

# IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

*Periodical Letter #17*  
*January 2021*

*from*  
**FREEMAN PATTERSON**



*Aerial view of Indian Ocean at Wilderness, South Africa*

If you grew up near an ocean, a great river, or a lake, there is a part of your soul that never leaves, even if you move away. Indeed, the desire to “re-immense” yourself with a visit may be achingly strong at times. For people who grow up in wild or rural areas such as deserts or prairies, where bodies of water may be completely absent, the coming of rain takes on major significance – both physically and emotionally. As Robert Johnson notes in Ecstasy, water has often been used as a symbol for the deepest spiritual nourishment of humanity.



*Atlantic Ocean breaker at Hondeklipbaai, South Africa*

This winter I’m visiting my favourite South African haunts through my photographs, which means that you can easily join me. We’ll fly into Cape Town and drive 500 km north up the N7 highway into the semi-arid region of Namaqualand and the village of Kamieskroon. From the little Kamieskroon Hotel, my second home since 1980, we can head off in any direction and become happily lost for hours.

Seventy kilometres to the west of Kamieskroon the Atlantic Ocean and South Africa meet with a range of continuous greetings – gentle to thunderous – depending on the shape of the land mass, the topography of the ocean floor, and the force and direction of the wind. Over the years I’ve camped in this coastal wilderness many times, sometimes with a friend, many times with a small group, but every visit has been too short and I have always left wanting to return.

As I viewed the more recent photographs I’ve made (2015-2019) at Hondeklipbaai (that’s Dog Rock Bay in English) and those from Boulderbaai, a few kilometres to the south along the coast, I realized that they fall into two main categories – [WATER](#) itself and the [MARINE CANVASES](#) of the beaches, which range from jumbles of massive boulders to great stretches of almost flat nearly white sand. *(Click on both to see a selection of my recent images.)*

All over Namaqualand you can see the bones of Earth and water has a lot to do with it. No rain falls for several months of the year and longer droughts are common, so when a good rain does come the soil is often unable to absorb it and the water rushes down the mountains and hillsides and across flatter land often creating deep gullies and exposing and polishing the bedrock.

**“Water is always working, reorganizing the land.”** *Tim Palmer*



Although other natural factors are involved as well, it is water in the form of the spring rainfall that brings forth the planet’s most varied and spectacular annual display of wild flowers, which in a long rainy season can last from the middle of July until nearly the end of September. (Go to my website <http://freemanpatterson.com> and click on “[IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS #7](#)” to see photographs of this natural spectacle.)



I often wonder why radio hosts and meteorologists make such superficial personal value judgements about weather, talking as if sunshine were the only desirable kind and completely ignoring the fact that all life forms and all ecosystems depend on water. A prediction of rain is not a forecast of “deteriorating” weather when we think of how all plant and animal life is interconnected. It is, rather, to announce the coming of a blessing, an assurance that life will continue.

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*(Insert the link below in your browser for a [delightful surprise.](#))*



Regen  
VID-20200619-WA0C  
(RAIN in English.)



Before I leave the subject of water, I’d like to add that I could have decided to select only photographs that I’ve made around Shamber’s Bluff (above photo), or in New Zealand, or in Israel. Or, I might have shown images of water from all of these places and many more. The fact that I, like so many other photographers, come back again and again to this subject matter is testimony to its emotional pull.

Yet, because water is omnipresent for most of us in our daily lives, always there in a glass, the sink, a tub, or spilling over us from a shower nozzle, we rarely regard it carefully. Water controlled and contained is simply too familiar. Only when our supply fails do we become acutely aware of water's fundamental importance to us, and maybe, just maybe in times like these, we can begin to appreciate the deep sense of loss often felt by a city dweller who grew up by an ocean.

When a person awakes to the infinite audible and visual range of water, she or he is engaging with the stuff of life. There's no better subject matter for a photographer.

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**“They both listened silently to the water, which to them was not just water, but the voice of Life, the voice of Being, the voice of perpetual Becoming.”**

*Hermann Hesse*

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This year in southern New Brunswick we had a very “open” late autumn or early winter, an unexpected snow-free month that enabled me to work easily out-of-doors. From time to time skiffs of snow have desaturated and lightened the browns of dead leaves and grasses and softened the bright greens of mosses exuberant about the moisture. (See image next page.) The subtlety of colour sometimes gave me the shivers, not the cold shivers, but the sort I feel when I inhale a delicate spring fragrance or when I savour the aroma of a particularly fine wine.

