

CREATIVE

ZYNE

VOL 2 | ISSUE 1

PRGI NO.: MHENG/26/A0124

INTERVIEWS

ALEXANDRA THANNHÄUSER
ZUZANA FAJMONOVÁ
BETINA LA PLANTE

TRAVEL

ANTARCTICA
NANO- EXOTIC GETAWAYS

ART

GINGER LIANNE
KIRAN ADITYA

INSPIRATION

RACHAEL TALIBART
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CREATIVE ZYNE


This magazine is born out of a shared feeling among photographers today—the absence of a magazine that truly understands them. In a space crowded with excessive advertising, gear-driven noise, rankings, and recycled advice, Zyne offers something quieter, more honest, and deeply needed. It moves away from the repeated spotlight on already celebrated names to make room for voices, stories, and perspectives that deserve to be seen and felt.

At its heart, Zyne celebrates what often goes unspoken—the inner life of the artist. It engages with the intersection of art and law, exploring authorship, ethics, and the realities of creative practice, while holding space for mental well-being, struggles, and the uncertainties that shape every creative journey.

Alongside this, Zyne brings thoughtful recommendations of books, films, and courses that genuinely enrich the practice of seeing and creating. It is a space to pause, reflect, and reconnect—with images, with ideas, and with the self.

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Photograph by Vivek Verma

From the Editor



Dear Reader,

In the fierce pursuit of dreams, I find it easy to run so fast that life quietly loosens its grip on us. We keep shifting the goalpost, convinced the next milestone will finally let us rest or have something bigger and better in store.

Meanwhile, days dissolve, unnoticed, and the people who make those days truly meaningful patiently wait at the edges of our ambition.

Living with our twin toddlers for the past two years has gently corrected me. I've come to cherish the sacredness of the smallest moments: nights cut short, bites shared from the same plate, walks measured in miniature steps, living room dances to nursery rhymes, soft arms anchoring me to my desk. They do not steal time from my work; they are life happening in its purest form.

When we finally raise the camera, we do not come to it empty. We arrive carrying voices that stayed with us, songs that softened us, pages that widened us, and the quiet imprint of those we have loved. What appears in the frame is guided not only by light, but by the life already glowing within us.

So perhaps the truest task before us is simple, though never easy: to slow ourselves enough to be changed by living. To allow experience to leave its quiet color upon the heart. Only then can a photograph hold more than what is seen.

May we not reach our destination having missed our lives.

VIVEK VERMA | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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INTERVIEW BY VIVEK KUMAR



Zuzana Fajmonová

FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER

Zuzana is an award-winning Czech photographer and visual artist known for blending scenography, body-painted elements, and hand-crafted props to transform sketches into immersive visual narratives. Winner of the World Photography Cup in Dallas, the Mile Awards, two FEP European Advertising & Commercial Merit Awards, and the František Kupka Award, her work has been exhibited globally and widely featured in Czech media.

1. Your work is renowned for its vibrant color palettes and meticulous compositions. How do you approach color as a storytelling element in your photography?

Color is incredibly important to me. It has the power to influence the viewer's emotions and shape the entire atmosphere of an image. In storytelling, color plays a crucial role—both in photography and in film, where directors deliberately use color palettes to support the mood of a scene.

I always consider how colors work together, making sure combinations feel meaningful rather than overwhelming. I often use contrast, or on the contrary, subtle color accents and minimalism.

2. In your "Pop-art" series, you reimagined iconic art movements. What draws you to reinterpret historical art through a contemporary lens?

It began at the very start of my creative journey, when I was still an amateur attending a photography course. We were assigned to reinterpret a famous painting. At that time, I photographed my friends on maternity leave as Madonna-and-child figures—being on maternity leave myself, it became my creative escape.

I also studied art history for the first time at that school. I fell in love with it, even though I hardly understood it at the beginning, so I started researching each period more deeply.

That led me to continue creating interpretations of historical artworks. Every style taught me something new—about color, light, composition, or symbolism.

Over time, I created work inspired by antiquity, pop art, cubism, Yves Klein, Henri Matisse, abstraction, romanticism, futurism, and surrealism—which speaks to me the most.



FRIDA

dfxš
ZA OBZOR



premiéry 7. a 9. listopadu 2025 | Šaldovo divadlo

režie, choreografie | Marika Milanová

taneční divadlo o bouřlivém životě mexické malířky





3. Your "Mater" series is deeply personal. How did this project evolve from personal experience to public exhibition?

Mater began as a school assignment. I am currently studying for my master's degree in fine art photography, which I should finish next year—I enrolled in university at the age of 34. After two very difficult childbirths, a documentary publication course helped me process the trauma. Photography became a safe way to express my emotions.

The entire book consists of mobile-phone photos, taken mostly at home or in the ICU. The project will have its first exhibition in February next year in Prague.

4. You craft your own props and backgrounds, often painting models' bodies. Can you walk us through your creative process from concept to final image?

This way of working has been with me from the beginning. When I started creating during maternity leave, I had no equipment or studio. I used a basic Nikon 5300, one bulb, and my living room. To create more interesting images, I had to be resourceful—so I began buying leftover fabrics and making fictional costumes. In my series Antika, I used bodypaint for the first time and painted my own backdrop to resemble ancient marble.

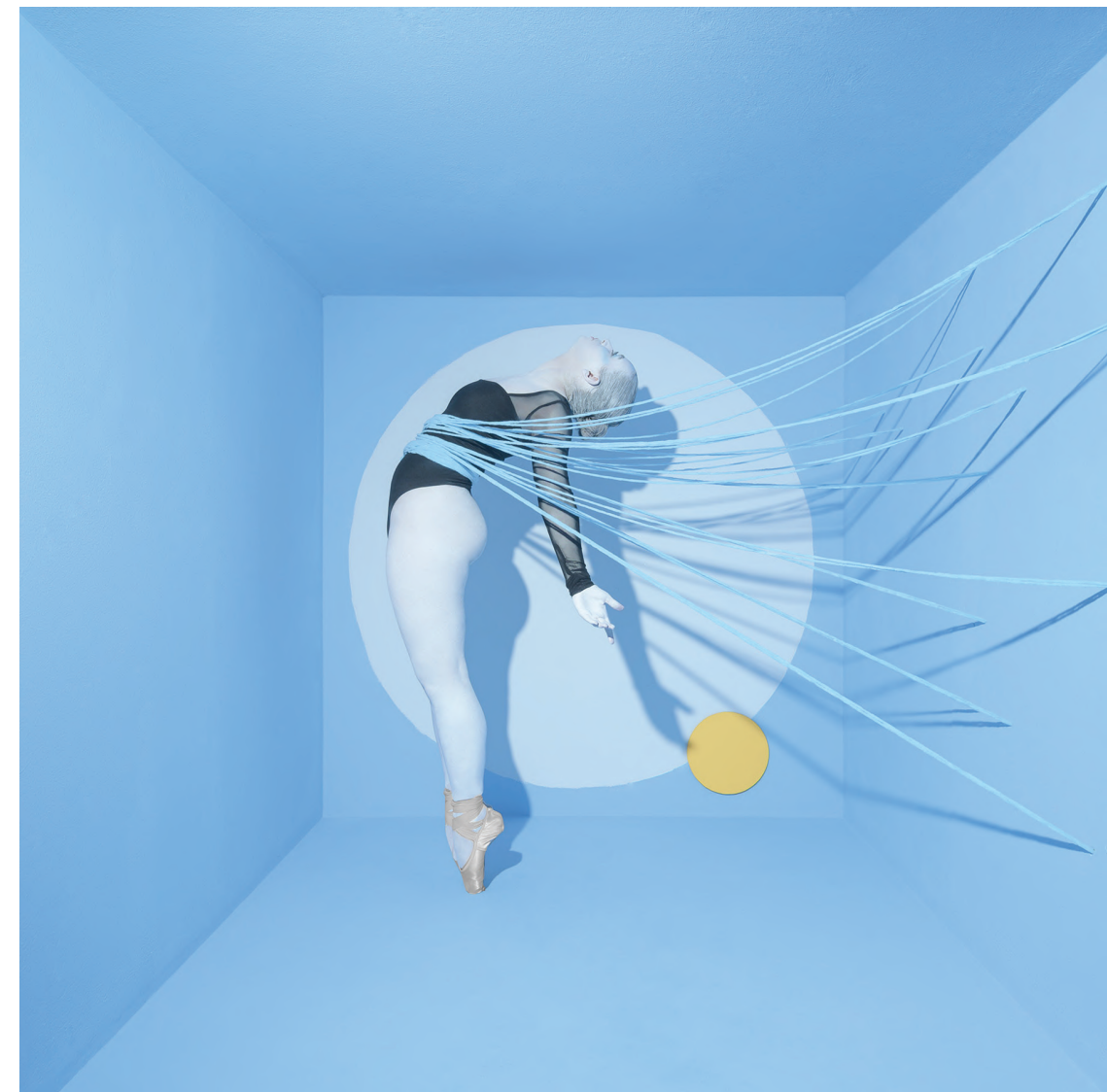
I used everyday objects as props—cables, crocs, polystyrene—combining ancient themes with modern materials. For pop art, I incorporated objects typical for the style; in abstraction, I relied solely on bodypainting.

Later, for Innerspace, my husband built a giant cube in my studio, allowing me to create more complex scenography. I love the entire process—from the first idea to the final realization. The actual shooting is only a small fraction of the work. And above all, it's a lot of fun.

5. How do you balance artistic intuition with technical precision?

Intuition and technique complement each other beautifully. Intuition tells me when something feels "right." I often think about a sketch for months, and when that moment comes, I know it.

Then technical precision takes over—it's essential for me. I'm a perfectionist, always looking for ways to bring a project to its best possible form.



6. Your compositions often include surrealism and symbolism. How do you decide which symbols to incorporate, and what do they represent?

I've been a dreamer since childhood. I painted, invented stories, imagined my own worlds—and it still shapes me today. I love art and still feel like a student learning to see.

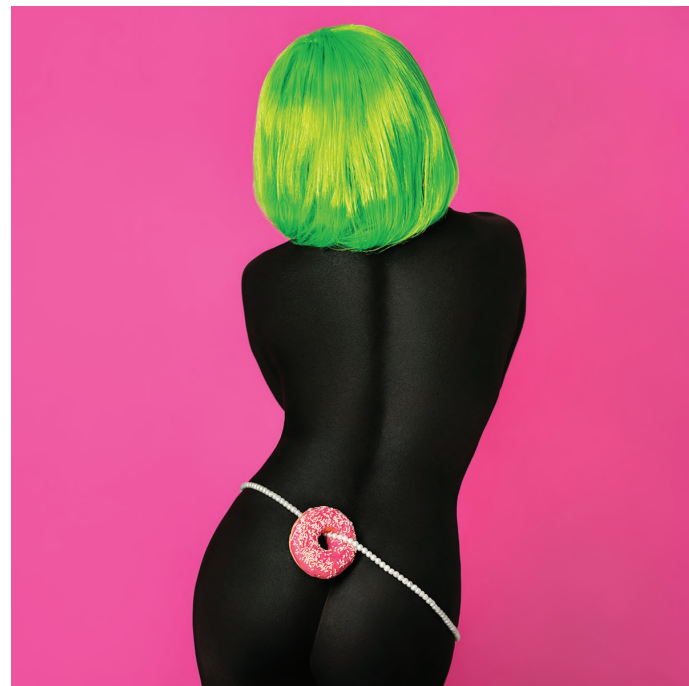
I am deeply influenced by sci-fi and fantasy—magical worlds and characters live somewhere in my subconscious, and they naturally appear in my work. I love both sleek dystopian aesthetics and rich fantasy universes.

7. You draw inspiration from nature, silence, and introspection. How do these elements manifest in your photography?

Nature is where I find calm. When I feel overwhelmed by ideas, it helps me slow down and clear my mind. I practice mindfulness and meditation—I truly believe these skills should be taught in schools. I also believe that all answers we search for are hidden within us.

That's why it's so important to "have a coffee with yourself," go into nature, pause, and listen to your inner voice. That is where the deepest inspiration comes from. Recycling is also very important in my work. I create using what I have available. I often reuse or repurpose objects destined for disposal.

I do this even in client work for theatre projects, for example, I use discarded props from their storage.



“
Have a coffee
with yourself
”

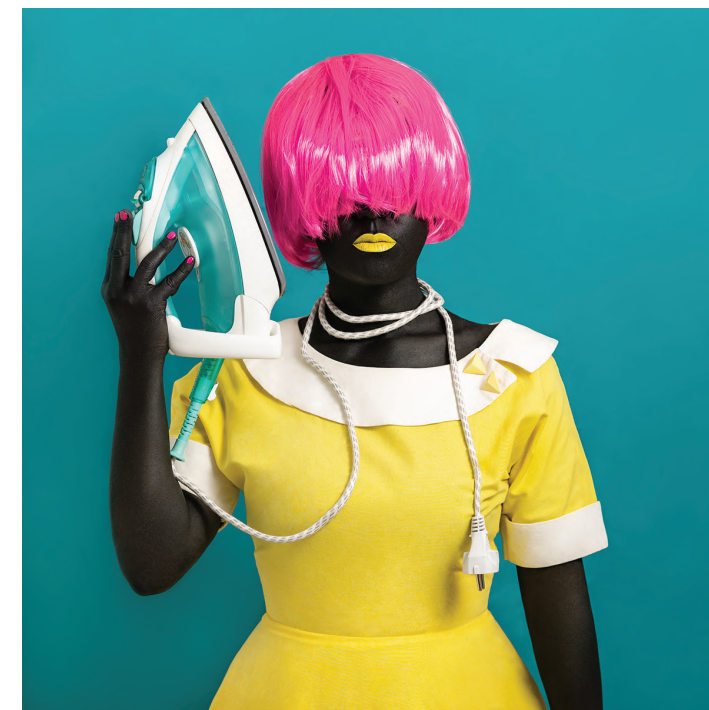
8. As the founder of a creative school and a mentor, what is the most important lesson you hope to impart to your students?

I want to give people the desire to create. Many students tell me that through my classes, they rediscovered their joy in creativity—and that is the greatest reward.

I love helping others discover their talents. There are so many gifted people, each with unique potential, and I enjoy supporting them. Most importantly, creativity should feel joyful. Original ideas emerge when we are open, playful, and in a state of flow.

9. Your work has been exhibited internationally and recognized with numerous awards. Does fame bring expectations you feel you must meet?

I still feel like an enthusiastic student or a beginner who simply loves creating. I don't fully know how to define "success." I just try to do what fulfills me. Art has been with me since childhood—I went to art school, and when I was eight, I illustrated my best friend's first book. Today she's a full-time writer. That connection is beautiful.



10. Tell us about one shoot that went spectacularly wrong—and what it taught you.

I like mistakes, even though they don't feel good. I truly believe there are only successes or lessons. Many times I forgot clips for the backdrop, batteries died, or my card was full. These moments force you to be creative and think fast.

The worst was when I didn't record the first kiss at a wedding—I simply forgot to press "record." I later captured a similar moment during the day and no one noticed. It taught me a lot: mistakes happen, and we must learn to handle them gracefully.

11. What three skills or lessons would you tell an emerging photographer to master first?

- Don't make excuses like "I don't have equipment." Having nothing makes you more creative.
- Study painting masters—they mastered light and composition perfectly.
- Photograph a lot. You truly "shoot your way" toward good photography.

12. Three photographers who inspire you to push your work further?

I adore Tim Walker—a master of scenography and one of my biggest icons. I love Annie Leibovitz—she blends documentary, commercial, and artistic styles beautifully. And classics like Gregory Crewdson or Erwin Olaf—they inspire me deeply.

13. Looking ahead, what themes or concepts are you eager to explore?

I am deeply drawn to surrealism. I want to continue creating projects that are 100% handcrafted, without AI—AI is great for sketches, but it cannot replace real creation. I also want to expand my teaching internationally and inspire students around the world. I love traveling and meeting people—it enriches me immensely.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

Rachael Talibart

Rachael Talibart is a professional photographer specialising in the ocean, particularly waves. Her work is represented by galleries in UK, USA and Germany, is frequently exhibited, and has been featured in major fine art publications worldwide. She recently published her fourth monograph, *Sirens: The Gallery Edition*.





Much of Rachael's early childhood was spent at sea. This has left her with a fascination for the ocean in all its forms, but especially in stormy weather. For Rachael, nothing beats a day on an empty shore, the wilder the weather the better, and this is reflected in her work.

Rachael owns f11 Workshops, providing location workshops and online training. An experienced teacher and lecturer, Rachael is particularly interested in the creative aspects of photography.

When the Shutter Clicks, the Law Clicks Too

BY VIVEK KUMAR
LAWYER & PHOTOGRAPHER

Vivek Verma is an investment banking lawyer based in Mumbai with over 12 years of professional experience, including early work on intellectual property rights matters.

He is the Chief Editor of Zyne magazine and the founder of the Zyne Awards, and he contributes to several of the magazine's signature columns.

He also runs an independent photography blog, *Creative Genes*.



The Risk We Rarely Prepare For

Photographers are conditioned to anticipate uncertainty. We study light before it changes, wait for gestures before they unfold, and prepare for technical failure long before pressing the shutter. Yet the risk that most frequently shapes a photographer's professional future rarely occurs during the act of photographing. It begins afterward.

Images travel further than intended. Credit quietly disappears. Clients assume ownership. Photographs resurface detached from context or authorship. These moments seldom reach courtrooms, yet their consequences — fractured trust, damaged reputation, lost opportunity — often prove more enduring than formal disputes. Photography discourse celebrates vision and craft. Far less attention is given to the legal reality that attaches itself to every image the instant it is created. Not because it lacks importance, but because it feels incompatible with creativity itself.

And yet, the two coexist from the very first click.

Creation and Control Are Not The Same Thing

Across most legal systems worldwide, the principle appears reassuringly simple: the photographer who creates an image is its author. Authorship emerges from creative decision — from standing in a particular place, at a particular moment, and choosing to see.

Copyright ownership typically begins there. But authorship and ownership are fundamentally different ideas. Authorship acknowledges creation; ownership governs control. In commissioned photography especially, this distinction becomes fragile. Payment is frequently interpreted as transfer of rights, while photographers often assume creative authorship guarantees continued authority over use.

Neither belief survives misunderstanding. Ownership can shift through contracts signed quickly, clauses insufficiently examined, or agreements never written at all. Professional reality is rarely determined by intention; it is determined by clarity.



The Forgotten Dimension: Moral Rights

Beyond economic ownership exists another layer rarely discussed outside legal circles — moral rights. Recognised across many jurisdictions, these protect the enduring personal connection between creator and work.

They commonly include the right to attribution and the right to object to alterations that distort meaning or damage reputation.

In today's digital ecosystem, images are endlessly re-edited, cropped, filtered, and redistributed. A photograph may travel globally within hours, detached from authorship or presented in contexts never imagined by its maker. What appears to be minor modification can fundamentally alter how a photographer's work — and reputation — is perceived.

Such protections, however, remain effective only when understood. Moral rights are sometimes waived unknowingly, embedded within standard contractual language creatives rarely pause to examine.

Silence, once again, becomes the greatest vulnerability.

The Cost of Unspoken Expectations

Early in my own career, a wedding commission revealed how quietly professional conflict can arise. The assignment concluded successfully, and weeks later I included selected images within my portfolio. The client objected, asserting that payment granted exclusive ownership and privacy.

From my perspective, portfolio usage reflected accepted professional practice. From theirs, it represented breach of trust.

The true issue was not legal disagreement but absence of agreement. No contract addressed ownership, privacy, or promotional use. Discussion quickly shifted from professional reasoning to personal grievance. The photographs were removed, yet reputational criticism remained — public, searchable, and enduring.

No legal ruling followed.
But consequences did.

Most photography disputes unfold this way — through assumptions never tested until expectations collide.

Ownership Still Requires Sensitivity

Even where copyright remains with the photographer, ethical responsibility persists. Photography frequently intersects with intimacy — weddings, portraits, personal narratives, private celebrations. Legal permission alone does not guarantee professional wisdom.

Portfolio publication may be industry norm, but trust demands communication. Respect for subjects and transparency of intent remain as essential as technical skill.

Professionalism resides in recognising that legality and empathy must move together.

“Most photography disputes are not about bad intentions. They begin with assumptions that were never written down.”



Rights, Payment, and Professional Value

Another misconception persists within creative practice: that payment and rights exist as separate conversations. In reality, licensing, delivery, and usage permissions form part of the same professional exchange.

Establishing boundaries around payment and usage is not adversarial behaviour. It signals seriousness — an understanding that photography operates simultaneously as art, labour, and intellectual property.

Creative industries increasingly reward those who treat their work accordingly.





Thinking Beyond The Assignment

Photographs routinely outlive the circumstances of their creation. Images commissioned for private purposes may later define exhibitions, publications, archives, or personal legacy. Rights relinquished casually today often shape opportunities unavailable tomorrow.

Many photographers look back wishing they had charged more. Far more wish they had retained control.

The long life of an image demands long-term thinking from its creator.

A Practice Worth Protecting

Legal clarity does not diminish artistic freedom; it enables it. The majority of professional conflicts in photography arise not from hostility, but from avoidance — conversations postponed, clauses unread, expectations presumed.

Every photograph carries two exposures: one made through light, the other through agreement. Photography asks seriousness from those who practise it — not only in how images are made, but in how they are protected. In a profession sustained by trust, clarity is not bureaucracy. It is creative independence.

When the shutter clicks, the law clicks too.



INTERVIEW BY VIVEK KUMAR

Alexandra Thannhäuser is a German photographer with a background in architecture and digital media. Her work explores the relationship between space, structure, light, and human presence through carefully composed urban scenes defined by geometry, rhythm, and visual balance.

