

FROM STREET CORNERS TO SELF-PORTRAITS: INSIDE ANDRÉA SELIGMAN'S PHOTOGRAPHIC WORLD



By Andy Butler

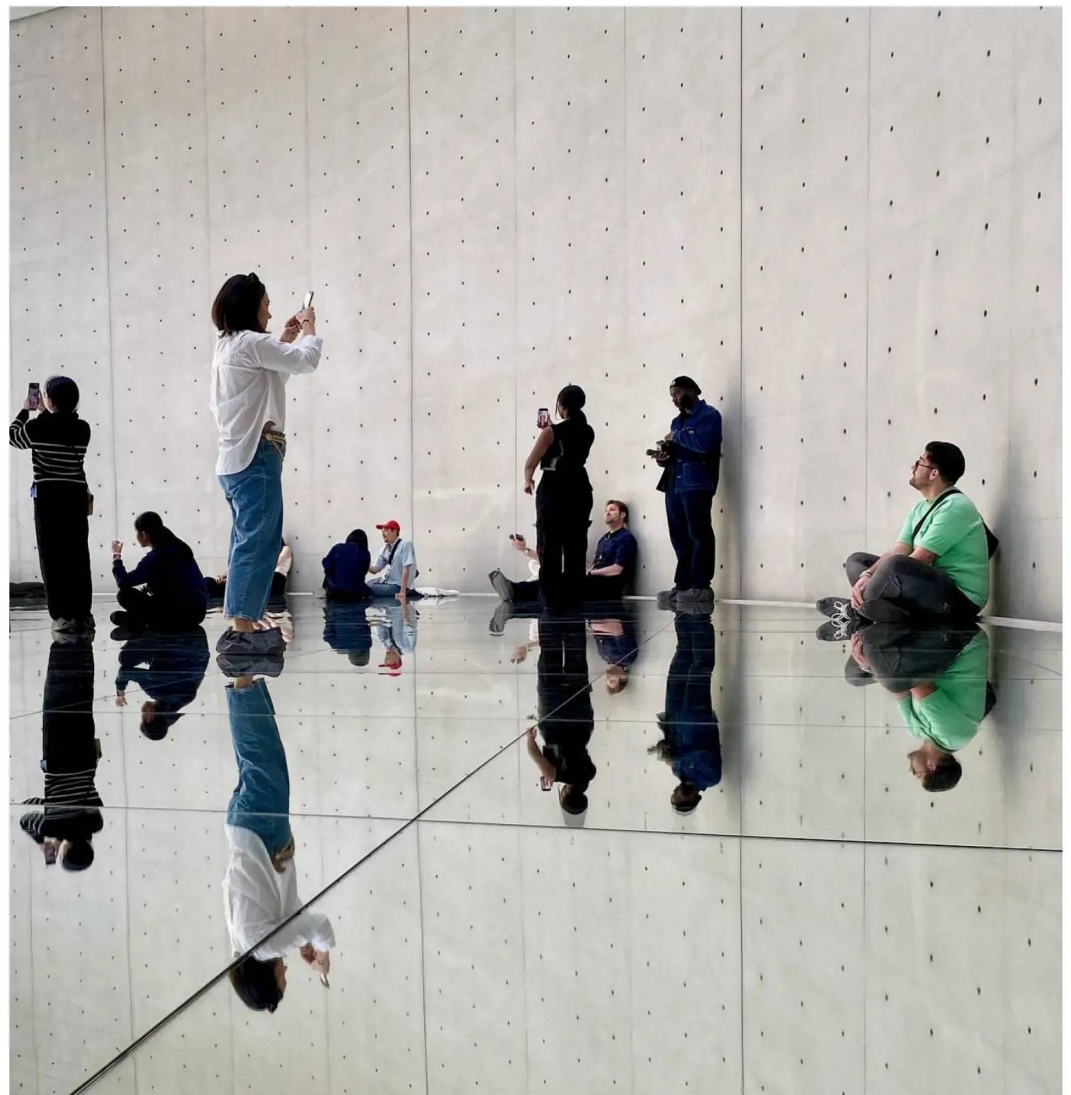
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Andréa Seligman is a photographer and architect from Brazil who uses her iPhone to capture the world around her. Living in Porto Alegre, Andréa's photography documents moments in time that grab her attention or that inspire her about her surroundings, be that a shadow on a street corner or the soft light coming in through a window at home.

