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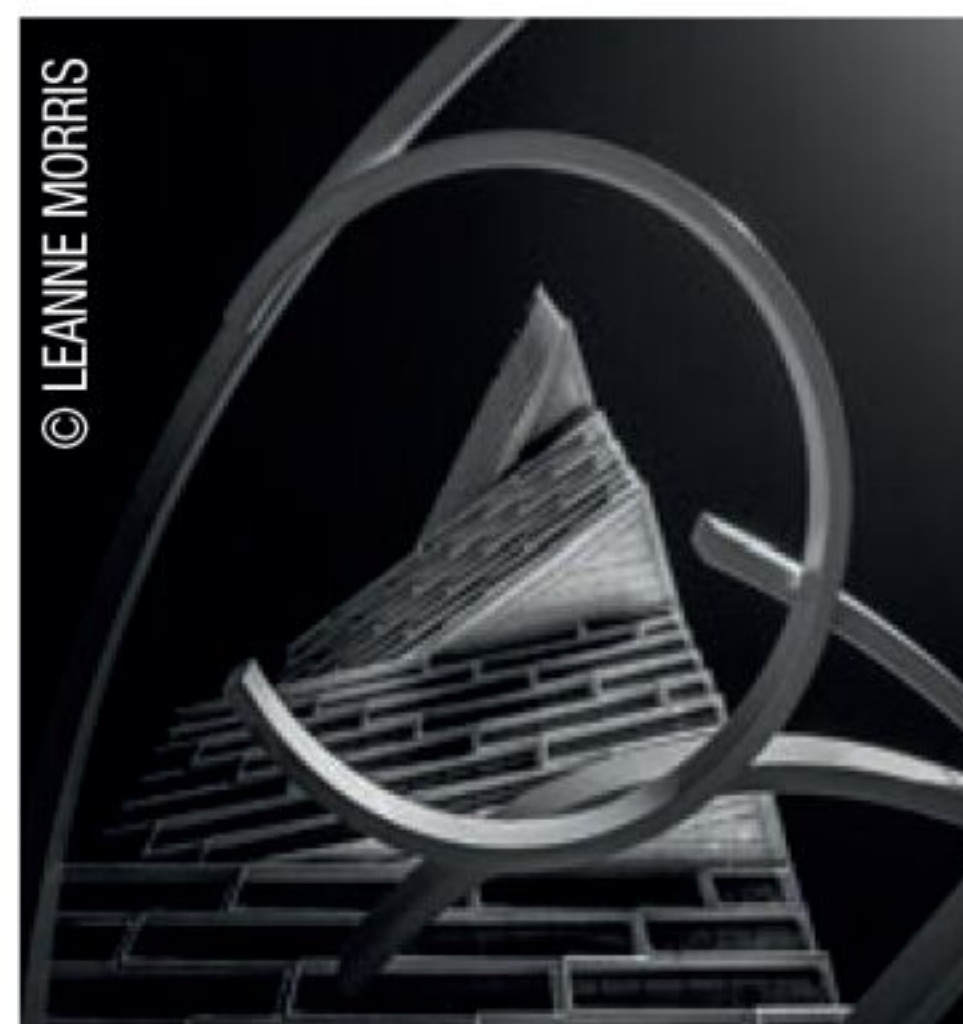
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ISSN 0004-9964

EDITOR'S NOTE



BLACK, WHITE, AND EVERY TONE IN BETWEEN

MIKE O'CONNOR, EDITOR

You can't argue there is something undeniably appealing about a simple and well-executed black and white image.

And yet, within that simplicity lies one of the great challenges for photographers. To do black and white justice — and I mean really do it justice, rather than simply converting any old shot to monochrome — is much harder than it might initially seem. In fact, it's a pursuit you could spend a lifetime exploring.

It's exactly this challenge that we love to celebrate each year with The Mono Awards. Now in its eighth year, the competition continues to attract stunning work that demonstrates everything we love about black and white photography, and this issue, our Mono Awards special, is a proper showcase of exactly that.

What I've always found so interesting about working in black and white is that it asks both the photographer and the viewer to interpret an image differently — to look beyond the obvious and find something in the relationship between light, shadow, shape and texture.

I've long believed that challenging yourself to photograph with an eye for black and white is a great way to improve your imagery. It encourages you to look beyond the obvious and boil an image down to its raw elements. And often, that's where the beauty lies.

Perhaps that is also why great black and white photography can feel so timeless. A photograph made decades ago can still speak to us in exactly the same way as one made yesterday, which is probably why the work of the greats of the black and white era continue to have such currency today.

And while the technology may have changed, the fundamental challenge remains the same: seeing the world in tones rather than colour, and finding the photograph within it.

That's what makes The Mono Awards so rewarding. There is no shortage of technically impressive photography these days, but the best monochrome images still demand something more from the photographer. A way of seeing, a sense of restraint and, ultimately, a good eye.

In the pages that follow, we're delighted to share the winning images from The Mono Awards 2026 with you. I hope you enjoy them, but also take a moment to consider how our finalists have embraced the constraints of black and white to create something truly exceptional. 🌟





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Every year, The Mono Awards' People category challenges photographers to capture something unique about the human experience, with one simple rule: it must be in black and white. This year delivered an extraordinary mix of styles, perspectives and stories. Here are the 30 images that stood out from the field.

26 THE MONO AWARDS – PLACES CATEGORY

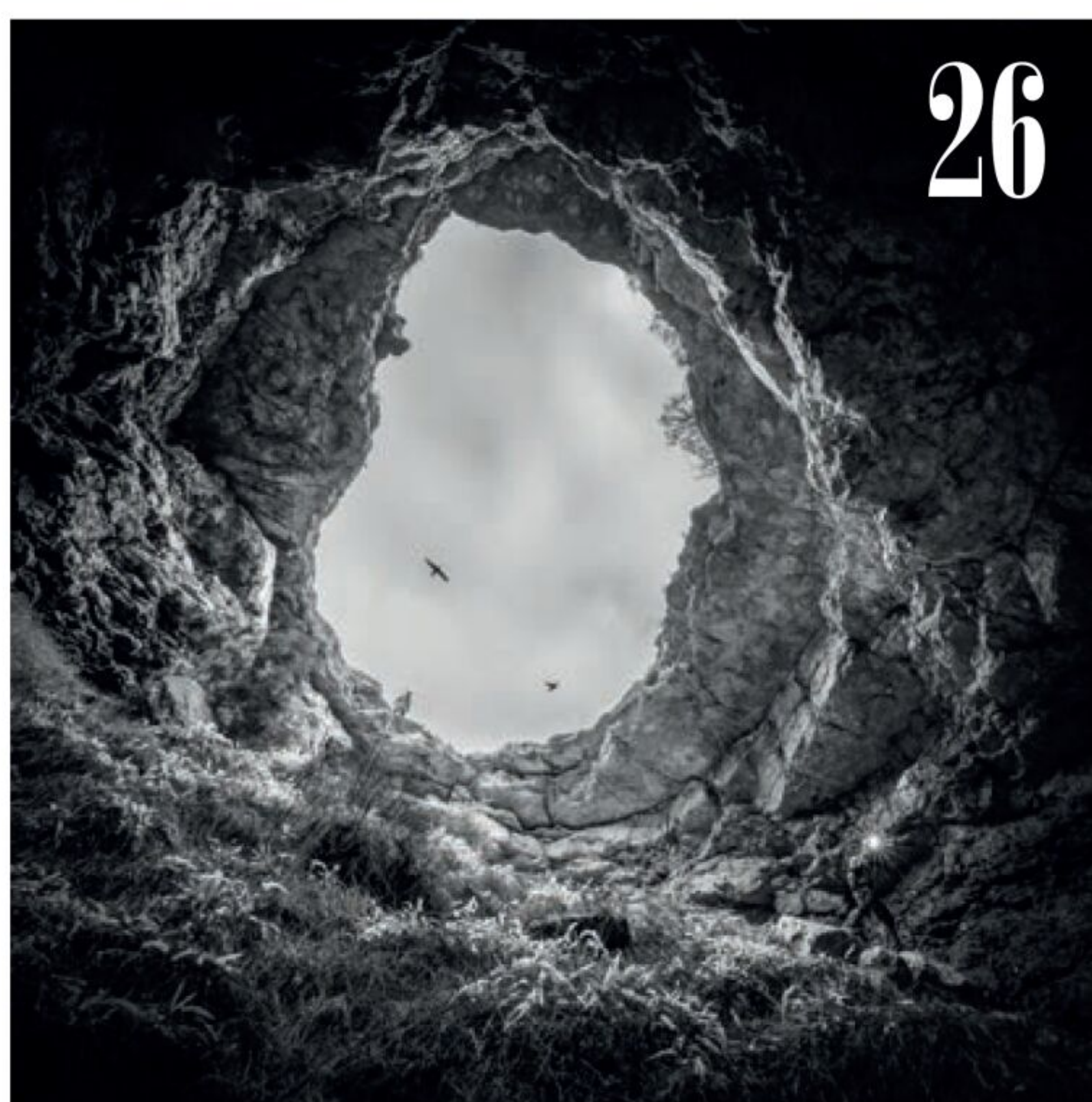
From dramatic landscapes and seascapes to cityscapes, astro photography and everything in between, the Places category delivered an incredible collection of images this year. Here are the 30 photographs that stood out.

36 THE MONO AWARDS – ANIMALS CATEGORY

Capturing the diversity and character of the animal world in a single black-and-white frame is no easy feat, making this one of photography's most challenging genres to master. Here are our picks for 2026.

50 5 QUICKFIRE BLACK AND WHITE EDITING TIPS

Sure, it's easy enough to just drop a black and white preset on your colour image, but being more deliberate and careful with your edits will always lead to stronger results. Here are 5 quickfire Lightroom editing tips to get you started.



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Take a look at the best images from our 'Minimalism' competition and find out who's won our Retouch4me prize.

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THIS ISSUE'S COVER

Taken by photographer Jodie Grieve, her image *Aquatic Velocity* shows Puck, a Saluki, and a dog built for "distance, speed, and relentless purpose," she says. "Every line of his body is tightened into intention: muscles engaged, ears streaming, eyes locked forward as the surface detonates beneath him." The image finished in the top 20 of the Animals category this year.



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YOUR BEST SHOT



MINIMALISM

This was a challenging theme, and with more than 250 entries, we received a ton of stunning images that played with the idea of 'less is more'. Here are our picks.

KATE SNOW

Spreading Seeds

EDITOR'S COMMENT

There were some really beautiful minimalist images entered in this issue's Your Best Shot, but we loved the sense of mystery conveyed in Kate Snow's clever macro entry, *Spreading Seeds*.

What makes the image work is the way it presents a beautiful and rarely seen aspect of nature through a cool, minimalist edit that removes any distractions. We've seen plenty of dandelion seed photos over the years, but this one brings a fresh perspective to a familiar subject.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

OM System OM-5, 60mm f/2.8 lens. 1/125s @ f8, ISO 500.

As our winner, Kate Snow takes home access to three Retouch4me photo retouching apps valued at \$360. Retouch4me retouching apps are available as Photoshop plugins and standalone apps. Options include Heal, Dodge & Burn, Eyes Bundle, Fabric, Skin Mask, Portrait Volumes, Clean Backdrop, Skin Tone, White Teeth, Mattifier, Color Match and Dust.

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THIS
MONTH'S
WINNER



ANTON GALITCH

Flying weather

EDITOR'S COMMENT

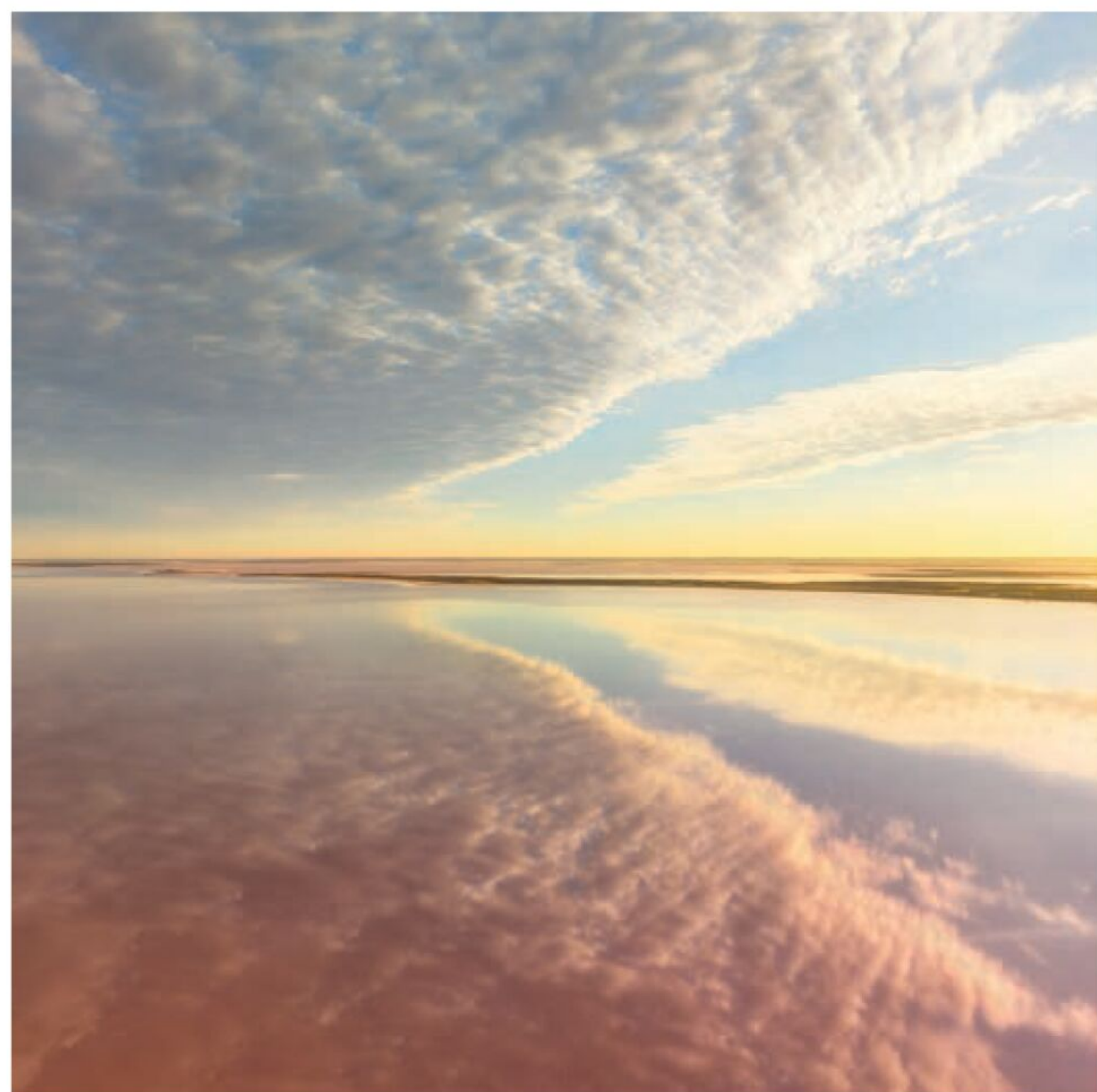
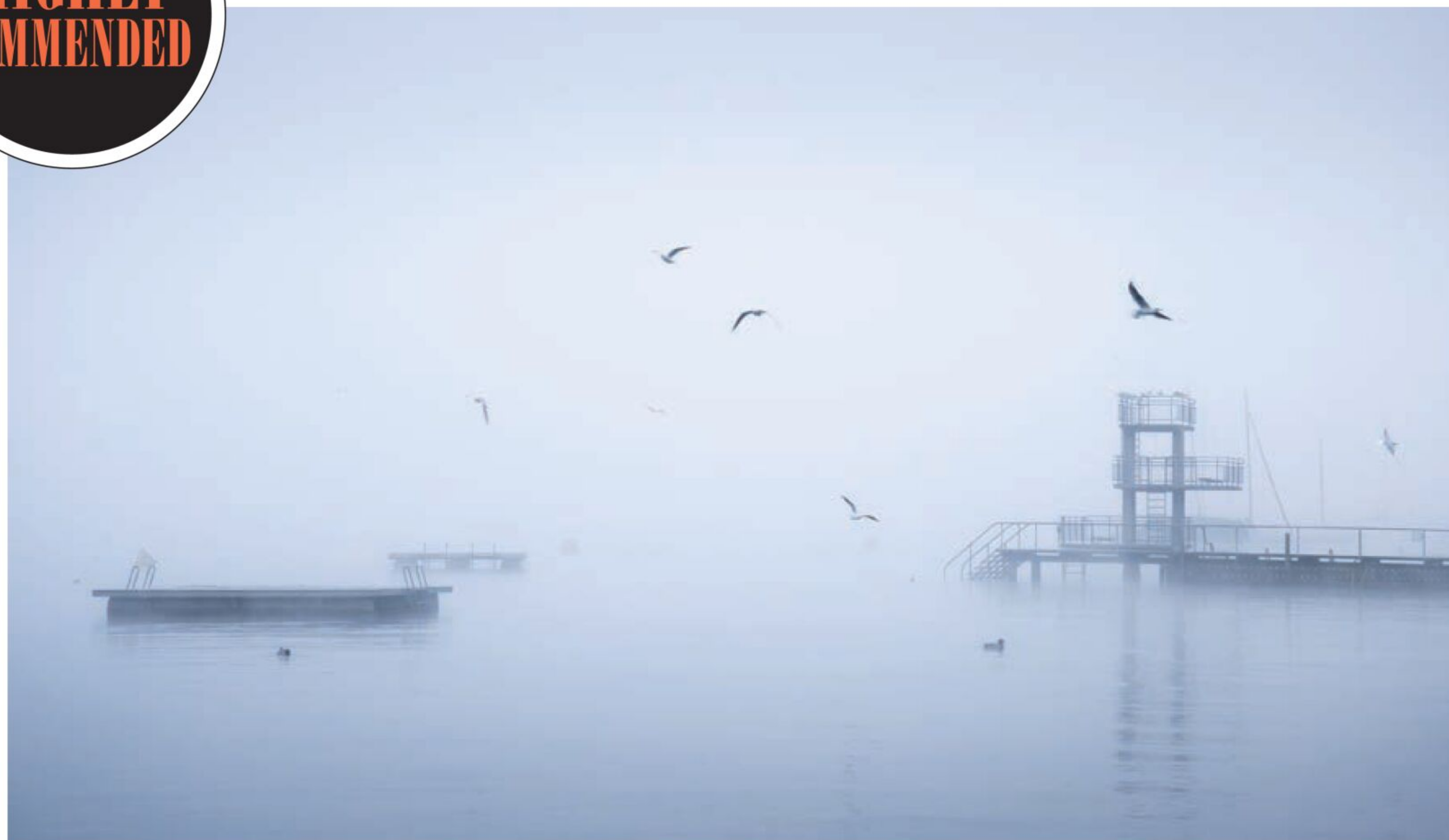
Anton Galitch's image was taken on a very foggy day, when the low visibility allowed him to capture what he describes as a simplified scene.

