



# Santorini Portfolio

by Stephen S. Ashley

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2014

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Stephen S. Ashley  
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First Edition

FRONTISPIECE: *Church in Megalochori #2, Santorini, 2014*

In 2011, my wife and I went on a cruise of the Greek islands starting in Kusadasi, Turkey, and visiting Patmos, Rhodes, Crete, and Santorini before disembarking at Piraeus. The port of Skala in Santorini, below the town of Fira, cannot accommodate a cruise ship, so our ship anchored in the ocean-filled caldera, and the passengers disembarked on launches that shuttled between the ship and the dock at Skala. We waited to come ashore and then waited for seats in the gondola up to Fira. By the time we reached Fira, we had about four hours to tour Santorini. We spent the whole time in the vicinity of Fira and then walked down the path to Skala, where we caught the launch back to the ship.

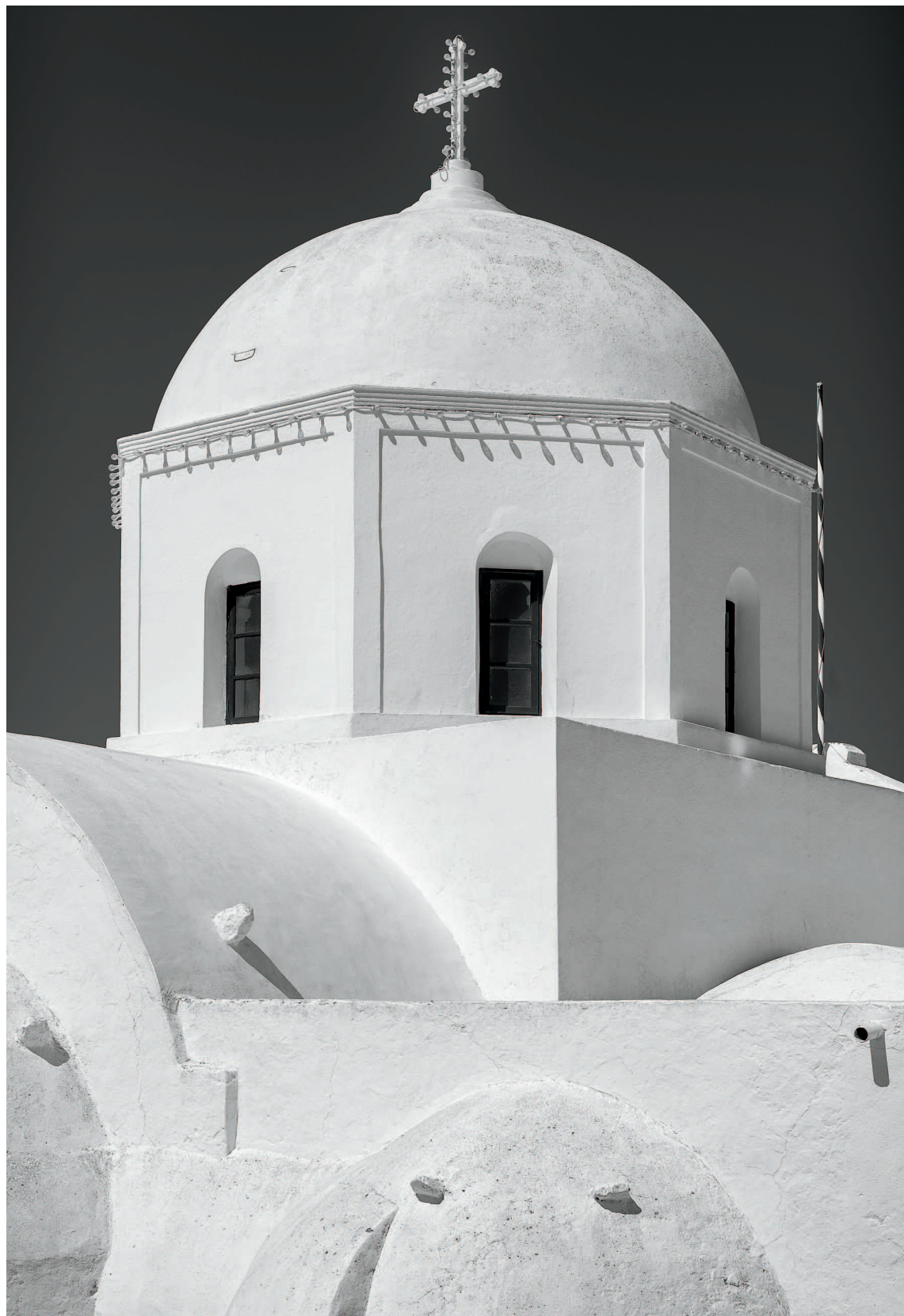
We knew that we had barely scratched the surface of what the stunningly beautiful island of Santorini had to offer, and we vowed to return some day when we could explore the island at our leisure. That opportunity arrived in 2014 when we spent five days and four nights on the island, dividing our time between Megalochori, on the southeast side of the caldera, and Oia, on the north side.

