

KOKORO

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Contents

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:

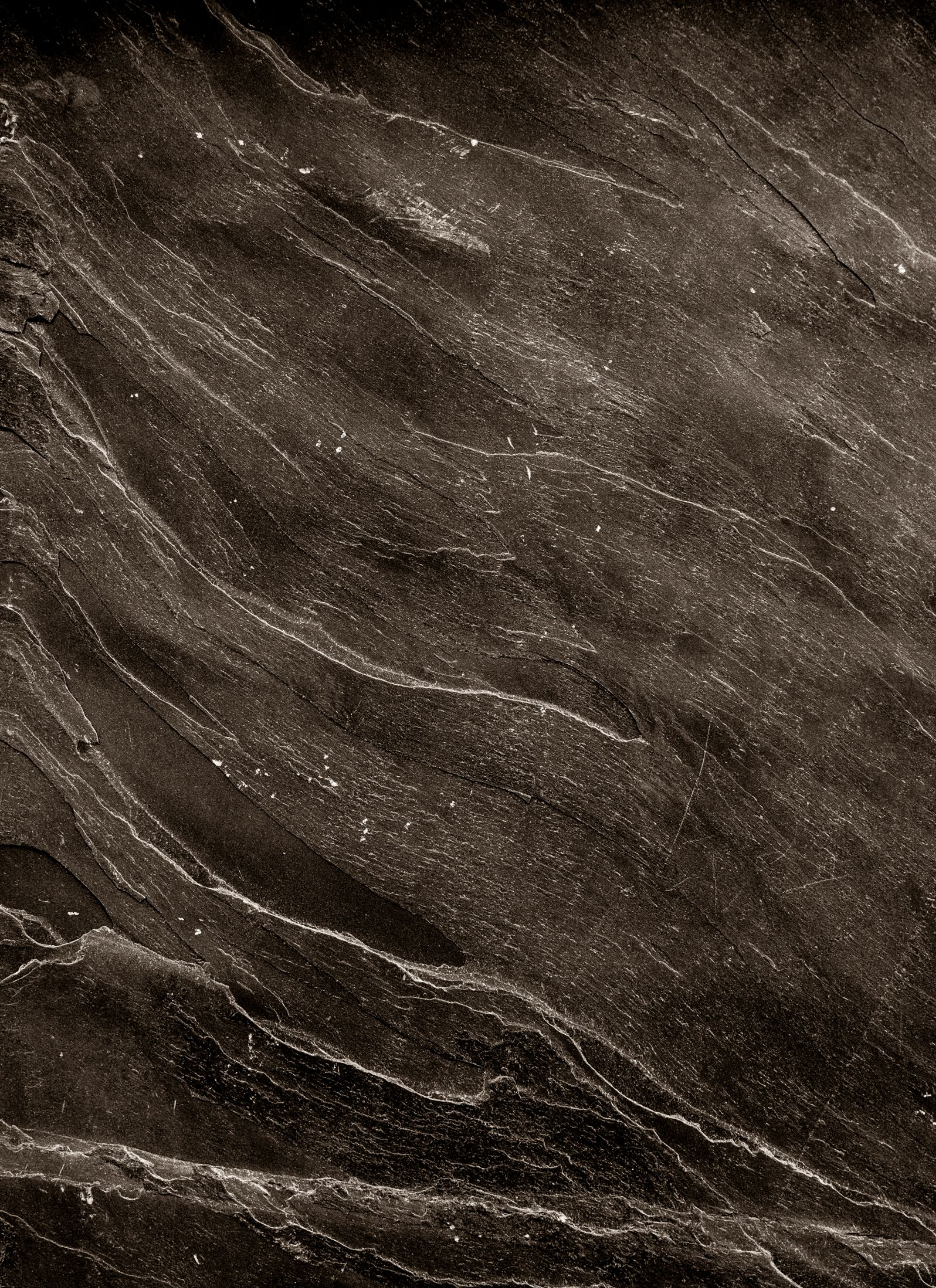
The entries comprising this volume treat of the inner rather than the outer life, — for which reason they have been grouped under the title *Kokoro* (heart). Written with the above character, this word signifies also *mind*, in the emotional sense; *spirit*; *courage*; *resolve*; *sentiment*; *affection*;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

