

HE'S NOT A BLUE-SKY KIND OF GUY

By Terri Stone

On sunny days, German photographer Jan Erik Waider puts his camera away. He's built his brand, known as [Northlandscapes](#), by seeking out locations that make most people shiver just to think of them. Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard—if it's cold, windswept, dramatic, and damp, his shutter is clicking.

Before 2012, Waider was a web designer who took photos for fun. While searching for online photo portfolio options, he came across [Behance](#). "I uploaded some of my travel photos without any intention of looking for jobs or potential clients. Then some inquires came in and I thought, 'Okay, why not upload more?' And from there it grew and grew and became a really important—if not *the* most important—tool for new business opportunities and meeting like-minded colleagues."



From the series "Prelude to the End of Everything."

Waider has a personal preference for far-northern landscapes—"I don't like the heat"—but there's also a business reason behind his choice. "As a pro photographer, it's important to find what separates you from the other people," he says. "What's the point of creating a photo that every company has already seen?"

In search of the exceptional, he often hikes solo into remote areas. "I do most of my best work on my own, experiencing these landscapes in solitude," he says. "I spend a lot of time traveling: four, five, sometimes six months each year." Once he finds a good area, he'll set up camp and stay for days, even a few weeks. "The more time you spend outside, the better chance you'll stumble upon something unique, or a unique weather situation." Sooner or later, the mercurial weather changes common to his favorite spots will reward him with dramatic photo opportunities. "You have to get out there and just wait for it," he says.



From the series "Awaken Blue Giants" and "Memento Mori."

THE ART OF EDITING

Waider's photos are united by subject matter and, often, by his editing process in [Adobe Lightroom Classic CC](#). "A lot of my photos are heavily color graded," he notes, which you can see in their characteristically dark tones and desaturated blacks. "I do a lot of tweaking, yet it still looks natural; it doesn't lose a lot of contrast or details."

Waider often uses the Split Toning controls in Lightroom's Develop module. (Split toning, a concept that comes from the analog darkroom world, adds different colors to an image's shadows and highlights.) "Split Toning can help recreate something from your head, and it's an easy way to connect photos visually. Even if it's subtle, maybe 6 percent, it makes a huge difference."

