



T H E C O L O R S O F  
H U M A N I T Y T H E  
C O L O R S O F H U M  
A N I T Y T H E C O L  
O R S O F H U M A N I  
T Y T H E C O L O R S  
O F H U M A N I T Y





# The Colors of Humanity

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

**Aladdin Ishmael**











# The Colors of Humanity

It was my first day riding the school bus when I fell wholly in love with color. For me the bus was a magical place and I was that kid who was less interested in the activities around me and more interested in looking out the window at the world going by.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

**Aladdin Ishmael**



From my vantage point I would notice glimpses of life moving by me - the hope and humanity present in pops of color. At first everything was completely recognizable but as the bus moved faster, scenes blended into the background through the blur of movement. I looked forward to the motion, my eye eager to see shapes and colors meld in this way.

I remember specifically the day that I witnessed the light hit one of those weathered bus windows and split itself into a mini-rainbow. There were days afterwards where I would find myself waiting to catch sight of any or all of those colors for the entire ride.

These moments made a significant mark on my beliefs in what color signifies— of its alchemic power. From those earliest school days on, I took note of how people used and chose color to present themselves to the world; how each color choice factored into how it could convey their emotion, their identity.

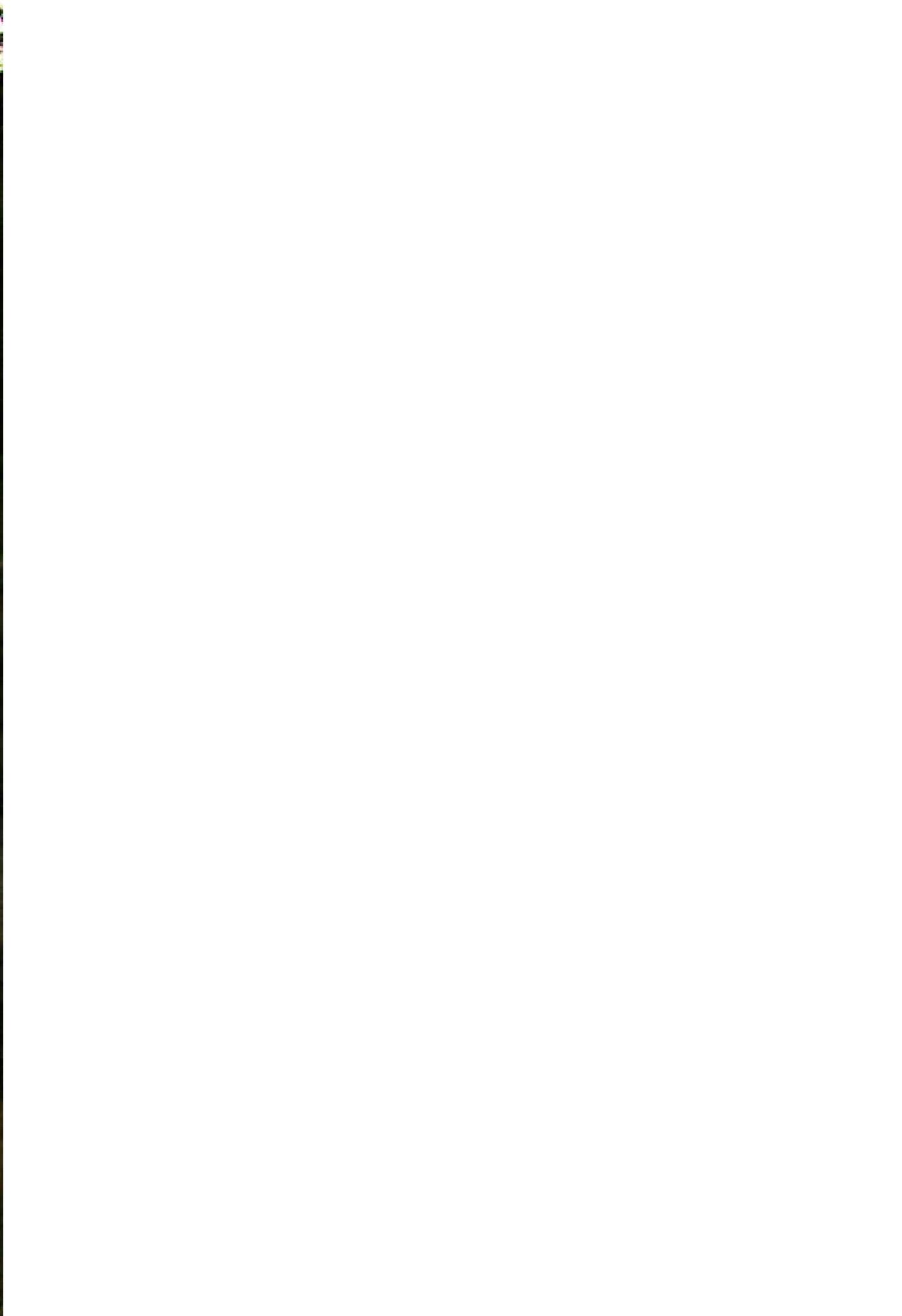
These memories are truly woven into my creative fiber; they are the reason I continue to see color first in each new place I travel to. Every moment is loaded with the potential to see new hues, and to spot how a unique color can play out around me in unexpected ways.

