

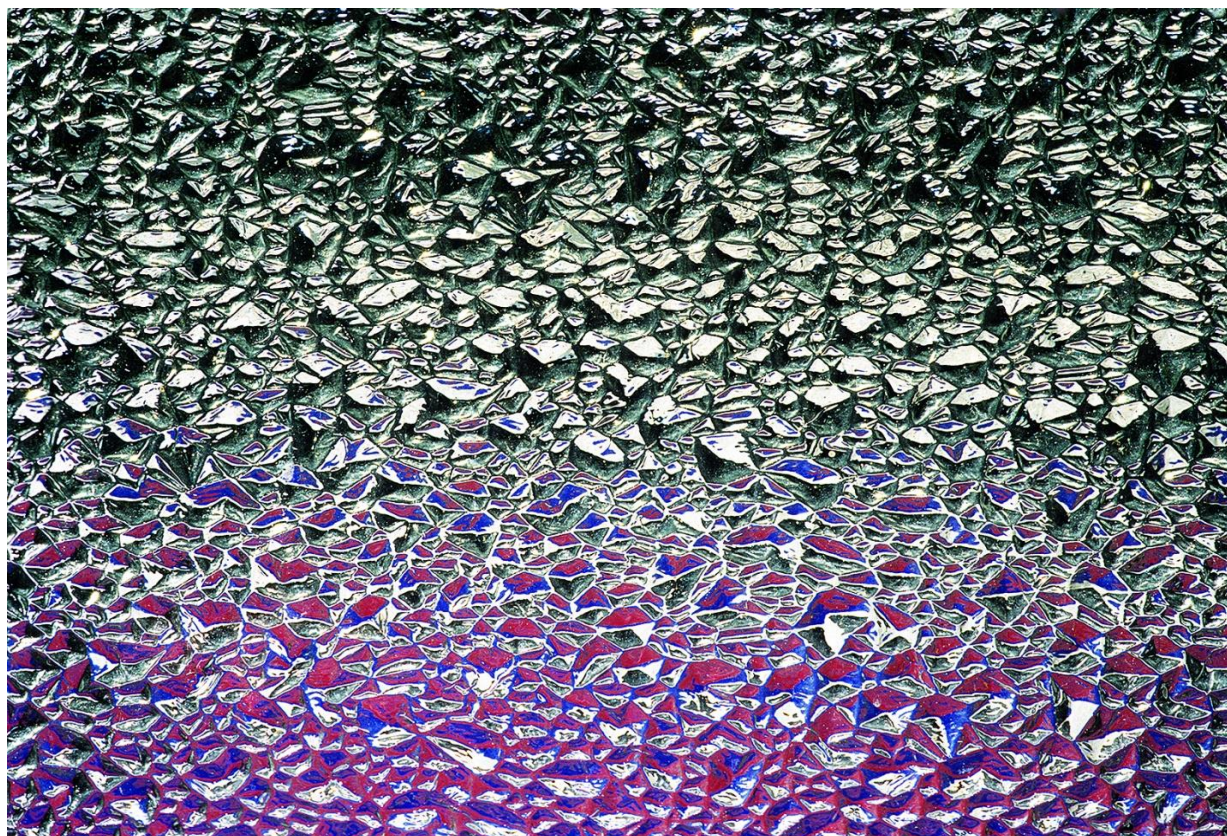
IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

Periodical Letter #24

March 2022

from

FREEMAN PATTERSON



Looking inwards, window pane in my barn

It's been a rough winter at Shamper's Bluff. Visually magnificent, extremely labour intensive! After the sixth two-day blizzard in as many weeks the snow and wind have abated somewhat, but the temperature is falling. The neighbour who clears my long driveway appeared a couple of hours ago with what can only be described as a MONSTER tractor and has just returned with his truck and regular plough to give me access to Shamper's Bluff Road.

