

KOKORO

Brooks Jensen Arts ~ July 2025, Vol 10, No 1





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.’

#173

Whispering Aspens

Whispering Aspens

Brooks Jensen





So close to my ear it made me startle, the Aspen said, "You really ought to pay more attention."

"What? Did you say something?"

"You are thinking too much, my young friend."

"You can speak?"

"Of course we can speak. Do you think we trees are as mute as rocks?"

"Why have I never heard you before?"

"You were not listening."

"I'm sorry. What were you saying just now?"

"You really ought to pay more attention."

"How do I do that?"

"Try stopping. Try letting go. Try being quiet."

"What will I learn?"

"That's a fine beginning."





“Is that better?”

“Shhhhhh.”











#174

A Good Place to Read

A Good Place to Read

Brooks Jensen







Here, I reached for a book of poetry.
I generally don't read poetry, but this
spot seemed, well, so poetical.

Sometimes we choose the book.
Sometimes the book chooses us.







This is the science fiction corner.
Perhaps it's that *eye*.

Sometimes we choose the mood.
Sometimes we ooze into it.





In Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, the illiterate Mr. Boffin hires Silas Weg to read to him. Referring to a book, Weg asks, "Do you have the necessary instrument?" Every time I read this scene, I can't help but wonder if the one-legged Mr. Weg isn't referring instead to a comfortable chair.







While it rains outside, I will sit in my chair
with this story,
this mystery,
this sutra,
these people on the page.

From time to time, I rest my eyes and all
worlds disappear. The rain still falls, the
clock tick-tocks, otherwise, the house
is quiet. When I return to my book,
those worlds once again come alive
in this sanctuary.

It is indeed a good place to read.

Field Notes

A New Type of One-Picture Story

On a trip to Acadia in 2023, I began to visualize a new method of presentation I call **Field Notes**: small physical prints (inkjet) with handwritten bits of text on the same paper as the photographic image. All for fun, roughly 4x6". Here are a few examples.



When a leaf falls,
it is a tragedy.
When all the leaves
fall, it is a lesson.

Field Notes, 2025



If it's not asking
for too much,
I'd like to be
reincarnated as a
pair of socks, please.

Field Notes, 2025

[Additional background on Field Notes](#) from the *Editor's Comments of LensWork #172*
a small, 600k PDF.



Every sunrise is different.
Each day is unique.

