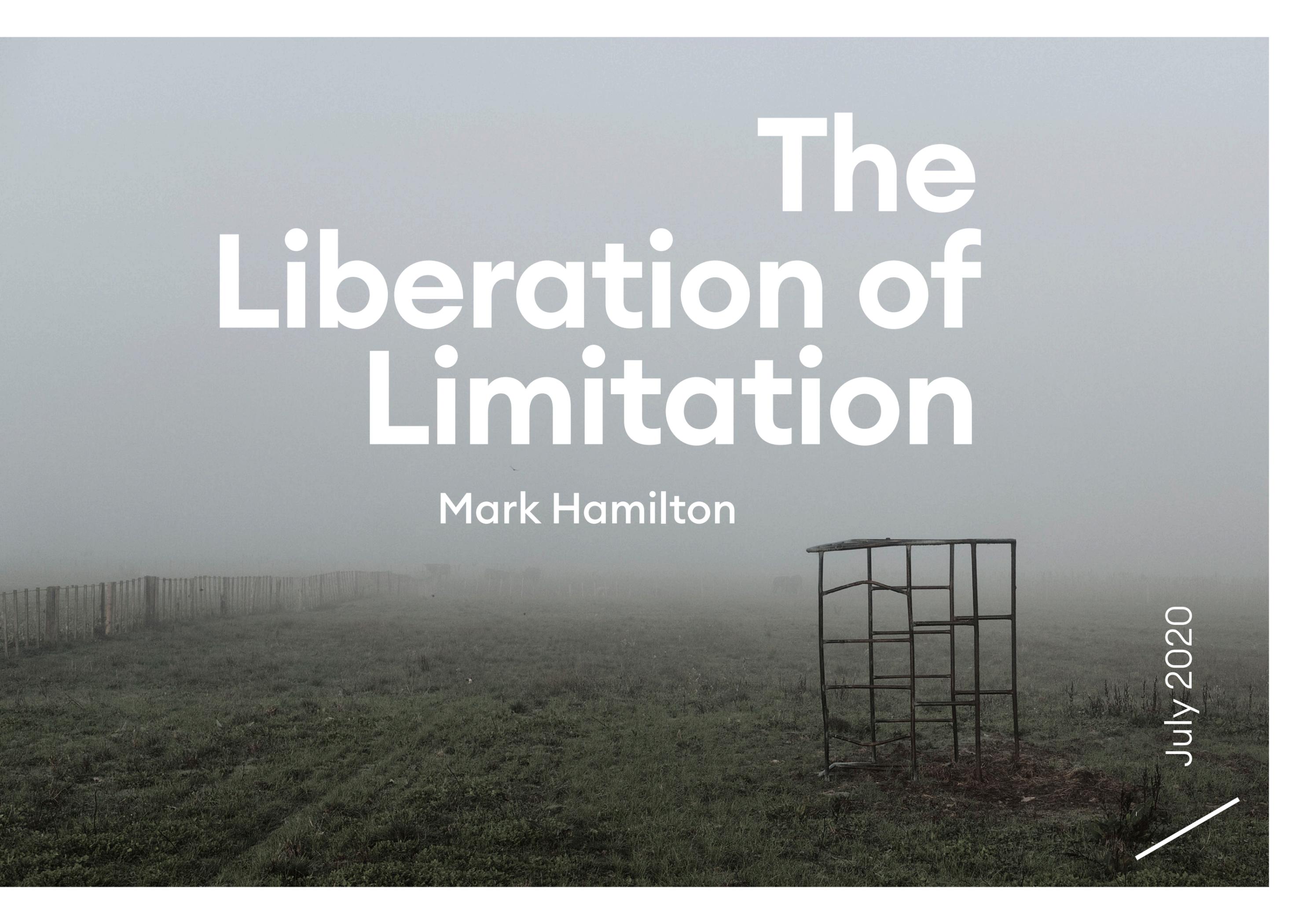


# The Liberation of Limitation

Mark Hamilton

July 2020



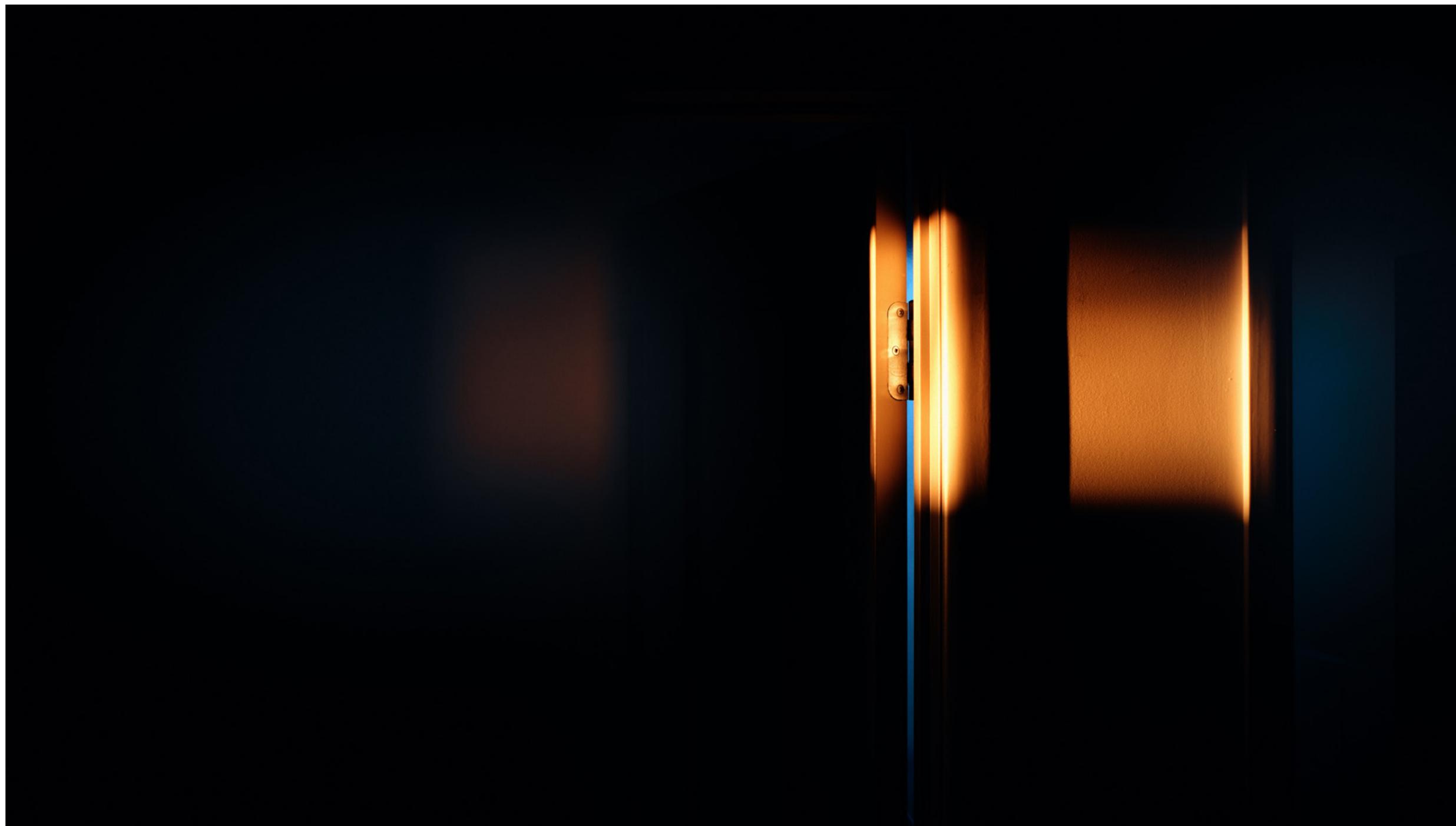
Scrolling through Waikato photographer, Mark Hamilton's Instagram page during lockdown earlier this year was a delight and a joy. His photos seemed to capture the mood of this time – a quiet, reflective sense of home. But they also had that slightly strange, unsettling quality that the Waikato is so good at delivering.

It was, therefore, an easy decision for the gallery to ask Mark to exhibit some of these works for our first show opening since lockdown. In this exhibition Mark presents a series of photos titled *The Liberation of Limitation*.

In addition, we commissioned Hamilton based writer, Faith Wilson to reflect on Mark's photos. For her, the pictures triggered memories of a long-standing, complex friendship, cultivated in the early morning hours going to school in Hamilton East, and surviving to this day.

