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Image 2.
Diver Space-scape, composite by John A. Ares

Text and photos by John A. Ares

We take photographs for different reasons: to identify the sea life we find, for the sheer pleasure of making images, or perhaps as a method of personal expression. It is the latter, personal expression, that leads us to the creation of art. John A. Ares discusses the creative use of compositing in postproduction.

Image 1. *Santorini Doorway*, by John A. Ares

Compositing
Creativity in Underwater Photography

I believe that creativity is an aspect of photography that can be taught or, at the very least, inspire. Search Google for the word "art" and you get 15 trillion results.

"The aim of art is not to portray but to evoke." This quote is by Paul Karabinis, from the forword of Jerry Uelsmann's book, *Other Realities*, published by Bulfinch. Uelsmann was

one of the greatest photographers in "post-visualization," or the assembling of photo montages or composites. I use these terms interchangeably.

Uelsmann did all his work in the dark-

room. Most of us in the digital age take advantage of the tools available via the computer. Compositing requires competence in using certain Photoshop tools, including:

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Compositing

- Masking
- Proficiency in working with layers
- Eraser tool
- Cutting shapes like circles
- Rotating selections
- Resizing selections

For more on selections, please see my article, "Selective Color: Creative Effects in Postproduction of Underwater Images," in issue 110 at: **xray-mag.com/content/selective-color-underwater-photo**.

Compositing is a creative technique that involves combining images in different ways. One simple method is to visualize a montage that uses only a couple of images. Consider the surreal view out the door into an underwater seascape in Image 1 (previous page).

Image 1. Santorini Doorway
Selecting photos for a composite is not always intuitive. For example, I saw the doorway photo from Santorini, Greece, in my archive and thought, what would it look like if you were looking out into an underwater scene instead of seeing a sky? I then looked for a suitable "seascape" to complement the doorway image.

In selecting images, it helps if you have a good size photo archive.

Uelsmann does not shoot for creating a composite; rather, he shoots using a process called "gathering assets." He shoots photos that contain interesting elements that may find their way into a future composite.

Image 2. Diver Spacescape
Another example of a composite is the image of a diver coming out of the deep. (See Image 2 on the previous page.) To me, the diver in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, looked as if he was in space. The backdrop of the reef on the right side of the image was insignificant, and I thought it needed a "starfield" instead. I had created the starfield for use in another photo and thought it would be appropriate here. (Search Google for "creating a starfield in Photoshop.")

For the top layer, I inserted a photo I took of a lunar eclipse, to further enhance the feeling of space. I rotated the moon so that it appeared as if the light was coming from the surface.

It was also important to highlight the fish on the border between the two images. The spadefish were getting dark at the border and required a little brightening.

Image 3. Concentric Jellyfish
Another approach to compositing
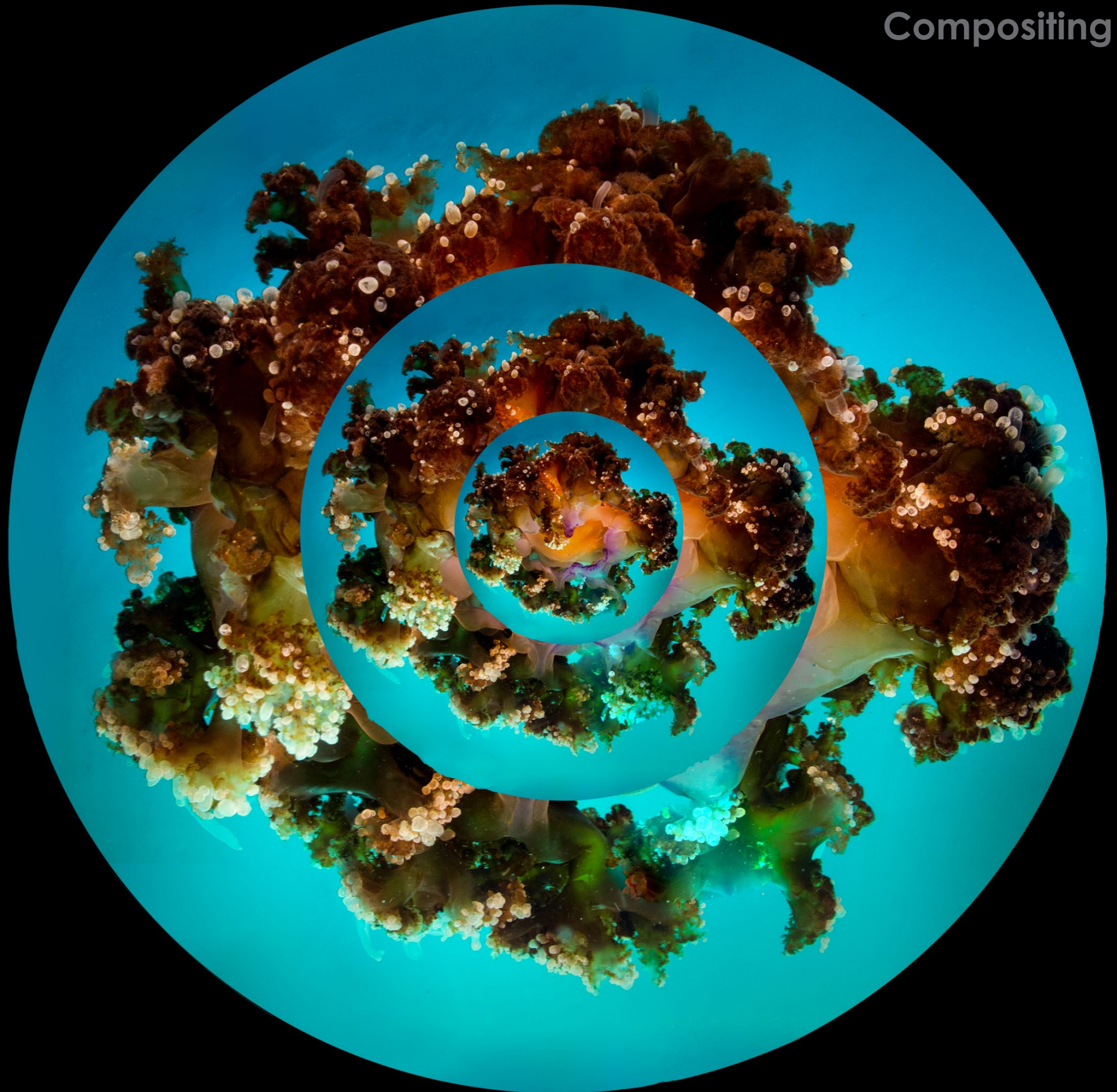
involves repeating a single image. Because of the symmetry, the jellyfish images could be nested inside each additional image. Three concentric images seemed to be a manageable goal. The primary image was placed on a black background and cut into a circle. Two additional copies of the image were then resized accordingly and placed so the images would blend.