#081

Lost at Sea

Lost at Sea

Brooks Jensen

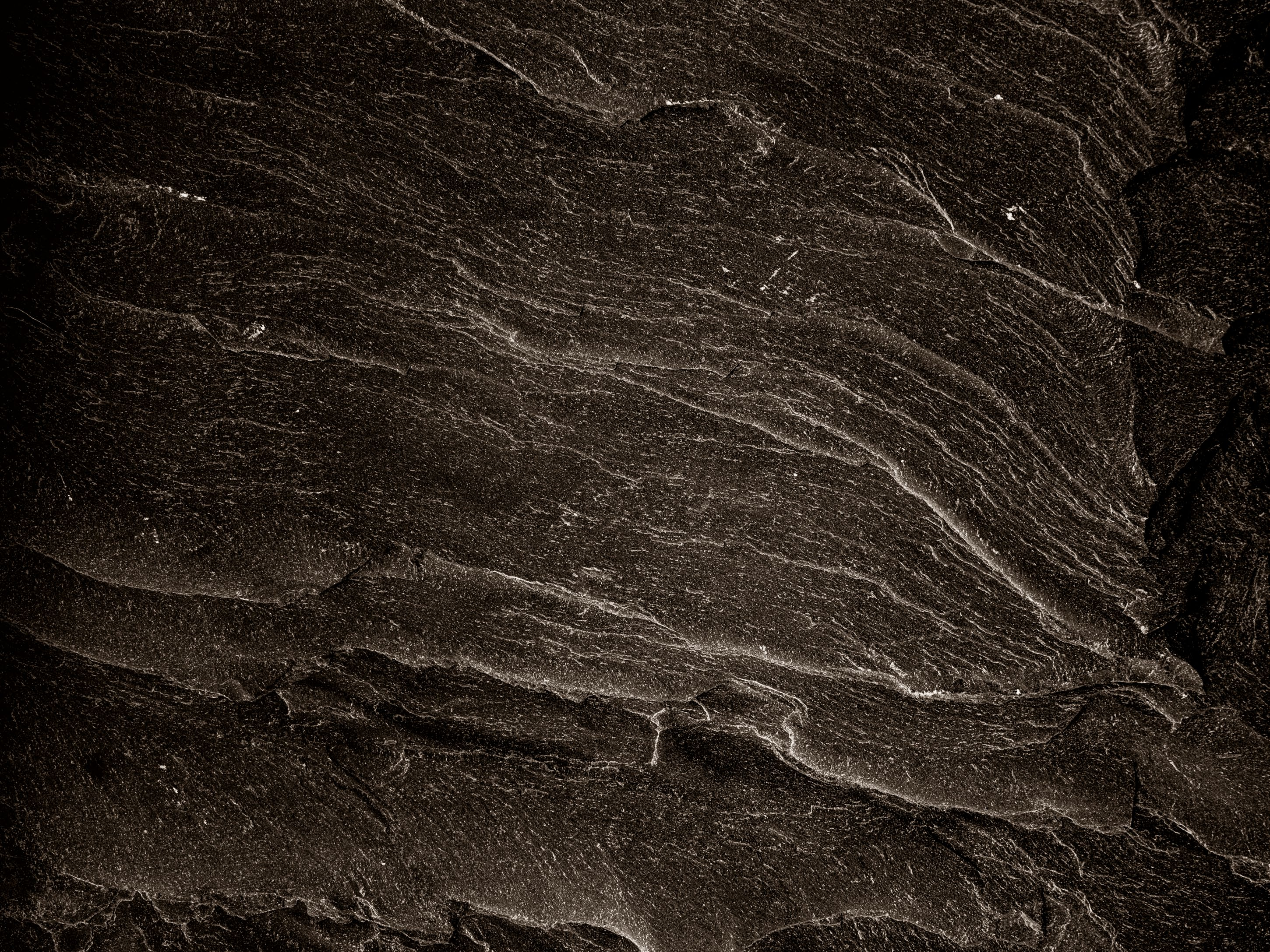


