

# IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

*Periodical Letter #45*  
*November 2025*

from  
**FREEMAN PATTERSON**



*Wild apples, late November, Shampers Bluff*

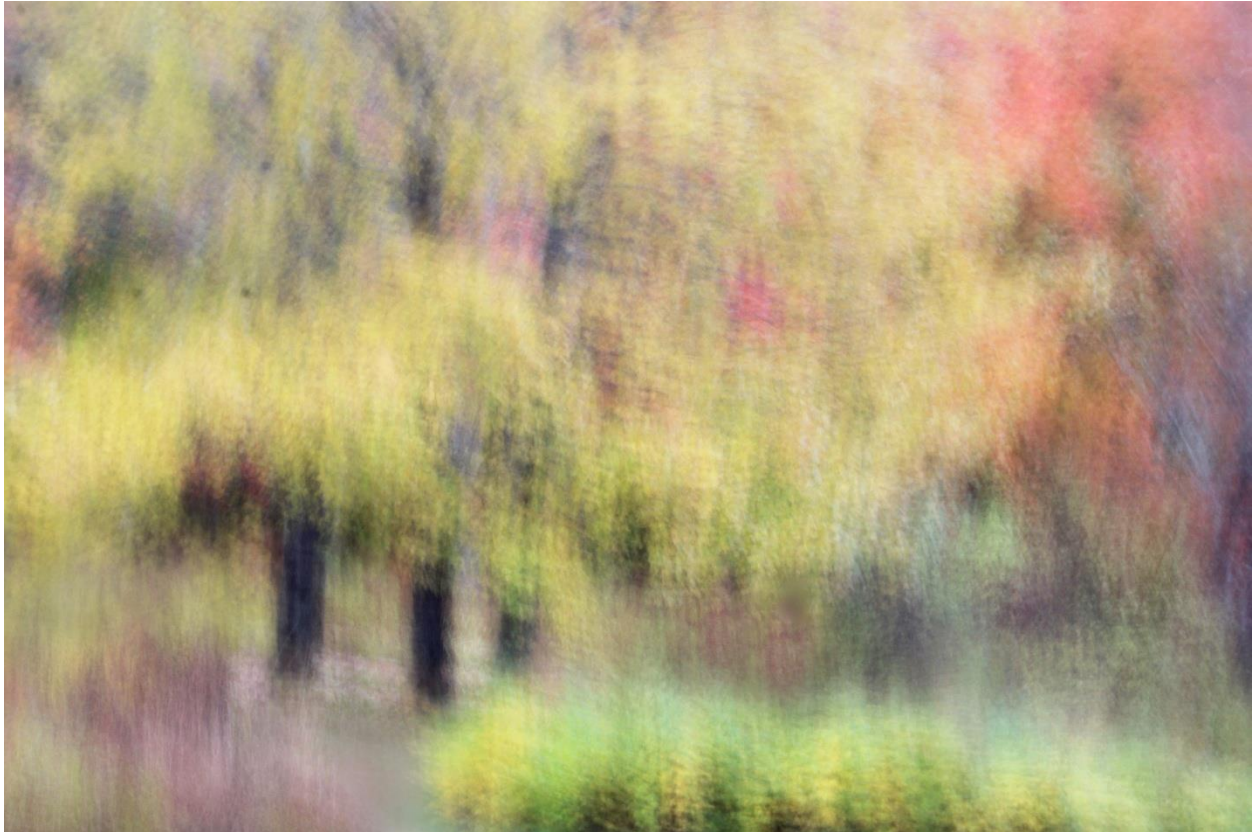
**I love November. The fields and forests of Shampers Bluff are ensembles of desaturated browns, purples, and greys studded unexpectedly with lingering patches of yellow, orange, and red. Some years wild apples, yet to fall for foraging deer, a bear about to hibernate, or for me to simmer into apple sauce, hang like ornaments, precursors of the season soon to follow.**



**It's a time of year that I become especially aware of textures, such as the weaves of grey branches. Texture, defined in two-dimensional design as the weave or fabric-like nature of surfaces, has enormous visual and emotional impact for me. While texture is an important element in many paintings, as it can also refer to surface roughness, this building block of visual design is seldom discussed by photographers, perhaps because it is always an illusion. There is no surface roughness to a TV monitor or most projector screens and little on most print surfaces.**