"The seagulls and the ducks added an interesting element of life to this otherwise artificial-looking scene," he says.

It's the fog, and the way it strips the scene back to its essential elements, that really makes this image work. The reduced visibility removes distractions while the birds add movement and a sense of dynamism to an otherwise quiet, almost surreal scene.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Fujifilm X-S10, 16-80mm f/4 lens @ 67mm.
1/180s @ f5.6, ISO 800.



KAREN MORLEY

Clouds

HOW I DID IT

Taken in the early morning winter light, the clouds are reflected in the pink of Lake Tyrrell.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Not provided

BRAD DUMMETT

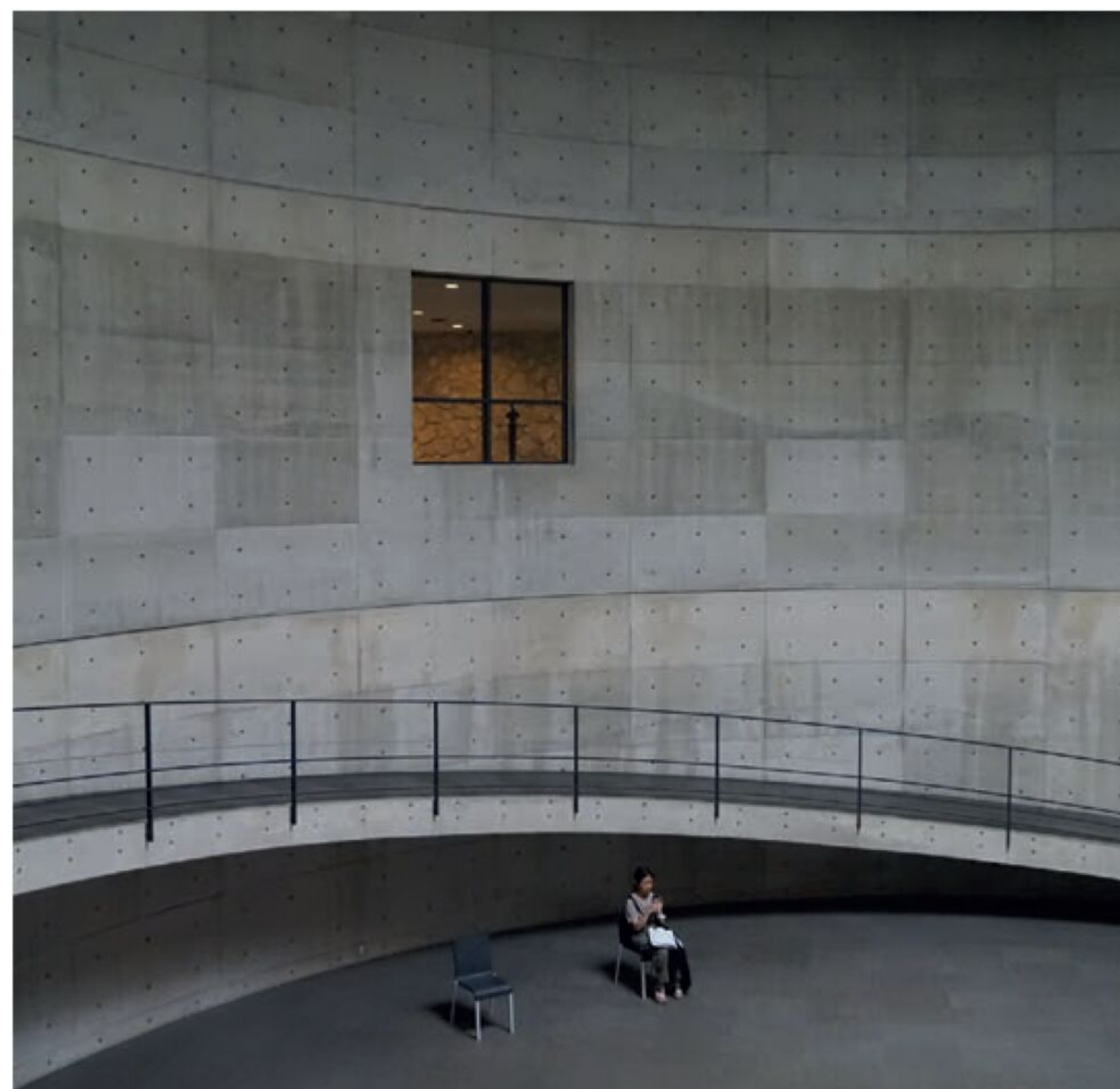
Solitude

HOW I DID IT

On a trip to Japan in September 2025, I visited the Chichu Art Museum on Naoshima Island. I saw this scene and snapped away.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

OM System OM-5 Mk II, 14-150mm kit lens
@ 17mm. 1/200s, @ f4, ISO 6400.





ADRIAN STAVOVY

Emu Walking

HOW I DID IT

I photographed this on the South Australian stretch of the Sturt Highway, travelling from Renmark towards Mildura after crossing the Nullarbor. Spotting a mob of emus, I slowed down as seeing them in the wild is still a rare thing for me. Further along, a solitary emu crested a low ridge, silhouetted against the sky. I pulled onto the verge and quickly captured a couple of frames before it disappeared over the rise. The distinctive 'Stobie' pole – steel and concrete, unique to South Australia – acted as a natural framing device, giving the scene scale and perspective. I like the starkness, and slightly surreal edge of the image, and the memories of outback Australia it personally evokes.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Olympus OM-5 Mark II, EF-S55-250mm f/4-5.6 IS II lens @ 125mm. 1/1000s @ f8, ISO 400.

HOW TO ENTER

YOUR BEST SHOT IS OPEN TO ANYONE IN AUSTRALIA. TO ENTER AN IMAGE IN THE COMP, CHECK THE COMPETITION THEMES AND ENTER AT [AUSTRALIANPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/YAFPHOTOCOMPETITION/YOUR-BEST-SHOT](https://australianphotography.com/yafphotocompetition/your-best-shot)

UPCOMING COMPETITION THEMES



DECEMBER 2026
LIGHT/SHADOW
30 September 2026



FEBRUARY 2027
OCEAN
30 November 2026



APRIL 2027
AUSTRALIA
30 Jan 2027



JUNE 2027
URBAN LIFE
31 Mar 2027

YOUR ENTRY

1. Email your entry to yourbestshot@australianphotography.com with the name of the competition theme in the email subject line, for example: Weather, Abstract, Landscape, etc.
2. The image file must be the same as your name, for example Jane Smith.jpg. If you enter multiple images, each new image file name should be appended with a unique number, eg Jane Smith2.jpg
3. A maximum of three images can be entered per person.
4. Images must be in JPEG format.
5. Email file size must not exceed 7MB.
6. Please include the following information about your entry in the body of your email: Name, image title and up to 200 words explaining how you created your image. Please also include technical details including camera, lens, focal length, shutter speed, aperture, ISO, tripod (if used) and a brief summary of any software edits.

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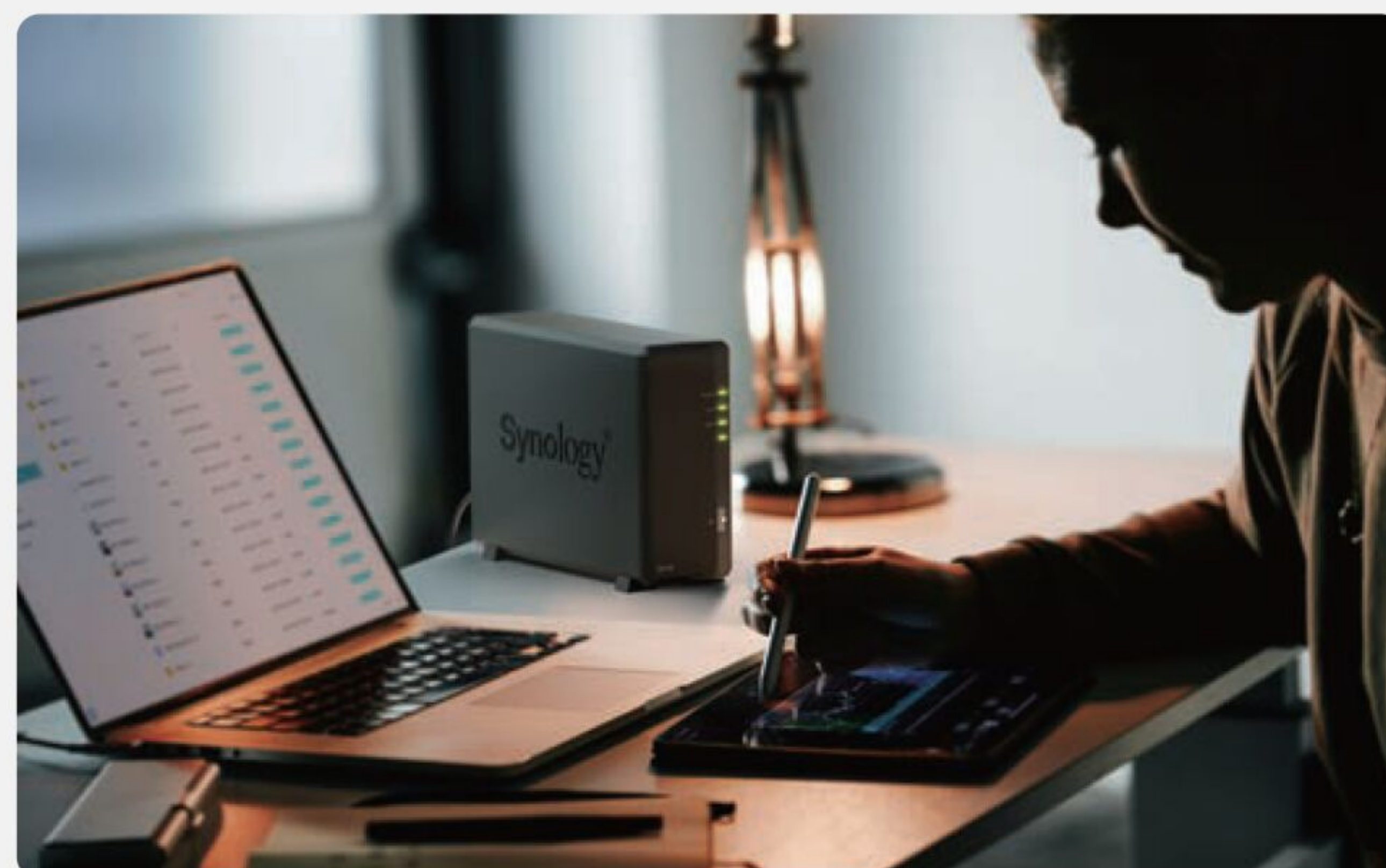
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THE Mono AWARDS 2026

We are honoured and delighted to share the winners and finalists in
The Mono Awards 2026, presented by Synology.

Now in its eighth year, The Mono Awards continues to celebrate the very best in black and white photography, showcasing the remarkable talent and diversity of photographers from Australia, New Zealand and around the world.

With more than 3,000 entries submitted, this year's competition produced an exceptional field of images across the three categories of People, Places and Animals, and featured a total prize pool of \$12,500.

This year's top honours went to three exceptional images: In the People category, Carly Goldsmith impressed with a beautifully observed family moment; in the Places category, Andy Zakeli's quirky street shot wowed our judges; and in the Animals category, Brooke Pyke's stunning image of a gathering of manta rays captivated us with its subtlety and sense of motion.

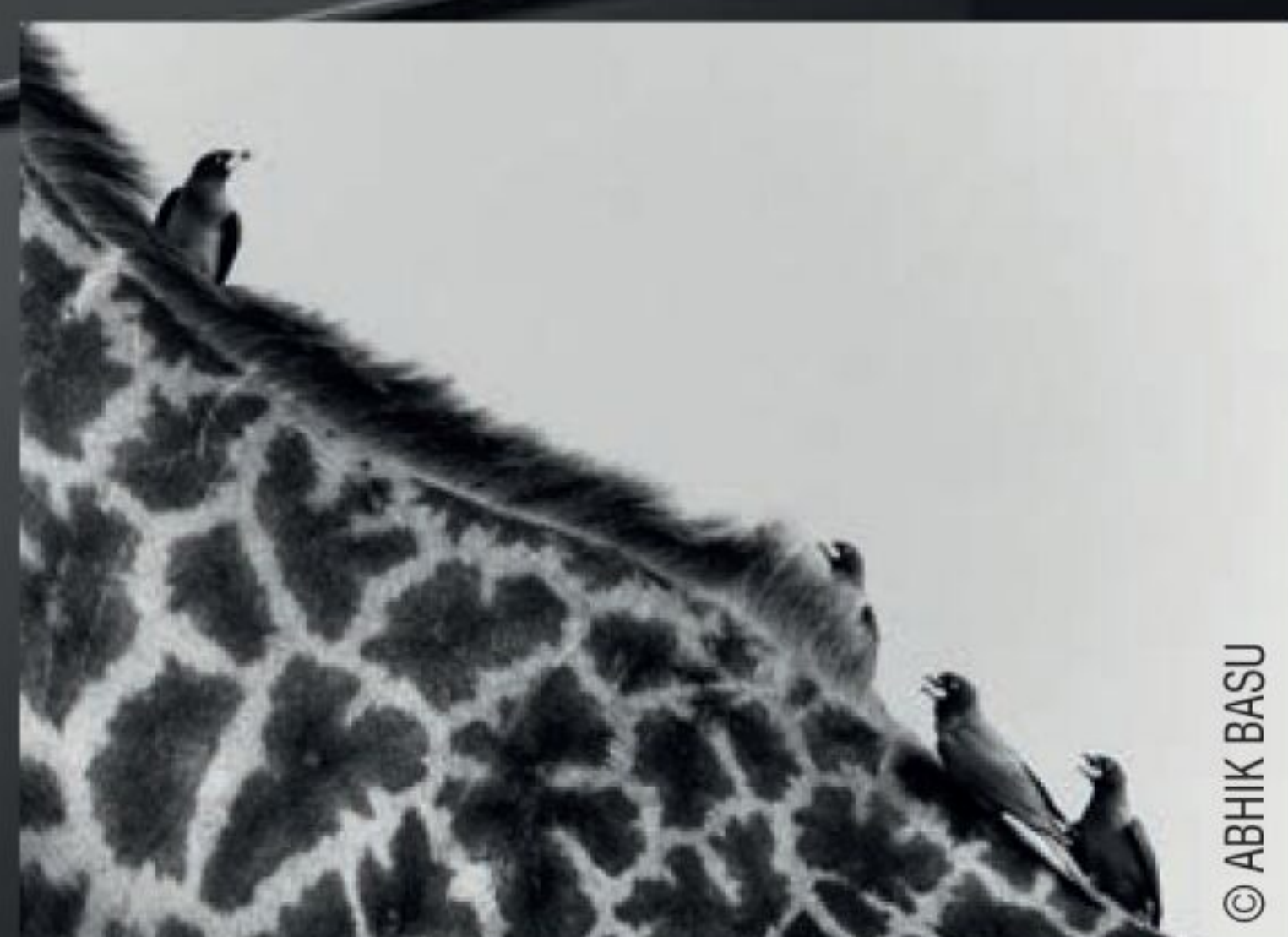
Across the following pages, you'll find the winners, runners-

up and Top 30 images in each category, accompanied by commentary from the judges on the photographs that captured their attention and rose above the rest.

Our sincere thanks go to this year's judging panel — Anthony McKee, Matt Palmer, Jackie Ranken, Mike Langford, Jay Collier, Dario Gardiman, Meg Hewitt, Paul Blackmore, Liz Ham and Chris Budgeon — for the considerable task of selecting the 2026 winners.

We are also grateful to Synology, the sponsor of this year's awards, for their generous support, and of course, to every photographer who entered. Together, you have helped make The Mono Awards a celebration of the creativity, diversity and enduring power of black and white photography.

We hope you enjoy exploring this year's collection of outstanding finalist images as much as we have.





WINNER CARLY GOLDSMITH

Carly Goldsmith is a family photographer based in Burpengary East, Queensland.