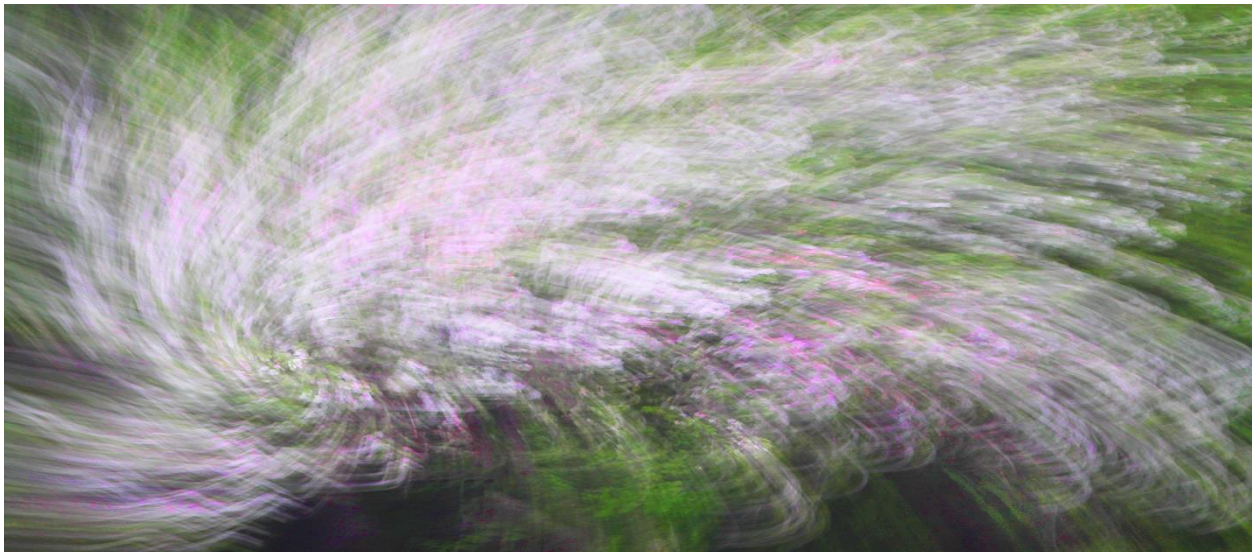
Twenty minutes ago I came in from my sixth half-hour round of shovelling heavy snow (often as densely packed as cement) and now have only four more rounds to go. (I hope!) Snowblowers work fine for houses with attached garages, where you can open the garage from the inside, start the already warm snowblower, and clear the paved driveway out to the street. However, they are of little use around here or I would have had one generations ago.

In case you've never experienced this sort of winter on a continuing basis, I should tell you that I find that dressing every time I go outdoors (several layers of clothes) and brushing off all the snow and undressing when I come back in again as enervating as anything.

What's the upside? The deep snow is insulating the soil and the roots and lower branches of plants; "winter kill" will be reduced. Then, as the snow melts it will saturate the soil, providing excellent moisture for new growth of both roots and branches. The story is more mixed for animal life in the short term. A winter like this makes survival more difficult for some species and easier for others, abetting the predator-prey cycle. All these things are easy to observe on Shamper's Bluff, most of which is a nature conservancy/reserve.

My pup, Tess, to whom I introduced you in my last letter and who will greet you again on the second last page of this one, is impervious to cold and would happily play in the snow all day long, but even though she has grown prodigiously, she's still potential prey for a coyote, as the coyotes are large here, having interbred with wolves. One walked out of the woods onto the deck the other night, depositing its scat before leaving – it knows she's here.

As for me, I haven't gained an ounce of weight all winter and I can fall asleep in a flash at any time of day. Because of all the exercise, lots of sleep, and a diet of all sorts of vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds, and some fish, I'm feeling very healthy and quite fit, maybe even very_fit for my age. However, my anticipation of spring knows no limits! It will feel like pure release when it arrives – because it will be!



Archbishop DESMOND TUTU

Desmond Mpilo Tutu (October 7, 1931 – December 26, 2021)

“We were made to enjoy music, to enjoy beautiful sunsets, to enjoy looking at the billows of the sea and to be thrilled with a rose that is bedecked with dew, ... Human beings are created for the transcendent, for the sublime, for the beautiful, for the truthful... and all of us are given the task of trying to make this world a little more hospitable to these beautiful things.”

