



Great White Shark Triptych, by Gary Rose. This photo was taken in Guadalupe Island, Mexico, and printed on white aluminum panels. Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 17mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 320, f/11, 1/125s

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

We asked our contributors to create an underwater “triptych,” and they returned with an artistic range of color, black-and-white and toned compilations, from abstract close-ups to wide-angle shots, featuring a variety of marine life, large and small, as well as divers, on reefs and wrecks, and in open water, lakes, and even an aquarium. Here, *X-Ray Mag* contributors share their favorite images from the tropical waters of Fiji, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Egyptian Red Sea, Bonaire and the Cayman Islands, to the temperate waters of the US East Coast and California.

Triptychs

Contributors' Picks





Photo 1. (far left) Original post-production image; Photo 2. (left) Image prepped by extending negative space of blue water on the left border to create better balance for the triptych; Triptych mounted on a wall (below)

Triptychs



All photos were taken with a Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 17mm, Nauticam housing, with Inon Z330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 320, f/11, 1/125s. SECOND ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Photo 3. Left third of triptych; Photo 4. Middle third, first cut; Photo 5. Middle third, second cut; Photo 6. Right third of triptych; Photo 7. (previous page) Final triptych assembled

Great White Triptych — Not Just Another Portrait

Text & photos by Gary Rose, MD

Often, when I look at shark photography on social media, in magazines, or at many presentations, I have noticed that, although the photos are of interesting sharks and technically excellent, they lack size—the wow factor! Why is that? Most underwater photographers are so caught up in the capture, that they forget about creating a story or an imaginative and artsy photograph, and just photograph the standard side-view portrait. Granted, many underwater photographers have taken a huge step out of their comfort zone, just to dive with and photograph sharks, and are thrilled to bring home a portrait photograph of a shark to share with friends

and family. Let's take it to the next step.

I usually set out on a shark photoshoot with a plan. Once I am in the water, I consider the visibility, lighting and my surroundings—blue water, reef or sand. After a few test shots to maximize the color saturation and balance of negative space (which will frame and not visually distract from my subject), I am ready to shoot.

Photo 1 is an iconic portrait of a great white shark. The viewers' attention is immediately focused on the huge and jagged teeth, and the bottomless depth of the sinister black eye. Next, the viewer will follow the natural flow along the streamlined body and react to the bulk, and the mating scars, of the great white shark. This portrait is a little more interesting because the shark is slightly at an angle

as it was gliding towards me. The intense deep blue of the negative space highlights the magnificent silver and white coloration of the shark.

I was familiar with the groundbreaking artwork by Damien Hirst, featuring a fully preserved tiger shark in a triptych, which was enclosed in glass cases. He rocked the art world in 1991 with this unique creation (ed. – entitled *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*). I decided I would try to emulate him—with a great white shark tryptic, on metal.

In the original (Photo 1), the shark tail was abutted against the border of the photograph. To improve the balance of the three panels of the triptych, I added negative-space pixels to the left border (Photo 2). Photos 3 to 6 demonstrate where I made the cuts to pre-



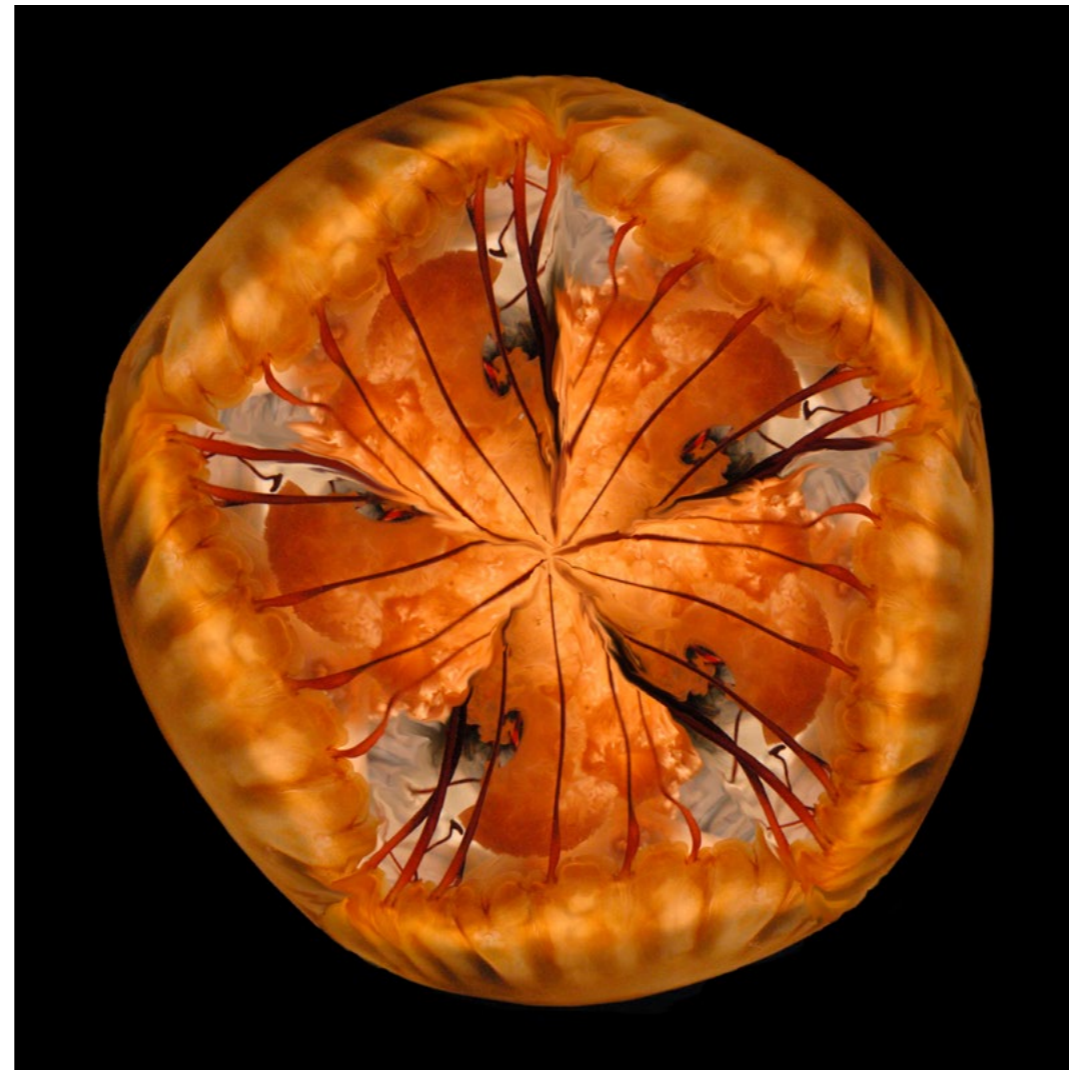
serve the sleek and efficient torpedo-like outline of the shark. Note the slight change between Photo 4 and Photo 5. In the latter, the cut is a couple of inches closer to the snout, maintaining the outline, flow and proportions of the great white. The surface markings of the shark, particularly the

