

KOKORO

Brooks Jensen Arts ~ February 2020, Vol 6, No 1

Sixty-six at Sixty-six





About This Issue

Sixty-six at Sixty-six

This month, I am the same age my father was when he died — sixty-six.

I hope that doesn't sound morbid or depressing. It does have me, however, thinking about my own mortality — and my artistic legacy. A couple of years ago, I saw the Ansel Adams Master "Museum Set" Print Collection on exhibition in North Carolina. These 75 or so images were the ones he considered his best; a proactive and personal statement of his artistic dispositions. I thought this was a great idea.

The sixty-six images in this special issue of *Kokoro* are some of my favorites. They are individual, stand-alone images that I'd like to see survive me. That's it, really — just ones I like and think do a pretty fair job of representing my artistic sensibilities.

I will be more than a little interested to see how many of these are in my collection "Eighty-eight at Eighty-eight" — assuming I haven't taken up residence in that cosmic ink maintenance tank in the sky.

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.'

Roots

My art life began with film and the landscape. In the 1970s, that meant 4x5 cameras and sheet film – neither of which I could afford as a young photographer. Instead, I purchased a 2¼x3¼ monorail and started looking for subjects that worked in smaller print sizes. Surprisingly, some of these are

still my favorites after all these years.

The *Made of Steel* project started with that camera on a rainy day. I had photographed the sunken sailboat and needed a place to dry off. Dollar's Garage was near – and my creative life took an unexpected turn.





Hi Speed

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INVERTED

GRAND SCALE WARRANTED

FOR 10 YEARS

UPRIGHT
GRAND

10200

W. B. Shinnick Aug 9 73

SEGERSTROM
MINNEAPOLIS

QUALITY OF THE HIGHEST
SEGERSTROM
PATENT IMPROVED REPEATING ACTION
WORKMANSHIP OF THE BEST





What Else It Is

Photographs as metaphors, not showing what *is*, but rather a glimpse of something deeper than the thing photographed, a feeling, a mood, a cloud of unknowing, an attempt to “ef” the ineffable.

I’ve never been a poet, but I’d like to think that I have sometimes *hinted* at poetry with a photograph now and again. These are images I can’t let go of because I can’t seem to fully understand them.





























Nature

Before photography, I was passionate about biology. That love of life and the wonders of our planet has never left me.

Alan Watts once proposed that nature *never* makes an aesthetic mistake. I've found his observation to be true.









