

KOKORO



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KOKORO

Wandering Through a Photographic Life

*An Image Journal
with Commentary, Meditation, Philosophy,
and Unanswered Questions*

Brooks Jensen

Brooks Jensen



Perhaps Lafcadio Hearn will not protest too much if I paraphrase (almost word for word) from *Kokoro*, his 1895 book of Japanese life. He explains this important Japanese term far better than I ever could:



“The entries comprising this volume treat of the inner rather than the outer life, — for which reason they have been grouped under the title *Kokoro* (heart). Written with the above character, this word signifies also *mind*, in the emotional sense; *spirit*; *courage*; *resolve*; *sentiment*; *affection*; and *inner meaning*, — just as we say in English, ‘the heart of things.’”



In This Issue

Factory Butte	4
A Place to Rest These Weary Bones	13
Silva Lacrimosa	25
Poe in Pictures	48
Cold on a Cosmic Scale	62
The Impossible Puzzle	75
Japanese Ghosts	101
Timon	110



FACTORY BUTTE



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Technically and logically, the Earth is just a ball of rocks floating in space. If that's *all* that it is, how can we explain the magic that seems to exist so palpably at certain places?

Perhaps an even greater mystery, is why do *some* of us feel that magic almost as a entity, while others feel nothing? Does the place withhold its magic from some? Or, is it only a matter of the sensitivity of the recipient? No answers are apparent, but the magic must be real, or so many wouldn't share it.

Factory Butte in Utah is a magic place for me. I know it is for others — particularly for so many *photographers* — because it keeps drawing us to it. I am tempted to plumb the mystery, but then I always decide just to let it wash over me and silence my questions. Just a pile of dirt, but then again ...















A PLACE TO REST THESE WEARY BONES



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Let's sit a spell, and have a chat.

As humans, we may speak different languages, eat different foods, and worship different gods, but everyone of us from time to time needs to sit and rest our weary bones.

We don't give much thought to sitting, but it surely has importance in all our lives. We sit on and upon, sit in, sit pretty, sit on our hands, sit tight, and sit up. The king sits upon the throne; the authority sits in judgment; the protesters have a sit-in; and we sit for a portrait. Even the hen sits on her eggs.

With over a billion people in China, it's no wonder there was a chair around every corner.



千钧霹雳开新宇——炮打司令部

毛主席
语录

全心全意地
为人民服务，一刻也不脱离群众；一切从人民的利益出发，而不是从小组的利益出发；不负人民的责任，并且同群众保持最密切的联系。这些就是我们的出发点。



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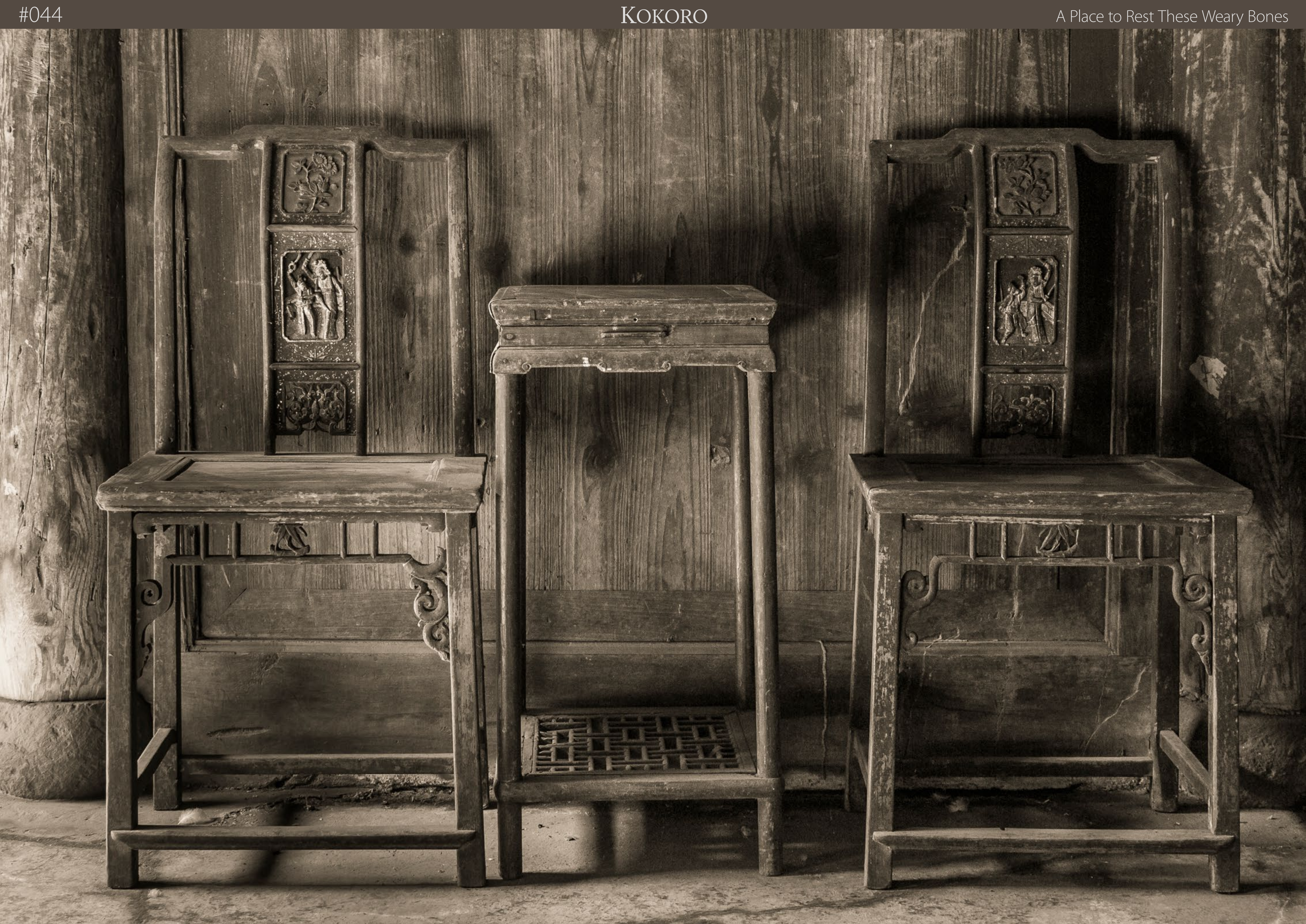










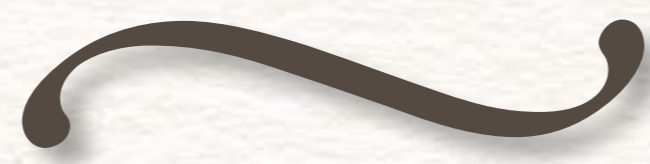






SILVA LACRIMOSA

(Tears of the Forest)



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There is life ... then comes the fire.

