



LOVE AND LANDSCAPE

These United States by Jake Rajs (Rizzoli, \$175) If you think Jake Rajs resorted to Photoshop to create this sharply etched view of South Dakota's Badlands, you're wrong. Those famously barren, sculpted hills look just the way they did to Rajs one frosty fall morning in 1990. The photographer had set out on a Friday night from New York City and driven (with a little help from his friends) straight through to the lonely spot, arriving on Monday morning in time to take a few sunny pictures before clouds rolled in. Then it started snowing. Rajs got up early the next day with his Nikon F3 loaded with Kodachrome to shoot the scene in cool predawn light. "There was just enough snow to coat the slopes, but not enough to stick to the ridges," Rajs recalls.

Rajs has been photographing America since 1970, when, inspired by Jack Kerouac's beat-picaresque novel *On The Road*, he thumbed his way cross-country on summer break from college. The photographs in *These United States* go back almost that far in time. But many recent pictures in the massively sumptuous, limited-edition 12x16-inch volume give it what Rajs calls a "historical bent," showing the settings of important events in American life and lore. Whether depicting nature or history, whether abstract or literal, the book's vivid images are motivated not by a post-card aesthetic but rather by an immigrant's infatuation with America.

Born in Poland, Rajs came to the United States in 1960 by way of Israel, arriving in time-honored fashion—on a ship in New York Harbor. There he was greeted by his father, who had come ahead to raise money for the family's passage. "Everybody on the ship was crying when we arrived," Rajs remembers. As American icon Walter Cronkite says in his introduction to the book, which comes with a signed 12x16-inch Fuji Crystal Archive print of Wyoming's Grand Tetons mountain range, "Perhaps it takes one who comes from the crowded confines of Eastern Europe to appreciate nature's dazzling display within America's horizons."

Like his adoptive country, Rajs's equipment is a melting pot—of formats. "When I first show up at a place I might whip out the 35mm if the light's changing," says the photographer, who has done editorial work for *Travel Holiday* and *Travel + Leisure* magazines and ad campaigns for American Express and AT&T. "But if the light stays good, I might switch to the Pentax 67. If it's an architectural subject, I'll probably shoot with 4x5." (Rajs's view cameras include Toyo and Sinar models.) Rajs shot the book's many panoramic images with the Fujifilm GX617, for its big 6x17cm originals. When you turn to one of *These United States's* double gatefolds, which measure 12x64 inches when unfurled, the detail makes your eyes water. —R.H.

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