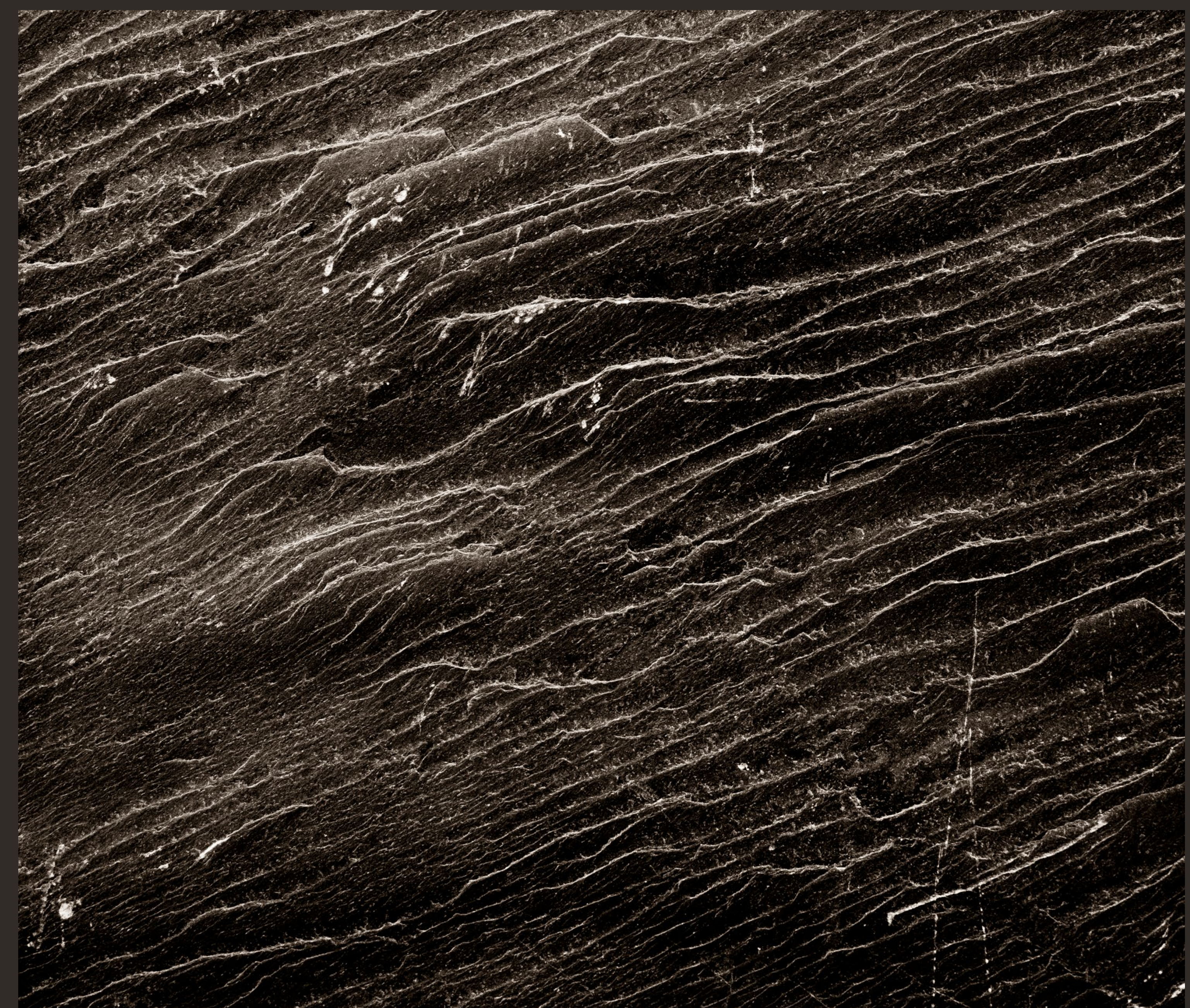
The weather worsened.

The seas rose.

