

Lens

MAGAZINE

ARTEM
KHAZOV

FASCINATING JOURNEY:
**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**

**Matteo
Redaelli**
Passion for
Nature

JOSÉ JEULAND
CAPTURING THE
ESSENCE:
A PHOTOGRAPHIC
JOURNEY THROUGH SRI
LANKA'S TEA PLANTATIONS
AND FISHERMEN OF
TRINCOMALEE

ERIN TOWNS

ARCTIC MELTWATER
UNVEILED: NATURE'S
LIQUID LEGACY

SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH
JOHN SPOHRER:
ST. GEORGE ISLAND,
APALACHICOLA BAY,
& THE ART OF CONSERVATION
PHOTOGRAPHY

Jason Little
PLACES

AGA SZYDLIK
ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI

WOODLANDS OF
MADRID
LOUIS IRUELA

*Patricia
Carr Morgan*
An Exclusive interview

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
WITH **PIERPAOLO
MITTICA**
CHERNOBYL

TRAVEL



76



Founder & Editor: Dafna Navarro

Dafna Navarro is the CEO and Founder of Art Market – Global Media Company. Founded in 2013, Art Market is the publisher of two famous international art and photography magazines: Lens Magazine for fine art photography and Art Market Magazine for contemporary fine art. Beyond her many achievements, Navarro is also a curator and an appraiser of art and collectibles. In addition, she serves on the jury panel of international competitions in the contemporary art & photography fields.

Navarro is the current Editor-in-Chief and the main creative driving force behind her magazine's rise and success. With no signs of slowing down, the magazines feature interviews with the most influential figures in the art and photography fields, coverage of international exhibitions and art fairs and all the latest news regarding fine and contemporary art from across the globe.

Both magazines are distributed worldwide in both print and digital media. As a result, the magazines receive the exposure of over 50,000 monthly readers worldwide, including a unique distribution of the GOLD LIST Edition by Barnes & Noble's book stores in the U.S. and Canada, Steimatzy Bookstores in Israel, and vast appearances in international art fairs. In addition, copies of each published magazine are added to universities' archive data and academic libraries as learning material for lecturers and students.



60



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WITH PATRICIA CARR MORGAN ON PAGE 8



Passion for Nature
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See the article on page 154



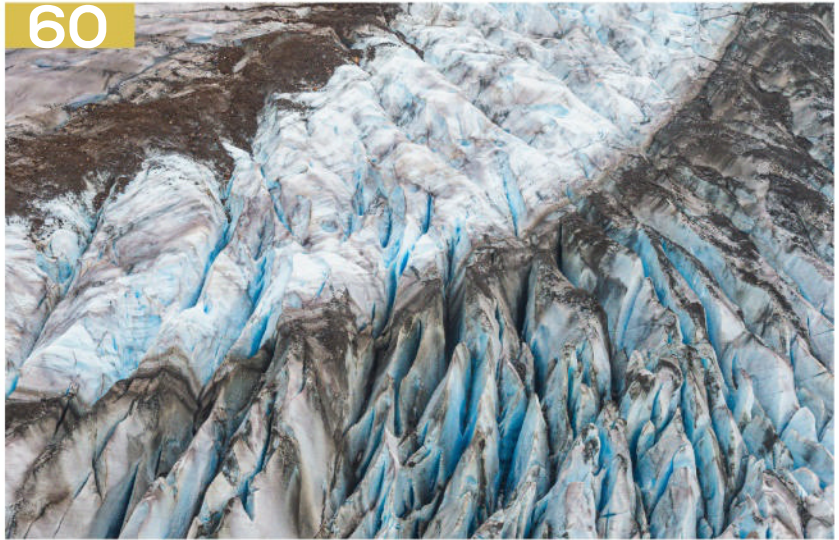
94



76



30



60



44



08



154

CONTENTS

08/ "I LOVE YOU,
DON'T LEAVE ME."
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
PATRICIA CARR MORGAN
BY ARIEL SU

30/ ST. GEORGE ISLAND,
APALACHICOLA BAY,
& THE ART OF CONSERVATION
PHOTOGRAPHY
SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH
JOHN SPOHRER
BY MARK EDWARD HARRIS

44/ CAPTURING THE ESSENCE:
A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH
SRI LANKA'S TEA PLANTATIONS AND
FISHERMEN OF TRINCOMALEE
BY JOSE JEULAND

60/ ARCTIC MELT WATER UNVEILED:
NATURE'S LIQUID LEGACY
BY ERIN TOWNS

76/ FASCINATING JOURNEY:
EXPLORING INDIA AND NEPAL
BY ARTEM KHAZOV

94/ CHERNOBYL
RUINED | FORBIDDEN LANDSCAPE
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
PIERPAOLO MITTICA

120/ WOODLANDS OF MADRID
BY LOUIS IRUELA

132/ PLACES
BY JASON LITTLE

142/ ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI
BY AGA SZYDLIK

154/ PASSION FOR NATURE
BY MATTEO REDAELLI

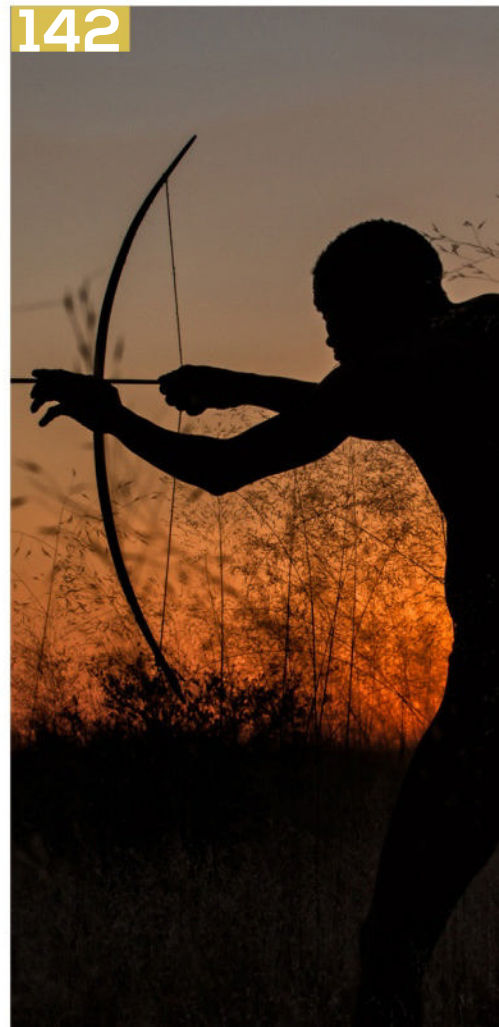


120

132



142





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**AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
LEGENDARY PHOTOGRAPHER**



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DESIGN**



An Exclusive interview with

**Patricia
Carr
Morgan**

By Ariel SU



"I LOVE YOU, DON'T LEAVE ME."

Is a decade-long project based on photographs the artist took of glaciers in Antarctica and Greenland. The multiple series that belong to this project—each utilizing various disciplines, including performance, installation, photography (digital and analog), and experimentation—act like a collection of personal essays expressing her attachment to the sublime beauty of the ice and its ultimate loss caused by climate change's impact.

**"I LOVE
YOU,
DON'T
LEAVE
ME."**

”

**ICE:
GREENLAND &
ANTARCTICA**

ICE IS A FRAGILE FORCE. ALTHOUGH IT CARVED THROUGH MOUNTAINS, CREATING PRAIRIES AND LAKES, ITS STRENGTH DIMINISHES EVERY DAY AS THE ICE MELTS, DRIPS AWAY, AND FAILS TO BE REPLENISHED. I PHOTOGRAPHED THIS ELEGANT, FRAGILE BEAUTY NEAR THE TOP OF THE EARTH IN GREENLAND AND SOUTH IN THE ANTARCTIC. I LOVE YOU DON'T LEAVE ME IS A BODY OF WORK CREATED OVER SEVERAL YEARS, AND THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ITS GENESIS."

An Exclusive interview with

**Patricia
Carr
Morgan**

By Ariel SU



"I LOVE
YOU,
DON'T
LEAVE
ME."

Ice: Greenland & Antarctica
Patricia Carr Morgan © All rights reserved.

Patricia Carr Morgan is a Tucson-based photographer and artist whose current practice is founded on traditional photographs of glacial landscapes in Antarctica and Greenland. Based on several of her trips to these regions, these photographs document disappearing glacial landscapes and imbue these images with a sense of personal loss as climate change ultimately transforms them.

Patricia Carr Morgan is a conceptual artist based in Tucson, Arizona, who has shown her work in museums and galleries across the U.S. and in China and has enriched communities with her public art. Through sculpture, interdisciplinary installation, and photography, Morgan explores memory, loss, and reality.

This last medium drives her new work, an exploration of glacier ice and climate change.

"I love you, don't leave me," examining the catastrophic effect of climate change through a multifaceted body of work built on the artist's photographs of glaciers in Antarctica and Greenland. From the relative safety of an inflatable boat, Morgan focused not on the majesty of the monolithic icebergs but on the sculptural forms and fractured ice that constitute our continental ice sheets.

"IN ANTARCTICA, I WAS OVERWHELMED BY THE VAST, UNENDING WHITENESS. IT WAS INTIMIDATING AND DANGEROUS BUT ALSO THE MOST SUBLIME PIECE OF EARTH I EVER SAW. IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT."

Ice has the power to carve through mountains to create prairies and lakes, but its strength diminishes as the glaciers melt. Knowing that what she had documented was gradually disappearing made her art both more urgent and poignant. Her sense of impending loss intensified as she experimented— with realism and abstraction, with materials and processes—to express her feelings and concerns.

The theme of love and loss is a bequest from previous work in which memorabilia informed the realities of memory.

Here, Morgan reveals her relationship with the ice in a microcosm—its beauty, danger, and fragility—to illuminate the global warming crisis. What she kept returning to was the solemn and awe-inspiring beauty of the ice.



An Exclusive interview with

Patricia Carr Morgan

By Ariel SU

"I LOVE YOU, DON'T LEAVE ME."

The new body of work goes beyond literal representation to introduce Morgan's vision of our planet's store of glacier ice to ask big questions about interconnectedness, moral obligation, and the future of our world.

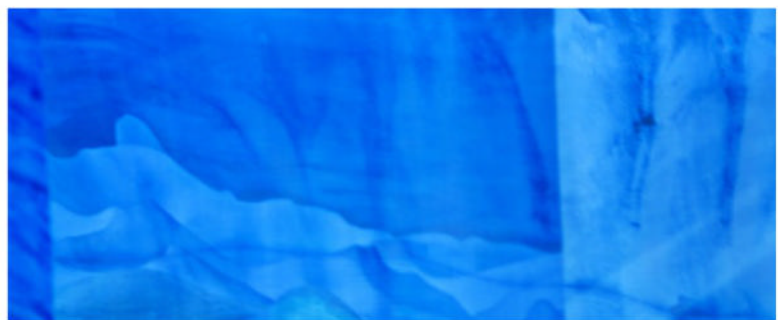
Through visual images and the affective experience of an immersive installation, Morgan invites us to think about what it will be like to lose what we love.

LENS MAGAZINE: Thank you for this interview, Patricia; having this conversation and featuring such an essential and fascinating project is a pleasure. First, let's discuss your background and passion for art, installations, and photography. What drew you to the fine art photography field, and were you influenced by the surrounding artistic atmosphere since childhood?

PATRICIA CARR MORGAN: As a child I was considered "artistic" and was frequently called on to make posters, but the single thing that stayed with me was an off-hand remark from my mother when I asked to take painting lessons from a local woman. My mother told me: "Oh, she just has people copy from magazines. That's not art." She had no idea what that would mean to me, but without a doubt it gave me a permission she couldn't have imagined and I never forgot it.

We had large picture books of art, but my first emotional connection was when I encountered Rothko as a freshman in college. As an art history major, I saw a lot of Kienholz, learned more about Duchamp, and they both became important influences. The only limit in art was my imagination and how powerful messages could be made about social concerns.





L. M: What can you tell about the inspiration for creating the project "I love you, don't leave me"? Before starting this beautiful ongoing project, were you an activist for fighting climate change and the global warming crisis?

P.C.M: Global warming has been a concern of mine for a long time, so for several years, I have been looking for a way to express this concern through my art. My best memories are frequently linked to connections

with the outdoors. I don't have a birding list, and the only footprints I can identify are human, but I love knowing I'm part of a larger world. It is so sad to realize that we are all contributing to the rapid devastation of this beautiful planet.

L. M: Can you share your feelings and experiences about your first trip to Antarctica? What impact did it make on you?

P.C.M: Being seasick was my first thought about traveling to Antarctica, but, never having been there, it still seemed like a good idea. Having seen many photographs of the area, I knew what it would look like, but I never imagined its impact on me.

Above the forbidding sea, the face of the glaciers reveal their vibrant blues that formed over centuries, and beyond the face is the beautiful expanse of undulating glaciers leading to the interior.



Patricia Carr Morgan © Blue Tears,
courtesy Tucson Museum of Art

All of this and the monumental icebergs sculpted by nature and floating free in the sea left me in awe. It was love at first sight, and I had found my focus on global warming.

L. M: Most photographs are in portrait sizes (17" x 22" to 24" x 36"). Is there a specific reason you use these sizes for expression?

P.C.M: As an installation artist, size and how it relates to the viewer are very important. My perception of the two sizes you mentioned is that they are familiar and easy for the viewer to approach—in other words, they're neutral. On several occasions, I have printed my series *Glacial Liquescence* at 42" x 55", which hints at the grandeur of the ice. I can see the possibility of a two-dimensional installation using extreme size as an essential





"I LOVE
YOU,
DON'T
LEAVE
ME."



Ice: Greenland & Antarctica
Patricia Car Morgan © All rights reserved.

conceptual factor in future installations like I did in Blue Tears.

L.M: In this project, you also created installations called "Blue Tears," based on layers cascading from above, diaphanous images of glaciers in Antarctica and Greenland sway gently as visitors walk around them. What is the main aim of the installations? You have mentioned in the installation description that "We know we have

broken its balance." Does using layers bring the unbalanced and unstable feelings to an extreme?

P.C.M: That's a good point I hadn't thought about. When choosing the sequence of the falling veils, I unconsciously chose the asymmetrical pattern that disrupted the balance of the beginning. My interest in using extreme sizes in the future utilizes that idea of disruption and imbalance.

L.M: What was the viewer's reaction to the art? Does the art influence the viewers and give a better understanding of the fragile situation caused by global warming?

P.C.M: My goal was to entice the viewer with the beauty of the ice and convey the sadness that I feel when I think of their disappearance. Some people have told me they wept as the veils fell during the performance.



Those remaining would fall randomly until, by the end, hanging askew, only one remained.

My hope is that experiencing this sense of loss will translate into action, both at home and at the polls. Equally important are the school children who came through with the docents, some of them learning about global warming for the first time.

L. M: Activists worldwide are looking for creative ways to make headlines to influence the public and create awareness. Some even use negative ways, such as destroying works of art in museums. What do you think of these attempts to influence? Have we reached the point where "every act sanctifies the goal for bringing awareness by coverage on the news sites and in the press"?

THE ”
GLACIERS
ARE WEEPING.
THEIR TEARS
FILL THE
OCEANS.”



Ice: Greenland & Antarctica
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"I LOVE
YOU,
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P.C.M: It seems to me that destroying art in museums is counterproductive. Unfortunately, while one gets press time, the destruction becomes more memorable than the message. Measures like peaceful protest, mailings, voting, boycotts, letters to the editor, political action, social media, and other things that push the issue to the forefront of our minds are needed.

L. M: What can you tell us about your studio? Do you have a permanent team working with you?

P.C.M: My studio has changed over the years from the bedroom, kitchen

table, industrial rental, back to kitchen table, then half a casita to all of the casita. Currently, my space is large, and I was able to proof Blue Tears here by hanging the bottom half, then the top half, from the ceiling on suspended aluminum bars.

I have help as needed. Someone added the hooks to the studio ceiling for me, a structural engineer made sure the floor of Enclosure XVIII was sturdy, I've used skilled neon and plexiglass experts, and when I'm using social media and new software, someone helps. It's always a pleasure to work with others who are experts in their area, so collaboration with others is

something I enjoy. Currently, I'm working on a two-dimensional project and have an assistant coming once a week to help with various tasks in the studio.

L. M: What gear do you use, and is there any favorite software? What kind of editing/post-processing do you use?

P.C.M: I switched to Sony A1 recently and have been happy with it. While I carry others, my go-to lens is the Sony 24-105, as most of my shooting has been from a zodiac boat. Bridge, Raw, and Photoshop are my primary software, and occasionally Mirage.

"I LOVE
YOU,
DON'T
LEAVE
ME."





Ice: Greenland & Antarctica
Patricia Carr Morgan © All rights reserved.



L. M: You've gained tremendous experience and success over twenty years through solo exhibitions, and your projects were exhibited in respectable museums, including at the Tucson Museum of Art in Arizona, the Tampa Museum of Art in Florida, and the Lindhurst Gallery in the University of Southern California. This is part of a more extensive list of solo exhibitions since 1974. Looking back and examining your development through the years, which project were you most attached to?

P.C.M: Usually, it is the most recent because, having worked on it for months or years, I'm still very invested in it. The one people seem to enjoy hearing about most is my first: *The Eternal Supper*. The floors, walls, and ceiling were covered with baby bottle nipples from Evenflo, and viewers were invited to remove their shoes and come inside. However, all of the work is important for me as it grows from our personal concerns to the universal: nurturing, isolation, a compartmented psyche, how we construct reality, respect for death, loss, and, not least, our memorabilia.

"I LOVE
YOU,
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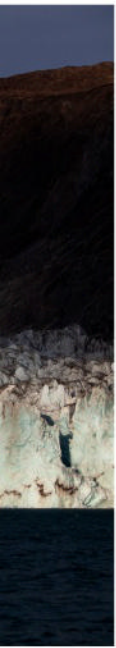


L.M: Are the projects an expression of your personal growth and changes in your personal life?

