

# Gone West

HANOTO WIBISONO



**Gone West**

Hanoto Wibisono  
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Secarik Keindahan, Kehidupan  
dan Kematian dalam Karya Foto  
Hanoto Wibisono

A Sliver of Beauty, Life, and Death in the  
Photography of Hanoto Wibisono

**Yudhi Soerjoatmodjo**  
Kurator / Curator





Jiwa penuh semangat para bangsa pendatang Amerika lahir dan ditempa oleh sungai liar, ngarai menganga, gurun terik, dan hutan berselimut salju yang mereka temui sepanjang pengembaraannya, hampir 200 tahun lalu.

Mereka adalah para buruh, petani, peternak, dan pengkhottbah, juga para pemburu, pencari harta, petualang, pelarian, dan penjahat yang kabur dari peradaban usang di Eropa buat membangun hidup baru di benua Amerika.

Sepanjang abad ke-19 pendatang dan keturunan pendatang itu terus berupaya memperbaiki peruntungannya --hijrah dari kota-kota di timur negeri yang telah semakin sumpek ke wilayah barat yang terbentang luas.

Berbulan-bulan mereka menapaki rute-rute perjalanan yang bisa mencapai 5,000 km panjangnya, membawa segala bekal yang bisa diangkut dalam gerobak lembu dan secercah harapan.

Satu dari sepuluh pengelana menemui ajalnya dalam perjalanan itu. Sebagian menjadi korban kerasnya alam. Sebagian tewas dalam peristeruan dengan suku-suku asli yang semakin terusir dari ladang dan tanah buruannya. Sebagian lagi terbunuh dalam kejahanatan antar mereka sendiri.

Tapi, arus manusia itu terus saja mengalir. Antara tahun 1830an dan 1870an, tak kurang dari 500,000 lebih jiwa ambil bagian dalam penje-

lajahan besar yang dikenal sebagai "Ekspansi ke Barat" itu.

Jejak-jejak semangat itulah yang masih bisa kita lihat dalam karya foto Hanoto Wibisono saat petualangan singkatnya pada 2016 lalu menjelajahi potongan terakhir California Trail --satu dari enam rute utama emigrasi ke barat Amerika.

Di Antelope Canyon, Yosemite, dan Grand Canyon, Hanoto menghadirkan kembali kebesaran sekaligus kengerian alam yang menggugah mata dan hati para pendatang-pengelana dalam pengembaraan mereka ratusan tahun lalu.

Di kota kecil Bodie yang terlantar dan lapuk, karya-karyanya seperti mengajak kita mendengar kembali sayup-sayup orgel gereja, desis mesin uap, dan percakapan petang saat pekerja kembali dari tambang emasnya – sebuah peninggalan demam "Gold Rush" yang mengantarkan 300,000 lebih jiwa ke California pada 1848-1855.

Di ratusan kota kecil semacam Bodie, matahari telah lama terbenam. Namun, walau cuma sesaat, karya-karya Hanoto Wibisono telah menghidupan kembali apa yang pernah diabadikan Henry Bradshaw Fearon, seorang tabib Inggris yang berkelana ke Amerika di abad ke-19:

*"Orang-orang Amerika itu selalu saja menatap ke arah barat, bagi mencari sesuatu yang lebih baik di sana. Hidup dan mati mereka pun selalu dilandasi harapan, tak ubahnya seperti para bangsa pengalana." ---*

The American immigrant spirit was forged by the wild rivers, deep canyons, scorching desert, and snow-blanketed forests they encountered in their odyssey to the western frontier-lands, nearly 200 years ago.

They were the laborers, farmers, cattlemen, preachers, hunters, gold-miners, refugees, and ruffians who had escaped Europe's decaying civilization to rebuild their lives in the new world that was America.

Throughout the 19th century, these immigrants and their descendants kept pushing their fortunes by continuously pushing at the borders –moving away in drove from the noisy crowded eastern cities to the still empty spaces out west.

They trekked for months, many to destinations nearly 5000 km away, carrying a dash of hope and just enough supplies that could fit in their ox-carts.

One in every ten travellers met their demise on these roads. Some fell victim to the unforgiving climate. Some died battling the native tribes who were increasingly angered by the loss of their own fields and hunting grounds. Others were simply murdered by their own kin.

Yet, the flow of human migration continued. No less than 500.000 people took part in the great journey that came to be known as the "Expansion to the West" between the 1830s and 1870s.

Hanoto Wibisono revealed some of the traces left by these old wanderers in the photographs he created during his short adventure exploring the last tranche of the famous California Trail – one of the six main emigration routes to the west-- in 2016.

At Antelope Canyon, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon Hanoto captured the grandeur as well as the eeriness of nature that must have aroused many an adventurer's heart with awe and fear hundreds of years ago.

