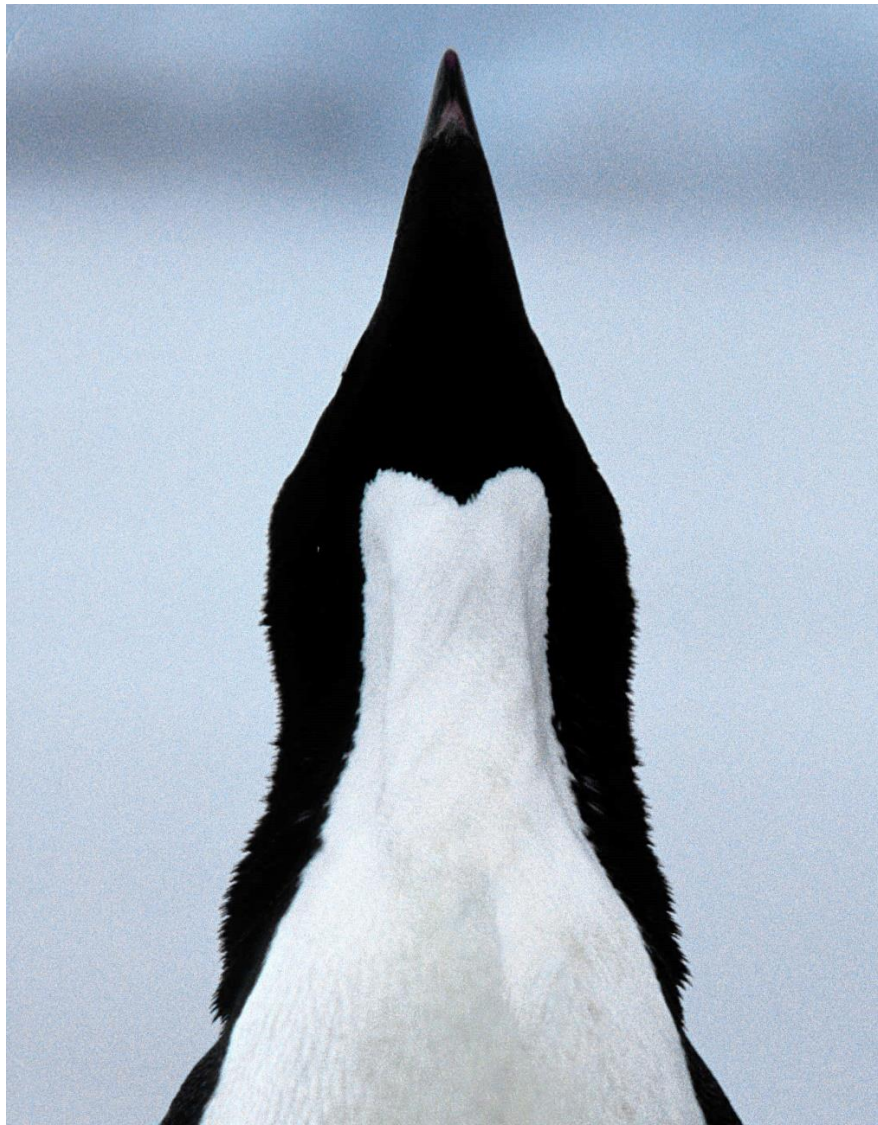


IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

Periodical Letter #10
November 2019

from
FREEMAN PATTERSON



Adélie Penguin

The other day a friend remarked that he and his wife are heading off to Antarctica late in November – a big first for them that reminded me of my first trip there, away back in 1989, and sent me into my slide files for a return voyage. After I had reviewed all my pictures and re-experienced the feelings of 30 years ago, I turned to the images I had made in 2004 on my second trip. There was a stunning difference in the content between the two groups of images, a difference so enormous that I have been left pondering “Why?”

Why, for example, did I photograph so many penguins and other wild animals on my first trip and only a single colony of penguins on my second? Although I had devoted myself almost exclusively to making images of the vast snowy landscape and the ice-rimmed ocean in 2004, I noticed among the images of huge spaces a few close-ups of lichens and rare grasses. They reminded me that on both trips the virtual absence of plant life in Antarctica affected me very negatively; I felt cut off from half the world of living things. This absence contrasts starkly with the rich botanical diversity of the Arctic, including the very high Arctic, through which I have sailed and where I have camped several times.

