

Pix to Words

Issue One ~ August 2018

Harmony in Word and Form

Featuring photographs,
short stories and poetry
from the August/September
show at Gallery Bistro...
...and a little bit more!



The official magazine of PixToWords.com

Harmony In Word and Form

*An exhibition of photographs and abstractions
Accompanied by the poems and stories they inspired
Selected from the blog, Pix to Words
PixToWords.com*

Gallery Bistro

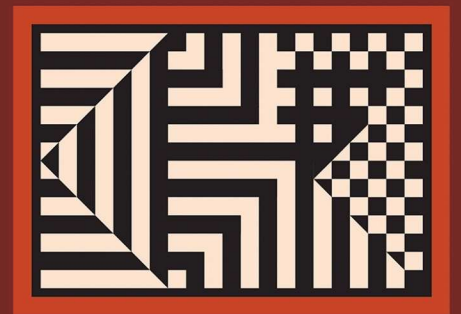
*August 22nd to
September 30th*

*Opening Reception
August 25th, 2-4pm*

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GalleryBistro

Pix to Words

Issue One ~ Fall 2018

Patrick Jennings:

Wrote, photographed, edited designed,
published and otherwise sweat buckets to
pull this magazine together ~ in two days.

And, yeah, that's him over there --->

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Inversion

Temperature

inversion,

a reversal of

the normal

behaviour

*of temperature
in the troposphere
(the region of the
atmosphere nearest the
Earth's surface),*

in which a layer of cool

air at the surface

is overlain by a layer of [hot]

warmer air.

(

Under

normal conditions

air temperature

usually decrease

s with height.

)



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www.PixToWords.com

Old Man Rock

Old Man Rock
He sits there watching
Spinifex and gum trees
Emu and the wallabies

Old Man Rock
He's steady-on
I sit upon him
Wondering

At all that is
And ever was
And what it means
And what becomes

I watch with him
As grasses bend
In gusty wind
When this he says to me

*The grasses and the emu die
They come and go
They're just like you
Ephemeral*

*Like cold and heat
Like sun and rain
In cycles
All repeating*

To this I say
*Time chips away
It wears you down
It's weather's way*

But Rock just laughs
Then heaves a sigh
He looks at me
Then says (no lie)

*Earth I am
Will always be*

*Sure, wind and rain
Do weather me
Knock the stone
Right offa me*

*Then grind the stone
Into the earth
But, sand I'll be
Which, still, is Earth*

*Then, soon enough
The crush of time
Returns me to
This state of mine*

*While all that lives
Soon turns to dust
Becomes the Earth
As all things must*

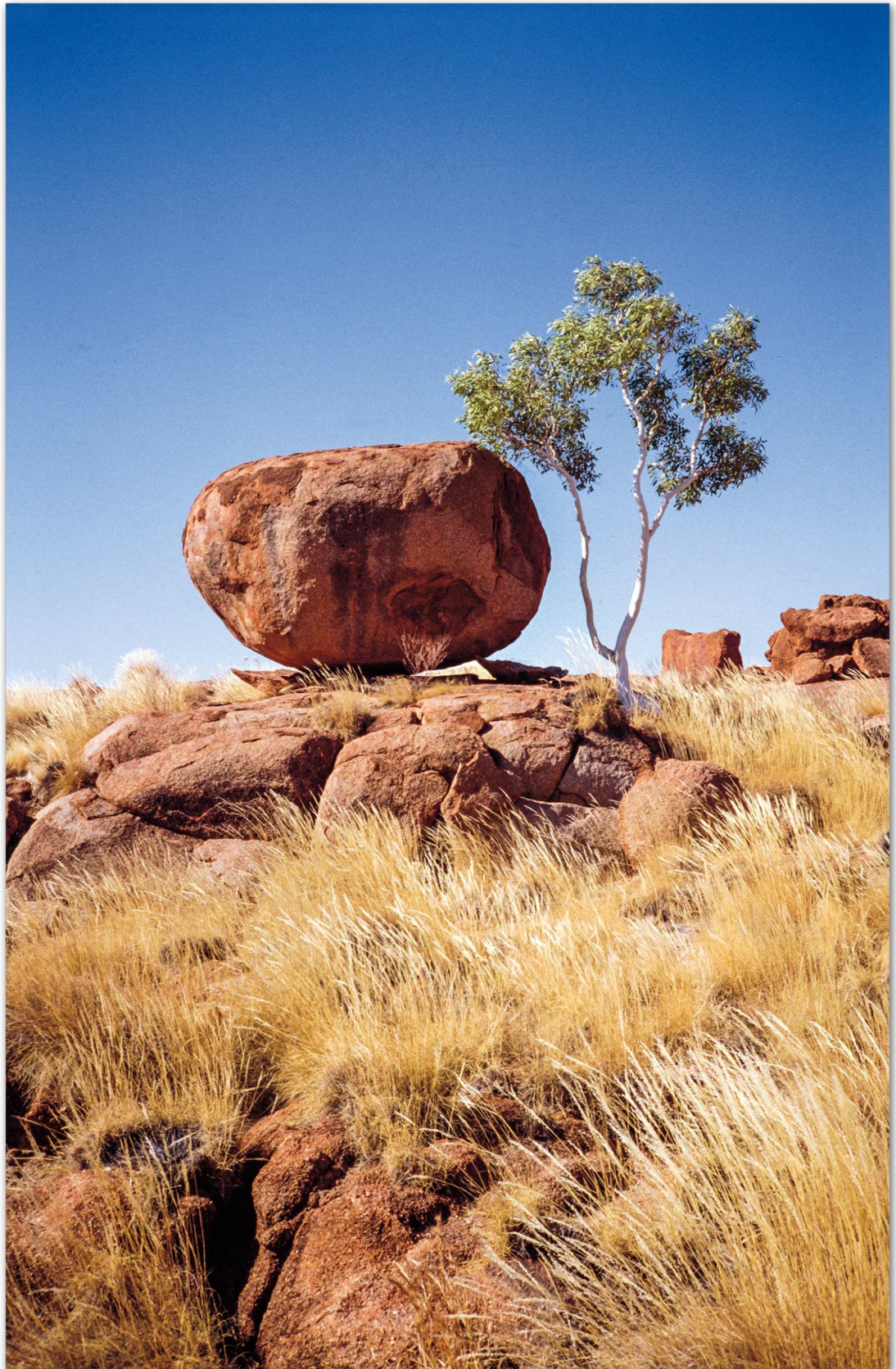
*So when you die
You'll someday see
A part of you
Transforms to me*

*Then time, my friend
Permit its work
Will grind us down
Time does not shirk*

*It lays us out
To be consumed
By living things
It's what you do*

*And there's the rub
All cycles turn
So what is me
May soon be you*

*But what is you
Is always me*



Devil's Marble ~ Devils Marble, Northern Territory, Australia, 1994

I Linger in Places of Power

I linger
In places of power

Quell my ego
Quell my mind

They both fear
Whatever is greater than they

In the quiet
Listen for the resonance within

There I find
That same power



The Twelve Apostles ~ Great Ocean Road, Victoria, Australia, 1995

All I Know



Coal Harbour Sunset ~ Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

I often wonder
If the city is
The beauty it seems to me
Or perhaps some
Unmitigated tragedy

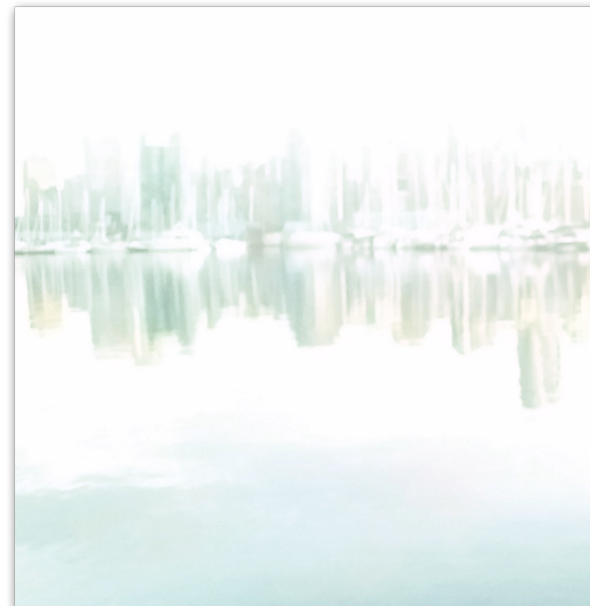
A grand delusion
At the end of a road
A wrong fork taken
Many aeons ago

Was I really meant
To live this way?
Were we?

