

*Contributors' Picks*

# Minimalist

*Underwater Photography*

Text and photos by John A. Ares, Rico Besserlich, Sheryl Checkman, Larry Cohen, Anita George-Ares, Kate Jonker, Matthew Meier, Brandi Mueller, Gary Rose, Michael Rothschild and Olga Torrey

**We asked our contributors what their favorite minimalist underwater photos were and they returned with a creative mix of macro, wide-angle and close-up abstract images in color and black and white. Here, *X-Ray Mag* contributors share their favorite images from the tropical waters of Fiji, French Polynesia, Chuuk, the Solomon Islands, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Egyptian Red Sea, the Bahamas, Cuba, the Cayman Islands, Mexico's Yucatán and Revillagigedo Islands, Bonaire and Honduras to the temperate waters of South Africa and the US East Coast.**







Photo 1. (above) Using shallow depth of field and contrasting negative space to highlight a hairy shrimp (*Phycocaris simulans*) in Anilao, Philippines. Gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, 60mm macro lens with +15 diopter, Sea&Sea housing, Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/22, 1/200s



Photo 3. (above) Using negative space and a smaller subject—a two-bar anemone clownfish (*Amphiprion bicinctus*)—in the frame. Red Sea, Egypt. Gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens, Sea&Sea housing, Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes. Exposure: ISO 160, f/11, 1/200s

Photo 4. (previous page) Using black and white to create a minimalist image of a ghost nudibranch (*Lecithophorus capensis*) at Gordon's Bay, South Africa. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, Nikkor 105mm macro lens, Isotta housing, single Inon Z240 strobe. Exposure: ISO 64, f/22, 1/200s



Photo 2. (left) Using a snoot to isolate a cape dorid (*Hypselodoris capensis*) at Gordon's Bay, South Africa. Gear: Canon EOS R5 camera, Canon RF 35mm macro lens, Marelux housing, Inon Z240 strobe with Marelux SOFT Pro Snoot. Exposure: ISO 100, f/22, 1/200s

Photo 5. (below) Using shallow depth of field to blur the background and isolate a cape dorid (*Hypselodoris capensis*) at Gordon's Bay, South Africa. This photo shows how the same subject can be photographed in different ways. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, Nikkor 105mm macro lens, Isotta housing, two Inon Z240 strobes. Exposure: ISO 64, f/14, 1/250s

## Simple & Clean Compositions

Text and photos by Kate Jonker

Minimalism in underwater photography is a way of capturing the beauty and details of a subject by using simple and clean compositions. This technique draws the viewer's attention to the subject being photographed by removing distractions in the frame.

One way to achieve minimalism in underwater photography is by using a shallow depth of field. By focusing on the subject and blurring the background and foreground, we remove distractions and direct the viewer's eye towards the subject. (See Photo 1 and 5.)

Another technique to create minimalist underwater photos is by using a snoot. A snoot is a lighting device that only illuminates the subject, resulting in a black background that highlights the subject's colours and details. (See Photo 2.)

Negative space is another way to achieve a minimalist look in underwater photography. By photographing a single subject against a



contrasting-coloured background, the subject becomes the star of the show and is emphasised against the empty space. (See Photo 3.)

Converting images to black and white can also result in attractive minimalist photos, especially if the image has fine details that are highlighted against a black background.

(See Photo 4 on previous page.)

By using shallow depth of field, snooting, negative space and contrasting colours, underwater photographers can create stunning and impactful minimalist images that showcase the beauty and wonders of our underwater world. Visit: [katejonker.com](http://katejonker.com)





Photo 3. (left) Green tunicate. Gear: Canon Rebel SL1 camera, Canon 60mm f/2.8 USM macro lens, Ikelite housing, twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/160s

Photo 4. (bottom left) Colonial tunicate. Gear: Canon Rebel T1i camera, Canon 100mm f/2.8 USM macro lens, Ikelite housing, twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 400, f/22, 1/160s

Photo 5. (below) Nudibranch. Gear: Canon Rebel T1i camera, Canon 100mm f/2.8 USM macro lens, Ikelite housing, twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 400, f/22, 1/60s

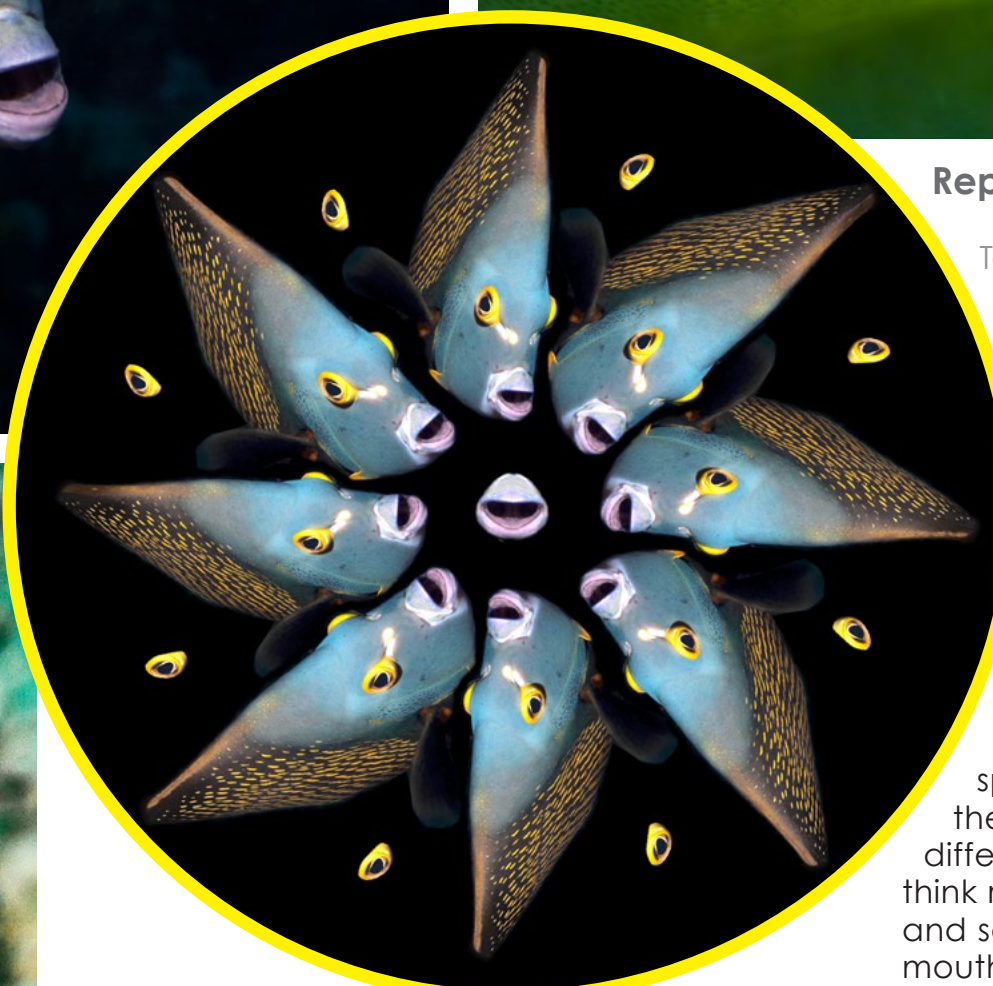


Photo 1. (top left) French angelfish. Gear: Canon 10D camera, 50mm Sigma macro lens, Ikelite housing, twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/160s

