

ALEXANDRE CHRISTIAENS (BE)

*Open interpretations  
on darkness*



Grèce, Voyage à Cythère, 2002© Alexandre Christiaens

## Open interpretations on darkness

Stormy seas wrapped in darkness, star showers where sidereal time is unraveled, wooden boat bow thrusters. Anchored by the galactic night to the deepest crevices of the earth, these millennia-old concretions, consecrated to eternity, are magnified in Alexandre Christiaens' photography. These photographs unveil and revel in the passion that analogue photography fuels in darkness.

As Christine de Naeyer writes in an article on Alexandre Christiaens' first monograph (appearing in *Yellow Now* additions and in the accompanying 2011 exhibition at the Espace Contretype in Brussels): this 'darkness that dawned before life and colour (...). 'The force of such a thick and encased darkness that bears no opacity. Indeed, far from representing a black screen that closes itself off, it is a darkness that invites its threshold to be constantly crossed'<sup>1</sup>.

In the images – which have been meticulously crafted in the photography lab hideaway–, there is a range of darkness graduating from the darkest to the faintest shades. Whether this darkness is in the form of intense chunks or sliced patches, 'from the onset, it captures the imagination and invites the viewer to meditate, journey inside and in front of themselves, through the core of the vibrant yet elusive material; an unfathomable mystery (...)'<sup>2</sup>. Seas and caves that share something in common: the photographer captures the visual aspect of the earth's mysteries as if it were a raw material to which he gave shape. In Alexandre Christiaens' photographs, we find organic, physical, mineral and visceral portraits. From depths of the earth to the moving surface of the sea and the furtive glints of the sky, which throw the viewer into the thick abyss of the living, captured in fragile yet powerful sketches.

Finally, these images share the tension towards formal abstraction – which emerge out of the dives undertaken by analogue photography in the dark room: photographic manipulation that is born out of the stop bath where the bright and mannerist moods of the sky, water and millennia-old stones are brewed and modulated. In the seascapes captured between dusk and dawn, and in the stalagmites that are secretly sworn to eternity – just like cosmic time is dilated under the celestial dome –, for the photographer, it is a matter of 'capturing, one by one, this ambiguity, the slight quiver of life in inertia, the veiled depth in the mysteries of time, – the remaining tatters of night, even in the midst of the day.'

François de Coninck

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1 Christine de Naeyer, 'L'oeuvre au noire' in *L'Art* magazine, no 52, page 36

2 Ibid.



Océan Atlantique, 2013 © Alexandre Christiaens



Brésil, Salvador de Bahia, Océan atlantique, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