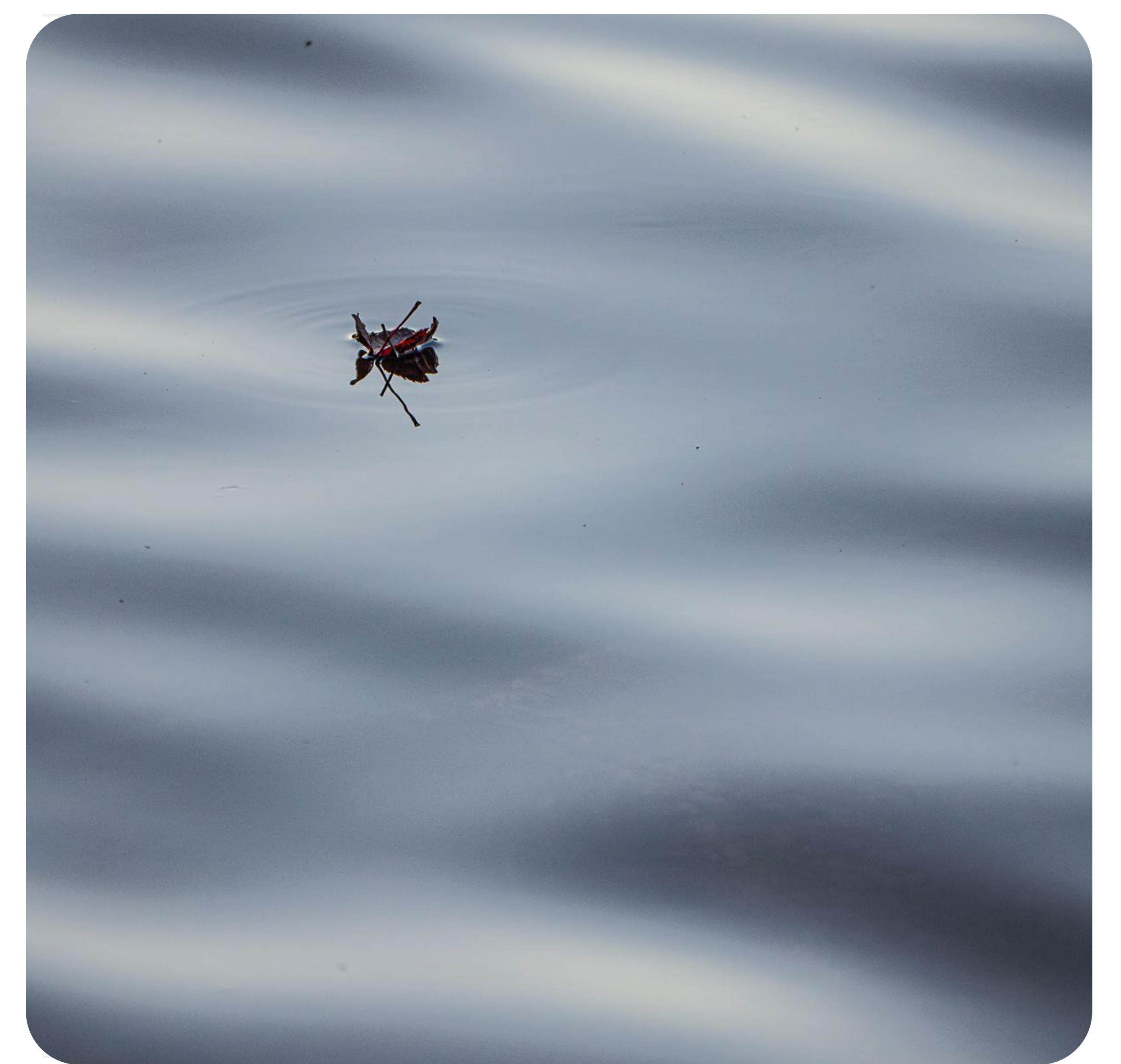
What is new in me this
beautiful morning?

Field Notes, 2025



There is a legacy in
what we leave
behind. Or is it
just a pile of
STUFF?

Field Notes, 2025



Every day our existence
makes a small mark
upon the world. What
is your mark this day?

Field Notes, 2025

#175

Shaker Aesthetic



Shaker Aesthetic

Brooks Jensen

A question for us 21st century folks:
Does life really require all this stuff?
Isn't it possible that those who let go
of stuff come closer to the truth of
awareness? Maybe the Shakers have
something to teach the rest us.

Let go, let go, let go.

If only it were that easy.

















Caroline













#173

First Snow

First Snow

Brooks Jensen











A billion billion snowflakes
whose descent is paused,
the first snow of this year.
Flakes the size of the present,
noiselessly descending,
noiselessly accumulating,
every twig and branch outlined
by the touch of a pure and pristine
white pen.

It writes the moment,
this moment of winter's arrival.









Thinking of spring
Makes this winter snow
Even colder













*While sleeping last night, dreaming of Spring,
Winter arrived*

Notes

Whispering Aspens

After 50 years in photography, I've fully confirmed that *taking* pictures is the wrong mindset. *Listening* for pictures is a better approach. As Anias Nin advised, "Do not speak unless spoken through."

As artists, we are conduits for something greater than ourselves. I know, this sounds awfully woo-woo, but I can't think of a better way to describe the creative moment. We like to think we *create*, but it's more accurate to say that we *transcribe*.