Photo 2. (above) Angelfish composite using Photoshop. Gear: Canon 10D camera, 50mm Sigma macro lens, Ikelite housing, twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/160s

### Repetition

Text and photos by John A. Ares

One of the characteristics of a minimalist photo is repetition. Images of underwater creatures frequently display repetitive elements.

Photos 1 and 2 show two versions of the same French angelfish shot in Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles. Photo 1 is minimalist because the angelfish is sufficiently isolated with a lot of negative space. However, I thought the angelfish also deserved a different treatment. In Photo 2, I think repeating the whole image and some of its distinctive parts (eyes and mouth) makes for a stronger, more intriguing image while still being minimalist.

The green tunicate in Photo 3 is monochromatic and has a dominating, oval character. The image was taken in Dumaguete, Philippines.

Photo 4 is an image of a colonial tunicate. The tiny, black individuals are called zooids. Repetition of the zooid elements is suggested in



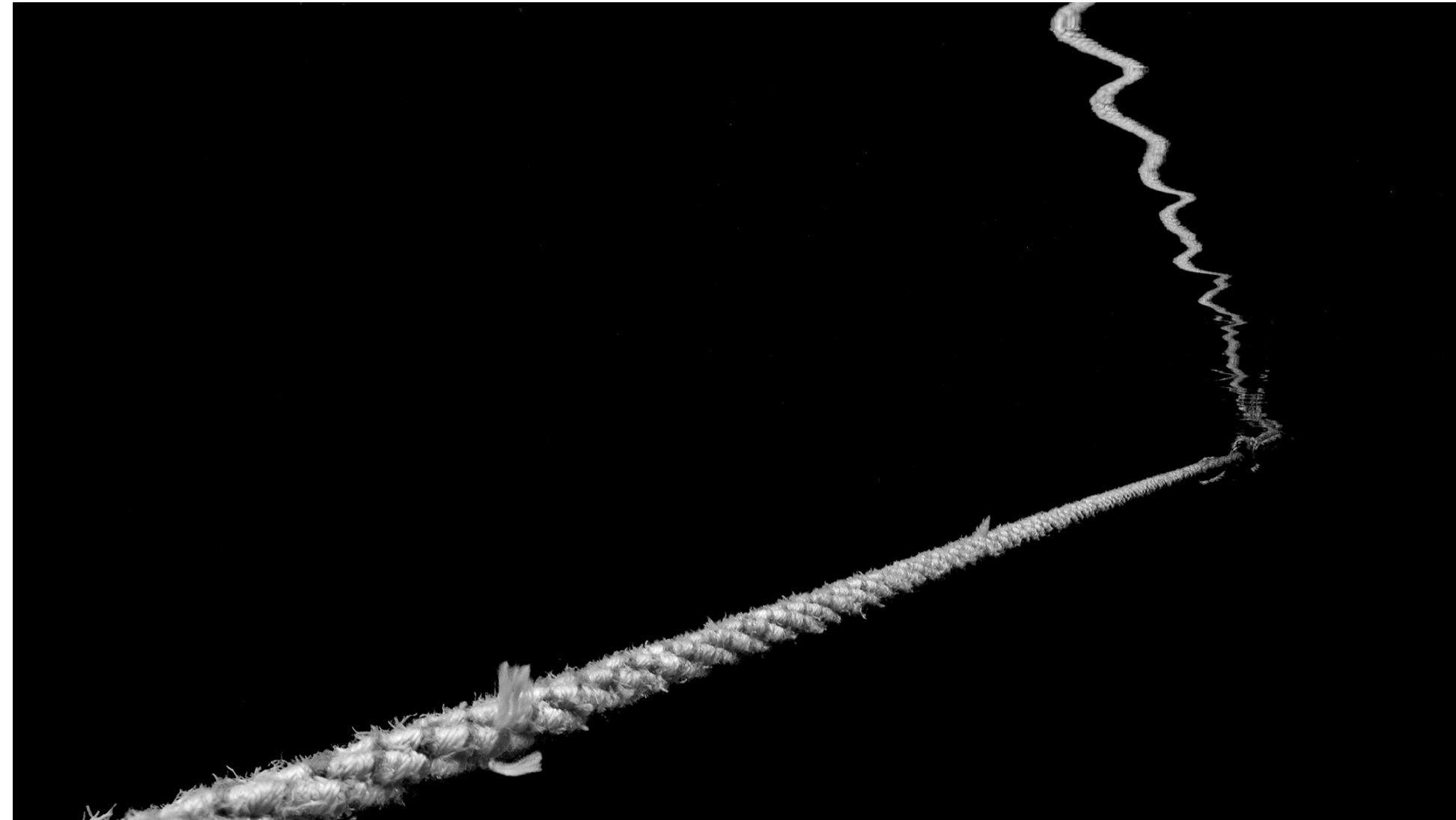
the sand background. The image was taken in Puerto Galera, Philippines.

The nudibranch, *Phyllodesmium rudmani* (Photo 5), closely mimics the octocoral that it eats. The white rhinophores (frontal sensory organs) definitively identify this as a nudibranch. This is often a difficult creature to spot among the octocorals. The image was taken in Puerto Galera, Philippines. Visit: [JohnAres.com](http://JohnAres.com)





Photo 2. (below) Anchor rope with reflection, Hurghada, Red Sea, Egypt. Gear: Canon 7D camera, Sigma 10-20mm lens, Easydive housing, two Sea&Sea YS110a strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/160s



## Minimalistic Images

Text by Rico Besserdich

I always like to explore macro motifs and photograph them with a very shallow depth of field, such as the soft coral in Photo 1. This helps show “minimalism” in the resulting image. Photo 2 shows an anchor rope reflecting itself on the water’s surface. I do often enjoy spending some minutes in extremely shallow water after the main dive is done. The simplest objects such as a rope can still serve as an interesting subject to photograph. Photo 3 shows sunrays passing through the water. I could watch them forever! Visit: [mavipho.com](http://mavipho.com)