It's all I know
But is it

All I can know?

Never Night



City of Ghosts

On a world
Forever bright
Never night
The ever-present suns
Bear down
Hammers on
An anvil

Evanescent



Himalayan Foothills Sunrise ~ Rishikesh, India, 2017



Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2015

Blessed shade and gloom
In an existence
Which fears the light
Grateful for each eclipse
Beauty in the shadows
Mystery in the illumined
Too bright for eyes to see

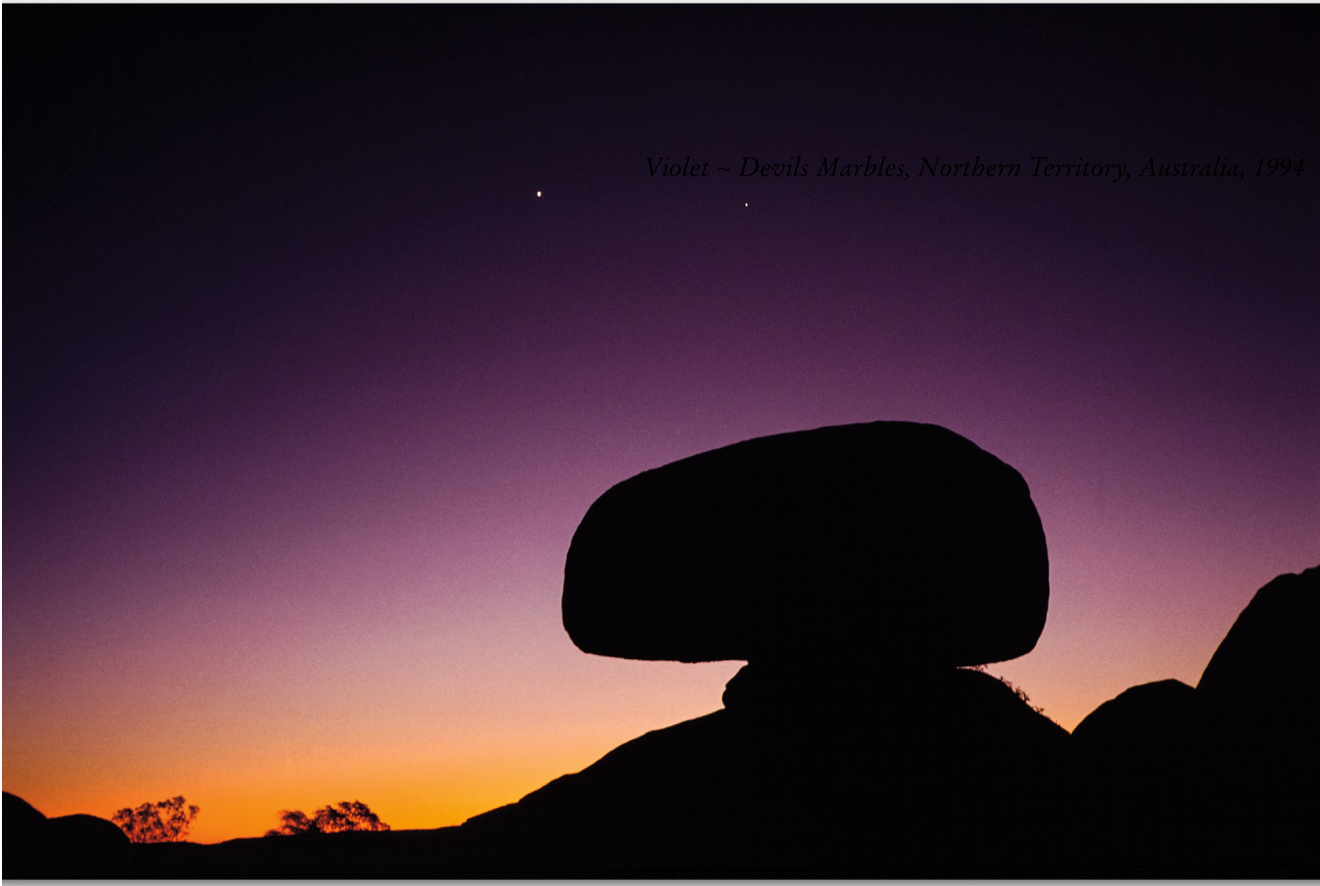
Celestial cyclic moment
With every day arise
As starlight crests horizon
Seeking eastern skies

Awakened human spirit
A grace divine replies

The night is done
New day is come

I breathe in deep
Exhale a grateful sigh

Violet



The violet
Behind my eyes
Followed on
The indigo
Which followed still
The cobalt blue
Where once was just
Obsidian

From the black
My spirit rose
Found the path
Where current flows
The energy
Connects us all
And me to me
The deepest part
I come to know
In violet light
Is bathed

Old Wood Cool

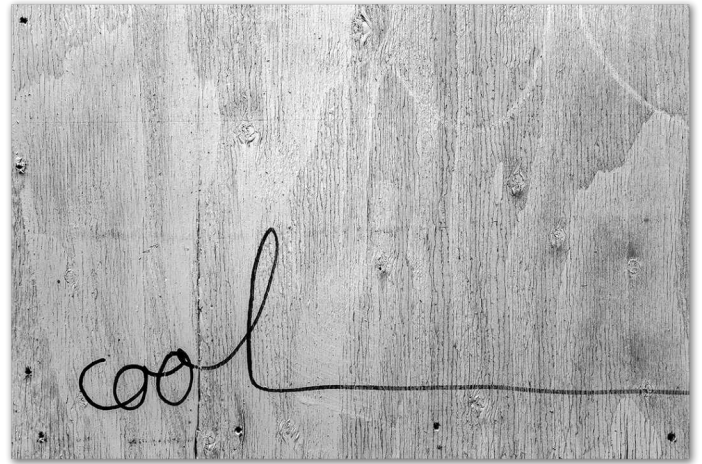
He was old wood cool
Rugged, lined and beautiful
Someone people clung to
Like paint

He didn't choose his friends
Everyone was welcome
And he played no favourites
But few weathered well in his company
Most faded quickly
In that radiant presence

I loved the bastard
And hated him
How could anyone be so goddamn perfect
Yet completely unaware of it
Devoid of ego
Completely naive
To the power he wielded
Over everything he touched
Over anyone who fell under his gaze
Over any room he walked into

He loved everyone
And everyone loved him
Even those who hated him
Who nonetheless
Felt like better human beings
In his presence
Only to suffer an aching longing
As soon as he moved on to the next thing
Which was all too often

In the end
I couldn't keep up
Fell to the wayside
Like so many other bits
Of chipped paint
Feeling a hollowness
Which his presence
Would never fill again
I could never feel fulfilled
Again



Cool on White-Washed Plywood, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2016

Cool on White- Washed Plywood

Cool
It said.

Cool
On a white-washed sheet of rough plywood
In a back alley
Beside railroad tracks
On the Vancouver waterfront.

Cool
In a loose, easy hand
With a black Sharpie
A long trailing line running like an afterthought
Like a question mark.

Remnants of the Storm

Caught up in the gloom
She went to the shore
Black rock
Charcoal sea
Flat grey sky

A scene to fit her mood
Remnants of a storm in passing

The waves, still high
Thrashed the shore
Flashes of brightness
In the monochromatic bleak

It occurred to her
Something needed to change



Remnants of a Storm ~ Amphitrite Point, Ucluelet, British Columbia, Canada, 2018

Beyond the Edge



Beyond Horizon's Edge ~ Amphitrite Point, Ucluelet, British Columbia, Canada, 2018

She came here, beyond the edge, because she was beyond the edge. Here, she could look straight into the tumult, because it was not her tumult, not her upheavals, not her crashing into the walls. These waves bashing on the rocks were not her endless tragedies.

Though she would spend hours looking into the churning ocean like it was her own life, she always left here calm. For a little while, she would be armoured. She would be like the stone the waves fell upon, jagged and broken, but not brittle. When he came at her, when her liquored father brought the thunder, all she would hear is water dashed upon stone. When she knew the hand was coming, all she could see was the spray of water caught in the wind.

No matter how hard the water fell upon the shoreline, the shore never broke. The water thundered and splashed, but then it just drained away in rivulets between the jagged armour of implacable stone.

Inside the edge, she was the stone. She had to be stone.