Océan Atlantique, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



Océan Atlantique, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens





Océan Atlantique, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens

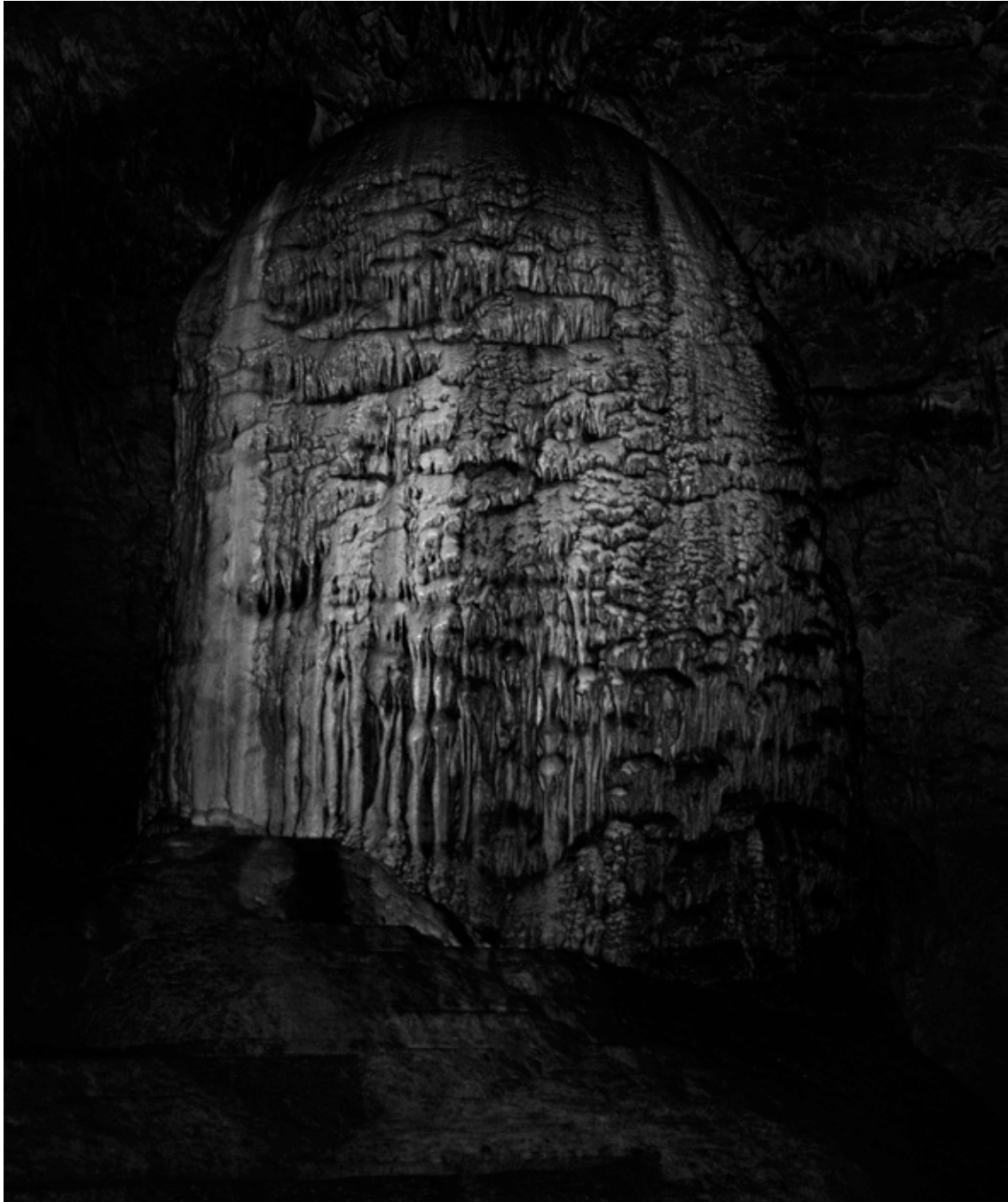




Indie, Mer d'Arabie, 2008 © Alexandre Christiaens



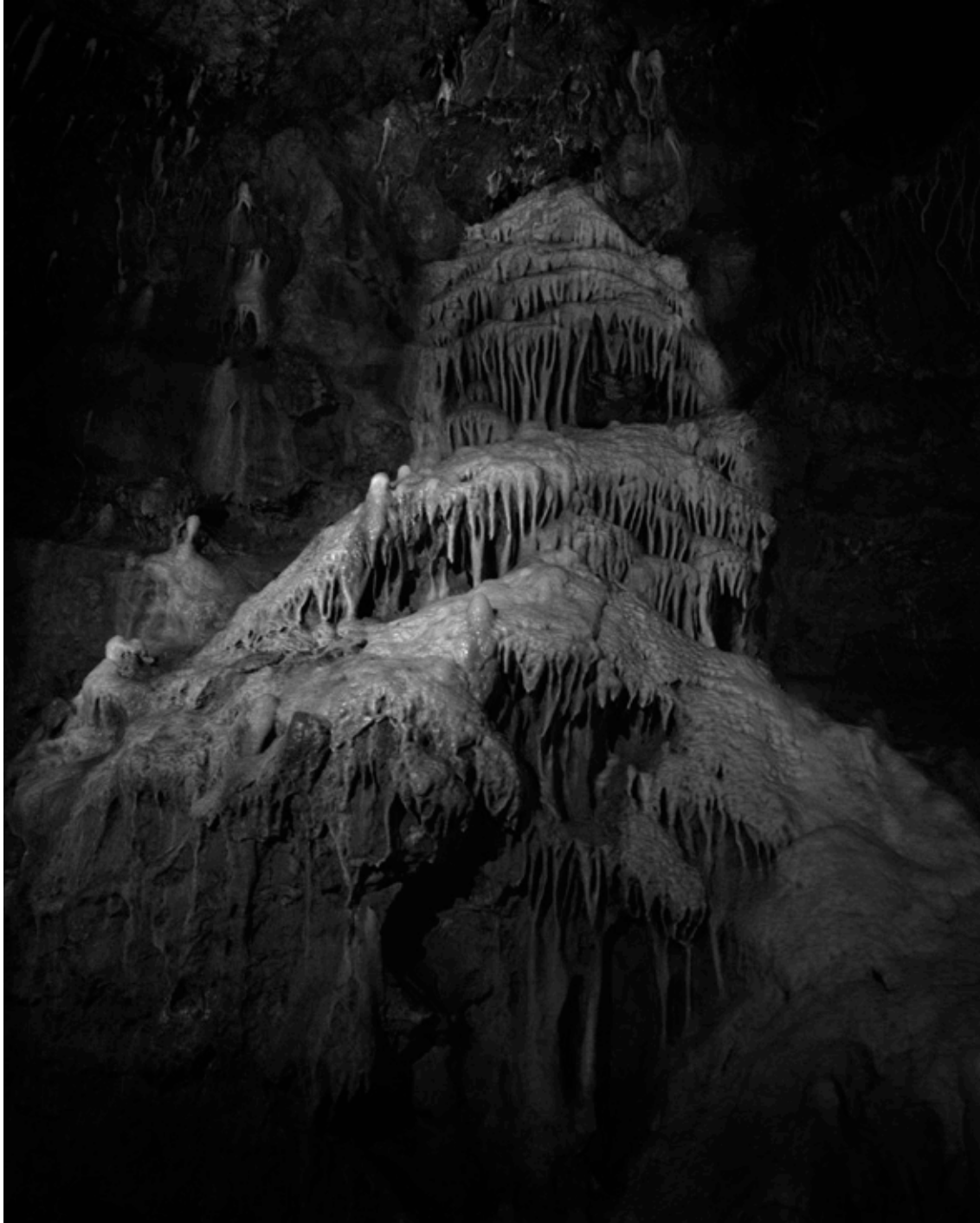
Roumanie, Mer Noire, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



