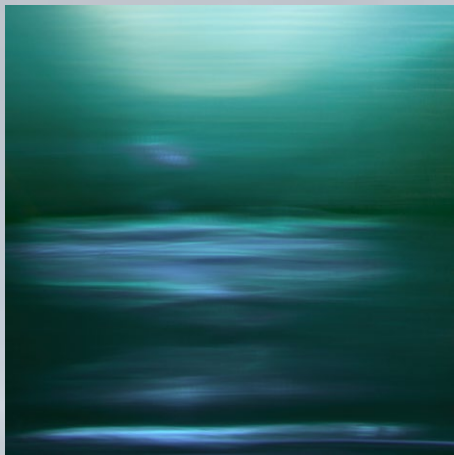


Synesthscares: Coolness

Andrew Ilachinski

“I call this series Synesthscaapes because of the suggestive manner in which reflections/refractions... evoke the synesthetic experience of vast landscapes, seascapes, and other ‘majestic’ vistas.”



Equipment: Canon 40D and 5D II DSLRs, Canon EF 100mm and MP-E 65mm macro lenses, and Manfrotto 190CX3 tripod.



Listen to the Interview with Andrew Ilachinski
(46:30 audio only)

Synesthscaapes: Coolness

This project dates back to Thanksgiving 2009, which my family and I celebrated at my mother-in-law’s home in Florida. As we began our meal and I reached for the salt, I was mesmerized by the reflections of the overhead lights on the salt shaker’s sinuous brushed-aluminum surface. Naturally, I spent the remaining part of our trip playing with the macro lens with which I always travel.

After we got home, I played with other reflecting surfaces and soon moved on to refractions of light in various forms of translucent colored glass. I’ve since used every imaginable glass or plastic object — glasses and goblets, crystals, vases, prisms, even whiskey and rum bottles! But what started out as an innocent exploration of “colored light abstractions” — captured for their own sake, purely in terms of their aesthetics — at some point evolved into a more focused “search” for what I call synesthetic landscapes — which later morphed into *Synesthscaapes*.

Synesthesia derives from the Greek *syn*, meaning “union” plus *aisthaesis*, meaning “sensation,” and thus means “joined sensation” — such as when something that is ordinarily “seen” is tasted as well. It is a condition that appears in some form in up to 1% of the population. In my case, up until about the age of ten, I vividly remember perceiving numbers (and, less frequently, letters) as colors. Sadly, I now only rarely experience this phenomenon. I call this series *Synesthscaapes* because of the suggestive manner in which reflections/refractions of otherwise “unappreciated” streams of light evoke the synesthetic experience of vast landscapes, seascapes, and other “majestic” vistas.

It is to this project that I indirectly owe my friendship with Barbara Bullock-Wilson, a daughter of the late, great Wynn Bullock. Barbara curates Wynn’s website and publishes a monthly newsletter about the activities of his estate. A month or so after I started (and because my thoughts were so focused on “color” at the time), I found a notice of publication of a book of color abstracts by Wynn Bullock (who is one of my spiritual mentors). Naturally curious — knowing Wynn exclusively through his black-and-white work — I ordered the book and now consider it a most cherished item. I emailed Barbara some musings on her dad’s brilliant work in color, and we quickly struck up a friendship.

Indeed, the highlight of this past year for me has been the commentary Barbara invited me to post (in written and verbal form) on a color abstract of my choosing (featured in April 2012 on Wynn’s website). Wynn and I both started “experimenting” with color at roughly the same age (in our early 50s). Though our paths unfortunately never crossed in real life, I view our respective color experiments as an artistic bridge across time.

The project is perpetually ongoing, as time permits, and new “colored translucent objects” find their way into my hands. In replying to people’s queries about what such and such a landscape “really is,” I inwardly delight in answering (with a nod to Minor White’s well-known adage): “You mean *what else* it is? Why, a bottle of rum!”

[Editor’s Note: Working in a similar vein, Andrew’s portfolio, *Micro Worlds*, appeared in *LensWork* #76.]