The Retreat



The Retreat ~ Amphitrite Point, Ucluelet, BC, Canada, 2017



She retreated
Not because the waves
Had come perilously close
Nor because the wind
Made it difficult to stand

She retreated because she had come
To feel the tumult of the ocean
To feel the battering of the wind
To feel the beauty of violence

Without consciousness
This is why she came here
And for a while
It was beautiful
And calming

But the rain came
Spattering drops
Running down her cheeks
Salty with sea spray
When she licked her lips
They tasted just like tears

She was reminded of the pain
Of the betrayal
And of the cold in his eyes

So she retreated

She ran
With no where to run to
She ran

Serrated Edge

I walk along serrated edge
Just beyond the tumult's grasp
Not retreating, no
Nor taking up the task
Of hushing life's cruel whispers
Caught between my courage
And despair
A darkness near enveloping

So stop
Take stock
Find firm footing
And there turn
Full face
Into all that comes
Lick the salt
Upon my lips
And savour
All strange beauty
In the bitterness

In the buffeting
Accomp'nying
Chaos roar
Find the rhythm
Find in it, rhyme
Find the way
Down to the shore
Where havoc plays
Which wrested out
My inner joy

Stand tall
Stand firm
Become a god
Shout out into it

Face the demons down
Will them back
For the storm
Is naught but breeze
Whipped into
Such swirling frenzy
By my fearful mind

Now show it light
And strength of heart
Dispel the darkness
And all it wrought

Then in the calm
Which falls upon
This gentle shore
Remind the mind





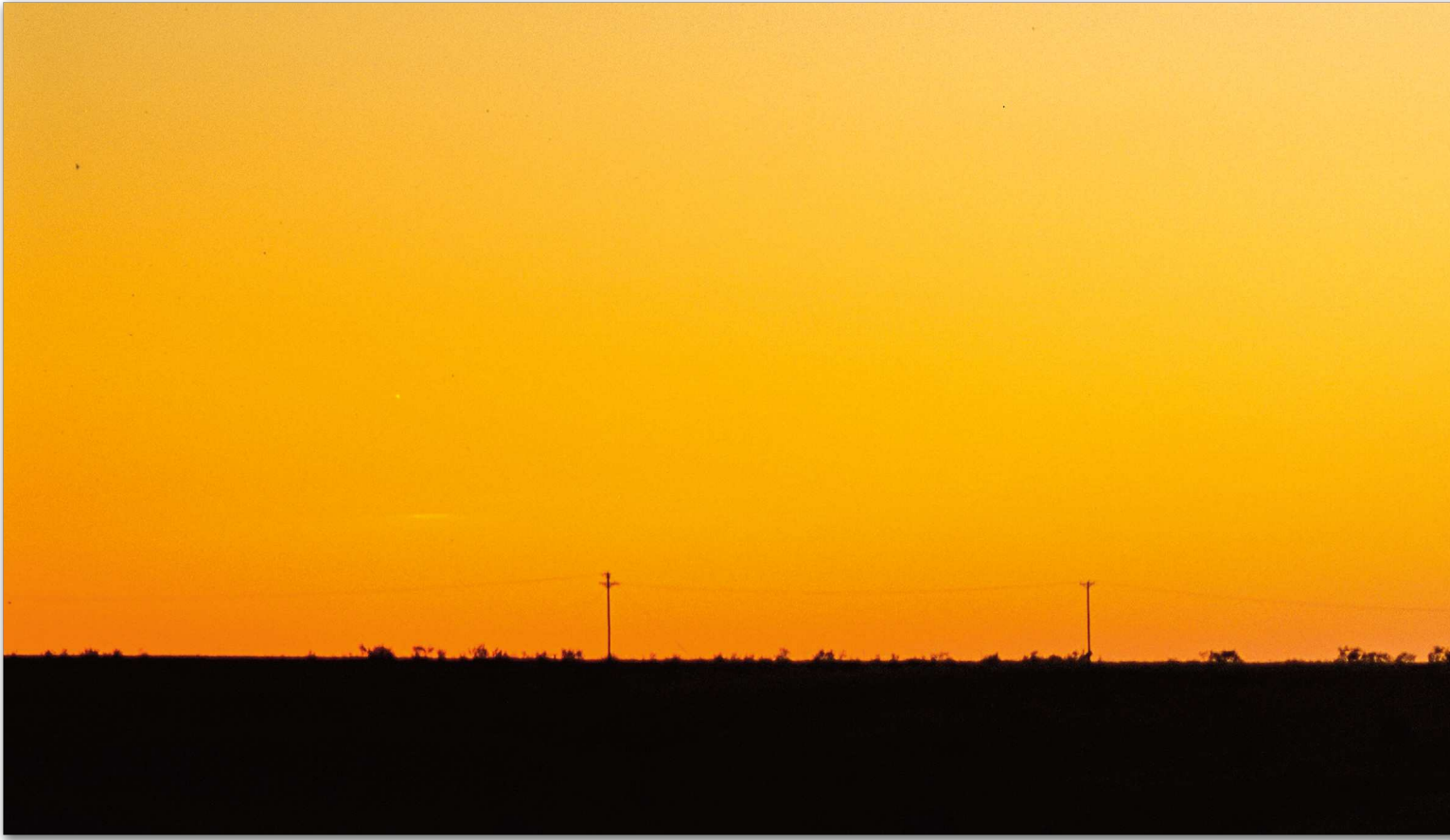
Serrated Edge ~ Amphitrite Point, Ucluelet, BC, Canada, 2017

*See, what all you feared?
Was just frail ego's tale
You thought to tell
And I took as real
When all along
My heart was true
Strong with spirit
Unconfused*

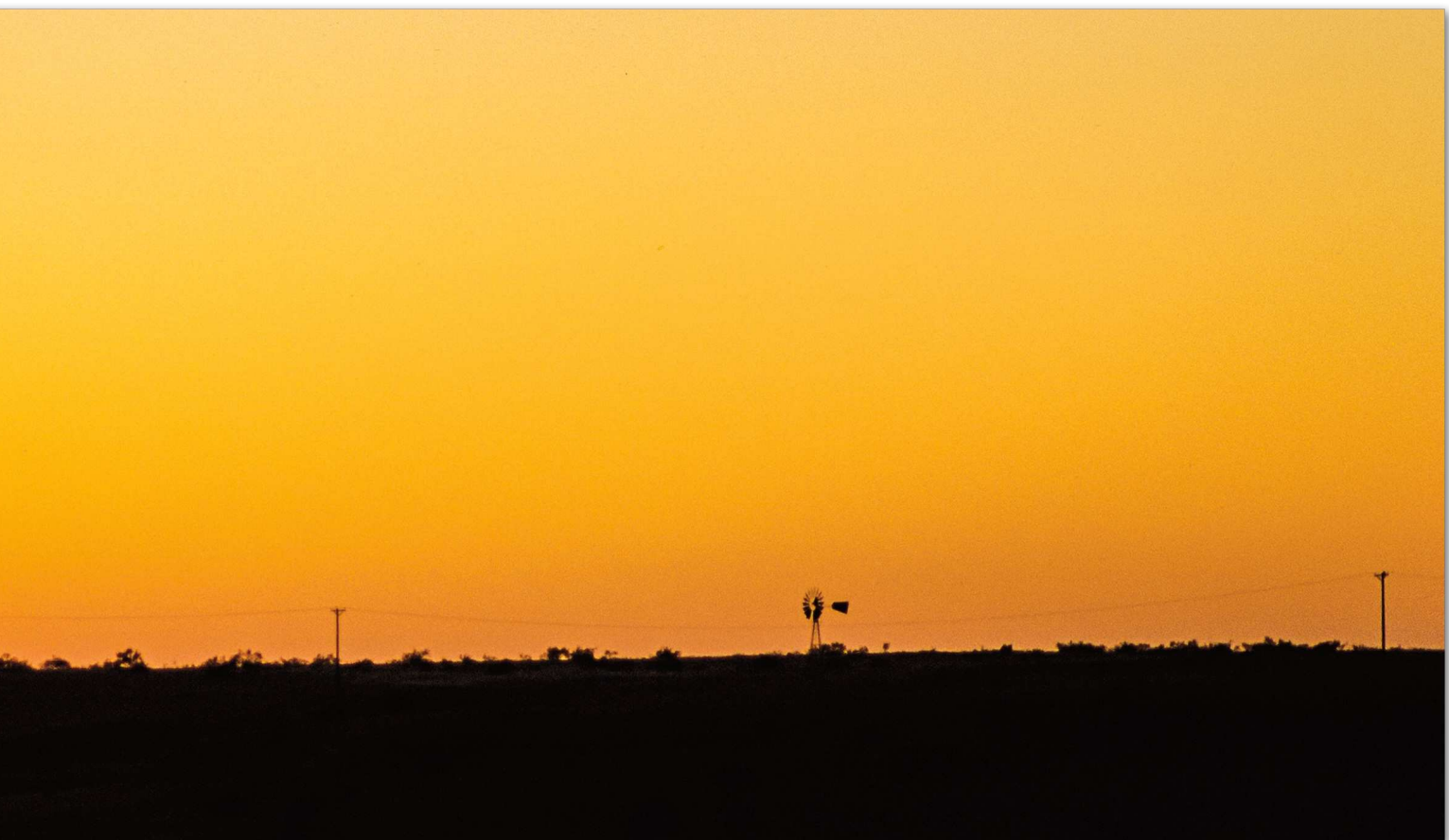
*Remember this
Next time the seas do rise
To crash upon your rocky shore
It's in you, mind
But not in me
Then sing this song
Again to we*

