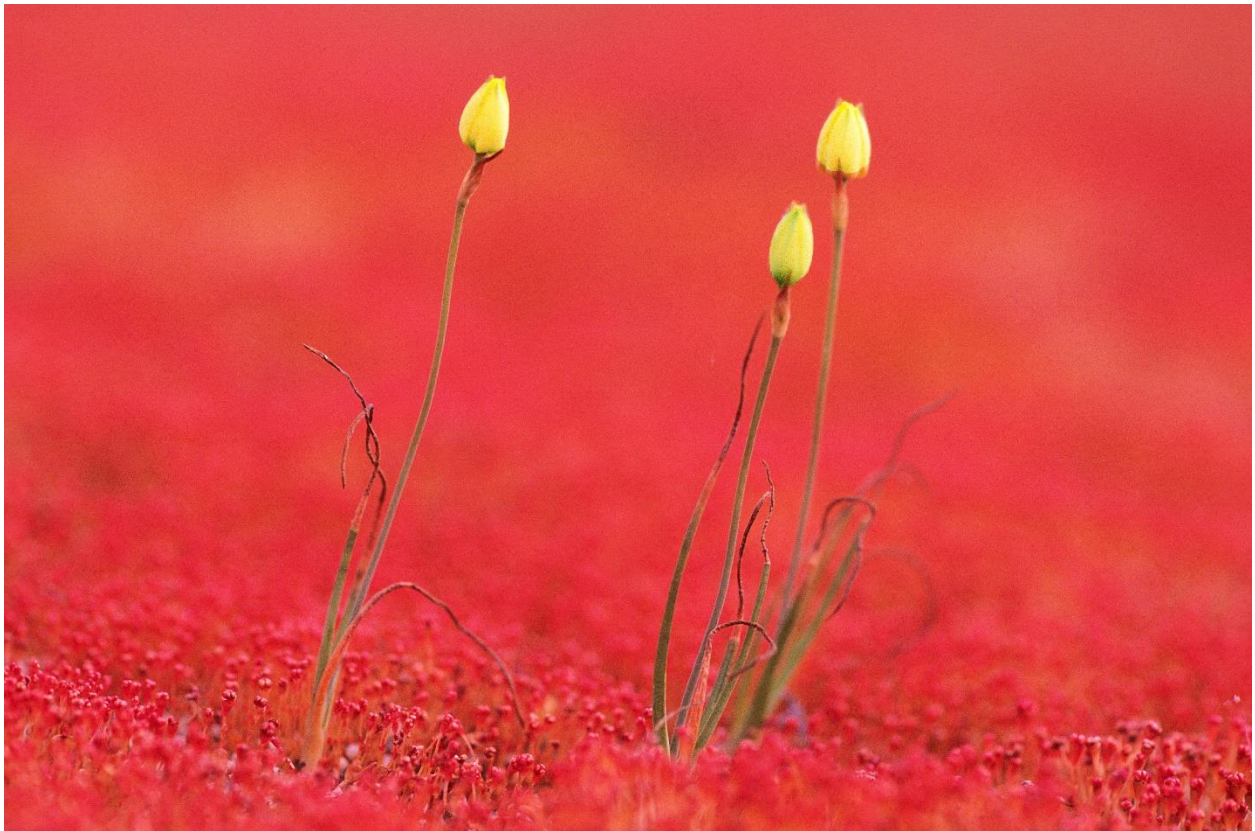


IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

Periodical Letter #44
August 2025

from
FREEMAN PATTERSON



Tiny yellow lilies growing in a rocky pool where the green vegetation turns red as the water evaporates

Namaqualand

I'm off to South Africa again in the first week of August. This year, instead of heading straight north from the Cape Town airport to Namaqualand, I'll be stopping for a few days to participate in the Photographic Society of South Africa's annual national congress, which is being held in Struisbaai, a small town southeast of Cape Town just four kilometres from Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of the African continent and the place where the Indian and Atlantic oceans meet.

I'll be making two presentations to the congress, one on the relationship between art and craft, the other on the flora and ecology of Namaqualand. This will be a mere 53 years since I first presented at a national PSSA congress – Johannesburg 1972.