Photo 1. (right) Soft coral, Anilao, Philippines. Gear: Canon 40D camera, Canon 60mm macro lens, Ikelite housing, two Sea&Sea YS110a strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/3.5, 1/200s

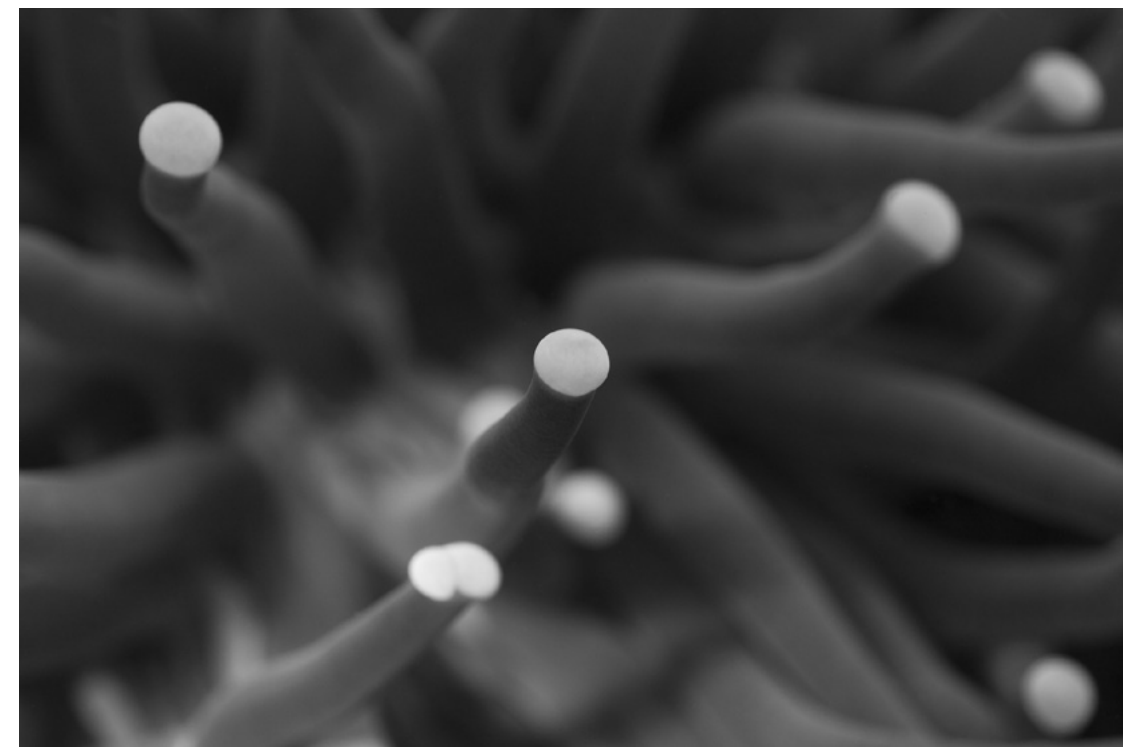
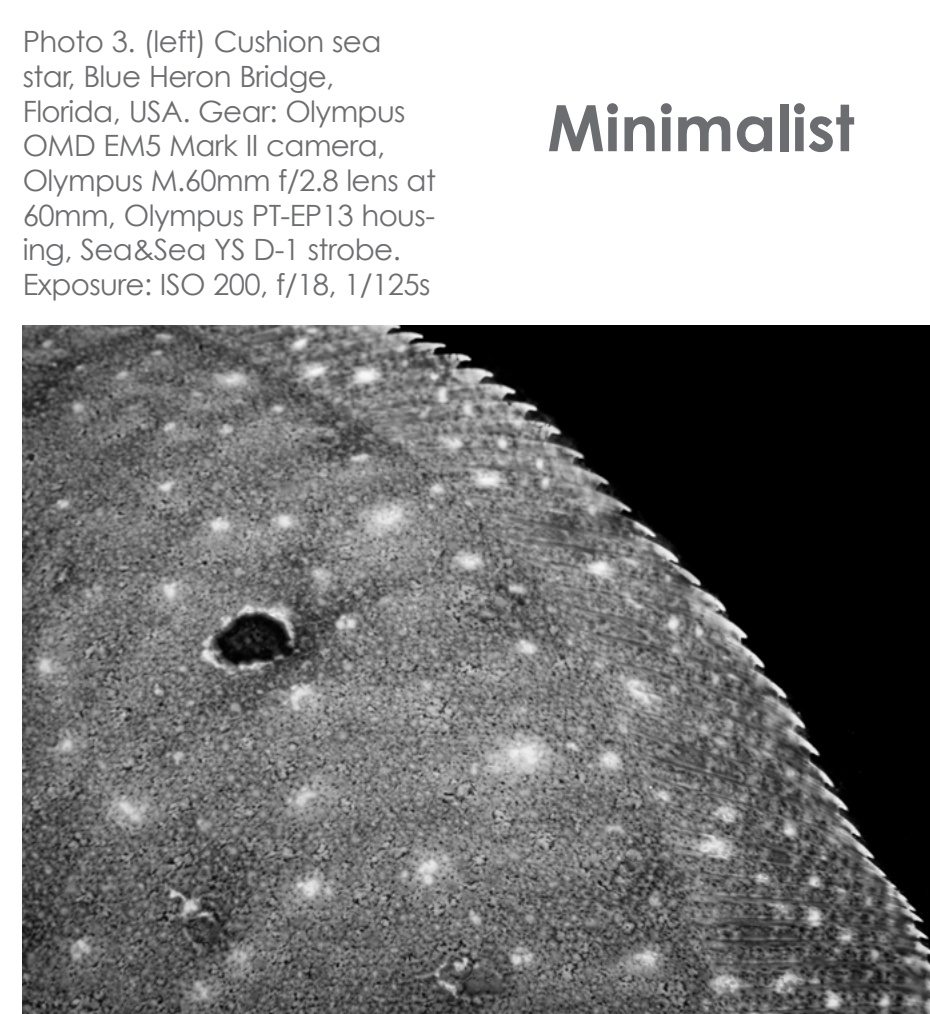


Photo 3. Sunrays, Sharm El Sheikh, Red Sea, Egypt. Gear: Canon 7D camera, Canon 10-22mm lens, Easydive housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 100, f/8, 1/125s







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Photo 3. (left) Cushion sea star, Blue Heron Bridge, Florida, USA. Gear: Olympus OMD EM5 Mark II camera, Olympus M.60mm f/2.8 lens at 60mm, Olympus PT-EP13 housing, Sea&Sea YS D-1 strobe. Exposure: ISO 200, f/18, 1/125s