*Stand tall
Stand strong
Become the god
Who sings this song
Within your heart*

Canary, Amber and Orange



Under a sky
So ridiculously
Canary, Amber and Orange
My presence seems
To be the true miracle



Canary and Amber ~ Near Alanreed, Texas, USA, 1997

How is it possible
There is such glory
In this universe
And how improbable is it
That I am its witness?

Perception



Through a lens
I see the world

With filters
Adding colours
With thinking
Adding meanings

Until the world I see
Looks little like
The world that is

Which world is best
I cannot say

Mittens ~ Near Mexican Hat, Utah, United States of America, 1996

Through a lens
I see the world

With filters
Adding colours
With thinking
Adding meanings

Until the world I see
Looks nothing like
The world that is

Which world is best
I cannot say

I see only the one
The world that is to me

The Quality of Light



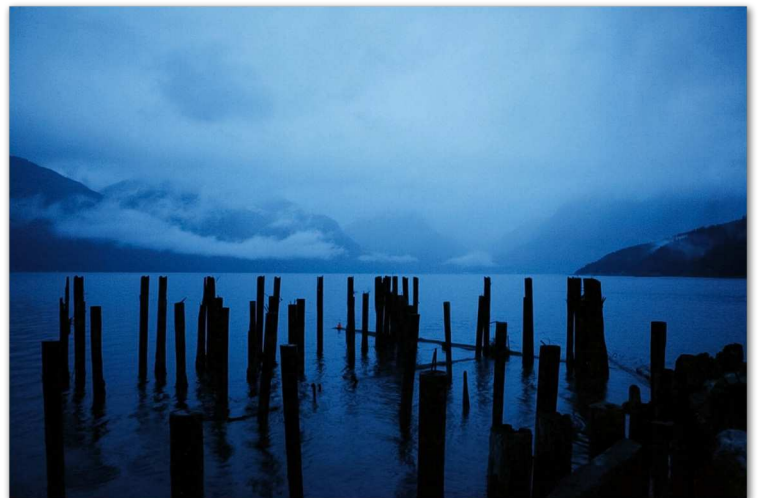
There are colours in the sky
I had never seen
And patterns in the world
I could never know

Until I looked through a lens
Clicked the shutter
And took the latent image home
To explore the possibilities

Light is an extraordinary quality
But I did not really understand that
Until I began manipulating it
As a quantity

