

# DESIGN

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## GRAPHICS

35mm 87

### Scanners

14 compared

Jeff T. Alu's digital

### Desert images


More Photoshop 6/7

### Studio skills

Pattern grids  
Liquify reconstruction  
Master high-bit images

Discreet 3ds max 5 & plasma  
Nikon Coolpix 5700  
Apple Dual-processor G4s  
Adobe Photoshop Elements 2

Monthly





## Jeff T Alu

Jeff Alu is a 3D artist/animator who began taking black and white photos in February 2000 in an attempt to get back to the basics of light and shadow. Taking to California's deserts in his jeep and armed with a Kodak DC 280 digital camera, he captures remarkable landscapes and uses Photoshop to isolate subjects and bring out emotions.

**Photography**  
Alu describes his photography as being graphic in nature: "I try to look for strong leading lines," he explains. Alu allows himself to alter the images in Photoshop, using dodging and burning: "I've found this to be such a great technique for isolating subjects or bringing out emotions". Alu had his fill of dark room work while at the JPL/Palomar Observatory: "We would venture up to Palomar each month for six nights and take pictures of the sky using the 18-inch Schmidt camera", Alu explains. "We used hypered 2415 film and usually processed about 100 films a night. We took pairs of films of different areas of the sky with a 40 minute separation.

We would then take a pair of films and look at them under a stereo microscope, trying to detect near-earth asteroids and comets. It was fun work, but also hard work, and I learned to really hate dark rooms in the process."

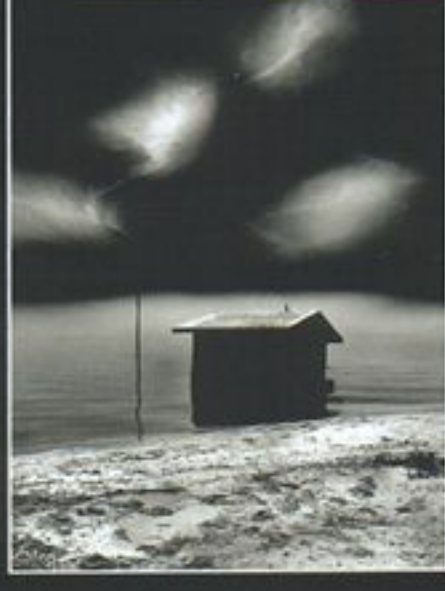
**Technique**  
Alu's shooting technique is for the most part point and click: "The act of photography for me has come out of my love for hiking through the deserts on very hot days". He drives out to locations in his jeep, then hikes in the rest of the way. "I'm usually more interested in finding new areas to photograph, rather than taking pictures in more popular areas", he explains. "I think this state of mind dates back to the Palomar days,

searching for comets – the thrill of the hunt. But in this case I'm hunting for new areas, new meanings, new questions. I feel very satisfied when I find a subject, because I know that I had to work for it. I was searching for "something", and I found something. Three hours from home, in the middle of nowhere, I found something. It always reminds me how much more there is to see, and how little I've seen."

**Process**  
Alu takes all of his pictures in colour, and converts them to black and white in Photoshop. He generally converts to black and white via the Channel Mixer, because it helps to cut down on the graininess of the sky. Next, he uses Dodge and Burn,

playing with different contrasts and levels. After dodging and burning, he always adds some Unsharp Mask, usually with a large radius, and a small amount. This helps to accentuate certain features in the image and increases the overall impact. Next, he adds another layer of Unsharp Mask, this time with a very small radius and a larger amount. This adds a more traditional sharpening to the image.