Andréa's portfolio of work on Instagram is a combination of street photography as well as abstract self-portraits. Her urban based photography focuses on

capturing reflections in windows, patterns, textures, and the brief moments that others may miss. Meanwhile, she uses her self-portraiture work to show a different side to her art. These images are more personal and emotionally rich in their delivery.

Andréa's photography has always caught my attention, so I was keen to find out more about her approach to the photos she takes, her creative process, the meaning behind her images, and how she uses her iPhone to express herself.



COULD YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY AND HOW YOU DISCOVERED SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY?

Ever since I was a child, I've enjoyed drawing and painting. My mum always encouraged me, directly and indirectly, by taking me to art exhibitions and museums and showing me the great painters of history. For many years, she worked at the RS Art Museum (MARGS) which is the most important museum in the state where I live in southern Brazil. I remember spending part of my childhood in the corridors of the museum, going into every room where there were exhibitions and attending countless vernissages. Even today, I can close my eyes and clearly see many of the paintings in the museum's permanent collection.

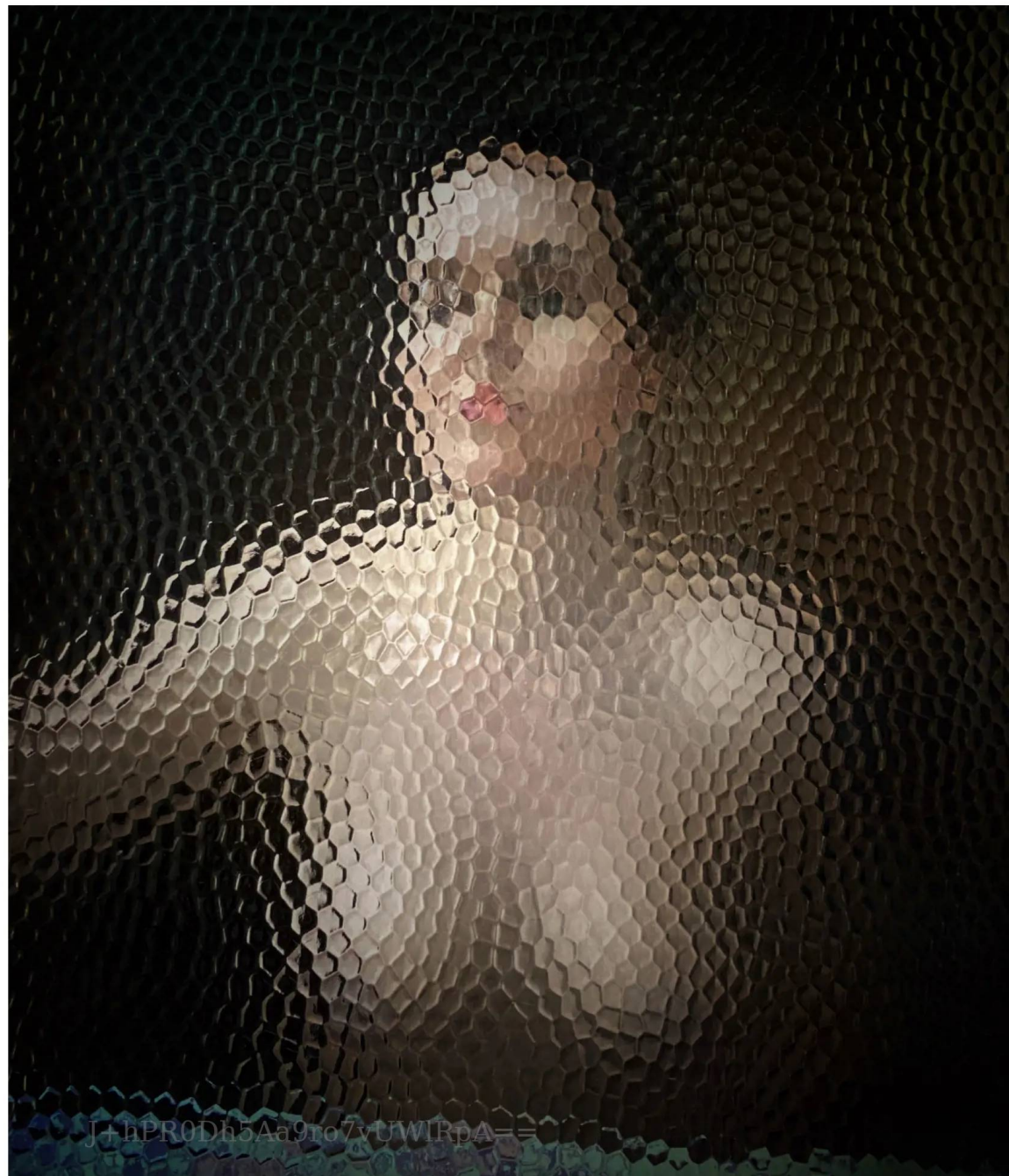
In our house, there were no empty spaces on the walls; they were all lined with works of art by various artists. My father gave me a taste for photography. He had a home laboratory where he enlarged his photographs, and it fascinated me to see the "magic" being developed. My sister, also a photographer, made me see reality through her own curious eyes, looking for different points of view. And finally, it was photography that "stitched together" all this learning, all the references, memories, and emotions, enabling me to materialize and express my essence through art.



