

# GESTURES OF A PRIMITIVE MIND



*Brooks Jensen*

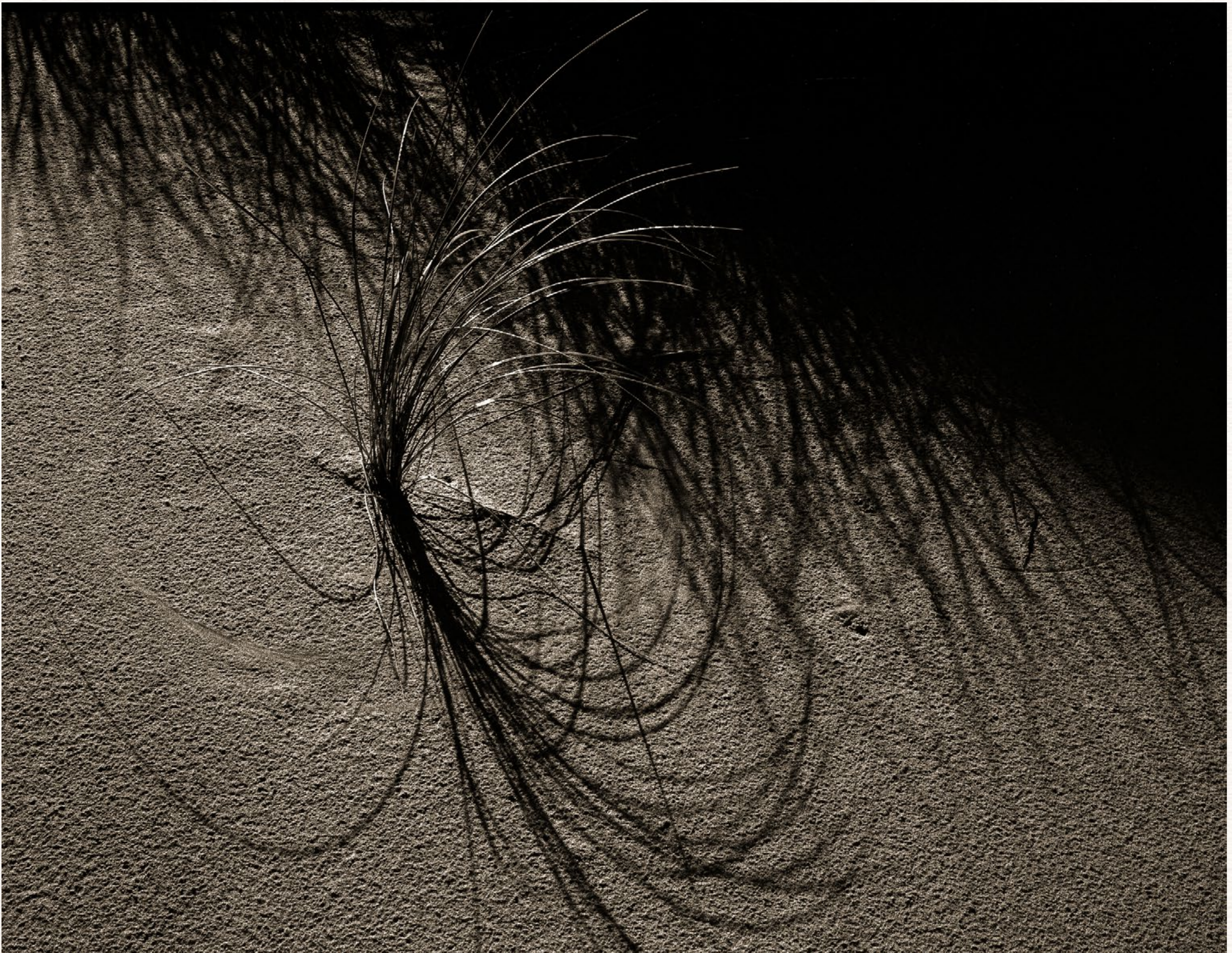
*A Brooks Jensen Arts Publication*

**I would** like to think that plants have consciousness. I would be comforted by it. The trees would wave hello; the flowers would return my smile. But it is not so. Science assures me of this.



Then again . . . imagine four billion years ago some astronaut from another world happened to be out surveying the galaxy and passed our sphere of blue and brown. He would no doubt have looked down upon the Earth and noted in his journal “No life — just a bunch of rocks.” Is it possible, on his return trip, he might look down upon us *today* and correct his entry: “Excuse me! Not just a bunch of rocks. They are *peopling* rocks after all!” For don’t we all grow *out* of this world the same way apples grow from the apple tree? It seems we are symptomatic of rocks.