countershading at the border of the silver and white coloring, were my road map.

The final relationship of the three panels, and correct spacing between them, is critical. Too much or too little space between the panels creates very unnatural border step-offs and throws off the

movement of the viewers' eye as well as the natural flow from the snout to the tail (Photo 7). The spacing must be correct. An additional bonus of creating a triptych such as this, is that it creates a feeling of the great white shark actually gliding right out of the deep blue. Visit: garyrosephotos.com





Triple Madness: Pizza & Pinwheels

Text and photos by John A. Ares

For the idea of a triptych, I was unsure if I would do a treatment of texture or “Pizzas & Pinwheels.” Sometimes, images contain aspects that can benefit from being repeated several times. The sum of the individual elements can be more interesting than a “documentary” shot. There are books on the subject. To some, these types of rounded multiple images are called “mandalas.”

I have a series of composite photos that lend themselves to abstract interpreta-

tion. All of these were enlargements sold individually at auction at the US expo, Beneath the Sea. Being competent with Photoshop compositing is necessary in creating these images. For more on compositing, see my previous article in **issue 114**.

Photo 1 (left) began life as two photos of a sea anemone in Bonaire. After staring at the images for a while, I realized they could become a “pinwheel.” The two images seem to blend nicely. Art results from your imagination, not getting “the perfect exposure with the perfect camera.”

Photo 2 (center) started all this madness. I took a jellyfish picture in an aquarium.

When I looked at the image on the computer, I realized that it vaguely resembled a slice of pizza, and *voilà*—a jellyfish pizza.

