

A STATE OF BALANCE

SEEING POSSIBILITIES IN
A PILE OF STONES.

WORDS Lindy Schneider
PHOTOGRAPHS Lincoln Seppings



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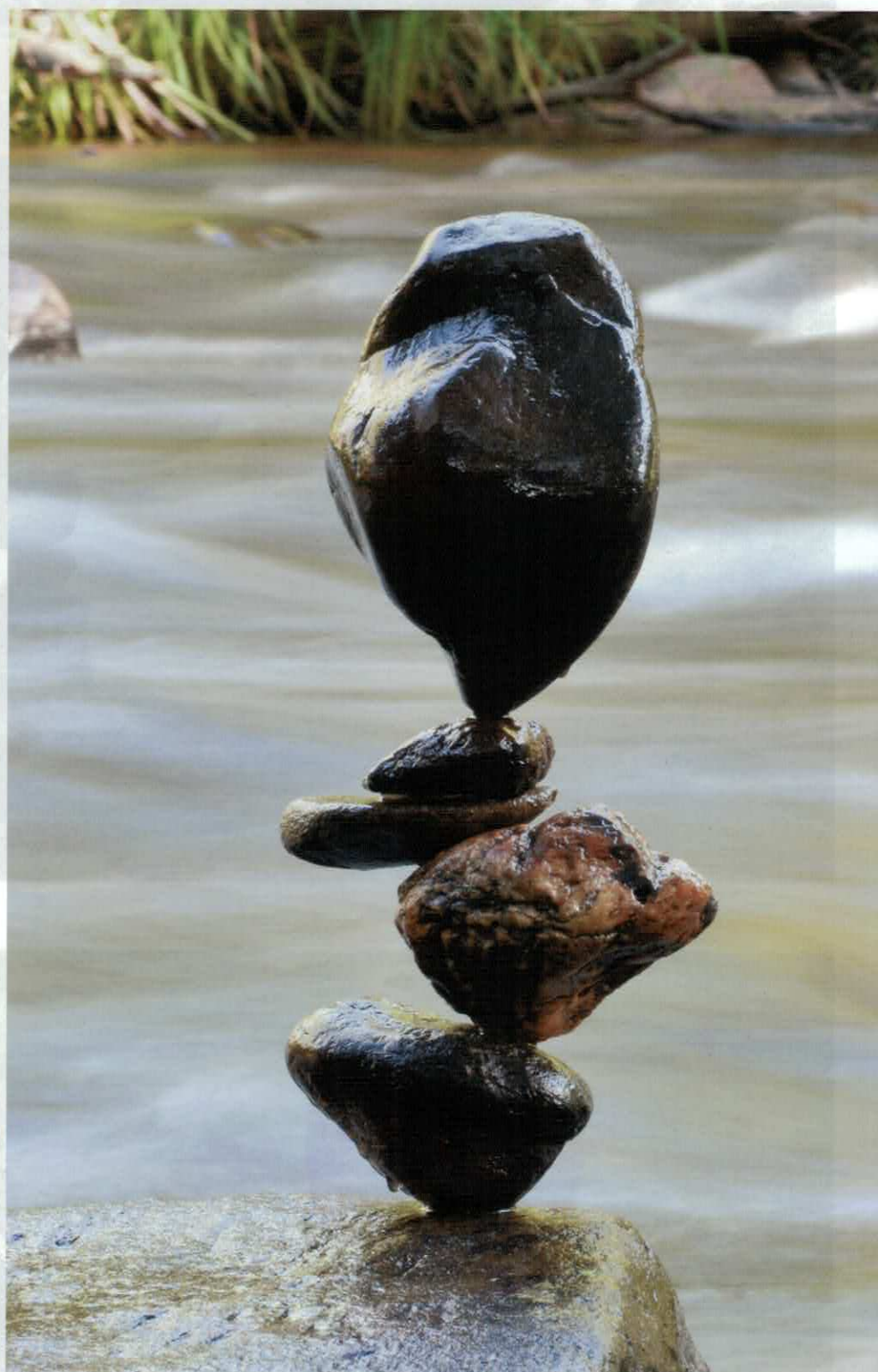
In the shallows of the Yarra River in Millgrove, a man in fisherman's waders crouches, a picture of perfect concentration. He holds the small rock he has selected for its unusual shape and with a steady hand he places this crowning stone on his latest ephemeral art piece, a stone balance.