Because I won't be home until mid September and soon after my return will be facilitating a workshop on photography and visual design with André Gallant, I won't have time to prepare an October issue of IMAGES, IDEAS, and RELECTIONS, but will have #45 in your mailbox for November 1. Although I've had to delay by a month only once before, it's for this reason that I call my letter a periodical one.

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In June my garden welcomed visitors from as close by as my nearest neighbours to as far away as Germany and New Zealand, and the rhododendrons and azaleas did not disappoint.

During the evening of June 5 the Saint John String Quartet performed for about 60 people, preceded by an hour for guests to wander through the garden and followed by Prosecco and finger foods. The weather was perfect. This event was organized by the Kingston Peninsula Heritage Society, which is a local charity that is constantly building community.

On the night of June 14 around 100 came to hear the local Kingston Collective and their guest performers, all emceed by Joel MacPherson, who is now my "main man" in the garden and who concluded the evening with a rousing 10-minute rap performance, singing and dancing barefoot on the portable stage that he had constructed from boards milled from large trees toppled in the garden by winter storms.

The very next day about 200 people came to my second annual Garden Day with the KPH Society providing snacks and drinks from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. Also, on June 9 the society provided a robust and delicious lunch for a busload of delegates from the American Rhododendron Society's annual convention, which had just concluded in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

And those weren't all the visitors, not by any means!

By mid-June the fields around and below my house were filled with wild lupins, soon to be intermixed with golden buttercups, and then creamy bedstraw. Spring bounded into summer! However, the grand crescendo of the rhododendrons and azaleas lives on in memory and in photographs, although many late-blooming varieties will provide colour and fragrance until early August, along with foxgloves, day lilies, roses, liatris, lysimachia, vetch, yarrows, and myriad other wild and cultivated species, including about ten varieties of ferns, many of which provide beauty until early November.

On the first day of summer I went to INSCAPE, my first workshop of the year, which I facilitate with David Maginley and Margery Nea in the approximately 175-year-old St. Martins County Inn on the Bay of Fundy, just an hour away from my home. It was a complete and welcome change of pace – a week of presentations and discussions about creativity,

consciousness, dreaming and dreamwork, and the relationship between the symbols in our dreams and the symbols in our art. The presentations, discussions, superb meals, and general ambience of the inn made for a memorable week.

This year participants came from as far away as Santa Barbara, CA, Vancouver, BC, and St. John's, Newfoundland and as nearby as Hampton and Saint John, NB. Connie Evans from Cartersville, Georgia, who is also a facilitator from time to time, was with us again this year. (You can read about this annual workshop on my web site www.freemanpatterson.com.)

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The deck railing of my room at the St. Martins Country Inn

**“The best place in the entire world to see and to make photographs
is wherever you are.” *FP***



Storm cloud over the Bay of Fundy, photographed from the front deck of the St. Martin's Country Inn

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“Art is the music we make from the bewildered cry of being alive — sometimes a cry of exultant astonishment, but often a cry of devastation at the collision between our wishes and the will of the world. Every artist’s art is their coping mechanism for what they are living through — the longings, the heartbreaks, the triumphs, the wars within and without. It is these painful convolutions of the psyche — which used to be termed *neurosis* at the dawn of modern psychotherapy, and which we may simply call suffering — that reveal us to ourselves, and it is out of these revelations that we create anything capable of touching other lives, that contact we call art.” *Maria Popova in The Marginalian*

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“Art, like the dream, is an emotionally loaded form of communication conducted through the use of symbols.” *Anthony Stevens*

Many serious photographers don't think of themselves as being artists, and many aren't. But then, many serious painters aren't artists either. The medium does not automatically make its practitioner an artist.

Nor is an artist in any medium constantly an artist. A photographer, for example, may make a picture of her pet or a section of her garden simply as a record of how it looked at a certain age or time of year, just like everybody else who uses a camera or phone for the same reason. Or, she may be shooting a wedding or other professional assignment for a client whose wishes must be honoured; in other words, the client "calls the shot."

