

# I AM BORN



*Brooks Jensen*

*A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication*



**My body** is 60 years old. Photography found me (I should say, *captured* me) in 1970 when I was 16. However, I didn't find *photography* until this photograph on New Year's Day in 1983. The first 12 years were filled with cameras and light meters, f/stops and shutter speeds. With this photograph, I discovered that one doesn't *take* photographs — one *makes* them. I celebrate January 1, 1983 as the birthday of my photographic life. Photographically, I'm a spry 32.

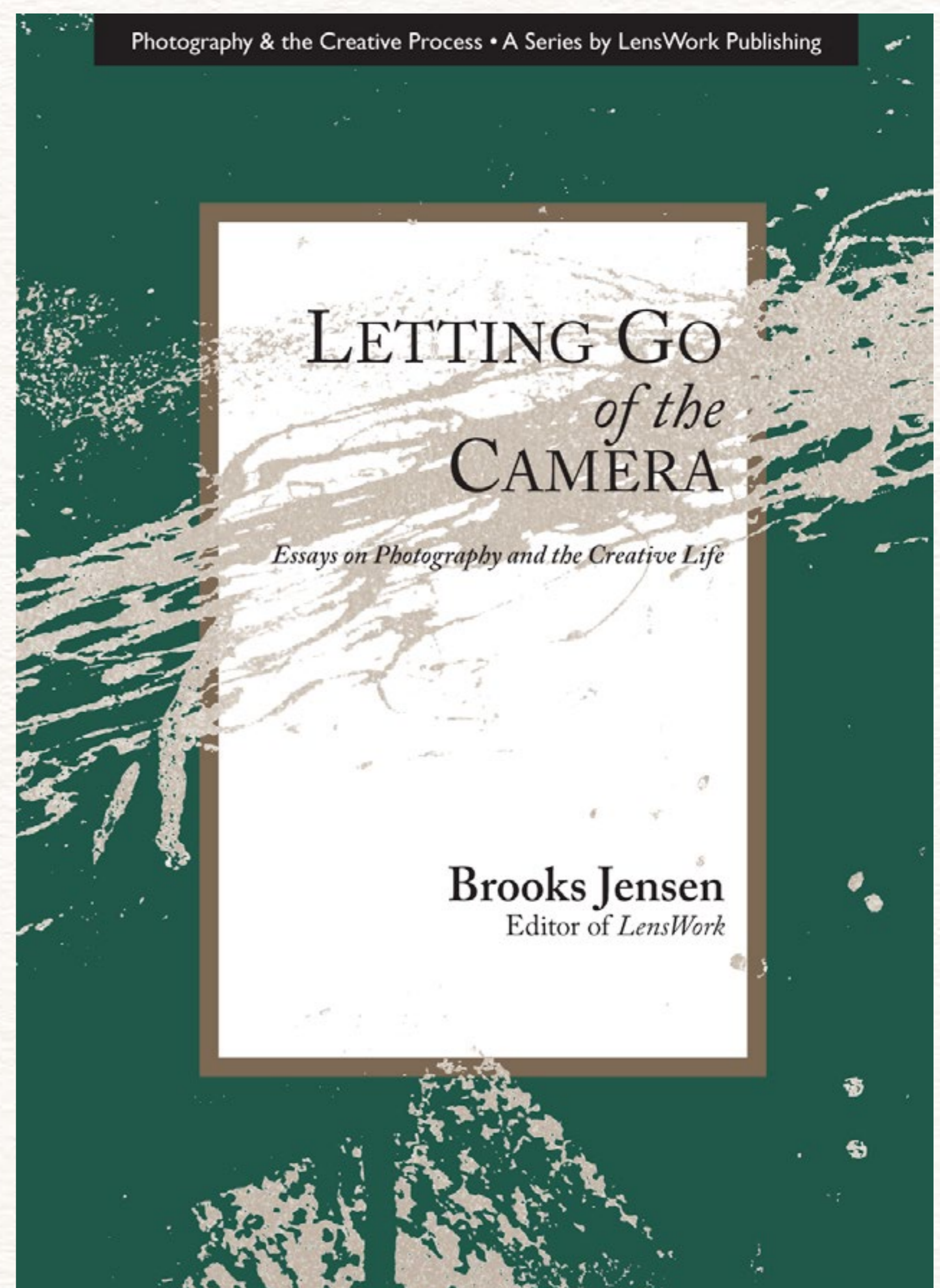




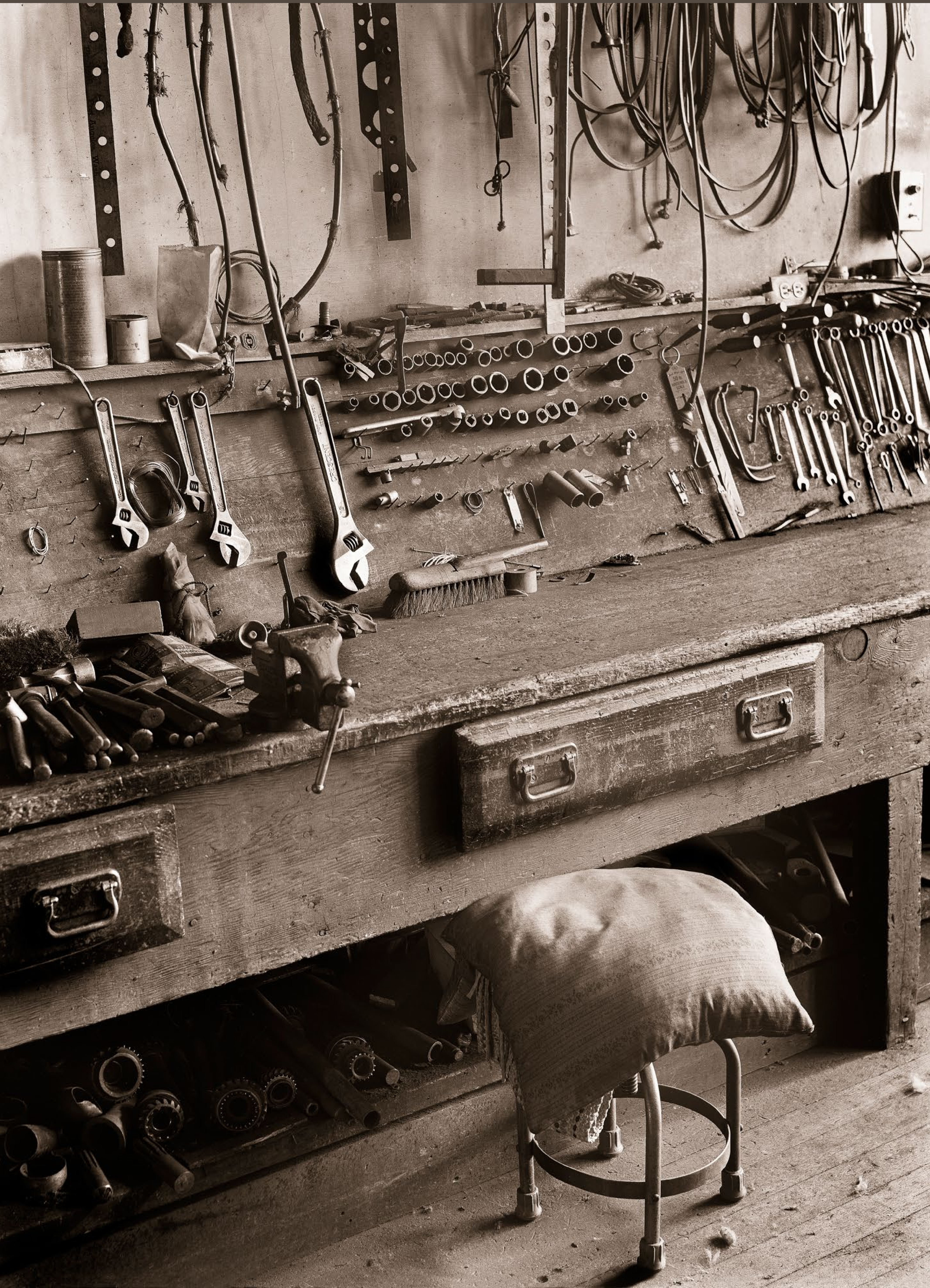
We had decided that a get-away for the long holiday weekend might help. My relationship with Barbara was ending. This trip was an attempt to revive it, but we both knew we were grasping at straws. I brought my camera gear with me so I could escape and spend some time out photographing while she was — not with me. It was a miserable day for landscape photography — drippy, cold, foggy, miserable. I saw this boat, and in it I felt a reflection of my mood, but strangely *not* as it appeared to my eye. The scene was gray, drowning, and bleak. *Emotionally*, it was light, airy, a release — with a horizon obscured in mist. In my mind's eye, the scene was much brighter, the water much calmer than what my physical eyes revealed. I realized I could make a photograph that either reflected my emotions, or simply capture the drab scene. A switch in my brain flipped, and my art life was born. It was cathartic; it was a revelation; not a fork in the road, but a complete dissolution of the road I thought I was on.

I titled my first book of essays on photography *Letting Go of the Camera* and that is still how I think of that transition. Today, some 32 years after *Sunken Boat*, the entire evolution seems so obvious. At the same time, I now recognize it as the most crucial first step in a budding photographer's career. Without it, photography remains about gear and technique for one's entire life. Dive into the pool, and life is never the same. At least that's my experience.

