

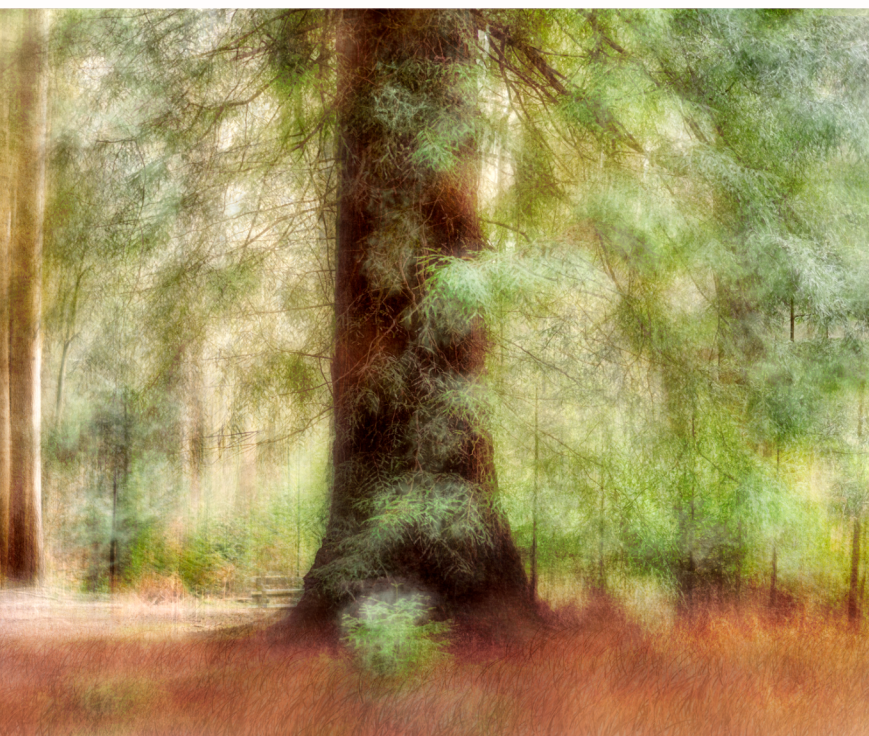


Re-imagining Intentional Camera Movement

An Impressionist Photography Practice
of Therapeutic Joy, and Imaginative Fun

How It Happened
and the Techniques to Get Started

www.thephotographicartisan.com



Amanda Newell



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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IF, PHOTOGRAPHY IS A POSSIBILITY

I sat down awkwardly on the bench and let the camera rest in my lap.

Now what?

I couldn't hold the camera, never mind depress a shutter button. I could force it, just; but without the use of either thumb, it was a herculean effort and created camera shake a small earthquake couldn't compete with and no shutter speed was ever going to hide.

Bother, I thought to myself.

Okay, you got me. It wasn't that polite and honestly, I was in a pretty dark place...

I ignored the rain that had started to fall as if on cue. Aside from the gentle patter as it fell, the place was otherwise quite still, the only sound a muted jangle of yacht masts, the boats on their moorings barely moving a few feet from where I sat alone on the benches at the edge of the Quay. I gazed out at the water unseeing...

Right, what now...?

For me, the camera doesn't capture the world. It captures the conversation between you and the world

Amanda x



If you want the context it's here otherwise skip forward a page or two :)

I won't bore you with the details. I'm sure you've got enough going on in your own life, but just for context... I *had* been a health care professional and therapist, self-employed. Two dogs and a pony for company, a life with a full diary that started at 5am to muck out aforementioned pony and walk the dogs before seeing patients, then evening stables visit, dog walk, dinner, bed – rinse and repeat. You get the picture. In the middle of this 20 year stretch, I'd decided to study Anthrozoology, or in plain English; human, animal and environmental interactions through the lens of culture and society at Exeter University. It was when doing my thesis that I picked up a camera, simply to record information initially, and then... I caught the bug...
...and that had been absorbed into my world too. Until now...

And then I got sick.now the business, horse, friends... all gone. I could barely walk and I'd lost the use of both thumbs... Oh, I'd discovered that you need the use of your thumbs for pretty much everything!

C'est la vie. I had my camera and I'd discovered this curious way of creating by moving it on purpose...

