



Portals
By Ruth Plucinski



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A key can unlock possibilities. It allows us entry and secures our exit. We come and go, at times with a clear intention, at others with a touch of curiosity as to what lies ahead. It is entrances and exits-- portals if you will-- that are the focus of this book, from man-made to natural to anything in between. As a photographer, I am drawn to the views they provide, however clear or obscure, that let my imagination wander.





Spiritual spaces provide a sense of grandeur. The arching doorways and ceilings, the glimpses of the sacred, all add to the mystery.





Passageways direct our steps- and our eyes- ahead. Here the endpoint looks like an oversized keyhole, providing a view beyond or perhaps a quick escape.





This sculpted and decorative doorway invites us to enter. Our expectations are set, there are no surprises.

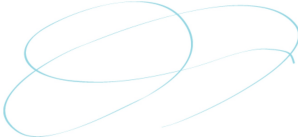


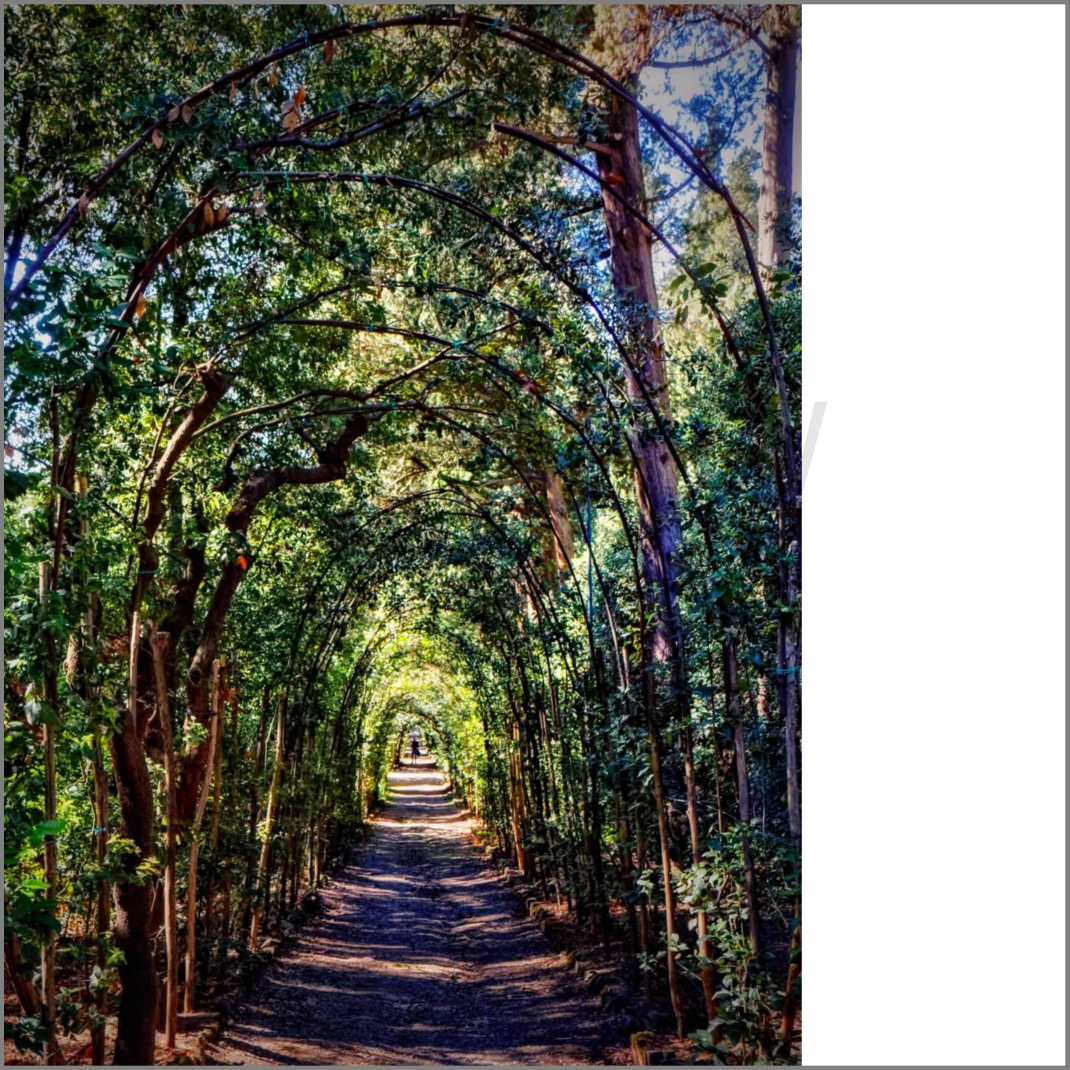


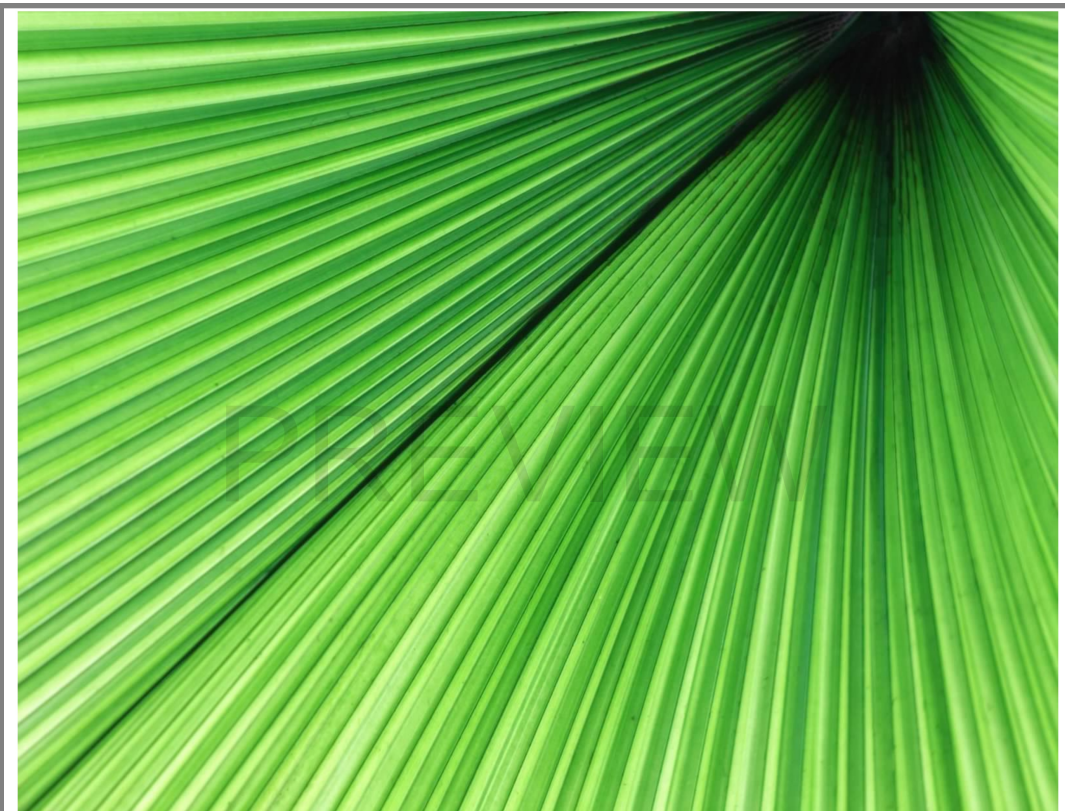
Here there is more mystery, an imagined spiritual release within an old New Orleans cemetery.