After making this exposure, soaking wet yet feeling excited to photograph some more, I headed for the nearest town to dry off and warm up. Nursing a hot beverage at the window seat of the coffee shop, I absentmindedly gazed across the street. There was Dollar's Garage. The next negative I exposed was the first in the project that became my first monograph and my best-known work — *Made of Steel*. That these two photographs are so juxtaposed in my personal history still amazes me. One never knows in the midst of life when The Moment will happen, but if we are lucky, happen it does, and a new life begins.











**Brooks Jensen** is a fine-art photographer, publisher, workshop teacher, and writer. In his personal work he specializes in small prints, hand-made artist's books, and digital media publications.

He and his wife (Maureen Gallagher) are the owners, co-founders, editors, and publishers of the award winning *LensWork*, one of today's most respected and important periodicals in fine art photography. With subscribers in 73 countries, Brooks' impact on fine art photography is truly world-wide. His long-running podcasts on art and photography are heard over the Internet by thousands every day. All 900+ podcasts are available at [LensWork Online](#), the LensWork membership website. LensWork Publishing is also at the leading edge in multimedia and digital media publishing with *LensWork Extended* — a PDF based, media-rich expanded version of the magazine.

Brooks is the author of seven best-selling books about photography and creativity: *Letting Go of the Camera* (2004); *The Creative Life in Photography* (2013); *Single Exposures* (4 books in a series, random observations on art, photography and creativity); and *Looking at Images* (2014); as well as a photography monograph, *Made of Steel* (2012). His next book will be *Those Who Inspire Me (And Why)*. A free monthly compilation of of this image journal, [Kokoro](#), is available for download.

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