With time, life rises again ... slowly. But for a long time, long before the life once again dominates the land, there are the remains of the life that was. The soot-black, charcoal, leafless carcasses of the trees point to the sky, point to the ground, point to each other.

They are the sentinels of memory.
They are the tears of the forest.













































This project was originally produced as an [11-print folio of black-and-white prints](#) in the fall of 2008.

POE IN PICTURES



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Deep into that darkness peering,

long I stood there, wondering, fearing,

doubting, dreaming dreams

no mortal ever dared to dream before.

– Edgar Allan Poe



Edgar Allan Poe has never been one of my favorites. I don't watch horror films, nor do I read Stephen King novels. Freddy, Chucky, Halloween — no thanks. I've never found any benefit in being *scared*.

Our darkest fears, however, cannot be suppressed indefinitely. They sometimes come out in my photographs — much to my surprise. I refer to them as my "boo-tographs." Humor helps disempower them.



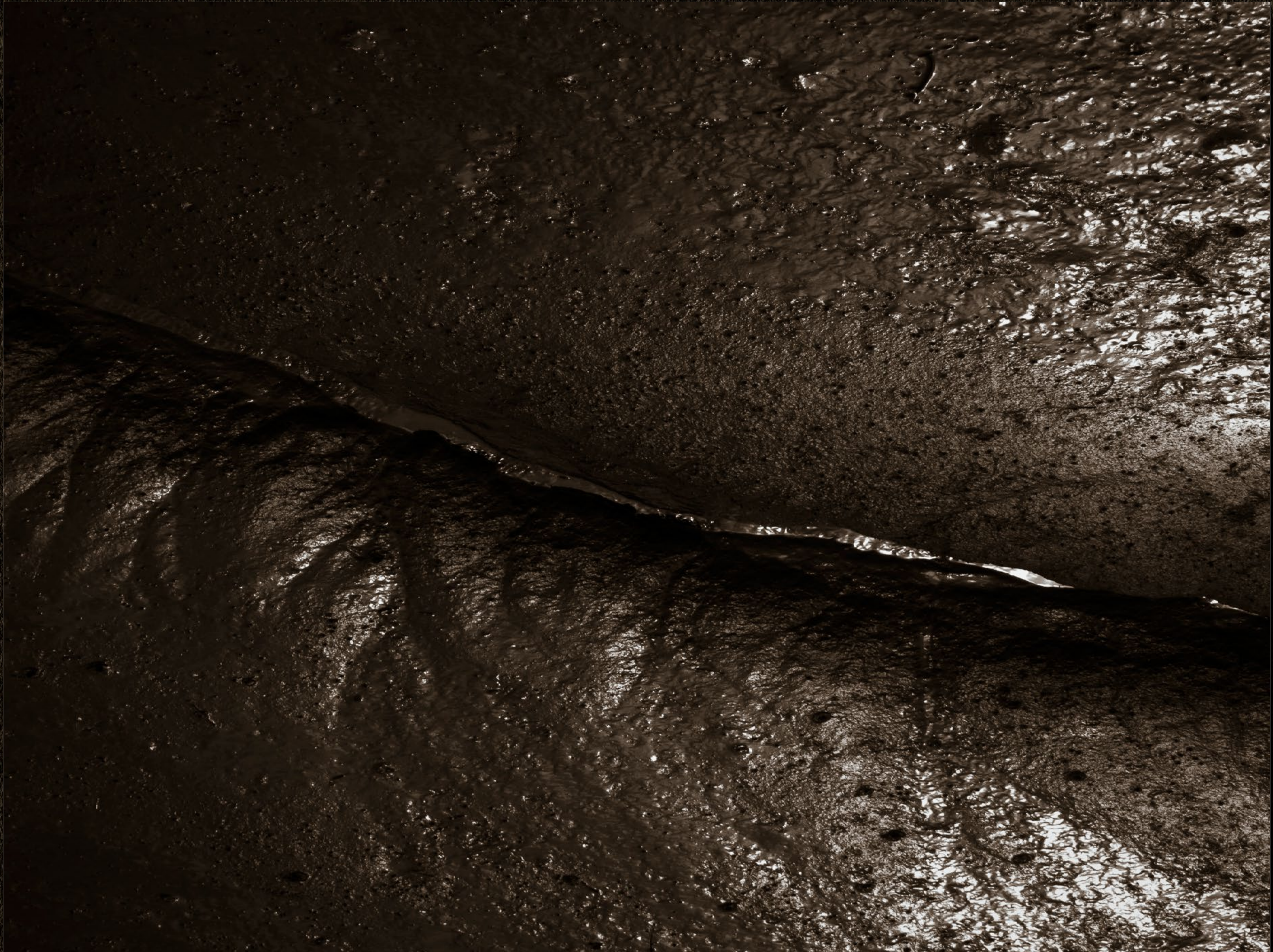














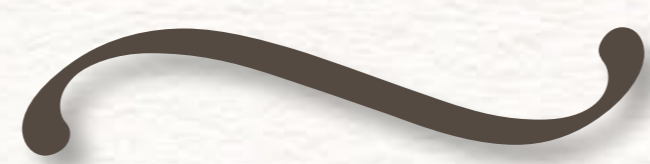




Boo.

COLD ON A COSMIC SCALE

*Or, How I Lost My Tuhkus in China,
on the Banks of the Frozen Yellow River*



Brooks Jensen

A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication

Science tells us that the coldest *theoretical* cold is minus 273° Celsius, so-called “absolute zero.” Most of the cosmos is pretty close to that, except the occasional pinpoint of a sun here and there. The interior of a sun is the other end of the cosmic temperature scale — roughly 15 million degrees Celsius. Of the 15,000,273 possible temperatures in our cosmos, we humans are “comfortable” in a range of about 0.0002% of them. Picky little creatures, aren’t we!? Or perhaps just incredibly delicate.