Although this little patch of snow-covered moss functions as a visual unit, making an overall impression, there is great variety and detail in its weave or texture, especially in the range of tones, which became more apparent to me the longer I observed it. (Notice the myriad black dots, for example.) The in-between seasons often provide opportunities like this – spring passing into summer and especially summer transforming itself into autumn and autumn into winter.



## WORKSHOPS

Except for the January workshops in Israel, Covid-19 caused me to cancel all my 2020 workshops. Although I've been happy to make numerous live presentations on Zoom or Web-Ex and still am, I find on-line platforms do not offer the teaching and learning opportunities of "the real thing." Apparently many others don't as well, because there has been considerable early interest in 2021 workshops, especially now that vaccines are becoming available. (Because of my age and my two liver transplants – 21 years ago this month – I'll likely have the opportunity to be vaccinated quite early in the year. Whenever my turn comes, I'm not going to hesitate, as I fear Covid-19 far more than possible side effects from a vaccine that was developed rapidly, but with rigorous testing, and final checking.)

Full details of all 2021 workshops are posted on my web site [www.freemanpatterson.com](http://www.freemanpatterson.com), but on the following two pages I'm providing condensed details of a new workshop.

# EXPLORATIONS

*A self-directed workshop with Freeman Patterson*



**Location:** Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts (KIRA), St. Andrews, New Brunswick. Meeting rooms, accommodation, and meals will all be in the 11-hectare/27-acre Kingsbrae Garden. (Visit [www.kingsbraegarden.com](http://www.kingsbraegarden.com) for an overview and check KIRA.)

**Number of participants:** Six per workshop

**Workshop Content:**

This is an artist residency, a time and opportunity for creative self-exploration.

Participants will meet Freeman at four o'clock Sunday afternoon on the commodious veranda of the KIRA residence to discuss the gardens, the town, workshop content, hopes and ideas for personal projects, and the week together, then share dinner in the Garden Café.

On Monday all participants will have the morning for exploring and making photographs in the many different gardens before viewing and discussing images in the afternoon. Freeman will have a number of programs available; during the week he will offer those he feels are most relevant to participants' interests and direction. There will be one-on-one and group discussions and opportunities for private viewing sessions with Freeman.

Participants may opt out of any program, evaluation, or discussion, as Freeman wants each person to pursue her/his own artistic goals above all else. His role will be to provide relevant instruction, objective (and subjective) evaluation, guidance, and support.

Participants will have access to all parts of Kingsbrae Garden before, during, and after public visiting hours (from dawn to dusk). You may also visit and photograph in the town of St. Andrews (easy walking distance).

Our final evening meal together will be at Savour in the Garden, a multi-course tasting menu prepared by the multi-award-winning chef Alex Haun – an experience in culinary art that you will long remember. (See Savour in the Garden on the Kingsbrae web site. )



**Requirements:**

1/ Participants **must** be familiar with their camera(s) and with the playback features that enable you to select, delete, and transfer images to your computer or flash drive. This is **definitely not** a workshop on how to operate your camera, phone, or other photographic equipment. Bring instructional manuals with you, if you feel in the least uncertain.

2/ Participants **must** bring their own laptop computer. A digital projector will be available. You should be sufficiently adept with software such as Photoshop or Lightroom to adjust the contrast, brightness, hue, saturation, and sharpness of your images. You **must** also be able to resize your images and save them as jpegs to a flash drive/USB. (Participants may shoot raw files, but we will work with jpegs to speed up workflow.)

**2021 WORKSHOP DATES: July 11 – 16 (depart July 17) and August 15 – 20 (depart August 21)**  
Registrations are on a first come/first served basis.



In “IMAGES, IDEAS, AND REFLECTIONS #13,” May 2020, I posted the link below and have been amazed at the number of readers who have written to tell me that they have made this workout part of their every-day activities. I’m re-posting it for the benefit of new subscribers, as it’s a great way to help stay fit during the winter months.

A couple of notes about the workout: 1/ Because it seems so simple, don’t beat yourself up if you can’t complete it the first few times you try it. Lots of people find it hard at first. 2/ However, once you can do it easily, which normally takes only a few days, you’ll find you can complete it in about 2½ minutes, or you may want to stay with four minutes and add extra rotations. Besides building muscle easily, the exercise does wonders for your breathing.

My own schedule is to do the workout every morning while I’m waiting for my coffee machine to finish perking, again around noon, and then sometime in the late afternoon or early evening.

### [ZACH BUSH MD | 4 Minute Workout - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwJCJToQmps)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwJCJToQmps>



This is an efficient anaerobic workout.