Photo 2. (right) Knobby sea rods, Sponges Wall, Roatan, Honduras. Gear: Olympus OMD EM5 Mark II camera, Olympus M.60mm f/2.8 lens at 60mm, Olympus PT-EP13 housing, Sea&Sea YS D-1 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s; Photo 4. (upper right) Flounder, Blue Heron Bridge, Florida, USA. Gear: Olympus OMD EM5 Mark II camera, Olympus M.60mm f/2.8 lens at 60mm, Olympus PT-EP13 housing, Sea&Sea YS D-1 strobe. Exposure: ISO 200, f/16, 1/125s



Photo 1. (above) Diver and raindrops, Nabs Dive Wall, Roatan, Honduras. Gear: Olympus OMD EM5 Mark II camera, Olympus M.9-18mm f/4.0-5.6 lens at 18mm, Olympus PT-EP13 housing, Sea&Sea YS D-1 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/100s

### Less is More

Text and photos by Sheryl Checkman

As the saying goes, less is more. Sometimes, the less you include in a photograph, the stronger the composition and the more impactful the image—such as the silhouette against a simple background in Photo 1. As I was surfacing after a dive on Nabs Dive Wall in Roatan, I looked up to see that it was pouring on the surface. Above me, another diver was also surfacing, and her silhouette against the raindrop-textured blue water told the story.

Isolating texture, shape, line and color can also tell a minimalist story (see Photo 2). When diving on Sponges Wall, also in Roatan, I encountered some knobby sea rods (a form

of gorgonian). I chose to focus tight on the strong vertical lines of the sea rods with their knobby texture, against a dark background, leaving out the distractions of its surroundings.

The tight crop in Photo 3 of the bright orange cushion sea star, which I found at Blue Heron Bridge in Florida, highlights the texture and diagonal lines on the sea star's surface and legs. The orange color against the dark background makes this composition pop.

I encountered the flounder in Photo 4 hiding in the sand, also at Blue Heron Bridge. I decided to convert the image to black and white in order to highlight the diagonal composition, contrasting values of gray with the white spots in its body, and the one black dot of its eye juxtaposed with the black background. Visit: [Instagram.com/sherylcheckman](https://www.instagram.com/sherylcheckman)



# feature

Photo 3. (right)  
Queen parrotfish, Bay  
of Pigs, Cuba. Gear:  
Olympus OM-D E-M1  
camera, Olympus  
60mm macro lens,  
Aquatica housing,  
Sea&Sea YS-D1  
stobes. Exposure: ISO  
200, f/5.6, 1/40s

Photo 4. (far right)  
Bigeye red snapper,  
Dahab, Egypt. Gear:  
Olympus E-520  
camera, Olympus  
50mm macro lens,  
Olympus housing,  
Sea&Sea YS-01  
stobes. Exposure: ISO  
100, f/5.6, 1/160s

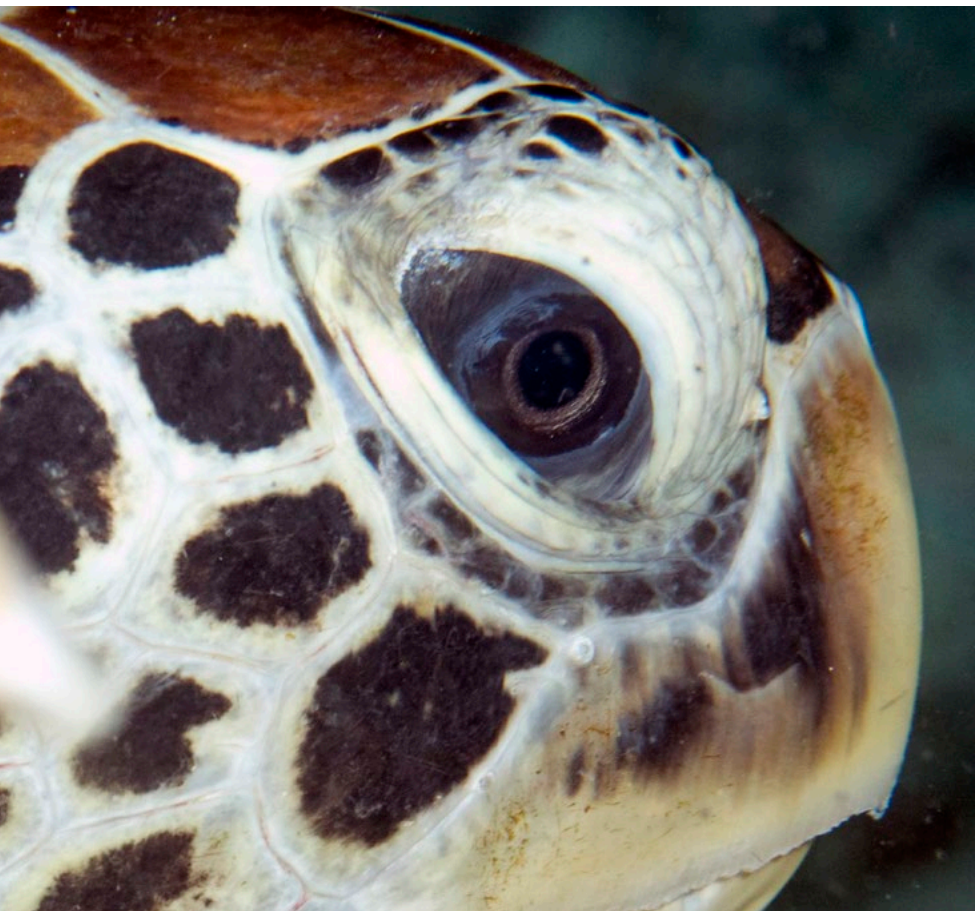


Photo 1. Sea turtle, Pom Pom Island, Malaysia. Gear: Olympus OM-D E-M1 camera, Olympus 60mm macro lens, Aquatica housing, Sea&Sea YS-D1 stobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/160s

## Minimalist Eye

Text and Photos by Larry Cohen

When underwater, I get sensory overload. There is so much to see, with different shapes and colors swimming around me in the current. My goal is to minimize the vast amount of visual stimulation into a simple image. One subject I am fascinated with is the eye. It does not matter if the subject is human or marine life; I want the viewer of my images to look into the eyes of my photo's subject. This is especially true when encountering a large subject with a macro lens on my camera.

I decided to do a late afternoon dive on the house reef the first day of arriving at Pom Pom Island Resort in Malaysia. Expecting to see an assortment of tiny creatures, I decided to use my Olympus 60mm macro

lens. So, of course, an enormous sea turtle greeted us. Having the wrong lens for this massive animal, I decided to capture an image of the eye (Photo 1). On the same dive, I encountered a giant blue-spotted stingray. So, I did another close-up (Photo 2).

