

An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by rocky, reddish-brown peaks and ridges, interspersed with green, grassy slopes. The background shows more distant, darker mountain ranges under a clear sky. The overall scene is a vast, natural landscape.

# IKARA \ VULKATHUNHA

CHRIS SAUNDERS, MIEKE BOYNTON, RICARDO DA CUNHA & MATT PALMER



Lumen Australis acknowledge and pay respects to the Adnyamathanha and Kuyani people, and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Ikara\Vulkathunha was captured in the Adnyamathanha traditional lands of Ikara Flinders Ranges, Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges and Munda Lake Frome and the Kuyani traditional lands of West Ikara Flinders Ranges.

Out of respect for the wishes of the Adnyamathanha people, we did not scale Ngarri Mudlanha St Mary Peak which is a sacred place. We also were grateful to observe beautiful traditional rock artwork dating thousands of years old; however, it was not photographed.

We acknowledge the Adnyamathanha and Kuyani people's deep connections to these landscapes and greatly appreciate being guests in their lands.



Wilpena Pound, Ikara Flinders Ranges \ CS



# INTRODUCTION

Ikara means 'meeting place' in the Adnyamathanha language and refers to the ancient and sacred mountain ridgelines of Wilpena Pound, cradling a valley in its centre. This part of Australia feels iconic with its rich red earth, scorching sun, unique characters and deep heritage. It also holds mysteries deep within in these landscapes, carried through generations of song and art and Adnyamathanha culture.

For our group of four photographers, Ikara also acted as our meeting place. Whilst we knew each other through the photographic community, it was in this place that we met for the first time under a collective name: Lumen Australis. The goal was to get to know each other and create our own artistic interpretations of this special place that none of us had visited before. What would draw our attention? What would we capture? How would we overcome the challenges of photography in this raw and rugged place? How would our perceptions of each other and of country evolve throughout the trip?

After exploring and appreciating the beauty of Ikara, we travelled North to the Vulkathunha ranges, and made Arkaroola our base. The journey of discovery continued, enriching our knowledge and understanding of the geology and cosmology of the area.

We invite you to view this stunning part of Australia through our eyes, and share in the discoveries and understandings that were revealed to us as you explore this collection of photographs and short reflections of our Ikara/Vulkathunha experience.

Each image caption in this ebook contains the initials of the photographer.

Following page: Arkaroola / CS









IKARA FLINDERS RANGES



# IKARA FLINDERS RANGES

The Ikara Flinders Ranges stand as a witness to time itself, the weathered peaks and valleys telling a story that stretches back 500 million years. 'Ikara', meaning 'meeting place' in the Adnyamathanha language aptly describes this land where past and present, human and nature converge.

Once towering 12,000 meters high, these ancient mountains have been sculpted by millennia of wind and water. Today, Ngarri Mudlanha (St Mary Peak) reaches 1,171 meters, the highest point in a landscape that commands attention and respect in equal measure.

Our journey began surprisingly, with torrential rains transforming typically arid roads into flowing streams. This dramatic welcome served as a timely reminder of nature's power to shape and reshape the land, a process we would witness throughout our stay. It was also in stark contrast to the three-year drought that had left its unmistakable imprint on the environment. Yet the resilience of life was abundantly evident. Wedge-tailed Eagles soared on thermals rising from the sun-baked earth, while the iconic Sturt's Desert Peas brought splashes of vibrant red to the ochre soil.

Weathered rocks and undulating ridges stood as evidence to the passage of eons. The concept of time stretched beyond human comprehension, inviting reflection on our own brief presence in this enduring landscape. Each vista offered a new perspective on the raw beauty of the Australian outback.

During our stay we were fortunate to witness the multiple personalities of the Ikara Flinders Ranges. From flood-swept gorges to sun-scorched ridges, the ranges presented a continuous interplay of light, shadow, and colour. Dawn painted the sky in soft pastels, while dusk set the rocks ablaze with rich reds and golds. Storm clouds rolled in, casting deep shadows across the craggy terrain, only to part and bathe the land in brilliant sunshine.

Our time in Ikara deepened our appreciation for this unique part of Australia, its intrinsic indigenous heritage, and the delicate balance of life in the outback. It set the stage for our continued journey northward, where the Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges awaited with new wonders to explore.





Glass Gorge \ CS





Glass Gorge \ RDC





Near Brachina Creek \ CS





Near Brachina Creek \ MP





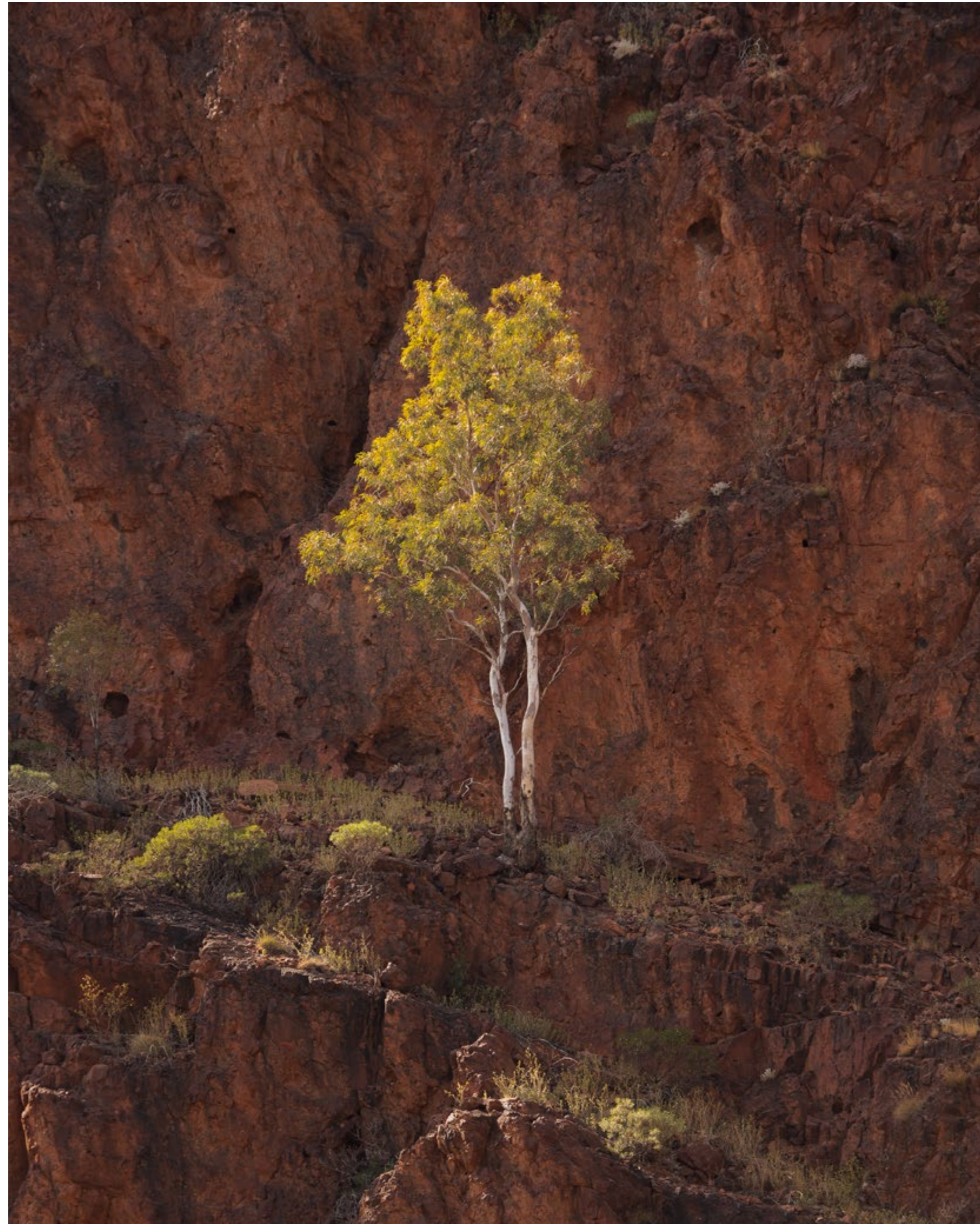
Wilpena Pound from Rawnsley Park Station \ MP