Locked in the acorn is the mystery of how to grow an oak. I can’t turn an acorn into an oak, so is an acorn more intelligent than me? If I kick my neighbor, he manifests his intelligence and says, “Ouch.” If I kick a rock, it manifests its intelligence and goes, “Clunk.” Different intelligence indeed, but who is to say if one is not simply far more sensitive than the other, far more expressive than the other, far more developed. I’d like to think it’s so.





You laugh. It's considered sentimental to exhibit such anthropomorphism — the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to nonhuman objects. Nonetheless, I cannot help but feel the grass is trying to ... *something*. Waving? Writing? Something that I can't comprehend.

Like when my cat sees my finger wiggle under the blanket and tries, with her limited cat-intelligence, to figure it out — again. She engages her mind, but there isn't much mind there to engage. I know that plants would like to discuss philosophy and metaphysics and share recipes and humorous anecdotes with me. They seem to try so hard to do so — reaching without muscles and thinking as best they can with brainless roots. And I try hard to listen.







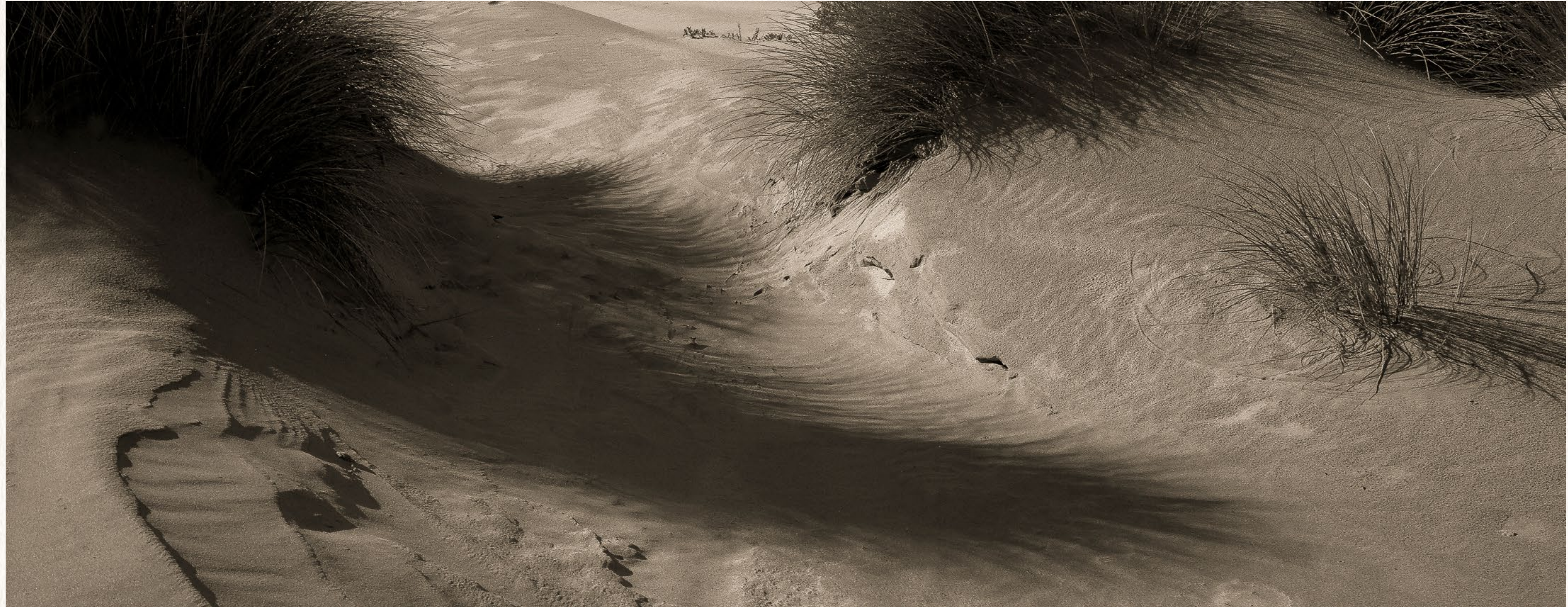








Which begs a deeper question: Which is the more primitive intelligence — the one who rustles carelessly in the breeze, or the one who tries so passionately to make it meaningful?



*This project is dedicated to the work and memory of the late Alan Watts — from whom I first heard the “peopling rocks” idea.*



**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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