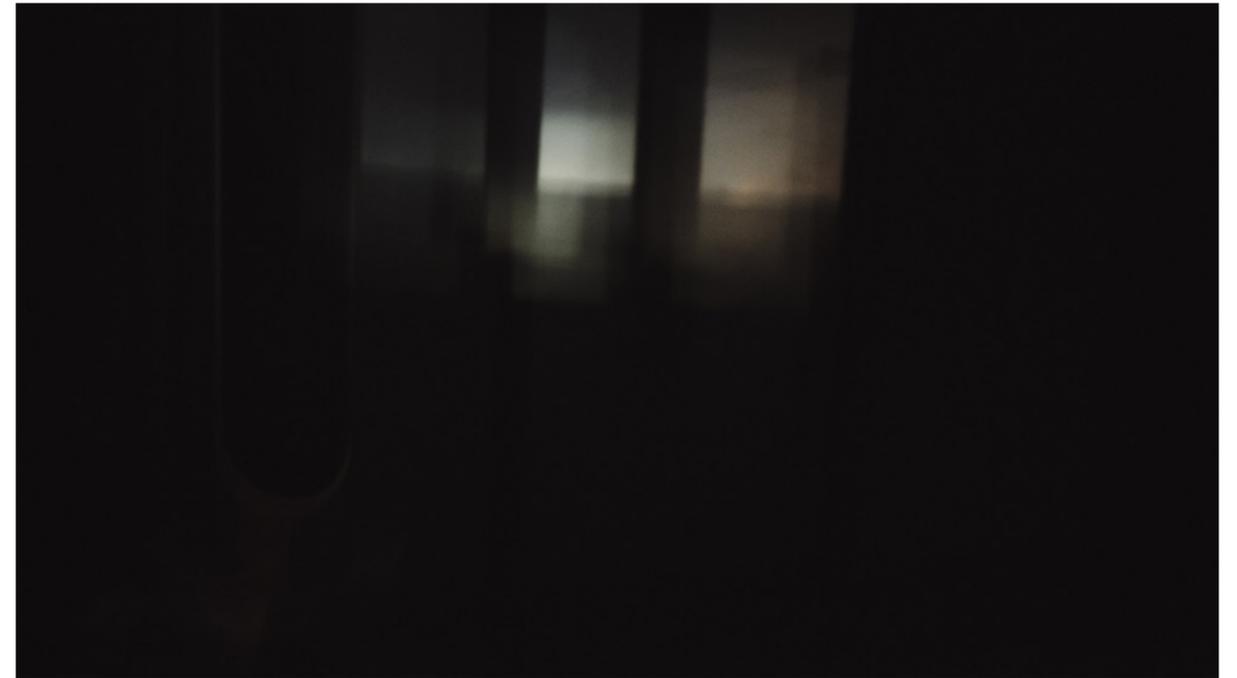
Faith has written a piece titled *Ride or Die* which is quietly reflective, personal and introspective, and also begins with a foggy morning in the Waikato.







