

ISSUE 51 | FEBRUARY 2016



for PHOTOGRAPHERS
AND AFICIONADOS

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GEOFF COMFORT

At low level

MICHAEL A SMITH

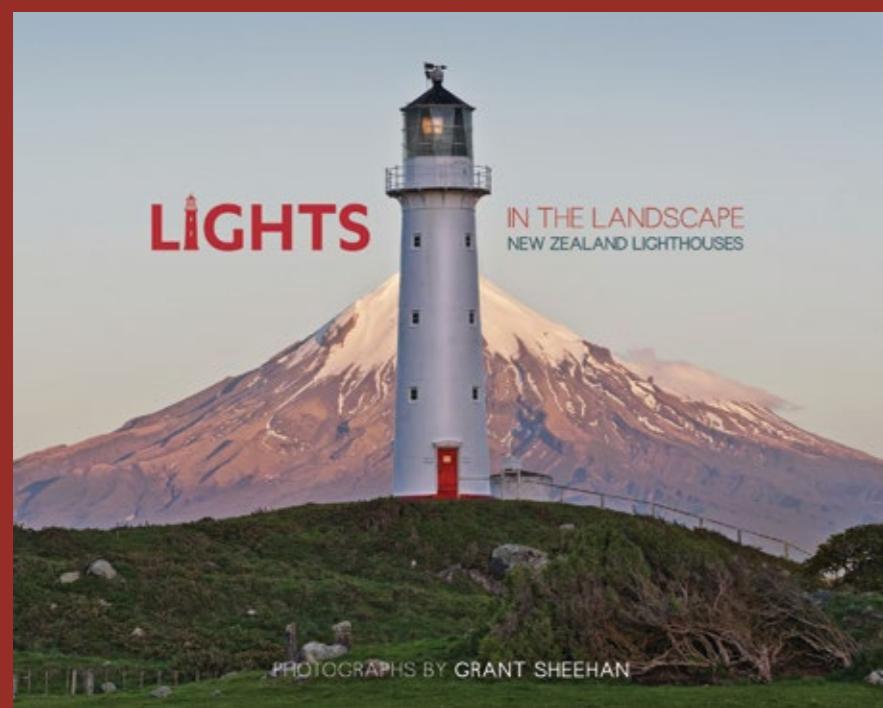
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I know it's February, but happy New Year! We're back, did you miss us?

Modern digital capture certainly has its place in this issue, but if traditional large format photography and the monochrome contact print is a source of fascination, then we have treats in store.

First up, Geoff Comfort is an Australian commercial photographer based in Canberra, ACT. A former boat builder, and at one point a wedding and portrait photographer, he now specialises in commercial work. We've chosen to concentrate this feature on his aerial photography, a genre in which he has enjoyed considerable success in successive AIPP APPA Awards. His work has previously featured in this magazine in that context, including the cover of our July 2012 issue. He also shot the cover of this issue, thanks Geoff!

American photographers Paula Chamlee and Michael A Smith are partners in life and creativity. Both work in large format silver halide capture and contact print output contributing to, and enriching, the world of fine-art photography through their commitment to keeping the traditional craft of photography alive.

As an example, when Kodak discontinued SuperXX sheet film in 1994, they bought all of the remaining stocks – an \$85,000 investment – and built a 14 foot by 18 foot freezer in which to store it! I don't know about you, but for me, that's real commitment.

Later, when Kodak discontinued all black and white papers, the couple attempted the nearly impossible task of having a new silver chloride contact printing paper made that would be as good or better than Azo. After five years of R&D, they succeeded, naming the product LODIMA photographic paper. The brand name Lodima proved extensible, with a press established to publish photography books of extraordinary quality; then a range of archival materials, and finally a drum scanning and digital print service. Not content with all of this industry, they also conduct workshops!

We're sharing Paula's images made in Iceland, and a retrospective of some of Michael's work taken from several collections.

Enjoy this issue of *f11*, as usual we made it with you in mind. ■

Tim

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GARY BAIRDON aka The Shooter was schooled in the dark arts of photolithography, before talking his way into a well-known Auckland studio in the heady 80's. Most of the 90's were spent in a plausibly deniable series of roles in the photo industry. After his disappointment at Y2K not signaling the end of the world, as we know it, he returned to shooting people, products and fast moving objects for filthy lucre. Helmeted and suited, he now spends weekends in his small German racecar, the latest in a succession of fast toys. For shits and giggles he plays both drums and bass in bands you've never heard of, in places you've never been to.



TONY BRIDGE is a fine artist, photographer, writer and photo educator – sometimes performing all of these minor miracles on the same day. When not hosting seminars or workshops or messing with someone's mind, this wandering nomad is usually to be found somewhere around New Zealand, four wheel driving up hill and down dale in search of new images and true meaning. Like any modern day guru, he thinks way too much, constantly reinvents himself and often pontificates on one of his blogs, enriching us all in the process. Rather than joining the rest of the team in the cult of Mac, he insists that he has now constructed the 'ultimate PC' – poor deluded man. As far as we can tell, this is his only flaw...



DARRAN LEAL is a photographer, adventurer and educator. An Australian by birth, he combines his twin loves of travel and outdoor photography by running tours, workshops and seminars and guiding photographers to stunning locations around the globe. Prior to inventing this great gig, he variously sold cameras, served food and wine, built gas pipelines, explored for diamonds and discovered that the life of a park ranger was not for him. When not up to his ass in crocodiles, cuddling gorillas or herding photographers, he fishes the world's oceans, rivers and streams. Only his fishing exploits suffer from exaggeration, believe it or not the rest of his adventurous life is, amazingly, true.



IAN POOLE has been a member of the AIPP since 1976, holding various positions within the Institute. Truly a trans-Tasman go between, Poole has been a long term judge of the APPA's and a guest judge in the NZIPP Awards for many years. Well known for his extensive work as an educator at both Queensland's Griffith University College of Art, and Queensland University of Technology, and with a background as an advertising/commercial photographer in Brisbane, Ian is now turning his hand to finely crafted black and white portraiture. He is a director of Foto Frenzy, which specialises in photographic education in Brisbane. Erudite, witty and urbane, or so he tells us, he's one of f11 Magazine's ambassadors in Australia.



TIM STEELE is the ringmaster of the travelling circus that is f11 Magazine. A former high wire artist for corporate masters in the photo industry, he still has nightmares about delivering the physically impossible, on occasion under the whip of the seemingly insane, and almost always for the terminally unappreciative. A brilliant escape from the last of these gulags left a tunnel for other prisoners and led him to consultancy in strategy, advertising and marketing. Always impressed by the Bohemian lifestyles, cruel wit and sheer bravado of professional photographers, he now frequents their studios, shooting locations and watering holes in search of his personal holy grail, outstanding images to share with f11 readers.



'At the root of creativity is an impulse to understand, to make sense of random and often unrelated details. For me, photography provides an intersection of time, space, light, and emotional stance. One needs to be still enough, observant enough, and aware enough to recognise the life of the materials, to be able to 'hear through the eyes.'

– Paul Caponigro

WARNING – HOTLINKS ARE EVERYWHERE!

Amazingly, some readers are still blissfully unaware that this magazine is a veritable hotbed of hotlinks, so this is a friendly reminder! There are links to online content such as videos, and to websites which expand on the ideas on offer here in the magazine. Anywhere you see an image of a computer screen contains a link, there are highlighted links within articles and all advertisements link to the advertisers websites so you can learn more about the products you're interested in. Simply click on the ad.

If this is still baffling, learn more in our expanded instructions on page 148 of this issue.



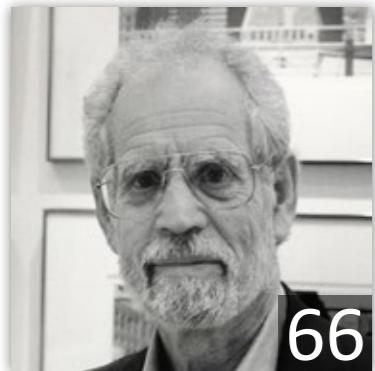
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At low level

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© Geoff Comfort



Michael A SMITH

Rhythmic events

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© Michael A Smith



Paula CHAMLEE

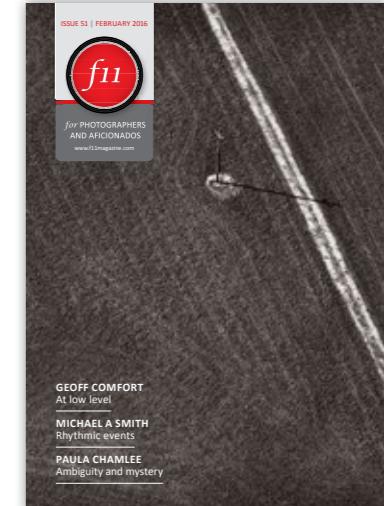
Ambiguity and mystery

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© Paula Chamlee

'(In) a constantly moving and noisy space, sometimes communication with the pilot can be difficult, and (you) need to plan around, and work within, the restrictions placed on you by air traffic control or aviation regulations. To this, add the challenge of working with 'g' forces that can double the weight of the camera equipment you are using in tight turns when navigating over unfamiliar territory...' – Geoff Comfort



COVER IMAGE
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www.geoffcomfort.com

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THE OBSESSION EXPERIMENT

Professional photographers are obsessed over the details, but Canon wanted to find out just how obsessed they are. As part of an ad for one of their printers they invited three people to analyse the same print and used eye-tracking technology to trace every eye movement they made. In the end, it was clear, a photographer's obsession is unmatched. Incidentally, the professional in this video is Joel Grimes, whose work featured extensively in our last issue.

Canon via YouTube



[CLICK ON THE SCREEN IMAGE TO VIEW THIS VIDEO](#)

SAY NO TO SPEC!



Toronto ad agency Zulu Alpha Kilo created this video to demonstrate how absurd it is for people to ask the advertising industry to do spec work in the hope of getting more business. An actor approaches real men and women in a range of businesses and asks them to provide a product or service for free, see what happens. Of course this 100% applies to other creative industries as well – including designers, illustrators and photographers.

Zulu Alpha Kilo via YouTube

[CLICK ON THE SCREEN IMAGE TO VIEW THIS VIDEO](#)



PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WORK – MIRU KIM

Short Ovation TV documentary on self-portraitist and urban explorer Miru Kim directed by Albert Maysles. It's a low res video but an interesting look at Kim's work in scenarios of her own making. NB Some nudity in this clip and a rodent warning for the squeamish...

OvationTV via Vimeo

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THE FUTURE OF POSSIBLE



A letter from film

Anyone remember me?

Once upon a time I was the life and soul of the party. All the cool kids hung out with me – big names, screen legends, fathers of photography, and more than a few wannabes as well. My arrival caused great consternation, illustrators and painters scoffing, then quivering with fear at my abilities, my uncanny and unfailing accuracy.

My reign was long, well over a hundred years, my longevity assured by the fact that I had no real alternative. Those were the days, my *bête noir*, digital, would follow much later.

It helped that I was never one to accept mediocrity, so my life was one of constant self improvement. Initially, a little slow, I thrived in the daylight but dark places scared me. I learned to see into their shadows, revealing more and more as my inquisitive users sought to peer into the blackness.

After mastering thousands of shades of grey, I learned to see in millions of colours. That was a revelation, and I brought that ability to the initially skeptical, but eventually grateful masses. Most of them never looked back, nary a tear shed for monochrome.

My flexible size was an asset. I could be long and skinny and bought in a roll, or flat and wide and come in a sheet, depending on the need, and to some degree the fashion, of the day. My flexibility extended to the ability to capture both

static and moving subjects. In one iteration I created images for print, in another for the big screen, delivering full motion to the movies, then the talkies, the multiplex, the gigantic iMax screen. I'm still there.

I've been loved and lost, found and discarded, returned to, searched for, stored and retrieved. I've been duplicated, migrated, transitioned to other forms of media and storage – but my roots are still there around the edges, the marks, the sprocket holes, the odd scratch, maybe evidenced by a light leak here and there.

I've been fashionable and unfashionable. I've been the Kodak moment and then abandoned, consigned to the scrap heap as a last century medium. I am everywhere, I'm in the great repositories of learning and history, a treasured antiquity handled with cotton gloves and locked away at night. And I'm in your bottom drawer, your basement, your storage locker, waiting to be discovered again, or lost to time.

Although reduced in type and number, I still exist in pockets of resistance. I have my loyalists, tireless workers prepared to put up with my ways, my vagaries, my foibles. In spite of my limitations, or perhaps because of them, I'm still here, perhaps out of fashion but never far from sight.

Remember me. ■

TS

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At the heart of the image

Beyond seeing

Photographing with your heart – Part 3

I have a good friend who is a master in several arcane martial arts, with more black belts than a funeral director's dressing room. We were talking after class, and I pointed out a newcomer, who had come from a hard style karate background, and who was struggling with the fluid wu-shu we practised.

I asked my friend, 'What do you think of students that come from karate or other disciplines? Shouldn't they be easier to teach?' 'Not at all' he replied, 'they are the hardest. And the higher the grade, the worse it is. They have so much to unlearn'.

Photography is like that. It isn't a nice logical progression, where we just file more cards in the rolodex of our knowledge. Sooner or later, there are things which we have taken for granted throughout our lives which must be examined and, if necessary, unlearned. We have to tear down the house of our cherished beliefs, bulldoze the land flat, and begin again.

Light is one such thing, and light, being the cornerstone of our seeing, is a place where we absolutely have to go.

Light is our vocabulary and the language of our expression. And sooner or later, if we are to speak more eloquently, we need to revisit our use of it and begin to closely examine all its intricacies.



Last light, Grace Cottage, Rawene. Fujifilm X100T. © Tony Bridge

To do otherwise is to continue floundering around in a fog of assumption.

From time to time, when I am running a workshop, I will take a sheet of plain photocopy paper and hold it up in front of the class (I am careful to ensure the room is lit by the ubiquitous Warm White fluorescent tubes.) What colour is this sheet of paper, I then ask? They all know it is a trap, but they reach for what seems to be the only viable answer: 'It is white'.

I pounce. Well, actually no, it is green. Here is why. Warm white tubes emit a real spike in the green part of the visible spectrum, so the light is essentially green. Your mind has 'learned' to see it as white, because that is what you have been taught. I explain that as a film shooter, for some time I carried around a colour temperature meter and over time, by comparing what my mind told me with what the meter indicated, I was able to firstly unlearn and then relearn seeing light as it was. And all of us as photographers will need to do the same thing, to retrain our minds.

There are a number of ways we can do this. Shoot RAW + jpeg, setting the colour balance to daylight or 5500° Kelvin. The RAW will be altered by whatever software you use, but the jpeg is fixed in-camera. Then compare the two. Often you will find that the jpeg will show you a version that is more interesting and you can use it as a marker towards which you can navigate your RAW file. Another way is to leave your camera in its bag and just look, questioning everything. In doing so, you will begin to take ownership of your own seeing. There is no right answer, only one which is right for you.

Evening had come and I was contemplating going to bed, although it seemed a little early. I sat on the end of my bed, and watched the light change in the front lounge. As the sun sank, the blue eased out of the light and an increasing amount of gold (yellow + red) came into it. It lit the normally white walls, and turned them into

banners of gold. I made a picture, and then compared the RAW and the jpeg.

Even now, after years of unlearning and relearning I was surprised at the jpeg rendition.

My mind was still trying to have its way. ■

TB

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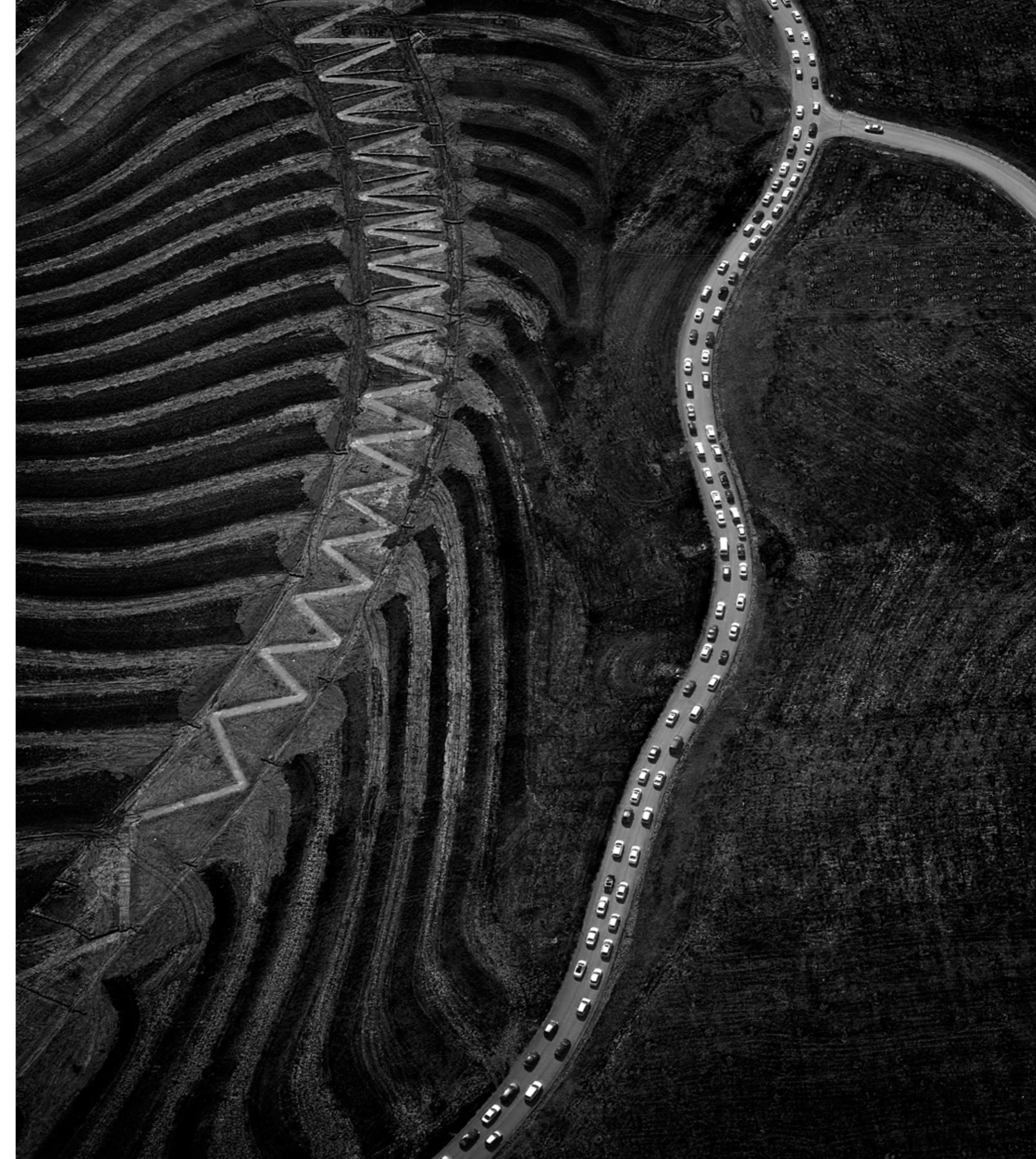
Geoff COMFORT

At low level

Geoff Comfort is an Australian commercial photographer based in Canberra, ACT. An accredited member of the AIPP since 1994, and awarded Master Photographer IV in 2014, Geoff's work has appeared in this magazine on several occasions, usually as part of our AIPP APPA Awards coverage, and on one occasion in issue #12, July 2012, gracing our cover with one of his aerial images. We've followed his career since that point, and it may come as no surprise that we've elected to focus this feature on his work in aerial photography.

Geoff gained an Associate Diploma of Arts in Photography from the Canberra Institute of Technology in 1993 before working as a wedding and portrait photographer for the first 3 years of his career. He also taught photography at his alma mater on a part-time basis between 1995 and 2005, and today he is still a specialist teacher there.

In 1995, with a business name change and a move to new premises, Geoff elected to move into commercial photography, specialising in corporate portraiture and events, architectural and aerial work. ▶



National Arboretum; Canberra, Australia; for the ACT Government. Canon EOS 5D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

Working from his studio and on location, he now photographs for a wide range of government and corporate clients.

Yet the story behind this career is a world away from his life as a creative professional in the imaging industry.

'Over the first 20 years of my working life I trained as a boat builder, and then ran my own boat building and repair business, specialising in the construction of high-performance sailing dinghies and rowing shells.

My interest in photography only began in the late 1980s when I enrolled in a black and white photography course. I was living in Sydney at the time and this course inspired me to think about a career change.

My problem was finding a way to be trained in photography and at the same time generate an income that would pay my mortgage and the other bills that people tend to have at that stage in life. I was not in a position to work as an assistant with a photographer in Sydney due to the low rate of pay for photographic assistants, so my partner and I decided to move to Canberra so I could study photography there at CIT. I had spent some time growing up in Canberra, and my parents still lived there, so the move was not difficult. I funded my studies by repairing rowing shells in the rowing clubs in Canberra.'

The three-year course would deliver just what he needed at the time:

'The course was very technical and provided graduates with a good background in all aspects of colour and black-and-white photography and printing, using cameras from 35mm to 4x5" studio cameras and the use of studio lighting. The downside was the relatively small amount of time spent on the creative side of image making. This was the opposite of the other high-end photographic course in Canberra at the ANU School of Arts. They were strong on creativity, but placed a reduced emphasis on

technical skills. At the completion of the course I graduated along with two others from an initial intake of about 40. I was also awarded the Institute Medal at the graduation ceremony.'