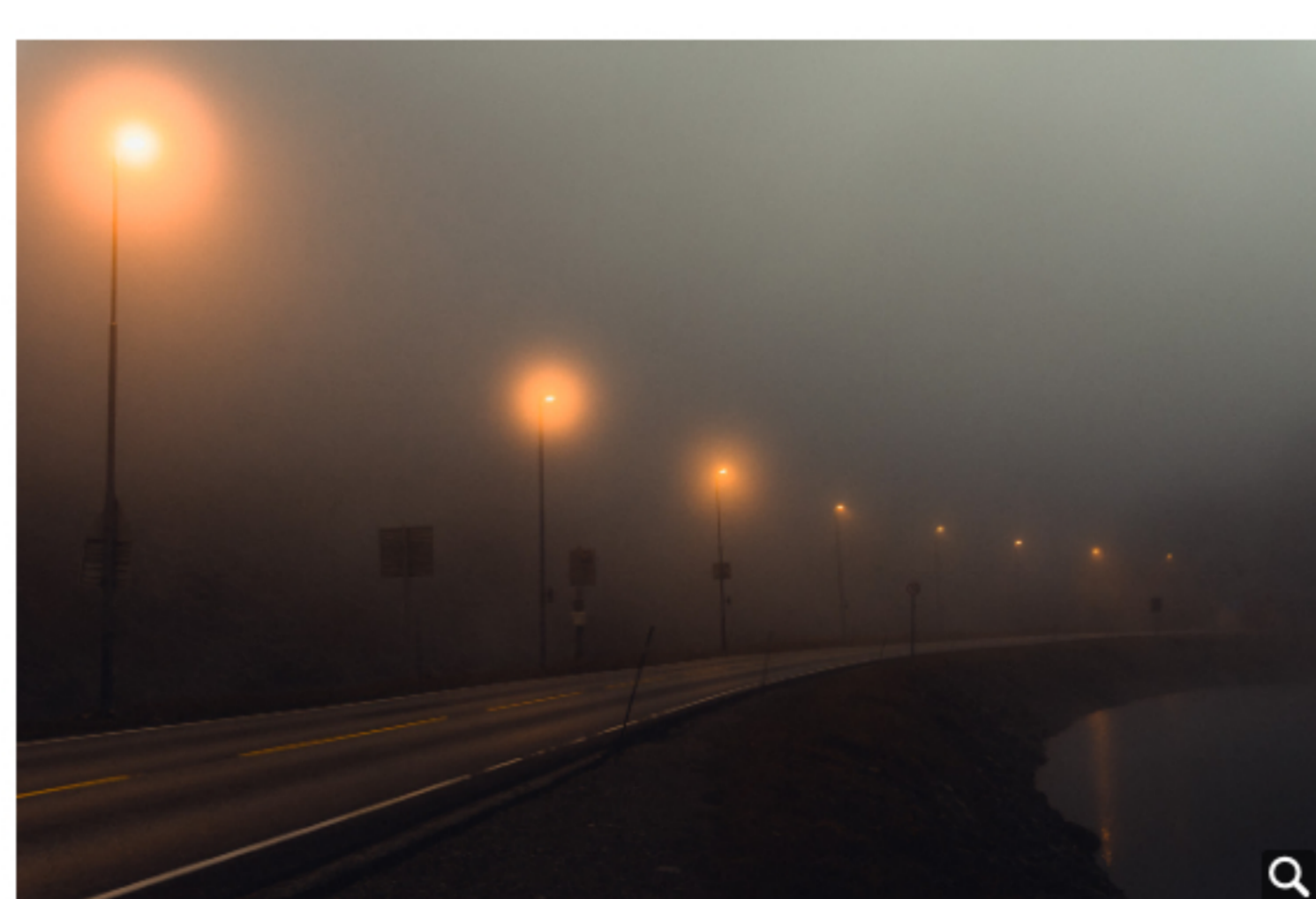


From the series "Arctic Silence."

FINDING THAT SPECIAL ASPECT

Making a living as a photographer isn't easy. "You have to put a lot of work into building a portfolio that's really interesting, with nice variety and a lot of photo series. Then you have to upload them to all these different outlets," Waider says. "And then you need a lot of patience because it can take a long time before somebody notices your work."