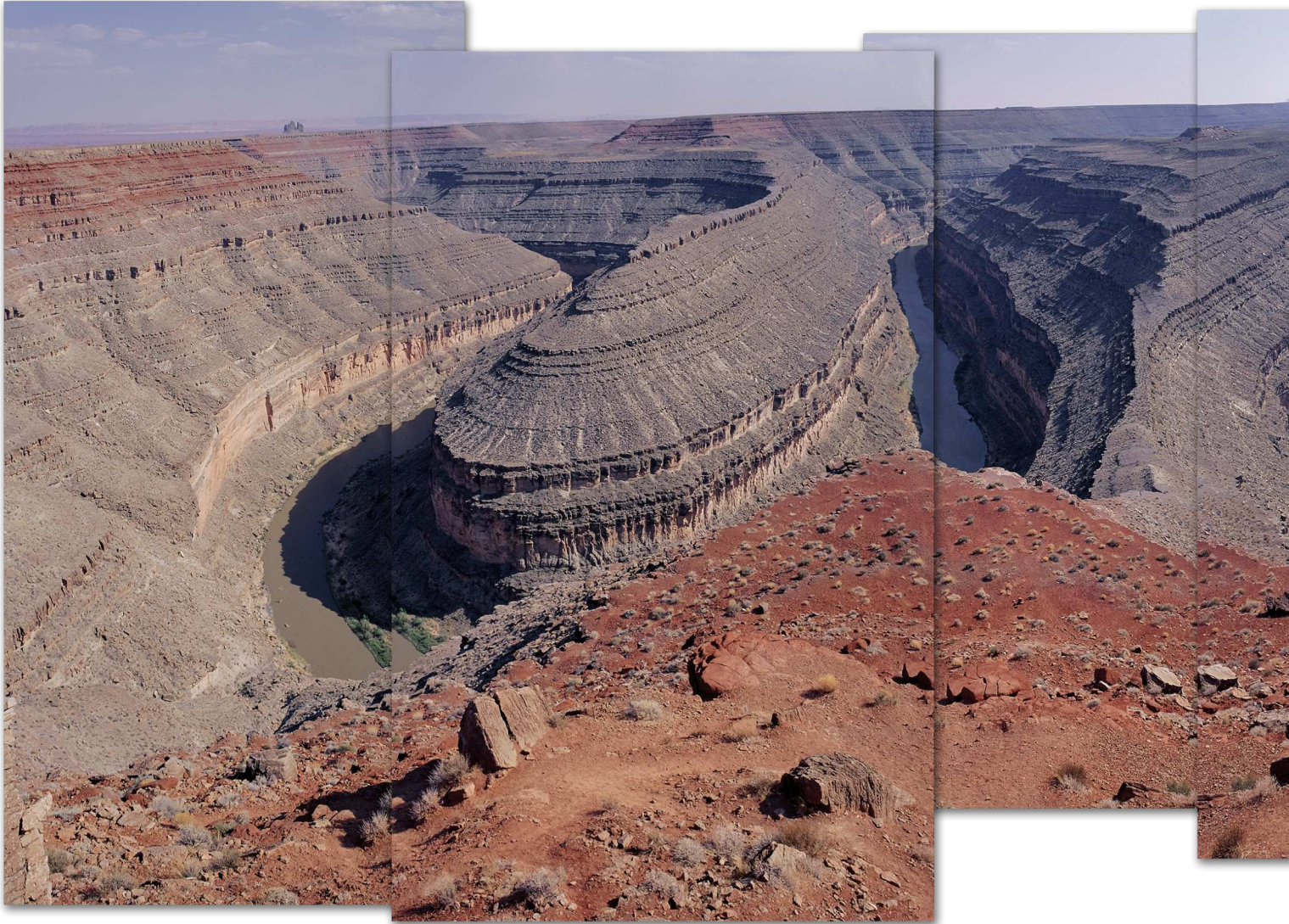
Measuring Time

I measure time
Not in terms of history
But by how much
I have left to do



Measuring Time, Britannia Beach, BC, Canada, 2016

Trust the Flow



*I make my way
Down winding path*

*Though much I seem
To go astray*

*Just trust the flow
To lead the way*



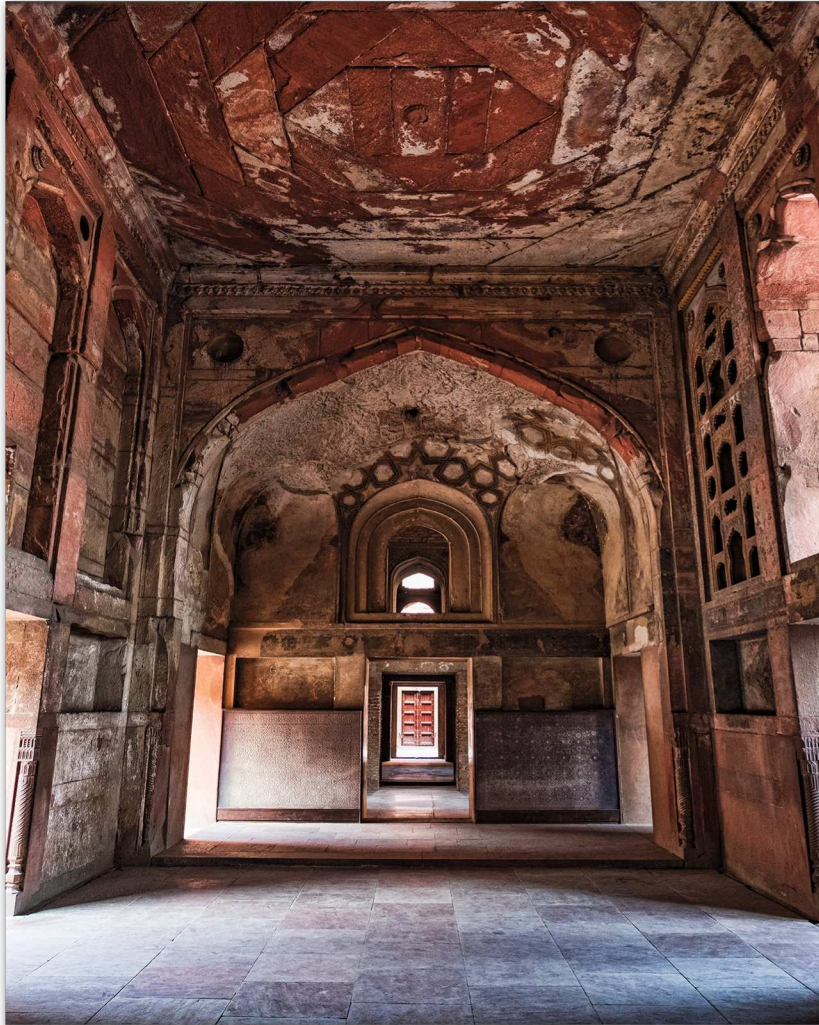
Goosenecks State Park ~ Utah, USA, 1996

*So long as I
Keep steady craft*

*Row with the main
And level stay*

*I'll reach the calm
Upon this raft*

Edifice



Empty Chamber ~ Red Fort, Agra, India, 2017

An edifice
After some time elapsed
Like bones
Stripped bare by desert sun

Hints at
Beauties lushly graced
Forever lost
Long stripped away

So close my eyes
To fill the space
With grandeurs from
Another time

An Artistic Encounter with Nature

Photographs



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Wonder, p. 30



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Stories & Poems

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In a magical place on a magical afternoon I discovered nature's artistry on a shallow beach. The dark grey-green sand served as canvas for a dance of lighter flecks as the waves gently cajoled them into wondrous patterns. My muse for the day, Chesterman Beach.

For the gallery exhibit, these photographs were arranged as above on the wall. The book, *An Artistic Encounter with Nature*, accompanied them to provide the stories and poems they inspired.

An Artistic Encounter With Nature

“Let me paint for you,” she said.

“Ummm, yeah. Yeah!” I stammered as what she was suggesting sank in with increasing gravity.

“Yeah! That would be awesome!”

She nodded, “Good.” Then rose from the wicker chair, grabbing her mug of rich, dark aromatic tea from the small table between us.

She’d seen me photographing the waves and rocks, and her home perched high up on the rocks. I was quite thirsty and graciously accepted the offer of tea she called down to me from above.

We’d talked for hours, as morning turned to lunch, (which she made for me with ingredients fresh from her garden) and then, hours later, to another round of tea. We’d talked about photography, about art, about beauty. She was remarkably well versed in art history, in aesthetics, in how to set a frame so the elements within it worked in harmony, to create beauty and meaning.

After lunch, she’d let it slip that she was a painter, herself. And of some renown, though I’d never heard of her before. “I’m very popular within the Folk Art movement,” she demurred. I had just asked if she would show me some of her work. Instead, I was going to have the treat of watching as she created it. Wonderful!

Now she rose with a regal grace, an effortless gravity, the mug wrapped snugly between the palms and fingers of both hands. She drew it close to her breast, as if she were lovingly cradling an infant. In retrospect, I really can’t be sure if it was so she could feel its warmth, or whether the force of her presence was keeping the tea warm.

She was five stately strides away by the time I snapped out of my reverie, hastily pushed my chair back and reached for the mug I’d been sipping from for the past half hour. Strangely, it was still full, and vapour curls caught the sunlight.

“You won’t need that.”

What? She hadn’t looked back...

“Just bring your camera,” she finished, then began lightly and confidently stepping down the rough rocky descent to the beach below.

I grabbed my camera from its bag and hurried to catch up. She was halfway to the sand by the time I reached the edge, where I shouted down over the sound of the crashing waves, “I thought we’d be going into the house!?”

“Why would we do that?” She replied, in the same soft husky whisper she’d used moments ago while sitting across from me at the table. It reached my ears easily, a sonorous song which touched me as though the song had been written and sung only for me.

In just a few more steps, she reached the beach and stopped. A dozen or so heartbeats later, I realized I’d stopped as well, and she was probably waiting for me. I started the awkward and somewhat risky downclimb, clutching the camera close to my chest while using the other hand to assist myself down the unruly rock.

Then I realized I hadn’t answered her question yet. “Isn’t your studio in your house?”

I nearly tumbled from the rocks to the sand, managing only just to get my feet under me, juggling the camera between both hands while staggering to stay upright. I came to a full stop about ten feet away from her, gathered myself up and faced her.

She shook a little with the tremors of soft, gentle laughter, the sweetest laugh I’d ever heard, bemused yet somehow loving, like when you see someone do something so damn kind you just want to smile and laugh at the perfection of the world. She was laughing not because I’d just reprised the full catalogue of physical comedy in my descent down the rock face, but because I’d done it with complete humanity, and stood before her with a sincere dignity.



Red Carapace and Sand ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

And so I laughed with her. The little laugh that's mostly in your eyes, and the way your mouth curves up on one side. The knowing laugh you share with someone known to you intimately for years, and years.

She looked at me. Looked *into* me. And winked. I wished right then in my heart that I had more than the one afternoon to spend with her.

God, she was a magnificent human being. Long grey hair cascading over one shoulder in a braid. Browned skin, taut yet wrinkled, drawn smoothly along the contours of finely chiseled features. But it wasn't the features that made her magnificent.

"Silly man," she said, then, throwing her arms out and up, "This is my studio!"

A lot of men might have been intimidated by her. I was. More than a little. And maybe some men would have been insulted, being called silly by a woman who intimidated them.

I wasn't.

What made her magnificent was her presence, her bearing. Some people just seem to belong in whatever place they are. She had all that, and more. It seemed like, well, she *was* the place. Not that she owned it or anything. Or that it existed

for her. But... it was there because of her.

That's powerful. That's presence. That's gravitas.

I wasn't insulted, because she wasn't belittling me. What she was saying was, "I'm going to show you something extraordinary, something exquisite, something you really, really do want to know." Don't ask me how I knew that. It was... apparent. There for anyone to see. There was no meanness in her. There was nothing so petty as a put-down in her, no desire to demean anyone.

"Come over here," she said, practically skipping to a section of the small, sandy beach below the high tide line, but above the point the waves were then reaching with the advancing tide. By the time I caught up with her, she was crouched down, on the balls of her feet, one hand on a knee, the other delicately tracing lines across the sand.

So I crouched beside her, watching. "Do you see the patterns?" she asked, still looking down at the sand. I looked down, where she was tracing figures, and for the first time noticed the sheen of lightly coloured sand resting on top of the denser slate grey sand. I'd thought the whole beach to be this deep, rich grey, but there was a light, glimmery sheen on top. More than that, there

were indeed delicate patterns formed by the lighter sand on its dark grey background.

And the darker sand, I noticed, it wasn't really grey at all. I mean, it was grey, but there was a deep green cast to it, like a twilight sage.

How did I not see all that? A trick of the light? A trick of my eye?

"Oh, come on," she prompted me again, "you *have* to see them."

"Oh! Yes! Yes, of course I see them."

"Aren't they beautiful? Aren't they just perfect?"

I looked for a moment. Saw sweeping lines formed by the lighter sand. Some dead straight. Some organic curves. And between the lines, light sand or dark sand filled in, creating patterns of darkness and light. Much of it was, indeed, beautiful in that way that nature is beautiful. But, some of the lines and shapes in the area she was gesturing toward seemed more chaotic to me. Discordant with the long sweeping arcs. There seemed to be no... harmony to it.

"Yes," I responded, "this over here would make a beautiful photograph."

