

Paradise by Moonlight

Creating something totally original for the first time is the greatest high you can have, at least in my experience of getting high. By the mid 1970's I had been experimenting with time laps color photography using just moonlight for years. I dreamed of creating a moonlight masterpiece. I knew it had to be something never done before that would stand the test of time. Back then doing color film time exposures at night was difficult, and using just moonlight was unheard of.

This chapter is about my journey to master the art of moonlight photography. It contains only two long tales. The first story is about my struggle to overcome the challenges of producing perfect photographs using only moonlight and creating my 28 piece collection of moonlight Hana seascapes titled "Paradise by Moonlight". The second tale called "Moondance" is about pushing the limits of moonlight photography to include people, which was not easy.

For all you people now and in the future who have never taken a photograph using film, let me tell you it was a hassle. You had to do all these calculations to set up your camera and then get the film developed to find out if your calculations worked. There was no photoshop to correct the image if your calculations were wrong. Slowly I learned how to read the moonlight and calculate the many minute exposures in my mind while taking the photos. This is not normal photography.

Kenneth Poli, the editor of Popular Photography wrote in a 5 page feature on my work for the magazine in July of 1982 "His photographs attest to his mastery of an esoteric corner of the craft. And, lacking a expert teacher to lead the way, Hill has eclectically devised his own techniques by guess, golly literal trial and error, and figurative toil, tears and sweat". "Hill is hard pressed to say exactly how he does time his exposures, since it is now a complex, almost organic process". That's right, he called me an organic photographer, which is the best way to explain it. These are the first color film photographs using only moonlight to ever be published and are a ground breaking part of photographic history.

Moonlight Masterpiece

This story is about my quest to photograph the pristine coast line of Hana using just Moonlight. The remarkable variations of shore line from Blue Pond to Kipahulu, is astounding. Rugged lava, jungle cliffs, sea side ponds, flowing pasture with beaches of red sand, white sand, black sand and different types of stones. Very few people had seen the spectacular Hana coast line at night, and no one had photographed it. It was virgin artists territory that on a moonlit night jumps to way pass magic. These night photos are pure moonlight with no human elements or lights in them. I had no idea how hard it would be to complete this masterpiece.

Moonlight is basically very dim, reflected sunlight. It has all the same colors as daylight but they are very weak. Even the fastest speed color film in 1975 need to be exposed for 2 to 15 minutes to capture a moonlight scene. The most expensive photographic light meter back then did not work with moonlight. The intensity and color of moonlight changes by the minute, time of night, cycle of the moon, time of year, you name it. Not to mention clouds, reflections from water, and other unpredictable stuff. It took me many years to figure out how to get images to look the way I envisioned them. Yet, many a time I was blown away by the raw, untamed energy or peacefully tropical beauty captured in the photograph. The movement of the clouds, ocean, wind, stars and moon shadows over time made each image totally unique.

There were many nights I really didn't want to get up and drive down to the ocean to spend hours trying to get one photo. Sometimes it would be months before a night would come along that was calm and clear enough during the full moon period to take photos. It took me over 10 years of persistent work to complete the following collection.



