



THE BOOK OF SKIN

MELODY MELAMED

shangri-la

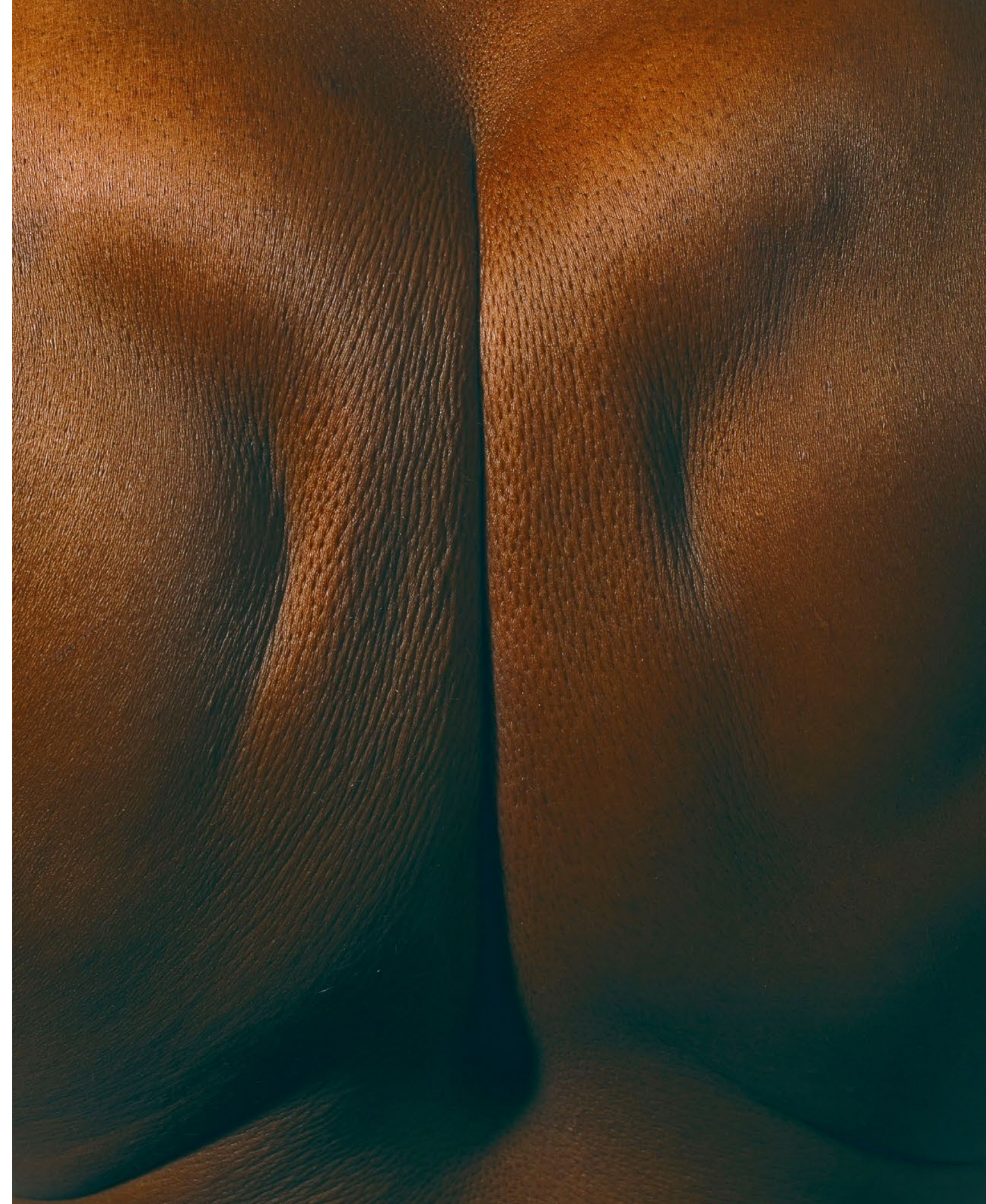
Shangri-la; a remote beautiful imaginary place where life approaches perfection: Utopia

When we speak about euphoria, what do we seek? A sensation? A feeling in the body, in the mind? Perhaps both. How does our identity define our sense of euphoria, and what do our bodies, our skins tell us about who we are and how strong we stand within ourselves?

The skin and its body are akin to the eyes of the soul; and what if we considered the vast, awe inspiring nature that subtly mimics and mirrors the relationships between our bodies, our skins and itself? What can this nature teach us about ourselves, our identities, our nature– are we not just the same? Our queer bodies mimic and mirror natures perfectionism as a reminder to us: we are connected to and come from its core. Within natures ever evolving euphoria, we are called up to find our own.

The dirt, the valleys and the trees expand perfectly into what they are meant to be, and seemingly without any mistakes. The seasons change, the mountaints spread and the seas maneuver according to their nature. Despite change, these thrive, even within peril, it all survives. Aren't we an extension of all its parts? We are made of the same soil and we expand and evolve into our own Shangri-la. Here, there are no mistakes. This is the kind of euphoria where no matter who we are or how we are, we are affirmed, we are valid and true.

–MM



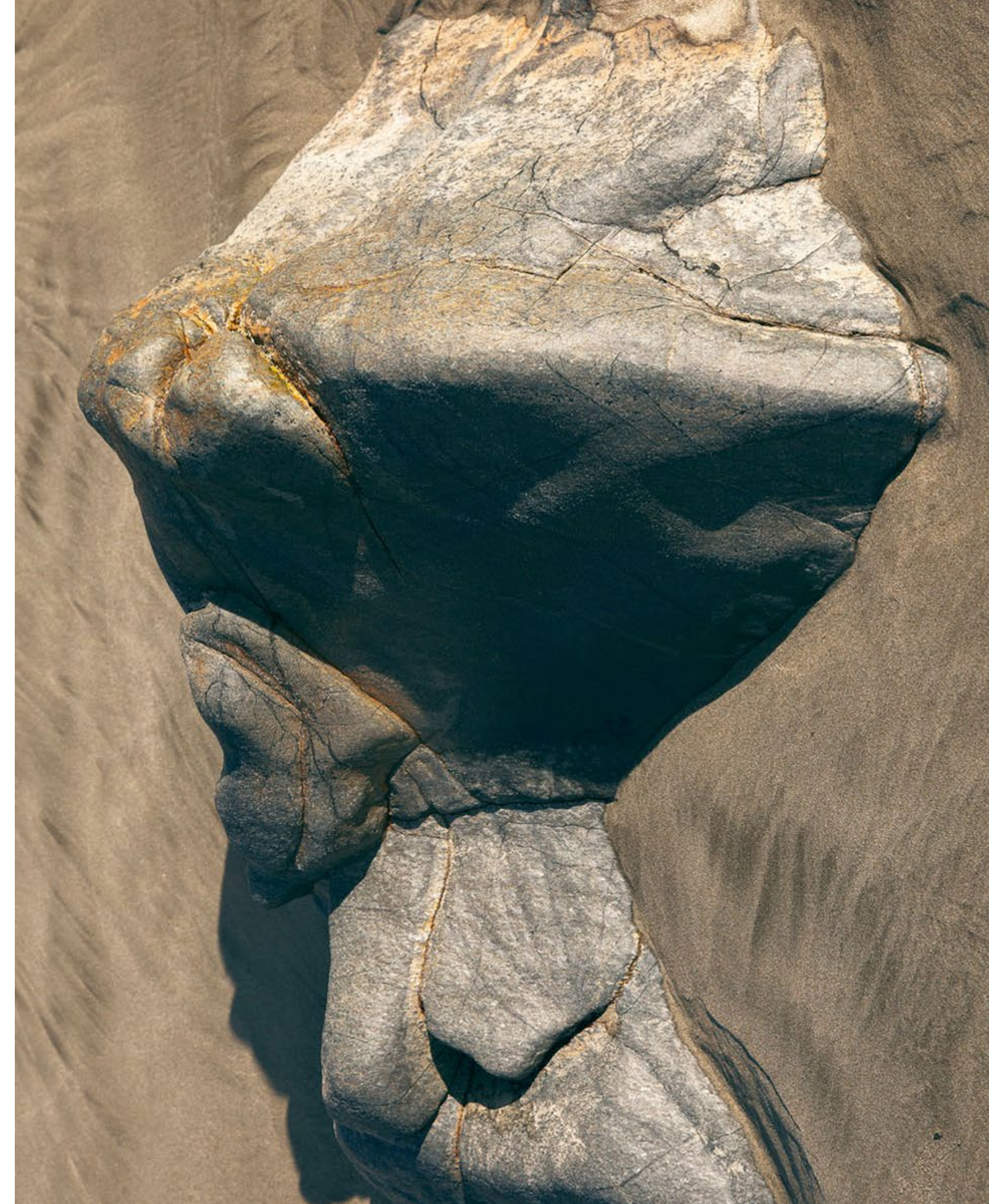
The soul is not something sequestered or inhumed in the body, but that which comes into being in contact, in activities of reaching, stretching, doubling, magnification. The soul is neither the body's position nor that object or new position for which it reaches. It is the reaching itself...It is what lies just beyond the fingers' ends, as when you reach for a key or coin in a narrow aperture. Even as you elongate yourself to your fullest extent, you must consult your own body, inwardly for the knowledge of whether you can stretch to it. You must imagine your reach, reach for the image of clasping your object, in order to reach it in actuality.