ANDREW ILACHINSKI

Born 1960, Sea Cliff, New York



Why photography?

Photography keeps me sane; more precisely, it provides a counterweight to my decidedly “left brain” day-job as a research analyst for a naval think tank. As I’ve always been a visual thinker (even when working on my endless equations and computer code), photography simultaneously provides a rest from “logic” and nurtures my ability to engage in it.

Formal / informal photographic education?

I am self-taught, and started by fiddling around with a Polaroid Instamatic camera my parents gave me for my 10th birthday. I got serious about photography after getting an SLR using the proceeds of some academic awards in college. A camera has been my constant companion ever since.

What is the role of photography in your life?

About the only way its presence could be greater is if its fruits were able to pay for the mortgage. ;-) As it is, I spend most of my (“day-job free”) waking hours either taking pictures or processing them. The best pictures of all, of course, are the ones I only imagine taking while otherwise waiting in northern Virginia traffic to get to work.

Sources of artistic influence?

First and foremost my dad — who was not a photographer, but was a lifelong artist. He lived art 24/7 to the end, passing away in 2002. Everything I know about tone, light, composition, expression, and overall approach to art, I’ve learned by being around my dad. As for photographers whose work has most deeply influenced me, in no particular order: Ansel Adams, Minor White, Fay Godwin, Paul Caponigro, Brett Weston, and Carl Chiarenza.

How do you describe “home”?

Home is in a northern Virginian suburb, not far from Washington, D.C., where I live with my beautiful (and wonderfully understanding and patient!) wife, Irene — a therapist who juggles career and time with our kids, Noah (14) and Josh (10). The family is rounded-out by our black pug, Blotto, whose name reflects his appearance *and* personality.

Published books:

A small portfolio edition of an expanded set of my “Synesthetic Landscapes” has been self-published using [Blurb](#).