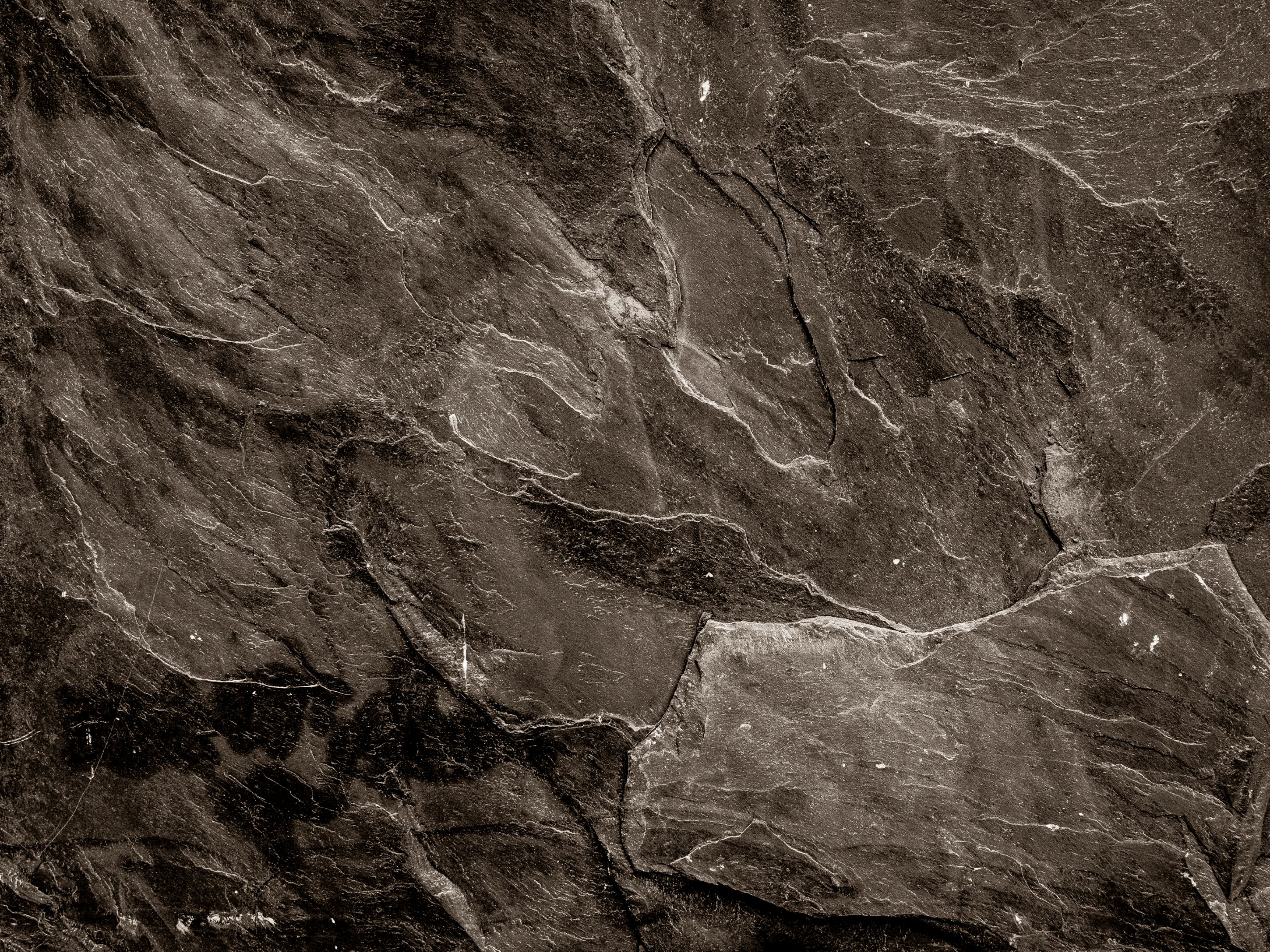
The ship foundered.

All hands were lost.











On February 11, 2017 in
the Bering Sea off the coast
of Alaska, a Seattle-based
crabbing vessel
— the *Destination* — went
missing with its crew of six.
No distress call was received.

We extend our prayers and condolences
to their friends and families.

#082

The Shortness of Life

SENECA ON
THE SHORTNESS
OF LIFE



Brooks Jensen



Most of mankind complains about nature's meanness, because our allotted span of life is so short, and because this stretch of time that is given to us runs its course so quickly. Life leaves us in the lurch just when we're getting ready to live.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman philosopher,
born 4 B.C. – died 65 A.D.



Why do we complain
about nature?

It has acted generously. Life, if you know how to use it, is long. But one person is held in the grip of voracious avarice, another by pointless enterprises. This one's sodden with wine, another slack with idleness. This one's tired out by his political ambition, while another's passionate desire for trading drives him headlong over every land and every sea in hope of profit.





You'll find no one willing to distribute his money; but to how many people each of us shares out his life!

Men are thrifty in guarding their private property, but as soon as it comes to wasting time, they are most extravagant with the one commodity for which it's respectable to be greedy.