I first discovered the smartphone as a photography device during the pandemic when I started experimenting with self-portraits. The mobile phone made my creative process much easier, bringing more mobility and control to different situations.

I was able to photograph in any environment, especially small spaces like the bathroom, where I took my first images. Later on, I started using it everywhere because it was so practical and didn't attract too much attention when photographing in the street. Going out with a camera in my city is dangerous.

Finally, the possibility of editing on the device itself was incredibly liberating for me. I love going into a coffee shop and looking at (and editing) my photos. For this, I use the Snapseed app and can spend hours experimenting with multiple creative possibilities.



TELL US ABOUT YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS AND WHAT KIND OF THINGS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IN A POTENTIAL PHOTOGRAPH?

My creative process is very intuitive and free. I enjoy being close to nature, traveling, walking the streets, and observing everything, from

macro to detail - the effects of light and shadow, architecture, textures, and reflections.

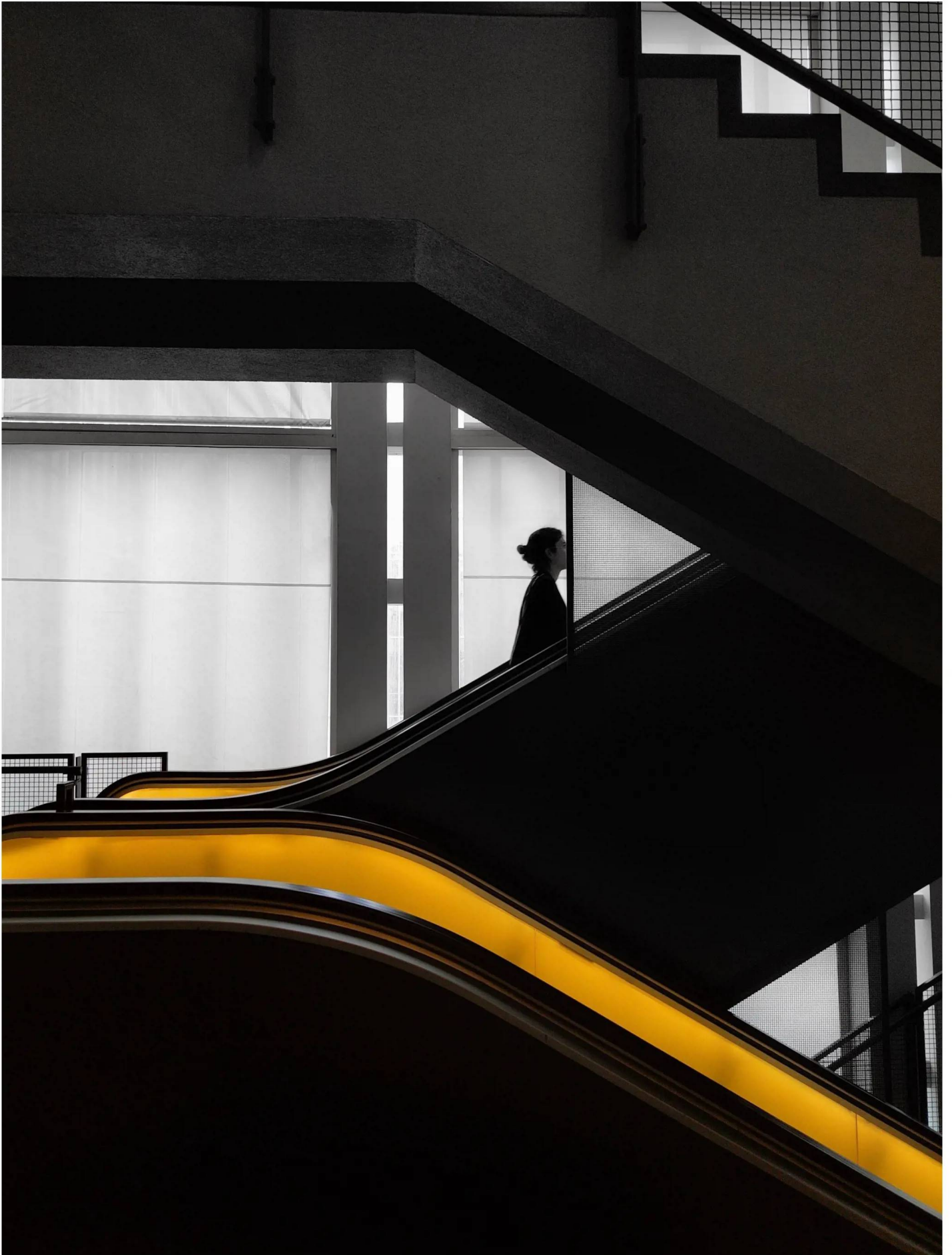
I don't plan anything; I let it flow. The images form and show themselves as I move around and notice them. My creativity comes from observation, curiosity, memories, and insights that are awakened.

When I'm photographing, time doesn't seem to exist; it's like a lucid trance.

I always try to find something unusual in a scene that isn't apparently so visible - some detail. I like mysterious, veiled atmospheres. I never go out with a

