FEDIPHOTO.ART

Interview with
@cedric@social.anthropi.st

Cover photo explained

Opinion: why a magazine?

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EDITO

In my youth I created a number of zines. I didn't like writing until one of my high school French teachers who forced me to do so. And I learned to enjoy it and from that point on I've needed to write a lot.

Part of what that high school teacher taught use was to analyse text. Each week, we'd have a text to read and analyse and wed be able to submit it for marking if we wanted to. We only needed to submit 3 per trimester. At the start it was a pain and I really hated it. But as I started to understand why and how to do it, I started to enjoy it and ended up submitting every week (because why bother doing it otherwise?).

What she taught us translates to images too. The way we read and understood a text can be applied to reading and understanding an image. That is that understanding, along with the intent of the photographer, that I'm interested in pursuing in this zine. I'd like photographer to come and explain what they do, why they do it, what their process is, and show how it applies to their photos.

This issue is a demo issue without contribution from the Fediverse. It's designed to show what I had in mind to those who are interested in taking part in the project. Contributions can be for editing, presentation, proofreading, articles, publicity, anything that will help getting the zine off the ground and spread the load so it's viable long term.

Feel free to contact me at the addresses below of you have questions, suggestions, or comments.

INTERVIEW

FEDIPHOTO.ART: Tell us a little bit about you.

@cedric@social.anthropi.st: I was born in the early 70s in France. I discovered computers at age 11 (early for the time) and have been obsessed with them since. I did a PhD in computing and I've been working in software development for over 30 years.

FEDIPHOTO.ART: When did you start your photography journey?

@cedric@social.anthropi.st: In around 2002, when I was living in the UK, my friend, who lived in France, came and visited me for a while. He came with his new Canon 300D. I had been using digital cameras for a while (my first one was a Kodak DC240 in 1996), but the 300D was a revelation: it was like an old SLR, but digital! I went out and bought a Canon 350D with kit lens soon after that and decided to take on photography, which I had never done seriously, as a hobby.

FEDIPHOTO.ART: How did you start?

@cedric@social.anthropi.st: I started by learning everything I could about the technology. I'm an engineer, I don't start something if I'm not confident I understand it. So, I started reading magazines, I joined a forum (Photocamel, RIP), and watched what people were doing.

To get some practice, I went round and took lots of photos. Mostly small things and mostly around where I was. Snaps, really. But that showed me the exposure triangle, depth of field, etc. It was a steep learning curve.

I realised quickly that knowing how the camera worked didn't make to take good photos. Centering the subject right in the middle of the frame and ignoring everything else wasn't really satisfying. So, I started learning about composition. And I drifted toward what really interested me: landscapes.

FEDIPHOTO.ART: What is your photography process?

@cedric@social.anthropi.st: When I started, I'd go to a place, and look for photos I could take. Some days I'd take many different ones (I always take a lot because I don't chimp much and I expose for everything), some days I'd come back with a couple. But after a few years, something clicked: I started visualising the photos I wanted in advance, then look for where and how I could take them.

I tend to have several photos in my head and I keep an eye out for where they could happen. When I suspect I found the place, I go at the right time to have the effect I imagined (sunset/sunrise, certain angle of light, cloudy/not cloudy), and take a lot of photos (I bracket a lot because I tend to take my photos at either end of the day). Then I go home and check what I have. I process very little. I barely crop the

photos. If it's not right in the camera, it's not right.

When I'm happy with the result, I archive it and move on to the next photo I have in mind. I lose interest quickly once I've done something, It's the process that interests me (did I mention I'm an engineer?), more than the end product.

FEDIPHOTO.ART: What type of photos do you take?

@cedirc@social.anthropi.st: I'm not an outgoing, gregarious person, I don't take photos of people (in the street or in the studio). I have taken photos of people in the past (I have done a few weddings as a semi-pro for example), but it never really tickled my interest. The sample photos in this article are from my engagement session in December 2007 in Northern Scotland, hence the heavy clothes, where I took half the photos (my friend took the other half, that's how I appear in them).

I have limited interest in macros, and architecture isn't my thing. Street photography vaguely interests me, but the current climate isn't great for that (paradoxically, people are at the same time protective of their privacy when others take their photo, but completely oblivious to it when they post on social media).

In the last few years, I've started astrophotography, which is a completely different animal. Way more technical than "normal" photography (especially with remote observatories).

It's only in the last couple of months that I decided to take on photography again after a 15 years hiatus. I decided I needed a reason to go out again after the Covid years, and photography was the obvious choice.

FEDIPHOTO.ART: What gear do you use?