P.C.M: They are the result of things I'm acutely aware of at the time. Nurturing and motherhood and the balance between too much or not enough. A trip to the Egyptian pyramids soon after my father's death led to the building of a tomb for the contemporary man, where viewers and I could leave memorabilia. I felt a need to leave red roses and later remembered when, as a child, seeing my mother in the casket, she held a red rose. I don't doubt that the personal (sometimes unconsciously) leads me to the universal, and I could go into detail about all the works. These connections are also true for Blue Tears. It is about global warming; it is about loss and sorrow. In the performance, a pair of men's loafers have been left in front of the chair to represent those before us. I sit in the chair, move them to one side, and replace them with mine. Returning to the chair, I prepare to leave and replace the loafers in their proper place. The shoes are those of my son, who has passed away.



Ice: Greenland & Antarctica
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L. M: What message would you like to give our readers about fighting climate change and global warming?

P.C.M: The book *Climate Chaos* by Brian Fagan and Nadia Durrani is one of the best I've read.

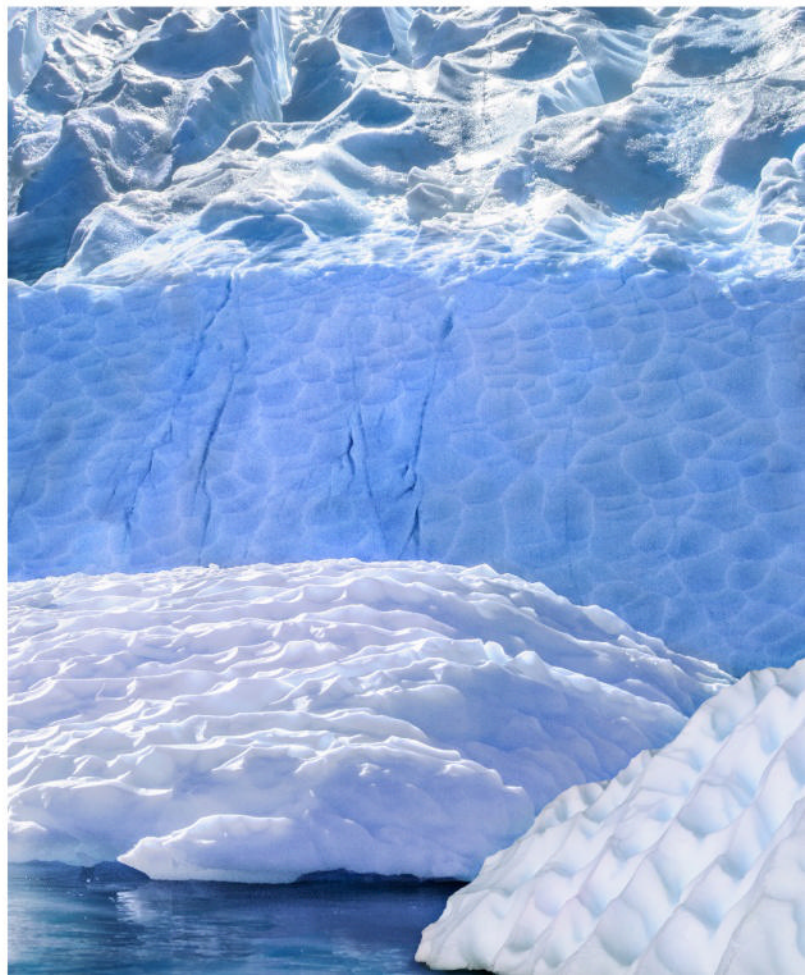
New technologies give archeologists additional information about ancient climate changes, and the authors discuss how our ancestors dealt with drought. They point out that when leadership failed, and there was a sclerotic bureaucracy, local efforts, and historical knowledge were important and ensured survival. We need to vote and support national and local leadership, peacefully demonstrate, and call attention to solutions in as many peaceful ways as possible. No matter how angry we are, we need to create more awareness and belief without inadvertently pushing others to become more resistant. It is a very difficult task, and all of us must participate.

L. M: What advice can you give the young fine art photographer trying to make his way in the field?

P.C.M: Don't be wedded to a medium; adapt to your circumstances. I've enjoyed doing mon-prints on the kitchen table or pen and ink drawings at different times,



and it's always fruitful in some way. One of my most important memories is visiting well-known galleries in San Francisco and showing them the same slides. One said they liked the work because the neon was so well integrated with the other elements; another said it was interesting, but the neon wasn't well integrated. So, keep working and trust yourself.





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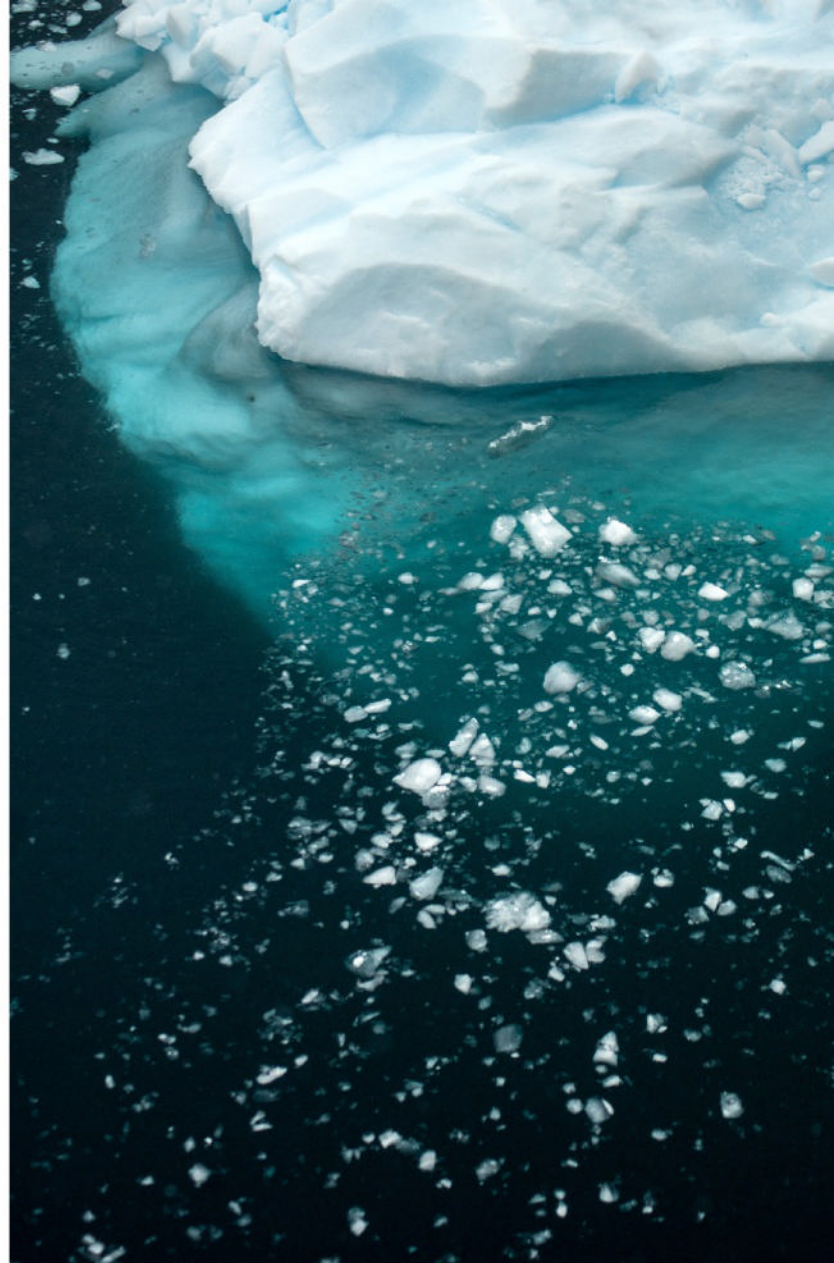


"I LOVE
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"I LOVE
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”Earth is not a paradise lost, but a paradise losing. The line in Anna Akhmatova’s love poem “He Whispers” could describe our dysfunctional relationship with our planet: “Either be mine alone or I will kill you.” We have always taken what we wanted from the Earth as we marched forward into the twenty-first century. At first, we didn’t know what we were doing; we thought the riches of our planet were endless and its survival forever. Now we understand we’re a mere interruption in the history of our planet. We know we have broken its balance. The climate we’ve adjusted to over 10,000 years is getting warmer each decade. With our carbon dioxide emissions, we have created a greenhouse we struggle to control but cannot.” - *Patricia Carr Morgan*





"I LOVE
YOU,
DON'T
LEAVE
ME."

**Patricia
Carr
Morgan**

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INSTAGRAM: [@PATRICIACARRMORGAN](https://www.instagram.com/PATRICIACARRMORGAN)



Sunrise Reflections, Apalachicola Bay
John Spohrer © All rights reserved.



JOHN SPOHRER:

***ST. GEORGE ISLAND,
APALACHICOLA BAY,
& THE ART OF CONSERVATION
PHOTOGRAPHY***

SPECIAL INTERVIEW
BY **MARK EDWARD HARRIS**

“I flew into Panama City, Florida, with a number of travel journalism colleagues to do a much-needed retreat on St. George Island. It's an ideal location to tune out and tune up in luxury. As we made our way along the coast, we stopped on occasion for some photo ops. My instinct is to take advantage of an opportunity when I see it rather than depend on the roll of the dice concept "it will be there later," for example, on our way back to the airport. Animals move, lighting conditions change, and there are too many variables.

After crossing over the 4-mile Bryant Patton Memorial Bridge, we arrived on St. George Island, a beautiful 22-mile barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico with unspoiled beaches and a number of unique nature and wildlife photography opportunities.





JOHN SPOHRER:

Portrait of John Spohrer
© Russ Norwood

ST. GEORGE ISLAND, APALACHICOLA BAY, & THE ART OF CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHY

**SPECIAL INTERVIEW BY
MARK EDWARD HARRIS**

Left Page:
Golden Oyster Boat,
Apalachicola Bay
John Spohrer © All rights
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Left Page Bottom:
Lightning Whelk, St.
George Island
John Spohrer © All rights
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Bottom:
Marsh Birds and Palms,
Apalachicola Bay
John Spohrer © All rights
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We settled into our Collins Vacation Rentals properties that would be our homes for an extended weekend. These high-end residences are ideal getaways for families, friends, and colleagues alike. Their 300 rental properties extend around the island. After unpacking, we ventured forth to take advantage of the natural beauty of the island and its environs, cameras in hand. I was particularly drawn to Cape St. George Island, reached by a St. George Island Charters' boat helmed by Captain Krista Miller. My Nikkor 400mm f/2.8 was particularly useful to take advantage of all the birding opportunities on this off-the-beaten-track islet.

”

**MY GOALS
HAVE ALWAYS
BEEN TO
PROMOTE THE
LAWFUL, ETHICAL,
AND RESPONSIBLE
TREATMENT OF
ALL WILDLIFE
AND TO SUPPORT
ADDITIONS TO OUR
TREASURY OF PUBLIC
WILDLANDS AS BEFITS
THE FORGOTTEN
COAST'S UNIQUE AND
IRREPLACEABLE
BIODIVERSITY."**



JOHN SPOHRER:
***ST. GEORGE ISLAND,
APALACHICOLA BAY,
& THE ART OF CONSERVATION
PHOTOGRAPHY***

SPECIAL INTERVIEW
BY **MARK EDWARD HARRIS**



A SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH
JOHN SPOHRER

BY MARK EDWARD HARRIS

During our explorations, I asked locals who the most well-known photographer in the area was. The name **John Spohrer** was always the answer. After checking out his books, including "Florida's Forgotten Coast" and "The Seasons of Apalachicola Bay" and his large-scale Lyve Matte Canvas prints created by Alison Bailey, it was obvious why. I asked Spohrer, who was named a "Florida

Master Naturalist," to share his knowledge and photos of the nature-rich region.

MARK EDWARD HARRIS: What makes this section of Florida so special for a photographer?

JOHN SPOHRER: First, let me define the area. The Apalachicola Bay system includes St. George Sound and St. Vincent Sound and covers

a total of 240 square miles. It is separated from the Gulf of Mexico by four barrier islands: St. Vincent Island to the far west, Cape St. George Island, also known as Little St. George Island, St. George Island, where your Collins Vacation Rentals property is located, and Dog Island.

For an outdoor photographer, the ecosystem of the Forgotten Coast, from river to bay to ocean and all the



land in between, offers an ever-changing palate of animals, plants, and habitats. For the waterscape photographer, the bay and its array of heritage vessels make compelling compositions in beautiful light. The region boasts 1,262 species of plants, including the largest stand of Tupelo trees in the world. There are at least 308 species of resident birds, 57 species of mammals, and the highest density of amphibians and reptiles in North America.



M. E. H: Where are some of your favorite locations, and at what times of year?

J. S: I enjoy shooting St. George Island on both the bay and beach sides. On the bayside, there are great opportunities with the sun at your back for wading birds, including herons and egrets. In spring, the island is the first land for migrating birds crossing the Gulf of Mexico. St. George Island State Park is a well-known migrant trap with over 400 species documented.

Top Left:
Moonset, Penumbra and
Oyster Boat, Apalachicola Bay
John Spohrer © All rights
reserved.

Top: Scallops, St. Joseph Bay
John Spohrer © All rights
reserved.





MY HOPE IS THAT THESE IMAGES REMIND LOCAL PEOPLE AND VISITORS ALIKE OF THE URGENT NEED TO PROTECT AND NURTURE THE HEART AND SOUL OF FLORIDA'S FORGOTTEN COAST AND ITS WILD CREATURES IN THEIR WILD PLACES."

Blue Heron Sun Back,
Apalachicola Bay
John Spohrer © All rights reserved.

In the summer, the beach brings opportunities for nesting turtles and their hatches. Shooting the riverfront in Apalachicola is a great venue for heritage working boats. Seafood Landing Park, on the west end of Apalachicola, offers several outstanding platforms for diving birds and many other marsh critters.

M. E. H: What is the importance of Apalachicola Bay to the ecosystem as a whole?

J. S: To supply the precious, life-sustaining flow of fresh water into the bay, the Apalachicola River drains a watershed of over 20,000 square miles. While much of my

work focuses on the bay itself, its unique character and life-affirming productivity cannot be sustained without the protection of the upland watershed and historical flows of fresh water. When I give talks locally, they generally center around "the story behind the picture." I also try to present a "baseline" of what we have to lose and what we have already lost.

M. E. H: What's your background in photography and science?

J. S: My college training was in journalism and photography. I was a photographer/writer in the Army. I am a Florida Master Naturalist.

To me, a naturalist has an enduring fascination with natural processes and creatures and tries to convey that joy to others so that they can properly appreciate their place in the web of life and be motivated to do as little harm as possible.

M. E. H: What camera equipment are you working with, and what lens range would you suggest to photographers coming out to experience this magnificent off-the-beaten-path section of Florida?

J. S: That's probably the most asked question I get from people visiting St. George Island and the region as a whole. No matter what lenses

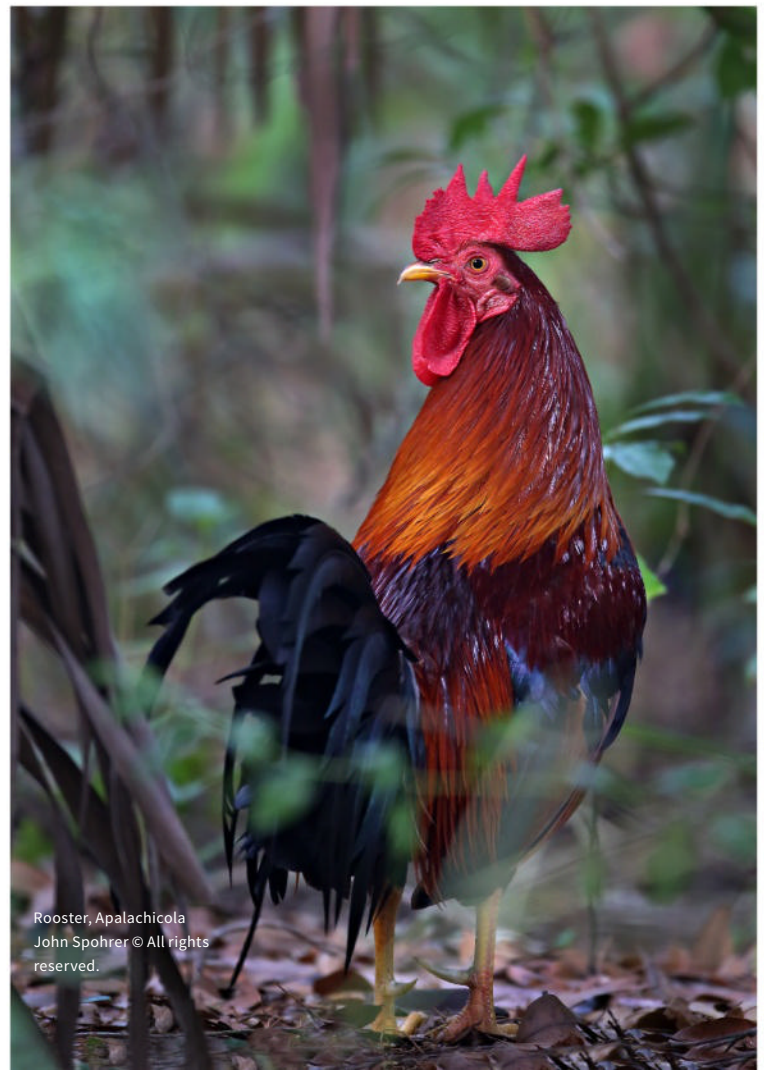


Walking Egret, St. Joseph Bay
John Spohrer © All rights reserved.

and cameras you're using, there are great pictures to be taken, but not all pictures can be taken equally well. For birds and most wildlife, I use a Canon 800mm f/5.6 with a 1.4 TC shooting at 1120mm at f/8. For waterscapes, I use the Canon 16-35mm. For walking the beach, a Canon 100-400mm works great. That said, for the first ten years of my education, I shot a humble Canon 300mm and crawled on my wet belly to get shots with plenty of good results.