hermetically defined objective. In reality, I want the photograph that meets me to surprise me along the way and to somehow awaken me, whether it's a shadow, a reflection, or an unexpected movement. I'm looking for delicacies and subtle things that reveal something meaningful.





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HOW HAS YOUR TRAINING IN ARCHITECTURE INFLUENCED YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC VISION OR THE WAY YOU FRAME YOUR SUBJECTS?

Architecture school made me see the world with sharper eyes, allowing me to be more attentive to new concepts, angles, volumes, textures, spaces, light and shadow, broadening my knowledge and my imagery.

I'm very attracted to "hazy," mysterious, and imprecise images. I find that, at times, very detailed things can become a bit tiring. I like images that can be interpreted in different ways by the viewer - veiled images where different stories can exist.



TELL US ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO COMPOSING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER PEOPLE SO THAT THEY CAN USE BETTER COMPOSITION IN THEIR PHOTOGRAPHS?

Setting up the composition is a completely intuitive process. The first thing I do is eliminate all the excesses and distractions that are unimportant for interpreting the image. I cut out what doesn't matter, then I correct the lighting.

Each image is edited differently, depending on the message and drama I want to convey. If the intention is more artistic or pictorial, I use a wide range of editing resources. Overlays, some filters. I don't usually use a lot of saturation in my photographs as I prefer something paler. In black and white photographs, I like to keep images minimalist and clean.