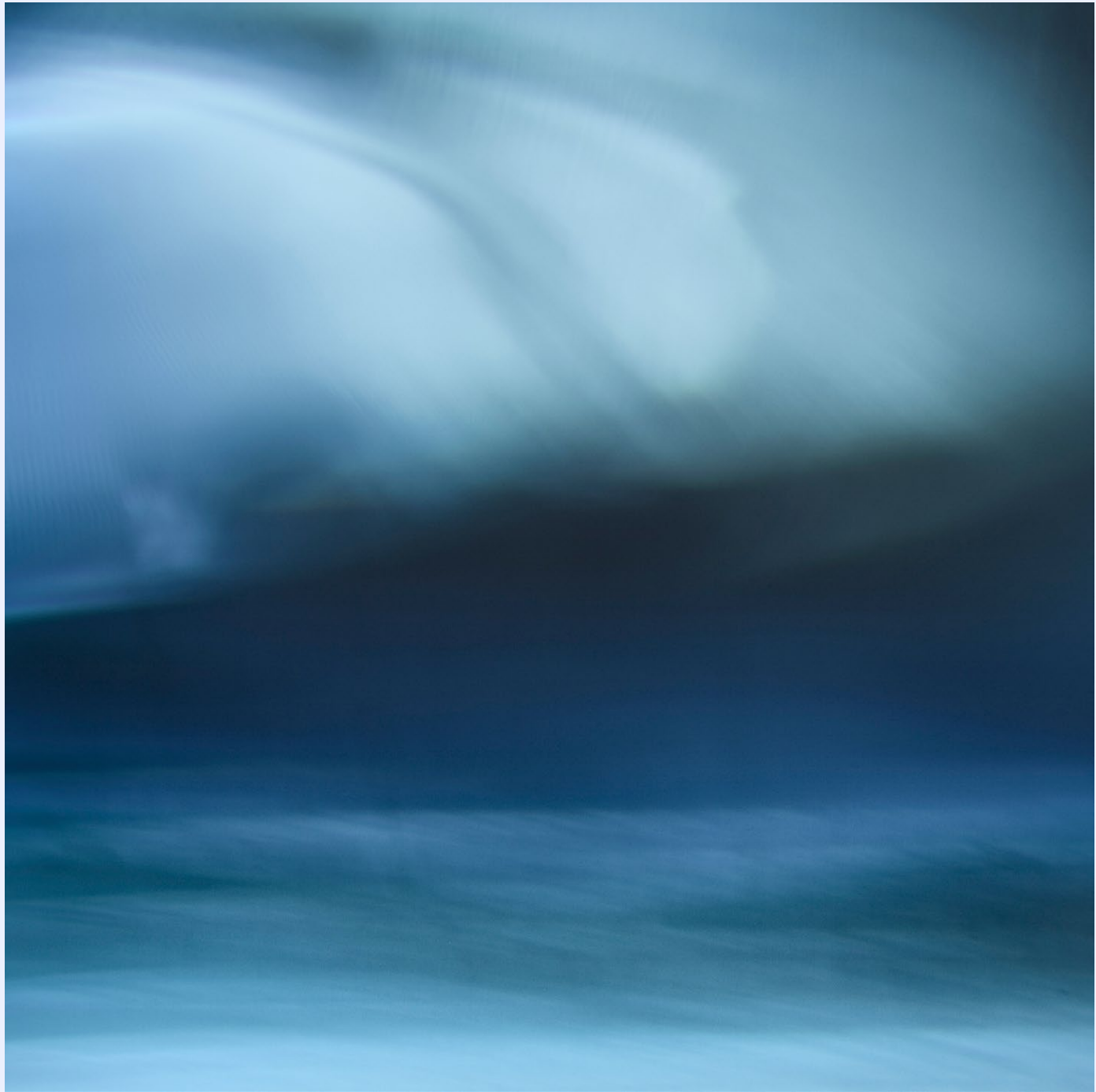
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