As I write this, here comfortably seated on a park bench overlooking Fidalgo Bay in my hometown, I am surrounded by a comfortable 60° (Fahrenheit) morning and a gentle warming sun. I recall a day photographing on the banks of the Yellow River in China not long ago, protected by two goose-down coats, still bitterly cold on a sunny, windswept 13° (Fahrenheit) winter day. On the cosmic scale, such a tiny change in temperature — almost immeasurable — was cosmically insignificant, but not to me! On that cold winter day in China, my lips and my *tukhus* froze and fell right off. I might be speaking *emotionally*, but trust me, it was **cold**. Ah, the sacrifices we make for art!























THE IMPOSSIBLE PUZZLE

Shipbuilding at Dakota Creek Shipyard



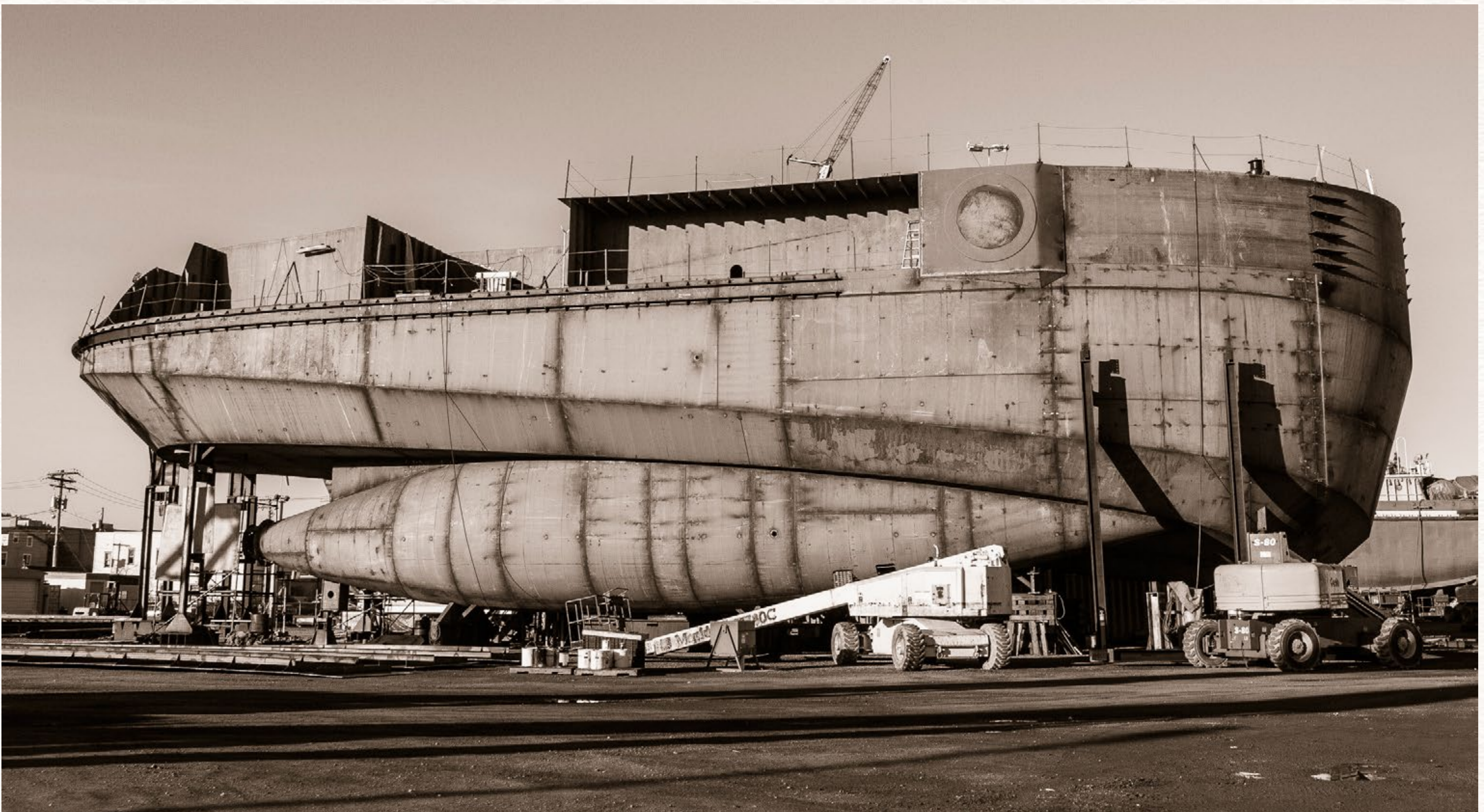
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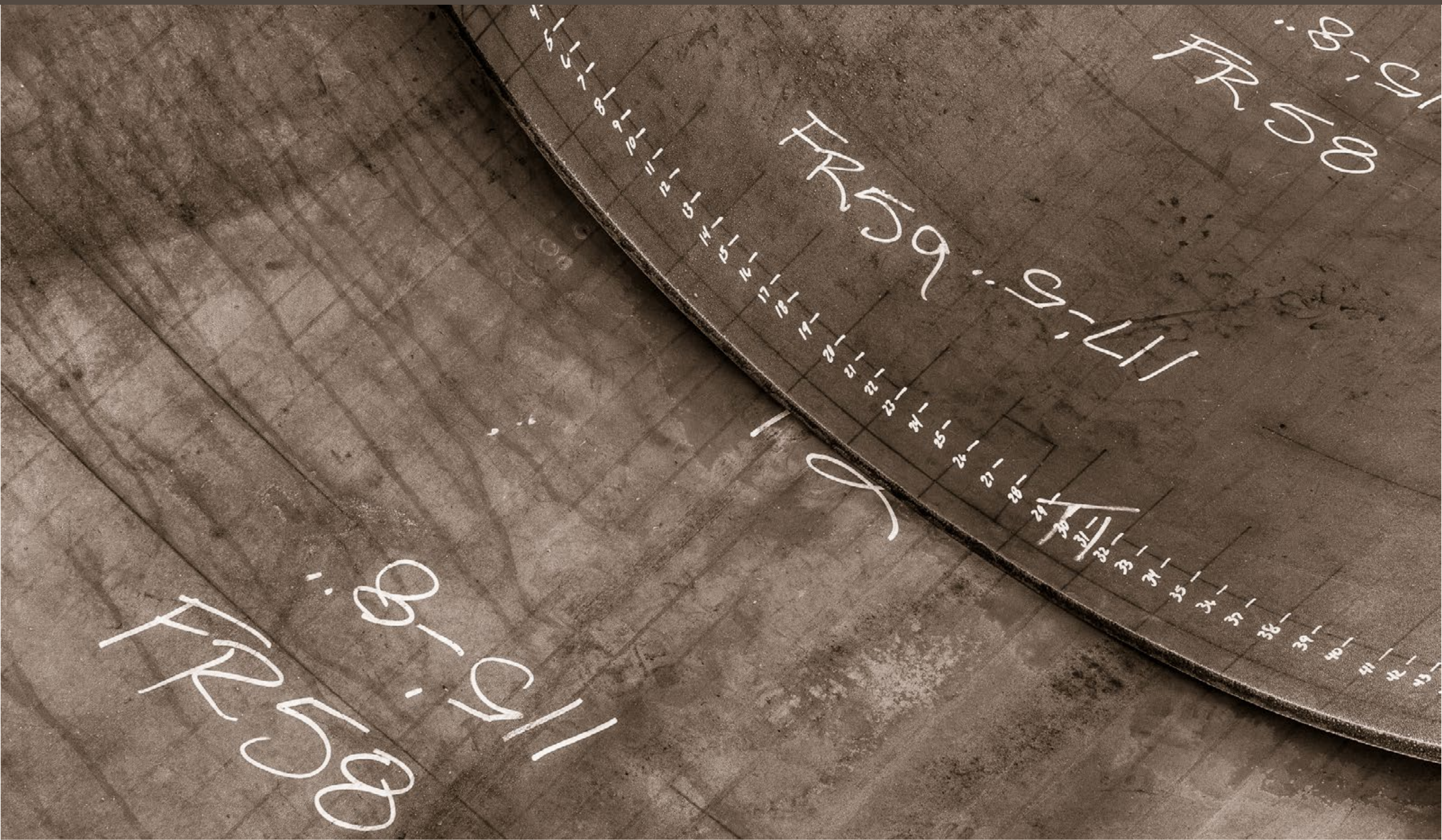
Shipbuilding.