On careful re-examination I noticed one striking similarity or visual consistency between my choices of subject matter in 1989 and 2004. Although I had made some close-up pictures of penguins and other creatures in 1989 (such as the penguin photo on page one), most of the time I portrayed animal life as a tiny individual or group in a grand Earthscape (see below and next page). In other words, it was the vast wilderness that called to me most of all. This enormity provides both habitat and context for living things, while at the same time luring us “beyond the beyond” into the great unknown, the Cosmos that exceeds the capacity of our imaginations.





“Antarctica has this mythic weight. It resides in the collective unconscious of so many people, and it makes this huge impact, just like outer space. It's like going to the moon.”

Jon Krakauer

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“In all the world there is no desolation more complete than the polar night. It is a return to the Ice Age— no warmth, no life, no movement. Only those who have experienced it can fully appreciate what it means to be without the sun day after day and week after week. Few men unaccustomed to it can fight off its effects altogether, and it has driven some men mad.”

Alfred Lansing, Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage

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If you'd like to see more photographs from my 1989 and 2004 trips to Antarctica, mostly to the Antarctic Peninsula, just hit [ANTARCTICA](#). However, I won't feel hurt if you are more inclined to grab a good book and curl up on a comfortable sofa under a warm blanket. Summer in Antarctica seems greatly to resemble winter in much of Canada. A lot of the time you need a survival suit to live in either place.

Speaking of cold weather reminds me of Raynaud's syndrome from which I and many others suffer. The phenomenon occurs when blood vessels in your fingers and toes temporarily overreact to cold temperatures or stress, turning white, prickly, and painful. I find that many "victims" simply grumble and try to bear it. Not me! In my case, a minimum dosage (20mg pill) of the generic drug nifedipine every morning is effective within two days, so I begin to use it in October when the first signs of Raynaud's usually appear and continue until late April or early May. (There are also some alternative medications.) Don't suffer, especially if you are working outdoors; ask your doctor for a prescription.



"The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one ninth of it being above water."

Ernest Hemingway

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The peak of the autumn colour has passed here in New Brunswick, which is why I am able to write this letter. For the third year in a row we experienced "a grand spectacle." Gradually the primary colours turned more and more to secondary magentas, purples, browns, and cyans (top photo next page) followed by a progressive desaturation of all hues.

Now the extended range of tones from pale to dark grey will become more and more significant aspects of most landscapes. Both my New Brunswick teaching partner André Gallant and I love these quieter moods of November, which are often marked by a flash of lingering orange or bright yellow. And, there may well be frost that temporarily outlines the shapes of leaves or tosses a semi-transparent white sheet across the fields, or a morning mist that softens the landscape for hours at this time of year.





John O'Donohue was an Irish poet, author, priest, and philosopher who was born in County Clare, Ireland, January 1956, and died suddenly of a heart attack in Avignon, France, January 2008.

To my great regret, I never met John O'Donohue in person. However, I was introduced to him through his writing when my friend Bob Stahl, who did meet him, sent me a copy of John's **Anam Cara**, and I have spent exceptional hours with him many times since our introduction. This morning at the local Farmers' Market another friend, Bridget Oland, told me that she had just come across another of O'Donohue's books, **BEAUTY: The Invisible Embrace**, and her mere mention of it made me decide on the spot to write to you about O'Donohue and provide some quotations from the book in this letter. As soon as I was home I pulled the book from its shelf and began to peruse it again, jumping all over the place in the process, and eventually coming to the conclusion that the best quotation I could provide you is the entire book. But, since that isn't possible, here are just a few excerpts.

"In a sense, all the contemporary crises can be reduced to a crisis about the nature of beauty.... When we address difficulty in terms of the call to beauty, new invitations come alive. Perhaps, for the first time, we gain a clear view of how much ugliness we endure and allow. The media generate relentless images of mediocrity and ugliness in talk-shows ... and these shows tend to enshrine the ugly as the normal standard. Beauty is mostly forgotten and made to seem naïve and romantic. The blindness of property development creates rooms, buildings, and suburbs which lack grace and mystery. Socially, this influences the atmosphere in the workplace, the schoolroom, the boardroom and the community. It also results in such degradation of the environment that we are turning more and more of our beautiful earth into a wasteland. Much of the stress and emptiness that haunts us can be traced back to our lack of attention to beauty. Internally, the mind becomes coarse and dull if it remains unvisited by images and thoughts which hold the radiance of beauty."