“[What] you have to understand is that the Bible is really a library of books and it has different categories of material,” he explained. “There are certain parts which you have to say ‘no’ to. The Bible accepted slavery... There are many things that you shouldn’t accept.”

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor,” he said. “If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

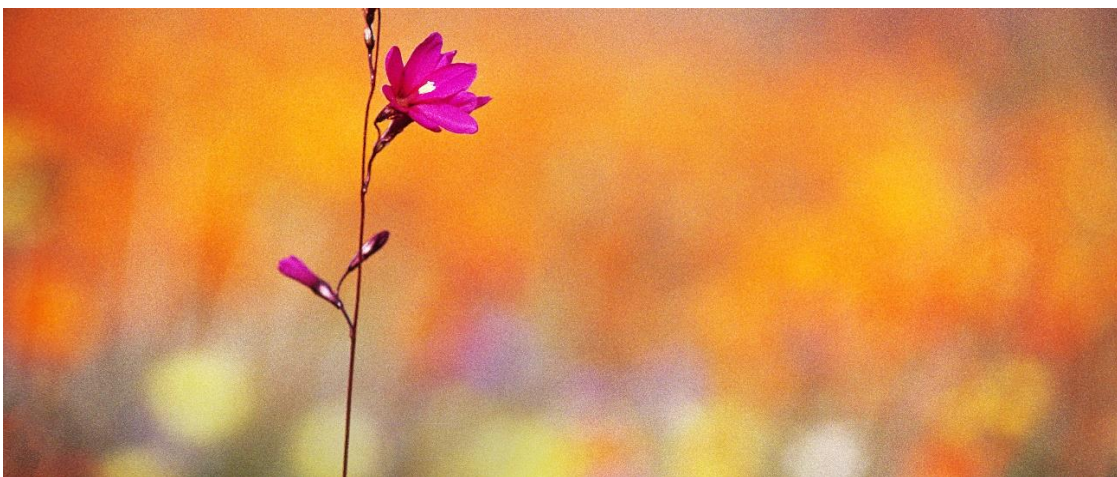
The Arch — credited with coining the phrase “Rainbow Nation”, although the phrase he actually used was “Rainbow People of God” — became known, despite his peaceful approach, for his unflinching stance on human rights abuses both during and after apartheid.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, when asked by a child what one had to do in order to win the Nobel Prize, gamely explained: “It’s very easy, you just need three things – you must have an easy name, like Tutu for example, you must have a large nose and you must have sexy legs.”

Tutu’s humour was perennial, his laughter described as infectious. In the United States, when confronted by a woman who ran up and greeted him with “Hello Archbishop Mandela”, he warmly congratulated her – not to her face – on getting two for the price of one.

So long Arch, thanks for the love

(Appreciation to the team of the Daily Maverick, a fiercely independent South Africa newspaper)



THICH NHAT HANH

*Zen Buddhist monk, "father of mindfulness," peace activist, teacher, prolific author
(October 11, 1926 - January 22, 2022)*

"When you grow lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look for reason it's not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet, if we have problems with our friends or family, we blame the other person. But, if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like the lettuce."

"When another person makes you suffer, it is because he is suffering himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment, he needs help. That's the message he's sending."

"To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself."

"My actions are my only true belongings."

"Life is available only in the present moment."

"At this very moment, the Earth is above you, below you, all around you, and even inside you. The Earth is everywhere. You may be used to thinking of the Earth as only the ground beneath your feet. But the water, the sea, the sky, and everything around us comes from the Earth. Everything outside us and everything inside us comes from the Earth. We often forget that the planet we are living on has given us all the elements that make up our bodies. The water in our flesh, our bones, and all the microscopic cells inside our bodies all come from the Earth and are part of the Earth. The Earth is not just the environment we live in. We are the Earth and we are always carrying her within us."

If we think about the Earth as just the environment around us, we experience ourselves and the Earth as separate entities. We may see the planet only in terms of what it can do for us.

We need to recognize that the planet and the people on it are ultimately one and the same...."

"Walk as if you are kissing the Earth with your feet."