And that had become 'it' ... *and I wasn't going to give up easily.*



*Winter light and
shadows in the*

So, as I say. Bother!

Right. I inhaled deeply and set my jaw.

What to do?

I wiped away the tears, cross with myself. That wasn't going to change much other than making me feel more pants than I already did. I'd already swapped out the DSLR for my beloved Fuji XT4, mirrorless, small, much lighter and no buttons to manage... And now this... Right.

I said 'right' a few times hoping for some inspiration or maybe some blinding flash of the obvious I wasn't thinking of. Because this weird practice with the camera really mattered, not only because I was clinging to it like a life raft but... I really loved it...

The rain had decided to gather pace falling in large splodges on my trousers turning them from mid blue to dark as it stained them and splattered on the Fuji camera sat on my lap. My eyes shifted back to the camera on my lap...

It was moving.

The camera was moving on my lap...

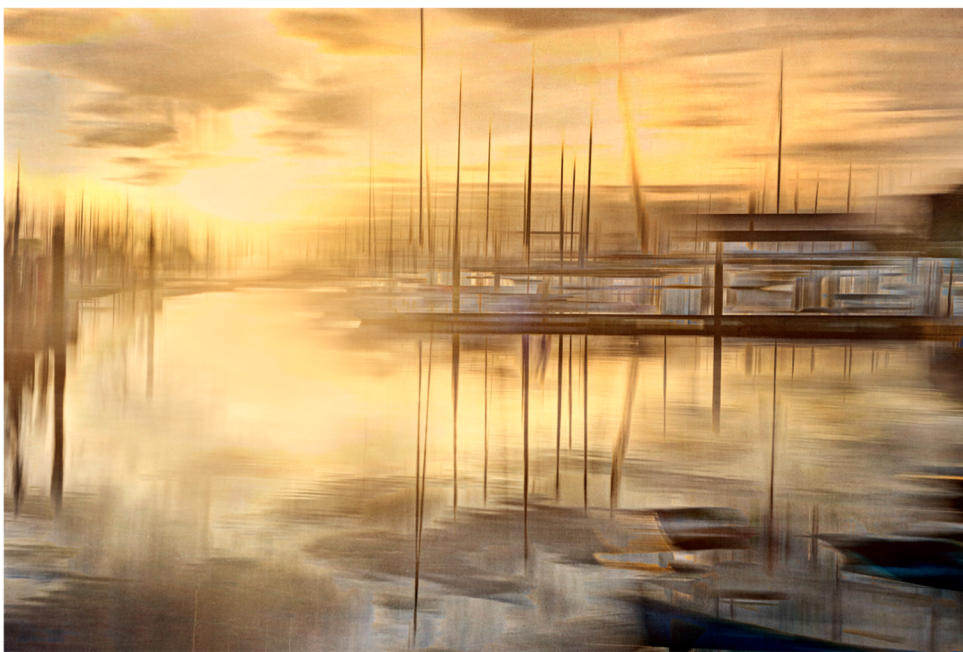
Okay, you got me. Let's start being more honest. I was slouching, because sitting properly was painful. The camera was balanced more on my belly than my lap. And since I'd been incapacitated and on steroids – the aforementioned "middle" was, ahem, a little larger than it used to be... Two dress sizes to be precise...

I stared at the camera moving, rising and falling, shifting a little this way and that... I wasn't doing that with my hands, my body was doing it...

How useful....

I think... maybe... I could maybe use that in someway...

I brushed the water that had started to drip off my hair into my eyes crossly. There was no way I was going home. I was thinking fast now, brain formulating and concocting ideas rapidly... Right! I launched off the bench, or rather I scrabbled and got up with all the grace of a beached walrus, because... the idea was forming faster... I had a plan...



Straight lines framing the sunrise - double exposure in camera on dark blend mode...

CHAPTER TWO

THE TECHNIQUE TO MOVE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Now, if you're thinking: 'Er, okay Amanda, but I have full use of my hands, so why do I care about this...'