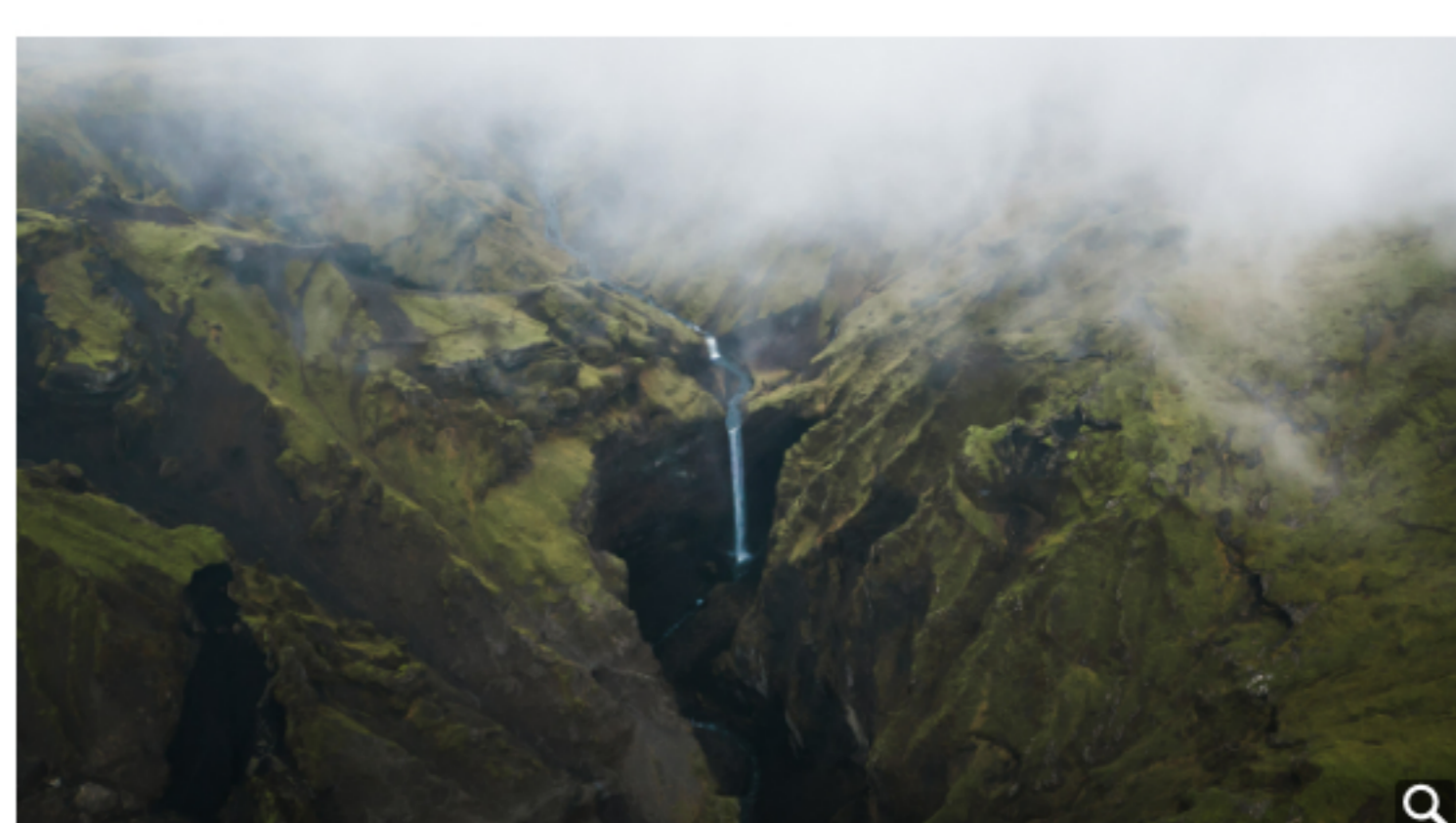
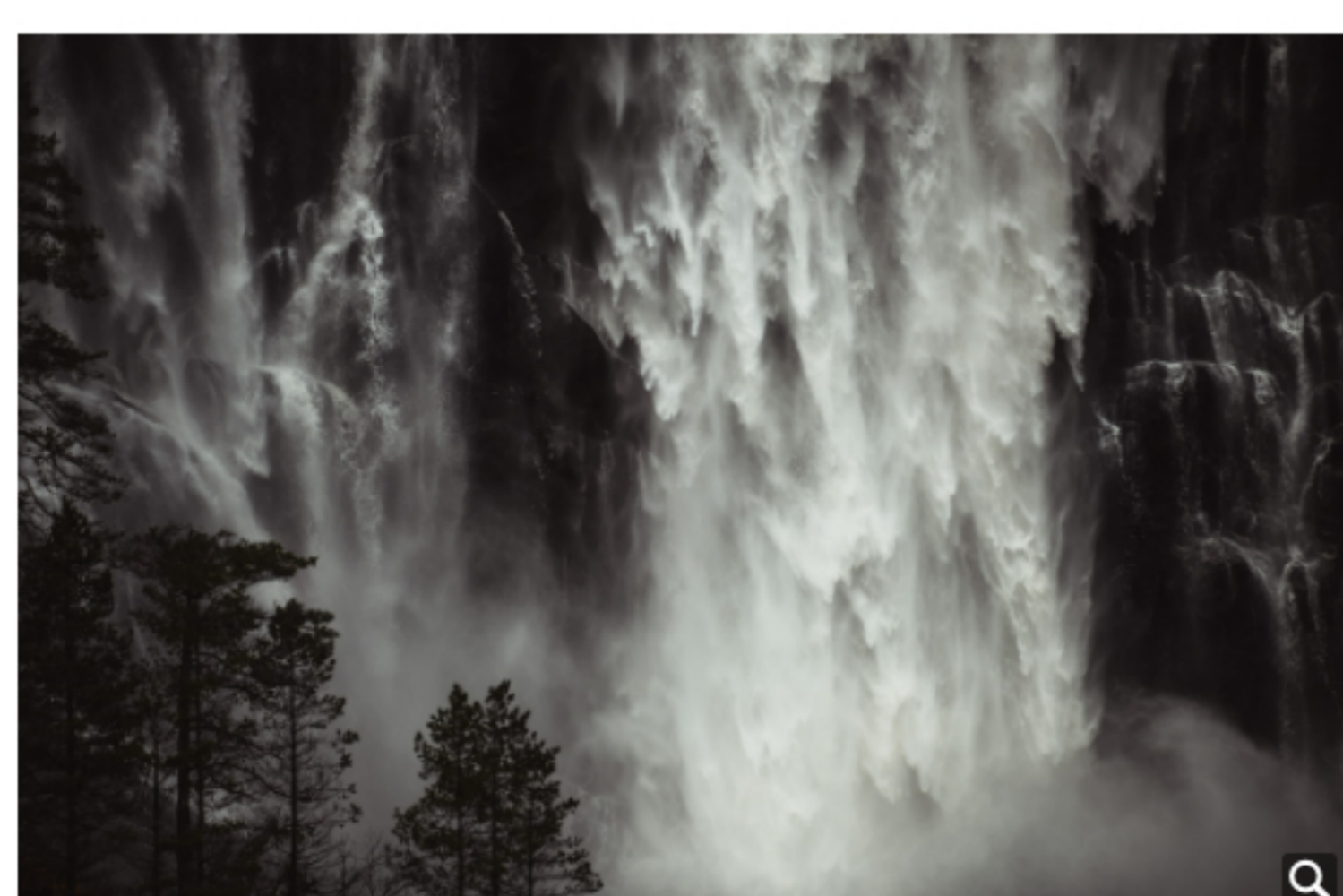
To help improve your chances, Waider recommends a unified online presence. His website and Behance, Twitter, and Facebook accounts all share some visuals and language so that his brand is easily identifiable. He's also careful to project professionalism across these platforms: "Some people just throw their work on there—it's not curated in any way, there are spelling errors, so even when the photos are good, it looks like a mess for clients. They might decide you're not someone they want to work with. I have a design background, so for me it's a little bit easier, but everyone can do it. It's just a little bit more thinking before uploading or publishing something."



From the series "Drive into the Night - Norway."

It's also important to choose the right outlets for your work. "You have to find where your clients are. My clients are usually agencies or bigger brands, and their creative directors have their own Behance profiles, so I try to discover them and follow them. And then they may discover my work. Of course, they're also on Instagram, but it's not as crowded on Behance."

He advises photographers to pursue related income sources; for example, Waider [sells Lightroom presets](#) and leads workshops and photo tours. Other photographers sell stock, write articles, or earn ad revenue from YouTube channels.



From the series "Fleeting Moments of Autumn - Norway" and "Land Below the Clouds - Iceland."

His final bit of advice: "You have to look at yourself like a brand. For me, it's atmospheric Nordic landscapes. I've shot good photos in a lot of countries, but I don't show them all because then my portfolio would look like everybody else's travel and landscape portfolio. You have to narrow it down. Find the special aspect in your body of work and then really stick to it."