You'll hear many say:
"After my fiftieth year I'll
retire to a life of leisure;
my sixtieth year will
bring release from all
my duties."

And what guarantee,
may I ask, do you have
that your life will last
longer?





In reality, your life, even if you live a thousand years and more, will be compressed into the merest span of time; those vices of yours will swallow up any number of lifetimes.

To be sure, this span of time, which good management prolongs even though it naturally hurries on, must in your case escape you quickly; for you fail to seize it and hold it back, and you do nothing to delay that speediest of all things, but you allow it to pass as if it were something overabundant that we can get back again.







Learning how to live
takes a whole lifetime,
and – you'll perhaps
be more surprised at
this – it takes a whole
lifetime to learn how
to die.

#083

Where Are You, Laozi?



Where are you,
Laozi?

Brooks Jensen



Wandering in China,
one expects surprises.

I've read so many ancient
tales where an innocent
villager, wandering in the
mountains, unexpectedly
comes upon Confucius or
Laozi and receives a bit of
life-changing wisdom. I've
come to expect such en-
counters are just part of
Chinese life.

But the mountains in China are remote and mostly inaccessible.

Chinese alleyways, however, are found in every village and *hutong*, and I kept hoping to bump into Confucius or Laozi around every corner.















Perhaps it is the lure of adventure; perhaps it is the anticipation of the unexpected; perhaps it is simply the light that seduces my photographer's eye. But in truth, I confess, I wander the alleyways hoping to find Laozi. I haven't found him yet, but am determined to keep searching.