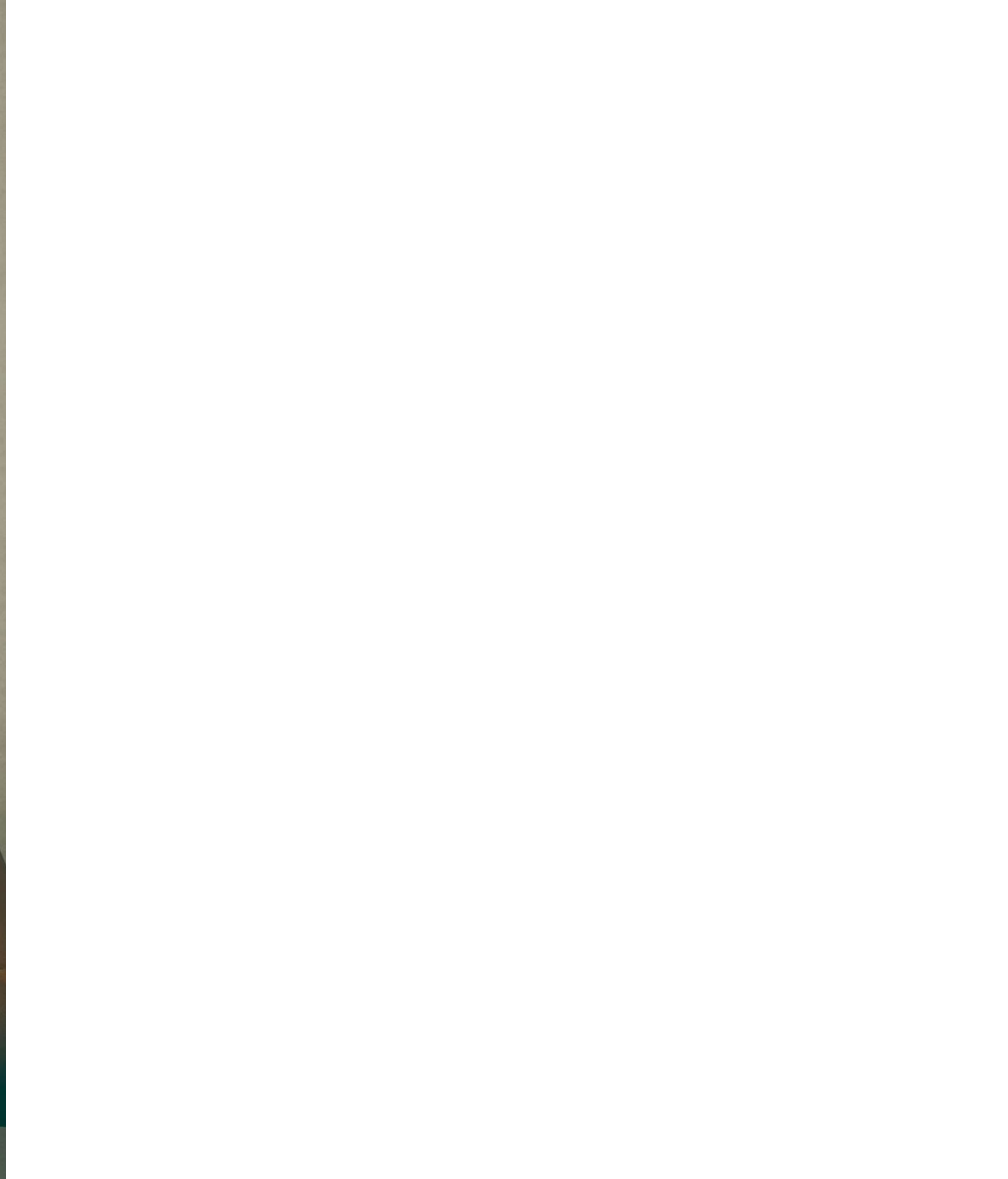
Primates, for whom hand and eye are so intricately wired together, will always see that shimmer of possibility at the fingers' ends.

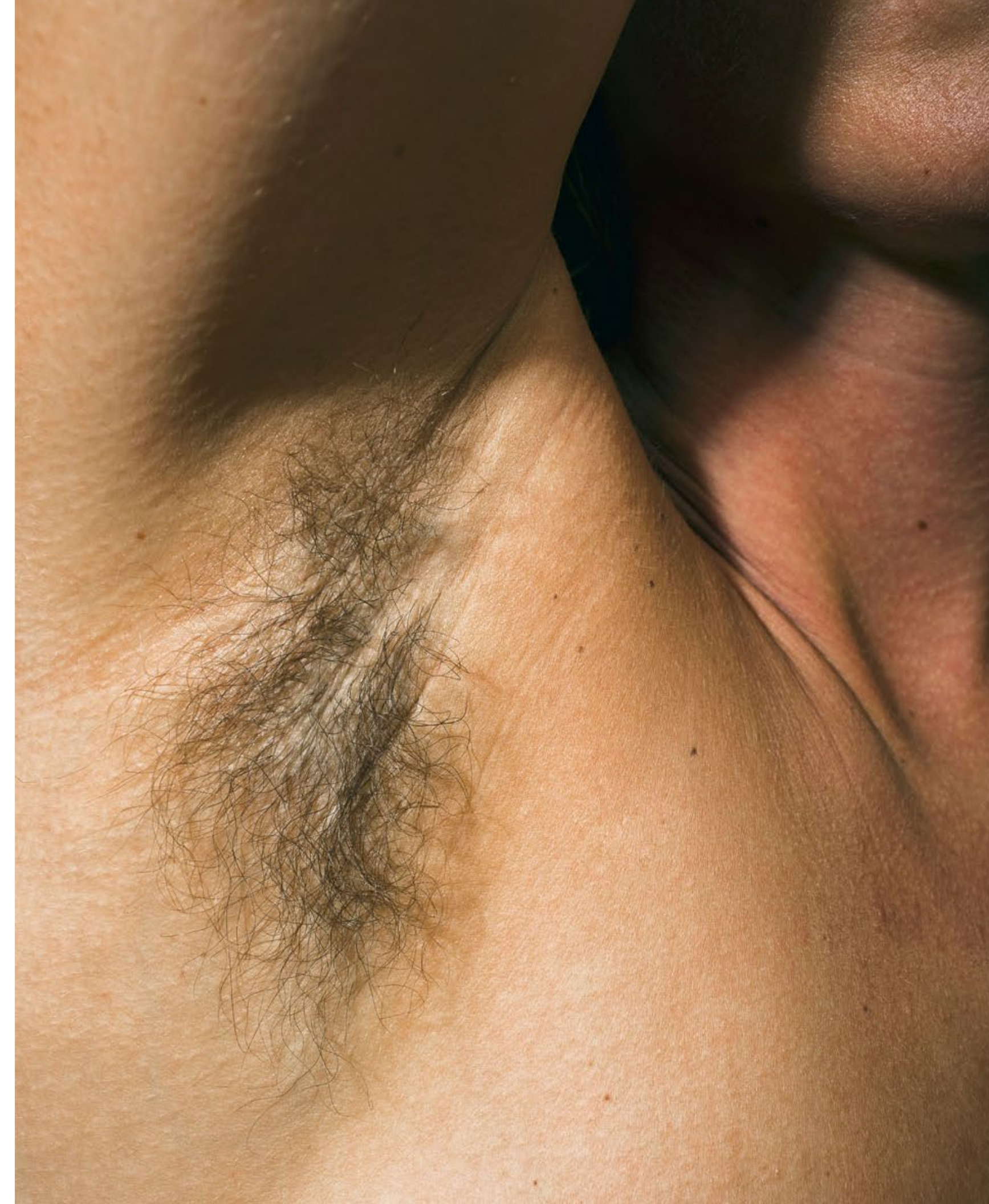
As we will see repeatedly in what is to follow, power is indeed concentrated at the fringe or the outer most edge of things.