It has taken him many hours to create this sculpture and tomorrow when he returns the waters may have already reclaimed its stones to the river bed. Lincoln Seppings is a Stone Balance Artist and one of only two people practising the art at this level in Australia. In twelve months, he has established an Instagram following of several thousand people, making him one of the most popular stone balancers in the southern hemisphere.

Stone balancing is a subtle art that is a relatively new practice. Modern day stone balancers were first recognised in the late 80s; however, the act of placing stones in arrangements can be seen across many cultures and through many thousands of years of history. From the cairns of Europe, to the stone arches of ancient South America and monuments such as the pyramids, the stone has been a much-revered natural resource through which people have expressed their gratitude and their dreams.

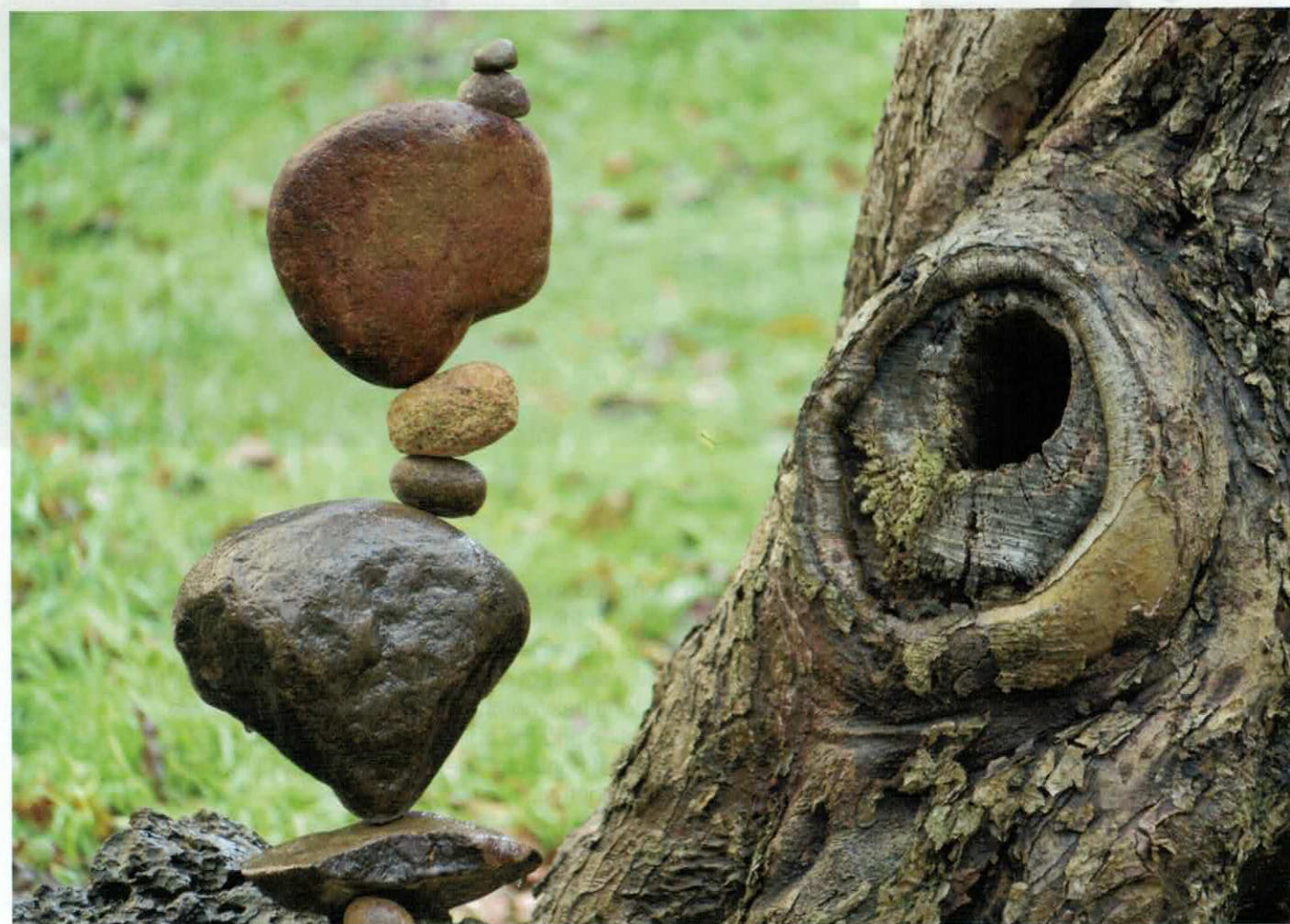
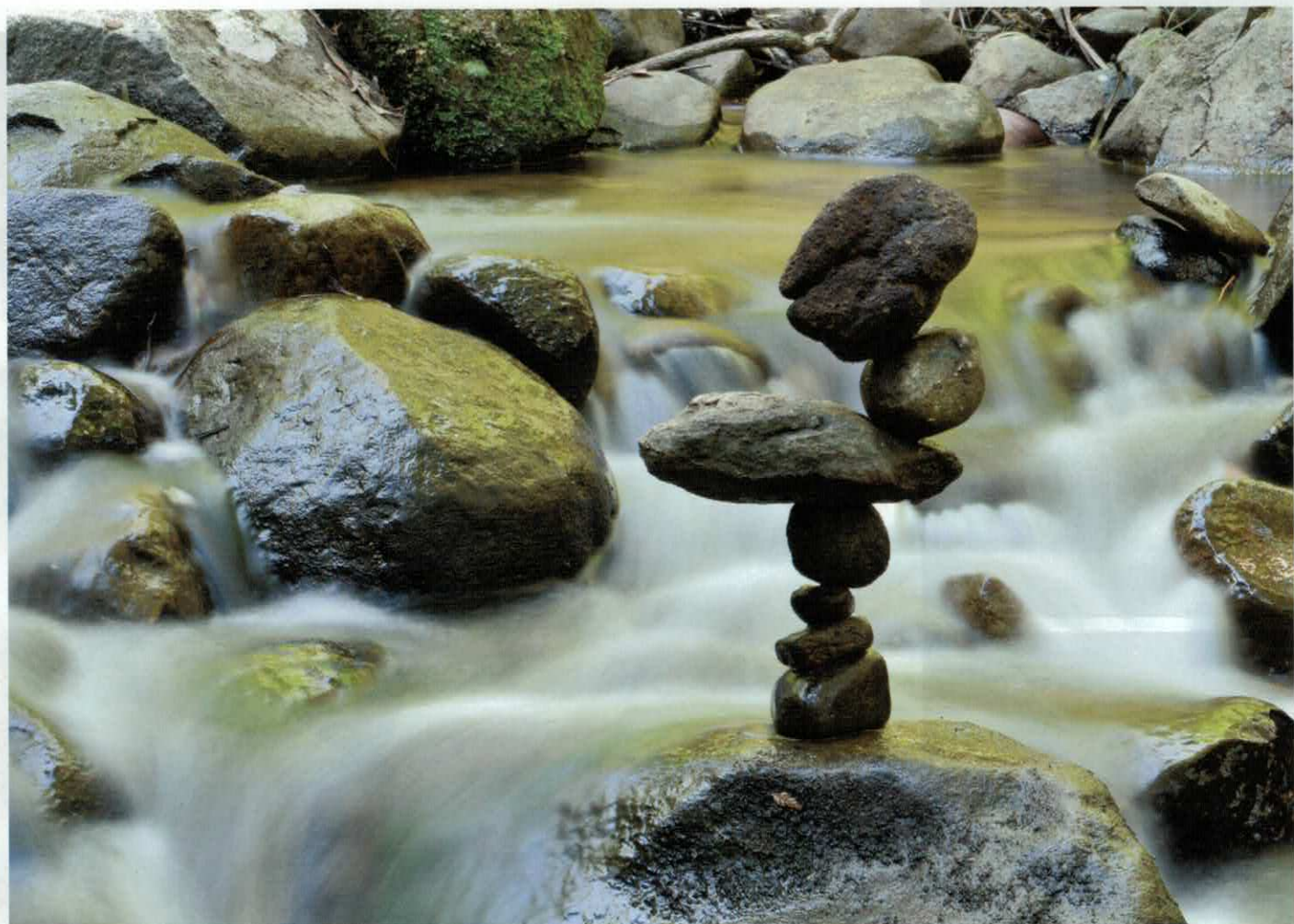
The art of stone balancing requires stillness, perseverance and, says Lincoln, "an ability to put aside your own agenda and