Blue Pond



Movement#3



Backwash



ain_apanapa-Night



Pacific Wanders



Orbits



Massive Moonlight Surf



"Beam Me Up" © Sanford L. Hill 1982

Beam Me Up



Jagged & Smooth



Into The Light



Yin and Yang of Red Sands Beach



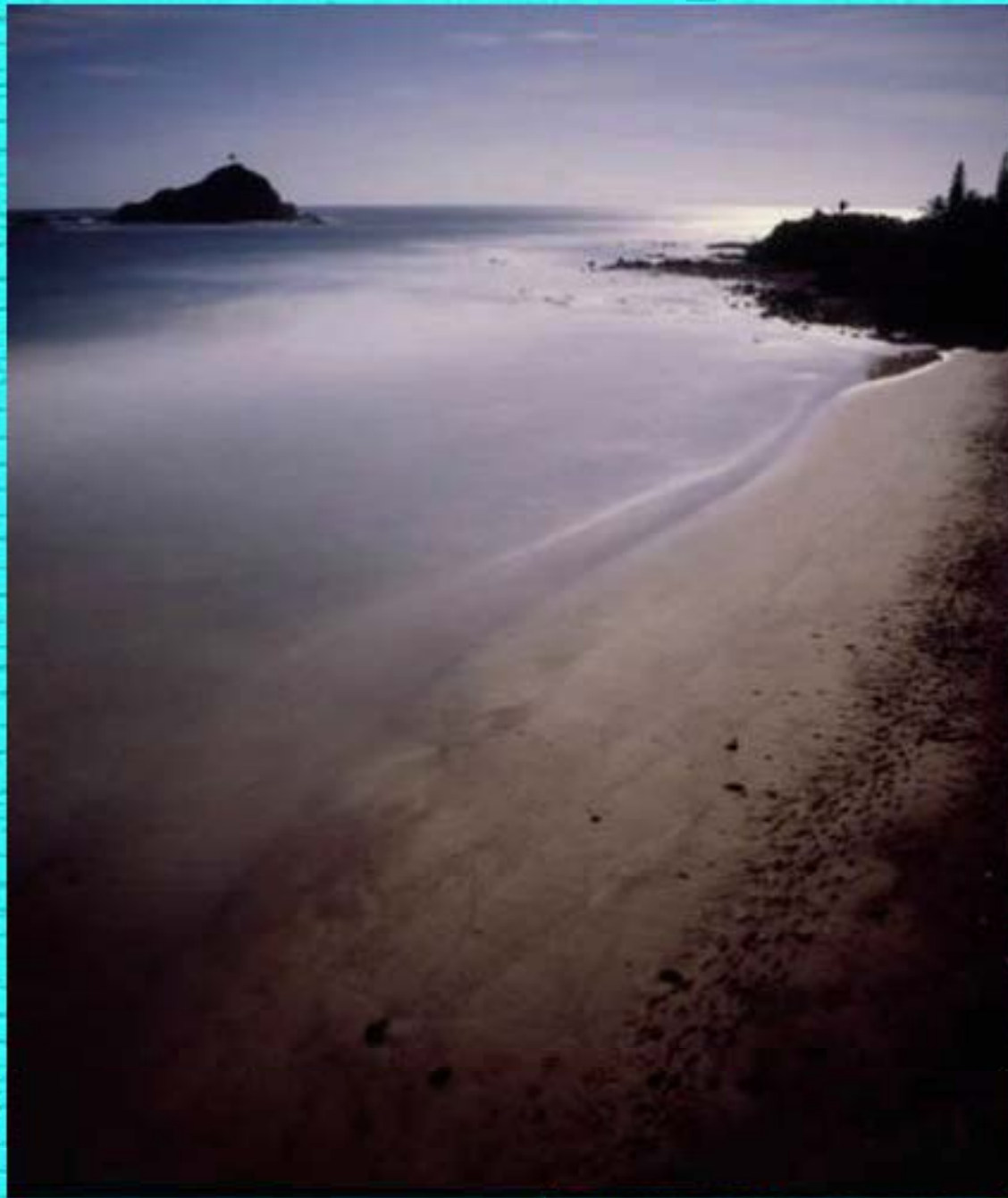
Kauhiki



Lisa's Love



Bad Moon Rising



After hours



Heavenly Hana



Haneo'o Fishpond



Silvery Moon



Hamoā Surprise



Paradise By Moonlight