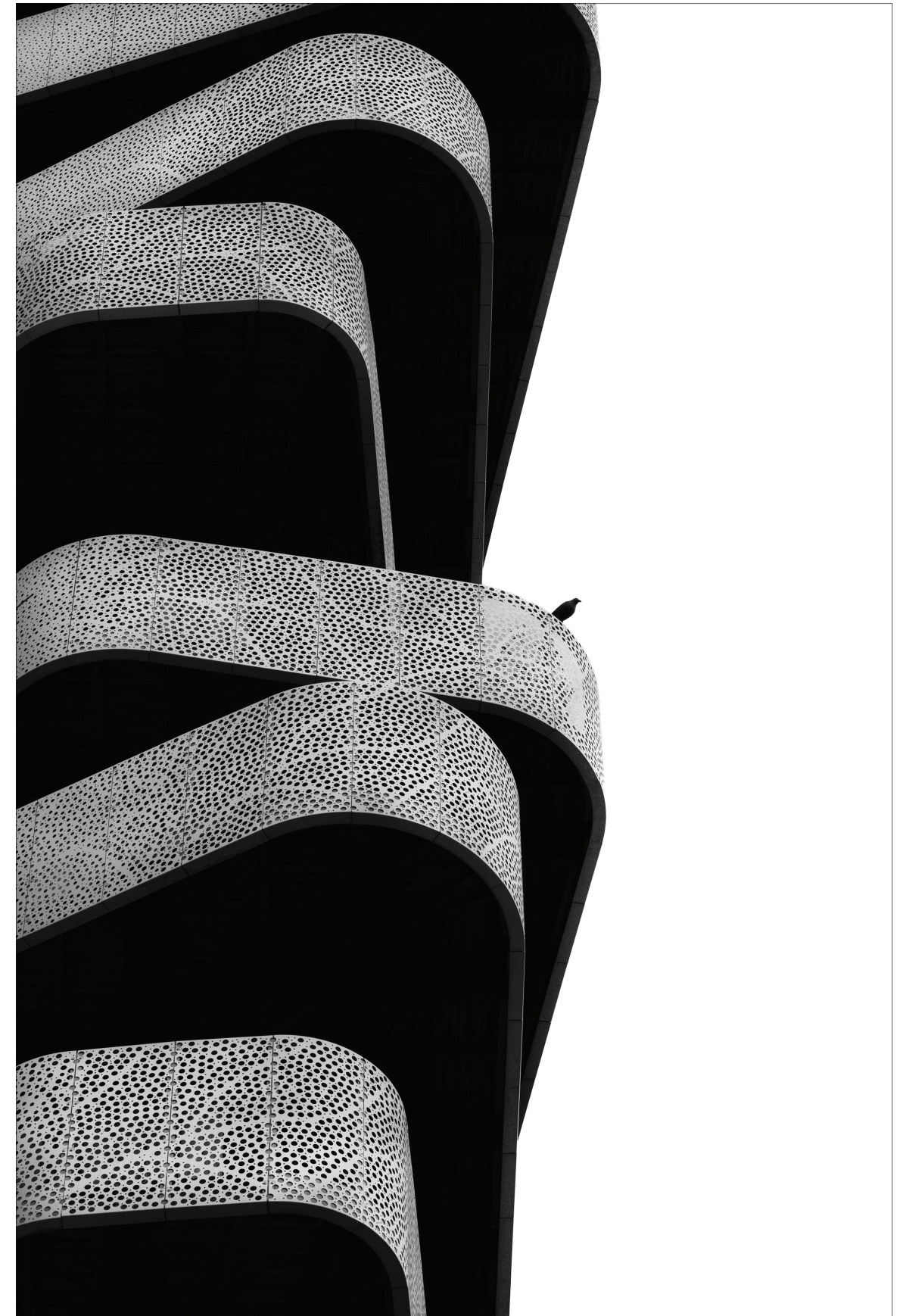
Her photography has received international recognition and has been exhibited and awarded in Europe, Western Asia, and North America. In 2024, she published her debut fine art photography book, *Beyond*.

Working at the intersection of street and fine art photography, Thannhäuser's practice focuses on observation, compositional precision, and the subtle visual narratives found in everyday urban life.



FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER

Alexandra Thannhäuser



Echoing Heights

Taken in Nijmegen, Netherlands: This photograph highlights the rhythm of repeating architectural forms. The presence of a small bird shifts the composition from a study of structure to a dialogue between scale and space, reminding us how subtle details can redefine perception.



▲ **Passing Time**

Taken in New York City, USA:

The monumental window of Grand Central Terminal forms a precise architectural grid, while a passing reflection blurs across the frame. A lone figure moves through the structure, caught between stillness and motion — a fleeting moment within the constant flow of the city.



▲ **Crossing Over**

Taken in Liège, Belgium:

Escalators rise toward a vaulted ceiling, where repeating arches create a strong architectural rhythm. A lone figure introduces scale and human presence, turning a functional space into a study of symmetry, movement, and structure.

1. You describe photography as a way to slow down and observe with awareness. How has this mindfulness practice influenced your life beyond the camera?

When I head out with my camera, I feel most like myself. Photography has taught me to be present in a very grounded way. The act of walking, observing, and waiting without forcing an outcome has gradually shaped how I move through daily life as well. I've become more attentive to pauses, changes in pace, transitions, and quiet moments - not just visually, but emotionally.

This slower way of seeing has helped me cultivate patience and acceptance, allowing space for things to unfold rather than trying to control them. Over time, this mindset has extended beyond photography and influenced how I approach everyday situations, relationships, and periods of change.

2. Your portfolio has distinct strands — Street, Architecture, Abstract. How do you decide which mode to work in for a given subject or project?

I rarely decide in advance which “strand” I’m working in. Most of the time, the distinction only becomes clear afterward, when I look back at a day’s work. When I’m walking through a city, I respond intuitively to what draws my attention - sometimes it’s the structure of a space, sometimes the rhythm of light and shadow, and sometimes a fleeting human presence entering the frame.

Often, the same location can offer all three possibilities. A street corner might first appear as an abstract composition, then reveal its architectural logic, and finally become a stage for a human gesture. I try not to force a category onto a place. Instead, I allow the image to take shape based on what the environment offers and how I’m responding to it in that moment.

“Photography then becomes a very personal act, a way of translating an inner state outward through what I notice and choose to frame”

3. Many of your images celebrate subtle beauty in the simplest moments. How do you cultivate that sensitivity to small details in your everyday practice?

For me, it starts with walking attentively through familiar places, often returning to the same routes and allowing my pace to soften. Rather than forcing a moment to appear, I stay open to what gradually comes forward, even when I’m holding a composition in mind. This way of moving through space allows small details to surface - shifts in light, fleeting relationships between space and form, quiet gestures.

Photography then becomes a very personal act, a way of translating an inner state outward through what I notice and choose to frame. I believe subtlety reveals itself when you remain relaxed and open, allowing intention and observation to exist side by side.



▲ Visor

Taken in Valencia, Spain:

Reflected in still water, Santiago Calatrava's architecture transforms into an abstract form resembling a visor or helmet. The reflection shifts the familiar structure into something unexpected, revealing how architecture can change meaning through perspective and moment.



◀ In Between

Taken in Düsseldorf, Germany:

This photograph explores the tension between physical reality and the digital realm. It reflects on how both shape identity, inviting harmony not by choosing one over the other, but by navigating both with awareness.

4. Your architectural background clearly informs your work. Do you ever notice lines, symmetry, or composition in everyday surroundings, outside of professional projects?

Constantly - it's almost impossible not to. Architecture trained my eye to read space instinctively, and that way of seeing has become inseparable from daily life. I notice how people move through built environments, how light defines surfaces, or how repetition creates rhythm - even when I'm not consciously thinking about photography.

These observations don't always result in images right away, but they accumulate over time. Photography becomes a way of translating that spatial awareness into a visual language, allowing me to respond to the world with the same sensitivity I developed through architectural thinking.



“The act of framing, observing, and waiting offered clarity and stability - not by providing answers, but by slowing everything down enough to listen.”

5. Can you share a moment or period where your camera really helped you reorient or make sense of change?

There have been periods where photography became less about making images and more about grounding myself. Walking with a camera helped me reconnect with my surroundings during times of personal transition.

The act of framing, observing, and waiting offered clarity and stability - not by providing answers, but by slowing everything down enough to listen.

6. As a fine art photographer, what role does process play for you? Can you share a “process ritual” that feels essential?

Process helps me manage attention and focus. I tend to take in a lot of impressions at once, which can feel overwhelming, and with that come many ideas about how to respond visually.

An essential part of my process is allowing myself to pause and sit with a place, letting scenes unfold on their own rather than reacting immediately. On a practical level, I wear comfortable clothing - especially shoes - because I walk for long periods and often work from unusual or low angles to shape a composition.

When I take that time, things begin to align - sometimes a sense of flow develops, sometimes it doesn't, and I've learned to accept both. At the same time, I often step away from a scene or return to it from a different angle, allowing distance and movement to reveal something I might have missed at first.

Being present and patient matters more to me than producing an image, and the photographs tend to emerge from that state rather than from intention alone. I usually work either alone or with a fellow photographer who shares a similar sensitivity. Working alone allows me to fully sink into a place, while working together can add another layer of reflection. Exchanging experiences and observations often deepens how I see and understand the work.

7. Looking ahead: is there a subject, a style, or a direction that feels like a frontier for your photography?

Looking ahead, I see two parallel directions emerging in my work. On one hand, I'm drawn toward images that reduce visual elements further - moving closer to abstraction while still holding a trace of lived space. I'm interested in a more compositional fine art approach, where structure, balance, and spatial relationships take precedence.

On the other hand, I want to engage more deeply with people through both spontaneous street encounters and more considered portrait projects. While these approaches differ in form, they share the same attentiveness to space, light, and gesture. In both cases, I'm interested in subtle visual storytelling, allowing meaning, presence, and quiet shifts in a subjects' inner state to emerge through context rather than explanation.

8. Looking back on your journey, what three pieces of advice have shaped your style, and which would you share with readers?

First, slow down. Many of the images that matter most to me came from patience rather than urgency.

Second, trust your intuition. Trends change, but intuition creates continuity and authenticity over time.

And finally, embrace uncertainty. Not knowing exactly where a project will lead can be uncomfortable, but it's often where the most honest and meaningful work begins.

▼ Deep Sea



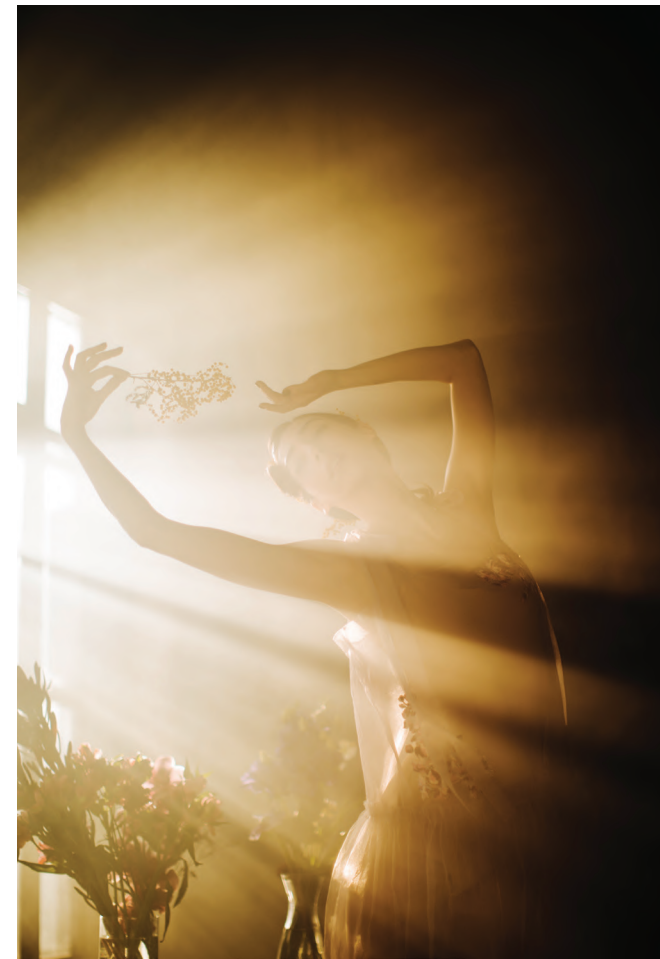
“
Embrace Uncertainty
”

Taken in Valencia, Spain:

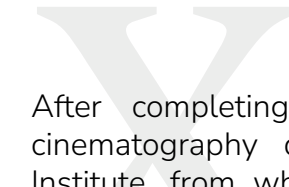
Reflected in still water, Santiago Calatrava's structure takes on the form of a vast skeletal creature. The tiny silhouettes of passing joggers introduce scale, turning the monumental architecture into an imagined deep-sea presence emerging from the surface.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

Xenie Zasetzkaya



Xenie Zasetzkaya is 30 years old and was born and raised in Moscow, Russia. She began taking photographs at the age of 13 while still in school. Her grandfather, a lifelong photographer, played a formative role in her journey. After his death, she inherited his film cameras and extensive photographic archive. Experiencing this loss as a teenager was deeply challenging, and photography became a means for her to continue communicating with him. Nearly 17 years later, she still feels this connection through the camera, light, and her photographs.



After completing school, Xenie enrolled in the cinematography department at the Moscow Film Institute, from which she graduated with a degree. Photography and film form the core of her life, and she continues to exist between these two creative worlds. Her professional journey spans from working as a backstage photographer on film sets to becoming the chief cameraman for ballet backstage productions. She has worked with all major theaters in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as the Royal Opera House in London.

Alongside her theatrical work, she has collaborated with Russian magazines, photographing prominent Russian film actors, and also photographed John Malkovich during a film shoot in Moscow. Xenie creates short feature films and documentary essays and aspires to work on international film productions and to direct her own feature film in Russia. Currently, she is more focused on photography and Instagram, travels extensively, and actively promotes her work independently both within Russia and internationally.





Source: Galeria Elvira Gonzalez

LESSONS FROM LEGEND

CHEMA MADDOZ

BY REMON DIAZ

Chema Madoz (Madrid, 1958) is one of the most relevant and influential living photographers in the world of photography as a form of artistic expression. With a background in art history and photography, he developed his work with notable influences from the classic Surrealist movement (Dalí, Magritte, Man Ray, Meret Oppenheim, Duchamp) due to his playfulness with the irrational, but with the clear distinction that his work is not linked to the dreamlike but rather to everyday objects; and from Dadaism for its break with established norms, opting to move away from digital photography and manipulation by constructing his own unique universes.

His visual poetry (André Kertész, Joan Brossa) uniquely and personally addresses concepts such as life, time, memory, and death, approached with his minimalist and conceptual style in black and white. His works, generally unaccompanied by texts, titles, or explanations, challenge the viewer through decontextualization.

He forces us to reinvent reality, prompting a reinterpretation of what we observe. With irony, humor, conceptual depth, and poetic sensibility, he always aims for the viewer to play an essential role in the contemplation of the work, avoiding any preconceived notions.

Remon Díaz, a Hispanic-Cuban photographer based in Miami, is internationally recognized for his conceptual, poetic work spanning photography, installations, and mixed media, with his book *LINES* shortlisted at the International Photography Awards.

All photographs copyrights to Chema Madoz



Cocktail Dress (1985)

This is one of the artist's most iconic photographs, taken during his early explorations of conceptual and surrealist themes. The elegance of the model's calm and upright posture, in her remarkably simple white dress, invites us to visual delight.

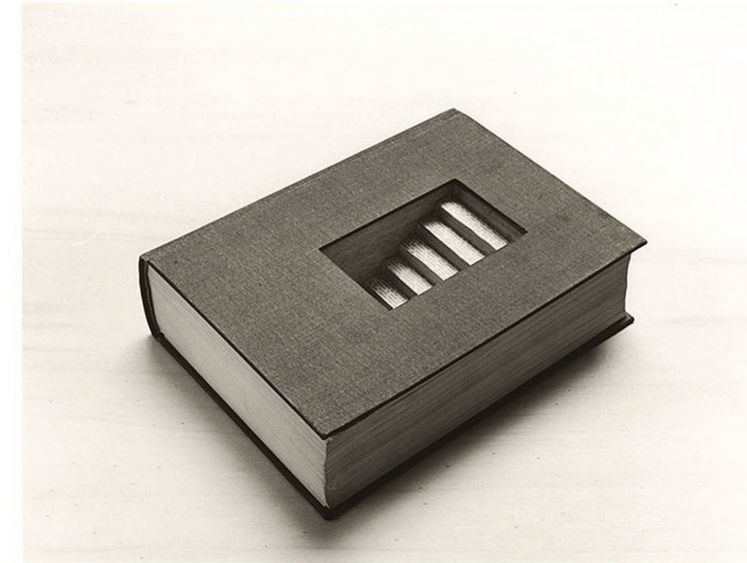
The anonymity, achieved through the cropped upper portion of the image, transforms our perception and subtly guides our attention to the glass (cleverly filled with a dark liquid in a triangular glass and with precise juxtaposition), which we can infer contains wine. This image has already achieved classic status in contemporary photography.



Untitled (1987)...5

The visual link directly refers us to the work of the great Dalí. It also reminds us of the great mystery of Marcel Duchamp's "Ready-Made." But with its compositional precision and poetic quality, it invites us to worlds we do not know. It is like a poem we read for the first time, and in its contemplation, it irrevocably captivates us.

Undoubtedly one of the most important authors in the current landscape, whose work is a must-see and must-study. His work offers a novel, imaginative, conceptual, and poetic view of everyday reality and its elements. In a way, it challenges us to reconstruct the way we observe and imagine the world we inhabit.



Untitled (2014)...3

With this photograph, the association and reference are evident. With careful lighting and construction of the main element, executed with detail and technical mastery, the photo invites us to the magic of reading, with the imperative to immerse ourselves in it.

It could also refer to the capacity for synthesis in modern society, with its physical limitations and the impossibility of fully immersing ourselves in the splendor of uncensored reading. Undoubtedly, a suggestive and wonderful work.

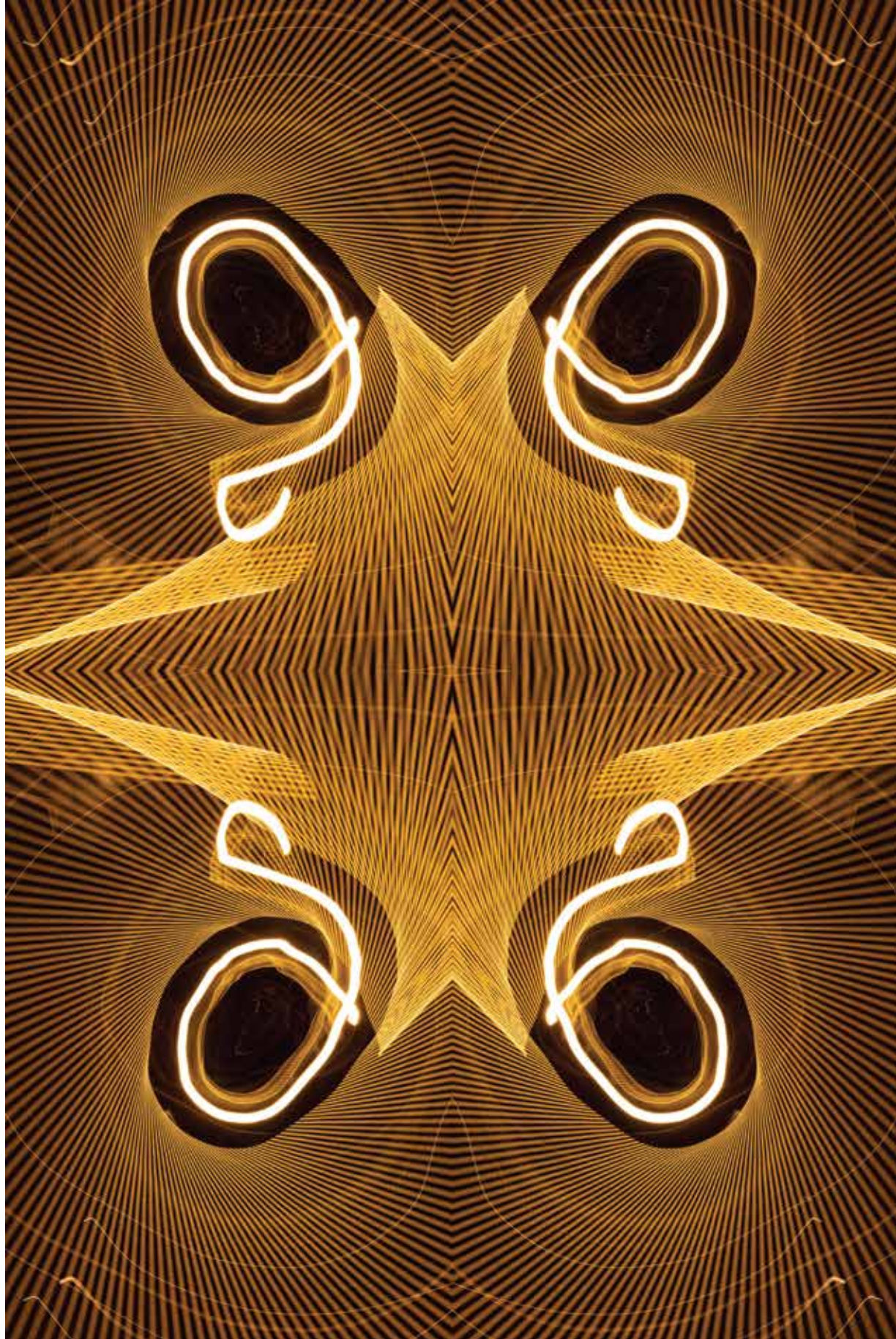
This photograph also holds a special place in his extensive body of work. Here, the concept essentially removes us from reality. With an exquisite composition and very precise technique, it breaks all logical moorings. Through the simple presentation of opposites in the general imagination, it reveals the details of what we reflect. It clearly touches upon the phenomena of identity and tolerance with the unexpected, unforeseen shadow. It delves deeply into questioning our truth, which is none other than the being we assume ourselves to be and the one we truly are.

Untitled (2000)...2



Clock Tracks (2000)...4

This photograph directly defies any kind of explanation or reference. Decontextualizing what coexists and offering a broader and deeper vision is an almost impossible task. Time, clock, tracks, train, interruption, transportation, life... we pause while we look at the clock on our wrist or in our living room, which continues its countdown.

