

VIEWFINDER

**Edifice Complex**

An upcoming exhibition showcases the stunning architectural photography of Alan Karchmer. By Beth Dunlop

ALAN KARCHMER GOT HIS FIRST CAMERA while he was still in architecture school, a Pentax Spotmatic that changed the course of his life. “I had an epiphany that photographing architecture was an art in itself,” he says. Shot over four decades, Karchmer’s impeccably composed images—which will be featured in an upcoming exhibition at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C.—both celebrate the beauty of some of the world’s finest structures and imbue them with a profound sense of humanity. “I like to think I am creating the experience of architecture,” he says. “I try to bring the viewer into the image.”

He has long photographed the jaw-dropping work of the Spanish architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava, known for his dramatic sculptural buildings and gravity-defying bridges. For his images to evoke the proper sense of awe, Karchmer spends days and often months finding the right moment. Still, he notes that as much as they are a product of planning, they are also a matter of luck—of dark clouds opening to reveal a slice of sunlight, or mist floating into a blue sky to make the photo “rich and engaging and inviting.”

He has also photographed Washington’s extraordinary National Museum of African American History and Culture and the inspiring National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, along with Château La Coste, a new art center near Aix-en-Provence, France. Karchmer says he looks to places that offer a palimpsest of history, where the building tells not one but many stories: “I’ve always sought to photograph buildings that are worthy of celebrating.”

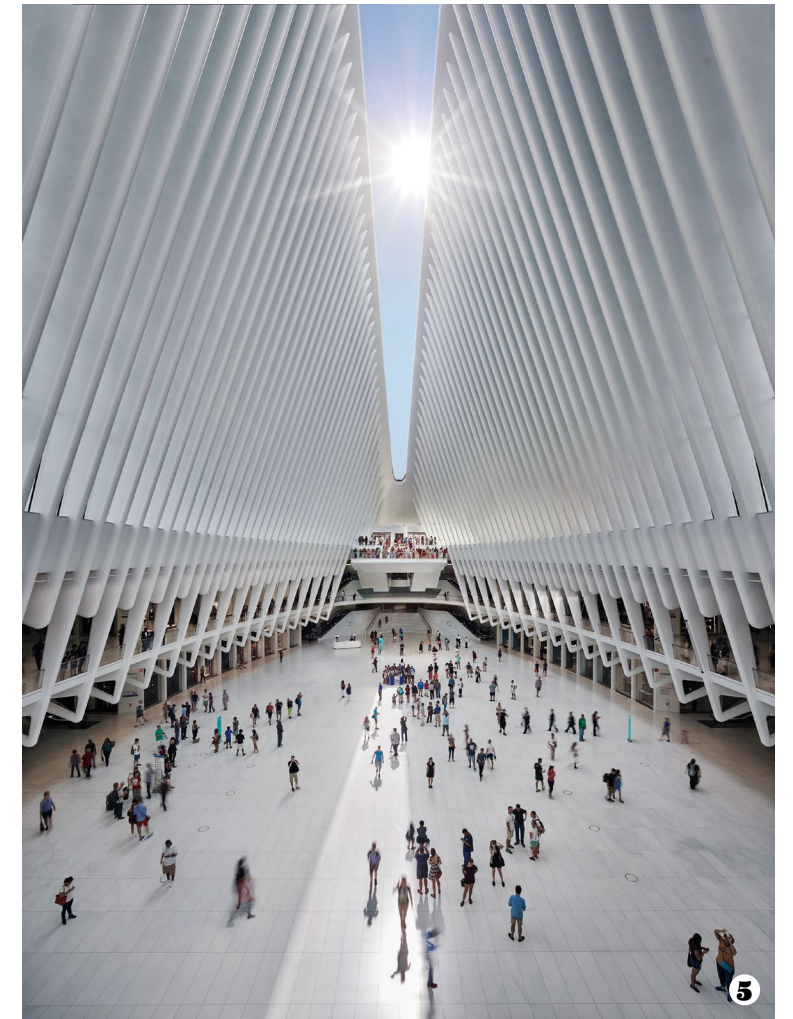


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TOP LEFT: ALAN KARCHMER / NYA/ABC © ALAN KARCHMER (5)

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1. National Museum of African American History and Culture, Freelon Adjaye Bond/SmithGroup Architects, Washington, D.C.
2. Château La Coste visitor center, Tadao Ando, Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate, Provence, France
3. Jubilee Church, Richard Meier & Partners Architects, Rome
4. National Memorial for Peace and Justice, MASS Design Group for Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, Alabama
5. Oculus at World Trade Center Transportation Hub, Santiago Calatrava Architects, New York City
6. Auditorio de Tenerife, Santiago Calatrava Architects, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Spain