The photographs in this portfolio fall into three groups, those taken in Megalochori in 2014, those taken in Fira in 2011, and those taken in Oia in 2014.



Megalochori

This photograph captures the feeling you get when you gaze upon one of these white-washed churches under the brilliant sun and dark blue sky. All the elements are there, the shining cross festooned with light bulbs, the octagonal chamber beneath, the cylindrical roofs above the nave and transept, even the blue-and-white candy-cane pole. There's something about contemplation of this Cycladic architecture that induces a feeling of peace. The sun and shadows reveal a constantly changing palette of white, grays, and black.



*Church Dome in Megalochori, Santorini, 2014*

This photograph depicts a Megalochori church from the front. The Greeks take great care of the appearance of village buildings, white-washing them frequently, but they clutter up the views of these beautiful buildings with power lines and telephone wires. It takes hours to retouch an image like this to rid it of all its ugly wires. I wish the Greeks would put their wires underground.



*Church in Megalochori #1, Santorini, 2014*

The crosses on these church doors seem to glow against the dark wood.



*Church Doors in Megalochori, Santorini, 2014*

This photograph depicts a detail of a Megalochori church.



*Detail of Church in Megalochori, Santorini, 2014*

Here is a pyramid of bells in Megalochori, minus the power lines.



*Bells of Megalochori #1, Santorini, 2014*

Another array of bells.



*Bells of Megalochori #2, Santorini, 2014*

I took this picture standing below the bells, looking up.  
Choosing this camera angle had the effect of eliminating the surrounding structures and accentuating the convergence of the vertical elements of the photograph.



*Bells of Megalochori #3, Santorini, 2014*

I was walking along the rim of the caldera when I came upon an unmarked path leading down towards the sea. About halfway down I came upon this lovely structure of bells.



*Cliffside Bells, Santorini, 2014*

The villages north of Megalochori cater to the tourists and have lost the feeling of authenticity, but the deluge of tourists has not affected Megalochori, due perhaps to the village's location away from the edge of the caldera and its spectacular views. Megalochori is a real village filled with real houses inhabited by real Greeks. This photograph depicts the entrance to a Megalochori house.



*Megalochori #1, Santorini, 2014*

I encountered this study in black, grays, and white while  
wandering around the village.



*Balusters, Santorini, 2014*

We landed in Santorini right on time, but our luggage didn't come with us, so we arrived at our resort with only the clothes we were wearing and our carry-on luggage. The staff at the Vedema resort, where we were staying, took pity on us and treated us like royalty. They gave us a room with a private patio and swimming pool, which we enjoyed while our hand-washed clothes dried in the sun. From our patio we could gaze across the vineyards towards Profitias Ilias, the highest point on the island.



*Vedema Patio, 2014*

The Vedema architect did a lovely job of incorporating the traditional Cycladic architectural elements, the curves and angles, in a modern structure. This photograph shows another view from our patio.



*Three Walls, Santorini, 2014*

The furniture sitting in a restaurant's courtyard was draped the night before with fitted, white coverings. The light grays of the coverings contrast with the dark grays of the courtyard pavement and wall.