@cedric@social.anthropi.st: The main cameras I've used in the years I started were the Canon 350D+grip and the Canon 5D+grip (bought in 2004 when it came out). Until this year, I didn't use anything else on a regular basis. The lenses I used the most were the Sigma 10-20mm and the Canon 24-105ISL (but I never found it wide enough).

I own a few more cameras: a Canon 550D, the "stunt" camera, that I use for travelling to dangerous or unknown places; a Canon 7D+grip that replaced the 350D but hasn't seen a huge amount of service. This year, I bought a 6D with a number of L lenses (they're cheap now) to replace the seriously aging 5D. My wife uses a Canon 100D with a Tamron 28-300mm macro, and a Canon 100mm macro.

I obviously use a tripod most of the time and a bunch of filters (mostly ND grads, also infrared).

FEDIPHOTO.ART: You recently shifted to monochrome only Why?

@cedric@social.anthropi.st: I've always been attracted to monochrome. In the mid-2000s, I was a member of a monochrome forum run by a single guy who was explaining his process and what

monochrome was. I learned everything from him.

Monochrome seems to be the right medium for me at the moment. It takes away from the distraction of colour and the constant assault on the senses we see everywhere now. It's like an island of calm and contemplation.

And I'm learning again how to work with it with new cameras, new software, new everything (though I'm still using Canon DSLRs and Gimp, so I didn't drift too far from where I left things many years ago).

I might well change my mind in a few months' time, but at the moment hat's where I want to be.

FEDIPHOTO.ART: Thanks for your time.

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Why a magazine in the age of social media?

I've been thinking for a good while about what I miss when I look at people's posts. We all enjoy looking at photos people publish, and we can favourite and we can boost. But in these days of mass media consumption, what I'm missing is spending time on photos and understanding the ones that attract my eye.

I can put on them my interpretation or understanding. I can try to look at details, forms, shapes, colours, subject, and imagine what the photographer wanted to convey. But that doesn't tell me what the photographer was thinking and why they decided it was a photo they wanted to show other people.

When I started photography ca 2002, I spent a lot of time on forums (fora?) such as Photocamel and photo.net, where a lot of very talented people hung out. Unlike modern social media, there was no like or reshare, and on most not even view counters. So, if you wanted engagement and feel people had seen your images, you needed discussions. And that's how we learned.

It's obviously hard to do on microblogging, even on a blogging platform, because the format isn't appropriate. And not every photo deserves an in-depth explanation: some are just throwaway shots (things I saw yesterday, holiday snaps in passing), some are just not quite as good as they could/should be, some are just designed to be free of explanation.

But some would deserve to be explained. What caught the eye of the photographer? Why is it pleasing to the eye? What was the context? What's the story behind the scene? Why that angle instead of another? What's the intent behind it? What message does it convey for the photographer?

I also miss the event aspect of a formal publication. I miss when you wait for the new issue and read it quickly the minute it arrives. I miss the package of goodness that arrives all at once instead of page by page as on a blog. I miss the fact that people spend time thinking about what they're publishing instead of just drive by posting.

So, I've been thinking of creating a magazine to cover many things: portfolios, photo explanations, "photojournalism" (aka telling a story), interviews, how people approach their photography, how they found their style (and what their style means), even who they look up to. The purpose would be to spread the thinking around photography instead of just the images.

I'm thinking monochrome oriented, because it's where my head is at the moment, and because monochrome photographers appear to me to be more dedicated to the craft (especially film ones). But I'm open to colour too (I used to do only colour).

I'm aware that magazines like that already exist in the world (e.g. Monovisions). I used to read them a long time ago. But this one would be ours. It would be the Fediverse's. People appearing in it wouldn't be some strange, pretentious photographer from New-York you'll never talk to, it would be people you see posting every day, who would engage with you, who you would possibly even meet. It

would be photography that is close to you and them.

The accent wouldn't be on gear because we all know that gear doesn't make you a good photographer. Some people like to use phones, others old cameras, others the latest mirrorless. Some like to use film, others digital. B&W or colour. Everything is acceptable and a personal choice and nothing relies on specific hardware. It would even be interesting to know why people choose what they use (e.g. cost, rapport to the medium, sentimental choice, aspect of the results, snobbism).

I'd love to see that magazine exist and I think I'd get excited by it. I'm not convinced yet it's a good idea for me to start it, but I'm happy to give it a go and see what happens.

PHOTO EXPLANATION

The photo I'll talk about this time is this issue's cover photo.

My model was Melanie, my then girlfriend, now wife.