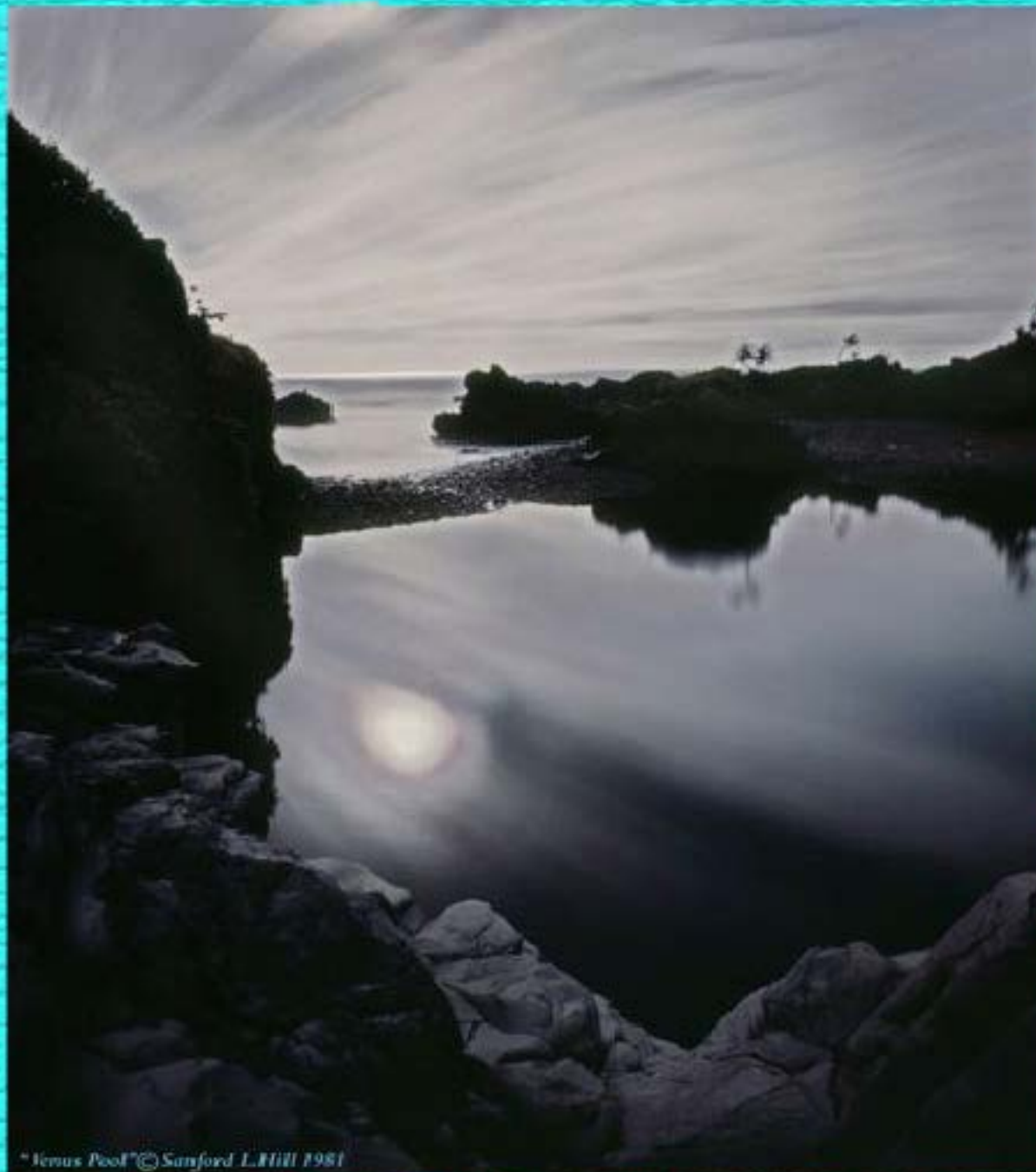
Midnight at H moa



Makalae Point

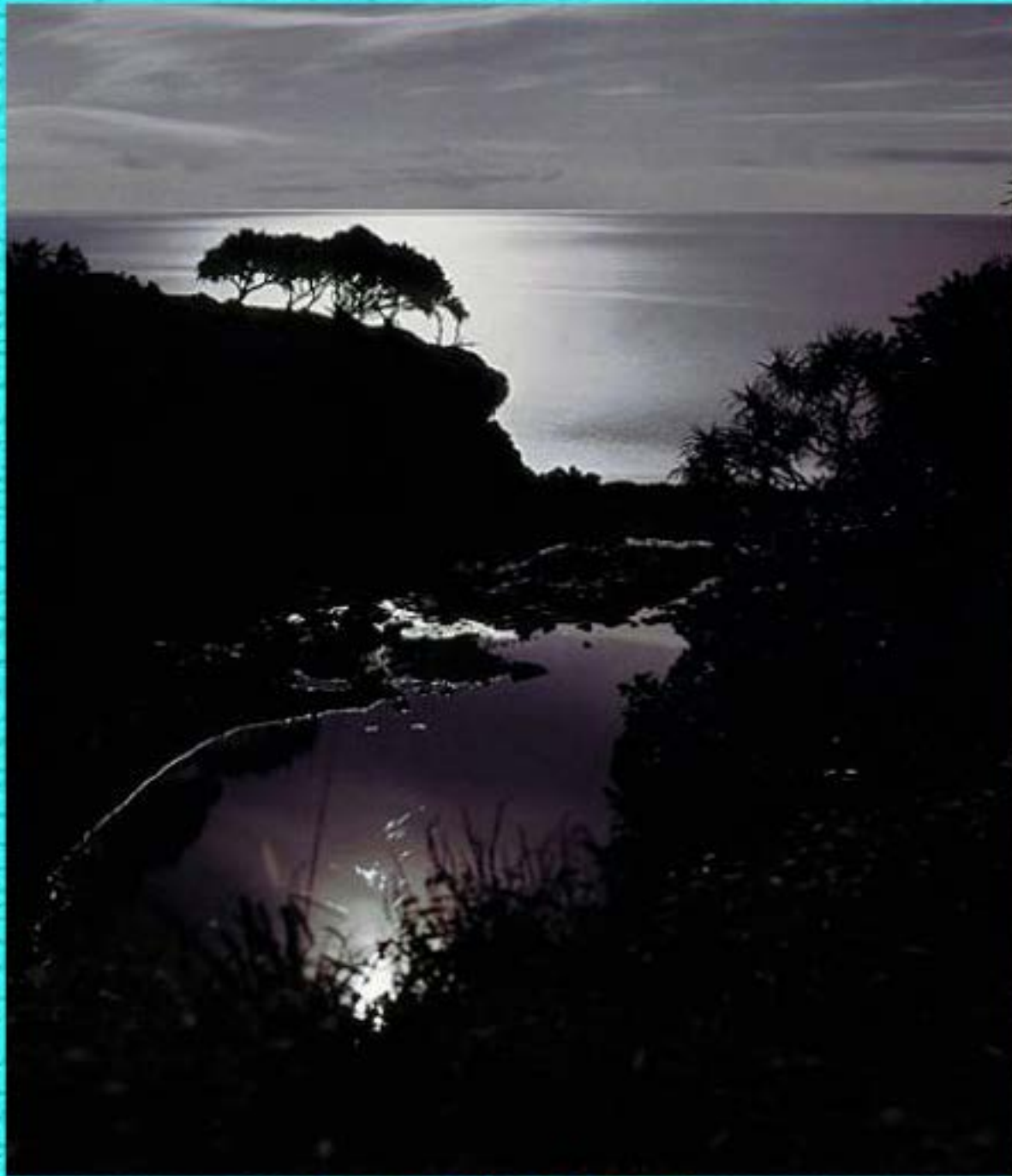


Moonshadows



"Venus Pool" © Sanford L. Hill 1981

Venus Pool



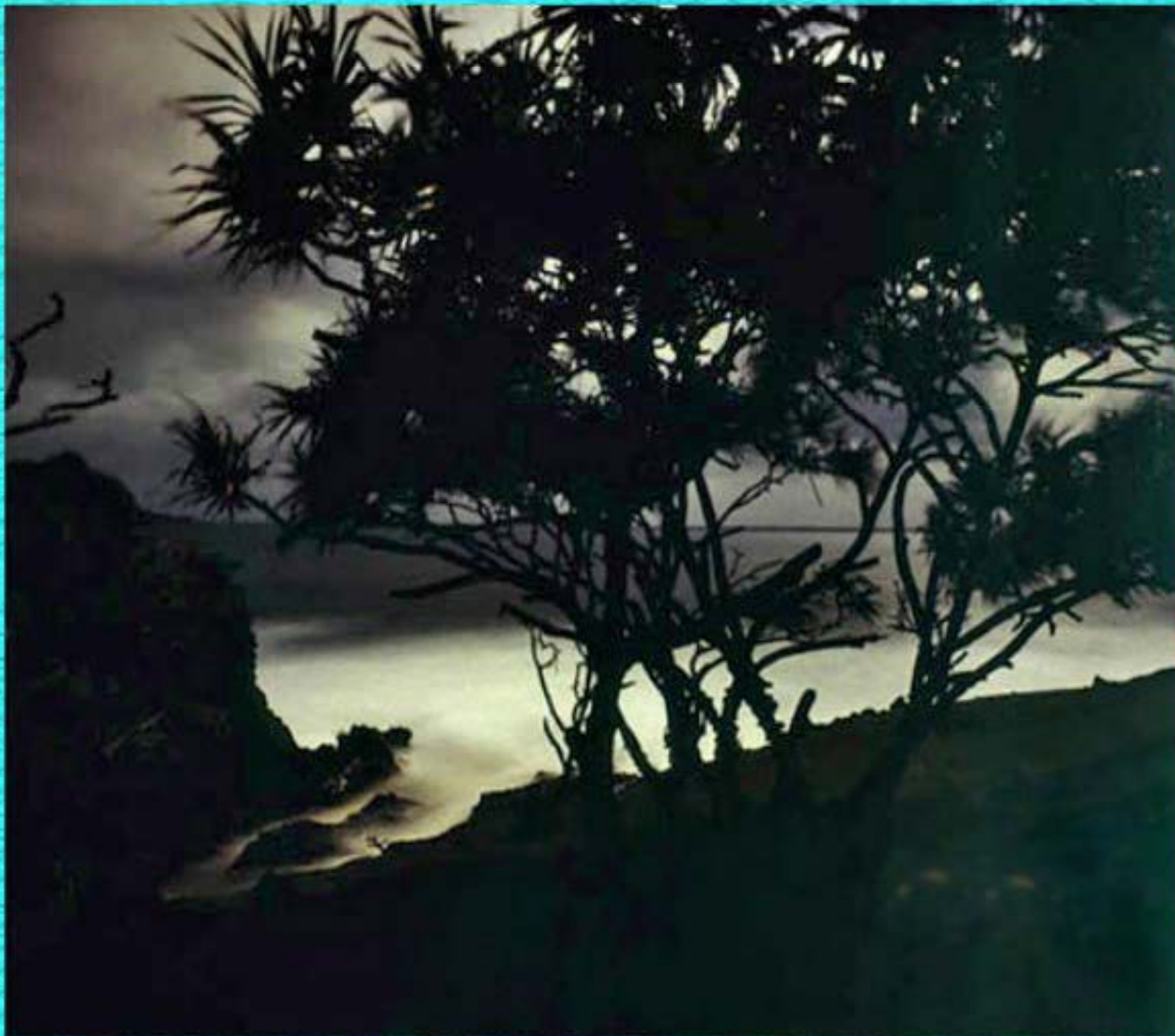
Luna Reflections



Sacred Pool



Sacred Pool



Stormy Monday



River meets Sea

Paradise by Moonlight

Hawaiian seascapes look even better after dark, says Sanford L. Hill

Photographs by Sanford L. Hill
Text by Kenneth Pol



Hana at midnight, 35-mm film, 15-minute exposure at f/8.

One of the specialties of photography's terrible, swift sword is the casting of time into microtime slices. But another aspect of photography's time-slicing talent is its ability to switch it—to record on a single piece of film what has happened during minutes, hours, even days. This latter ability is not often exploited by photographers. But when it is, the results are usually interesting, often spectacular.

Astronomers, for example, show us hours-long exposures of deep-space objects like nebulae, double stars, and clusters. Fast color film, tracking telescopes, and special low-temperature operating techniques reveal not only millions of

stars invisible to the eye, but beautiful colors as well as parts of the aspects of different universes.