*Covered Furniture, 2014*

These are the rooftops of buildings containing Vedema resort guest rooms. The cylindrical roof is a common architectural feature on Santorini. You often see cylindrical roofs used in the construction of the transepts and naves of local churches. These roofs remind me of rolling waves about to break on the shore (except for the chimneys).



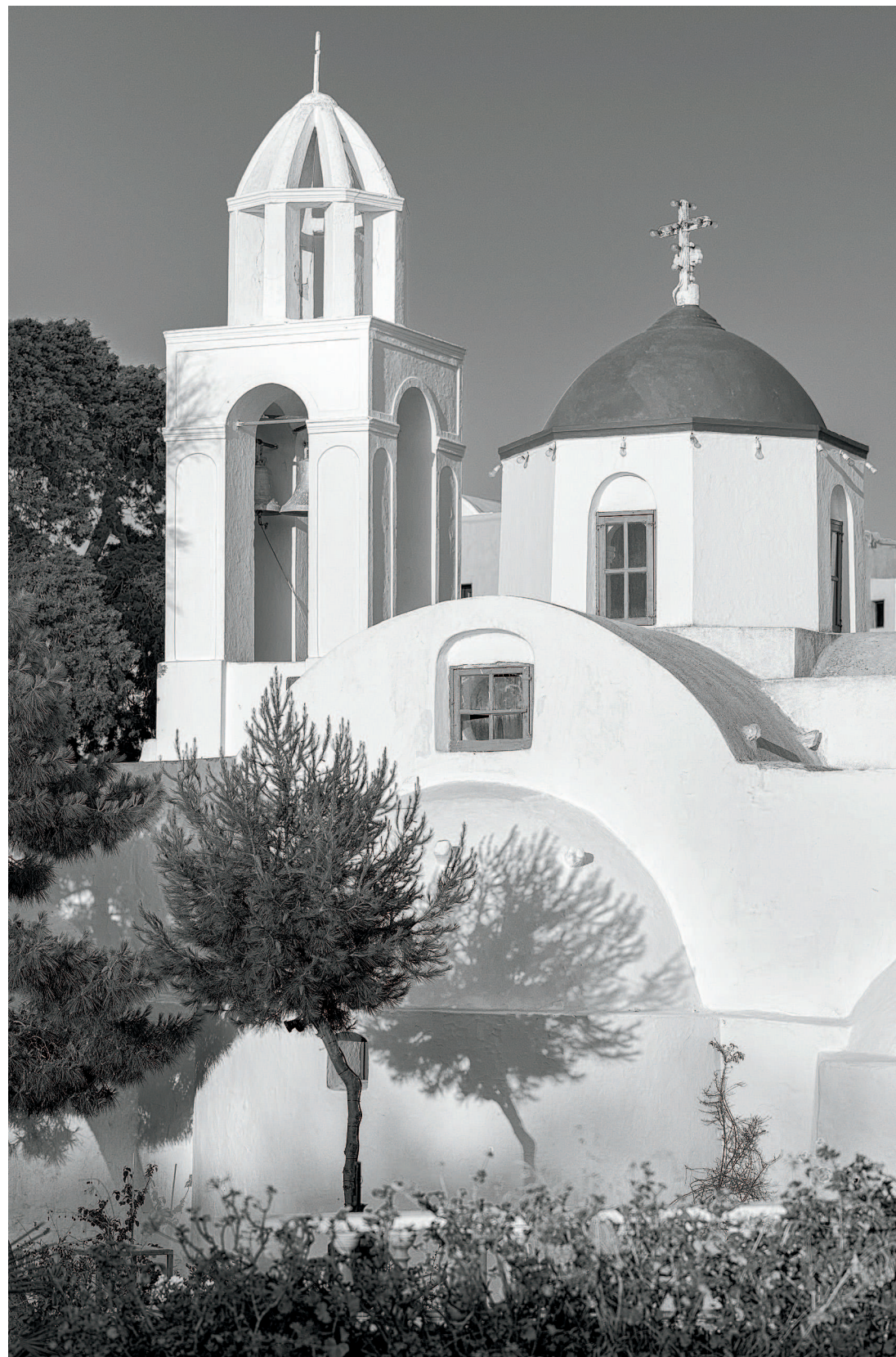
*Rooftops, Santorini, 2014*

The most prominent secular structure in Megalochori is the clock tower, though it too has a cross on top. This photograph shows the clock tower early in the morning.