Image 4. Tunicate
A variation of compositing involves copying parts of an image and rearranging them multiple times on the photo.

For the tunicate image, I thought the glow of the gold ring was intriguing and needed some amplification. I copied, trimmed and resized the gold ring twice to show the ring three times in total.
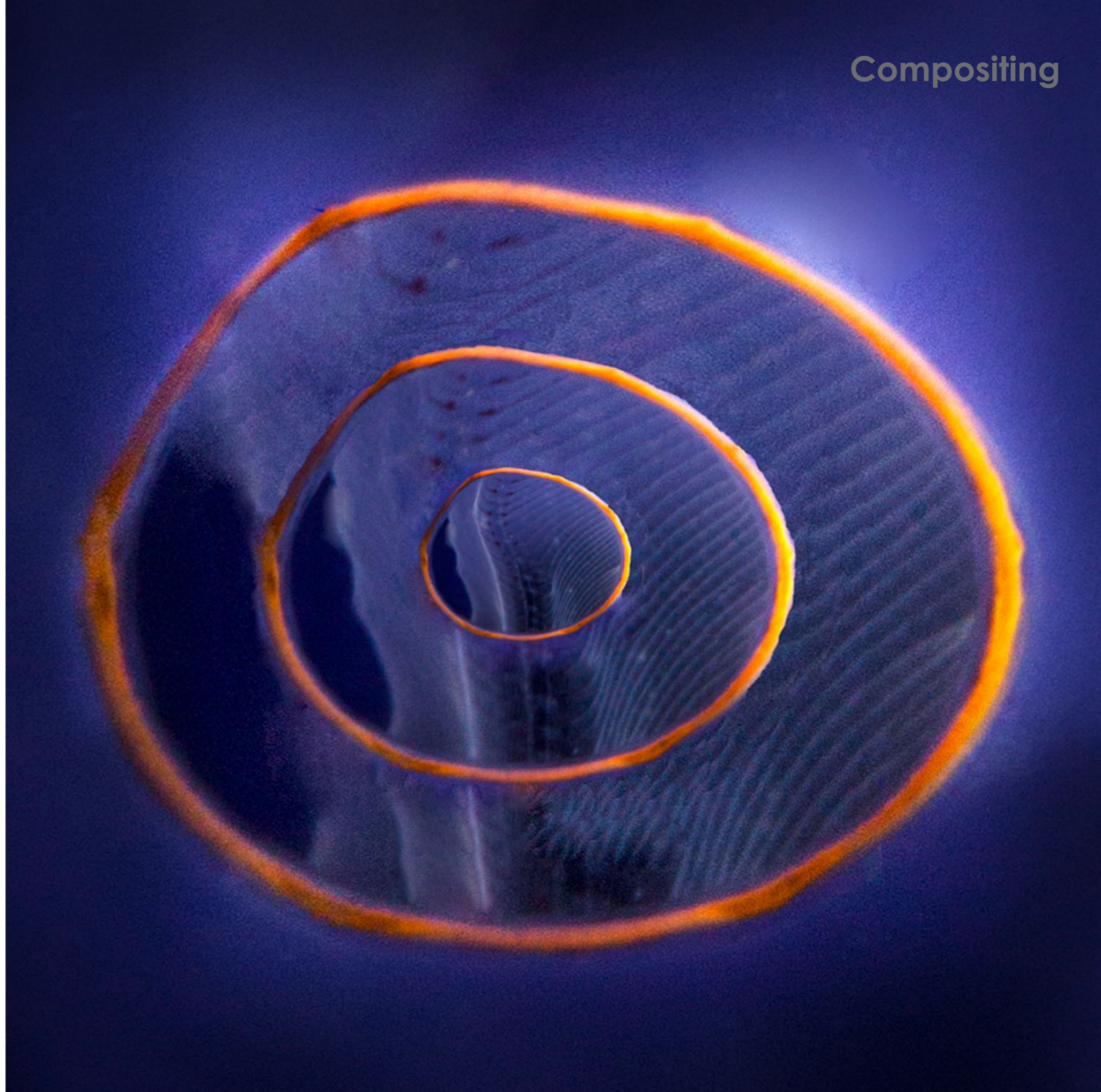
Final thoughts
There are many creative ways to use one's own underwater photographs. Letting your imagination run free, finding intriguing associations, and thinking outside the box can lead to interesting artistic composites, in which the whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. ■