Razorback Lookout \ MB





Brachina \ RDC





Moralana Gorge \ MB





Moralana Gorge \ MB





Tree Details \ MP





Moralana Scenic Drive \ MB





Emus in Aroona Valley \ MP





Glass Gorge \ MP





Wallaby Skull \ MP





Alpana \ RDC





Upalinna Station \ RDC





Quorn \ MP





Composite Image \ RDC





Kanyaka Station Ruins \ MB





Wilson Station Master's Residence \ MB





Near Brachina Creek \ MP









Willowie \ RDC





Edeowie Railway Siding \ CS





Stokes Hill Lookout \ MB





Razorback Lookout \ RDC





Cazneaux Tree \ MB





Stokes Hill Lookout \ CS





Stokes Hill Lookout \ MB





Quorn Railway Station \ MB





Wilpena Pound \ RDC





Edeowie Railway Siding \ MP





Hucks Lookout \ MP





View Southwest from Pugilist Hill \ CS





Moralana Scenic Drive \ MB





Pugilist Hill \ MP





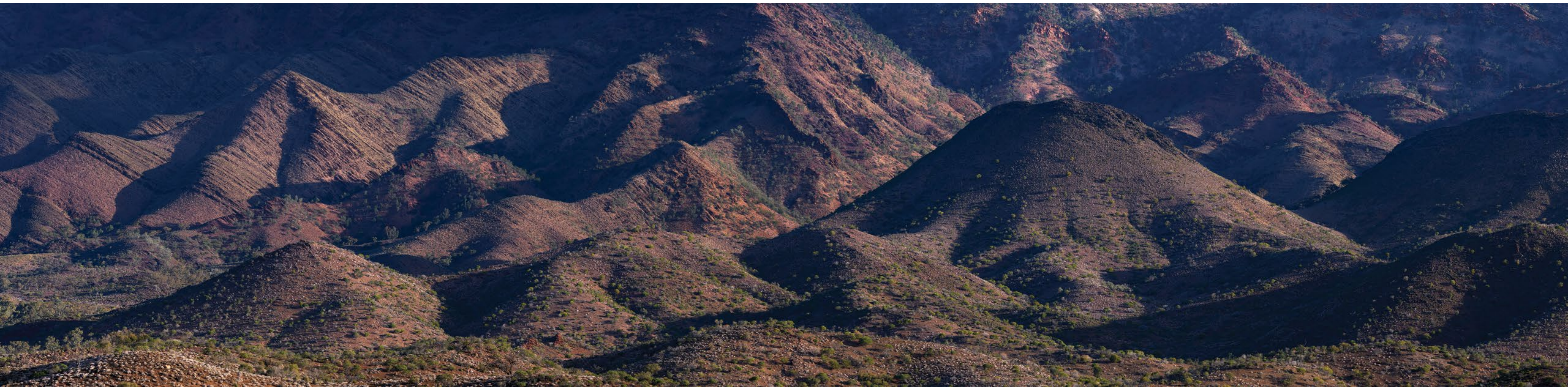
Near Cradock \ CS





Near Stokes Hill \ CS







# VULKATHUNHA GAMMON RANGES



# VULKATHUNHA GAMMON RANGES

Stretching to the north-east of the Flinders Ranges, the Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges stand as a testament to the raw, untamed beauty of Australia's outback. Our journey led us to the remote Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, a haven of geological wonders and unique biodiversity that would become the base for our explorations.

The sanctuary, an oasis amidst the arid landscape, revealed its secrets gradually. Each day brought new discoveries, from the rare sightings of the endangered Yellow-footed Rock Wallaby to the awe-inspiring vistas that stretched to the horizon and beyond.

At the heart of our Arkaroola experience was the renowned Ridgetop Tour. Perched in open-top 4WDs, we ventured into terrain that seemed to belong to another world entirely. Our skilled guide navigated hair-raising ascents and descents of the steep slopes, sharing insights into the area's staggering 1600-million-year geological history. As we climbed, the landscape unfolded beneath us, showcasing its ancient granite mountains and hillsides cloaked in resilient native vegetation.

The tour's pinnacle came at Sillers Lookout, where we were greeted with stunning views. From this vantage point, the vast expanse of Munda (Lake Frome) stretched to the horizon, its shimmering surface a stark contrast to the rugged terrain surrounding us.

The panorama encapsulated both the raw beauty and immense scale of this historic landscape, leaving us in admiration of nature's artistry. Beyond the Ridgetop Tour, our time in Arkaroola offered many other unforgettable experiences.

Arkaroola is also one of only two certified Dark Sky Sanctuaries in Australia offering astronomy enthusiasts the opportunity to explore the night sky in detail. As night fell, we joined our fellow guests and resident astronomers and turned our gaze skyward, marvelling at the clarity of the stars in this remote region. This evening was a magical blend of science and storytelling, linking the cultural heritage of the land and its indigenous people to the constellations such as the "Emu in the Sky."

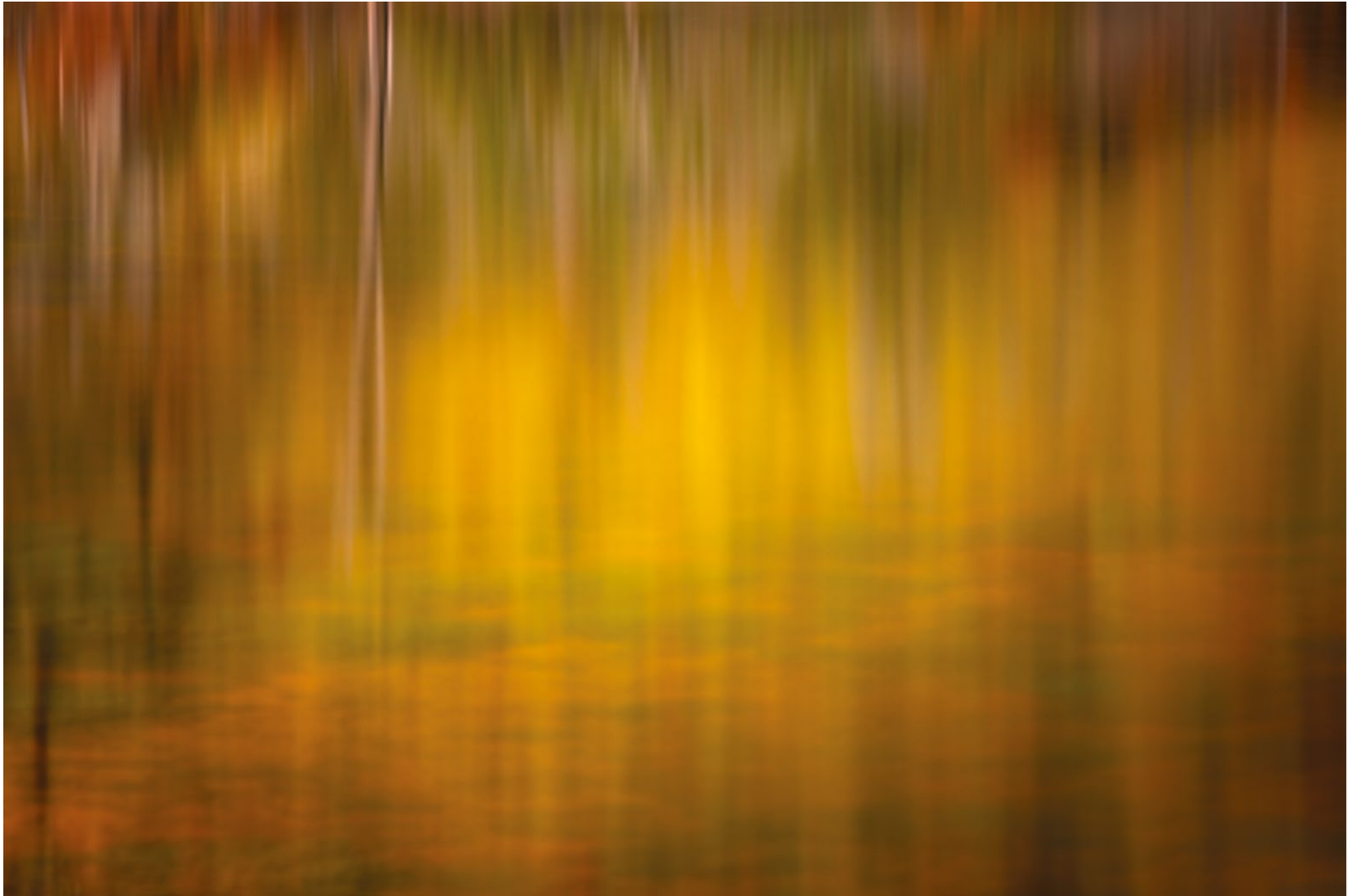
Throughout our stay, we were continually surprised by the beauty of this remote corner of Australia. The long drive through the desert to reach Arkaroola proved more than worthwhile, as each day unveiled new wonders. From the interplay of light and shadow across rugged peaks to the delicate balance of life in this harsh environment, the Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges offered a masterclass in the sublime aesthetics of the outback.