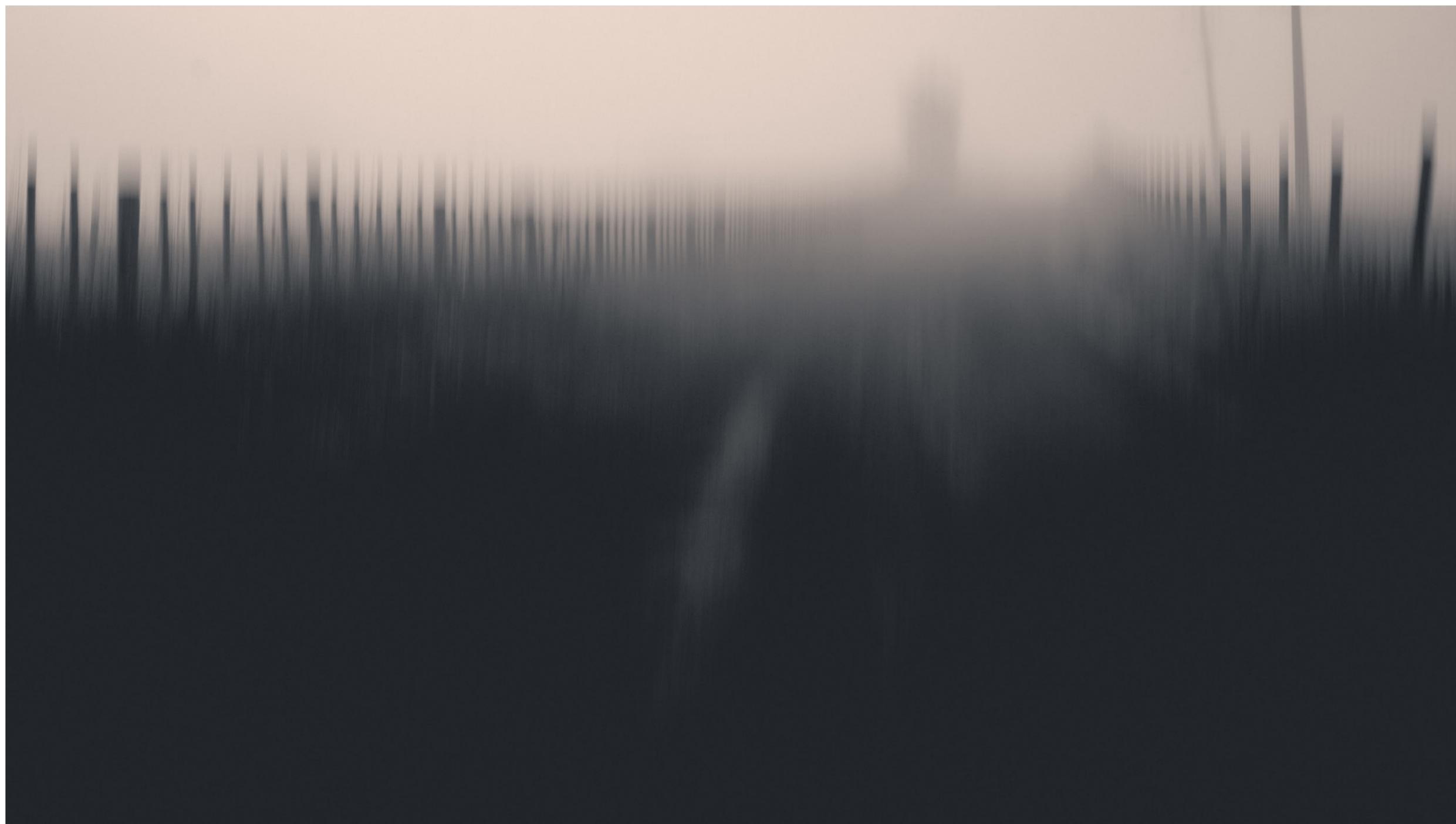




**Level 4 Day 8**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

**Level 4 Day 20**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

**Level 4 Day 6**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250





**Level 4 Day 33**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Ilford Galerie Gold  
Fibre Pearl



**Level 4 Day 27**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

**Level 4 Day 33**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Ilford Galerie Gold  
Fibre Pearl



Level 3 Day 6  
Rangiriri  
2020  
Ilford Galerie Gold  
Fibre Pearl



Level 4 Day 31  
Opuntia  
2020  
Ilford Galerie Gold  
Fibre Pearl

# ride or die

Faith Wilson

Ruth lives a few houses up the road from me. I'm waiting in the lounge at the window that faces the street, drawing faces in the condensation that's built up overnight. It's only a ten-minute walk to school from my house but we're always late. Even if she gets up early, Ruth leaves everything to the last minute. I hate being late but when I see her outside the gate I play it cool.

Our winter uniform is knee high socks and black leather shoes, and when it's real foggy and cold like this morning, we wear gloves and scarves, and Ruth wears one of those beanies that's knitted to look like a strawberry. I'm too self-conscious to wear a hat.

We always stop at the dairy on our walks to school. The dairy-owners know us. Depending on how rich we are, we get a two-pack of raspberry liquorice to share, two small squares of Cairns fudge, individually wrapped, and a vanilla coke, two straws. Our teeth will pay later, but for now, we don't care about anything.

Our favourite mornings are the ones like this. Fog so thick, you think this must be what it's like to walk through clouds. You can't see more than a metre in front of you. We make patterns on the dewy grass, dragging our shoes in case we get lost in the mist, so someone will be able to see our footsteps.

I've stopped caring we're late, cos Ruth doesn't care and if she doesn't care then it makes it okay.

We don't really need anyone else.

\*

I'm waiting in the lounge. Ruth's fucking late. Again. I called her 10 minutes ago saying I needed to be on time today and she literally said she was just leaving the house, and 10 minutes has gone and she's not here. Well, fuck it. Fuck her. I'm leaving without her.

I just want to be on time for once, not have everyone staring at us like we're some dropkicks, have the teacher not riding my ass for once. Maybe even hang out with some of my other friends in form class, chat about the weekend, or run around the classroom singing, or laugh about stupid stuff. I just want to be me.