*A former senior management consultant for Fortune 100 companies, studio commercial photographer and trained biologist and marine food toxicologist, John A. Ares is an assignment and stock photographer and image consultant based on Staten Island in New York City, specializing in portraits, nature, travel, underwater, food/restaurant and fine art photography. An avid diver, he has been a PADI instructor and instructor trainer, teaching underwater photography courses and traveling to many exotic dive destinations around the world. A member of the New York Underwater Photographic Society (NYUPS) and American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP), he has served as an associate editor and photographer for Seafood America magazine and his work has won competitions of American Photographer magazine. He also conducts training seminars and has been a presenter at Beneath The Sea and NYUPS. For more information, visit: **JohnAres.com***

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photo news

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Vello LENS-2020 Lens Calibration Tool

The Vello LENS-2020 Lens Calibration Tool allows one to test a camera's autofocus accuracy and then calibrate the focus system to correct any possible front- or back-focusing issues. After the adjustment is saved within the camera as a lens profile, it can be used for future shooting sessions. The included grey card helps to set a custom white balance for true colours. The tool is foldable for easy storage and portability. The Vello calibration tool can be mounted on standard tripods (with a ¼-inch connector). **Vellogear.com**

Hasselblad X2D 100C

Hasselblad's new medium format mirrorless camera—the X2D 100C—features a 100-megapixel 43.8 x 32.9mm backside illuminated sensor, a hybrid phase and contrast-based autofocus with 294 phase-detection AF points, five-axis in-body image stabilization, and 15 stops of dynamic range. The Hasselblad X2D 100C is equipped with a 0.5-inch 5.76M-dot OLED electronic viewfinder (EVF) with a magnification of 1.00x and a refresh rate of up to 60fps. The rear touchscreen is 3.6 inches large, providing a 2.35M-dot resolution. Another 1.08-inch colour display on top of the camera displays the current settings. For media storage, the camera has a built-in 1TB SSD (solid state disk), plus a CFexpress Type B slot for additional memory storage devices. The battery, which is quick charging via USB, provides enough energy for up to 420 photos. Important note: This is a stills-only camera, with no video capabilities provided. **Hasselblad.com**

Nauticam Housing for ARRI ALEXA 35

Nauticam has released its new video camera housing for the ARRI ALEXA 35 cinema camera. The new housing features a tray system for assembling the camera, which slides into place. Furthermore, it provides large knobs to control focus, iris and zoom, plus the option to operate the lens via motors. The housing is compatible with a variety of battery packs. For monitoring, the Atomos Ninja V or SmallHD 503 Ultrabright can be mounted on Nauticam's housing and be connected via SDI bulkheads. Nauticam's own Vacuum Check and Leak Detection System is included. The housing ships with a 250mm optically coated glass dome port and a 100mm housing extension, which allows the use of three motors for the control of zoom lenses or longer prime lenses. **Nauticam.com**

Sea&Sea Sony Alpha Universal Housing

Sea&Sea has announced a new universal housing that will be compatible with Sony's full-frame Alpha camera series. According to the manufacturer, the MDX-aU supports the Sony a7 Mark IV, a7R Mark IV, a7S Mark III, a9 Mark II and a1. The housing can be adapted to the above-mentioned camera models by using which can minimal part replacements, be done by the user. The housing features a large acrylic back panel, a new improved fiber-optic cable cover, and Sea&Sea's own Leak Alarm Unit, which comes standard. The MDX-aU supports fiber-optic connectivity with compatible Sea&Sea YS strobes in TTL or manual modes, plus classic strobe triggering via sync cord. **seaandsea.jp**

AOI Housing for OM System OM-1

AOI has released a new housing for the premium Micro Four Thirds OM System OM-1 system. The new UH-OM1 housing shares similar features to AOI's other OM-D housings, such as a compact polycarbonate design, an integrated optical trigger, and AOI's Vacuum Analyser and Wet Detection System. The in-built trigger also works in Super FP mode (high-speed flash sync). The housing weighs 1,079g and is depth-rated to 45m. **aoi-uw.com**