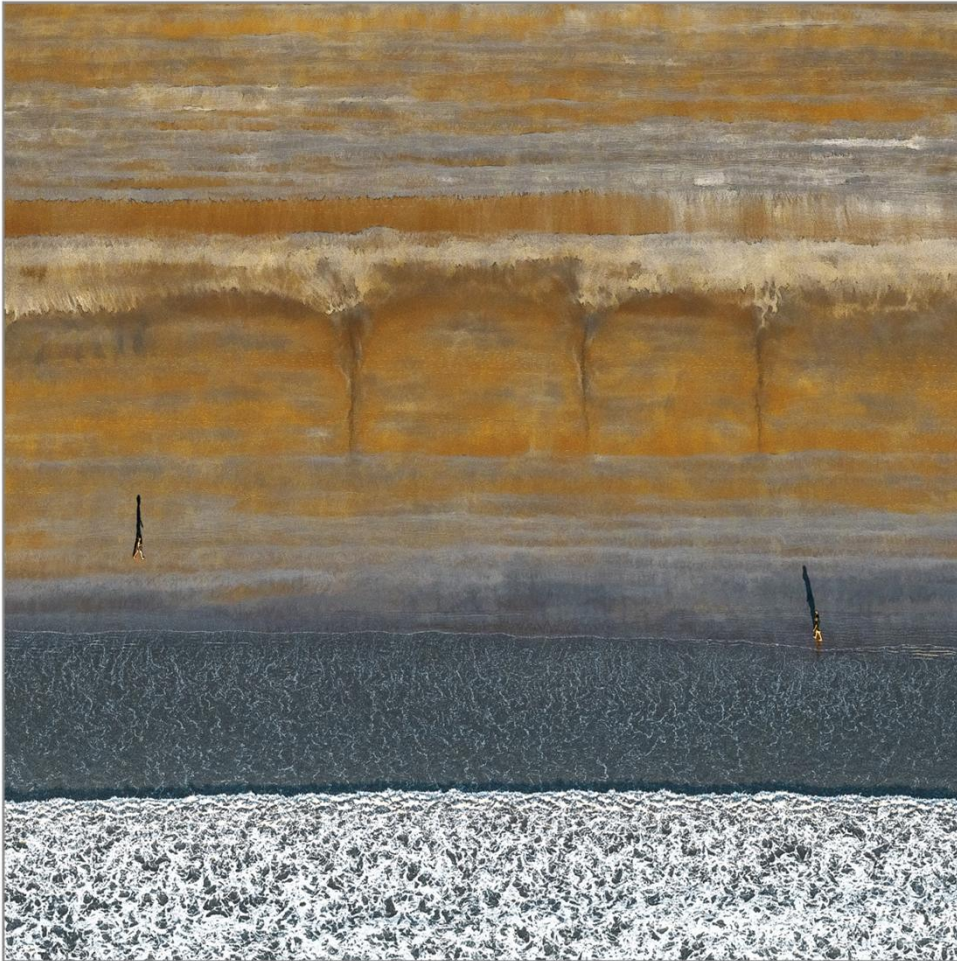


AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

WHAT MAKES A GOOD AERIAL
PHOTOGRAPH



Definition

Aerial photography is the process of taking photographs from a height, using various airborne platforms such as aircraft, drones, balloons or tall buildings.

What's the Attraction?

Aerial photography offers a bird's-eye view that is impossible to achieve from ground level. This vantage point allows for the capture of patterns, shapes, and relationships between elements within a landscape that are often unseen from a traditional perspective.

Categories

Natural Landscapes: Aerial art photography can be used to capture vast and dramatic landscapes, offering a bird's-eye view of natural features.

Urban Landscapes: Photographers can capture the intricate details and patterns of cities from above, showcasing the scale and organization of urban areas.

Abstract Aerials: These images focus on patterns, textures, and shapes, often removing the context of the landscape to create a more abstract composition.

Types of Aerial Photography

Oblique

- Taken with the camera axis at an angle to the ground, offering a side-view perspective.
 - **High oblique:** Horizon visible.
 - **Low oblique:** Horizon not visible.

Vertical

- Taken with the camera axis perpendicular to the ground, providing a top-down view
or
- Processed to achieve a top-down view

So what does make a
Good Aerial?

Landscape and Urban Aerials

A good aerial landscape or urban photograph balances compelling composition, effective use of light, and a strong sense of place. It should draw the viewer in, evoke emotion, and tell a story through visual elements.

Key elements include:

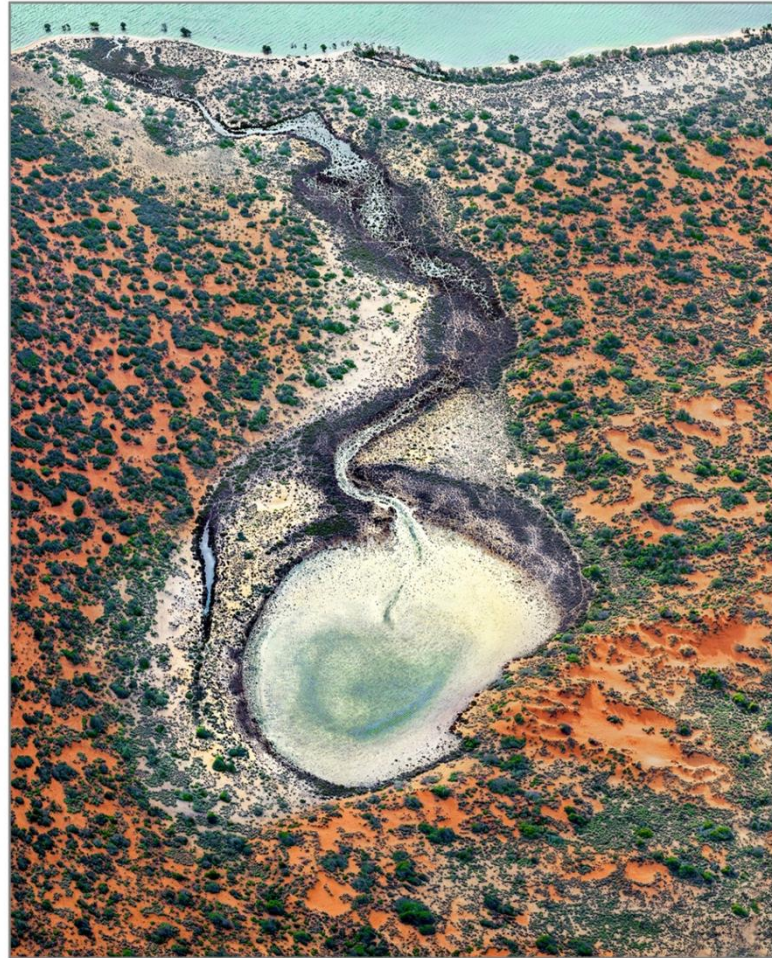
- a clear focal point
- thoughtful foreground and background elements
- leading lines and
- an awareness of the light's impact on the scene.