BlueDot.mp4

Click on VIDEO “Blue Dot”

This excerpt from Carl Sagan's book "Pale Blue Dot" (1994) was inspired by an image taken, at Sagan's suggestion, by Voyager 1 on Feb 14, 1990.

The earth is shown from a distance of about 6 billion km (3.7 billion miles).

Voyager 1 had completed its primary mission, and was leaving the Solar System when, at the request of Carl Sagan, it was commanded by NASA to turn its camera around, and take one last photo of Earth across a great expanse of space.

This short video's accompanying words, spoken by Sagan, and written almost 24 years ago, are as relevant today as they were then.

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Aerial photograph of New Brunswick's West Quaco Beach (Bay of Fundy) at low tide

Ponderings about PHOTOGRAPHERS and Other Visual Artists

Recently arrived in my mailbox is the winter 2022 issue of “createdhere,” a beautifully designed print magazine about the visual arts in the province of New Brunswick, where I live. Funded jointly by the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design and the Sheila Hugh Mackay Foundation (a private foundation for the visual arts in NB), the 80-page quarterly has fewer than a thousand subscribers, but punches far beyond its numbers.

The first of the 12 spreads was “Stories in the Landscape,” a short article and several photographs by a First Nations artist, Desmond Simon, of Mi’kmaq heritage, four of which I consider particularly well seen and impeccably crafted. I was especially pleased that the editor and publication team consider photography, as they always do, to be an important visual art medium – no argument necessary.

Leafing slowly through the pages, I recalled a beautiful couple of hours spent last summer with six photographers (and two spouses) and Lucinda Flemer, creator of the 27-acre Kingsbrae Garden and Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts (KIRA) in St. Andrews, NB. Lucinda is a visual artist – a garden designer and gardener – and I felt it would be both delightful and informative for the participants in the artists’ retreat that I was facilitating to meet Lucinda who, by the way, is still “the head honcho” at the age of 91. The premise, of course, was that photographers have much to gain by immersing themselves in other visual media. Not surprising to me, Lucinda was keenly interested in hearing about how each individual was hoping to approach the week photographing in the garden she’d created. She used the opportunity to learn too – from people working in a medium that she knows and appreciates as an observer.

Then ELEMENTS arrived in my digital mailbox. The February issue of the photography magazine was, if possible, even more impressive than usual. Many readers of this letter receive the magazine and everybody from whom I’ve heard has high praise for its attention to curation, visual design and layout, careful editing, and variety. Art matters at ELEMENTS.

I was thrilled to see the “Gallery” section devoted to the images of Xuan Hui Ng of Japan. Xuan attended a workshop with André Gallant and me in 2019 and both of us were moved by her perception and the sensitivity of her work – her fluency of craft conveying her emotional response to her subject matter with an unusual clarity. Co-editor Steve Friedman wrote that we can expect to see more of Xuan’s work in ELEMENTS. Art communicates!

Also, since the first of this year I’ve been present for Zoom presentations by three outstanding Canadian photographers, each of whom earns his income entirely by his art. One of them, Richard Martin, freely acknowledged how his vision has been enhanced by the work of various painters. He specifically mentioned Jackson Pollock, a painter whose work also holds great meaning for me, and Jean-Paul Riopelle.

In writing to Richard to express my thanks for his program, I opined that many photographers (both amateur and professional) seem to have little contact with other visual artists, which greatly reduces their artistic opportunities and resources. (To me, it’s rather like saying you’re not interested in the wine-poached salmon and most of vegetables on your dinner plate after sampling only the potatoes, thereby greatly reducing your possible pleasure and the nutrition available to you.)

In his reply Richard told me that when he is leading photographic groups through Venice he always endeavours to take the members to see the Pollock paintings at the Peggy Guggenheim museum. Is your camera club making a field trip to a major art gallery in 2022? It's always seemed to me like the sort of thing that every club should do at least once a year and more frequently would be even better, especially if the trip were tied in with a gallery talk or accompanied by a knowledgeable guide. What could be more natural or beneficial for photographers at any stage of development than studying the work of other visual artists?