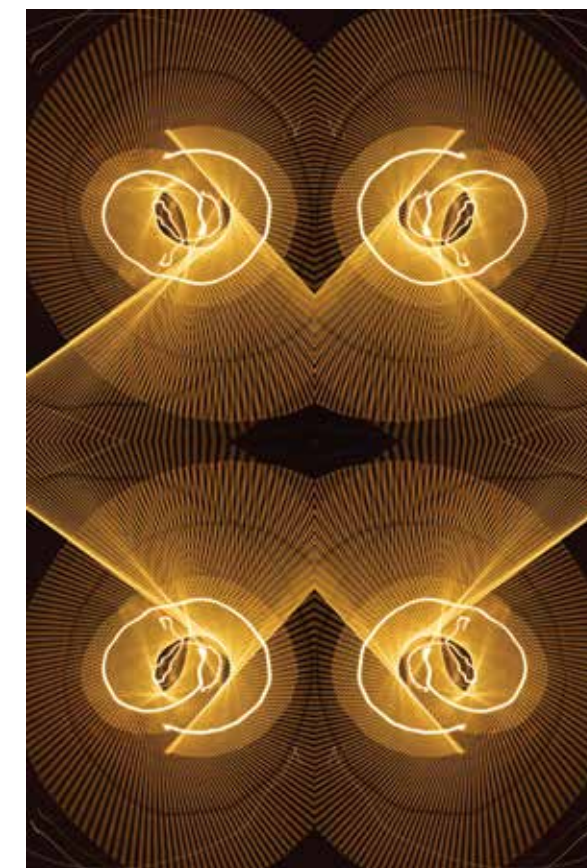
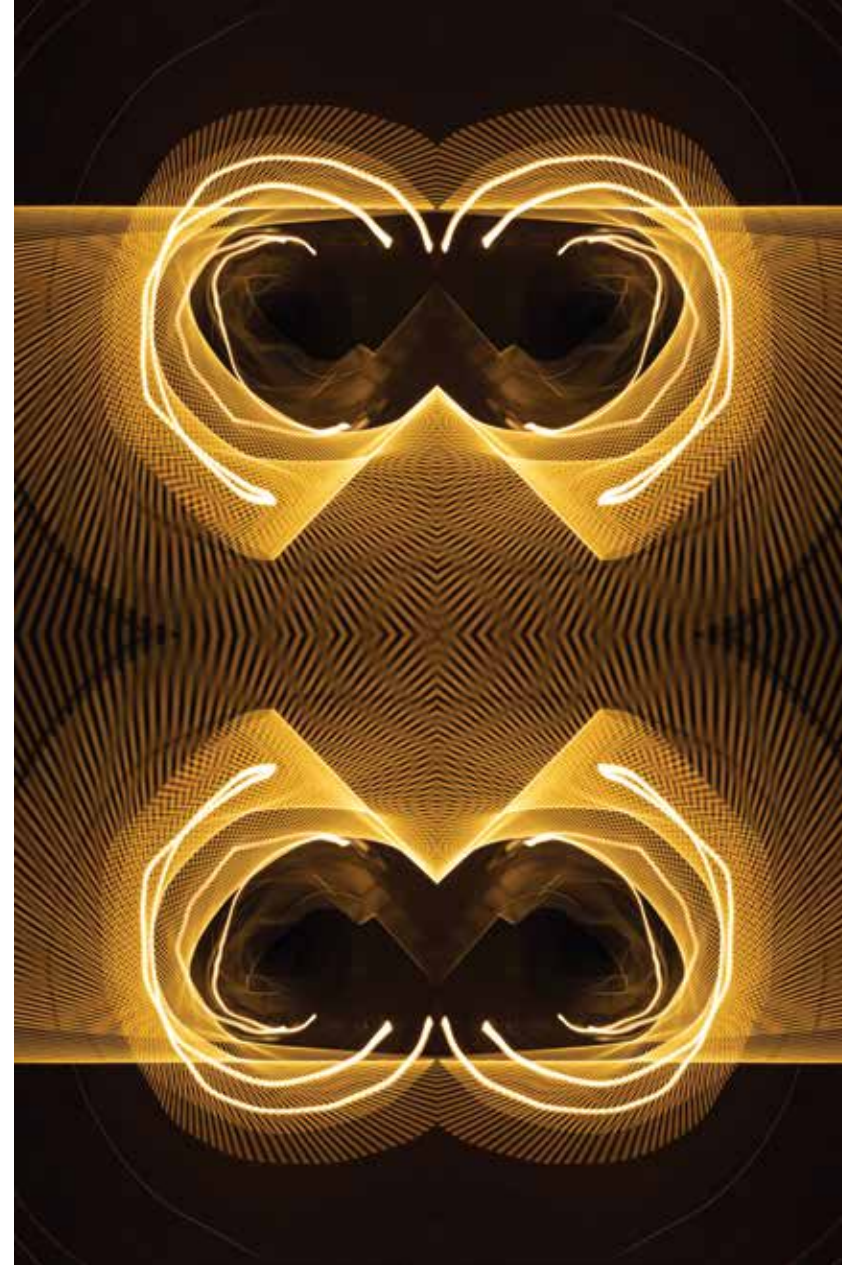


VIVEK VERMA

Abstract & Fine Art Photographer

BENDING THE LIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES

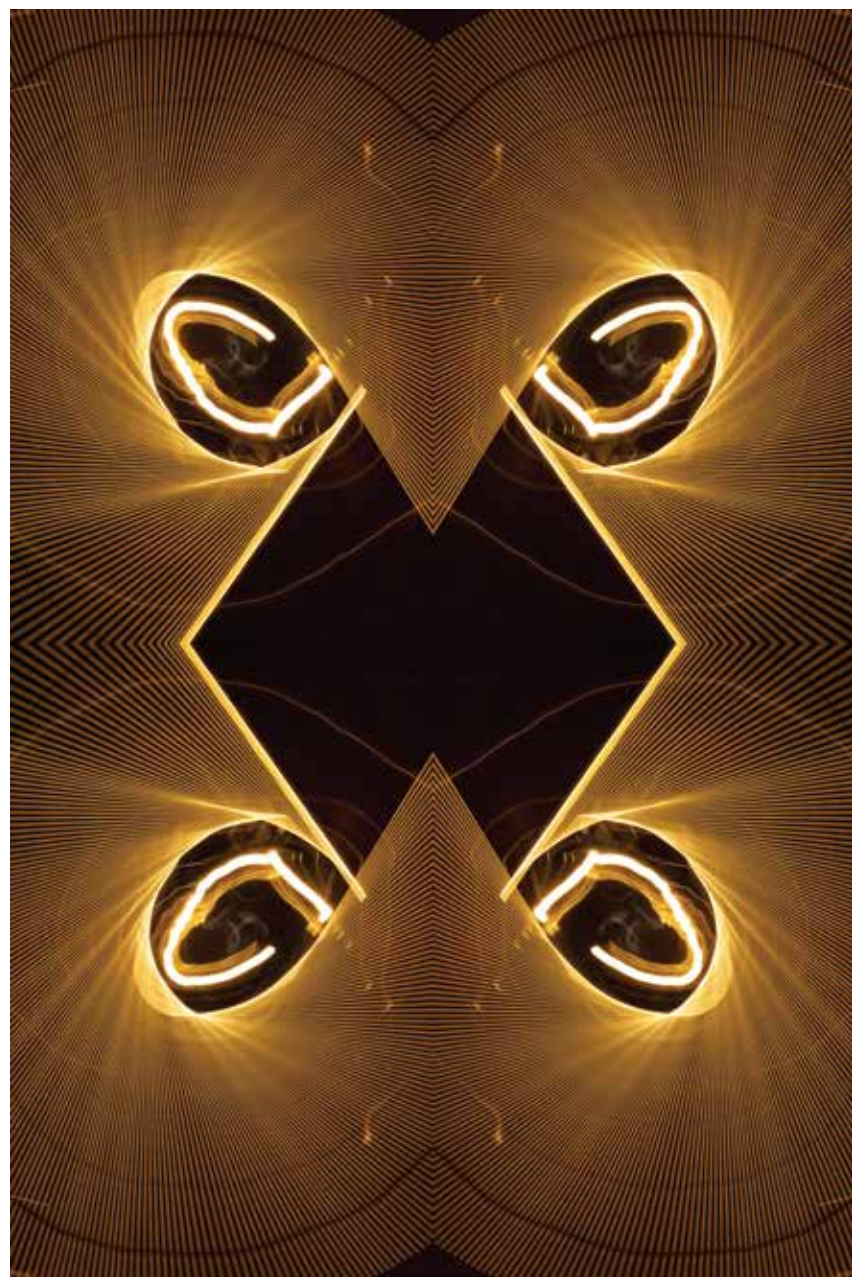
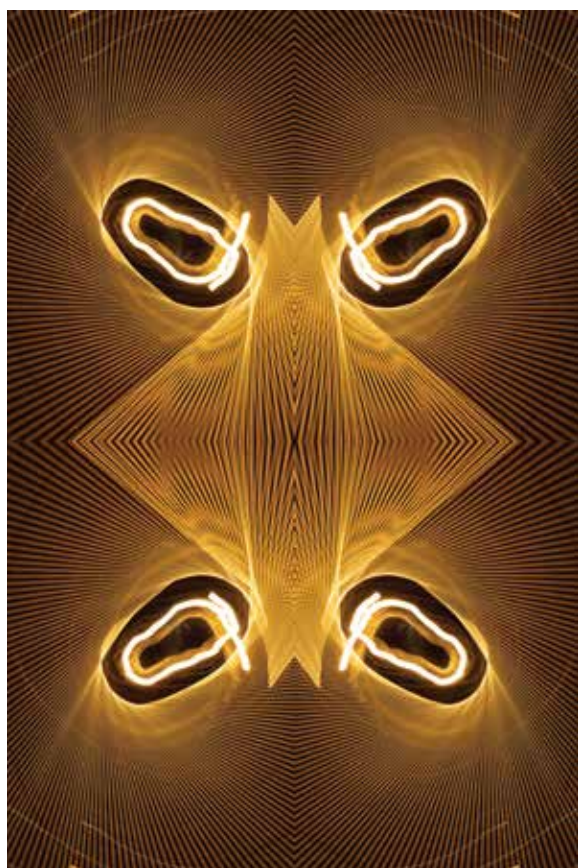


This series of abstract work is rooted in the spirographic drawings many of us made as children—simple tools, repetitive motion, and the quiet satisfaction of watching patterns emerge. That playful memory is revisited here using light instead of ink. Through intentional camera movement and long exposure, the illuminated décor of a resort becomes a surface for drawing in space.

As the camera moves, light traces spirals and looping paths, forming layered patterns that feel both precise and fluid. Control and chance work together, much like those early drawings where repetition slowly shaped form. By replacing pen with motion and paper with time, the work treats light not as something that reveals, but as something that actively draws—turning a familiar childhood gesture into an abstract visual experience.

VIVEK
VERMA

Vivek Verma is a fine art photographer, writer, poet, and art curator whose work explores the boundaries between perception, emotion, and abstraction. His practice exists at the intersection of logic and lyricism — where light becomes both subject and metaphor — a language of consciousness that transcends representation. His photographic work challenges the conventional purpose of a single image. By experimenting with intentional camera movement, reorientation, and mirrored composition, he transforms reality into visual meditations that blur the line between photography and painting.



“

YOU DON'T MAKE A
PHOTOGRAPH JUST
WITH A CAMERA. YOU
BRING TO THE ACT OF
PHOTOGRAPHY ALL
THE PICTURES YOU
HAVE SEEN, THE
BOOKS YOU HAVE
READ, THE MUSIC
YOU HAVE HEARD,
THE PEOPLE YOU
HAVE LOVED

— ANSEL ADAMS

”

Betina La Plante

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER

Betina La Plante is an Argentine-born portrait photographer best known for her expressive black and white portraiture. Based between Los Angeles, Europe and Argentina, she began her career in film and television before turning fully to photography in 2009. Her work emphasizes natural light, emotional depth, and quiet intimacy, often focusing on the inner presence of her subjects rather than overt styling. La Plante works across editorial, personal, and commissioned projects, with a visual style influenced by her early experience shooting on film.



1. You began in film and television before focusing on photography. How did that experience with narrative and moving images influence the way you approach a single-frame portrait?

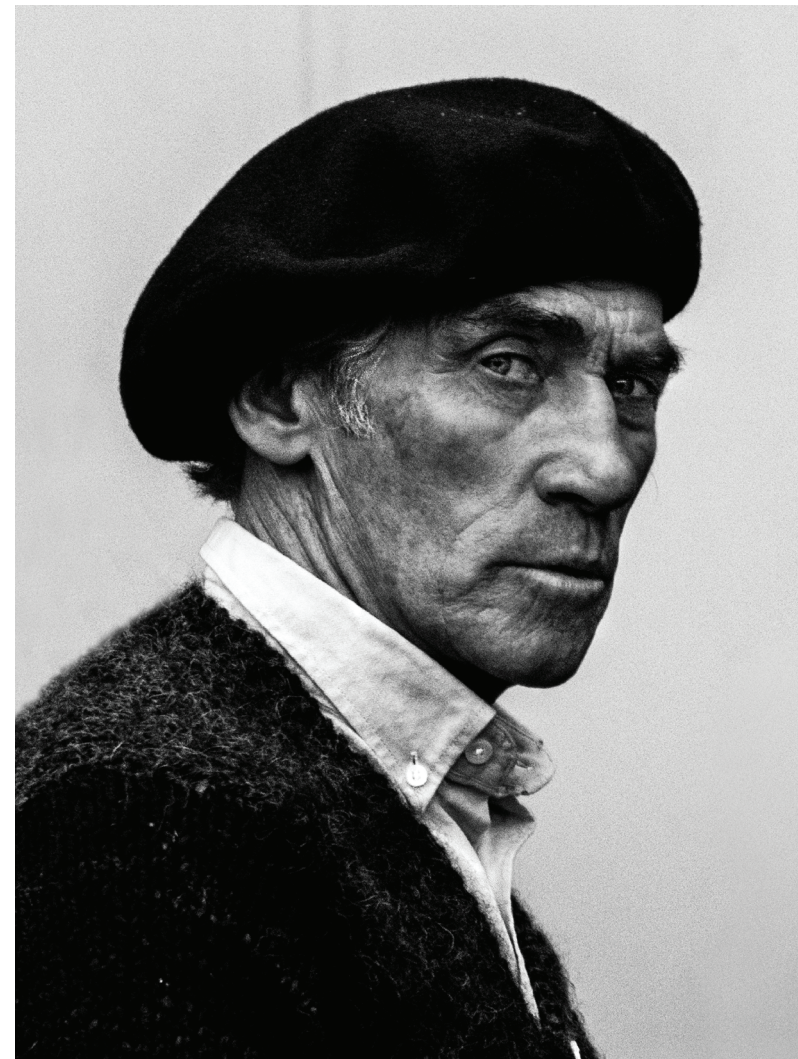
As a script editor, my role was often about removing excess dialogue to focus on the heart of a scene and drive the narrative forward. I approach photography in a similar way — one frame can't tell the full story of an entire scene or session, but it can hold the emotional essence found in that one moment. It really does come down to the art of observation, and determining which moments will hopefully resonate.

2. Black and white dominates your work. Beyond aesthetics, what does it allow you to reveal emotionally or psychologically in a subject?

Working in black & white began as a practical choice because I was developing film and printing at home, and for me the process was simpler than colour. But I quickly fell in love with it and it changed the way I approached a subject. Since we experience the world in colour, removing that element shifts our perception, and the focus is more on light, shadow, shape and texture to tell the story and evoke an emotional response in the viewer.



INTERVIEW BY VIVEK KUMAR





3. Many of your portraits feel disarmingly intimate. How do you create a sense of trust so your subjects can show vulnerability? Is that trust built before the shoot, or in the small silences during it?

Thank you, that's a lovely compliment. If time allows, I like to get to know someone before we shoot, even if briefly. I think trust is born out of respect for the subject, and intimacy comes from that trust. I try to build on that connection as the session evolves, and be prepared for those quiet or unscripted moments, as they can be the most honest ones.

4. You often resist glamorization and instead embrace texture, imperfection, and depth. How has your personal definition of "beauty" evolved over the years?

I've never equated beauty with perfection (what is perfection, anyway?). I'm drawn to character, emotion, experience, vulnerability - all the things that make someone feel real. That's true whether I'm photographing a child, or an adult of any age.

5. Do you see portraiture as revealing a person's "truth," or as constructing a version of them? How do you navigate that tension?

I don't know if a portrait can reveal an absolute truth about the subject, since they are for the most part aware of the camera's presence. But it's not necessarily purely performative either. Every portrait is shaped by choices, and within the structure of those choices there are moments when something genuine emerges. It is my role as photographer to stay open to, and try to capture, those moments.

6. When you're working on editorial commissions versus personal projects, how do you balance client expectations with your own instincts?

When working for clients, I respect their wishes and try to meet their needs, but I stay flexible to how things unfold. I've learned that some of the strongest images come from allowing space to explore other ideas rather than hold on too tightly to a plan. This fluidity seems to work best in both commissioned and personal work.

7. Looking ahead, what themes — aging, intimacy, identity, representation — are you most compelled to explore?

I've never thought of portraiture as working in themes, per se - I simply like working with people! However, I have been approached to collaborate on a book on aging, and celebrating aging as an adventure to growing older by simply living - so I'm very much looking forward to that. I have also started to work more on film sets as stills photographer and right now that is my primary focus.



8. Three photographers who have always inspired you to take your artistry and craft to the next level?

Irving Penn is always the first name that comes to mind. Not just for his portraiture but for every genre of photography. He was a true artist! Beyond that it's hard to narrow it down to just three names - or even 20!

There's an endless number of incredibly talented photographers, and the list keeps growing. And inspiration doesn't only come from photography - it comes from all other art forms.

I make it a point to look at and appreciate other's artists work, to go to galleries, to watch films, to listen to music. Inspiration comes in many forms...

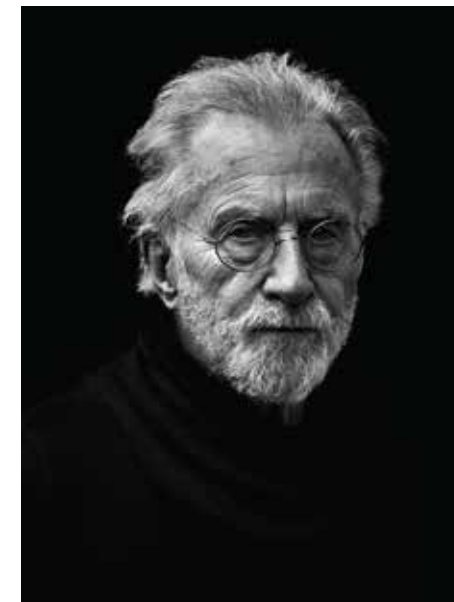
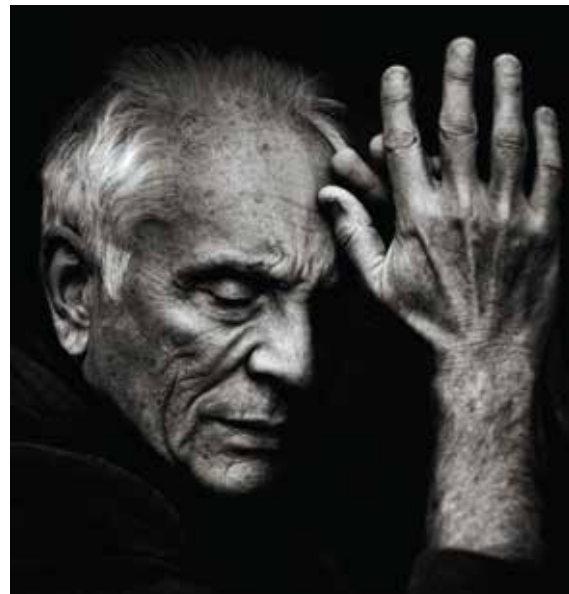
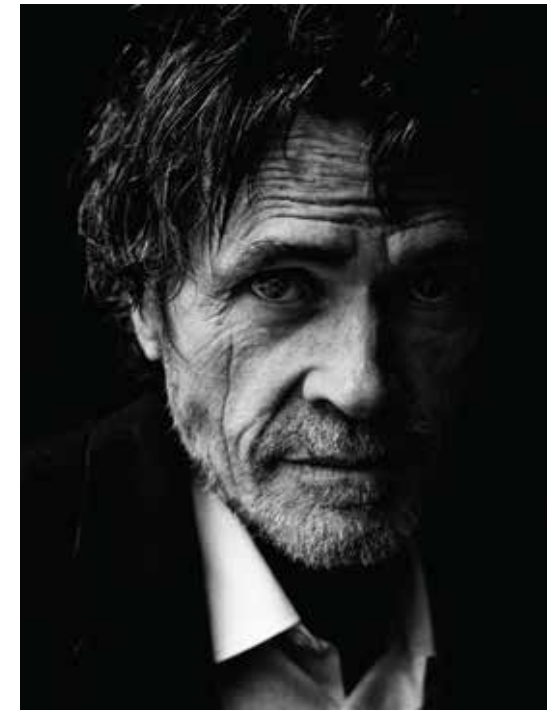
9. If you were to take your lens beyond what you usually shoot, what other genres of photography inspire you the most?

Many of my personal projects already explore various photography genres but I also like to experiment with different mediums - working with Polaroid, alternative processes, mixed media, and collaborations with other artists.

In this age of social media and digital art, I like working with tangible mediums - and I make a point of printing my photographs too, so that they aren't just images on a screen.

10. Your work has been published in several international publications and books and garnered global recognition. How have these achievements influenced your photography journey, and what insights you would like to share with aspiring photographers?

Recognition is rewarding - and yes, there's some validation in it - but it doesn't change the work itself. The real journey is about curiosity, experimentation, and growth. That's what keeps creativity alive.



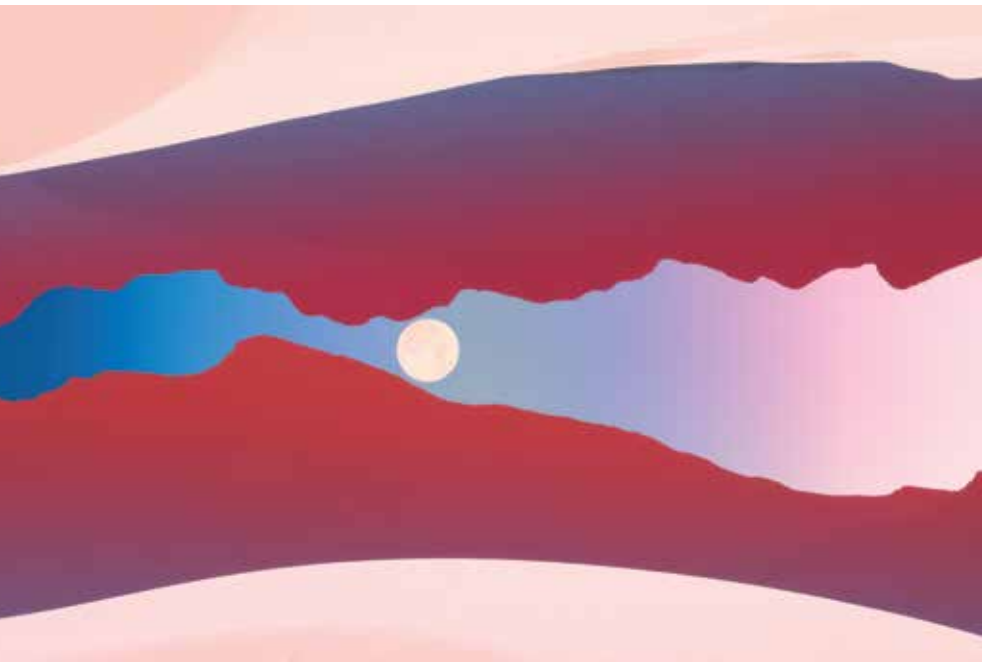
11. Looking back on your journey, what three pieces of advice or photography tips have been most influential in shaping your unique style, and which would you love to share with our readers?