"The wonder of the Beautiful is its ability to surprise us. With swift, sheer grace, it is like a divine grace that blows the heart open."

"At it's deepest level, creativity is holiness. To create is to further the dream and desire of the creator. ... Creation is a huge beginning, not a finished end."

"When we awaken to the call of beauty, we become aware of new ways of being in the world. We were created to be creators."

After John's death his brother, Pat O'Donohue, wrote "John O'Donohue's life cannot be encompassed within the one act of birth, life and death. He was not a finite act that existed and is now lost forever more. He is just a story that is written, spoken, and lives amongst us. Just as we are and continue to be. His themes of echo and the response of continuity, imagination as the ability to still see the mountain behind the mist, and absence as the transformed presence of the vanished, awaken our thinking and provide food for our spiritual journey in an increasingly hungry world. "

Please visit John O'Donohue's Home Page on line. You'll probably find that you want to spend a little time there viewing videos and reading.

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In the seven weeks beginning August 25 and ending October 12, I was fully engaged in four week-long workshops, three on photography and visual design with André Gallant and the annual INSCAPE workshop with David Maginley. This year completed 47 years of photography workshops in New Brunswick for me and I've never enjoyed the experiences more. I was excited before every workshop began and felt "filled up and brimming over" on every final evening. Both André and I always feel that we have learned as much as the participants, who came this year from as far away as Singapore.

The difference is truly vast between an on-line workshop and one where people live together in a lovely old Inn, sharing working and leisure spaces, enjoying superbly delicious and nutritious meals, making pictures either in a group or by oneself, and having lots of opportunities for both group and one-to-one conversations and gut-wrenching laughter. Also, because the photography and visual design workshops are totally non-competitive, the whole atmosphere is highly conducive to learning.

As for this year's INSCAPE workshop, all I can say is "Wow!" David Maginley was at his informative, perceptive, empathetic, and convivial best in talking about everything from "consciousness" to the implications of quantum physics on our understanding of consciousness. But, among his other initiatives David gave nightly instruction on astral photography and led optional group meditations.

"The Dream Sisters" (Margery Nea, Connie Evans, and Harriet Ritchie) presented jointly an in-depth program on the fundamental importance of dreams and dreamwork (in pictures, poetry, and factual research data), which so stimulated the participants that they requested three follow-up sessions of dreamwork.

Marie-Hélène Allain, a member of the Sisters of Charity and a sculptor in stone for almost half a century (now widely-renowned), joined us for the fourth successive year, talking openly about her creative vocation as meditative, religious pursuit and examining the nature of creativity.

Although all the programming was optional, EVERYBODY participated in just about everything – and nobody more fully than the man who had been extremely hesitant to come because he thought "he didn't know enough." Two hours after arriving he was so deeply engaged in conversation with Connie Evans that I had difficulty getting his attention even for a moment. He's been talking about his experience ever since.

David and I are delighted to be able to tell you that Margery, Connie (two of The Dream Sisters) and Marie-Hélène have already confirmed that they will be with us again next year.

Here are the dates for all the **2020** New Brunswick workshops. Please see my web site www.freemanpatterson.com for complete information and registration details. As usual, Kim Nickerson will reply quickly to your enquiries and application requests.

Photography and Visual Design workshops (St. Martin's, New Brunswick **2020**)

August 23-29

September 27 – October 3

October 11-17

INSCAPE workshop (St. Martin's, New Brunswick **2020**)

September 6-12

Dreams, creative expression, and soul are inseparable. They operate in an endless cycle. Each plays a crucial role in your inner life. Each needs, nourishes, and leads into the other. Treat each with the quiet, curious and loving respect it deserves.

Jill Mellick, The Natural Artistry of Dreams

“All you need is love, but a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.”

Charles M. Schulz



*A place for all seasons
Balcony on my barn - 2017 birthday gift to myself*

**Happy November, EVERYBODY!
Un novembre heureux, TOUT LE MONDE
FREEMAN**

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