Nooldoonooldoona Waterhole \ MP





Bararranna Gorge \ MB





Bararranna Gorge \ MB





Bararranna Gorge \ RDC





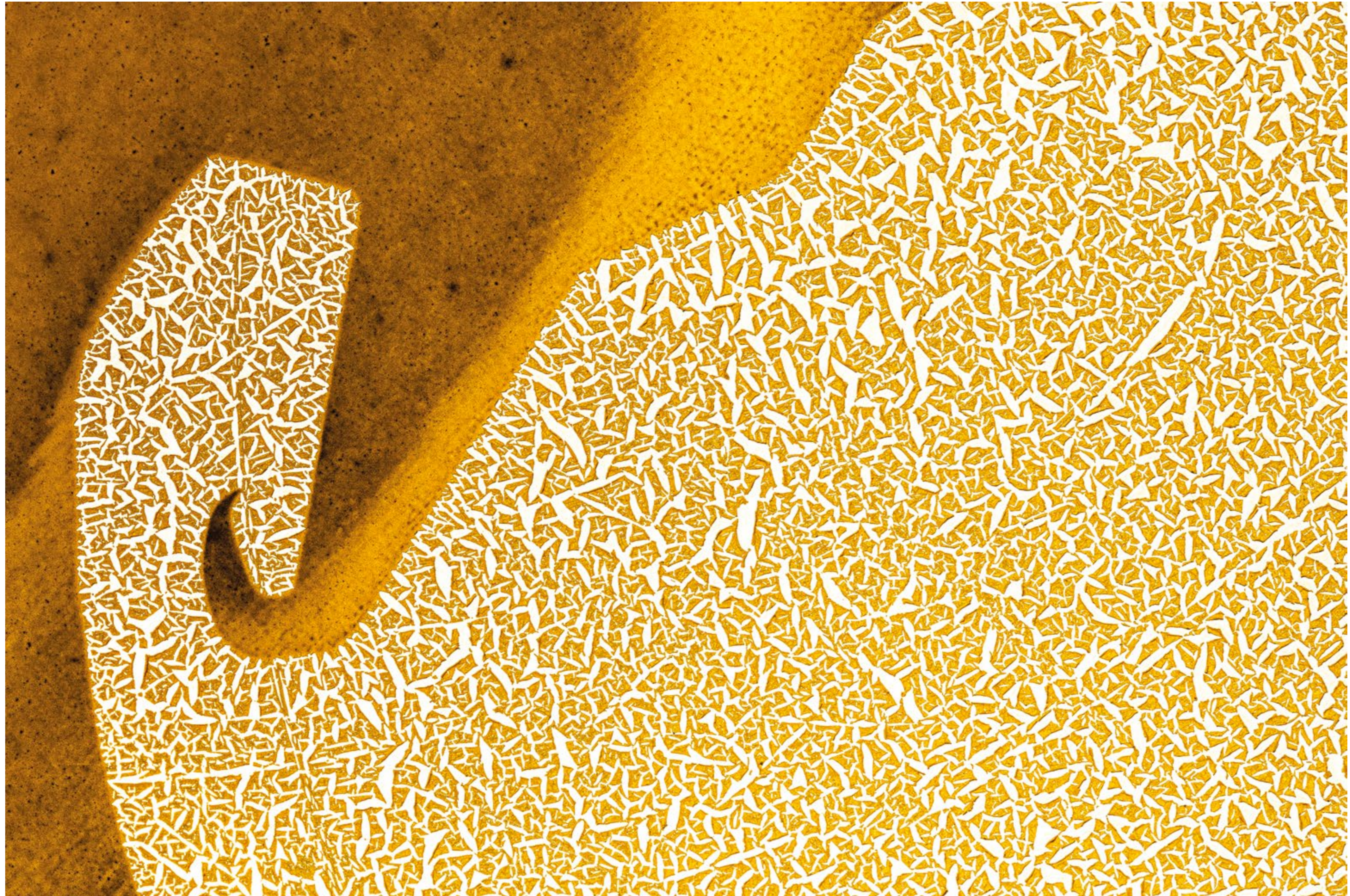
Arkaroola \ MB





Griselda Hill \ MB





Arkaroola \ MB





Nooldoonooldoona Waterhole \ MB





Ochre Wall \ RDC





Bararranna Gorge \ CS





Sillers Lookout, Arkaroola \ MB





Arkaroola Backcountry \ MP





Arkaroola \ RDC





Griselda Hill \ MP





Griselda Hill \ CS





Arkaroola Backcountry \ MP





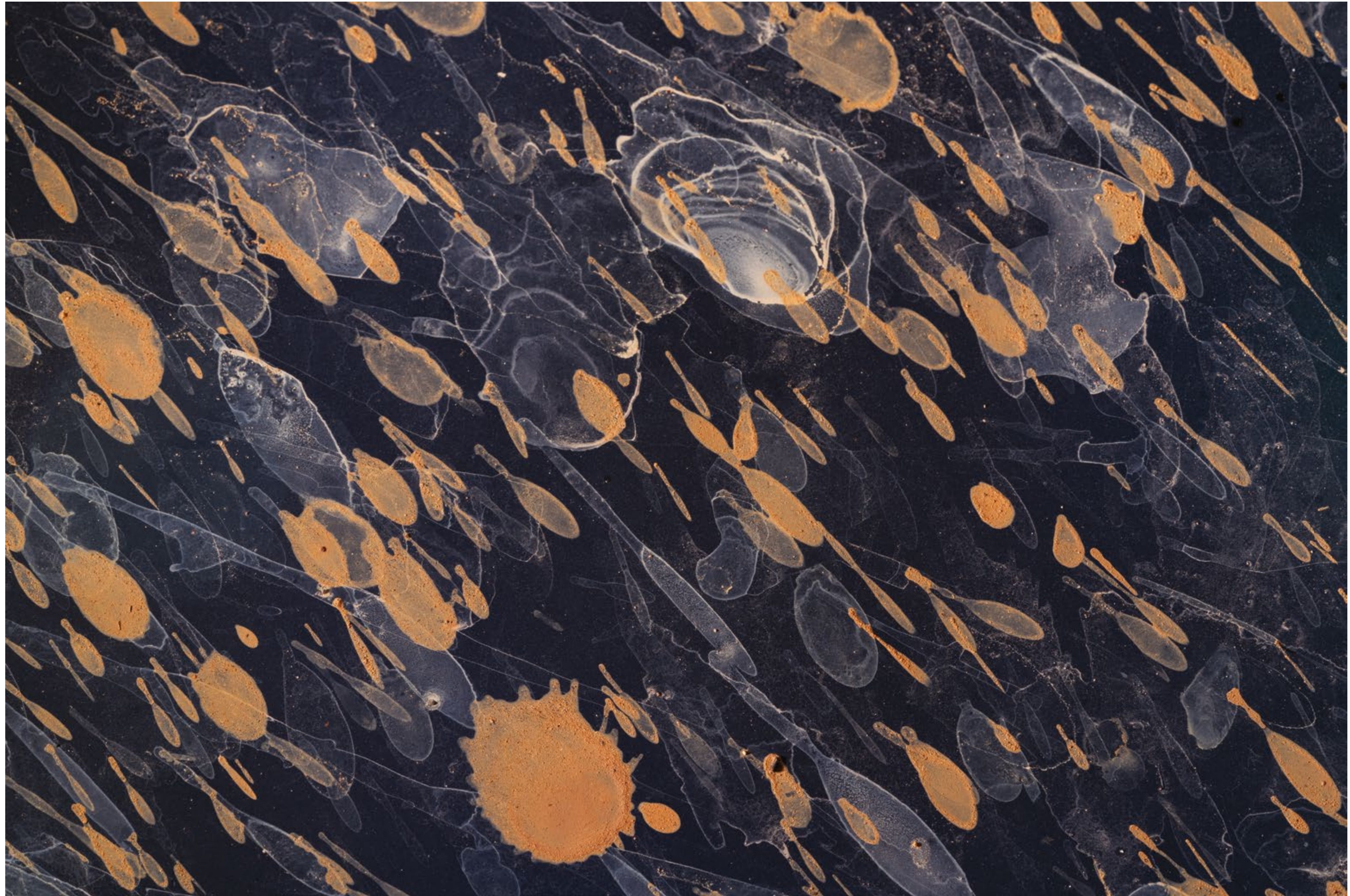
View from Sillers Lookout \ MB





Arkaroola Backcountry \ MB





Landcruiser Bumper Patterns, Arkaroola \ MP





Arkaroola Backcountry \ CS





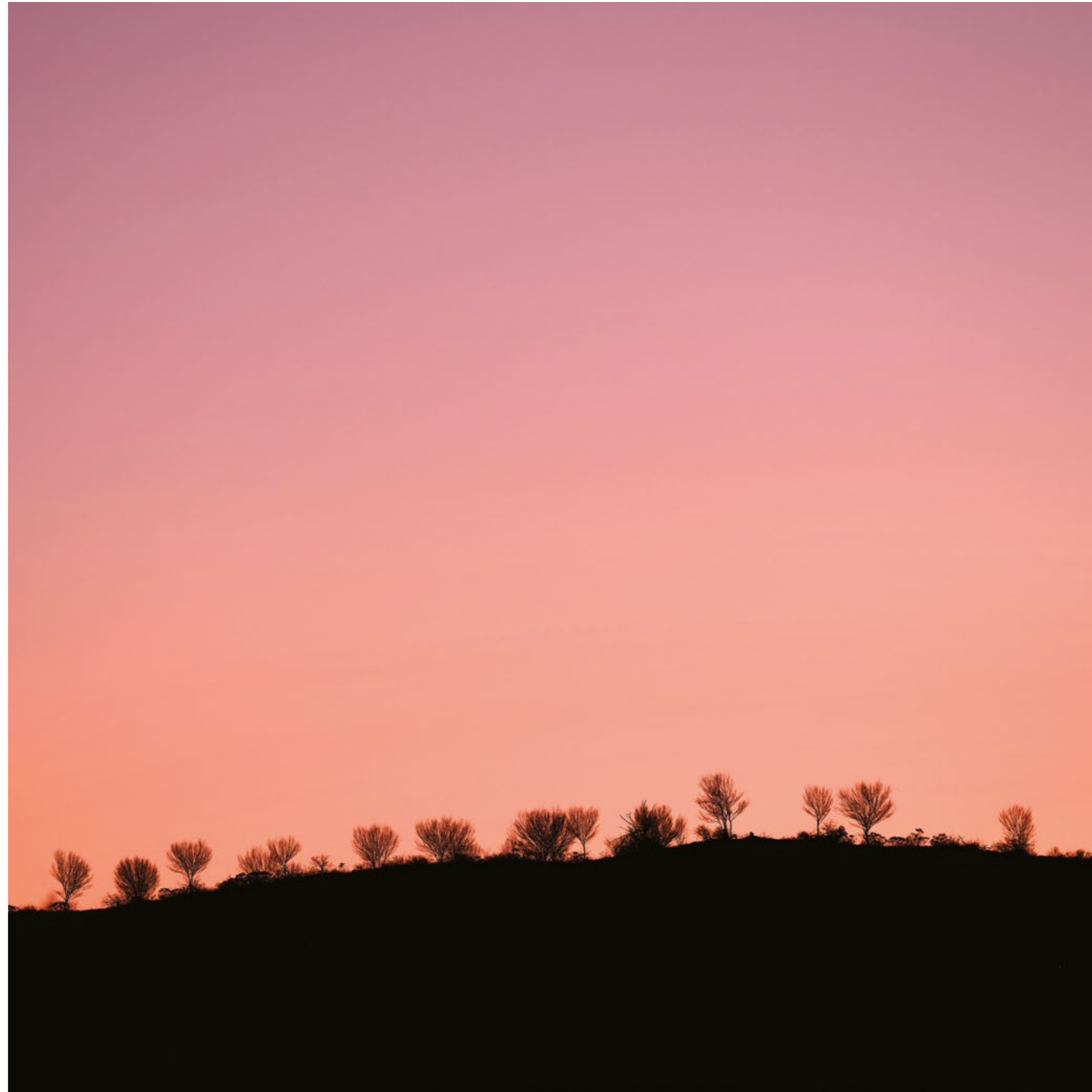
Arkaroola Backcountry \ MP





Gammon Ranges \ MP





Arkaroola \ CS





View from Arkaroola Weather Station \ MP





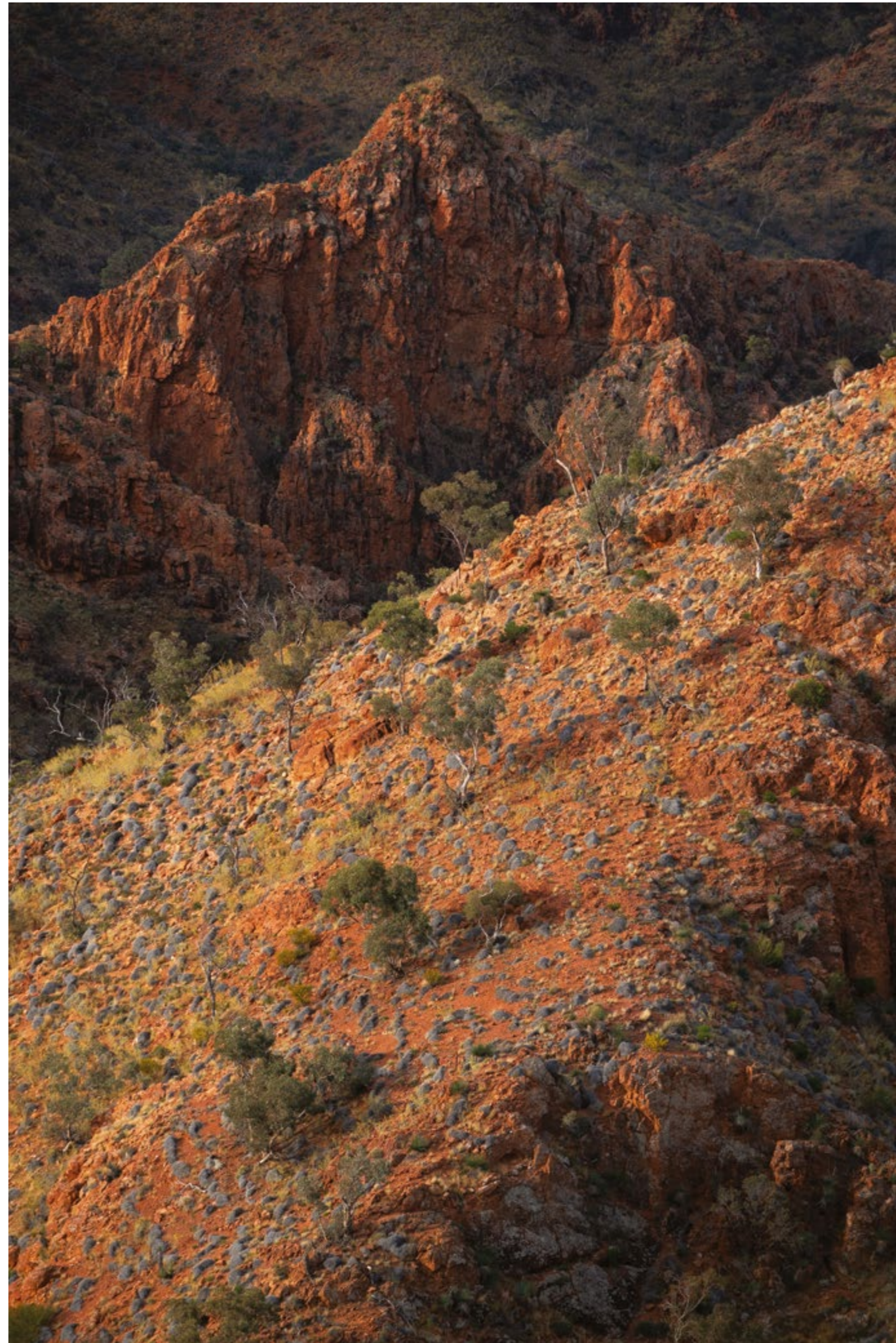
View from Arkaroola Weather Station \ RDC





Arkaroola Backcountry \ RDC





View from Sillers Lookout \ MP



MUNDA LAKE FROM E



# MUNDA LAKE FROME

Our journey to capture the essence of Australia's outback reached new heights as we lifted off from the "Arkaroola International Airport" - a small shed standing defiantly in the wilderness. With clear skies above, cameras at the ready and a full tank of fuel, we were guided by the expert piloting and local knowledge of Doug Sprigg, guardian and owner of Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, on an aerial adventure over Munda Lake Frome.

Munda, the Adnyamathanha name for this vast salt pan, stretches an impressive 100 kilometres long and 40 kilometres wide. Officially dual-named Lake Frome / Munda in 2004, this endorheic lake mostly lies below sea level, rarely filled with more than a shimmer of brackish water. Its 259,615 hectares of unvegetated, crusty surface tell a story of an ancient landscape shaped by time and the harsh Australian climate.