Art has infinitely deeper roots; it is neither a casual affair, nor a documentation of what's "out there." As Anthony Stevens expresses in the quotation from his book Private Myths (previous page,) art, like the dream, arises from one's unconscious. David Maginley puts it this way, "It's not art if it tells you something you already know" and Jeremy Taylor in The Wisdom of Your Dreams states, "No dream comes to tell you what you already know."

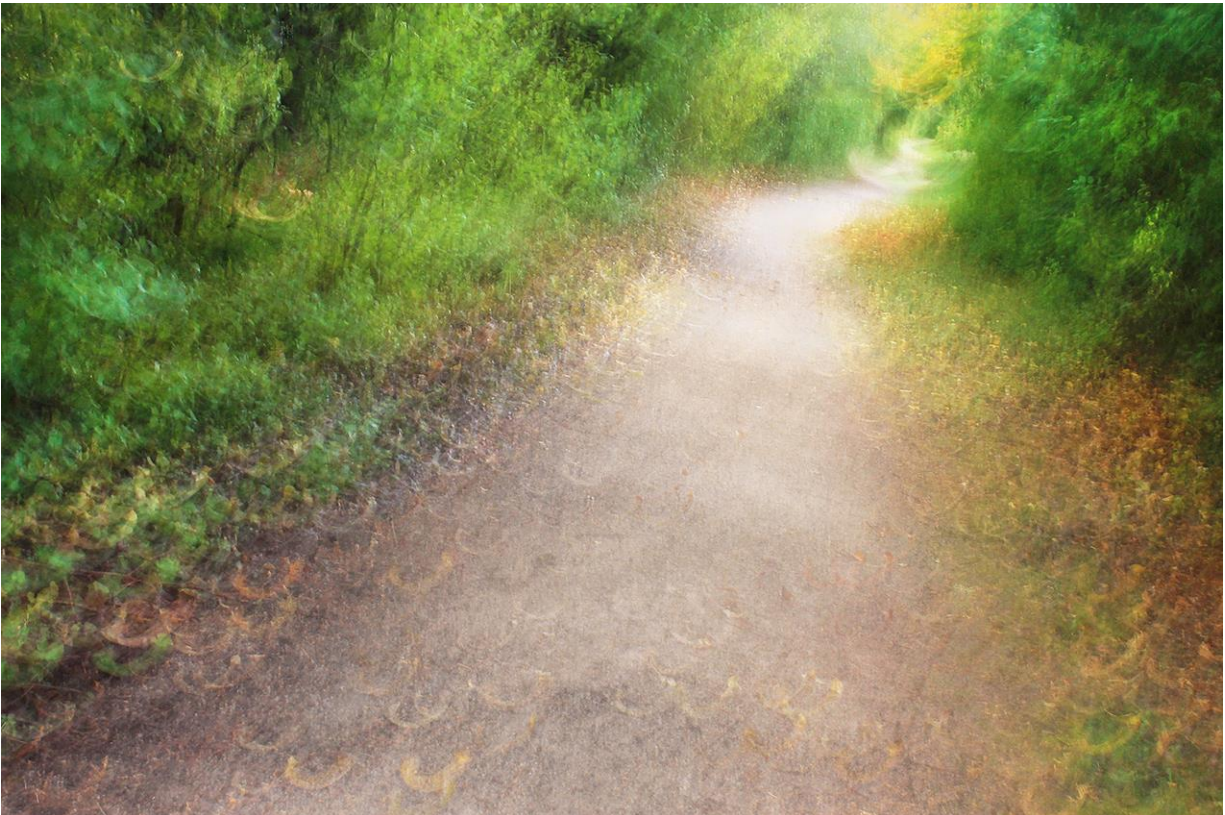
Because most of us live in cultures that regard dreams as mere fantasy and irrelevant to our daily lives, we pay little or no attention to them or, if a dream shocks or scares us, we probably regard it as a literal prediction rather than a symbol of an emotional reality.

The dream, however, is our unconscious endeavouring to get information through to our conscious self or ego. Dreams communicate in symbols. For example, if we dream of being terribly injured or killed on our way to work one morning, it's infinitely more likely that the dream is warning us to start paying serious attention to our emotional life, or we will have an emotional smash-up, not a physical one.