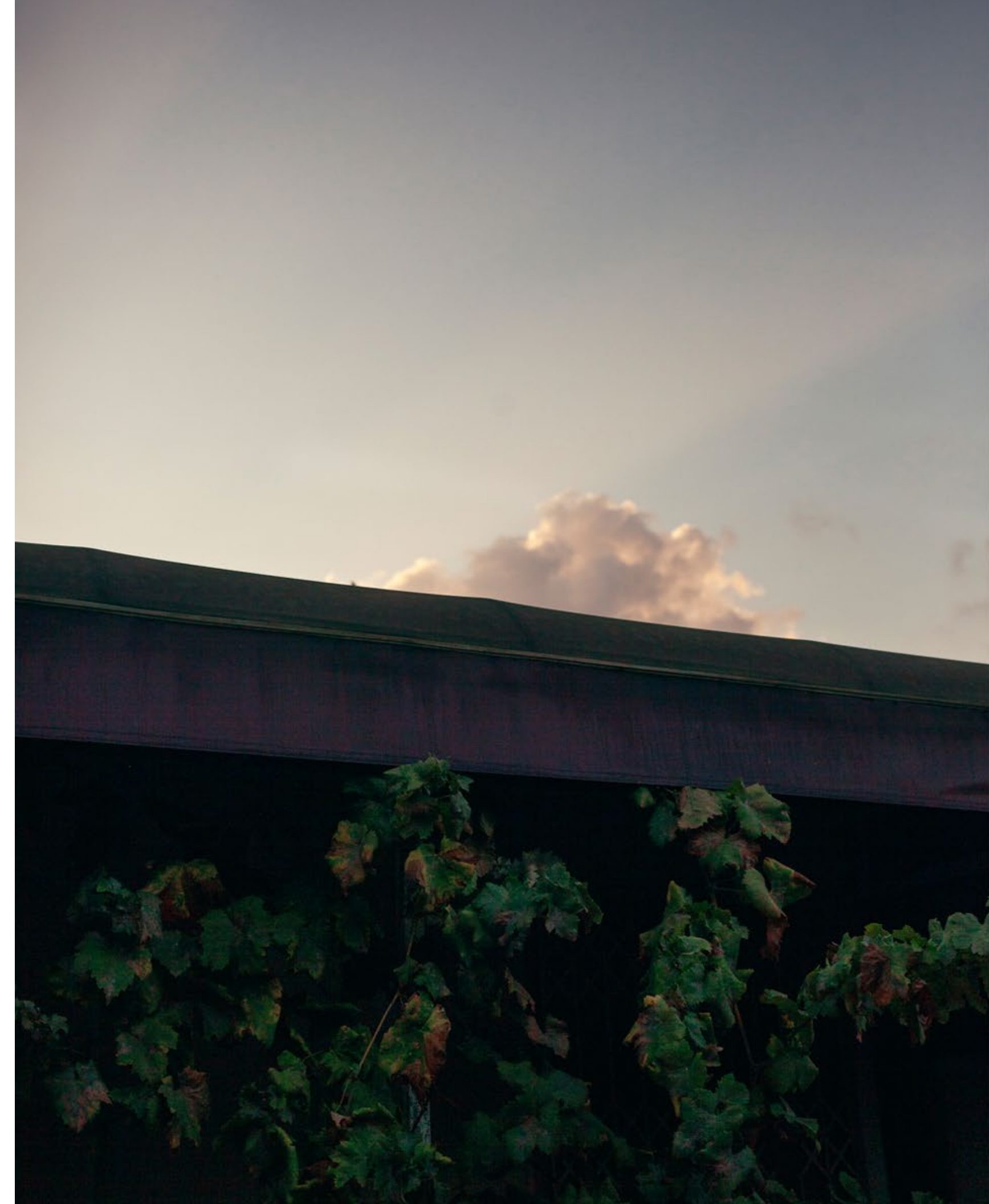




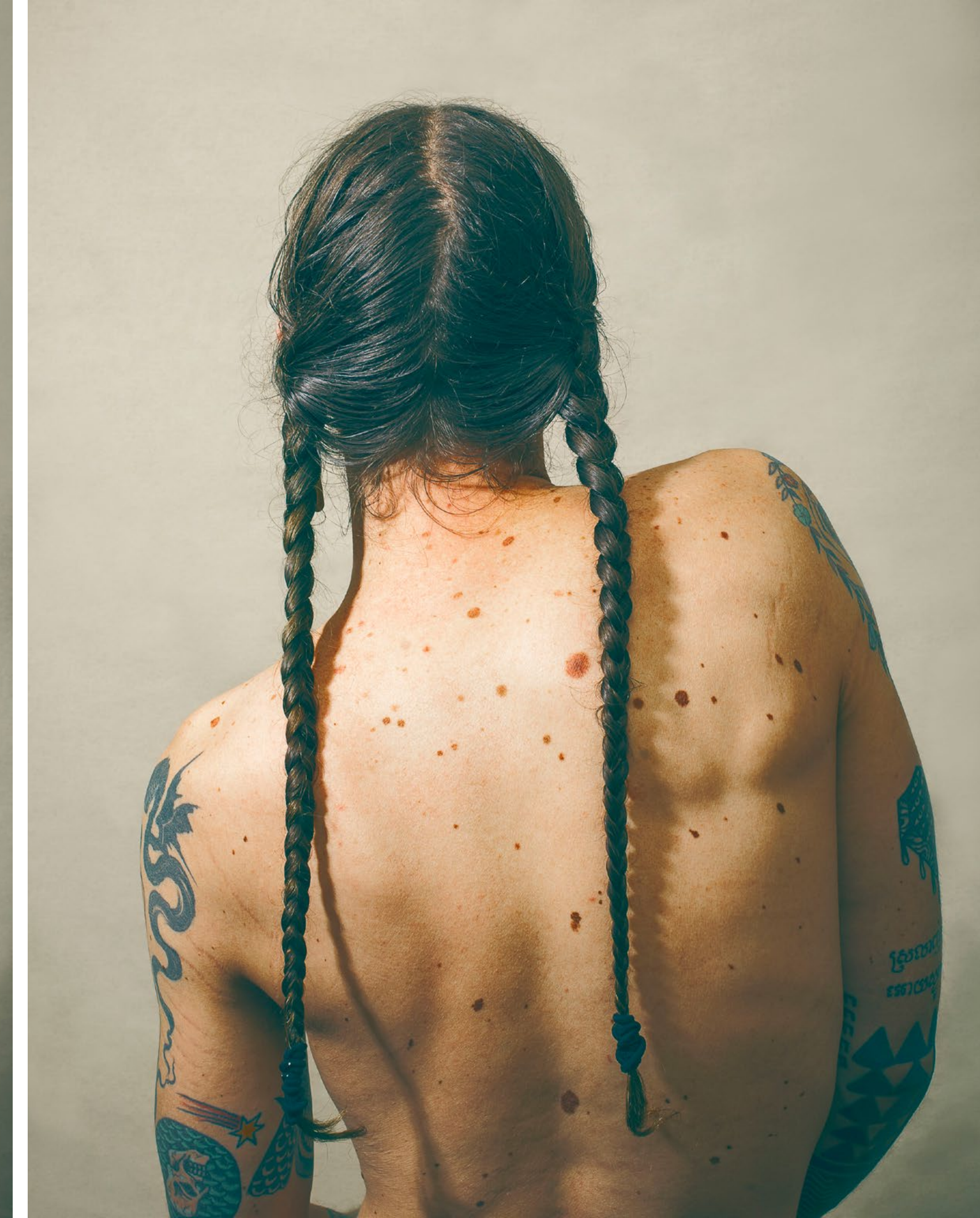


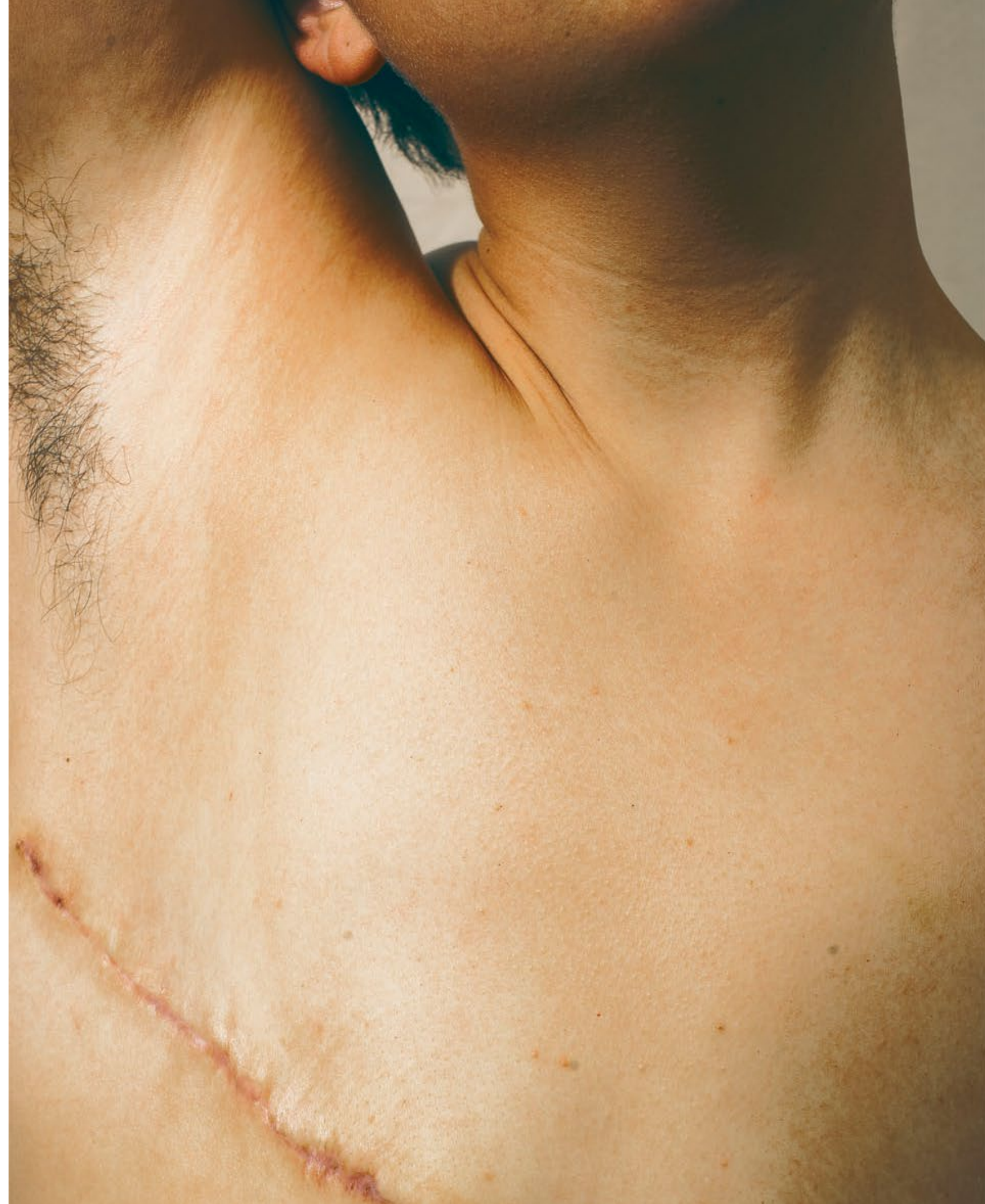


The skin is a topology rather than a topography.
A shape which does not present itself all at once to
the eye, but emerges, like the gathering of
a wave, or the piling of a cloud, through the passage
of time, who's shape it itself comes to be.

