





Invisible Worlds by Daniel Franc, Athens 2022

There are whole universes around us which we see - yet, which are invisible to us. At least, without the proper perspective. When we expand our vantage point and take a look from the above, free from our ideas about how things are and where to look for beauty, we discover new worlds right under our feet that we didn't know about.

Several years ago, I started exploring the world from this perspective. I take a view from the air, free of constraints of our everyday existence, on landscapes, nature and industrial worlds. I search for beauty, rhythm, strangeness and cracks between the worlds in a way that is not possible from the ground.

The photographs in this book are the selection for the exhibition "Invisible Worlds" that took place in Greece in Athens, Blank Wall Gallery, in September 2022. They represent many different explorations of this invisible universe over several years in several countries around the world.

For the continuation of this journey, I would also like to invite you to visit my pages with more photos and prints at

www.danielfranc.art

The invisible worlds need your eyes to explore them and bring some understanding to them. This exploration will be only yours. Not mine, not anybody else's. Therefore, I don't give my photos names, neither I want to disturb your journey with descriptions printed along the photos.

However, you may use your phone or computer while browsing this book. By opening the web at www.danielfranc.art/athensbook (or using the QR code here) you can see the location of each image and a story of the place or how the photo was made. So if you wish, you can go browse the pages of book and at the same time, scroll the page on your phone to see the background stories of each photo.