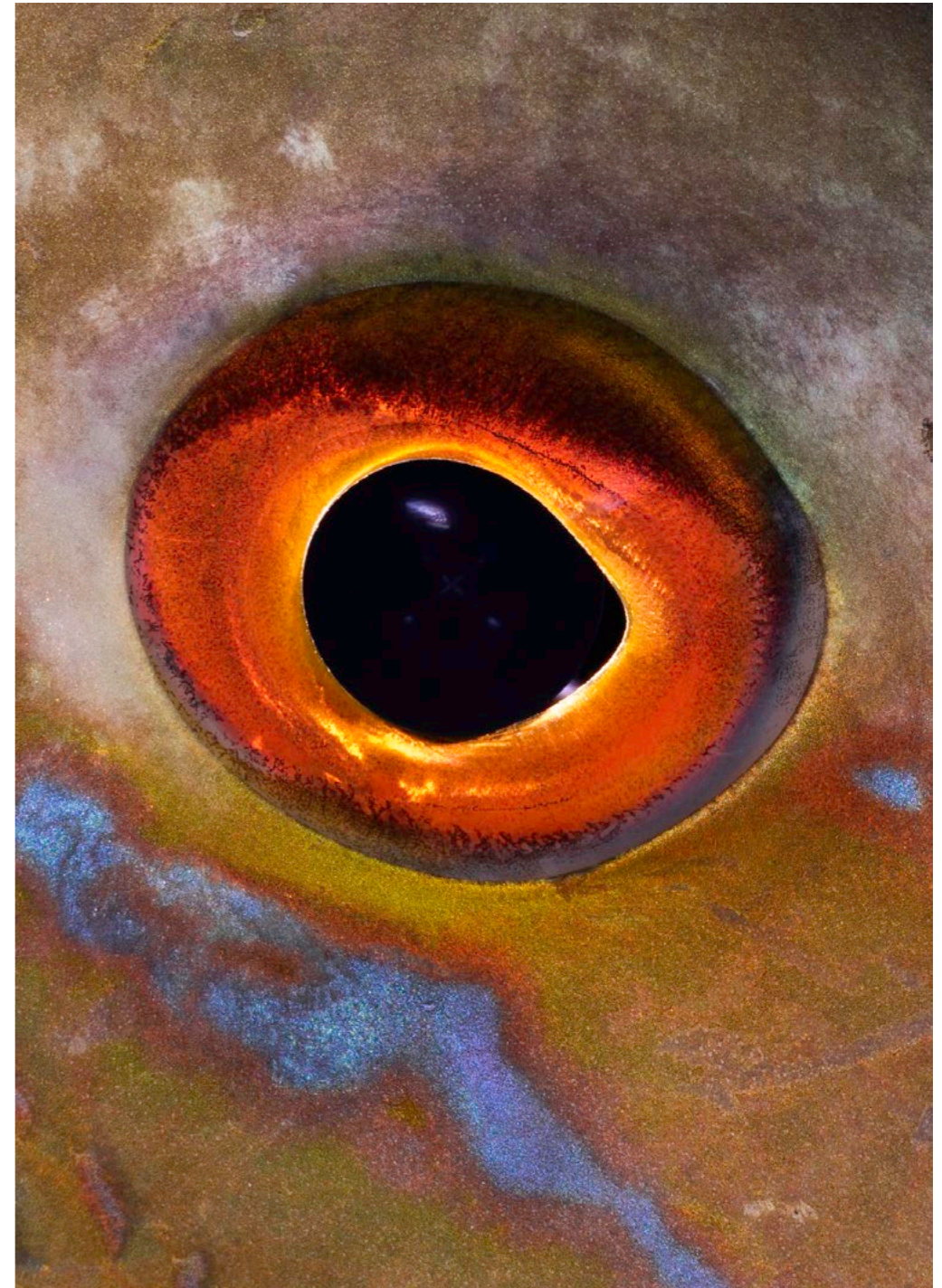
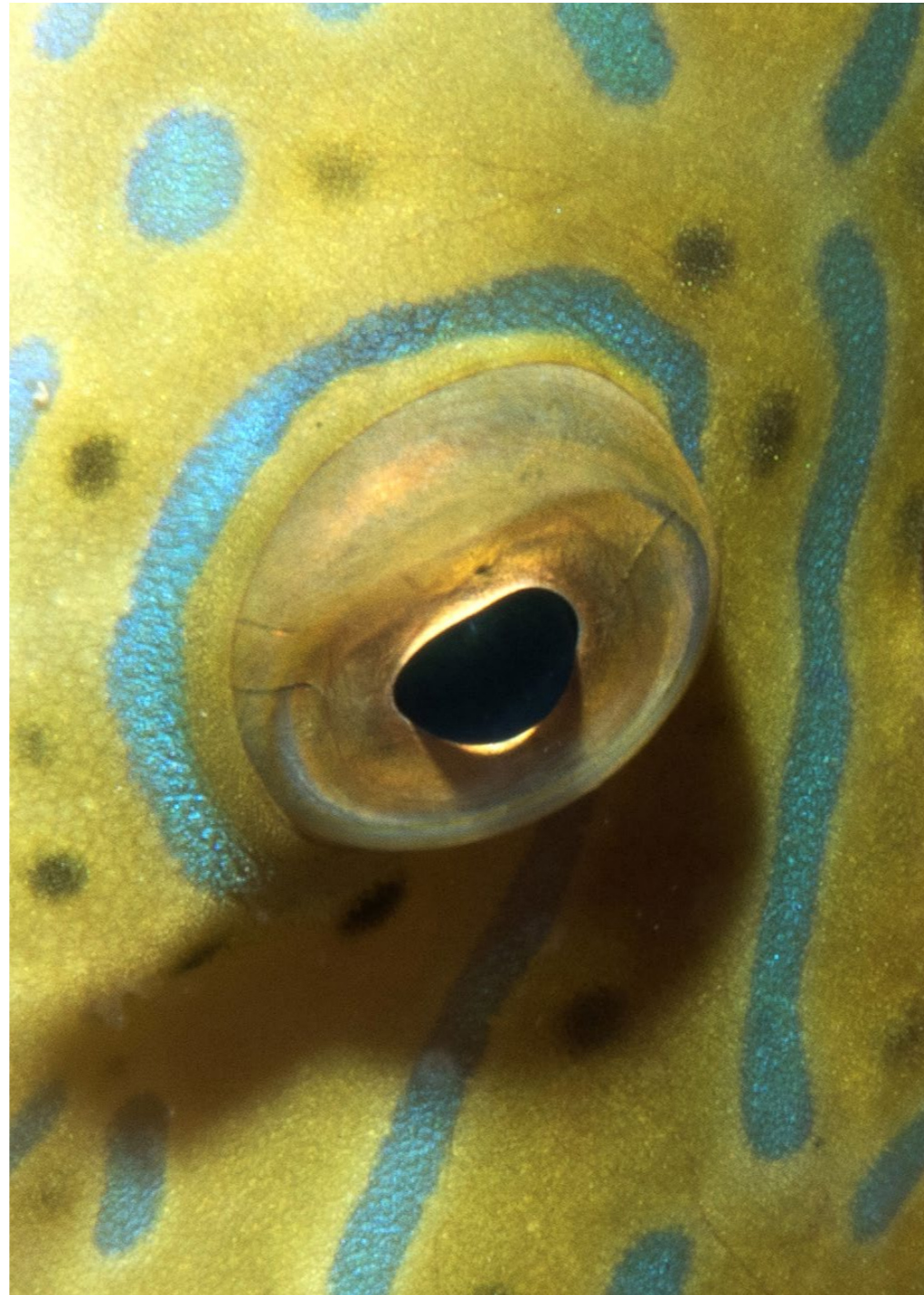
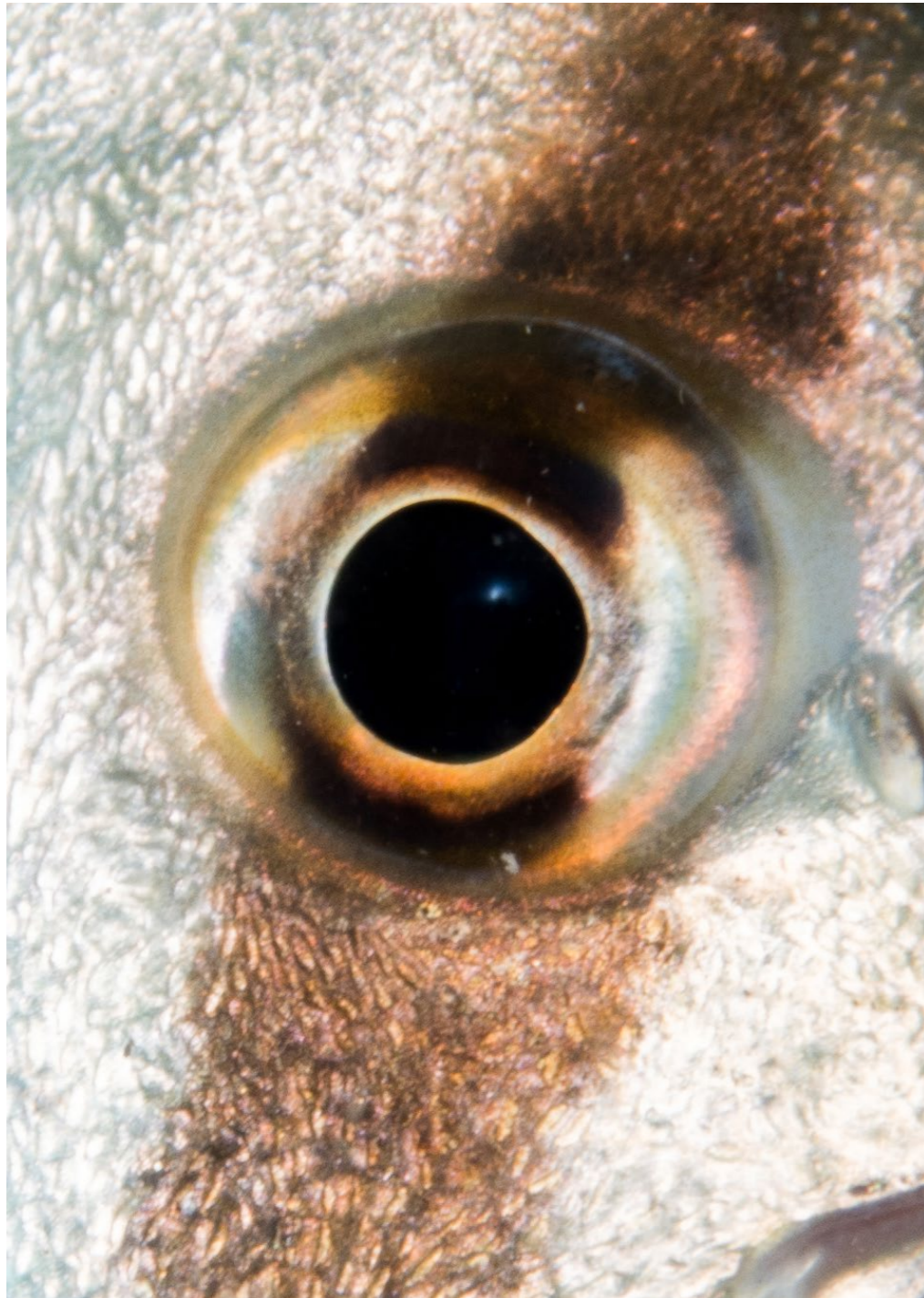
Photo 3 (right) was a flatworm shot in Fiji. As with Photo 1, when I stared at the image for a while, I realized it had the elements to become a “pinwheel” as well. Visit: JohnAres.com