I chose that photo for the cover because I thought that having a face on the cover would attract the eye more than a random photo. It's one of the very few photos I have of people in my archive.

One day, I woke up and had the idea of a film noir image for an imaginary thriller. I wanted the usual tropes of film noir, harsh and directional light, shadows, and over the top expression.

I've always been attracted to that style, even though I've never been into the films or seen many. I've been exposed to the French Noir and I've seen references to American ones, mostly through parody. The grit, the harshness, the unforgiving light in line with the story lines has always been something I've wanted to look into.

I decided early on that I wanted the background to be the shadows of a blind. After all, that's what you expect in a P.I. office at the time (at least in films). I didn't have one at home, but I had seen one in the office. So, one weekend, we went to work and had a photo session (I had a key).

I didn't have any studio lighting setup, given that I wasn't really a people photographer. But I had three flashguns.

The first step was to find where in the office to take the photo. There weren't many placed that allowed me to have the blinds I the right position, a white wall in
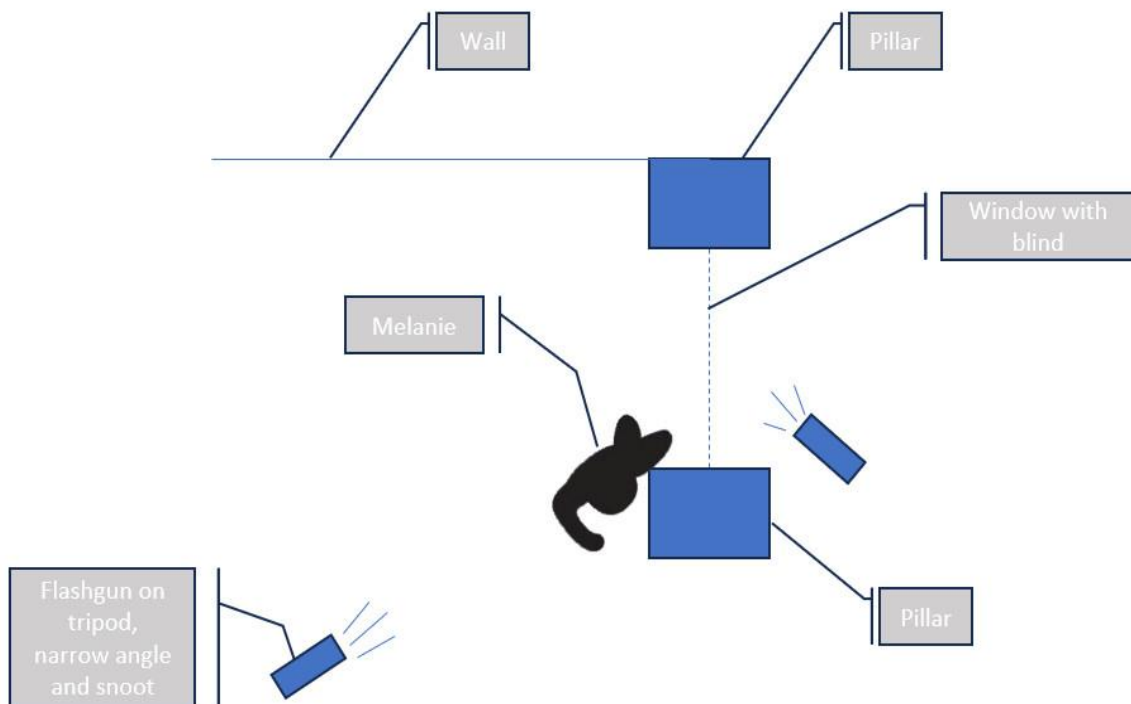
the background far enough but not too far, and somewhere where Melanie could hide. Luckily, there was one, as shown in the top photo.

As I wanted a very directional light to emulate 40s studio photography (had softboxes not been invented yet?), I added a home-made snoot on the main flash. That also avoided light reflections on the white walls.

I'm not a studio photographer, so I kept things technically simple and straightforward: Canon 5D + Canon 24-105mm f/4 ISL, flashguns on manual ¼ power controlled by hotshoe remote, f/8, 1/60s, @105mm.

One thing I had thought about was that I wanted to balance the white of the face a little bit with the background. So, I placed the flashgun slightly down and pointing up to make the bottom of the wall a little bit brighter than the top. That way, the pillar and the face would be bright top-right, and the wall would be bright bottom-left. I don't know if it worked as much as I had imagined it.