M. E. H: No matter what lenses you work with, nature conservation seems to be your main focus, so to speak.

J. S: My goals have always been to promote the lawful, ethical, and responsible treatment of all wildlife and to support additions to our treasury of public wildlands as befits the Forgotten Coast's unique and irreplaceable biodiversity. My hope is that these images remind local people and visitors alike of the urgent need to protect and nurture the heart and soul of Florida's Forgotten Coast and its wild creatures in their wild places.



Rooster, Apalachicola
John Spohrer © All rights reserved.



Lightning Over Sunrise
John Spohrer © All rights reserved.



Dawn, Southern Sky
John Spohrer © All rights reserved.

JOHN SPOHRER:

**ST. GEORGE ISLAND,
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Laughing Gull Skimming,
Scipio Creek, Apalachicola
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MARK EDWARD HARRIS

Assignments have taken Los Angeles and Tokyo-based photographer **Mark Edward Harris** to more than 100 countries and all seven continents. His editorial work has appeared in publications such as Vanity Fair, LIFE, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Time Magazine, GEO, Newsweek, Conde Nast Traveler, National Geographic Traveler, AFAR, Wallpaper, Vogue, Architectural Digest, The Los Angeles Times Magazine, and The London Sunday Times Travel Magazine as well as all the major photography and in-flight magazines. Among his numerous accolades are CLIO, ACE, Impact DOCS Award of Excellence, Aurora Gold, and IPA awards. His books include Faces of the Twentieth Century: Master Photographers and Their Work, The Way of the Japanese Bath, Wanderlust, North Korea, South Korea, Inside Iran, The Travel Photo Essay: Describing A Journey Through Images, and his latest, The People of the Forest, a book about orangutans.

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CAPTURING THE ESSENCE:

A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH SRI LANKA'S TEA PLANTATIONS AND FISHERMEN OF TRINCOMALEE

BY JOSE JEULAND

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- JOSE JEULAND



Sri Lanka's Tea Plantations
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It's been quite a while since my last contribution to Lens Magazine, a hiatus filled with the whirlwind of commercial photography shoots and directing videos for **COCO Creative Studio**. Yet, amidst the bustling world of professional endeavors, I found solace in returning to the heart of what ignited my passion – capturing the raw, authentic beauty of places and people through my lens.

In this exclusive series, I delve into the enchanting landscapes of one of my favorite countries – Sri Lanka. Over the years, I've explored various facets of this island nation, from the bustling streets of Colombo to the serene fishing areas of Negombo, the historical city of Jaffna, the southern coast, and the captivating wildlife safaris. However, my lens turned its focus to a different narrative during November and December 2023 – the labourers in the Tea Plantations and the fishermen of Trincomalee.

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CEYLON TEA TRAILS: A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF TRADITION

Sri Lanka's Tea Plantations
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My initial destination was the Ceylon Tea Trails, which embodies the rich history of Sri Lanka's tea industry. The journey began with a picturesque train ride from Colombo to Hatton Railway Station, offering a glimpse of the country's diverse landscapes and vibrant villages. Nestled at 1250 meters, the Ceylon Tea Trails in Sri Lanka's UNESCO World Heritage Central Highlands seamlessly blend the past with the present.

As I explored the extensive Tea Plantations, I witnessed a meticulous process that has endured through time. Once a coffee plantation, the fields are adorned with

kilometers of tea bushes. The labour-intensive task of tea plucking begins at the break of dawn, with women clad in vibrant traditional attire meticulously picking tea leaves. The steep slopes of the mountains create a challenging terrain infested with leeches, yet these resilient workers, many hailing from India or generations of their families, persevere barefoot.

The resulting images capture not just the beauty of the landscape but also the spirit and resilience of the women who contribute to the legacy of Ceylon tea.

Amongst the emerald expanse of the tea fields, a unique tool captures my attention – a simple wooden stick.





Sri Lanka's Tea Plantations
Jose Jeuland © All rights reserved.

PHOTOGRAPHER
JOSÉ JEULAND

This unassuming object plays a crucial role in the tea plucking process, as the workers use it skilfully to maintain the level of the tea plants. Watching them work reminds me of artists shaping their masterpieces, each movement deliberate and necessary. Despite the elegance of their craft, the reality of their labour is far from glamorous. These workers, predominantly women, face a relentless routine, beginning their task at dawn's first light. Their

compensation, unfortunately, does not reflect the skill and dedication required for their job. The wages are modest, a stark reminder of their economic challenges. Observing their hands, I am struck by their precision, speed, and delicacy. It's like a dance atop the tea plants, a mesmerizing performance of necessity and skill. To the imaginative eye, the tea leaves in their nimble hands could be mistaken for money bills, symbolizing the paradox of their labour – a high-value product

harvested by those who receive so little in return. Amidst this scene of contrasting realities, a poignant detail stands out. The nets donned by these laborers bear a striking resemblance to wedding veils. This unintentional adornment adds a touch of grace to their appearance, juxtaposing the beauty, but in reality, the net aids them by including the plucked leaves in it. It is a visual metaphor for their lives – an existence marked by resilience and endurance, cloaked in a veneer of deceptive simplicity.



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CEYLON TEA TRAILS: A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF TRADITION





TRINCOMALEE: WHERE CULTURE MEETS THE OCEAN BREEZE

Trincomalee, located on the eastern side of Sri Lanka, beckoned me with its unique blend of beaches, Hindu temples, and vibrant fisherman villages. The serene beauty of the place immediately captivated me, offering an incredible backdrop for capturing the essence of daily life. The fishermen of Trincomalee became my subjects, their daily routines documented against the stunning coastal landscapes. From the rhythmic motions of casting nets to the laughter of children playing on the beach and adults engaging in a game of soccer, every moment reflected the unhurried pace of life by the ocean. The play of light in Trincomalee is nothing short of magical. Whether it was the golden hour casting its warm glow on the beach or the vibrant hues of sunrise

and sunset painted the sky, each frame encapsulated the enchantment of this coastal haven.

Amidst the scenes of daily life, a beautiful temple stands proudly on the beach, a testament to the deep cultural roots embedded in the landscape. Dogs, an integral part of the coastal life, added an unspoken charm to the images, further enriching the visual narrative.

In Trincomalee, I was continually amazed by the seamless integration of nature, culture, and daily life.

Each photograph from this series serves as a visual ode to the authentic beauty that resides in the unexplored corners of this captivating destination.

As my lens traversed the Tea Plantations of Ceylon and the coastal vistas of Trincomalee, I rediscovered the joy of capturing moments that tell stories beyond words.

PHOTOGRAPHER
JOSÉ JEULAND

Fishermen of Trincomalee
Jose Jeuland © All rights reserved.



Fishermen of Trincomalee
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Through this series, I invite you to join me on this visual journey, where the traditions, resilience, and simple joys of life in Sri Lanka unfold in each frame.

As I continued my exploration of Trincomalee, the presence of local fauna became an unmissable aspect of the coastal scenery. Dogs and crows seemed to have found their haven here, thriving amidst the fishermen's daily catch.

These ever-present and observant animals partook in the fishermen's bounty, scavenging free meals here and there, adding a raw, natural charm to the landscape.

The beach was a hive of activity for the fishermen and the community as a whole. Some locals were engaged in the meticulous task of preparing their fishing nets and lines, a skill passed down through generations. Others indulged in a game of soccer, their laughter and cheers echoing over the sounds of the waves. It wasn't uncommon to see groups simply lounging on the beach, soaking in the sun, and enjoying the tranquil environment.





Fishermen of Trincomalee
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TRINCOMALEE: WHERE CULTURE
MEETS THE OCEAN BREEZE



Fishermen of Trincomalee
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PHOTOGRAPHER
**JOSÉ
JEULAND**



Fishermen of Trincomalee
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This mix of activities and people, from young children playing in the sand to the elderly sharing stories, painted a vivid picture of community life. Family enjoyment was a central theme in Trincomalee. Parents and children, grandparents, cousins, and friends all congregated along the shore, each contributing to the tapestry of beach life. Their joy and relaxation were palpable, a testament to the simple pleasures of life by the sea. The harbor was dotted with

an array of boats, each painted in vibrant hues that seemed to challenge the brightness of the sky and sea. The colors were a visual feast, standing out starkly against the natural backdrop. These boats, varying in size and design, were not just functional vessels but symbols of the fishermen's pride and livelihood. Interestingly, the task of fishing was exclusively undertaken by men. It was a tradition deeply ingrained in the local culture, where the ocean's bounty was harnessed by the fishermen's solid



hands and enduring spirit. This gender-specific role highlighted a fascinating aspect of local customs and social structure.

As I captured these scenes, my camera became more than just a tool; it was a window into the lives and traditions of the people of Trincomalee.



Fishermen of Trincomalee
Jose Jeurand © All rights reserved.

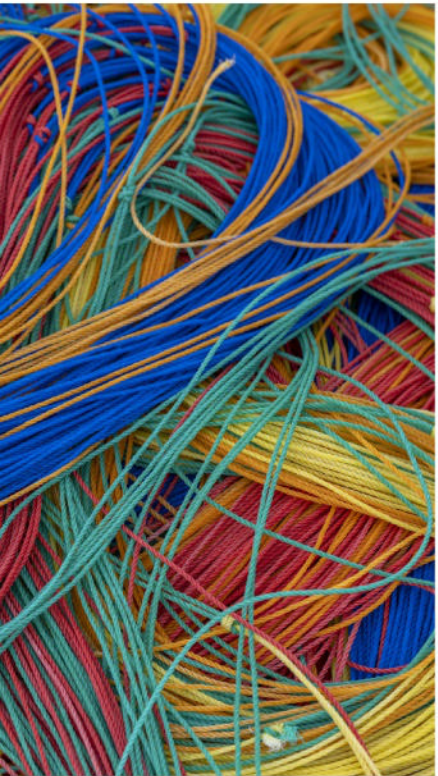
Their connection with the sea, their communal bonds, and the vibrant colors of their environment all came together to create a tapestry rich in culture and beauty. In every frame, the essence of Trincomalee's spirit was vividly encapsulated, inviting viewers to step into a world where the rhythm of life is in perfect harmony with the ebb and flow of the ocean. In reflecting upon the lives of the tea plantation workers and the fishermen of Trincomalee, a profound parallel emerges.

Though separated by the vastness of land and sea, these two groups share a common thread of experience. The tea pluckers, predominantly women, grace the emerald expanses of the highland plantations, while the fishermen, primarily men, brave the ocean's azure depths. Their tasks, though distinct in nature, are equal in their demands of skill, endurance, and connection to the environment. Both vocations are a dance with nature, a vibrant

splash of color against the backdrop of their natural settings. The bright saris of the tea pluckers weave a tapestry of color amongst the lush green of the tea bushes, mirroring the vividly painted boats of the fishermen, bobbing like jewels upon the ocean's canvas. Their environments, though contrasting, are equally demanding and unforgiving, yet they navigate these with a harmonious blend of strength and grace.

This harmony extends beyond the physical realm into the realm of beauty and artistry. Watching the tea pluckers at work is akin to observing a carefully choreographed ballet - a symphony of movement and rhythm, where every pluck is a note in an endless melody. Similarly, the fishermen's daily routines unfold like an intricate dance with the sea, each net cast in a fluid motion in sync with the rhythm of the waves. The beauty in their movements belies the difficulty of their tasks, offering a poignant reminder of the elegance that can be found in the most laborious of endeavors.







In capturing these moments, my camera lens became a bridge connecting these disparate yet intertwined worlds. Through it, I sought to convey not just the vibrant tapestry of life in Sri Lanka but also its people's deep-seated resilience and indomitable spirit. Whether on land or sea, their lives are a testament to the beauty and strength that can emerge from the most challenging circumstances.

As I conclude this photographic journey, I am left with a profound sense of admiration and respect for the tea plantation workers and fishermen of Trincomalee. Their stories, etched in the lines of their faces and the calluses of their hands, speak of a life in harmony with nature, marked by its challenges and splendors. Through these images, I hope to have offered a window into their world, where the beauty of the human spirit shines brightly against the backdrop of their daily toil.

In the end, it is not just the landscapes or the cultural tapestry of Sri Lanka that captivates and enchants. The people – their resilience, joy, and unwavering spirit – truly embody this remarkable land's essence. Their stories, interwoven with the fabric of nature, continue to resonate long after the final image is captured, a timeless ode to the enduring beauty and strength of the human condition.



Fishermen of Trincomalee
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PHOTOGRAPHER **JOSÉ JEULAND**



A firm believer in chasing his passion, José Jeuland embarked on an atypical journey. He first started his career as a professional triathlete at the age of 25, where he took part in international

competitions. This life of globe-trotting during his triathlete days kick-started José's professional photography journey and an appetite for documenting lesser-known cultures worldwide. His social-relational skills and his curious and benevolent gaze on the world led him to form invaluable connections with people from diverse walks of life.

Now based in Singapore, Jose is managing COCO Creative Studio, where he produces commercial photography and videography work; Jeuland is an ambassador for The North Face, a FUJIFILM X-Photographer, and supported by EPSON, Manfrotto, BenQ, and Gravity Backdrops.

He collaborates and creates content for these brands, and he regularly works with international clients such as JW Marriott, Shangri-La, The Fullerton, Grab, Amazon, Expedia, etc.

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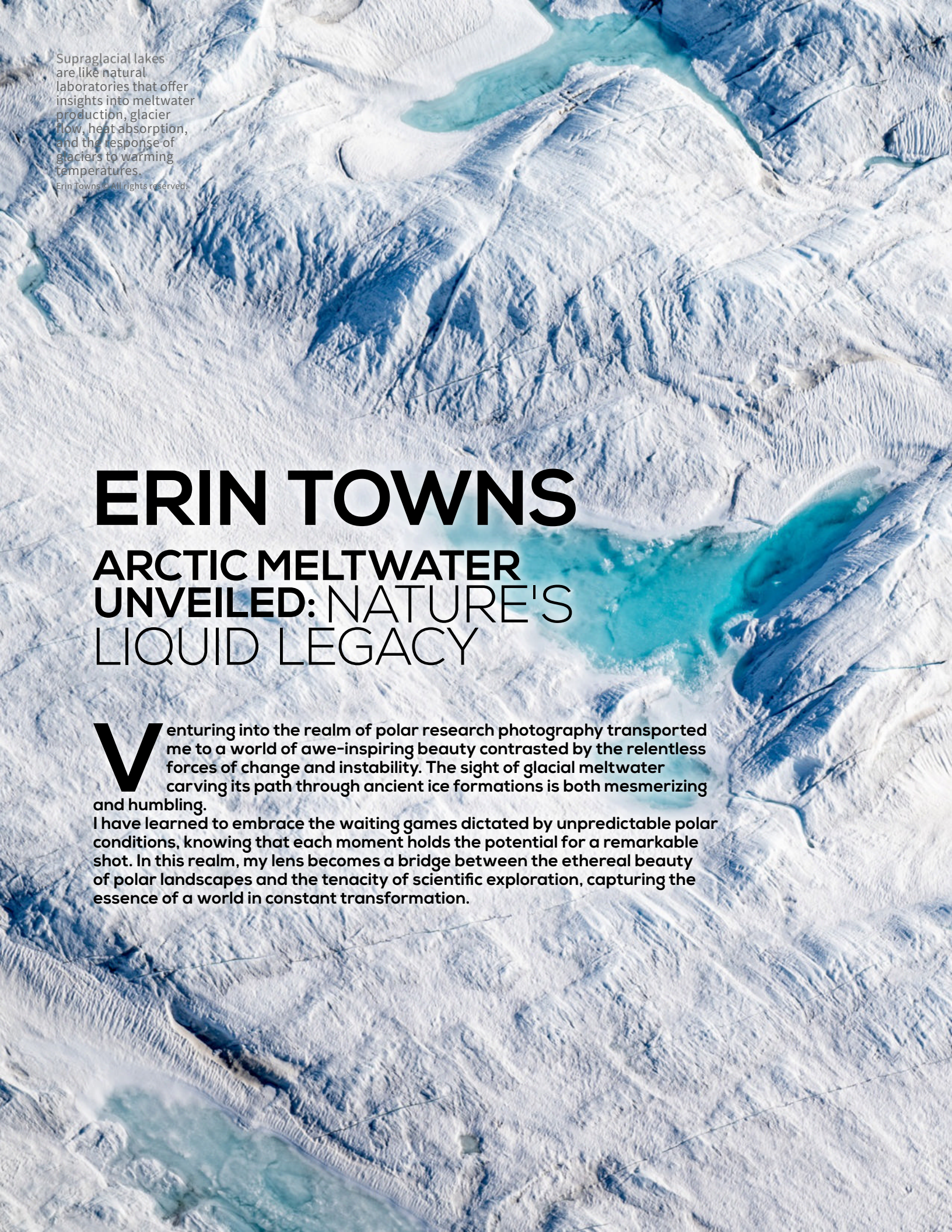
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Supraglacial lakes are like natural laboratories that offer insights into meltwater production, glacier flow, heat absorption, and the response of glaciers to warming temperatures.

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ERIN TOWNS

ARCTIC MELTwater UNVEILED: NATURE'S LIQUID LEGACY

Venturing into the realm of polar research photography transported me to a world of awe-inspiring beauty contrasted by the relentless forces of change and instability. The sight of glacial meltwater carving its path through ancient ice formations is both mesmerizing and humbling.

I have learned to embrace the waiting games dictated by unpredictable polar conditions, knowing that each moment holds the potential for a remarkable shot. In this realm, my lens becomes a bridge between the ethereal beauty of polar landscapes and the tenacity of scientific exploration, capturing the essence of a world in constant transformation.





The Sermeq Kujalleq (Jakobshavn Glacier) provides valuable data for scientists studying Greenland's ice sheet and its responses to rising temperatures.
Erin Towns © All rights reserved.

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About three-quarters of Earth's freshwater is stored in glaciers and ice sheets. Supraglacial lakes that form on the surface influence ice melt dynamics

and accelerate the melting process. The beauty of vivid green water is due to the presence of finely ground rock particles, minerals, and microscopic algae. Meltwater rivers contribute to the overall water supply, supporting and sometimes harming human populations and ecosystems. Understanding and monitoring the impacts of thawing Arctic permafrost on meltwater runoff highlights the interconnectedness of Earth's systems and the complex consequences of warming temperatures in polar regions.