Ultimately I feel indebted to color — it permeates every aspect of my life and my work— it is what I call on to add depth to a character or meaning to an environment. It is the medium I use to captivate, maybe even demand, someone's full attention.



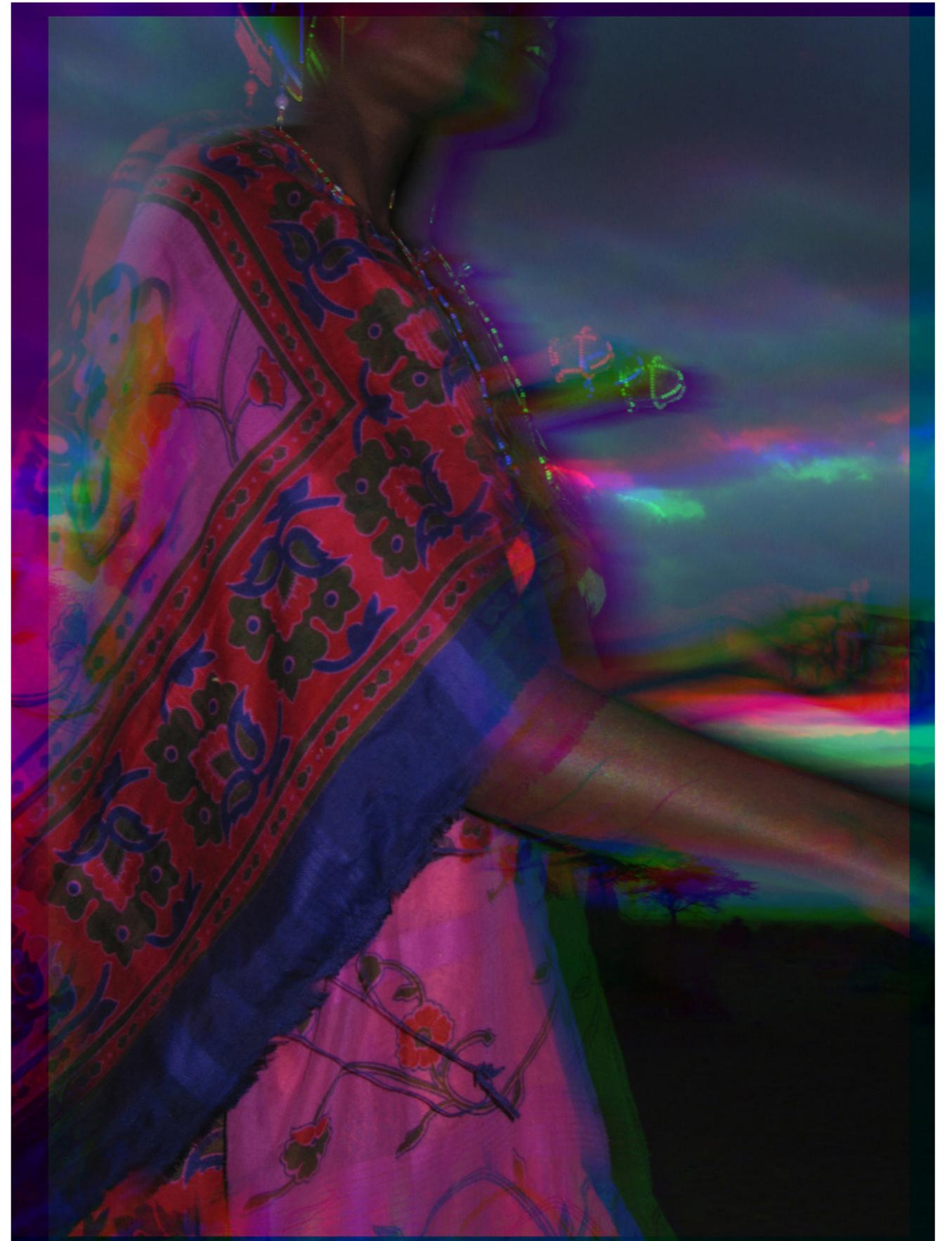




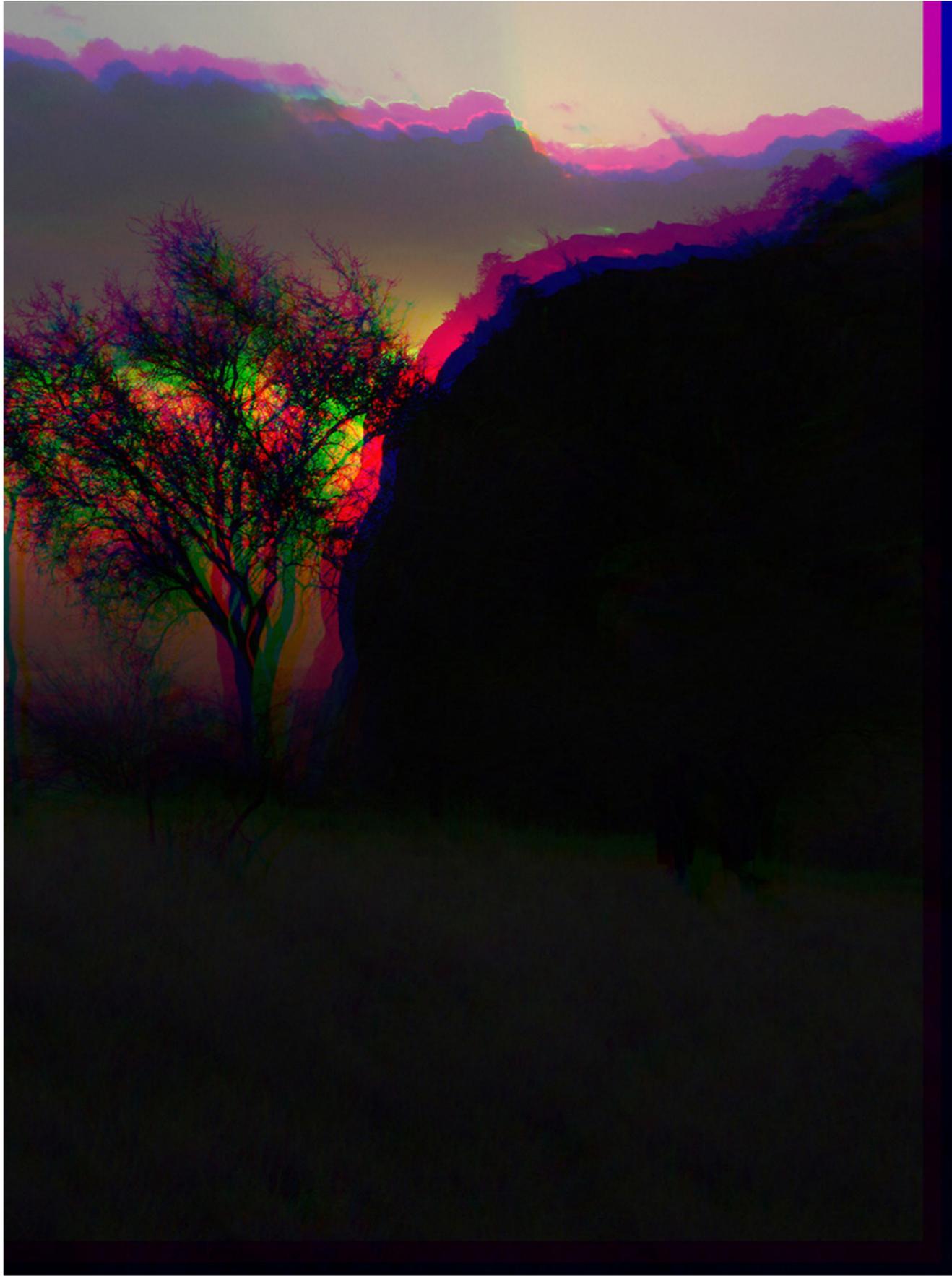






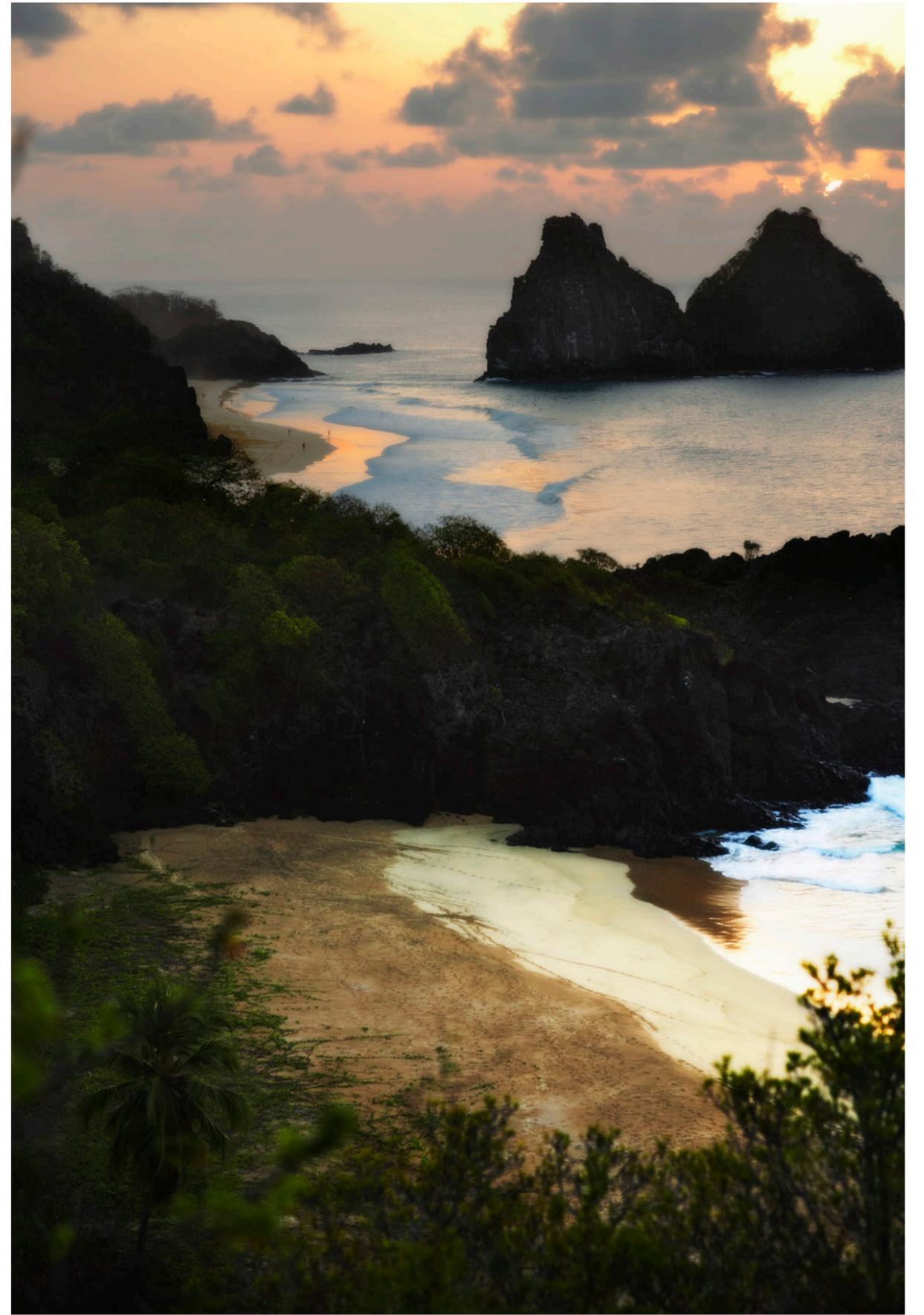


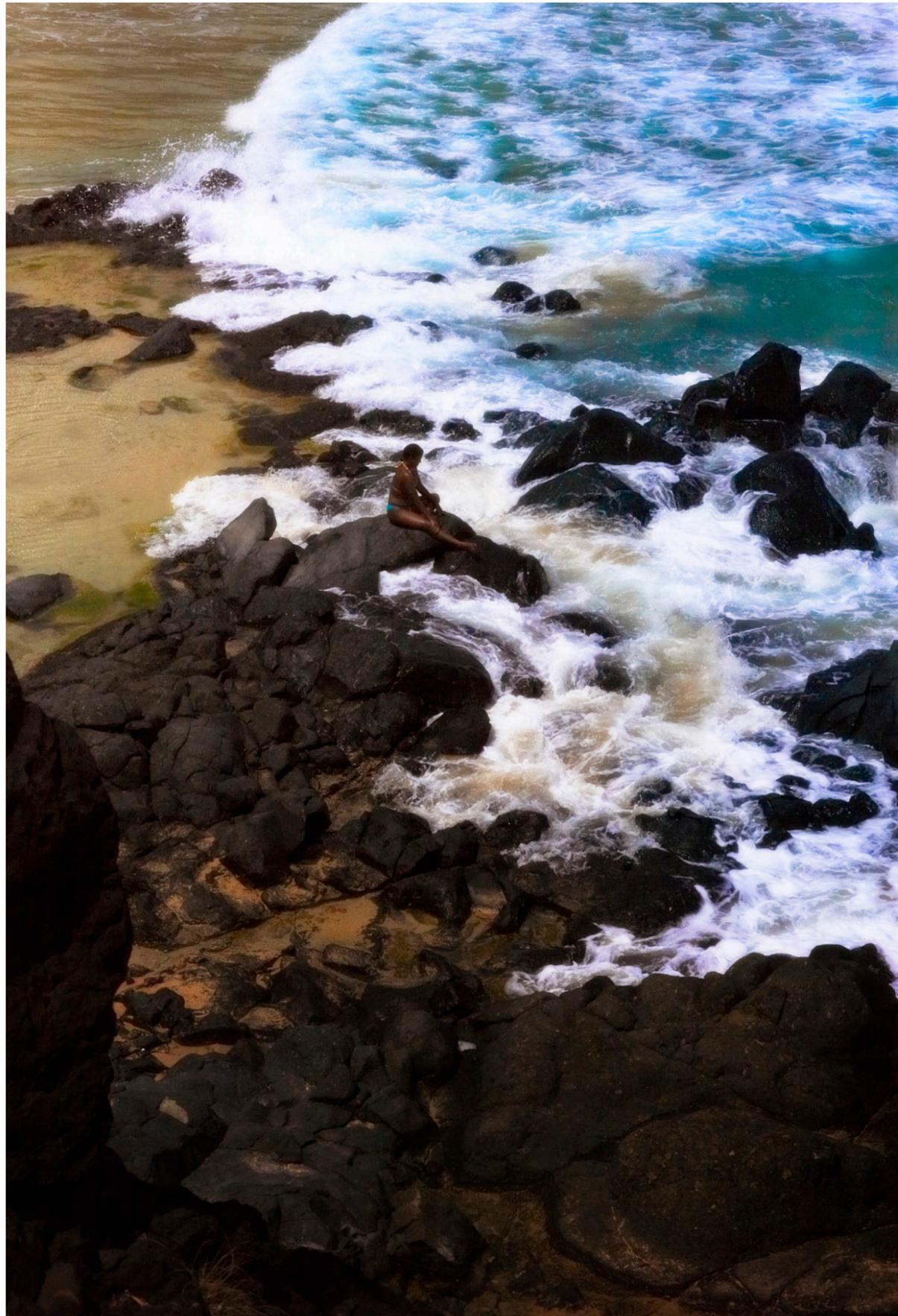








































































## ABOUT ALADDIN

For over twenty years, Aladdin Ishmael has created imagery that can appropriately be categorized as fashion photography, even as the reach of his expansive practice often transcends categorization. The work blurring the boundaries between genres, moving freely between entire worlds, fanatical in its terms of care and attention to things people might not see immediately.