As our small plane banked and circled over the lake, we were presented with a unique perspective on this remarkable terrain. Doug expertly manoeuvred the aircraft, tilting its side towards the ground to allow us to shoot directly downward and capture the intricate patterns etched into the lake's surface. The salt formations, dunes, animal tracks, and other geological features became abstract compositions through our lenses, transforming the familiar into the extraordinary.

As we orbited over Munda, we were deeply grateful for the opportunity to witness this landscape from such a unique vantage point. The images in this chapter are our attempt to capture and share our interpretations of the beauty and significance of Munda Lake Frome. These aerial images present landscapes that are simultaneously informative and visually striking. The photographs reveal the structure and detail of the lake's surface while also inviting contemplation of its abstract beauty. In this way, our work bridges the gap between documentary and fine art photography, offering a fresh perspective on this ancient land.

The lake's significance extends beyond its visual allure. Munda is deeply woven into the Dreaming stories of the Adnyamathanha people. Legend tells that the Rainbow Serpent Akurra drank the lake dry when it ventured down Arkaroola Creek, explaining the lake's current state and highlighting its spiritual importance to the traditional custodians of this land. For the scientific community, the lake's consistent brightness and tonality also make the location of scientific importance for satellites, which use this location to calibrate their cameras. These are but two examples of the many ways in which Munda Lake Frome supports the convergence of people, cultures and time.