Imagine a jigsaw puzzle that is 300 feet long ...
and weighs 5,400 tons ...

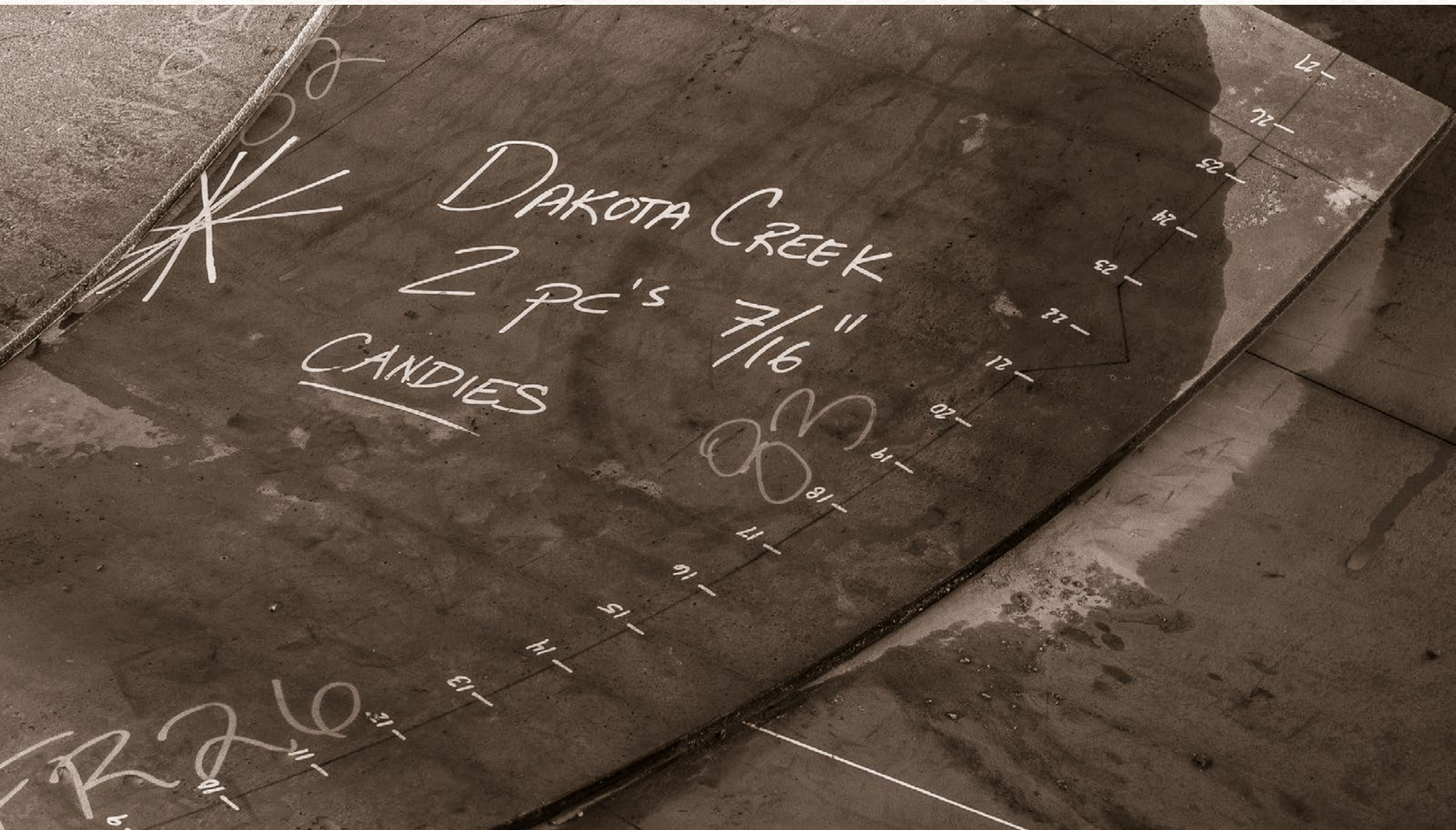
... once you've assembled it.



Shipbuilding is like *that*.



It starts with piles of cut steel, shaped to a tolerance of 1/32", each weighing more than a man can handle, no two of them exactly alike.