REFERENCES:
CUNNINGHAM, L.B. (2020). THE MANDALA BOOK: PATTERNS OF THE UNIVERSE. UNION SQUARE & CO.
EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/MANDALA

Photo 1. (left) Anemone Pinwheel, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles. Gear: Canon 10D camera, Sigma 50mm macro lens, Ikelite housing, twin Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/32, 1/160s

Photo 2. (center) Jellyfish Pizza, aquarium shot. Gear: Canon 10D camera, Canon 100mm f/2.8 USM macro lens, available light. Exposure: ISO 3200, f/19, 1/30s

Photo 3. (right) Flatworm Pinwheel, Fiji. Gear: Nikonos II camera, 35mm lens, 1:2 extension tube, single Ikelite DS125 strobe. Exposure: Digitized ISO 100 film, f/8, 1/60s



Fish-Eye Triptych

Text and photos by Sheryl Checkman

For this feature, I chose to get up close to focus on the eyes of three different fish. By cropping into this macro view, the fish eyes become more of an abstraction, with shape,

line and color defining each image. Just as each individual fish is different, each eye is unique as well. By isolating the eyes, you can see the differences that make each individual fish unique from the others.

The photo on the left is a close-up of the eye of a spadefish taken at Blue Heron Bridge in West Palm Beach,

Florida. There is a clearly defined brown stripe crossing the eye against a silver background. The center shot of a scrawled filefish was taken on a night dive in Alor, Indonesia, on the house reef adjacent to the resort. The blue circles and lines surrounding the eye create the look of an abstract painting, as does the shadow created by

the protruding eye socket. And finally, the shot on the right is of a mutton snapper at Nancy's Cup of Tea dive site in Little Cayman, Cayman Islands.