*Megalochori Clock Tower #1, Santorini, 2014*

Here is a view of yet another Megalochori church, just after sunrise. Notice how the tree in the foreground casts its shadow on the convex surface of the church, distorting the shadow.



*Church in Megalochori #3, Santorini, 2014*

An antique lamp hangs from an arch over a cobblestone street. The connecting wires on each side of the central wire pull the lamp in a manner that seems to defy gravity. My original composition did not include a little dog. He trotted into the scene just after I had snapped the shutter, so I quickly made another exposure.



*Hanging Lamp, Santorini, 2014*

Fira

Every day cruise ships deposit their passengers on the dock at Skala, and the passengers ascend the steep side of the caldera by gondola, donkey, or foot to the village of Fira where they inundate the souvenir shops and restaurants. At the end of the day the hordes of tourists descend to Skala and return to their ships, leaving the residents of Fira to enjoy their peace and count the euros the tourists left behind. It's easy to understand why the ships unload at Skala: the views from Fira are spectacular.



*Rooftops #1, Santorini, 2011*

This is the view from Fira north towards the village of Imerovigli.



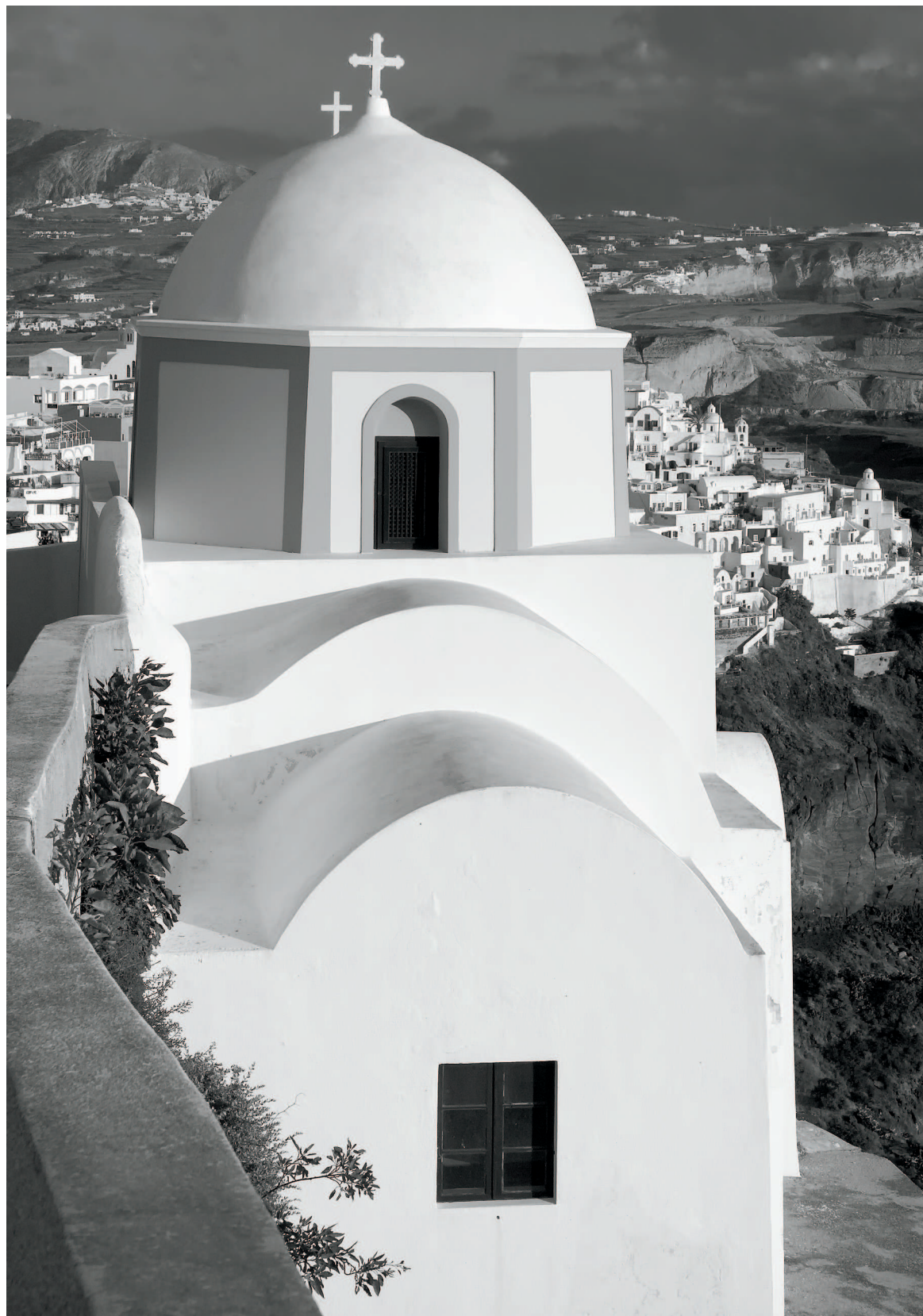
*Cliff-Top Village #1, Santorini, 2011*

This is the view south from Fira. In the distance beyond the two domes and crosses you can see the southwestern tip of the island.



*Two Crosses, Santorini (2011)*

Like Megalochori, Fira is dotted with churches and chapels. This structure sits on the edge of the caldera. The view is to the south.



*Church #4, Santorini, 2011*

This church resembles those we saw in Megalochori with its dome and cross, cylindrical nave and transept, and multi-colored pole at the entrance.



*Church #1, Santorini, 2011*

Here is another view.



*Church #3, Santorini, 2011*

Structures built on the side of a cliff need lots of stairs.



*Staircase, Santorini, 2011*

The noted photographer Morley Baer took a memorable photograph of a ladder inclined against the backside of the wall of a kiva at the San Ildefonso Pueblo in New Mexico. This ladder in Fira reminded me of Baer's ladder the moment I saw it. I got puzzled looks from passersby as I set up to take a picture of an ordinary ladder a short distance from the spectacular Santorini caldera.



