

KOKORO

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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.'

#162

The Spirit of Mu'Chi

The Spirit of Mu'Chi



Brooks Jensen

Six Persimmons

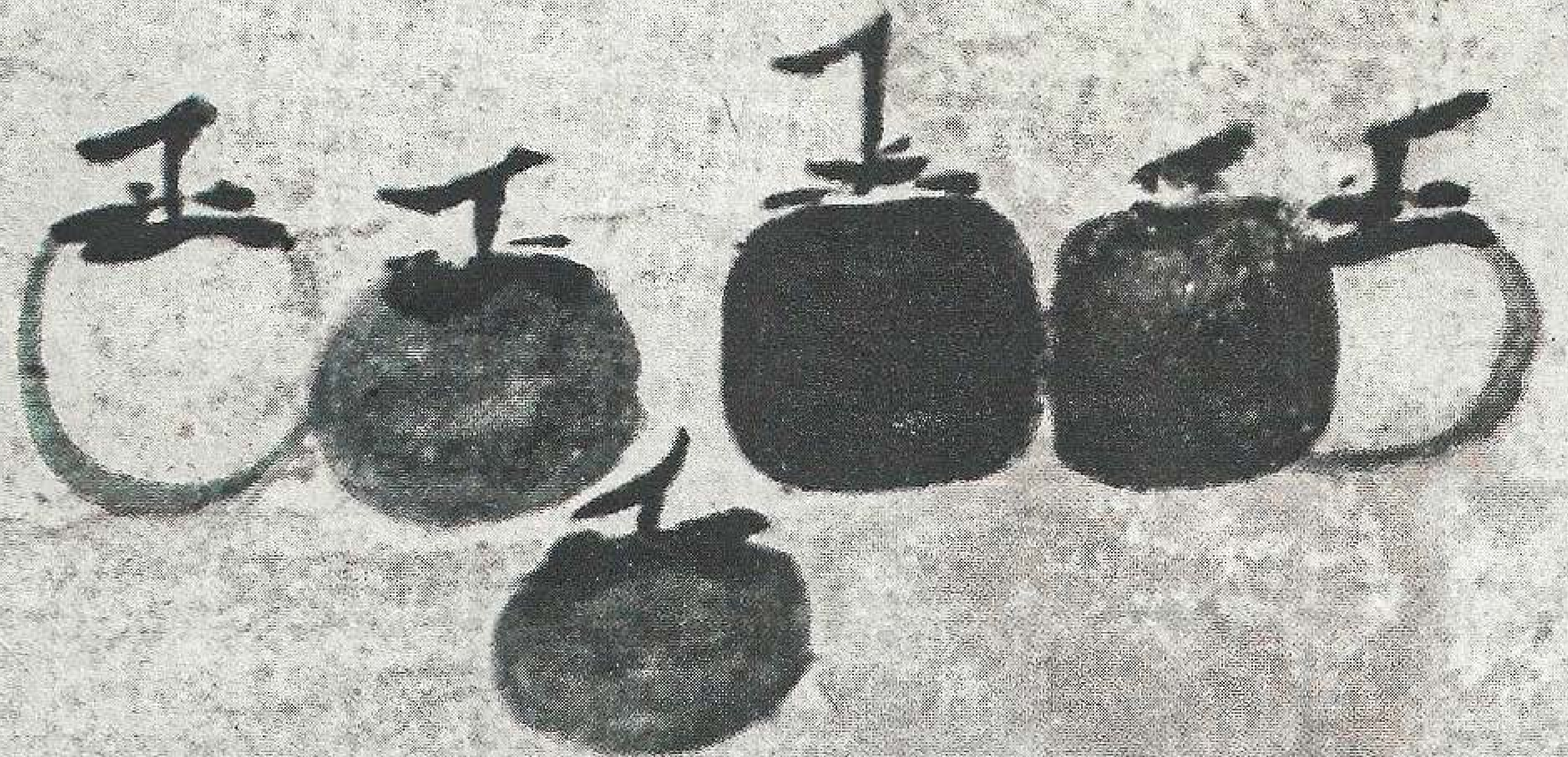
by

Mu Ch'i Fachang

13th century

Certainly one of the most famous paintings from China's Song Dynasty.