Geoff was drawn to the AIPP (Australian Institute of Professional Photography) while still a student:

'During my second year of studies I saw the advantages of becoming a member of the AIPP. I joined as a student member and became involved in AIPP activities. This introduced me to a number of professional photographers. It was not long before I was involved with the ACT committee and started entering the Australian Professional Photography Awards. In my final year as a student, I was awarded three silver awards at APPA. I have continued to enter APPA each year since as it presents an opportunity for the best photographers in Australia to have their work assessed by their peers. Judging photos is subjective and there are many thoughts as to what is the best judging system. APPA is recognised internationally as one of the best awards programs and is constantly being updated to make it better each year. Now that the state awards use the same system the quality of work at APPA is higher than ever! For me, nowadays APPA is a personal indulgence, as I don't know that many of my clients worry too much about my silver and gold awards. The problem today is that everyone is an 'award winning photographer'. Winning a category or the overall Professional Photographer of the Year Award is a different matter. Clients have a better understanding of the value of this type of award. They know you have reached the top of the tree!' ▶

*Iron ore stockpile, Port Kembla steel works, NSW, Australia. Canon EOS 1D MkII with 24-105mm L lens.
© Geoff Comfort*



Geoff's early move away from wedding and portrait photography was very much a personal decision, based on two reasons.

'I found that I had lost the enthusiasm for wedding photography especially the process of up-selling during the viewing of photos. At this time this was a popular method to increase sales but it didn't sit well with me and seemed to cause a lot of stress to my clients. Mary and I now had two small children and I decided my time could be better spent if I specialised in commercial work, and worked from home.'

About this time a house came up for sale that was about 200 metres from our existing house. This had been the local vet's house with a surgery attached. We bought the place and over the next 12 months converted the surgery, consulting room, waiting room and office into a studio with a black and white darkroom and office. This property has served us well and we still live there. Working from home was a good decision as it meant that someone was normally at home when Ben and Megan came home from school. About two years after finishing the renovations I decided to remove the darkroom and extend the office to include another computer station. The studio is not used very much for photography, just some corporate portraits and product photography. It has some of my work on display and is a good location to meet with clients.'

The change would bring new pressures as Geoff sought to develop relationships outside of the people photography area he had previously established.

'I now had to promote my skills and concentrate on my new areas of specialisation. Most of my promotion was through personal contact and I slowly built my list of clients, some of whom I still work with. The business grew to a stage where I was happy that I had achieved the work life balance that I wanted.'

This seems like just the point to go toe to toe

with Geoff to get the lowdown on his move into aerial photography.

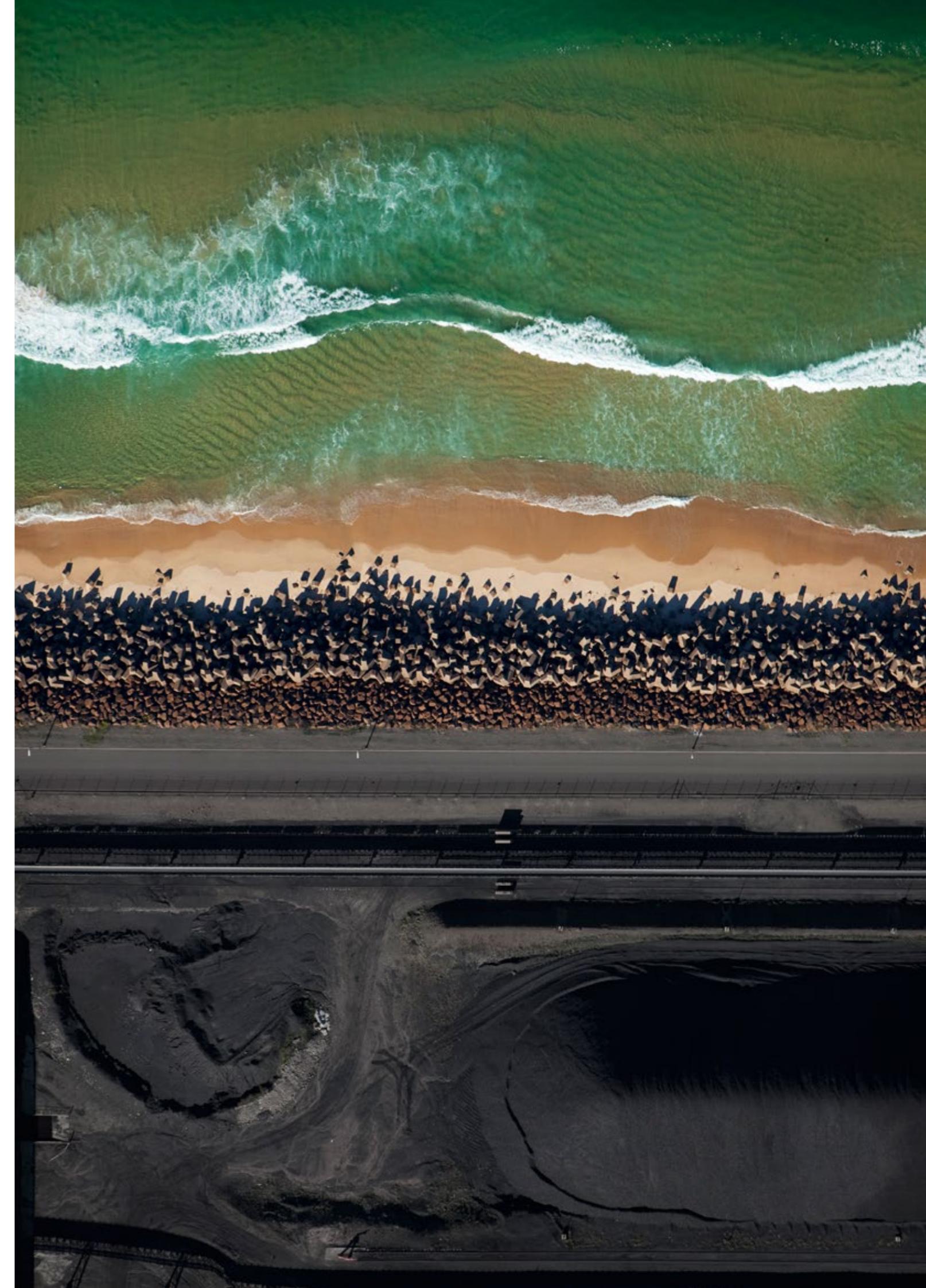
f11: Welcome back to f11 Geoff, we've finally run you to ground and this time the spotlight is very much on you!

GC: Thanks Tim. I look forward to sharing some of my insights into my aerial art photography with you.

f11: Tell us about that carefully planned move into aerial work?

GC: During the 1980s when I was living in Sydney, I learnt to fly and gained my private pilot's licence. I had about 300 hours as a pilot when I decided that somehow combining my interests in flying and photography might offer potential. When I was studying, and in the early days of my photography business, there was not much money to allow me to continue my flying. When I made the change to commercial photography, I thought it would be a good idea to see if I could put my experience in light aircraft to use. I'd made some enquiries with flying schools based in Canberra and soon found a couple that I could work with. These schools had planes that were good for aerial photography and some experienced pilots. One of the planes had a hole in the floor and was very good for vertical aerial photography. With access to this plane I approached ACT Forests to see if they required aerial photographs of their assets here. They did! I worked with them for many years using a Mamiya RB 67 film camera, taking vertical aerial photographs of pine forests. They used my photos to see how much work their contractors had done on each forest coup and paid them accordingly. I enjoyed the work, but it was challenging. The navigation was difficult (many of the forest coups looked similar from ▶

Coal loader, surf and beach, Port Kembla, NSW, Australia. Canon EOS 1D MkII with 24-105mm L lens.
© Geoff Comfort



the air) and the back of a small plane is uncomfortable when you are facing backwards, kneeling on the floor and doing tight turns. As digital cameras began to offer higher resolution capture, I stopped using my RB 67 and mounted my Canon EOS 1D MkII in the floor. In addition to the vertical images, I also took oblique photos of many of the buildings I had photographed from the ground. Not many photographers were able to offer both of these services in Canberra. The area's new development sites were also something I photographed and that work continues today. I also realised that my photos had the potential to become a significant collection of historical images over time. I may not get to see the value of this collection, but my children may. Even now the photos taken at a North Canberra farm (p54) show a scene that no longer exists. This area is now the Canberra suburb of Forde. The photos of the 2003 bushfire damage (p57 & 58) are part of a collection that documents some of the burnt out pine forests and rural areas near Canberra. The opportunity to create an aerial art image out of such devastation is a real bonus, a positive outcome from a pretty negative scenario.

f11: And the move into producing less literal, and more artistic, aerial images pretty much came at the time you moved to digital capture?

GC: Yes, when I switched from film to digital aerial photography, I started to look at other photographic opportunities while on each flight. Obviously the cost per shot dropped dramatically with no film to buy, process or scan. Initially, I took photos with the camera mounted in the floor of the plane. My photo of the Cotter Road farm (p40–41) is an early example of this. This technique was bit hit and miss, requiring great precision as you need to line up the subject ►

*Springbank Island, Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 20D with 70-200mm lens.
© Geoff Comfort*



a long way out, before it disappears under the nose of the plane. I soon realised that there were many more options available if I took the camera off the floor mount and shot oblique photos through the open window. Less flying time was required to photograph these images and with a steep angle of bank, and I could get close to a vertical view if required.

f11: A fixed wing aircraft, or a helicopter? What's your platform of preference?

GC: Most of my aerial photography (and I now have about 800 hours logged) has been done in a Cessna 172. This is a high wing, single engine light aircraft generally available for charter at most airports. For most of my photography, this is a good platform and relatively cheap to fly (at current rates between AU\$400 and \$500 per hour). It is able to be flown at a slow speed of about 80 knots which is good for low level work. The 172 does have some limitations at higher altitudes. At anything above 10,000ft above sea level there is a requirement to use oxygen. In these cases I would fly in a larger aircraft, such as a Cessna 210. Naturally, if the budget or the location demands it, I will use a helicopter. Compared to a plane these are expensive (between AU\$1000 and \$2500 per hour). In Canberra there are fewer charter helicopter services available and these are based some distance from the airport. That said, in areas of high aircraft traffic they can make life easier.

f11: This question won't surprise you, what are your thoughts on drones? Are you jumping on to this bandwagon?

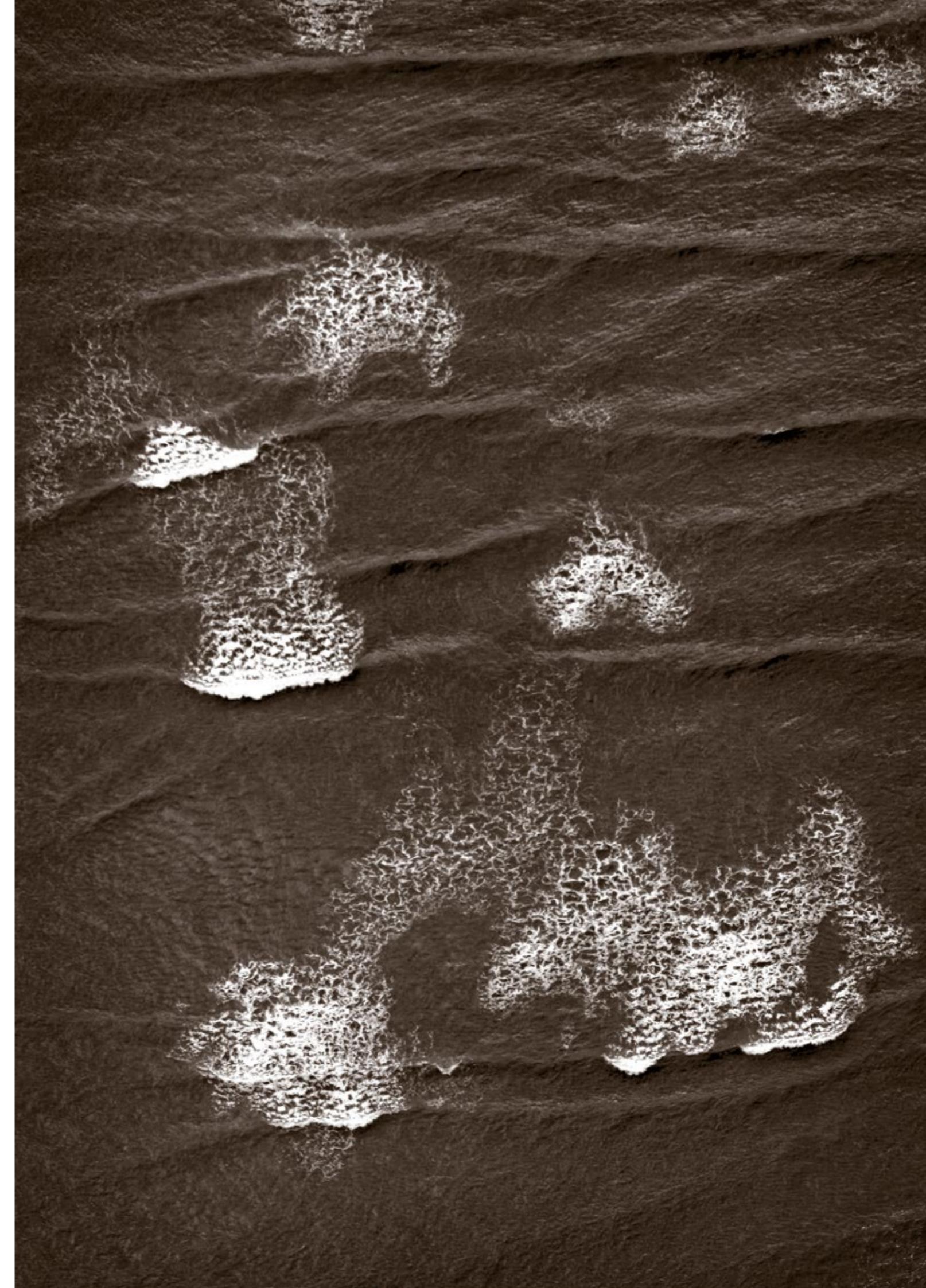
GC: I don't use drones myself, but I work with a good drone operator in Canberra if required. Drones have certainly opened up the aerial photography market and can produce photos that were impossible to take from a helicopter or light plane. I have lost a number of clients to drone operators who have done a good sales job! It also happens to be a fashionable thing

at the moment. With the operating limitations of drones, both legal and physical, I feel many are limited in their ability to produce high quality aerial photos. One of the main areas they excel is in locations where we would traditionally have used cherry pickers. Because of a drone's low maximum operating altitude, about 120 metres above ground, any photo that requires a large view can only be achieved with a very wide-angle lens, often introducing a large amount of distortion. It is possible to gain an exemption to the ceiling rules in certain cases, but there is a time delay, a cost and some paperwork. They are also limited as to how close they can operate from an airport. Unless the operator has an exemption, you cannot fly a drone over the Canberra city area. There are no problems for me in a real aircraft. Some drone operators are coming from a non-photographic background and are setting up aerial photography businesses. Technically they are producing some good photos, but have a few problems understanding how to use light well at different times of the day and in applying a creative eye to their subject. I noticed this at the recent APPA Awards with many drone photos appearing in the landscape category. Often these were either just ordinary aerial photos without much narrative or copies of scenes that had been photographed a year or two before.

f11: Typically, how high do you fly to achieve the sort of images we're showing here?

GC: The legal requirements here in Australia are minimum altitudes of 1000ft above built up areas and 500ft above uninhabited areas. Most of my photos are taken at about 1000 to 1500ft above ground level. Above that and the view is often too wide. Below that and the scene goes past too fast and there is more turbulence to contend with. ▶

*Wave patterns, Moruya Heads, NSW, Australia.
Canon EOS 20D with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort*



f11: What equipment do you favour, and what's typically in your kitbag for work of this nature?

GC: I always have at least three camera bodies on hand. One full frame, one with a cropped sensor, and one spare body. At the moment the full frame is a Canon EOS 5D MkIII and the cropped sensor camera is an EOS 7D MkII. The 5D has a 24-105mm L series lens attached and the Canon 7D has a 70-200mm lens attached. Both lenses are image stabilised. I also have a 17-40mm L series lens in my bag but it is seldom used as it is too wide – often including wings and wheels in the photo if not used carefully! All of my camera gear is in a soft bag restrained by a seat belt. The two main cameras in use for each flight are both attached by lanyard to a hard point in the plane.

f11: What's your favourite time of day for this work?

GC: If you look at my photos, you can see I fly at almost any time of the day depending on the effect I need. Other photos, such the Queanbeyan tennis courts (p44–45) and the new road photos (p29 & p157), were taken in the middle of the day. These are flat, two dimensional subjects where long shadows would not add anything helpful to the photo. In many cases if the photos were taken as an 'add on' to an existing flight, the time of the client photo was the determining factor, rather than any preference of mine. I have recently taken some dusk photos for a commercial client with the sun below the horizon. These were photos of the city centre with office and street lights on. 8 or even 5 years ago, photos such as this were unattainable, but digital technology has advanced so much that photographing these scenes is now achievable.

f11: I don't think people realise how difficult and challenging it is to work out of a light plane or helicopter, I certainly had my eyes opened the first few times I attempted this. Describe some of these issues for us?

GC: There are so many factors: such as working in a cold, windy and confined space, experiencing disorientation from working in a constantly moving and noisy space, sometimes communication with the pilot can be difficult, and the need to plan around, and work within, the restrictions placed on you by air traffic control or aviation regulations. To this mix, add the challenge of working with 'g' forces that can double the weight of the camera equipment you are using in tight turns when navigating over unfamiliar territory – all the while trying to meet the needs of your valuable clients!

f11: Apart from yourself and the pilot, is there ever room for passengers along for the ride?

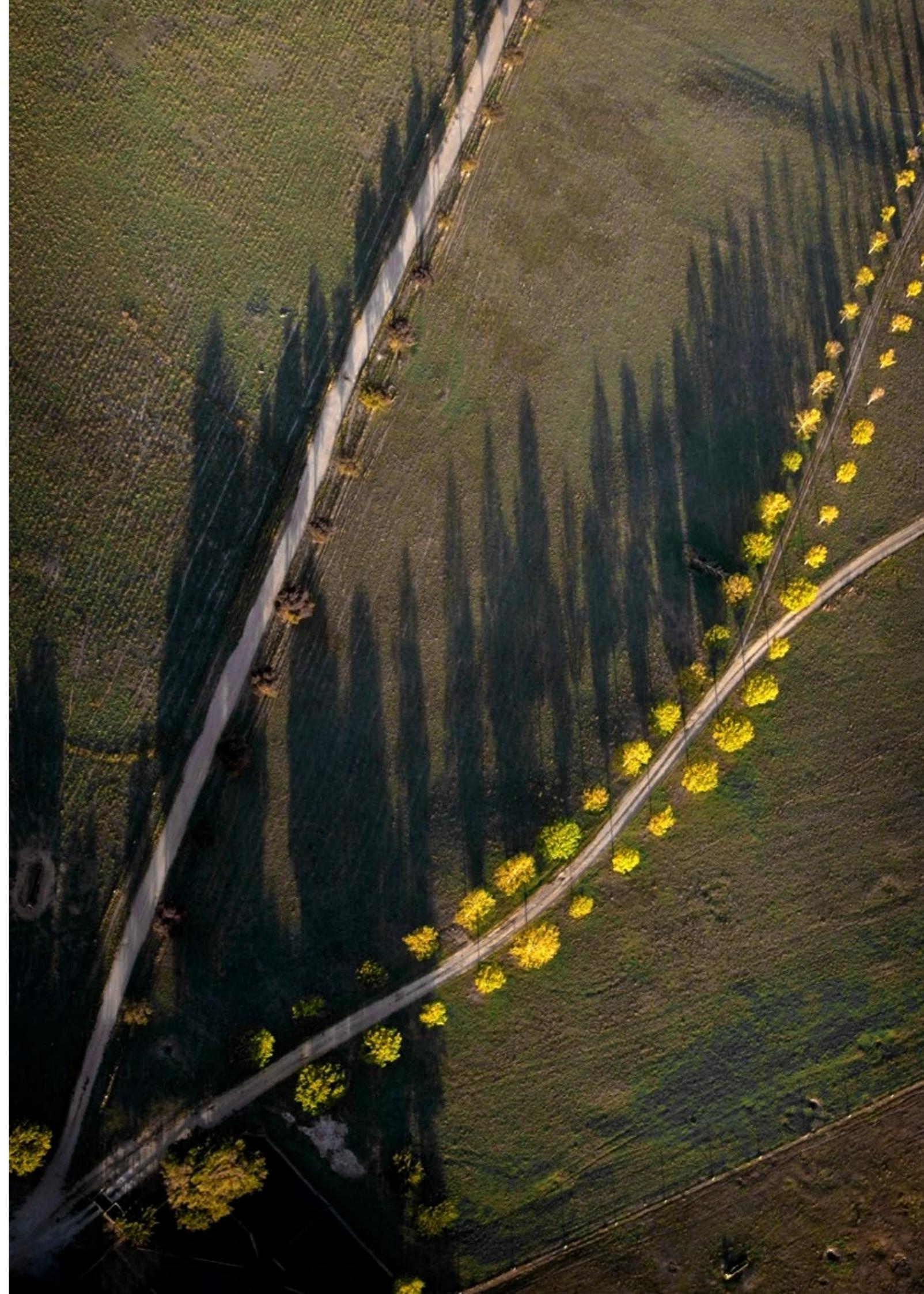
GC: No, I generally fly in a four-seat plane. I am in one seat, my camera bag in another, the pilot in another and the last seat is folded out of the way. There are also some insurance concerns and the risk of any passengers feeling, or being, sick and the flight might have to be aborted.

If I need to fly with a videographer, I will always suggest a helicopter with the doors off. Then we can both work on the same side of the helicopter to capture stills and video effectively and economically.

f11: In addition to that prudence, I guess you're also taking lots of safety precautions, good common sense stuff?

GC: The most important aspect of any of these assignments is coming home safely. I never compromise on safety. No photo is worth risking my life, or the life of my pilot. Is flying in light aircraft safe? Yes, if you use a good pilot, a well maintained aircraft, and have a sensible attitude and a sound understanding of how a plane works. Of course my experience as a pilot ▶

Farm driveway near Lake George, NSW, Australia.
Canon EOS 10D with 24-105mm L lens.
© Geoff Comfort



helps me a lot with this type of photography. The airport is also a dangerous place on the ground with spinning propellers and jet blast, so we need to be careful before we even leave the ground.

f11: Have you done any air-to-air photography, or is it all air-to-ground?