*Ladder, Santorini (2011)*

Late in the afternoon the time came for us to return to our ship. Rather than pay for another gondola ride we elected to walk down the switchbacks from Fira to Skala. This photograph shows the view looking back up the cliff at the village of Fira. Within a few weeks of our too short visit to Santorini some rocks broke loose from the cliff and fell on the path, killing a tourist riding a donkey.



*Cliff-Top Village #2, Santorini, 2011*

Oia

On the third day of our visit to Santorini in 2014 we departed Megalochori and moved to Oia, the village at the north end of the island. Oia more closely resembles Fira than Megalochori, as it too caters to the throngs of tourists. The cruise ships, however, do not discharge passengers at Oia, so the village is spared the daily tides of cruise ship passengers who flood Fira.

The resorts in Oia were built on the rim of the caldera and drip down the edge like icing on a cinnamon bun. The guest rooms were built into caverns carved into the cliff wall. I took this photograph from the bottom of the gorgeous Mystique resort looking upwards towards the rim of the caldera. The rectangular umbrellas extend into the sky like the prow of a ship.



*Oia Resort, Santorini, 2014*

Why are the Greek island villages always so sparkling white?  
Because at regular intervals someone climbs on the roof with  
a roller and a bucket of paint and whitewashes the building.  
I took this photograph in Oia. In the background you can see  
the caldera and the south edge of the rim.



*Whitewashing, Santorini, 2014*

Every dwelling on Santorini seems to have a chimney or two.  
I never saw smoke coming from a chimney, so perhaps they  
are only used in winter.



*Two Chimneys #1, Santorini, 2014*

This dwelling had a particularly sculptural pair of chimneys.  
The sun on their curved surfaces created smooth gradients  
from white to black.



*Two Chimneys #2, Santorini, 2014*

A trail starts at Oia, climbs the ridge south of the village, and extends along the edge of the caldera to Fira. The views of the caldera, the Mediterranean, and the neighboring islands are unforgettable. High above Oia is a church. I photographed it early in the morning as the sun was rising behind it, creating a starburst just to the right of one of the crosses.