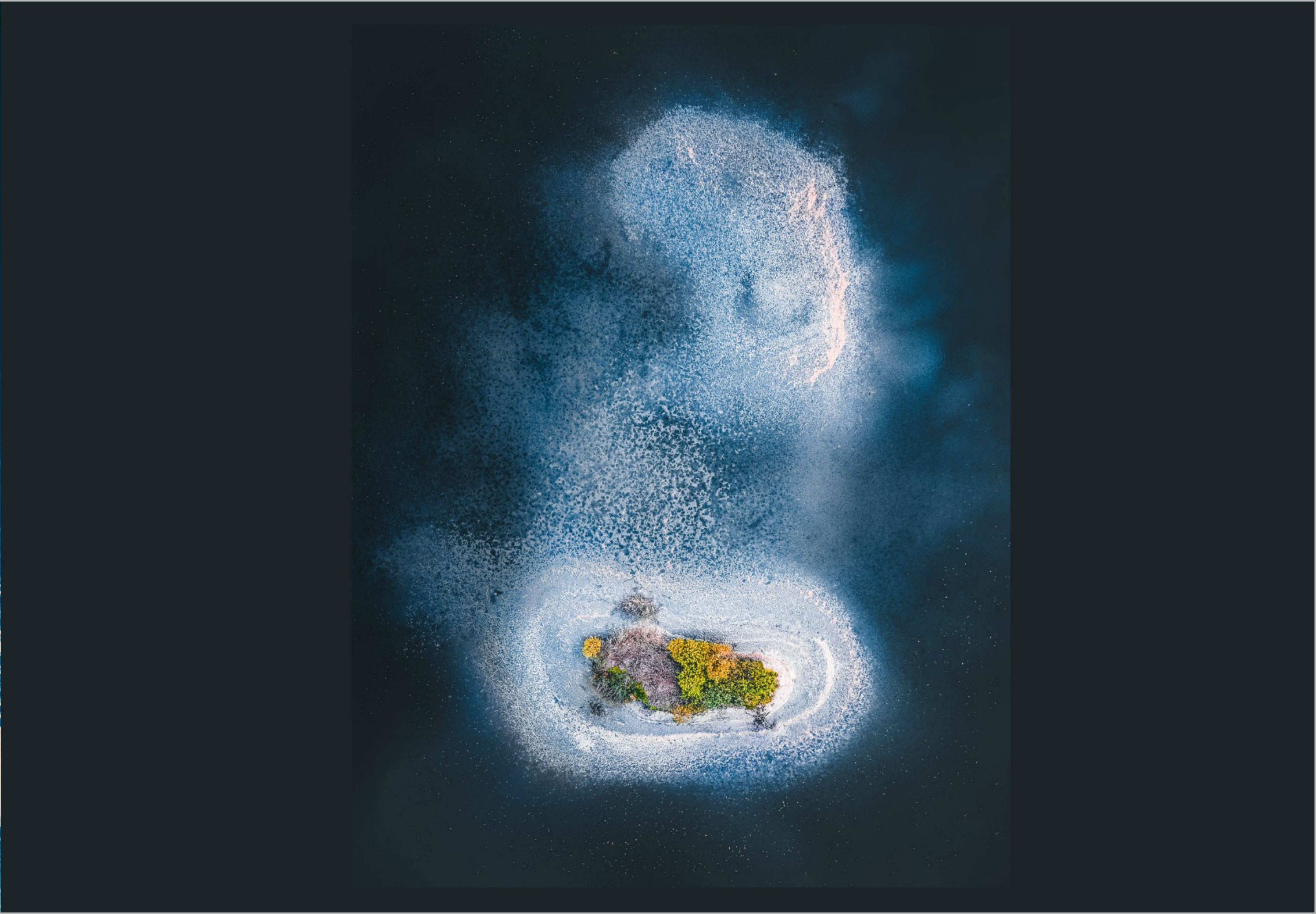


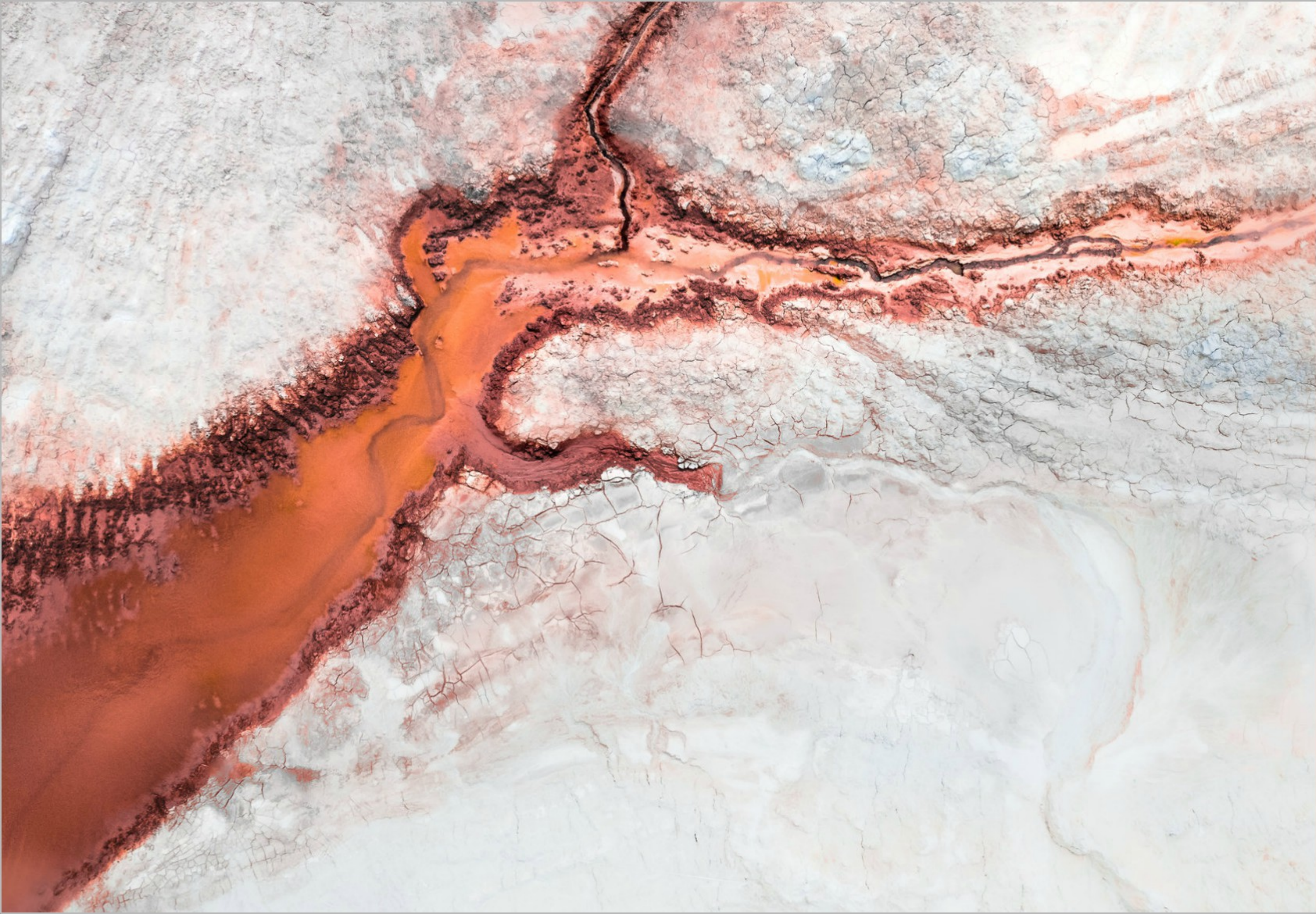












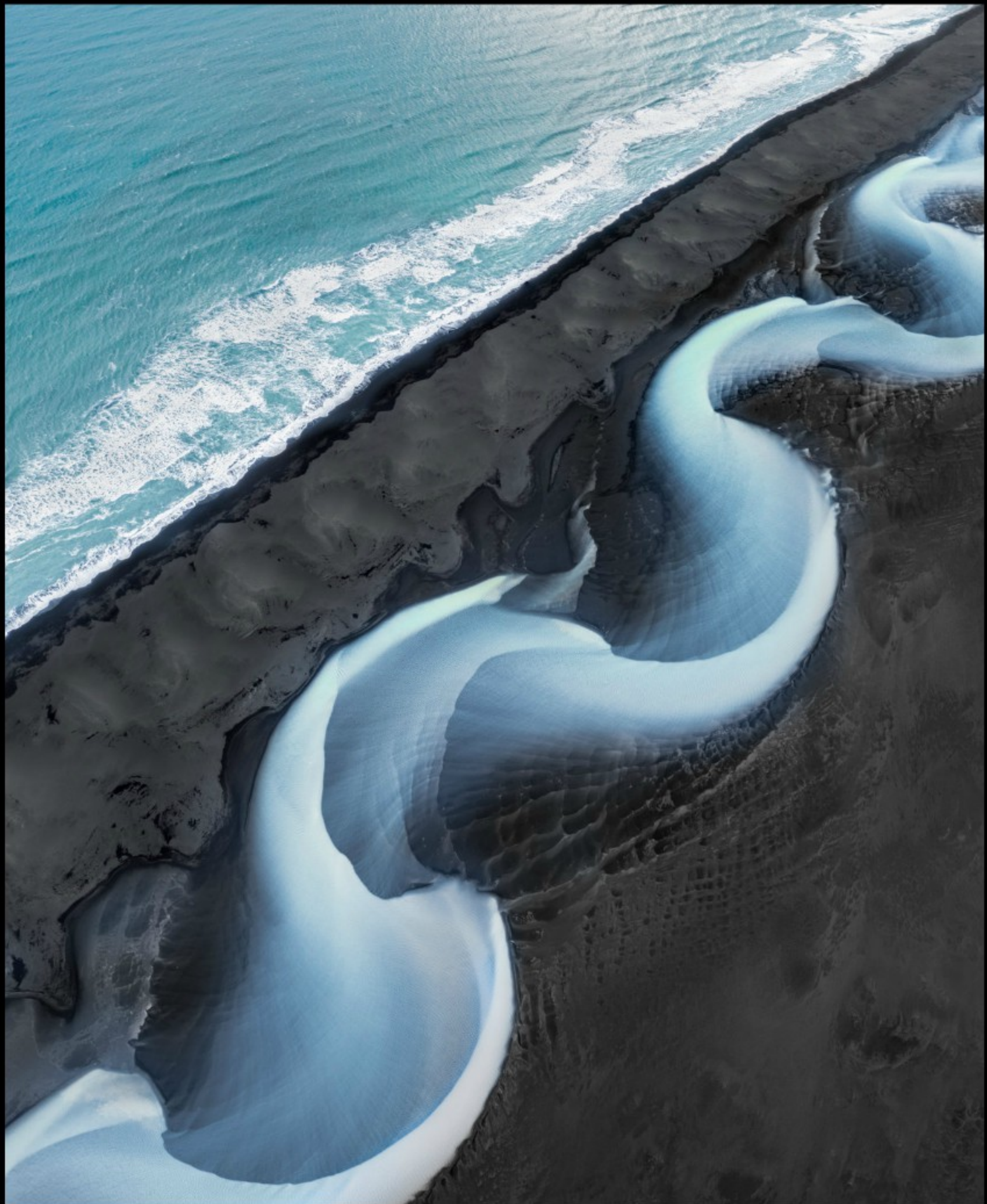








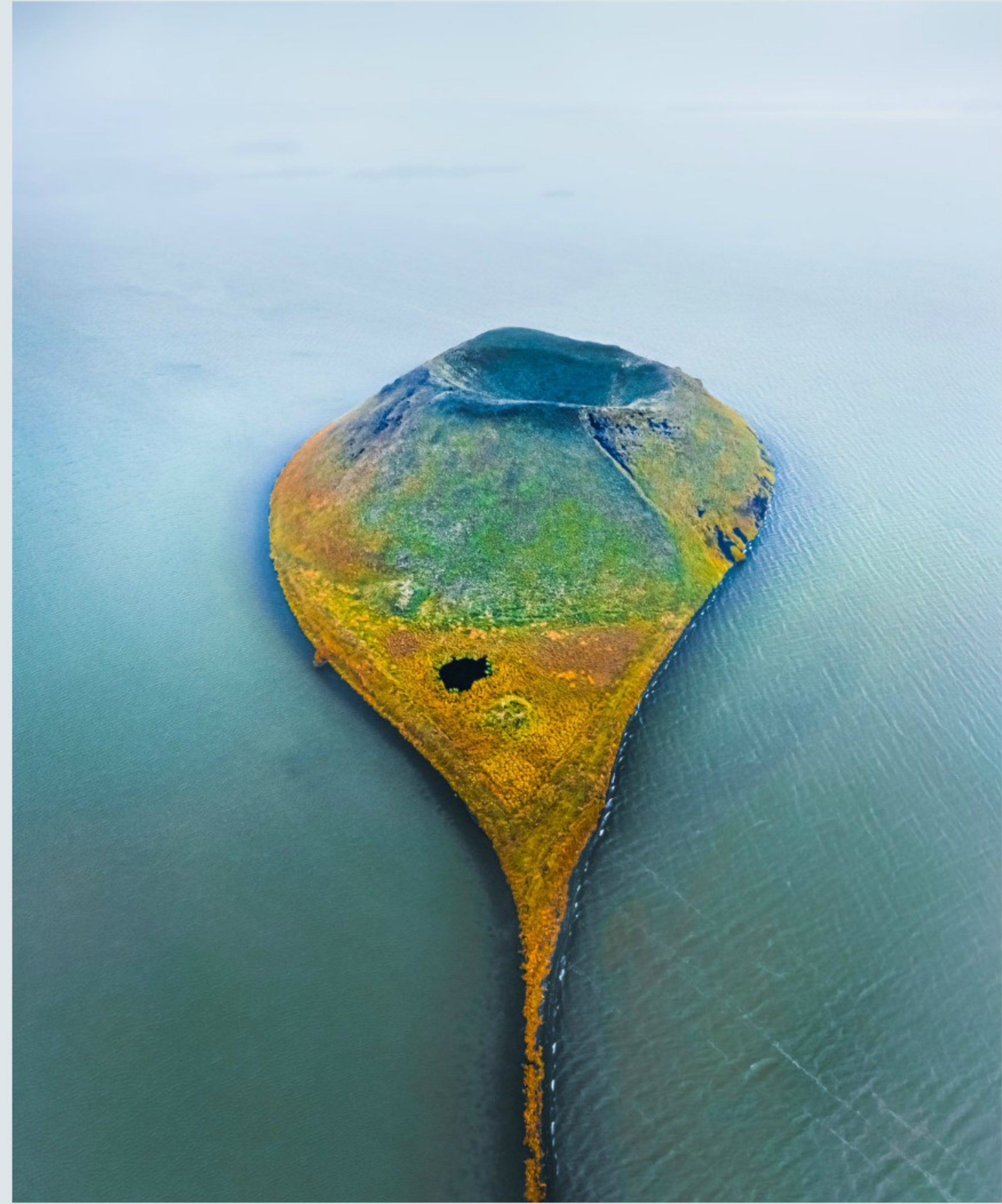






















An island on a little pond close to Káraný in a chilling January weather.

(Toušeň, Eastern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This island isn't man made - nature presents us here with a torn mind of this complicated island. The January morning freeze painted the trees white, while it wasn't cold enough to make the water freeze and hide the sand and mud texture of the island "lagoon".

I took this photo on an early morning drive on January 2nd from vacations in the mountains to get a shot at a doctor's and then coming back to join my group. This image - one of the first photos I took in 2020 - then became a strong symbol of a torn mind, dualities, things we need to reconcile... for me, this remained one of the strongest photos I took that year.



An early bird couple takes a morning stroll on a beach on Xmas day at the Canary Islands.

(Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, Spain)

This Canary beach was actually a man made lagoon, which made the see completely flat, especially in the early morning.

Very soon, the beach got very full, but this moment must have had been serene from the ground, as it definitely was from the air as well.



A path between two ponds.

(Naděje pond system, Southern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This curious path separates two man made ponds. My theory is that the curious shape was there before the ponds, which probably only filled the areas on the side of an already existing road between villages in this part of South Bohemia.

One of my clients purchased this print once saying "Story of my life: troubles from the left, fools from the right". But actually, these two ponds do have very different names: it's actually Hope and Love. I trust it will bring all these to the gentleman!