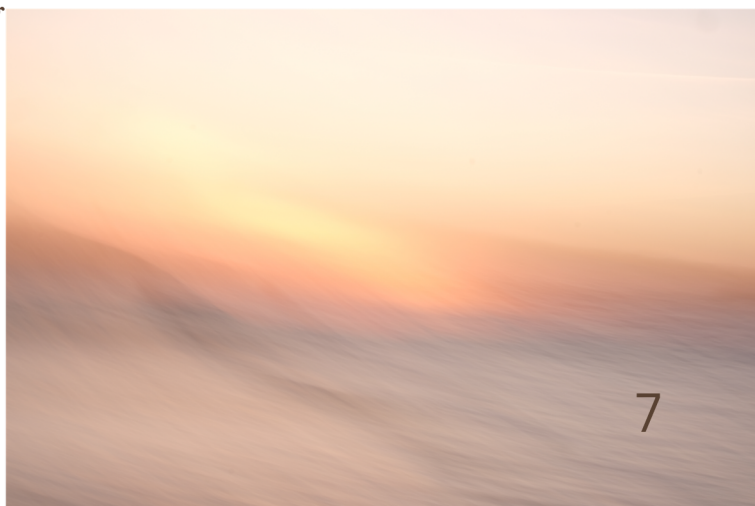
The answer is this; what follows is how I solved my problem and developed the techniques for creating the very slow camera movements that get me the painterly effects — with full control and no grip!

It was a letter a few months ago that reminded me what a paradox I had stumbled into that morning.

'I don't understand it,' a reader and YouTube follower wrote. He was looking at this image I'd shared (the one above) and had spent the afternoon trying to replicate the technique.

'How are you getting your lines so straight, presumably it's in Photoshop or you're using a tripod because I'm gripping really hard to keep steady and it's just impossible...'

And I remembered all this as it happened because the clue is in the word - grip, which of course, I didn't have! And the solution is coming...



So... here's a few things to know (just in case you don't already) before I continue...

A long/slow shutter speed = risk of visible camera shake.
Normally you'd speed up the shutter to match the focal length to fix it.
But if you want to do camera movement that's obviously not an option because you need time to make your movement...

As I discovered, the slower movement create the painterly effects I get...

You can't use a tripod because you'd have no freedom to move you're confined... But if you use a slightly faster shutter, you're forced to move a little more quickly or even sharply to get the movement in before the shutter closes... Not so useful for those super soft painterly effects....

But if you concentrate hard on being still or try and root yourself, all that effort engages the prefrontal cortex bit of your brain and guess what? When that's working hard creativity is muted...

So, the clue was in the message my viewer sent me... *'I'm gripping really hard...'*
That was the problem... Muscle tightness creates more unwanted motion – tight muscle creates shake. Tight muscle also blocks movement....

I'll share my technique in a moment but just to clarify; I never use a tripod, I can't. And while I do use Photoshop as an artist, the camera movements are camera movements... Look closely at the image above and you'll see the imperfection on the yacht masts... that double line – that's my body expanding as I breathe creating motion... Unintentional movement maybe, but these days I use it to my advantage so it became a part of my image making as you can see...

Exercise to Experiment and Show Yourself...

Try it. Pick up a pen and grip it really tightly and now try and write with loopy handwriting! Tricky huh!

And this was the challenge that started me off. I couldn't grip, I couldn't move particularly freely either to start with by sheer physical limitation...
What is the solution?



CHAPTER THREE ANOTHER WAY

I hobbled back down to the end of the harbour where the composition works better, and took a moment to gaze down the line of boats and collected my thoughts, thankful the rain was now easing.

Right.

Think.

Relax the jaw... I was gritting my teeth. Hope? Excitement? The possibilities racing through my mind, mixed up with a big dollop of fear that if this didn't work.....

Shut up. Concentrate.

Taking the weight of the camera in the palm of my two hands, wrapping fingers around it as best I could, I paused. Hang on, I remembered to set timer again, changing the countdown to longer than before so I'd have time to prepare (*I'd been using the timer to depress the shutter to avoid the aforementioned earthquake-esque depression my fingers*)... Right...ready.

First, I wiggled my toes to bring focus to my body and calm...

Then I noticed the natural rhythm of my breathing that was creating the motion... just like the athletes do... I took a few inhales noticing how the camera rose if I exaggerated the rise, riding on the energy of my shoulders and arms rising as I expanded... and falling as I exhaled...

Beep, the camera's warning – ready... breathing out. Beep. Still breathing out... Beep, inhaling, rising... CLICK... The shutter fired itself and I relaxed softening to let the motion of my body take the camera with it...