There are also lots of photographic images in art galleries, quite often very different in both content and approach from what one usually sees in amateur photographic circles. The important question to ask is always "Why?" Why did the photographer make this image in the first place? Why did the curator include it in the exhibition?

When you spend time pondering these questions, you'll comprehend, for example, why the composition is such a disorganized mess or why the huge black shadow overwhelms a tiny arrangement of exquisite flowers? Where was the photographer's heart? What was she feeling? Try to put yourself in her place.

In 2016 and 2017 the Art Gallery of Ontario and then the Musee d'Orsay in Paris hung "Mystical Landscapes," featuring the work of 37 artists from 14 countries. The exhibition took more than five years to pull together, containing original pieces from many of the world's greatest museums and galleries. I visited the exhibition only once, but while I was there I went through it from beginning to end – twice! It was, to quote from the Globe and Mail, "a feast for the senses and the soul."

As I was leaving, I scanned the exhibition catalogue again and noted that among the principal financial supporters were a bank and three private contributors. One of them was Lucinda Flemer. Three days later when I interviewed Lucinda for a project in which we were both engaged, I began by thanking her for helping to make "Mystical Landscapes" possible, and then I added, "I believe it tells me all I need to know about why you created Kingsbrae."

I love these connections between visual artists – gardeners, sculptors, photographers, painters, fabric artists, print makers, and more – each of us learning from the others, gaining new perspectives and the courage to try approaches we might never have dreamed about on our own, receiving useful criticism and helpful guidance, and most of all affirming together that the needs of the soul are as important as the needs of the body.

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GOOD VALUE / FAIR PAYMENT

Since the coming of Covid, which has limited or prevented many organizations, including camera clubs, other photographic societies, garden clubs, etc. from meeting at their usual site, they have been using ZOOM or a similar on-line service for both business meetings and presentations.

Canadians, in particular, quickly realized that these platforms also offer a long-term solution for groups to meet during winter months, when driving long after dark or in frequently unsafe weather conditions has always rendered planning and holding meetings at a designated site a very dicey matter.

Like many others, I've been delighted to sit at home, wearing whatever, enjoying presentations from top gardeners, photographers, other artists from around the world, theologians, scientists, etc. with a vast range of knowledge and experience. When I don't pay a personal registration fee, it's because I've been invited to participate as a guest, or because I'm a member of a club that is paying a reasonable fee.

In pre-Covid days I expected to pay to attend a professional concert, play, or dance performance, etc. and to pay for the privilege of seeing exhibitions of all sorts. Why? Because all of these have value for me and because the creators and performers have usually devoted enormous amounts of time and energy to making sure I receive that value! For the most part I also requested and received fair payment for presentations to photographic and other groups myself.

Since the coming of Covid and of Zoom, I've been asked to make many on-line presentations, mostly by North American photographic groups, but also by other interest groups and from groups in other countries. Usually, moving from the invitation to the presentation has been quite a straightforward and happy experience.

However, occasionally there's been a problem related to fair payment – invariably from amateur groups, whether photographic or other. For example, I've had four or five invitations from photographic clubs that have stated explicitly, "We're just a small club and our standard payment is \$150," the letters so similar in wording that somewhere, sometime the details were standardized. Other photographer-teachers whose sole or primary source of income is photography have received identical invitations and ignored them.

Personally, I've declined all these requests in writing, except one that contained an additional line suggesting the writer was open for discussion, which he was. I stated my standard fee for on-line presentations (which I'll discuss shortly) and suggested that the club 1/ work in tandem with another club or clubs, or 2/ make the presentation available for a fee to other visual artists, such as fabric artists, gardeners, and painters, and to teachers of all age levels, or 3/ turn it over to Event Brite, which one small photo club did, signing up 200 paying registrants in no time and making a whack of money for the club as well as easily paying my fee. (Remember that photographs are like musical performances – you don't need to be a photographer or a musician in order to enjoy them. In fact, don't be surprised if non-photographers make up the larger part of the audience.)