**Contact Details**  
Jeff T. Alu  
animalu@animalu.com  
www.animalu.com/pics/photos.htm



**Do Not Cross**  
Bombay Beach, Salton Sea, California.

**Far and Away**  
Southern Salton Sea, California.

**Posts**  
Bombay Beach, Salton Sea, California.

**Dream**  
Fish Creek, Arica Borrego Desert State Park, California. (opposite page)

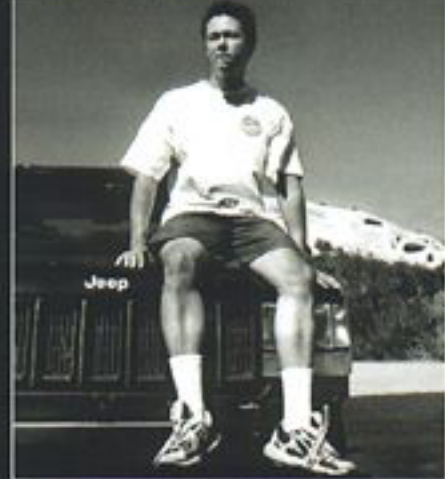
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### The technique

Jeff takes to the deserts of California in his jeep to the sounds of classical music before setting out on foot with his Kodak DC280 to photograph his subjects.



**The creative process**  
Alu starts with a raw and sometimes poorly exposed digital image.

Next he converts the image to black and white with Photoshop's Channel Mixer monochrome setting and lowers the Red channel while increasing the Green channel to reduce CCD noise.

He then uses Photoshop's Dodge and Burn tools to make light areas lighter and dark areas darker for better contrast. Finally, to bring out more detail Alu performs two passes of Unsharp Mask. The first with a large Radius and a small Amount, and the second with a small Radius and a large Amount.

**Arch**  
Near Naland, Salton Sea, California.

**Lake**  
Near Naland, Salton Sea, California. (opposite page)



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**Journey**  
Morro Rock, California.

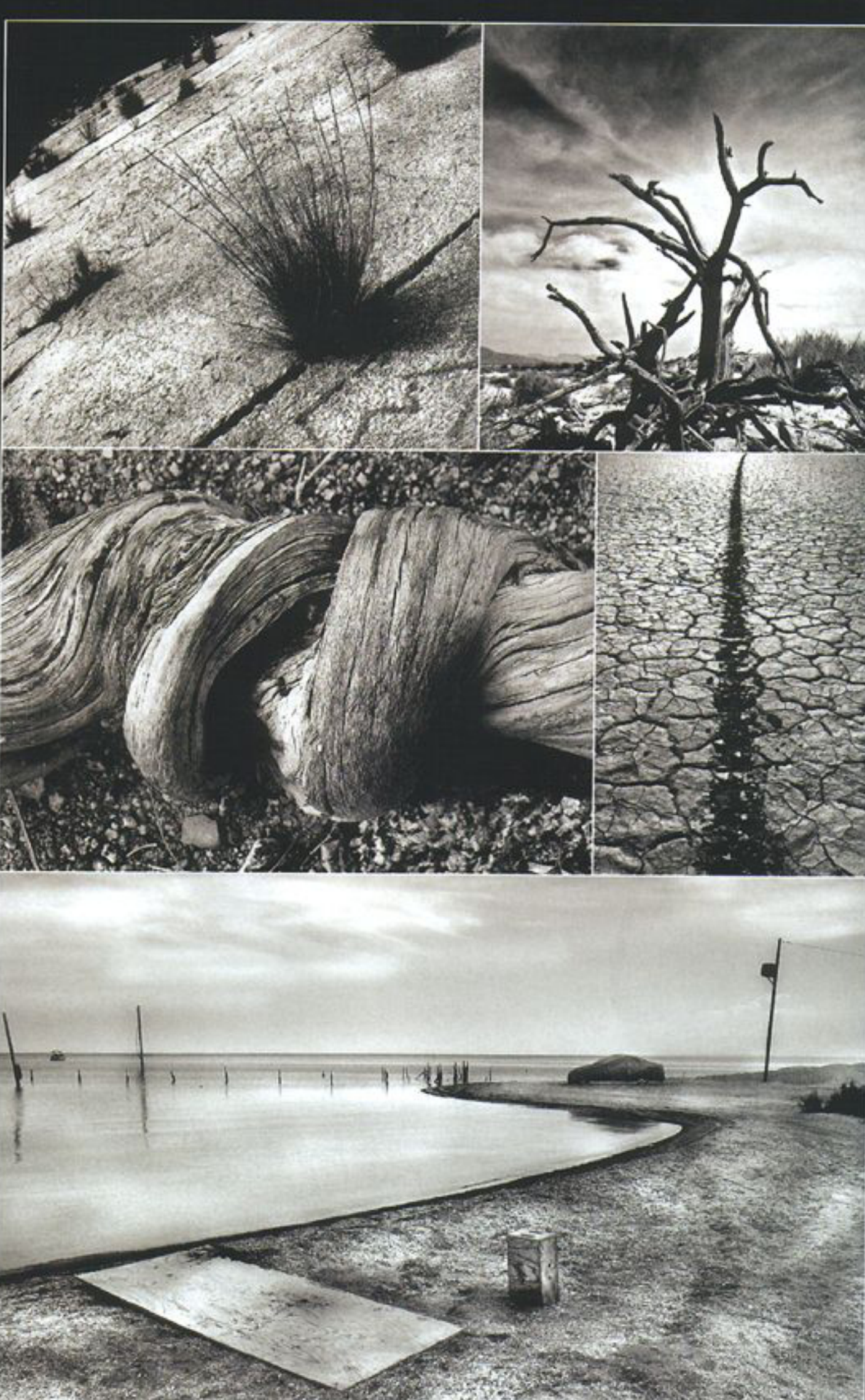
**Tree**  
Bristol Dry Lake, California.