The most important thing is to know what story I want to tell with each image. Depending on this narrative, I will emphasize or not emphasize certain elements, blur backgrounds, establish overlaps, and so on; in short, I create its concept.

WHAT ATTRACTS YOU MOST TO STREET PHOTOGRAPHY? AND HOW DO YOU APPROACH CAPTURING THE MOMENTS YOU SEE?


I recently discovered that I'm passionate about street photography. I can spend hours walking around, discovering new landscapes and scenes, corners and people, shadows and reflections.

I have a lot of patience, and for me, time doesn't seem to exist while I'm photographing. It's the unnoticed details of everyday life that enchant me and make for beautiful photographic captures.



Reflections on glass surfaces fascinate me. Reflections in shop windows, rain, or puddles of water. People in movement, shadows, and mystery. I sometimes like to use long exposures to add movement to the image.

I'm also drawn to shadows and their impact on various surfaces, as well as parallel worlds reflected in shop windows, unknown faces, textures, and details.



**TELL US ABOUT YOUR SELF-
PORTRAIT WORK AND THE KIND
OF EMOTIONAL PREPARATION
OR MINDSET YOU ENTER INTO
WHEN CREATING YOUR SELF-
PORTRAITS?**

During the pandemic, when we were all confined to our homes, I turned (literally) inwards and started photographing myself in various environments at home.

I saw self-portraiture as a powerful tool for expressing myself in the most intimate and emotional sense. It was like therapy, in which I released all my fears, resentments, challenges, emotions, dreams, and desires.

In my work with self-portraits, I try to express what I'm feeling at that moment. I connect with my essence, and I strive to use art as a means of emotional healing, reflection, and introspection.

Everything comes intuitively; I close my eyes and build the image in my head, and then I look for the means to materialize it.

The different settings, compositions, the incidence of light in the environment, and its drama, as well as experimenting with different types of materials are all relevant to what I want to convey.

My inspiration when building a self-portrait comes not only from my cultural and visual background but also from my memories, feelings, questions, and concerns that I want to convey.

My images have a scenic and pictorial soul. They're permeated by mystery, drama, and delicacy at the same time.

IN YOUR AWARD-WINNING SELF-PORTRAIT THAT WAS EXHIBITED INTERNATIONALLY, WHAT WAS THE STORY OR FEELING BEHIND THIS PARTICULAR IMAGE?

My self-portrait won first place in the Mira Mobile Prize 2024 competition in Portugal. As well as winning the prize, I had the opportunity to spend seven days in the city of Porto, where I met some very special people and was warmly welcomed by everyone.

I got to know a little of the local culture and many fantastic places. It was an unforgettable experience that made me immensely happy. I was surprised by the scope of my self-portrait as a photographic expression. I didn't realize the extent of it, which gratified me greatly.

The winning image was a photo of my face with an overlay of a eucalyptus forest (a tree that is very abundant in the Serra Gaúcha, in the state where I live).

