

# IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

*a periodical letter*  
*from*  
**FREEMAN PATTERSON**



*Along a trail, Shamper's Bluff, NB, mid October*

## IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS #3

*Freeman Patterson, September 2018*

If you live in Canada or the northern United States, autumn is already impinging on your consciousness. Although the season begins officially on September 21, everybody knows that when it begins and when it ends vary enormously across the continent and, to a lesser degree, from year to year in every region.

Back in 1978 I spent the second half of September in Alberta, photographing the golden aspen and the dark green conifers in the Rockies and the foothills every day from first light until after sunset. Over ten days the colours intensified to a crescendo, then just as the leaves began tumbling naturally to the ground, gale-force winds ripped them from their branches, a spectacle that resembled clouds of sandpipers and plovers filling the sky during a fall bird migration on the Atlantic flyway. In the early 1960s I'd camped in mountain valleys during late September, but that year was special, a genuine "Rocky Mountain High."



*Kananaskis County, Alberta*

On the first day of October I drove to Calgary, caught a night flight to Toronto and, next morning, another to Fredericton, New Brunswick, where I rented a car and began to drive slowly down the St. John River Valley toward my home. Autumn colour was just beginning to rise. Three weeks later the great show was nearly over, though grace notes lingered well into November. It had been an incredible season!

Again this year, 40 years after I made the picture above, I'll be a participant in the sheer exuberance of autumn, experiencing again repeated bursts of excitement and joy and finding deep peace in simply being among natural things.



*House on Main Street, St. Martin's, New Brunswick*

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**The power of the suggestive is much greater than the statement of reality.**