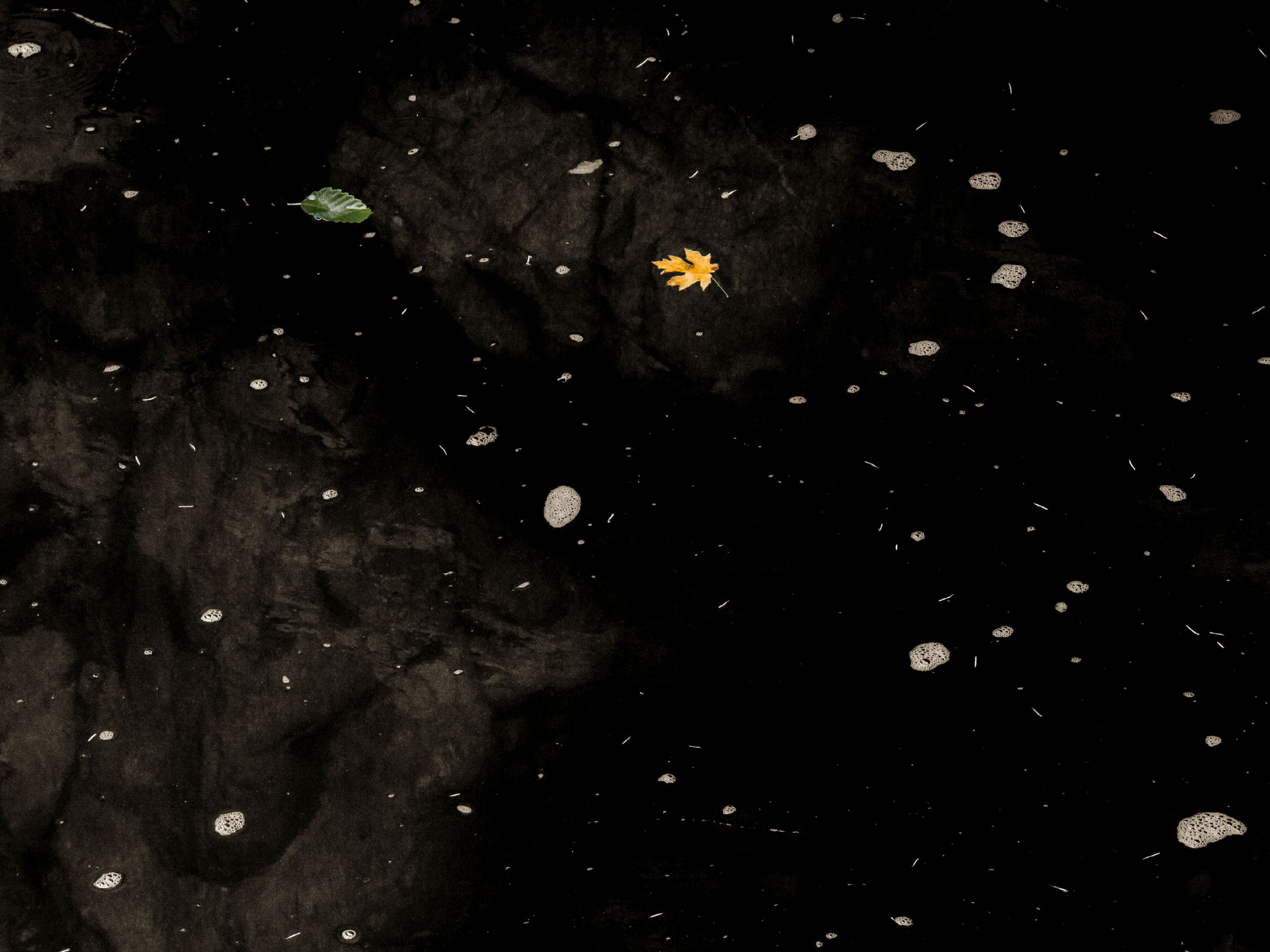
















Japan

I first visited Japan in 1989 and was instantly in love with the aesthetic and the people. I felt at *home*. Japan is in my bones, my dreams, my heart.









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櫻井兵四郎夫妻之墓

松屋智影大姉

無縁塔

堅剛院

洪源院雄道宗繁居士

寶安

七代目

明流

天保四己





信女
居士

信女
居士

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離念淨
淨室清
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Abstracts

There are no words that can explain or even rationalize an abstract piece of art. Like a joke, you either “get it” or you don’t. To say a particular abstract photograph is a favorite of mine offers nothing whatsoever about the image, but may speak volumes about me.

Instead of merely interpreting the Rorschach ink blots, an abstract artist *makes* them. They are a projection of personal meaning onto the world. They are *so* personal that they may be of interest and value only to the artist. I’m comfortable with that.