Born in Amman, Jordan and raised by his mother among a house of sisters, meant learning about life from a variety of female perspectives. The house was an intense convergence of old cultural norms of politics and religion blended with the new. From stacks of fashion magazines and the pan-European satellite channel Music Box, came an early fascination with the transformative power of clothing at its most material level — draping, movement, color, light, and shadow — but also its alchemical power; how people used clothing and chose to present themselves to the world.

After emigrating to the United States as a young man, he studied at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco where his early work was encouraged by Marion Peterson, a protegee of Ansel Adams, and Ruth Bernhard, the German-born photographer considered one of the leading studio practitioners of the nude form.

Ishmael's practice benefits from these deeply-embedded influences of female perspectives. His study of the human form eschews the gratuity of the male gaze. Rather, his imagery of bodies possesses a certain tenderness, embracing a promise of freedom informed by its absence. His vision is based in the hope of creating new ways of seeing, and in that seeing, new threads of understanding.

His impressionistic eye is particularly interested in the agency of women and the power of the female body, framing his subjects as beacons of openness and modernity among a world which continues to seek to cloister them. His practice internalizing the fantasy and glamour of fashion imagery's long tradition while also subverting it into something unique, conjures an enveloping and consumptive mystique that feels at once familiar and bristles with the frisson of the unknown.

Reflected throughout is Ishmael's attraction to photojournalism — it's a quality on full view in his series *Fight Like a Girl* which demonstrates a hybrid effort to find a third way between sober record and artful expression, colliding documentary and staged imagery to synthesize an essential truth about femininity and the legacy of feminist movements in the United States.

His *Rebirth of Earth*, pushes these ideas further still, steeping them in surrealist contemplation. Ishmael places the dancer Larsen Thompson within an otherworldly terrain — simultaneously scorched earth and new spring — creating an atmospheric elegy for our estrangement from nature, and a spiritual tone poem of regeneration borne from a fertile expression of liberation.

Ishmael's first monograph, *My Hotel Room*, is an intimate collection of images culminated from a three year period of research, travel, and human connection. Born from a deep reverence and respect of travel cultivated from the time he received his first passport as a child, the images present a multi-textured paean to hotel life; more than a luxurious stopover or sanctuary — though it touches those things — but also a powerful locus of energy, mysterious and enveloping, charged with emotional affinity. Ishmael's hotel rooms contain multitudes conveyed through his subjects: a correspondence of ideas, culture, vulnerabilities and possibilities. *My Hotel Room* finds Ishmael fully open to them all.

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