Tech notes: Editing this project was the hard part. I have some 200+ images of aspens. This edit retains those that speak to me. Photographed over 8 years with several different cameras.

A Good Place to Read

Visiting some friends in Florida — a retired professor and his equally scholarly wife — I lost count of the number of leather reading chairs they have throughout the house. I tried them all. Each in its own way was a good place to read. No wonder they have so many books.

Tech notes: This project would not have been possible but for the introduction by Adobe of a new software capability known as AI DeNoise. I photographed all of these images handheld (without a tripod) using fairly slow lenses and fairly long shutter speeds. The images would have been too dark without using a high ISO — which always introduces digital "noise" in the image. The new DeNoise tool in Lightroom took care of that and made these images look fantastic, especially considering the conditions under which they were made. Thanks, Adobe.

Shaker Aesthetic

The Hancock Shaker Village near Pittsfield, Massachusetts is now a tourist museum. I spent two days there photographing. The main activity was not so much to look at the displays as it was to try to imagine their life and work.

I found the simplicity and minimalism to be seductive. Don't get me wrong, I could never live the way they did, but I can try to absorb their non-materialistic philosophy and bring it into my life.

I did notice how many of the photographs on display showed them in their old age, working, healthy, vibrant. Perhaps there is something to learn from them. At least, that was my thought as I drove away in my

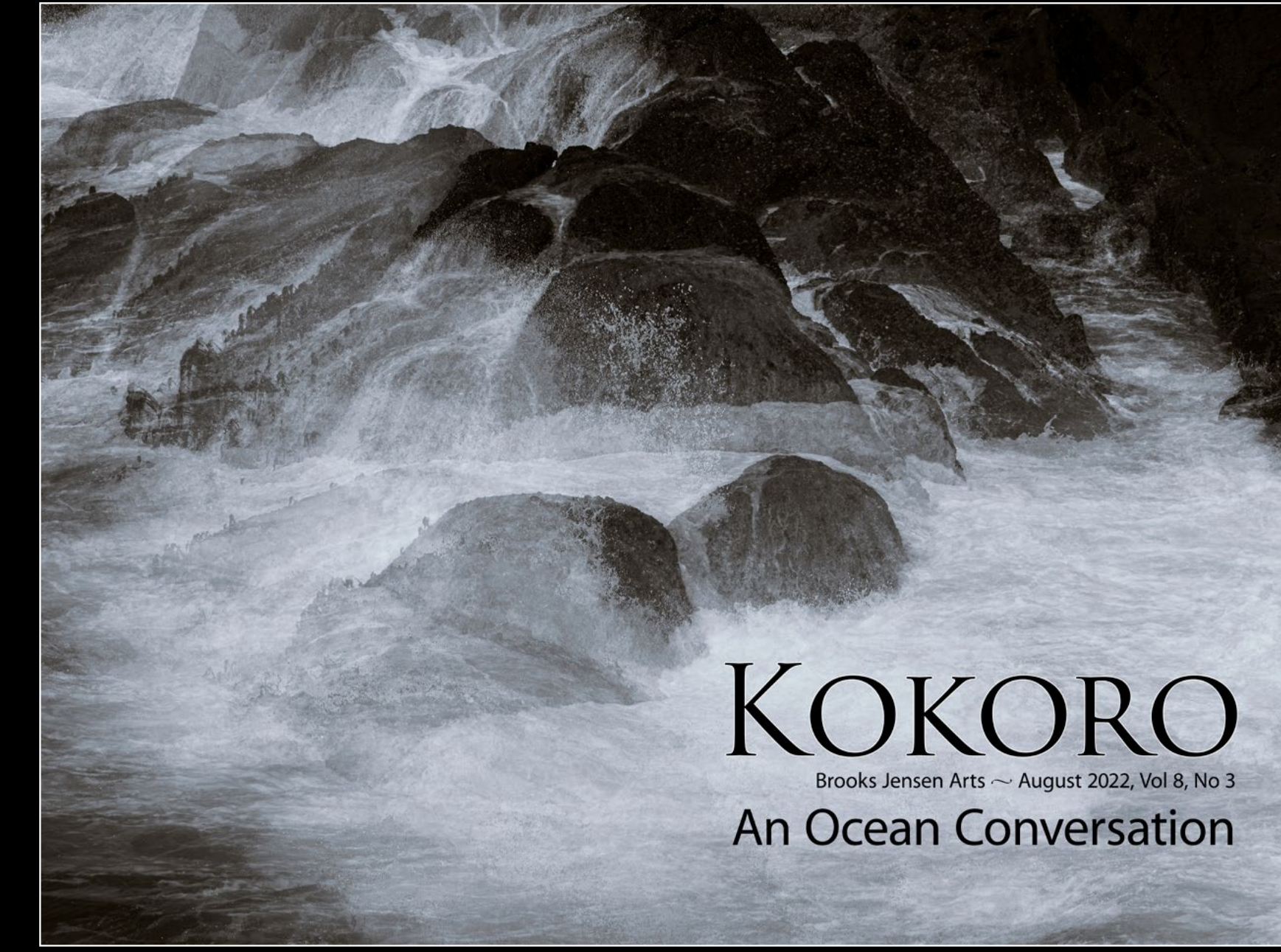
air-conditioned pickup, confident that in the 596 images I photographed I would find a few that could express their simplified life.

Tech notes: Like so many tourist locations, the Hancock Shaker Village has interesting displays with restricted access. I would have liked to make more images from close focus range, but over two-thirds of these ended up being photographed with a long lens. That led to lots of focus stacking — fun and now easily possible with today's digital workflow.

First Snow

Every child knows there is magic in those first snowflakes of the year. They signal their arrival with a silent descent and accumulate on branches. Typically, that first snowfall only lasts a day or two and the weather vasculates for weeks between the seasons. I can't explain it, but when the snow returns for that second or third time, it's just not as much of a thrill as is the first snow.

Tech notes: Six different cameras over a span of seven years. There was one valuable lesson I learned with this project. For some of the shots, I used an inexpensive lens that others recommend as much sharper than its price would indicate. This is probably the only time in my photographic life where a \$100 lens has wowed me.



Kokoro, a periodic PDF journal of Brooks Jensen's art

35 issues (as of July 2025) and counting!

Including 176 projects/sketches

Over 3,000 images

All downloadable, all perpetually free

[More](#) about *Kokoro*

[Complete index with download links](#)

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* PDF 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*

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\$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, hand-made artist books, and digital media publications.

He is the owner, co-founder (in 1993, with his late wife, Maureen), editor, and publisher of the award winning *LensWork*, one of today's most respected and important periodicals in fine art photography. With subscribers in 70 countries, Brooks' impact on fine art photography is truly worldwide. His long-running weekly podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 1,450+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](#), the LensWork members-only website. He also publishes a daily *Here's a Thought...* commentary with short inspiration for creative photographers. Again, all 2300+ are available to members of *LensWork Online*.

LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with the *LensWork Tablet Edition*, and *LensWork Extended Computer Edition* — a PDF-based, media-rich expanded version of the magazine.

Brooks is the author of sixteen books about photography and creativity: *Photography, Art, & Media* (2016); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *Single Exposures* (3 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); *Looking at Images* (2014); *The Best of the LensWork Interviews* (2016); *Seeing in SIXES* (2016); *Seeing in SIXES* (2017); *Seeing in SIXES* (2018); *Seeing in SIXES* (2019); *Our Magnificent Planet* (2020 and 2021), *Trilogies* (2022), and *Light Glorious Light* (2023).

[Kokoro](#) is a free, bi-monthly PDF e-publication of his personal work and is available (both current and back issues) for download from his [website](#). He has published two printed monographs of his photography, [Made of Steel](#) (2012), and [Dreams of Japan](#) (2021).



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