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# **THE COLOR OF EVERYTHING: A JOURNEY TO QUIET THE CHAOS WITHIN**

By Cory Richards

## **The Color of Everything: A Journey to Quiet the Chaos Within**

**By Cory Richards (Random House)**

Cory Richards has been a prolific 21st-century alpinist, high-altitude mountaineer, and adventure photographer. From being the first and only American to summit an 8,000-meter peak in winter to being National Geographic's 2012 Adventurer of the Year, Richards's success in climbing and photography made him a public figure around the world, even live-streaming his 2016 ascent of Everest without supplemental oxygen via Snapchat. In this memoir, Richards relates the expeditions that built his career, but not from the angle that often typifies mountaineering literature. It is the examination and admission of his own culpabilities—which led him to an “early retirement”—that make up the marrow of the book.

Richards uses a broken timeline and braided-narrative structure to piece together the road that took him to—and also away from—the Greater Ranges. From his earliest memories, Richards experiences severe trauma in his home, and as a young adult slowly and painfully unravels a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. He experiences homelessness, drug use, and sexual assault at an age when most would be concerned with their math test in sixth period. After a few years of repeatedly running away from private institutions for troubled teens, always to be returned, Richards begins to climb again, like he had with his father as a boy. Climbing leads him to photography, which will stabilize and shape the course of his life for decades to come.

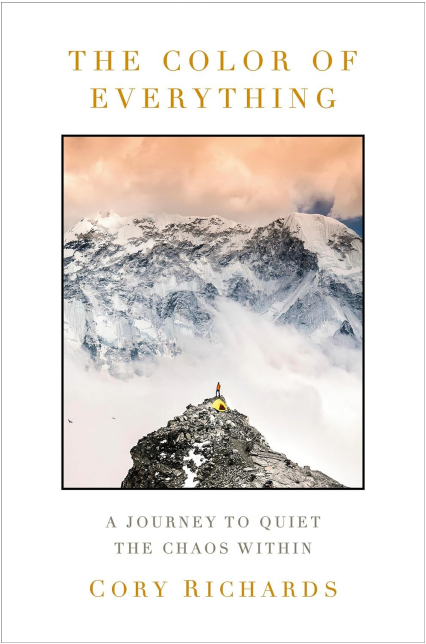
While Richards examines the roots of his trauma to understand his own motivations, the memoir is also a deep reflection on identity and how one's perception of their identity can drive them to ends they might not desire. As any climber who has committed significant time to their craft knows, ours can be a selfish pursuit. I believe the same may be said for the life of an artist, and at his core, Richards is an artist. The passion and obsession he poured into mixed routes and high altitude are only exceeded by his ambition as a photographer. The two crafts always intertwined and embedded with his identity, to the point that he began to question his own self apart from his crafts. It is Richards's commitment to and control of his craft, now through memoir, that permitted him to admit the motivations and shortcomings of his previous identity.

Richards gracefully navigates the consequences of his failed relationships and addictions with prose that employs brevity to capture complex experiences. Through examination of his furious rage as an adolescent, infidelity in his marriage, contentions around prioritizing mental health in climbing, and honesty about his past sexual misconduct, brought to light through the #MeToo movement, Richards lays himself out on the page with unfailing exposure. As when leading a delicate mixed pitch, he does not take the easy way out. He continues on, admitting his faults with grace and conviction, and without blaming his mental health for the pain caused to others.

Reading this memoir of someone who has lived chaotically up to the very edge of life, I appreciated the refreshing perspective that we are responsible for ourselves, the good and bad, without denying the complexity of simply existing.

—Wade Dittburner

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Article Details

Author	Wade Dittburner
Publication	AAJ
Volume	66
Issue	99
Page	
Copyright Date	2025
Article Type	Book reviews