While navigating dangers, including large crevasses, polar scientists spend time in the field using ground-penetrating radar systems and seismic tremor technology to unravel the mysteries of glacial hydrology. Their data is crucial for coastal communities managing sea level rise and infrastructure issues, global security strategies, and economic adaptation planning.

While meltwater-related changes may present challenges, Greenlandic and Arctic communities have a long history of resilience and adaptation to changing conditions.

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Seismic tremors can be used to study glacial meltwater and its impact on glacier dynamics. A polar field engineer performs systems checks on a recently installed seismic system on the Western Greenland Ice Sheet. Erin Towns © All rights reserved.

ERIN TOWNS



Ground penetrating radar systems like the one pictured here in the sled help scientists understand what lies beneath the ice. Like a cell phone that sends and receives signals to and from a tower, GPR sends signals into the ground to see layers of snow, ice, and bedrock. Erin Towns © All rights reserved.



ARCTIC MELTWATER
UNVEILED: NATURE'S
LIQUID LEGACY



Driving along Alaska's Dalton Highway, trailing a fuel truck, my thoughts turned to the stark reality of warming temperatures, meltwater, and profound shifts in our environment.

I pondered the toll on Greenlandic sled dog culture, where icy terrain is integral, and the traditional fishing way of life, both deeply intertwined with the frozen landscapes now in flux. Climate change brings tangible consequences that touch the very fabric of the cultures and traditions that rely on these frozen expanses. The legacy of Arctic meltwater is a testament to the profound changes our planet is undergoing. Although at times a stunningly beautiful sight, the reality is that as Arctic ice continues to melt, it leaves behind a complex legacy of environmental, geopolitical, and scientific implications.

Glacier crevasses pose significant dangers to anyone working in glacier-covered areas. They typically undergo rigorous training in glacier safety, use specialized equipment, and follow established safety protocols.

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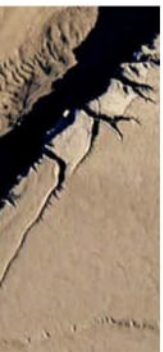
The green and aqua-blue appearance of meltwater is primarily due to the scattering and absorption of sunlight. Perceived color depends on the wavelength of light that is scattered the most.

Erin Towns © All rights reserved.



Understanding the timing and volume of meltwater discharge, including the presence of glacier flour, is crucial for managing water resources in regions dependent on glacier-fed rivers.

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ARCTIC MELT WATER
UNVEILED: NATURE'S
LIQUID LEGACY

ERIN TOWNS

Erin Towns is a National Geographic Grosvenor Teacher Program Fellow and PolarTREC Teacher Program alumni from Augusta, Maine.

As a teacher with twenty-four years of classroom experience, she has traveled the world working with teachers and students nationally and internationally, creating an interdisciplinary curriculum that combines the study of history, economics, Earth and climate science, and visual arts. Towns is a graduate research assistant at the University of Maine, helping to run programs that connect teens with PolarSTEM career field exploration opportunities in Arctic

environments and serves as a photographer for the University of Maine's Polar Geophysics Team. Her artistic journey is a fusion of her deep love for the Arctic and Maine, intertwined with her passion for education and climate science. She is an inquisitive artist who thrives on capturing the intricate details of landscapes while exploring the interconnection between the Earth, animals, humans, and the science that underpins them.

Through the lens, Erin embarks daily on a journey of self-discovery, finding optimism in the face of environmental challenges. Her work is action-oriented, seeking solutions to the pressing issues of our time.

Erin's fascination with humanity is evident in her ability to showcase diverse perspectives, creating a tapestry of stories through her lens.

As a Maine-based artist, Erin draws inspiration from the beauty of her surroundings, and her photography is a celebration of Maine's unique themes, yet it resonates universally, echoing the importance of preserving our planet. Through her work in polar regions, Erin connects changes to what's happening in Maine for students and the community. Erin sincerely wishes that her work serves as a testament to the power of art and humans to inspire change, offering a fresh perspective on the world we inhabit.



ARCTIC MELT WATER UNVEILED: NATURE'S LIQUID LEGACY

Top: The color of a glacier can vary, and it is often not pure white. The Kaskawulsh Glacier contains dirt, debris, and rock particles, which, in part, causes it to appear brown. These impurities absorb sunlight and heat, causing the ice to melt and darken.

Erin Towns © All rights reserved.

Top Right: With sea level rise, high tides start from a higher starting point. Tides reach further inland than they did in the past. Recently, a record high tide and powerful storm surge rocked Maine's coast, leaving communities reeling.

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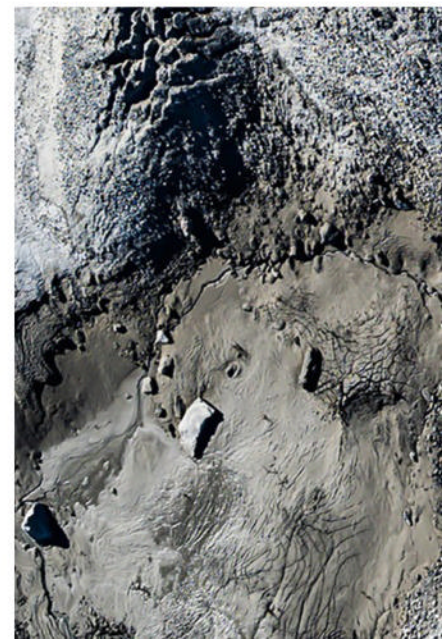
Right: The melting of permafrost in the Arctic and the release of meltwater have several significant impacts, including greenhouse gas emissions, infrastructure damage, erosion, and land loss.

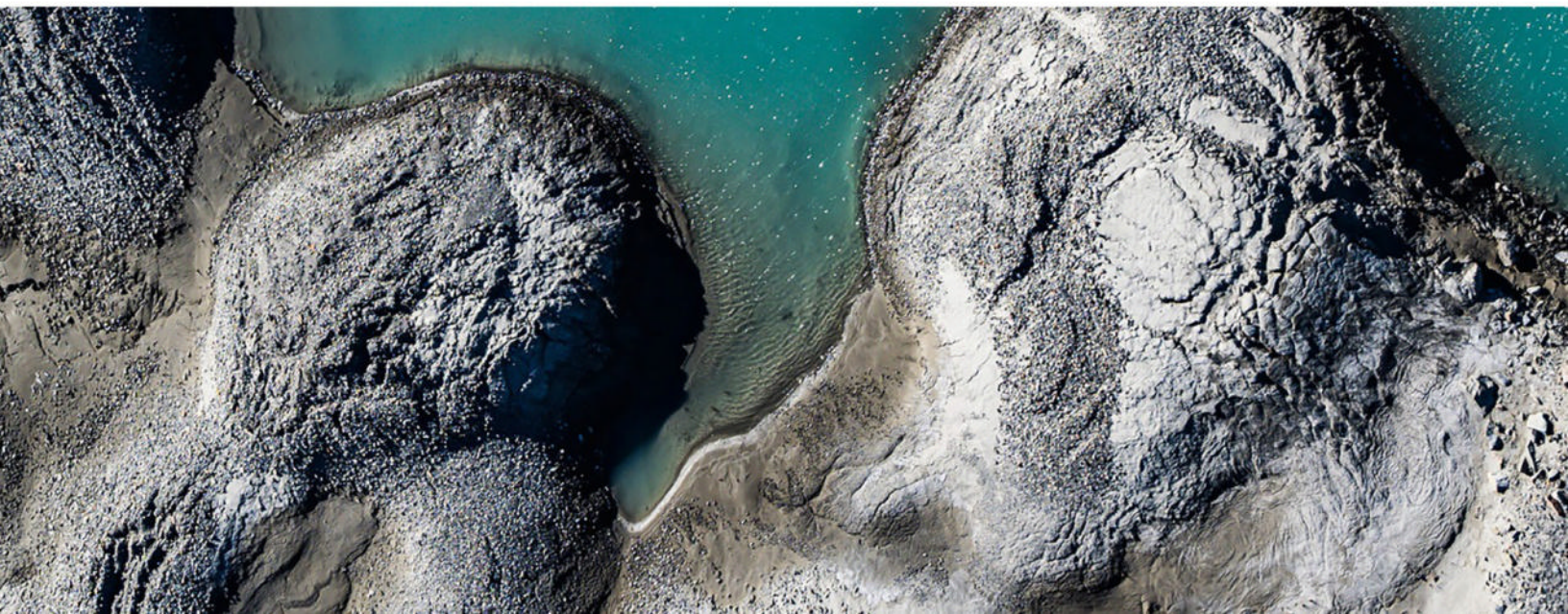
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Right Bottom: The green and aqua-blue appearance of meltwater is primarily due to the scattering and absorption of sunlight. Perceived color depends on the wavelength of light that is scattered the most. (Detail)

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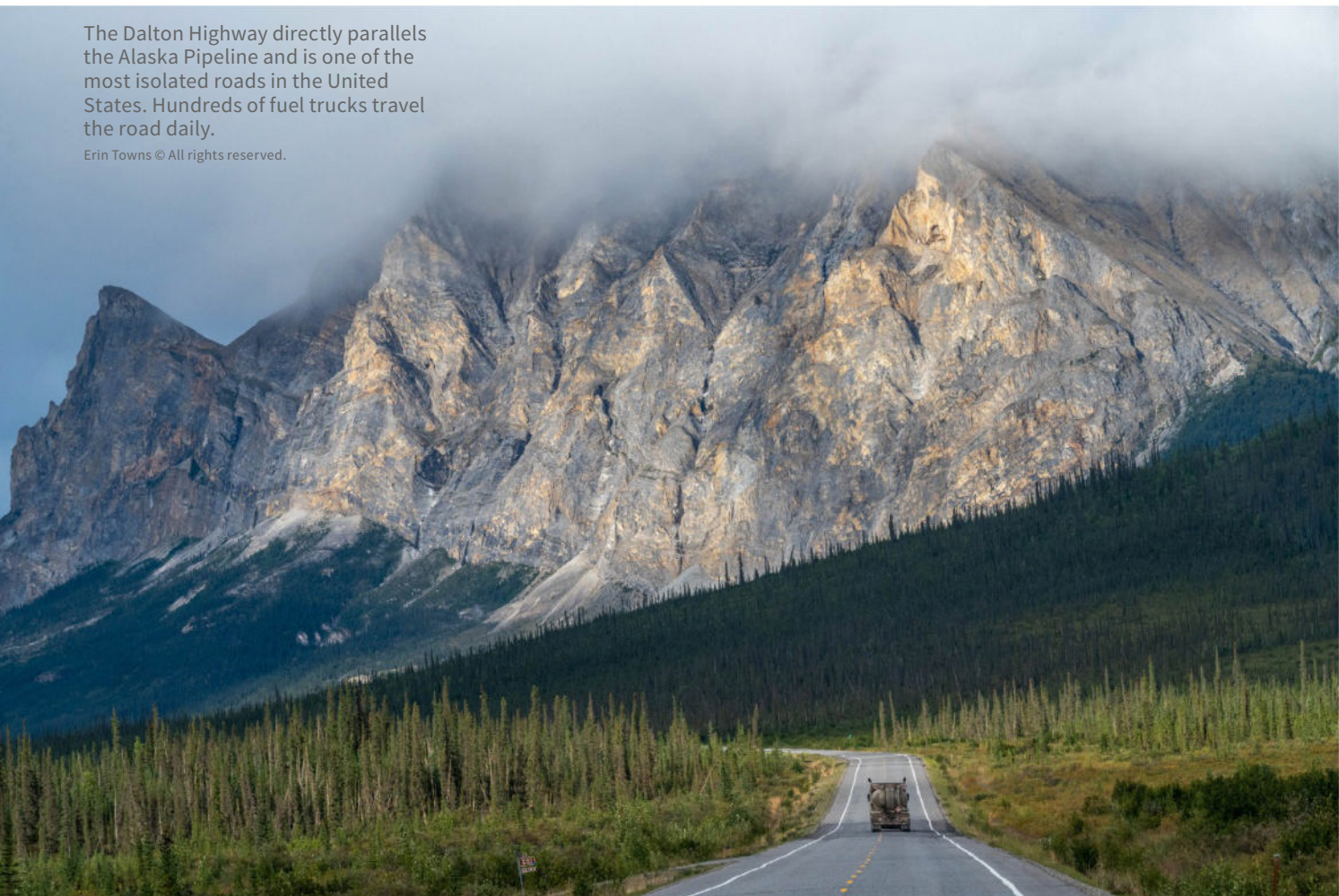




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The Dalton Highway directly parallels the Alaska Pipeline and is one of the most isolated roads in the United States. Hundreds of fuel trucks travel the road daily.

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**ARCTIC MELT WATER
UNVEILED: NATURE'S
LIQUID LEGACY**

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ARCTIC MELTWATER
UNVEILED: NATURE'S
LIQUID LEGACY



River evolution from glacier meltwater is a dynamic process influenced by various factors and stages. Over time, proglacial rivers carve paths through the landscape, creating channels, meanders, and sediment deposits.

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ARCTIC MELTWATER UNVEILED: NATURE'S LIQUID LEGACY

The interplay of meltwater, ocean dynamics, and the fishing economy in the Arctic is a complex and evolving issue that requires ongoing research and monitoring to understand and address its implications for fisheries sustainability.

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ARTEM KHAZOV

FASCINATING JOURNEY:

**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**



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NEPAL

A man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a black hoodie and a black backpack, stands in a city street. He is looking directly at the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and buildings.

■ ARTEM KHAZOV

FASCINATING JOURNEY:
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”

NEPAL AND
INDIA CAN BE
DISCOVERED
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PERSPECTIVES.
THIS TIME, I AIMED
TO OBSERVE HOW
RESIDENTS IN
LARGE CITIES LIVE.”



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I started practicing photography over 5 years ago. My interests turned to extreme sports such as snowboarding, wakeboarding, and acrobatics. As a photographer, I began capturing precisely in these directions. Over time, I became interested in portrait photography and found working with light and shadow fascinating. I learned retouching and studio work for about a year and a half.

In the winter of 2021 (when I worked as a photographer in a marketing agency), my first business trip to

Tanzania changed everything. For the first time, I interacted with tribes, photographed wild animals, and took pictures of people on the streets.

Since September 2022, I have traveled mainly across Europe and the Balkan countries. It became a challenge for me that life in these countries is quite measured and lacks excitement, significantly influencing photography.

So, in September 2023, I decided to embark on a significant journey through Asia. India became my first destination, and against the

backdrop of Europe, I experienced a cultural shock. Sometimes, it was even uncomfortable to take out the camera. However, I believe that such trips compel us to overcome ourselves, face our fears, and develop, especially in reportage and documentary photography.

To this day, I continue to travel the world. Each time, I strive to stay not in touristy places but where locals live to have the opportunity to capture authentic moments and convey the life that people in each country are experiencing.



ARTEM KHAZOV

FASCINATING JOURNEY:
**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**

The country where mountain peaks rise above the clouds, where people seek tranquility and enlightenment behind the walls of Buddhist monasteries, where thousands of individuals challenge themselves every year, attempting to conquer the highest mountain on the planet - I arrived in Nepal. When we imagine Nepal involuntarily, the Himalayas, Everest, and mountaineers come to mind. However, beyond that, like everywhere else, Nepal is home to local inhabitants preserving their traditions and culture. As a photographer, I found it intriguing to explore the traditional aspects of the country, observing how locals live, what rituals they observe, and how they carry on with their lives. The

focal point of my journey became the capital of Nepal - the city of Kathmandu.

In Nepal, the day begins early; in some monasteries, prayers commence at 4:30 in the morning. People start working at 5-6 in the morning, but before that, it's customary to visit temples to make offerings to the gods - the morning puja. What's astonishing is that at such an early hour, one can encounter people from various social strata and age groups in the temples. Some may be adorned in expensive attire, while others wear clothing from years past. You might come across an old person living out their days or a 13-14-year-old girl praying for divine favor. Nepal is steeped in religion.

Hinduism predominates in the country. Exploring Kathmandu, you will inevitably find yourself at the Pashupatinath Temple. Its visit is impossible to ignore. Daily cremation ceremonies take place in the temple, allowing you to witness relatives bidding farewell to the deceased, whose body will eventually be consumed by fire. In modern Nepal, this ceremony has become a kind of spectacle. Tourists are charged an entrance fee, but it's essential to note that, for the locals, this ceremony is sacred and not a show.

While in the temple, I tried to keep my distance, avoiding intruding into the proceedings. People bid farewell, and I believe the presence of a stranger is inappropriate in such situations. In such instances,



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telephoto lenses usually aid me. In the Pashupatinath Temple, I often used the Sigma 150-600. Utilizing such a lens allows the moment's significance to be captured without disrupting its processes.

At cremation sites, whether in Nepal or India, Agoris are often encountered. They are monks who worship Lord Shiva and engage in ascetic practices such as tobacco, alcohol, meat consumption, and communication with corpses. However, what you will most likely see in 90% of cases is a costumed individual earning a living imitating an Agori.





ARTEM KHAZOV
FASCINATING JOURNEY:
**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**



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After all, cremation sites attract numerous tourists, and where tourists go, money follows. One of the most stunning symbols of Nepal and Buddhism is the stupas. Stupas hold profound spiritual significance and serve as places of prayer, meditation, and worship for Buddhists. Passing by one of the most famous stupas in Nepal - Boudhanath - with my camera, I encountered a vast number of praying individuals. No one paid any attention to me, allowing me to capture some of my best shots in Nepal.

Here, I'd like to make a brief digression for a comparison between India and Nepal. While conversing with my Nepali acquaintance and describing the country, he shared an interesting phrase: "In India, they want to show you something, but in Nepal, they simply recommend

it." This statement best encapsulates the comparison between these two countries. It's particularly crucial for a photographer. Why? In Nepal, people are indifferent to what you photograph and where, except in monasteries, where it's better to ask for permission. In India, you are always in the spotlight. People want to show you the best places to shoot, where groceries are cheaper, or the finest restaurants. However, remember to pay for their assistance in the end.

I believe Nepal can be discovered from various perspectives. This time, I aimed to observe how residents in large cities live. I hope that in my next journey to this country, I will explore the mountains and the people who assist climbers in conquering the planet's highest mountain - Everest.