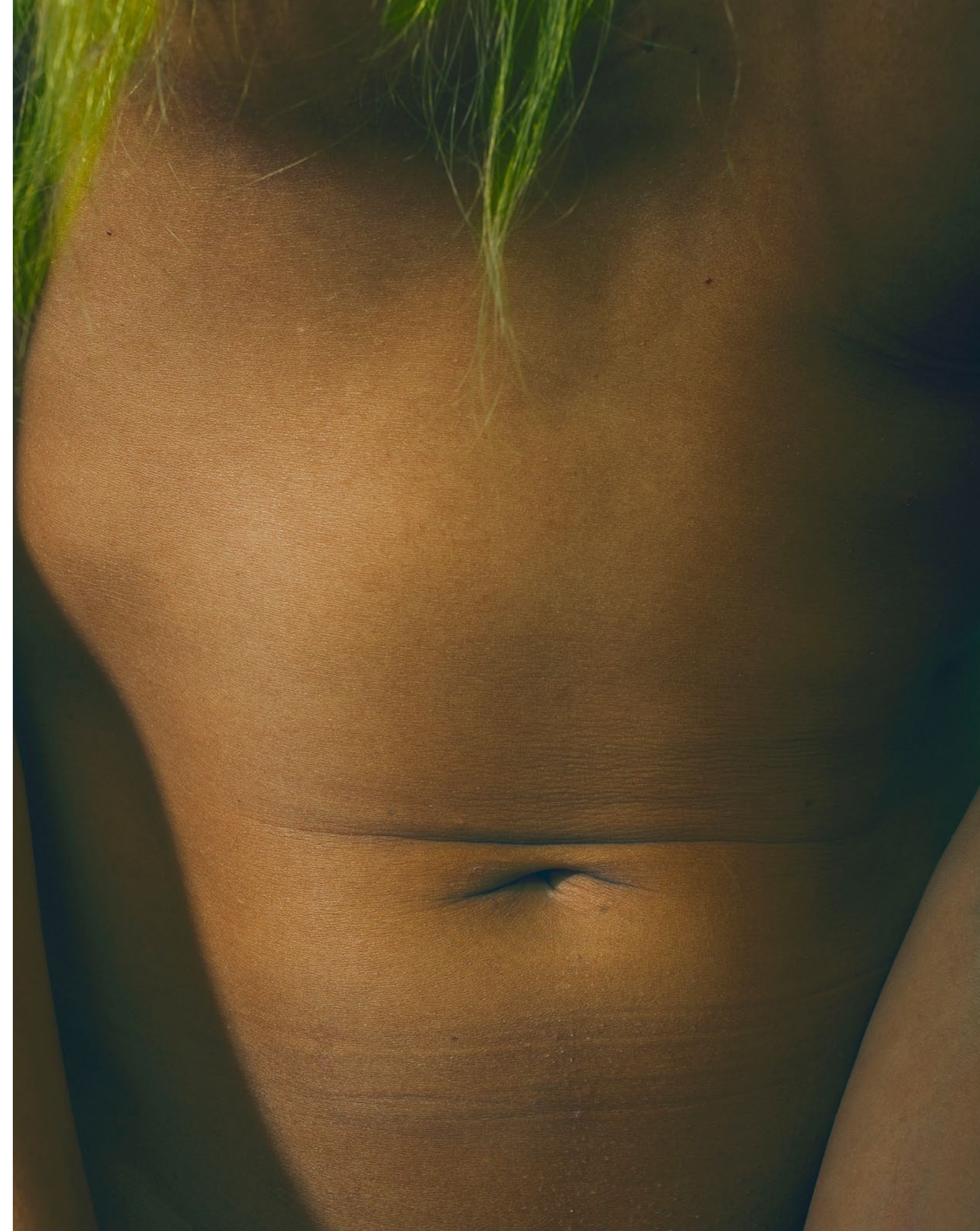


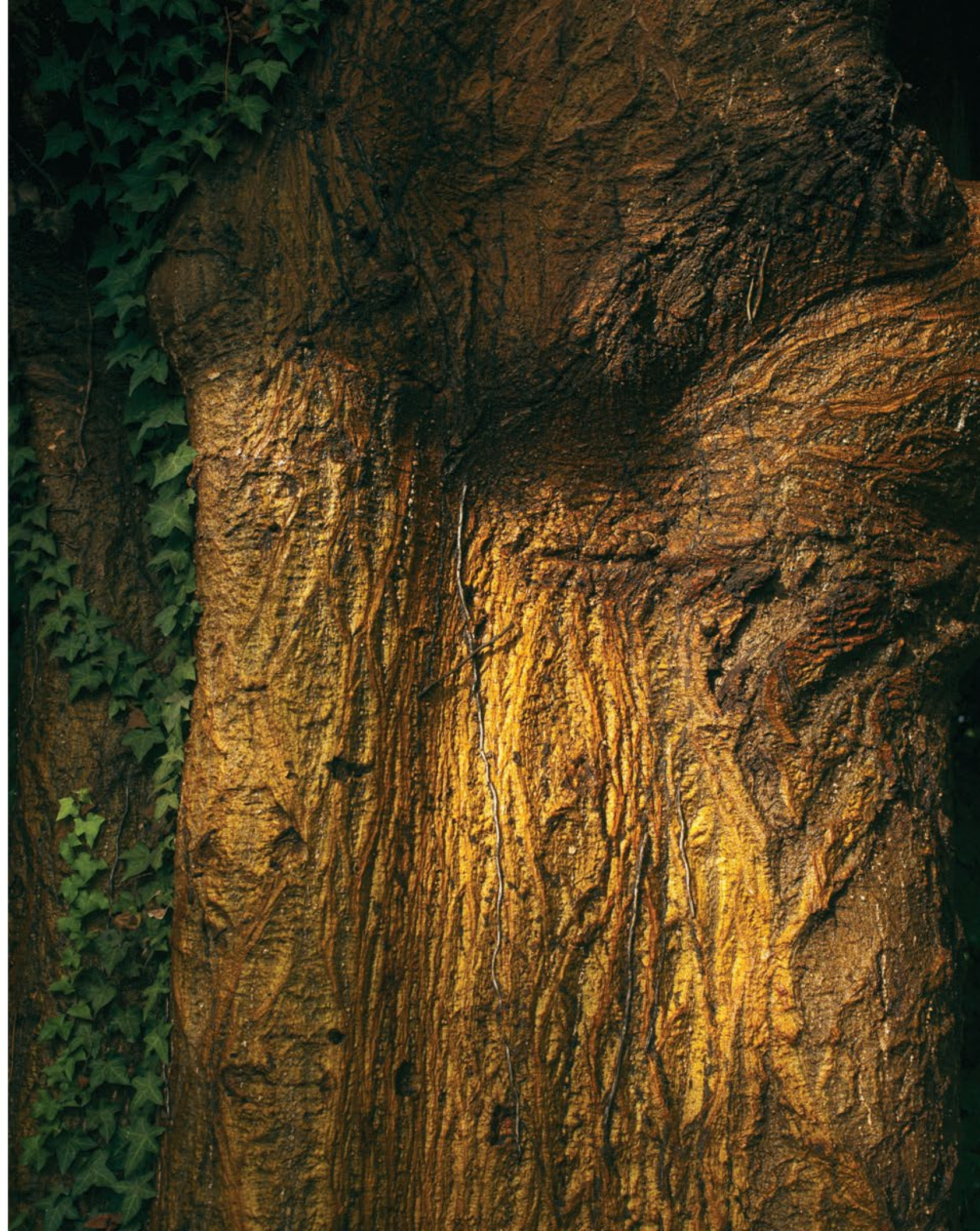
The luster or glow of flesh implies and approximates to the eye, the moistest and most lustrous part of the outward appearance of a terrestrial creature. And perhaps the living glow or shine of the skin is fascinating partly because it has eyes for us—because it is all eyes. The living luminous skin has something of the eye distributed across the skin.