For unknown, unexplainable reasons, this simple painting moves me deeply. Perhaps it's that these six, unpretentious persimmons taught me a way of seeing.



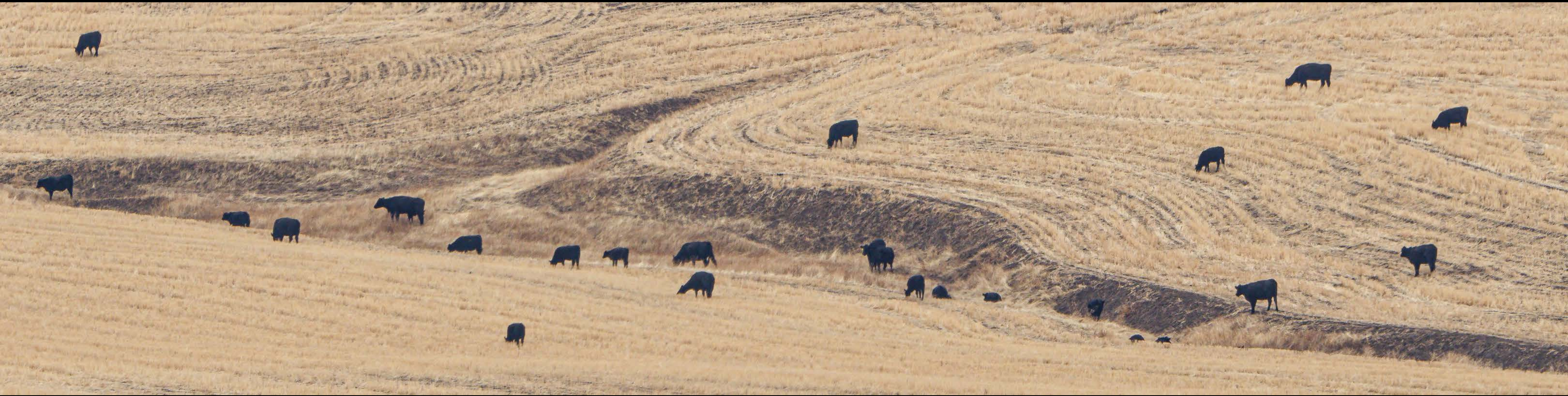














The Great Wave

A One-Picture Story



The Great Wave

We artists sweat bullets in our creative process. And someday, if we become famous and our artwork is recognized world-wide, we might find our creative vision used to promote a beverage. Success at last!

#163

Upper Chambers



Upper Chambers

Brooks Jensen

I never gave much thought to *stairways* until my knees failed me.

Suddenly, stairs prompted a calculation that measured some pain/reward equation.

Now, instead of a means of elevation, stairways have become an aesthetic symbol of those unknown, unvisited, mysterious, upper chambers.





















Please Don't Fail Me Now

A One-Picture Story

I love my electric bicycle.
It can easily take me so
much farther than I could
ever walk.

I was 22 miles down this
dirt road before I needed
to change batteries. And
then it dawned on me
how easy it was to rely
on *mechanical success* for
the return trip — and how
much trouble I'd be in if it
broke down or my spare
battery was discharged.



#164

I Lost My Wife

I Lost My Wife

Brooks Jensen







And just like that, she was gone.

I was not prepared for the end of “us.” We knew the prognosis was inevitable, but we dealt with it. We had no other choice. For ten years, we did what was necessary to endure and survive, cherishing each day. We were in it together.

And then the void. The silence. The permanence of it. “Us” was now *one*. And every lone tree brings a memory flooding back.















The Family Gatherings

A One-Picture Story



My wife was one of seven siblings in her family. Gatherings of the clan were always a highlight of the year. We were married 28 years before cancer took her from me and in that time there were a dozen others in the extended family who were lost. I can still hear the echoes of their voices.

#165

Waiting for a Haiku

*Waiting for
a Haiku*

Brooks Jensen





I thought I might try my hand at haiku, but no. The best I can do is to *see* them, but words fail me.