NEPAL



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INDIA

ARTEM KHAZOV

FASCINATING JOURNEY:
**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**



Every photographer, and essentially any creative person, periodically draws inspiration from the works and creations of others. For me, as a photographer, the source of inspiration was the works of Steve McCurry. Every time I flipped through his books, I admired the places he visited, the people he met, and the moments he captured in his photos.

But knowing the path and walking it are completely different things. I wanted to explore India and tread this path on my own.

In late September 2023, after buying tickets to Delhi, I set out on my journey. I was to spend a month in the city of Gurgaon. I figured it would be better to stay away from tourist routes to see the real India.

The city is only a 40-minute metro ride from Delhi, making it a convenient hub if I wanted to travel to other cities. Visiting Agra, Jaipur, and Varanasi was also on my agenda. Watching TV series or movies, we imagine India as a bright, spiritual country. To some extent, it is true, but movies never convey the smells, the sounds of the chaotic traffic, and the persistent people who pretend to want to help you, but their main goal is to ask you for as much money as possible. Movies don't show the homeless, those who have lost limbs, forced to beg on the steps leading to the mosque; they only occasionally lift the veil of reality, revealing its beauty.

On the first day of my journey, India greeted me with all its colors. While inspecting the Airbnb apartment I rented, which had beautifully



INDIA

ARTEM KHAZOV
FASCINATING JOURNEY:
**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**



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carved furniture and lovely paintings, a swarm of cockroaches ran towards me, scattering throughout the apartment. Lifting the cushions of the beautiful sofas, I discovered a layer of dirt that an ordinary European might see only next to a trash bin on the street and not everywhere. This prompted me to change the apartment, but a similar situation would haunt you everywhere in India.

What do I mean? When visiting magnificent temples and palaces with well-kept grounds,





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you eventually leave them, and all the brilliance you saw a few minutes ago disappears, leaving you alone with the real India. On the streets and sidewalks, the smell of urine will follow you; in tourist places, beggars will chase after you, and if you order a taxi and step out onto the road, you'll be surrounded by rickshaws that won't leave you alone until your car arrives or you agree to use their services. To avoid this, you can use the services of guides and stay in good hotels, but then you will never see the real India.

After two days in the country, my initial shock subsided, and I headed to my first location, Meena Bazaar.

Imagine the situation: you find yourself at a market where the overwhelming majority of the local population is poor. You are the only white person in this place, and you have \$4000

worth of equipment in your backpack. For the first 30-40 minutes, I felt uncomfortable even taking the camera out of my backpack. But at some point, I caught myself thinking - you came here for this; this is the way of life here; either start shooting or leave with nothing. After an hour of shooting, I immersed myself in the process. It no longer mattered what others thought or how they looked at you. It was important

to see something interesting, find my character, and hear the sound of the camera shutter. That's how my first shots from India were born.

At first, I used a Sony 18-105mm lens. It allowed me to take both portrait shots and show what was happening around me, occasionally switching to the Sigma 16mm, forcing myself to get even closer to the subject.



INDIA

ARTEM KHAZOV
FASCINATING JOURNEY:
EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL



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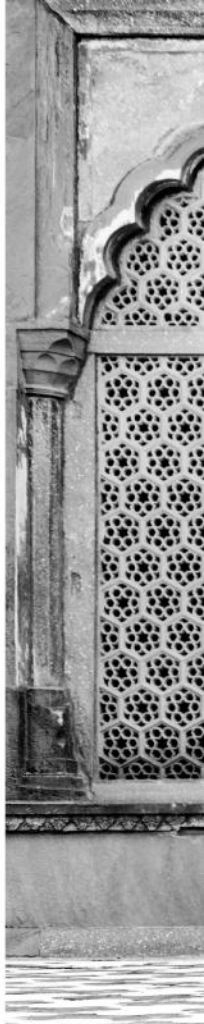
There were often situations when I saw an interesting character in the crowd, but he had already passed me. Then I tried to catch up and overtake him, waiting for him to reappear to take another shot.

While shooting in India, I learned not to notice the sharp smells mixed with the aromas of incense, to interact with strangers on the streets, and to adapt to the insane traffic on

the roads. A couple of times, I had conversations with the police because I was shooting at the station. However, I also met many amazing people who asked me to take their photos. We discussed the countries I had visited, why I started doing photography, and why I came to India. India was a discovery for me, not always pleasant, but as real as it gets.



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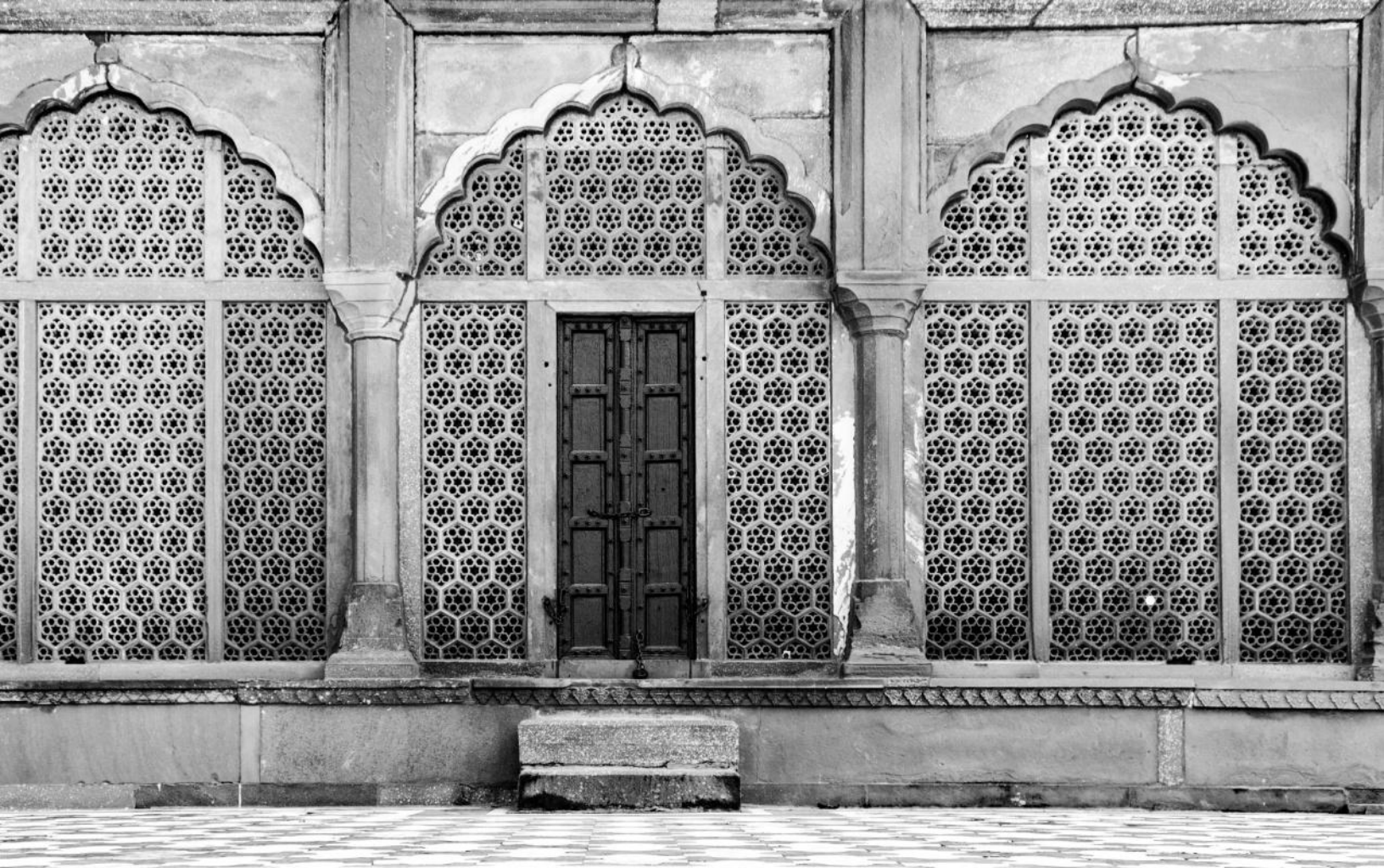
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WHEN VISITING
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LEAVING YOU
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REAL INDIA.”

-ARTEM KHAZOV



INDIA



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ARTEM KHAZOV
FASCINATING JOURNEY:
EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL



FASCINATING JOURNEY:
**EXPLORING
INDIA AND NEPAL**

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AFTER AN HOUR OF SHOOTING, I IMMERSSED MYSELF IN THE PROCESS. IT NO LONGER MATTERED WHAT OTHERS THOUGHT OR HOW THEY LOOKED AT YOU. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SEE SOMETHING INTERESTING, FIND MY CHARACTER, AND HEAR THE SOUND OF THE CAMERA SHUTTER. THAT'S HOW MY FIRST SHOTS FROM INDIA WERE BORN.”

-ARTEM KHAZOV


AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH **PIERPAOLO MITTICA**

A fox roams the streets of the ghost town of Pripyat, Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

After the nuclear disaster, which spread hundreds of thousands of tons of radioactive material into the air, many people assumed that the area around Chernobyl would remain for a long time a dead zone. But meanwhile, not only dense forest grows rampantly here. There have also been observed animals, which otherwise in many parts of Europe are still hard to find. Besides wolves, foxes, wild boars or deer also elks and lynxes, and even bears inhabit the area in which the radioactivity, according to research, is still increased ten to one hundred times.

Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.



A desolate landscape in Chernobyl. In the foreground, the rear of a brown dog is visible on a gravelly path. A utility pole with a triangular sign stands prominently. In the background, there are bare trees, a dilapidated building, and a large evergreen tree under a grey, overcast sky.

CHERNOBYL

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AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PIERPAOLO MITTICA



It is a pleasure to feature an exclusive interview with Pierpaolo Mittica, an award-winning Italian photographer and filmmaker who devotes his work to the human and environmental aspects of Chernobyl.

His unique photography work has been featured in many international publications, including The Telegraph, The Guardian, Asian Geo, National Geographic U.S.A., l'Espresso, Internazionale, Alias del Manifesto, Vogue Italia, Corriere Della Sera, Repubblica, Panorama, Il

Sole 24 ore, Oggi, Le Scienze, Vanity Fair, Photo magazine, Daylight Magazine, Days Japan International, The Asahi Shimbun, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Spiegel, Wired U.S.A., and China Newsweek.

He is co-author with Alessandro Tesei and Michele Marcolin of two documentary movies: Living Toxic, Russia (Produced by Sydonia, 2014) and Behind the Urals (Produced by Mondo in Cammino, 2015). The films were broadcast on many media and news channels, including at Al Jazeera Documentary Channel (MENA - the Middle East & North Africa) and Discovery Channel,

U.S.A., amongst others. In his studying years for the Master's Program at C.R.A.F. diploma in conservation and the history of photography, he enjoyed the company of influential photographers such as Charles – Henri Favrod, Naomi Rosenblum, and Walter Rosenblum who is a spiritual father in photography. In this interview, we discuss his creative, most exciting projects, all focus on the Chernobyl disaster and its effect on the people and the land.



Freshly painted warning signs ready for distribution inside the restricted area, Pripyat, Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

In the ghost town of Pripyat, there is a workshop where workers repair and renew the damaged warning signs worn by time and weather. After repair, they can be installed to indicate the most contaminated and dangerous places. A job, which, considering the rate of decay of the various radioactive substances, probably still have to be done for thousands of years.

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LENS MAGAZINE: Thank you, Pierpaolo, for this interview! Your projects are so unique and impressive. Let's start from the beginning; why Chernobyl? How did you begin this project? Where the inspiration came from? This is an unusual project and not always a comfortable subject for the viewer to deal with.

PIERPAOLO MITTICA: First of all, my knowledge about the Chernobyl exclusion zone began years ago, in 2001, when I met the president of an Italian N.G.O. who brings Chernobyl children in Italy for recovery vacations. She told me about Belarus's contamination situation (*Belarus is the most contaminated land by Chernobyl accident, 70% of its territory is contaminated*). I was really impressed by the story, so in 2002 I started to document the consequences of Chernobyl. From then I went inside the Zone and in the contaminated

lands around the exclusion zone more than 20 times. I started documenting the consequences of Chernobyl in 2002, and In 2007 I finished my first project about Chernobyl that was published in a book named "**Chernobyl the hidden legacy**" edited in 3 editions, one in Great Britain (Trolley Books), one in Spain (Elago Ediciones) and one in Japan (Kashiwa Shobo), focused on Chernobyl legacy. Meanwhile, In the last 6 years, I focused my attention more on some not well-known stories inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone. The more you go inside a place, and more you discover particular unknown stories that, for me, deserved some attention. Frequenting the Chernobyl exclusion zone for so many years makes me confident with many people living there. I became dear friends with many of them, especially my guide, Yuriy Tatarchuck that guided me for so many years,


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from 2003 till today. Thanks to him and the local people I met, I discovered those not well-known aspects of the Chernobyl exclusion zone like the stalkers, the Hasidic Jews, the recycling of radioactive metals, and Chernobyl's life City, etc. and get in touch with them. So I started a new photographic project about Chernobyl divided into chapters and titled "**Chernobyl Stories**" that I just finished after 6 years of work.

L.M.: In your series of work, "**CHERNOBYL 35 YEARS AFTER.**" You are documenting the results of the Chernobyl disaster (*A nuclear accident that occurred on Saturday, April 26, 1986, at the No. 4 reactors in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, near the city of Pripyat in the north of the Ukrainian S.S.R. It is considered the worst nuclear disaster in history, which blighted the lives of millions of people.*) Didn't you feel uncomfortable spending time there?

P.M.: The Chernobyl exclusion zone is a really particular place permeated by a tragic story and contaminated by radiation. I never feel uncomfortable there because I was motivated to give voice to the people who were suffering due to the Chernobyl accident. Furthermore, Chernobyl's life is an incredible way of living because it is normal life in a totally abnormal situation. The city is inside an exclusion zone. But as you visit there in Chernobyl City, you see a distinct area that looks like any other small city in Ukraine, and people live normal everyday life.



Forest and wildfires are raging nearby the abandoned and neglected city of Prip'yat. Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Fires are among the most significant threats which exist in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Through the fires, radioactively contaminated trees and woods are burned. The resulting radioactive ashes are spread into the atmosphere provoking a new fallout. On April 27, 2015, one of the largest forest fires in the restricted area was built in 1986 with a radius of 30 km around the wrecked reactor block no. 4 of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant on the territory of Ukraine. More than 113 square kilometers of radioactively contaminated forest were affected, throwing back tons of radioactive particles into the air.

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LIFE LOOKS NORMAL INSIDE THE ZONE, BUT WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THAT THE PEOPLE HERE LIVE IN ONE OF THE MOST CONTAMINATED SPOTS ON THE PLANET, WITH ALL THE CONSEQUENCES THEY HAVE TO FACE.



Tamara, the House of Culture director in Chernobyl and a keen opera singer, meets in her office with Serhiy to finalize the program, which includes shows and cultural events. Chernobyl City.

Chernobyl, located within the exclusion zone and 16 km from the exploded reactor, is the main center of daily life in the area. Before the incident, it was home to 16 thousand people; today, four thousand reside there. Most of them work in the local area, all linked somehow to the power plant, but not all of them. Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

The town of Chernobyl, located within the exclusion zone and 16 km from the exploded reactor, is the main center of daily life in the area. Before the incident, it was home to 16 thousand people; today, four thousand reside there. Most of them work in the local area, all linked somehow to the power plant, but not all of them. In fact, the town of Chernobyl is still home to some "**Samosely**," so-called self-settlers who resisted evacuation from the area and remained or returned to live out their lives. People such as the painter **Leonid**, now famous as "**The painter of Chernobyl**," or **Mihail**, the music teacher at the school in Chernobyl before the incident and now a pensioner.

The other inhabitants of this strange town are the administrative offices' staff, workers involved in the disposal of radioactive material, the guards and military that control the area, firefighters, and local police. But above all, the personnel (around 2000 of them) who each day ensure the Chernobyl nuclear plant's safety, at least until 2065, the year in which the decommissioning work on the reactors will begin. In the town, there are four markets, some bars, a canteen, and life goes as normal. And that feeling of normality struck me in those years of my stay in Chernobyl City, and for this reason, I started to document the "normal" life in the city of Chernobyl. In the past 19 years, I was inside the exclusion zone more than

20 times, and I knew practically all the city inhabitants. I was in their homes, eating and drinking with them, hearing their stories, enjoying their company, and they are so gentle that we became dear friends with many of them. Life looks normal inside the Zone, but we must always keep in mind that the people here live in one of the most contaminated spots on the planet, with all the consequences they have to face. Amid the radiation, a normal life flows, like in any other Ukraine city, except that there is an exclusion zone here, that radiations are still high, and the contamination will remain for millennia. Normal life in a totally abnormal place.



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Maria in her house inside the Exclusion Zone. Maria died on 17 May 2016 at the age of 78 years. Paryshev, Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Maria was one of the last settlers who still live in the Exclusion Zone. In the 1930s, as a child, she survived the famine during the Holodomor. 3-8 million Ukrainians died. Only a few years later, in the 1940s, came the Nazis. During the second world war, 11 million Ukrainians were killed. After all these experiences, Maria was not scared about radioactive dust and invisible nuclear particles in the air, water, and soil. Much more, she feared being separated from her homeland, losing her home, identity, and livelihood. When she was evacuated, she rebelled and ignored all warnings of the authorities, scientists, and medical doctors and stayed, defying the radioactive contamination. She lived her whole life in her house, with her husband Ivan Ivanovich, in Paryshev, a small village in the Chernobyl exclusion zone. Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

L.M.: In your documentary work, you cover the life in Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, where more than 8000 people are part of the community, live and work inside the area within 30 kilometers radius. What impression did you have of the people that returned to their homes, considered today as **'The last elderly people living in the zone'** after their evacuation in 1986?

P.M.: Life for the people is totally different in the villages inside the exclusion zone because now most of them are inhabited by only a few elderly people and lie abandoned. At the time, in 1986, 116 thousand people were

evacuated and transferred to the big cities' outskirts. The area was too contaminated to allow the population to live there. But some, about 1200 people, decided that life in cities was not for them, too difficult to survive with poor wages and without the garden's products. And above all, they have a too strong bond with their land for abandoning it forever.