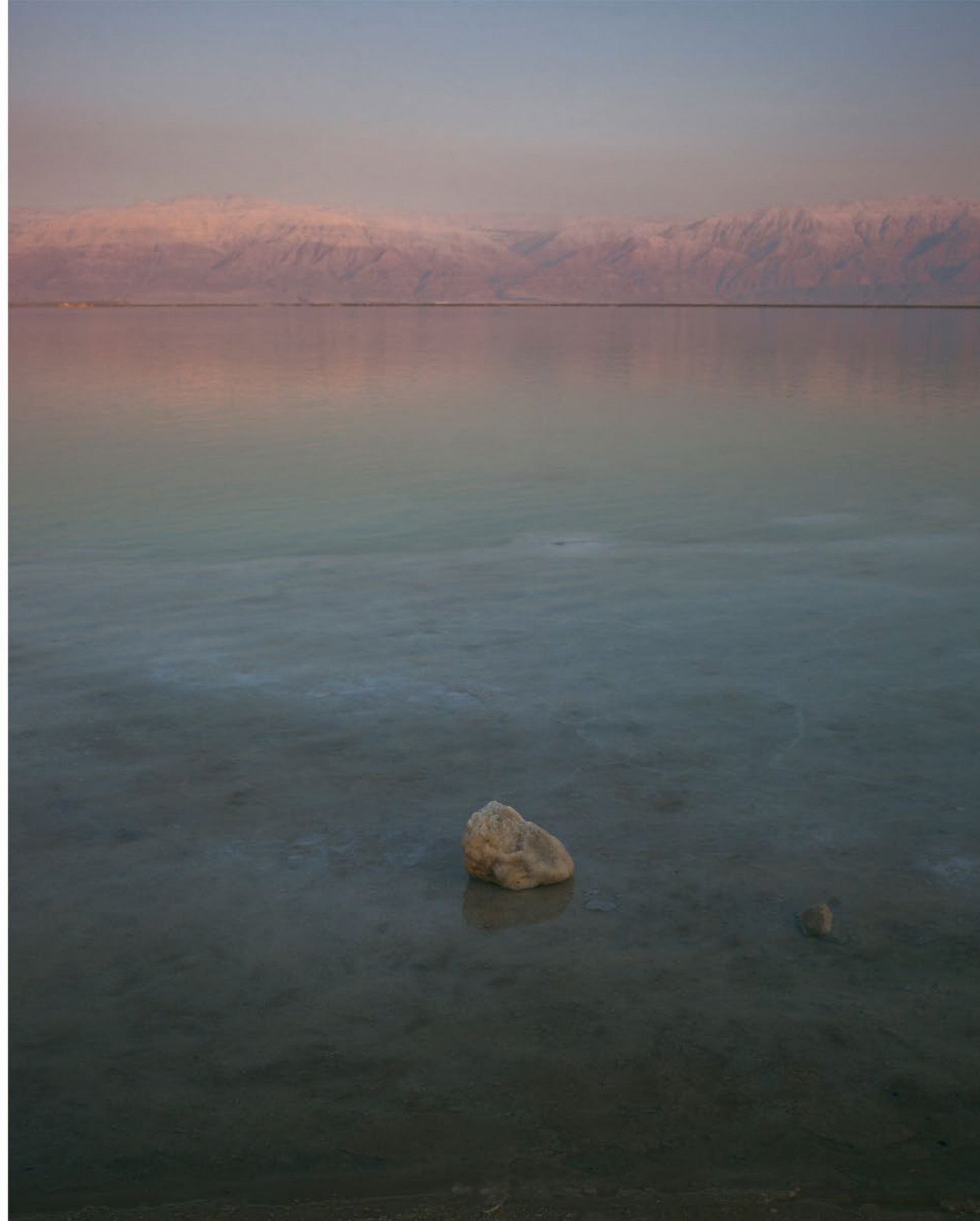


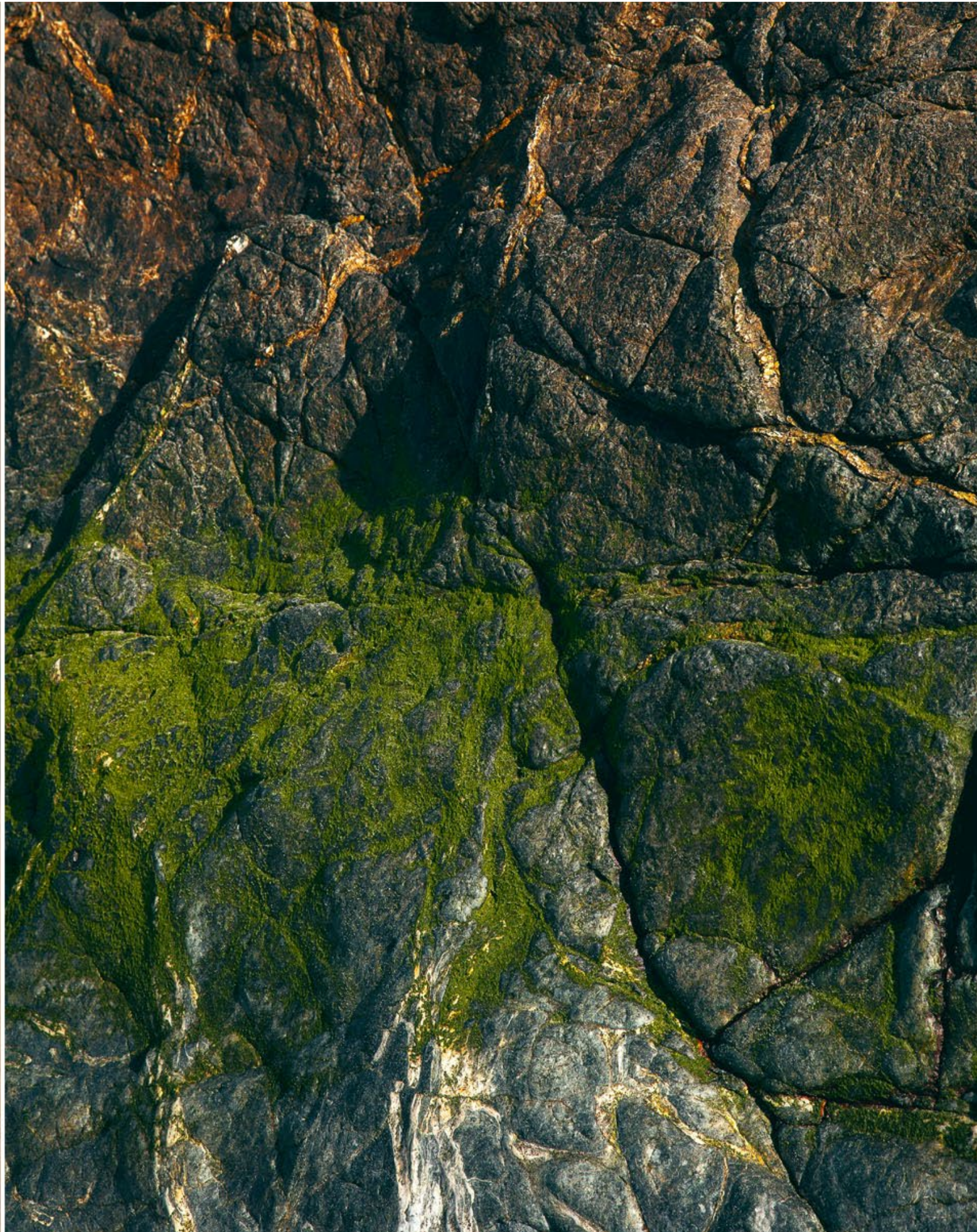


Thinking of the skin is complicated because to some considerable degree the skin is what we think with. Thinking *through* the skin, in the sense of getting straight about the skin, is always going to be difficult because all thinking is a form of thinking through the skin. The skin being literally implicated in thought.

The skin is a thinking organ and a form of thought.