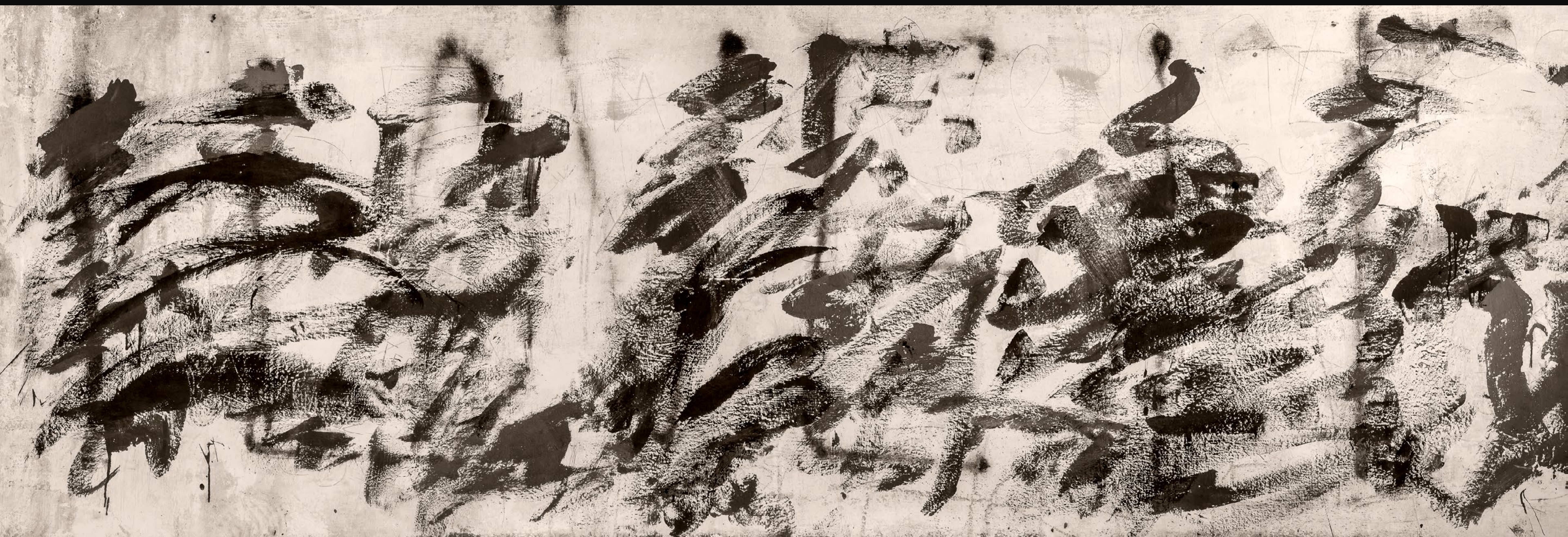














Trees

According to Darwin, we humans came down from the trees. Perhaps, I don't know. All I do know is that in terms of numerical count, there are far more trees on the planet than there are of us. I cannot conceive of living on this planet and not loving trees. They protect us, provide the materials

to build our houses, and expire the very air we breathe.

I have no doubt that I have more photographs of trees than of any other subject. Selecting a few favorites is a bit of a ridiculous task. That said, here are some of my friends from the arbor world.



























Notes

Sixty-six at Sixty-six

Essentially, I'm a believer in form and structure as a support for the creative life. I know, it sounds counter-intuitive to place a structure on the spontaneous, but it works. As Orson Welles so aptly put it, "The enemy of art is the absence of limitations."

Kokoro typically has a structure of 4-6 projects with a dozen or more images in each. That structure allows me a great deal of flexibility, yet makes it easier for me to produce — and for you to digest.

There are, of course, exceptions — and this issue is one of those. Hopefully it won't give you *indigestion*.

The sixty-six images in this issue of *Kokoro* are a bit of a response to my friend Joe Lipka, who did a project titled *50 at 50* when he was fifty years old. I thought it was such good idea that I decided to do one just like it when I turned fifty. It has only required the intervening 16 years for me to do so. (So much for artistic *discipline*.)

I suppose if I were perfectly candid, I'd state that *Kokoro* is my artistic legacy. I don't produce many individual images, but tend to think and work more in small projects. I've proposed for years that most photographers do

work in projects and their so-called "greatest hits" arise later, often selected by statistical popularity from all the images in a project or a photographer's career. Maybe that's as it should be.

To be honest, I have little faith that people will care enough about my artistic legacy to elevate anything I've done to a "greatest hits" collection. Okay, maybe a "greatest *hit*," if I'm lucky. Let me save all of you the work and simply make my own selections. I'd not want to burden future generations with the task of wading through the volumes and volumes of really bad photography I've created in my life just to find a gem or two. Relax and rest assured that I've saved everyone all that torturous toil. You're welcome.

So, sixty-six images I like — mostly a lot, depending on my mood and the position of the moon and stars. At least I don't *dislike* any of them and they all have the questionable virtue that they've seemed to wear well over the years. With more time, who knows? I make no promises.

Tech notes: Some film, some digital. Cameras from Arca Swiss, Fujifilm, Sony, and Panasonic. Lenses of all shapes and sizes. I've been pretty gear-agnostic my entire photographic life and it shows. I use whatever I have, whatever works, and whatever doesn't break.

Folios, Chapbooks, Prints

Support the artist!

For over 30 years, Brooks has shared his photographic lessons, failures, inspiration, creative path — and more than a few laughs. If you've enjoyed his free *Kokoro* PDFs publications, or been a long-time listener to his free audio commentaries (his weekly podcast *On Photography and the Creative Life*, or his daily *Here's a Thought* commentaries), here is your chance to tell him how much you appreciate his efforts. Support the artist!



Choose whichever level of support fits your appreciation and pocketbook. We thank you, he thanks you, and here's looking forward to the exciting content that is yet to come in all our *LensWork* publications and media as Brooks continues exploring this creative life.

\$15 Applause - Thanks!

\$25 Standing Ovation - You'll receive a signed copy of *Dreams of Japan*

\$50 Basic Support - You'll receive a thank you of a signed 6R (8-page, 6x8") chapbook, handmade and signed by the artist

\$100 Essential Support - You'll receive a signed Full Quarto (16-page, 8x11") chapbook handmade and signed by the artist

\$250 Sustaining Support - You'll receive a thank you of an original, signed print + wall hanger

\$500 Friend of the Arts - You'll receive a thank you of a signed original print with wall hanger plus a Full Quarto chapbook

\$1000 Patron of the Arts - You'll receive a special thank you of, well, you'll see!

[You can donate to support Brooks' creative life using this link.](#) Thanks!



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 1,200+ 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 fourteen 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); *Seeing in SIXES* (2018); *Seeing in SIXES* (2019); *The Best of the LensWork Interviews* (2016); as well as a photography monograph, *Made of Steel* (2012). [Kokoro](#) is a free, monthly PDF e-magazine of his personal work and is available (both current and back issues) for download from his [website](#).

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