"Oh yes!" She actually beamed at me. "You *do* have an eye! Why don't you take that photo?" So I lined up the frame, checked my meter settings and clicked the shutter. We both looked at the display screen. It really did look great.

She pointed to the discordant area. "Why don't you take that shot too?"

I looked at it again. Tilted my head sideways, looking for an angle I could frame something interesting. "I don't know. There doesn't seem to be anything there."

She smiled. The smile my favourite teacher



Nature's Beach 8 ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

used to give me whenever I had asked the right question in class, but didn't really understand what I'd just asked.

"Why not? Aren't there some shapes, and lines? Is there nothing at all beautiful in there?"

I thought about my answer. "I don't see any order there. It's a jumble. I like clean, precise lines. Complex is OK. But there's almost always something that seems mathematically perfect about a good line. Those lines are all chaotic."

She looked at me, thoughtfully. "I see what you mean by 'chaos'. That nobody has come up with a mathematical formula to describe what's going on when nature is at work. But do you really think that means it's not beautiful?"

"Yeah," I shrugged. "Isn't it the math that makes a line perfect, defines a shape that is beautiful?" I started into an explanation about the Fibonacci sequence, and bifurcation, and how these mathematical formulas could be used to describe the utter beauty and perfection of nature, but she interrupted me before I got very far.

"No. No no. It's the patterns that make the math perfect! It's nature that makes math

beautiful!”

I gave another shrug. “But if there’s no math, then there’s no order. No order, no art.”

That teacher smile again. “There is order in everything. If mathematicians can’t find that order, that just means they have something to learn. Just like you mister.” And on that note, she practically beamed. “No matter. If you can’t see it yet, there are other things I can paint for you.”

And with that a wave came through with a thin film of water, just enough to wipe away the patterns and rearrange the light sand into new patterns. The red carapace of a dead crab floated into the frame, adding a new colour and texture to the frame. As the water washed up by the wave drained away, I shot a couple new images while she watched, intent.

She actually “Oooh’ed, then smiled at me. “Nice shot!”

While another wave rolled through, changing the patterns again.

We kept this pattern up as wave after wave kept creating patterns for me to photograph. I couldn’t find beauty in all of them, but she would always assure me there was.

“The dark sand is the canvas, and the organics are the paint. The waves are the paint brush. So, every time a wave comes through that’s just me — I mean, nature — that’s just nature painting a new picture. And nature never paints an ugly picture. It’s always beautiful.”

When a new wave would “paint” a beauty I couldn’t see, she’d try to give me a perspective or an insight that would help me see it. And sometimes I would. So I was learning, a lot. Learning new ways of seeing.

My time for departure drew near, so we clambered up the rocks back to the house. Rather, I clambered while she seemed to glide through the sharp angularities with feline grace. By the time I’d breathlessly crested the top, she was waiting

with a large glass of water. Then just smiled as I drank it down between breaths.

Our conversation had grown increasingly casual, and we’d mixed in some topics that weren’t wholly about art. I was still curious about the white sand. Where did it come from? So, handing back the glass, I asked her.

“Oh, that’s not sand,” she said, holding up the crab carapace she must have picked up from the beach. “It’s shell. From crabs, and mussels, oysters and clams. Barnacles.”

“I had no idea!” I said, while packing my camera into its bag. Just about ready to leave.

But she wasn’t finished.

“Yes, it’s not sand but the ground up shells of thousands of animals. I guess, in a sense, thousands of animals had to die so I could paint for you today, so you could learn about what’s perfect, what’s beautiful.”

I stopped, and looked at her. “I’d never thought of it that way before.”

That smile again. It warmed me. I wondered what was coming.

“So what do you think that means for you? Does it make you want to do anything differently when you photograph?”

“Hmmm,” I thought. “I suppose I could express gratitude to those creatures. Thank them for offering me such beauty.”

The gentle laugh, again. “Well, yes. That too.”

Then she fixed me with a look deep into my eyes, deep into *me*. “What it really means is, *‘Don’t fuck it up!’*”

She held that look, held me to the depth of my core, for a number of uncomfortable seconds.

Then leaned back and laughed in a hearty guffaw. Even slapped me on the back.

We said our goodbyes. She gave me the most

wondrous of hugs, a kiss on the cheek and sent me on my way with a wave and a blown kiss.

I never did see her again. I went back to the area on another trip a few years later, and went to look her up. But she wasn't there anymore. There wasn't a house there. As far as I could tell, it didn't look like there ever had been.

But I still carry her with me. Or rather, she is in everything I see, everything I photograph. And

I'll never forget that last bit about not fucking it up.

I've tried to be authentic and sincere in my photography ever since. In my photography. In my art. In my life. And I'll never stop looking for beauty, the beauty in everything.

I must be doing OK. Something makes me think I'd be getting a visit if I wasn't.

The story continues with
The Seashell Nebula
on page 31

Patterns in the Chaos

I love finding
Patterns in chaos
When order emerges
From disorder

I try not to mind
Immersion into chaos
When the irregular
Overcomes the regular

These are all
Fundamental states of being
And who am I
To argue with reality

Rather, embrace them all
Find beauty in disorder
Perfection in the irregular
Peace in chaos



Patterns in the Chaos ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

Maelstrom

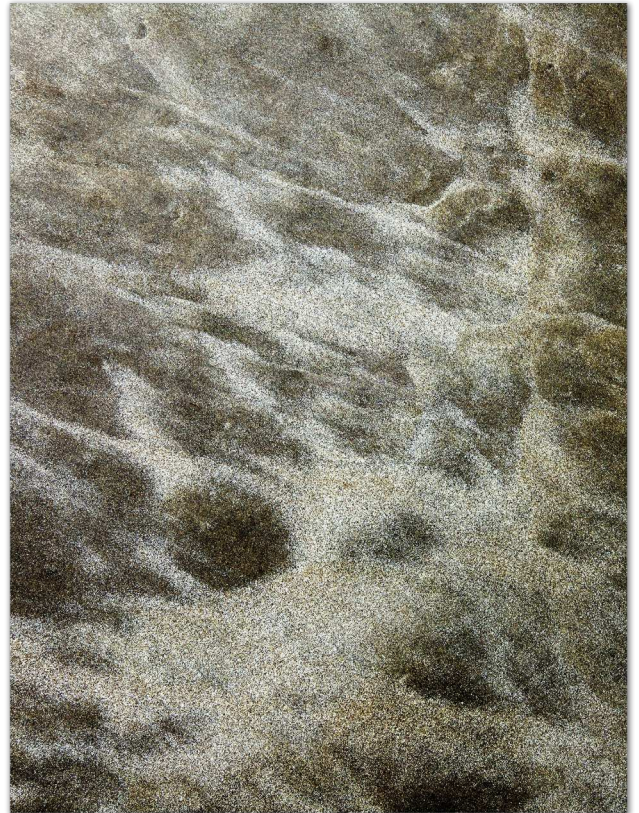
Caught in the maelstrom of thoughts
I am lost in a chaos of possibilities

So I breathe
Let go the thoughts
Dispelling
The chaos

Until I am conscious
Only of being

From there a single possibility arises
So I open myself
To the peace
Of non-being

Until the "I"
Drifts away, like my thoughts



Maelstrom ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

She Danced



She Danced ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

She danced
As if everyone was watching
And all they wanted
Was to see her dance

She danced
As if every word she'd ever spoken
Could be translated
To a gesture, a swirl, or a twirl

She danced
And all I knew was
I wanted to be there
On the dance floor

With her
Now
Forever

She Saw Them Dancing

In the moving sand
She saw them dancing
The elves and sprites
No one else saw
She found that sad

The world was a more beautiful place
When magical creatures danced
A shame no one else knew the magic
They didn't dance in this world

Of course, she knew that
She only saw their shadows
Energetic reflections
Crossing the boundary between worlds

"Whatcha doin' lady?"
The young boy's voice startled her
Not sure what to say
She felt the loose change in her pocket

Without looking up, she replied
"I think I dropped a quarter here"
Then instantly regretted it
Now the boy would help her find it

The boy peered down at the sand
"Oh, look! Elves!"
The boy's finger pointed
At the dancing figures

She followed the finger
Back up the arm
To the tousled head of hair
Framed in the afternoon sun

"Yes, Elves. And sprites too"
Then, after a pause
"You see them?"
"Oh yeah! All the time!"