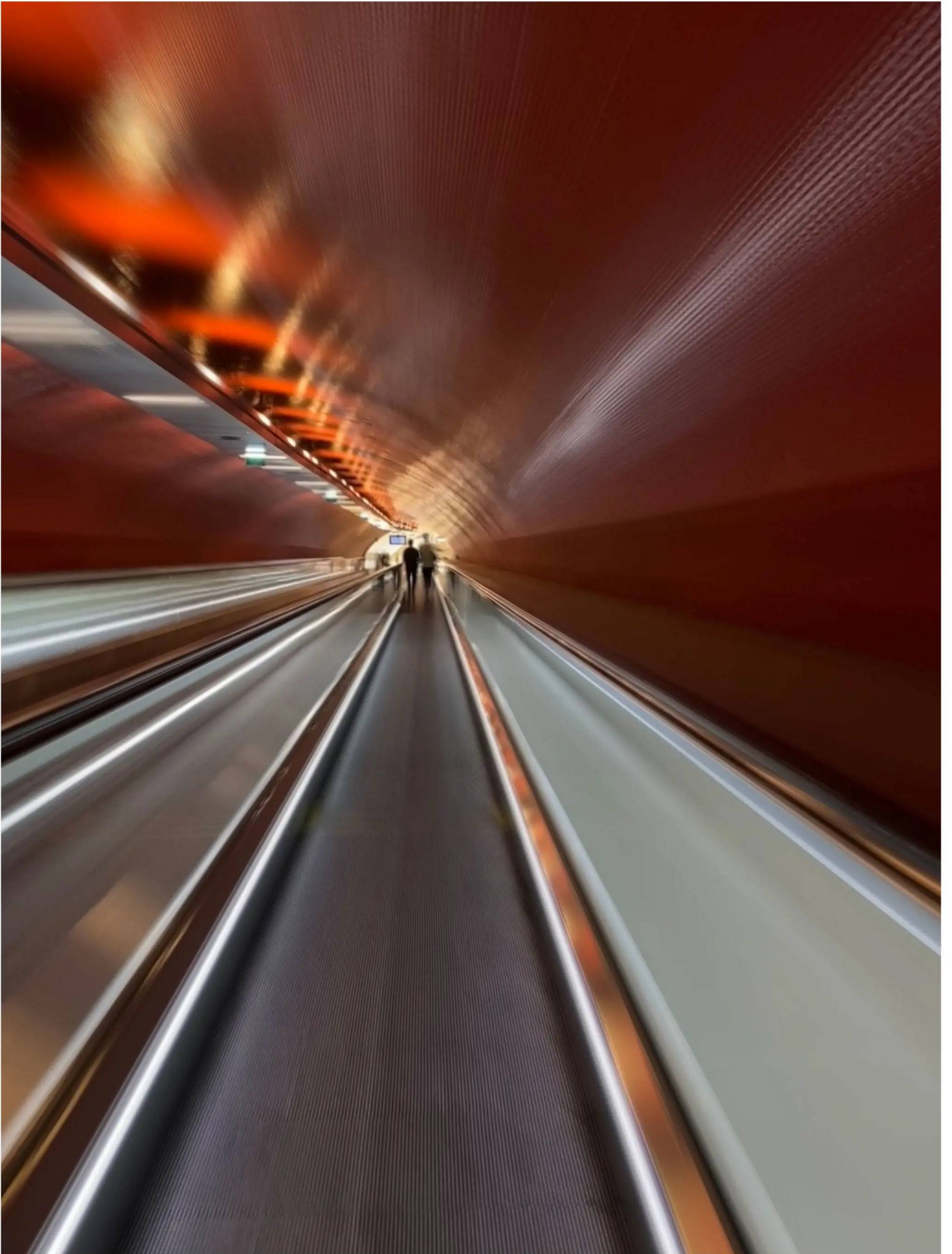
The photo had a very interesting effect, with textures all in black and white. The aim was to connect nature with the human in a woman's face.



HOW HAS HAVING YOUR WORK EXHIBITED INTERNATIONALLY (FOR EXAMPLE, AT THE CARROUSEL DU LOUVRE IN PARIS) AND ALSO BEING RECOGNIZED IN PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITIONS INFLUENCED YOUR CONFIDENCE OR OUTLOOK AS AN ARTIST?

Being recognized by important photography competitions and institutions is a great incentive in my constant quest to improve the images I create. Knowing that I've been recognized in these events is confirmation that my photography is high quality and evolving. The awards serve as a great sign that I'm on the right track and that I should continue experimenting, creating, and building new images.

I'm very critical and a perfectionist when it comes to my photography. I never thought my work was good enough, I would always focus on the flaws rather than its strengths. It took me a long time to believe and accept that my work really had a good degree of quality about it. That's why receiving awards, participating in exhibitions, and gaining international recognition have been so important for me in recognizing the potential of my photography.



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WHICH APPS DO YOU USE TO TAKE AND EDIT YOUR PHOTOS? AND IS THERE A PROCESS OR METHODOLOGY YOU APPLY TO YOUR POST-PRODUCTION EDITING?