Similarly, when photographers, painters, sculptors, etc. "follow their energy," which means photograph, paint, and sculpt "what turns them on" in ways that turn them on, they are in effect paying attention to their dreams, and in the process they will learn, slowly or sometimes swiftly, something important about themselves.

Here are three images I created that matter deeply to me, because they tell me something about me. Whether or not anybody else "likes" them is irrelevant.





You'll notice that both photographs on the preceding page, made years apart, have a path as a major feature and that the compositions are similar, but that's where the similarity ends. The pictures "feel" very different. As a viewer, you may experience a slight or deep sense of relevance for your own life, or none at all.

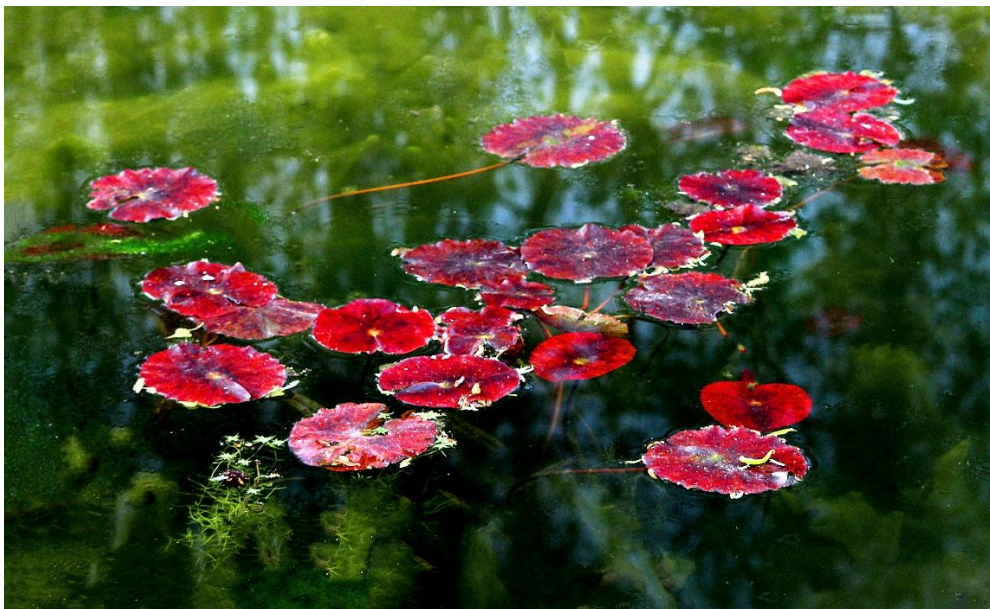
To change the narrative a little, I'd like to speak about Claude Monet, because I found symbolism writ large on the three occasions when I was teaching in Giverny.