Each of these close-ups, when seen together, are like three colorful windows into the souls of life beneath the sea. Visit: [Instagram.com/sherylcheckman](https://www.instagram.com/sherylcheckman)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Spadefish, Blue Heron Bridge, West Palm Beach, Florida, USA. Exposure: ISO 200, f/18, 1/125s; Scrawled filefish, House Reef, Alor, Indonesia. Exposure: ISO 200, f/18, 1/125s; Mutton snapper, Nancy's Cup of Tea, Little Cayman, Cayman Islands. Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/200s. Gear used for all images: 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.



Olga at Dutch Springs

Text and photos by Larry Cohen

After scuba diving at Dutch Springs in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, my dive buddy, Olga Torrey, and I decided to swim. We removed our dive gear and drysuits; the cold water was invigorating.

We agreed that we should take some photos besides having a relaxing swim. When Olga dived underwater, her flowing hair looked stunning. So, she repeated the dive, and I shot multiple images to get the right look.

The image that showed the old, abandoned smokestacks (of a nearby factory) on the surface was one of my favorite

images, so I selected that one first. When processing the RAW file in Lightroom, I loved the color photo, but I also converted it to black and white, and then played with adding colors, so it looked like a toned image.

I was never sure which version I liked better. By creating a triptych, I can use all three. Visit: liquidimagesuw.com

Olga Torrey swimming at Dutch Springs, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA. Gear: Olympus E-620 camera, Olympus 7-14mm f/4 lens, Olympus housing, Sea&Sea YS-01 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/30s



ANITA GEORGE-ARES



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Coconut octopuses at Lembeh Strait in Indonesia. All photos were taken with a Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 60mm f/2.8 macro USM lens, Ikelite housing and two Ikelite DS161 strobes. Photo 1. (left) Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/200s; Photo 2. (center) Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/200s; Photo 3. (right) Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/200s