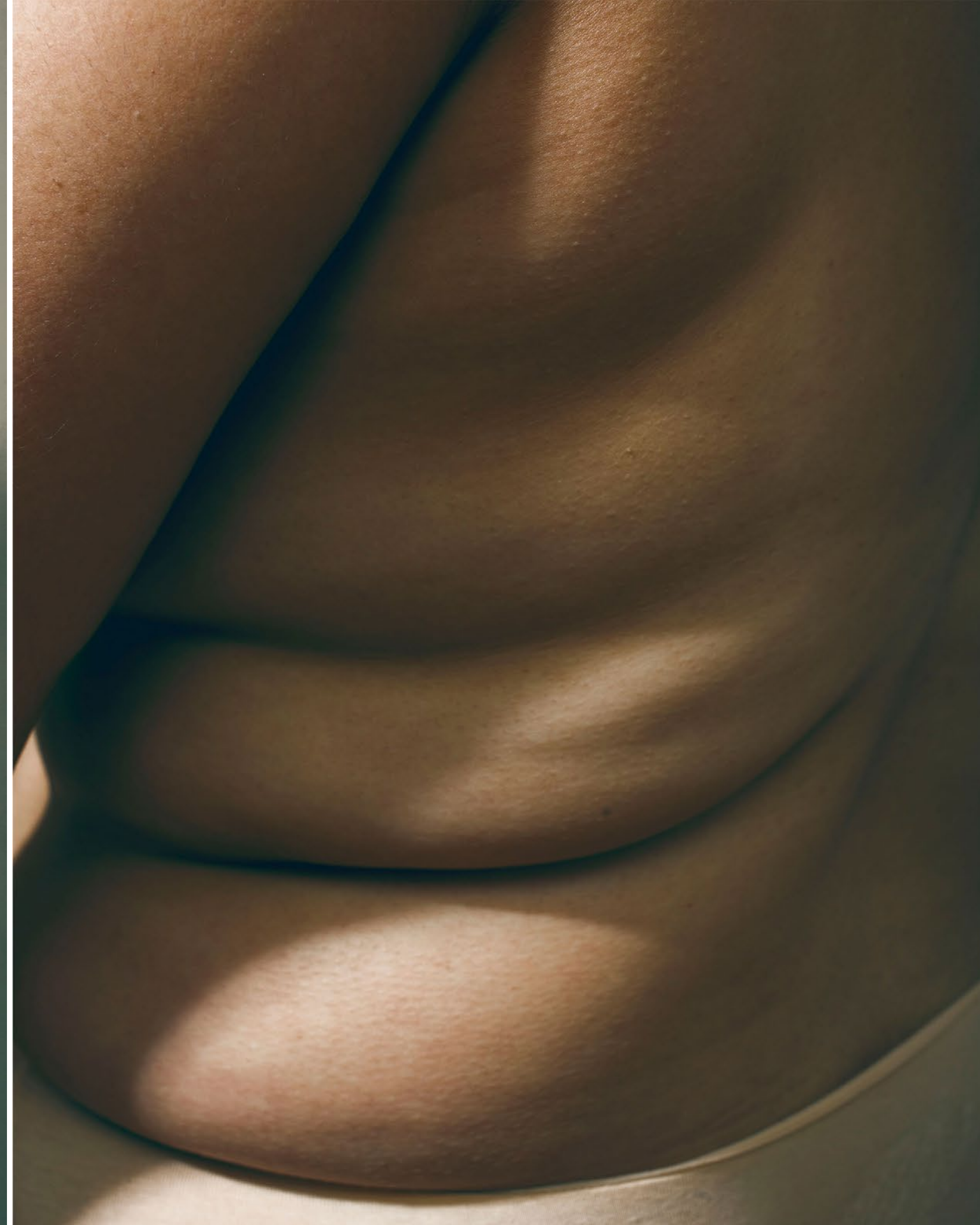


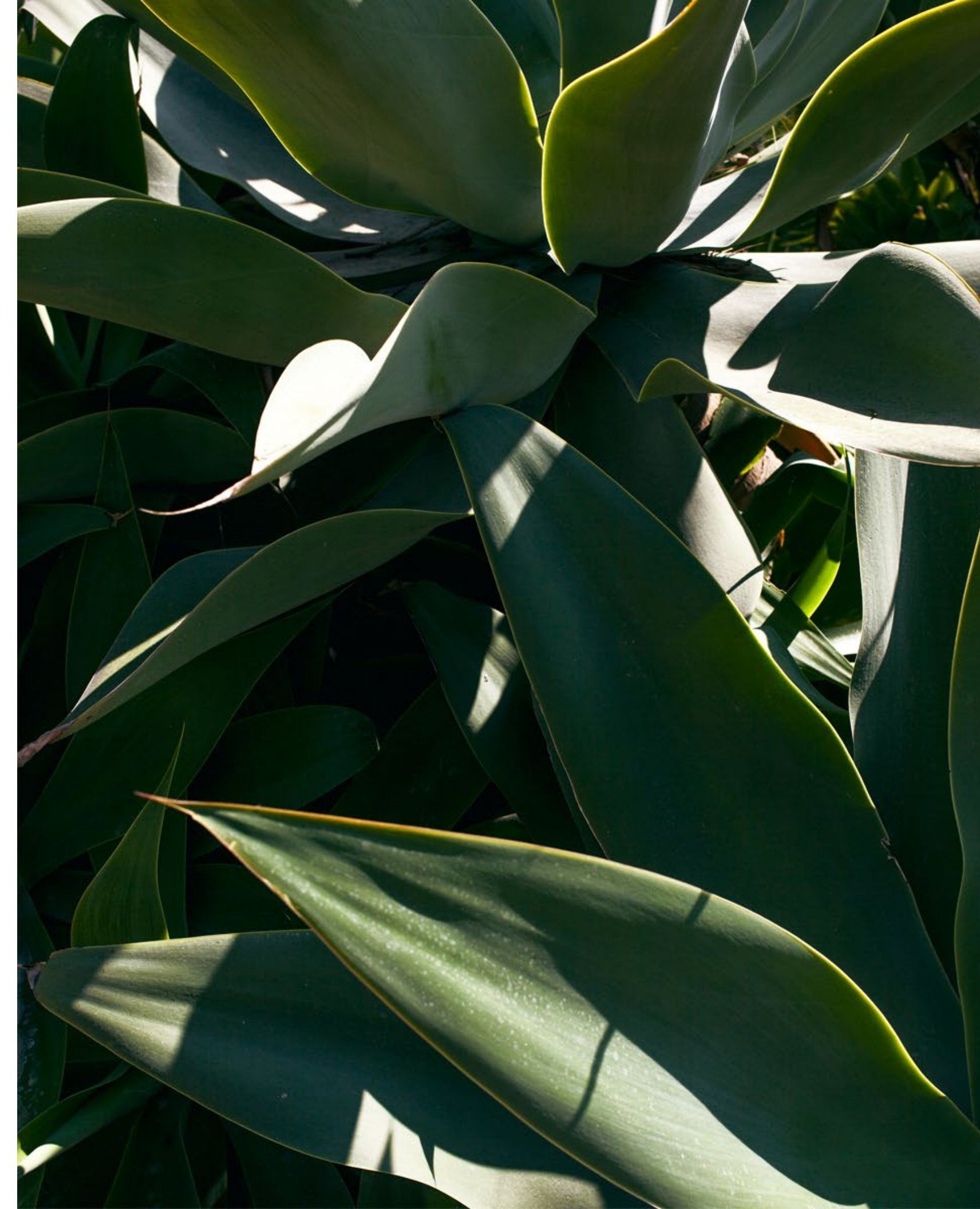




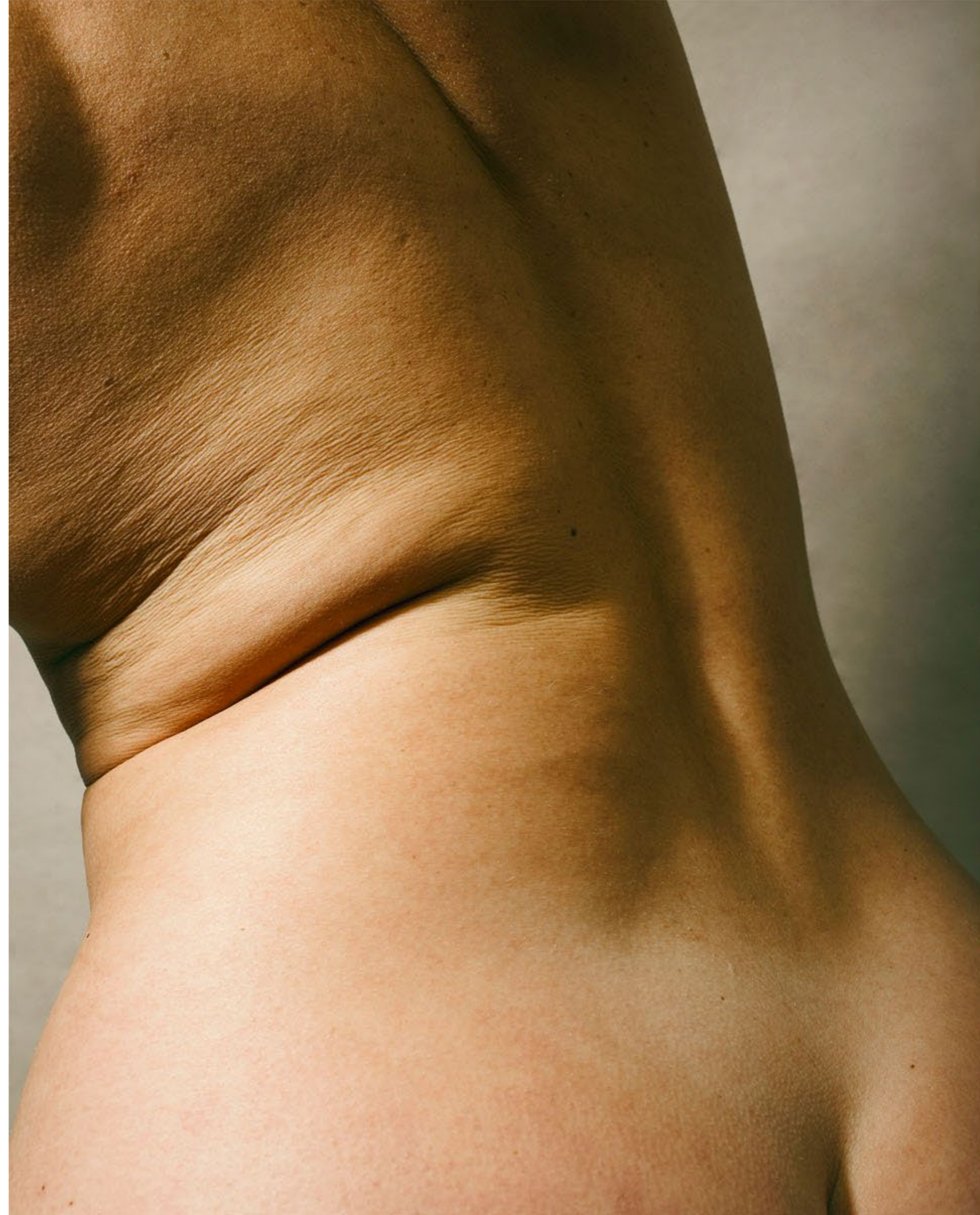
The world presented to my touch imprints itself on me in impermanent shapes that are homeomorphic with the shapes of the surfaces that I present to it. Body and world are continually interchanged. As I touch objects in the world, they seem to rise to their own surfaces to meet me in the shape that I present to them...it seems possible that in as much as the world is presented to us primarily as actual or implied surface, we experience that world as a single, intermittent skin, which mirrors and gives rise to our own single but intermittent skins.