His series of photographs from the small abandoned town of Bodie seems to invite us to listen attentively to the lost sigh of the church organ, the dying hiss of the steam engines, or the murmur of evening conversations as workers straggled home from their mines –a relic of the "Gold Rush" fever that had gripped the world and lured more than 300.000 people to California in 1848-1855.

The sun has since set for hundreds of small towns like Bodie but for a small moment when Hanoto Wibisono's images brought to life what the 19th century English surgeon and traveler, Henry Bradshaw Fearon, had immortalized after his own sojourn to the American west:

*"The American has always something better in his eye, further west; he therefore lives and dies on hope, a mere gypsy in this particular." ---*



















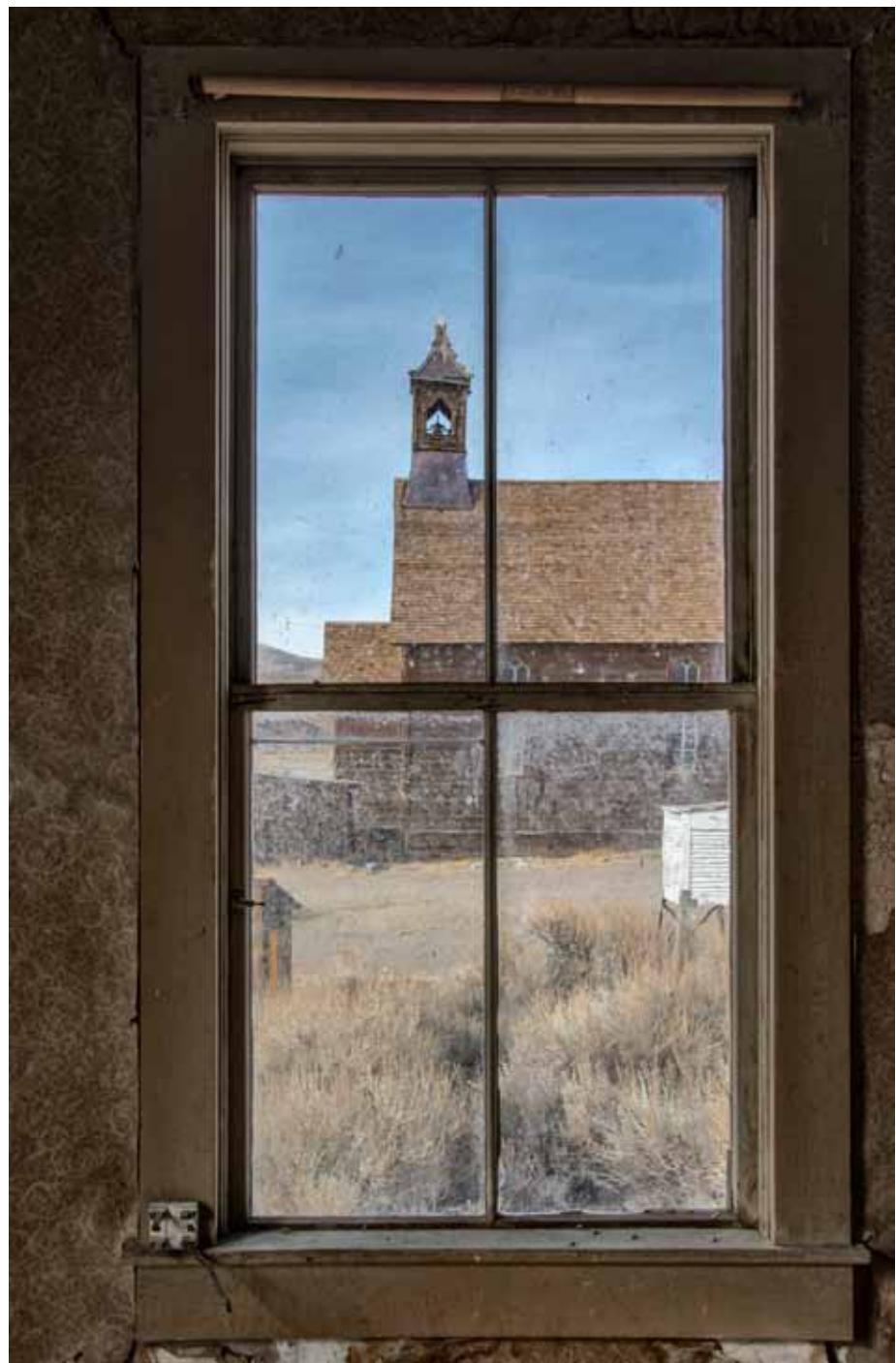
























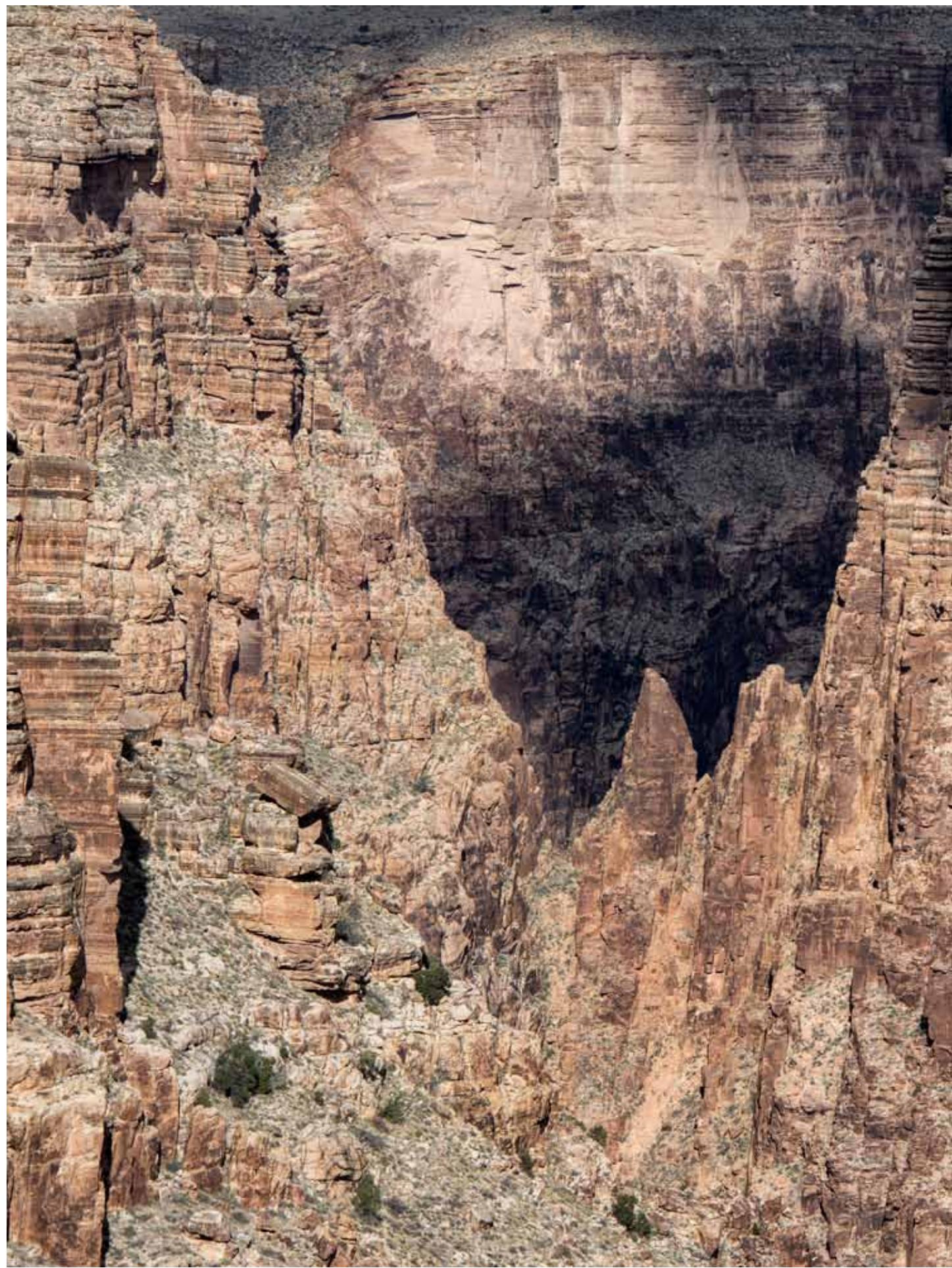
















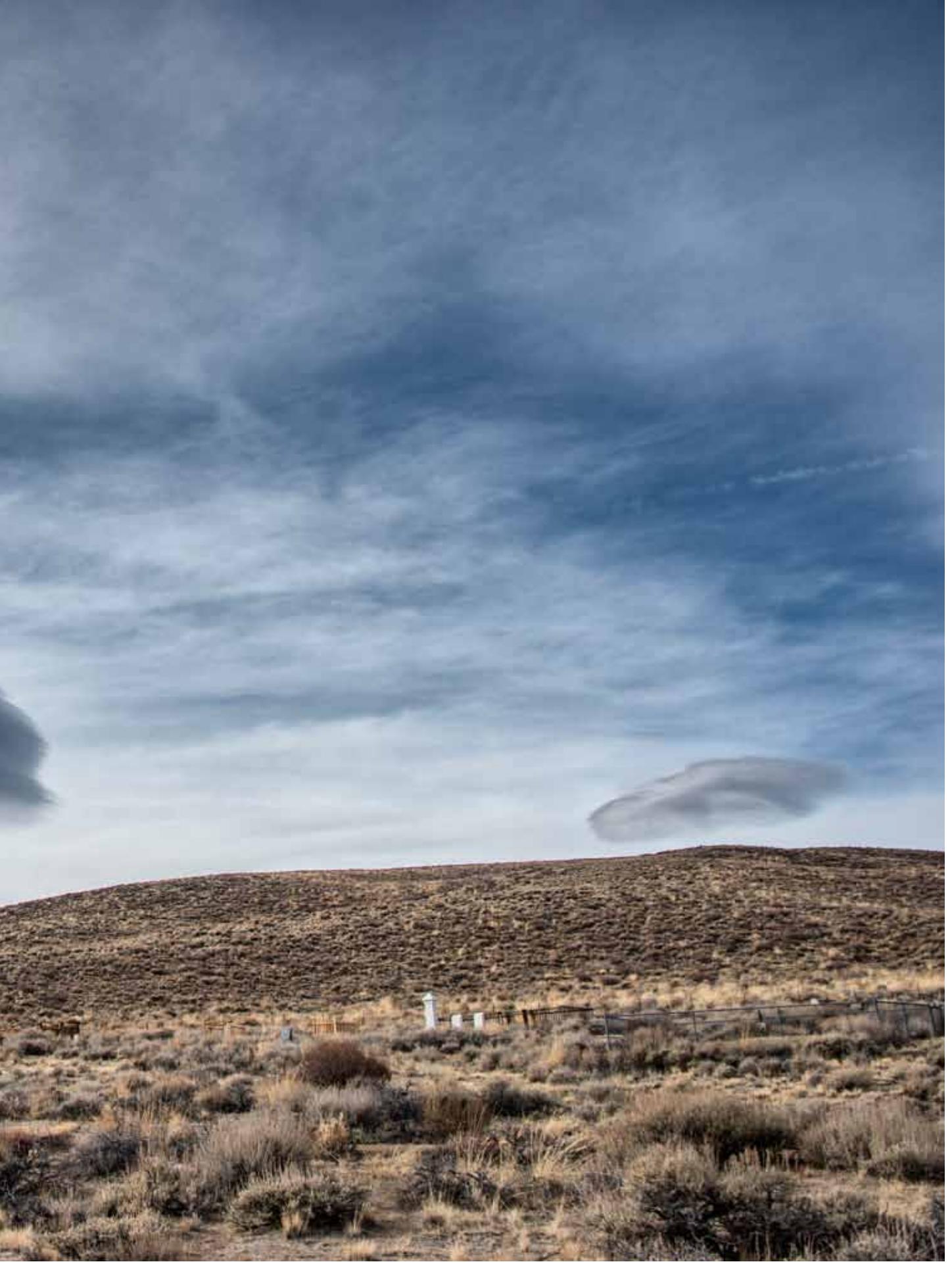