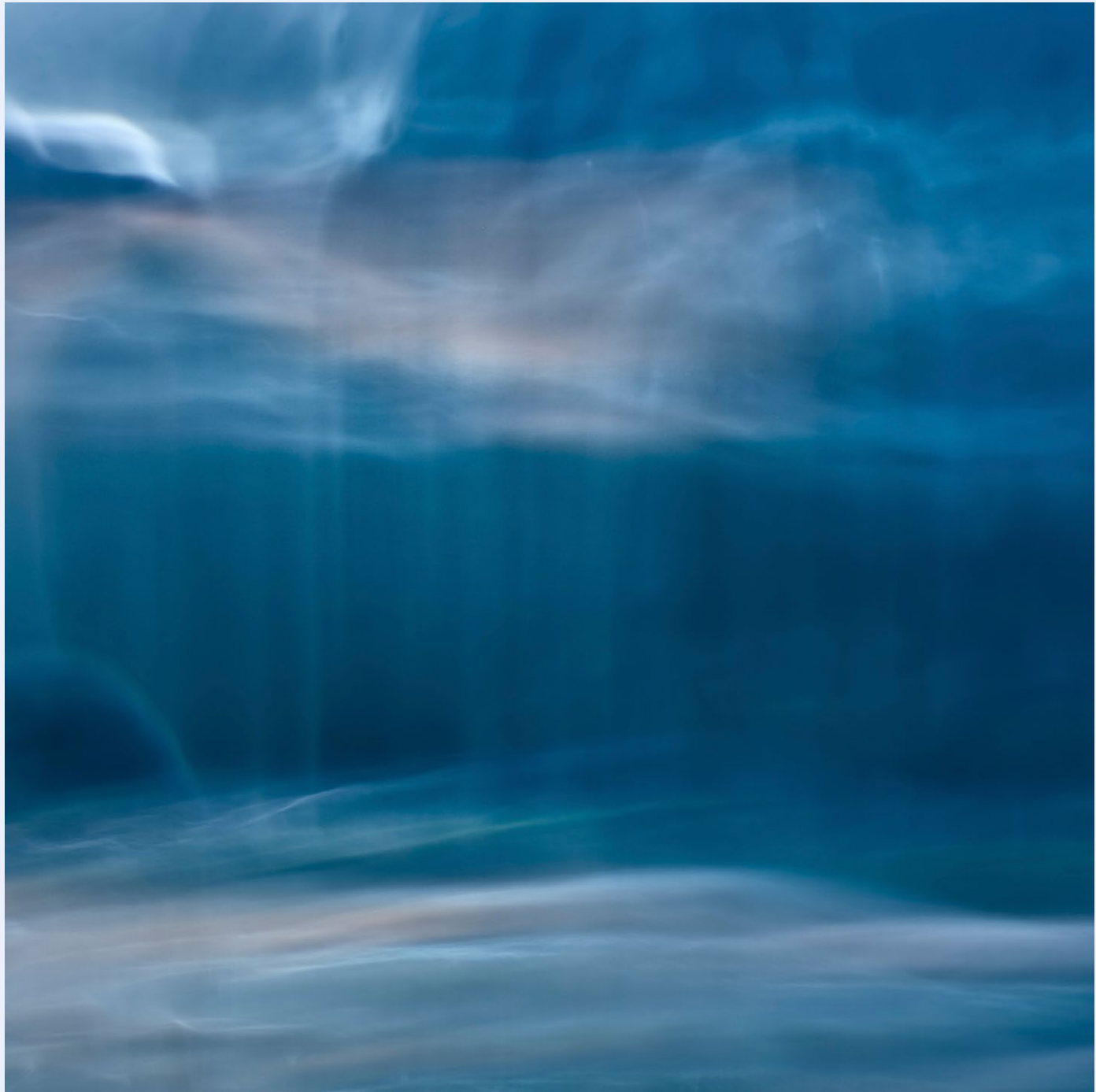






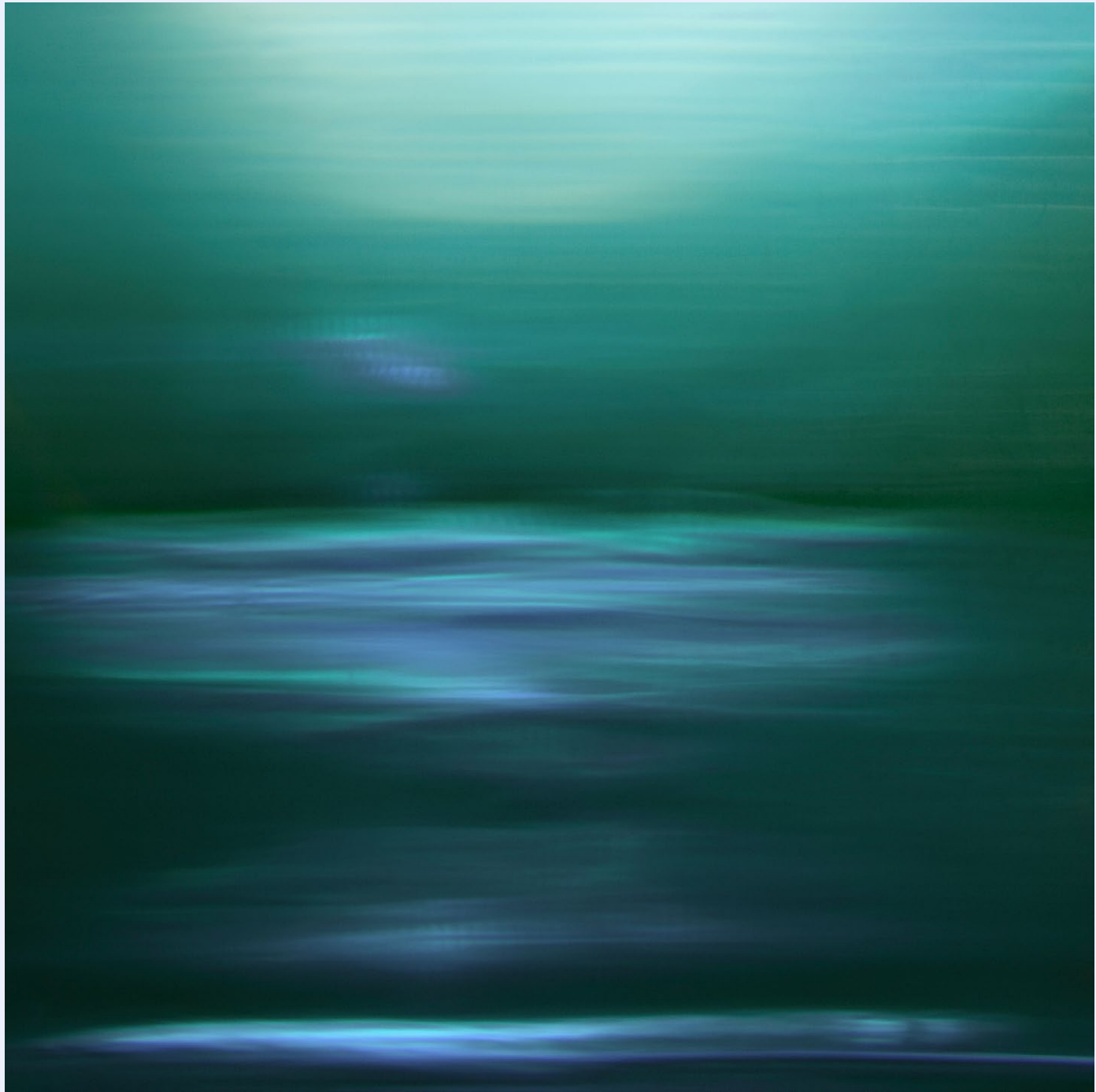




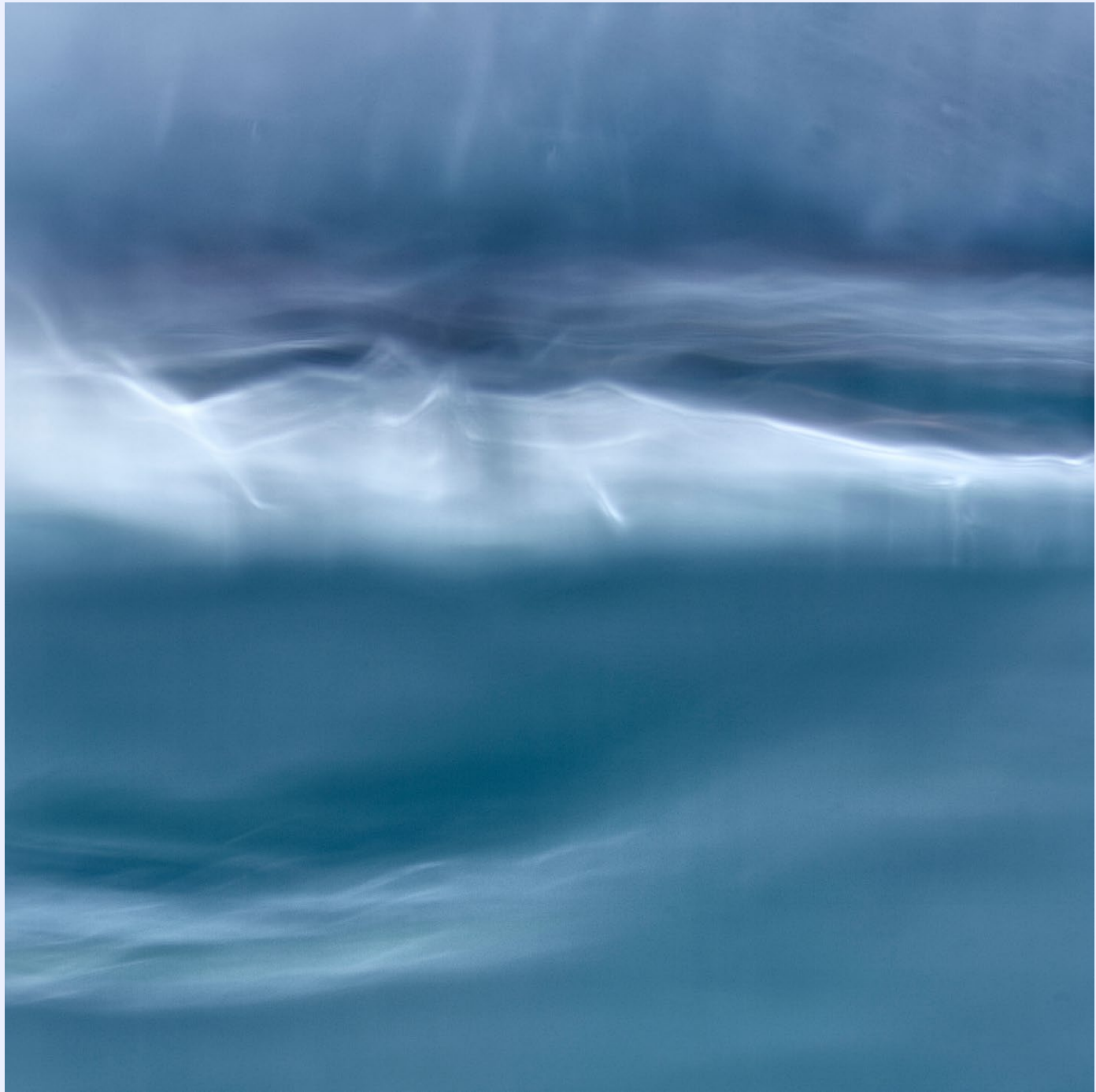




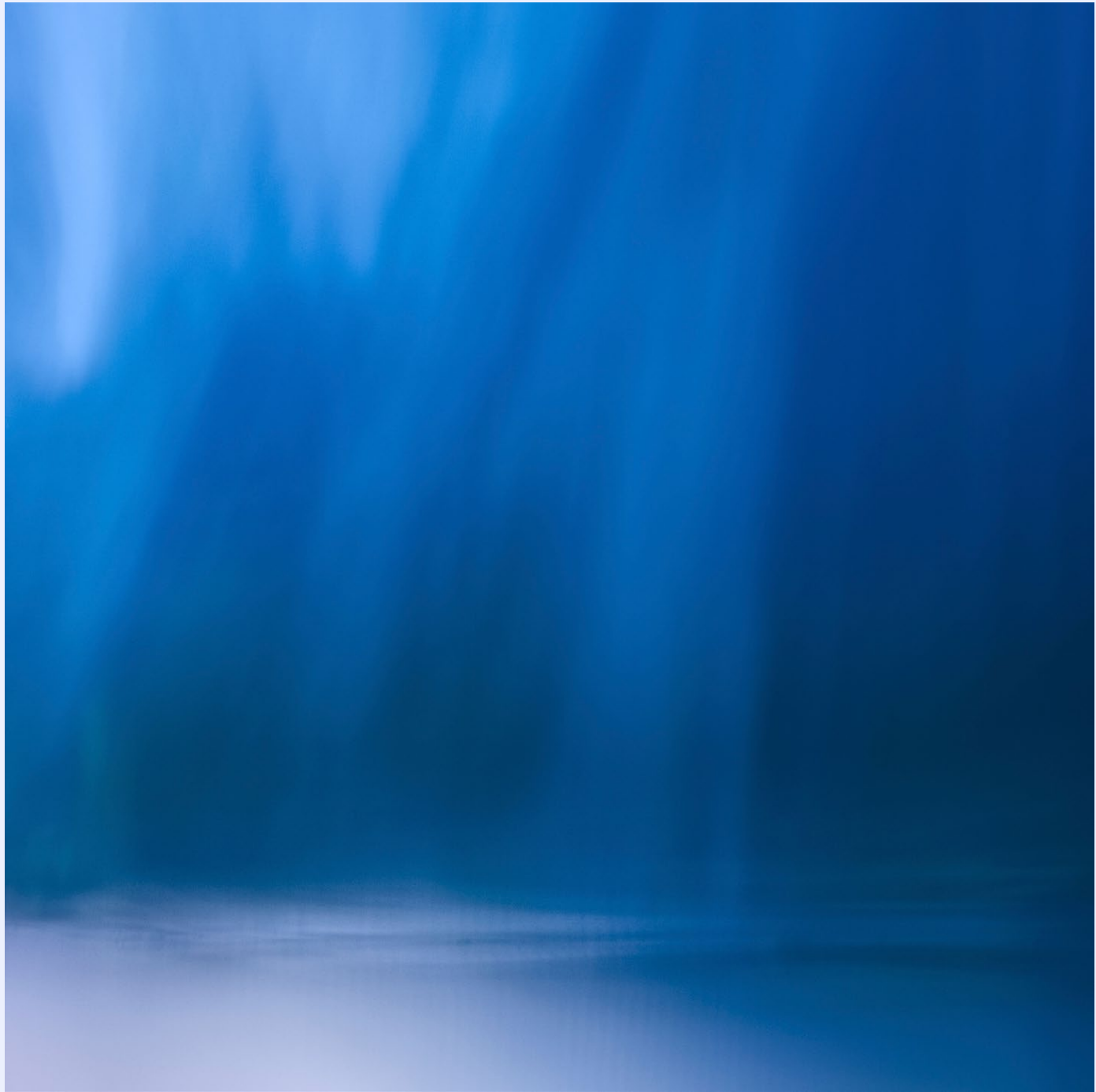
















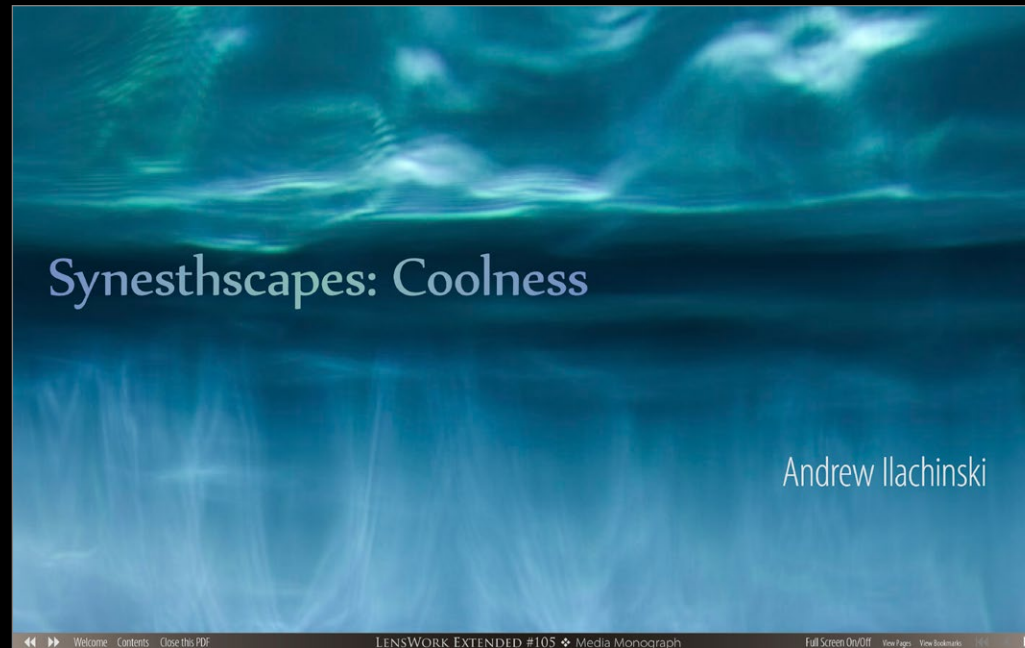












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