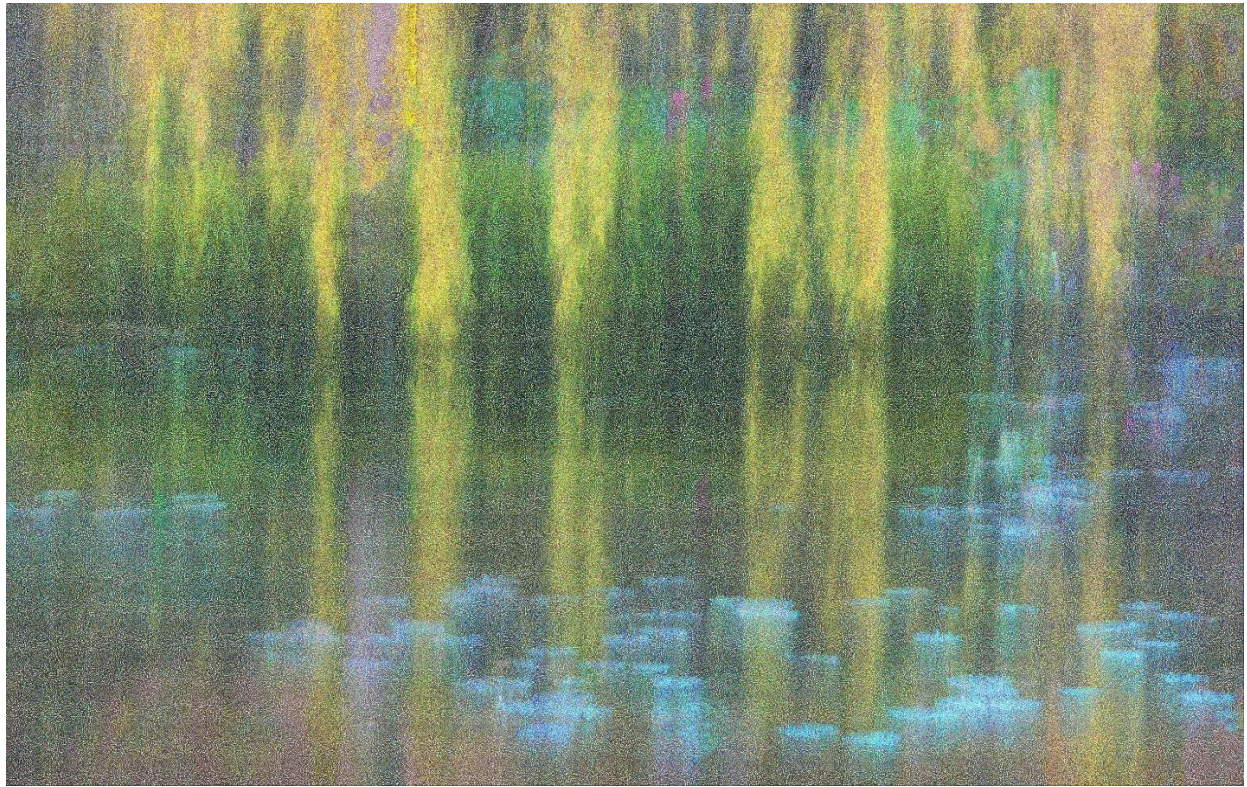
Les Deux Jardins de Claude Monet The Two Gardens of Claude Monet

Monet created two gardens that are very different from each other – the house garden and the water garden. The house garden came first. Monet began to create it as soon as he acquired the property in Giverny, when he was still a fairly young man. It's beautiful, but it's borrowed. The garden is constructed in the French classical tradition – very geometric, very formal. The flowers soften the symmetry somewhat. As lovely as this garden is, it reveals as much about French culture as it does about Monet.

The water garden is another matter. There's hardly a straight line in it. Monet began this garden as he was traversing his "middle passage," to quote James Hollis, transitioning through mid-life to what follows, and it was here that Monet did most of his painting in the latter part of his life. I loved this garden, because it told me so much not only about who Monet was, but especially about who he wanted to be.

As Ross King sets Monet in his cultural, political, and personal context in MAD ENCHANTMENT: Claude Monet and the Painting of the Water Lilies, he reveals a man who, in some respects, was not a very nice person. However, even if Monet did not recognize his senses of entitlement, nor deal with a temper over which he sometimes lost complete control, he created beauty both as a gardener and as a painter. Beauty mattered to him deeply. Monet's paintings of the water lilies expressed his love of beauty; they were symbols of his better self.





“Beauty is not a luxury, but a vital spiritual necessity. It is not a superficial decoration of life, but a way of being fully alive.” *John O’Donohue*

“The pursuit of beauty requires no justification.” *FP*

O’Donohue’s quotation is relevant for everybody, but especially for older people.

I do not know a single older person who does not have a physical problem or several, and I know a lot of older people. Some elderly people talk about little other than what’s wrong with them. They even compare notes. Others, however, rejoice in the fact that they have had the privilege of living so long. They accept and honour the gift they have been given and, despite their particular infirmities, dance their way to the exit.

Time and again I’ve noticed that these wonderful souls have an innate appreciation of beauty in at least some of its many expressions.

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Zaidee Williams



“I've always said that one night, I'm going to find myself in some field somewhere, I'm standing on grass, and it's raining, and I'm with the person I love, and I know I'm at the very point I've been dreaming of getting to.”

Drew Barrymore



Why did I make this photograph?
Because it's summer!

Where did I make this photograph?
At the edge of a bed of flowers!

How did I make this photograph?
On my tummy!



Goeie wense, almal!

Bons vœux, tout le monde

Good wishes, everybody!

FREEMAN

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