I followed Basho's "narrow road to the deep north." In his footsteps, I came to understand that all of Japan is itself a haiku without words. Those master poets of Japan did not write haiku — they *found* them.









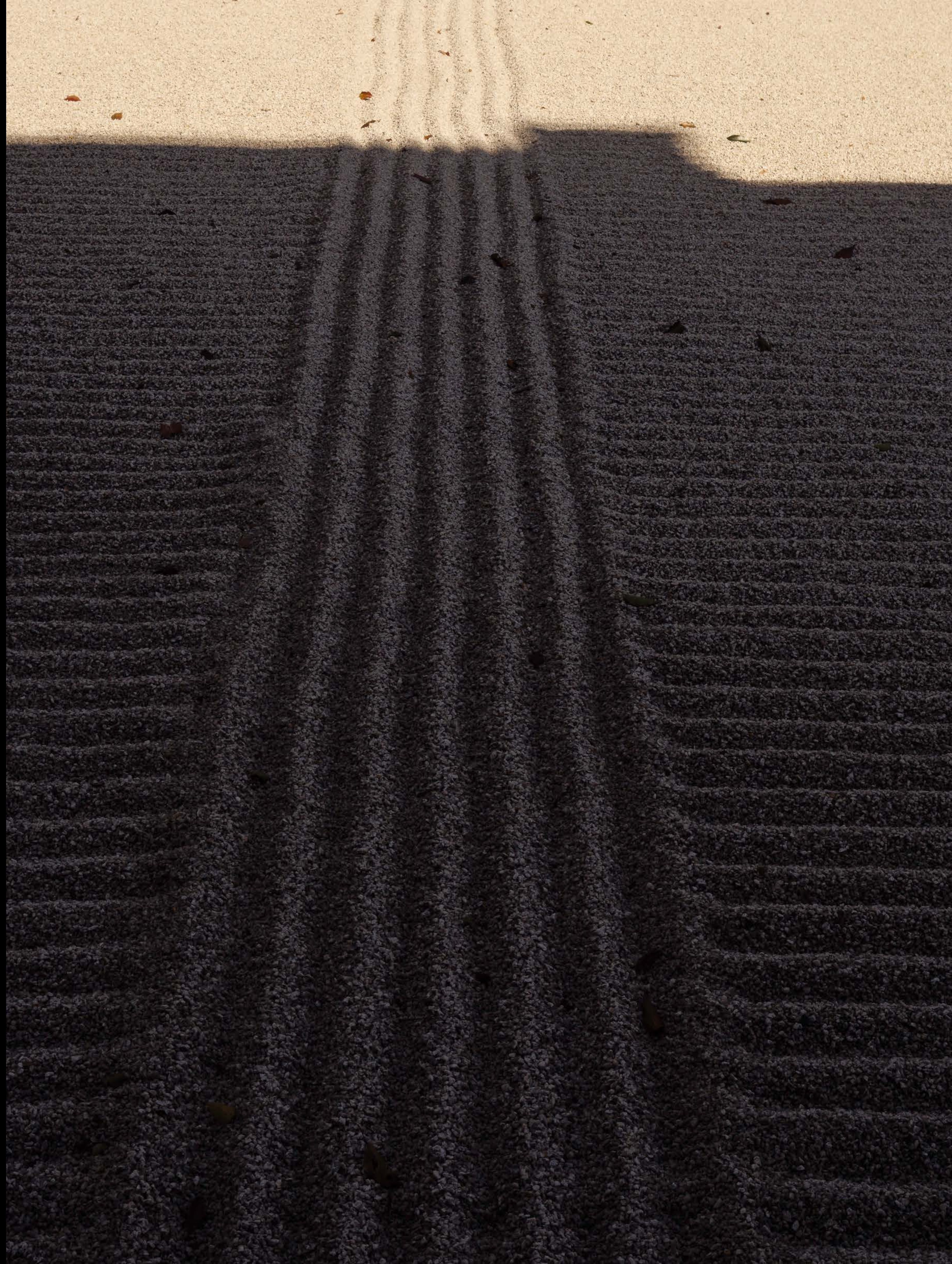
























生童里十頓目
法俊住持
應喜司信女
壽喜司信女
壽喜司信女




社
離念淨心
淨室清心
教譽淨圓
大譽清圓

念翁信
義公新念
太至
壽

Two Shoe

A One-Picture Story

A photograph of a barn wall with the word "Two" painted in white, reflected in a puddle of water. Tall grasses are in the foreground.