Fallen leaves and algae on the top of Slapy dam near Prague in the Autumn.

(Slapy dam, Central Bohemia, Czech Republic)

The colorful pattern is created by a combination of leaves fallen down from the forests of the surrounding hills and various colored algae that grew massively during the summer. A fisherman makes his way through it to land shortly on the shore.

It was late in the afternoon and of the last little trips outside of Prague that year. I have fond memories of that evening and this image printed in a very large format is reminding me of it in my own living room.



A pipe pumping some oily waste to a partly frozen wastewater pond.

(Odkaliště Venuše, North West Bohemia, Czech Republic)

Odkaliště Venuše ("Sludge pond Venus") is probably the last place where you'd look for beauty in the Czech Republic. In the middle of a land destroyed by mining and industrial activity is a pond with a content you don't even want to think of. Yet - here we are presented with a magically pretty flower... an acid flower, perhaps.

That January afternoon was truly a mix of all extremes of what feelings you can have about a countryside and this image is a part of a larger series of similar acid beauties.



River mouth bringing dead trees and sediments into the lake.

(Lago Maggiore, Northern Italy)

The river that flows from the Alps to the lake brings in all kinds of messages from the mountains - should it be trees or various colorful sediments. Of all the rather more complex images I took at this area this one strikes out clearly... a combination of happiness vs endings, tranquility vs. strong currents, merry colors vs. the blackness of decay. It really depends on what you want to see in this and there's definitely tons more stories than what the simple view would tell.



A tiny island on a little pond in the Autumn.

(Třeboň area, Southern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

South Bohemia is a region with hundreds of man-made lakes and ponds dating back to the medieval era. These ponds are scattered by many muddy islands, often providing home to many bird species.

This photo was taken during one of the most colorful autumn days and is a part of a rather large series of similar islands.



A wastewater substance in a puddle in the surface mining area.

(Mostecko, North Western Bohemia, Czech Republic)

Another of my photos which were taken on completely randomly discovered locations. I actually went to photograph something different, but parked right next to this puddle, which caught my attention right after the take off. Needless to say, I spent a generous time right at my spot looking at this colorful beast before flying to my final location (out of which, as far as I remember, not significant photo was made...)



Two dead trees in the middle of an autumn-colored forest.

(Křivoklát area, Central Bohemia, Czech Republic)

The hilly region around castle Křivoklát is one of the most beautifully forested places not far from Prague. In the autumn, it's a real therapy to take walks around there. And there are a few places to capture the color madness from the air - even to realize that death, which met these two drying out trees, can highlight a beauty everywhere.



A former quarry now filled with water.

(Rychlebské mountains, Northern Moravia, Czech Republic)

This quarry heart is one of the many man made tiny lakes in the very remote area of the Rychlebské mountains on the border of the Czech Republic and Poland. These quarries are a fantastic destination for a couple day hike through the wilderness of the mountains, but from the sky, they reveal even another level of beauty. And mind you, since I don't artificially create new shapes in the photos during the post production, this heart



A dump into a wastewater reservoir in an industrial area.

(Chomutov region, Western Bohemia, Czech Republic)

The liquid waste is being dumped from the pipes on the bottom into a pond with already sedimented waste.

These dumps are very uninspiring from the ground and nobody comes to visit. However, from a bird's perspective, a wholly different realm opens up. I love flying, whenever possible, above these areas - definitely being avoided by an average tourist. But again, if you look at them with a different perspective, and a different attitude, perhaps, they



Last group of trees with leaves amidst a deep autumn forest

(near Koněprusy, Central Bohemia, Czech Republic)

I was concerned that I may not get great photos, coming to the area so late in the autumn with most trees already having shaken their leaves down. However, some patches still could be found and especially in the bright sun of that day they created incredible views.



Fallen tree amidst the wild Autumn vegetation and leaves

(Třeboň area, Southern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This tree was lying on a wild inhabited island on one of the many Třeboň ponds. Thanks to the particular time of the year, it was glowing reddish colors that could be visible even on my drone preview screen. I edited the contrasts lightly to bring them even more up to reveal a true autumn fire...

The Třeboň area in the "pond district" of Southern Bohemia is one of my favorite places for aerial explorations, as the very diverse landscape of ponds, forests, paths and meadows creates incredibly beautiful vistas. I have many photos from there in my portfolio and this one is less common amongst them as it doesn't show any water surface (water is everywhere in the Třeboň area!)



A late Autumn forest in bright afternoon sunlight.

(Koněprusy, Central Bohemia, Czech Republic)

The Koněprusy area is a place covered by many fairly deep forests, which are also a favorite destination for many weekend hikers or tramps.