Although I was often working outdoors during November and the first half of December, I had the opportunity to complete Diane Beresford-Kroeger’s To Speak for the Trees: My Life’s Journey from Ancient Celtic Wisdom to a Healing Vision of the Forest. The book is probably not for everyone, but some readers will become totally immersed in the deep connection between Celtic spirituality and nature. The author, who grew up in Ireland and England and now resides in Canada, has written other books about trees and natural gardening. If you aren’t able to check out the author and her books at your local bookstore, take a peek on Amazon.

I highly recommend Ronald J. Deibert’s RESET: Reclaiming the Internet for Civil Society. This is the published version of the 2020 Massey Lectures (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ). I listened to the six lectures on radio then immediately purchased the book, as the radio versions had been edited to fit one-hour time slots. Deibert is a professor of Political Science and director of the Citizen Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto. The research outputs of the Citizen Lab are routinely covered by the world’s media. This book is a powerhouse of information that is highly relevant for our time both publicly and personally.

To digress slightly, the annual CBC Massey Lectures are unfailingly substantive, radio at its finest. I never miss them. Also, they are always published simultaneously in book form by House of Anansi Press and are available digitally. You may also want to check out the topics of previous years.

## So here we are in 2021. Are you breathing easier?

Most of us, I believe, are feeling a sense of hope that “this too shall pass,” meaning the Covid-19 pandemic of course, and embracing the truth of some old familiar expressions, such as “There’s light at the end of the tunnel.” I’m definitely a hopeful member of the pack.

Even though we all know that we can never go back, not exactly to how our lives were before the virus swept the globe, it will be very easy to settle thoughtlessly into new routines, which is to waste the value of the experience. So what should we do?

In difficult situations I’ve often found that it’s useful to shift my perspective by 180 degrees – for instance, instead of regarding a difficult situation or a negative occurrence as a problem, thinking of it as an opportunity or an asset. By looking at “shadow experiences” in this way, we can often turn them into creative breakthroughs – both little ones and big ones!

Also worth considering, it seems to me, are questions such as, “What has the Covid-19 experience shown me about myself that I don’t like?” “What has it revealed about me that I feel good about?” and “How am I going to put these new insights to good use for myself and others?” I’ve also found that it can be quite useful to take a sheet of paper and write down both the questions and my personal answers, as this gives reality and impetus to the enquiry.

As we emerge from this claustrophobic experience, I wish each of you good physical and emotional health. Treat yourself to something special and don’t feel guilty about doing it!

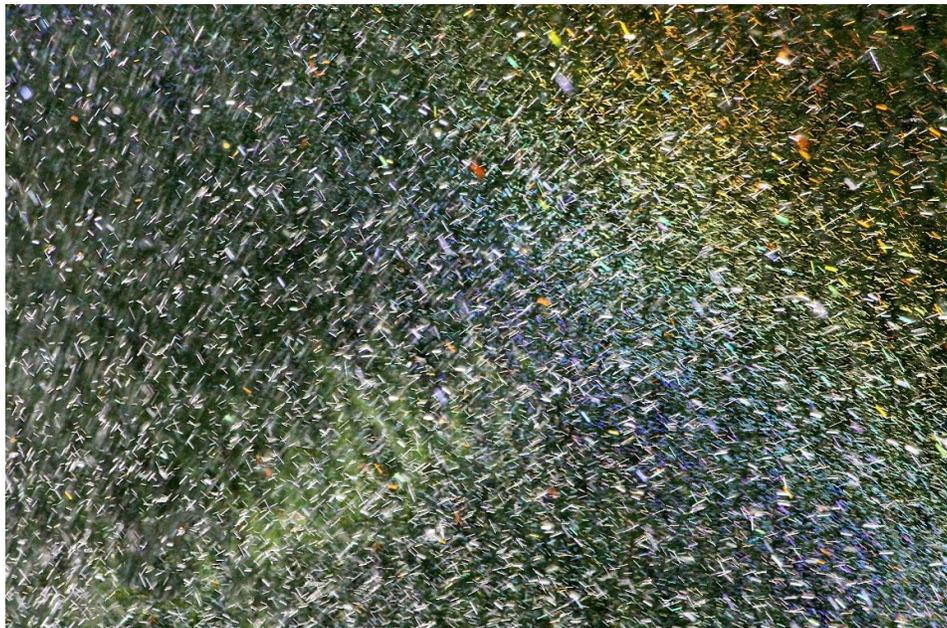
**Happy New Year! Bonne Année! Gelukkige Nuwe Jaar!**

**FREEMAN**

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*Backlighting water from a garden hose*