On a more down-to-earth level, long exposures produced some of the illustrations for "Eric Stiller's Light Fantastic" (see POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY, June, 1982). They produced fire, color, and motion effects that are forever burned in normal vision.

The photographs in this portfolio by Sanford L. Hill of Hana, Maui, Hawaii fall somewhere between the astronomical and engineered photography just mentioned.

From time to time, since 1974, Hill has

been "revisiting the magical coastline of Maui, discovering how to take color photographs using only moonlight."

His photographs attest to his mastery of an esoteric corner of the craft. And, lacking an expert teacher to lead the way, Hill has ingeniously devised his own techniques by guess, golly, literal trial and error, and figurative fall, boom, and boom.

Moonlight is merely reflected polarized sunlight, greatly weakened—no about 1/100,000th the original, to be approximate. To make pictures by it takes many times as long as with sunlight. For example, a star-*(continued on page 128)*

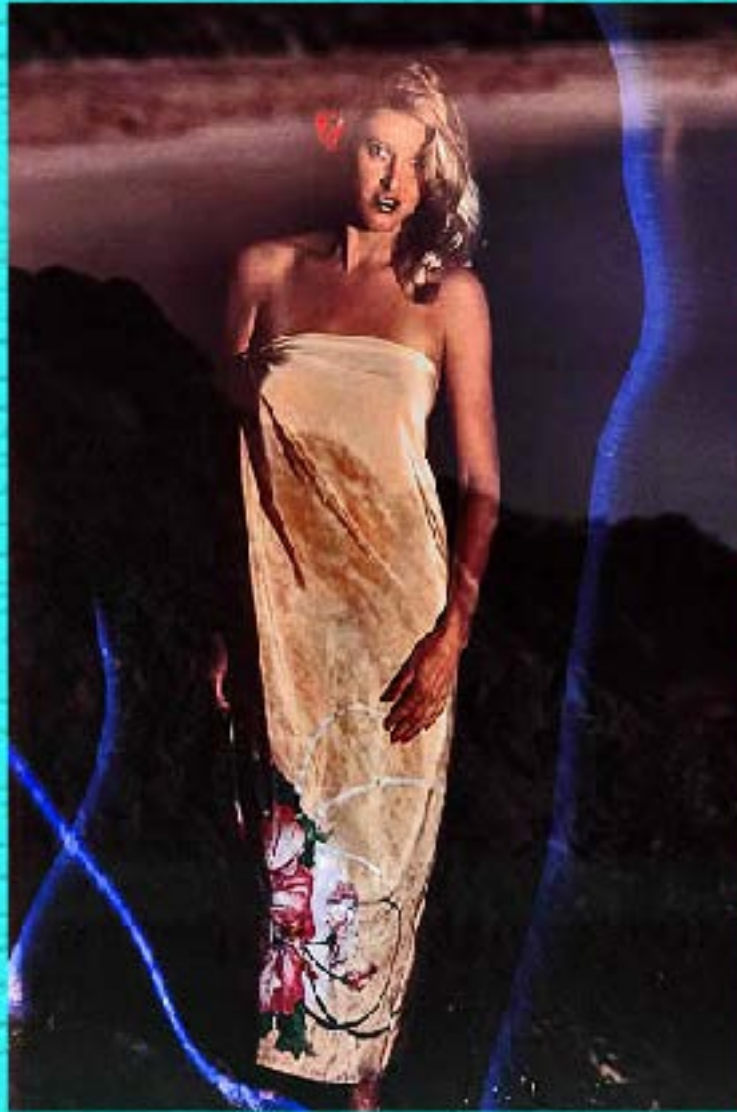
Moondance

There is no place more romantic than a moonlit Hana beach or tropical waterfall. If you went after 10pm you could always have the beach or pond to yourselves back then. We would go skinny dipping or make love on the beach under the stars all the time. Hamoa and Koki are the best beaches at night. Seven Pools and Venus Pool are unreal moonlight ponds. I never saw other people enjoying the tropical Maui moonlight when I was shooting.