**Twister**  
Box Canyon, Salton Sea, California.

**Particle Acceleration**  
Gulbury Dry Lake, California.

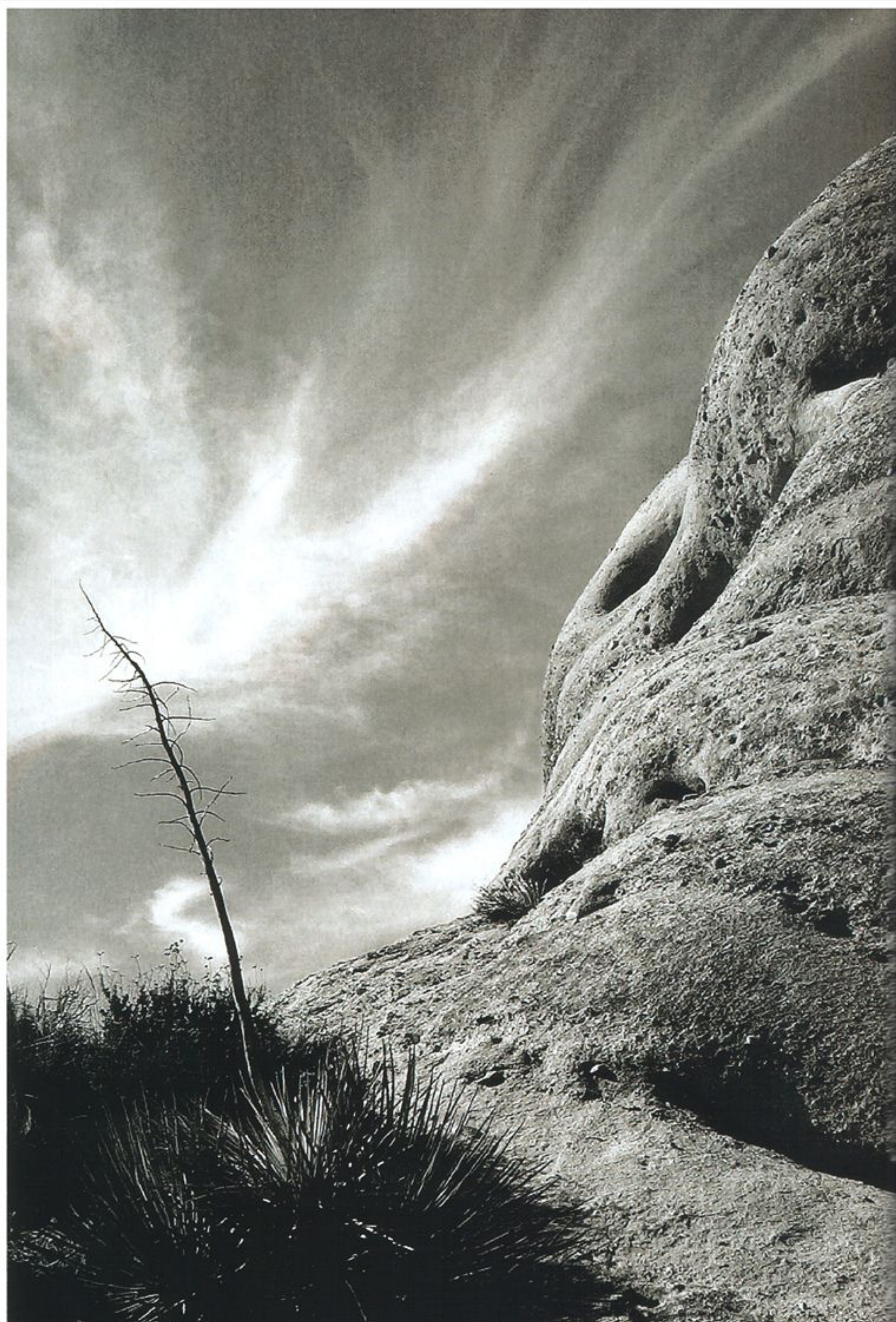
**Car**  
Bombay Beach, California.

