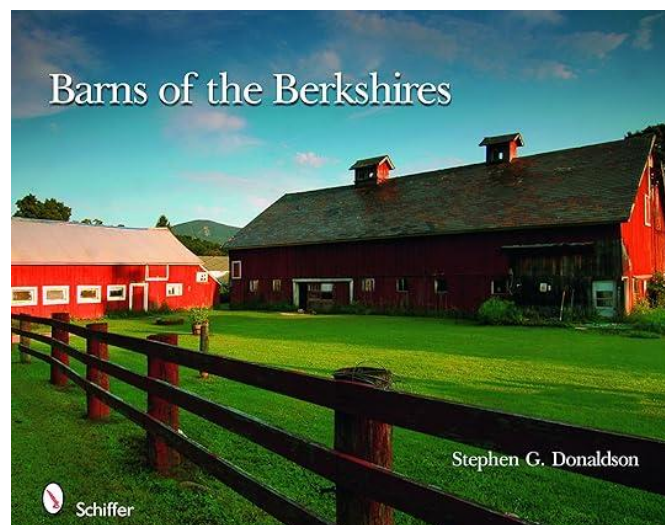
One source is bookstores with used books. You can often buy such photo-rich books (in very good condition) at 1/6 the publication price. Some used bookstores have a wide selection of used coffee-table photo books.

Another source is Amazon. Amazon offers the books of hundreds of independent booksellers selling used books at prices set by such booksellers, not Amazon. There is a standard shipping cost of \$4. So, the base price to you is \$4. But many of the used books (some are even new books) sell for extremely cheap prices. If you can't find a price you like today, wait a month and try again.

A good example is *Ancel Adams 400 Photographs* (paperback). It has a publisher's list price of \$50 for the hard cover and \$35 for the paperback. Amazon sells it for \$22 (new paperback). I got it used in very good condition for \$6 + \$4 shipping. What is a set of 400 Ancel Adams photos for casual viewing worth every time you want to drum up a little enthusiasm for outdoor photography?



I'm in the process of throwing out most of my paper books. (I've bought all of my books in the Kindle ebook format since 2007.) Most of the paper books I'm retaining are used coffee-table photo books, which I bought cheap and which I can browse through when I need a little inspiration.



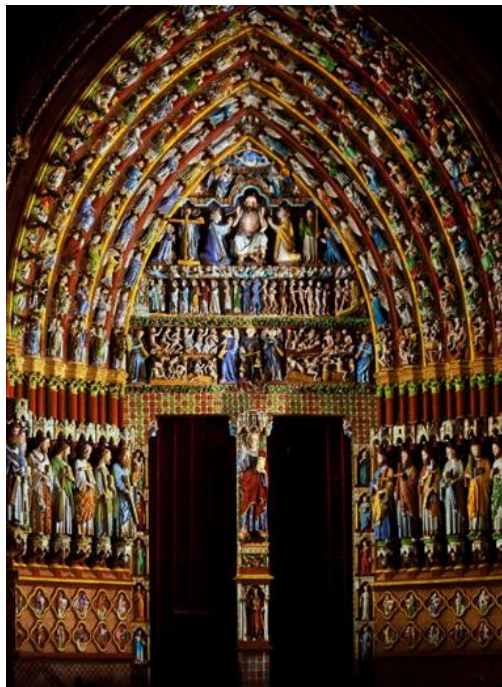
The web is another source of photos to browse. Make a list of talented photographers and visit their website galleries.



Or, plug into Google search “the best horse photos of 2023” to find horse photos. You will get photos, sources of photos, and commercial photography services (with photos), etc: all about horses and with abundant photos of horses.



As an example, what about a search for “medieval churches”? Plenty of photos to browse.



Stock photo services are also a copious source of photos to browse, typically of commercial or fine-art quality.



Indeed, the web is a rich resource for photos to browse, and my suggestions are just the tip of the iceberg.

And finally, you can find coffee-table photo books in the library. You don't necessarily need to check them out. Go to the library and spend some casual time leafing through such books to enrich your creativity.



And what about magazines? Photo magazines typically have plenty of advertising but limited photos.

Two magazines available in paper/digital forms are different and worth your consideration, even though you won't find them on the magazine racks. They are replete with photos unlike more well-known magazines

Aperture features intelligent articles and columns on timely and timeless topics on the art and technology of photography as well as book reviews of photobooks. It also has articles on individual photographers plus their photos.

A subscription is as little as \$60/year.

<https://aperture.org/>

Lens is a contemporary fine art photography magazine featuring articles about individual photographers. It's loaded with great photos.

A subscription is as little as \$46/year.

<https://lensmagazine.net/>

These are serious magazines for those who are serious about photography. Caveat: they don't cover the business of photography.

How do they compare to common photography magazines? Magazines such as *Outdoor Photography* and *Popular Photography* tend to feature articles that support their advertising, primarily camera companies and other photography industry businesses. For instance, they feature camera reviews, gear reviews, and the like. *Aperture* and *Lens* are much more intellectually oriented.

Another magazine, *PHROOM* is unique in that it is free. It's a digital platform on the web, a good place to see a lot of photos by a diverse number of photographers with commentary.

Give it a try. Maybe even make a portfolio submission to it.

<https://phroomplatform.com/>

A productive place to browse, and the price is right.

Whatever your source, you will want to be sure that any collection of photos or art you browse is commercial quality, fine-art quality, or otherwise high quality. You will want to build your mental resources to endow your sense of photographic understanding and evaluation. Every photo you view will count for something, however much or little, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether for good or bad, and whether you want it to or not. So, go for the quality, and take the time to browse every so often.

Still-Life

I've always wanted to do a still-life photograph but have never gotten around to it. One of these days I'm going to make a specific effort to do a

still-life. Here's what my approach is going to be. I'm going to review as many works of art (and photos), which are still-lives, that I can find. I visit art museums several times a year and photograph art; in the future, I will make sure that I photograph still-lives for my digital collection. And I will go back to my prior digital collections of museum art and look for still-lives.





In addition, I have coffee table books to browse, as well as the internet to browse.



From my research, I will develop an idea of what I want to photograph and then develop a strategy for taking such photos. There are opportunities in my house, other people's houses, restaurants, hotels, etc. But perhaps the best opportunity is to stage a still-life.

By staging a still-life, I will have complete control over the photo. I can include a variety of interesting objects such as pitchers from my grandmother's collection, cooking utensils from my grandfather's collection, plates from my mother's collection, table clothes from my spouse's collection, fruit, vegetables, legs of lamb, flowers, musical instruments, lamps, knives, etc. There is no limit on creativity.

Once staged, I will experiment with lighting. Natural light? Electric light? Flash? Low light? Candle light?

Post processing is important too. The most obvious is to make the still life look old (like a museum painting). The least obvious is to make the still life look Avant-Garde. Somewhere in between is a look that may be pleasing or even

beautiful. Thus, the postprocessing is a key part of the project.

This is obviously a strategy that one can use for any photography project. In this case, it's a strategy I can use for something I've never done before.

Note: Without any prep I decided to just do something. So, I did a quick still-life, my first. It's not much. But it's not nothing either; it's a first step. And that leads to greater things. Supposedly?