Roumanie, Grotte Méziad, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



Roumanie, Grotte Méziad, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



Belgique, La Merveilleuse cave, 2005 © Alexandre Christiaens





Inde, Grotte Diu, 2008 © Alexandre Christiaens



Inde, Grotte Diu, 2008 © Alexandre Christiaens





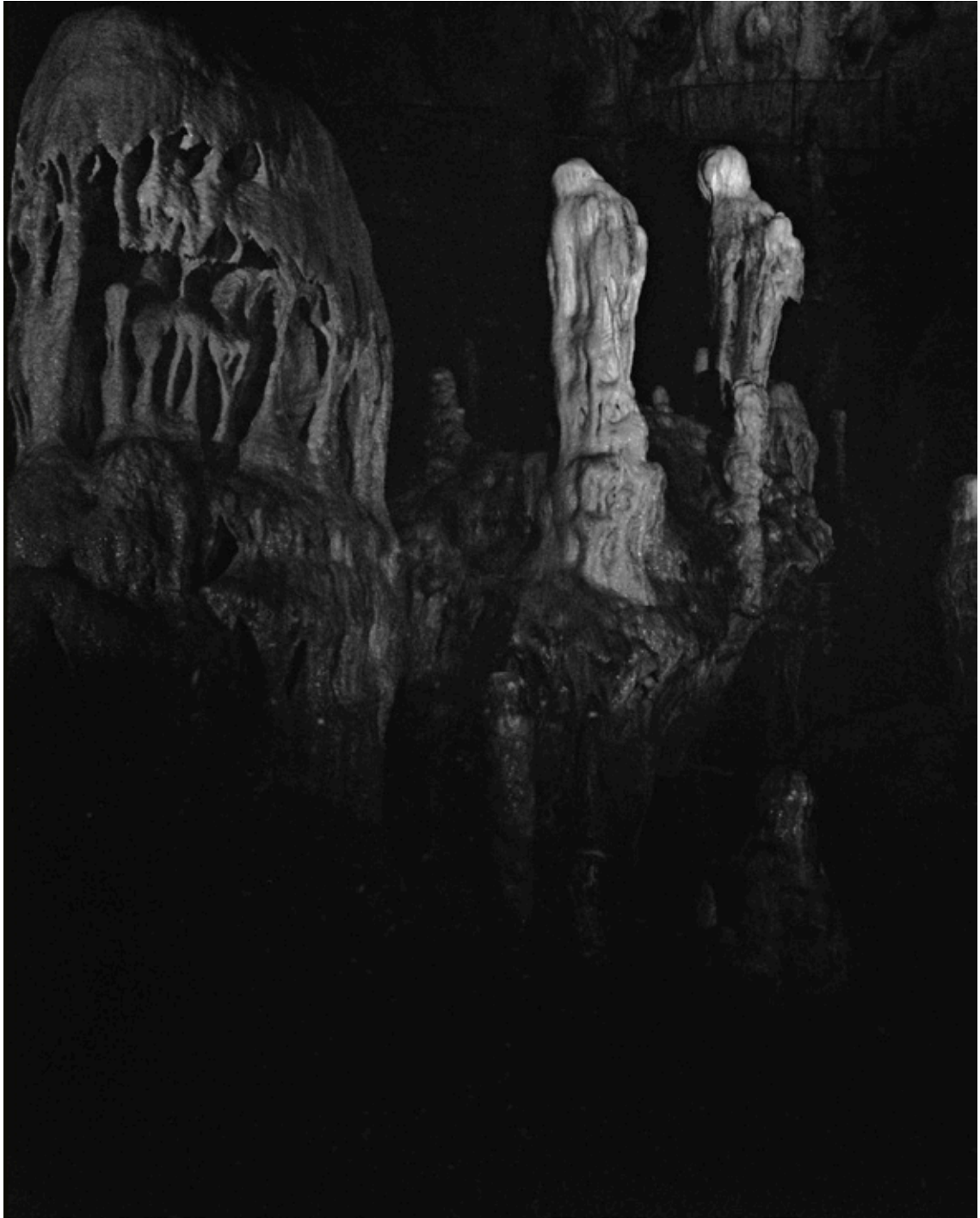
Inde, Grotte Diu, 2008 © Alexandre Christiaens