Things that I try to remind myself of:

- 1) Substance and emotion matter more than technique. Know your tools but focus on content
- 2) Be patient and work with intention. Don't rush - or overshoot out of insecurity
- 3) Don't get trapped in comparison. There is so much talent out there, and measuring yourself against others can kill creativity. Stay curious, stay true to your vision, and work from interest rather than fear.



“Stay curious, stay true to your vision, and work from interest rather than fear.”



INSPIRATION

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
Jerad Armijo





Jerad is a synesthesia landscape photographer based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He uses synesthesia, minimalism, and surrealism to express his life's journey.

He tends to photograph otherworldly, desolate, and surreal scenes that tie in with his personal painted peculiar colours. Every photograph is a story of his life. His work is a personal diary.





Perfection, Visibility, and the Modern Artist

BY AAFRIN DAMANI

Aafrin Damani is a visual and UI/UX designer based in Mumbai with a background in Product and Lifestyle Design.

Alongside design, she explores creative writing as a form of expression and storytelling. Curious by nature, she works across mediums while continuously learning, experimenting, and growing through real-world projects.

The Age of Visible Creativity

In today's digital world, art rarely remains private. From designers refining portfolios to artists sharing work online, creativity is increasingly shaped by visibility and response. What was once personal now unfolds across platforms, timelines, and audiences.

The pressure to appear polished, relevant, and consistently "good" has quietly turned perfectionism into expectation rather than choice. Public validation—likes, recognition, approval—often begins to feel like a measure of worth, even when artists know it should not.

Yet beneath this visibility lies a quieter reality: many artists continue to create in isolation. Their work circulates widely, while the process behind it remains unseen—defining much of the modern creative experience.

The Work That Stays in Drafts

An artist pauses before uploading a piece completed after weeks of effort. The work is finished, yet not finished enough.

A detail feels uncertain, a colour slightly unresolved. Thoughts turn toward reception—how the work may be judged, compared, or misunderstood.

The post remains saved as a draft—not because the work lacks value, but because the fear of being seen imperfectly outweighs the desire to be seen at all.

Pressure Beyond The Platform

Digital platforms amplify perfectionism, but they are not its only source. Professional expectations, client demands, institutional standards, and years of comparison shape internal benchmarks.

Perfection gradually shifts from aspiration to necessity. Even private work can begin to feel performative, as though preparing for judgment that has not yet arrived.



Audience is Not Community

An audience observes.

A community understands.

Many artists today experience visibility without belonging. Their work is seen, but their process remains unsupported.

Without spaces to share uncertainty, creators carry the emotional weight of making alone. Community, by contrast, normalizes doubt and reminds artists that uncertainty is inherent to creative practice.



The Quiet Cost of Perfection

The consequences accumulate slowly. Artists delay sharing work despite having ideas. Decision-making becomes exhausting as instincts are repeatedly questioned, and some projects are abandoned altogether.

For others, productivity continues while joy fades. Creativity becomes task-oriented rather than experiential, and isolation deepens—not physically, but emotionally.

Rethinking Perfectionism

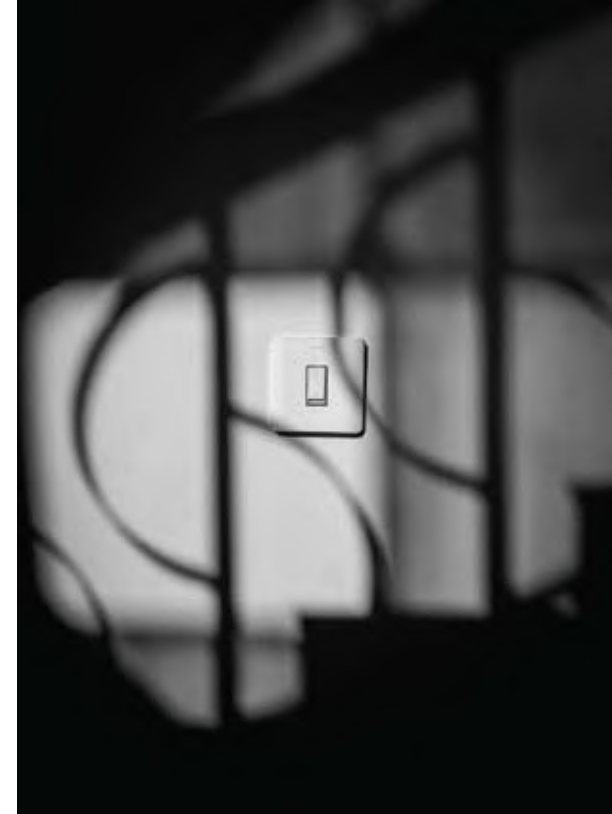
Perfectionism often arises from care rather than insecurity. The inner critical voice seeks safety, stability, and meaningful reception. Seen this way, it becomes less an obstacle and more an indicator of investment.

This shift does not remove pressure, but it softens its authority. Artists can acknowledge the impulse toward refinement without allowing it to control every decision.

Progress Without Recognition

We often hear that progress does not need validation to be real. In theory, this feels comforting. In practice, it is difficult to sustain in environments where visibility influences opportunity and credibility.

Creative growth is frequently measured outwardly through feedback and reach, making quiet development feel insufficient when it is not reflected back by an audience.



Creating Without Witness

Separating creation from visibility can restore a sense of safety. Allowing certain work to exist privately—unfinished and unshared—encourages experimentation rather than performance.

Sharing works-in-progress within small, trusted circles can further reduce isolation, helping normalize vulnerability and reaffirm that doubt is shared, not personal.

Returning to the Practice

Perfectionism, public validation, and isolation are not personal failures but shared conditions of contemporary creative life. Visibility shapes how art circulates, but it does not determine artistic value.

Remembering that progress can exist without applause, allowing room for imperfect creation, and cultivating genuine community helps artists reconnect with their process. Creativity then shifts away from performance and toward presence—grounded in care, continuity, and sustained engagement with making itself.

When Creation Turns Self-Conscious

Each new work invites familiar questions: Is this good enough? Relevant enough? Will it be understood—or compared?

Gradually, exploration gives way to caution. The artist becomes both maker and critic, negotiating between expression and self-protection.

Social media reinforces this illusion of certainty. Viewers encounter finished images—clean compositions and confident outcomes—while the uncertainty behind them remains invisible.

A single image can conceal weeks of doubt and emotional labour, leaving artists disconnected not only from audiences but from their own process.

CONCLUSION

Perfectionism, visibility, and isolation are not personal failures but shared conditions of contemporary creative life.

When artists loosen the need for constant validation, allow space for imperfect work, and seek genuine community, they reconnect with the core of their practice.

Creativity then shifts from performance to presence—sustained not by approval, but by care, continuity, and the act of making itself.

INTERVIEW BY VIVEK KUMAR

1. Your aerial photographs often look abstract rather than literal. What draws you to this style of seeing from above?

What draws me to abstraction in aerial photography is the way altitude strips reality of its obvious references. From above, landscapes lose their conventional scale and identity and transform into shapes, textures, and rhythms.

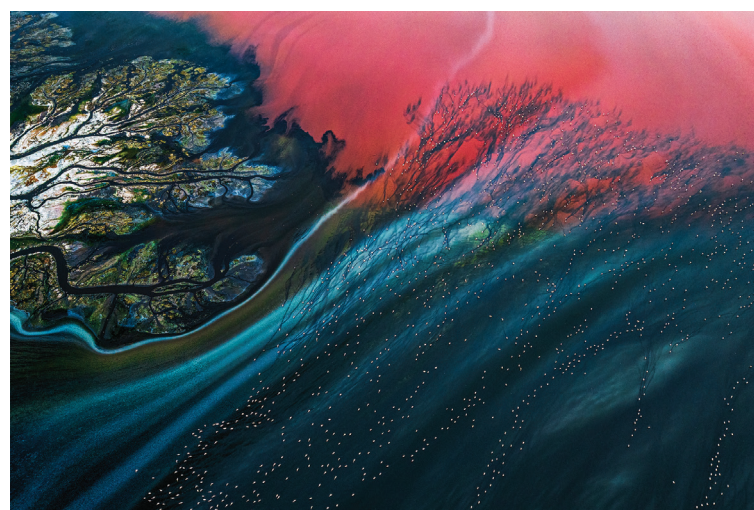
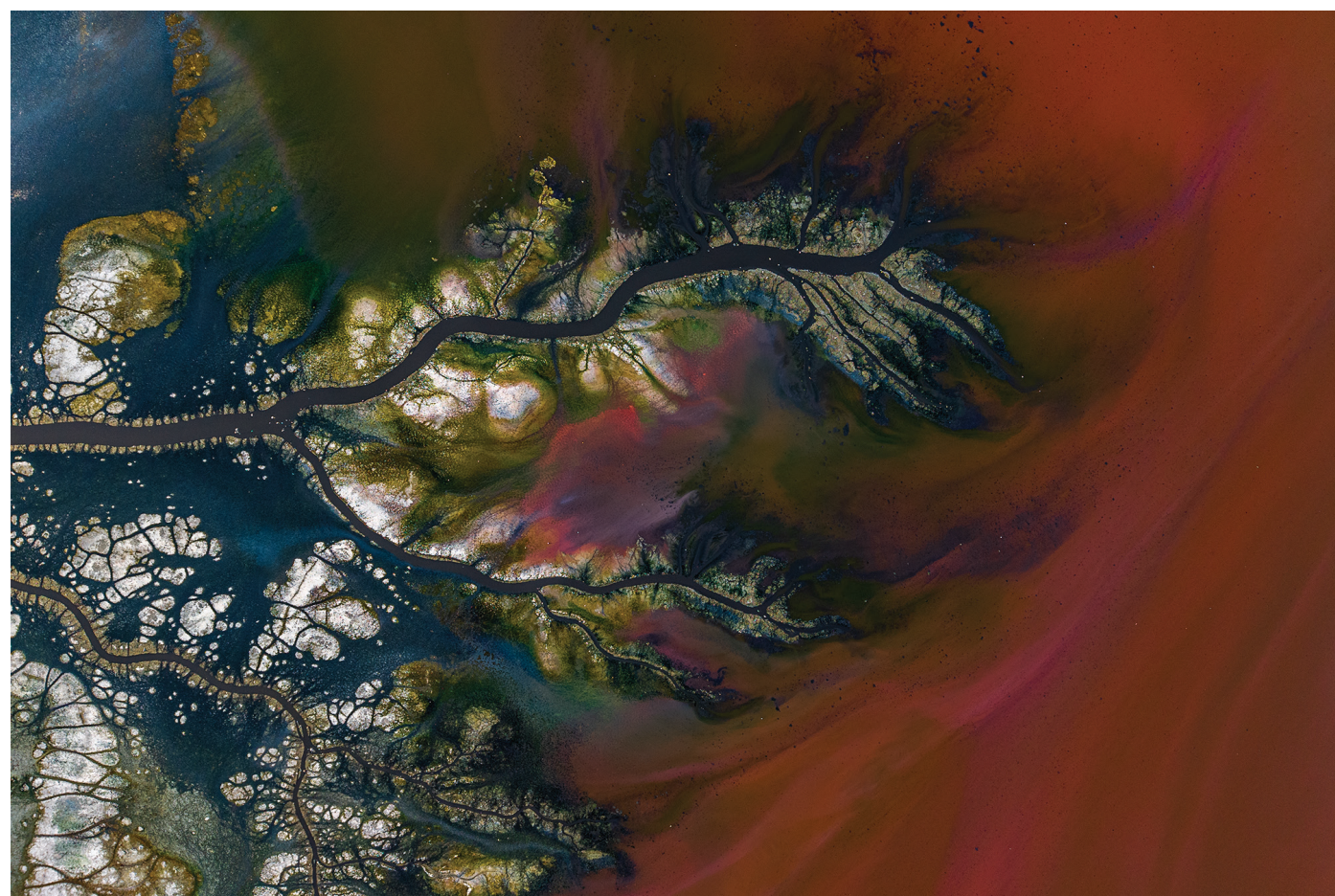
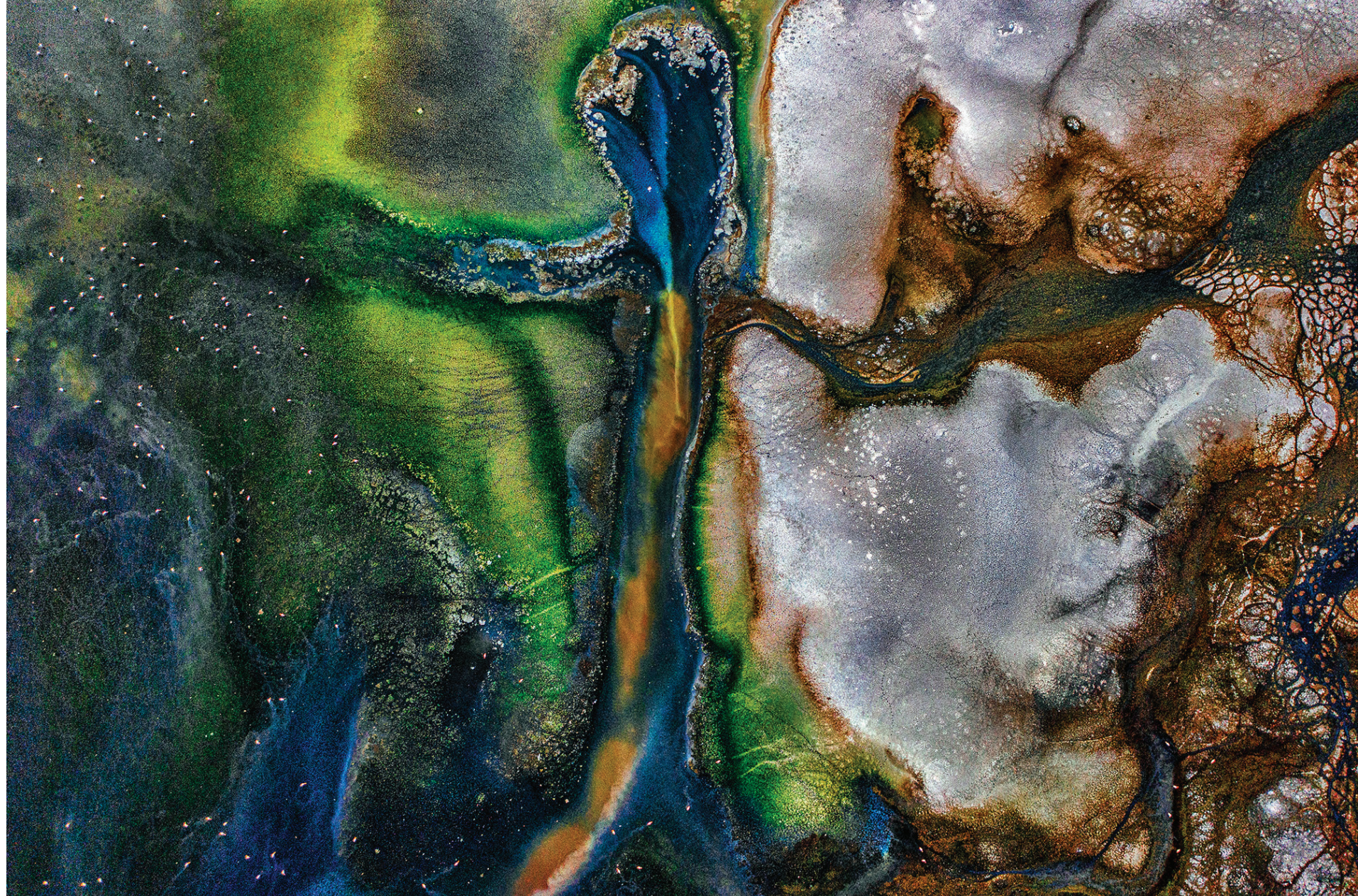
I'm fascinated by this moment where the image no longer describes a place but becomes an emotion or a visual question. Aerial abstraction allows me to invite the viewer to slow down and interpret the image rather than immediately recognize it.

2. How has your background in graphic arts influenced the way you compose your aerial/drone photographs?

My background in graphic arts has deeply shaped how I see composition. I instinctively think in terms of balance, negative space, geometry, color harmony, and visual weight.

When flying a drone, I'm not just documenting a scene; I'm arranging elements within the frame much like a graphic composition. Lines, contrasts, and repetition guide my decisions more than literal subjects.

AERIAL LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER



Ali Azar

Ali Azar is a photojournalist living in Isfahan, Iran. Active in the field of environment with abstract approaches using drones. He studied graphics and holds a master's degree in photography.



3. Which ZIPA 2025 winning image of yours is closest to your heart, and why?

This photograph holds deep meaning for me because of its strong environmental narrative. At first glance, the image offers beauty—vivid colors, rhythm, and harmony—but as the viewer spends more time with it, that beauty slowly transforms into a sense of tragedy.

The unusual colors and abstract movement hint at ecological imbalance and environmental distress beneath the surface. For me, this image represents the fragile line between visual pleasure and environmental warning, which is a recurring concern in my work.

4. What do you usually look for on the ground before deciding to take your drone into the air?

Before flying, I carefully observe light direction, shadows, textures, and patterns on the ground.

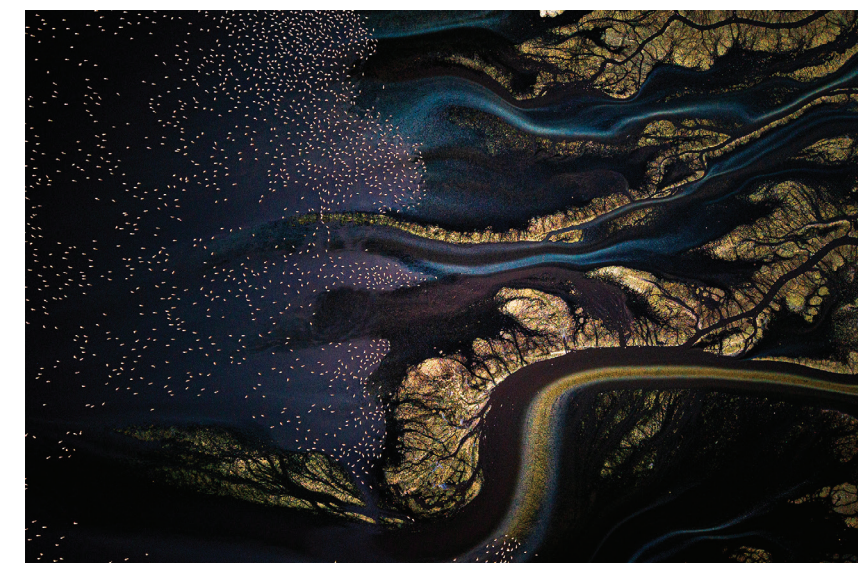
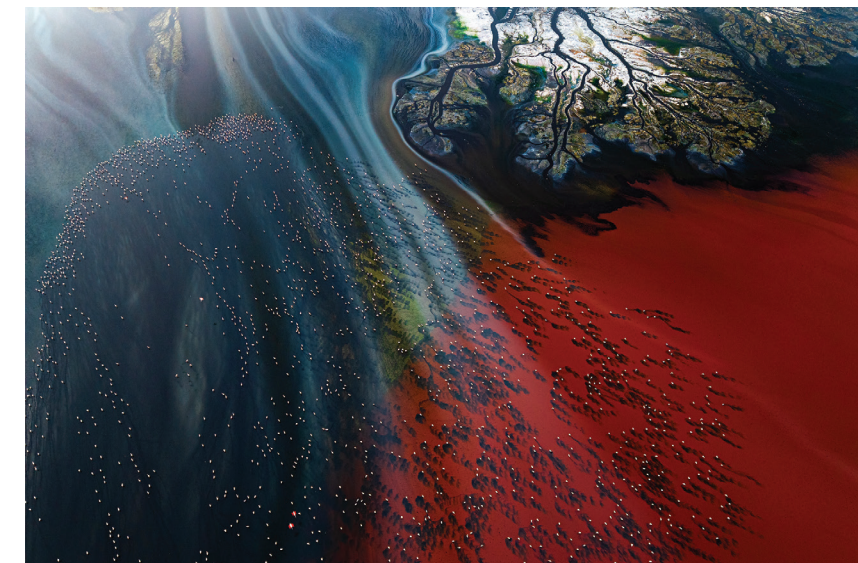
I look for natural or human-made geometries that might only reveal their full potential from above.

Weather conditions, especially wind and haze, also play a crucial role. If the ground already hints at abstraction, I know the air will complete the story.

5. What advice would you give to photographers who want to explore abstraction through aerial photography?

I would advise them to move beyond the idea of “showing everything.” Abstraction often comes from limitation—tight framing, minimal color palettes, and patience with light.

Study painting and graphic design, not just photography, and learn to trust intuition. Most importantly, fly with intention, not curiosity alone.