CS





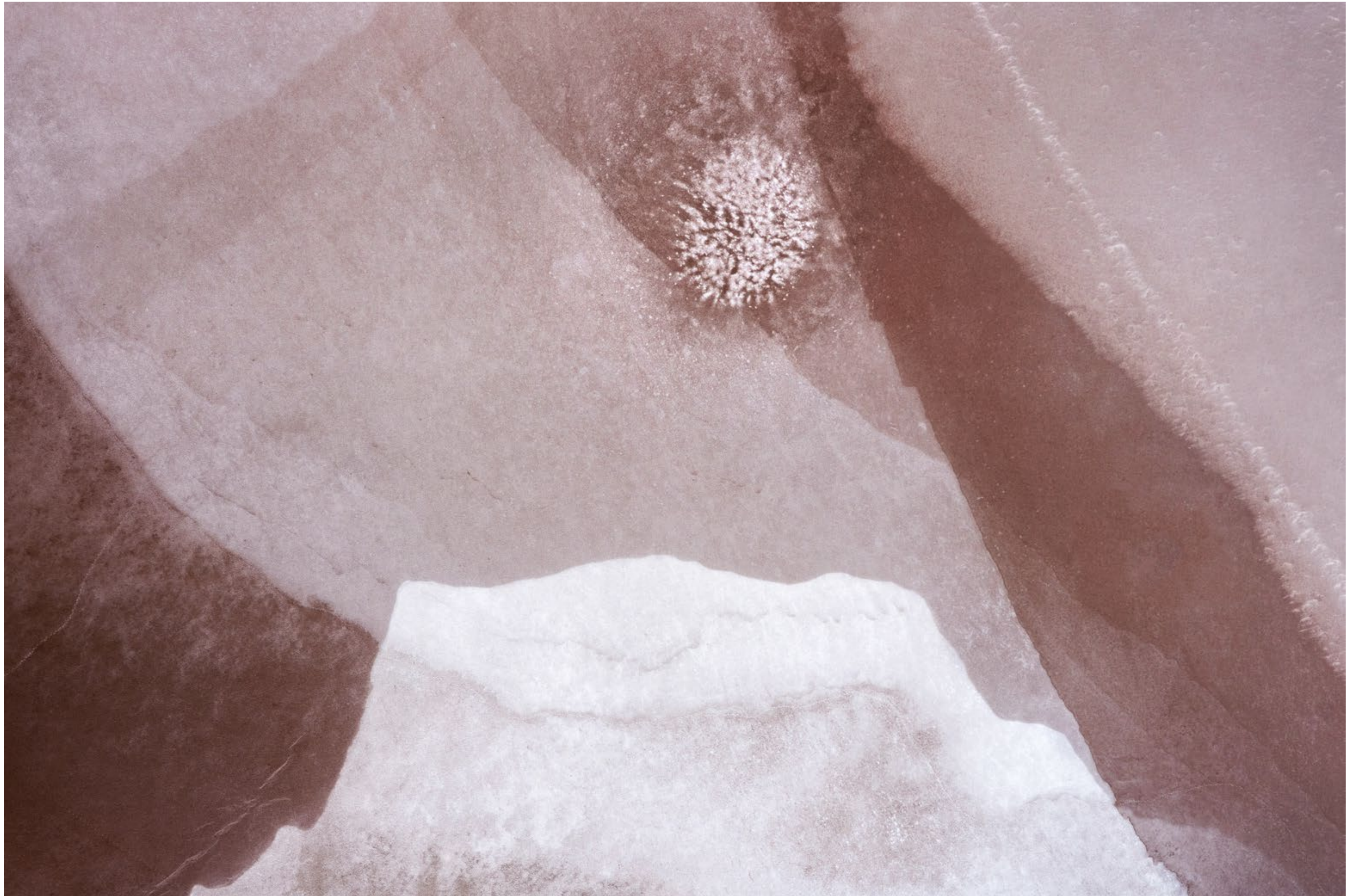
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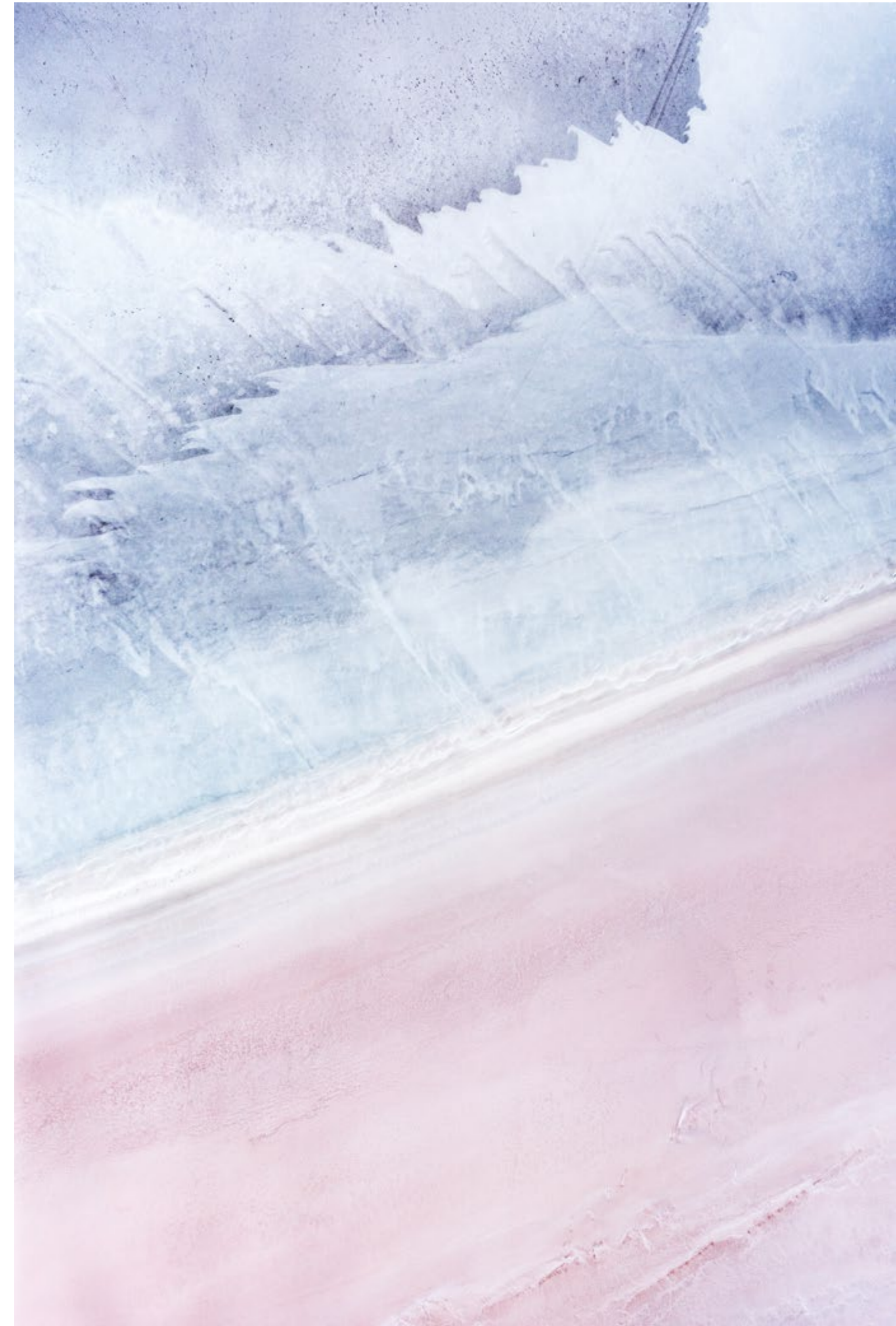


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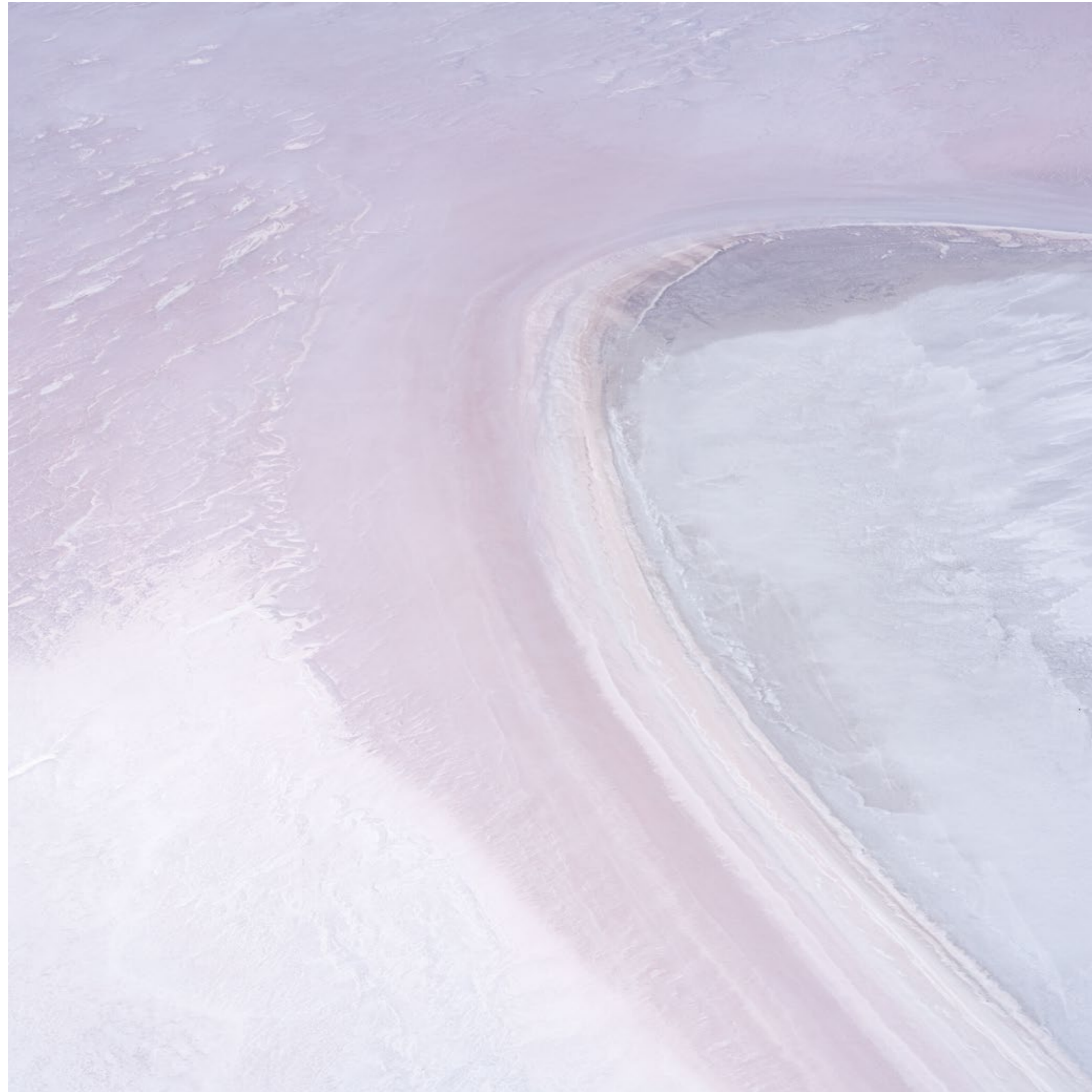