I so much wanted to take a photo of another location a kilometer from here but I managed to crash my drone a few days before that. Thanks to a friend who lent me her drone I managed to get to the place anyway, but my original location didn't reveal anything that would speak to me that day. In some disappointment, I just flew around the area rather randomly, only to discover this forest. It had almost all leaves already fallen and the sharp yet low-angle sun created an incredible canvas out of it.



Gulls over a dried out pond with a few centimeters of water.

(Hodonín area, Eastern Moravia, Czech Republic)

The Czech Republic saw some heavy droughts in the Spring 2020. Many ponds dried out, especially in South Moravia. When rains brought a few centimeters of water in later, it did not dissolve the dry mud and a "cracked water" pond full of birds was born.

This was one of the few trips we were able to make during the initial onset of Covid 19 and I loved every minute of it. This photo also brings back some nice personal memories from that trip.



A mountain top in the South East Iceland coast.

(South Eastern Iceland)

Often I love driving to a tourist destination only to find out that its surroundings are often just as interesting. This was the case - I was driving to the very popular Stokksnes beach, but this caught my attention. I parked on the side and spent about 1 hour there, actually missing the Stokksnes at all due to bad weather coming very shortly. I don't regret it!



Waterfall in the Stuðlagil canyon in the late autumn.

(Stuðlagil, Eastern Iceland)

The canyon was until recently "undiscovered" by people - a very strong river used to flow there and the area around the eastern inland highlands is very inhospitable even for weathered Icelanders. But 13 years ago, the river level dropped by almost 9m due to a nearby power plant and a completely unsuspected canyon full of basalt columns appeared. The canyon is now on side 2, may be 3, of all Icelandic tourist catalogs. Less so this

The day was a pretty bad light, it was a cold winter, it was raining with snow (which my drone especially likes) and I was still a long way from my accomodation far up in the mountains. So I'm glad that this photo came out quite well and I can present it to you now.



Swans at a pond.

(Lázně Bohdaneč area, Eastern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This is one of my most tranquil photos. I feel like this is the Swan Lake that was the inspiration for the ballet, the Tchaikovsky music and everything else which is somewhat ethereal, flowing, quiet, slow yet powerful... I took a polite distance to these swans but had been observing them from their perspective for quite some time, totally forgetting about the areas I originally planned for that day's shoot. I totally don't regret it



Wild geese on a glacier river at the beginning of sunset.

(Northern Iceland)

Glacial rivers are a major attraction for my aerial photography as Iceland is a true paradise in this regard. These incredible patterns created by the interaction of the river bed, various sediments brought from the mountains, combinations of many incoming streams and the profile of the surface can provide endless possibilities for abstract discoveries. However, the best views happen when you manage to encounter the true local inhabitants of these magical places... like these geese.



Start of a lava stream (flowing to the left for a few kilometers) at the Icelandic volcano.

(Fagradalsfjall volcano, South Western Iceland)

Many volcanoes have side openings near to them, from which lava flows (not erupts, or just very lightly) down in long lava creeks. This one was about 3 meters wide at a maximum, but the hot lava lasted for at least a kilometer or two down the valley.

I was lucky enough to visit the Fagradalsfjall volcano on an active day, moreover, there were several of these side craters. The opening of this one reminds me of a fire dragon that's been released from the Earth. This was my first day in Iceland and I was concerned about the drone surviving when I flew so close to the lava - some 25 meters - and there indeed was very minor damage, but other than that, the drone survived for the next month in Iceland. Still, this photo from Day 1 remains one of the best from the whole trip.



A dried out pond before the Fall fish-takeaway season.

(Nákří, Southern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

In the autumn, fishermen in the Czech Republic remove water from many of the medieval man made ponds they manage so that they can take out fish and especially carp for the Xmas season - with carp being the preferred meal of the Xmas Eve dinner in the country. The "mud ponds" are then a haven for many bird species.



Glacial river before finding its entrance to the ocean.

(Southern Iceland)

This mesmerizing puzzle of shapes, patterns and shades is painted by a river flowing from nearby glaciers straight to the ocean - provided that there isn't a lava sand barrier between the river and the waves. It took the river about 600 meters around the shore to finally find the opening and enter the Atlantic ocean. This day was very dark, windy and rainy and flying around taking photos was quite an adventure. It was only back home that I realized that what I saw from the top is quite incredible.



A glacial river tries to find its way over the lava sand barrier to the ocean.