Then it was acting time. I wanted Melanie to look scared and I needed her to have dark lips (so she used the darkest red she had). I also wanted to see her hand because that's what I had imagined, thinking of Hitchcock films and I wanted to convey movement, as if she had just passed the corner of the pillar on her way out running from some danger.

For processing, I converted to monochrome by filtering with a red bias to increase the whiteness of the skin. The rest was unchanged from the camera output.

The end result I is son t the next page. For information, the actors were our cats (chubsy and bony).

C-P-C FILMS PRESENTS

MELANIE
SPADE

CHUBSY
McFLEAS

BONY
McBLEET

Murder,
My Sweet

SCARIEST EVER!

HARDBOILED

PORTFOLIO

Aberdeen beach, Scotland.

I've lived in Aberdeen for many years. During those years, the beach, often deserted because of the harsh weather, was one of my favourite hunting grounds. It had everything: long sand beach, rocks, groynes, a lighthouse. I spent many sunrises there, especially in the winter (due to the latitude, summer nights are extremely short and there is no proper night).

The portfolio section is the opportunity to organise your work/art into a story or a logical set, and reach an audience you might not usually. For example, in this demo issue, I'll show some of my favourite shots from the beach in Aberdeen to give you an idea of what it looks like. Of course, the photos are all monochrome because it's my taste at the moment, but they could have been colour.