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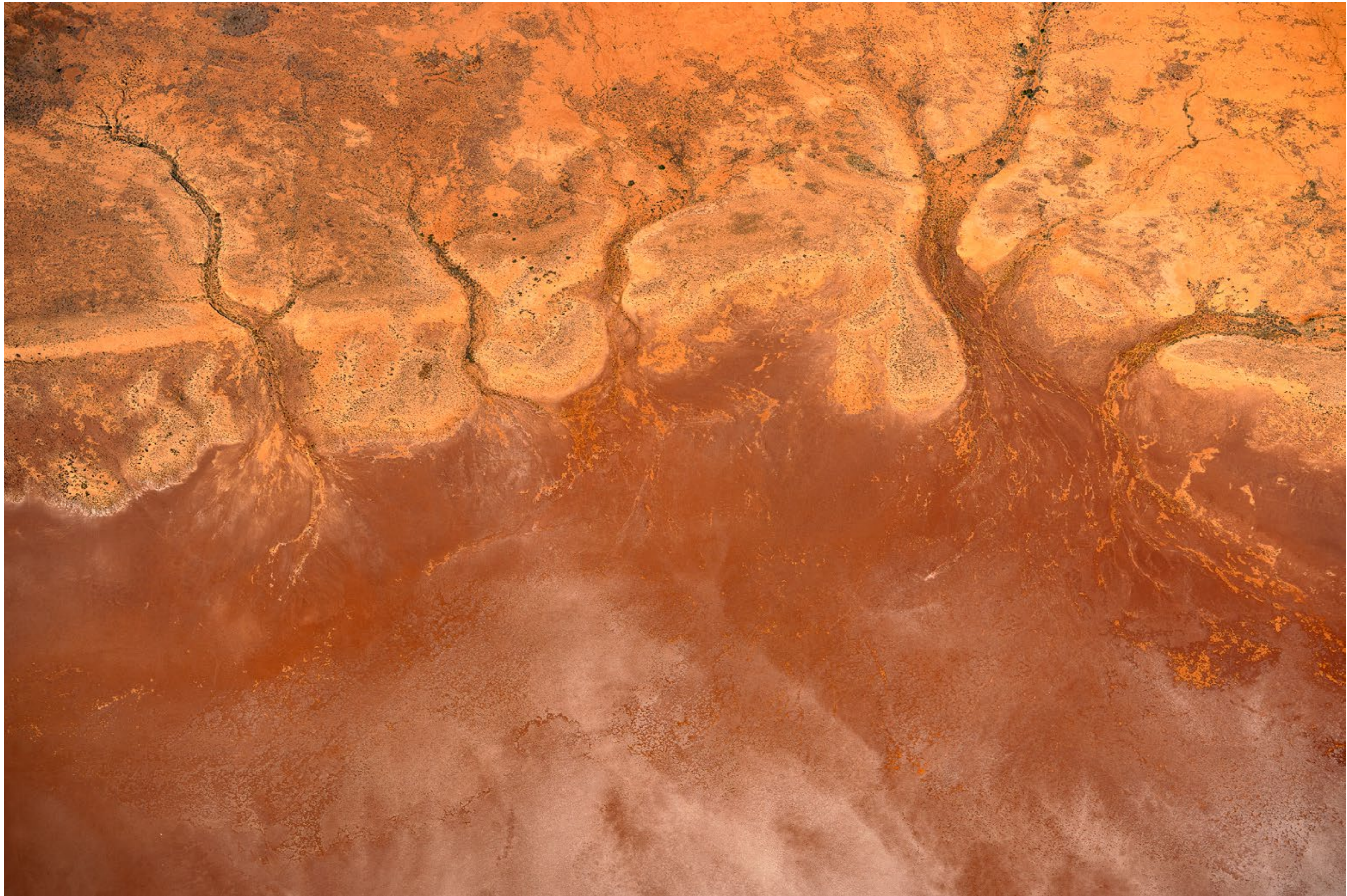
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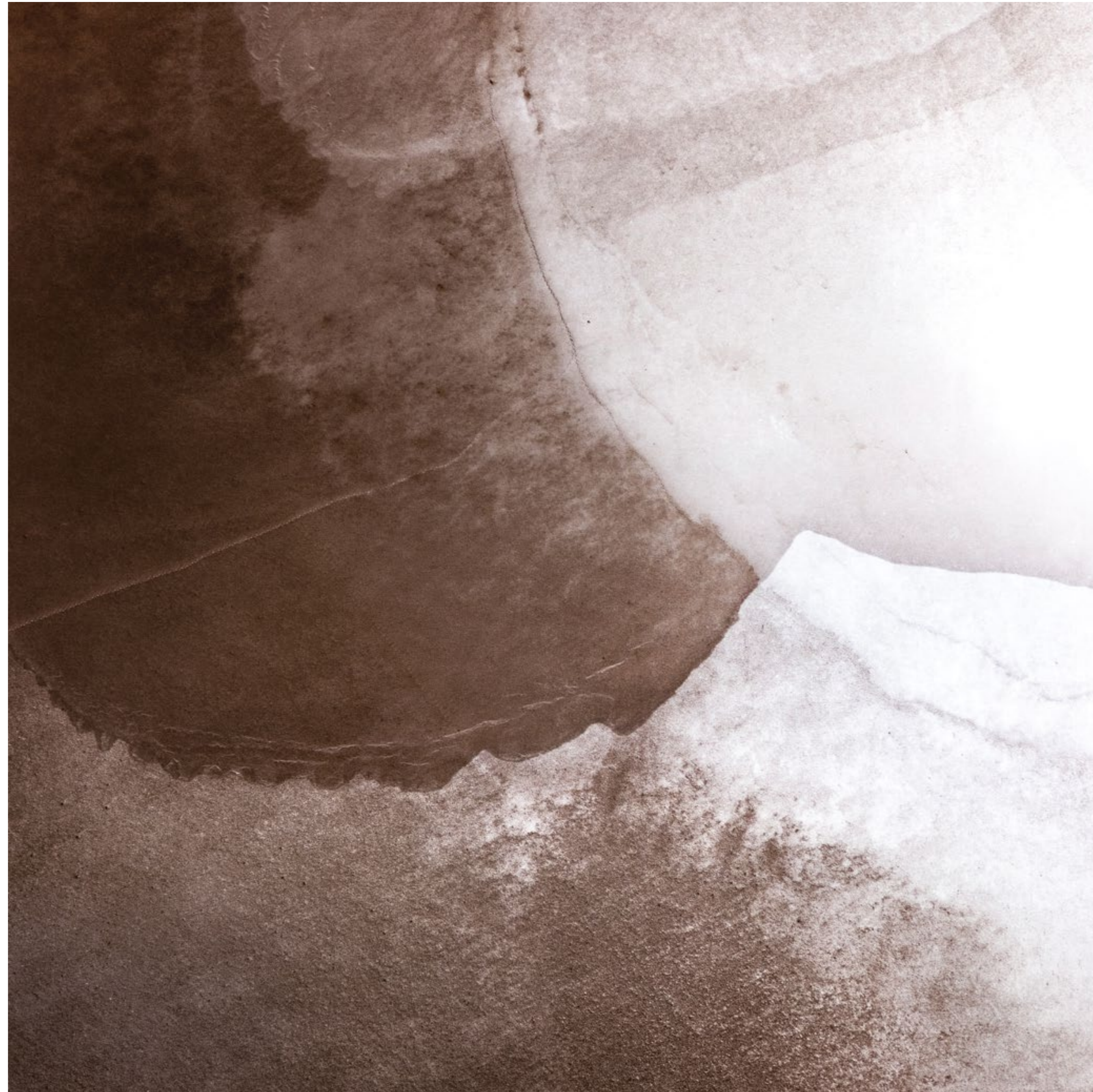
RDC