I peered at the back of the screen, tugging at my reading glasses, now peppered with rain drops cursng the shift in my vision the last few years (isn't get older wonderful!) Squinting I looked... huh... Not bad. Not enough movement but...

What happens if I make the shutter speed longer, long enough it lasts throughout the whole of my natural inhale. Then I can ride that a little more... floating the camera upwards...?

And so it began. I was only trying this for ten minutes, glancing at what was happening in the camera, Er, wow... Okay this was exciting... my pulse beginning to race at the possibilities beyond this.

I did a few, more getting better at synchronising my breathing with each attempt, pausing to see what the images looked like...

Wow... These were... interesting. Better than anything I'd managed before when I could use my hands. Sort of painterly and pictorial...

I raced home (and I use the word "raced" in the loosest possible terms because I had all the speed of a tortoise. In fact, I suspect my brain arrived home before my body...) and I started to research because I knew from my background in biomechanics that this made sense, I just needed to find out why and how and...how I could use it!

Of course! Boom. It all started coming back to me as I pored over old notes.

Golfers using slow rhythmic diaphragmatic breathing to stop micro movements of the shoulders and hands, steadying their movement. Gymnasts coordinate with their breathing to generate energy in motion, archers and shooters to synchronise the best moment of stillness... Shot-putters and javelin throwers for energy and precision...

And now a chubby middle-aged woman with a camera was doing the same... Although of course, I didn't intend to throw my camera like a shot put. I bit my lip, maybe though I could create more momentum....

I pulled out a notepad and wrote as best I could (yep, you need thumbs for that too) 'New Beginning...' deciding to make this my project, an ethnography, I'd never used that training might as well use it now! And maybe just maybe I can make this work because by hook or by crook Lupus and life is not going to take this too. Now I was fired up. I'd need a plan... a rough one, more like guidelines..

How do you do this then?

Here's the thing... when you inhale/breathe in your body naturally rises and falls. You've heard the phrases, '*the rise and fall of the chest*,' or '*the expansion and contraction*...' If you're not into biology, just so you can imagine it; you are divided in half by a big sheet called the diaphragm, imagine a big rubbery disc being slipped in between your abdomen and chest like a dividing line. When you inhale, it pushes down as the thorax (top bit) fills, and as you exhale it rises back up.

We are always in motion because of this. Isn't biology incredible. Since the day you were born your heart has been beating without a break (hopefully) and your body has been expanding and contracting, rising and falling constantly all those years...

Our bodies are just mindblowingly clever. I started to wonder how I else I could leverage that...

.....*don't try and hold your breath!*

Why? because that creates more movement by the physical tension required to do it. It's also distracting and forces you to rush your camera movement, because you can only hold your breath for so long and you need sustained controlled movement over one, two maybe three or four seconds with flow... and the rigidity of 'holding' your breath is now another muscle blocking that flow...



CHAPTER FOUR THE TECHNIQUE IS – THIS

And this is how it began.

I'd ask myself a question – how long does it take in shutter time for me to inhale deeply but gently letting the camera float up...?

I'd try, mess it up, scratch my head, wonder,

Was I trying to force it? Was I tense? Did I not co-ordinate well enough? Or could I generate a little energy on the inhale in my hands?

Plan an adjustment and try again...

Better...

More shutter time?

Yes, a longer shutter, what happens then...

And so, it went on.

I sat on the same little bench a few days later and dictated some notes on my voice recorder I found easier than trying to write... to remind myself what was working and what wasn't, what was frustrating me, what was getting me stuck that I needed to think about at home...

I was on a mission and I was hooked, excited by it, inhabiting it...

It was a play process, and creativity I learned from the research is always a process of trial and error but not random...

Play.

The word resonated about my head one morning.

I'm playing with the camera, but... this isn't mucking about. This is more sort of organised, not rigidly planned but... it's like that writer said...

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.

Samuel Beckett, Worstward Ho, 1983

I'm failing better.

But not because I'm being random. I frowned... So?

I mean, you can keep failing, but you won't fail better unless there's something other than randomness going on.

I thought all this in between camera movements at the harbour or elsewhere. People noticing me must have thought me crackers. Offering muttering to myself as I pondered... Because pondering what is going on, it turns out, can be pretty useful... And in all that pondering I realised this:-

It's like a kid trying to walk for the first time. There's no manual or instructions.