WINNER



Hadi Dehghanpour

SILVER WINNER



Ghalishooyan Ceremony Kashan by Ali Azar



BRONZE WINNER

Mohamadreza Jalilzadeh

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

GOLD WINNER



Oliver Yat King Chew

RUNNER UP



Behzad Azimi

2025

ZIPA

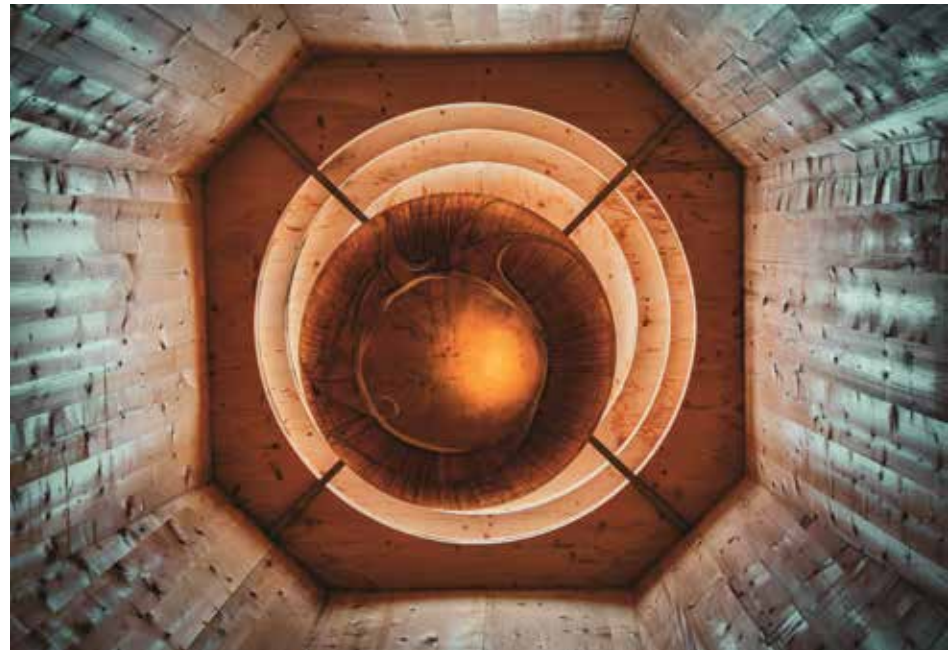
WINNERS

SILVER WINNER



Jiaming Bai

Core by Kaitlin Lloyd
GOLD WINNER



BRONZE WINNER
Uber by Ali Azar



SILVER WINNER
Ayanava Sil

Behzad Azimi
GOLD WINNER



Eshagh Aghaei Mansourabad
BRONZE WINNER



BLACK AND WHITE
PHOTOGRAPHY

MINIMAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Hadi Dehghanpour
GOLD WINNER



Ehsan Hemmati
SILVER WINNER



GOLD WINNER



Flamingos moving in Maharlu Lake by Ali Azar

SILVER WINNER



Green by Elaheh Mollaei

BRONZE WINNER



Mohammad Ataei Mohammadi



BRONZE WINNER
Mojtaba Gitinezhad

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY



Escape by Mohamad Jalilzadeh | B&W



Maxmilion Sperlich | Landscape

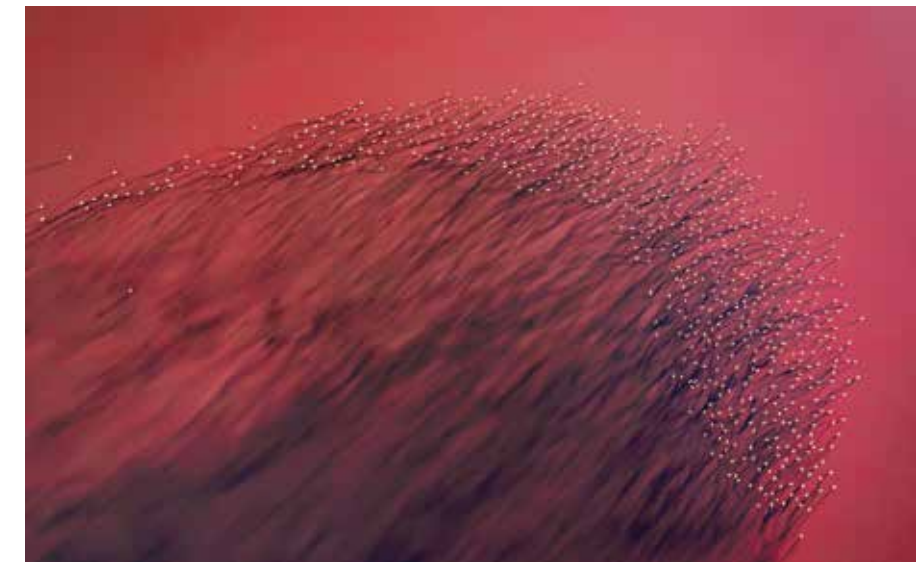


Debdip Maitra | Street



Mohammad Fotouhi | B&W

Hossein Akbarian | Abstract

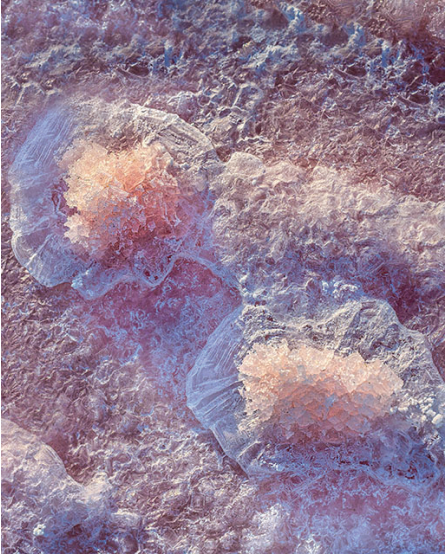


Olga Arune | Minimal



Hossein Akbarian | Abstract

ZIRA 2025 - EDITOR'S CHOICE
zyne
WWW.ZYNEMAG.COM



Zeinab Mokhtari | Abstract

Zeinab Mokhtari | Landscape



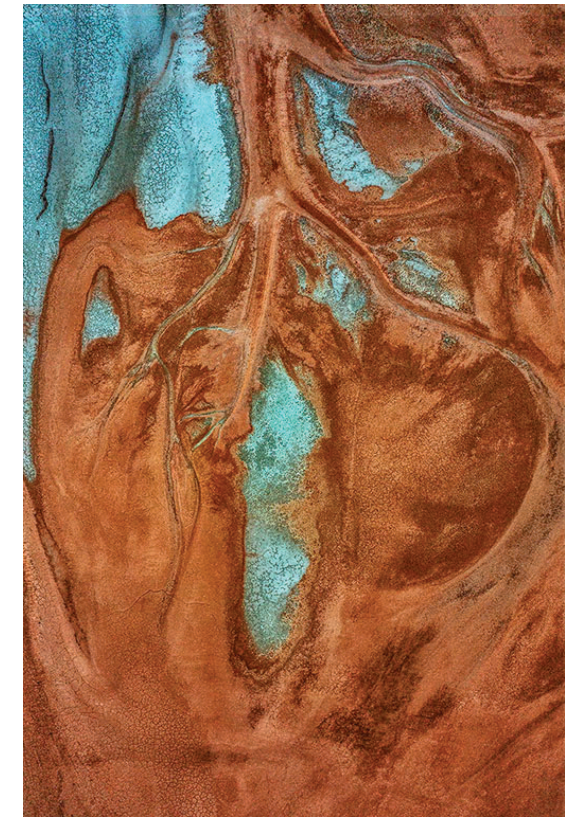
Blacksmith Man by Mojtaba Gitinezhad | Street



Behzad Azimi | Minimal



Farid Azadi | B&W



Lung of the Gavkhuni Wetland by Ali Azar | Landscape



Ayanava Sil | Street



THE BER TREE

MILKYWAY PANORAMA TRIPOD HEAD SETUP

If you're photographing a single-row panorama, a basic tripod paired with a ball head is usually sufficient. It allows you to rotate the camera smoothly from a fixed position and capture a wide field of view without much complexity. However, when you move into multi-row panoramas, precision becomes critical. A dedicated panorama head setup is essential to maintain consistent framing, accurate overlap, and a perfectly level horizon across multiple rows.



GEAR RECOMMENDATION BY ASHISH KAMBLE

Ashish Kamble is more than a photographer—he's a visual storyteller who fuses culture, consciousness, and the cosmos into striking imagery. With over a decade of experience, he has inspired 900+ budding photographers through his teaching at Mumbai University colleges and his own LotusBeam School of Photography.

Now a mentor at Indian Photo Expeditions, Ashish brings his love for sharing knowledge to the field. His unique perspective—rooted in India's vibrant traditions and a deep fascination with sci-fi and human consciousness—shines through in every frame, whether it's a soulful tribal portrait, a dramatic landscape, or the awe-inspiring beauty of the night sky

Leofoto VH-10 (two-way head)
Enables accurate vertical and horizontal movements, making it easy to shoot multiple rows with consistent alignment.

LEOFOTO PANORAMA HEAD SETUP
Designed for maximum stability and control in the field



Leofoto LB-75 (levelling base)
This allows me to quickly level the setup, ensuring a straight and consistent horizon without having to adjust each leg individually.

Leofoto LS-324C (carbon-fibre tripod legs)
Chosen for their excellent stability to weight ratio, especially useful in windy conditions and uneven terrain.

Leofoto DH-60/PR-60 (rotating index)
Used to maintain a precise 30% overlap between frames, which is ideal for reliable stitching and minimising parallax errors.

This modular setup gives me full control over camera movement and alignment, ensuring clean transitions between frames and seamless stitching during post-processing. It's especially effective for high-resolution landscape, architecture, and milkyway panorama photography, where detail and accuracy are non-negotiable.



JONATHAN FAUS

Black & White Photography

INSOMNIUM

PHOTOGRAPHY SERIES



Insomnium (In- ingressive prefix) is a word that comes from the Latin, and its primitive meaning refers to daydreaming, the initial stage of entering sleep, where a series of imagined images occur while sleeping and are perceived as real.

Daydreams are not subject to any type of control; they constitute a work of art, where there is always movement. When one dreams, fantasy is perceived as reality, and irrational situations are represented that have a much deeper meaning than logic can recognize.

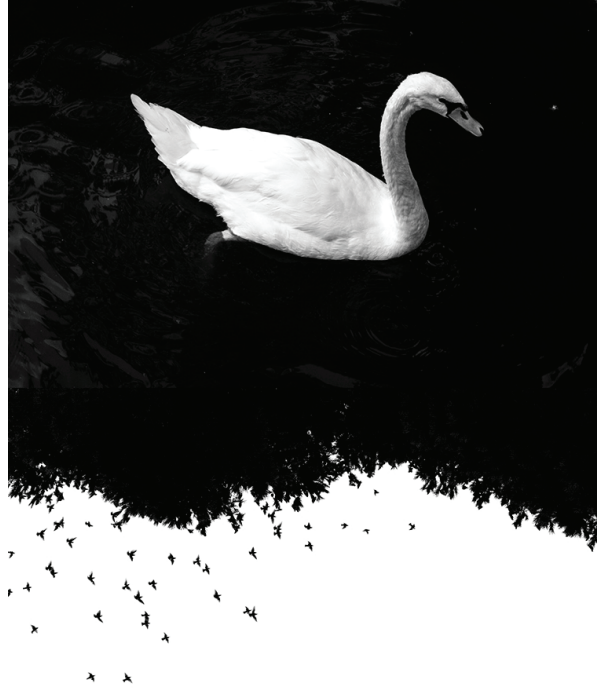
The general theory of daydreams dates back to ancient Greece, where Hippocrates related it to the state of mental health; Plato and the emergence of free instincts; and more recently, Gestalt, which refers to daydreaming as the royal road to integration, being the most spontaneous human production of existence.

Daydreaming seeks balance between our logical and conscious half and our unconscious half, where irrational images are reproduced that seek balance and wholeness of our being.

According to Jung, "Dreams are a spontaneous and symbolic self-interpretation of the current state of the unconscious. Human life is filled with a set of polarities, such as day and night, birth and death, joy and suffering, good and evil, and there is no certainty that one of these opposites will triumph over the other; this is a continuous struggle in which the human being finds himself."

Reading each image separately has a rational meaning; by uniting them in the form of a diptych, we are creating a new visual imaginary where both polarities coexist.





JONATHAN FAUS

Jonathan Faus (Valencia, 1985) is a photographer whose work has, from the outset, taken the city as its principal setting.

Through urban spaces, he seeks to depict multiple narratives: unseen moments that invite a second reading, cities from different parts of the world that provoke surprise, and everyday scenes that constantly surround him.

Since 2017, following training through various courses and workshops with photographers such as David Jiménez, Navia, and Julián Barón, he has focused on developing more personal projects.

In these works, his immediate surroundings and inner concerns move to the foreground.

Black-and-white photography predominates in his practice, which aims to approach a more sensitive register, leading the viewer into a space where interpretation of the environment takes precedence over purely descriptive logic.

His work has been exhibited at O+O Art Gallery in Valencia; at MuVIM as part of the second Ciutat Vella Oberta Art Biennial; at Montsequi Art Gallery in Madrid; at Space Place Gallery in Nizhny Tagil, Russia; and at the Photopolis Festival in Greece, among others.

His photographs have been published in Valencia Plaza, Photo/foto Magazine, fotoDNG, Artego Magazine, and Urban Void. In 2024, he was a finalist at the EX+24 León Photo Festival.



The project is situated at that unavoidable moment when any person feels the need to look inward, reflect, and interpret a path that is still incomplete. A free space for posing questions that don't always find answers.

On the horizon of a diptych, two images converge; the concrete meaning of each fades away to become part of a whole that seeks to surpass the limits of understanding, inviting us to interpret.



WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER
DR. CAESAR SENGUPTA

Dr Caesar Sengupta is a globally acclaimed Wildlife Conservation Photographer, a National Geographic- acknowledged educator, freelance writer and trainer.

He is a Canon India EOS Maestro, a qualified MD Medical Microbiologist and is also the Founder Director of DCP Expeditions LLP, which is India's one of the largest Wildlife, Nature and Travel Photography Community Platforms, operating since 2010 and now present in 21 cities across India. He conducts regular photography workshops and field expeditions across the country.

He has travelled far and wide across Indian geography and beyond. He has the timeless distinction of having a frog species discovered in 2014 named after him - The *Indosylvirana caesari* also known otherwise as the Maharashtra Golden Backed Frog. Through his photography, he tries to depict the untold and unseen beauties of nature.

NECK OF LIGHT

In the stillness of an African night at Shompole, a giraffe lifts its head after a quiet drink — scattering a shimmering arc of water that glows like liquid light. The interplay of motion and reflection transforms a simple gesture into a moment of wild choreography, revealing both the grace and grandeur of the savannah's tallest sentinel. Shot in near-total darkness, the photograph captures the poetry of light, silence, and instinct meeting at the edge of a desert waterhole.

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER
PRANAB NAYAK

He is a landscape photographer based in Utah, USA. He is primarily interested in natural environments shaped by light, weather, and seasonal change.

His work seeks to capture the essence of a place, exploring the relationship between land, sky, and everything in between. Night-sky photography is his second favorite genre, after landscape photography.



METEOR SHOWER



© prateek

A PROTECTIVE MOTHER

In the beautiful jungles of Manas National Park in Assam, this capped langur mother is hugging the baby. A beautiful sub-specie of the langur, with the golden front and the black cap.



SIBLINGS AT PLAY

A brother sister duo from the forests of Tadoba are seen playfully fighting here. On a beautiful monsoon afternoon, on International Tiger Day - these two sub-adults entertained us tiger lovers for hours by running around and playing across the lush green meadows.

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

PRATEEK SHROFF

Prateek Shroff is a lawyer by profession and wildlife photographer by passion. His photographs have been displayed at various galleries, including the Jehangir Art Gallery, and other exhibitions Mumbai, Goa, Kolkata.

His work attempts to express the natural state of the animals and landscape he captures. His photos have won awards and honourable mentions at various forums, including refocus awards, Wild Visions.

AUTHOR SPEAKS

BY NINA PAPIOREK

It has always been my wish to create a book of my own. However, this idea needed time to mature. Taking the step toward a first publication is significant—much greater than one might initially expect. Beyond selecting the right visual material, one suddenly finds oneself immersed in an entirely new field: layout, paper types, printing processes, ICC profiles, cover materials, and much more. At first, this can feel overwhelming and even intimidating, requiring a deep and thoughtful engagement with every detail.

During this process, I also spoke with various publishers. It quickly became clear, however, that my vision for the first book was very specific and firmly defined. I had a clear idea of what I wanted and a strong commitment to quality—exactly as I had imagined it. Compromises were not an option. For this reason, I ultimately chose the path of self-publishing, a decision I have never regretted.



IKIGAI

“...THAT WHICH MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING.”

Self-publishing allows me to personally number and sign each book in its limited edition. At the same time, it gives me the opportunity to add a personal touch to every copy, in the form of a handwritten greeting card. In this way, each book becomes not just a publication, but a unique piece with a direct connection between myself and the reader.



Nina Papiorek's visual language is characterized by a distinctive aesthetic. In her black and white compositions, she prefers to capture the interplay between lines, architectural forms and the presence of people. Her photographs combine elements of street photography, urban landscape and fine art photography.

Underlined by her distinctive minimalist approach, which runs like a common thread through all her work, the connection between people and their urban surroundings becomes the focus of her photographic narratives.

Nina is a professional street photographer who has received numerous of the most prestigious international photography awards. Her work has been featured in a large number of exhibitions and publications worldwide and she has contributed to several book projects besides being the author of online photography courses. She is working on commissioned work for international clients.

Nina is based in Germany, following her love for photography for more than 20 years



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COURSE RECOMMENDATIONS

Photography Basics and Beyond:

FROM SMARTPHONE TO DSLR SPECIALIZATION

Course Instructors:

Peter Glendinning
Mark Valentine
Sullivan

When readers ask me where they should begin — or how to rebuild their foundations with seriousness — I often think back to my own time in the Photography Basics and Beyond Specialization from Michigan State University, delivered on Coursera and guided by Peter Glendinning. I enrolled hoping to tidy up a few technical uncertainties. What I received instead was a disciplined way of thinking.

The progression is deliberate. Exposure clarified relationships I had previously handled by instinct; aperture, shutter speed, and ISO began to feel less like variables and more like vocabulary. Camera control removed hesitation in the field. Composition demanded accountability — why this frame, why now, what must the viewer understand? By the time I reached the techniques modules, adaptability had become a habit rather than an aspiration.

The capstone changed everything. Conceiving and editing a focused body of work forced me to slow down, to connect craft with intention, and to recognize that photographs gather meaning when they speak to one another. It was rigorous, occasionally uncomfortable, and absolutely necessary.

The structure supports that growth. Each of the four courses spans about a month, followed by two months for the project — six months that pass quickly but leave lasting clarity.

The program is entirely online, accessible anytime, yet it never feels casual. Nor is it free. Completing the sequence earns a certificate authorized by the university and signed by the faculty, a marker of genuine commitment.

I recommend it with conviction, because I have lived its demands and its rewards. It teaches you not merely to make pictures, but to understand why you are making them.

Course Link:

<https://www.coursera.org/specializations/photography-basics>

Minor White: Manifestations of the Spirit is less a book to be read than absorbed. It resists quick viewing, inviting the reader into a slower engagement where photographs are not meant to impress but to be experienced. Sparse and often enigmatic, the images gain meaning through careful sequencing and through White's own introspective writings. What emerges is not simply a collection of photographs, but a record of a life lived in deep dialogue with photography itself.

White appears here less as a stylist than a seeker. At a time when much of twentieth-century photography pursued clarity and formal mastery, he turned inward. His photographs function as metaphors for psychological and spiritual states, allowing meaning to unfold gradually rather than declare itself. The book quietly demonstrates how images think collectively — how sequencing, pacing, and association shape interpretation as much as the photographs themselves.

Seen today, White feels strikingly contemporary. In an age saturated with images and instant visibility, his commitment to slowness and intentional seeing feels almost radical. His legacy as a teacher and editor of Aperture resonates throughout: photography, for White, was not merely descriptive but transformative.

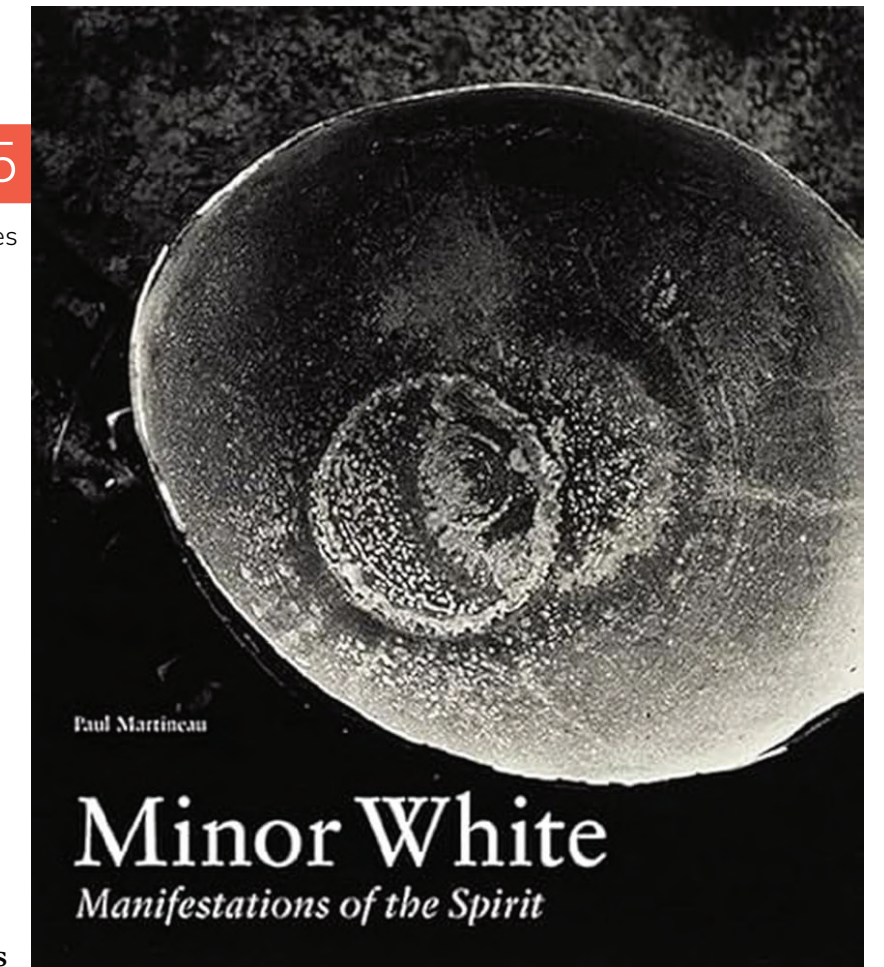
Manifestations of the Spirit offers no conclusions. Instead, it encourages sustained attention and reflection — reminding us that photography is not simply about making images, but about learning how to see.