When diving near the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, I used my macro lens on the day's second dive. While looking for small marine life, I stumbled across the largest queen parrotfish I ever saw. Again, I captured a close-up of the eye (Photo 3).

While diving off Dahab in Egypt, one of my strobe arms broke. So, I decided to shoot macro and use one strobe above my port. I spotted a bigeye red snapper under a ledge (Photo 4). Using one strobe created a strong shadow that added to the minimalistic composition. Visit: [liquidimagesuw.com](http://liquidimagesuw.com)



Photo 2. Blue-spotted stingray, Pom Pom Island, Malaysia. Gear: Olympus OM-D E-M1 camera, Olympus 60mm macro lens, Aquatica housing, Sea&Sea YS-D1 stobes. Exposure: ISO 400, f/8, 1/160s





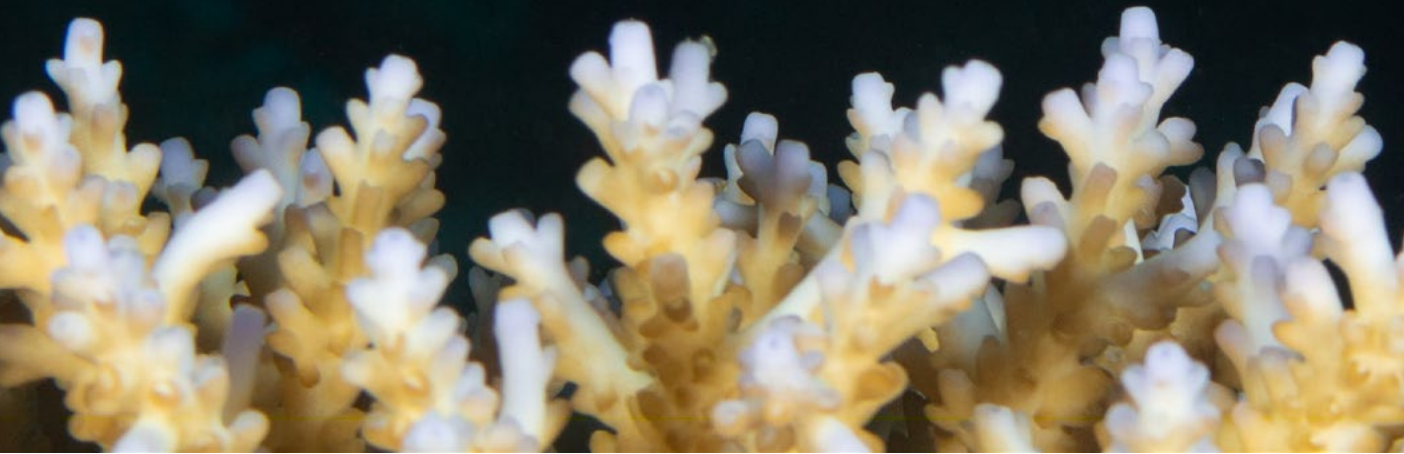


Photo 4. (above) Reticulated dascyllus, Taveuni Island, Fiji. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS STM lens, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS 161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/200s

Photo 2. (right) Blacktip sharks, Moorea Island, French Polynesia. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-5.6 IS STM lens, available light. Exposure: ISO 400, f/22, 1/200s



ANITA GEORGE-ARES



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## Minimalist

Photo 1 (left). River otter, Staten Island Zoo, New York City, USA. Gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Sigma Sport DG OS HSM 70-200mm f/2.8 D lens, available light. Exposure: ISO 2000, f/2.8, 1/1000s

Photo 3 (below). Anemone tentacles, Viti Levu Island, Fiji. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 60mm f/2.8 macro USM lens, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS 161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/160s

### Isolation

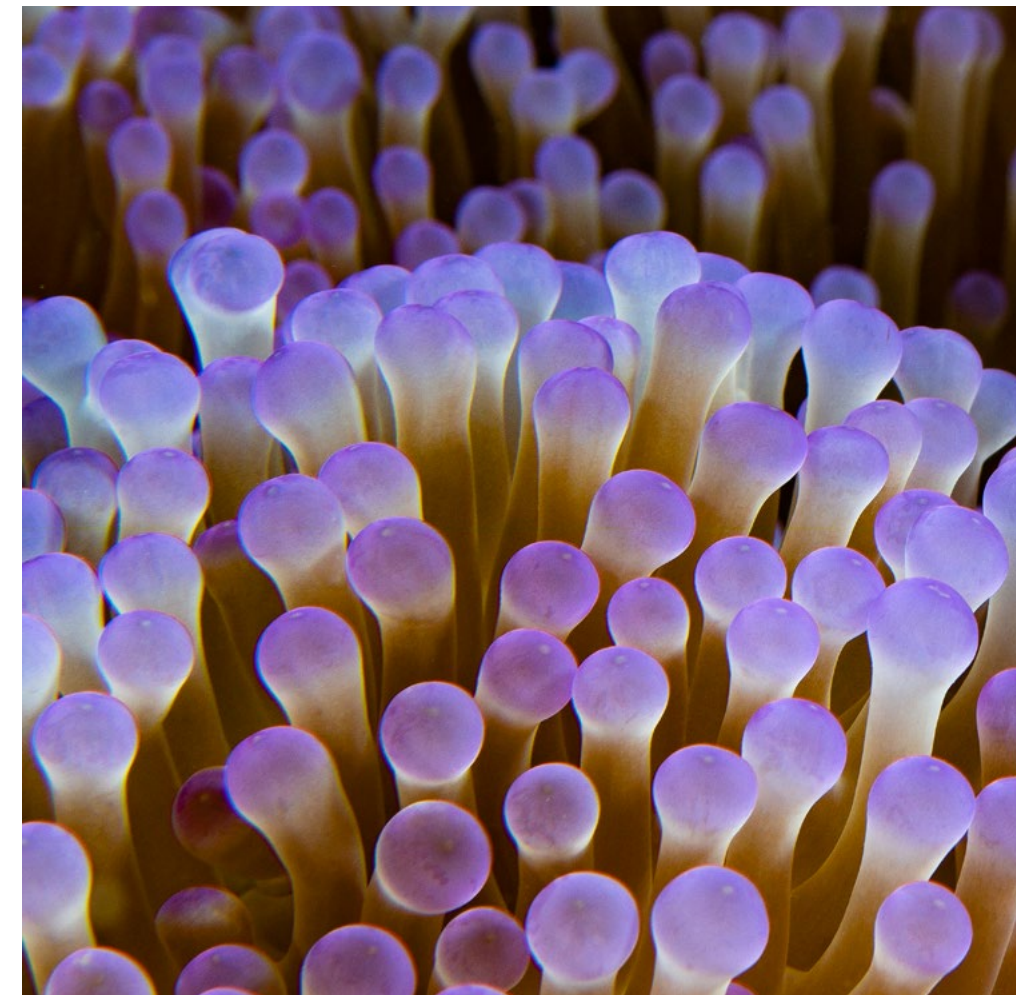
Text and photos by Anita George-Ares

Staten Island Zoo is home to a pair of playful river otters. Knowing that I would unlikely be able to photograph a river otter underwater, I took the image of the otter (Photo 1) by shooting through a glass wall in a dimly lit tunnel that was part of the otter enclosure. The negative space isolates the otter and the diagonal trail of bubbles rising from the otter's coat.