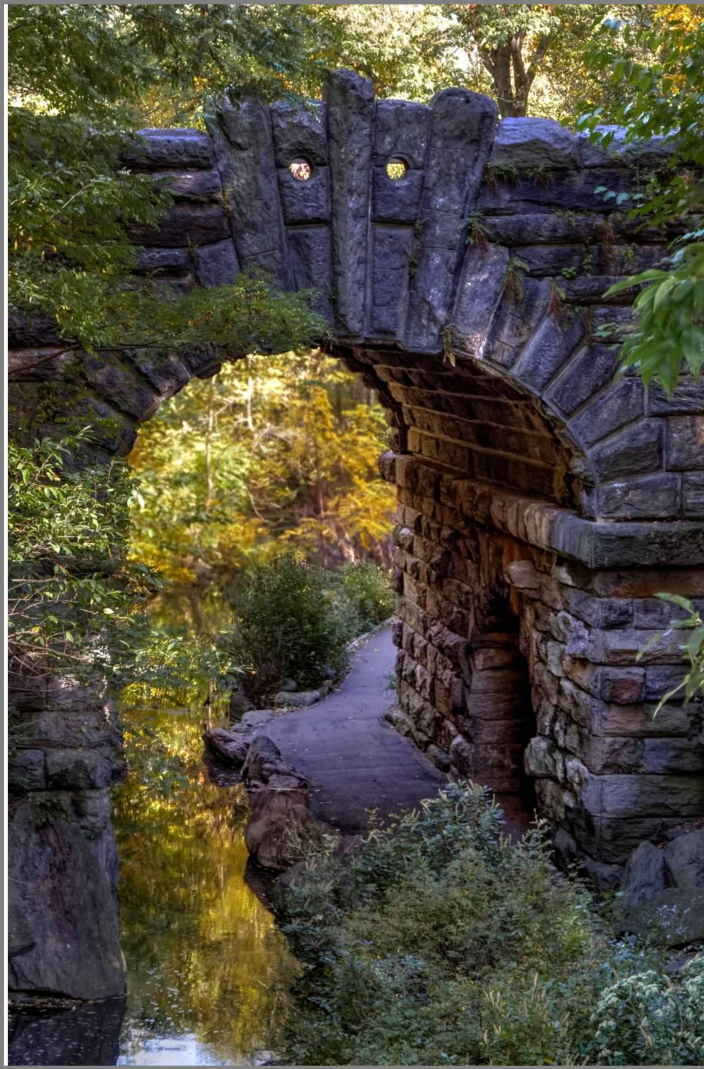
Nature has its own portals. Fingal's Cave is tucked amidst the basalt rock on the island of Staffa, off of the western coast of Scotland. The dark and foreboding entry hides an acoustic wonder.







Arching vines provide a natural cover of shade. The proverbial light at the end of the tunnel is an exit for the park goers of Florence. Getting ready for its close up, the view of a palm frond offers defined pathways. The fan draws us into the unknown.



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The path that leads us through this stone arch is surrounded by the glorious flora of New York's Central Park. We can't see what, or who, awaits us around the bend.



A glassless and dusty window of an old covered bridge provides a peek at the autumn foliage. The narrowness of the roadway forces a delicate jockeying with the cars which pass through. Their riders don't have the luxury to stop and capture the view.



A rustic New Hampshire door is propped open, allowing a glimpse of the scene beyond. Where is that man going? Where does that path lead? It sets my mind to wandering and encourages me to step through and follow along.







Windows offer their own stories (especially one that hides what lies behind its tattered screen). They do provide more difficult access, where slipping in and out seems to be reserved for the adventurous. Maybe it's better just to snatch that orange and run.



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Sometimes it's just about the view, drawing me to the shores of a Norwegian fjord or the rolling hills of the Grecian countryside. I want to see more...