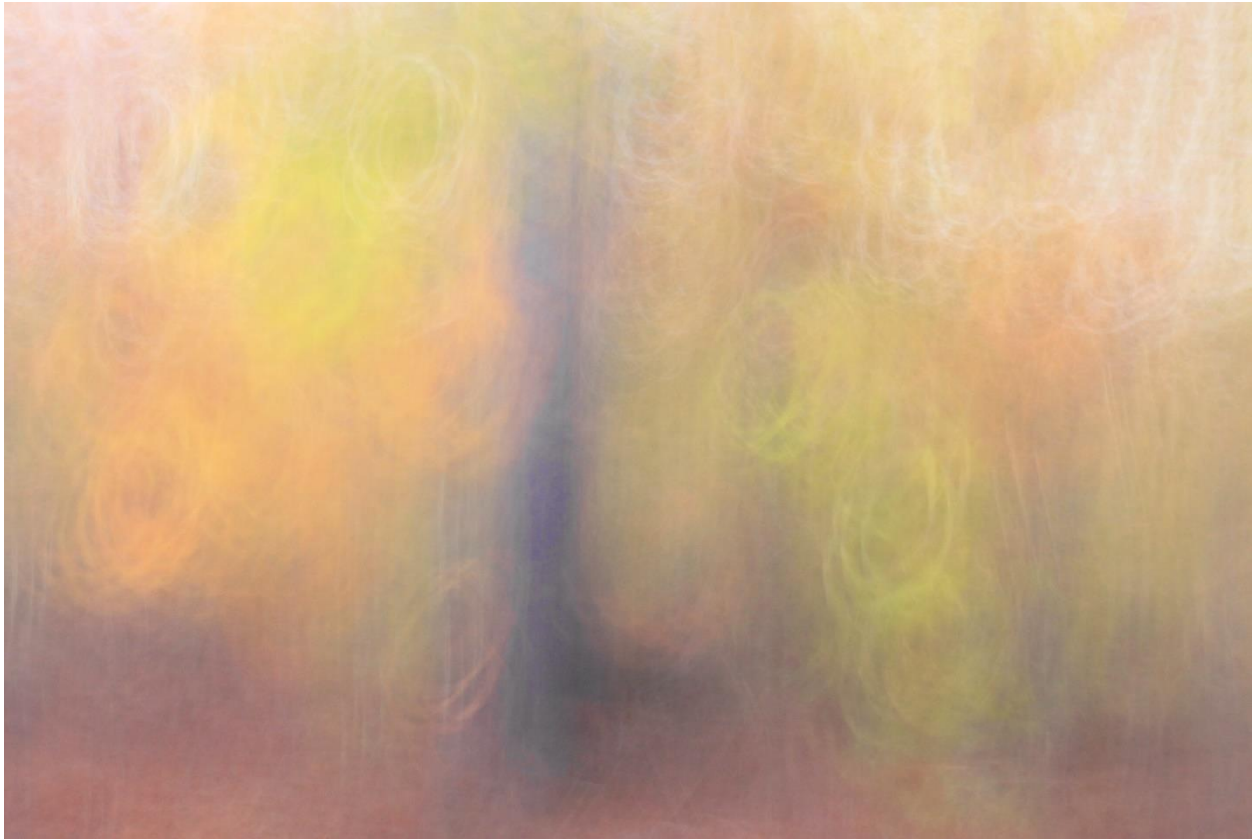
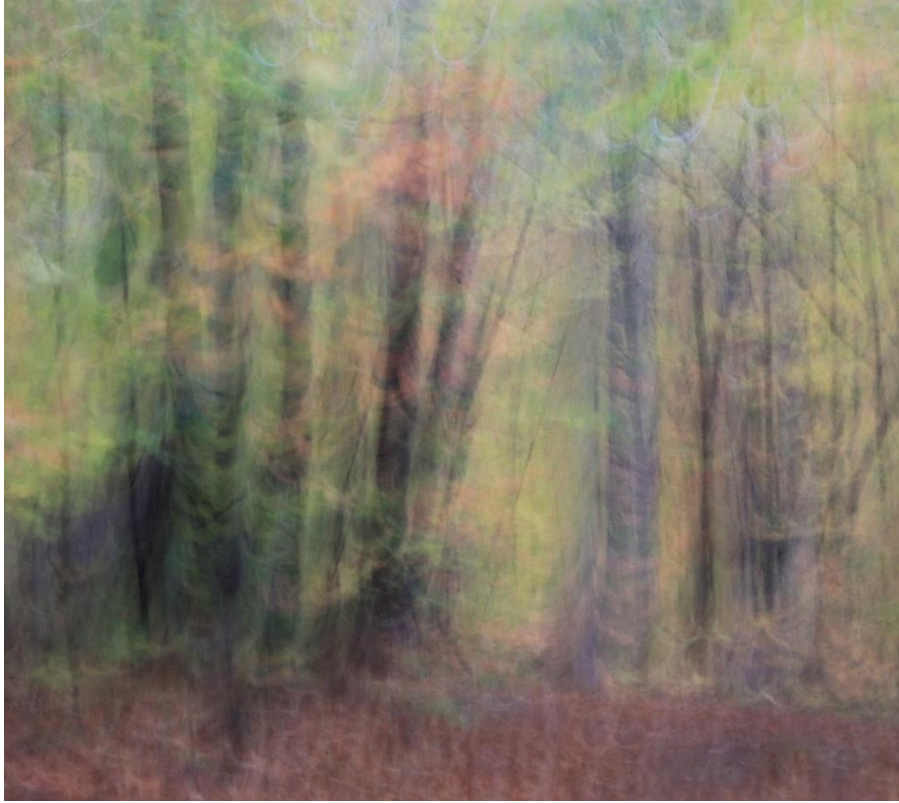
*C.W. Mundy*

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The first great tradition of photography is the documentary/descriptive, which is generally regarded as providing an accurate literal description of the subject matter. The three photographs I've shown you so far are examples of this tradition and, I hope, capture effectively the sheer beauty of autumn.

The second great tradition of the medium is the expressive/evocative. At the same time as I was making the preceding three pictures, I was making others, images that were intended to evoke, suggest, and, hopefully, to convey my mood or emotional response. The information they provide is less about the subject matter and more about the interior me, about the "joie de vivre" that fills me up to brimming over when autumn is dancing across the land. On the next page are a couple of images I made last year along ravine trails in Oakville, Ontario, where autumn had me bordering on bliss. Then, there's one more picture made in New Brunswick.