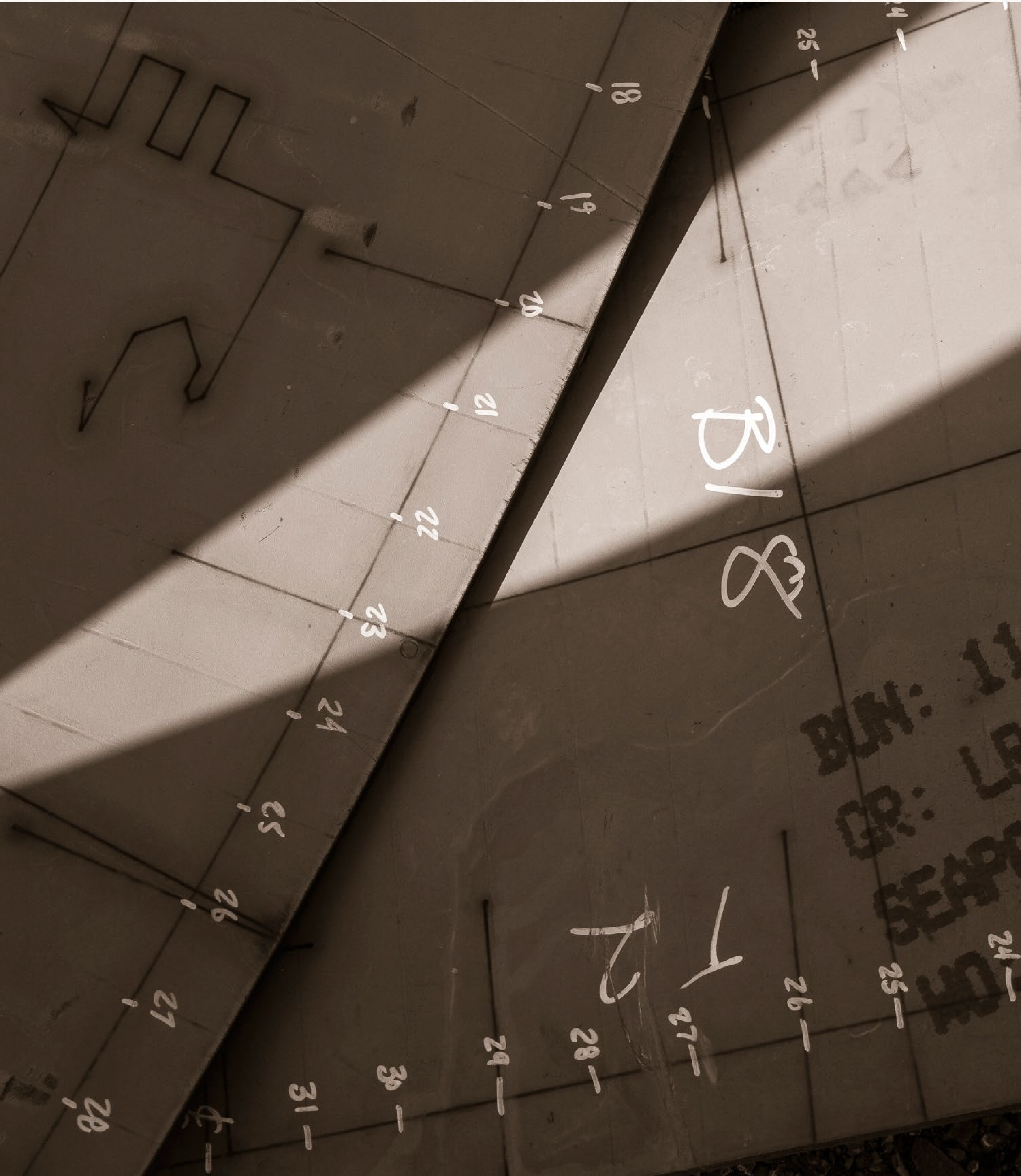




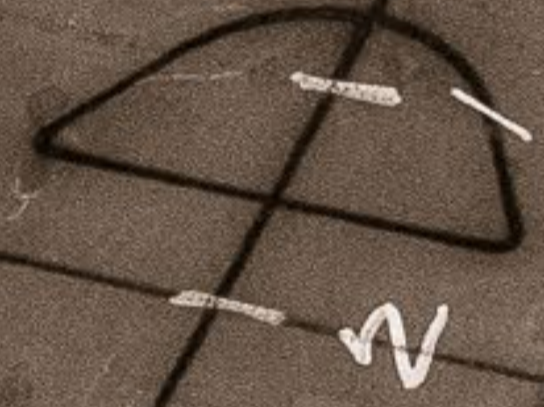
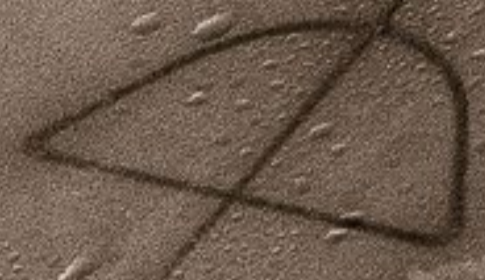
No straight lines, no flat pieces.
Instead, they are rounded like the waves, curved like the earth.



I've been photographing in the shipyard for years. I'm captivated by the cryptic notes, drawing, marker points, measurements, and comments found here and there on the steel. To my untrained eye, they are all hieroglyphics, but to the shipbuilders I suspect they are the keys to the puzzle.



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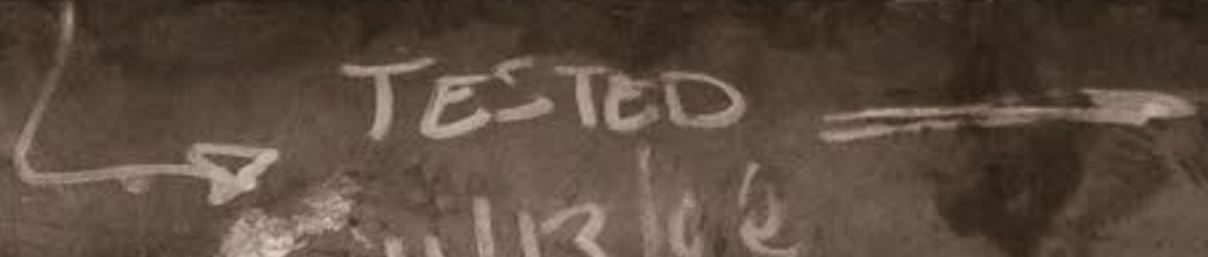