*Church Above Oia, Santorini, 2014*

Along the trail from Oia to Fira are a pair of statuesque rocks jutting out of the ground as if they had been placed there deliberately. To the left of the rocks is a flat area where Santorini teenagers, or perhaps visiting lovebirds, arrange little white stones to pledge their undying love for each other.



*Along the Oia-Fira Trail, Santorini, 2014*

On the last day of our visit to Santorini our luggage finally caught up with us, including the tripod I had lugged to Europe in anticipation of our visit to the island. That night I took this time exposure from our patio at the Mystique resort looking along the edge of the caldera towards Imerovigli, Fira, and Megalochori. In the distance you can see the silhouette of Profitis Ilias, the high point on the island.



*Santorini at Night, 2014*

# About this Book

The photographs in this book were taken on two trips to Santorini, one a four-hour stop on a cruise of the Greek islands in 2011 and the second a five-day visit in 2014. The 2011 photographs were taken with a Canon Rebel T1i using a 17–85mm zoom lens. The 2014 photographs were taken with a Nikon D800E using 50mm and 85mm lenses. The photographs were processed in Adobe Photoshop using the NIK Collection of plug-ins, in particular Silver Efex Pro 2. The text of this book was set in Optima using the Adobe Lightroom Book module.

You can find most of these photographs, along with dozens of photographs of other beautiful places, on the website at [nigrumetalbum.com](http://nigrumetalbum.com). If you would like to track Stephen Ashley's photographic activities, you may follow him on Twitter ([twitter.com/sashleyphotos](https://twitter.com/sashleyphotos)) or on Pinterest ([pinterest.com/NigrumEtAlbum](https://pinterest.com/NigrumEtAlbum)). You can reach him by email at [stephen.ashley@strattonpress.com](mailto:stephen.ashley@strattonpress.com).