GC: I have done a few air-to-air shoots, mainly for a locally based airline. There is a high level of skill and organisation required for this photography especially when you need to photograph bigger, faster planes. There's also a ton of pressure when your client is paying more than \$10,000 per hour to have two planes in the air, you need to come back with the goods! You can see some examples of this work on my website.

f11: How much do these images rely on significant post-production to balance the perils of shooting from a moving platform while not having 100% control over each angle and every perspective?

GC: As with all photography, the best capture gives the best result. For photos taken in bright sunny conditions, my preferred camera settings are ISO 400 (not too noisy), f8 (the sharpest aperture for my lenses) and 1/1500th of a second shutter speed (fast enough to give a sharp image) and shot as RAW. Autofocus, image stabilisation, manual exposure and manual white balance are used. At the other end of the scale, my dusk photos are taken at ISO 1600, f4 and 1/60th of a second. These photos are noisier and not as crisp as the daylight photos but still to my mind acceptable.

With the best capture possible I then edit the photos. Very little is deleted, nearly all the RAW files are held on a dedicated drive, even duplicates and poorly composed images. These will not be processed, but at least they are still there if a section is needed to complete another image. The edited photos are then processed in Lightroom before being individually worked

on in Photoshop. I don't add textures. I use a few of the Nik Collection filters, but only to see and preview the effect. I then prefer to go back into the Photoshop menu and create something similar. I have found that on some photos the Nik software will over emphasise the Moire effect, especially on steel roofs, and I can get a cleaner image where I decide on the effects and execute them in Photoshop. The image on p53 is a good example of this.

f11: Have any other photographers creating aerial photography been a source of inspiration?

GC: Yes, three spring to mind, and I note that you've already featured the first two in this magazine. First, Jackie Ranken. In 2002, Jackie won the AIPP Australian Professional Photographer of the Year with a submission that featured four vertical aerial photographs taken near Goulburn, NSW. These were very different aerial photos as they were shot as traditional black and white landscape photos. They were taken late in the afternoon with long shadows showing the form of the land, but from the air. The method Jackie used to take the photos was unique and is worth researching. As a result of her success, she went on to publish a book featuring these photos and more, titled 'Aerial Abstracts'. Then there's Richard Woldendorp, a Dutch-born Australian Photographer known for his aerial photography of Australian geography. Richard saw the geography of Australia in a different light and created graphic, colour images, mainly of outback Australia. Unlike Jackie's aerial photos, many of Richard's photos were taken in full sun to emphasise the strong colours of Australia. His images were so important that they were acquired by some of the major institutions here in Australia. And finally, Grant Mudford. From 1965 to 1974, he established a commercial ▶

Tributary, Lake George, NSW, Australia.
Canon EOS 10D with 24-105mm L lens.
© Geoff Comfort



photography studio in Sydney and worked widely in advertising, fashion, magazine, editorial and theatre. He also worked on numerous short films as a cinematographer. His quirky architectural photographic abstractions helped me with both my architectural and aerial photography.

f11: Meticulous research must be a factor for producing your most speculative aerial work, I don't suppose you ever just stooge around burning avgas in the hope of seeing something worth photographing?

GC: Sometimes the scene does appear on a client flight as we're transiting to the location. I am always on the lookout for a potential silver or gold award scene simply appearing before me. The two images on p59 are good examples of that. On other occasions, I have decided on a location that could be interesting and know that it may be worth a dedicated flight to get some exciting images. I often use Google Earth or other satellite image sources to see what may be possible. It is possible to zoom in and see a close up view of possible subjects. Then by using a program that gives sun angle above the horizon it is possible to work out the best time of day for the photography. Sometimes I will take some photos at the end of a commissioned flight. In this case the client has paid a fixed price for their site to be documented, so the additional time does not go on their account. In some of these cases the flight maybe extended because I have researched and planned to take some sites while I was on a client flight, so the additional costs incurred are mine to bear.►



Intersection, Denman Prospect, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

f11: At the end of the day, are these personal aerial images purely made to win awards, or do they have some more commercial motivation?

GC: At this stage, the photos are produced mainly as my personal work. I have sold a few as art pieces, but have not promoted this very much. The world of selling online images is very competitive and is not part of my business model at the moment. This may be something that I will work towards in the future. If this article inspires someone to contact me about using/buying/representing the photos, that would be a bonus!

I always like to try and achieve a silver or above for my work at APPA so I need to create some special images that will impress the judges. Most of these photos are entered in the Landscape category. More recently I have included some of these photos in my client coverage, so these have been able to be included in the Commercial category.

f11: What are your plans for the future?

GC: I will probably work full time as a photographer for the next 4 or 5 years. In that time I might look at selling all or part of my business or establish a partnership with another photographer. Whilst I am working I will keep offering aerial photography to my clients as that gives me the opportunity to create more aerial art photography. Producing these photos, and my architectural images, is an enjoyable task. I also intend to keep entering APPA and am hoping to gain four points this year which would see me earn my Grand Master of Photography! ▶

Steelworks roof, Port Kembla, NSW, Australia. Canon EOS 1D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

f11: Thanks Geoff, it's been great to get to know you a little better and we appreciate you sharing what you do.

GC: Thanks Tim. I hope your readers enjoy the images we have selected. ■

TS

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Recycling plant, Port Kembla, NSW, Australia. Canon EOS 1D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort



Public car park, Tuggeranong, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII
with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

*'My interest in photography only began in the late 1980s
when I enrolled in a black and white photography course.'*

Following double page spread: Melbourne Tennis Centre, Melbourne, Victoria,
Australia. Canon EOS 7D MkII with 70-200mm lens. © Geoff Comfort





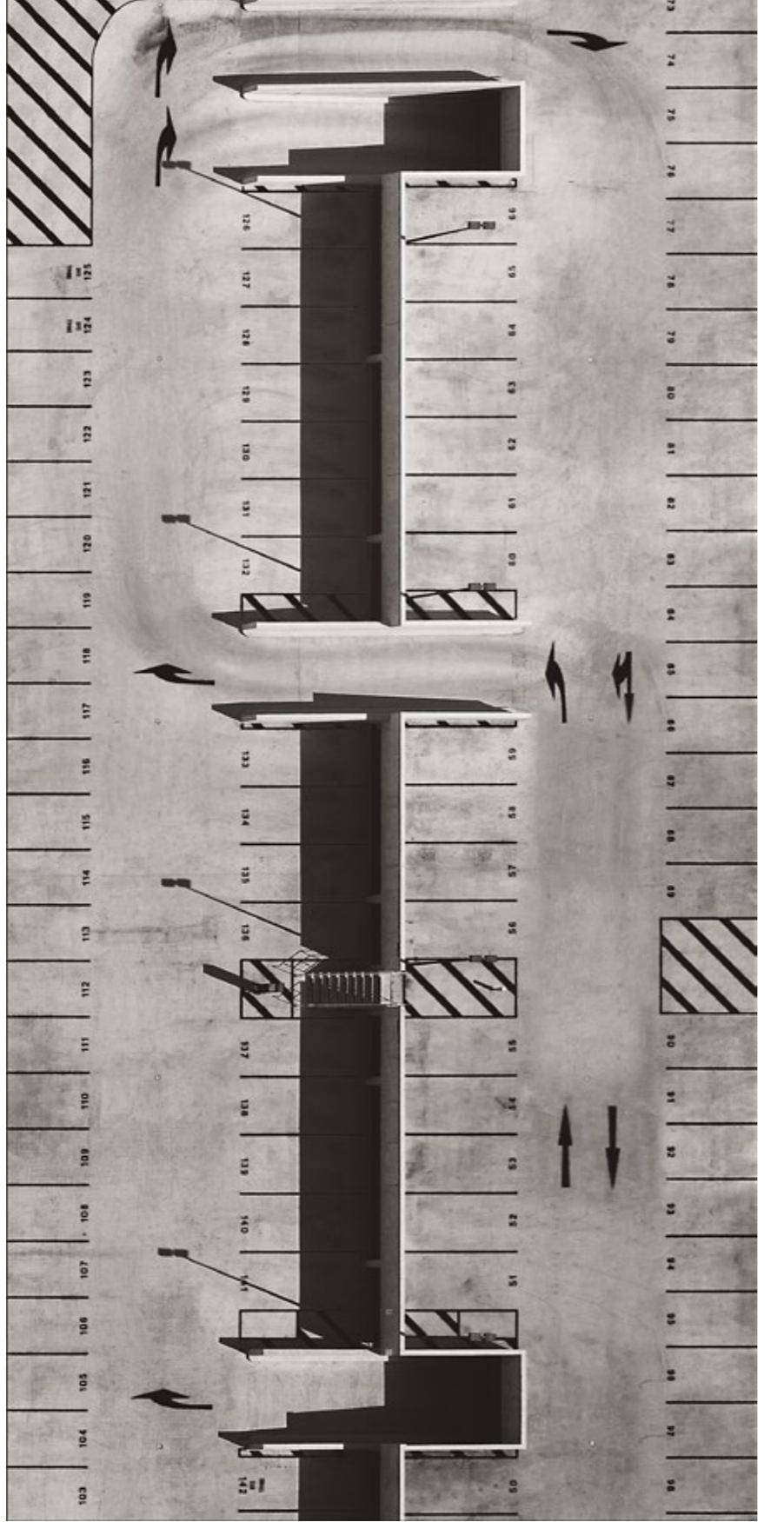
Gungahlin Town Centre, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 24-105mm L lens.

© Geoff Comfort

Following double page spread: Farm, Cotter Rd, ACT, Australia.

Canon EOS D60. © Geoff Comfort



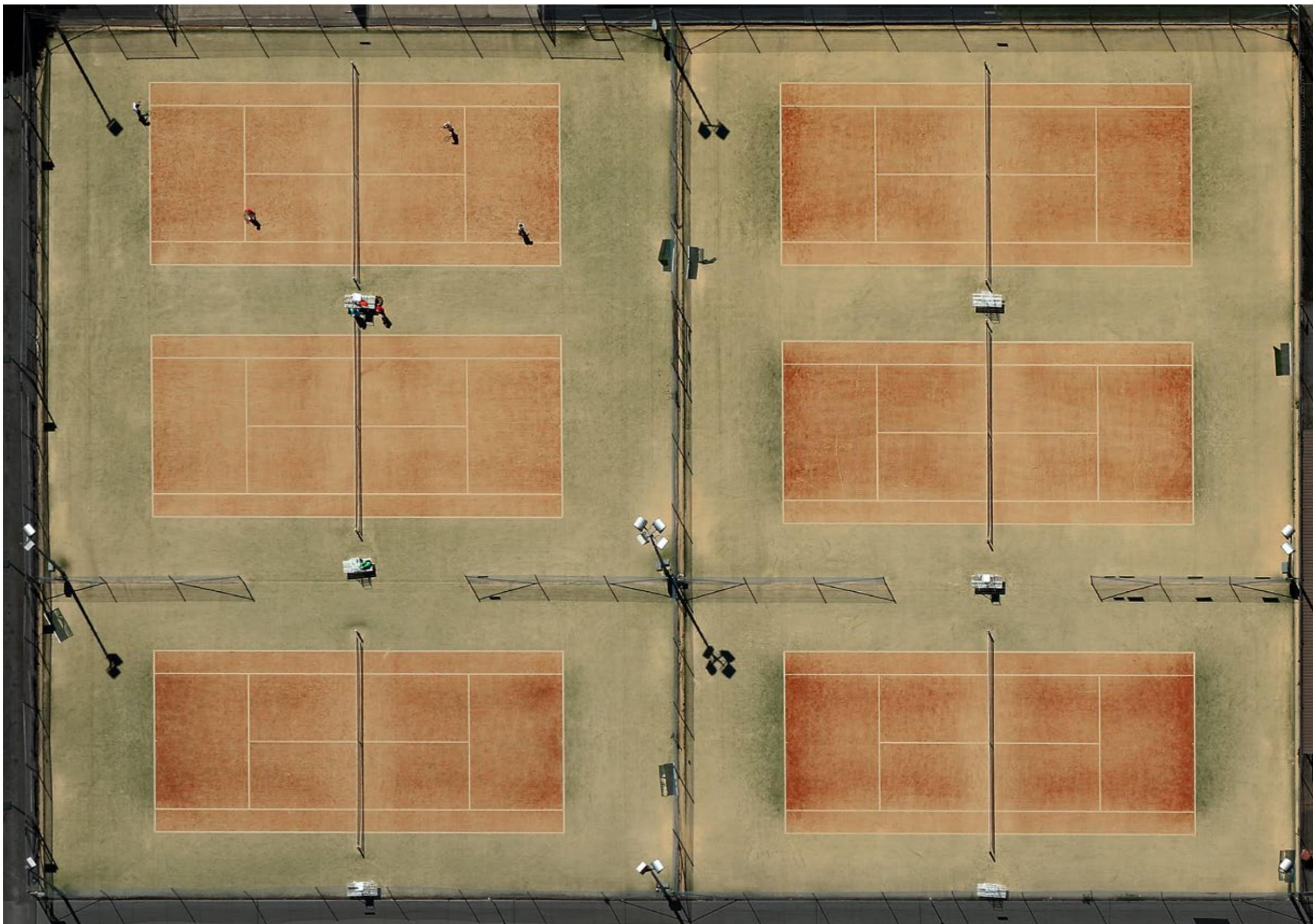


Office carpark, Tuggeranong, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort



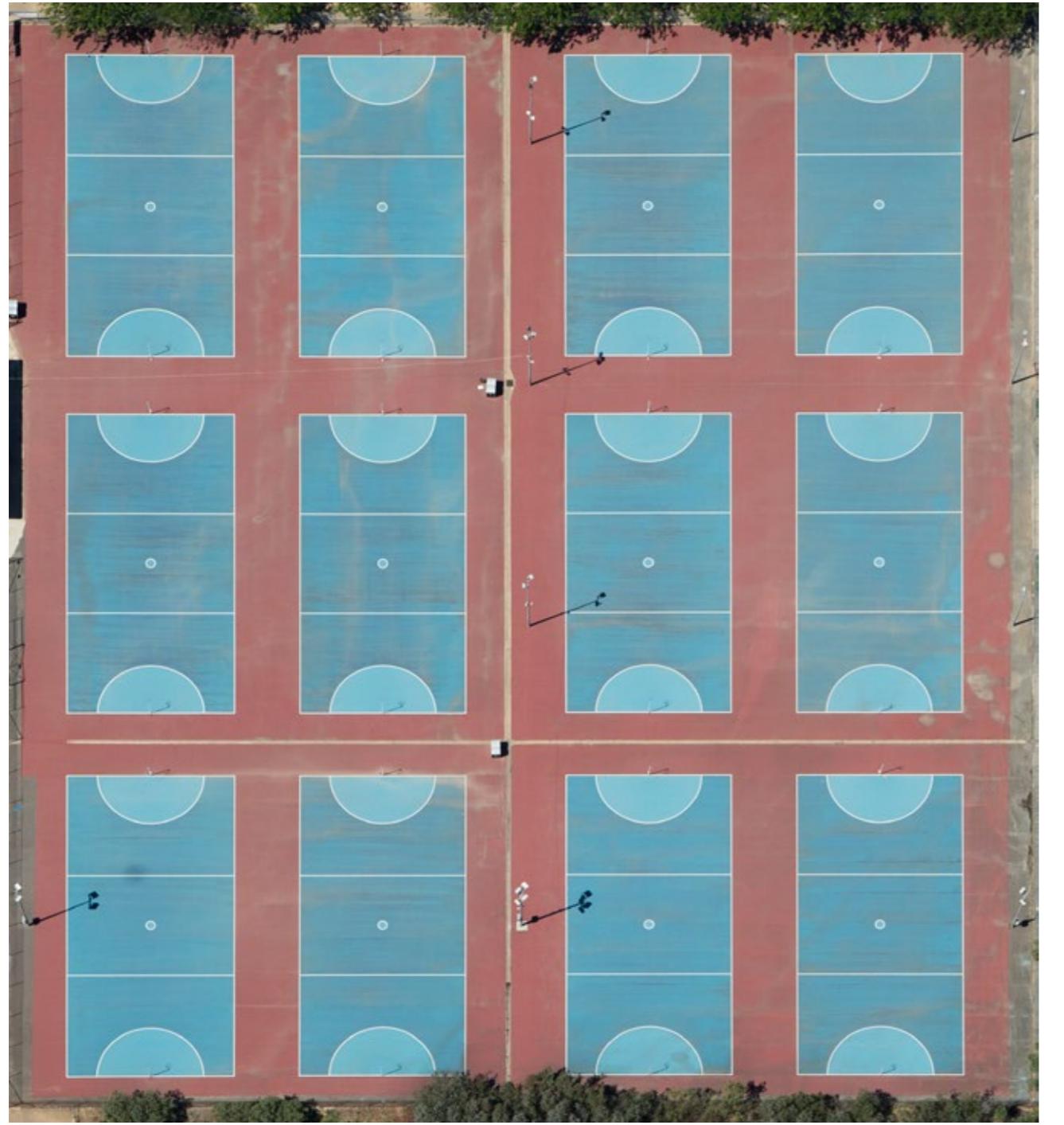
Bass Point Quarry, south of Port Kembla, NSW, Australia. © Geoff Comfort

'During the 1980s when I was living in Sydney, I learnt to fly and gained my private pilot's licence. I had about 300 hours as a pilot when I decided that somehow combining my interests in flying and photography might offer potential.'



►► Following double page spread: CSIRO trial site, Gungahlin, ACT, Australia.
Canon EOS 7D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort



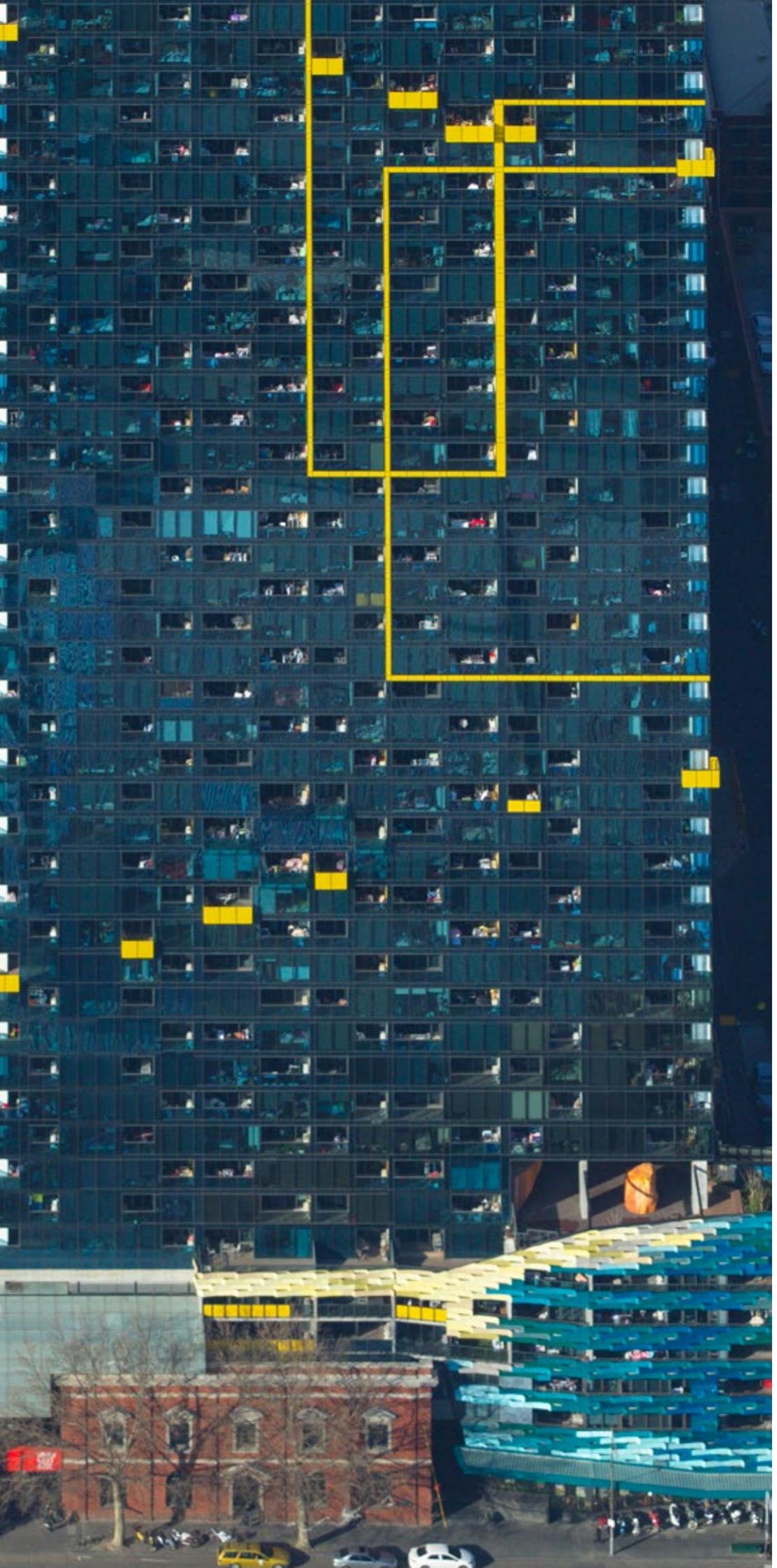


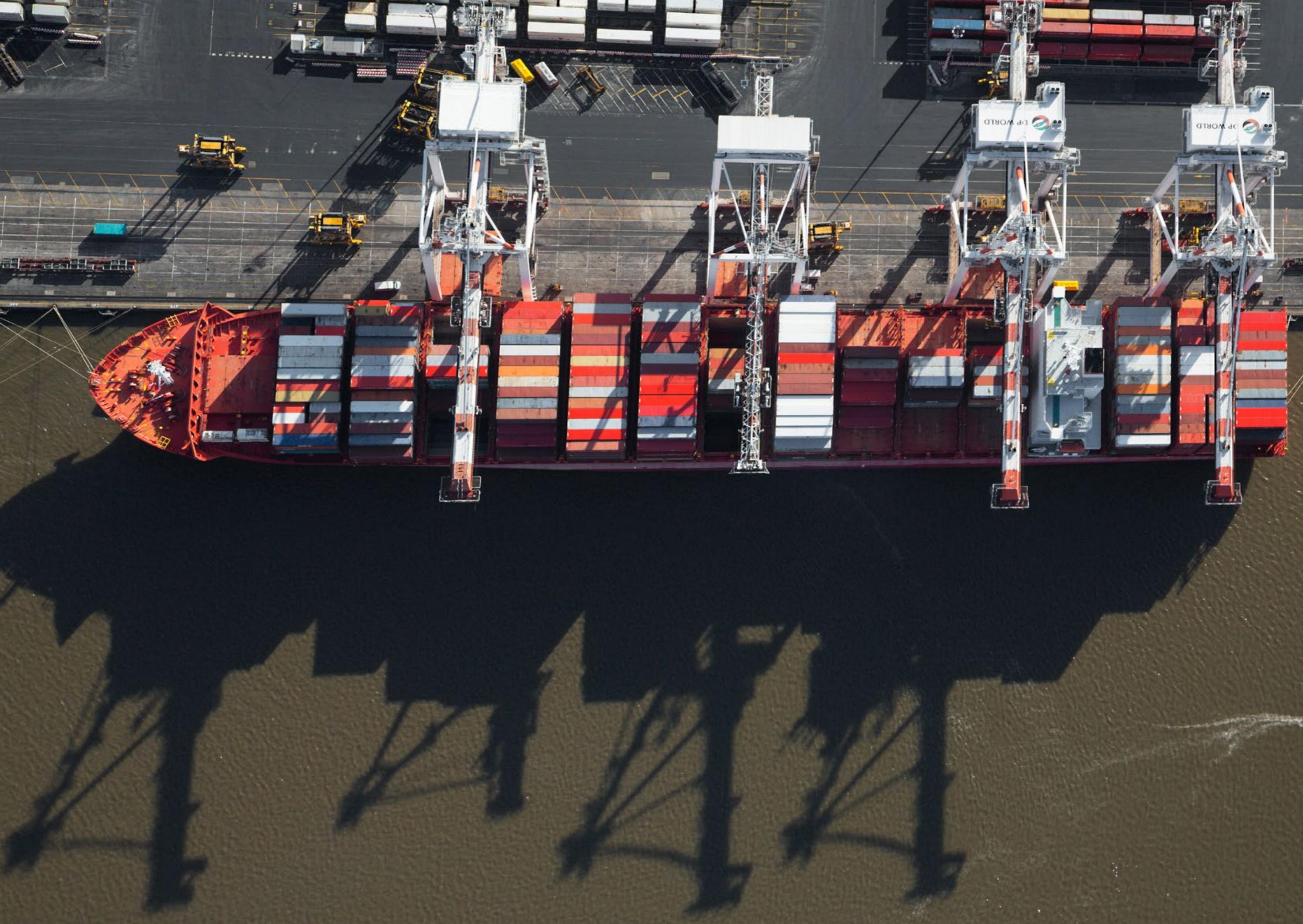
Southwell Park Netball Centre, Lyneham, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