**I've come to realize that the reason I pay so much attention to textures is that they are always "integrated," woven together loosely or tightly in important ways, and thus function for me as a symbol of integration. Being integrated, able to balance all of one's fabulous experiences, horrible experiences, and the normal experiences of every day, is the challenge of the latter part of my life and, I suspect, everyone's.**

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**Most of the time our actions have a purpose. We set out to go somewhere or to do something in particular. However, whether we live in the city or the country, I think it's important to wander aimlessly from time to time.**

**The whole point of such a stroll is to let things come to you, not the other way around. Having a purpose in mind is often like putting on a set of horse blinders – you see the road ahead, but you miss the daisies blooming in the ditch.**

**If I hadn't gone sauntering forth with no schedule and nothing particular in mind one morning three weeks ago, I'd never have made the picture above. I usually hang a camera over my shoulder, but most people would take their phone instead (turned off, I hope, if you're wandering aimlessly.)**

**The yellowish trees and shrubs were an accidental find that arrested me in my tracks. After a long pause to appreciate their beauty I made a couple of documentary shots, but the soft interplay of pastel hues made me realize that I could express my feeling more effectively if I used a gentle intentional camera movement (ICM).**

**Did I succeed on my first try? No, I did not. However, I could visualize the effect that I wanted and achieved it on the fourth or fifth try. Then I became aimless again and after an hour realized that I'd traversed less than a kilometre. My blinders had come off.**

**Another aimless wander yielded the two very different pictures on the following page. If I'd been intent on "getting" somewhere, I'd have missed them completely.**



In my previous (August) periodical letter I wrote about my imminent return to South Africa, my 50<sup>th</sup> trip, and mentioned that I'd be making two presentations to the annual national congress of the Photographic Society of South Africa, being held this year at Struisbaai, near the southern tip of the continent. Then I'd be heading north about 600 km. to Kamieskroon in the heart of Namaqualand, where the annual spectacular spring display of nearly 4000 species of wildflowers would be underway.

I can tell you now that neither part of my trip was a disappointment in any way. The congress co-chairs, Nicol and Trudi du Toit, hosted me at their home in Cape Town for a couple of days before we drove southeast to Struisbaai, the site of the congress, shared their accommodation with me there, and then drove me to Kamieskroon when the congress concluded. I will never forget their kindness to me and happily count them as two new friends.

The congress provided me with the opportunity to meet many participants of the workshops I conducted in Namaqualand with Colla Swart between 1983 and 2006 and other old friends, as well as meeting many other photographers from around the country.

As everybody in South Africa is at least bilingual and because a great deal of Afrikaans was spoken at the congress, I found my comprehension improving quickly (an annual occurrence) and after my weeks in Namaqualand with my good friends Maryna and Helmut, I was often speaking it myself at least briefly before I boarded the flight for home. For whatever reason I have found the fundamentals of the language, e.g., grammar and sentence structure, much easier to acquire than I found those of French.

However, Afrikaans is the world's most recent modern language and is greatly simplified in a number of ways. For one thing it has ditched the unnecessary use of the masculine and feminine, common to all the Romance languages. No need to learn that a cup ("une tasse" in French) is feminine and a glass is masculine ("un verre.") I often wonder who decided that gender needed to be assigned to objects and why, but I know it happened long ago, as I studied Latin in both high school and university.

I took the picture below at Cape Agulhas, the southern tip of Africa. To the left is the Indian Ocean, to the right is the Atlantic and, if you go straight ahead, you'll eventually reach Antarctica. Good luck!