From childhood, she says she was drawn to storytelling through imagery, using her camera to capture moments of connection, emotion and the beauty of everyday life.

After 13 years working as an emergency nurse, Carly stepped away from her career to focus on motherhood and family life. Her nursing background gave her an appreciation for human connection and emotion, which continues to influence her approach to photography.

Inspired by everyday family life, Carly's work focuses on genuine connections and the moments that can easily pass unnoticed. Her photography reflects an appreciation for the small, meaningful moments that become part of a family's story.

@carlygoldsmithphotography

CHILDHOOD. Carly Goldsmith photographed this image of her two youngest children playing together in her backyard one afternoon, unexpectedly capturing a moment of innocent beauty.

"As the sun dropped lower in the sky, it cast a

beautifully defined shadow across the fence. It was an unposed, ordinary moment, but when I reviewed the image later, it carried more emotional weight than I had realised at the time," she says.

"Their silhouette gives me pangs of nostalgia, knowing they have already grown and changed since this photograph was taken. It perfectly captures their sibling bond and the simple joy of childhood afternoons spent together in the backyard, while reflecting my own desire to hold onto those fleeting years just a little longer."

"In my family photography, I often gravitate towards black and white when an image evokes a strong feeling or deep connection. The simplicity of a monochrome edit removes distractions (in this case, my son's hi-vis shirt) and allows the light, shadow and emotion to take centre stage, creating a more powerful image."

For the judges, the image's simplicity and the sense of wonder captured in a pure, decisive moment, made it a clear winner in the People category.

Prize: \$2,500, Synology Beestation plus bst170-8t single bay nas, 8tb built-in preconfigured hdd

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

We often treat photography as a literal medium, yet there are times when it is the metaphorical or even subliminal ideas in a photo that really talk to us. Carly Goldsmith's winning photo of two young children is proof of this; yes, the principal elements are out of focus and the print is slightly dark, but this all helps us focus in on that solid shadow that is really telling the story. For many readers this one image will evoke a lot of memories; for me, that old fence reminds me of days spent in my grandmother's backyard. I am sure that in years to come this photo will stir memories for these children too. – **Anthony McKee**

I really like this image because it's a quiet, tender moment between two children, told almost entirely through shadow. The fence is where the focus lives – the kids themselves are soft and out of frame, but you can still catch the joy on the little girl's face as she looks up at him. His head is tilted gently toward her in the silhouette, caring and unhurried, and their little noses line up in the shadow in the sweetest way. It's the kind of image that makes you feel something rather than just look at it – it speaks more through what's suggested than what's sharp, and it takes me straight back to what childhood actually feels like. – **Meg Hewitt**



RUNNER-UP ROSS MCLENNAN

Ross McLennan describes himself as new to photography, having spent much of his career working in the film industry. He began in Australia as an assistant before moving to London and then Los Angeles in 2008. He remained there until 2023, when he returned to Australia and decided to focus on photography.

“Whilst in LA, I got more serious about photography, specifically film photography shooting people. My heroes were Avedon, Penn and more recently Alec Soth and Nadav Kander. I slowly expand my formats to 4x5, then wet plate collodion and eventually 8x10,” he says.

“I love the history of photography, its heritage and how film photography

slows the process down,” he says.

“Now with AI, I’m more committed to film photography as it’s only met with a fondness of memory or excitement to people bored of the digital workflow.”

Now living in regional NSW, Ross has recently opened a studio and darkroom mainly to produce his own work.

@getrossco

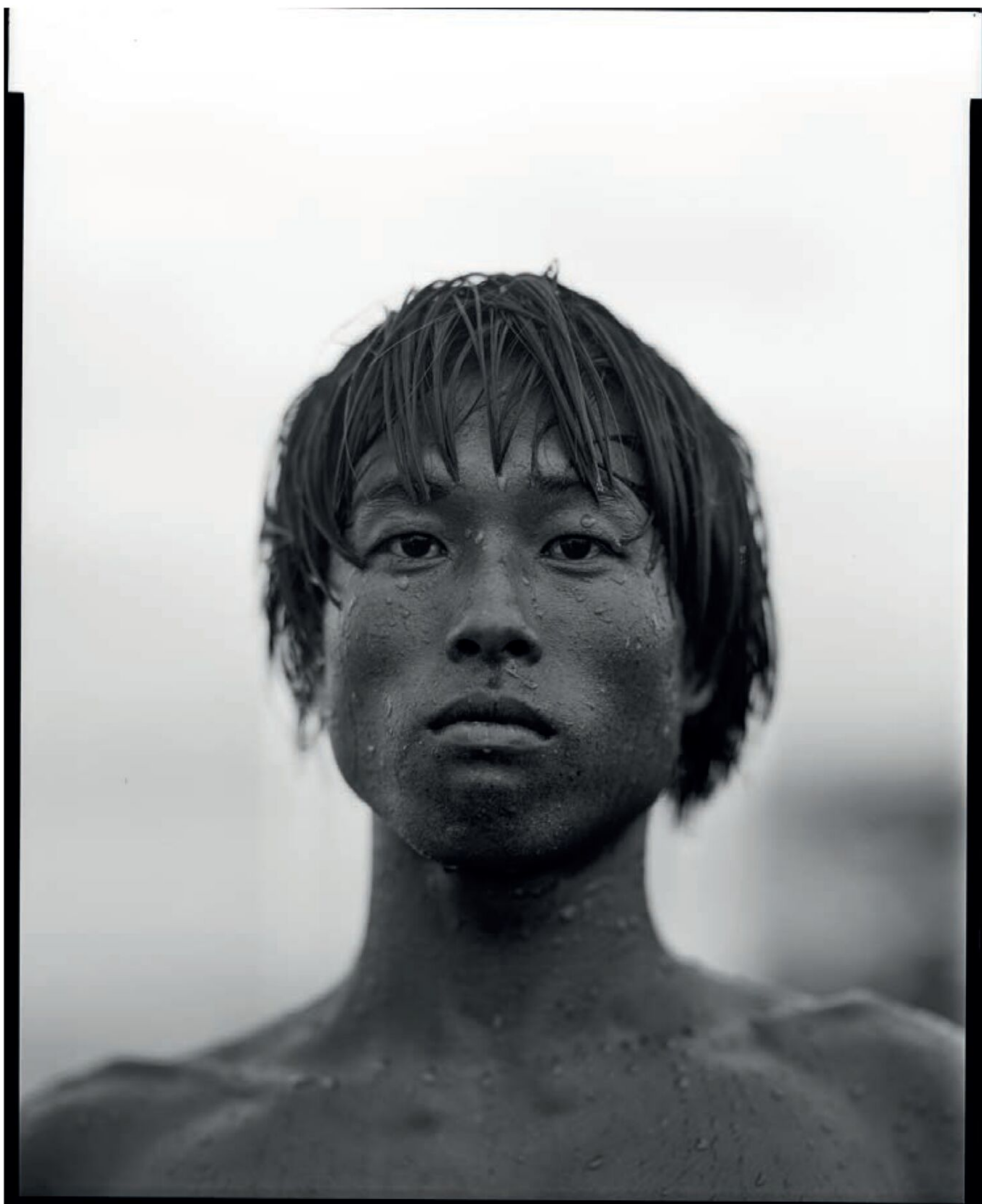
JIN. Ross McLennan’s Mono Awards runner-up portrait is part of a series with the working title of Ortho Surfers.

“Living in Crescent Head, a surf town, I inadvertently shot a friend’s portrait on 8x10 Ilford Ortho after running out of panchromatic film,” explains McLennan.

“I loved the way his tanned skin rendered darker. This self-portrait was made to test a semi-stand development process for the series, helping to extend the film’s dynamic range.

“I feel there is a lost world full of wonder in film photography, and I’ve committed myself to using it, along with other non-digital processes, to tell stories through my eyes. These portraits have a timeless quality that shifts the viewer’s perception. It can be difficult to tell whether an image was made yesterday or 100 years ago, leaving the viewer to interpret it for themselves.”

Prize: \$1,000 cash



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

I love the way that large format cameras immediately invoke a more considered approach to people photography. It’s often slower paced while being completely susceptible to random happy mistakes that come naturally with this process, which of course is part of the charm. This image is a simple, direct, no frills example that elicits an emotive response that is not necessarily tangible, but revels in beautiful tones, unusual framing and a compelling gaze that lets the viewer’s mind wonder about the origin story. – **Chris Budgeon**

This is such a simple and powerful portrait that leaves you with so many questions, and that’s okay! The hold of the subject’s steadfast stare seems to count for resilience and confidence. The drops of water across his skin and wet hair also leave me wondering what has just happened? The water droplets are also reminiscent of tears. The way the subject holds his jaw feels like he may be in the midst of saying something, or breaking down. Such selective focus removes this context further. The result is a very potent and universal portrait image that leaves us with less of a narrative but more of an affect. – **Liz Ham**