I constantly use my mobile phone to capture and edit images. I use Snapseed, and I very rarely use Photoshop.

I love Snapseed as it allows me to experiment with various creative possibilities. My go-to

tools include the curves adjustment, which allows me to fine-tune the brightness and contrast with precision, the correction tool, and the vintage filter which adds a beautiful, nostalgic touch to my images. I also love using the brush tool for selectively enhancing specific areas, allowing me to emphasize details or create some lovely effects. I also like using the double-exposure tool which allows me to blend two images together, giving my work an artistic flair. I find the app easy to use, making the editing process enjoyable.



I usually start by cleaning up the image, making general corrections, such as darkening areas, adjusting colors and contrast, which will depend on the type of photo I'm working with and any additional effects I intend to add or not.

Editing is much more meticulous, refined, and time-consuming when the intention is more artistic - for self-portraits, for example.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS OR WORDS OF WISDOM FOR ASPIRING PHOTOGRAPHERS OR MOBILE ARTISTS?



I don't consider myself to be an expert, but rather someone who's passionate about photography and self-taught. But from my experience, what I can suggest is:

Firstly, don't be lazy; be curious, patient, and persistent. Move around a lot to discover different angles and perspectives of the scene. Always stay attentive and be willing to experiment.

Connect with all the elements around you, whether you're outdoors or indoors. Remember, you don't have to leave the house to take a great photo.

Look for a light source that can enhance your scene. Seek out textures, unique angles, light and shadow effects, as well as volume and depth of field.

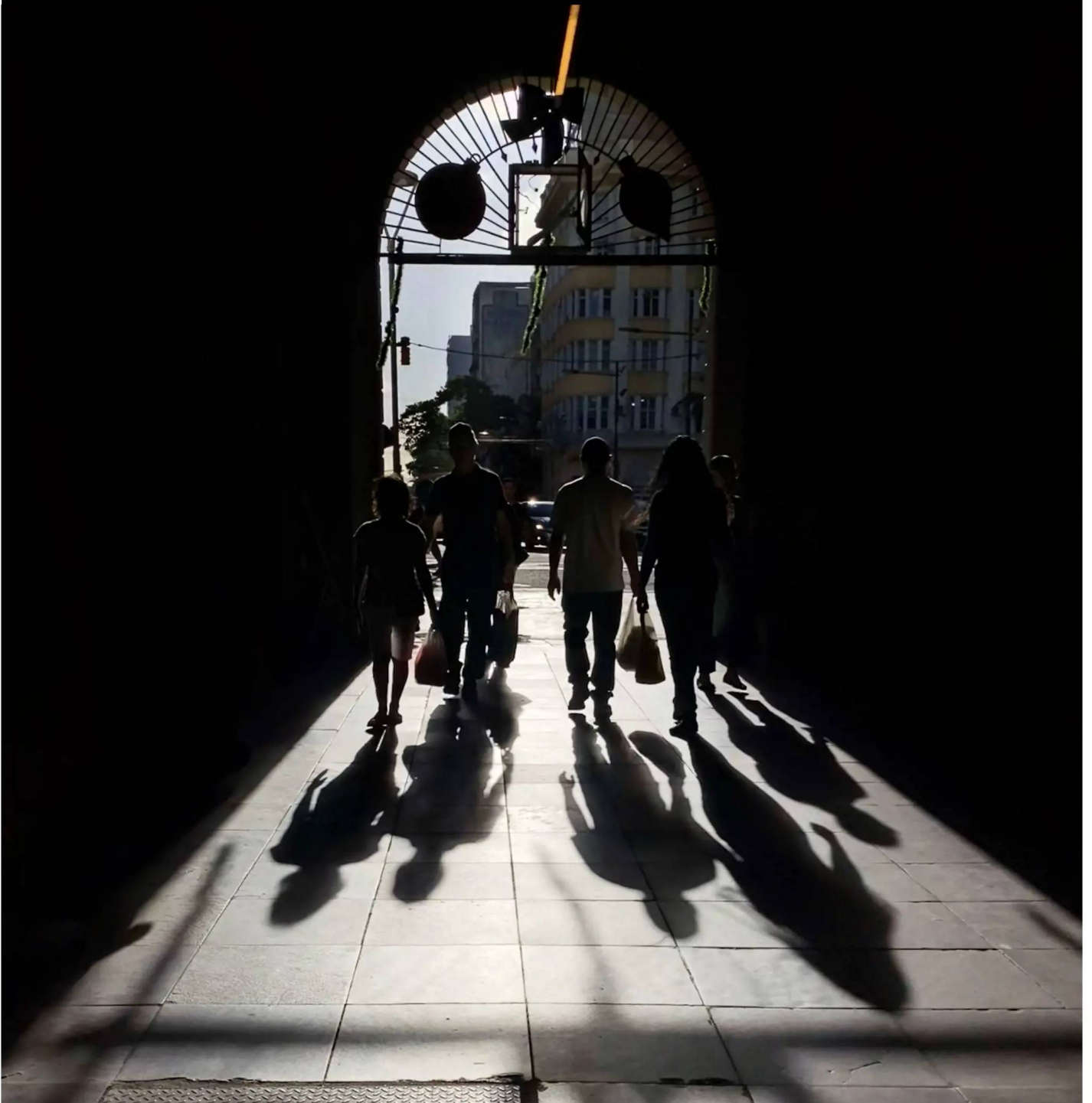
Find something that evokes a feeling in you. Consider what meaning the image will hold. What memories, stories, questions, or emotions, such as beauty, joy, sadness, loneliness, immensity, strength, or dreams will it awaken in the viewer?