After few months of forced evacuation, they came back to live in their homes, challenging the ban of the Soviet government. Some of them even never went away. Life is very hard for them.





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Tourists while visiting the abandoned swimming pool in the ghost town of Pripyat, Chernobyl exclusion zone.

Today tourism in this new Pompeii has become fundamental. It helps the local economy; 90,000 people a year are not few for a place that would have to be abandoned and forbidden. Here the nuclear amusement park works well, so well that the Ukrainian government plans to bring the number of tourists to one million a year. But forgetting that everything here is contaminated, and it will be for millennia. Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

They live scattered in the semi-abandoned villages of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, surviving as they have always done, with the products of the garden and what nature offers them, but virtually in almost total isolation. No infrastructure, no transports connect them to civilization, only some officials of the exclusion zone who occasionally check to see that everything is in order for them. And their sons who live outside the area and who periodically come to meet them. Today less than 100 people remain of 1200 returned to live in the area shortly after 1986, time and radiations have taken them away. Today the last survivors are very elderly. When the last of them dies, the village culture of the province of Polessie will end forever with their history, traditions, and customs. The memory will disappear because radiation does not just erase life but also history. They are the last witnesses of the lost places, lost forever.

L.M.: Tell us about your special series '**The stalkers**', who are they, and what is the primary interest of entering illegally into a radiation zone?

P.M.: One day, my guide Yuriy Tatarchuck introduced me to a guy and told me: *"talk with him. I'm sure you will be interested in his experience in the Chernobyl exclusion zone"* That guy was a stalker, Eugene Knyazev, and he started telling me about illegal trips that many youngest Ukrainians organize inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone.

I heard rumors before about that story, and I was very curious to meet for the first time with them, and we talked for hours. I asked him to join his group on one of their next travel. So I joined his group, and I went with them illegally inside the Zone together with my colleague Alessandro Tesei, and we also made a movie about this trip, titled **"The Zone, road to Chernobyl."**



The stalker Jimmy welcoming his friends invited to the party in his apartment in Pripjat.

These groups are mainly sons of the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. videogame, a survival-horror videogame released in 2007 and set right into the Zone. The videogame influenced the new generation of Ukrainians as Jimmy explains: "The game S.T.A.L.K.E.R. it is a cult for our country and for

the whole post-Soviet area because, first of all, thanks to this video game, they could tell us that this place exists. In fact, with this game, many people began the knowledge of Chernobyl and the desire to visit the exclusion zone. The game has this authentic look and is done realistically from the site's point of view. Here the places are really like in the game". Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

We were with 3 stalkers on that trip, but when we arrived in Pripjat, we met 30 other stalkers.

The story is really a post-romantic story; in fact, many young people have recently started to illegally enter the Chernobyl Zone of Exclusion. Those guys are mostly in their thirties (or even younger) and represent the latest Chernobyl generation. They are referred to as "**Stalkers**," a name coming directly from **Andrei Tarkovski's** film "**Stalker**." A cult movie dated back in 1979 - and from a survival-horror videogame released in 2007 and set right into the Zone named **S.T.A.L.K.E.R.**

Chernobyl' Stalkers have lately developed a proper veneration for this specific area, which they

consider as a post-atomic private home. They seem to be organized in paramilitary groups with names, symbols, and rituals while enjoying a dangerous trip to reach their final destination: the ghost town of Pripjat.

In order to get there, they have to walk about 60 kilometers through the woods - mostly by night to avoid the police patrolling - between nuclear radiations and wild animals.

During their journey, they usually sleep in abandoned villages, eat canned food and drink the water they find along the way, dirty and contaminated.

They say they want to experience a different adventure, test themselves, and feel like they are the last survivors on the planet; they want

to break free from their routines and normal lives while having fun and being isolated in limbo with no rules for a while.

They are a sort of post-romantic travelers, in love with these places they consider almost sacred, permeated with a tragic story not forgotten.

Among them, I appreciated a lot my companions of travel, **Eugene Knyazev**, **Aleksandr Sherekh**, and **Maxim Dondyuk**, and their philosophy of living the Zone and their great respect for the memory of the place. Every stalker I met had his own particular story, but maybe **Eugene Knyazev** had the one that most touched me. In fact, he made more than 50 illegal trips inside the Zone.



Workers return to their accommodation after their shift. Chernobyl City.
Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

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A doll in the abandoned kindergarten "Zolotoj Kluchik", the golden key, in Pripjat. Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

When Pripjat was evacuated, almost no one of the residents knew that he would never return.

Besides important documents and the most necessary things which they were allowed to take with them, the residents left everything behind. What isn't already decayed or was looted can partially be visited still today in the original state. There are still books, photographs, toys, or dolls in many places, which as silent contemporary witnesses, keeps on to hold vigil.

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The stalkers Jimmy, Sasha, and Maxim while preparing their breakfast in their apartment in the ghost town of Pripyat, Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

During their trip to Pripyat, the stalkers eat canned food brought in the backpacks and drink dirty and contaminated water collected in the buildings' floodgates. The town of Pripyat is located three kilometers from the Chernobyl nuclear plant. 50 thousand people lived there and were evacuated two days after the explosion. The people were forced to leave behind everything except for their documents and what money they could bring. They never went back. Now Pripyat is a ghost city. No people live there, but their presence lingers in the abandoned streets and houses. That's why Pripyat is the Mecca for the stalkers. Here they arranged some apartments and fix them with what they found around the city. The city is still highly contaminated.

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A tourist while taking a souvenir photo holding the skull of a cow, scientific laboratories, Chernobyl exclusion zone. Since 2011, the year in which the Ukrainian government has opened the exclusion zone door to the tourists' visit, about 90,000 people a year cross the radiation border. There are now dozens of tour operators from Kyiv organizing the all-inclusive "Chernobyl tour," a day in the most significant places of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.
Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

He is an expert in the subject and fond of the zone; in fact, as he told me, the Zone is all in his life, also because on one of this trip he met a girl who after became his wife. He met the love of his life in a dead zone. For me, that story was like a symbol of life that continues; a love and a new perspective of life was born in a dead zone.

L.M.: You are also documenting the **Rabbi Menachem Nochum Twersky's Jewish followers**, who visit the graves. Tell us the story of the Jews of Chernobyl.

P.M.: This was an astonishing story, which I was very surprised by—the Hasidic Jews pilgrimage in Chernobyl.

One day, I was inside the Zone, documenting radioactive metals' recycling, and my guide told me: ***"come on! we must go back quickly to Chernobyl city because the office told me that the Jews are coming!"*** I was really surprised and asked him which Jews? What are you talking about? And during the trip back to Chernobyl city, he told me briefly the story about that pilgrimage that every year takes part. I knew that Chernobyl city was in the past a Jewish City, but I did not know it was so important from a historical point of view.

There is a Chernobyl before the nuclear accident occurred on April 26, 1986, not well known but of great historical importance, especially for the Jewish people.

In fact, in Chernobyl, one of the major branches of the Hassidic movement, one of the most important Judaism currents - the reforming current of orthodox Judaism - developed. A Hassidic dynasty was born in Chernobyl from **Rabbi Menachem Nochum Twersky**, born in 1730, and a student of **Baal Shem Tov**, the Hassidic movement founder. Twersky became a community preacher in Chernobyl, where he founded the Hassidic dynasty, which spread throughout the world. Chernobyl has a deep history related to the Jews. The first traces of the city of Chernobyl date back to 1193, but it is in 1566 that the first Jewish settlements begin.



Yitz Twersky in front of the former Chernobyl synagogue while showing some old pictures of the Synagogue to Rabbi Leibel Sirkes. Yitz Twersky is the last descendant of the founder of the Hassidic movement Rabbi Menachem Nochum Twersky.
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Jews inside the abandoned Chernobyl Synagogue. Chernobyl City.
Chernobyl had 5 synagogues; they were all destroyed, except one that is still standing today and became a military recruitment center under the Soviet period.
Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

In the second half of the 18th century, 60% of Chernobyl's population were Jewish, and the city became a major center of the Hassidic movement. But life for the Chernobyl Jews became extremely difficult. From 1881 to 1921, pogroms took place across Ukraine: the anti-Semitic uprisings and the resulting massacres and looting against the Jewish population, supported by the Soviet government. Moreover, with the Tsar's fall and the rise of communism, all religions were persecuted and banned, including Judaism. All traces of religions were erased. Chernobyl had 5 synagogues; they were all destroyed, except one that is still standing today and became a military recruitment center under the Soviet period. With the advent of the First World War, Jews continued to be persecuted, and the Twersky dynasty decided in 1920 to leave Chernobyl, moving primarily to Israel and the United States. In New York, a branch of the family founded a new Chernobyl town in New Square, 40 miles from New York. At that moment, Chernobyl ceased to exist as the center of this branch of Hassidism. During the Second World War, Chernobyl was occupied by the Nazis, and most of the Jewish population was exterminated. After the Second World War, the remaining Jews in Chernobyl constituted just under 5% of the population, disappear definitively with the Chernobyl accident in 1986 and the city's consequent evacuation. Chernobyl today is a place of nuclear disaster and tourist destination; it is also a historical memory of worship and pilgrimage for Hassidic Jews. In fact, the devotees of this current every year come from all over the world to visit the graves of the

founders of the dynasty, Grand **Rabbi Menachem Nachum Twersky** Admur of Chernobyl, as well as his grandson, Grand **Rabbi Aharon Twersky** Admur of Chernobyl and great-grandsons, Grand **Rabbi Menachem Nachum Twersky** Admur of Chernobyl (son of R' Aharon), and Grand **Rabbi Yeshaya Meshulam Zusia Twersky** Admur of Chernobyl (son of R' Aharon). The graves are located in Chernobyl City, near the former school, forgotten for many years and recovered in the early 90s thanks to the Jewish community that restored and preserved them. Each year, with the anniversary of the death of the Grand **Rabbi Menachem Nachum Twersky** Admur of Chernobyl, which occurred on October 31 1787, a pilgrimage takes place to pray at the graves of their founders and venerate the places of worship of their religion, such as the synagogue, now reduced to an anonymous abandoned building, but still steeped in history. Chernobyl is not only the place of the worst nuclear accident ever, but it is also the place where the history of the Hassidic Twersky Dynasty was born.

For me was an incredible discovery because Chernobyl is only known for the accident, but it has tremendous historical importance, which was entirely erased by accident. I discovered that a nuclear accident could erase the lives of the people, the memory, and the history of a place.





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A Jew inside the Chernobyl synagogue
Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.



Yuriy while sandblasting the radioactive scrap metal in the warehouse where the metals are recycled. Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Inside the zone, tons of metals lie abandoned, but all this rusty gold has not gone unnoticed and more or less illegally is recycled over the years. Since 2007, the Ukrainian government has legalized the recycling of radioactive metals with the blasting method. The workshop is a huge warehouse where twelve men clean and recycles radioactive metals in very dangerous working conditions. The company recycles about

30 tons of metal a year. The recycling method consists of an intense blasting of the metal that effectively reduces the contamination at zero. Once complete decontamination is achieved, the metal is ready to be sold, usually to Ukrainian companies but also to foreign companies. In recent years, according to official estimates, about 40 thousand tons of metals were exported. It is currently considered that 1 million tonnes remain inside the zone with a value of one billion dollars. Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

L.M.: Let's talk about your series '**Radioactive gold of Chernobyl**', where you document the metal's recycling method in the Zone.

Private companies and the Ukrainian government are selling this metal, although it's considered high radioactivity levels?

P.M.: Another story that I found is about the recycling process of radioactive metals in the Zone. I heard about recycling metals long ago, but mostly about the "illegal" recycling of metals.

After the accident of 1986, local people came illegally inside the Zone to recycle everything that could be recycled. And that story is well known, but since 2007, the Ukrainian government has legalized the recycling of radioactive metals with the blasting method.

Two years ago, I met a man inside the Zone, and we became dear friends. During a conversation, he told me that till 2009 he was the head of the recycling process of radioactive metals, and hearing this story obviously, I became very curious about it.

The story interested me because it is a story that was

never documented before, and my interest is not only about environmental problems but also the life of the people during the consequences of ecological disasters. It was complicated. It took me a long time to have their confidence. When I heard the story the first time from my friend, I asked him to take me to see the place.

We went there, but he told me to not bring the camera, only to see. I met the workshop's head, a very friendly, smart, and generous man with a great spirit. I went there several times to talk with him, without taking pictures. We became confident with each other. And I could meet and also talk with the other workers.

One day I asked him if I could take some pictures inside the compound, and he let me. "*Only 20 minutes!*" He told me. I rushed inside to take pictures.

After some hours, I was still there; no one paid attention to me; they did not forget about me; they simply accepted me. Everyone was so friendly. It was in November 2015. Then I went there several times till the end of 2016.

It's a unique process of sandblasting up into the air a radioactive cloud that spreads throughout the hall.



Abandoned sunken ships in the port of Chernobyl. Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. Chernobyl is located in Polesia, a national region rich in rivers and lakes. Through the evacuation zone around the power plant flow rivers like Pripjat, Uzh, Sachan, Braginka, Glinitsa. Many large cooling basins of the power station, oxbow lakes, and reservoirs are situated here. Especially in the first two weeks after the reactor accident, many spring water, marsh, and water protection areas have suffered strong radionuclide contamination. The water

presents a high amount of radioactive materials accumulated by the ground segments even today. Only the measured values of cesium-137 are at 11 to 30 million Bq/ m² (the security level is below 2000 Bq/ m²). In the course of the years, the radionuclides pass through numerous outlets in only a few kilometers distant reservoirs of Kyiv and thus in the Dnieper River, which supplies 30 million people with water.

Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

Workers are immersed all day in contaminated dust, and they breathe continuously radioactive particles. The problem with this process is the severe risk of internal contamination for the workers by inhalation of radioactive particles that is perpetuated every day. We are talking about particles such as cesium, strontium, plutonium, highly radioactive and toxic particles, especially if inhaled or ingested.

The safety equipment, even though they are mandatory, virtually does not exist. Only a few of them use the equipment as those involved in the blast process. They use a kind of diving suit, like a man on the moon, which protects from the sand, but certainly not from radioactive particles. Most workers vague in the midst of toxic clouds created by the sandblasting process, breathing all day radioactivity. But the fact of using or not the protection is a personal choice. A mixture of fatalism, insufficient knowledge about radiation toxicity, popular beliefs, and difficulties in carrying the protective devices during the entire work shift. As a worker told me: *"I work in this shed for two years, but Pasha has been here for 12, you see how he is healthy? If he is healthy,*

why should I fear radiations? And then there's the vodka that cleans everything!". Here is one of the most popular and widespread beliefs.

They do it because they need to work. In Ukraine, a big economic crisis began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and increased with the war. Most of them have a family with children, and the wages in the exclusion zone are about 30% more than in the rest of Ukraine. A sort of compensation for working with contamination. Radioactivity of the metals is only on the surfaces, radioactive particles emitted by the explosion of reactor number 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on April 26, 1986. In fact, tons of radioactive dust was expelled from the reactor into the air because of that incident, contaminating our planet's entire northern hemisphere. They were deposited where the faith wanted to, with everything and everyone, even on the surface of the metals that here lie ready to be decontaminated. The recycling process consists first of all in a strong sandblasting of the scrap metals, which actually reduces the contamination of the scrap metal surface to zero.



Olia and Ania are both affected by radiation-related cancers in the Zaporuka NGO Family home, Kyiv.

The 14-year-old Olia is affected by osteosarcoma, the most common form of primary bone radiation-related cancer. At this moment, she films her same-age guitar-playing friend, which is under chemo treatment because of the thyroid and ovarian cancer.

Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

I have to admit that the process works perfectly, as I could see. And it is checked in an extremely accurate method. In fact, after a first blast, the head of the radiology panel checks the metal with the Geiger counter. If radioactivity is still there, the area is marked with chalk, and the sandblaster must then wipe those parts until everything is decontaminated. Once achieved complete decontamination, the scrap metals are ready to be sold, usually to Ukrainian and also to foreign companies with a rate of 30% less than the price market.

L.M.: Through all your visits to Chernobyl City, were you aware of people's mutations created due to the high levels of radioactivity?

P.M.: Unfortunately, the Chernobyl accident with its contamination created a legacy that will last for thousands of years. My first work about Chernobyl, "**Chernobyl the hidden legacy**," I did from 2002 till 2007, was focused on the environmental and health consequences on Belarus and Ukraine's population. For 5 years, I visited local hospitals, orphanages, documenting the health consequences on the population. Also, in the last six years, on my last project, "**Chernobyl Stories**," I continued to document the illnesses, mutations, and health problems on the local population affected by this massive accident.

L.M.: In the past years, you opened a special workshop dedicated to the 'Chernobyl documentary' for emerging photographers from all over the world. What was the reaction to these workshops, and what was the response?

P.M.: I practically know every corner of the Exclusion zone, I had 19 years of experience in the Zone, and I know many local people, and I have lots of contacts. For these reasons, I decided to start a photographic workshop for emerging photographers interested in learning how to work in challenging environmental conditions and realize a photographic project. I had a great response, and I did 7 workshops before the Covid-19 stop all the world.



Priest Nikolai in the Orthodox church in the town of Chernobyl. At the time of the evacuation in 1986, he refused to leave. Since then, he has always lived in Chernobyl town, continuing to celebrate mass for the population. Chernobyl City.
Pierpaolo Mittica © All rights reserved.

L.M.: You have also published beautiful and most exciting book about your projects; on your website, you describe it as **'Stories of a photojournalist.'** Any particular story you would like to share here?

P.M.: **"Ashes - Stories of a photojournalist"** is a book done about my first 15 years of career as a photojournalist; it is a sort of anthology of my works in my first 15 years. I was very proud of this book because it represents what I did in my first part of my photographic career.

L.M.: What was the most emotional, touching, and unusual experience while covering Chernobyl's disaster effect?

P.M.: Many stories touched me while covering the Chernobyl disaster; one of them is the story of **Volodimir**. I met him at his home in the small village of Terenzi, located within the exclusion zone. Terenzi, before the accident, had 300 inhabitants; today, only 20 people live there. Volodimir is one of the few firefighters who survived that tragic night of April 26, 1986.