Inde, Grotte Diu, 2008 © Alexandre Christiaens



Roumanie, Grotte de Glace, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



Roumanie, Grotte des Ours, 2007 © Alexandre Christiaens



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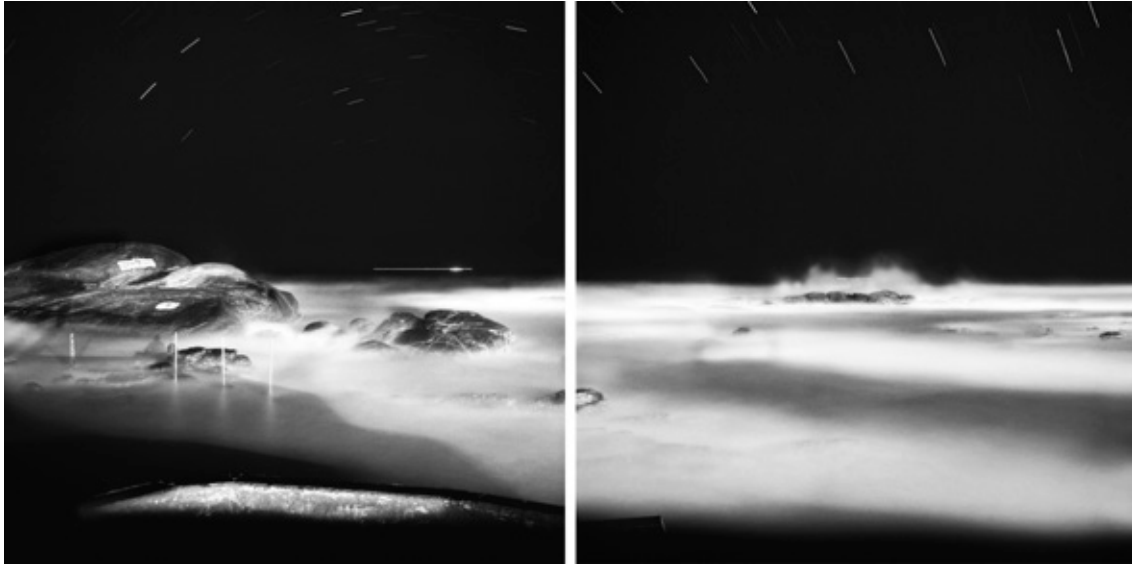