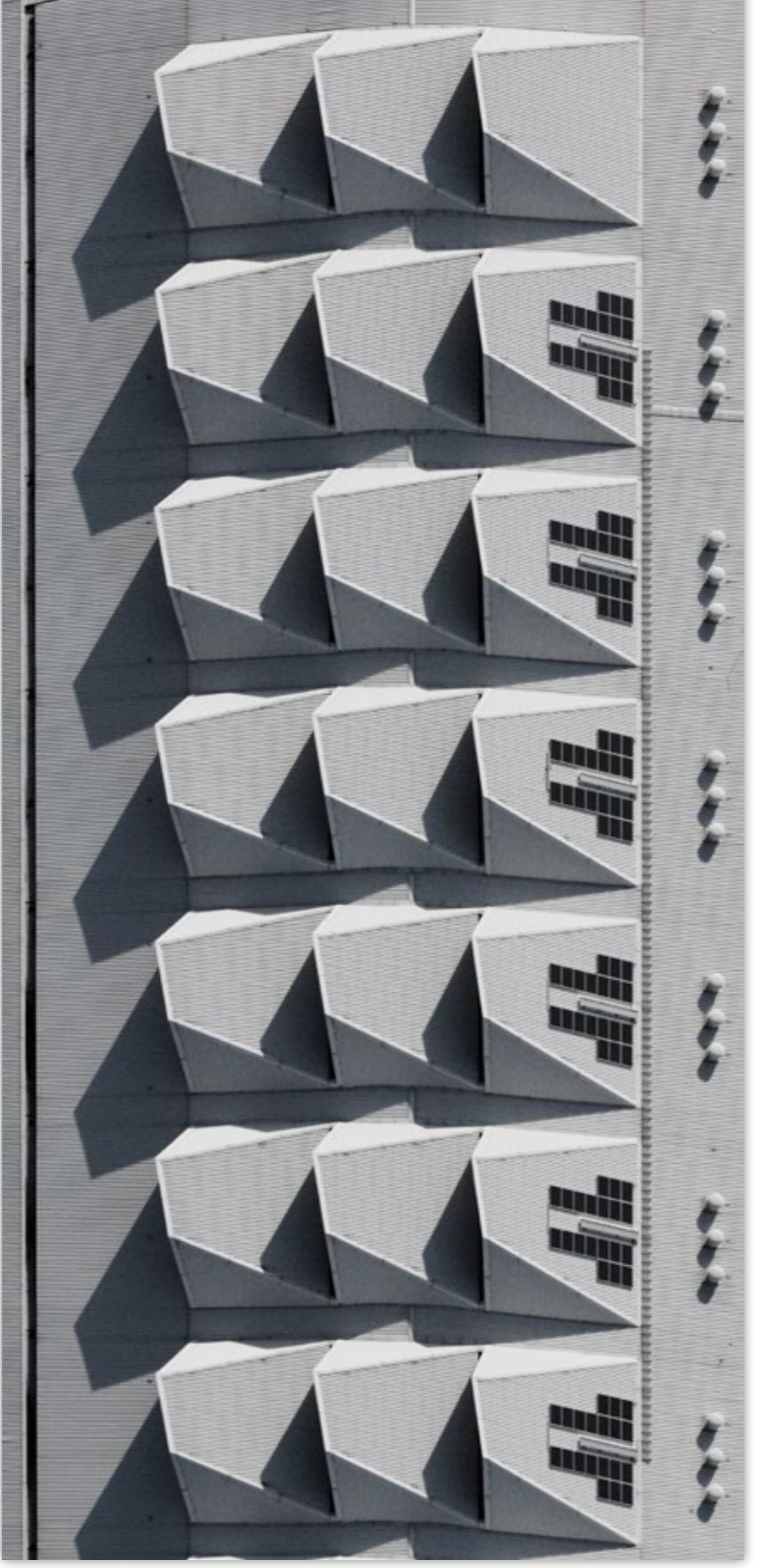
► Office block, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Canon EOS 7D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

►► Following double page spread: Coode Island docks, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

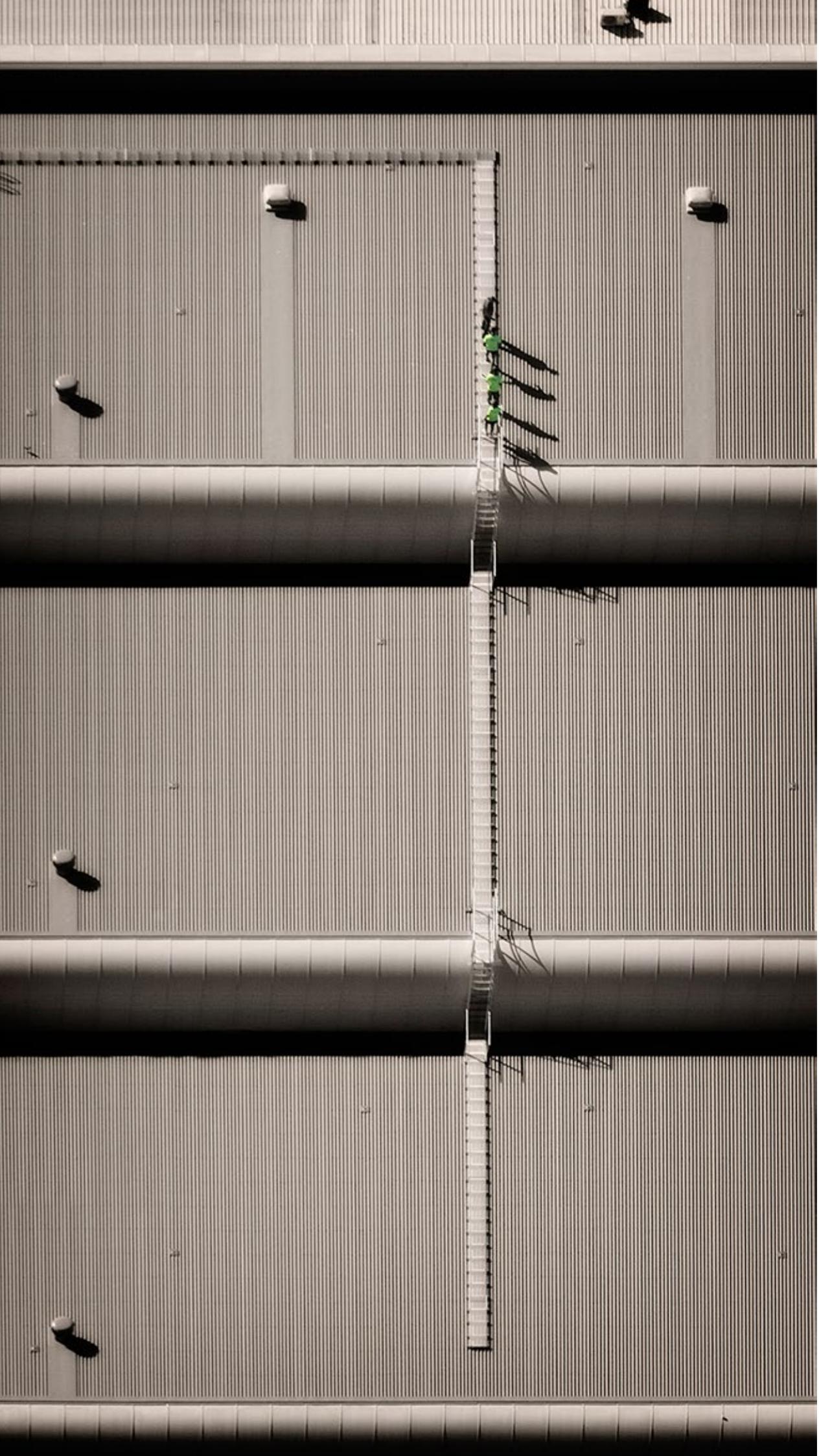
Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort







Melbourne Tennis Centre, Victoria, Australia. Canon EOS 7D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort



AIS Pool roof for Delnas Metal Roofing, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 70-200mm lens. © Geoff Comfort

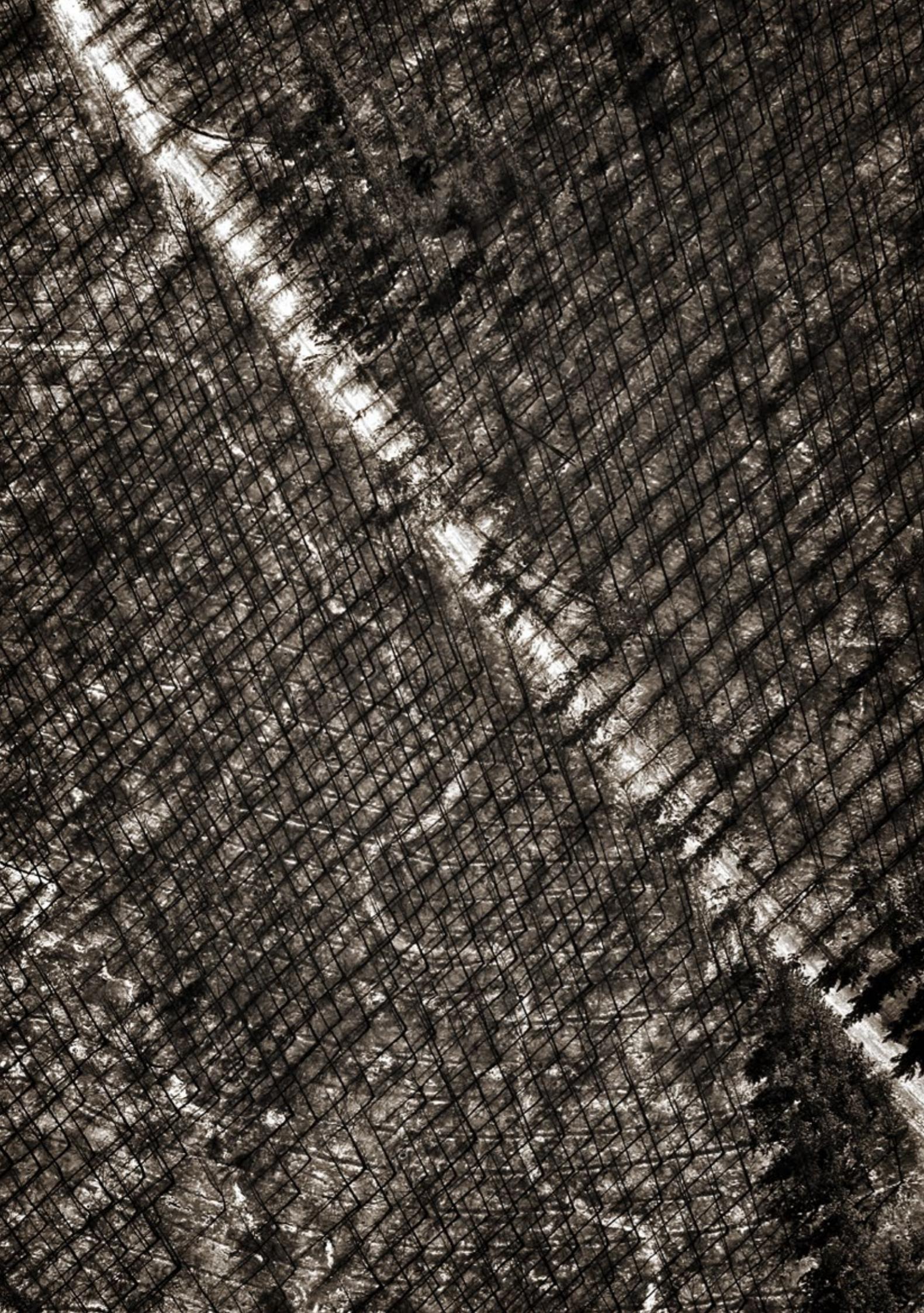


Previous double page spread: Telegraph pole, farm, North Canberra, ACT, Australia.
Canon EOS D60. © Geoff Comfort

'Most of my aerial photography (and I now have about 800 hours logged) has been done in a Cessna 172. This is a high wing, single engine light aircraft generally available for charter at most airports. For most of my photography, this is a good platform and relatively cheap to fly...'

Bushfire damage, Pierces Creek pine forest, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS D60. © Geoff Comfort



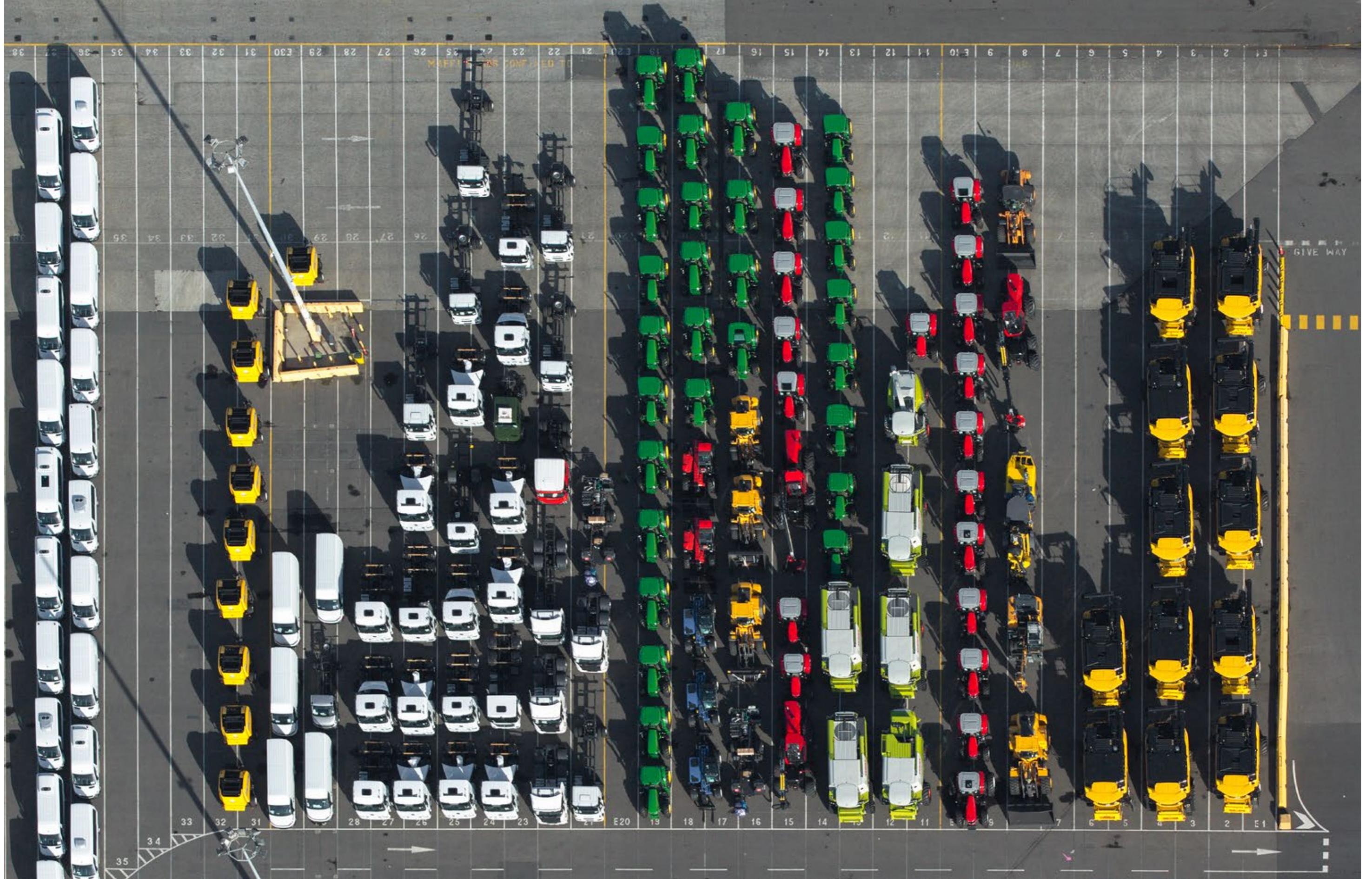


Scriveren Dam, Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, Australia. Canon EOS 50D with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort



Wheat field between Harden and Boorowa, NSW, Australia. Canon EOS 50D with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

◀ Bushfire damage, Mt Stromlo pine forest, ACT, Australia. Canon EOD D60. © Geoff Comfort



Commercial vehicles and farm equipment, Melbourne docks, Victoria, Australia.

Canon EOS 7D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

►► Following page: Melbourne Tennis Centre, Victoria, Australia.

Canon EOS 7D MkII with 70-200mm lens. © Geoff Comfort



Tennis court, Hawker College, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkII with 70-200mm lens. © Geoff Comfort



Car park, Tuggeranong, ACT, Australia. Canon EOS 5D MkIII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort



Car park, Docklands, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Canon EOS 7D MkII with 24-105mm L lens. © Geoff Comfort

'The most important aspect of any of these assignments is coming home safely. I never compromise on safety. No photo is worth risking my life, or the life of my pilot.'



From Bristlecone Pine, California, USA, 1982. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith

Michael A SMITH

Rhythmic events

Michael A. Smith, born in Philadelphia in 1942, has been working in photography since 1966. Less than a year later, in 1967, he began photographing exclusively with an 8x10-inch view camera, committing himself to the contact print. Later he added 8x20 and 18x22-inch view cameras to his arsenal.

During his second year as a photographer, he began teaching his own seminars and workshops, but after seven and a half years stopped teaching to dedicate himself solely to the making of his photographs. It was not until 1999 that he ▶

began conducting occasional workshops, something that he and his wife, Paula Chamlee, continue to do.

His photographic journeys during the past 50 years have taken him to every state in the continental United States, western Canada, Mexico, and Europe. The results of these remarkable odysseys are included in the permanent collections of over 125 museums in the United States, Europe, and Asia, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Art Institute of Chicago, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

His commitment to the medium has resulted in over 200 exhibitions. In addition, he has twice received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and he has been the recipient of major commissions to photograph five American cities. In 1981, Smith's first book, the two-volume monograph, *Landscapes 1975–1979*, was awarded Le Grand Prix du Livre at the Rencontres Internationale de la Photographie in Arles, France. At that time, the Swiss publication Print Letter commented, 'For the first time in the 11 years of the Rencontres, a deserving book has won the book prize.'

In 1992, Smith was honored with a 25-year retrospective exhibition at the International Museum of Photography at the Eastman House in Rochester, New York. To mark the occasion, *Michael A Smith: A Visual Journey - Photographs from Twenty-Five Years* was published.

His first book of portraits, *The Students of Deep Springs College*, was published in the fall of 2000. His next book, *Tuscany: Wandering the Back Roads - Volume II* was published in the fall of 2004. In 2008 he was commissioned to photograph Chicago, and a book of his Chicago photographs, *Chicago: Loop* was published in December of 2009.

Smith photographed in Iceland in 2004, 2006,

and 2010 and his next book, *Iceland: A Personal View, Volume II*, with an essay by Jens Rasmussen, Curator of Photography at the National Museum of Photography in Copenhagen, Denmark, was published in 2015. A second book was also published in 2015 - *Ocean Variations*.

