

# IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

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*from*  
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*PARKER COGSWELL*  
*by*  
*André Gallant*



A few hours ago I returned from the funeral of PARKER COGSWELL, a valued friend of 30 years and the husband of my teaching partner, André Gallant. They met at my kitchen table one August evening in 1993, when André and I, who had met earlier through photography and discovered that we both owned a Harley, were returning from a couple of days riding around southern New Brunswick and getting to know each other better. From that night on Parker and André were seldom apart.

This year on the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their meeting, they came to tell me that Parker had decided, with André's full support, to discontinue his chemotherapy treatment for esophageal and liver cancer.

Many of you who receive this letter knew Parker well, perhaps meeting him first when he appeared for lunch or dinner at one of the many workshops André and I have facilitated in our teaching partnership that began in 1996. Parker's *joie de vivre*, his "nuttness," and his impish smile invariably brought bounce, hilarity, and an elevated level of happiness to us all.

As I write this letter, I am deeply aware of how Parker took control of the trajectory of his life to the fullest degree that any of us can. "Coming out" as a gay teenager, he experienced hostility, taunting, and rejection, but he accepted that "I am who I am" and set about in practical ways to use his suffering creatively. One of the most effective was journaling, which he began at about the age of 16, writing his daily log until well after he met André in his late 20s. Nobody ever read his journals, but he told me once that "he let it all out – the bad and the good."

Honest journaling like this, self revelation really, is an invitation from the ego to the unconscious part of oneself to which the unconscious always responds. So when I was introduced to Parker 10 years after he had embarked on this adventure into himself, I met a man of great insight and caring. He was quick to perceive the sensitivities, difficulties, and biases of others, intuitively sensing the best approach to confront them directly, one that always carried the message, "I care." Frequently irreverent, Parker laughed at his own foibles far more than at those of anybody else.

Parker's funeral really was a celebration. André made sure of that. For the most part it was non-religious in the usual sense of religion, but far, far more religious in the deepest and best sense of the word. The officiating priest, who had known Parker since they worked together in their early 20s, called him a prophet, demolishing the traditional image of a prophet in the process and presenting the original, more holistic definition of a person whose insight and foresight have evolved from daring

to go where so few dare. After the service I told Father Martin that theologically he had been “right on the mark,” while at the same time I was imagining a surprised Parker pointing at himself and, with a quizzical look, exclaiming, “Me, a prophet!” and then convulsing in hilarious laughter.

So it was! We cried and we laughed and we applauded our prophet Parker – with our hands and with our hearts! And everyone celebrated the love story that began at my kitchen table.



*André and Parker*

## That Time of Year



Although I love the desaturated hues of the Canadian November – the soft browns, remnants of yellow, and hints of purples and blues – all expressed through a wide range of tones, the mid-greys often dominating, the shorter days induce a desire to spend more time in bed. This urge to hibernate always reminds me that I am a mammal, that my animal instincts are triggered by environmental changes, and that yielding to these natural urges is a good course of action. I shall always remember the only protocol that my liver transplant surgeon, Dr. Vivian McAlister, ever gave: “Listen to your body and use common sense.” Over lunch 17 years later, I confirmed to him its value for me.

And so I sleep, perchance to dream! Well, actually, I always dream and always remember at least snippets of my dreams. There is a huge connection for me between dreams and imagination, so every morning after I climb the stairs to my desk in the south loft of my house, the first thing I do is gaze out the window at the familiar landscape, sometimes documenting what I see, but just as often calling on my imagination to help me capture my feelings. (You’ll find an image from yesterday morning on the next page and one from today on the page following that.)

In his classic INNER WORK, Robert Johnson writes: “We may picture two conduits that run from the unconscious to the conscious mind. The first is the faculty of dreaming; the second is the faculty of imagination. Dreaming and imagination have one special quality in common: their power to convert the invisible forms of the unconscious into images that are perceptible to the conscious mind. This is why we sometimes feel as though dreaming is imagination at work during sleep and the imagination is the dream world flowing through us while we are awake.”

Most of the time, the facts of a Canadian November are actually far less important than the negative feeling many people have about the month. Photographers (and painters) can work with such feelings, perhaps by making dark, turgid, ominous compositions that may have no physically recognizable content or by creating images in which dark areas are rendered as light and delicate – in short, either by confronting darkness or by transforming it.