3 **FIONA BOWRING** SHADOW PLAY



4 **PHIL DUVAL** WARRIOR WOMAN



6 **BEN CONNOLLY** VITELLI MAFIA



7 **LEO FARRELL** CHRISTMAS DAY



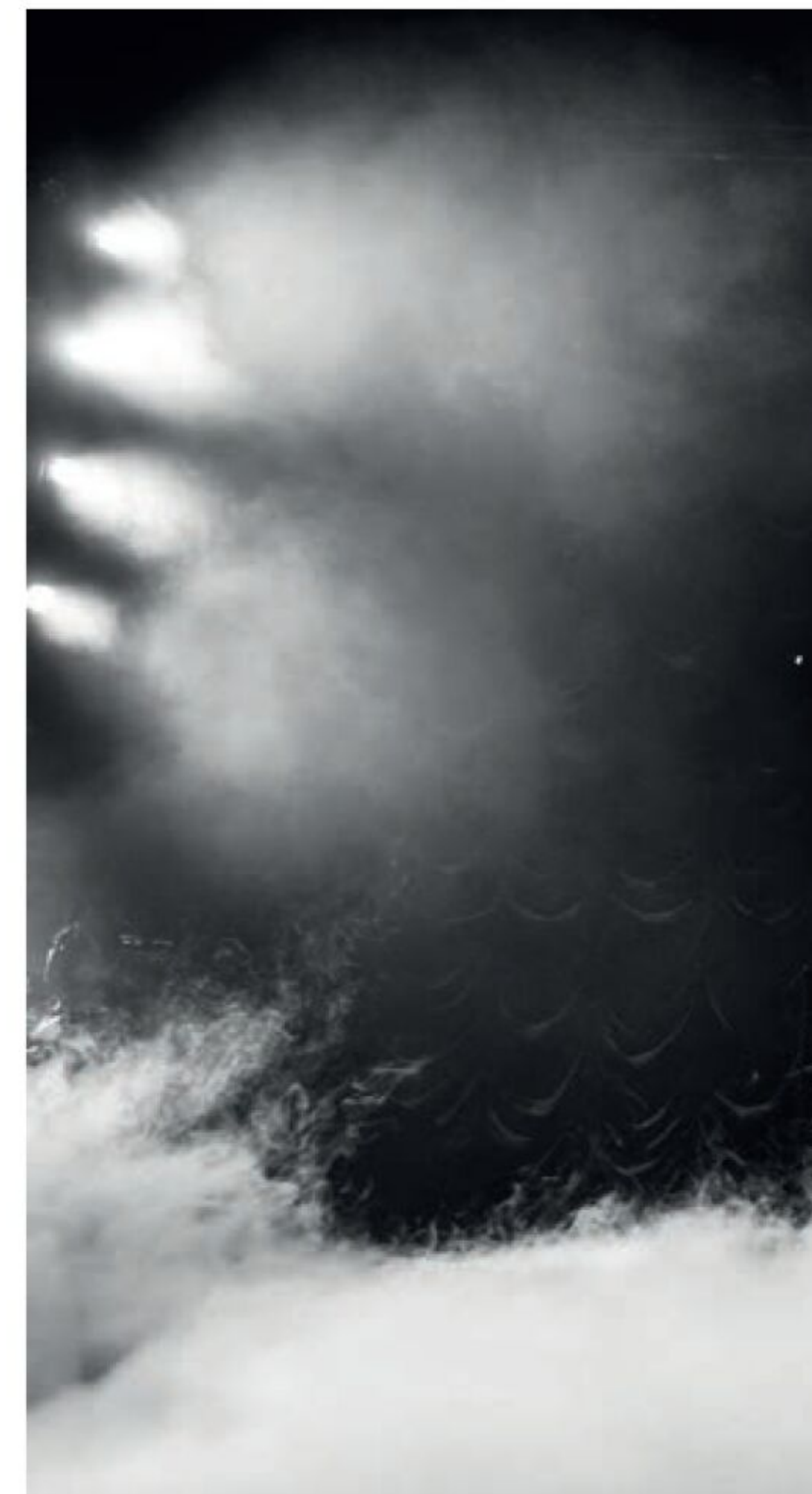
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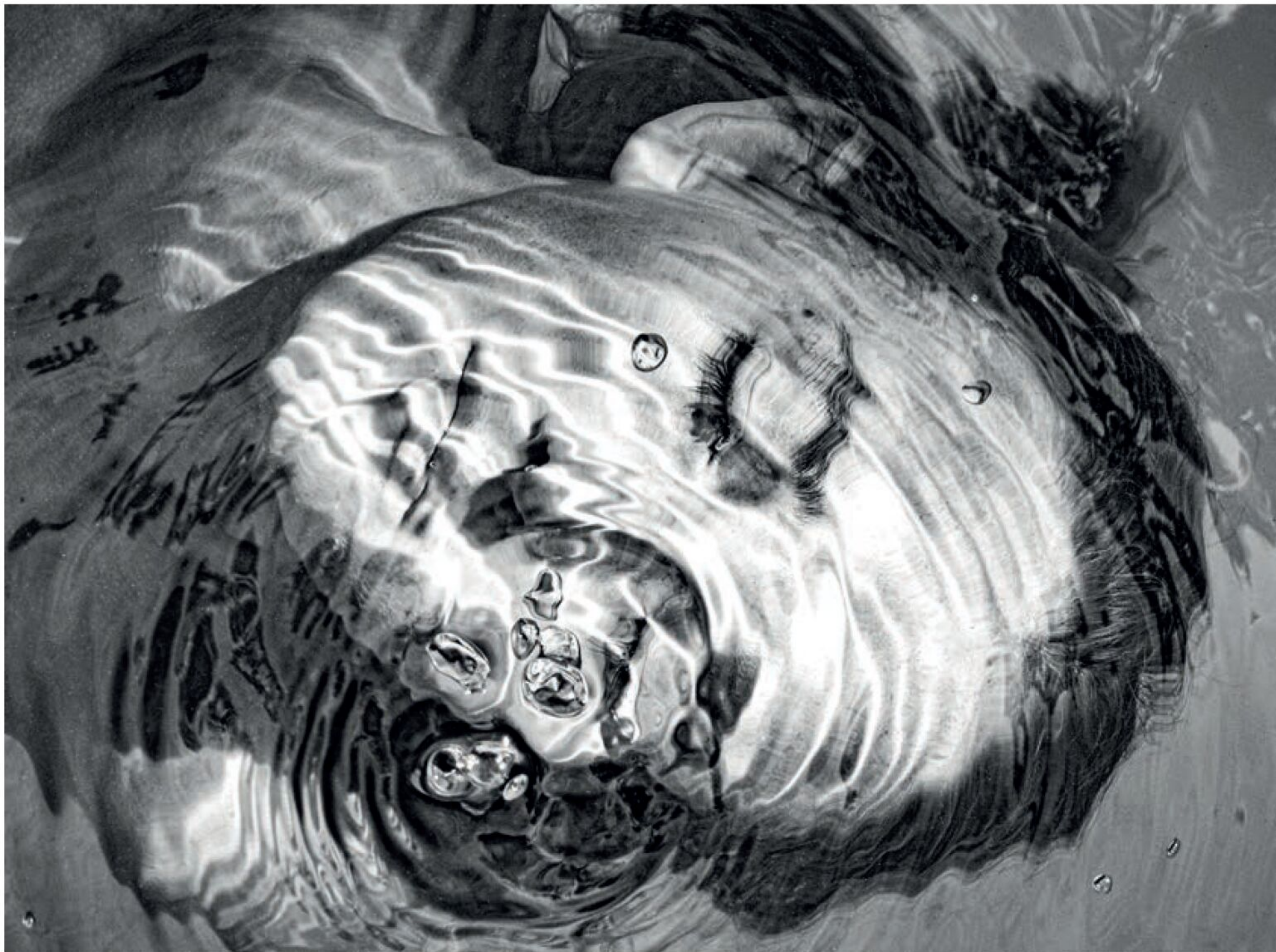
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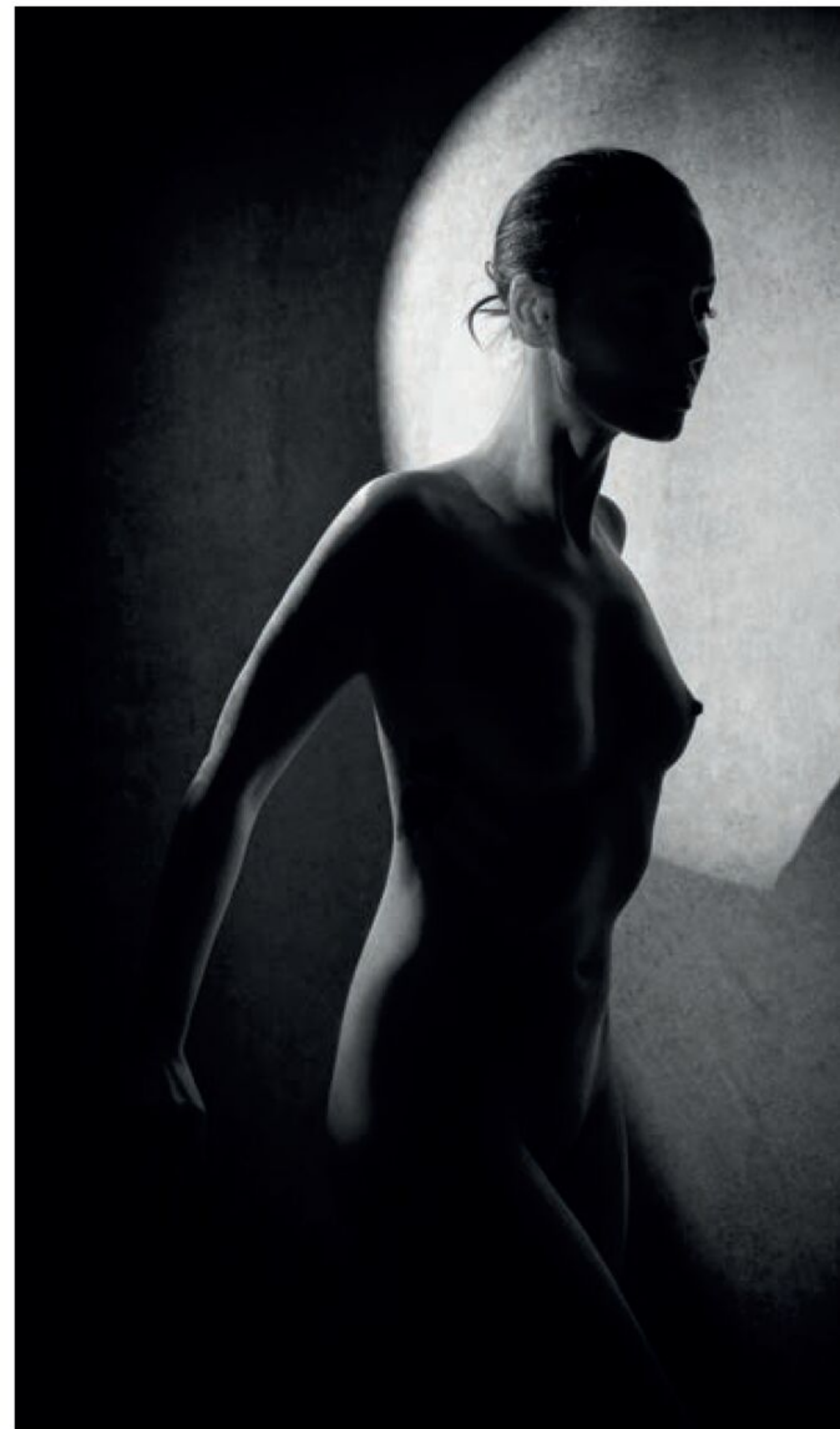
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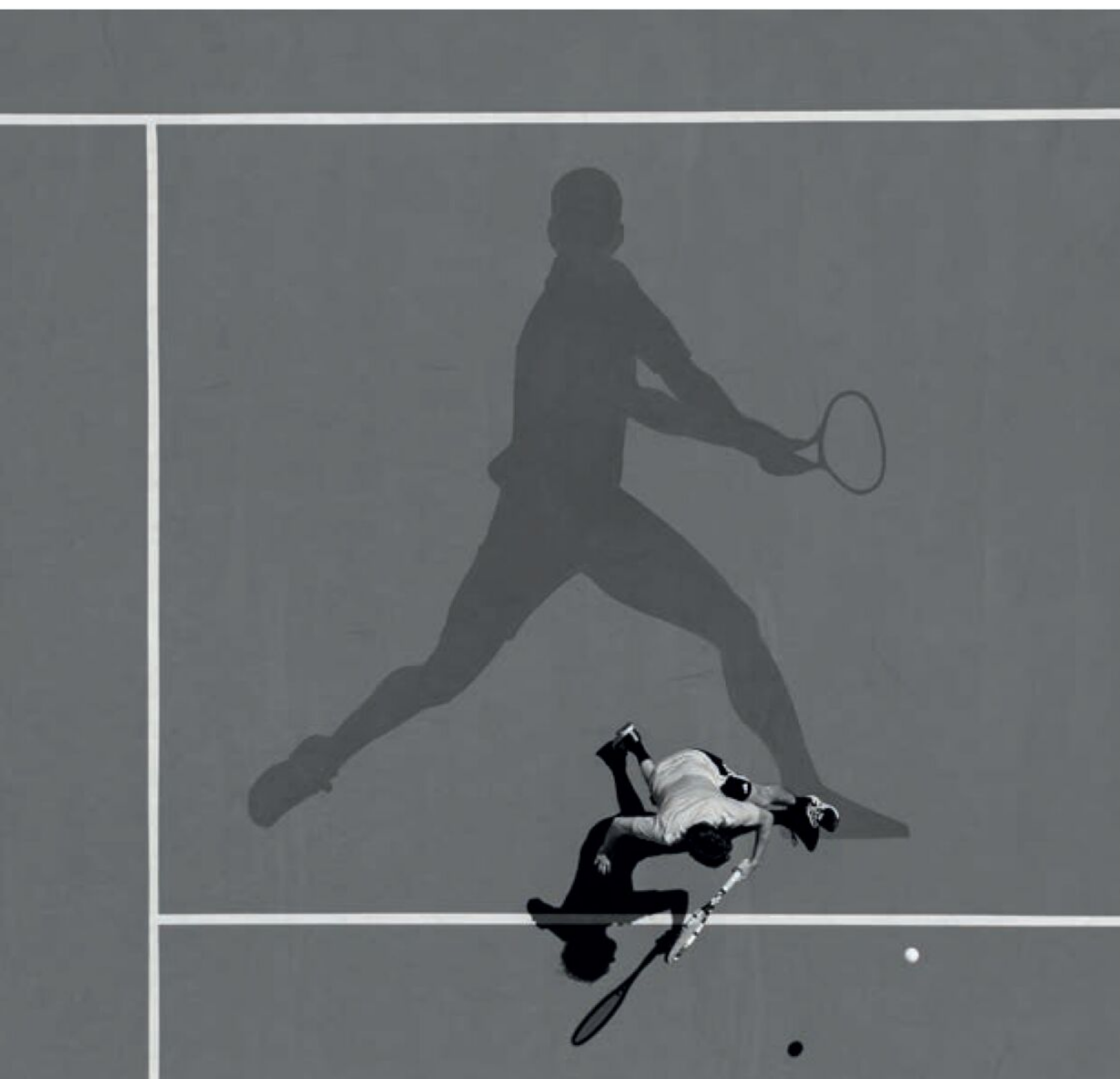
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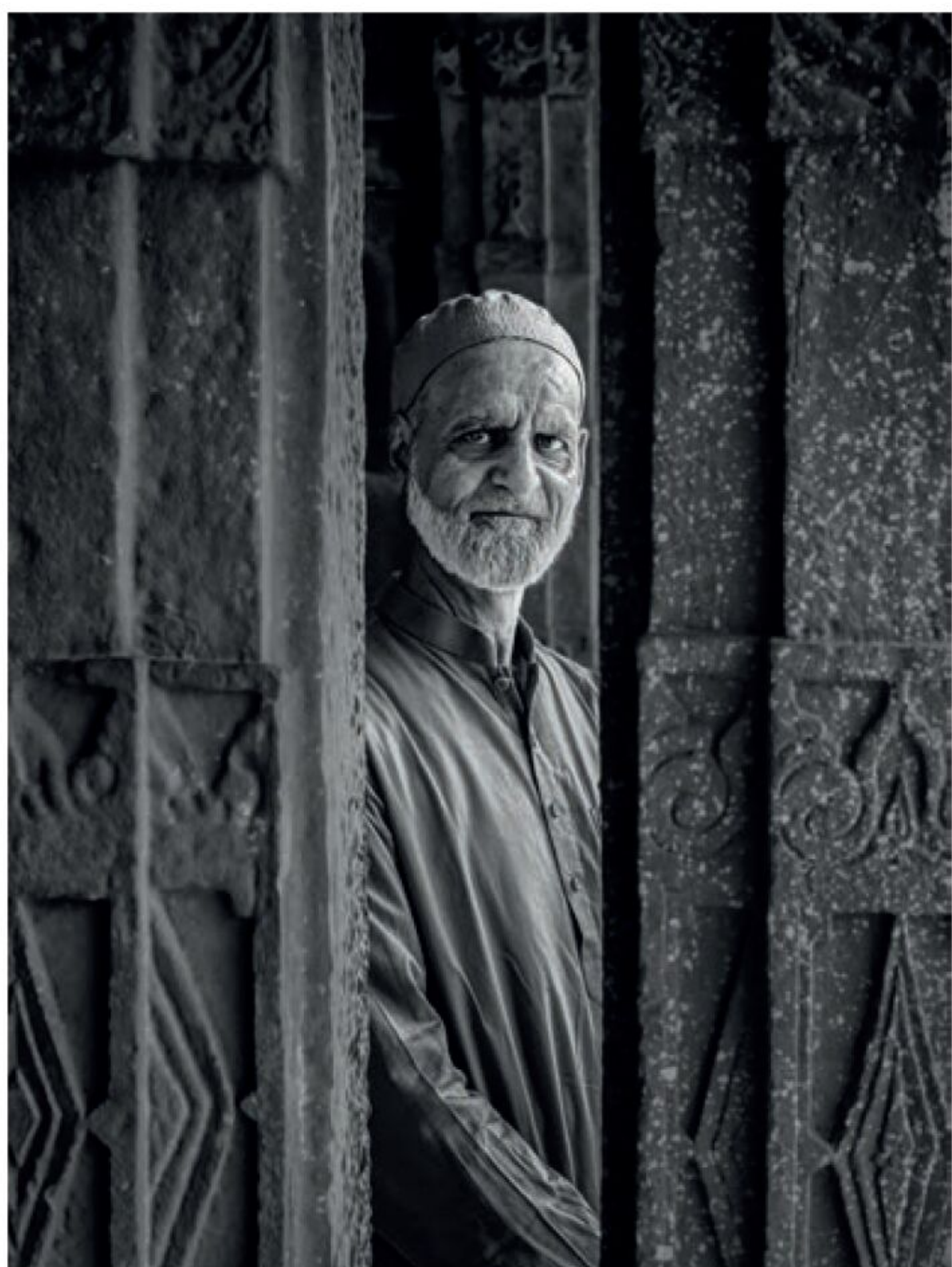
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WINNER ANDY ZAKELI

Andy Zakeli worked as a press photographer for more than 25 years with Fairfax Media and also worked internationally as a paparazzo in London. A large part of his career was spent specialising in sports photography, covering the English Premier League, the Sydney Olympics and the NRL, as well as politics, hard news and celebrities.

He currently works as a photography teacher with TAFE NSW and as a videographer with Shoalhaven Tourism, while also working as a freelance photographer in the corporate sector.

At the same time, he has rediscovered his passion for black-and-white film photography, which is how he originally learnt his craft. He now runs a mobile

darkroom van, Shutterstop, teaching people the ins and outs of black-and-white film photography.

@andyzakeli_photo

DE-ESCALATION. Andy Zakeli's image wowed our judges with its clever use of geometry, symmetry and humour. The image transforms an everyday scene in Sydney's Gadigal Station into something visually unexpected, with the escalator, concrete columns and signage creating a strong graphic composition.

The image came from a street photography excursion with Zakeli's TAFE students, where he was experimenting with different angles of the station's architecture.

"I took it a step further for a bit of fun

and made the subject headless, almost decapitated by the signage. I like trying to add humour or strange elements to my photos purely to create interest for the viewer," he says.

The judges were also drawn to the image's balance and almost tessellated design, with the lone commuter providing a subtle human element within the strong architectural forms.

"Capturing a single subject in the right position on the escalator during a busy weekday wasn't easy, so I was stoked to capture this shot."

Prize: \$2,500 cash, synology beestation plus bst170-8t single bay nas, 8tb built-in preconfigured hdd



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

My immediate reaction to this image is a smile. There's something wonderfully quirky about the decisive moment, as the commuter's head is cut off by a banner, leaving the letter K to fill the space where his head should be. The letter almost becomes a stick figure or animated symbol for walking, while the man's body remains stiff and upright, his suit pulling ever so slightly across his frame. The composition is carefully observed, balanced and remarkably clean – a man caught in a moment where everything seems to have frozen perfectly in place. – **Jackie Ranken**

De-escalation is a playful approach to a classic compositional idea. Photos featuring multiple escalators symmetrically captured within transit architecture is a well-explored idea, and the lines of the handrails alongside the horizontal repetition of the steps make for strong visual elements. Here the headless figure is the key point of interest that flips the script, inviting the viewer to explore the anonymous figure through the draping of their jacket and pants and the luggage on the step below rather than their face which is obscured by the location's identifier. – **Matt Palmer**



RUNNER-UP CUSHLA MONK

Cushla Monk is a Sydney-based photographer with a passion for the sea and the landscape, particularly seascapes.

Originally from New Zealand, she says she made her way to Australia, where photography took hold.

“With a background in Cartography, preparing designs and proposals for international mineral and oil exploration companies, this work has sharpened my eye for detail which enables me to shape how I see landscapes today,” she explains.

Over the past ten years, she has dedicated herself through workshops and tutorials to try and master the art of photography, and is intent on continuing to develop her skills.

@cushla_monk

CATHEDRAL OF STEEL. *Cathedral of Steel has a wonderfully atmospheric quality and striking use of light, successfully transforming one of Sydney’s most recognisable landmarks into an evocative, almost abstract scene.*

The combination of fog, sunrise and the Harbour Bridge’s steel framework creates depth and movement, while the monochrome treatment emphasises the structure and changing light.

Monk says a little research into weather and sunrise conditions led to an early-morning trip to the harbour.

“What an overwhelmingly beautiful morning it turned out to be,” she recalls.

“The constant movement of the fog rolling in across the harbour, the light as the sun rose and the changing angles of the sun’s rays through the steel girders of the Harbour Bridge were all so mesmerising.”

Positioning herself on the western side of the bridge, she waited for the rising sun to stream through the steel framework.

“I felt the light and mood of the moment was so well portrayed in a mono image.”

Prize: \$1,000 cash



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

This is a cracker of a shot! We have all seen so many images of the bridge, so it’s always very refreshing when the elements all come together like this to envelop the familiar icon in a shroud of mystery and intrigue. I love all the bells, whistles, smoke and mirrors in photography. There is something so beautiful and theatrical about light trying to pierce through the fog. The treatment is just so. All the tone and detail is where you want it, and contrast where it is warranted. – **Liz Ham**

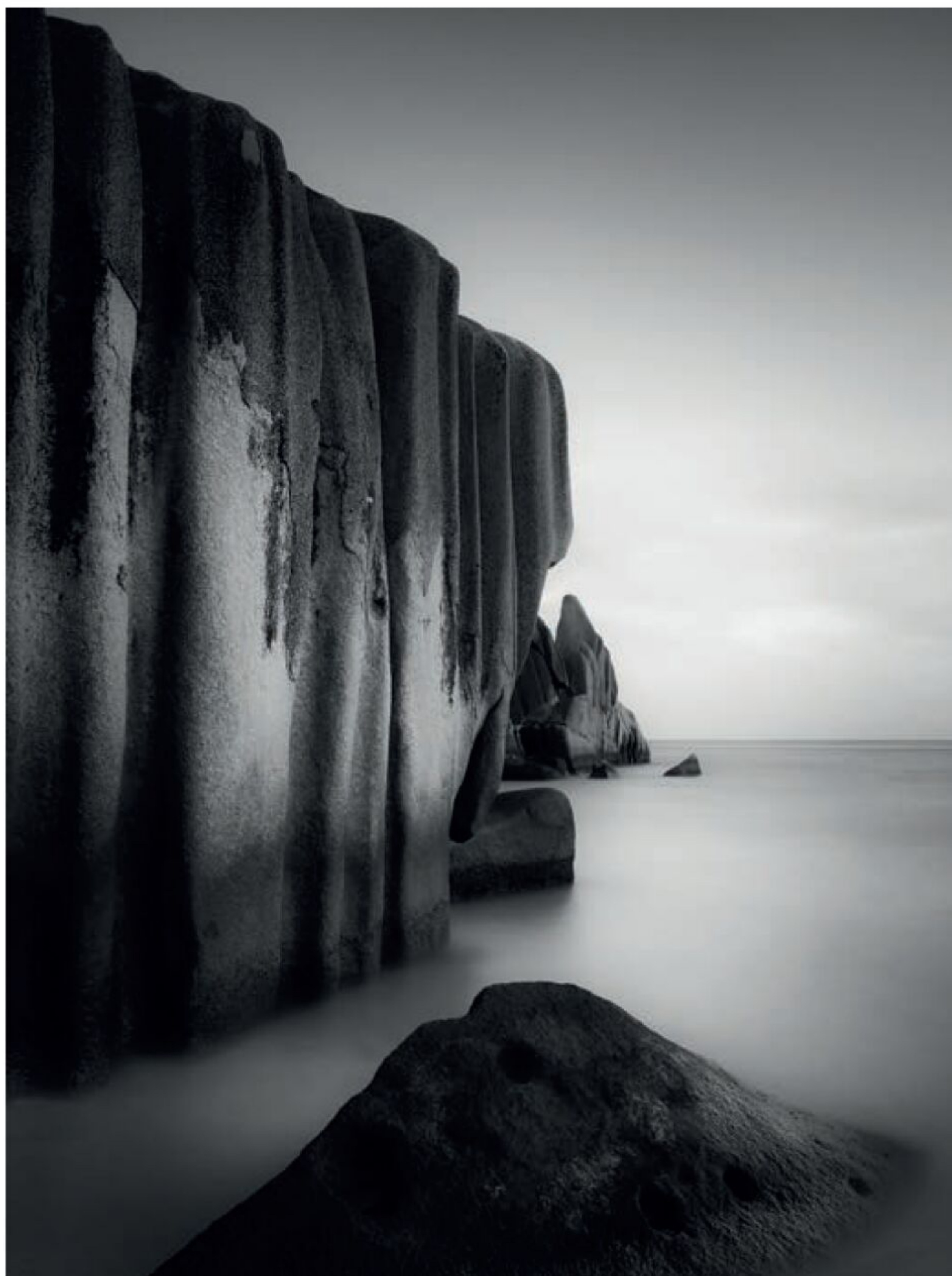
It’s not every day that an often-photographed location stands out in a competition, or even registers my interest, but I can honestly say I’ve never seen an image of the Sydney Harbour Bridge quite like this. The image instantly caught my attention and held it, drawing me in to appreciate just how unique it is. An outstanding capture, and one I’m sure won’t be repeated anytime soon. – **Jay Collier**