**Hidup**











# HANOTO WIBISONO



Kecintaannya pada seni fotografi bermula sejak akhir tahun 1970an saat bergabung dengan klub foto SMP Santo Yosef, Surabaya, dan terus berlanjut semasa kuliahnya di bidang Teknik Mesin di Universitas Seattle di Seattle, Washington, AS. Kecintaan itu terpercik kembali setelah bertahun-tahun terpendam saat membangun keluarga dan usahanya sendiri di bidang industri makanan, lantas membawanya berkelana mengabadikan berbagai tempat terindah di dunia dengan ditemani para empu salon foto paling termahsyur di Indonesia. Karya-karya foto dalam pameran ini ia ciptakan dalam perjalanan tahun 2016 saat melewati potongan rute emigrasi kuno ke California, termasuk ke bekas kota tambang emas, Bodie, yang sudah ditinggalkan penghuninya sejak 1942.

His love of photography started in the late 1970s after joining the school club at SMP Santo Yosef, Surabaya, and continued well throughout his university years while studying Mechanical Engineering at Seattle University in Seattle, Washington, USA. It was rekindled after several years building a family and his own food-industry business, taking him on various journeys to capture some of the world's most beautiful sights --often accompanied by many of Indonesia's most renown practitioners of the salon photography genre. The series of photographs in this exhibition was created during a road-trip in 2016, traversing parts of the old California emigration trail, including to the former gold-mining town, Bodie, abandoned by its population since 1942.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To transform a simple dream to reality, a lot of people have worked hard to create this exhibition.

This exhibition is possible through the grace of the Lord Almighty. I would like to thank my wife—Cecilia and daughters—Elle and Claire for the support; Djie Tjian An and Mr. Saiman from CP Art for the faith in me; Yudhi Soerjoatmodjo for curating the show; Vivi Yip for managing the exhibition; and Mentor Paman Harlim for setting me ablaze on this path of wonder and creation. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.