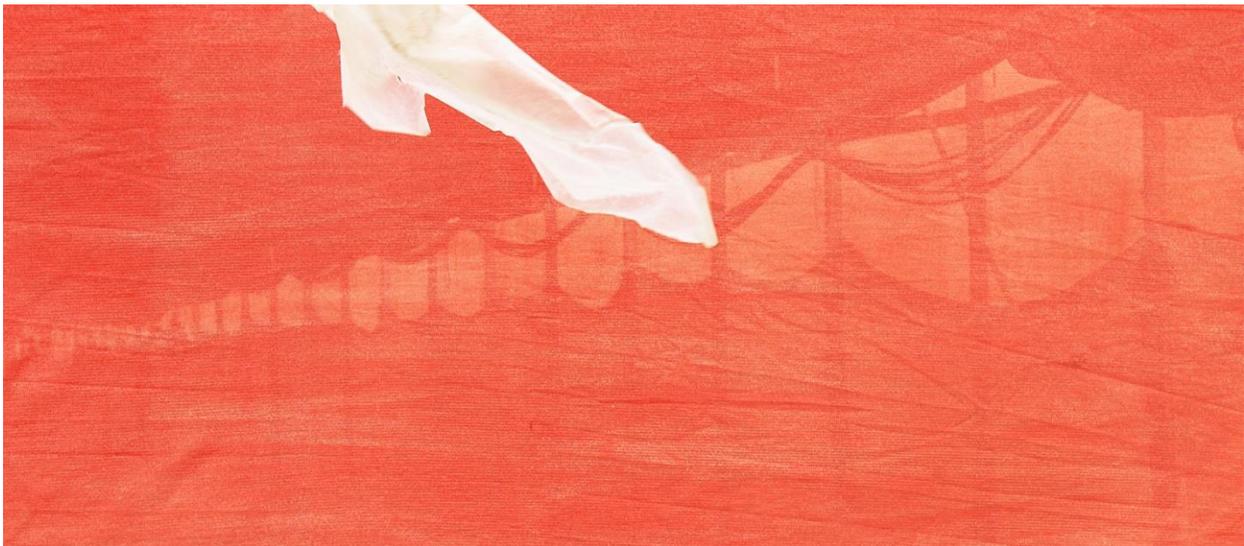
Quite frankly, this sort of personal image-making, creating images for yourself, far surpasses in value making pictures for a camera-club competition, a contest, or even a professional client where, to put it in plain language, the photographer sacrifices his/her soul to satisfy the ego. The ego may construct well-designed, technically perfect compositions, but because it is the ego or conscious mind the ego never produces art. Art is conceived by the unconscious and birthed in the conscious mind.

The more often you “don’t give a damn” whether or not anybody “likes” your work, the more you will “latch on” to unconscious symbols, and the more liberating and deeply satisfying your “creations” will be. Also, the more you will find that creative activity becomes part of your daily life.





Quite often somebody will ask me if I make photographs every day. The answer is “No, but I make some most days, and often I pick up one or both of my cameras without hardly being aware of doing it.” Something has “grabbed” me and off I go – for five minutes or an hour. The something that has grabbed me is in some way symbolic; it’s the inner me that’s calling. Karl Jung described this psychological interaction when he wrote that we don’t choose our symbols, they choose us. To put it another way, our unconscious self chooses the symbols and our conscious self (ego) responds. This is when art can happen, not when somebody else gives us an object or concept to photograph or paint.



**“Art is generated by an emotional impulse. It is a genuine response to one’s reality, a means of communication with the world and with life. It requires an intense encounter.”**

**“Imagination is an organ of knowledge just as real as the physical sense organs of the body.”**

**“Art is an incarnation of the imagination. It gives body to symbolic reality, and we cannot penetrate this imaginal universe with rational abstractions or empirical analysis and measurement.”**

*All quotations: Howard McConeghey*

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The three short excerpts above are from Howard McConeghey’s ART and SOUL, published in 2003. McConeghey was a professor of art education at the University of New Mexico, a studio painter with an international reputation, and a practising art therapist. He came to be regarded as a “wise old man” and this book gathers his life insights.