*A view of the Indian Ocean, Cape Agulhas*

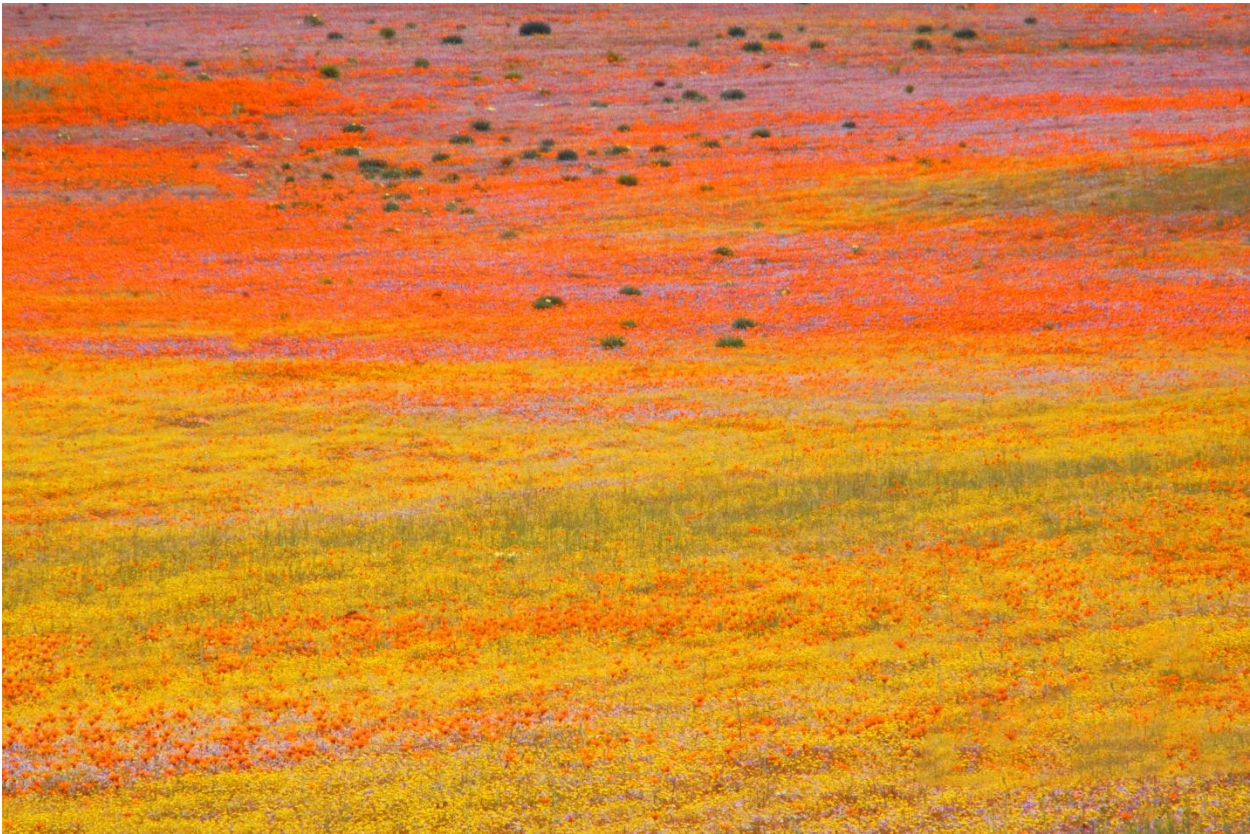


*A view of the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Agulhas*

On the drive from Cape Town to Struisbaai and when leaving the area for Namaqualand, we passed through vast fields of yellow canola and, as you'll guess, stopped more than a few times to make photographs.



And then came Namaqualand!





Identifying all the Namaqualand picture files I want to process and then processing them will be a late autumn and winter project. Then I'll hit the delete button and say goodbye to all the rest. When it comes to editing images, both my photographic teaching partner, André Gallant, and I ask the same question, "Will I ever use this photograph for anything?" If the answer is "No," then away it goes.

Editing, of course, tells us as much about ourselves as the subject matter we choose to photograph and how we go about photographing it. This is especially true when we are editing images that we have made entirely for ourselves – not for a client, a competition, nor a contest.

Meanwhile, I'm cooking. Mostly I'm creating (inventing sometimes) soups and chowders that I'm popping into my big freezer to be ready for late fall and winter visitors. Yesterday it was fish chowder. Today it's corn chowder, a bit unlike any other corn chowder I've made before, but then I never repeat recipes exactly, because they're mostly in my head.

I'm fluent in microwave, having dragged my stove out of the kitchen 41 years ago, because it was using too much electricity, and I've never replaced it. A large microwave, a crockpot, and a toaster oven (which I seldom use) handle everything. To my mind there's a kind of parallel between cooking with a microwave and making photographs with a cell phone. No stove, no camera!

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ZACH BUSH four-minute workout: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwJCJToQmps>

With winter approaching in the northern hemisphere, here's the link (again) to a short workout that you can do anytime, anywhere to help you keep fit. Actually, if you can't complete it in less than four minutes at first, you'll soon be able. Personally, I'm adding five or six stretch exercises every day and at least 15 minutes on my treadmill.