He is currently working on a series of portraits made at Sheriff Joe's 4th Avenue Maricopa County Jail in Phoenix, Arizona.

We've compiled a number of quotations and comments from Michael into what we feel makes for a pretty compelling artist's statement:

'It is how one sees not what one sees that makes any photograph interesting.

My photographs are really records, records of the interaction between myself and the things recorded. It is my hope that the end result of this interaction - the photograph - will provide an exciting new interaction between itself and the viewer.

Whether I photograph the natural or urban landscape, portraits or still lifes, the challenge always is to balance the allure of the subject matter with my own visual concerns and sense of abstraction. I use large view cameras because I find looking on the ground glass to be an exhilarating experience. On the ground glass, as I move the camera around, the world comes and goes, flattening itself into pictures. Wondrous transformations often occur, small details can appear as landscapes and vast landscapes are sometimes diminished. On the ground glass everything is potentially equal.

A photograph is a rhythmic event.

When once asked by a museum to make a statement about what I am trying to do when making a photograph I wrote a paragraph and threw it away. Then I wrote another paragraph and threw that away, too. I ended up with this: I just try to make the best pictures I can.

My entire career has been involved with

understanding and revealing the underlying connections and truths between the specific (the only thing one can photograph), and a universal condition.

I am only interested in making photographs as works of art. The function of art is to connect us to the world and to each other. I believe any work of art in any medium, if it is to be successful, makes the connection through the rhythm of the structure of the work, which relates to universal rhythms. And since universal rhythms flow through us and around us constantly, it is these rhythms that make the connection.

It does not matter what equipment any photographer uses. Why do I use a large view camera? It is the pleasure in the process. The pleasure in the process is what keeps one going. Artists are interested in making things, not in things made.

e.e. cummings in a talk he gave at Harvard University said, "...an artist, whose every agony is to grow." For me, making photographs is a means of personal growth. The painter Alfred Leslie once wrote that, "There is a direct relationship between how much we see and the quality of life." Making photographs is a tool for enabling me to see more.

When photographing, I always have a deep emotional response to something out there in the world, otherwise I would not bother to set up my heavy and cumbersome camera. But once under the dark cloth I have only one concern: to make the best picture I can. I rarely know what the picture will look like when I set up my camera. If I knew beforehand, I would not bother, because there would be no sense of discovery, and therefore no personal growth. And the point of the process is to enhance personal growth. The good photographs will come if one understands what all good photographs, regardless of subject matter, have in common - that being a structural rightness that underlies the subject matter. In the

workshops Paula and I teach, we discover that very few truly understand that. The result of our teaching is that with a new understanding of how to approach making any photograph, all participants make better photographs - on their own terms.'

While we've selected a collection of his landscapes for this feature, Michael has photographed extensively in cities (concluding that he has made more photographs of the urban landscape than ones of the natural landscape), and made many portraits, including one book of portraits with another on the way.

f11: Welcome to f11, I understand that you and Paula are about to visit New Zealand, and that, for you, its been a trip 46 years in the making?

MAS: I have wanted to come to New Zealand since 1970 when I had a student who was an astronomer. He told me that friends of his were working in NZ and could see the stars rise at the horizon. They then went to the Kitt Peak Observatory in Arizona and could not see stars until 20 degrees above the horizon. When I heard that I said, 'I'm going to New Zealand.' So clear was I about this that I searched out NZ photography publications. Bruce Weatherill had just begun publishing "Art and History of Photography in New Zealand." Issue number one was no longer available, but I spoke with Bruce and he sent one to me. I continued to subscribe through the several name changes until PhotoForum ceased publishing the magazine in the mid-1980s. At that time, I followed developments in NZ photography closely and was familiar with all the names of the photographers. But when I stopped receiving the magazine, I stopped following NZ photo activities.

f11: I have to suggest that our 50 back issues, all available online, might lend some additional insight into much more recent photography in New Zealand. ▶



Atchafalaya Basin, Louisiana, USA, 1985. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith

MAS: That is an excellent suggestion. The only problem is that I prefer paper and find it less satisfying to read on a screen. But I will try.

f11: That aside, what are your plans for visiting our beautiful country?

MAS: We are thinking of this trip as a month-to-six-week scouting trip, to see if we would like to come back and make photographs. I will not be bringing a camera of any sort. I will have an iPhone, but I will not make photographs with it. For me, it is too technical. Nothing is easier to use than a view camera. Paula will have her 6x7 Pentax, however. She travels with it when we are on a short trip like this. She will no doubt make exquisite small contact prints. We do not enlarge our negatives in the darkroom.

We know New Zealand will be incredibly beautiful. Our problem is that we have photographed extensively in Tuscany and in Iceland and do not want to make the same kind of photographs that are simply in a different place. So on this trip we will see if we respond to something that will not lead to a kind of repetition of what we have done before. An example of this kind of repetition can be found in the work of Paul Strand. After his photographs in France and in Italy, he photographed in the New Hebrides, Romania, Egypt, and Ghana. Basically he was making the same photographs, just in different places. I find those later photographs uninteresting for the most part.

f11: You're also planning to offer some workshops for local photographers, in Auckland and Wellington, while you're here?

MAS: Yes, we will be holding two workshops. One is a 'Vision and Technique' workshop in Wellington from Friday, March 18 to Sunday afternoon, March 20. This workshop includes darkroom sessions, but those who use digital cameras are welcome as well. And the following weekend, March 25–27, we will be holding our 'Art of Seeing Photographically' workshop in Auckland, after our free talk on Thursday

evening, March 24 to the Auckland Photographic Society. This workshop is primarily for those who use digital cameras and do not work in the darkroom. But both workshops are for everyone. We have discovered that while our approach to making photographs is similar to a few other photographers, we have been told by curators that we are able to articulate it in a unique way. For example, we explain that we never know what we are going to photograph until after the camera is set up. We use the camera as a tool to make discoveries. And we give workshop participants the tools to do the same. Details are on our [website](#). In addition to the workshops, Paula and I will be participating in PHOTOBOK New Zealand in Wellington, March 11–13.

f11: How difficult is it for you and Paula to continue using large format sheet film? Can you find consistent supply of the materials that you need, or prefer, to use?

MAS: We use Kodak SuperXX film. It was discontinued in 1994. Since it was the best film Kodak ever made - it is all straight line, with little toe and shoulder - we purchased all that remained. We had no money to do so, and used credit cards to make the purchase. It took us over five years to pay off the \$85,000. Then we had to build a 14-foot by 8-foot freezer in which to store it.

We made all of our prints on Kodak Azo paper, the last of the silver chloride papers, until it was discontinued. Silver chloride papers have an entirely different quality from enlarging papers - there is a longer and smoother gray scale and the paper has deeper black tones. When Azo was discontinued we spent over five years of R&D and finally had another silver chloride paper made, which we named Lodima, after our publishing company, Lodima Press. "Lodima" is Amidol spelled backwards. Amidol is the print developer we use. We sell Lodima paper to photographers all over the world (including a few photographers in NZ) who make contact prints. Silver chloride paper is of a slow speed and is not

a paper on which one can easily make enlargements, unless one is extraordinarily patient.

If beautiful silver chloride papers did not exist I would no longer make photographs. For me it is the object that counts - the "presence" of a beautifully made object. Of course, it goes without saying that the picture must be well-seen; technical excellence alone is empty. Paula and I once saw an exhibition of photographs by former assistants of Ansel Adams. All of the prints were made on enlarging paper. Only one print in the entire exhibition would have made it out of our darkroom.

f11: How vibrant is the large format film capture scene in the US these days? Are you part of a shrinking or growing community of sheet film aficionados?

MAS: Yes, the community of large-format photographers is shrinking, but there are still many who use large format cameras. It may be of interest to learn that a number of art schools and universities that dismantled their darkrooms, have rebuilt them, due to students' demands for a 'real' photographic experience.

f11: Do you do all of your own developing and contact printing? Tell us about the processes you employ?

MAS: Paula and I do all of our own film developing by inspection and we do our own contact printing. We have no enlarger in the darkroom, only a very bright light bulb to expose the paper.

f11: Do you, as a matter of course, then digitise all of your work for sharing, storage or exposure online? What's your workflow process for this?

MAS: Our assistant, Richard Boutwell, himself a very fine photographer, taught himself the digital stuff and scans our prints on a high-end flatbed scanner for an archive and for viewing online. I know nothing about the workflow, as digital processes are a mystery to me.

f11: Are your prints sold in limited editions, or

open editions? What materials and production methods do you employ, and what's your claim regarding the archival quality on offer?

MAS: When we make a print in the darkroom for the first time, we make five prints from each negative. One of those prints becomes our 'master print' and is never for sale. Should we sell the other four prints and need to print again, we will make five more. Since we are in our seventies and are not getting any younger, we have no interest in going back and printing old negatives. We only want to make new work. So after a few years, the negatives are retired and the editions are limited to how many, or how few, we printed.

Materials: We dry mount all of the prints we make in the darkroom. While doing research for an article I wrote, *Advances in Archival Mounting and Storage: Ultimate Protection for your Photographs*, I learned that dry mounting prints gives them a layer of protection from pre-acidic gases, and that dry mounted prints, when mounted on ArtCareTM board will last longer than if they were not dry mounted. See my article [here](#). As a result of our own need for immense quantities of this board, we ended up becoming suppliers of this board to the photography community and we call our company Lodima Archival Materials.

We guarantee our prints for one thousand years. But of course there is a catch: the guarantee is not transferable.

Richard also drum scans our black and white negatives and our 8x10-inch color negatives and, under our approval, makes our archival pigment prints. These are printed in limited editions, the edition size is dependent on the size of the print, but normally the editions are ten or fewer. He has recently been drum scanning my 8x20-inch negatives and I am now making prints that are eight feet long. ▶



Canyon del Muerto, Arizona, USA, 1991. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith

f11: What sort of edition sizes do you typically produce, and where is your work represented?

MAS: Edition sizes are small, usually fewer than ten prints. At this moment we represent ourselves. We each have gallery exhibitions from time to time, and are looking for the right gallery that would represent our work, either separately or together.

f11: What place, if any, do digital cameras have in your large format, silver halide based world?

MAS: Our large prints are digital archival pigment prints from drum scanned 8x10-inch or 8x20-inch negatives, but I cannot imagine ever using a digital camera. Since for me the pleasure of the process is what is essential, and I get great pleasure from using large-format cameras, I see no reason to make a change. But, hey, I'll never say never.

f11: Your photographs have titles from many places. Do you only make your photographs when you are travelling?

MAS: Although there have been times when I have travelled to make photographs, I strongly believe that good photographs can be made anywhere, even in one's back yard. And I make many photographs near my home.

Travelling to make photographs has one advantage over staying at home: there are fewer distractions - no phone ringing (we still use landlines and our cell numbers are never listed nor are they public knowledge), no email to check, just absolute concentration on making photographs.

Since I believe that good photographs can be made anywhere, even when travelling it is never necessary to get far from the road to find a special place or special viewpoint. Those places are everywhere. Both hiking and making photographs are wonderful activities. I never mix them. I have often said that the ideal distance from the truck when making photographs is ten feet. Brett Weston once

commented, 'If it is more than 50 feet from the road, it is not photographic.'

f11: Finally, in a world obsessed with pixels, its great to find photographers wedded to the print as the ultimate personification of an image. Tell us about this aspect of your work?

MAS: When we are printing in the darkroom, we view our photographs on a large piece of glass above the fixer tray, and we step back about eight feet to the point where it is difficult to see what the subject is. At this distance we are only seeing the tonal balance and the abstract structure of the photograph. If the tonal balance of the photograph is not rhythmically harmonious, we destroy the negative and throw out the photograph, regardless of the subject matter or what the photograph is of, or the degree of excitement we felt when we made the original exposure.

Some photographers have talked about making prints to try to recreate as closely as possible what they felt at the time of making the exposure. To me this is absurd.

Although it is the reality of the subject before you that captures your attention, the feeling one has while photographing is determined by myriad factors. The physical reality before you - the very real three-dimensional space, the light, the colours, the sounds, the smells, the weather - is of course a major factor. Of the others, some are more or less stable, such as one's world-view and the general state of one's psyche and health. Other factors are more fleeting, such as the time you have available (it is hard to be calm and contemplative when rushed, whether by quickly changing light or the need to be somewhere else), the other people who may be present, your dreams from the night before, or a conversation you may have just had. All of these factors contribute to determining your mood, which in turn may affect how you feel about and respond to what is before you.

Realising the absolute impossibility of trying to create for others and to recreate for myself, in a two-dimensional black and white photograph, the feeling of the multi-faceted experience of having been at the scene photographed, my goal when making prints is simply to try to make the best print I can, and thereby to provide, both for myself and for the viewer, a new experience - one of the photograph itself.

As an artist, I am responsible for every square millimetre of the print, in the same way that a composer is responsible for every note, or a poet is responsible for every word. I try to make my prints so that all parts are of equal importance, and I do not feel they are successful if the viewer's eyes are not somehow involuntarily compelled to navigate to every part of the picture space. Therefore, the dodging and burning-in I do is not to make elements stand out, but to have them cohere into a unity.

f11: Thanks Michael, well said, and we hope that you and Paula will enjoy your visit to New Zealand. ■

TS

www.michaelandpaula.com
www.lodima.org



Guerrero Negro, Baja California, Mexico, 2003. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith

*'Why do I use a large view camera? It is the pleasure in the process.
The pleasure in the process is what keeps one going. Artists are
interested in making things, not in things made...'*



Near Lornarno, Tuscany, Italy, 2000. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Shore Acres, Oregon, USA, 1979. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



San Ignacio, Baja California, Mexico, 2003. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Shore Acres, Oregon, USA, 1979. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Stonington, Maine, USA, 1998. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Near San Quirico d'Orcia, Tuscany, Italy, 2000. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith

'...hiking and making photographs are wonderful activities. I never mix them. I have often said that the ideal distance from the truck when making photographs is ten feet.'



Near Aspen, California, USA, 1991. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Broward County, Florida, USA, 1989. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, USA, 1984. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Near Delaware, Ohio, USA, 1983. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith



Yosemite, California, USA, 1988. Medium: 8"x20" gelatin silver chloride contact print. © Michael A Smith

'As an artist, I am responsible for every square millimetre of the print, in the same way that a composer is responsible for every note, or a poet is responsible for every word. I try to make my prints so that all parts are of equal importance, and I do not feel they are successful if the viewer's eyes are not somehow involuntarily compelled to navigate to every part of the picture space.'

Paula CHAMLEE

Ambiguity and mystery

Paula Chamlee returned to college in the 1980s majoring in the visual arts to finish a degree she had begun in the 1960s in the performing arts. She earned a B.F.A. in painting in 1988. During this latter part of her college career, she discovered photography and quickly found direct involvement with the world outside the studio to be irresistible.

In the thirty years since, she has travelled extensively, making photographs both in the United States and abroad. Chamlee has been the recipient of several grants, including one from the Leeway Foundation in Philadelphia for 'Excellence in Photography.' Her photographs have been widely exhibited in museums and galleries, and her photographs are in numerous collections, both public and private in the United States and abroad. She is collected in forty museums in the United States, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, and Library of Congress.►



Dyrhólaey, Iceland, 2006. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print.
From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee

She has taught workshops in photography in the United States, Austria, Germany, Tuscany, England, France, Iceland, and Australia. She has had seven monographs of her work published.

Her first book, *Natural Connections: Photographs by Paula Chamlee*, consisting of photographs and writing about the natural landscape, and with an essay by Estelle Jussim, was published in 1994 and established her reputation as a highly original artist working within the classical tradition of straight photography.

In Chamlee's second book, *High Plains Farm*, published in 1996, she looked to her roots and photographed and wrote about the farm where she grew up on the High Plains of the Texas Panhandle. One critic called *High Plains Farm* 'one of the genuinely significant contributions to photography and landscape study in many a year,' while another described it as 'epic in its vision and intimate in its humanity.' A 30-minute PBS film was made about Chamlee doing this series.

Her third book, *San Francisco: Twenty Corner Markets and One in the Middle of the Block*, published in 1997, takes a look at the uniqueness of small, family-owned markets amidst the larger, faster-paced commerce of a big city.

In 2004 she published two books of photographs from Tuscany: *Tuscany: Wandering the Back Roads - Volume I*, with an essay by Robert Sobieszek, and *Madonnina* with an essay by Steven Maklansky.

In 2008 she was commissioned to photograph Chicago, and a book of her Chicago photographs, diptychs, triptychs, and quartets combined with her drawings, collages, and assemblages was published in *Chicago: Lake* in December of 2009.

Chamlee photographed in Iceland in 2004, 2006, and 2010 and her latest book, *Iceland: A Personal View, Volume I*, with an essay by Jens Rasmussen, Curator of Photography at the National Museum of Photography in Copenhagen, Denmark, was published in 2015.

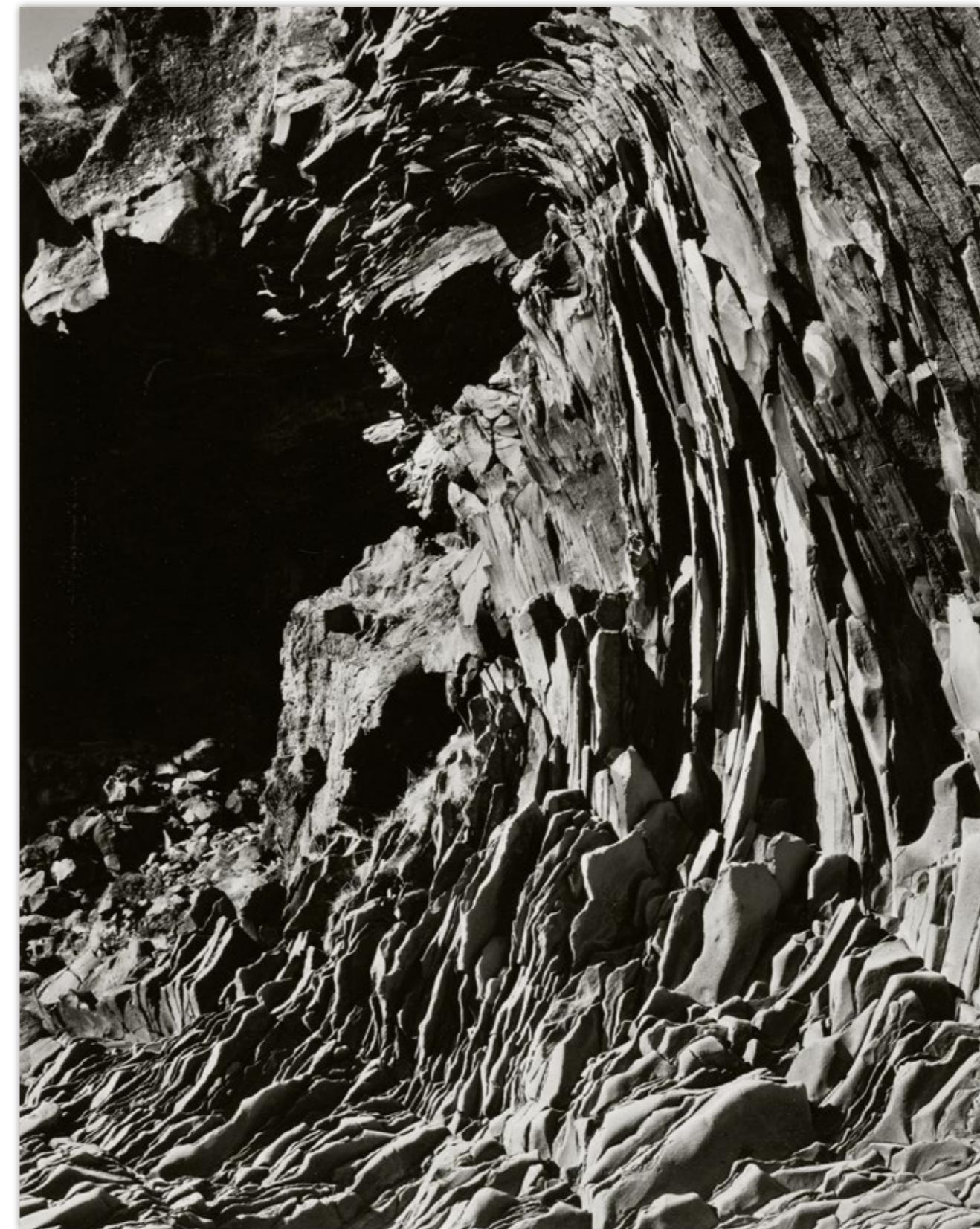
More recently, Chamlee is working on a series of photographs of the Texas Panhandle from the air and a series of studio still lifes, *From the Field*. In addition to her still photography, Chamlee made her first film, *Flow*, while in Iceland in 2006, and from footage made in Iceland in 2010 is currently working on new films.

Her path to large format photography was an interesting one:

'I came to photography from painting, and now that I have a large studio (completed in 2009) in which to return to painting and other mediums, I am integrating those visual concerns into my photographs, even combining the mediums. I don't know where this will lead, but if I did, I probably wouldn't do it. I enjoy working with the surprises and challenges as they come up.'

My first inspiration in photography came from seeing the reproductions of Edward Weston's photographs and from reading his Daybooks. They seemed to be in the same spirit as the way I was working. I studied all the master photographers through books, then much later I was able to see original photographs in many museums around the world. I continue to look at everything I can, even if it is not to my taste. I sense that my subconscious visual library is always compiling something new, and what is meant for me to use will eventually and naturally emerge.

After both of my children were in school, I went back to college to get a degree I had begun at an earlier time in my life. While at the university, I began to photograph with a 35mm camera because that is what we had as a family camera in 1985. I soon connected with some local photographers and one day saw some 2 1/4-inch negatives, and said, "Oh, that's better." So I began photographing with an old Yashica twin lens reflex camera owned by my former husband who had used it when he was a newspaper editor. I liked this format very much until another photographer friend showed me some 4x5 ▶



Hellnar, Iceland, 2004. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print.
From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View, Vol. I* © Paula Chamlee

inch negatives, and I thought, "Oh, that's better," so I borrowed a 4x5 camera and gear from a friend and started photographing with that.