Early in my moonlight photo experiments, I discovered that because the moonlight exposures took minutes, you could vary the density of objects in the image by moving them in or out at different times during the exposure. This included people. I could just have someone walk out unseen during the exposure. This gave a great dream like effect.

So, I began putting girls that were with me on my moonlight shoots in the photos. I learned how to use fill flash and other light sources, even a blow torch, to freeze the girls in the image. None of the photos in this chapter are double exposures and of course there was no photoshop back then. This was bleeding edge photography that no one else was doing. It was always a surprising thrill to see the moonlight images for the first time.

The photos for moondance were taken over the years I lived in Hana. They usually have a theme, sometimes we used costumes and other times got naked. It was real fun bringing my moonlight fantasies to life, though I was not always romantically involved with the models in these photos. Still, there is nothing like hanging in the moonlight with beautiful girls on a tropical Maui night. You can find additional night photos in different tales of this book. Being one of the first to capture the moonlight world in color is probably the greatest accomplishment of my life.



Dream Girl



In Your Dreams



Sleeping Beauty



Moonlight Flier



Dream Girl



tvfoonbathing



Magic Hands



Moonlight Fantasy



Night Dancer



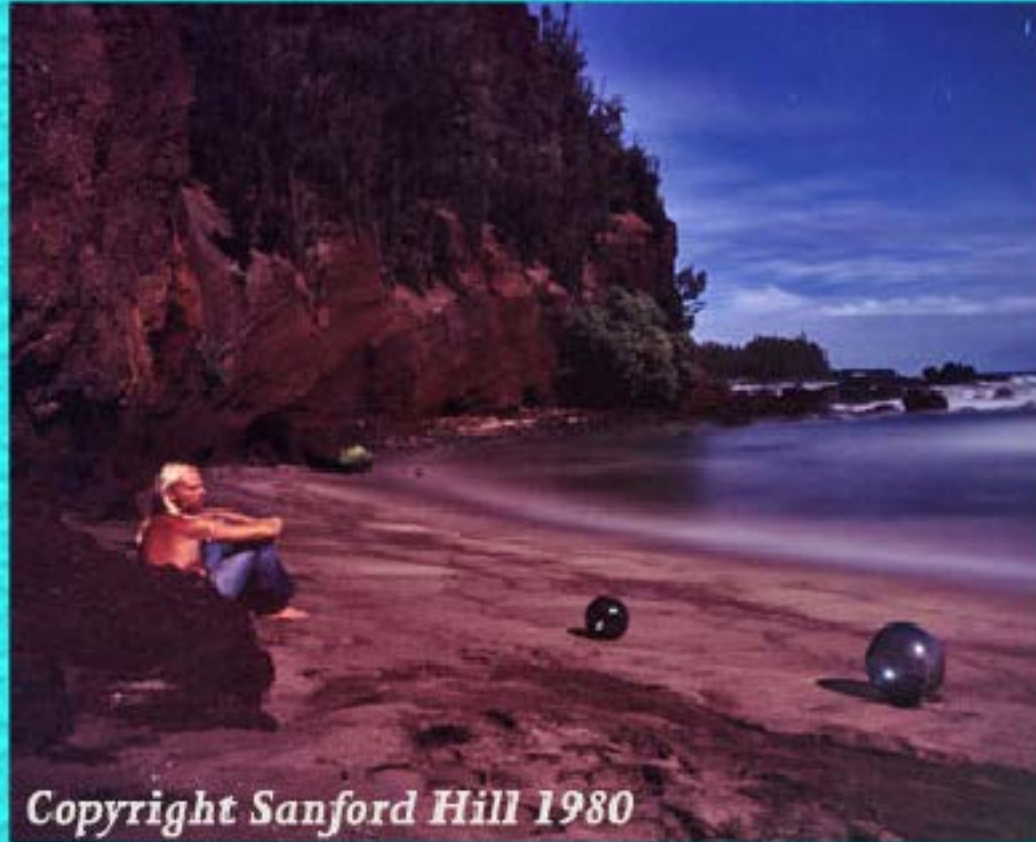
Tropical Dreams



Girl Friends



Sleeping Beauty



Moonlight self portrait