To create these images I did everything with my little camera (except for cropping the first image) – because I could. One of the biggest reasons for becoming fluent in your craft (or whatever languages you speak) is so you act or express yourself spontaneously when you are deeply moved or affected. Of course, instead of making pictures, you may find yourself hugging an aspen or a maple tree!





In his remarkable book, Ecological Intelligence, South African ecologist-psychiatrist Ian McCallum writes:

**“The cure for homesickness is to remember where we have come from. It is to rediscover that original church within oneself and to remember that the wild areas of the world are the landscapes of the soul and that the creatures who belong there are soul-makers. We need these places in much the same way that the ancient Celts needed their sacred groves – not because they are there, or because they are beautiful, but for that compulsive union of fact and feeling that we experience when we go there. Deeply visceral, it is the experience of soul.**

**We have to be able to go there ... to the desert, the savannah, the mountains, the sea, or the wild lands of ice and snow, we have to be able to go the places where we most belong and where we are most ourselves. It is an inner and an outer journey and our healing depends on both.”**

Dr. McCallum is describing my deep resonance with autumn and spring, of listening to the breakers crash on the coast of Namaqualand and roaming its ancient mountain deserts, camping by a great fjord on Ellesmere Island in the high Arctic, hiking the ravine trails of Oakville or the forest trails and field paths of Shamber’s Bluff. He is speaking to me about being home – home to myself, home to All That Is.

But, let’s look at this from another perspective. On the last day of our INSCAPE workshops, each participant who would like may create/make a presentation of some sort for the entire group – read a new poem, share photographs made during the week, tell a story, or whatever comes from her/his imagination and desire. On this summer’s INSCAPE workshop one participant gathered large and small pebbles from the beach at St. Martin’s, arranged them on a large tray, and then used each stone as a symbol to mark and describe events, steps, stages of growth, and her overall movement through life.

Her accompanying spoken presentation was open and honest, so it was informative, at times compelling, and relevant to us all. It was also far more effective because she used the rocks both as physical objects and as symbols. They were her “touchstones.”

Earlier in the week resource person Margery Nea of Richmond, Virginia, spoke in depth about dreams and the significant role they play in our lives, even when we don’t acknowledge their value or claim that we never dream. Eventually the entire day was given over to “dream work” and we eagerly joined our forbears, who so long ago realized that dreaming is a natural process and to work with the symbols in our dreams is to honour Nature/Creation – and to be more fully in touch with ourselves.

Margery was followed the next day by resource person Marie-Hélène Allain, a member of the Sisters of Charity from Ste-Marie-de-Kent, NB, whose vocation for most of her life has been sculpting, primarily in stone. Stone! Rock! The stuff of the ages! After breakfast we watched the 2008 ONF/NFB film, En Dialog avec la Pierre/ Speaking with Stone, about Marie-Hélène and her work and spent the rest of the morning and all afternoon in intense conversation on the deck of the St. Martin’s Country Inn.

One of the most significant subjects to be raised was the parallels between the symbols in our dreams and the symbols in our art, a subject about which Anthony Stevens writes at some length in his classic Private Myths. It’s an important connection that we rarely make, yet what could be more natural? Both the symbols in our dreams and those in our art are expressions of Nature (except for very rationally determined ones, but often even those too), coming as they do, not from our Ego (or conscious self), but from the larger and deeper part of ourselves, our Unconscious.

Then, on Friday morning, David Maginley, my co-facilitator of the INSCAPE workshops, spoke about near-death experiences, a subject on which he has become expert since “returning” from a powerful one himself during one of his four bouts with cancer. His description of another entirely natural phenomenon/experience was an additional expression of the fact that we are forever and always “in” Nature. We are “creatures,” products of Creation/Nature, which is constantly creating in and through us in both material and non-material ways. It’s very exciting stuff! And, it helps to explain why I feel utterly and exuberantly at home all alone (i.e., by my human self) in the desert sand and escarpments of southern Israel with all the plants and animals that live there (following photograph) or in a wild forest community on Shamper’s Bluff.