The professor who taught the History of Photography course showed me how the view camera worked, and when I first looked on the ground glass and saw the world upside down and backward, I thought, "This is perfect! Now I can see the world for how it looks and not for what it is." It was a long time before I realised how valuable that revelation was, as it has enabled me to see things I cannot see without the camera and lens - the perfect tool for making visual discoveries and a way to put aside my preconceptions about how I think things should look. It gave me the window to see how things could look. I had found a new way for my visual vocabulary to expand that I had not imagined before.

I set up a painting studio that included an ample darkroom, and by the time of my senior exhibition, it was two-thirds painting and one-third photography. When I had my first solo exhibition of my paintings and photographs, I felt that the act of working as an artist is not complete until the works have been given for viewing. They are not given as a need for affirmation, but a need for connection. For me, there is something energising about that. I believe it is important to present the work to an audience, and thus complete the circle, whether that audience gets something from it or not. It simply should not remain in a closet, lifeless and unchallenged.

When I met Michael in 1987, it was my first time to see an 8x10-inch negative, and I thought, "Well, that's better yet." Though it would be three years before I started working exclusively with my own 8x10, I had already embraced this cumbersome, yet contemplative way of working. It seemed to suit the slow process of painting where I had to consider and respond to every mark I would make on a canvas. I treated the ground glass the same way: that is, before

making an exposure, every visual element in that rectangle had to be necessary to the picture before it could be seen as complete. I've often said that when seeing the world with your camera, knowing where to put the edges is pretty much all you need to know. I discovered how framing the world while looking on a large ground glass can provide endless, unexpected possibilities. And for me, viewfinders on small cameras did not easily show or inspire those insights.

When our travels take us to cities, Michael and I go to museums and galleries in an effort to keep up with what's going on in the world of art and to occasionally absorb new inspiration. For me, my inspirations continue to revolve primarily around the painters. My early influences were Kandinsky (his paintings prior to 1917), Matisse and Cezanne, also the instructive, complex organization of elements in Géricault's and Delacroix's paintings. Later I began to understand the complexity of Bonnard, to appreciate the minimalists, and more recently to look more closely at Rothko and the drawings of Pousette-Dart.

The photographs reproduced in my first book, *Natural Connections*, reflect my ever-present interest in a significant connection with subject matter: an intuitive and intense collaboration between me and what is before my lens. The book is sequenced to a particular visual rhythm and is interspersed with visual pauses of my writings from my travel journals from that period. I still stand by my artist statement in that first book, "Making my art is an expression from the soul that awakens and expands my feeling of connection with the world."

The photographs from *High Plains Farm* represent a large series of photographs I made over three years of travels to my family farm in Texas, a place where my parents, who were then in their mid and late 80s were still farming 1,100 acres all by themselves. This is where I grew up and re-visited every year of my adult

life. I wanted to photograph and write about this place and all that it seemed to embody before my parents died and while the spirit of the place was still vibrant and intact.

To make these very personal photographs, I felt that I needed to be both an insider and an outsider in order to get a larger picture of what it could stand for: that is, the significance of home and place and how we are formed by that, the death of the family farm in America, rural life, and so forth. But I wasn't thinking of any of that when I made the pictures. I just photographed, and each day seemed to bring something new.

High Plains Farm, San Francisco: Twenty Corner Markets and One in the Middle of the Block, and *Madonnina* are all somewhat documentary - yet what I felt when doing each series was making a poetic document. Merely illustrating these things did not interest me; instead, I wanted to place them in the context of something larger and more universally relevant.

In addition to my published books, I have created three one-of-a-kind, handmade books, one with fifty-seven original contact prints combined with my writings, one with thirty-three original contact prints, and one with contact prints, drawings, and objects.

By the time Michael and I photographed Chicago in 2008, I was starting to combine drawing and assemblage with photography. Michael had been encouraging me to do this for a long time, so the Chicago project was my first launch of these combinations. I have since gone much further and into more complexity in those pursuits.

I work in my studio nearly every day, working on as many as five to ten different pieces at a time, slowly figuring out how to bring them to completion. Even though some may await final resolution for a year, something is always in the works. Though I can sometimes make a sumi ink drawing in minutes, it has taken nearly forty years of study and musing before that

"spontaneous" gesture becomes possible. When I'm photographing, I work out the layers of resolution very quickly, following intuition and personal sense of rhythm, but again, I've been thinking and musing about that for a very long time prior to the shutter click.

When photographing, my engagement with the world is quite different from painting. Since my painting studio in Pennsylvania was finally completed in 2009, I was able to resume painting, making collages, assemblages, and also working on still-life photographs in the studio. Many of my collages include photographs. By working in multiple mediums, I have the same visual concerns with which to struggle and resolve as in all of my photographs, and thus feel that this synergy helps me learn from each medium, whether two dimensional or three dimensional.

When I find a composition on my ground glass that warrants making a negative, I consider that to be my starting point, not a point at which to stop. I continue to move the camera around, letting the camera find things for me. Discoveries made in this way usually exceed my first responses. I want to be surprised; without that, I'm just repeating what I already know.

Photographs can be anything one wants them to be - fanciful, imaginative, and can have a big "wow" factor, but the question for me, always, is "Does it have any soul?"

My objective has always been to try to make a photograph, or any work of art, more than what it is of. How does one transcend the literalness of the subject matter before the lens to make a photograph that is more than what it is of? That is what we teach in our workshops.

Now that I am making films (3-screen simultaneous projections), and continuing to photograph with my 8x10 (in both black and white and color), I can say that my interest evolves more and more toward ambiguity and mystery.►

While working in my studio and in the field, I have found that if the work is too comfortable and easy, then I am probably not pushing myself into that frightening new territory where I can learn something. But, when I do get there, it ends up being so much fun.'

f11: Hi Paula, welcome to f11. It's great to catch up with you before you and Michael visit New Zealand.

PC: Thank you. We are very excited about this forthcoming journey to your wonderful country.

f11: We're showing your work from another stunning photographic destination, Iceland, and it strikes me that places like these can't help but imply or even impose great expectations on visitors. With so much research, planning and pre-exposure is there a slight danger of feeling some degree of *déjà vu*?

PC: For visual concerns, there is no 'pre-exposure' or pre-planning at all. The goal, and the excitement, is to discover a place without preconceptions (as much as possible), and to try to experience it all freshly. Wherever we (and I can speak for Michael, too, on this point) travel and photograph, we are committed to wandering and discovering and trying to get a sense of a place, that is, to get in tune in a deep way. Once, when I was taken to a particular sacred canyon in the United States, I suddenly felt overwhelmed by the power of that place and said, 'I can't photograph here,' sensing that I had not been given permission. I didn't even know what that meant exactly, but some time during the next day, I felt completely free to photograph, as if I had absorbed some of what the land had to say to me before I could work there. I guess that's why I never say that I 'take' a photograph, only that I 'make' them. I believe in deep trust between me and the subject, which is one reason why my first book was called *Natural Connections*. ▶



Búðir, Iceland, 2006. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print.
From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee

The extensive planning for these trips involves mostly physical logistics: We study maps and sometimes consider: Can we travel with our vehicle on certain back roads, what is the price of fuel there, what is the Krona to USD exchange rate, what to expect with the language, weather conditions, vehicle regulations and road rules, etc. Of course, we did some reading ahead of time about the history of Iceland - geologic, cultural, social and political history, just to get a feeling for the place - fascinating information that one cannot get by observation. But, once in the place, I can say that we are trying to be as free of pre-conception as possible - we like to wander throughout the island with fresh eyes. Though the great tourist spots are spectacular and worthwhile, we try to stay open to the unexpected and unplanned.

f11: So tell us about these images of Iceland, what was it like to make them, how much time did you have available, and how challenging was the environment?

PC: The last part of your question first: We made three major journeys to Iceland (7 to 8 weeks for each trip) during the summers of 2004, 2006, and 2010. For each of those trips, we shipped our old Land Rover, fully outfitted with all of our camping and photography gear in a container. We also shipped another SUV, which our two assistants would use for their own photo and camping gear. We flew to Iceland two weeks later to coincide with the container ship's arrival in the port of Reykjavík.

The weather in Iceland is quite unpredictable and can be extreme at times. The island has isolated storms, so one can often drive several kilometers down the road and be in a totally different weather situation. The wind was a big problem some days, and the average summer temperatures were around 12 degrees C, so it was chilly with wind and rain. If we were surrounded by high winds and heavy rain, we would sometimes give up and just go to a coffee shop and catch up on some reading - or get

some sleep! Not a bad thing. I have several fun stories in my book about the wind and weather. We forded many streams and rivers, but rarely needed the 4WD on our Land Rover to do so. But we did get advice from Icelanders on how and when to cross. We're accustomed to 'reading' the water because we ford a stream every day to get on and off our own property in Pennsylvania. When you're not familiar with a body of water, you do have to take precautions such as wading out into the river in high boots to check out the low spots. You don't want to experience the cost of a towing service summoned from a remote area of Iceland.

Regarding my personal experiences in making the photographs, perhaps my writing from the preface 'The Poetry of Earth' in *Iceland: A Personal View, Volume I*, gives you an idea:

'Iceland can be forbidding and unforgiving, yet also powerful and dramatic in revealing itself. In making my photographs and films, I found visual music everywhere - from the rhythmic pulsation of steam, waterfalls, waves, rivers, and ice to swirling rock forms of beautiful colour and texture and lava beds covered in centuries-old moss. I also found I would use the word 'surreal' in my journal many times.'

The way all things in nature curve and connect with one another has interested me from the beginning of my art-making years, and it continues to be the deepest source of my inspiration to this day. I believe the secret to all of life is encoded in these patterns. One can see the manifestation of these natural movements particularly well in Iceland, especially in the land and volcanic rock formations, because the island is young in geologic time. During my Icelandic travels, the water, ice, clouds, sky, and weather gave me new information and endless inspiration.'

f11: Given that you and Michael are view camera workers, is excess baggage simply a foregone conclusion? How does one 'pack light' for a long-haul journey with gear of that nature?

PC: One doesn't 'pack light' with our gear. These trips require months of pre-planning regarding the logistics of packing the photo trucks, shipping by container, scheduling transport to and from ports, paperwork for customs and export agents, and on and on. We shipped the film in the container going over, but we hand carried our exposed film back on the plane. Containers are often heavily x-rayed and you can't be sure your container will not get zapped.

To ship by excess baggage is extremely expensive, and then upon arrival, we would have to rent and outfit a vehicle for the safety and ease of working with all the gear. On only one occasion have we put all the gear on an airplane in "excess baggage." We were teaching at the Academy of Film and Photography in Prague in 1994 under the auspices of the USIA (United States Information Agency - a cultural exchange program that sponsored performance and visual arts residencies overseas, a program that no longer exists). They insisted that we take our cameras so we could work there while teaching. We said, "Are you sure?" They insisted. Later, they reported that ours was the largest excess baggage charge they had ever paid in the history of the program. They were otherwise very pleased with our ambassadorship in the Czech Republic.

f11: I guess that wherever you go the 'on the ground' logistics are also somewhat challenging?

PC: The logistics and expense for three summers in Iceland were immense, but such an arrangement was far more efficient for working, and it provided freedom of movement throughout the island. Because of our large cameras, tripods, film boxes, lenses, holders, changing tents, my video equipment, hard drives and computer, etc., it was far cheaper than renting and outfitting a suitable vehicle in Iceland. Plus, all compartments in our Land Rover are outfitted for convenience and immediate accessibility. We could escape from extreme weather and stop to work almost

anywhere we wanted. We slept on top of the Rover in a pop-up tent, and kept all meal times fairly quick and easy. And with two vehicles, we could work miles apart at times, if needed. And having assistants helped make it much more productive and pleasant.

f11: How do you get your assistants for these trips?

PC: We've been very lucky with assistants. They usually contact us and ask if they could join us on a trip. Or, it might be someone we know from a previous workshop or who assisted on a different trip, such as Tuscany. We each have an assistant during the trips and they often trade off working with each of us. We can pay a small part of their expenses, but we provide the fuel and vehicle for their use (\$6–8 USD average per gallon in Iceland) and also transport their photo equipment in our container, if needed. They assist for free and have full access to our teaching and working methods the whole time, as much as they want. We ensure that they also have time for their own photography. We have had assistants whom we have met only through the internet, having no idea if we can easily travel together until we're together on the trip! But, very luckily, each time it has worked out well. Our assistants for the three Iceland trips joined us from various places - Arizona, California, Colorado, Pennsylvania, even Hong Kong (a New Zealander).

f11: Was this your first experience with Arctic light?

PC: Yes, and the light was amazing. On the first trip, I couldn't bear to stay asleep very long; I kept opening the flap of the tent to try and fully realize that gorgeous Arctic light, glowing with warm and deep colours. Even the light in storms could be magical and very different from our home continent. Sometimes in campgrounds, I would peek out of the tent to watch Icelandic families hiking and playing at 2 or 3 a.m. With nearly 24 hours of daylight, we would often ▶

photograph until 10 or 11 p.m., then make dinner, set up the changing tent, change and reload the film holders, and then sleep for a few hours. Dawn followed dusk very quickly, so it was hard to resist the urge to get up too early. I was grateful when we actually had 'nighttime' in late August.

f11: How would you characterise these photographs of yours from Iceland?

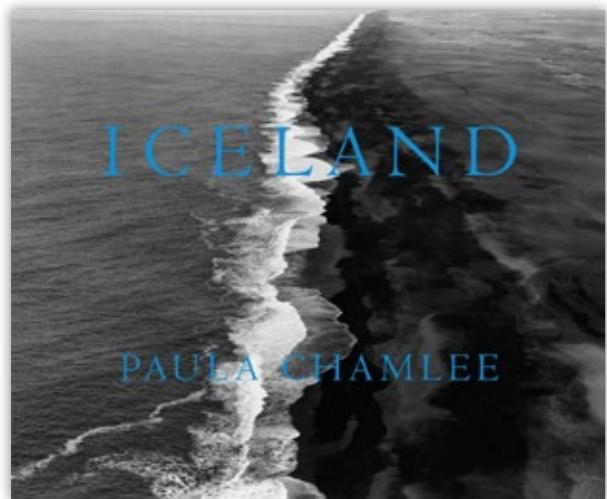
PC: Though these photographs are of Iceland, they are not only about Iceland; they represent my experience there. For me, they are less about the landscape than about my connection to it.

f11: Thanks for sharing this work with us Paula, we'll look forward to seeing what you produce here in New Zealand, and whether or not this initial exploration leads to a return visit!

PC: I have no doubt that my experience in New Zealand will be deeply enriching and inspiring - and engender a desire for Michael and me to return. ■

TS

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Cover of the book, *Iceland: A Personal View, Vol. I*
© Paula Chamlee

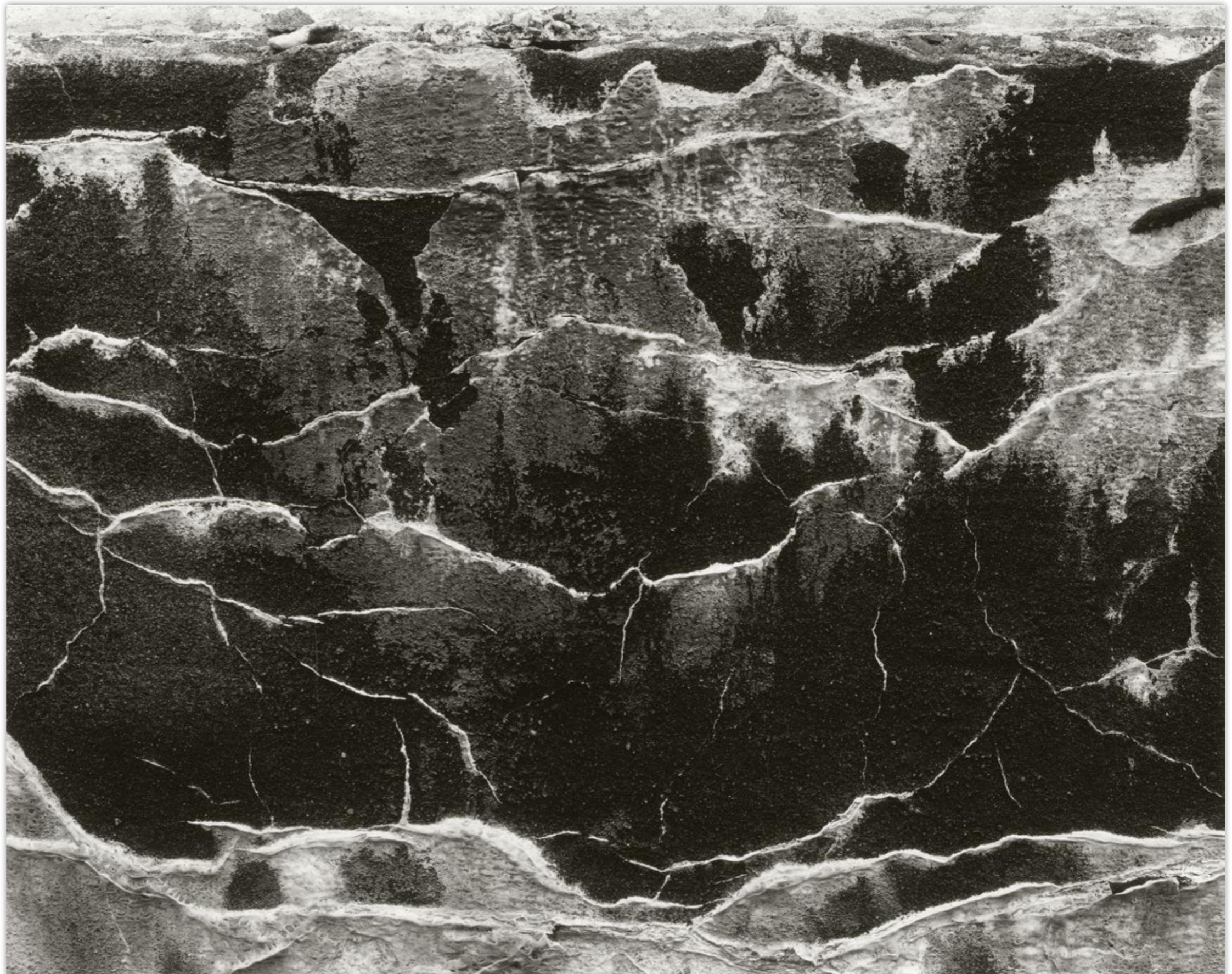


Reyðarfjörður, Iceland, 2004. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print.
From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View, Vol. I* © Paula Chamlee

Jökulsárlón, Iceland, 2004. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



Djúpavík, Iceland, 2010. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



Dyrhólaey, Iceland, 2006. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee

'We made three major journeys to Iceland (7 to 8 weeks for each trip) during the summers of 2004, 2006, and 2010. For each of those trips, we shipped our old Land Rover, fully outfitted with all of our camping and photography gear in a container. We also shipped another SUV, which our two assistants would use for their own photo and camping gear.'