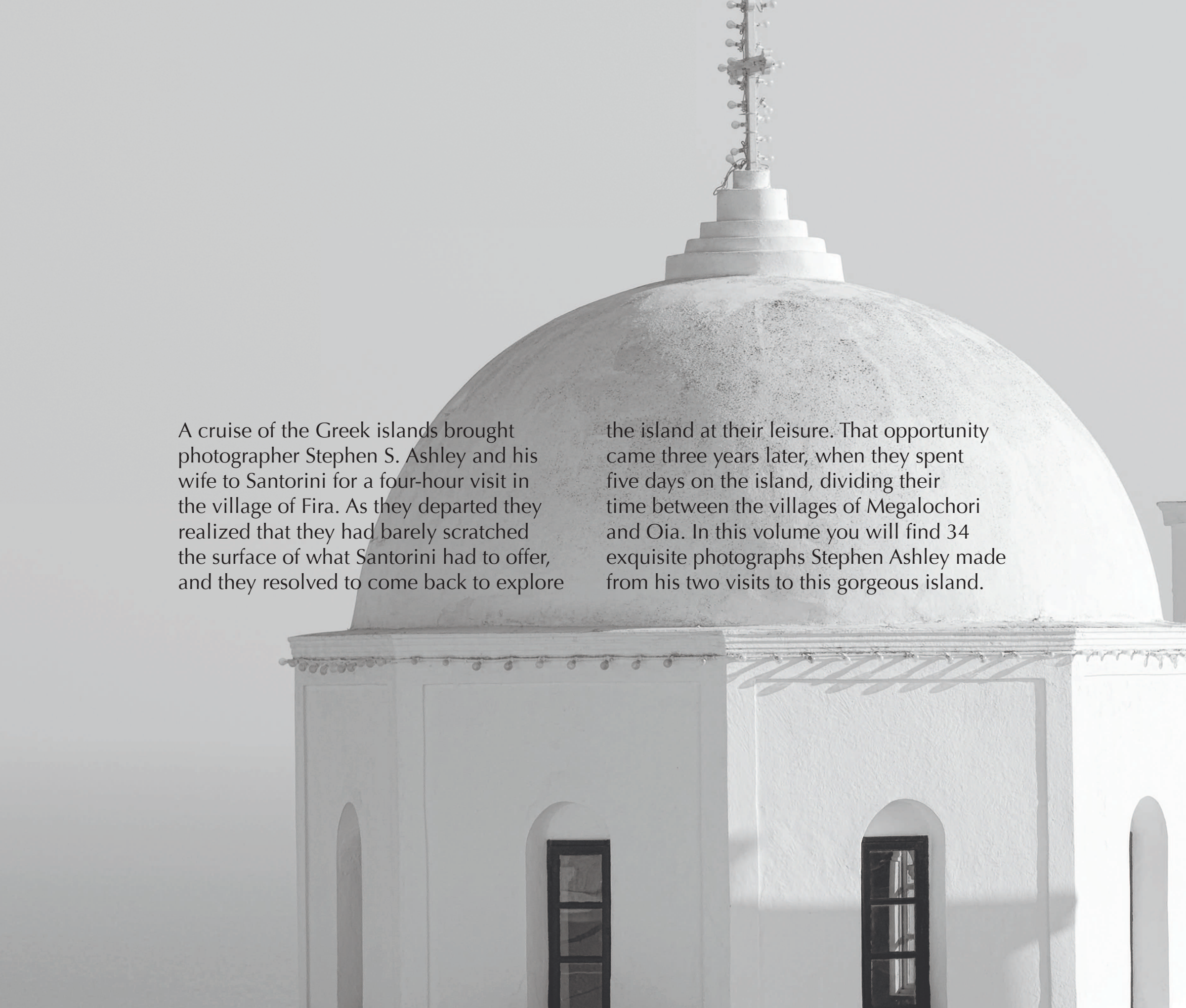
Many of Mr. Ashley's photographs are available for purchase on the website, [nigrumetalbum.com](http://nigrumetalbum.com), and on Etsy at [www.etsy.com/shop/nigrumetalbum](http://www.etsy.com/shop/nigrumetalbum). Printed version of his photography books are available at [www.blurb.com/user/store/sashley](http://www.blurb.com/user/store/sashley); pdf versions of the same books are available for free at [nigrumetalbum.com/books](http://nigrumetalbum.com/books).

# About the Photographer

When Stephen Ashley was a young teenager, his family moved to a new town and rented a house with a bomb shelter in the basement. He discovered that when he turned off the lights, the bomb shelter was perfectly black. He realized that the bomb shelter would make an ideal darkroom, and he assembled one, using a Kodak slide projector as an enlarger. The light from the projector was so bright that it solarized the enlarging paper. Thus began his photographic avocation.

During his career he engaged in many occupations—fire fighter, typesetter, lawyer, writer, publisher, law professor, software developer, flight instructor—but all the while he honed his photographic skills. After a serious illness forced him to give up his law-related work, his retirement gave him the opportunity to devote his time to expanding his portfolio and to finding an audience for his work.

Mr. Ashley had no formal education in photography but learned from many teachers. In the 1970s and 1980s, the University of California Extension programs at Berkeley and Santa Cruz offered a wide selection of short courses on various aspects of photography, and he enrolled in many of them. These courses gave him the opportunity to meet and learn from Stuart Scofield, Mark Citret, and others. He also had the good fortune to attend a Friends of Photography program, where he met Ruth Bernhard, Morley Baer, John Sexton, Marilyn Bridges, and William Christenberry. More recently, in May of 2014 he flew himself to Moab, Utah, to attend the Moab Photography Symposium, where he had an opportunity to photograph with Judith Zimmerman and Colleen Miniuk-Sperry.



A cruise of the Greek islands brought photographer Stephen S. Ashley and his wife to Santorini for a four-hour visit in the village of Fira. As they departed they realized that they had barely scratched the surface of what Santorini had to offer, and they resolved to come back to explore

the island at their leisure. That opportunity came three years later, when they spent five days on the island, dividing their time between the villages of Megalochori and Oia. In this volume you will find 34 exquisite photographs Stephen Ashley made from his two visits to this gorgeous island.