(Southern Iceland)

Only from the air when flying above the shore, I saw this incredible almost optical illusion of the river looking almost 3D thanks to the play of sediments. But... it's completely flat (except the little sand barrier between the river and the ocean), there is no ice and the water is free flowing. After checking the maps afterwards, I realized that this pattern is just temporary, aerial maps from other periods showed a very different image. So, it's likely gone now as well... how lucky we are to be able to witness this!

Many of my locations were not planned in advance and I found them by mere coincidence. This magic place is one of these, not being at all among the tourist attractions of Iceland. I drove around the shore and saw the river from the shore, wondering how it gets to the water.



Mumlava river in the winter.

(Mumlava river, Northern Bohemia, Czech Republic)

This river, or creek, flowing through a mountain valley is a home to some of the Czech waterfalls - modest in size but big in attractiveness. This was taken during a trip right before the New Year's eve and everything was so right that week - hopefully that feeling got somehow translated to how I saw the winter forest that day and captured it for us here.

This mountain area is mostly off limits for recreational drone shooting, but you can still find places like this. And with proper flight permits, even the rest.



Winter in the forest Hvězda.

(Prague, Central Bohemia, Czech Republic)

One of the oldest forests in Prague is around the summer castle Hvězda ("Star", because of its shape) where the kings of the nearby Prague Castle would go to hunt and enjoy their time with whatever kings did over the weekends those days. While the summer castle itself is a true medieval gem, I love the various shapes and forms created by the forest especially during winter. Oh, and it's also my childhood area as I grew nearby and as kids we would spend quite a lot of time there (much to the disdain of our parents and their concerns that something would happen to us over there, which of course even increased its attractiveness for us).



The first snow at the reserve.

(Friðland að Fjallabaki highlands, Central Iceland)

This was only the second day after the first snow which formed only a fine carpet over the still-visible black lava bedrock and the ponds still didn't freeze. It was already fairly difficult to get to this area even in my 4WD and later in the evening that day, the rangers closed the reservation for normal entry for about 8 months, so I was very lucky not with light and weather that day, but also the timing. Yes I did plan to spend several more days in this area, but the photos I managed to take definitely pay back for this result of weather games.

Like many other of my Iceland photos, this was taken with proper permissions by Icelandic authorities. Although it does take a bit of time and money to arrange for it, I definitely advise having them. Iceland is a drone paradise and we want to be responsible pilots, not spoiling nature or the atmosphere of it for others.



A glacial delta river at the South Iceland coast.

(South Eastern Iceland)

Sometimes people don't believe this isn't photo manipulation in Photoshop. And I always reply with my mantra: what you see was really there. No editing of shapes or adding stuff to my photos. Let's just agree I was very lucky to have spotted this black heart. It did bring some rather dark symbolism for me in the following weeks so I don't have an easy relationship with this photo, but I guess what else to expect from a heart that intense...



A river on a black moss beach covered with autumn-colored moss.

(Sólheimasandur, Southern Iceland)

The black sand beaches in South Iceland look especially otherworldly in late September.



Cross Country skiers on a cold January day.

(Krušné hory Mountains, North Western Bohemia, Czech Reoublic)

This particular region on the top of Krušné Hory mountains is hugely popular among cross skiers and many international competitions take place there regularly.



A micro island covered by autumn vegetation in the middle of a glacial river.

(Northern Iceland)

This river has a wide delta stretching for more than a kilometer before entering the Atlantic ocean. The colorful surface - which you can see really only from the skies - is caused by sediments brought by the stream from the mountains and their interaction with the bedrock. I could fly there for hours... no, days... and still find mesmerizing new abstract views.



The DC3 crash site.

(Sólheimasandur, Southern Iceland)

In 1973m a United States Navy DC plane ran out of fuel and crashed on the black beach at Sólheimasandur, in the South Coast of Iceland. Fortunately, everyone in that plane survived. Later it turned out that the pilot had simply switched over to the wrong fuel tank. The remains are still on the sand very close to the sea. The photo is almost a rescue mission for a pilot crash landed on another planet - these little red dots are quad bikes of a tour expedition.



A forest on the top of the mountains.

(Krušné hory Mountains, North Western Bohemia, Czech Republic)

I found this place by a pure coincidence - as is the case of quite a few other photos here - when flying from a site that actually didn't prove to be as appealing as I'd have guessed from the online "satellite" maps (this also happens quite often). But I'm glad I did. And after seeing this photo in large prints, I understand why people sometimes take this part of the forest to their homes!



A pseudocrater covered by autumn moss.

(Lake Mývatn, North Eastern Iceland)

It is not a classic volcanic crater because it is not "connected" to the magma in the earth and has never spewed lava. Still, these craters were created thanks to lava streams from nearby volcanoes flowing over a wet surface in the past, creating massive explosions of steam.