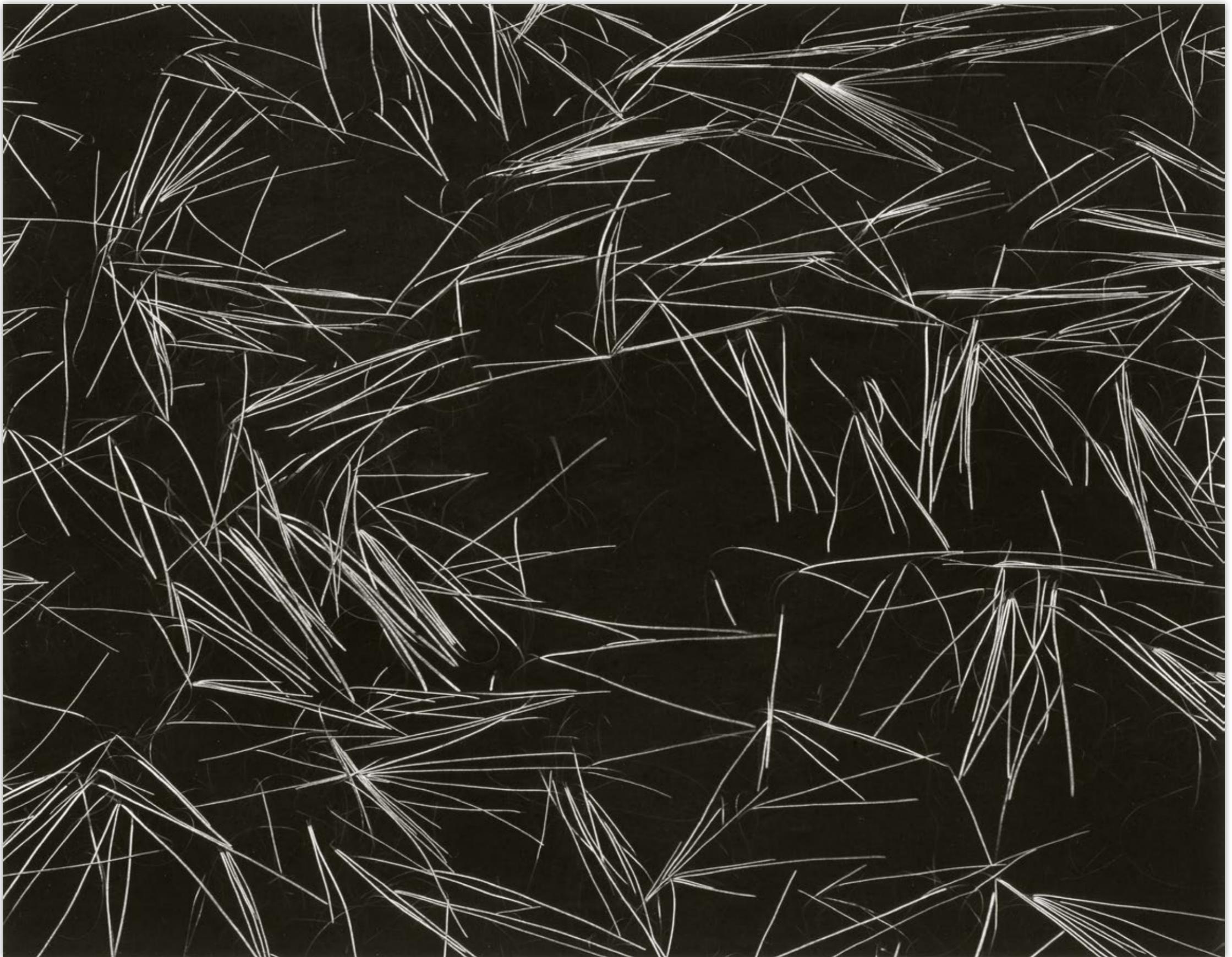
Búðir, Iceland, 2010. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



Jökulsárlón, Iceland, 2006. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



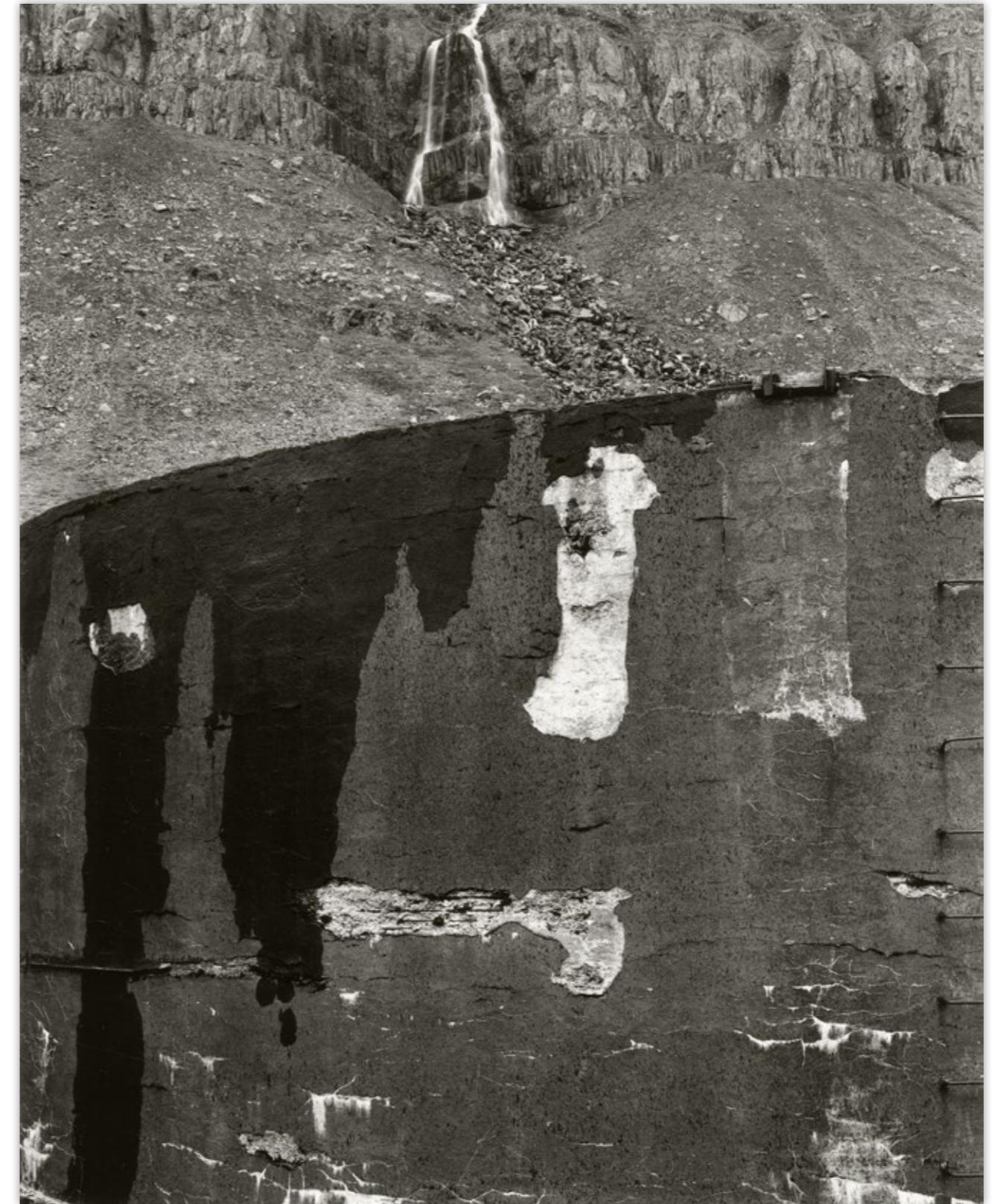
Kjálkafjörður, Iceland, 2010. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



Grindavík, Iceland, 2010. Medium: 8"x10" gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee

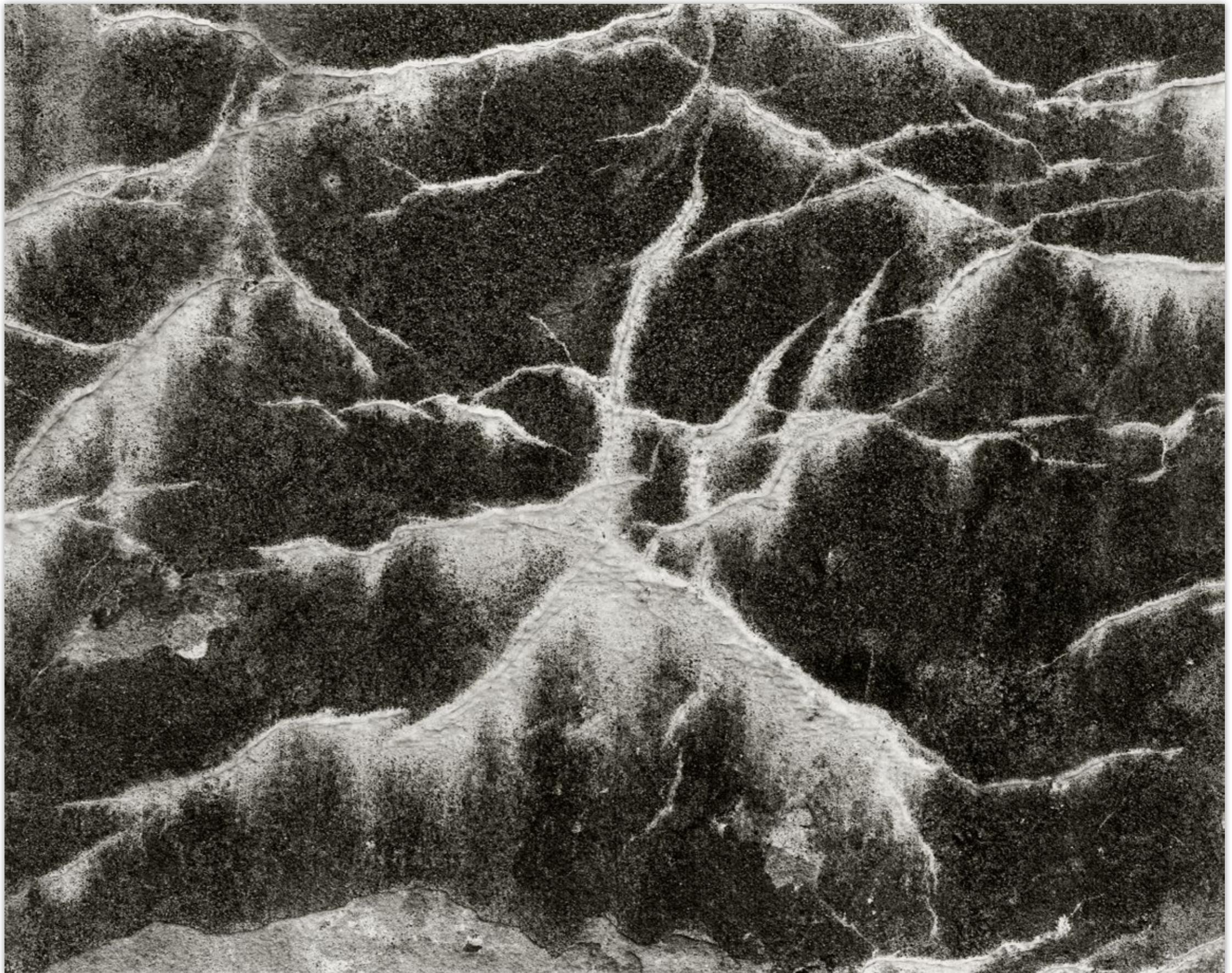


'On the first trip, I couldn't bear to stay asleep very long; I kept opening the flap of the tent to try and fully realise that gorgeous Arctic light, glowing with warm and deep colors. Even the light in storms could be magical and very different from our home continent.'



Djúpavík, Iceland, 2010. Medium: gelatin silver chloride contact print.
From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee

Djúpavík, Iceland, 2006. Medium: gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



Djúpalónssandur, Iceland, 2006. Medium: gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



'Though these photographs are of Iceland, they are not only about Iceland; they represent my experience there. For me, they are less about the landscape than about my connection to it.'



*Fjallsjökull, Iceland, 2004. Medium: gelatin silver chloride contact print.
From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee*

Djúpavík, Iceland, 2004. Medium: gelatin silver chloride contact print. From the book, *Iceland: A Personal View*, Vol. I © Paula Chamlee



In harmony

Michael and Paula – exploring a partnership

f11: I'm really interested in the relationship between you. You are business partners, and creative individuals working within the same craft. What's it like for two artists to live and work together?

MAS/PC: We have often been asked this question. We are together almost constantly. Either we are on the road making photographs as we travel for months at a time in our 1961 International pickup/camper, or in our 1973 Series III Land Rover, or we are back home where we try to find a way to each get enough darkroom time and deal with the multitude of other responsibilities connected with our work. Since we are always working, we sometimes have to stop and make time for each other - even though we are rarely apart.

MAS/PC: In our experience, living with another creative artist is exhilarating and thrilling - we learn from each other's discoveries as well as from our own, quickening the pace of personal growth. Working in the same medium and working in a similar manner seems only to intensify this process. But, living with another creative artist can also be maddening - we have strong opinions about all things visual, (as well as about almost everything else), so the conflicts that inevitably arise in any relationship are intensified.

MAS/PC: Working together in a similar way might seem problematic, but our strong personalities ensure that the technical similarities do not impede our individual vision. That our philosophical and intuitive understanding of the world is deeply akin only helps connect us to each other through our work in a particularly deep way.

PC: After getting my painting studio finished around 2009, I can now spend most of my time there in quiet solitude working on my various projects, many of which include photographic series done in the studio. Michael is extremely respectful of the time and space I need for working.

MAS: We support each other's work totally. When I was once asked who my favourite photographer was (besides myself, of course), my immediate response was, "Paula." Sure, I could have responded, "Edward Weston," as I would have a number of years ago, but I have so thoroughly assimilated Weston's photographs that I feel they have nothing more to teach me. But many of Paula's photographs surprise me and challenge me.

PC: I have always been inspired by the depth and complexity of Michael's photographs, and I am extremely lucky that Michael lauds and promotes my successes without a bit of jealousy or any effort to hold me back. Historically, as well as contemporarily, that is very unusual.

MAS/PC: When we travel and photograph together we take two assistants with us. We are often responding to different things, or to very different aspects of the same places, so an entire day can go by where we barely see each other. But occasionally it happens that we are working in close proximity to each other. While

photographing, we never look on each other's ground glass so we have no idea what the other one is seeing. But later, when looking at each other's finished print, we often exclaim, "We were standing almost next to each other and you saw that!" We are completely respectful of each other's time when photographing and make sure that we each have time for photographing in the places where either of us wants to go.

MAS/PC: We both photograph with large view cameras, use the same kind of film, develop our film with the same formula, print on the same kind of paper, and use the same formula for print developing. And yet, our photographs are not alike at all, and not because of format. (Michael is now making mostly 8x20-inch contact prints while Paula continues to make 8x10s.) The difference is in the rhythms of the photograph. Michael's photographs are, generally speaking, more "constructed," with more rigorous tensions in the structure. Paula's photographs are more lyrical, more "painterly." This has been pointed out to us innumerable times by collectors and curators who readily see the distinct, though often subtle, differences. This is, however, nothing we think about or are even conscious of during any part of the creative process.

MAS/PC: We know well which among a series of negatives we will print and which negatives we will discard, but occasionally we are not sure which way to go and we will ask the other's opinion of whether it is worthwhile to print a particular negative. Because we each have thousands of finished photographs, we always hope the response will be "Toss it." But, alas, the response is usually, "Print it."

MAS/PC: While we can easily travel and photograph together, we rarely assist one another in the field, and we never work in the darkroom together. Since we might arrive at our prints in different ways, were we to try to advise each other when printing we fear it would jeopardize our marriage, almost twenty-six years and counting as of this writing (Jan. 2016). ■

www.michaelandpaula.com
www.lodima.org



Michael A Smith © Hans Bol



Self portrait © Paula Chamlee

PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES

(and don't forget ships...)

I loved the movie and yes some of those same situations can play out if you regularly travel the world - except the shared bed.

To get anywhere, we often need to hop into some form of modern transport. We encourage customers to shoot from such transport, this includes mini buses, maybe a taxi in the city, or from the deck of a ship as we cruise. All scenarios offer new challenges and excitingly, new photos.

PLANES

It goes without saying, but virtually everyone who travels internationally flies. It is amazing to step into a metal tube and hours later, arrive on a different part of our planet with new experiences and cultures awaiting. The whole idea never gets old. I have shot out of all sorts of plane windows but unfortunately, few results work for professional use. In smaller, more suitable aircraft, 'doors off' is the only way, or specialised aerial setups if you are more serious. However, you can still shoot some great travel and memory images from the comfort of your jet airliner. Photography and travel is not always about shooting an award winning image. One of my favourite flying experiences is when we fly to Africa from Sydney. Not every year, but about every second year, we are offered the chance to see Antarctica's ice from an altitude of 37,000 feet – always amazing!

At 37,000 feet and with a triple laminated window. I had the opportunity to shoot the Antarctic ice pack (departing from Australia) when flying to Africa. The hardest part was staying awake as the other passengers were asleep. Program mode, f9.5 at 1/180 sec, 17-40mm lens at 17mm, 100 ISO. © Darran Leal

TRAINS

As I write this feature, my son Pearce has just left Japan and its bullet trains and is in India with its overnight train journeys. What a diverse experience! I remember travelling in France on a bullet train – capturing fantastic blurred 'creative' images and at 300kph, only a 3 hour trip to our distant destination. Train stations are hot shooting locations. It is this open minded thinking that can help you to be more creative with your photography. Use every environment, try things.

AUTOMOBILES

From small rental cars to buses, every part of the journey can offer a new image. Windows down will offer you the best result, with an open aperture and fast shutter speed. I generally aim for at least 1/1000th of a second, but of course this will depend on the creative concept you have in mind. The key with this type of transport is that in most vehicles you are essentially using a moving 'hide'. Often those around you are utterly oblivious to your camera, this offering opportunities to create fantastic people and cultural images. Imagine photographing goats hanging off vehicles in bags, or perhaps an old lady working in her house beside a road in Turkey. The opportunities are endless. ▶



CRUISING

Last year we cruised the Kimberley coast of Australia, plus Antarctica. The year before was an Arctic cruise and the year before that was the Galapagos Islands for the 6th time. Cruises, especially with a photo guide, can help you to target unique locations, can allow you to travel with a group of similar minded travellers and, of course, open up fantastic adventures. I try to limit my own exposure to rough seas on a boat of any size as much as possible. Personally, I just don't get on very well with all that rocking and rolling. We even fly into Antarctica now. Why? To reduce exposure to seasickness, to help all concerned to enjoy the adventure and most importantly, because it maximises your photography time. With all of these forms of photography, digital technology has made a big difference. We can shoot with high ISO settings to help achieve faster shutter speeds. I even use my iPhone for quick snaps. It is also more common today for enthusiasts to own higher quality 'faster' lenses. Information about shooting techniques is everywhere and we are travelling more. This all adds up to more opportunities and more results to share our images with the world. Make sure you print your great images. A photo book will allow you to show off your work now, and for generations to come. Whether it is a trip to your local beach, or you are cruising in Antarctica, have your camera ready, at the right settings for the environment, and be prepared to snap something that might blow you away as 'a one off' unique result. Don't let a bit of glass get in the way. It could lead to an effect that acts like a special filter. Half the time I am not even looking directly through the camera viewfinder, essentially grabbing shots relying on the excellent exposure and focusing systems. Yes this means you miss a few, but you will also enjoy the rewards of the ones that worked out brilliantly.

Enjoy your photography ... ■

Darran Leal

darran@f11magazine.com
www.worldphotoadventures.com.au

Darran and Julia Leal are the owners of World Photo Adventures, Australasia's premier photo tour company. WPA is celebrating 26 years of amazing small group photo adventures. From local workshops and tours, to extended expeditions on every continent, they are famous for offering unique travel and photography experiences. For more information visit:
www.worldphotoadventures.com.au



TOP: Transport can come in many different forms - how about a camel? I love to travel on them as they offer a high and different perspective. In this case our Berber guide was a perfect 'add in' to help tell the story of the Sahara Desert. Aperture Priority, f8 at 1/750 sec, 24-105mm lens at 24mm, 400 ISO.

© Darran Leal

BTM: In Africa, open and 'pop top' vehicles make all the difference as shooting platforms. While I had a \$12,000 camera outfit ready for the big game, the best camera for this image was my iPhone.

© Darran Leal





Freeing ourselves from the constraints of competitions

Over the supposedly quiet season, I have been thinking a little about the need to free our photography up. Freeing it up from whatever builds walls around our approaches to it.

Most of us have at least something in us that makes us competitive, so we want to compete against each other and seek to win, or at least do well. And we get a buzz when we do succeed. So we enter photography competitions – at our local photography clubs, in the ever-expanding number of web-based opportunities, in so-called salons or exhibitions given approvals by our national photographic bodies such as the Australian Photographic Society, or by international bodies such as FIAP.

The judges of competitions vary in their personal photography skill levels or ability to assess images. The local newspaper where I live conducts photography competitions for readers where the judging is done on Facebook by anyone who cares to vote. This means the winners are the authors who have the most FB friends or the best social media skills to self-promote.

Judges at photography clubs and in salons are generally well-credentialled and experienced photographers who have themselves succeeded in such competitions and may well have completed a judging course. So, when we enter these competitions we submit images that we hope will please the judges. Whilst we learn

from these experiences and, hopefully, improve our photography as a result, do we put our imagery into something of a straight-jacket at the same time?

At last year's APS national convention, some of the presenters introduced us to approaches that may not produce images that would succeed in competitions. I think that is a good thing as it helps free up our photography. Not every image we take needs to be aimed at competition. We should enjoy making images that will simply bring a smile to the face of a friend, or cause another person to ask, why on earth did you take that?

The Society's Contemporary Division does not conduct any competitions, preferring instead to encourage its members to focus on exploring their own personal approaches to photography and to illustrate concepts. Members break "the rules" and seek to stretch the boundaries of their photography.

I will continue to enter competitions at my local club, primarily because as a member I want to participate in as many of its activities as possible. I will also continue to enter into a few select competitions. But my principal focus is on creating new images for projects that I embark on; images that will never be entered in competitions but will be shared with anyone who is interested.

**Brian Rope OAM, AFIAP, FAPS, ESFIAP, HonFAPS
Chair, Marketing & Sponsorship Sub-Committee**

2015 – A rewarding year for PSNZ

Get Caught in the Moment - PSNZ National Convention 2016

It's sneaking up fast, so if you haven't already registered for the 64th National Convention of the Photographic Society of New Zealand, don't leave it to the last minute.

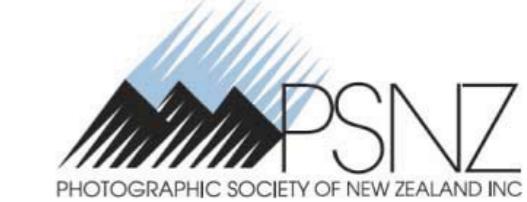
'Caught in the Moment' will be held from April 22 to 25 at Queenstown's Remarkables Primary School, a venue which will suit the informal and friendly format of the PSNZ conventions.

The programme has been carefully designed to appeal to most photographers and features a lineup that includes a vast array of workshops and seminars, field trips, evening events and presenters to keep you inspired and stretch your love of photography.

The workshops include a Landscape Masterclass with Andris Apse, Photojournalism with Queenstown photographer Dave Wethey; travel photography with Australian Master Nick Rains as well as Johannes Van Kan, Tim Hawkins, Laurence Belcher, and Queenstown resident photographers Jackie Ranken and Mike Langford.

The programme will be four days of full immersion of photography with like minded people. A PSNZ convention provides an excellent opportunity for anyone interested in photography to extend themselves and their skills, as well as network and meet new friends.

All workshops have limited spaces so the

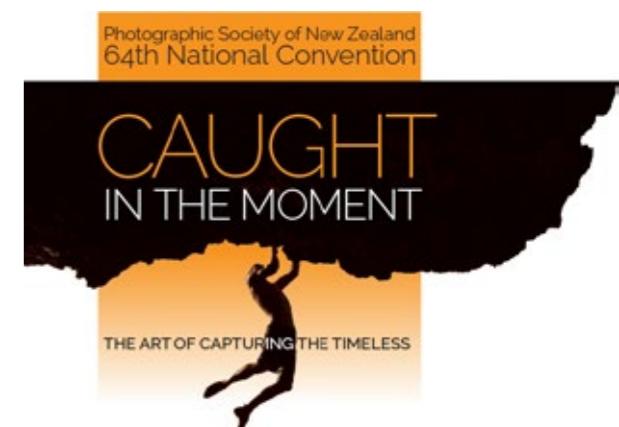


organising committee recommends making your selection and registering without delay.