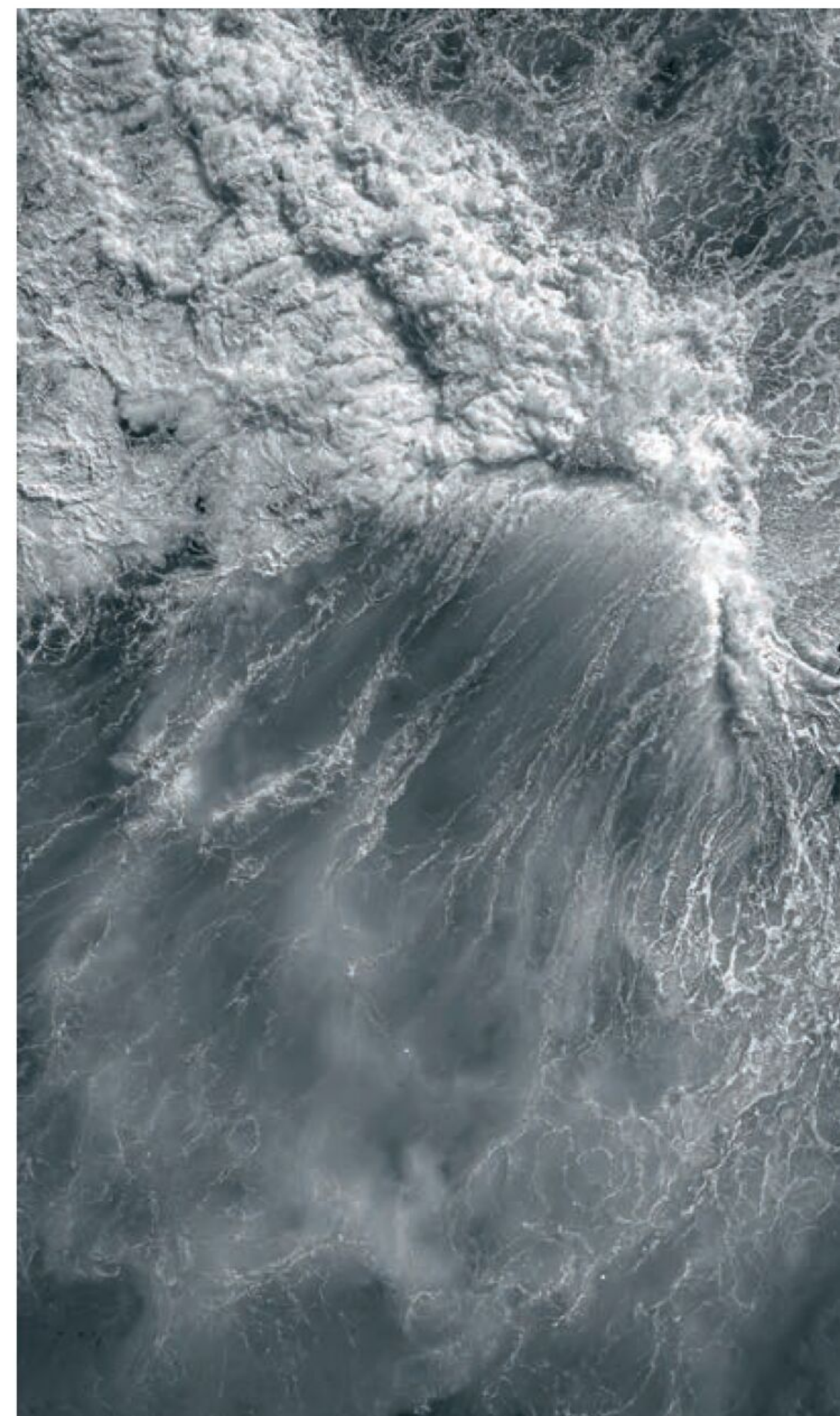
3 **BRUCE WESTERMAN** ECHOES OF THE SILK ROAD



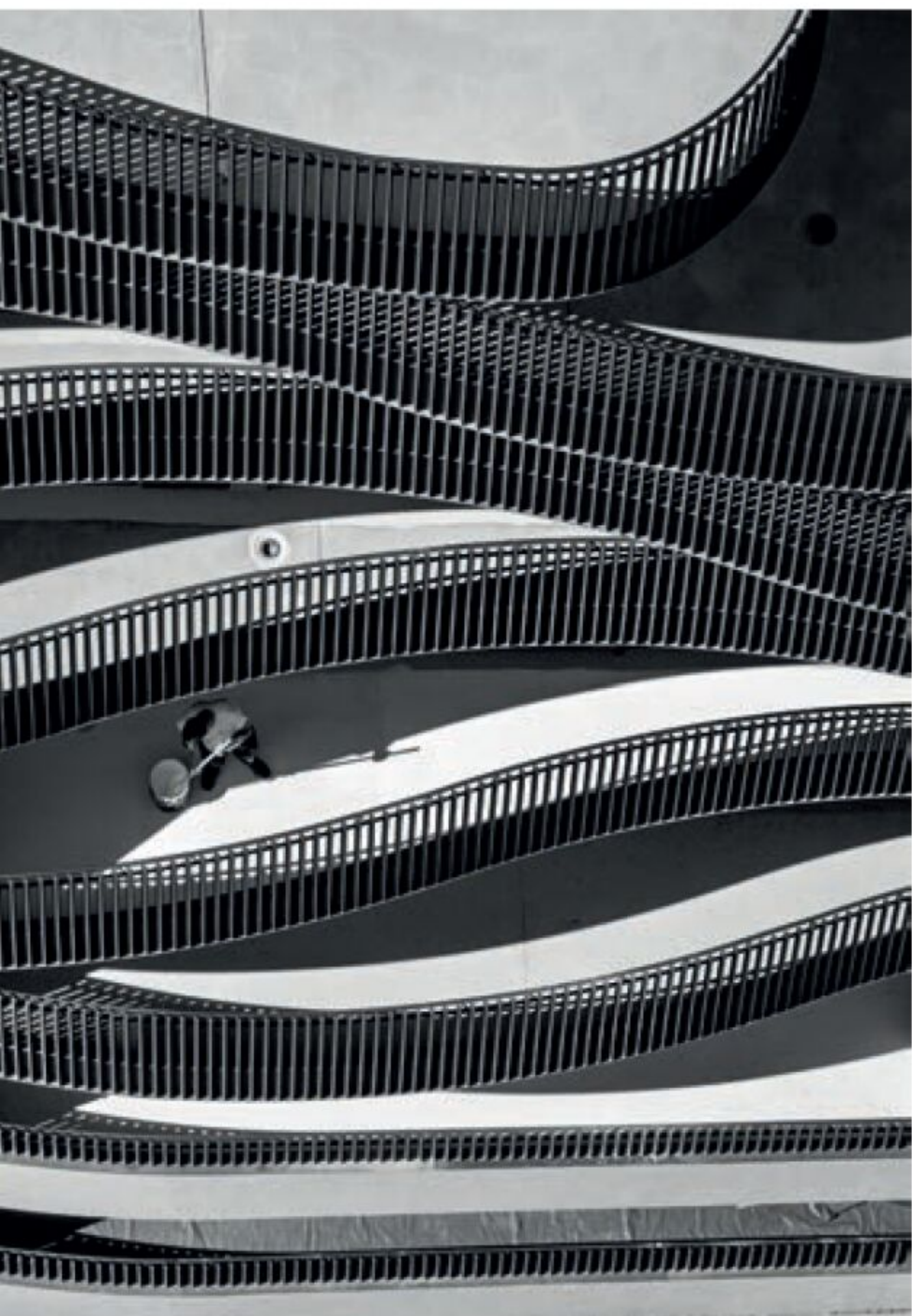
4 **DRAGOLJUB ZAMUROVIC**
URBAN CURRENTS



6 **EDDY DELORIE** OCEAN SENTINEL



7 **LORENZO PASSALACQUA** AVALANCHE



5 KEIKO ELLIS A PERSONAL MEETING WITH MT FUJI



8 ERIN JACOB THE LAST DESCENT



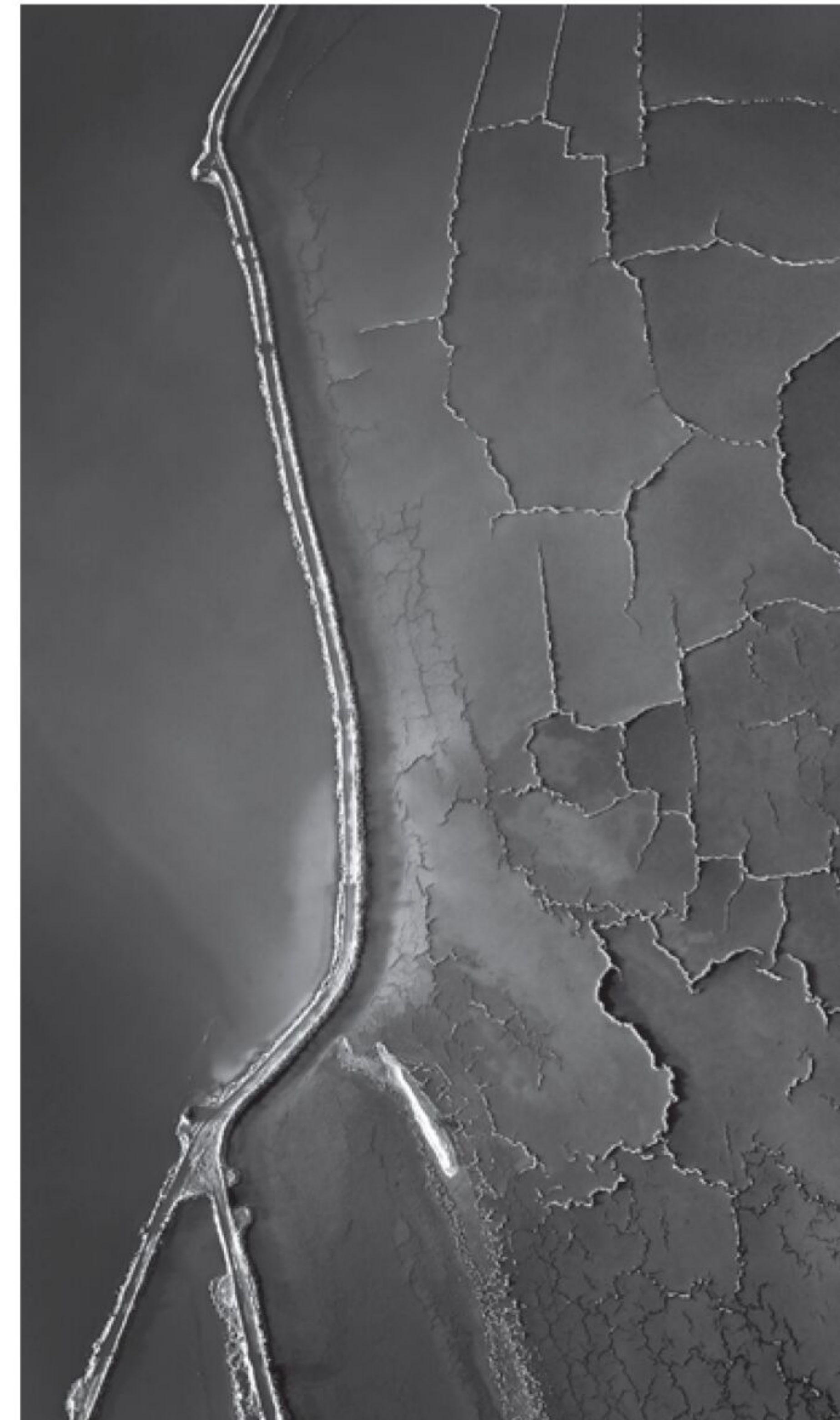
9 PAUL BRIGGS MORDOR



10 JOHN TWINAME CONTOURS



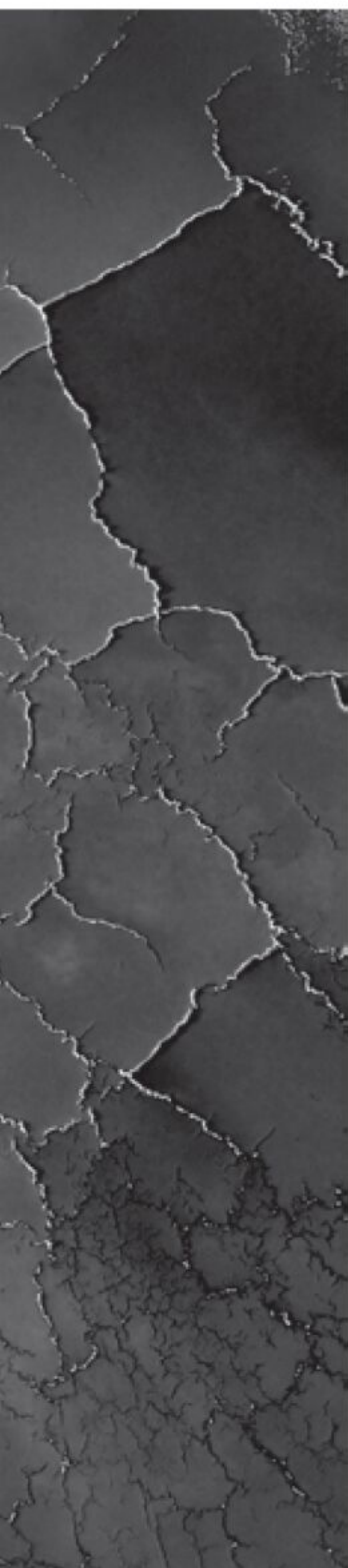
12 LEANNE MORRIS QUAY QUARTER TOWER



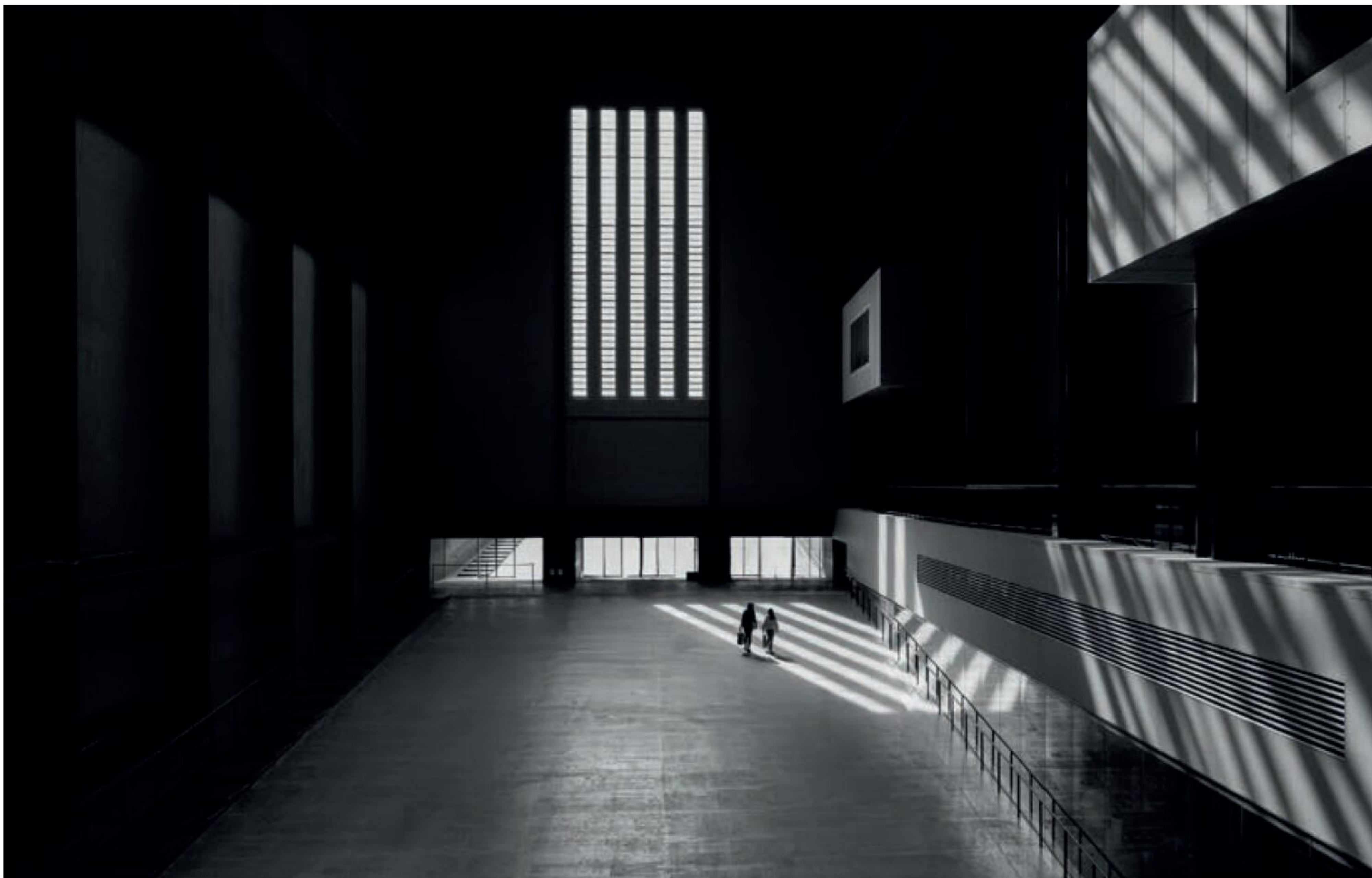
13 REBECCA HASSETT SALT LINES



11 **TERENCE OW** THE ARK “PNB 118”