It's play. But is play just play?

All the same?

Nope!

I did a bit of research and discovered there's a distinction between serious play and the other kind. *Why does this matter?* Because I needed to figure out how to play more effectively. To hone play in a way that gets me somewhere...

And it's just like that when kids are trying to figure out how to walk because they have no manual or instructions. It's really amazing when you think about it... They play with it... try this... okay that didn't work... move this way, nope, move that way... nearly...

They can't narrate it to themselves either because they are pre-speech, so they don't have the narrator in their head doing all the - 'I'm useless, I'll never manage this...' running in their head...

Then it occurred to me, my inner narrator, who is a relentless spiteful b***h, had been unusually quiet lately...



Of course! I was in flow....

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term 'flow' and found that this state of complete absorption isn't just pleasant, it's when people report being at their happiest and most creative. He even called it optimal experience and argued it is central to a meaningful life... How bizarre, I thought. I'd been trained in it, talked about it for years, and now I was feeling it. How odd that this should come now, in the turmoil my life is right now... or maybe not so odd!

Just like that child's expression when they first manage to crawl. The realisation of what this opens up for them. Then the walking... the freedom, the fun, the possibilities... And when they're trying so hard to crawl or stand or walk... the expression is there, you can see they are consumed by the desire to get up and do it...

Yep, that was me... Armed with a camera....

And here's another interesting thing I discovered, this time from neuroscience.. when the prefrontal cortex (the narrating/thinking bit so not to be written as "bad" rather just a bit noisy) is less active, creativity is fuelled... there is space for the brain to be imaginative when it's not consuming all it's resources thinking and narrating....

“What’s your shutter speed and other camera settings, Amanda?”

Usually between 1 second or 3 seconds, sometimes longer sometimes faster...
but here’s the thing... you can’t do this work off knowing camera settings...

....It’s what you **do** during the open shutter that gets the effect...

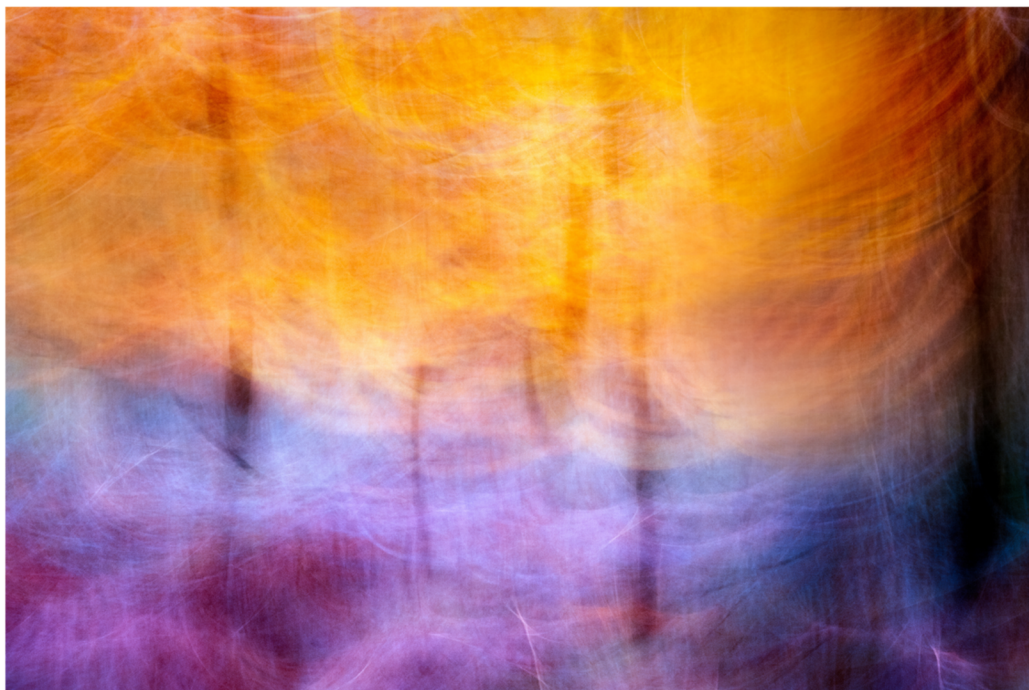
Favourite shutter speed: 1 second 2 seconds or 3 seconds faster if the subject
is in motion

ISO – as low as it’ll go most of the time

Aperture – usually around f/16 – small enough to block the light (assuming
its daytime) but not so much you can see so many of my dust spots it’ll take
me ten years to remove them...