Full details and registration can be found [here](#)

For more information about PSNZ visit:
www.photography.org.nz

Moira Blincoe LPSNZ is the PSNZ Councillor for Publicity



TELL YOUR STORIES BETTER WITH SUSANTO WIDJAJA

VICTORIA 16TH FEBRUARY 2016

To learn how we can tell the same stories in a more impactful and meaningful way. The 90 minute presentation will revolve around the method we use to tell the stories in our work. Firstly we will talk about what is the basic of storytelling and how we appreciate good stories. We will then see some examples of good stories told poorly and average stories told well. Then We will go through a step by step guide on how we can build a framework in our storytelling and tell our stories better.

SOME KEY POINTS THAT WE WILL COVER:

- What are the elements of a good story?
- How can we tell stories better?
- How do we seek for stories?
- Why do people connect with different kind of stories?
- Breaking down the storytelling elements in some examples.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SUSANTO

He always likes to tell stories but had never been really good at it. This was until he realised his gift of story telling, through film. This breakthrough has brought him to where he is today, someone who inspires others in many parts around the world through his work in Paper Cranes. He thinks of great stories like miracles. They are actually everywhere, you just need to look deeper. Ever since he found Paper Cranes in 2008, he has been fortunate enough to win multiple national and international awards as well as conducting storytelling workshops both in Sydney and overseas. Now his team consists of a small number of creative individuals that work together with the same passion and determination, and that is to tell stories that not only make others think, but also the ones that make others feel... and he believes that together we can make the world a better place, one story at a time.



SOUTH WEST SUMMER SESSIONS

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
22ND - 23RD OF FEBRUARY 2016

Join us at magnificent Caves House in Yallingup, for an action-packed two days of speakers and workshops with some of the most influential photographers from Perth to the South West of WA. Covering a huge range of genres from live wedding and fashion shoots to presentations on business and creative thinking – including an evening open-air keynote on photojournalism and documentary photography by a couple of the worlds best David Dare Parker and Martine Perret!

With a mini trade show and giveaways, and opportunities to network and learn from the best – you definitely won't want to miss out on this!

SPEAKERS | STEF KING, CHRISTIAN FLETCHER, RUSSELL ORD, PARIS HAWKEN, DAVID DARE PARKER, MARTINE PERRET, RUSSELL BARTON, TONY HEWITT & SCOTT ROBINSON



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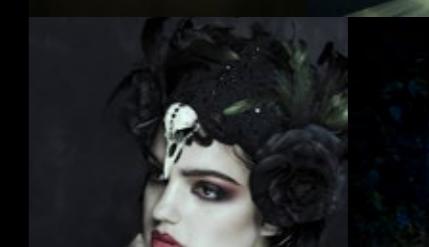
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DATES CONFIRMED

VICTORIA

23rd – 24th of February

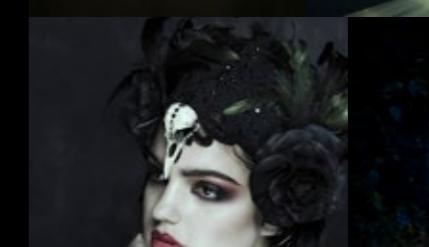
ENTRIES OPEN



NEW SOUTH WALES

19th – 20th of March

ENTRIES OPEN



TASMANIAN

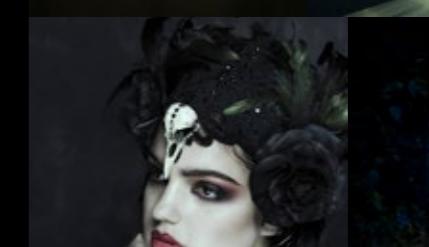
16th-17th of April

ENTRIES OPEN

QUEENSLAND

30th of June – 1st of May

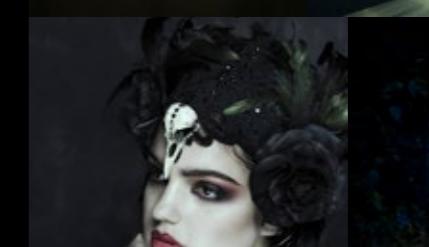
Dates Confirmed



NORTHERN TERRITORY

16th – 17th of May

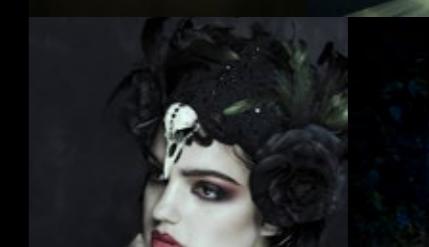
Dates Confirmed



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN

31st of May – 1st of June

Dates Confirmed



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN

19th –20th of June

Dates Confirmed



Tony Hewitt APP.L GM.Photog FNZIPP Hon. FAIPP, Nathan Maddigan APP AAIPP, Terry Hann APP.L AAIPP, Kevin Chamberlain APP M.Photog, George Fragopoulos APP M.Photog, Ken Drake APP M.Photog, Suellen Cook APP, Shannon Cotterill APP M.Photog, Lori Cicchini APP AAIPP, Kris Anderson APP AAIPP, Steve Scalzone APP AAIPP and Will Dielenberg APP AAIPP



WEDDERBURN: THE PAINTERLY LANDSCAPE WORKSHOPS WITH TONY BRIDGE

JUNE-JULY 2016

The Maniototo district in Central Otago, New Zealand, has to be one of the most beautiful parts of the country, and in winter it is an extraordinary landscape which begs to be photographed.

This is a workshop like no other. It aims to take photographers of all levels and get them to think in new ways, to step outside the conventional paradigm and begin to make truly individual work by exploring their own response to place and time. It begins with the principle that each of us is unique and therefore we should use ourselves as our own greatest resource.

Technically it moves along and explores the edge between painting and photography, exploring issues which face painters and offering ways of achieving this in Photoshop.

Some feedback received from previous participants:

'I have found Maniototo special to me. I have learned more about myself and my goal in photography after each of the three workshops I attended between 2011 and 2015. I have gained a lot technically, aesthetically, and personally through your teaching and evaluation of my work. These are the feelings from my heart.'

'The Painterly Landscape Workshop for me not only showed me a wonderful and varied land, but also let me see a pathway to my mind and soul from making images, through to creating in post production. A workshop not to be missed if you wish to enlighten your creative side.'

'I came away from the workshop with new ideas for future projects, new friendships and memories and the inspiration to develop my photography further.'

**EARLY ENQUIRIES AND PROMPT
BOOKINGS ARE ENCOURAGED AS
PLACES ARE STRICTLY LIMITED ON
THESE SMALL GROUP WORKSHOPS**

LEARN MUCH MORE HERE



BUT WAIT – THERE'S MORE...



HOW TO FIND THE LINKS TO EXTRA CONTENT IN f11 MAGAZINE

Each issue of f11 Magazine contains dozens of hotlinks, all expanding on our content and offering an enhanced readership experience.

There are links to online content such as videos, and to websites expanding on the ideas on offer here. Passing your cursor over the link usually highlights it.

Anywhere you see an image of a computer screen contains a link, usually to video content.

There are links highlighted grey within articles which may provide further explanation or take you to a photographer's website.

All advertisements link to the appropriate website so you can learn more about the products you're interested in.

Finally, there are email links to many of our contributors so you can engage with us.

HOW TO USE THE LINKS

A single click of the mouse will activate the link you're interested in. Here's how they behave depending on how you're reading the magazine:

ONLINE readers will note that these links open in a new tab, or window, in your web browser, so you won't lose your place in f11, as this stays open in its own tab or window.

If you're reading our **PDF** on your computer, Acrobat/Adobe Reader will open the link in your browser while holding the f11 page open for you to return to.

If you're reading our **PDF** on your **iPad**, iBooks will ask you if you wish to leave to open the link. Once you've viewed the link contents in Safari, simply return to iBooks where you'll find f11 remains open on the page you were last reading.

Enjoy.

AIPA

FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

www.aipa.org.nz

"It's great to belong to an organisation that supports photographers and is actively involved in making the industry better for everyone."

Garth Badger
www.garthbadger.co.nz



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“NZIPP is more than just an Institute. It's a great organisation to make awesome friends, enjoy a coffee or beer and be surrounded by like minded professionals. For our clients, it gives them peace of mind that we're accredited photographers and part of a trusted support network.”

Warren Williams - NZIPP Member

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Queenstown Centre for Creative Photography



New Zealand Photographic Workshop Specialists – 2016

Jackie Ranken and Mike Langford, both internationally award winning photographers, judges and lecturers based in Queenstown, New Zealand.

Mike Langford Canon Master, Grand Master NZIPP, Australian Travel Photographer of the Year 2013, NZ Travel Photographer of the Year 2012.

Jackie Ranken Canon Master, Grand Master NZIPP, NZ Landscape Photographer of the Year 2013 & 2014, NZ Professional Photographer of the Year 2012, NZ Creative Portrait Photographer of the Year 2012, Australian Landscape Photographer of the Year 2012.

Join us for hands-on, practical workshops, where you can use our CANON EOS 700D cameras and/or trial our range of lenses and filters. All camera brands are welcome. Our aim is to teach and inspire. We will enhance your camera skills and develop your creative palette. We believe you will leave our workshops totally inspired and excited about your own photographic future. We always run small groups of eight students with two tutors.

Our 2016 event schedule:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| March 17-21 | 'Gold Fields' Central Otago |
| March 25 - 27 | Queenstown Portrait |
| April 15-18 | Autumn Colours 1 |
| April 25-28 | Autumn Colours 2 |
| May 26 - 30 | Kinloch 'Top of the Lake' |
| July 14-18 | Mount Cook |
| August 18-22 | Mount Cook Winter |
| September 15-19 | West Coast – Haast |
| October 6-10 | Fiordland |



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New Year's Resolution:

Simplify and Declutter

Nice idea, but is it even possible for a commercial photographer?

While those who know me would be more than a little surprised to find me reading a self help book of any kind, over the summer break I started reading Joshua Becker's best seller – Simplify. Simplify is a book that outlines the (according to Joshua) seven guiding principles to help anyone declutter their home and life.

How did this come about? Well, my wife and I live in a lovely but compact townhouse and after being here, and accumulating things, for 15 years the space seemed to contract around us.

This was further compounded by me moving all of my gear in when I became a nomadic photographer with my permanent studio replaced by a home office. I've related that story in an earlier issue, but let's just add that this really put the squeeze on the already small amount of space we have to play with.

When the attic eventually filled up, and the two car garage could now only fit one due to a large quantity of photographic and studio equipment taking up the rest of the space, we started feeling a bit claustrophobic. The way house

prices are in Auckland at the moment, moving to an even slightly bigger place is not a practical option, so until the day we can punch out and move to the dream place in the country we had to find a way to regain control over our surroundings. Enter Joshua's book.

It contains a wealth of information and practical advice and it certainly worked wonders in the living areas of the house, but when it comes to thirty something years of accumulated gear, props, and photographic problem solving knick-knacks, the principles and techniques outlined in this tome of wisdom were about to be seriously challenged.

Over the years I've shed (though often reluctantly) most of the equipment that has been superseded commercially along the way. You know what I mean, things like film cameras, darkroom equipment, printers and seldom used accessories. Even with that regular housekeeping, I'm still left with a massive inventory of specialised bits and pieces that I believe I would deeply regret parting with.

If I did, the phone call would surely come the very next day, to shoot something I hadn't shot in years and reminding me that the last time I



had bought a widget or made up a special holder/reflector/stand/plinth to make the job easier - or even possible. Oh how I would kick myself if I had to do it all again, and in the worst case, what if I couldn't even get the said widget any more? This created anxiety and emotional turmoil of the highest order!

Take, for instance, this example found on Joshua's blog. It's called the 12-12-12 Challenge which requires one to collect 12 items to relocate or keep, 12 to throw away, and another 12 to give away.

Try that with your equipment bag, locker or cupboard. If anyone out there can do this I take my hat off to you. I did manage to find 2 or 3 things out of 36 that I could safely shed after an hour or two but that was it. Success eluded me.

Feeling the bite of failure I sat back and looked at all that kit and decided that if I couldn't effectively declutter then the least I could do was get it properly organized. I convinced myself that this was worthwhile as at least I could find what I needed whenever a request came in.

As I now do all of my studio work in spaces rented for the duration of the shoot, I've learned

to make sure I have everything I could possibly need for a particular job in the car as I can't just go behind the cabinet or into the bottom drawer to get some little thing as I once would have.

In this situation the clock is always ticking loud and clear when you have a space booked, whether it's a shoot of a few hours duration, or a day or two. So there's no 'popping home' to grab the missing doodacky.

So after a trip to the hardware store and a day in the garage I now have a neatly organised collection of plastic boxes clearly labelled with genres like 'jewellery', 'food' 'bottles/glass', 'gerbils' and so on, so I'm all ready for whatever 2016 brings.

How long this will stay like this is another matter altogether. Clutter has a mind and a life of its own, it's an organic life form.

Try the book, lots of great ideas – maybe some will work for you.

I was a difficult subject... ■

GB

Buzz

gary@f11magazine.com



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Michael A. Smith & Paula Chamlee from the USA will be conducting photography workshops in New Zealand in March, 2016.

Vision and Technique

The Art of Seeing Photographically

After these workshops everyone will make better photographs, in their own terms.

Some unsolicited comments they have received:

"I have been a commercial photographer since I was 17. I went to college, assisted the top photographers in London, worked on global international advertising accounts for the last twenty-five years, and last year I went back to college to do my Masters. Not once in all that time have I ever had such an interesting and informative photographic experience."

"Just a note of thanks to you both for having me at your wonderful workshop. There are events that occur in one's life that you consider a milestone for growth for who you are or become. I can honestly say that your workshop is one of my milestone events. You have renewed my photographic vision. You have reaffirmed my love of photography."

"The workshop expanded my perspective and I have not felt this level of excitement since I started in photography. The best workshop of the dozen that I have attended."

For dates and details and to sign up:

www.michaelandpaula.com



IAN POOLE does PHOTOGRAPHY



With an active and long-term membership of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP); a lifetime of photographic experience; an extensive role in judging photographs in Australia and New Zealand; and a post-graduate degree in visual arts; Ian Poole is well placed to assist you with your photographic images. Ian's previous teaching experience at university level, as well as strong industry activity, gives him powerful skills in passing on photographic knowledge.

Are you looking for assistance in any of the following?

- Portfolio construction and development
- Initial advice for a photographic exhibition
- Curatorial assistance with an exhibition (opening night details – even choice of wine)
- Re-assess your photographic output – weddings/portraits
- Writing a strong artist's statement
- Choosing strong photographs for competition entry

Ian works from Teneriffe, an inner city Brisbane suburb, but there are many ways to contact and speak to him.

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photographers who became my mentors – and such was their silver tongued monologue delivered in the space of 3 metres and 10 seconds. Lighting was always easy – blast at f11 with flash. But posing had to be controlled and arranged and done in moments.

Working the graduating crowds as the completion of the awards ceremony was a short timed photographic feeding frenzy that required similar, but slightly different skills. The robed and mortar-boarded graduate had to feature prominently, but the cluster of family needed to be respected and appropriately arranged. Groups of graduate friends could not be ignored, but family groups must come first. This was all in a time well before such institutions stepped in and arranged a single entity to do this documentation and usually well away from the hurly burly of the public entrance.

The skills gained were many and varied. Recognising a saleable shot from 20 metres was a requirement. Using the right language to greet, slow down, stop and interact with a prospective subject was critical. Posing, rearranging, grouping, checking for bra straps, fly-away hair etc – all of this done on the run and with great respect, was as critical as getting the correct exposure.

Any wonder I regard this 5-6 year period of my life with fondness and a gratitude to those unnamed fellow photographers who shared a few of their secrets. What they didn't tell me I learnt from the School of Hard Knocks and Dreadful Mistakes, I'm sure you're familiar with it? ■

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School of hard knocks

It is not commonly known that I had a reasonably extensive background in wedding photography prior to moving through to the commercial and advertising genres. With hindsight I was probably not the greatest exponent of the craft at that time. But I do look back with a little fondness at the skills that I learnt during those development years.

The late 1960s, in yet to come of age sub-tropical Brisbane, Australia, was not a hotbed of creative energy. Powerful flash units semi-permanently fixed to medium format cameras and driven by the equivalent of a motor cycle battery draped over one's shoulder were the norm.

No it wasn't the equipment that was paramount in my early training but the people skills I observed and learnt from clients and other photographers. Remember I was the classic back-yarder. No formal training, no tertiary education; just a man with a Nikon F and the desire to earn some extra money.

The Nikon was the first mistake! No photographer employer was interested in 35mm. Far too small a film size, ignoring the convenience of a smaller camera. After investing in the Nikon all I had money for was a second hand Yashica 635 twin lens camera using the 6x6cm 120 format film.

But the real training came in having to interact with clients who had not booked my services. It was a time when following a reading of the Saturday morning wedding column in the daily newspaper, a list of weddings and times and locations was created and passed out to a small group of 'Spec' (speculative) photographers who

would set off with rolls of film (but not many) and business cards (lots). Our job was to garner photographs of the wedding guests, and one or two of the bridal party. Our sales came from family groups dressed in their Sunday best, hair combed and faces cleaned attending a formal gathering, possibly for the first time in a while. As well as taking photographs, our job was to sprinkle the wedding guests with business cards encouraging them to visit the Studio in the following week.

My job was to create photographs that sold.

This most basic of all marketing business premises was hammered into me. Family groups lined up in an aesthetic, but well lit, group were only successful if all faces were towards camera and had NO blinks. Finding a grandmother with a cute grandchild was like striking gold. These moments had to be exploited (in the nicest most professional photographic way) and turned into 'must have' photographs. Remember I only got 10% commission on SOLD photographs.

This later translated into formulae that was useful when covering more hectic and fast moving events like the foyer of the theatre holding a Saturday afternoon ballet matinee or in the crowded foyer outside university graduations. The Grandmother Formula was a pure gold mine at ballet performances. Smooth talking little old ladies became my stock in trade. A sharp, but polite and respectful, repartee was developed. I was working with one or two older

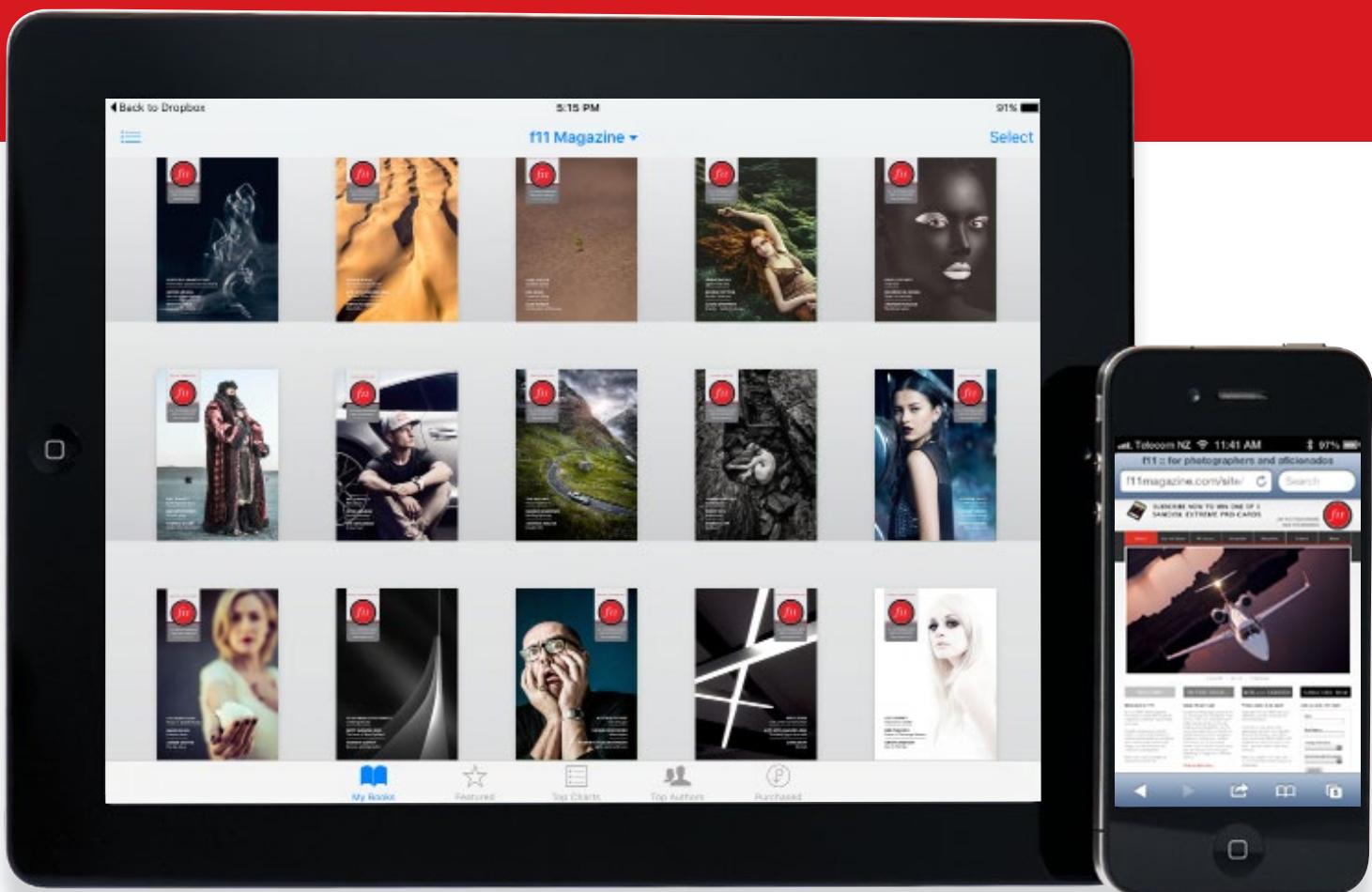
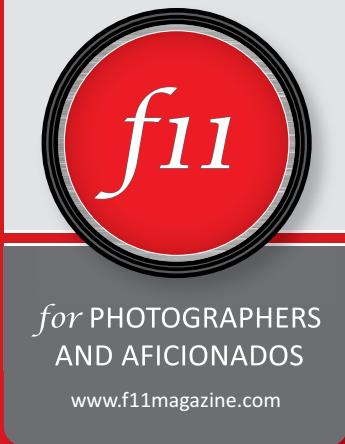
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