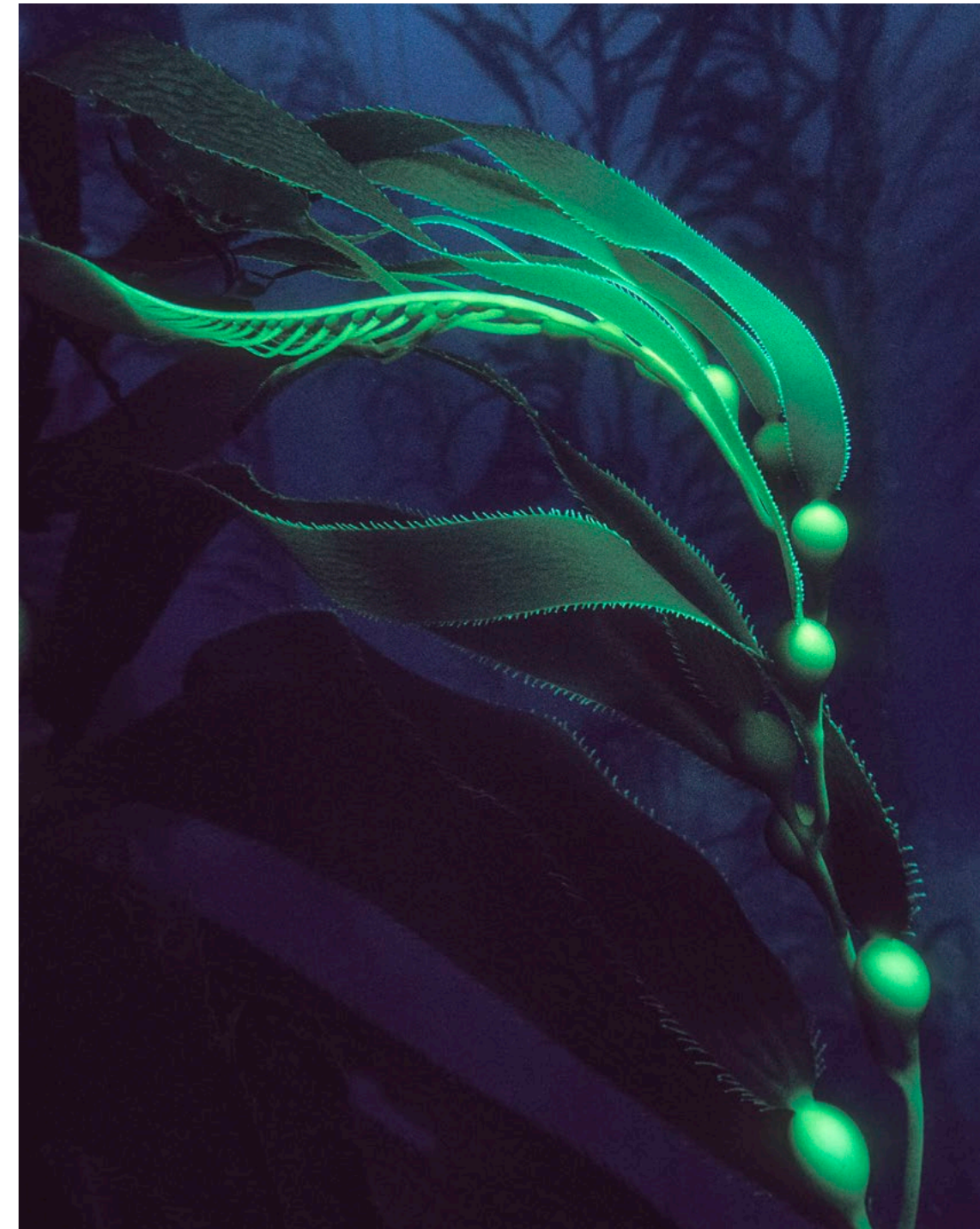
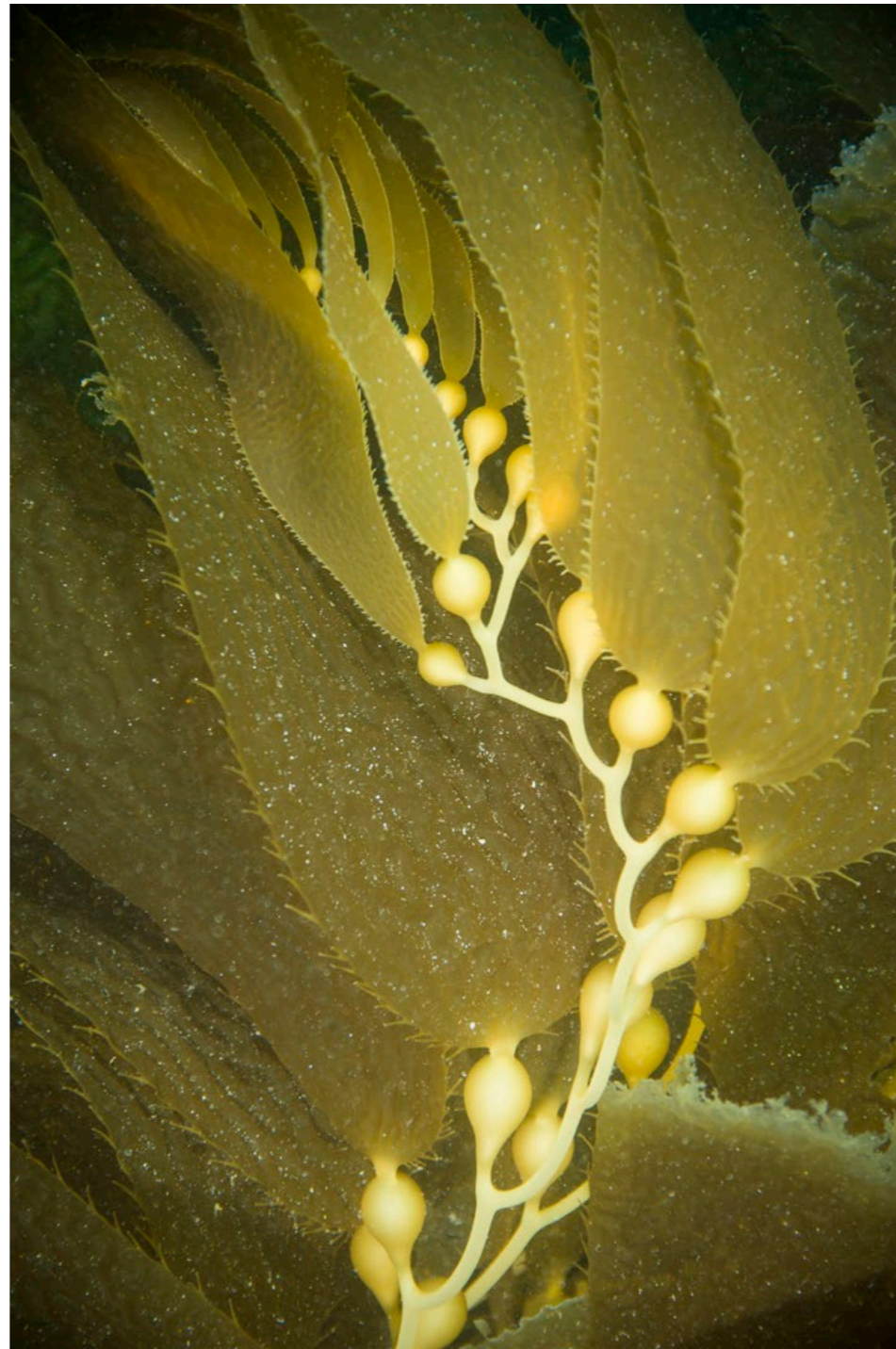
Octopus on the Half Shell

Text and photos by Anita George-Ares, PhD

The coconut octopus is a common and very entertaining resident of Lembeh Strait, located between the Indonesian islands of Sulawesi and Lembeh. While coconut octopuses may be found sheltering in or carrying around coconut halves, they also occupy shells, cans and glass bottles. Coconut octopuses are widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific. I hope to see and photograph this species in a coconut shell one day.

The octopus in Photos 1 and 2 is the same individual. The octopus was constantly moving and changing its position on the shell while I was taking images. In the center image, the shell is nearly hidden by the octopus. Not wanting to stress the octopus, I swam away and found another coconut octopus (Photo 3) that sat quietly in its shell.

