

José Luis Avila has a Master of Architecture, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA, 1993 and a Bachelor of Architecture with a Minor in Philosophy University of Kentucky, 1990. He works with [Photography](#) and [Ceramics](#).

Avila views “*the visible world as the first shoreline of the invisible world*”.¹ He uses various cameras to explore this landscape and develop his vision: digital, x-ray, film, pinhole, and his favorite, the camera obscura.

In a culture dominated by digital photography, using an x-ray camera or making one’s own pinhole camera provides a route to true exploration. Avila’s x-ray photographs, taken from multiple orientations with a camera designed for dental imaging, reveal multiple interior structures in objects such as seashells. His self-made pinhole camera photograph, “Bulb,” printed in a century-old non-silver technique using gum bichromate, utilizes floating watercolor pigments to create the images. Part of the Johnson & Johnson Collection, this photograph has also traveled with the Citibank Collection, “[Public Art / Private Art](#).”

Avila first learned of the camera obscura, (“dark room,” in Italian), while studying architecture. His graduate thesis exhibition featured photographs from a self-made camera obscura, a practice that awakened him to divinity within natural phenomena and inspired him to share this divine experience with others. He continues to pursue this inspiration through his series of 180-degree vertical panoramic photographs encompassing the landscape between his feet and the sky in visual sun salutations. These works also celebrate the Celtic notion of “[thin places](#):" places where the temporal, material, and eternal, immaterial worlds merge.

Avila is currently assembling several book-length collections of his photographs, under the following working titles:

*“Turn Sideways Into The Light and Disappear”*² - *Photographs of the West of Ireland*

Dalí Sueños - Opening Night at The Saint Petersburg Dalí Museum
Daily Sun Salutations - A Photographic Practice

Born in Puerto Rico, Avila learned to walk in Madrid, to speak English in Tennessee (by listening to Johnny Cash albums), a passionate listener of spoken poetry and a devoted husband and parent.

1. John O’Donohue interview with [Krista Tippett](#).

2 . Tobar Phdraic In River Flow: New and Selected Poems © David Whyte and Many Rivers Press