ND Filter – screw on adjustable type – essential!





CHAPTER FIVE

THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRACTICE – HOW I DO IT...

It comes naturally, breathing. Don't try and change it or have an opinion about it or do anything to it... Just use awareness of it to your advantage...

Here's my flow:-

I stand and get the camera ready. These days I like my shutter at about 1 to 3 second for subjects that are still (ish). Obviously moored boats are never completely still, but you know what I mean, neither are they racing past like a motorbike.

I tend to use the aperture to control the light when in regular photography you might be thinking about depth of field. Sometimes I do use it creatively with camera movement with a wide-open aperture, but I use it sparingly because it's easy to end up with the images too soft and the colour and light too blended. Shooting during the day means my aperture is likely to be pushed up to the highest number/smallest aperture to try and reduce the light coming into the sensor because, at a one second shutter speed, that's a whole lot of light flooding in.

For the same reason, the ISO will be down at the lowest number possible usually. Oh, and you're almost certainly going to need an ND filter. If you're not sure what they do, I always think of ND Filters as putting sunglasses on the camera. I use the screw on adjustable ones so I can adapt fast.

Once I'm all set up, I just stand there quietly and notice my breathing. Noticing when I'm breathing in and then out and then in and then out and then on the next cycle just as I'm starting to inhale, I use the momentum of the inhale to flow the camera upwards in my hands...

It took me a few days at first, practicing the synchronicity to get into a natural flow with it. To begin with, it's like first learning to drive when you have to struggle to co-ordinate the clutch with the gear change... there's also an oddness I found to listening to your own breath... But it comes eventually, like all things do if you just gently keep trying...

...and something else happened. I was looking at the back of the camera, at the images and getting really excited by the results...

The images that had been grey, hazy, muddy, frustrating and difficult had become something else entirely... glowing with colour as the sensor of the camera lingered just a little longer than it ever had been before. Colour and light picked up and pulled so gently in the flow of the breath it was soft and dreamy, yet saturated and vibrant.

And as I played, I slowed down even further, the quietness allowing such fine control in this calm state that I could extend the shutter time to 3 or even go as far as 8 seconds... inhaling floating the camera up, letting it linger there to gather colour and light... and then exhale and float back down...

...and then, as the days passed a new awareness of what I was holding in my body and the effects on the image. And I'm not just talking about stress and feeling tired and that stuff... What about if you're cold? Or warm. Too hot, energetic or exhausted... I began to play. To see how the shutter speed could be adapted to these changes, what it caught, the results on the image on different types of scenes – lines, shapes, flowing water... how it mirrored the world in the final image – cold, hot, rainy, dry, quiet, windy...

...and I'd come inwards to myself noticing little tensions in muscles. Experimenting with inhaling, exhaling and seeing just how far I could un-ratchet that tight muscle by breathing deeply into it....

And the huge amazing paradox was that the more I could soften into myself, the more controlled the movements became. Now I could get away with longer and longer shutter speeds and be still — without trying. The trying now was simply sinking inwards, imagining my feet softening into the floor, a tense muscle like melting chocolate, sinking into my own pelvis and low back, all those places where we spend a lifetime holding tight in response to the external environment...

I jotted that down – the phrases we use tell the story. ‘Hold tight’ and ‘get a grip’, how curious and interesting that things we say to ourselves to take control are the opposite of where I’d found control... in flowing softness.

I looked at the back of the camera. Blimey.
Double blimey... I was just loving the images...

If only though, if only I could create more movement?! We always want more don’t we.

I’d got this far, but what if I could create more movement. The results were lovely and I was happy, but now I wanted to explore this a little further, what if I could just create little more stretch and motion, still without tension...

A bit tired, I sat down on the same bench where I’d sat a month or so back and with tears streaming down my face feeling utterly horrible and frankly terrified by my incapacity and what it meant and now... I sat gazing at the boats, peaceful today in the quietness of the still water thinking this had brought something new and amazing into my life... I’d been studying art, design and Photoshop too like a woman possessed by some strange creative drug of imagination and creativity...