I'm writing about this both for myself and for other photographer-teachers who, as full-time professionals, appreciate being recognized as such and paid appropriately for our services, exactly like mechanics, plumbers, nurses, schoolteachers, etc. It's taken all of us

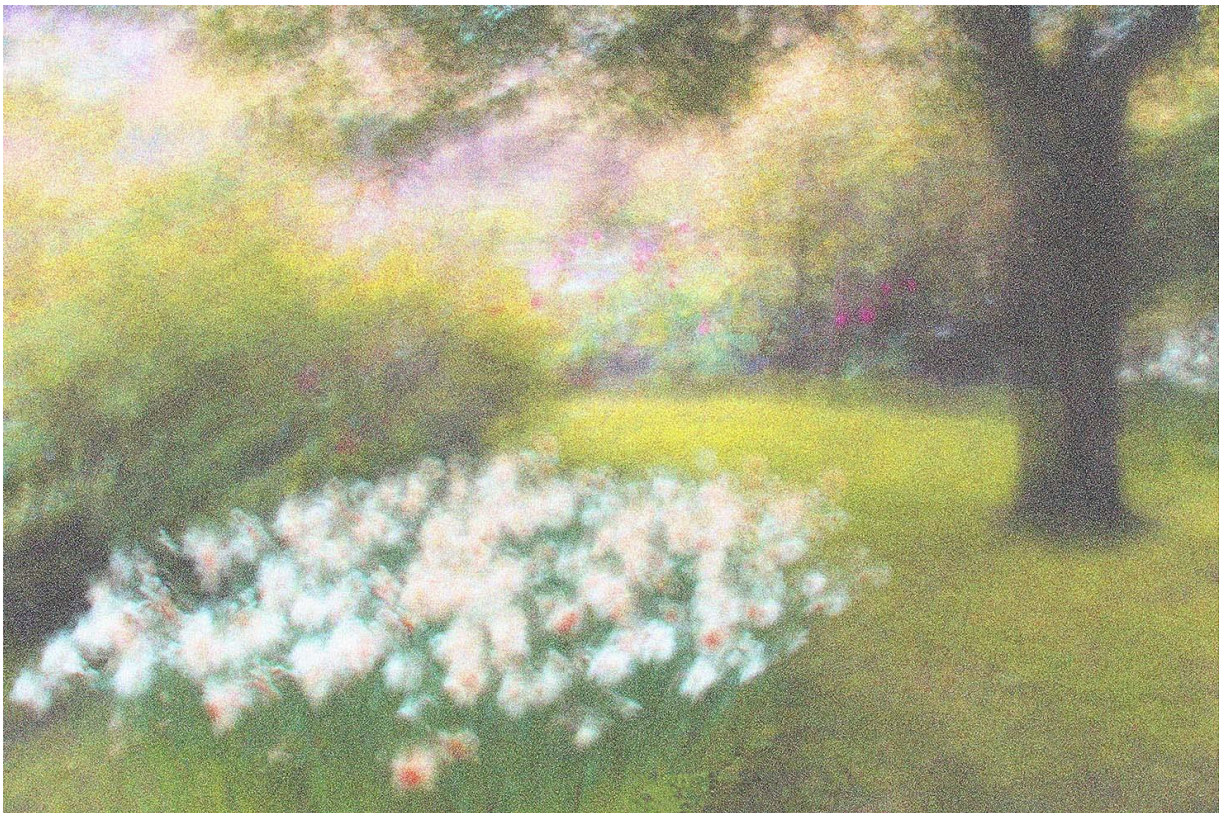
years to accumulate the experience and the material for really good programs, certainly days to pull one together, and finally there's the time involved in making arrangements for the presentation and for the presentation itself. Even an existing program needs to be reviewed, updated, and rehearsed again. (I always spend an average of 15-20 hours on an existing program prior to presenting it again on Zoom.)

An offer of \$150 for just these few hours is an offer of \$4-5 per hour, which I am not prepared to accept unless I'm donating my services (presentation) to a charitable cause or helping to promote a photographic effort that I believe to be extremely worthwhile. I will, however, work for \$25 an hour, which is still considerably less than the average hourly wage of the vast majority of professionals. Once in a while, I'll make a barter arrangement.