This was one of my last photos of the day. It was too late and very quickly the wind began to rise from the south (at the top of the photo), which brought a lot of clouds, fog and rain. My drone very much dislikes these conditions, so I took this picture and headed for the landing quickly.



Braided river in Southern Iceland.

(Southern Iceland)

This photo is a crop of a huge 600 megapixel composite I made with my drone covering a larger area of the river. I then opened it at home, taking crops of the source image and looking for patterns and rhythms.



Blind stream Musik of the Slapy Dam near Prague in early autumn.

(Slapy dam, Central Bohemia, Czech Republic)

The Slapy dam - created to protect Prague from previously devastating floods - is another popular destination for my photo trips. Both the water surface as well as surrounding hills and forests and almost an endless source of surprises.



South Moravian hills and fields in early spring.

(Southern Moravia, Czech Republic)

The large agricultural country area of South Moravian hills is quite difficult to photograph from above - but when you get to the right place, it literally flies. I spent a lot of time with this photo sailing on its waves, because it contains several almost optical illusions (sometime due to eroding surface due to removed trees, which is nothing great actually), at the same time the colors of the South Moravian spring are difficult to interpret, let alone when you want to extract the spirit you feel there.

I found this particular place between Bilovice and Čejkovice by chance, it is not one of the usual South Moravian photo locations.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

"S Nadhledem" (With a Perspective), Třeboň Chateau, Czech Republic, 2019

"Invisible Worlds", Blank Wall Gallery, Athens, Greece, September 2022

AWARDS (selection)

1st and 3rd place. International Photography Awards, Fine Art - Nature, 2022 & Oneshot - Color

"Aerial Photographer of the Year" - 1st and 2nd place, Aerial photography category, Minimalist Photography Awards 2022

3rd place, International Photo Awards 2022 - One Shot, drone category

1st place (category Places) in the Earth Photo Competition by Royal Geographic Society UK, 2022

1st and 2nd place in the Landscape category, Czech Nature Photo, 2022

3rd place in Czech Nature Photo, 2021

Gold (Nature by Air), 2nd place (All Nature categories), Top 5 jury's choice. Tokyo International Photo Awards, 2021

2nd place in Drone category, ND Awards, 2021

Top 5 Jury Selection, IPA - International Photography Awards, October 2021

"50 Best BnW Minimalist Photographers", USA, 2021

"Best Photo Portfolio", Blank Wall Gallery, Greece, June 2022

Jury's winning photo at "Keep it Green" exhibition, USA, April 2021

"Landscape Photo of the Year", Czech Republic, 2021

Over 50 honorable mentions and nominations from international competitions including APA and TIFA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022:

Czech Nature Photo , Prague, May-Sept, Czech Republic

Glasgow Gallery of Photography, Glasgow, June, UK

Royal Geographical Society, London, June-Sept, UK

Indoor exhibition at Dalby Forest, Sept 2022-Jan 2023 North Yorkshire, UK

Outdoor exhibition at Haldon Forest, Oct 2022-Jan 2023, Devon, UK

Outdoor exhibition at Fineshade Wood, Nov 2022-Mar 2023, Northamptonshire, UK

Indoor exhibition at Grizedale Forest, Dec 2022- April 2023, Lake District, UK

2020-2021:

"Silence", Budapest, Hungary, April

"Quiet Landscape" , Vermont, USA, April

Chania Int'l Photo Festival, Crete, Greece, June

"Of the Earth", Online, April

"Keep it Green", Los Angeles., USA, April

" Purely Abstract", California, USA, June

"Czech Nature Photo" , Czech Republic, Prague and elsewhere

"Color", Vermont, USA, August

"Contrasts ", Rome, Italy, August

"Abandoned", Los Angeles, USA, September

"Van Gogh Photo Award", Utrecht, Netherlands, September



Daniel Franc is an internationally recognized aerial photographer creating fine art photography with his drone, discovering the beauty, energy and new views on the world.

It's been only since 2017 that he started this journey, but he had been fascinated by exploring the hidden possibilities in the world around us his whole life. He has been an innovator in the areas which were new or simply outside of the beaten path. He's also always been in love with nature, even spending some time in his youth as an outdoor adventure facilitator in South Africa, Australia and then the Czech Republic.

He got his first drone (by an accident, actually) in 2017 and since then, has visited places in the most common areas as well as more exotic destinations which provoked his imagination with new views on our world from the above.

More of his work and prints: www.danielfranc.art