



## *Les Reves Des Rois (Dreams of the Kings)*

by David Robin



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### Commentary

Mood. Not the past tense of what the cow said; not the ring; not even emotional reactions of a sulking person. The mood of a photograph is a visceral reaction, like laughing at a joke. If it needs to be explained—just as in the joke—it's powerless to bring about the effect.

There is a mood to David Robin's entire portfolio of work that defies description, but I know that you feel it—or at least most of you do. At first, I thought it was created by his use of texture in the image. (He does this, by the way, by placing a sheet of textured art paper over his 4x5 file in the film holder, then exposing in the camera through the paper onto the film. Ingenious.) On second thought, it's not the texture alone, but perhaps has something to do with the soft light and very soft blacks. It does, but not alone. Maybe it is the edge burning—but not alone. Maybe . . .

And then I realized I was doing it again.

It is the curse of being a photographer that we simply have such a difficult time looking at another's photographs without mentally attempting to deconstruct them. Such analysis and mental gyrations are a terrible barrier to, well, the higher purpose of *enjoying the image*. Musicians, painters, furniture makers, novelists—all of us creative types struggle with this.

We have a friend who is a serious gardener and landscape designer who could not look at Rob-

in's portfolio without analyzing the structure of the gardens and the horticultural aspects in his photographs. As he was looking at Robin's images, he punctuated each turn of the page with an announcement of the name of the shrubbery he could identify. Useful knowledge, but I couldn't help but think that this knowledgeable analysis prevented him from enjoying the photographs.

Letting go is unnatural, but so important. This is precisely why I often find it beneficial to listen to music before looking at a new photography monograph. With my mind in "art appreciation mode," I can pick up the book and see it without donning the photographer's vest—at least for a while. It seems that it is necessary for me to be in the right mood in order to see the mood for what it is—without dissecting it.

Notice how Robin's image does not require much visual detail to evoke the mood. Light, shadow, and texture (which is a different thing than *detail*) are there in generous quantities. What more do we need?