Ask yourself about its impact. I always strive to understand the intention behind the photograph and what I want to express through it.

FOLLOW ANDREA SELIGMAN

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THE STORY BEHIND MY FAVORITE PHOTOS...



CAR AT NIGHT

Like most of my street photographs, this image was taken quite randomly. I was walking down a completely empty street at night, heading towards my parents' house, where they were waiting for me for dinner.

It was winter, and heavy fog surrounded me when I spotted an old parked car. I got the sense that someone had left it there, lonely and forgotten. The scene transported me to another time and place, so I began taking pictures with my iPhone 11.

This photo resonated with me because it was so ordinary and simple. With this photo, I became a finalist in the B&W Minimalist Photography Prize competition, and it was also featured in a beautiful printed book.

SILENCE

This is one of the first self-portraits I took during the pandemic. The meaning of this image is very deep for me. I was going through a very challenging time as I was coming out from a toxic relationship. The setting is not coincidental; it plays a crucial role in the image.

I took the photograph in my bathroom, specifically while I was showering. This was one of the few places and moments where I felt at peace and protected. It was a time when I could breathe, think, and cleanse myself of bad memories, allowing me to feel lighter, purified, and stronger. The silence in that space calmed me.

I took several self-portraits in this setting, and two of them were selected for exhibition at the International Contemporary Art Salon Carrousel du Louvre in Paris in October 2022. Through this process, I realized that the meaning of water perfectly symbolizes what I was feeling: water represents emotion.





THE JUMP

I took this image in Paris in May 2024 during one of my long walks around the city. I have a passion for reflections, glass, mirrors, and pools of water. I was attempting to focus on the reflection of a beautiful old building, which is common in Paris, when suddenly a person appeared and jumped over the puddle of water in front of me.

It happened so quickly that I barely had time to think; I just started clicking non-stop. I loved the result and the sense of movement and the unusualness of the moment. This leap symbolizes a deeper meaning of "moving forward, daring, risking, and experimenting," which resonates with my personal and professional journey.

I was very happy during this trip for several reasons beyond just the journey itself. It was my first major solo trip, which was an absolutely delightful challenge. I had just received an award for Best Mobile Phone Photography at the Mira Mobile Prize 2024 in Porto, Portugal, which was the reason for my trip. This experience was special, unique, and unforgettable for me. It felt like validation that I was on the right track, pursuing my dream, and dedicating myself to what I love: photographing the unexpected.