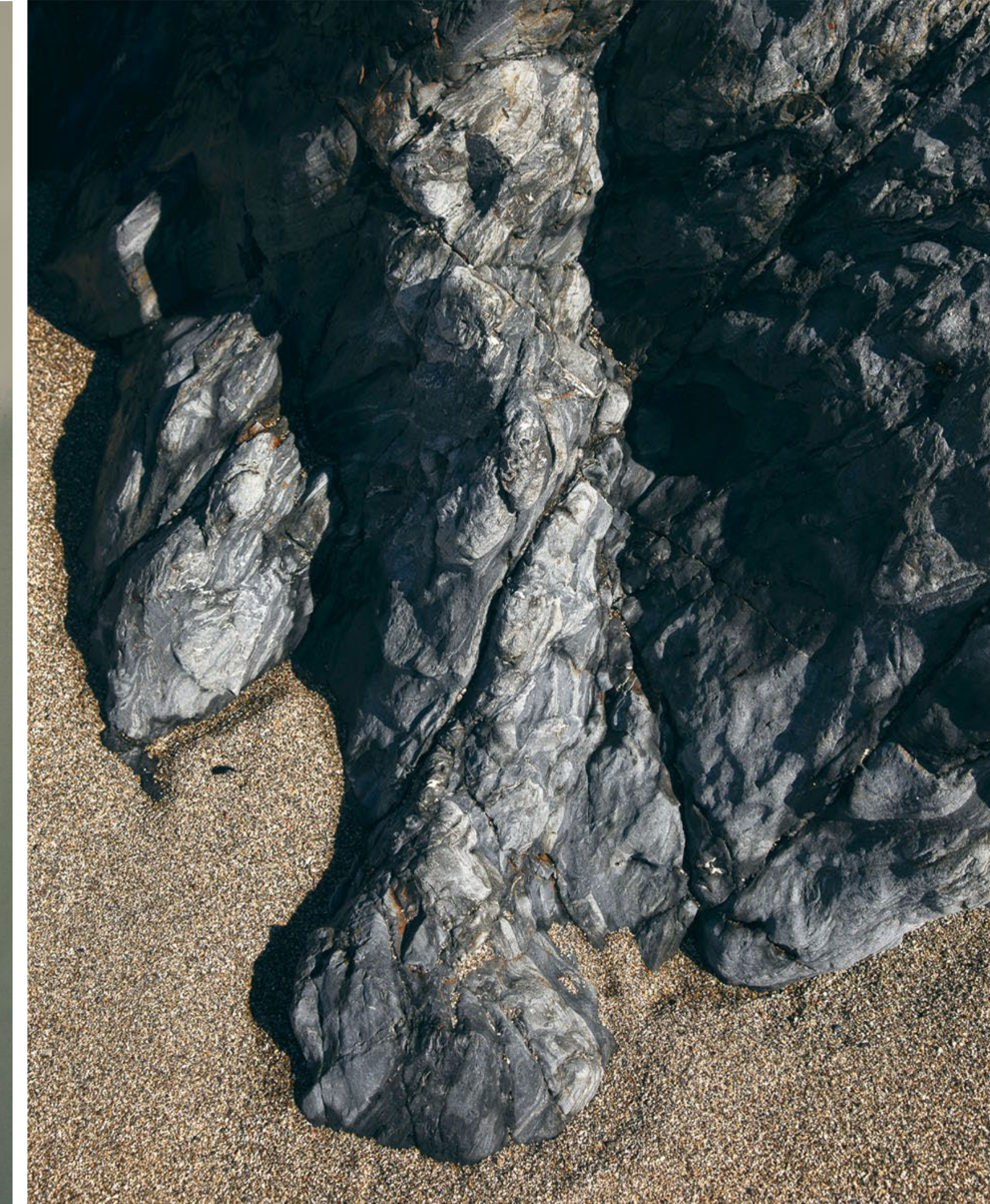






We invent with our bodies, and thereby reinvent those bodies. Unlike other animals we have a relation to our bodies— a relation that we invent and a relation that *is* our bodies. Our bodies are the kind that are always in question or transition, are always a work in progress.