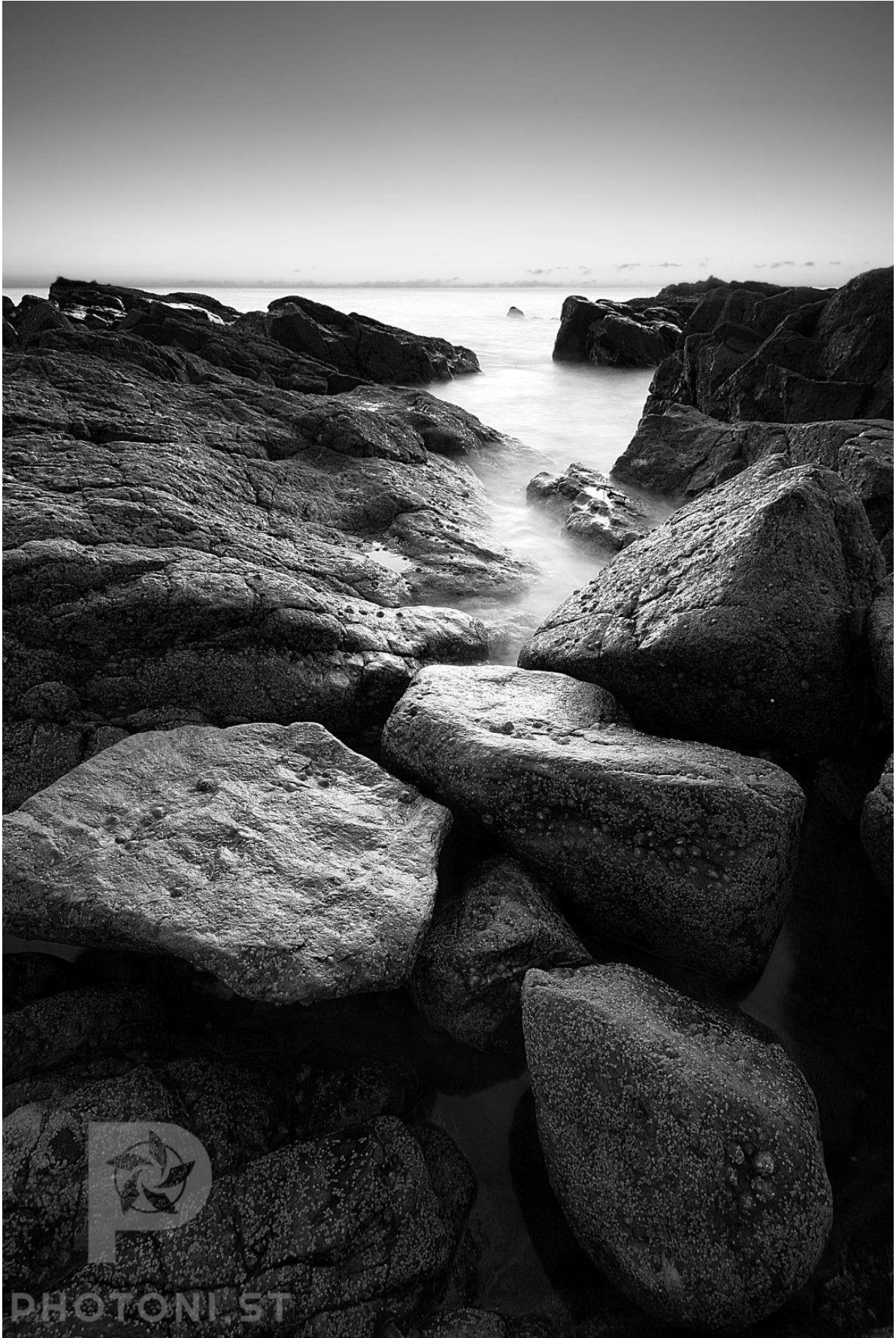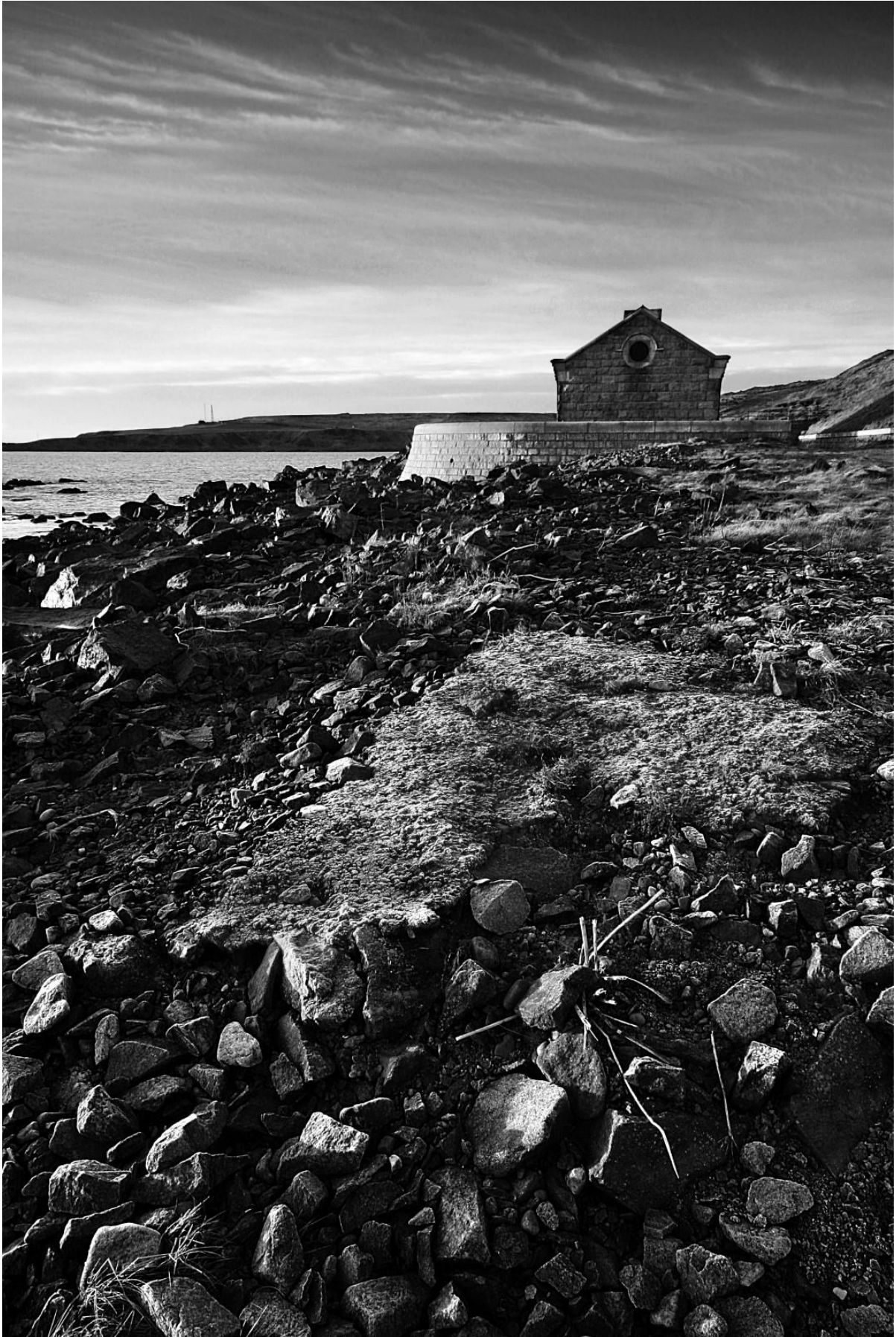Sunrise long exposure

Groyne remnants

Summer solstice 3am

Waves on the rocks

Teardrop wave

Sunrise on the rock canal

Hut on the beach