Ian McCallum also writes:

**Through the guidance of poetry, let's take that clumsy yet essential first step towards rediscovering ourselves in Nature. The choice is yours, says the poet, Rilke.**

***Wherever you are:  
tonight I want you  
to take one step  
out of your house.***

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Last year during the first week of September, photographer-teacher Charles Needle and I were giving a workshop on photography and visual design in Claude Monet's garden in Giverny, France. Every morning we had access to the garden for two hours before tourists were admitted and every evening for two hours after they had departed. In order always to be available to workshop participants, Charles and I divided our time on each visit between the large house garden and the water garden, where Monet planted and painted his famous water lilies.

Although both gardens are magnificent, I soon felt that Monet had laid out the house garden with his left brain. The basic design is geometric; however, this formal pattern is softened by the riotous dance of flowers, colours spilling every which-way in sheer abandonment. The order that underlies the disorder tends to make overall compositions easy, especially for documentary images.

Monet's water garden is entirely different. The underlying order is so fluid and subtle that it never interferes with the celebration of tones and hues. Except along one edge of the garden, there is not a straight line to be found. To speak in the vernacular, "I lost it!" Never has a created space had a greater emotional impact on me! Once, after having stopped for a long while in one place, I suddenly realised that this was precisely the spot where Monet had painted some of his most famous works. Even though the positions of tree branches and water lilies were considerably altered and the intervening years had produced other changes, I knew exactly by feeling why the man who had created the garden and painted it so many times sat right here.

I think you can buy a cell-phone app now that enables you to make photographs that look like Monet's paintings. What a way to kill creativity! I don't want to imitate Monet. Although he has influenced me, so have many other painters. While I am very happy to acknowledge my appreciation for Monet's contribution to my aesthetic development, I want to express my feelings in my way, not his.

When I returned home and went through all my photographs from Giverny, I found that about 90% of those I'd made in the house garden were documentary and about 90% of those I'd made in the water garden were loosely "impressionistic." It was in the water garden that I was most at home with me. If you'd like to see a selection of images that I made in Monet's water garden in September 2017, click on [MONÉT](#). (I've included two documentary photos in the group.)

Finally, I endeavoured to photograph Monet's two gardens as gardens and, thus, devoted almost no time to making close-ups or semi-close-ups of flowers, which I can make to my heart's content around home and elsewhere. In the late 1980s when I photographed 35 of Canada's finest private gardens for the Penguin book In a Canadian Garden, co-authored by Nicky Eaton and Hilary Weston, both the editor and the authors emphasized the importance of "seeing the garden." They did not want photographs primarily of flowers or individual plants. I remembered that in Giverny.

## COMING UP

The second INSCAPE workshop with David Maginley and two more workshops on photography and visual design with André Gallant, plus a five-day private workshop in Pubnico, Nova Scotia, are all coming up before my departure late in October for a month of teaching and other programs in the Blue Mountains region of Australia.

After returning home in mid-November I'm going to be spending four mornings a week for three weeks improving my French. In 2008 and 2011 I enrolled in three-week sessions of French immersion at Centre Linguistique de Jonquière, in Jonquière, QC, then three years ago I searched for and found a good French instructor in my area. Laura Mazerolle of nearby Quispamsis taught French for the federal government for more than 30 years and is now retired. In the process of our many conversations "en français" Laura and I have become good friends. We laugh a lot. The best kind of learning situation!

In February I'll be off again for nearly two months in Namaqualand and the wilderness camping tour in March, which is now filled. En route home in early April, I'll be stopping in France to teach another workshop with Charles Needle in Claude Monêt's garden in Giverny, north of Paris. (See the Workshop page on my web site: [www.freemanpatterson.com](http://www.freemanpatterson.com).)

Before my next periodical letter comes out in November, all the 2019 New Brunswick workshops in photography and visual design with André Gallant will be posted on the website. If you are interested, please start checking about mid October. The 2019 INSCAPE workshop with David Maginley will be September 8-14 and registration is now open for this workshop. ([See my web site.](#))

**Autumn is expecting you!!! Accept its invitation.**

**My best, FREEMAN**

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