OPPOSITE PAGE Lincoln at home in his garden, shows inspiration can strike anywhere; 'Beauty in Basic'. THIS PAGE RIGHT 'Elegance'; below, 'Delicate Bloom' and 'When you are your own biggest critic'.



listen to what the stone has to say". The 'perfect' balance is one where each rock meets at the smallest possible point, where the central line through the stones is one of movement, and where counterbalance gives a sense of not only shape, but also wonder, to the creation. Every stone has 'notches' that will provide a balance point and it takes practice and the ability to 'see with the fingers' to find the unique point of contact. "The top stone," says Lincoln, "holds everything else together."

Born and educated in the Upper Yarra Valley, Lincoln has never lived further than walking distance from the Yarra River. An avid fisherman since childhood, he first started balancing stones out of



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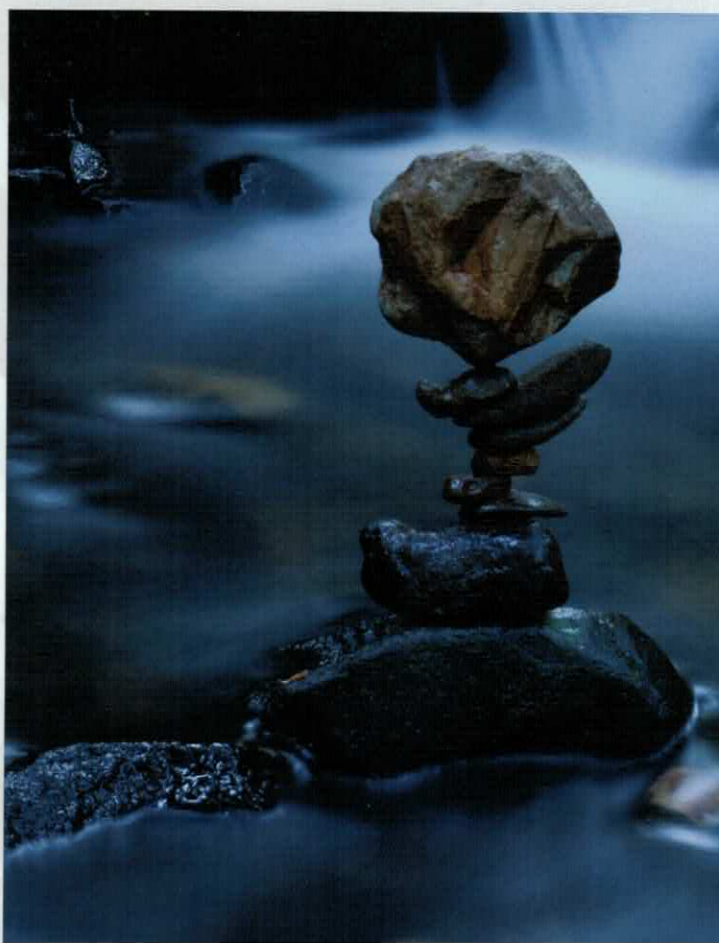
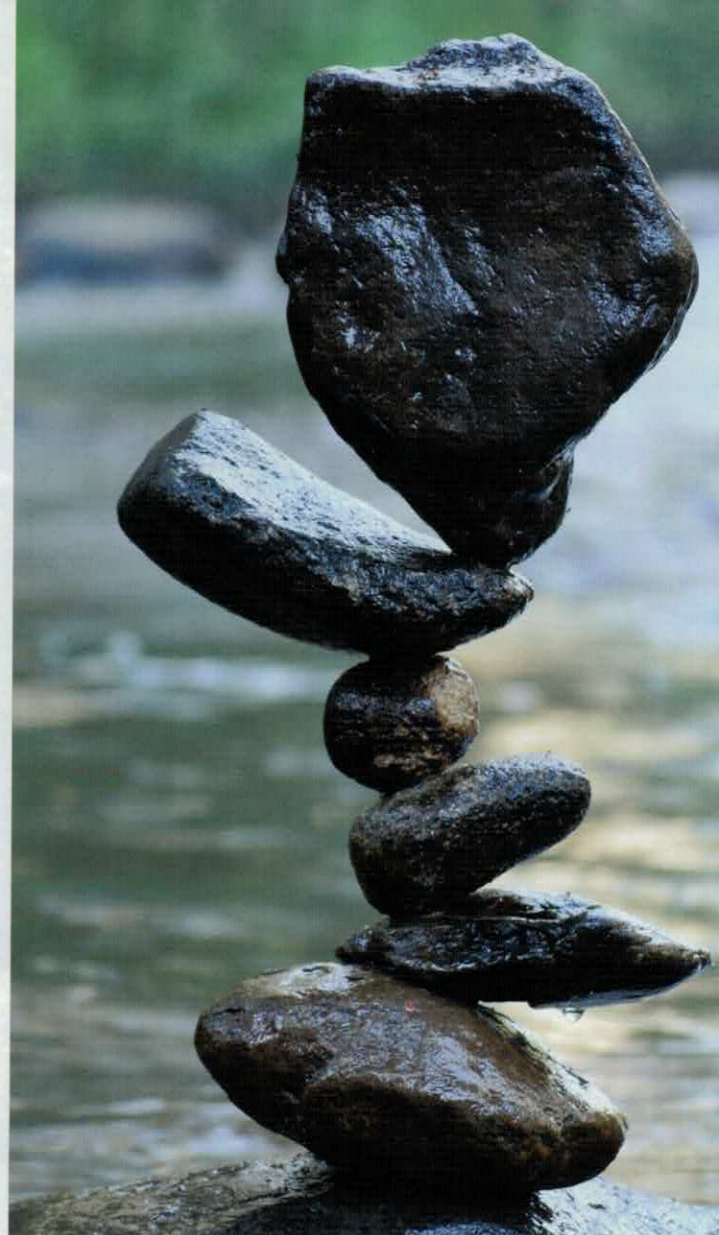
instinct, not realising until recently that it was an art form with a worldwide following. As a means of managing his anxiety, stones were a steady presence, straight from the river he loved, and balancing provided him with a practical way to restore himself to a state of calm.