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## THOUGHTS ABOUT WORKSHOPS

During the Covid pandemic Zoom and similar platforms provided good learning opportunities and they still do. However, two recent workshops with my photographic teaching partner, André Gallant, once more made abundantly clear that an on-line workshop doesn't begin to compare with an on-site workshop as a learning experience for both the participants and the instructors.

Nearly every morning before sunrise most participants were on the Bay of Fundy beach across the road from our residence, the St. Martins Country Inn, and André was there – with ideas, suggestions, demonstrations, and practical tips. The quality of the images was stunning, both the documentary ones and those for which the maker had employed some form of intentional camera movement.

In addition to the daily lectures/presentations by André and me, there was a morning field trip every day and, after lunch, all the participants processed their picture files together at a long table – a major learning situation that an on-line workshop cannot provide.

Then came the daily evaluation, each person submitting three or four images for comments by André and me, whose basic approach is to identify what the maker did well and to suggest possible improvements. Everybody sees these photographs, hears our comments, and may ask questions or make comments of their own. Then it's time for a glass of wine, a beer, or more picture-making before dinner, which is usually a pandemonium of conversation and laughter. Invariably, a community quickly develops around a common interest, including at meals.

For the instructors there's also a huge beneficial difference between on-line and on-site workshops. Workshop participants energize André and me; they help us to be better instructors, which they do not only in the classroom, but in the field, at meals, and in private and group conversations. Both André and I feel this strongly in both our shared workshops and the smaller ones we facilitate alone.

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**“Relationship and connectedness are the pre-condition for change. Every meeting, every process, every training program has to get people connected first. Otherwise the content falls on deaf ears.”** *Peter Block*

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## WORKSHOPS 2026

(For full details, please see [www.freemanpatterson.com](http://www.freemanpatterson.com))

**INSCAPE (12 participants) – with David Maginley, Margery Nea, and Freeman Patterson**  
St. Martins Country Inn, St. Martin's, N.B.  
arrive Sun. June 21, depart Sun. June 28

**ARTISTS RETREAT (6-8 participants) – with Freeman Patterson**  
Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts, Kingsbrae Garden, St. Andrews, N.B.  
arrive Fri. July 24, depart Thurs. July 30

**PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL DESIGN (12 participants) – with André Gallant and Freeman Patterson**  
St. Martins Country Inn, St. Martins N.B.  
arrive Sun. Sept. 13, depart Sat. Sept. 19

**ARTISTS RETREAT (6-8 participants) – with Freeman Patterson**  
Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts, Kingsbrae Garden, St. Andrews, N.B.  
arrive Sun. Oct. 4, depart Sat. Oct. 10

**AUTUMN (12 participants) - with André Gallant and Freeman Patterson**  
St. Martins Country Inn, St. Martins N.B.  
arrive Sun. Oct. 11, depart Sat. Oct.17

**ONE-DAY WORKSHOPS (1-3 participants) – with Freeman Patterson**  
Freeman's home, Shampers Bluff, N.B.  
November through April, August (exact date determined by participants and Freeman)



*Breakfast and lunch nook, St. Martins Country Inn*



*Livingroom, Kingsbrae International Residency for the Arts*

**Thank you all for a wonderfully memorable year – for your letters, for your enthusiastic participation in workshops, for contributing to the variety and richness of my trip to South Africa, for providing and helping out with musical events in my garden, for the more than 100 vendors in the local Kingston Farmers Market and all the conversations I’ve had there while eating my Saturday morning Korean vegetable pancake, for good friends of all ages both at home and around the world. I can’t begin to name you all, but I thank you all – deeply.**

***Merci à tous pour une année merveilleusement mémorable – pour vos lettres, pour votre participation enthousiaste aux ateliers, pour avoir contribué à la variété et à la richesse de mon voyage en Afrique du Sud, pour avoir aidé à organiser des événements musicaux dans mon jardin, pour les plus de 100 vendeurs au marché fermier local de Kingston et toutes les conversations que j’y ai eues en mangeant mon petit déjeuner du samedi, une crêpe coréenne aux légumes, pour les bons amis de tous âges à la maison et dans le monde entier. Je ne peux pas commencer à vous nommer tous, mais je vous remercie tous – profondément.***

**Beste wense, almal**

**À tous, mes meilleurs vœux**

**My best wishes to all**

**FREEMAN**

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