Shark Sandbank, located in nearshore Moorea, is popular with swimmers and snorkelers. Pink whiprays and juvenile blacktip sharks circle unceasingly in the shallow area. I chose this image (Photo 2) as an example of minimalism as the sharks are isolated in the center surrounded by dappled negative space. To improve the contrast and highlight the patterns of light on the sharks and sand bottom, I used Nix Silver Eflex Pro 2 and Adobe Photoshop CC 2018 to convert the image to black and white.

I photographed a beautiful purple anemone (Photo 3) while diving in Fiji. This image is an example of minimalism as there is the single element of tentacles with a predominant color of purple. The anemone appears to glow.

The image of the dascyllus hovering over the coral is another example of minimalism (Photo 4). The fish



ANITA GEORGE-ARES

is isolated in the water column, surrounded by black negative space. The blue color on the lips and fins of the fish provides a pop of color. Please visit: [facebook.com/profile.php?id=100016947967639](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100016947967639)



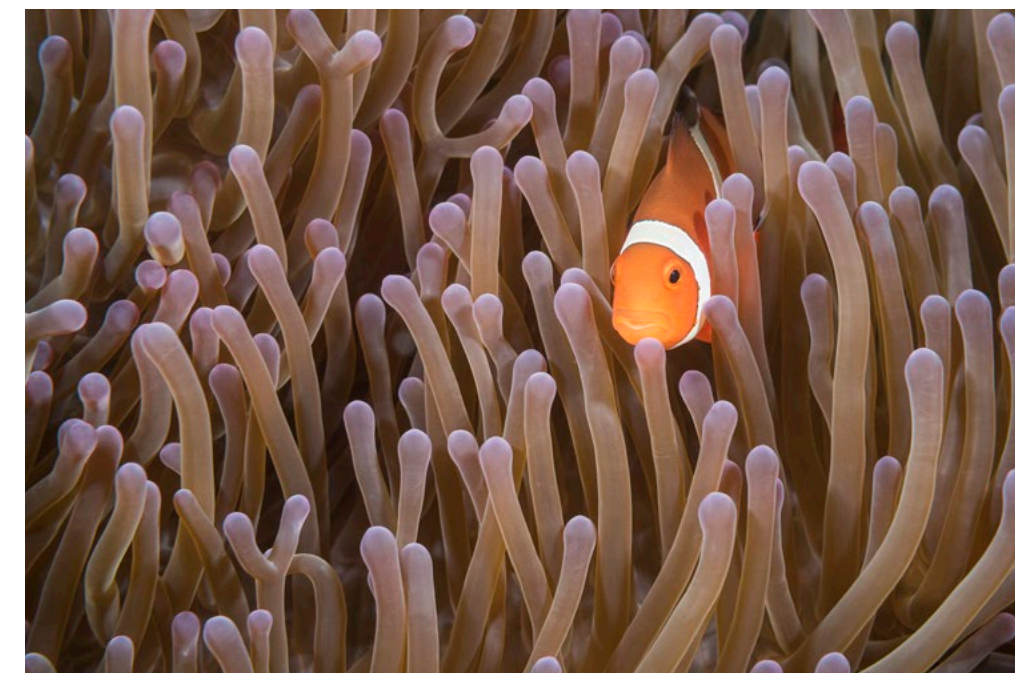




## Minimalist

Two blue tang fish swim in front of a pair of large sea rods, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles (left). Gear: Nikon D3 camera, Nikon 24-85mm lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/5.6, 1/40s

Looking down at a chevron manta ray swimming in blue water near the surface, San Benedicto Island, Revillagigedos Islands, Mexico (left). Gear: Nikon D810 camera, Sigma 15mm fisheye lens, Subal housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 200, f/7.1, 1/80s



False clown anemonefish in an anemone, Dumaguete, Philippines (above). Gear: Nikon D810 camera, Nikon 105mm macro lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/13, 1/125s



Detail view of a red crown-of-thorns sea star, Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands. Nikon D810 camera, Nikon 105mm macro lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes with snoots. Exposure: ISO 200, f/9, 1/200s

### Producing a Minimalist Feel

Text and photos by Matthew Meier

Minimalist: Less is more... saying a lot with very little, in a visual way. In searching for images to fit this topic, I found significantly more examples amongst my topside imagery than underwater. Still, I tried to select a variety of examples highlighting some of the different ways the term "minimalist" is defined—whether that is by isolating the subject, using a single element, utilizing a pop of color, showing lots of negative space, showcasing texture or contrasting textures and creating a silhouette or simple shapes with the composition. Whether you are shooting wide open spaces or creatively framing macro subjects, there are numerous ways to produce a minimalist feel. I am already thinking ahead to my next dive trip on how best to use some of these techniques to produce more compelling images. Visit: [MatthewMeierphoto.com](http://MatthewMeierphoto.com)



Caribbean reef shark swimming over the sandy bottom, viewed from above, Grand Bahama Island, the Bahamas (left). Gear: Nikon D3 camera, Nikon 24-85mm lens, Subal housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 400, f/8, 1/200s





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Photo 2. (left) Cenote Fire. After extensive rains, the waters of Cenote Car Wash in Mexico sometimes turn a fiery orange. Looking back through the cave exit into daylight, the cavern walls make a natural vignette and tree branches produce shadows streaking through the opening. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, Ikelite housing, ambient light. Exposure: ISO 2000, f/7.1, 1/80s



Photo 4. (far left) Orange, Raja Ampat, Indonesia. By removing the color saturation of the anemone in postproduction, the bright orange of a false clownfish stands out. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, Ikelite housing, dual Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/18, 1/200s

### Eliminating the Non-Essential

Text and photos by Brandi Mueller

There are many definitions of minimalism, including to live a life striving to only use what serves a purpose and to reduce clutter and waste. In art, it is often described as using lots of negative space, shapes, shadows and using few colors. Essentially, to eliminate the non-essential or unnecessary.

For me, minimalism in underwater photography refers to images with a very clear subject. It can be images with lots of negative space, with only one small part of the image in focus or images that are not busy like grand reef scenes.