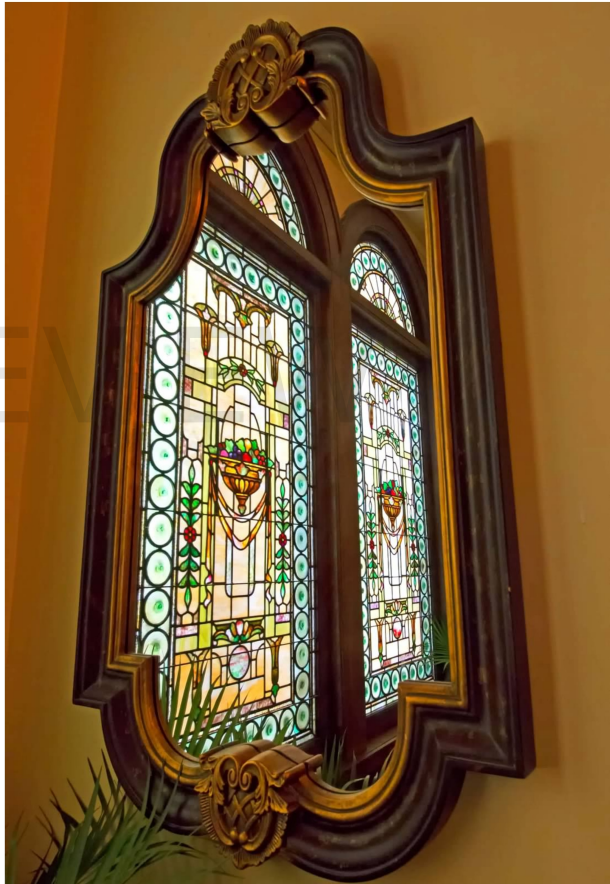




Windows also let us literally reflect on our surroundings. We may not be able to see what is ahead, but perhaps what lies behind us is more interesting.







A mirror and a window provide endless possibilities...



What can be more intriguing than a door left slightly ajar, especially when what lies beyond it is so enchanting. It could provide an entree to a Tuscan vineyard...

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PREVIEW

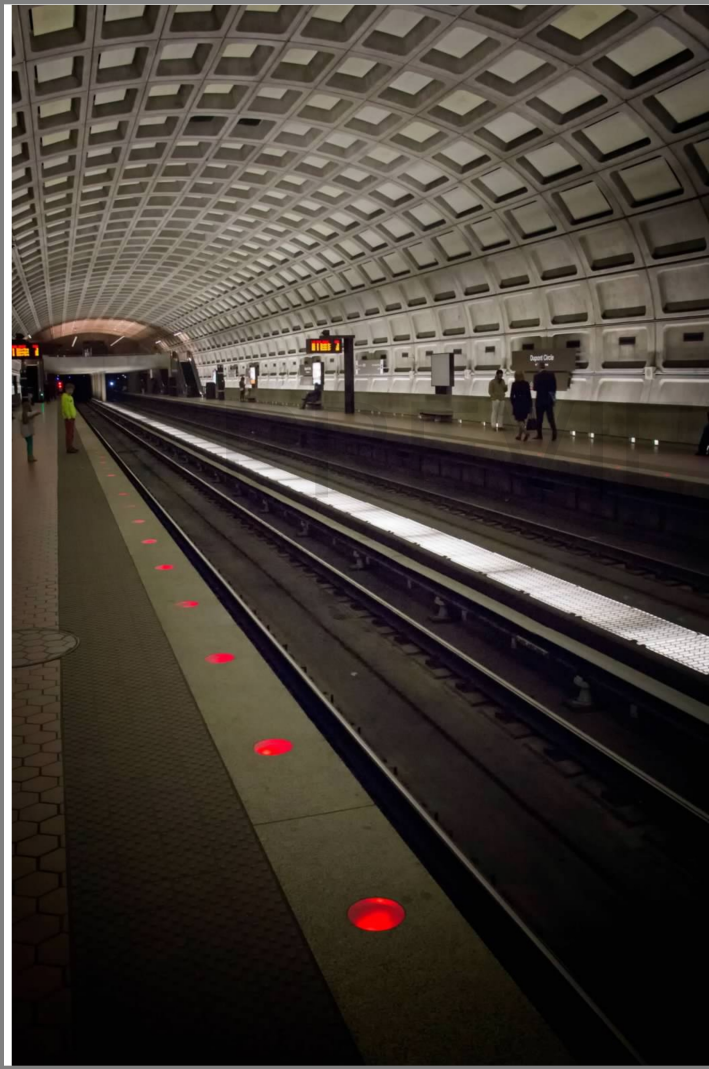
...or a view of the caldera and the sapphire-blue waters of Santorini.