As I storm out the door, Ruth rocks up to the fence, cool and casual. She asks me if I want to get stoned. I don't really want to. I want to go to school for once. Mainly cos I feel guilty about wagging half the week but also because we have English today and we have to write a short story and I kinda wanted to be there for that.

But I know how the story goes. I'll say yes. We'll go to the backyard of my house cos no-one else is home. We'll fill up a bucket with water. Grab the Coke bottle with a chopped off bottle that's hidden behind the shed. We'll fill the lid, that's had the middle cut out and fitted with a socket, with some chopped up weed. We'll put the bottle in the water, screw the lid on. Light it, and pull the bottle up slowly until it's full of thick, creamy smoke. We'll take turns. You'll go first. You'll unscrew the cap, put your mouth over the bottle opening, and push the bottle back into the water, and the water will push the smoke into your mouth, and you'll inhale it, deep into your lungs, and you'll take it all and you won't cough. And then I'll go next, and my hands are sweating. I always get nervous cos a bucky really fucks you up, you only need one. And I'll inhale, I'll take it all. But I'll cough, and cough, and spit, and spin out. And neither of us will be able to talk for about a minute. We're so stoned. Then we'll tip the water out. Hide the bottle again. We obviously don't go to school.

\*

Our friendship necklaces never broke because we didn't wear them. We weren't basic bitches, our shit was deep. When you fucked off to Dunedin, you were too broken to tell me, and I was too fucked off to realise there were other things. Things bigger than eating magic mushrooms at Sam's on the weekend. Things bigger than nicking mascara from Farmers. Things bigger than your sister stealing your shoes, and bigger than my parents banning me from seeing you. Things way bigger than doing well at school, and having normal friendships and telling each other how much we meant to each other. We were both kids eh. My world no bigger than Ham Easy. Your world too big, too deep, for either of us to understand. So Dunedin made sense, really. A whole island away, a sea in between us, too far to bridge. You left me. And it broke me. I spent a year grieving.

\*

It's weird being back here, back home. Hamilton for me, is inextricably tied up with you. I haven't lived here for years, until now. You, even longer. What ties you to this place? It's like every trace of you here is gone. Maybe you exist only in my memory, every time I walk past number 15, look down the long driveway, hoping to see you on your bike, or picking mandarins from the trees, or hiding from your parents as they call you in for dinner.

For a long time, I wanted you gone from my head. We were too close, our lives bound up in each other's, our own lives too heavy to carry alone, but bearable together. The things we hid, and carried, didn't matter. Until they did. And when they did, it all came spewing out, up, over, and we were covered in lava and we were burning, we were burning. And then the lava cooled. And we turned to stone. And we were stuck.

\*

But sis. You're a Capricorn, and I'm an Aries. We're a match made in hell. So fuck it. I'm jumping. Jumping into the deep down beneath us, into the hot and sticky. I'm melting these stones, to laugh rapturously, to move freakishly into the space that's always welcomed us: the complicated; the contradictory; the controversial; the fucked-up; the wonderful; the head-over-heels; the seductive, heavily perfumed, messy-15-year-old's-bedrooms that hid us from the world when we needed it to. I'm jumping because I'm alive, and I want to feel free.

\*

Down here. We're on other sides of the world. No bridge to connect us. No planes even. Maybe you do exist only in my memory. But you're real. You're here. Every time I walk into that same dairy; when I go past KFC and remember how we used to get popcorn chicken and chips after school; when I drive past the tinny house we'd go to in our school uniform; when I walk down by the river and remember you had a secret spot down there so I made myself one there too; when I'm showing my partner my 'hood and I'm telling him stories, all the things we got up to, the mischief, the inventiveness of children with no money but so much life. You were my ride or die from day one.

You're here when I'm by myself, pensive, in thought, reading a book, and remembering how while other kids were out playing tiggy or handball we'd be inside, reading our fantasy novels, stopping every 10 minutes to update each other on what's happening in our book.

You're here when I lie down, and all of a sudden I realise I'm 30, marvel at how the time has flown by so fucking quickly, and it feels like only a few short years ago, that we were kids, just girls trying to have fun, trying to make sense of the world we were thrust into, trying to grow up into, and then out of, just a couple of weirdos who found some kind of solace each other, some kind of light, and we never let it go.