14 **CARL NEHORE** ARCHWAY ISLANDS



15 TERRY O'HAGAN THE TATE



16 CRAIG FORD LAKE SHŌJI



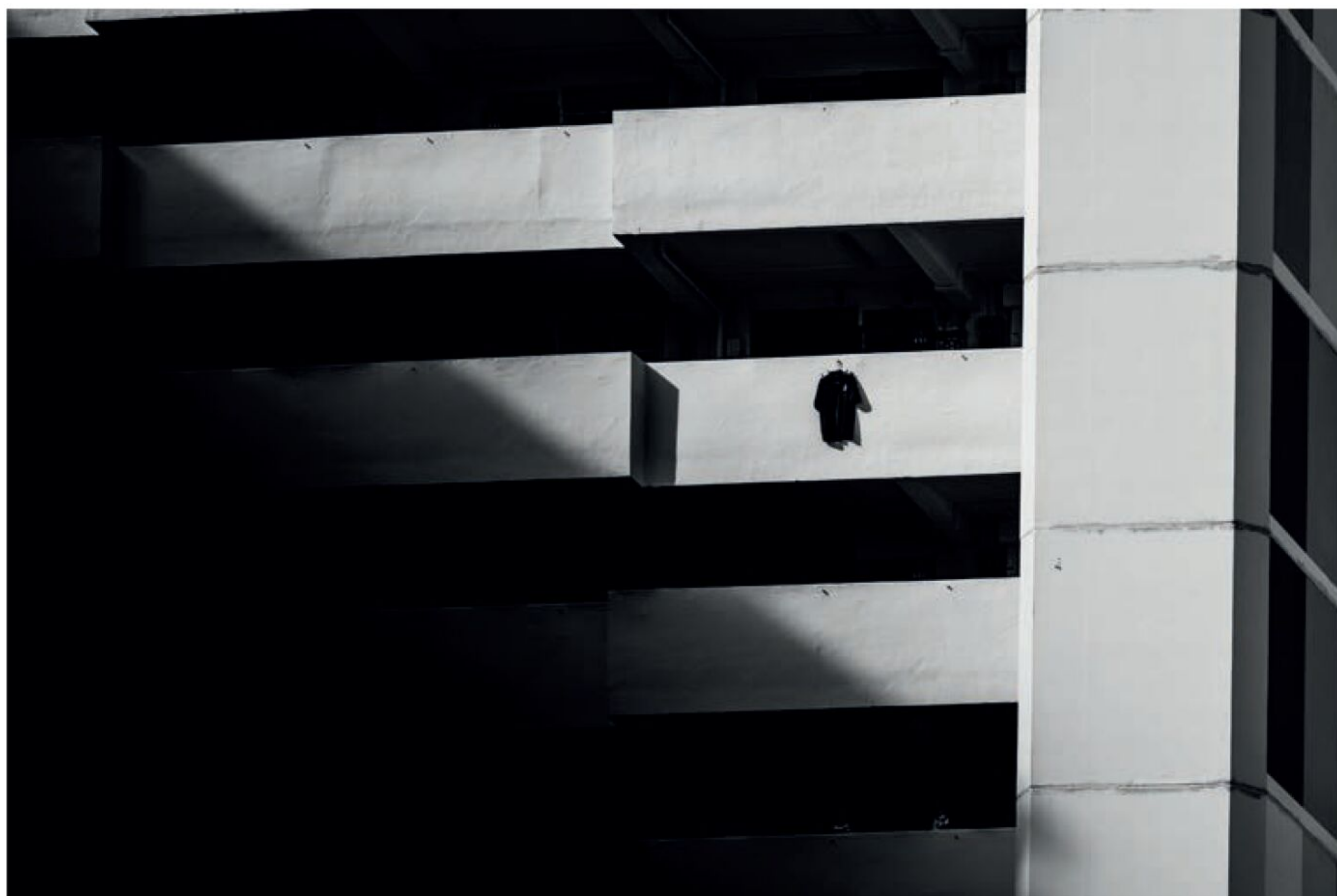
18 PHIL FLANAGAN UNDER YOUR SCARS



19 DANIELLE KEANE GROUNDED GIANTS



17 JAMES HAYWARD SUNRISE OVER HAWKS NEST



20 ERIC WONG HANGING SOLO



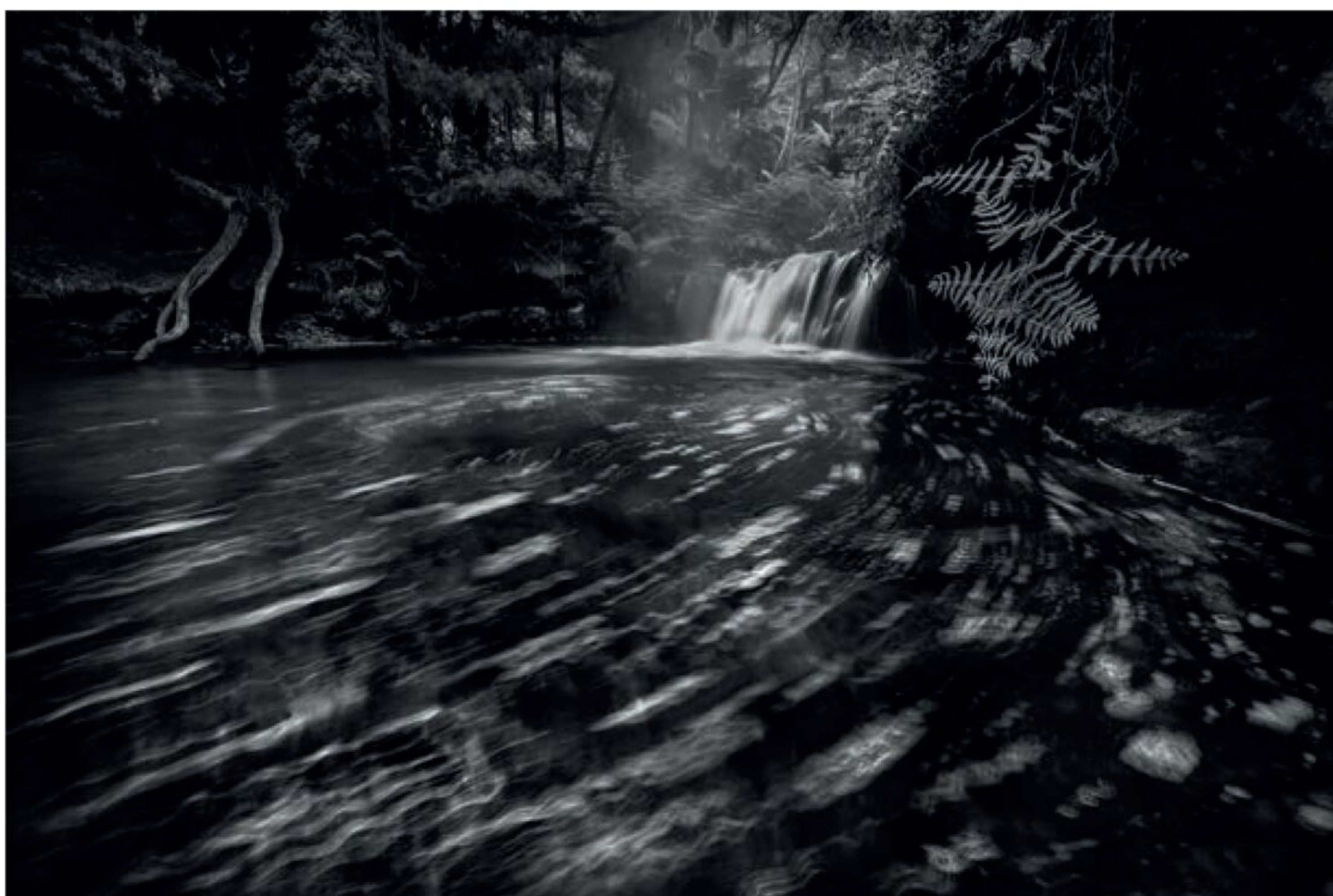
21 **DINY JONES** THERMAL FROSTING



22 **CLEMENT CHUA** POWERFUL CEILING



24 **BEN ALLDRIDGE** TENDRIL



28 **GLEN PARKER** KERO CREEK



29 **JANA SOKOLOVSKAJA**
THE SON OF MAN REIMAGINED

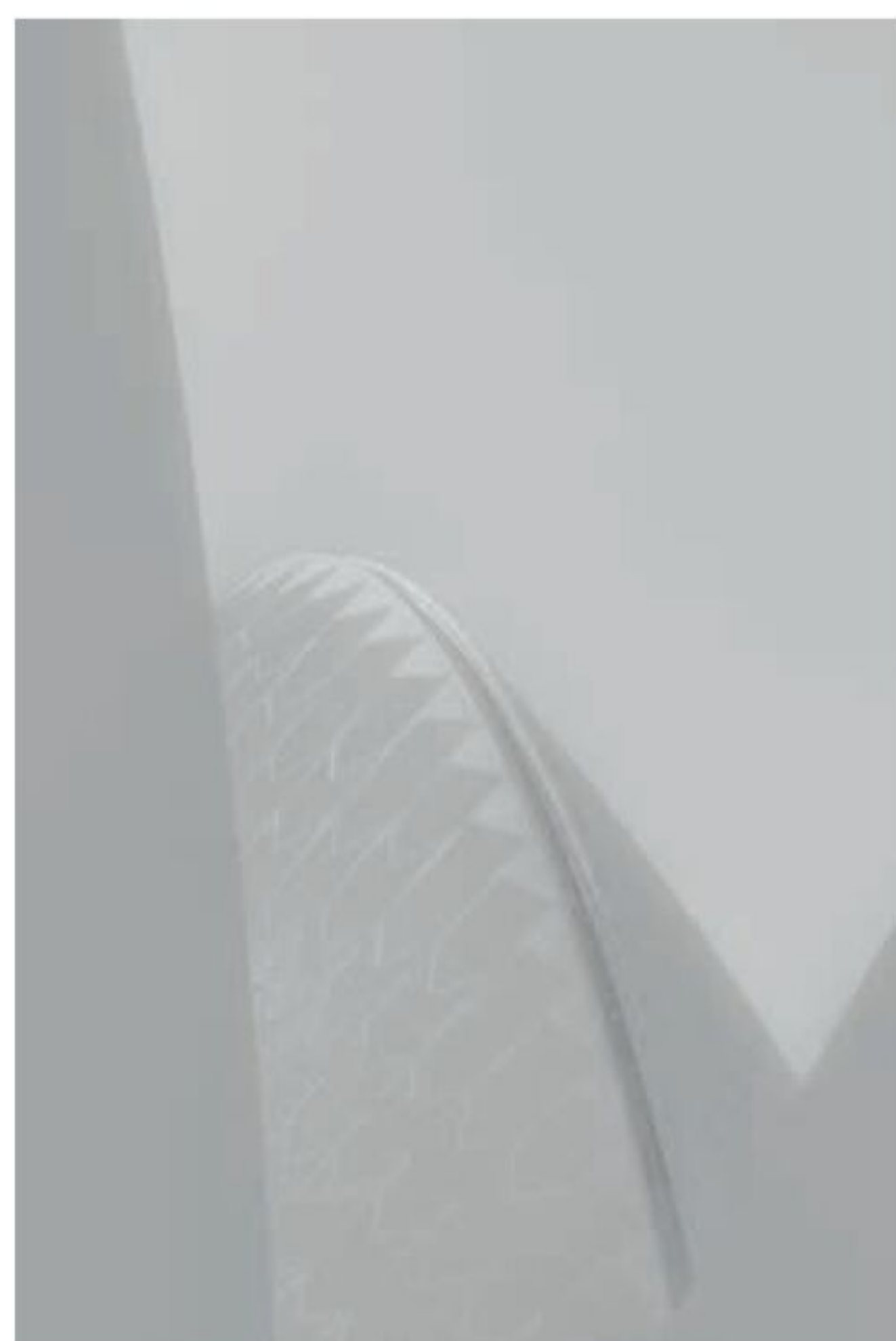




23 **BOB PULLEIN** HOKKAIDO CHERRY TREES



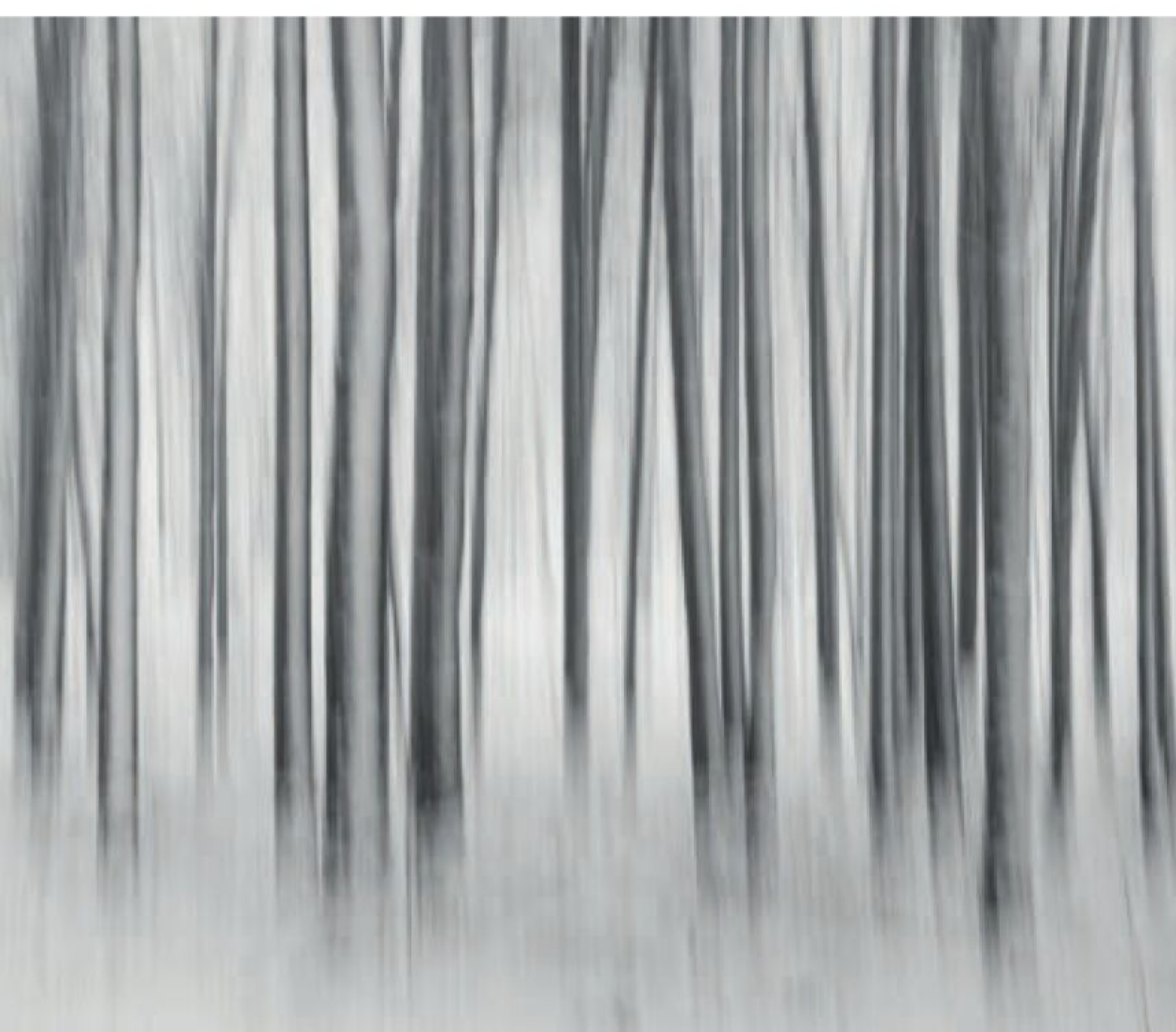
25 **GINNIE ALLWOOD**
LES ECLAIREUS LIGHTHOUSE



26 **SOPHIE KOGOS**
HIDDEN ANGLE



27 **STEFAN EBERHARD** MURRA-EL-ELEVYN



30 **LILY BERNAU**
CAN'T SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES



WINNER BROOKE PYKE

Brooke Pyke is an Australian ocean and marine wildlife photographer, originally from Melbourne but now living full time on the Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia.