Miles from the nearest paved road, someone left a message on the side of the barn. Was it a nickname? And why singular? "One-shoe" I could understand. "Three-shoes" would be odd, but *Two Shoe*? I finally concluded it was an anagram – *thoowes*, which is of course the plural of *thoow*.

#166

An Eon of Rain



An Eon of Rain

Brooks Jensen



By my calculations, it takes about 6.46397×10^{8493} drops of rain to carve such landscapes over the course of an eon or two. I haven't double checked my math on this, so let's just round it up to 7 umpteen bazillion raindrops and call it good. Agreed?

























Visiting the 9/11 Memorial

A One-Picture Story

No words.

Just tears.



#167

The Herd

The Herd

Brooks Jensen















陡坡危险







Notes

The Spirit of Mu'Chi

Sometimes, a piece of artwork touches us deeply — for reasons we cannot fathom. The moment I saw Mu'Chi's *Six Persimmons*, I had a physical response to it that even now I cannot fully describe. His vision inspires mine.

Tech notes: All but one of these were captured with a Panasonic G9. Of late, I've been making a lot of panorama images with multiple exposures and stitching. All of these, however, are simply cropped from a single exposure.

Upper Chambers

In my youth, I would bound up a flight of stairs two or even three stairs at a time. Now, with aged knees, stairs have become a barrier I negotiate with caution. As my mother-in-law used to say, "Growing old is not for wimps."

Tech notes: These images come from seven different locations over the course of five years. It's a great example of a project not being based on a single location, but rather a single subject.

I Lost My Wife

After a ten-year battle with ovarian

cancer, I lost my sweet, sweet Maureen. I've been told that we never truly recover from such a loss. After a year and a half, I'm just beginning to understand the truth of this advice.

Tech notes: All of these were photographed after Maureen passed away. I was not conscious of this and they weren't photographed on purpose for this project. I "discovered" the thread of these images only recently. I have no doubt it's part of the healing process, but it's still a mystery to me how this happens.

Waiting for a Haiku

Who among us hasn't tried to write a haiku? They seem so simple and yet elegant. It's easy to think that writing a haiku is a matter of finding and choosing the best words. Not so. The essence of haiku is an experience and that is something that is available to all who live the art life.

Tech notes: When I say in the text that I followed the footsteps of Basho, I literally did. In 1990, I visited the house that was the northern most point in Basho's travel. In his time, it was an inn where Basho spent the night before he turned south. So many of the places I visited in that and other trips are still pretty close to what Basho would have seen during his travels.

An Eon of Rain

Most of these images are from Death Valley, a few from Capitol Reef. In such locations, the expanse of Time is ever-present and overwhelming. In this project, I'm hoping the raindrop metaphor helps create that sense of awe that is inescapable when one stands in front of these magnificent land forms.

Tech notes: Curiously enough, all but one of these were shot with a telephoto zoom, the Panasonic Leica 50-200mm lens. I've never used a sharper lens and these images illustrate its phenomenal capabilities.

The Herd

Artmaking is a solitary affair — at least most of the time. Something in photography, however, seems to promote a more social — or perhaps *competitive* — approach. I guess I'm too much of an iconoclast to join the group. Whenever I see a gaggle of photographers (or is it a *shutter* of photographers?) together, it amuses me.

Tech notes: The funny part is that I would bet that everyone got unique images, even standing next to each other.

Folios, Chapbooks, Prints



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 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 more than 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 1,200+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](#), the LensWork membership website. He also publishes a daily *Here's a Thought...* video with short inspiration for creative photographers.

LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with the *LensWork Tablet Edition*, and *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* (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); and *Our Magnificent Planet* (2020 and 2021).

[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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