**Level 4 Day 33**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

**Level 4 Day 28**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Ilford Galerie Gold  
Fibre Pearl

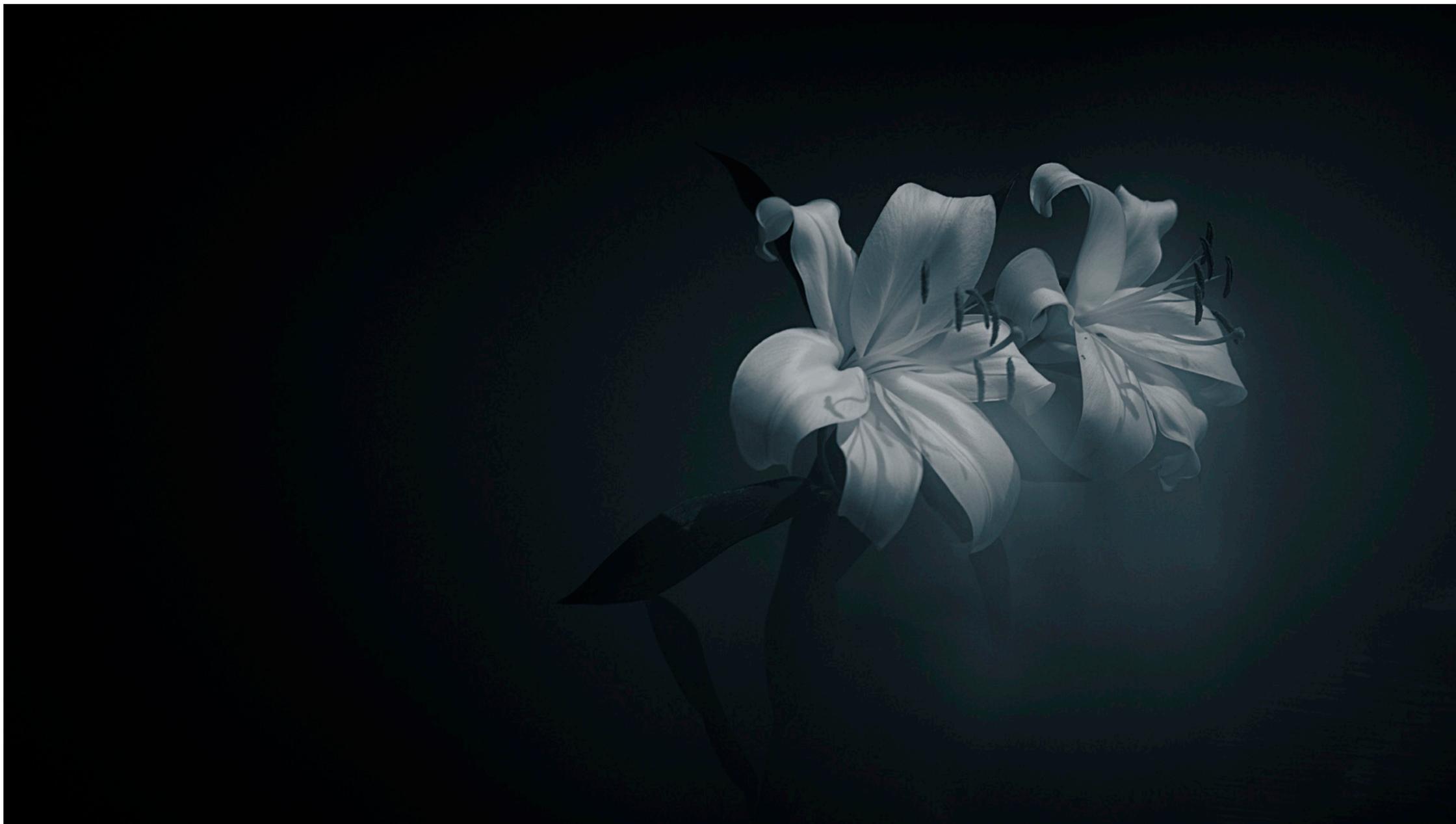






**Level 3 Day 2**  
**Rangiriri**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

**Level 3 Day 2**  
**Rangiriri**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250



**Level 3 Day 8**  
**Opuatia**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

**FRONT COVER:**  
**Level 4 Day 33**  
**Opuatia (detail)**  
2020  
Epson Luster 250

RAMP

Tuesday-Friday  
12.30-4pm  
or by appt.

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