**Battle Trees**  
Apple Valley, California. (opposite page)



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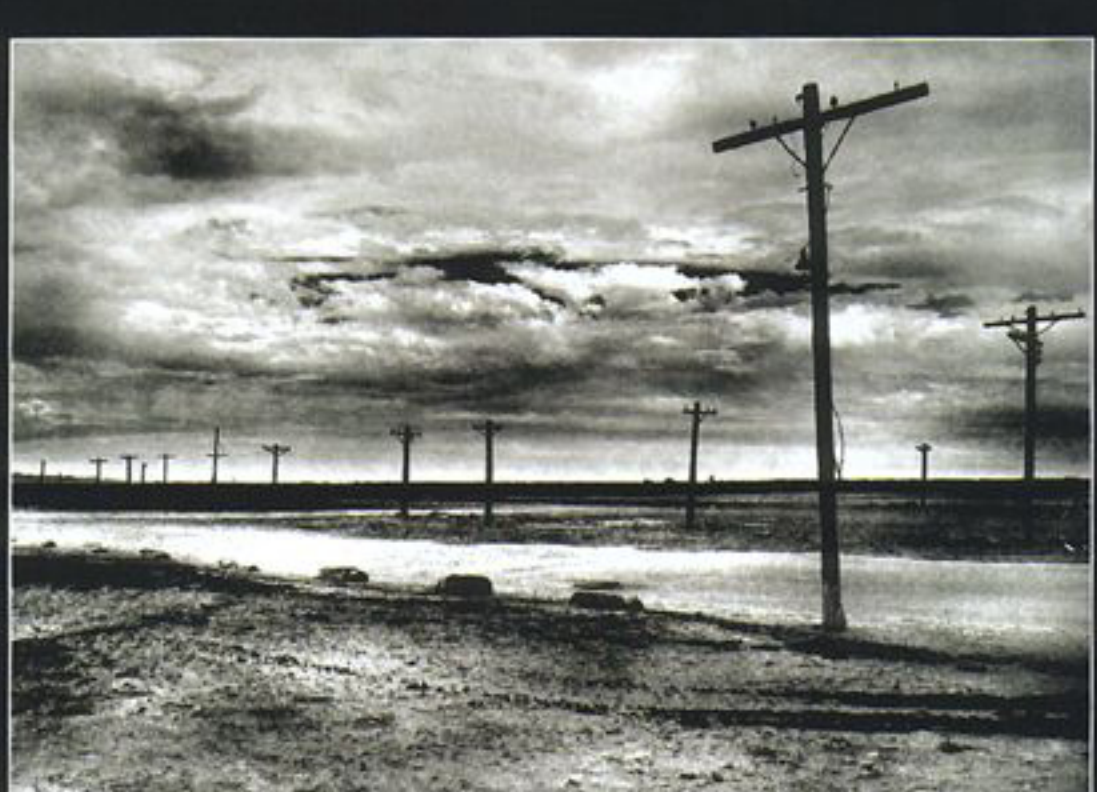
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**Convergence**  
Morro Rock, California. (opposite page)

**Poles**  
Palo Verde, Salton Sea, California.

**Dark Hills**  
Box Canyon, Salton Sea, California.



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