RDC





MB





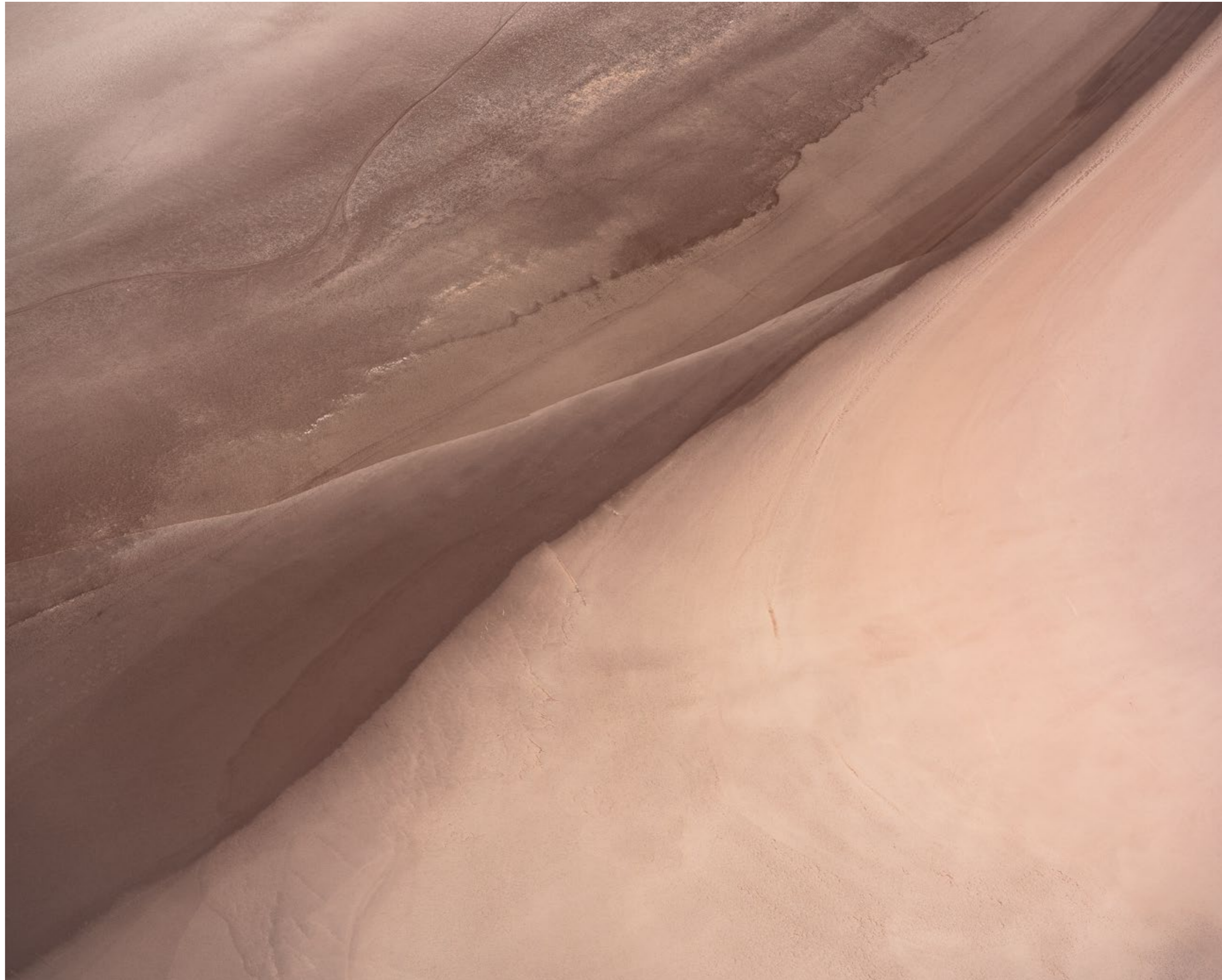
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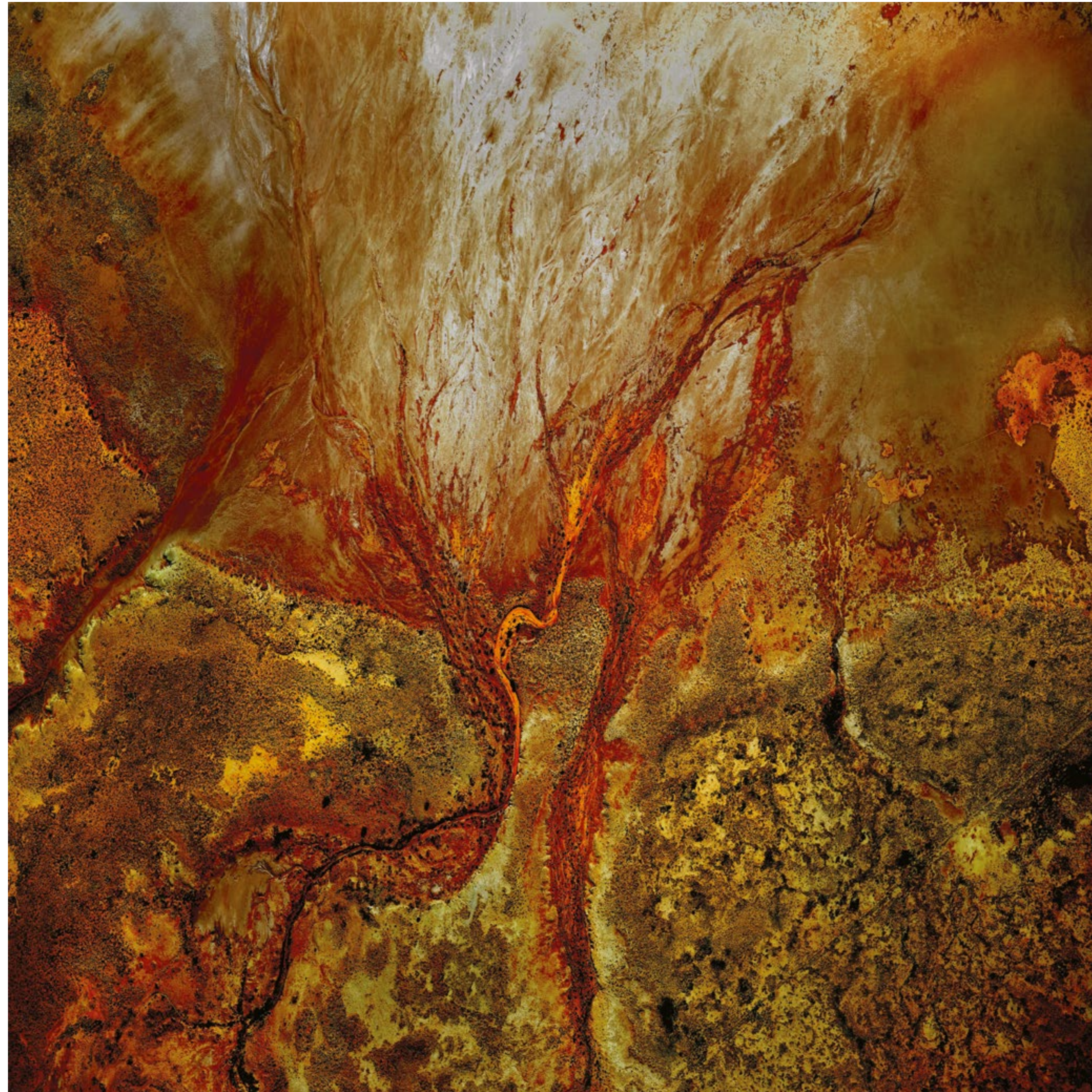
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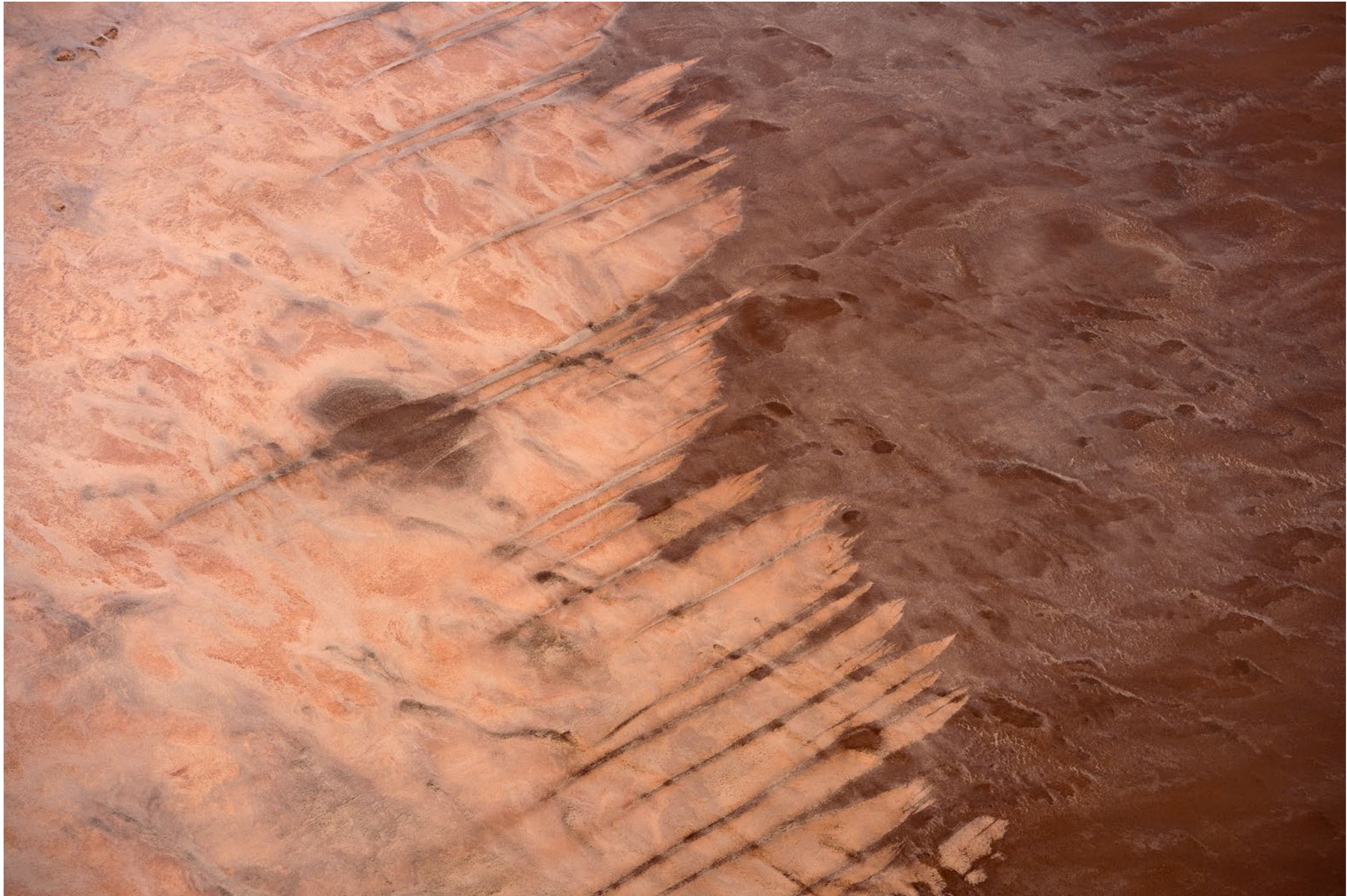
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RDC







# CHRIS SAUNDERS

Visiting the Ikara Ranges with three other photographers was an incredible opportunity to learn from not just the spectacular area we were visiting but also from Matt, Mieke and Ric.

With each sunrise and sunset, the sky was painted with a tapestry of colours, creating extraordinary moments. The mood of the landscape was fascinating, shifting each day between serene pastels, ominous greys and vibrant colour.

As we explored the rugged environment, the ranges shared an untamed beauty that stretched beyond my initial expectations. Standing in its vastness, it was impossible to not feel humbled by the scale of nature's creation.

This trip was an unforgettable experience, reigniting my passion for land-based photography and leaving me with special memories, shared with friends, of a place that touched my heart.



Bunyeroo Road



# RICARDO DA CUNHA

I was filled with excitement and intrigue when I was kindly invited to see and experience what was to be a completely new landscape for me: the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. Although I'd seen the popular images of Wilpena Pound from the air, I knew nothing more of Ikara-Flinders Ranges, and I knew even less of Arkaroola.

Ancient, harsh, otherworldly... These were just some of the words that came to mind after my first encounter with Ikara-Flinders Ranges. I had never seen such an array of rugged peaks that had been shaped over hundreds of millions of years. Such was the uniqueness of the landscape, that at times I felt it resembled something that one would expect from the surface of Mars. Throughout the Ikara-Flinders Ranges, wild animal remains were sadly abundant: evidence of the many who had perished after surrendering to a 3-year long drought. Yet there was also a myriad of animals who had somehow found a way to adapt, as they have for many millennia, and so soaring Wedge-tailed Eagles and Black Kites were never too far away. Quintessential images of the famous South Australian outback that had been long confined to magazines and screens for me were now revealed to my own eyes... And none more classically "Outback" than the Sturt's Desert Peas and the sight of a swarm of budgies. What an inspiring landscape it was to behold, and especially from behind the lens of a camera... I was in my element!

After what felt like us only just having scratched the surface at Ikara-Flinders Ranges, we drove 3 hours further north, past the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges, to the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. If I knew little of Ikara-Flinders Ranges, then I knew even less of this magical place. I was simply mesmerised by the sheer ruggedness of Arkaroola. The famous Ridgetop Tour felt nothing short of a rollercoaster ride, except this one was on 4 wheels! The view that awaited us at the top of the escarpment looking out towards Lake Frome,



Road to Gammon Ranges

and then the returning trip in the dark under the rising full moon, will forever live with me. And what better way to conclude my experience of Arkaroola than to see more of the night sky with an intriguing visit to one of the observatories, and then finally to take to the air to see Arkaroola and nearby Lake Frome from hundreds of feet above.

This enriching experience will forever be imprinted in my memory, and I hope that I have been able to convey some of the wonder and magic that I felt through my images within this book.



# MIEKE BOYNTON

When Lumen Australis first formed as a collective in 2020, we had no idea that we would soon have the opportunity to spend quite a bit of time on Zoom together due to COVID. We filled in our time chatting about all things photographic, and shared short presentations about our favourite artists and artworks, learning much about each other in the process. In July that year, we started planning a trip, discussing many potential locations but ultimately choosing Ikara / Vulkathunha. There were many elements that played a role in the selection of this area, including its "Outback" identity, its Aboriginal heritage and importance, its incredible geology, and the fact that none of us had ever been there. So in February 2021, we booked our accommodation for August and started getting excited, but shortly thereafter, the whole world was thrown into in a complete state of upheaval and – like everyone else – we had to postpone our trip indefinitely.

In reality, the postponement simply allowed us to look forward to the trip for longer, so as you can imagine, it was with much excitement that we finally met up in Melbourne in September 2022 and headed west. It was a fantastic experience, and we each came home with a deep appreciation for this ancient and spiritual landscape, unbreakable friendships, and several full memory cards.

For me, there were so many highlights on this trip. There are countless fun memories (Ric being chased by an emu; the special sunset ridgetop tour of Arkaroola on my birthday; flying over Munda/Lake Frome with Doug; playing Joking Hazard together; and who could forget Bev?) but also some more deeply meaningful memories, such as feeling surrounded by power and presence at Bararranna Gorge; learning some of the Adnyamathanha



Arkaroola Weather Station

Dreaming stories that permeate the landscape; feeling the raw, heart-pumping fear of climbing precariously up on the rocks of Griselda Hill with all my camera gear; and the deep soul-enriching experience of simply being immersed in such a raw but ancient landscape. As the vivid memories fade somewhat over the years, I know I will come back to this book time and time again to re-visit our incredible trip in my mind.



# MATT PALMER

The Ikara-Flinders and Vulkathunha Gammon Ranges trip would be my first to the “real” Australia. It was a prospect that created anticipation but also some anxiety within me.

What if I couldn't connect to these places?

What if I wasn't good enough to capture anything deeper than the superficial?

And what if I did all of that in front of three photographers who I have admiration for?

I'm a photographer that typically feels the call of snow and ice, pointed jagged peaks, glaciers and wild places. Dynamic landscapes that transform swiftly. And in the past, with few exceptions, I've photographed alone.

Australia's ancient mountains are a stark contrast. Realms created by a slow churning of time, where landscape evolves over millions of years.

Ikara's mountains uplifted 500 million years ago, culminating in a mountain range estimated to tower an astonishing 12,000m high—surpassing Sagarmāthā/Qomolangma (Mount Everest) by a staggering 3000m. Millions of years of erosion have worn down this mighty range to its highest peak Ngarri Mudlanha (St Mary Peak), a sacred place, which today stands at a height of 1171m. This landscape is a monumental testament to the inexorable flow of time.

Venturing into the unknown seemed to be a fitting chapter in my journey at this point in my life. Our expedition into the Ikara-Flinders was greeted by torrential floodwaters that briefly stalled our journey. This ancient place proved that it could indeed be dynamic, and the surprising weather it welcomed us with would set the stage for our journey and for many of the images featured in this book.



Southern Flinders Ranges



The Flinders region has held a "spell" over me  
ever since I first went to Quorn and Hawker...  
I had come into contact with the "bones of Nature" laid bare.

Since then my interest in this unique landscape has grown  
with each successive trip into the Arkaba and Aroona country.  
I have found each trip (and they have been many) an  
exhilarating experience in form and colour...

The stark outlines of the Flinders excite after the  
more gentle undulations of the Mount Lofty Ranges...  
The great Red Gums in the creek-beds of the Flinders  
fill me with wonder; their feeling of strength of limb,  
of vigour and life, suggest the very spirit of endurance.

They fascinate me as do the "bare bones" of the ranges.

*Hans Heysen, from visits to the Flinders between 1926 – 33.*

H. Mincham, 1964.  
The Story of the Flinders Ranges





**CHRIS  
SAUNDERS**

[www.645imaging.com](http://www.645imaging.com)

Chris is renowned particularly for his aerial work. He has received significant recognition in the field, including being named Australian Landscape Photographer of the Year and Australian Professional Photographer of the Year in 2018. He further solidified his standing by winning the title of Australian Professional Photographer of the Year again in 2022, and securing the Creative Landscape & Travel category at the WPPI Awards in the USA the same year. Beyond his professional achievements, Chris has shown dedication to the photography community through volunteer work at industry events such as the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP) Awards.

Chris's expertise spans various aspects of photography, encompassing aerial and landscape photography, digital editing, and print-making. He has showcased his work in both joint and solo exhibitions, earning recognition not only for his technical prowess in the field but also for his post-processing and print-making skills. Chris is known for his innovative approach, continually expanding his knowledge and techniques while generously sharing his expertise with fellow photographers.

His photographic style is distinguished by a unique ability to interpret landscapes, enhancing their emotional impact through thoughtful composition and editing. Critics and peers alike have praised Chris's work for its memorability and its effective blend of subtlety and boldness.



**MIEKE  
BOYNTON**

[www.miekeboynton.com](http://www.miekeboynton.com)

Mieke Boynton is known for her diverse portfolio and deep connection to the landscapes she captures. Her career began in the Kimberley region of Australia, where she spent nearly a decade documenting the area's essence. This experience fostered a strong respect for the land and its indigenous custodians, which continues to influence her work.

Mieke's photography spans various genres including travel, landscape, nature, and abstract. She has gained particular recognition for her aerial photography, which has garnered international acclaim. Her achievements include being the first Australian and first female to win the Epson International Pano Awards in 2019.

Further accolades followed, with Mieke winning the NZIPP International Photographer of the Year title in 2021 and the NZIPP Australian Landscape Photographer of the Year in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Mieke is an advocate for The Nature First Alliance, reflecting her commitment to environmental stewardship. She and her husband Matt Palmer run the Alpine Light Gallery in Victoria's high country.

Her approach to photography is characterized by a deep immersion in her surroundings, allowing the landscape to guide her creative process. This method, combined with her technical skill, results in images that are noted for their emotional depth and visual impact.





**RICARDO  
DA CUNHA**

[www.ricardodacunha.com.au](http://www.ricardodacunha.com.au)

Ricardo Da Cunha is known for his emotive landscape work and post-production skills. He has achieved the status of AIPP Master of Photography with a gold bar, demonstrating an exceptional level of professional skill.

Ric's accolades include the 2020 International Color Awards Photographer of the Year, the 2020 RISE International Awards Landscape Photographer of the Year, and the 2014 AIPP Australian Landscape Photographer of the Year. His work has been featured in publications such as Capture Magazine and Australian Photography.

In 2021, Ric released his debut book 'SPACE', which showcased his photographs in both open and limited editions. The publication included an accompanying soundtrack, creating a multi-sensory experience aimed at evoking contemplation and tranquility.

Ric is known for his approach to photography that emphasizes emotional connection with the landscape. His post-production techniques are noted for their ability to craft images with compelling narratives, often exploring the relationship between nature and humanity.

As an advocate for environmental conservation, Ric is a member of the Nature First Alliance and The Light Collective, where he works to promote awareness and protection of wilderness areas. His photography is characterized by its ability to capture the emotional essence of landscapes and it continues to evolve as he explores his artistic voice and personal growth.



**MATT  
PALMER**

[mattpalmer.co](http://mattpalmer.co)

Matt is known for his work in documentary, nature, and landscape photography. His images are recognized for their ability to convey the essence of natural environments and evoke emotional responses from viewers.

Matt has earned several notable accolades in his field, including Australian Photographer of the Year, Canopy Awards winner, and Australian Documentary Photographer of the Year. His work has been featured in international publications and exhibitions, establishing him as a respected figure in Australian photography.

A significant aspect of Matt's work is his focus on environmental conservation. He uses his photography to raise awareness about ecosystems and natural landscapes, particularly in Australia. His projects have included documenting rainforest preservation efforts and the impact of fires on Tasmania's environment.

Matt's photographic style is characterized by strong composition and a blend of technical skill with artistic narrative. He is noted for his ability to capture often-overlooked details and convey the emotional depth of the scenes he photographs.

Based in Bright, Victoria, Matt co-operates the Alpine Light Gallery with his wife Mieke. Through his photography, Matt aims to encourage a more thoughtful perspective on the world, highlighting the interconnections between humans and nature.











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Thank you for your support!  
Matt, Mieke, Chris & Ric