Michael Kenna

Born in Widnes, Cheshire, England, in 1953, Michael Kenna was introduced to photography while a student at Upholland College, Lancashire, in 1964 to 1972. After a stint at the Banbury School of Art, Oxfordshire, in 1972 and 1973, and the London College of Printing, 1973 through 1975, he embarked on a career in commercial photography. In 1979 he became a printer for photographer Ruth Bernhard, and in 1980 he started photographing gardens, which led him to note, "my studio is the landscape."

Kenna seeks to capture gardens as a cultural artifact, using unusual angles to evoke the atmosphere of the place. He usually shoots at night or during dusk and dawn, relying on long exposures to capture layers of light and shadow. He is known for small-scale, meticulously printed silver-gelatin prints that are often toned to give warmth to highlights and depth to shadows.

Kenna's preferred themes are pastoral and industrial subjects--Mont St. Michel in France, the seaside resorts and nuclear power plants of England, and the steel and automotive plants in Michigan. He once stated his intent to record on film "the almost spiritual atmosphere--a presence that emanates from within or behind an object."

Kenna's photography has entered the permanent collections of leading museums in North America and Europe. He has illustrated Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Hound of the Baskervilles, and his books include Michael Kenna 1976-86; Night Walk; Le Desert de Retz; Michael Kenna, The Elkhorn Sough and Moss Landing; and Michael Kenna--A Twenty Year Retrospective.

Kenna currently teaches at Friends of Photography, San Francisco, where he resides.