I chose these images for a triptych as the octopuses are the same species. They both sheltered in bivalve shells and were found on the same dive. The images have similar backgrounds of volcanic sand. Visit: [facebook.com/profile.php?id=100016947967639](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100016947967639)



Giant Kelp Triptych

Text and photos by Matthew Meier

In thinking about which image or images I would use to create a triptych, I tried to envision what would look best “hung on the wall of a gallery.” That phrase was part of the descriptive instructions for this latest topic in the *Contributors’ Picks* series. So, when I start-

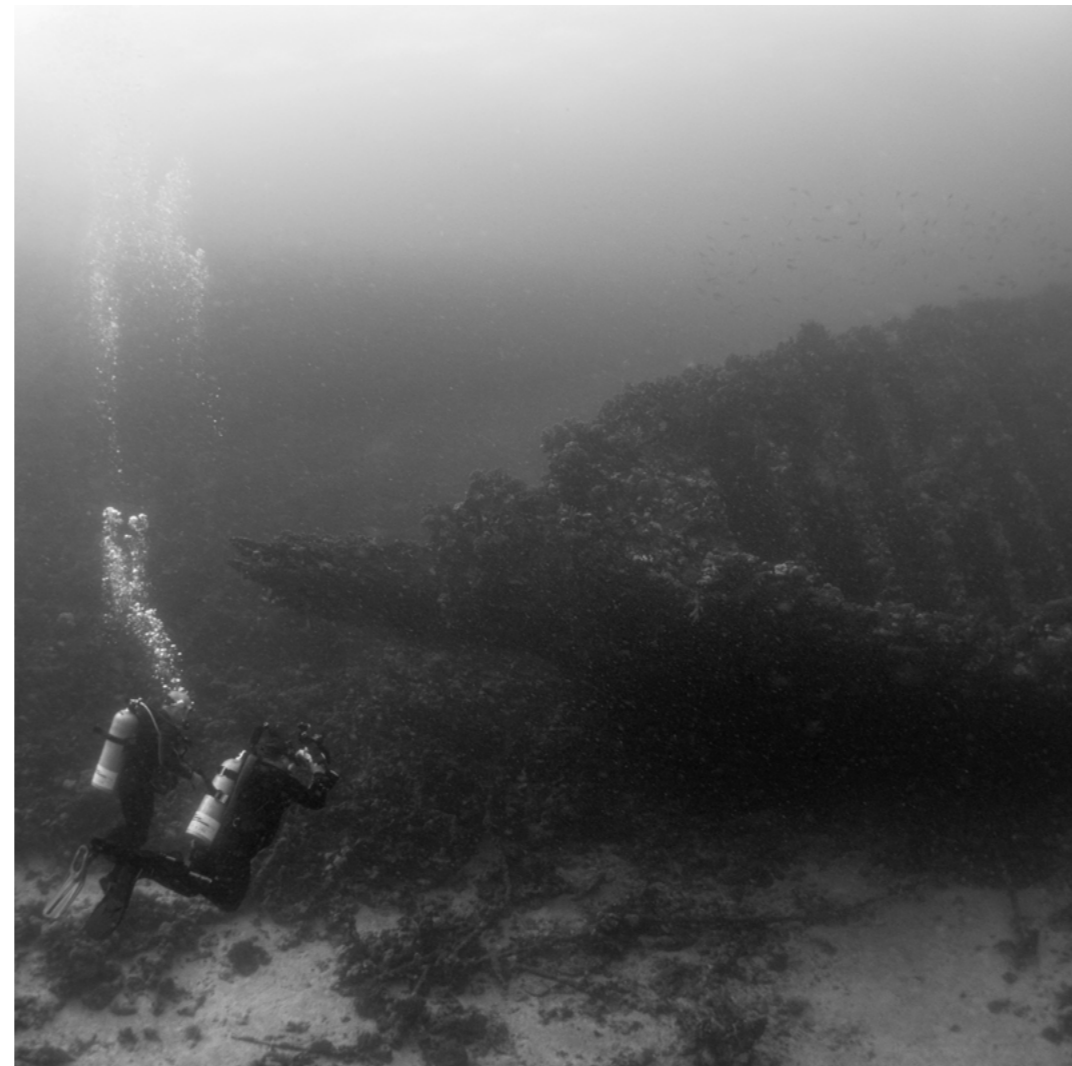
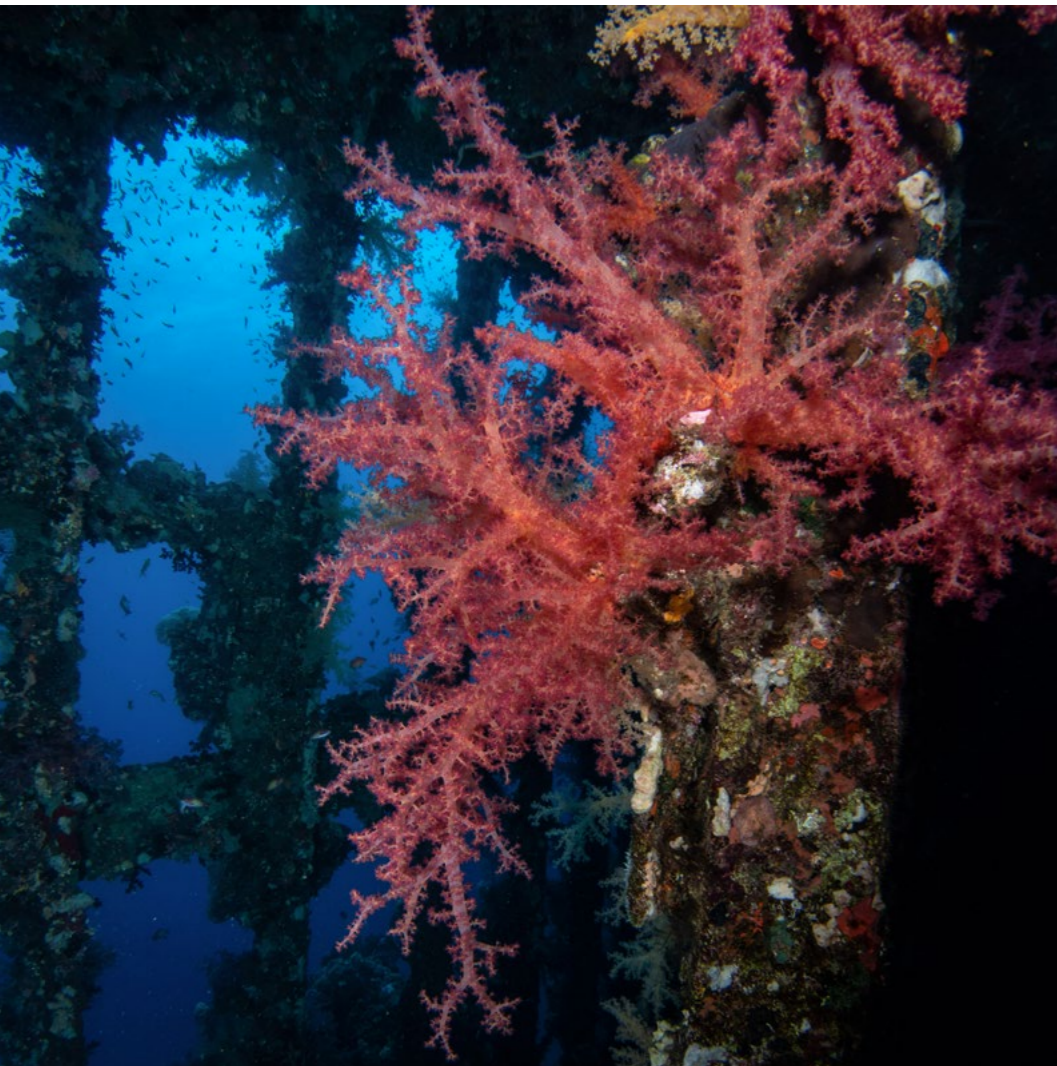
ed looking through my library, I searched for photos that were worthy of either being hung alone or together as a threesome.