The boy crouched down beside her
"What are they doing? Dancing?"
She smiled
From the center of her being
She smiled

"I think it is the solstice dance"
She whispered, in confidence
"Kewl!"
Said the boy

They watched together, for a bit
The gentle wavelets
Moving the sand
Revealing the movements
Of magical creatures in another world

Her faith grew with every wave
In herself
In humanity
The world was, indeed
A magical place

The boy broke the peaceful silence
"Over there, the Kobolds and Dwarves
Are having an epic battle
Wanna come watch?"

If it was possible
Her smile deepened
Deepened until she glowed
"No thanks," she said

"I've had rather enough of Kobolds
And Dwarves and their wars
I'm happy here
With the Elves and Sprites"



Nature's Beach 15 ~ *Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015*

“Sprites?! What are Sprites?”
She pointed to the sand
Where the Sprites pirouetted
“They’re quite a bit smaller
Than the Elves”, she said

“Oh, wow! And they have wings!”
“Yes”, she agreed, “they do
They hover
Like hummingbirds”

“I’ve never seen a Sprite before”
She nodded her head
“They are pretty shy
But they always come out
For the Solstice Dance”

The boy watched the Sprites
As they flit about
Like squadrons of hummingbirds
Flying in formation
She watched the boy’s wonder

It had been a long time
Since she had known such wonder
The wonder of a child
The wonder no one wanted to take away
But the boy soon grew tired
Of Sprites and Elves
He shifted on his haunches
“I’m going to go watch the battle
Sure you don’t wanna come?”

“No thanks,” she said amiably
“I’m good here with the Solstice”
Then, in a beguiling tone
“The fireworks are about to begin!”

The boy considered that
“The Kobolds were bringing a trebuchet...”
She nodded
“Yes, a trebuchet trumps fireworks
Maybe I will catch up to you later”

With that, the boy popped up
Stepped gingerly around
The dancing Elves and Sprites
Before running and skipping
Off to the battle

She watched the boy for a while
Reminded of her young self
In the boy's animated gestures
Mimicking the arcs of arrows
The swinging of hammers and swords

She shouted out to the lad
"Do let me know if any dragons appear!"
The boy gave her a thumbs up
Over his shoulder
Attention on the battle unwavering

Then, she surmised
The Kobolds unleashed the trebuchet
For the boy spread his arms wide
The gesture of a mighty explosion

*Abhh, how boys love a good battle
Especially when young, she sighed
Then returned her attention to the dance
Unfolding in the sand*

*I do wish I could hear them singing
She thought, not for the first time
Oh well, I can't live forever
So, soon enough*

Harmony

I wonder at the patterns in the sand
How they got there
The intricate harmonies of line and shape
What could create such beauty?

Then the wave comes
I wonder anew
At the interplay of moving water and sand
The rivulets and eddies and smaller waves

Then I wonder
Does the wave cause the beauty in the sand
Does the sand cause the beauty in the wave
Which creates which?

Then I understand
The harmony of sand and sea
I realize the beauty of each
Is created by the harmony of all



Wondering ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

The Seashell Nebula

Continued from "An Artistic Encounter with Nature", page 26)

I return to Chesterman Beach every year now. It always surprises me that the house still isn't there, that she is nowhere to be seen. I look up from the beach, expecting to see her, there at the top of the rocks, cradling a steaming mug of tea in her hands.

Every now and again, I Google the name she offered that day. No search has ever returned a mention of a folk artist from British Columbia's Vancouver Island. Nor do any of the many gallery curators I've met these past few years recognize her name.

No surprise there. And I've grown surprisingly nonchalant about it. I learned everything I needed from her that day, enough to send me on the path meant for me.

I come back here because... well, because this is the place I first began to really see the world, the world in its full breadth and width. It's where I began to find beauty everywhere, and where I began to discover ways to tease that beauty out in photographs.

There is no place else quite like this little cove at the South end of Chesterman Beach. I've never found anywhere with this delightful sprinkle of pulverized seashell, nor the gentle brush of waves which paints so many patterns of exquisitely simple complexity on the canvas of sand. I can stand in one place and the waves treat me to an endless array of beautiful arrangements. In just an hour, I fill up memory card after memory card.

As the years have gone by, my Seashell Series of photographs gained critical and public notice, so the trips here have enriched my finances nearly as much as they have enriched my vision, my



Sea Shell Nebula ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

spirit. Every time I come, I see deeper and deeper into the beauty.

A lot of years have passed. I'm old now. If I want to stay on the beach for hours, I bring a chair, and a tripod, no longer quite so nimble and tireless in my pursuit of beauty. But where I once needed to shoot hundreds of frames to find ten, I came to need just ten to find ten.

This time... this time, I haven't shot a single image. It's my last afternoon here. The tide's coming in. The sun getting low, and weak. I don't have much time left.

And yet, I'm unperturbed.

It's not for lack of seeing. The waves brought me more beauty than ever before. But, this time... beauty is not what I'm here for. Not that I have any clue just what that is. I'm not sure what I'm here to shoot. A voice, deep inside, says "not this one, Patrick." I guess I know what I don't want. And so, I stay my finger on the shutter release. Waiting.

The waves come in, and wash away. They come

in, and wash away. Always bringing change to the sand, to the grains of shell. I can see them, the bits of shell, individually, rolling with the gentle flow of water, or tumbling with a stronger wave. I see time in them, I see the crab carapace and mussel shells they once were, see the crab prying open the mussel, and eating it. See the seagull, capturing the young crab in its beak, flying it dozens of feet aloft to drop onto the rocks, cracking its shell, exposing its flesh.

Cycles of life in a grain of shell I once thought was nothing but sand.

So I look closer at the sand, and see a beach before life, the look further back, to see a land before water, and further to see a sky before land. Further back, there is only dust, circling in a vast disk, circling the gassy mass, slowly heating up at its center. And when I look back into the beginning of it all, there is an implosion, into which all matter gathers, shrinking, shrinking, shrinking in volume, until it becomes nothingness, and everything blinks out of existence, even time.

I take a breath, then, and find that same grain of shell, watch it begin tumbling with an incoming wave. Thousands of them are tumbling, and rolling, like a dance, guided by forces greater than they, and yet always creating patterns, intricate and delicate, strong and brutish, whole swaths of grains swept up in a tide, moving as one, inexorable, unified, single-minded — each grain, its own path — yet in unison with all the other grains.

In all this motion, I see the great sweeping gestures of human history, see the totality of human existence, and how each individual being plays their part, has a role, makes their own choices, yet is confined in those choices by the forces of consciousness and unconsciousness which guide us — and drive us — on paths we believe to be of our own choosing. Sometimes, they are, but never so much as we believe, never so much as we rationalize.

The wave recedes, and all the grains come to rest. No longer beings, they become stars, celestial

things. Gases. Dust, in deep interstellar space. I see into them, see past them. See into the deepest reaches of the universe, beyond the point to which the light of the Big Bang has been able to reach. Far enough that it seems like touching infinity.

From there I look back, all the way back, and find the one star beyond a nebula of stars, and gas, and dust. The one star which is the sun, my sun, casting light upon a small cove, on an Island, in an Ocean on a very small blue planet. And I am back on that beach, looking through the viewfinder at the grains of sand and shell that are that nebula. Infinite depth in a layer of shell restlessly shifting across the sands of endless time.

CLICK!

I release my breath, along with the shutter.

Another wave comes in, and the Seashell Nebula is gone.

A tear traces down my cheek, catches the sun, twinkles like a star that no one can see, not even I. I begin to think the thought that comes to me as a whisper in my ear, “Yes, that’s the one, Patrick.”

I feel the hand on my shoulder, feel the brush of a braid against my cheek. Her scent is on the breeze.

“Print that one,” the voice continues. The voice I remember as if it were only yesterday I last heard it. “Many will see its beauty, but a few will see its true gift: that beauty — all beauty — has meaning. Some will know the meaning. In time, others will come to know. And they will all touch infinity, just as you have.”

The whisper trailed off, and then the hand was gone, the braid drawn away. Her scent faded on the breeze. When I turned to find her, to thank her, there was no one there.

I am done here. I have followed to a natural end the path I set out on decades ago. So I begin to pack up the camera equipment, prepare to make

my way back to the rental car and drive away. I think, for the last time.

Packed, I look up the rock face to where I know a house once stood. Where an enigma

invited me: come, understand the universe. There's a sign there, one I hadn't noticed before. The land is for sale.

Of course it is.