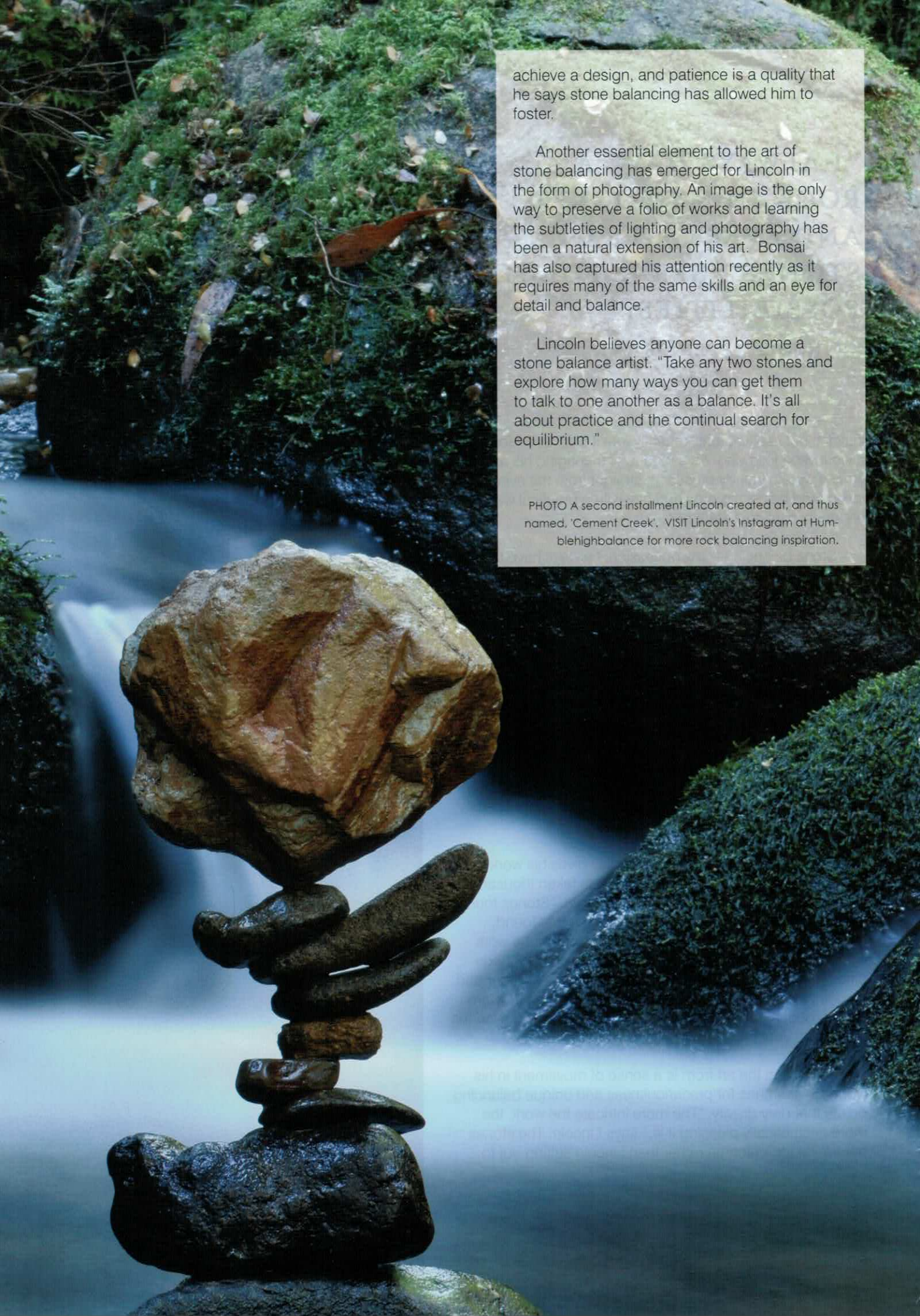
"Stone balancing is my obsession. I always have a rock in my pocket, and every pile of stones I see is full of possibilities. I've even balanced bricks at parties," he says. A recent new father, it was a special commemorative stone balance he called The Waiting Game that eased the time when his wife was overdue.