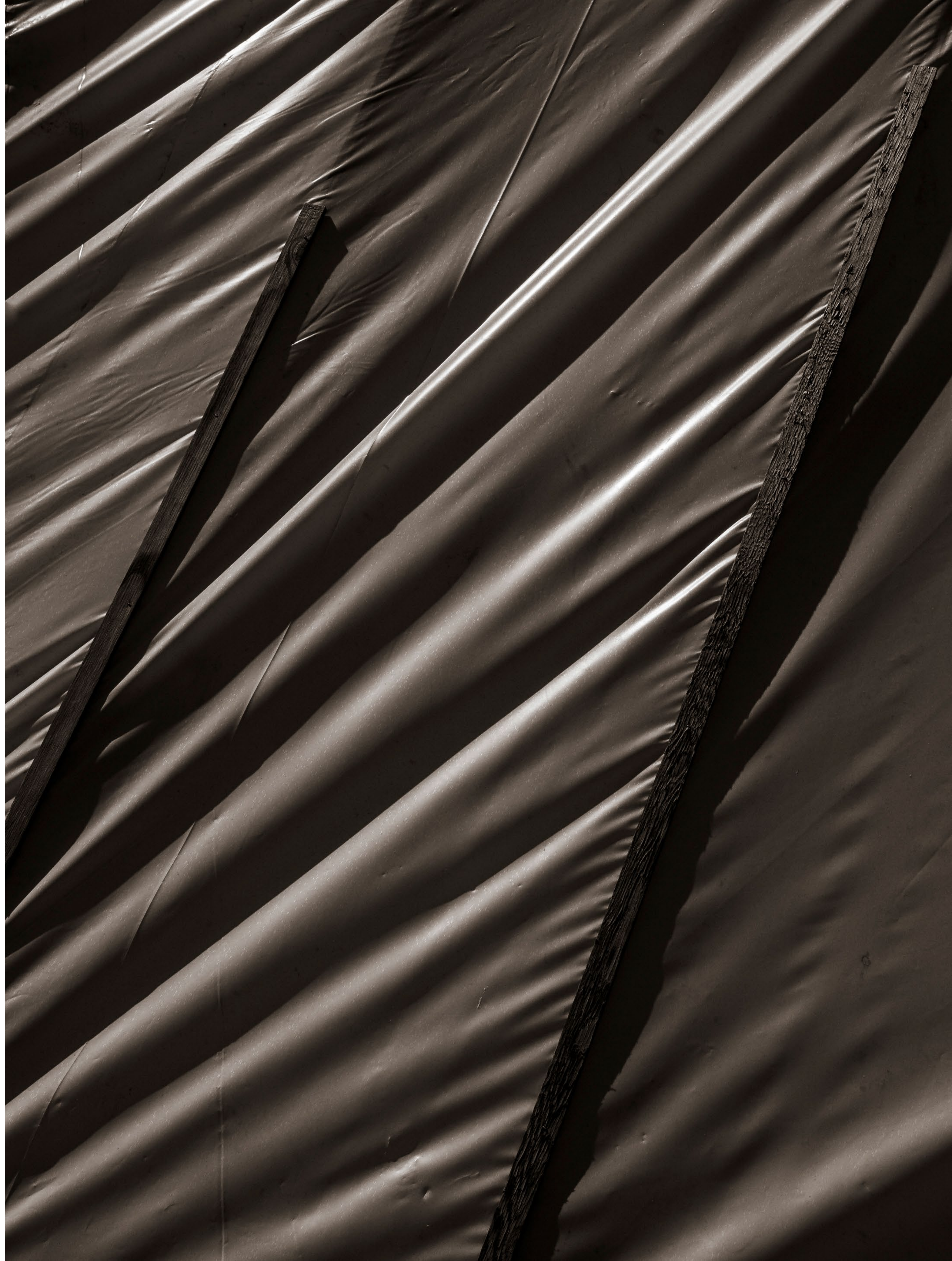
#084

Not For Your Eyes

Not For Your Eyes

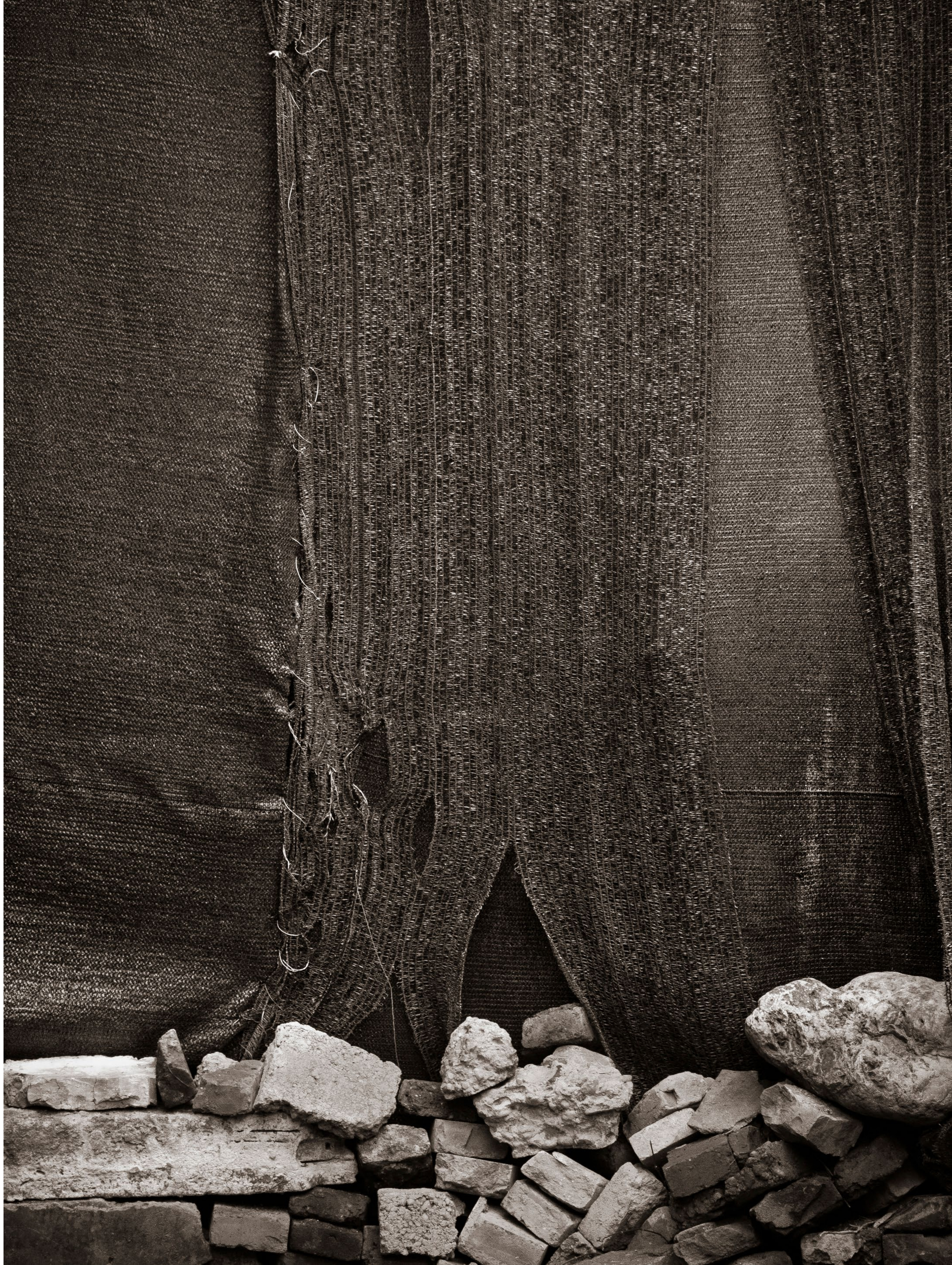
Brooks Jensen

We photographers are curious people. We want to see; we want to photograph; we are inquisitive and acquisitive. We don't want to be denied. Few things frustrate me — or seduce me — more than a curtain. Is it asking too much for just a glimpse? Please?













Notes

Lost at Sea

A friend of mine is the lost captain's sister. I guess this made the tragedy just a little closer to home.

The images are from 20-minutes of photography while I waited for the China Academy of Fine Art in Beijing to open its museum doors. These images are all of the slate tiles covering the wall outside the museum.



I had no inkling that the patterns looked like an angry ocean until I started processing them back home. A great example of the “gathering assets” strategy in photography that leads to unexpected results. I love creative surprises.

Tech notes: All shot using a Panasonic G7 camera with either the Lumix 12-35mm f/2.8. All handheld.

The Shortness of Life

I stumbled across Seneca's short essay *On the Shortness of Life* and immediately wanted to use his ideas in combination with some of my images. Fallen, fall leaves seemed the perfect answer. The challenge for me with this project was limiting it to just 20 images.

Tech notes: Shot with a variety of cameras and lenses, all Panasonic, all micro 4/3. All images captured between 2009-2017.

Where Are You, Laozi?

All but one of these were shot during a single stroll through a village near Lishui, China during a cold, but sunny, December day. I had stayed an extra day for photographing after a big photography festival had ended. Unknown to me, a couple of days earlier our group had been taken to a spot very near here to photograph some iconic but very cliché boats. The photography I discovered later was only a couple of streets away in these village alleyways. I'm very lucky I stumbled onto them – with the

aid of my very capable translator and a compliant and patient taxi driver who knew the neighborhoods well.

Tech notes: Photographed in 2009 using a Panasonic G1 and the Lumix 14-45mm f/3.5-5.6 kit lens. The one exception is the vertical, arched doorway which was made using a Panasonic G2 in 2012. All shot using a monopod.

Not For Your Eyes

I've been photographing tarps and other cloth covers since my earliest days in photography. To my knowledge, I've never used any of these images in any way. I just keep shooting them for reasons unknown. It's nice to finally have an idea that allows me to bring a number of them together into a unified project.

This is a great example of “mining our photographic archives” to see what subconscious projects we may find hidden in the piles and piles of images we collect. I find this treasure hunt a great deal of fun.

Tech notes: Photographed over five years, using four cameras, in three countries, on two continents.

Folios, Chapbooks, Prints

Folios and Chapbooks

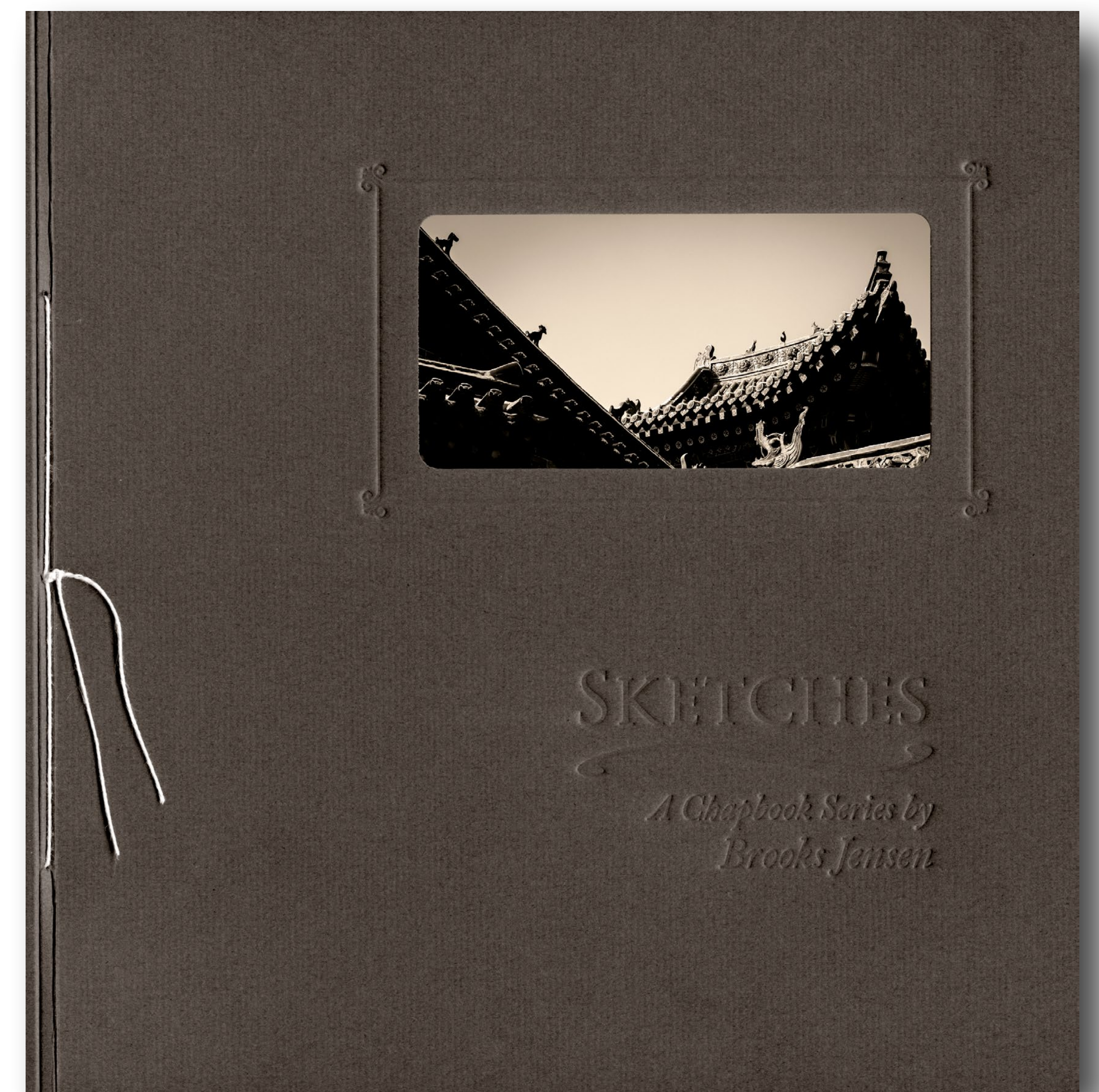
My primary media for physical artwork are handmade folios and chapbooks. These media allow me to provide a hands-on, tactile, off-the-wall viewing experience.

Folios are sets of unmounted sheets, typically related by theme or place. Folios include an introductory text sheet or folded signature. The art-paper enclosure is embossed. These are numbered and signed.

Chapbooks are sewn, handmade books that present more flexible possibilities for storytelling and predetermined sequencing. Chapbooks use two-sided printing and are typically between 8 and 12 pages. The covers are made from embossed art-paper. Chapbooks also are numbered and signed.

I do not use the artificiality of “limited editions” — a marketing strategy that conflicts with the very nature of photography’s reproducibility.

Currently available titles are listed at www.brooksensenarts.com.





Brooks Jensen is a fine-art photographer, publisher, workshop teacher, and writer. In his personal work he specializes in small prints, handmade 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 worldwide. His long-running podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 1,000+ 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 ten best-selling books about photography and creativity: *Photography, Art, & Media* (2016); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *Single Exposures* (4 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); *Looking at Images* (2014); *Seeing in SIXES* (2016); *The Best of the LensWork Interviews* (2016); as well as a photography monograph, *Made of Steel* (2012). His next books will be *Those Who Inspire Me (And Why)* and *Seeing in SIXES 2017*. A free, monthly PDF e-magazine of his personal work, [Kokoro](#), is available for download.

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Anacortes, WA, U.S.A.

Email brooks@brooksjensenarts.com

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