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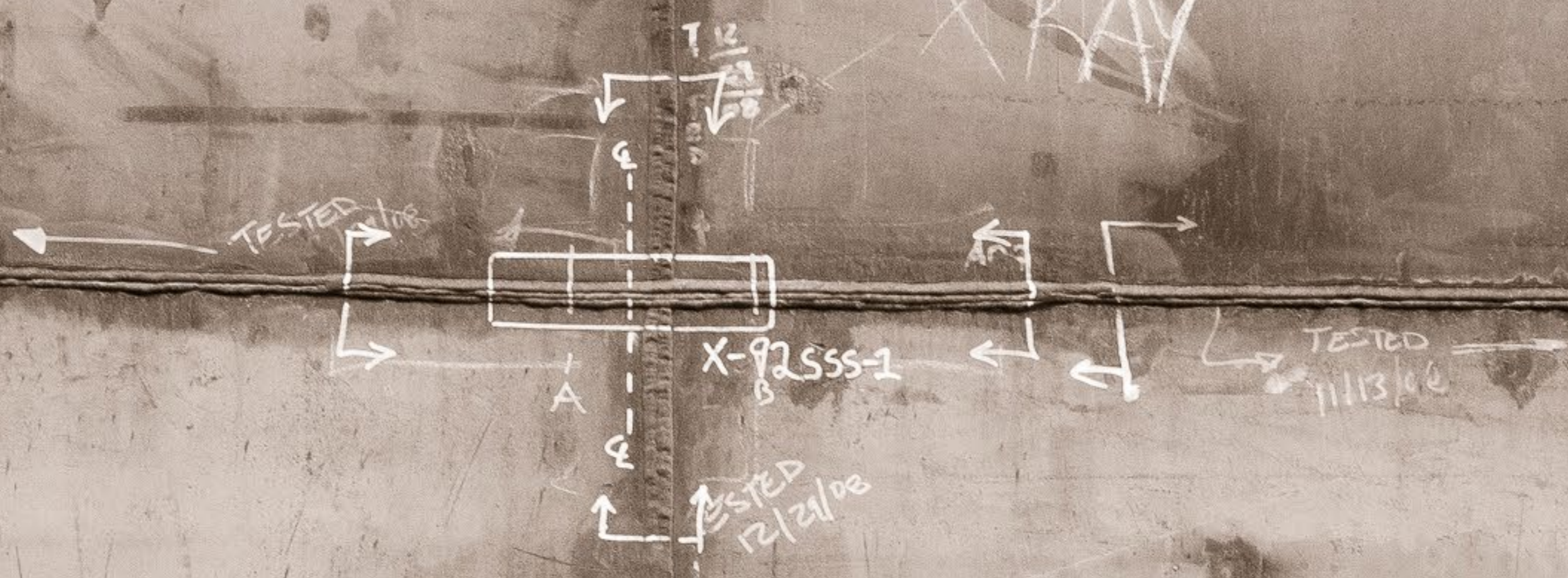