Inde, Mer d'Arabie, 2008 © Alexandre Christiaens



Grèce, Voyage à Cythère, 2002 © Alexandre Christiaens

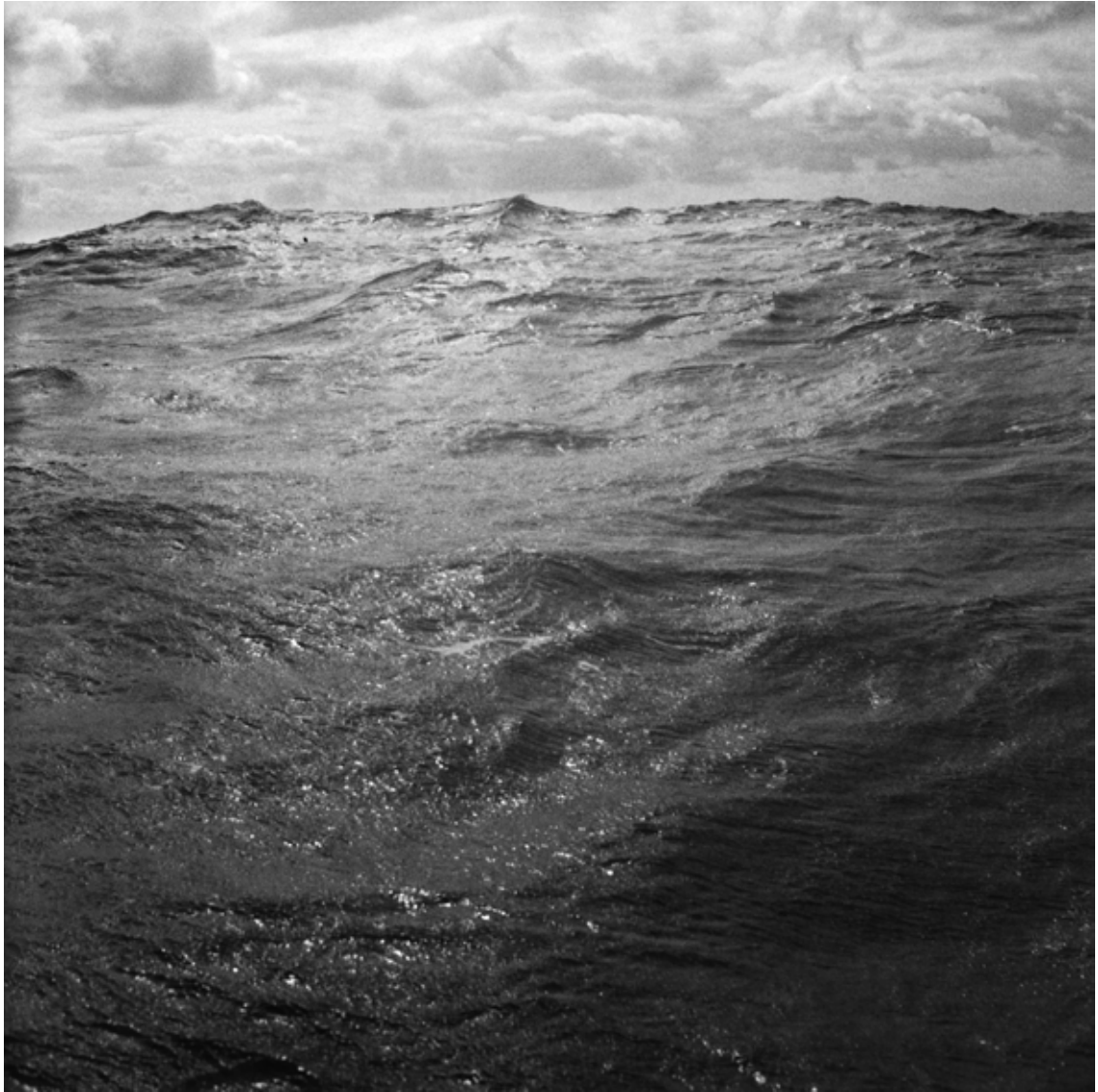




Inde, Cap Cormorin, 2004 © Alexandre Christiaens



Inde, Mandvi, 2015 © Alexandre Christiaens



Océan Atlantique, 2013 © Alexandre Christiaens



Chili, Valparaiso, 2015 © Alexandre Christiaens

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on **[www.alexandrechristiaens.com/en](http://www.alexandrechristiaens.com/en)**

High definition portfolio on request.

**Alexandre Christiaens**

Rue du moulin, 29  
5100 Dave, BE  
++32 (0) 473 56 21 28  
[alexandre.christiaens@gmail.com](mailto:alexandre.christiaens@gmail.com)  
[www.alexandrechristiaens.com](http://www.alexandrechristiaens.com)



Iles de Wight, 2000 © Alexandre Christiaens