Instead, perhaps the Bokeh effect may be used, like in the image of a seahorse (Photo 1) where only the face is in focus. In Photo 2, the exit of a cave makes a natural vignette of shadow and tree branches from the surface reaching down into the water, while tannic waters glow a fire-like orange. Or it could be the simplicity of a diver's fins (Photo 3) photographed as the diver prepared for a dive into a Mexican cenote, with light beams dancing through the water. Or it could be accomplished by using unnatural alterations in post-production to make a colorful false clownfish stand out against a black-and-white anemone. (See Photo 4.) Visit: [brandiunderwater.com](http://brandiunderwater.com)



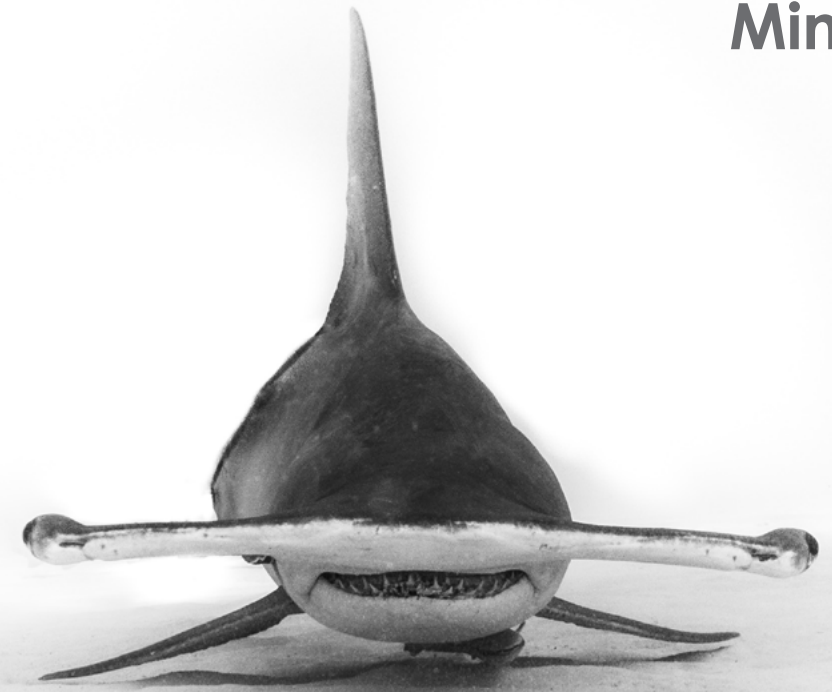
Photo 1. Seahorse, Raja Ampat, Indonesia. Using a wide aperture, the Bokeh effect is achieved by making only one small area of the image in focus and the rest blurred. This seahorse's face stands out. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, Ikelite housing, dual Ikelite DS 161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/7.1, 1/200s



Photo 3. Sunbeams and Fins. A diver begins a dive into a cenote as sunbeams dance below. Gear: Nikon Z7ii, Ikelite housing, ambient light. Exposure: ISO 2500, f/11, 1/25s







All photos were taken with a Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, and Inon Z330 strobes. Photo 1. (top right) Hammerhead shark—the power of a stark white background. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s @17mm. Photo 2. (above) Lemon shark—high shutter speed with bright natural light. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/80s @10mm.

### A Minimalist Approach

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

When I prepare for a day of underwater photography, I generally have an idea planned, in advance, of what I am going to photograph on that given day. For example, I will dive where there are plenty of sharks, mantas, or sea life on the coral reef. On some occasions when I am drift-diving in a heavy current, especially in deep water, I approach my photo shoot in a different way. I take an approach of “minimalism.”

If you look up the word “minimalism,” you will find many different definitions. I personally like the one found in the Meriam-Webster dictionary:

*“...of, relating to, or following a style (as in art or design) that is*

*characterized by simplicity and uses a small number of colors, parts, materials, etc.”*

What many underwater photographers do not realize, on any given open water dive, is that they are surrounded by unlimited negative space, which is the perfect minimalist canvas.

I find my negative space early in the dive, searching for a totally uncluttered background. After a few test shots to determine my camera settings, I patiently wait for the right subject to enter this preconceived negative space. I prefer to have a canvas of deep blue, but it is not always available. By playing with shutter speed, ISO and strobes, I can create a homogenous white or black background and highlight a single subject. (See Photo 1 and 2).

On “sporty” days, I like to create my negative space by shooting up. This has a few benefits, particularly the magical swirls, whirls and wave patterns that emphasize the simplicity of one of my favorite effects—the silhouette. In Photo 3, I was able to capture two interacting subjects in silhouette and feature their connectivity. The negative space, the surface above them, is magical. There is so much energy in this photo. You can feel the forces that are drawing them together. The interplay between them is powerful. The viewer cannot resist being drawn into the photograph with a desire to be engulfed by the energy.

Minimalism gives meaning to the concept of “Less is more.” Visit: [garyrosephotos.com](http://garyrosephotos.com)



Photo 3. Diver and giant manta ray—a Chihuly-inspired surface counters the simplicity of the silhouettes. Exposure: ISO 200 f/9, 1/125s @107mm





Photo 4. (below) Diver on the wreck of the *Hesper*, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles. Frame grab from a video file. Gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Tokina 10-17 fisheye lens (10 mm), Nauticam housing.

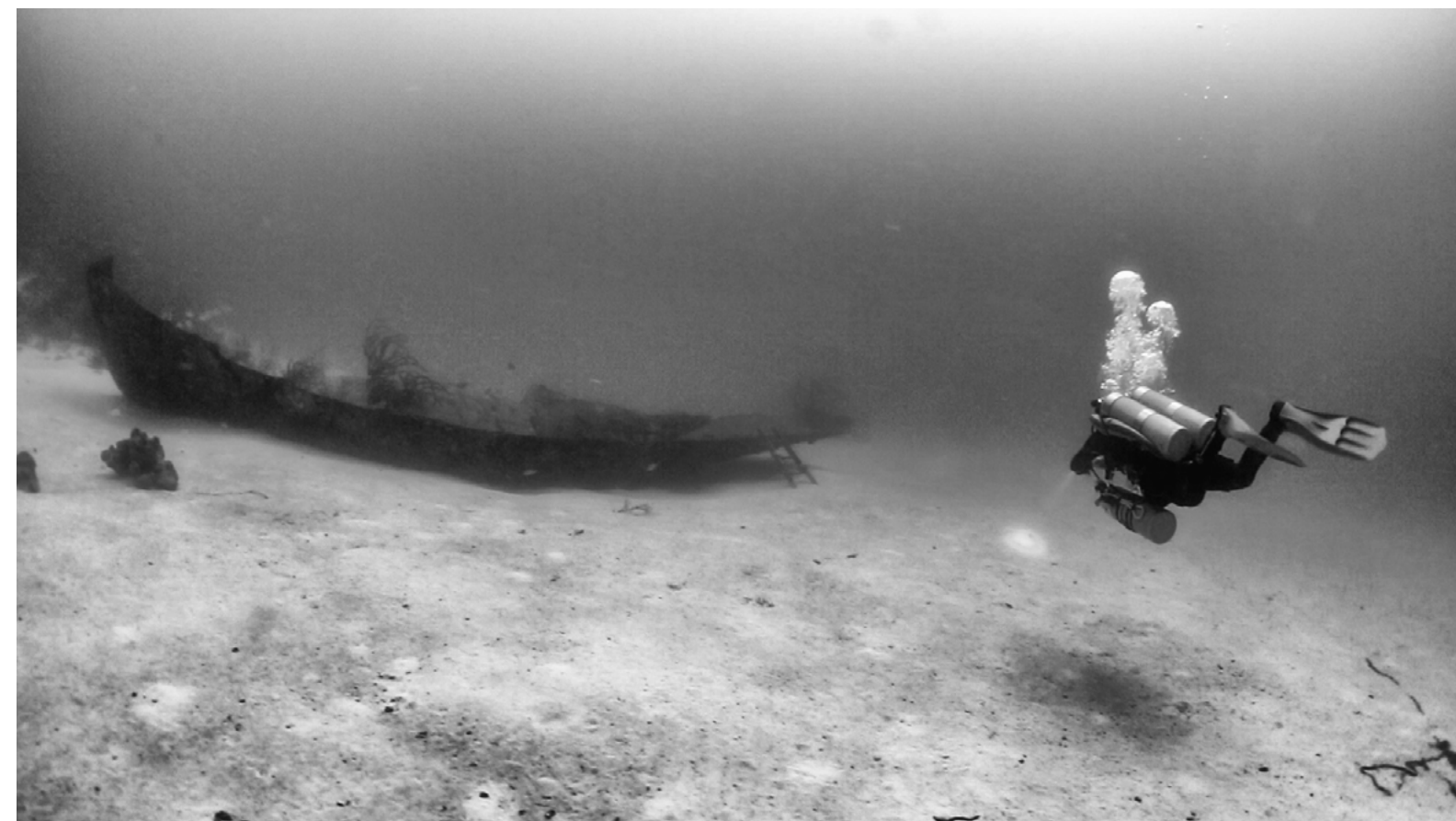


Photo 1. (above) Diver on a wreck off Pompano, Florida, USA. Gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens (at 10mm), Nauticam housing, dual Inon Z-240 strobes. Exposure: ISO 250, f/10, 1/200s; Photo 2. (left) Diver at the Dutch Springs Quarry, Pennsylvania, USA. Gear: Canon EOS 7D camera, Tokina 10-17 fisheye lens (10 mm), Nauticam housing, dual Inon Z-240 strobes. Exposure: ISO 250, f/8, 1/250s

## The Power of Negative Space

Text and photos by Michael Rothschild, MD

Get close, and then get closer. That is what every underwater photographer learns on day one. We long for clear water, fisheye lenses and powerful strobes to make the subject dominate the frame—to punch through the page or screen and grab the viewer's attention. But this article is about minimalism, where composition and balance are stressed. This is where you realize just how powerful negative space can be.

The first image (Photo 1) shows my dive buddy flying through the midwater cathedral light rays, the power of his DPV vis-

ible in the taut tethers. The second image (Photo 2) is another cathedral shot, but this one is painted in the muted colors of our local freshwater quarry. Here, the blue-green waters contrasts with a grassy bottom. The third (Photo 3) was taken over a deep wreck. The rising ascent line and boat span the vertical image and tell the story of deco—the part that has been done and the part yet to finish. The fourth (Photo 4) shows a minimalist wreck sitting on flat and unadorned sand, balanced by an approaching diver.

Find beauty in simplicity. Not every scene needs to be a circus. Visit: [dive.rothschild-design.com](http://dive.rothschild-design.com)



Photo 3. Diver on a wreck in Truk Lagoon, Federated States of Micronesia. Gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Tokina 10-17 fisheye lens (10 mm), Nauticam housing, dual Inon Z-240 strobes. Exposure: ISO 160, f/11, 1/250s



# feature

Photo 1. (right) The photographer looks small yet is a part of something bigger, with a purpose. Playa Del Carmen, Mexico. Gear: Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, Olympus 7-14mm lens, Nauticam housing, dual Sea&Sea strobes. Exposure: ISO 320, f/7.1, 1/250s

Photo 2. (far right) This boat was sunk to be part of an artificial reef at Mataking Island, Celebes Sea, Sabah, Malaysia. Gear: Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, Olympus 7-14mm lens, Nauticam housing, dual Sea&Sea strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/5.6, 1/160s

Photo 3. (below) Batfish (circular spadefish) at Mataking Island, Celebes Sea, Sabah, Malaysia. Gear: Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, Olympus 12-50mm lens, Nauticam housing, dual Sea&Sea strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/7.1, 1/125s



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Text and photos by Olga Torrey

A few years ago, my scuba buddy Larry Cohen and I went to photograph the bull sharks off the coast of Playa Del Carmen in Yucatán, Mexico. We hoped to see female bull sharks, which returned to their breeding grounds every year. The dive operation we were diving with did not do shark feeding, so we knew we would be lucky if we saw just a few of them.

We stayed on our knees, making ourselves negatively buoyant by deflating our BCDs, and looked for sharks. The space was empty, with pale blue water all around and white sand beneath us. The image of Larry, the photographer, alone, with his camera in hand, in an enormous body of water (Photo 1), made him look small yet part of something bigger, with a purpose.

The other three photos were taken at Mataking Island in the Celebes Sea

in Sabah, Malaysia. The boat in Photo 2 was sunk to be part of an artificial reef. The vessel had sailed the sea at one time and was now tied at anchor to serve as a shelter for marine life. The boat looked abandoned and lonely, but soon it would blossom with marine life, which would call it home.

The batfish (Photo 3) is a very peaceful and social fish, and it forms schools with others of its species. Therefore, in this image, instead of showing the whole school of the batfish, I deliberately focused on one single individual, and used the tail fins of the rest of the school of fish as a backdrop.

Photo 4 shows a trumpetfish. With its elongated, almost snake-like appearance, rigid body and long snout, the trumpet fish lives on coral reefs and is camouflaged in seagrass beds. I took a close-up photo of the trumpetfish when it tried to blend in with the algae. Visit: [fitimage.nyc](http://fitimage.nyc)



Photo 4. Trumpetfish at Mataking Island, Celebes Sea, Sabah, Malaysia. Gear: Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, Olympus 12-50mm lens, Nauticam housing, dual Sea&Sea strobes. Exposure: ISO 400, f/6.3, 1/160s