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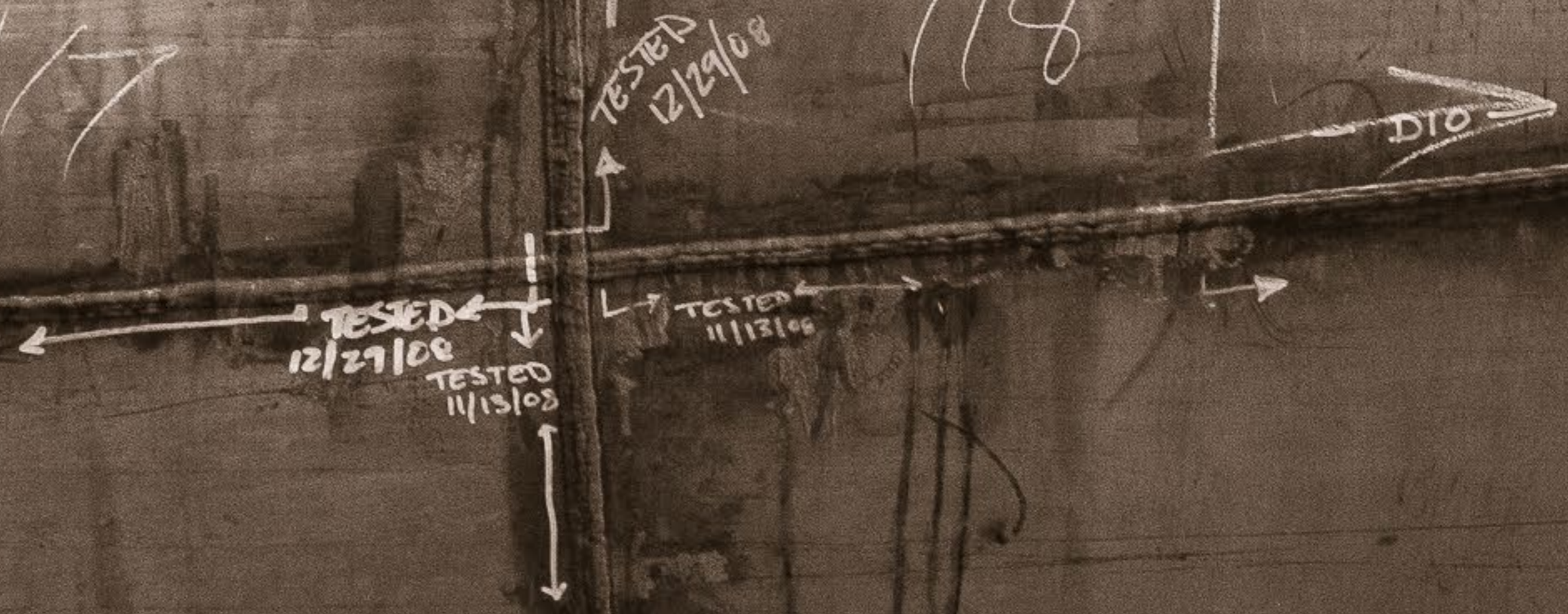
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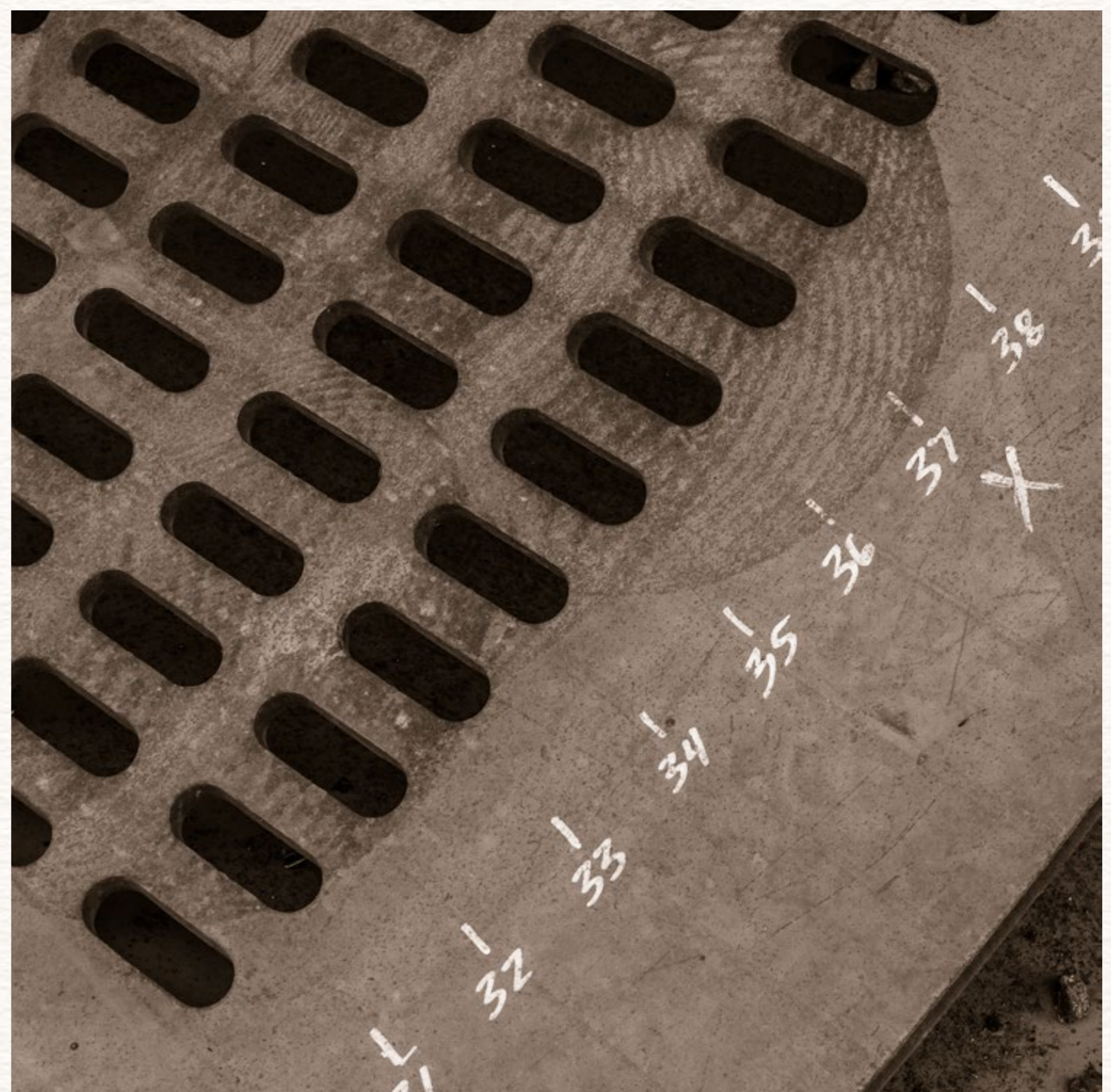
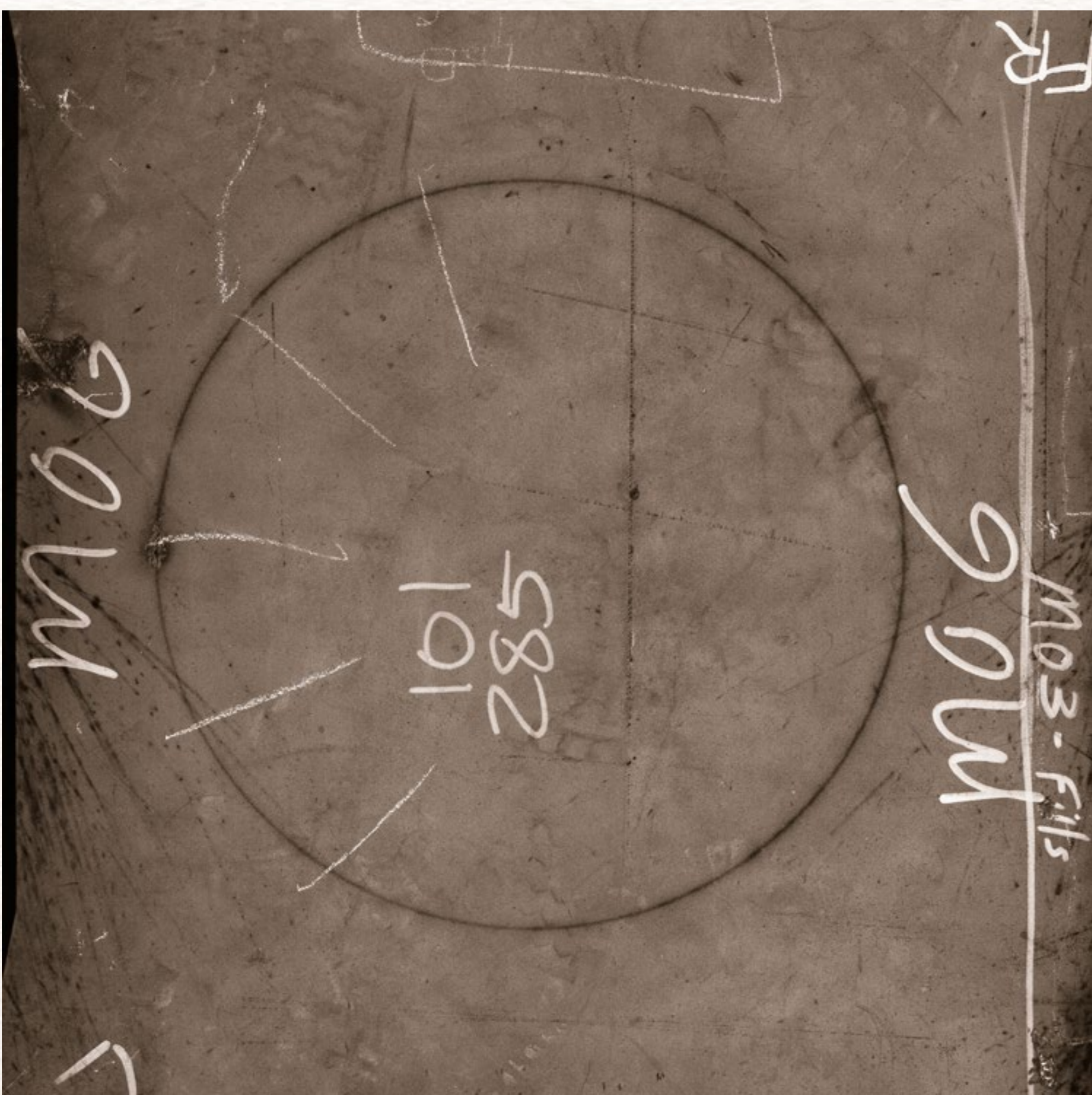
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The tons of steel, equipment, and engines will *float*, when the shipbuilders are done; even more, it will move and work.