When exploring old cities, stone archways often frame the scene. It could be a view of the Old Town of Gdansk or of tourists exploring the tight passageways of Venice.





Even more modern interior spaces offer their own drama. This Washington, D.C. Metro station provides an expansive space. The platform drives down to the darkness of the tunnel where riders will be whisked to their destinations.

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This hallway builds upon a series of archways leading to a distant door. And no, this is not a library, but a mausoleum in Oakland, California that was designed by Julia Morgan of Hearst Castle fame. So what actually lies behind that door?



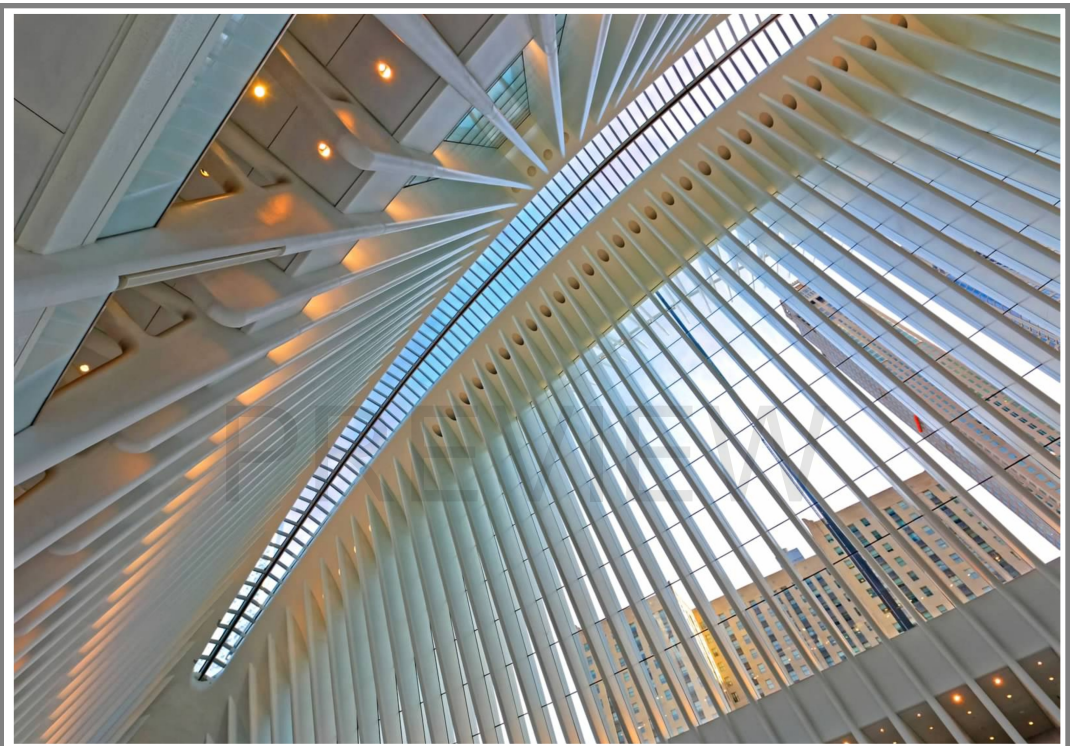
Of all of the angles that one can shoot from, the most uplifting for me is to simply aim up. These Redwoods are so massive that little light can enter at their base. Yet by following their trunks upward, we are lead to the freedom of the sky above.





This stairway in a Vanderbilt mansion offers a similar view. What is at the top... a way out perhaps?

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I find that one of the most inspirational buildings is the Oculus in downtown Manhattan. When I enter it, I feel as if I'm soaring to the roof and reaching for the clouds. All of these portals cause us to pause, look, and imagine. I would like to think that this is the path for my photography-- to keep on seeing and striving to capture a bit of mystery, a bit of beauty and a bit of myself in the process.





A tribute to Lady Liberty who for many has been a true portal to a life reimagined.