High oblique: horizon high in frame

Standard landscape principles

- Is the horizon level and positioned appropriately in the frame?
- Is it sharp where it needs to be?
- Is the composition balanced both from an element, saturation and tonal perspective?
- Does the lighting enhance the image?
- Is there an emotional connection?



High Oblique: horizon high in frame

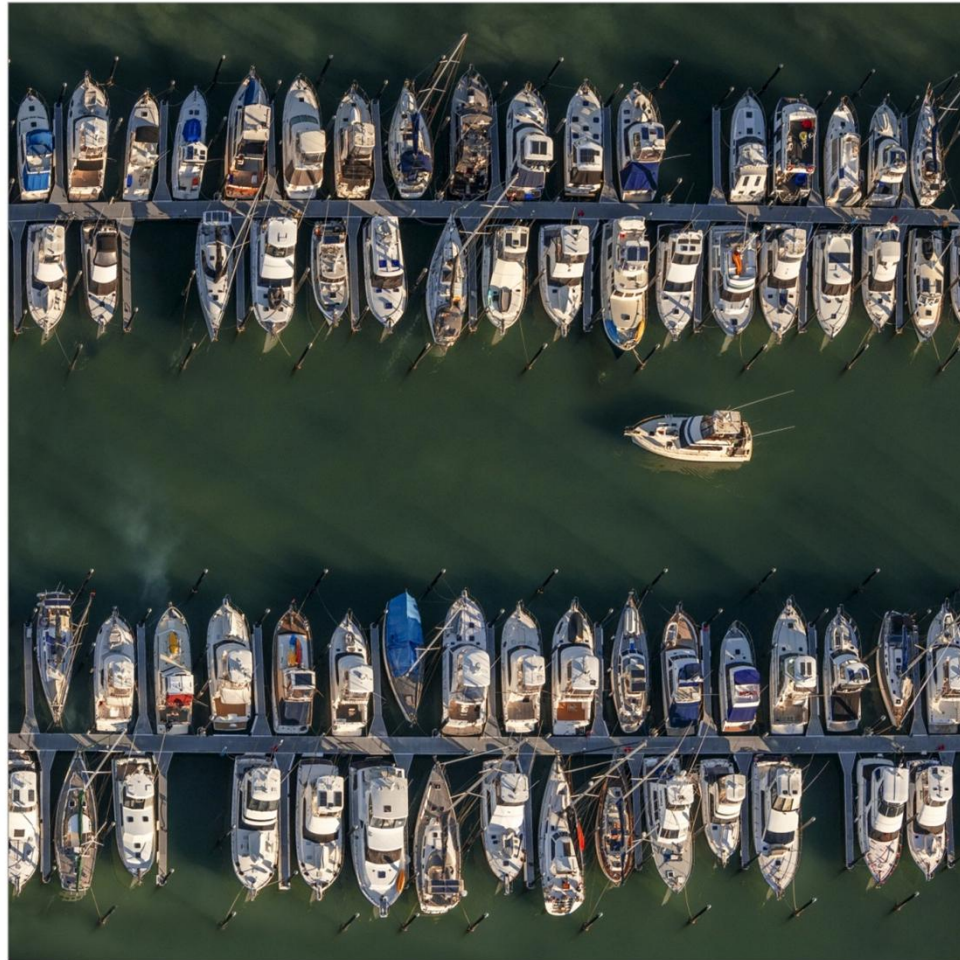
- Balanced composition based on natural elements
- Colour reflects those in northern Australia
- Technically strong
- Several potential interpretations
- Variation of a “standard” aerial taken in northern WA. Not unique



Low oblique: Horizon not visible

Standard landscape principles

- Does it draw the viewer into the scene and keep you there
- Is it sharp where it needs to be?
- Is the composition balanced both from and element, saturation and tonal perspective?
- Does it generate a response?



Vertical Urban

- Technically strong.
- The single boat plays a significant role in the composition. It connects the two wharves

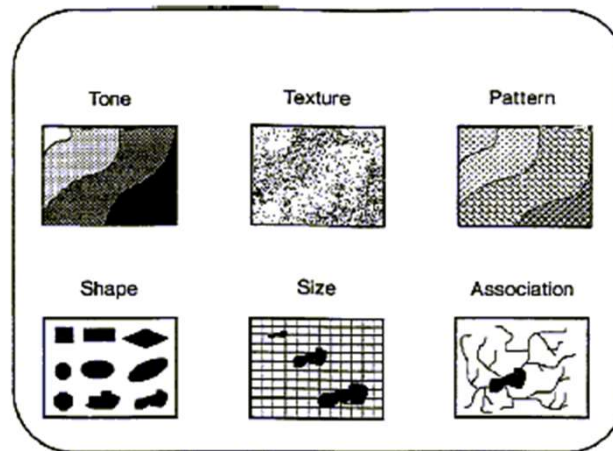


Vertical Urban

- Technically strong.
- Composition both complex and simple. Roads around edge give breathing space
- Underlying gentle colour palette
- Very strong story which draws you in to see more
- Created emotive response

Abstract Aerials

Abstract aerial photographs do not rely on the objective subject matter, but rather use the fundamental design elements of: texture, pattern, shape balance, contrast and colour.



Use post processing techniques to emphasise these design elements

TEXTURE

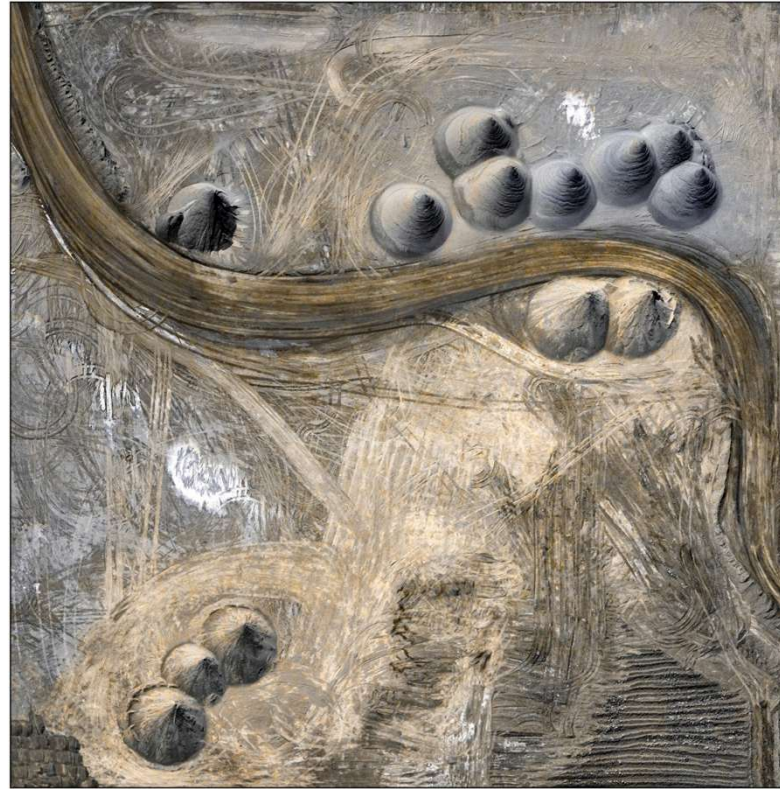
Texture adds a sense of touch to a photograph. As one of the 5 senses, touch adds dimensionality to our world.

Abstract aerial landscape photography plays with our innate sense of touch. It makes an abstract landscape rich with tactility, yet with no solid visual reference. This cultivates curiosity within a viewer, inviting them in for a closer look.

RAW



After Post Processing



- ACR
- Geometry
- Crop
- Distort
- Move white areas away from edges of frame
- Auto curves
- Mid tone contrast piles
- Mid tone contrast roads etc
- Selective Colour
- Detail extraction

PATTERN

The human eye is wired to seek out pattern. From urban sprawl to natural landscapes, pattern sorts the visual world into regulated posits of information. In abstract aerial landscape photography, curating pattern requires a holistic approach and helps create rhythm within an image. A lack of objective subject matter generally engenders a slower rhythm and a tranquil meditative photograph. The inclusion of brighter colours, sharp angles or even abrupt repetitive patterns can stimulate a faster rhythm and an energetic photograph.

RAW



After Post Processing



- ACR
- Crop
- Duplicate to generate pattern
- Distort to straighten lines
- Auto curves
- Selective mid tone contrast
- Selective colour
- Hue/Saturation to bring out blue area

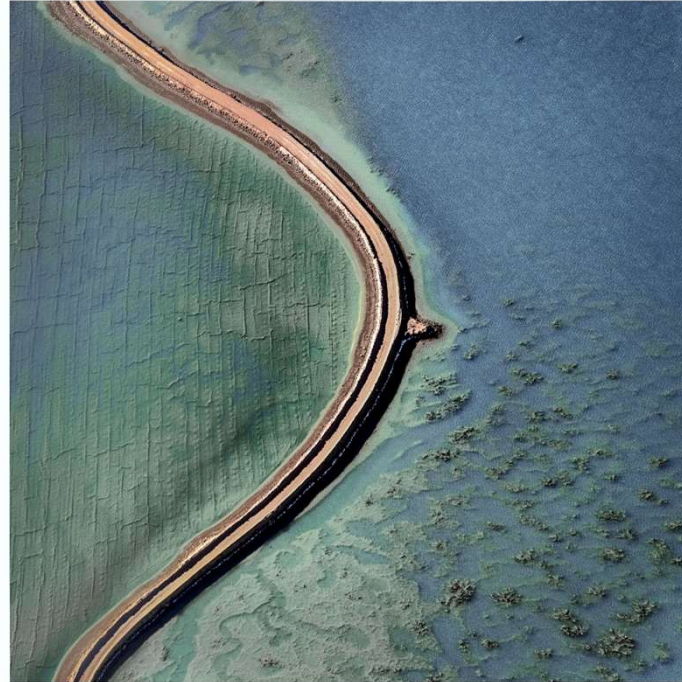
SHAPE

Shooting with the lens perpendicular to the landscape flattens a scene. It creates a study of the shapes that construct a plane of view. By taking advantage of naturally occurring features in the landscape (such as the line of a creek or curve of a sand dune), shapes are formed creating a path for the viewers eye to journey through the image.

RAW



After Post Processing



- ACR
- Crop
- Structural change to curve
- Hue/saturation
- Mid tone contrast

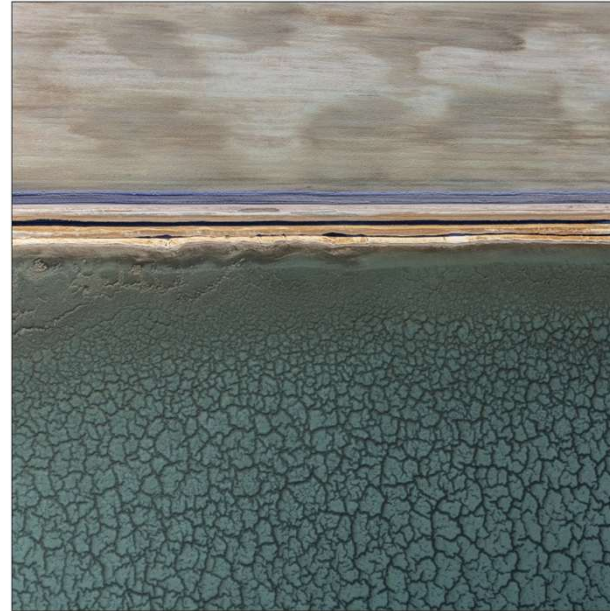
BALANCE

Balance is the manifestation of weight in a composition between space, forms, colours and contrast. Symmetry and visual similarities between concepts or subject matter all create a sense of balance. Balance can be instilled by the even distribution of an abstract aerial landscape and its features throughout a frame or balancing negative space with form and shape. Each part contributes to the sum of the image as a whole. For example, the presence of shadow within an abstract aerial landscape can help balance positive and negative space, allowing a scene to breathe.

RAW



After Post Processing



- ACR
- Rotate
- Straighten
- Crop to balance top and bottom
- Mid tone contrast curve
- Hue and saturation
- Mid tone contrast curve at join

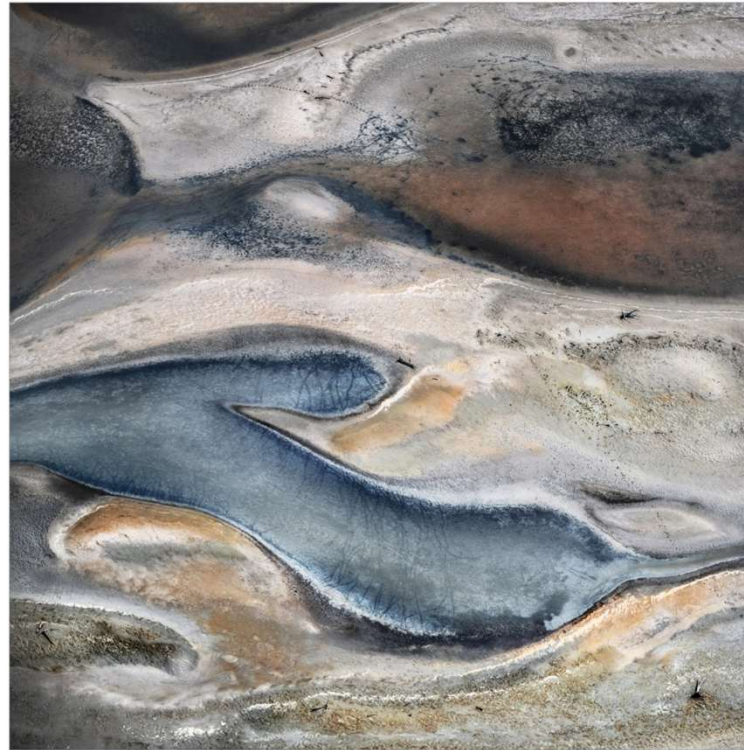
CONTRAST

Rough against smooth, light against dark, contrasting subject matter garners energy and variation within an image. Photographing the natural transition between the land and sea or capturing fields regulated by different colours are two examples of incorporating contrast into abstract aerial landscape photography.

RAW



After Post Processing



- ACR
- Crop
- Minor warp
- Auto curves
- Curves darken base
- Mid tone contrast (water)
- Selective colour
- High pass filter

RAW



After Post Processing

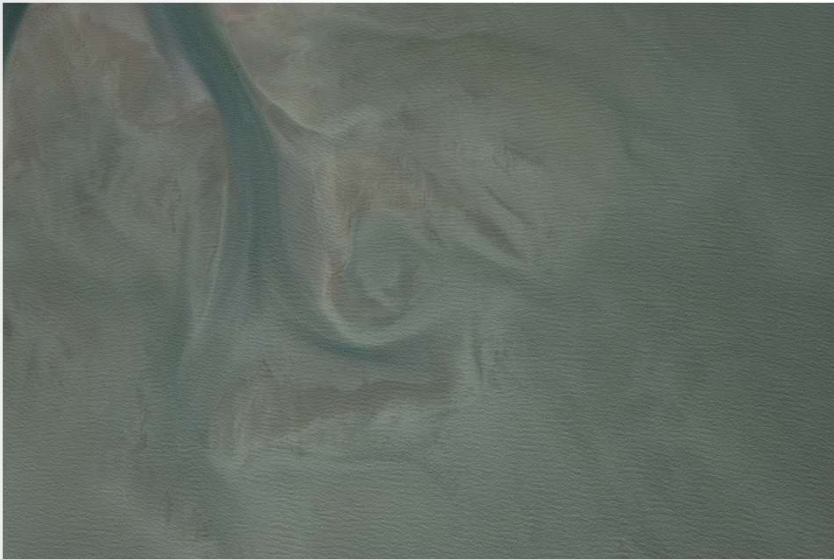


- ACR
- Geometry
- Auto curve
- Mid tone contrast (trunk)
- High pass filter to sharpen select areas
- Clone to remove distractions
- Hue/saturation

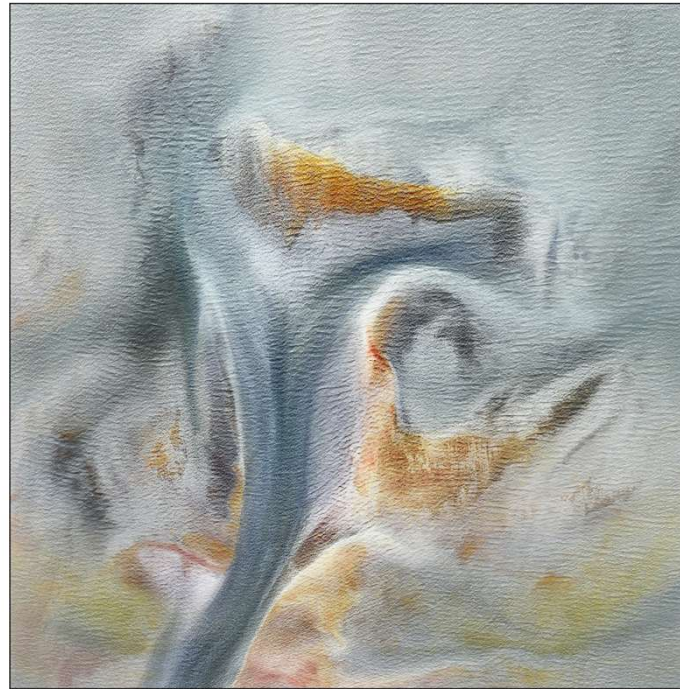
COLOUR

Abstract aerial landscape photography captures colours that go unnoticed from the ground. Some landscapes are awash with colour. Others are muted, creating a more subdued experience. By incorporating areas of bright colour within an abstract aerial landscape, a photographer gives visual priority to particular elements in an image over others.

RAW



After Post processing

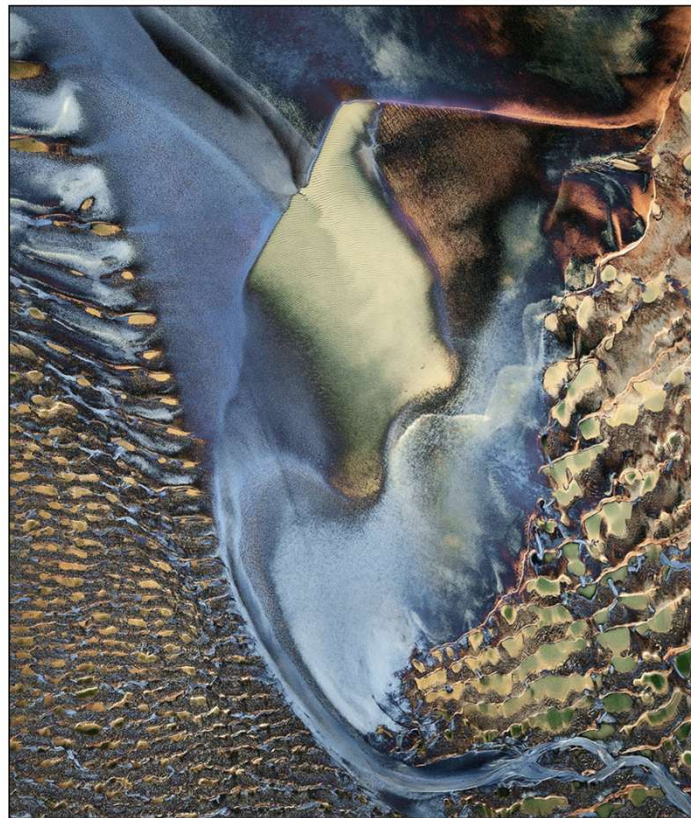


- ACR
- Invert vertically
- Crop
- Auto curves
- Colour fill
- Clone
- Selective Colour
- Hue/Saturation

Raw



After Post Processing



- ACR
- Crop
- Distort for elements into corners of frame
- Auto curves for colour
- Mid tone contrast curve
- Hue/saturation
- Invert colour

Some of my favourite Aerials

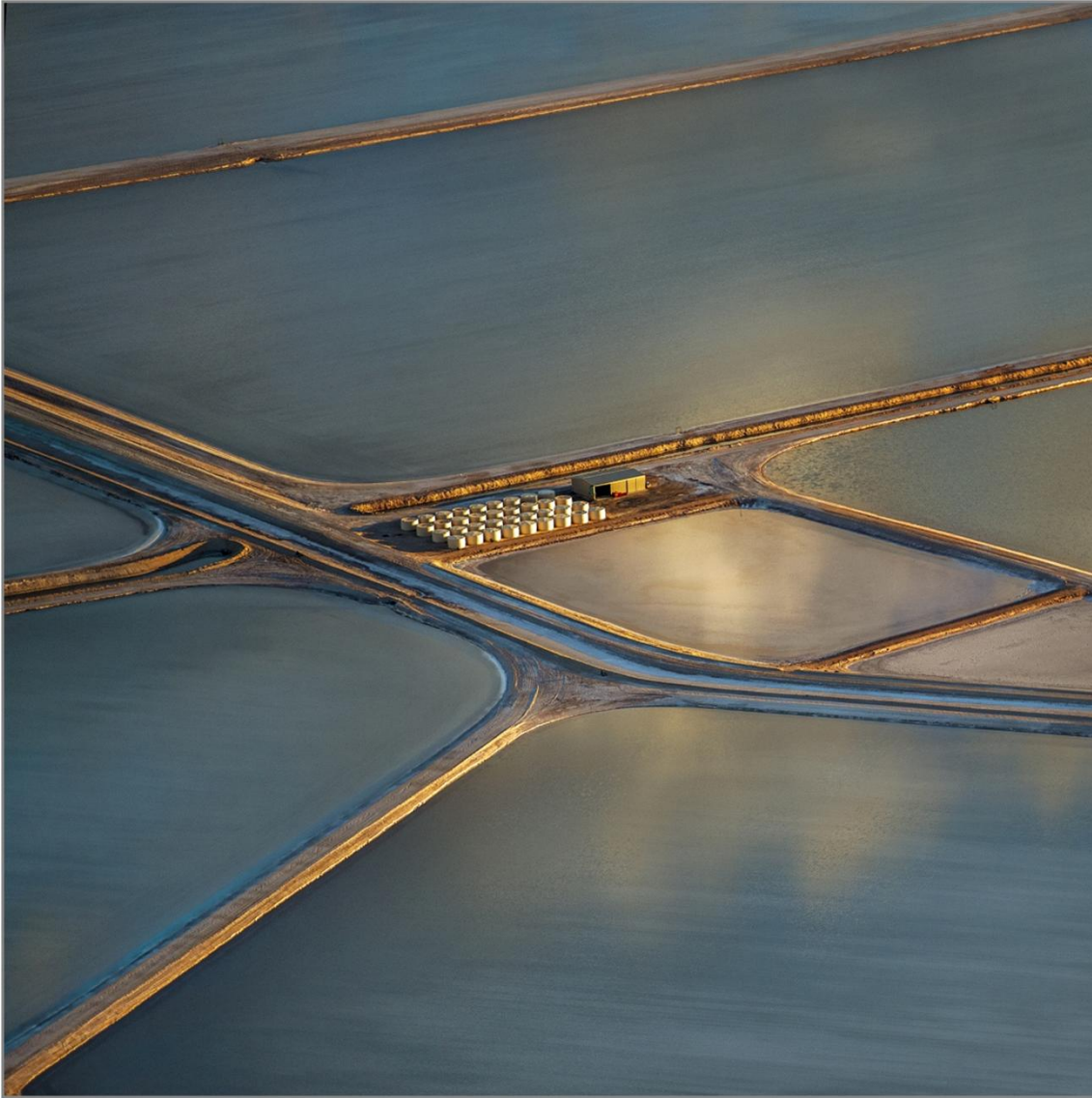
How I Shoot my Aerials

- From a plane or helicopter, preferably with doors off. At least through open window
- Typically 2,000ft, but sometimes higher. Usually not much lower as movement becomes an issue
- Two Nikon cameras: one with 70-200mm f/2.8 lens, the other 24-70mm f/2.8 lens. No changing of lenses or memory cards during flight
- Shutter speed at least 1/2000s or faster. I aim for about 1/3000s with telephoto lens. f/4, ISO the lowest that works
- Auto focus, but sometimes manual focus is required
- Post production in Adobe Camera Raw, followed by Photoshop 23 to avoid AI



Salt Works Shark Bay

- Composition: lines and shapes, patterns, texture and perspective,
- Balanced
- Colour and Tone: colour palette, contrast, saturation
- Technical quality: sharpness and focus, balanced exposure, colour accuracy
- Abstraction (?): identifiable landmarks or objects, emotional impact, interpretation



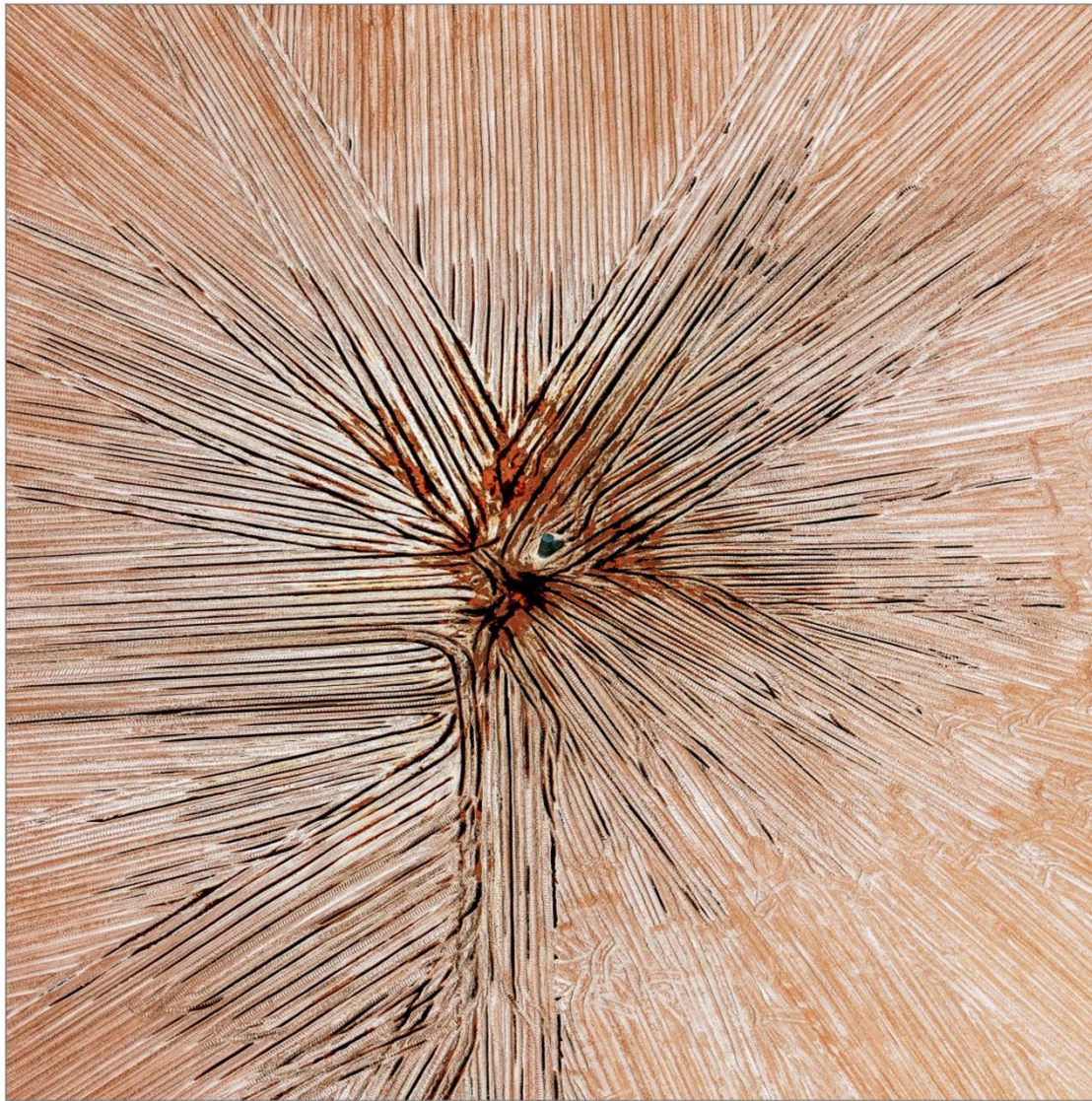
Salt Works Shark Bay

- Balanced composition based on man made elements. Use of diagonal lines, into corners
- Use of complementary colours
- Softness of the water adds a sense of peace to the image
- Late afternoon lighting adds impact and directs and holds the eye
- Technically strong
- Not unique



Salt Lake, west of Kalgoorlie

- Strong use of curves and intersecting lines to create visual interest
- Repeating patterns adds complexity
- Neutral colour palette adds a peacefulness interrupted by dashes of red.
- Texture of salt lake surface adds interest
- Open to interpretation, makes you ask what is it?



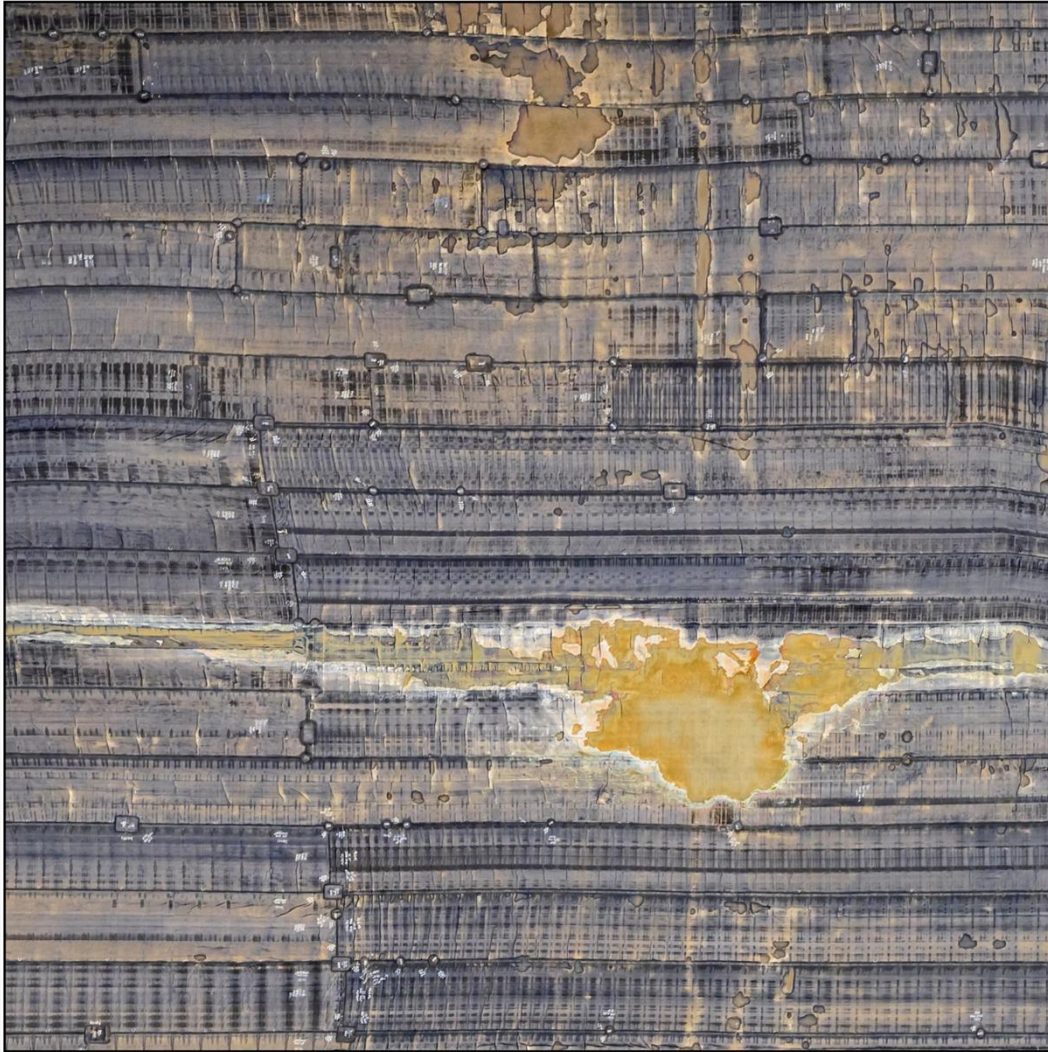
Residue Area, Bauxite Facility

- Strong use of lines to create visual interest and direct eye to centre.
- Eye is held at centre by selective increased contrast and saturation
- Repeating patterns adds complexity
- Simple neutral colour palette interrupted by dashes of red.
- Industrial facility, frequent subject for aerials



Salt Lake, west of Kalgoorlie

- Unusual in that you don't see many mono aerials
- Strong use of lines and tones to create visual interest and direct eye to centre.
- Texture plays a significant role
- Evokes a sense of confusion, and foreboding. A storm brewing or a shark circling.



Mining Facility, Residue Area

- Industrial facility, frequent subject for aerials, but different perspective
- Strong use of lines to create visual interest and texture
- Your eye is directed to the lower thirds intersection to the yellow liquid by selective contrast and saturation
- Simple neutral colour palette of yellow and blue, opposites on colour wheel



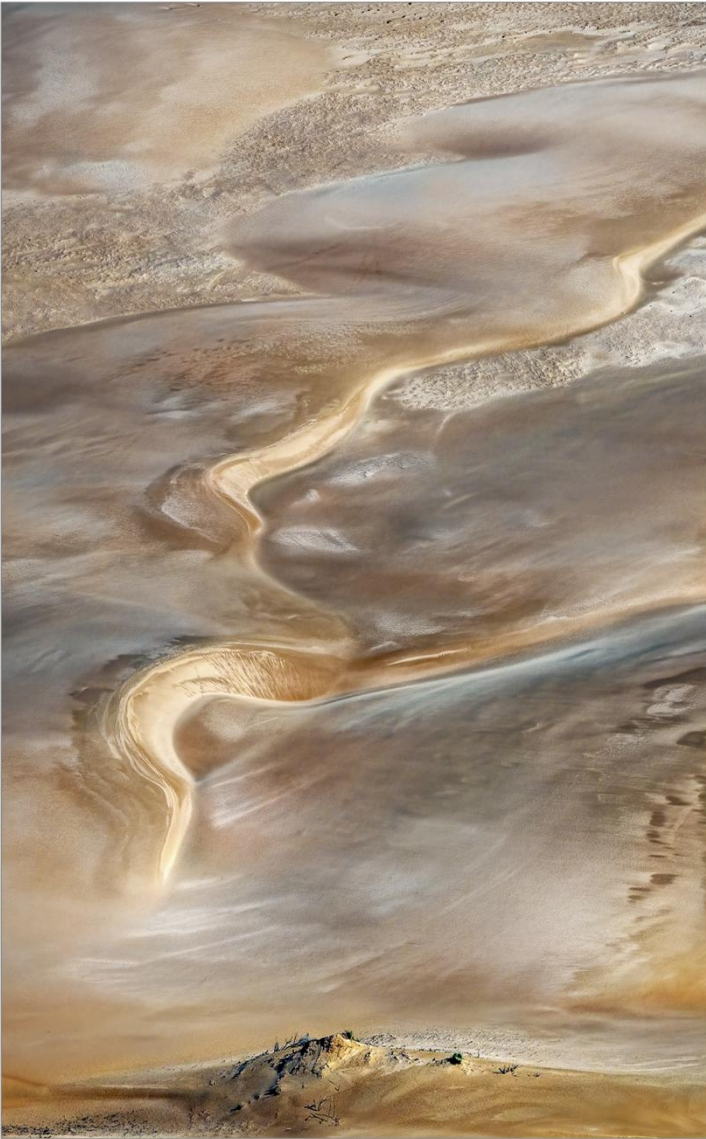
Residue Area, Mining Facility

- Strong use of lines and colour to create visual interest
- Repeating patterns and texture adds complexity
- Industrial facility, frequent subject for aerals, but again a different perspective
- Strong consistent story. Use of red evokes fire and danger



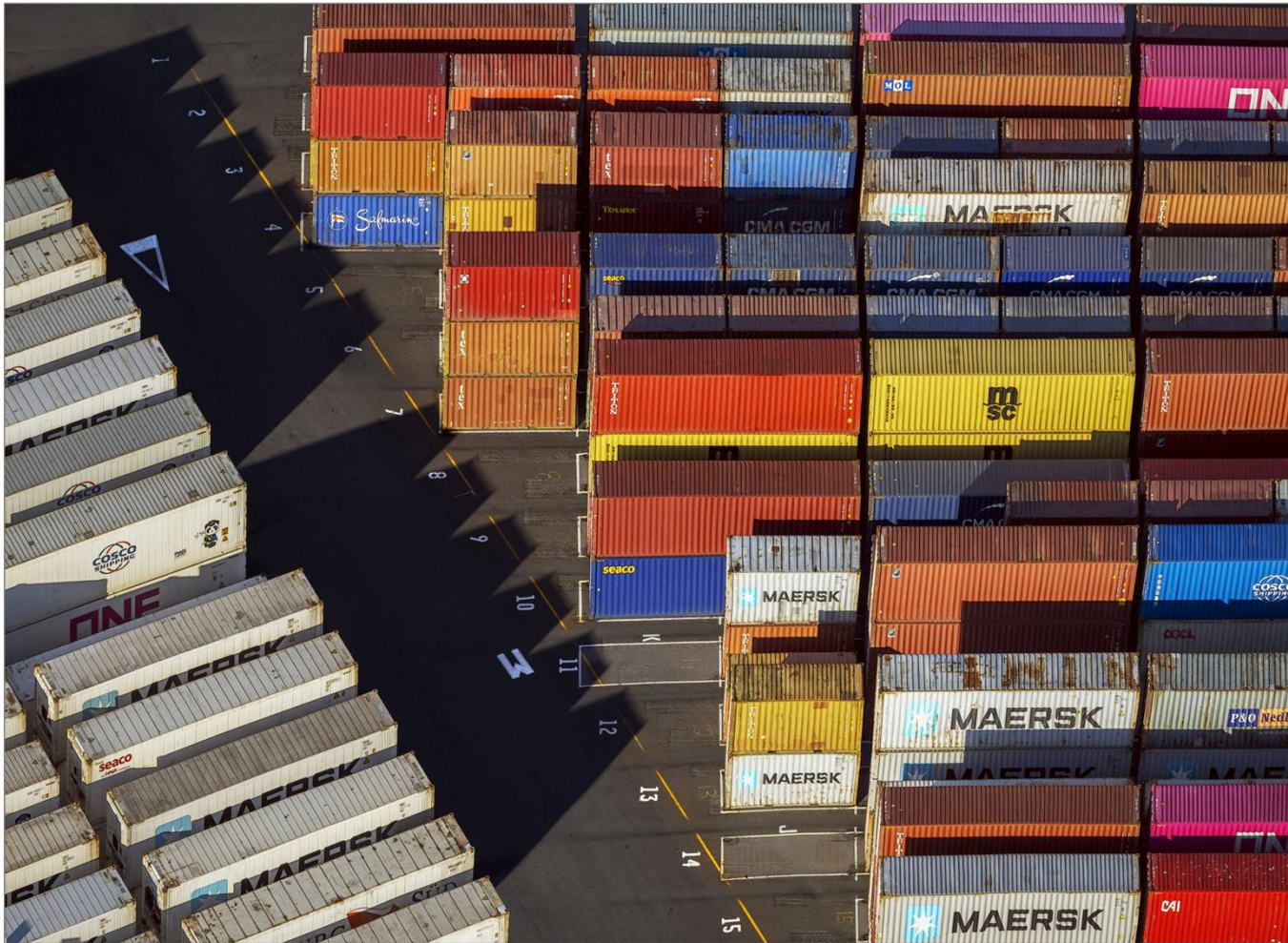
Esperance Port Facility

- Strong use of lines and colour to create visual interest
- Repeating patterns adds complexity
- Almost appears vertical.



Sand Dunes Shark Bay

- Pastel colour palette gives ethereal feel
- Strong use of curves, texture and colour to create visual interest
- Repeating patterns adds complexity
- Almost appears vertical



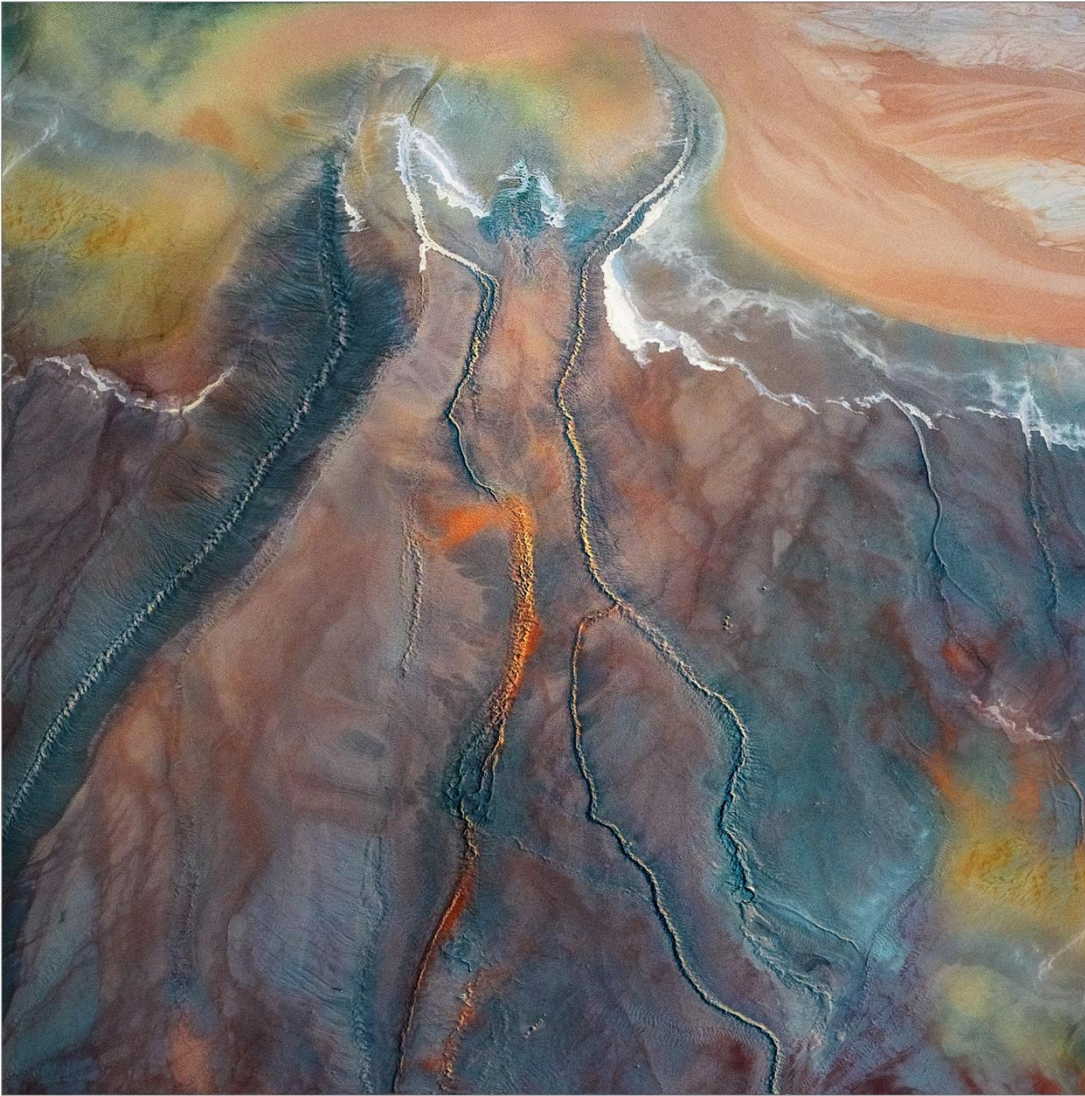
Port Facility New Zealand

- Strong use of horizontal and diagonal lines create visual interest
- Repeating and colour patterns adds complexity



Artesian Wells, west Of Kalgoorlie

- Simple colour palette of oranges and blues
- Implied diagonal and texture adds interest
- Sense of warm morning or evening light
- Placement within frame gives balance to composition.



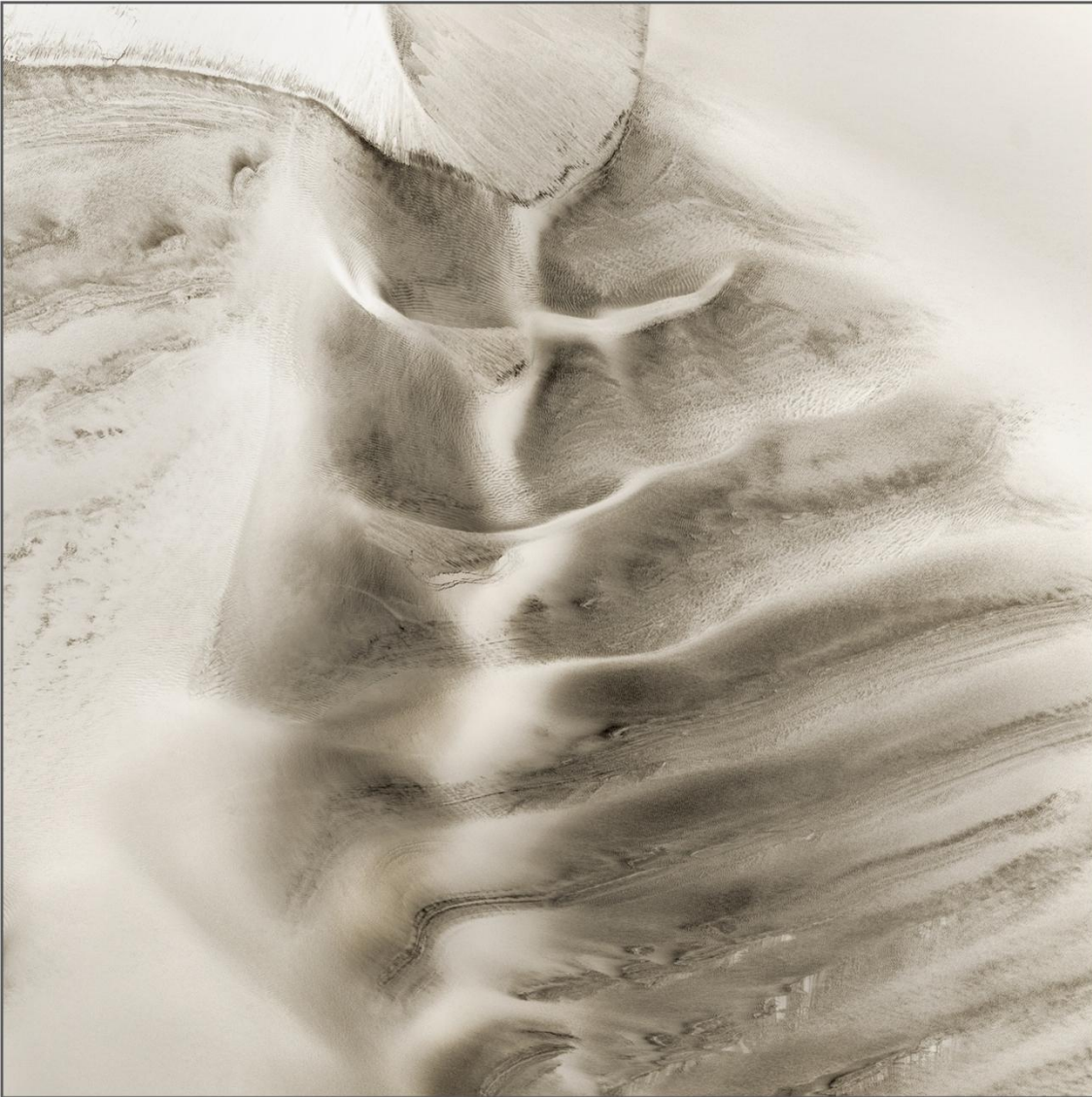
Residue Area, Kalgoorlie

- Strong use of colour and texture to add interest.
- Composition suggest an angel or person
- Selective saturation and contrast draw the viewer's eye into frame



Lake Eyre

- Strong use of colour.
- Red evokes a sense of anger
- Horizontal and diagonal lines and to create visual interest
- Repeating and colour patterns adds complexity



Skeleton Coast, Namibia

- Reminds me of human skeleton
- Horizontal and vertical lines to create visual interest
- Contrast between rough and smooth



Gypsum Works, Wheatbelt

- Simple colour palette
- Strong use of texture
- Reminds me of human lungs
- Divided into quarters