MINOR WHITE

AUTHOR: PAUL MARTINEAU

4.6/5

198 Pages

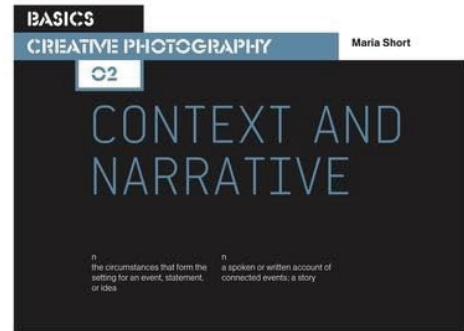


Publisher: J Paul Getty Museum Publications

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Author: **Maria Short**

CONTEXT AND NARRATIVE



4.2/5

232 Pages



Publisher: **Routledge / Taylor & Francis Ltd.**

Context and Narrative by Maria Short is a quietly indispensable book for photographers who want to understand not just what to photograph, but how and why images work together to create meaning.

In an era saturated with pictures, Short's clarity of thought offers a structural lens through which to read and shape photographic sequences, bodies of work, and storytelling.

The book moves with discipline and generosity—interweaving theory, clear examples, and analytical frameworks that make narrative strategies tangible without ever feeling abstract.

What distinguishes this volume is its refusal to treat narrative as a fixed formula. Short deftly navigates the interplay between context, perception, and interpretation, allowing the reader to see narrative as a dynamic force within any photographic practice—whether documentary, conceptual, or personal.

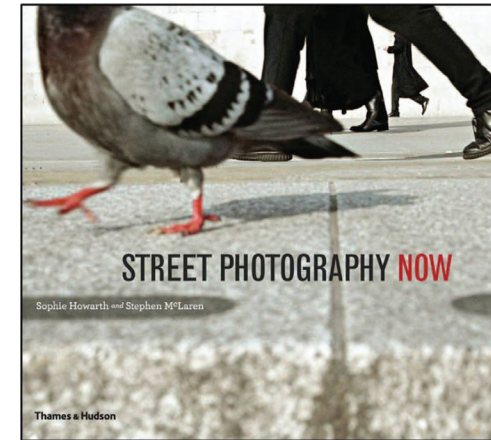
Essays and visual studies become tools for editing, sequencing, and critical reflection, making this book a lasting reference rather than a one-time read.

For those who wish to explore this further, my personal notes and key takeaways from this book are available on Creative Genes, where I unpack its lessons through examples and reflection.

Curation by Vivek Kumar

Vivek Verma is a Mumbai-based photographer and chief-editor of Zyne, with a deep engagement in photographic practice and literature. An avid reader and collector, he maintains a private library of over 100 photography books, including several rare titles, which he generously makes accessible to photographers across India for borrowing. He also writes reflective reviews and concise notes on photography books on his blog Creative Genes.

Author: **Sophie Howarth and Stephen McLaren**
STREET PHOTOGRAPHY NOW



4.6/5

240 Pages

Publisher: **Thames & Hudson Ltd.**

Street Photography Now by Sophie Howarth and Stephen McLaren remains one of the most lucid and generous mappings of the genre in the last two decades. It does not attempt to define street photography narrowly; instead, it opens it up.

Through the work of 46 photographers from across the world, the book presents street photography as a living, evolving language—shaped by culture, ethics, humour, chance, and restraint.

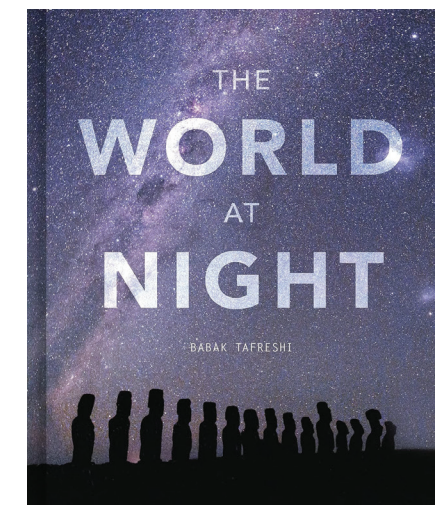
What gives the book its lasting weight is editorial intelligence. Images are not treated as isolated moments of success but are carefully contextualised through essays and first-person reflections, allowing readers to understand how and why photographs carry meaning. The sequencing itself becomes instructive, revealing rhythm, tension, ambiguity, and intent.

For anyone even mildly drawn to photographing life as it unfolds, this book sharpens the eye and quietly raises standards.

My personal notes and key takeaways from this book are also available on Creative Genes, for those who wish to read further.

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Author: **Babak Tafreshi**
THE WORLD AT NIGHT



4.7/5

240 Pages

Publisher: **White Lion Publishing**

Babak Tafreshi: The World at Night is a book that quietly recalibrates how one looks at the night sky. It is not driven by spectacle, though the images are frequently breath-taking. Instead, it unfolds as a patient, deeply considered meditation on our place beneath the cosmos.

Tafreshi—founder of The World at Night project and a long-standing National Geographic contributor—positions the heavens not as a distant subject, but as a shared human constant, inseparable from culture, geography, and memory.

What distinguishes this work is its refusal to isolate the sky from the world below. Stars, planets, and the Milky Way are framed in dialogue with ancient monuments, remote landscapes, and lived spaces, restoring a sense of scale that modern life has largely lost.

The book reads as both visual archive and quiet manifesto, reminding us that night-sky photography is as much about awareness, restraint, and responsibility as it is about technical precision.

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION



THE REVENANT

Star Cast: Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Domhnall Gleeson, Will Poulter

Director: Alejandro González Iñárritu

I still remember walking out of the multiplex after watching *The Revenant* and feeling strangely quiet. Not moved in the dramatic, applause-worthy sense—but subdued, almost emptied out. The kind of silence that follows when images have done more than entertain you. They’ve lodged themselves somewhere deeper. For days after, fragments of the film kept returning to me: a lone figure crawling across an endless white plain, breath hanging in frozen air; a dark silhouette dwarfed by mountains that felt less like scenery and more like judgment.

On that extra-large screen, scale became the story. The landscapes were not beautiful in a postcard sense; they were overwhelming, indifferent, occasionally brutal. As a photographer, I couldn’t stop thinking about how those wide frames worked—not through spectacle, but through restraint. Human presence was constantly reduced, almost humiliated, by space. And in doing so, the film reminded me of something essential about landscape photography: scale is not about showing how big a place is; it’s about showing how small we are within it.

What stayed with me was the patience of the imagery. Light was never forced. Weather was never corrected. Snow, fog, wind, and shadow were allowed to misbehave. Many frames felt as though they were waiting—waiting for the right cloud, the right movement, the right moment of stillness. That kind of waiting is deeply familiar to anyone who has spent long hours outdoors with a camera, hoping the land will eventually meet you halfway.

Even now, certain scenes resurface unexpectedly, like visual afterimages. They serve as quiet reminders that composition is not just geometry, and storytelling is not just action. Sometimes, all it takes is a figure placed honestly within vastness for a story to unfold on its own.

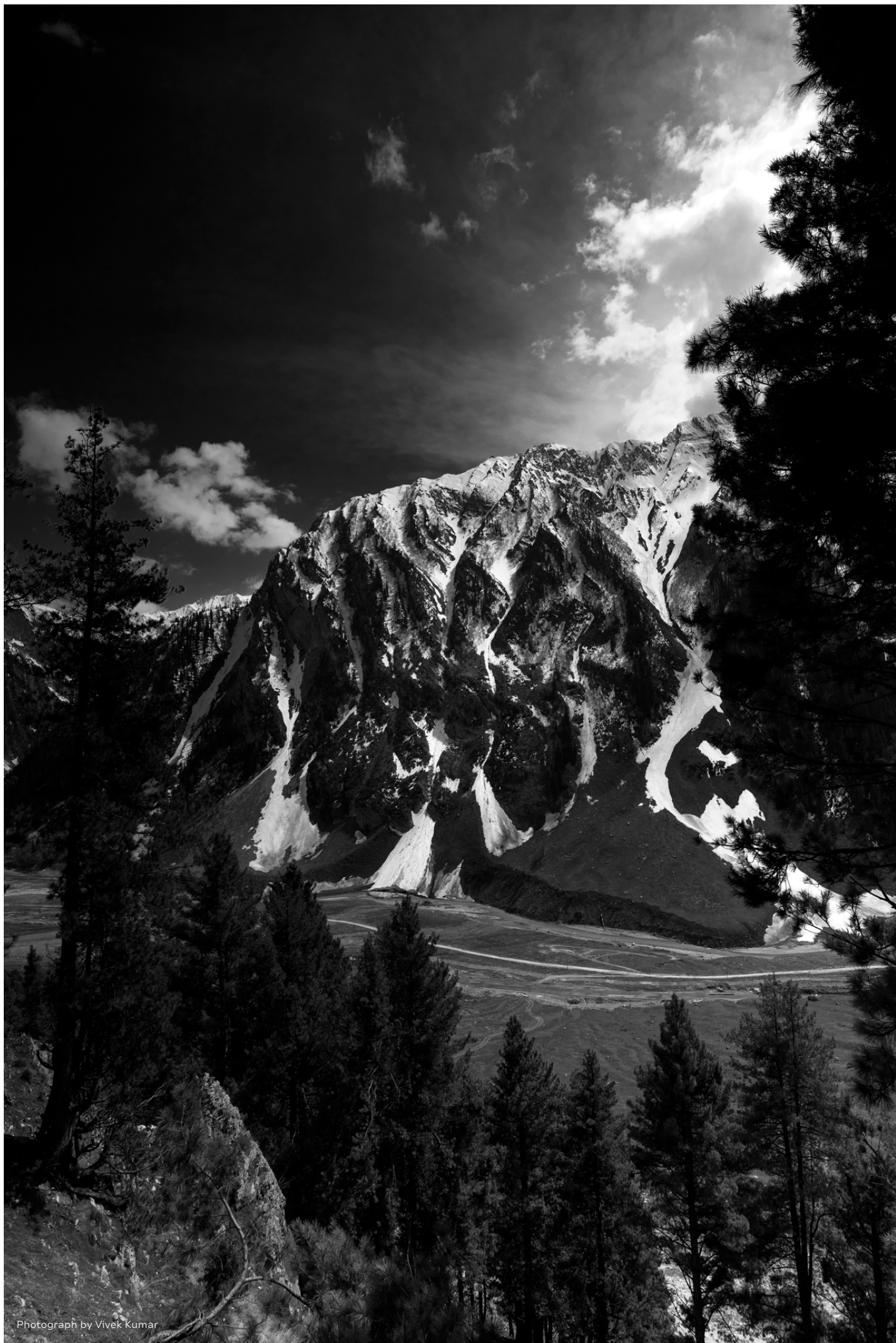
Available on: Netflix and JioHotstar



Cinematography: Emmanuel Lubezki

A few lessons *The Revenant* leaves behind for photographers

- **Scale changes meaning:** Vast spaces can humble a subject, amplify emotion, and deepen narrative without adding anything else to the frame.
- **Landscapes are not backgrounds:** When treated seriously, terrain and weather carry as much emotional weight as human characters.
- **Wide frames require humility:** Ultra-wide compositions work best when the photographer resists control and lets space breathe.
- **Patience is part of the craft:** The most enduring images often come from waiting—for light, for weather, for alignment.
- **Atmosphere is not a flaw:** Snow, fog, wind, and darkness are not distractions; they are part of the language.



Photograph by Vivek Kumar



TRAVEL

TALES

ANTARCTICA

A DREAM COME TRUE



STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS
By Pallavi Kishore



Antarctica always felt like one of those faraway dreams - the kind you admire from a distance and assume belongs to another lifetime. Since childhood, I had seen places like this on television. My dad watched National Geographic and the Discovery Channel religiously, and I remember sitting beside him, quietly wondering what it might feel like to experience landscapes that seemed so untouched.

For years, Antarctica lived in that space between my imagination and impossibility. But in January 2025, I started to think about visiting Antarctica seriously, and decided to just go for it - booking the trip for Christmas 2025. It felt a little crazy at first - the cost, the safety questions, the infamous Drake Passage, the sheer remoteness of it all. But the more I researched, the more I realized that this dream was closer and more realistic than it seemed. Many expeditions run safely each year. This wasn't impossible, just unfamiliar.



HOW TO GET THERE

The Journey to the End of the World

Reaching Antarctica is not a single flight - it is a journey that slowly pulls you away from the familiar world.

The expedition begins in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a vibrant, bustling city that feels like the last stronghold of civilization before heading south. From there, travelers fly onward to Ushuaia, a small port city nestled at the southern tip of South America and often referred to as the southernmost city in the world. It is here, in this windswept town framed by mountains and sea, that the true expedition begins.



From Ushuaia, you board the ship and set sail across the legendary Drake Passage, the body of water that separates South America from Antarctica and connects the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. Known for its unpredictability, the Drake has earned two nicknames among polar travelers. When conditions are calm, it's called the Drake Lake, with glassy seas stretching endlessly in every direction. When winds and swells pick up, it becomes the Drake Shake, where waves often rise fifteen feet or more.

I experienced something in between the Drake Lake and Drake Shake - a rite of passage that makes the first sight of Antarctica feel all the more earned!



WHY I CHOSE DECEMBER

Antarctica's Peak Summer

Antarctica's travel season is brief, running roughly from November to March, but December is considered peak summer. During this time, near constant daylight stretches the days, allowing for longer landings and extended zodiac cruises. Retreating sea ice opens up passages farther south, making areas accessible that are often unreachable earlier in the season. These favorable weather and ice conditions allowed our ship to cross the Antarctic Circle and reach as far south as 69°54' South latitude, where I experienced 24 hour daylight.

December is also a magical time for wildlife encounters, particularly for penguin lovers. It is peak season for penguin chicks. The conditions felt almost paradoxical: cold, but alive, navigable, and generous in what they offered.



MY EXPERIENCE WITH Lindblad National Geographic Expeditions

There are several expedition operators offering voyages from Ushuaia to Antarctica, each with different ship sizes, itineraries, and levels of access. After researching multiple options, I chose Lindblad National Geographic Expeditions for its balance of safety, access, education, and onboard comfort.

SHIP TECHNOLOGY & SAFETY

Lindblad's National Geographic Endurance is built for polar exploration. The ship has a PC-5 ice-class hull, designed to safely navigate heavy sea ice, and advanced stabilization systems for challenging conditions such as the Drake Passage. Its X-Bow technology improves fuel efficiency and stability in rough seas, prioritizing both safety and environmental performance. For a destination as remote as Antarctica, ship capability was a non-negotiable factor for me.

SMALL SHIP, INTIMATE EXPERIENCE

The ship carries approximately 130 guests, which allows for a more intimate expedition experience. Smaller group sizes mean smoother logistics during landings and zodiac operations and ensure that all guests can participate in daily activities, often twice a day.

ONBOARD EXPERTS & SCIENTISTS

One of Nat Geo Lindblad's defining strengths is its expedition team. Onboard were naturalists, polar experts, glaciologists, geologists, wildlife researchers, and National Geographic photographers. Their presence added constant context to what we were seeing - whether it was glacier formation, penguin behavior, or climate patterns. Daily briefings and informal discussions made the experience wholesome.

RESPONSIBLE & REGULATED TOURISM

Lindblad operates under strict IAATO (International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators) protocols. This includes limits on the number of passengers ashore at one time, mandatory biosecurity measures to prevent contamination, and guidelines to minimize wildlife disturbance. These practices ensure that tourism remains responsible and sustainable in one of the world's most fragile environments.

LUXURY MEETS LEARNING: LIFE ONBOARD

While the focus was exploration, onboard comfort was exceptional. I chose a balcony cabin, allowing private views of icebergs, wildlife, and open ocean. The ship offers amenities such as a sauna, spa services, gym, yoga studio, glass igloo style observation areas, jacuzzis, and open deck access throughout the voyage. Daily highlights included the captain's cocktail hour, evening recaps, and lectures. Room service and attentive staff ensured that comfort never detracted from the expedition experience.

FOOD & DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Meals onboard were five star quality, with thoughtfully curated menus and excellent service. The ship was highly vegetarian friendly, with diverse options at every meal. Dining was both nourishing and indulgent - an important balance after long days of cold weather exploration.

DAILY LANDINGS & ACTIVITIES

Each day typically included two off-ship excursions, weather permitting. Activities ranged from zodiac cruising and guided hikes to kayaking, cross-country skiing, polar plunges, and wildlife observation. The variety of activities ensured that each day felt distinct and immersive, offering multiple ways to experience Antarctica up close.

Point being, if chosen correctly, Antarctica expeditions can come with comfort and luxury which are often not associated with exploring such remote places and regularly deters many people from considering it as a potential destination.



WHAT I SAW
A Profound yet Grounding Experience

White stretched endlessly in every direction. No borders. No noise. No distractions. Just ice, water, wildlife and an unmistakable awareness of how small we really are.

This wasn't a vacation. It felt more like a pilgrimage to the end of the world, one that quietly recalibrated perspective and presence. No two days were the same. We watched towering glaciers slowly fracture and calve into the sea, their echoes carrying across still water. Gentoo, chinstrap, and Adelie and Emperor penguins moved through the landscape with surprising confidence, their downy chicks offering moments of lightness against an otherwise austere backdrop. Weddell and crabeater seals rested on ice floes, unbothered, perfectly adapted to a world that feels hostile to humans. We even saw a ross seal - a rare sighting!

Zodiac cruises took us through mirror-still waters where ice cliffs reflected so clearly they felt unreal, as though the horizon had dissolved. Humpback whales made an appearance every now and then. And there was the silence - deep and uninterrupted. It was profound as well as grounding.



HOW MUCH DOES IT
Cost to Visit Antarctica?

Antarctica is one of the most remote destinations on Earth, and visiting it requires specialized ships, trained expedition teams, and strict safety and environmental protocols. As a result, it is not an inexpensive trip. Costs vary based on several key factors.

Season plays a major role. Shoulder months such as November or late February are generally more affordable, while Christmas/December and New Year fall during peak Antarctic summer and are priced higher due to better ice conditions, longer daylight, and prime wildlife activity.

Ship size and capability also significantly affect cost. Smaller ships typically cost more but offer smoother logistics, more frequent landings, and increased time on shore. Ship technology matters as well - higher ice ratings, ice-cutting capability, and advanced stabilization systems increase safety and allow access to more remote areas.

Route and cabin type further influence pricing. Sailing across the Drake Passage is generally less expensive than fly-in options. Further, standard cabins are the most economical, while balcony cabins add a premium.

Overall, most Antarctica expeditions range from USD10,000 to USD25,000+ per person, excluding international flights to Buenos Aires, South America.

I traveled during peak season in December, over Christmas, aboard an intimate ship with approximately 130 guests. The vessel had a PC5 ice class rating with advanced ice-cutting and stabilization technology, which allowed safer navigation and deeper access, including crossing the Antarctic Circle. I chose a 10 day itinerary and a balcony cabin. The total cost of my expedition was approximately USD 23,000 per person, excluding flights to Buenos Aires.



A MUST VISIT DESTINATION
ANTARCTICA



FINAL REFLECTION
A Must Visit Destination

Truly, some dreams don't need perfect timing or complete certainty. They just need you to take the first step and somehow everything begins to fall into place.

Antarctica doesn't shout. It whispers. It teaches patience. Perspective. Responsibility. You leave with photographs, yes - but also with a renewed awareness of the fragility of this planet and our role in protecting it.

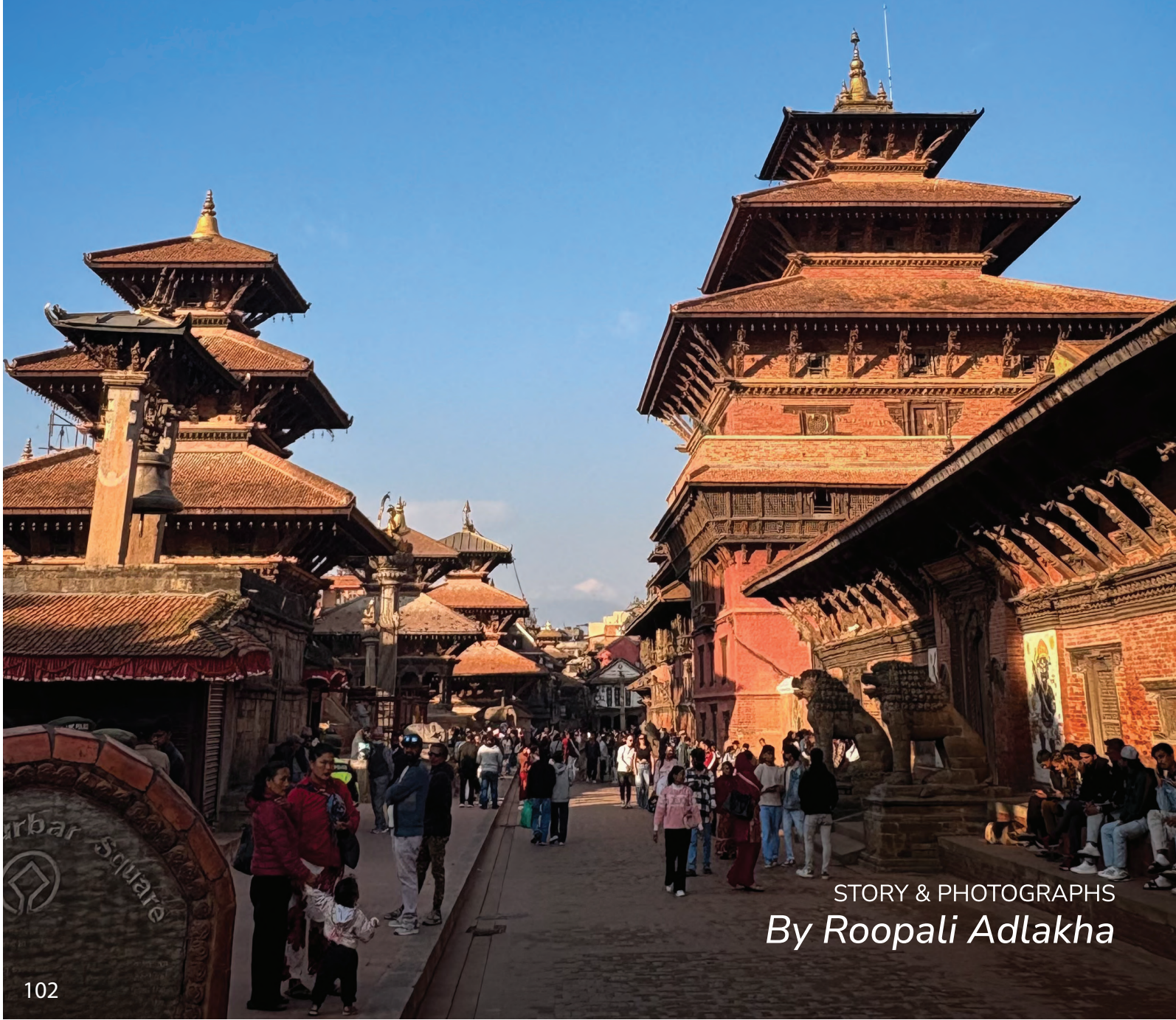
This wasn't just travel. It was a reminder of what still exists beyond us - and why it matters.