I have no memory of buying ART and SOUL, but it had been sitting on a bookshelf for a long while waiting for me to “grow” ready for its contents. This book is definitely not quick and easy reading; it requires both art experience, serious reflection on what art is all about, and some familiarity with archetypal psychology, which is why the book had to wait for me, but once I opened its pages its effect on me was immediate and profound. ART and SOUL is a “lifer” for me; I will return to it often – a paragraph or a couple of pages at a time.

Two weeks ago my friend David Corkett dropped into my lap a book by John Cleese (yes, he of Fawlty Towers.) It takes about an hour to read CREATIVITY: a short and cheerful guide, but it’s an hour very well spent. Cleese draws from his long experience as a writer, actor, humourist, and iconoclast to present concrete, practical ways of activating your creativity and using it all the time. Not surprisingly, Cleese writes about the power of the unconscious, but in ways that everybody can easily understand.

Also, I want to recommend again Robert A. Johnson’s INNER WORK: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth. If you read only the first 100 pages of this 223-page book, you’ll be extremely well rewarded. I’ve given away at least a dozen copies and lent my own copy (usually new, as the book was seldom returned) so many times that I finally purchased a digital copy for my Kindle. Johnson, a Jungian analyst, is the author of several other books, all of which I have found compelling in their examination of what it means to be human.

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**“Everything you imagine is real.”** *Pablo Picasso*

**“Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere.”** *Albert Einstein*

**“You can’t depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.”** *Mark Twain*

**Imagination is intelligence with an erection.”** *Victor Hugo*

## INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT

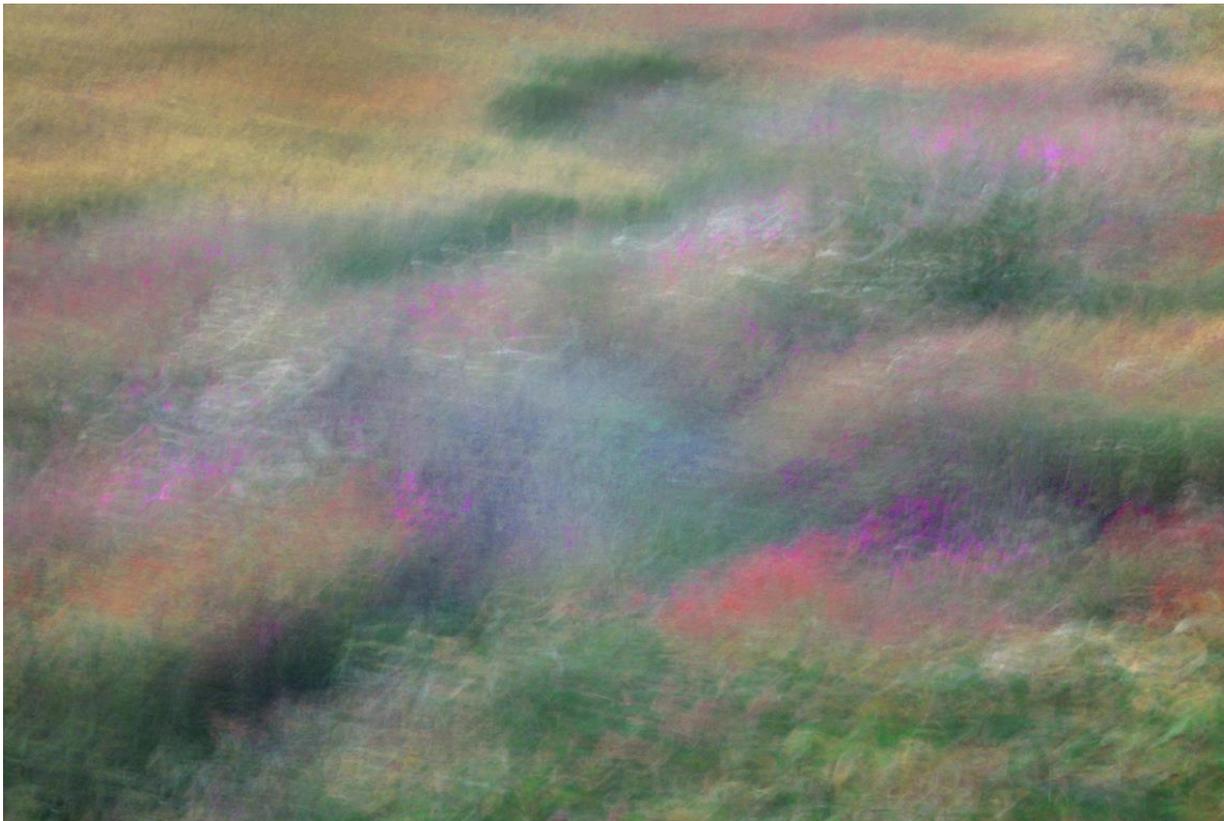
*(Click [ICM](#) for lots of illustrations.)*

Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) is a fairly recent catch-all term, now commonly used to cover every conceivable deliberate or “intended” movement a photographer chooses to make when using a camera. The only things new about ICM are the name and the fact that it’s in vogue. I remember jumping up and down while holding my camera 60 years ago, but in those days the general consensus among my peers was that I seemed to be “losing it.” To show them up, one day I seized the opportunity to grab my camera by its strap and swing it around my head in huge circles while it was set at a shutter speed of five seconds – on national television! Also, I included an ICM picture in the first edition of my *Photography and the Art of Seeing*, published in 1979.

So, quite obviously, I’m all in favour of panning, blurring, making multiple exposures while dancing, etc., etc., and so on – especially when you think one of these ICM techniques will help you to accomplish an expressive goal. The feelings your subject matter evokes for you will be your best guide for choosing your approach. Always pay attention to your emotional responses.

To achieve an effect you intend often requires repeating a movement several times – even dozens of times! Don’t be surprised by repeated failures. Each one will lead you closer to your goal.

Playing with various types of intentional camera movement, like all play, is great for stimulating your imagination! It’s okay if you want to delete all your efforts afterward; remember all the sand castles you built on the beach that the waves soon washed away.



**“The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.”** *Karl Jung*

## This Time of Year Down Under

As I've lived about a decade in the southern hemisphere (the total of many long visits,) I'm keenly aware that all my friends in South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia are currently moving into reverse seasonal gear, and I long to be with them. I'd love to be going straight into spring again, as I did in 2018, when I stayed for a month with my friends Sue Lightfoot and Robyn Auld in Australia's Blue Mountains and marvelled daily at the beauty of waratah (red, below) and rhododendrons. Sue and I were out every day in her flower and vegetable gardens, or talking gardening, or shopping at a plant nursery, where invariably I wanted to buy half the plants and ship them back to Shamber's Bluff. I've just received a note from Sue saying it's a stunning spring. (Namaqualand was over the top too.)



Like many of you, I'm feeling somewhat over-ZOOMed these days. Meetings, presentations of one sort or other, and the preparation for both has not only changed my work patterns, but also substantially increased my workload. A couple of times my mail has been backed up for nearly a month. However, I don't mean any of this as a complaint. I'm very conscious of and grateful to the many health professionals whose workload makes mine seem like a holiday. As usual I was practically first in line to receive the annual flu shot, not only because I'm immune compromised as a result of my transplants, but also because I consider getting one an easy thing I can do for my community.

For years winter has been my time to travel and often to teach. This year I am going to miss dreadfully a visit to the village of Kamieskroon, Namaqualand, in the northwest corner of South Africa, and especially to the little Kamieskroon Hotel, which is a second home. I know every flagstone, every flower pot, and all the best places to watch the sun rise and set. I can smell the scent of wild rosemary in the air and see even now the old country road, a long ribbon of silver stretching before me as I begin a six-kilometre walk in the moonlight long before dawn. But, because I will be at home I will be able to take advantage of opportunities that arise here. Maybe among them another book will jump off the shelf crying, "Read me, read me!" and very likely I'll do exactly that.

**My best to you all! Mon meilleur à vous tous! My beste vir julle almal!**

**FREEMAN**

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**What? No mask!**

**Quoi? Pas de masque!**

**Wat? Geen masker nie!**