It's quite a different matter when club members make presentations for their own club. All members pay an annual membership fee and have responsibilities to the club community, i.e. to each other, and even the newest or least experienced members can contribute photographically, as well as in other ways. Usually, no fee is expected or paid for a member's presentation, except when unusual costs have been incurred in its preparation.

However, I want to encourage groups who approach speakers/presenters *from outside their own organization* to think creatively about how you can pay an adequate fee for the services you request. Believe me, you'll earn a lot of appreciation and respect if you do.

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Avril au jardin de Claude Monet/ April in the garden of Claude Monet

WORKSHOPS 2022

We still have spaces available on some of our 2022 workshops. (Please see my web site www.freemanpatterson.com.) This year I've been asked for more one-day workshops at Shamper's Bluff than usual, all individually crafted for one to three persons.

I love the workshop experience and always have. Next year will mark 50 years since the first workshops at Shamper's Bluff, all 10 days long in the early years. After five years I moved locations to Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy for a while, then for several to Gagetown, a lovely village on the lower St. John River.* When Adair's Lodge and Cabins opened just three kilometres from my home, it became the workshop venue until 2009. Since then it's been the St. Martin's Country Inn on the Bay of Fundy coast east of the city of Saint John,* but beginning last year I added Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts (KIRA) in Kingsbrae Garden, St. Andrews, also on the Fundy coast, but well to the west of Saint John near the border with the U.S.A.

It's not possible to provide a good workshop experience for a dozen or so persons without a capable and compatible teaching partner, and I've had three – Dennis Mills (1973-1978,) Doris Mowry (1979-1995), and André Gallant (1996 -present.) I am indebted to these partners, especially to André. In addition, David Maginley and I have jointly facilitated the INSCAPE workshops since their inception, always along with exceptional resource persons.

*(*The use of two spellings – Saint John and St. John – is confusing. The city of Saint John is situated at the mouth of the river St. John. If you are flying into the city, make sure your ticket reads Saint John [YSJ] in full, or you may end up in St. John's, Newfoundland.)*



Storm clouds lifting – view across the Bay of Fundy to Nova Scotia from the front deck of St. Martin's Country Inn

Me again, TESS!



December 18, 2021



Valentine's Day 2022

Thanks to EVERYBODY who wrote to Tess and me after my January 1 periodical letter. Now in her early adolescence, Tess is exhibiting many of the traits of a typical teenager. She's extremely curious, very strong-willed, follows me around like my shadow indoors, but is daring to go farther and farther afield when we're outdoors.

Tess will run free here for most of her life, so it's essential that I let her begin to establish her personal boundaries. We always had a female dog on our family farm, because females established a large territory (centred on our house) and protected it (the mothering instinct), whereas male dogs did what guys are prone to do – run off to visit the neighbourhood girls.

However, while Tess was small I had to be concerned about two predators – bald eagles and coyotes. By mid-January I saw the last eagle checking us out, but I'm still seeing huge fresh coyote tracks in the snow coming right up to the deck. Shortly, though, I'll know Tess will hold her own if one comes a-calling.

My last Shepherd, Gaia, had a fox as a friend and, one day, the two of them trotted down the full half-kilometre of my driveway together, before she sat down at the end of the driveway and refused to cross the road, despite enticing invitational barks from the fox.

Yes, training Tess is exhausting and there are times when I reach the end of my patience; then, I have to control myself. Everybody who has raised kids knows exactly what I'm talking about! You love them to pieces most of the time, but occasions arise when murder is forefront in your mind.

I am relying on the history of my relationships with my four previous Shepherds and daring to believe that everything will work out just fine in the end.

LAST WORDS

Every time I begin to write and choose photographs for a letter, I invariably think of many different people – around the world – who subscribe and whom I have met once or many times, but I also imagine the woman in Mississippi or the man in Brazil about whom I know nothing, except that they like to receive my letters. You are a community to me, and you help me to determine what I write about and to select the images. Thank you for your interest and your support. It matters!

(I'd like to note that although this letter is something of a hodge-podge, it isn't any longer than my previous ones, because even though there are more pages, there are no hyperlinks for you to click on this time!)



Imaginer, rêver, créer! Stel jou voor, droom, skep! Imagine, dream, create!

FREEMAN

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