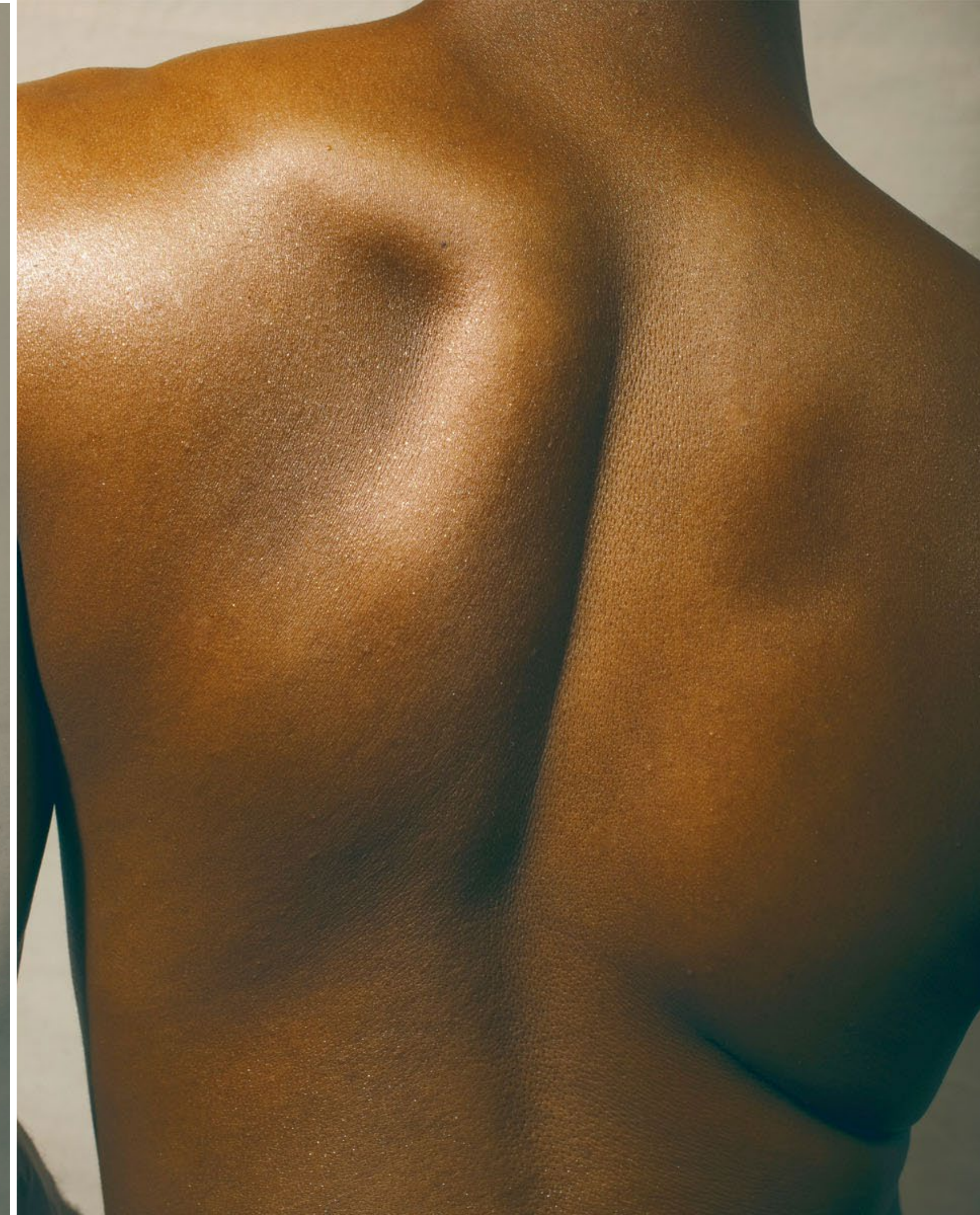


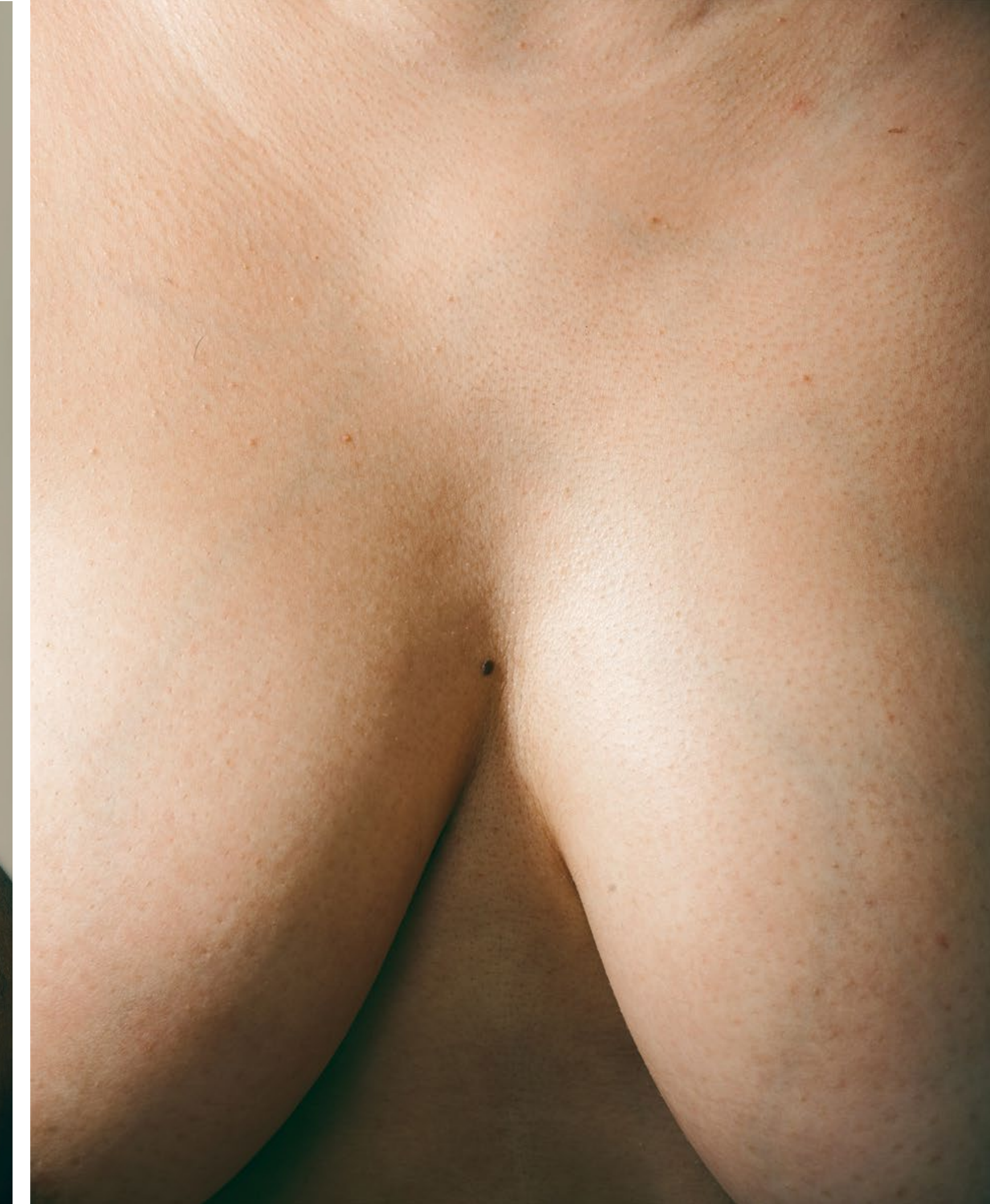
If you touch your skin– and think how hard it is to think without touching your skin. Forefinger to lip, say– then you feel yourself and you feel yourself feeling. You are simultaneously an object in the world and a subject giving rise to itself as it advances to meet the world in that object.

The skin is an organ, but, unlike the other organs, it has many other functions in maintaining the definition, uprightness and continuing life of the body it demarcates. However wrapped in thought, the skin is also the sensible form of our corporeal being.

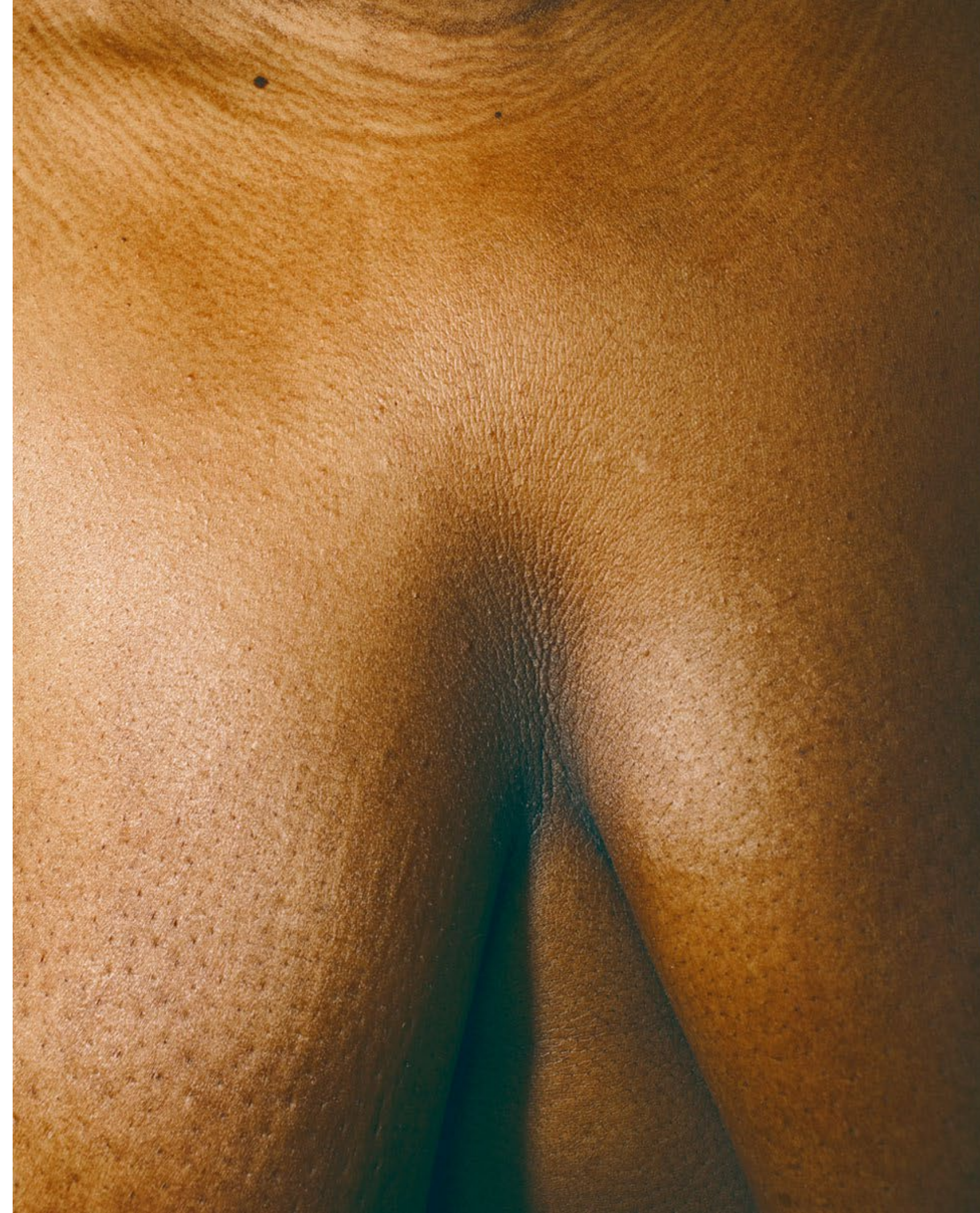
The skin, in all its many allotropes, seems to be the stuff, or the emblem of the stuff of which we are composed. The model for many of the ways in which we meet with the material world, and shape it to our ends or to its: as clay, fabric, membrane, armour, powder, breath, light.











...And the skeleton is not of bone but of
skin, like a skin that walks; and one walks from
the equinox to the solstice, buckling on one's
own humanity.



NATURALEZA

my body is not of your science
I am nature
red and white earth
smooth clay over curves
bones and dirt
rivers and oceans
drumming water beats
through arteries
where my heart seats
intelligence
your science is irrelevant
my nature is inexplicable
raw & visceral
science remains dispicable
in his addiction
to affliction
boasting his diagnosing of
that which he cannot understand
but me?
I go with wind like sand
hand in hand with cyclical plan
at peace with that which I do
not know
matter fact it gives me purpose
rising to surface
like water flows
always changing yet forever the same
known by many names
but the love will never change
and though they try to lock us on display
behind the bars of their psycho-
analytical biomedical pitiful cage
this nature cannot be contained

–Nato, *Troubling The Line*

All words and references written
by **Steven Connor** from *The Book of Skin*
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