This simply *cannot* be done — except that they do it.
It's either magic or skill, or perhaps both.



JAPANESE GHOSTS



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Perhaps there are elements of Japan that are just naturally (or unnaturally) weird.



Perhaps too much time looking at Yoshitoshi's *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, or reading too many Lafcadio Hearn ghost stories is catching up with me.



Japanese ghosts are the spookiest of all, not the *scariest*, but definitely the spookiest. They don't harm; they *haunt*. Relentlessly.



Perhaps I've just had too many close encounters of my own to assume they are fictions of our imagination, or to take them lightly.









Or perhaps I just have an overactive imagination.



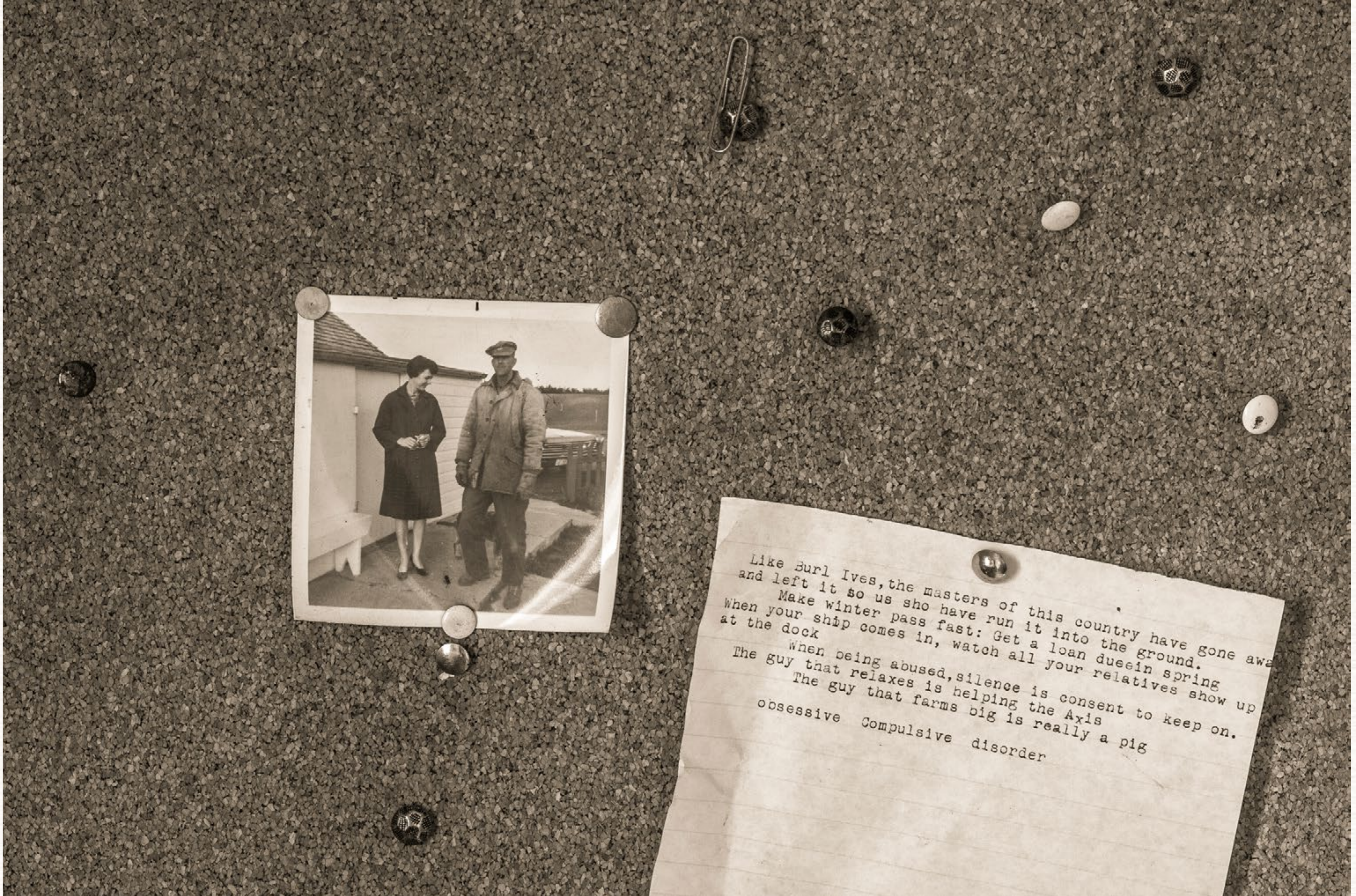
TIMON



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No one ever questioned whether or not Timon was a bit of an odd duck. Everyone agreed about that. But he was family, and that was that.



Perhaps it was because he was younger than his nine siblings — the “tenth man.” Or maybe he just liked living alone for over 70 years. He was a quintessential Norwegian bachelor farmer living in his mother’s farmhouse long after she died — right up until he died — without running water and with only an outhouse.

At one of the family reunions, I remember someone asking Timon, “Would you like to go golfing with us this afternoon?” With a deadpan expression he replied, “I don’t think that I would.” Quintessential Norwegian.

His one passion in life was collecting junk. “It’ll be wort’ tousands someday.” After he was gone, the auction proved he was right.











Brooks Jensen is a fine-art photographer, publisher, workshop teacher, and writer. In his personal work he specializes in small prints, hand-made artist's books, and digital media publications.

He and his wife (Maureen Gallagher) are the owners, co-founders, editors, and publishers of the award winning *LensWork*, one of today's most respected and important periodicals in fine art photography. With subscribers in 73 countries, Brooks' impact on fine art photography is truly world-wide. His long-running podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 900+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](#), the LensWork membership website. LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with *LensWork Extended* — a PDF based, media-rich expanded version of the magazine.

Brooks is the author of seven best-selling books about photography and creativity: *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Single Exposures* (4 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); and *Looking at Images* (2014); as well as a photography monograph, *Made of Steel* (2012). His next book will be *Those Who Inspire Me (And Why)*. A free monthly compilation of of this image journal, [Kokoro](#), is available for download.

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Email brooks@brooksjensenarts.com

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