"That night, they called us, but without telling us what was happening," Volodimir told me. "We realized immediately that was a serious situation, but we never thought that there could be a nuclear accident. We spent the whole night throwing water on the reactor."



“ It was a cold night, and occasionally, we did break to warm up ourselves near some hot bars.

We put our hands close to them. Only after we realized those bars were the graphite rods of the reactor. After a few hours, we started to feel ill: headaches, metallic taste in the mouth, vomiting, fatigue, but we continued to work until the end of our strength. Then we were taken to the hospital in Pripyat, where we finally knew the truth: we were in the middle of a radioactive hell.

The doctors decided to move us to Moscow hospital 6, which specialized in radiation sickness, but I refused to go there; I wanted to stay close to my family. So they moved me to Kyiv. My brigade was made up of six men; four died in the following days for acute radiation syndrome. I made a promise to God: if you save me, I would become a priest."

At the time of our conversation, Volodimir was 55 years old and has become a priest. He helped the last inhabitants of his village Terenzi.

He survived, but through an ordeal of all kinds of diseases, he had a poor health condition due to radiation exposure, and each year he knew well that it could be the last one for him.

The firefighters of that night were heroes because they sacrificed themselves to save the world.

If the fire had not been extinguished, the whole of Europe could not exist anymore.

Volodimir was a survivor of those forgotten heroes, and I had the chance to meet him and talk with him, one of the most poignant moments in my life inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone. Unfortunately, Volodimir died on November 18, 2020, due to liver cancer.





Volodimir, 55 years old, a former firefighter, died on November 18, 2020, due to liver cancer. Terenzi, Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

Volodimir lives in Terenzi, a village in the exclusion zone. Before the accident the village had 300 people, today only 20 people live here. He is one of the few firefighters who survived that tragic night of April 26, 1986. His six men's brigade arrived first immediately after the explosion of reactor number 4 to extinguish the fire. Four companions of his brigade died for acute radiation syndrome in the following days hospitalized in Moscow. He survived despite years of sickness and suffering and today is a unique witness of that tragic event.

He became a priest and helped the people of his village till his death.

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Inside control room number four of Chernobyl nuclear power plant where all began. Chernobyl Exclusion Zone.

An employee of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant inside the damaged control room of reactor no. 4, in which once the disaster was triggered, which has been widely regarded as the worst accident in the history of nuclear power in the world: On Saturday, April 26, 1986, here there was a meltdown and explosion of the reactor core, whereby the block was completely destroyed. After the disaster it has been enclosed in a concrete, and lead sarcophagus. Since then the access is limited to certain workers only. The levels of radioactivity inside the control room of reactor no. 4 are 30 times higher than the normal level.

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CHERNOBYL

**RUINED | FORBIDDEN
LANDSCAPE**

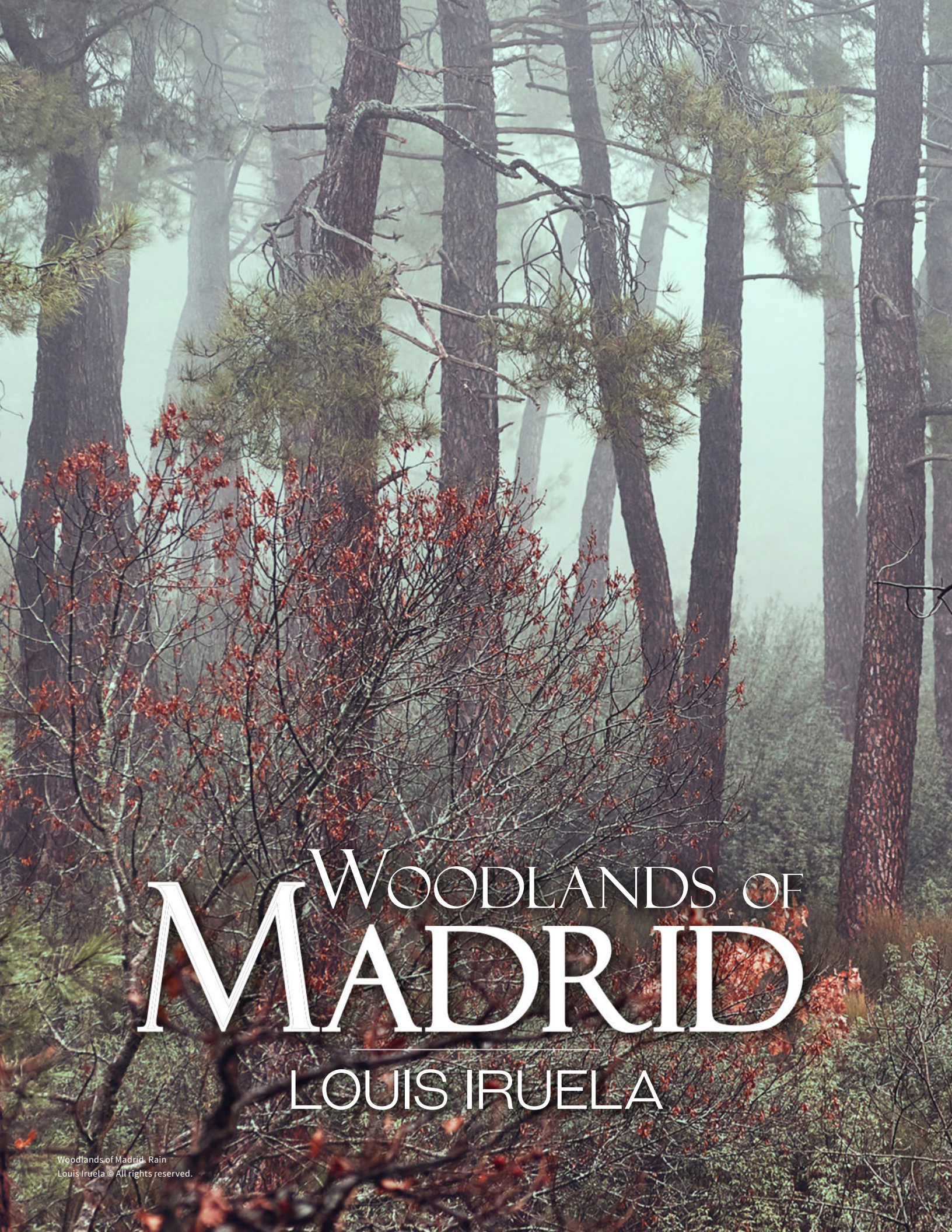
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A misty forest scene with tall pine trees and a bush with red flowers in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

WOODLANDS OF MADRID

LOUIS IRUELA





Woodlands of Madrid. Soul
Louis Iruela © All rights reserved.





WOODLANDS OF MADRID

“**T**his series of photographs were taken in the woodlands of Madrid.

A small mountain range full of history, It has served as the recreational area for Spanish Royalty, witnessed Napoleon defeat the Spanish army and is the setting for Hemingway's "For Whom The Bell Tolls", where he depicted horrid combat during the Spanish Civil War.

Its grounds are less rich in diversity but hold many hidden corners where birches, oaks, and pines mingle in fern-covered floors.

This colorful and surrealist series of works takes on this unknown but extraordinary land.

Woodlands of Madrid.
Backyard Romance
Louis Iruela © All rights reserved.

LOUIS IRUELA





Louis Iruela © All rights reserved.



LOUIS IRUELA

I grew up on the outskirts of Madrid, Spain, and was involved in nature activities from a very young age. Trees and forests gradually became an obsession.

My photography journey started very late. Assisting in fashion was my first experience with the industry when I was 35. I soon started taking my own images of the Spanish climbing scene, leading me to photograph the landscapes we visited. My interest naturally transitioned toward nature.

I have always consumed photographs in books and magazines and had a great interest in classic landscape

painting, such as the Hudson River School, Barbizon School, or the earlier Flemish and Dutch 16-17th century masters, who I usually turn to when searching for texture and color references.

My creative process is very chaotic. It's hard to meet rainy conditions in Spain for days at a time, so when I am blessed with the opportunity to take out my camera, I do so quickly and always use a handheld camera to take advantage of the chance. I think many would find my accelerated demeanor in the forest somewhat humorous. I hardly ever cull or edit until days after. This allows me to begin postproduction with a clear mind.



Woodlands of Madrid. Vampiresca
Louis Iruela © All rights reserved.



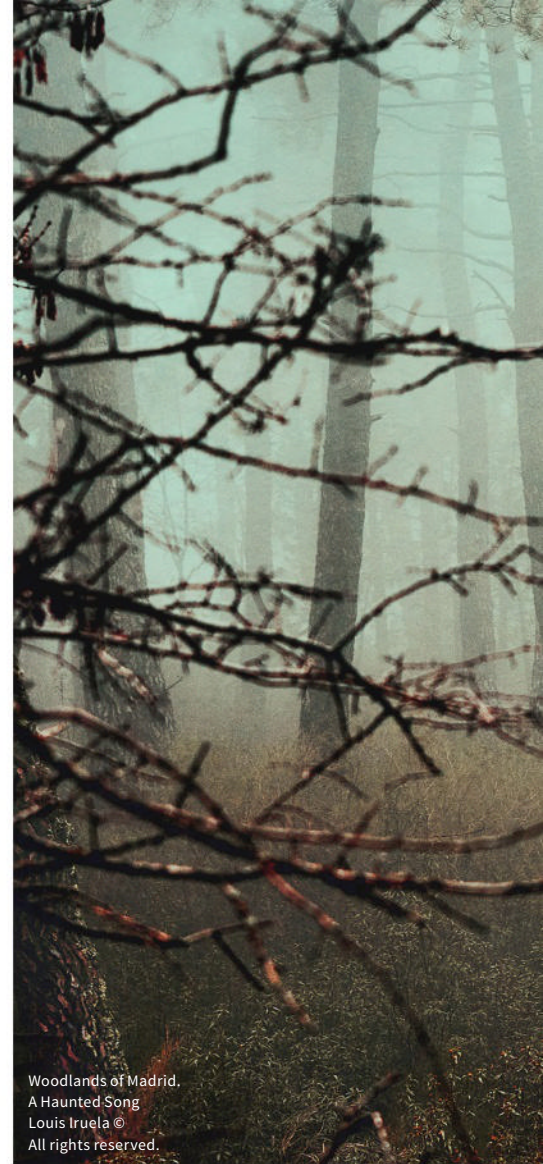
Woodlands of Madrid. A Long Forever
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Woodlands of Madrid.
In Steel Feel (Detail)
Louis Iruela ©
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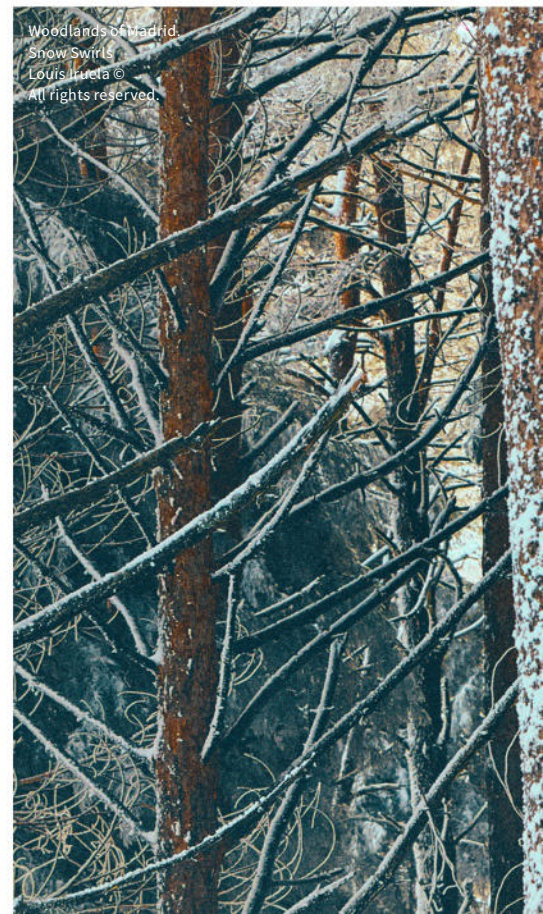
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Insomnia
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Snow Swirls
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WOODLANDS OF MADRID

Rather than approaching subjects for mere documentation, I'm inclined toward dark, romantic, and compelling scenes, often not complying with specific "rules" of traditional landscape and realistic photography. Photography grants us a chance for personal interpretation. This photography project

invites the viewers to witness nature from my perspective without complying with the rules of traditional landscape imagery. I want to take advantage of the chance photography grants me for personal interpretation, so experimenting with new editing "techniques" is always on the table. I can't wait for my next walk in the rain, as I'm sure my best photograph is still to be taken.



LOUIS IRUELA



Woodlands of Madrid.
Petríchor
Louis Iruela ©
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LOUIS IRUELA

Woodlands of Madrid.
A Lone And Still
Louis Iruela ©
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WOODLANDS OF
MADRID



Woodlands of Madrid.
Untitled
Louis Iruela ©
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“MY CREATIVE
PROCESS IS
VERY CHAOTIC.
IT'S HARD TO MEET
RAINY CONDITIONS
IN SPAIN FOR DAYS
AT A TIME, SO WHEN
I AM BLESSED WITH
THE OPPORTUNITY
TO TAKE OUT MY
CAMERA, I DO SO
QUICKLY AND ALWAYS
USE A HANDHELD
CAMERA TO TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF THE
CHANCE.”

-LOUIS IRUELA

A misty forest landscape with a rocky path and trees. The scene is dimly lit, with a soft, hazy atmosphere. The foreground is dominated by large, dark rocks and a path leading into the distance. The trees are tall and thin, with some showing autumnal colors. The overall mood is serene and quiet.

“

RAIN
IS MY
FAVORITE
COLOR”

WOODLANDS OF
MADRID

Woodlands of Madrid.
A Darkest Hour
Louis Iruela ©
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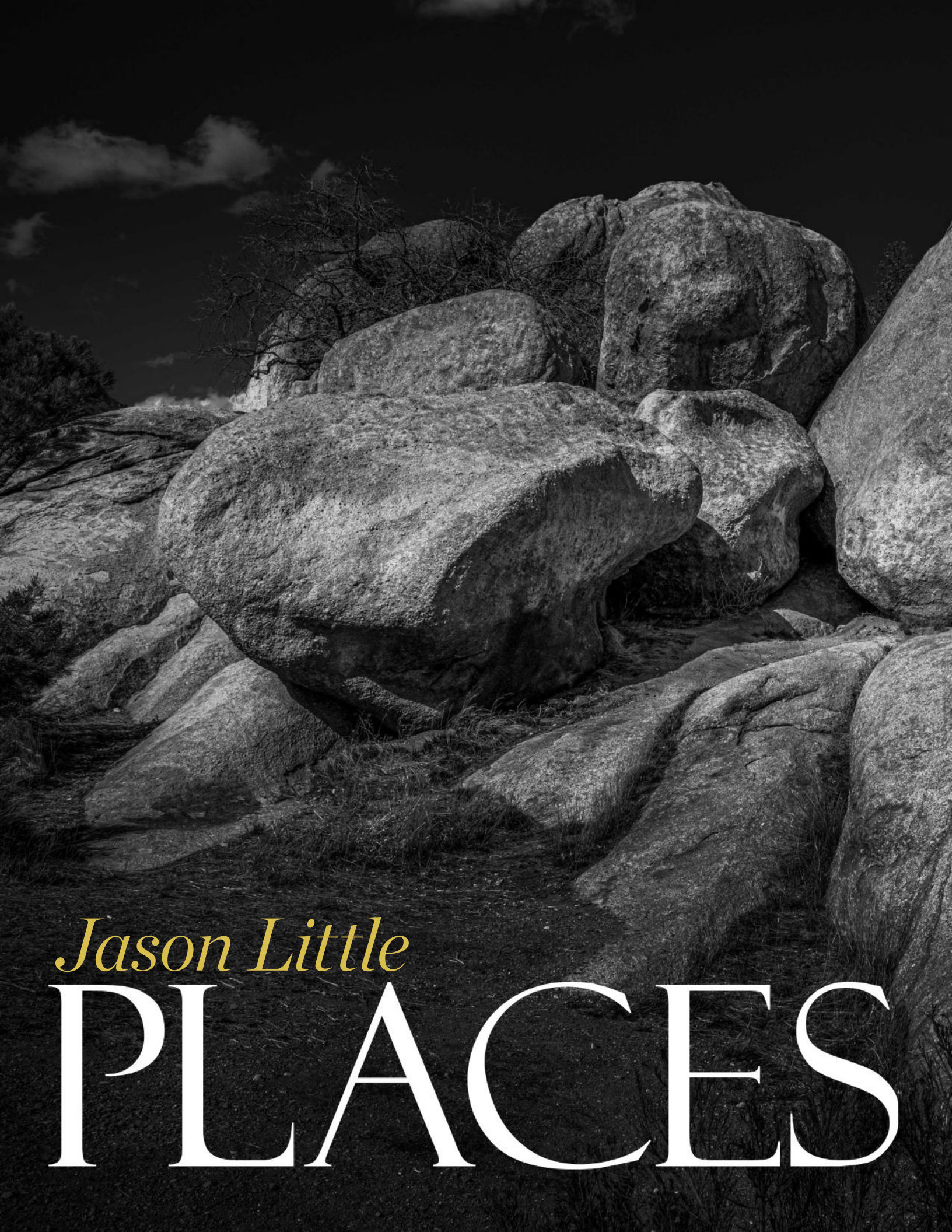


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Jason Little

PLACES



MY GOAL IS TO CREATE
IMAGES THAT TRANSCEND
THE ORDINARY AND REVEAL THE
EXTRAORDINARY.”



EACH
IMAGE
TELLS

A STORY OF
RAW EMOTION
AND UNTAMED
BEAUTY, INVITING
CONTEMPLATION
AND AWE AS
LIGHT AND
SHADOW DANCE
ACROSS RUGGED
TERRAINS."