Photo collages seemed more interesting to me than slicing up a single image, so ultimately, I created several themed combinations using either bold colors, specific species or a combination thereof, to come up with half a dozen striking triptychs. There was a trio of orange hairy frogfish; portraits of scorpion-

fish in red, pink and yellow; and families of clownfish swimming among their purple, red and green anemones.

However, as I could only submit one triptych for this assignment, I decided on similar compositions of giant kelp in shades of blue and green. Two of these photos are already hanging on my wall, so I look forward to rearranging some artwork to highlight this triptych in the near future. Visit: MatthewMeierphoto.com

LEFT TO RIGHT: Giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) with sun rays. Gear: Nikon F4 camera, Nikon 20mm lens, Subal housing, Ikelite strobes, Fuji Velvia film, settings unknown; New growth, giant kelp patterns. Gear: Nikon D3 camera, Nikon 24-85mm lens at 85mm, Subal housing, Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/5.6, 1/60s; Moody giant kelp. Gear: Nikon F4 camera, Nikon 20mm lens, Subal housing, Ikelite strobes, Fuji Velvia film, settings unknown. All images were taken at Santa Cruz Island, Channel Islands, California.



LEFT TO RIGHT:

Pink soft corals inside the *SS Carnatic*, Red Sea, Egypt. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, 8-15mm fisheye lens, Ikelite housing, dual DS230 Ikelite strobes. Exposure: ISO 250, f/8, 1/125s

Divers admire the wreck from afar, to get a full view of the whole ship. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, 8-15mm fisheye lens, Ikelite housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 500, f/5.6, 1/100s

Parrotfish resting inside the ship. Gear: Nikon D850 camera, 105mm lens, Ikelite housing, dual DS230 Ikelite strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/16, 1/200s

Wreck Triptych

Text and photos by Brandi Mueller

After a ship sinks in the ocean, it starts to become a new habitat for marine life. I love how much variety an underwater wreck might have. From a distance, it may still be a huge shadow of man-made metal; but as you get closer, the ocean takes over. In the case of the *SS Carnatic*, in the Red Sea, colorful soft corals adorn the wreck and fish life abounds. This British steamship, built in 1862, ran aground in 1869, and what remains is a beautiful artificial reef. As you get closer and closer, more marine life comes into view. Pipefish swim on the hull, parrotfish feast, anthias swarm, and schools of glass fish fill up the inside of the ship. Focus more closely, and more will come into view. Visit: brandiunderwater.com





Nudibranchs in Malaysia

Text and photos by Olga Torrey

One of my favorite macro subjects to photograph are nudibranchs, also called sea slugs. These colorful creatures are snails without a protective shell. There are over 3,000 species in both tropical and cold waters. Many of them have brilliant colors and eye-catching patterns on their skins. They are often considered some of the most beautiful animals in the world.

I selected three images of nudibranchs that I had photographed in the warm waters of Malaysia and created a triptych of them. I chose photos that showed their various shapes, sizes, colors and patterns.

Visit: fitimage.nyc

REFERENCE: WIKIPEDIA.ORG

LEFT TO RIGHT:

Nembrotha lineolata nudibranch, Mantabuan Island, Tun Sakaran Marine Park, Malaysia. Exposure: ISO 250, f/13, 1/60s

Nembrotha milleri nudibranch, Mantabuan Island, Tun Sakaran Marine Park, Malaysia. Exposure: ISO 250, f/11, 1/50s

Phyllodesmium magnum nudibranch, Sipadan Pom Pom Resort, Celebes Sea, Malaysia. Exposure: ISO 250, f/11, 1/80s

Gear for all images: Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, Olympus M.Zuiko 12-50mm f/3.5-6.3 EZ micro lens, Nauticam NA-EM5 housing, Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes