

KOKORO

Brooks Jensen Arts ~ December 2017, Vol 3, No 4

Lost in China





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.’

About These Images ***Lost in China***

In November of 2017, I made my seventh trip to China. It seemed reasonable to think I had a grasp on what I might see, what I might photograph, the memories and experiences I might bring home with me. I never suspected I would feel so out of touch, so flummoxed, so thoroughly lost in China.

My knees hurt; my arriving flight was rerouted from Beijing to Shanghai; my plans evaporated. During the two weeks I was in China, almost everything that was on the schedule was scrapped, changed, or simply failed to materialize. At the time, I tried my best to just go with the flow, adapt to the vagaries of international travel, accept the situation and make the most of it photographically. Looking back at the photographs I made, I’ve realized how lost I really was.

The four projects in this issue of *Kokoro* — all photographed during those two weeks in China — each reflect my uneasy state of mind. In my writings on photography and the creative life, I’ve often advised, “photograph your life!” I guess in China I did just that, although not on a conscious level. Come to think of it, maybe I did succeed photographically — if, that is, the images I made convey the actual experience I had.

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#089

Too Much, Too Fast

Too
Much
Too
Fast

Brooks Jensen

China came at me faster than I could process it.

The rain came softly, but steadily. The car raced through the streets, sped past the lights, sped toward some place I was being taken to. Sped past the oncoming traffic, sped past the slow-moving trains, sped faster than my camera could capture it.

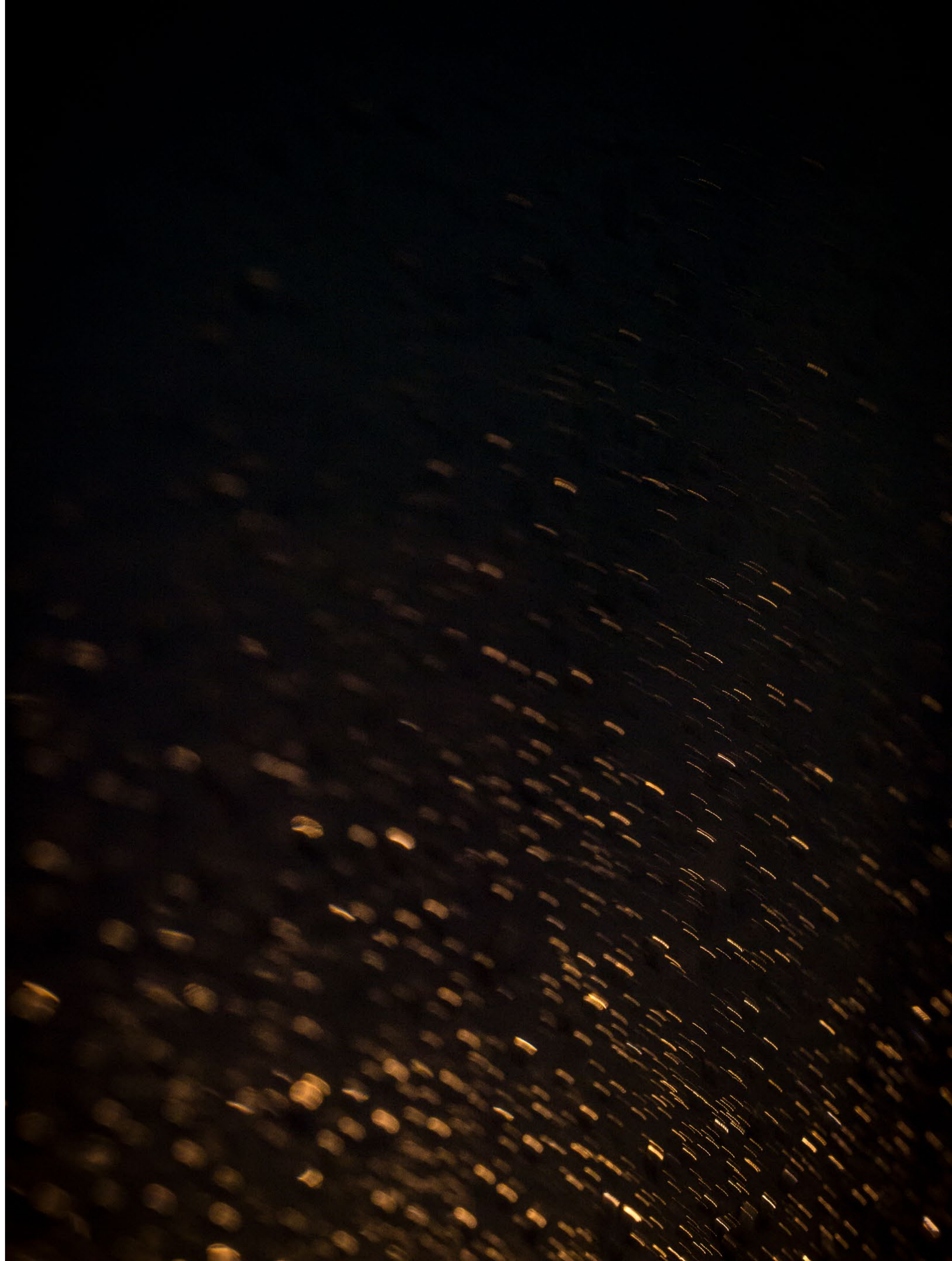








Too much, too fast,
too many details,
too many questions,
too much to see,
too much to absorb.
Faster than life.
Faster than I expected.





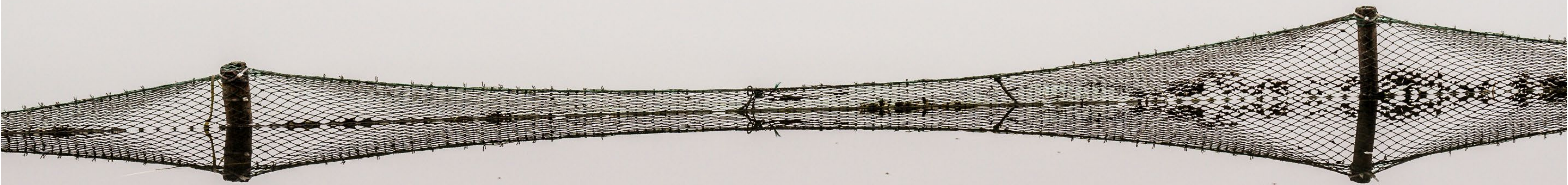


And then it was over –
and all I can do is look
back and try to make
sense of it.



#090

Like Catching Water with a Net



*Like Catching Water
with a Net*

Brooks Jensen



Life is change.

A photographer's goal is to do the impossible – capture life in the instant that it happens, preserve life in the image so we can relive it.

Sort of like catching water with a net.

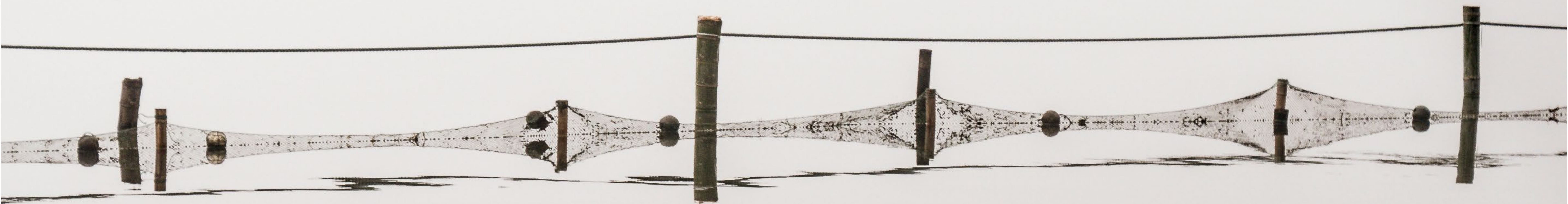




Leaves fall, rain drips into the lake, and this pattern repeats through the millenia – no two instants ever being the same. We can no more capture the moment than we can stop time. We photographers can no more stop *trying* to capture the moment than we can stop the rain.















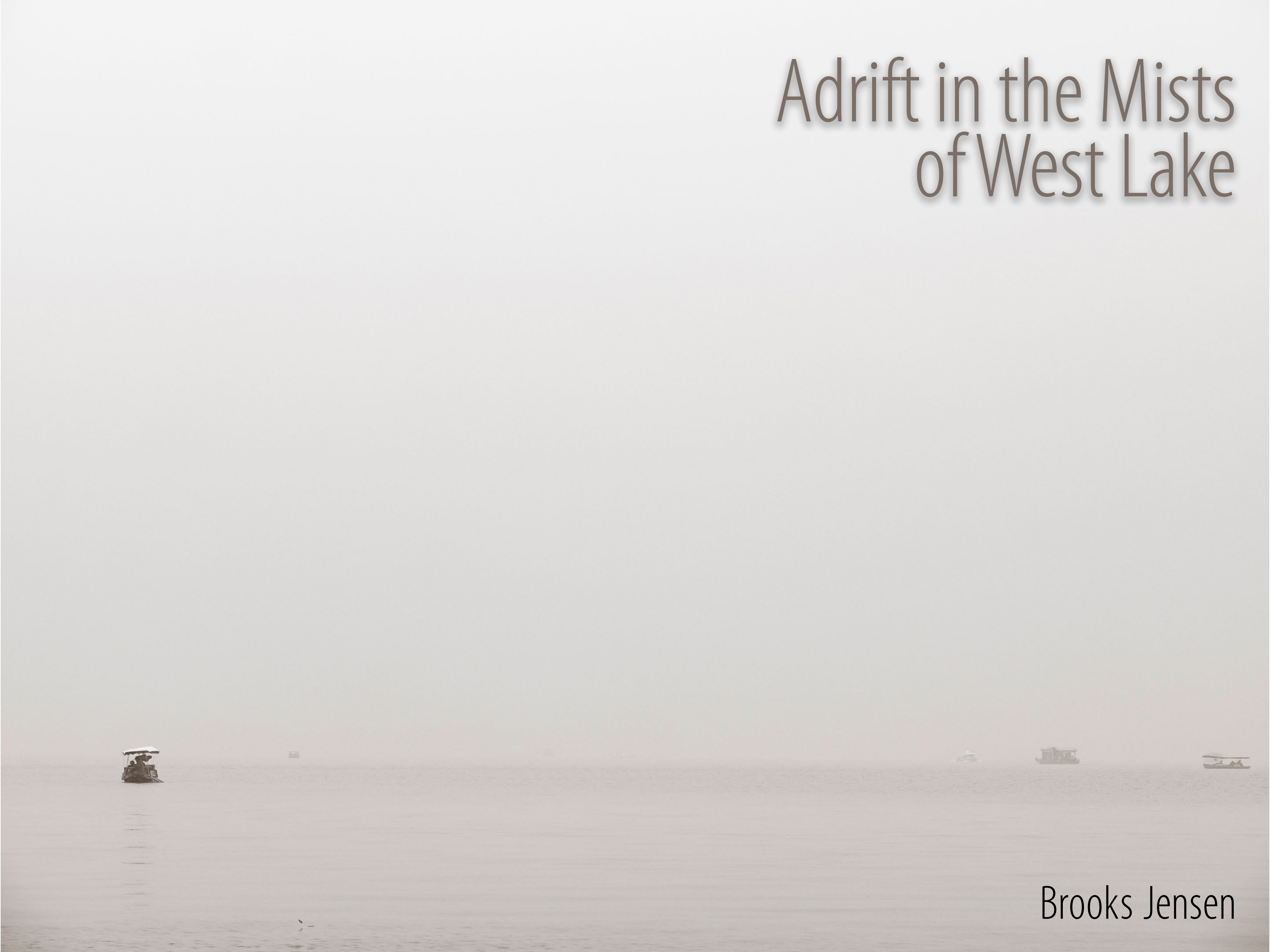




#091

Adrift in the Mists of West Lake

Adrift in the Mists of West Lake



Brooks Jensen

A pleasant hour or two – that's what famous West Lake is to the residents of Hangzhou, China. A place to get lost from the hectic pace of life; a place to hide in the mists of a relaxing boat ride; a place to float through life for a moment or two. Perhaps a place to lose oneself.







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#092

Buddhas in the Cliffs



Buddhas in the Cliffs

Lingyin Temple,
Hangzhou, China

Brooks Jensen



















Notes

Too Much, Too Fast

In the car, late in the day. Headed for the famous tourist/shopping Hefang Street in downtown Hangzhou. The day has been too long and I am already tired. Knees killing me. Ears overwhelmed with so much Chinese language that I don't understand. For no reason whatsoever, I start photographing the lights as they stream past. Of course they will be blurry. Of course they will not be anything like my normal style of photography. Only later did I recognize this for the metaphor of my experience that it was.

Tech notes: All shot using a Panasonic G85 camera with the Lumix Leica 12-60mm f/2.8-4 lens using Dual IS2.

Like Catching Water with a Net

We had published the wonderful work of Professor Dalang Shao in both *LensWork* and in a *LensWork Monograph*. Many of his images were from famous West Lake in downtown Hangzhou. He wanted to show me the location of

many of his images, so we went to the water's edge where these fixed nets are doing – well, something. I asked Prof. Shao to explain and he had no idea of their purpose either. As far as I was concerned, their purpose was to be photographed in wonderfully minimalist compositions. So I did so.

Tech notes: All shot using a Panasonic G85 camera with the Lumix Leica 12-60mm f/2.8-4 lens using Dual IS2. Most of these I used a monopod – which also doubled as my walking cane. Damned knees.

Adrift in the Mists of West Lake

The tourist boats of West Lake are a huge draw. No matter the weather, boatmen will take you for a ride out on the lake where you can commune with nature – or your cell phone. Mist, haze, fog, and air pollution are common. It presents the lake with a quintessential Chinese landscape painting atmosphere. How quaint. How irresistible. Thankfully, there was a McDonald's across the street where I could get some really bad coffee and warm up. I know, not even

close to the spirit of travel photography – let alone the soul of a Chinese painter – but when your damned knees are hurting, you do the best you can.

Tech notes: All shot using a Panasonic G85 camera with the Lumix Leica 12-60mm f/2.8-4 lens using Dual IS2. Most of these I used a monopod – which also doubled as my walking cane. Have I mentioned my damned knees?

Buddhas in the Cliffs

The Lingyin Temple is an extensive complex on the outskirts of Hangzhou. It was a highly recommended tourist stop, so we went. I'd been to the Lama Temple in Beijing and the Lvzu Temple in Baotou, so I was pleased to have an opportunity to add to my growing repertoire of Chinese temple photographs.

Dozens of stone-carved Buddhas were an unexpected surprise. They are carved right out of the rock in the cliffs. Amazing – and a fun respite from the minimalism of West Lake.

Tech notes: All shot using a Panasonic G85 camera with the Lumix Leica 12-60mm f/2.8-4 lens using Dual IS2. All of these were exposed using a monopod.

Folios, Chapbooks, Prints

Folios and Chapbooks

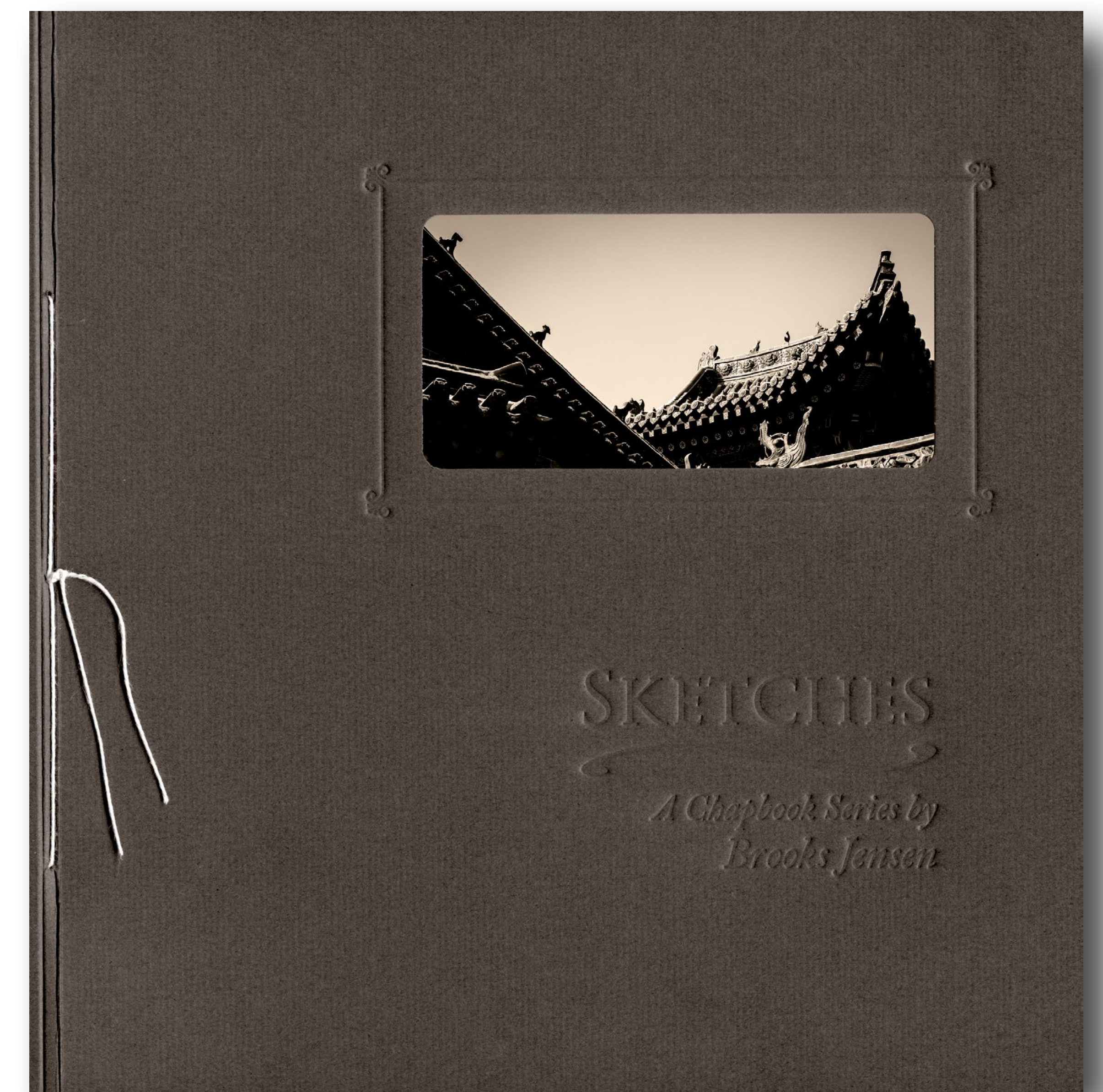
My primary media for physical artwork are handmade folios and chapbooks. These media allow me to provide a hands-on, tactile, off-the-wall viewing experience.

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 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](http://LensWorkOnline.com), 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 twelve 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); *Seeing in SIXES* (2017); *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 *Looking at Images 2018*. [Kokoro](http://Kokoro.com) is a free, monthly PDF e-magazine of his personal work and is available (both current and back issues) for download from his [website](http://brooks.com).

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