The Eye of the World Upon Me



Nature's Beach 14 ~ Chesterman Beach, Tofino, BC, Canada, 2015

I sat
Relaxed
Settled myself
Turned my consciousness inward
And breathed

Breathing in
Breathing out

In the quiet
I observed
The peace
Of my mind
Of my body

I observed
The clothes
Settling against my skin

I sensed the sand
And the ocean
Lapping at the beach
Salt in the air
The sun

And it's warmth
On my brow
Where the wind tousled my bangs

So I quieted my senses
Reached deeper inside
With my breath

Breathing in
Breathing out

Until my breath became the wind
My body became the sand
My being became the ocean

Vast
Fathomless
The source
Of all things
And the reservoir
To which all things return

Connecting to all things

And there I sat
Settled
Present

Breathing in
Breathing out

Until I felt a gaze
Not upon the sitting me
A gaze upon my being
The eye of the world upon me

Mind, awakened, quietly suggested

“If you are connected to all things
All things are connected to you
All things must also observe”

So there I sat
A being
Connecting to all things
All things connecting

To my being
Until my being
And all things
Become one

Breathing in
Breathing out

Mind returned to its quiet

I sat
The eye of the world upon me
Gazing back
Into the infinite eye
Connecting

Mind whispered one last thought

“Achieving oneness
That eye
Becomes
Your Eye”

“Except...
There is no you”

And no mind
I reminded Mind
Now, quiet you

Breathing in
Breathing out

Moments



An Angel ~ Varanasi, India, 2017

There is a moment
A moment before
A moment after

Each with their own tenor
Their own flavour
Their own meaning

There is the overall
The changing times
The recollected meaning

Of a moment
Made up of moments
All part of another

Moment

I choose the moment
Within a moment
To define a moment

Even the briefest moment
Never remains
The same moment

I am in the present
Remember the past
Look to the future



Angelic Pose ~ Varanasi, India, 2017

Which leads to questions
About this moment
Recorded for eternity

Have I captured an angel?
Or captured a pose?
I will never be quite sure.

Must one
Exclude
The other?

Not that it matters

In one moment
She was an angel
And remains so, to me

Touch

More than kisses
More than words
More than moments

I miss
The tingling
Resonance
Of your touch

Your breath
On my neck

Your fingers
On my hand

Your loving
On my heart

Your presence
On my spirit



Subduing Mara ~ Sukhothai, Thailand, 1995

This Golden Touch

This golden touch
I reach for Earth
Connect to it
And all that is
With quiet mind
Become as one
With everything

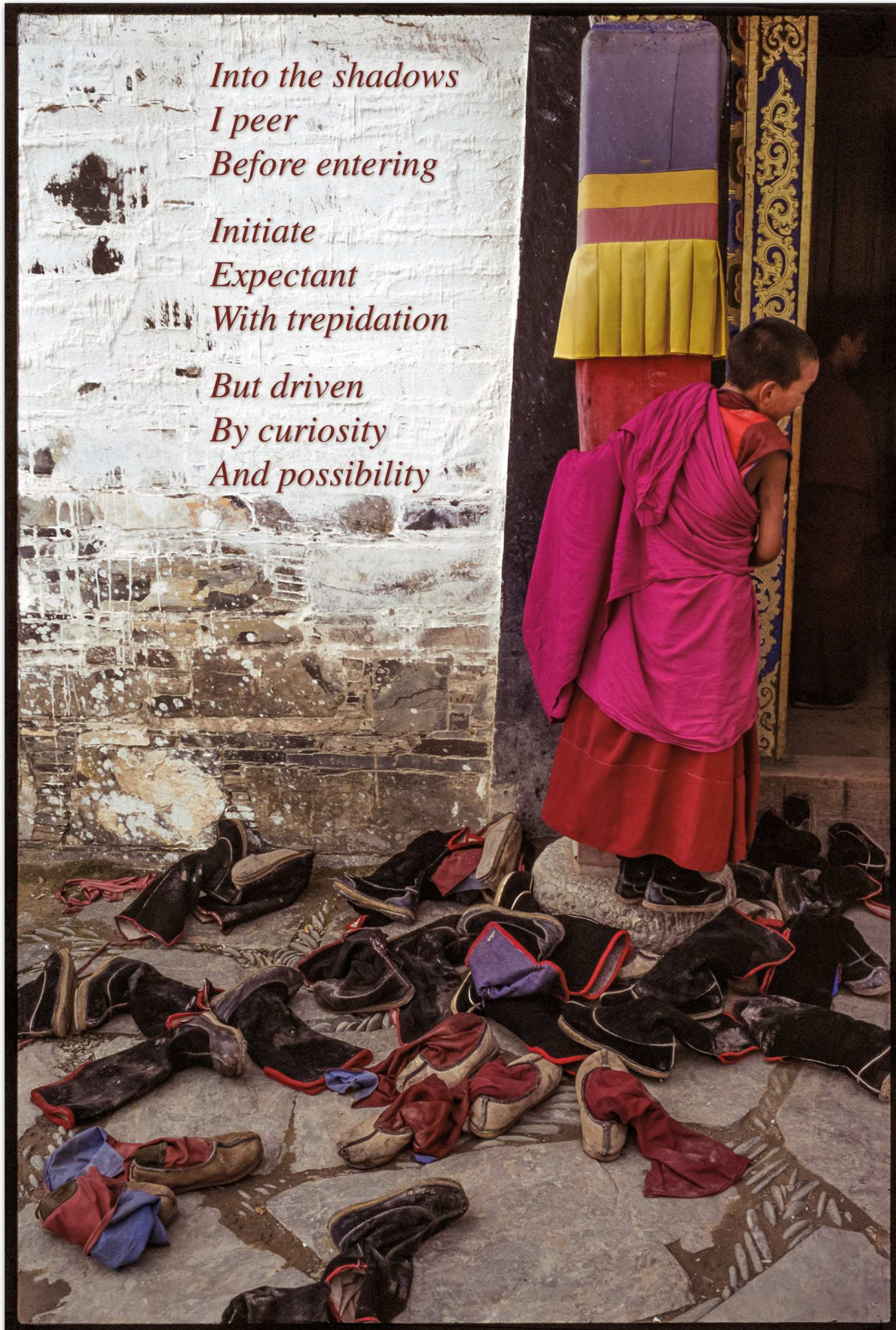
Buddhas



Buddhas all in a Row ~ Kek Lok Si Temple, Penang, Malaysia, 1995

Sometimes
I bring up this image
Just so the line of Buddhas
Can remind me of compassion
And the vibrant colours
Embolden my will for passion

Curiosity



*Into the shadows
I peer
Before entering
Initiate
Expectant
With trepidation
But driven
By curiosity
And possibility*

Curiosity ~ Labrangsi Monastery, Xiahe, China, 1998

Boots

Inside
The chanting
The texts
Stripping away
Layer upon layer
Of being
Seeking
At the centre
The non-being
That is everything

Outside
The first layer



Boots ~ Labrangsi Monastery, Xiahe, China, 1998

Unencumbered

Unencumbered, must I enter
Unattached
Unburdened

Burdens weigh me down
Attachments distract me
Encumbrances hold me back

Light as a feather
Clear as crystal
Quiet as a desert night

So may I enter
Beyond temple doors
The hall of peace

The Turquoise River

She looked at the long, thin meandering crack trailing down the foundation wall like a coursing river. She felt compelled to trail her finger over the length of it, feeling the raspy turquoise concrete, cool under her fingertip.

"I'll have to go get some sealant," her husband had told her.

"But that will ruin the paint," she replied, with an emotion that surprised her. "I don't have any more."

"You have to fix it before it gets out of hand."

"But it's such a small crack!"

He paused.

"Honey, the crack will just get worse. See, water gets inside and breaks down the concrete, little by little. In the winter, the water expands when it's freezing, then relaxes when it's warm. It's like a jackhammer, widening the crack a little every time."

He paused, again, but she still pouted a little.

"Eventually, the foundation cracks and that's when the real problems start."

She sat at her desk, heaving a sigh he took as assent. He left her there, looking at the little river in her turquoise wall.

This was her sanctuary. The one place in the home that was hers, away from the rambunctiously adorable children upstairs, and her husband's workshop in the garage. She came here, every morning, with a mug of dark black coffee and her journal, to write down what she would never tell anyone. With artfully inked script, she sometimes imagined where the Turquoise River might take her. Those were the only entries she ever re-read.

She began looking around the little room for another place to put her desk, a place where the black smudge of sealant wouldn't encroach on her peripheral vision. *Water*, she thought, *it's a lot like disappointment.*