DON'T LET YOUR BUSY LIFE COME IN THE WAY OF EXPLORATION

EXTREME DAY TRIPS

NANO- EXOTIC GETAWAYS



STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS
By *Roopali Adlakha*

In a year filled with hectic schedules, immense responsibilities and complete lack of clarity, the travel bug continued to bite and I needed to scratch the itch more often than time permitted. Especially when the times are tough, a true-to-soul travel experience is all I long for – the change in pace, and experiencing something brand new can go a very long way in rejuvenating your mind and giving you the much needed break that you so deeply crave.

This is all great in theory, but how can one even manage to travel when life is chaotic and unpredictable? Well, I found myself in a similar spot last year. I was working on a very demanding project that needed me to prioritise it. I only had a few weekends to myself and they were far and in between. But I am someone who needs to see, hear, touch and breathe newness in my surroundings ever so often to stay sane and motivated and I know that this is the case with MANY of us.

In this dichotomy, I found a sweet spot of something more popularly called 'extreme day trips' and something I fondly call 'Nano-exotic getaways'. If you love to travel, you know that any country you visit often needs at least 1 or more weeks to really do justice to the destination and make the most of the money and effort spent. Having said that, that is not the point of these nano getaways. These are your bite-sized travel experiences which while short, pack a punch and leave you with some memories you will cherish for a long time.

I know what we all are thinking – another article about the Lonavalas and Dehraduns of the world. And while they are amazing destinations in their own right, that is not what I am here to talk about.

This is using a weekend or even single day off to explore somewhere farther and rather exotic - somewhere that will give you the flavor of a memorable travel experience without needing a week or two from your unpredictable schedule.

While it seems counterintuitive to go to another country or far away even domestically for such a short period, it can have an immense impact on how you feel about life – trust me, I have been where it feels like you are just going through the motions and not truly living. This will fix that feeling - just stay with me a little longer.

Now picture this, you are done with your calls, to-dos and chores on Friday night except you are not going to rot in bed in the next two days trying to recover from the week and failing anyway. And your Monday morning will not seem like a continuation of Friday itself.

Instead, you will be exploring a whole new world - hovering over the Himalayas, maybe snorkeling in crystal blue, pristine waters, seeing the glaciers so up close, or simply devouring a whole new cuisine.



But how, you ask?

Did you know Kathmandu, Nepal is a short, direct flight from Delhi and Mumbai with return tickets priced below INR 20k (cheaper than many domestic flights these days). It is also visa-free for Indian passport holders. Now that is not even where the beauty ends, there is a short 40-minute flight from Kathmandu which flies over the Himalayas and takes you very close to the most iconic peaks – Gauri Shankar peak, multiple 8k+ ft peaks including the great Mt. Everest.

For most of us who do not aspire to or can not climb the world's largest peak, this is the closest we can get and take my word for it, it is truly surreal.

So all you have to do is, take a Saturday morning flight to Kathmandu, explore the Patan Darbar Square (used as a set for Doctor Strange) and Kathmandu Darabar Square during the day and eat some sumptuous Nepali food (momos, gundruk, bara, thukpa, dhido, chatamari and much more).

Do call it a night early. Wake up before the sun, get picked up by your guide to take you to the airport (again?!) but this time for an experience of a lifetime.

You will then board a small 2-by-2 aircraft where the aisle seats would be empty and only the window seats are allotted to the passengers. You then fly over the hills and villages near Kathmandu with the sun rising behind them, and before you know it, you are amidst the gigantic, formidable Himalayan peaks. It feels dreamy in so many ways – with the mountains looming ominously around you, the early morning sun hitting the snow-covered peaks, and you are closer to the peaks than you could ever imagine possible without climbing one yourself.

After the breathtaking views, you could visit the other religious and tourist sites in Kathmandu before hoping on the flight back and you would be in bed before the night falls – ready to brace the Monday blues except, they will not feel so blue after all.

But wait, are you more of a beach person? Let me pitch an alternate plan to you then. Crystal blue waters, rum in hand, African music on repeat and happy locals dancing – sounds divine, isn't it.

Now, let's add play time with some of the world's oldest tortoises (resident Master Oogways) and that's how your dream weekend in Mahé, Seychelles awaits you.



Explore the island of Mahé by snorkelling at the beautiful beaches or hiking Morne Blanc Trail, merry-making at Takamaka Distillery, shop at the Victoria Market (you will invariably chance upon fun local street shows) and visit the Seychelles National Botanical Garden to learn about the unique flora and fauna. With direct flights under INR 35k, you can spend a weekend of pure bliss on this exotic island that will make every penny spent worth your while. The views from the plane and random vistas you will keep stumbling upon alone will have you thanking yourself for taking you on this nano-exotic getaway (yes, I am sticking with this name I coined).

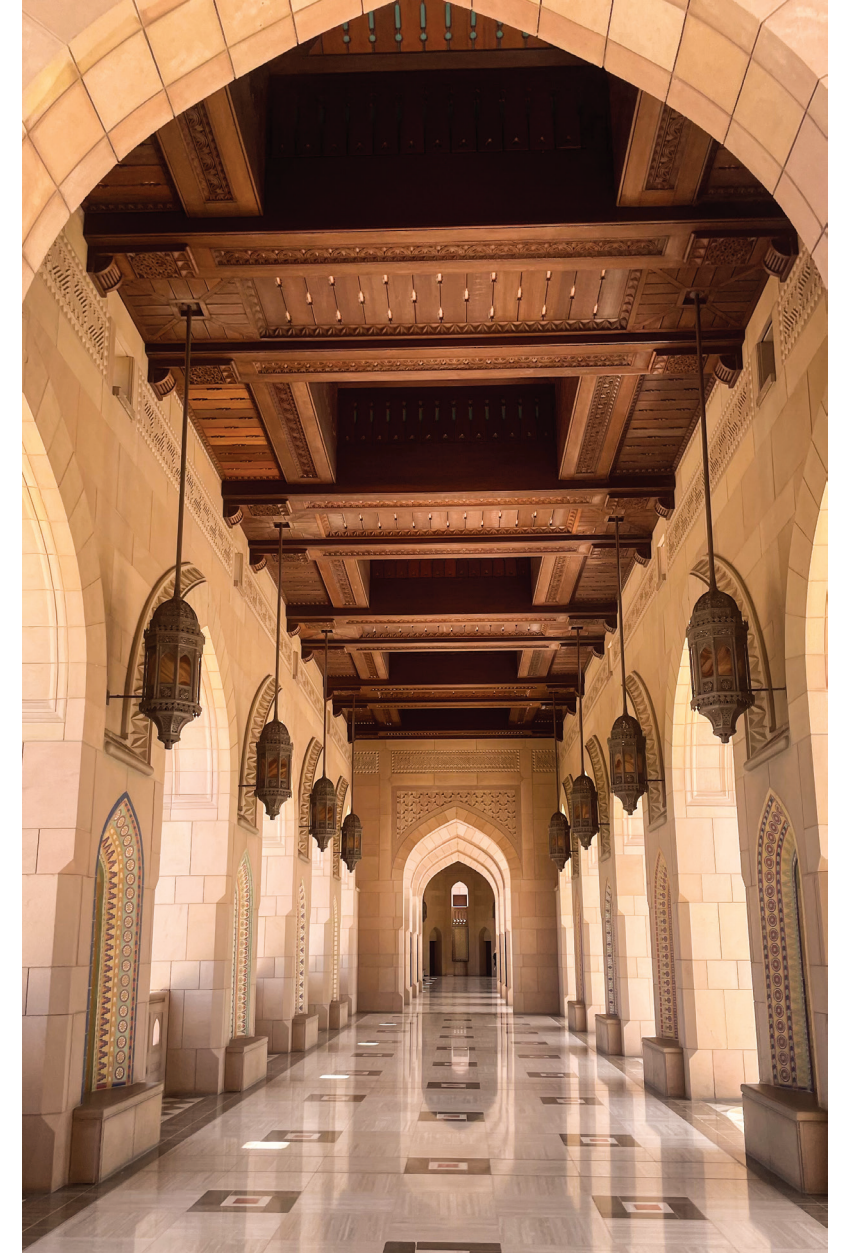
If you want something more budget friendly but still maintain exotic vibes, you could fly to Muscat, Oman. It is also a short, direct flight from most major airports in India and has some of the best hospitality you can experience. You could delve into the Omani culture and food by exploring the lanes the Mutrah Souq, walk along the spotless corniche with extraordinary views of the Arabian Sea, meditate at the stunning Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque (open to tourists of all religions), and be enamoured by Al Alam Palace, Royal opera House and many more sites of Muscat.

You could follow this up with a half day trip to snorkel at the Daymaniat Islands and enjoy a picnic at a secluded sand bar – beyond romantic! And yes, you can experience all of this in a short weekend trip.

Needless to say, you could spend over 10 days in Oman and still only have seen a small part of what the country has to offer, but let's be honest, how many such over-one-week trips are we really able to take in a year - so this is a perfect way to scratch the travel itch and explore more. And you can always come back for a longer trip if the place really calls out to you.

These are just a few examples. There are many such destinations close to India that you could consider, from the more popular ones to lesser known ones. You could start with Abu Dhabi (for the ultra-luxury hotels, world's fastest rollercoaster and Formula 1 track), Doha (for the dessert safari and Formula 1 track), Bangkok (for shopping, temple hopping and nightlife), Kuala Lumpur (for good food, seeing the pandas, exploring old nearby town of Melaka) and Phuket (chilling at scenic beaches and exploring the old town lanes).

If I have managed to pique your interest, let me also share how I plan these nano-exotic getaways. The formula that works for me is that once I know which weekend I am free, I use the "anywhere" feature on Google Flights to check the flights from Mumbai (which is where I live) – for a more budget-friendly way, you could search with flexible dates if that is practical for you. Either way, look for what fits your budget and has no or easy visa / entry requirements.



Either way, look for what fits your budget and has no or easy visa / entry requirements. You can then decide from your short list after checking your trusted weather app to ensure the weather is not going to play a complete spoil sport. If you are a travel junkie like me, you would have bookmarked a bunch of places or have must-do experiences in a host of places but even if you do not, a quick search will help you zero in on the things to do. Do book an accommodation in the middle of the main areas that you want to explore (to make the most of your time, of course). It also really enhances your experience to have one activity or place that you are most excited about and if nothing else, this highlight would make your trip worth it. I would highly recommend booking such activities in advance.

These tricks work best if you live somewhere with access to a well-connected airport or else the travel time may make the weekend / day trips unfeasible in which case you can consider adding another day to it.

Either way, the premise remains the same – you do not need a long time off to be able to explore more of the world and keep your inner traveler well-fed with life-changing and perspective broadening experiences even when life is not cooperating. As, when life gets tough, the travelers get going (anyway).



अस्त

STORIES

Rishika
Sehgal

Kiran
Aditya

Ginger
Lianne



RISHIKA SAHGAL

ABSTRACT ARTIST
INDIA



Rishika Sahgal is an abstract mixed-media artist based in India whose practice explores landscapes as carriers of memory, trauma, and resilience. Working with texture, cement, plaster, and layered surfaces, her work reflects emotional geographies shaped by her experience of the 2013 Uttarakhand floods. A graduate of the University of Westminster, London, Rishika creates immersive, intuitive compositions that balance fragility and strength. Through her art brand Reveario by Rishika Sahgal, she produces contemporary, luxurious abstractions that invite viewers to engage with both material and memory

1. You've spoken about how the 2013 Kedarnath floods changed your life completely. How did that experience find its way into your art and the way you see the world now?

The 2013 Kedarnath floods were not just an event I witnessed; they became a part of how I understand landscapes, nature, and memory. Seeing something so powerful and destructive at such a young age changed the way I look at the world. I no longer see landscapes as just beautiful spaces; I see them as living entities that hold stories, trauma, and resilience.

In my art, this experience translates into textured surfaces, ruptures, layers, and erosion; almost as if the canvas itself carries memory. It taught me that beauty and destruction can coexist, and that has deeply shaped both my worldview and my visual language.

2. Your "Flood Series" feels both emotional and abstract. When you paint something connected to your past, do you think about the story behind it, or do you let your feelings take over and guide the work?

It is always a dialogue between story and feeling. The memory is there, silently guiding the work, but I do not try to illustrate it literally. Instead, I allow emotion, intuition, and material to take over.

Sometimes the story becomes abstracted through texture, movement, or colour, just like how memories blur with time. I think that is where the work becomes more universal: it is no longer only my story, but something others can emotionally enter in their own way.

3. Can you tell us how a painting usually begins for you? Do you start with an idea, a colour, or maybe just a feeling — and how does it slowly take shape?

Most of my paintings begin with a feeling rather than a fixed image. Sometimes it is a mood, sometimes a memory, sometimes just an internal restlessness that needs form.

I start my piece intuitively with material, texture, or colour, and let the surface speak back to me. The painting slowly reveals what it wants to become through layers, erasures, and additions. For me, painting is less about control and more about listening to what emerges.



Rainwater, Acrylic, Clay, Cement, Indian Coins, PVA Glue and Resin on Canvas

99.2 x 62.99 in. (252 x 160 cm.)

2024
GEHRAIYAAN

गहराइयाँ





4. Some of your paintings come with soundtracks — such a beautiful idea! How did you start pairing sound with your art, and what connects the two for you?

Sound adds another emotional layer to how I experience my work. I began pairing soundtracks with certain paintings almost instinctively; some works felt incomplete without a sonic atmosphere.

Sound, like abstraction, bypasses logic and speaks directly to emotion. When combined with visual art, it deepens immersion and allows the viewer to feel the work rather than just see it. In many ways, it mirrors how memory works: fragmented, layered, and sensory.

A fun fact: For one of my soundtracks, I asked my Nana (Mom's Dad) to chant the Maha-mantra that we used to chant when we were stuck there. This sound added a personal emotional touch to my piece.

P.S., I went to Char Dham with my grandparents, both from the maternal and paternal sides.

5. You studied and worked in the UK for a few years. What was the biggest thing you learned from that time that still stays with you when you paint today?

My time in the UK taught me to trust experimentation and process over perfection. Being in an environment that encouraged conceptual thinking, critique, and material exploration gave me the confidence to move beyond just making "pretty" art and instead create work that carries depth and intent.

It also taught me to articulate my practice, to speak about why I create, not just what I create, which continues to shape how I work today.

6. Some of your works come from very personal or painful places. When you work on something like that, how do you take care of yourself and keep creating at the same time?

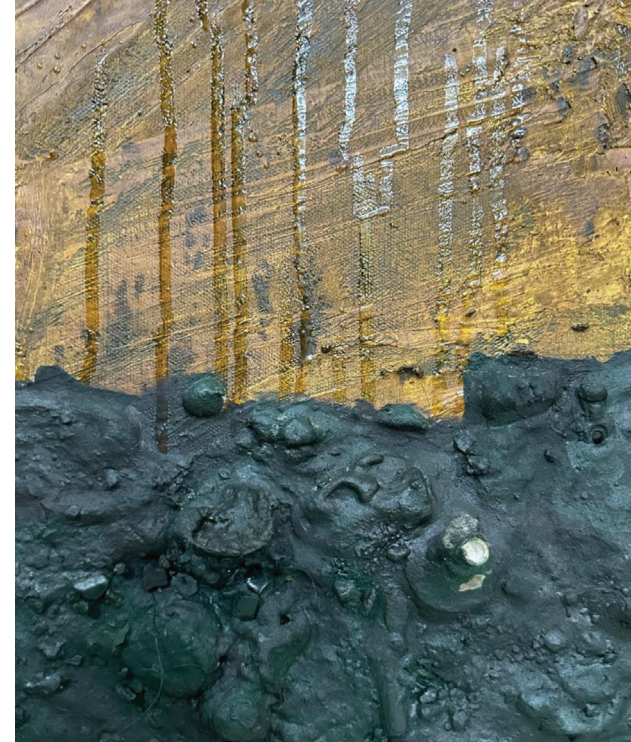
I have learned that taking care of myself is as important as taking care of my work. When I am creating from painful or emotional spaces, I allow myself breaks, distance, and reflection.

Art becomes a way to process rather than suppress, but I try not to romanticise suffering. I create with honesty, but also with gentleness towards myself. That balance helps me continue creating without burning out emotionally.

7. Your work feels calm and true to you — not driven by trends. How do you stay connected to your own voice as an artist?

I try to constantly return to why I started creating in the first place, not for visibility or trends, but for expression and connection.

I observe trends, but I do not let them dictate my work. Instead, I focus on developing a visual language that feels authentic to my experiences, materials, and emotions. When the work feels honest, it naturally finds its place.



2024

RUDRA PRAVAH

FIERCE FLOW

Acrylic, Cement, Resin, Marble Dust and Broken Brass Temple Items on canvas

72 x 48 in. (182.88 x 121.92 cm.)

8. For artists who might be struggling or doubting themselves, what's one simple piece of advice or thought that has helped you keep going?

Doubt is part of the process; it doesn't mean you're failing, it means you care. One simple thought that has helped me is: You don't have to see the whole path, just take the next honest step.

Keep creating, even quietly, even imperfectly. Growth often happens long before recognition does.





Rainwater, Acrylic, Clay, Cement, PVA
Glue, Canvas Sheets, Resin and Thread on
Canvas

75.59 X 79.92 in. (192 x 203 cm.)



2024

CRACKS & WAVES

दरारें और लहरें

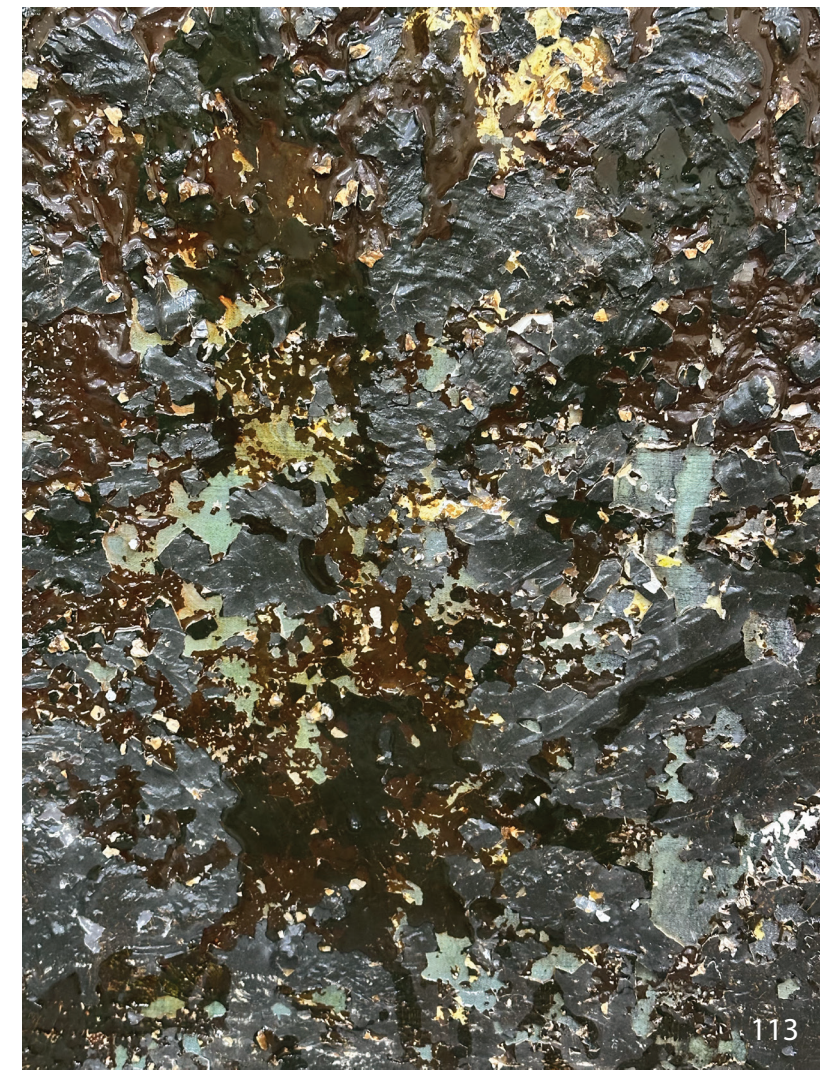


2024

BAADH KA PRAKOP WRATH OF FLOOD

Acrylic, Cement, Resin, and
Marble Dust on canvas

48 x 36 in. (121.92 x 91.44 cm)



Kiran Aditya

PHOTOGRAPHER & ARTIST

India

Kiran Aditya a Fine Art Graduate whose watercolours gently capture the soul of Mysore's heritage. documents the cultural and architectural essence of Mysore with sensitivity and restraint. Under AAROHA ART, his practice embraces spontaneity, wet-on-wet techniques, and expressive mark-making to evoke mood rather than detail. Each artwork becomes a visual archive—honouring the past while allowing space for personal interpretation and emotional resonance.