... it would be so lovely to be able to elongate those yacht masts just a little further.....

And then I had another blinding flash of the obvious... I had no idea where all these ideas were coming from but grateful for it, I got up (slightly less walrus-esque this time) and made my way back down to the end of the harbour to my favourite spot.

...set up the shot... Still using the timer...

Only this time I softened my knees... Using the rail at the end of the harbour to steady myself (*I was very incapacitated at this time*) against the rail hoping it didn't give way, or I'd be going for an unscheduled swim... I let myself sink into a gentle horse stance, feet slightly apart just sinking softly into bent knees, not far, never a full bend just softness, just enough that I could rise up when I inhaled... concentrating but only on softening into the movement, hoping this would create yield more movement, just to get that little bit more stretch on those yacht masts...

I heard the beep go, the camera counting down to the click.

Inhale and start to move – slowly rising up, CLICK the shutter had depressed itself... as I rose... rising imagining a silver string pulling my head up very slowly and gently as I inhaled gently but deeply... rising on the energy of the inhale. Slowly softly like a brush stroke across a canvas.

Click, the shutter had closed...

I looked. It worked, it worked, it worked!!!

And the movement, so slow, so gentle had lingered on the scene long enough that it was impressionist but complete... the clouds even 'whole' not flattened completely by the movement... Like sweeping the camera-brush over a canvas of wet paint that is the scene before me and then smudging it just a tiny little bit...





CHAPTER SIX AND A LITTLE MORE MOTION STILL.....

I started playing with how much momentum I could add and the natural variations in my breathing started to become more obvious.

It varied, depending on my body on any given day.

If I was tired or afraid, angry, relaxed... it affected my body, and my body was affecting the camera movement because you cannot separate one from the other... Huh. Interesting!

And there were days my breathing was bad because of pollution or humidity... and so it changed again...

I got frustrated but...

What if this is part of it?

What if this is what makes the image unique, unusual?

What if this is the ultimate self-expression with a camera?

With the core approach embedded in my automaticity, like driving a car, I moved to new locations and amazingly realised I could walk a little better... I ventured into the Forest staying close to the car but enjoying sitting on a bench near the car park and losing myself in mucking about with a plan, always thinking what if or maybe...

What will happen if I try move in a vertical pan and do something else...?
Does the movement of my breath and body match a movement...?
Bingo – yes...

We breathe out so it seemed logical to push my arms out as I exhaled as a new movement, and presto, a very flowing soft ‘controlled’ movement...

Now I was seriously excited...

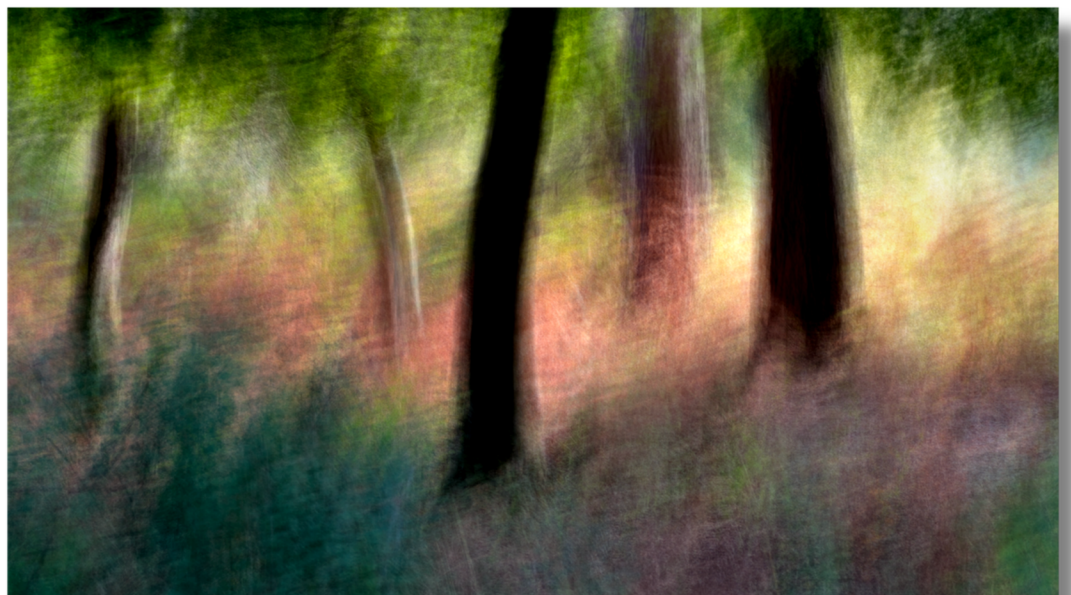
What if I rock at little on my feet... while panning up...