Self-taught behind the lens, she began her underwater career as a dive instructor across Thailand and Indonesia, where she taught scuba divers and volunteered with the Marine Megafauna Foundation on manta ray research.

In 2021 she moved to Ningaloo Reef, and what started as a season photographing whale sharks became a full-time career.

@brookepykephotography

FEVER. Brooke Pyke was on an ocean safari in Baja, Mexico, and had hoped to document schooling mobula rays.

“With marine life, you never know what you might see, and that’s part of the magic. Wildlife photography requires pa-

tience, so I always try to keep my expectations low,” she says.

“Our boat captain suddenly called out for us to get ready – he had spotted a school of mobula. I remember thinking it seemed too good to be true. Looking over the side of the boat, I couldn’t see anything; how the captain spotted them, I have no idea.”

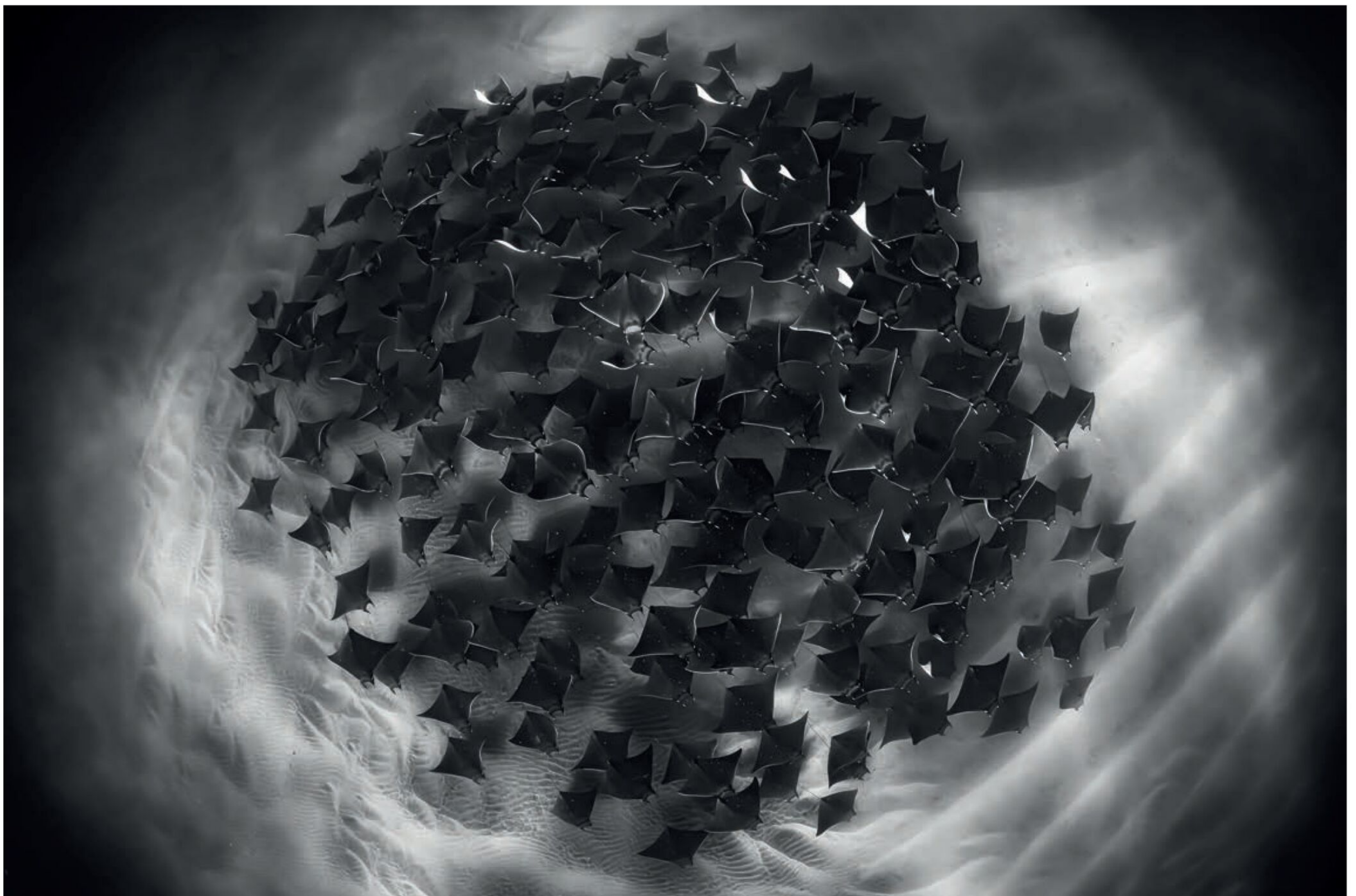
“When I plunged in with my camera, I looked down to see around a hundred rays moving slowly across the sand, silhouetted against a glowing white backdrop. Shooting over white sand was an amazing opportunity, with their shapes contrasting beautifully against the ripples.”

“I knew it would work well in black and white and felt it was a perfect fit for the Mono Awards. I still pinch myself that I got to witness this scene first-hand.”

Prize: \$2,500, synology beestation plus bst170-8t single bay nas, 8tb built-in preconfigured hdd

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

While the image would undoubtedly hold its own in colour, the decision to explore black and white only strengthens its visual impact. Doing so emphasises the velvet textures and gentle form over the distraction of colour information. The subtle gradation of tones contributes to an atmosphere of mystery and ambiguity, encouraging the viewer to engage more closely with the abstract within the composition. The subtle distortion within the frame introduces a gentle curvature that emphasises the natural contours of the shapes, presenting this concept of global nature. For me, what makes the photograph particularly successful is the combination of observation, technical ability, and response. Organised chaos, beautiful tones, and a one-in-a-million chance of this event reoccurring to be captured again. – **Dario Gardiman**





RUNNER-UP LEANNE SILVER

Leanne Silver came to photography later in life, receiving an entry-level DSLR as a birthday present in 2017.

"I fell in love with the art and possibilities of photography, and have spent the last nine years improving my skills. Earlier this year, I was awarded my Associate of the Photographic Society of New Zealand."

"I initially focused on landscapes, but moved into wildlife, which is where I'm happiest behind the lens. Wildlife photography continually opens my eyes to the beauty and diversity of our world, both overseas and here in New Zealand. I also love floral photography, exploring still life and creative possibilities."

@leannesilverphotography

SNIFFING FOR PREY. *Leanne Silver's Animals category runner-up image, Sniffing for Prey, wowed our judges with its beautiful composition and unique wildlife moment, captured in an especially challenging environment.*

"High up in the Arctic Circle, on a small ship surrounded by seemingly endless summer sea ice, we spotted a young female polar bear climbing onto an ice floe," recalls Silver.

"She spent some time there, often finding a vantage point to gain height and sniff the air for prey. We were very aware that she would count us on that list if she had the opportunity!"

"Polar bears rely on their acute sense of smell to track prey, sometimes over considerable distances, so it was fascinating to document this behaviour. I found a spot where I could get my camera as low as possible, checked my settings, and captured her moving around the ice floe before she slipped gently back into the water and headed away."

"It's an experience that will stay with me forever, making me acutely aware of the beauty of these amazing apex predators and the challenges they face."

Prize: \$1,000 cash

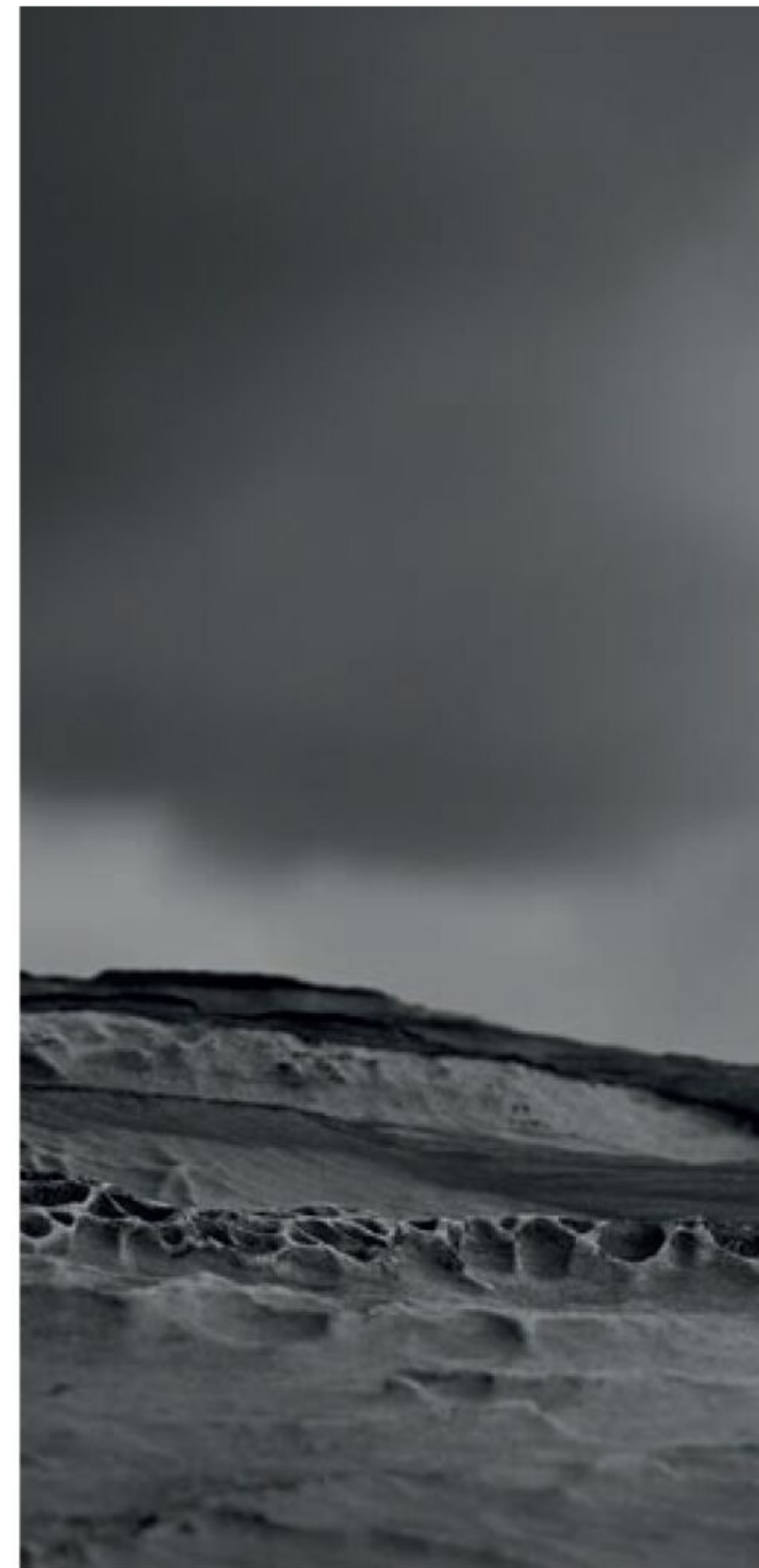
WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

I believe great photographs often come from the capture of a gesture, and this image is the pinnacle of that idea. Then look at the composition and the repetition of triangles, the mound of snow the bear is leaning on, the strong shape of the bear's pose, set against the beautifully soft-rendered snowy ice pack, so delicately high key and majestic. Everything comes together: the gesture, the shapes, the tonal simplicity and the sheer presence of the animal, with its black nose lifted into the air, sniffing for prey. — **Jackie Ranken**

This image reads like a graceful ballet dancer caught in a fleeting moment of movement and beauty, again illustrating that timing is always critical. As humans we tend to expand the literal story of an image that our eyes present to us, a wild animal sniff testing the air, and impose our own emotional responses to that construct. This is a beautifully framed poignant moment of sculptural elegance that evokes issues like nature, changing environments and the endangered existence of these magnificent beasts. — **Chris Budgeon**