SUNLIGHT ON SILENT PILLARS

Maharaja College | 10 x 15 inches



MYSORE'S TIMELESS CENTRE

Chikka Gadiyara | 10 x 15 inch



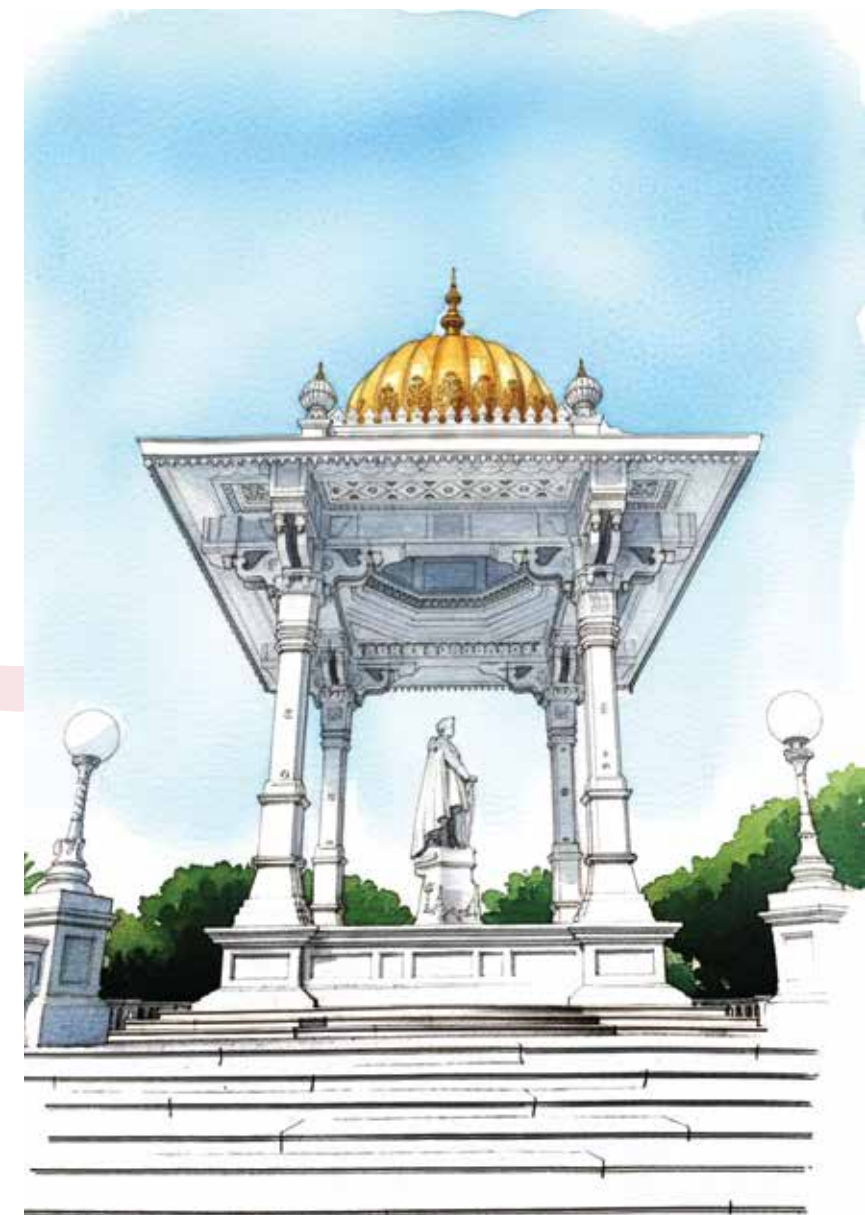
A QUIET DOORWAY IN ROSE

Vani Vilasa Marukatte | 10 x 15 inch



AN ARCHWAY TO ROYAL SPLENDOUR

The Royal Palace | 10 x 15 inch

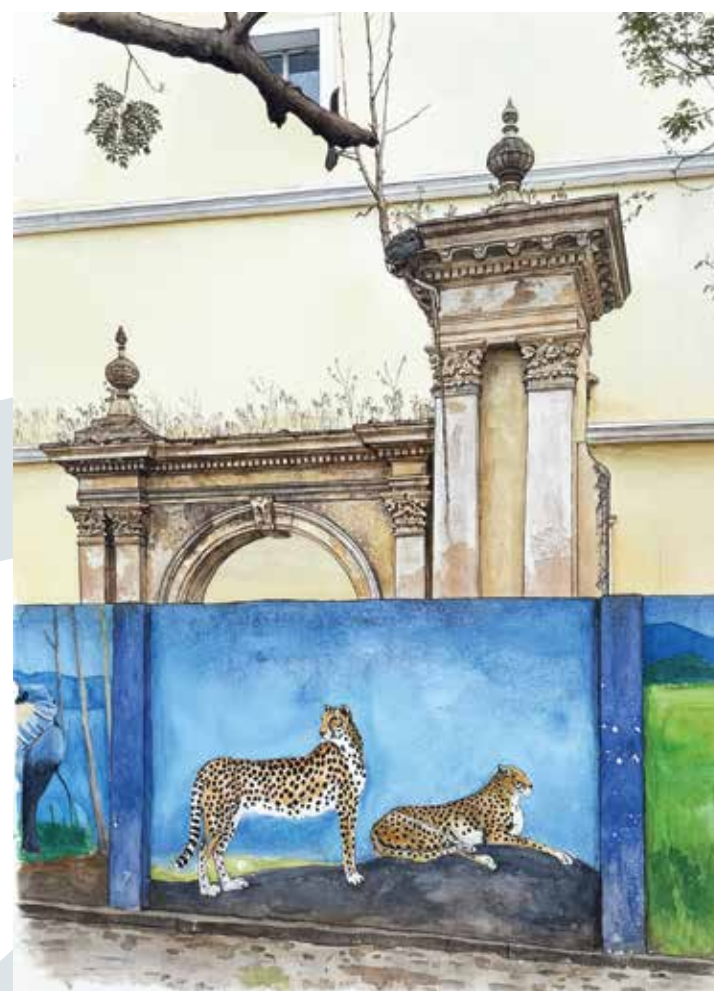


GOLDEN CANOPY OF REMEMBRANCE

Statue Circle | 10 x 15 inch

BETWEEN HISTORY & TIME

Maharani College | 10 x 15 inches



A STUDY OF BALCONIES & TIME

Agrahara Mysore | 10 x 15 inch



WHISPERS OF OLD TRADE

Santhe Pete | 10 x 15 inches



ECHOES BENEATH THE VERANDA

Landsdowne Building | 10 x 15 inch



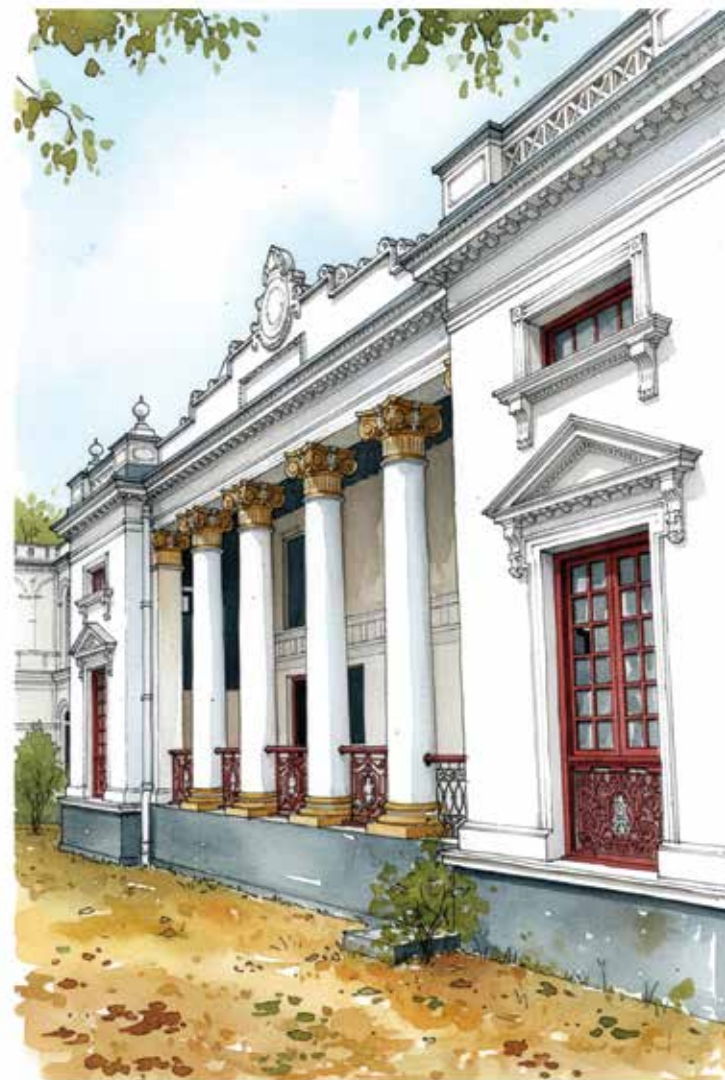
ORNAMENT OF A BYGONE ERA

Devraja Marukatte | 10 x 15 inches



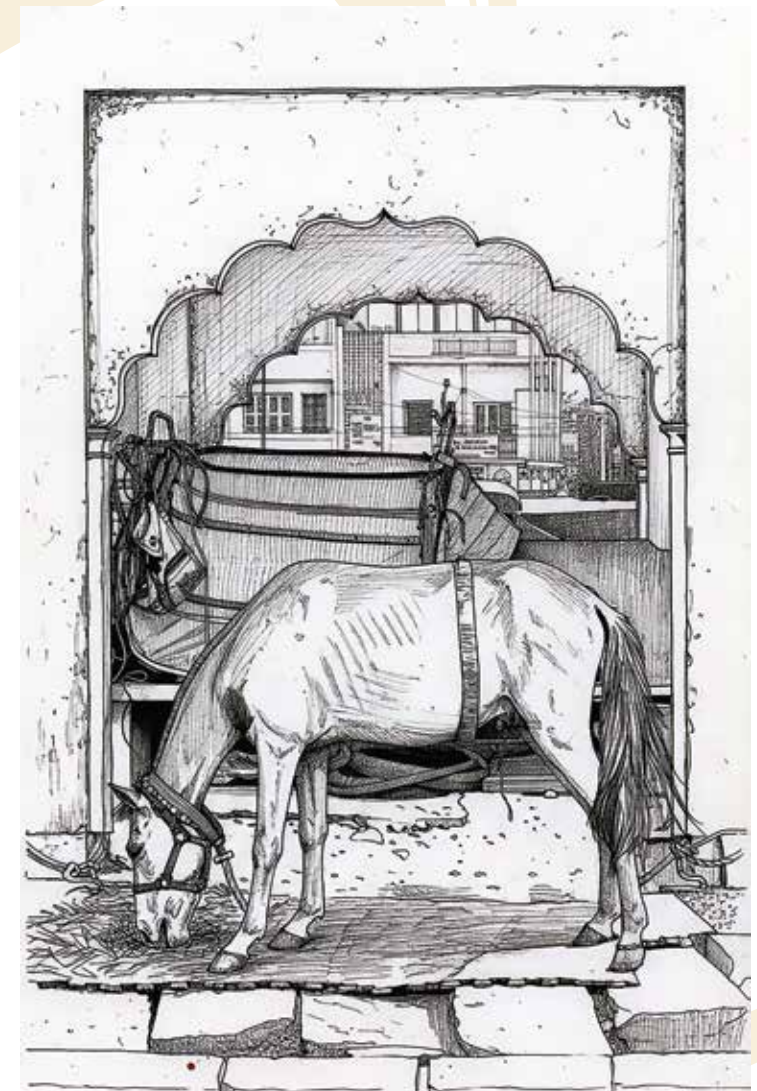
WHERE TIME WATCHES THE CITY

Chikka Gadiyaraa | 10 x 15 inches



A LEGACY IN COLUMN

Agrahara Mysore | 10 x 15 inch



WAITING AT THE THRESHOLD

Tanga Stand | 10 x 15 inch

Ginger Lianne

ABSTRACT & IMPRESSIONISTIC ARTIST

The Pacific Northwest, USA

Ginger Lianne is a contemporary abstract and impressionistic painter based in the Pacific Northwest. Her work explores the emotional landscapes of healing, transformation, and freedom through rich layers of texture and intuitive color. Inspired by ocean tides, mossy forests, and the shifting moods of coastal light, she paints to express what words often can't. Each piece reflects resilience, a balance between chaos and calm, darkness and light. Guided by emotion and movement, Ginger's paintings invite viewers to pause, feel deeply, and rediscover beauty in the quiet moments of becoming.



www.gingerlianart.com



I'M JUST A GIRL

24x36 acrylic \$1200

A blend of pinks, purples, and teals drips and dissolves into one another, creating a tender balance between strength and vulnerability. This piece whispers of softness after survival...a visual poem about allowing yourself to feel again.



NO ONE CARES

18x24 acrylic and oil pastels \$850

Dark, expressive strokes clash with graffiti-like marks, evoking the tension between inner silence and external chaos. The raw energy captures the feeling of trying to find yourself amid the world's noise, messy, powerful, and deeply human.



LOST

24x36 acrylic \$1200

Vivid greens, reds, and yellows collide in this exuberant burst of color. It feels like sunlight breaking through storm clouds ... joyful, messy, and alive. A reminder that healing can be loud, bright, and unapologetically imperfect.



FREEDOM TO LET GO

24x36 acrylic \$1800

Dreamlike and serene, this oceanic piece moves like light over water. Blues and golds shimmer through textured layers, symbolizing calm after the storm... a quiet moment of reflection and grace.



FREEDOM TO SPEAK

30x40 acrylic \$2500

A dance of magenta, violet, and electric blue, this piece feels alive with the energy of transformation. Layers of color intertwine like wildflowers bursting through dusk, symbolizing freedom after chaos. It radiates a sense of emotional release and renewal.

Mr. Anand Desai is an upcoming comic book writer. He Hails from Valsad, Gujarat—where comic reading was almost unheard of. He inherited his love for books and comics from his father.

His childhood bond with Raj Comics reignited when he had the privilege to work with Mr. Sanjay Gupta of legendary Raj Comics, the father of Indian superheroes. Starting as a superfan volunteer for Raj Comics by Sanjay Gupta, Mr. Desai contributed as a proofreader, translator, and later as editor at Alpha Comics.

It was Mr. Sanjay Gupta who encouraged him to write his own original stories. Then an idea born at the Modhera Sun Temple, lead to the creation of Yami – The Daughter of the Sun.

Since then, Mr. Desai has expanded into multiple genres like superhero, psychological thriller and horror with characters like Baldor & Nilabh under the Alpha Comics banner.

His work also includes translations of Raj Comics icons such as Super Commando Dhruva, Nagraj, and Doga, along with editing Alpha Comics' Animo City.

His upcoming releases include original works Yami and Baldor, which are soon to be available on shelves.

Mr. Anand Desai

CONDUCTED BY: MR. ANKIT RASTOGI



1. So, Mr. Desai, what lead you in this colourful world of Comic Books and when did you decide to take plunge as a writer?

Honestly, comics were in my DNA from childhood. My father was an avid reader of novels and comics, so I grew up surrounded by books and never heard 'no' when I asked for one. Even though I come from a place where the comic-reading culture was nearly absent, my bond with them was strong. Years later, destiny brought me close to Sanjay Gupta ji, the father of Indian superheroes, through Comic-Con volunteering and then as a proofreader and translator at Raj Comics as well as Alpha Comics. That's when childhood companionship turned into real contribution.

The turning point came during a visit to the Modhera Sun Temple, where I got an idea for a character. Sanjay Sir had just started a new publishing banner called "Alpha Comics" which opened up gates for lot more new characters and stories apart from legendary Raj Comics. I casually shared the idea with Sanjay ji, and instead of just incorporating it in his pool of ideas, he encouraged me to write it myself. Without Sanjay Gupta ji's faith and guidance, I would never have taken that plunge as a writer — and that's how Yami – The Daughter of the Sun was born, marking the start of my journey as a creator.

2. Can you describe or elaborate on your creative process for the comic books you have written till date?

Frankly, It begins with a spark – an idea that suddenly pops into my mind. It could be a place I visit, a myth I read, or even a weird thought that refuses to leave me. Then I play with "what if" questions – what if this happens, what if that person betrays, what if the hero makes a tough choice.

Observation plays a big part. Being introvert, I don't speak much but I listen & observe my surroundings and people very much (sometimes almost stalking ☹️) This helps me building characters. How would person of certain characteristics behave in certain situation.

Supporting characters and their backstories are as important as the main plot, and this is the stage where I build my character layers, imagining their arcs, and longboarding the rough storyline. Once the base plot is ready, I move into detailed research, to ensure the universe feels real and factually correct.

Once the base plot is ready, I move into detailed research, to ensure the universe feels real and factually correct. This process takes the maximum time. Key moments, turning points, and punchline dialogues are locked in, and the story is structured into three act skeleton. Finally, I convert those plot points into actual comic book pages and panels, and final script.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned from Sanjay sir is to always think ahead – to start shaping what's next even before completing the current story or arc. By the end of any story, readers should not only understand and connect with who the character truly is, but also feel curious about where their journey could go next. A good story doesn't just conclude; it leaves readers engaged, excited, and eager to know more about the characters, even if it's a one-shot comic book.

3. How has Mr. Sanjay Gupta helped you with your writing and approach to storytelling?

I still remember my very first call with Sanjay sir after I sent him the idea of Yami. He carefully understood my vision, and then came the tough questions (smiles). Together, we inverted the initial idea into something far more meaningful — a story where readers could truly connect with Yami, both as a character and as a journey.

With every step, Sanjay sir gave sharp feedback – guiding, correcting, even criticizing when needed, but always encouraging. The Yami plot actually went through 14 versions before it was finalized.

For me, Sanjay sir has been a masterclass in storytelling. He has taught me the importance of structure, layering, and most importantly, preserving the soul of a character. He has shaped my thought process, showing me how to create powerful stories and situations even out of nothing.

What I admire most is his encouragement – he listens to hundreds of ideas pitched to him and makes sure everyone gets thoughtful feedback. And he never hesitates to appreciate even the smallest details. I still cherish his words when he said, 'Kya ending likhi hai Yami ki, maza aa gaya,' or after reading Baldor 1, 'Isse padke to main zindagi se free ho gaya.' Those moments are priceless.

4. Can you give us some insides into the world of Yami & Baldor?

Each of their world reflect on a different shade of storytelling I wanted to explore. Yami's roots are in mythology but her universe is modern world dilemma – She is literally the saviour of the world but she has lost so much in the process. Her story explores how someone so powerful deals with grief, loss, responsibility, and a world that fears her fire. In her first issue, readers witness her unmatched physical might, while the second takes us deeper into her mental resilience, showing how strength is not just about battles but also about endurance. She is setting up on an epic journey from issue 3 which will become a saga itself.

If Yami is a light, Baldor takes us into a far darker space. Igor, a loyal soldier who believed deeply in his country. But something horrific happened to him – an incident so scarring that while it turned him against the people he adored. Now, stripped of pain, both physical and emotional, Baldor walks the thin line between man and monster. His world flirts with psychological thriller, almost on the border of horror, where the real terror lies in the human mind. Its raw and gory. I have co-created and co-authored Baldor with very talented Harsh Chaudhary (fame Varaha, Narsimha, Bhujang etc.), who is a goldmine of stories himself.

5. Have there been moments of self-doubt, writer's block, scratching/deleting multiple drafts?

Of course, there have been moments of doubt and plenty of drafts. In fact, the Yami plot itself went through 14 versions before it was finalized, and Yami Issue 2 also saw considerable churning. Some concepts were scrapped entirely, like Yami – Lost in Memories, where she was dealing with memory loss and forgotten identity, and Yami – Aatash, set in the laid-back Parsee town of Udwarda around the mysteries of the Holy Fire.

But I wouldn't call it writer's block – I feel I'm just beginning this journey and there are still hundreds of stories waiting to be told. The only real self-doubt I faced was during Yami Issue 1, when I mistakenly started writing it more like a web series or film script rather than a comic book. With Sanjay Gupta sir's guidance and mentorship, those doubts cleared, and my approach improved with every step. Today, I see those multiple drafts not as failures, but as stepping stones that helped me become a better storyteller.

6. Is the process of writing healing for you, how does it impact or boost your mental health?

Yes, writing is absolutely healing for me. Being an introvert, I've always had countless thoughts running through my mind, but I often find it difficult to express them through verbal communication. Writing gives me that medium – it allows me to put those infinite thoughts into stories, characters, and worlds where they can truly breathe. I live every character I write, right down to their core, and that journey gives me immense happiness. It's almost like therapy: every draft helps me process emotions, whether it's grief, joy, or hope, while keeping me mentally balanced. And when readers connect with those stories, it feels like my inner world has found a voice that can reach others – which is both healing and deeply motivating.

7. Do you have any advise for Young and upcoming Writers?

My advice would be simple – just start. Don't wait for the perfect idea or the perfect draft, because stories grow only when you put them down on paper. Be ready to rewrite, because the first version is never the final one. Observe people, listen to conversations, and read as much as you can – because characters are built from life around us. Most importantly, don't be afraid of self-doubt or criticism; both are part of the process and they will only make you better. And finally, write with honesty. If you stay true to your characters and emotions, readers will always connect.

Apart from the aforementioned works in the pipeline, what are your plans towards writing in future? Apart from Yami and Baldor, I definitely want to expand into new genres and formats. Under the Alpha Comics banner, I'm already working on characters like Nilabh, MAA and several others still in early stages, which will allow me to explore different shades of storytelling. My aim is to build a rich universe of interconnected stories rooted in our culture but told with a modern, global sensibility. In the long run, I'd also like to experiment with children's comics, crime suspense thrillers.

I'm fortunate that I got a chance to provide creative contribution in Alpha Comics since inception of its larger universe. Lot many characters to come and lot many stories will be told, universes will collides and strange partnerships will be formed. Stay tuned...



International Photography Awards (ZIPA) 2026

Creative Zyne announces its **2nd** edition of **ZIPA** across **18 categories**, with an international jury panel of **16** master photographers!

16 Jury Members

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REMON DIAZ	ROBERT LIE
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GERMAIN FAVRE-FELIX	ANJAY THAKUR

CONTEST OPENS

1 MARCH 2026

DEADLINE

31 MAY 2026

RESULTS

30 JUNE 2026

Awards & Recognitions

EXHIBITION: Gold winner in each category will have their work exhibited in a prestigious art gallery in India.

MAGAZINE PUBLICATION: Gold and Silver winners in each category and the photographs selected for Editor's Choice, will be published in the August 2026 issue of Creative Zyne magazine.

AWARD BOOK: All winning and recognised work will be published as an annual ZIPA 2026 award book.

INTERVIEW: Among all the winners, a few may be selected for an interview with Creative Zyne magazine and Creative Genes blog, showcasing their work.

CERTIFICATE: All winning and recognised work will receive certificate of merit with ZIPA badge.

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MORE ABOUT THE CONTEST AT [ZYNEAWARDS.COM](https://zyneawards.com)

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Photography by Xenie Zasetskaya



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