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Jason Little
PLACES



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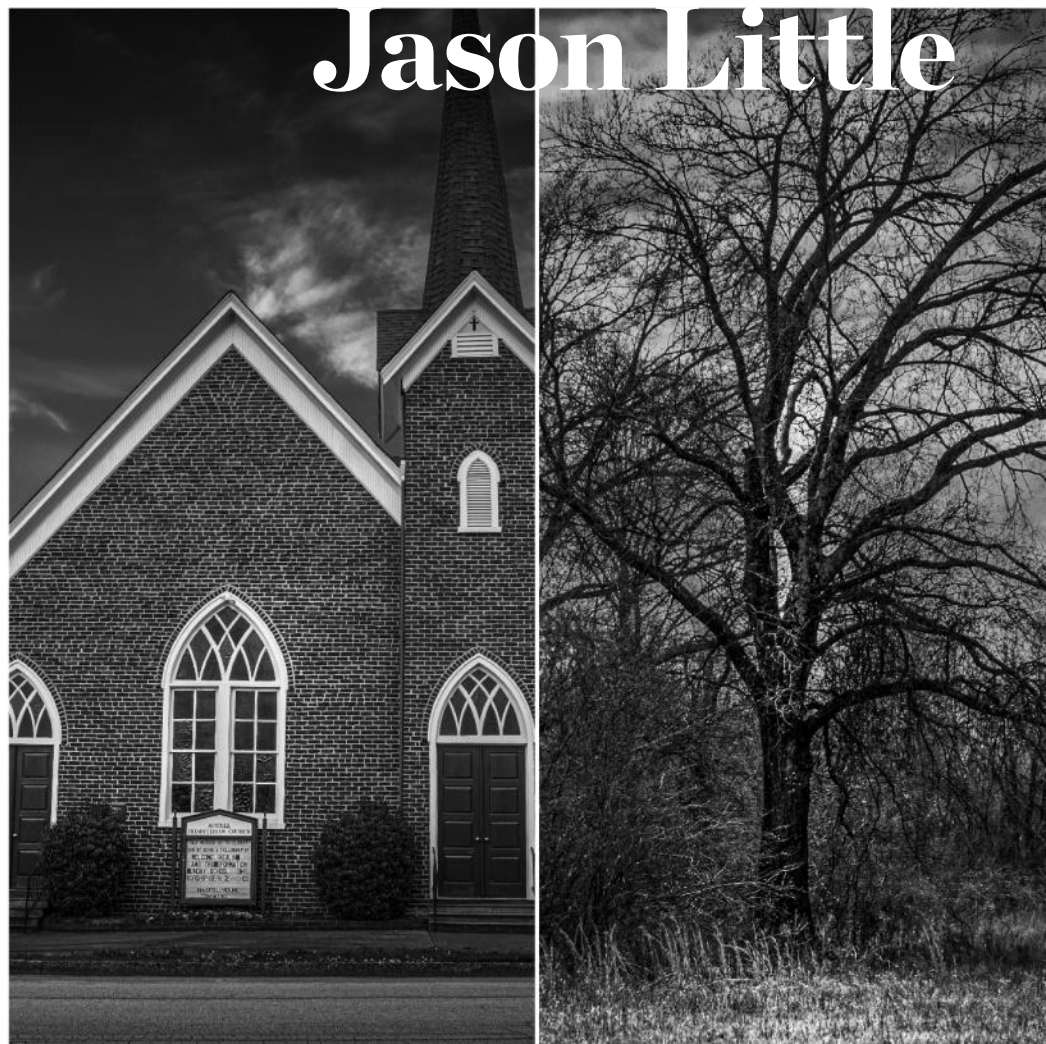


Jason Little's Portrait. Photo by Courtney Bush © All rights reserved

PLACES

Jason Little is a U.S.-based photographer who creates works in fine arts, portraits, landscapes, and more. Jason has been published in People.com, with one of his images of the multi-platinum rapper and actor "Chingy," and has also been published in Aphro Magazine, Off Town Magazine, and Vogue Italia/Photo Vogue. Jason's style of photography goes beyond capturing what is in front of the camera. His unique creative expression provokes the viewer to feel the emotions behind his images. As a photographer, Jason strives to capture the beauty and meaning of the world around him. He is inspired by the stories, emotions, and expressions of the people and places he encounters.

Lens Magazine

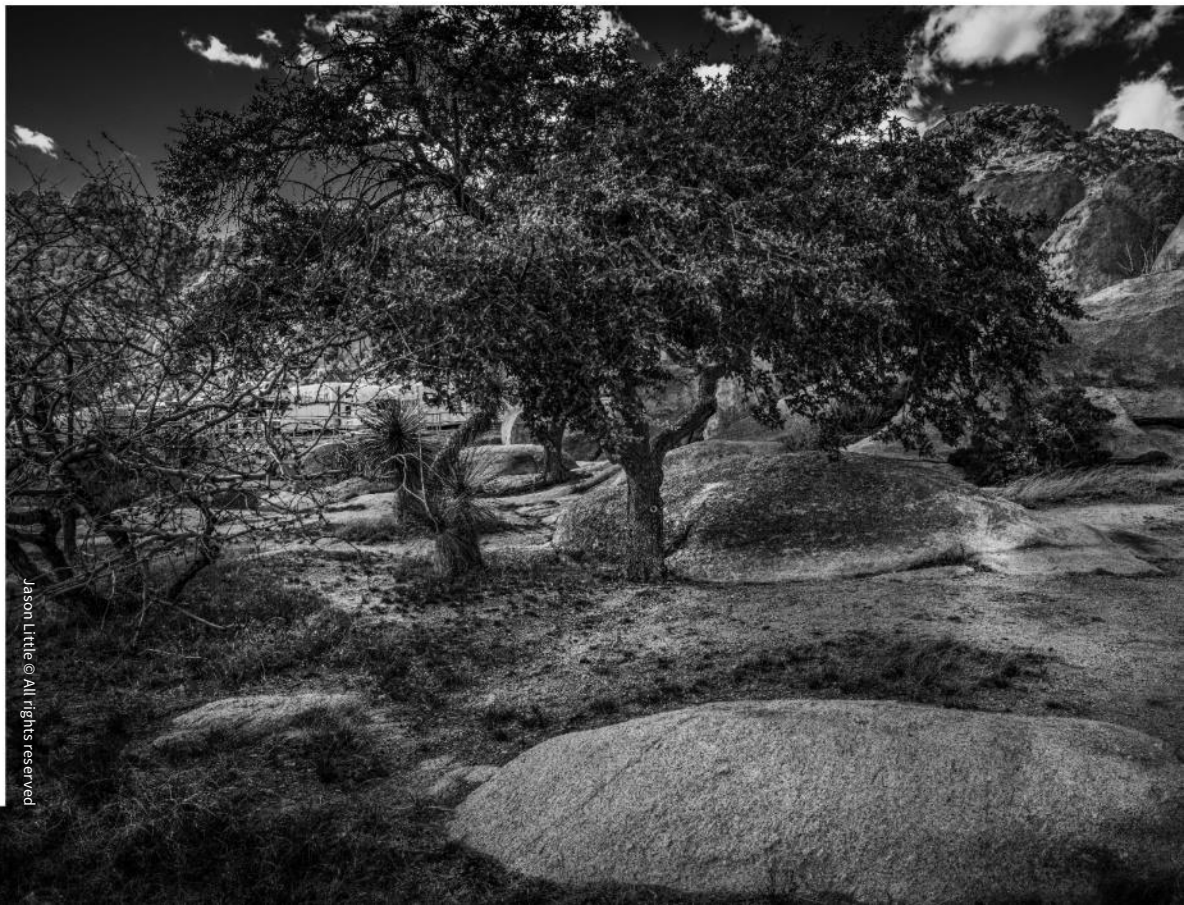




Jason Little © All rights reserved

This Fine Arts photography series immerses

viewers in a world of dramatic, black-and-white landscapes, capturing the essence of nature's grandeur in stark contrast. I embarked on a journey from Atlanta, GA, to the inspiring Grand Canyon in Arizona. Along the way, I captured some breathtaking images of the picturesque landscapes of Arizona, the verdant trees of Oklahoma, and a charming church in Austell, Georgia. The photos are a testament to nature's beauty and photography's art.



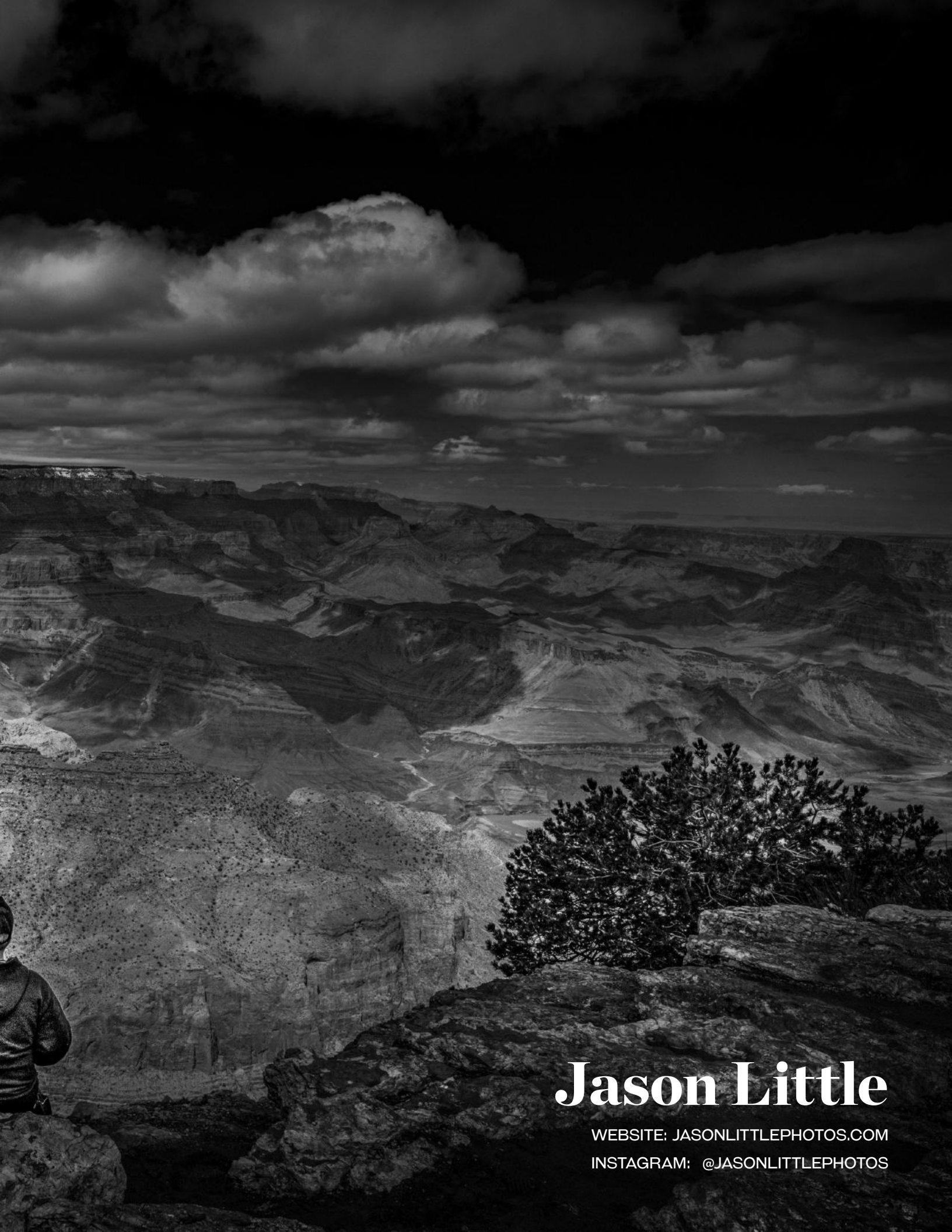
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THIS FINE ARTS
PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES
IMMERSES VIEWERS IN A
WORLD OF DRAMATIC, BLACK-
AND-WHITE LANDSCAPES,
CAPTURING THE ESSENCE
OF NATURE'S GRANDEUR IN
STARK CONTRAST."





Jason Little

WEBSITE: JASONLITTLEPHOTOS.COM

INSTAGRAM: @JASONLITTLEPHOTOS

A photograph of a dead tree in a desert landscape. The tree is dark and silhouetted against a bright orange background of sand dunes. The foreground shows a body of water, likely a salt flat or a dry lake bed, with some dark, possibly dead, vegetation. The overall scene is a stark, arid environment.

AGA SZYDLIK

ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI





AGA SZYDLIK

ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI

Namib desert, stark and rugged in its beauty, surrounded by the striking ancient red dunes, one of the oldest and highest in the world, reaching 300-400 meters and scorched by the sun for thousands of years to a rusty red color.


Sossusvlei pan was formed when the Tsauchab River flooded the desert, and the abundance of water allowed camel thorn trees to grow. However, as the climate changed, the sand dunes encroached on the pan, blocking the river from reaching the area.





Aga Szydlak © All rights reserved.





The Sossusvlei, also known as the Sossus Vlei, is located in Namibia and is a beige salt-clay pan in the Namib, surrounded by sand dunes, which is only used in rare good rainy years water leads. For a short time, a lake a few centimeters to several meters deep forms in the Vlei at the end of the Tsauchab. Sossus means "blind river" in the Nama language. "Blind" refers to the fact that after heavy rainfall from a mountainous region in the country's interior, it is heading towards the Atlantic flowing river Tsauchab at Sossusvlei in the sand dunes of the Namib coastal desert ends or silts up - about 50 km from the sea. The area is part of the Namib-Naukluft National Park.

The Sossusvlei has been part of the UNESCO World Heritage of the Namib Sand Sea since June 21, 2013. The entire area, including the surrounding dune landscapes and vleis, is referred to as Sossusvlei.

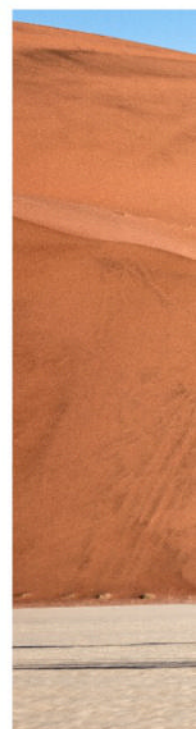
It is one of the three areas of the Namib-Naukluft Park (next to Naukluft and Namib).

The surrounding orange dunes are among the highest in the world, with a height difference of more than 380 meters compared to the pan. The tallest among them is Big Daddy, also called Crazy Dune. The orange color of the sand is caused by iron oxide; black areas of the dunes consist of magnetite.





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Aga Szydlak © All rights reserved.



Despite the extreme living conditions, there are many creatures adapted to the desert in Sossusvlei. In addition to mammals such as the gauntlet and the desert gold mole, there are, among others—also, the ancient sand lizard, the mist drinker beetle, and the puff adder. Camelthorn trees grow particularly frequently along the waterways, and Nara, which is endemic to the Namib, can be found on the dunes.



AGA SZYDLIK

ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI

Aga Szydlak is a scientist and a documentary photographer based in Cambridge, USA. Her work mainly focuses on off-beaten path travels, tribal and documentary photography, conservation, exploration of heritage sites, and documentation of indigenous rituals and beliefs.

She actively supports human rights and conservation efforts. Aga's assignments involve both freelance work and collaborations with various non-profit organizations.

Aga is passionate about exploring the world, and her journeys enable her to be completely immersed in the cultures she documents. Through her photography, she aims to tell the story of people she meets during her travels in a relevant, expressive fashion.

Aga began her professional journey by experimenting with fight photography when she was living in Thailand and started documenting Muay Thai. During her extensive travels, Aga was able to have many adventures and to explore SE Asia. Eventually, years later, her journey has led her to Indonesia and South Africa.

Aga shares her passion for photography with her love for science; she is a scientist with a molecular biology and virology background. Over the years, her projects ranged from the development of human biotherapeutics and vaccines to developing novel ways to mitigate the environment's protection.



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ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI





AGA SZYDLIK

ELEMENTS | SOSSUSVLEI

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An aerial photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, a river flows through a valley, its banks covered in snow. The middle ground shows a wide, snow-dusted plain leading to a range of mountains in the distance. The sky is a mix of dark and light tones, suggesting a twilight or dawn setting. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

Passion for Nature

Matteo Redelli © All rights reserved.



**Matteo
Redaelli**



Passion for
Nature



Matteo Redaelli

Matteo Redaelli is a professional landscape photographer based in Milano, Italy. Travel is the artist's passion, and he believes in different approaches to landscape photography.

Redaelli's personal interest and exploration in photography are broader and extend to various subjects, including Fine Art, Landscapes, Nature, Travel, Wildlife, and videography.

Landscape photography is part of his work as a scientist with expertise in Biology.

Redaelli is an international award-winning photographer and was awarded the Chromatic Awards for his fantastic work in the "Midnight in Lofoto" category in December 2023; the World Photo Annual 2023 Refocus award for Landscape; the Sony International Photo Award in 2018 and the Tokyo International Photo Award in 2017

Lens Magazine



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Among his collaborations with brands, you will find the cooperation with Oslo University with naturalistic pictures on Tvergastein featured in the 2018 Issue and a unique contribution to DOVE VIAGGI. In recent years, his work has been published internationally in books, photography magazines, and in press. Redaelli loves to feature his work through social media channels and exhibitions. He specialized in photography of Northern Europe, such as Iceland, Norway, and Oceania, such as New Zealand. He has always tried to create the most beautiful images, especially for night, Landscape, and nature photography.

Passion for Nature



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**Matteo
Redaelli**



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**Matteo
Redaelli**






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Passion for
Nature

An aerial photograph of a mountain valley at sunset. The sky is filled with orange and yellow clouds, with the sun low on the horizon. The mountains are dark with patches of snow. In the foreground, a winding road leads through a valley with several lakes. The water in the lakes reflects the sunset colors. There are some small buildings and a road in the lower right corner.

“ Through my
photography,
I aim to point
out how different
landscapes are
necessary for
animals of various
species and create
magical views for
the eyes. Water is
the most essential
material for our
environment
because of the way
it shapes it. Can you
imagine a world
without glaciers?

- Matteo Redaelli

Passion for
Nature



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**Matteo
Redaelli**

Passion for Nature





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lens
MAGAZINE

Woodlands of Madrid.

A Darkest Hour

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See the article on page 130

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