

MOON OVER SANTA ELENA

O n e E a r t h R e v o l u t i o n

Moon Over Santa Elena traces the transformation of light during one revolution of the earth.

On an earlier trip to Santa Elena, the magnificent canyon in Big Bend, I was photographing at noon. Bright white light filled the canyon face. I made a reasonably good photograph. I come back at sunset, or when I thought it would be, waiting two hours as the shadows slowly crept across the sands of the Rio Grande. The first late afternoon shots were cloud filled with the face of the canyon in shade. I made several exposures. Finally, a burst of gold and red poured over the edge the cliff and filled the canyon. I made another exposure at sunset.

I framed and displayed these three very different images and thought about them for a year. This triptych became my obsession.

What are all the different lights that could cover this majestic canyon? What about morning? And dawn? And dusk? And the Moon? It stayed with me until I could get back and photograph an entire day and night. I imagined the night images, the morning and dawn. I thought of Monet and his studies of grain stacks. I thought of the moonlight. On the afternoon of May 8th, 2006, I had a chance to begin the series.

The light exceeded my imagination, transforming the canyon continuously as the earth moved fully through day and night.

Al Brader
PHOTOGRAPHER