For Lincoln, the unusual is beautiful and one of the most important elements of stone balancing is respect for the environment. When working in the creek that is one of his favourite sites to balance, Lincoln is careful to only borrow rocks that are not harbouring life such as fish eggs or shelter for river creatures. He returns the rocks to their home and respects the natural order of the ecosystem that he is emerged in.

The unique setting of the Yarra Valley gives his work its own sense of aesthetic and appeal. It has taken thousands of hours of practice to develop his own style. "Stones found in the rivers in local waters are different to those found, for example, in beachy areas," he explains, "So, the work is different." He even finds the stones of local creek beds different to those of river banks. "Stones will be rounder and smoother depending on the water flow, how often they are submerged, the underlying geology of the area and even the time of the year."

Essential to the art form is a sense of movement in his work. He searches for precariousness and unique balancing points that defy gravity. "The more intricate the work, the more aesthetically pleasing it is," says Lincoln. The stones determine the outcome rather than Lincoln setting out to



A photograph of a stone balancing sculpture in a creek. The sculpture consists of a large, light-colored, irregularly shaped rock balanced on top of a stack of several smaller, dark, smooth, rounded stones. The stack is placed on a larger, dark, wet rock. In the background, a small waterfall flows over mossy rocks, and the surrounding area is covered in green moss and fallen leaves. The water is blurred, creating a sense of motion.

achieve a design, and patience is a quality that he says stone balancing has allowed him to foster.

Another essential element to the art of stone balancing has emerged for Lincoln in the form of photography. An image is the only way to preserve a folio of works and learning the subtleties of lighting and photography has been a natural extension of his art. Bonsai has also captured his attention recently as it requires many of the same skills and an eye for detail and balance.

Lincoln believes anyone can become a stone balance artist. "Take any two stones and explore how many ways you can get them to talk to one another as a balance. It's all about practice and the continual search for equilibrium."

PHOTO A second installment Lincoln created at, and thus named, 'Cement Creek'. VISIT Lincoln's Instagram at [Humblehighbalance](#) for more rock balancing inspiration.