3 JOHN PETERS F/0.58

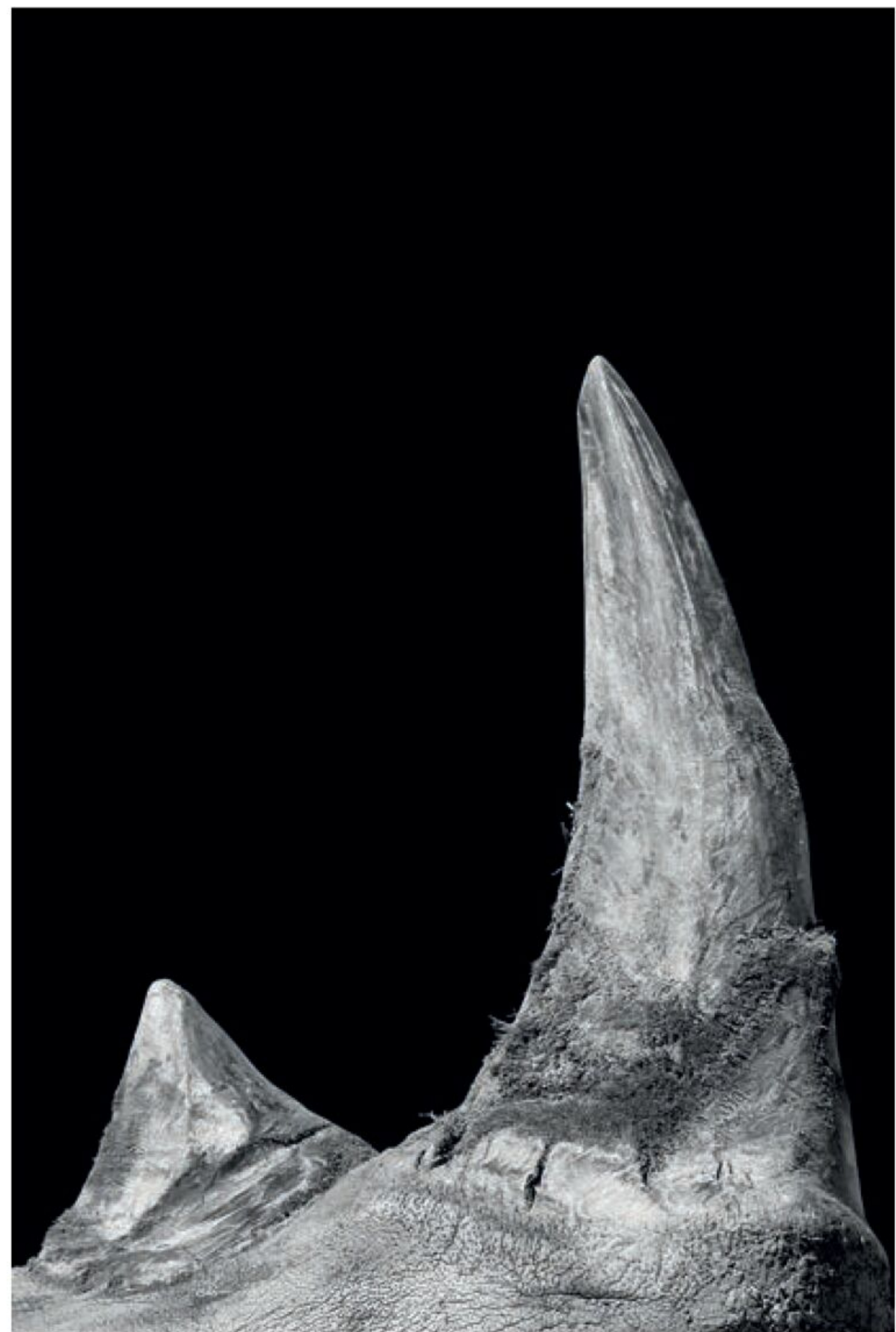


6 GERGO RUGLI INNER CIRCLE





4 **EMMA PARKER** FISHERMENS FRIEND



5 **DEBBIE HARTLEY** RHINO LANDSCAPE



7 **JAYATHU AMARASINGHE** SYMPHONY OF SURVIVAL



8 **RACHELLE MACKINTOSH** SYDNEY ARBOR



9 CRAIG TURNER-BULLOCK KEEPER OF STORMS



12 BROOKE PYKE WHERE'S WALLY



13 LYNDELLE CONNOR ALMOST HUMAN



10 ANDREW PEACOCK PENGUIN HOME



11 ABHIK BASU OXPECKER DIALOGUES



14 BEN CAMPBELL SCREEN TIME



15 JODIE GRIEVE AQUATIC VELOCITY



18 GEORGE DIAN BALAN MAMMOTHS COME FROM AFRICA





16 ROBERT HALLETT THE HUNGRY EGRET



17 JENNY POWER SOUTH GEORGIA SNOW FIELDS



19 IAN CALLAGHAN ARION



20 MAREE BENDEICH A CUT ABOVE



21 CHRIS MATHISEN FULL



24 SHANE MORRIS BEACHED



25 BRONWYN MATTHEWS WHITE-BREASTED WOODSWALLOWS

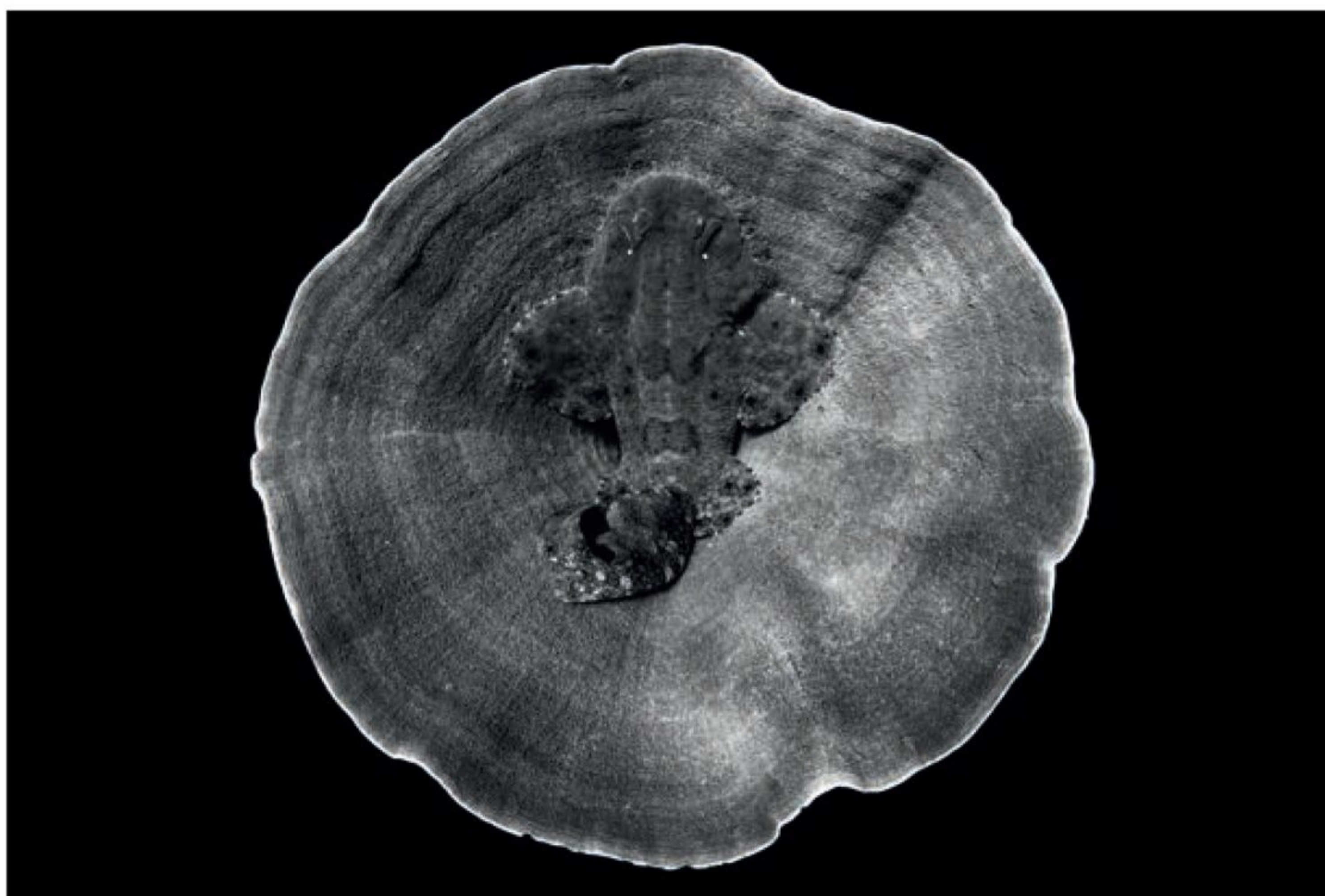


28 KATIE TURNBULL
WHITE STEMMED GUM MOTH





22 CRAIG WILLIAMS A SENSE OF CONTROL



23 BROOKE PYKE THE THRONE



26 REMUNA BECA RARE PORTRAIT



27 NIKKI PASSCHIER UNEXPECTED SNAIL



29 ALUN POWELL ICY DISPUTE



30 RICHARD SHAW THREE OF A KIND





APS ONE FRAME

GAME OF THRONES

A chaotic underwater scene turned to gold.



WITH IAN PATTERSON

I have been scuba diving for 50 years, but only really became interested in underwater photography when I retired five years ago.

I have enjoyed 'terrestrial' photography for a long time, but underwater photography is very different in many ways. Ambient light, and particularly reds and yellows, are lost very quickly as you go deeper, so most underwater photography requires additional light in the form of 'strobes', which are essentially underwater flash units.

TTL does not work, as the camera assumes light will behave as it does in air. Consequently, we are almost always shooting manually. The strobes need to be positioned differently depending on the subject, so the lighting is never uniform. You also need to get close to your subject, as light intensity drops off very quickly in water. 'Back-scatter', caused by particles suspended in the water, is another constant problem, and getting close helps to reduce it. Then there are the challenges of maintaining buoyancy and working with currents.

This photograph was taken on a reef in Sulawesi, Indonesia, at a depth of about 20 feet.

This is a porcelain crab, which is protected by the stinging tentacles of its host anemone. I thought the scene was reminiscent of the throne made of swords in the popular television series *Game of Thrones*. The crab was less than 3cm in diameter. It feeds by combing plankton from the water with its long, feathery setae.

I use a Canon G7 X III in a Nauticam housing. This is a much smaller setup than an SLR, allowing me to get much closer to my subjects. 'Wet lenses' attached to the front of the housing can be changed underwater, unlike with an SLR, where the lens inside the housing cannot be changed. For this photograph, I used an INON M67 Close-Up wet lens attached to the front of the housing, along with a single Inon strobe.

Underwater photography makes you look much more closely at wonderful marine creatures and reveals spectacular details that are not always appreciated with the naked eye. 🌊

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ALL THE DRAMA

Light can completely change the way a photograph feels. In this month's column, we look at how light and shadow can transform an image, and why some photographs respond particularly well to black and white.



WITH ROZ ZITO



I was once invited by the Facebook group Award-Winning Women Photographers to set a photographic theme. I chose Rim Light, but it was interesting to see how many members submitted images featuring backlighting, which I consider quite different.

Backlighting places the subject between the camera and the light source, often producing a silhouette with little detail visible in the subject itself. You can use Lightroom's sliders to emphasise this effect further.

Rim light, by contrast, can trace the edges of a subject with a narrow band of light while retaining detail within it. The effect can be particularly effective in portraits and wildlife photography.

Both techniques use light to separate and emphasise the subject, but they produce quite different results.

Black and white can intensify the effect of light and shadow, particularly when rim light or backlighting is involved. But converting an image to monochrome doesn't automatically make it dramatic.

The subject needs separation from its surroundings, while the image needs enough tonal variation to give it depth. Shadows help create form and dimension. If the subject is lost among background detail, or the lighting is so flat that there is little distinction between light and shade, the conversion is unlikely to add much.

A useful exercise is to take a selection of your photographs and preview them in monochrome. Look at which images gain something from the conversion and which lose their impact. The stronger candidates will often have a clear subject, relatively uncluttered surroundings and a strong interplay between light and shadow.

You may find that you enjoy this approach enough to start shooting with black and white specifically in mind. I don't tend to do that with wildlife, because colour can be an important part of

the subject, such as with a lilac-breasted roller or a lorikeet.

But when the lighting is right, removing colour can concentrate attention on the subject and the way the light falls across it.

As Charles Glatzer, a great photographic mentor who recently passed away and is greatly missed, put it: "Light illuminates and shadows define." 🌟

The image I've chosen was taken in morning light with an old Canon 7D Mark II. The rim light outlining the subject was pure serendipity. I knew very little about photography at the time. These days, if I'm deliberately looking for rim light, I know to position myself so I'm shooting towards the light rather than having the sun behind me. In wildlife photography, backlighting at night often comes from a spotlight operated by a guide. I find side lighting particularly effective, especially when a guide in another vehicle illuminates the scene from the side rather than lighting the subject directly from the front. I converted this image to monochrome because I felt it strengthened the relationship between the light and the subject. The strong outline and limited palette make the lighting immediately noticeable.

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5 B&W EDITING TIPS

Converting a photo to black and white in Lightroom is easy. Making that conversion actually work is another matter. Beyond simply dragging the Saturation slider to zero, there are plenty of less obvious tools that can help give monochrome images more depth, separation and atmosphere. Here are five quick tips worth trying.

STEP 1

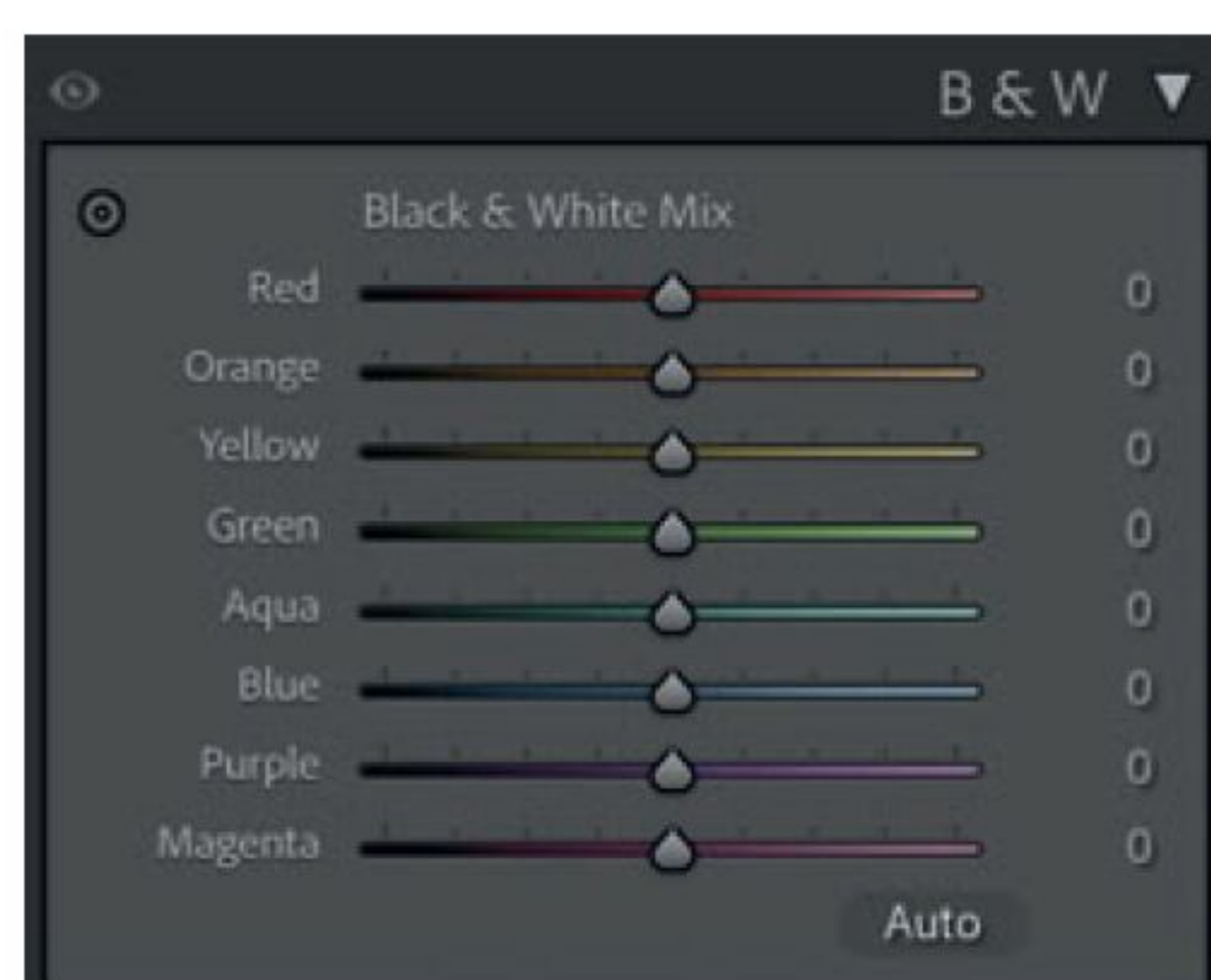
USE THE B&W MIX TO CONTROL BRIGHTNESS

When you convert an image using Lightroom's Black & White treatment, the colours in the original image don't disappear completely from the editing equation.

The B&W Mix sliders let you control how bright or dark different colours appear in the final monochrome image.

For example, dragging the Blue slider down can make a blue sky dramatically darker, while increasing Orange can brighten skin tones.

This is particularly useful for landscapes, where you can create a much more dramatic sky without touching the overall exposure.



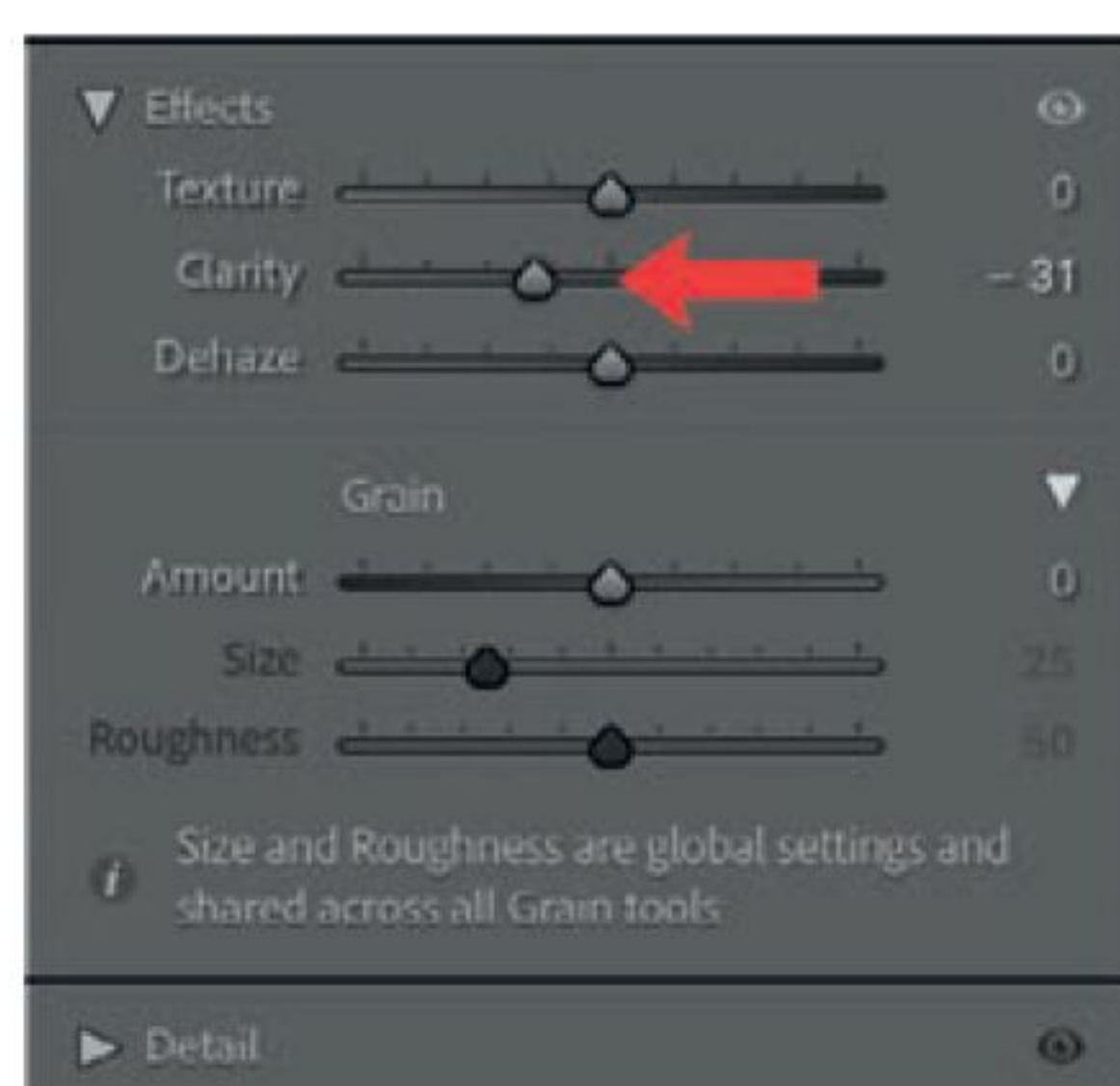
STEP 2

DON'T OVERLOOK TEXTURE

Clarity gets most of the attention when photographers want more punch, but Texture can be surprisingly effective in black and white.

A modest increase can bring out fine detail in rocks, architecture, clothing and skin without producing the exaggerated, crunchy appearance that heavy Clarity adjustments can create.

Try increasing Texture first, then add only as much Clarity as the image actually needs.



ADD A LITTLE NEGATIVE CLARITY TO HIGHLIGHTS

Here's a useful trick for portraits: instead of increasing Clarity globally, try reducing it slightly in the highlights.

Using Lightroom's Masking tools, select the brighter areas of the face and reduce Clarity a little. This can

soften skin while leaving hair, clothing and other darker details relatively crisp.

It can also work beautifully on atmospheric landscapes, taking the harshness out of bright areas while retaining structure elsewhere.

STEP 3

USE THE POINT CURVE TO CREATE A MATTE BLACK

If your black-and-white images look too digital or clinical, the Point Curve can help.

Instead of simply lifting the Blacks slider, grab the bottom-left point of the Tone Curve and raise it slightly. This lifts the deepest blacks and creates a subtle matte effect.

You can then add a second point in the shadows to control how quickly the tones rise.

The trick is subtlety. A tiny adjustment can give an image a softer, film-like character without making it look obviously faded.



STEP 4



STEP 5

TRY COLOUR GRADING

It sounds contradictory, but Colour Grading can be useful after converting an image to black and white.

Adding a very subtle warm tint to the highlights and a cooler tint to the shadows can introduce tonal separation without making the photograph look obviously colourised.

Keep the saturation extremely low. You're aiming for tonal character, not a sepia effect.



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