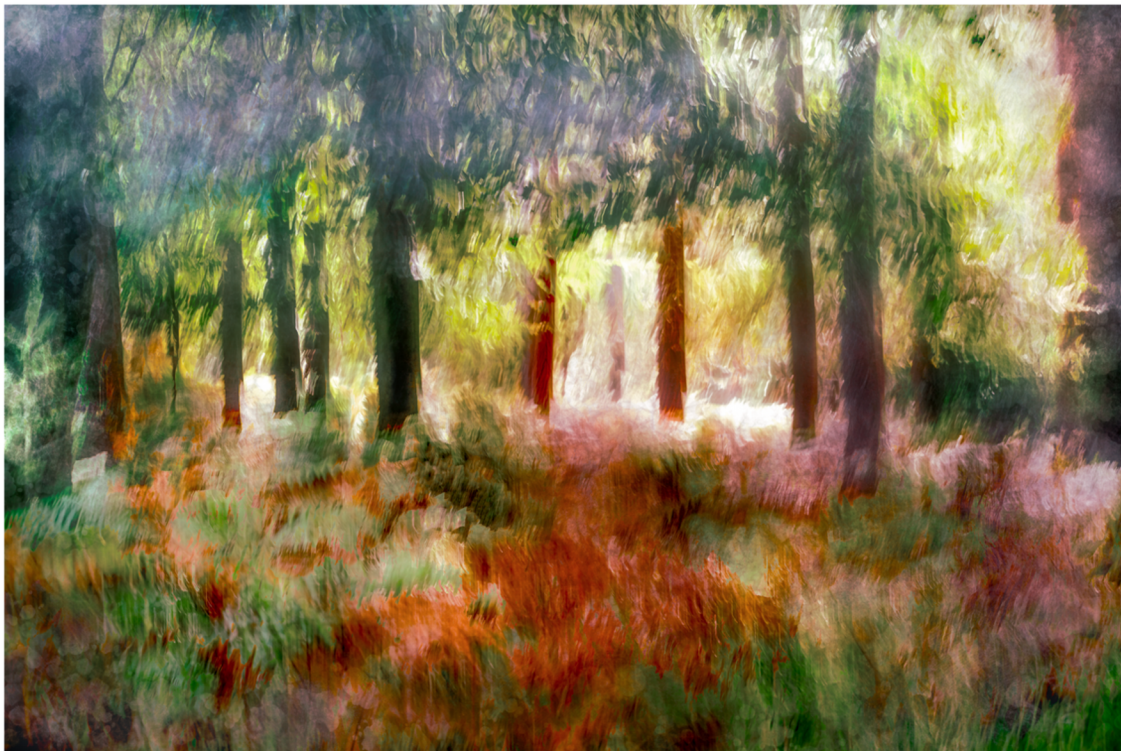
Exhale and turn from left to right to pan across the horizon...

What would happen if... I inhale and float the camera up and then step diagonally and backwards because the camera will do what I do I don't necessarily need to move the camera with my hands, it's going to come with me so...



More play...
More awareness and exploring
and...
Joy!





CHAPTER SEVEN INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT – HOW TO TACKLE DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

If you've not done any camera movement this before and you'd like to try, I thought you might like some core ICM approaches... and here's another quick thing I should say....

I have this phrase I say a lot, 'letting the land lead'...

If it sounds abstract and poetic to you...

It's not!

I don't mean it like that.

But I mean it literally...

I don't think or talk poetically. I feel intensely and will talk about inhabiting the world but please be clear... I mean it quite literally. I explore everything from neuroscience to philosophy, imaginatively and creatively but always physically and experientially.... It's not an abstract concept...

And that really matters because the world literally leads us. It helps us out...

Notice what shapes and lines are before you.

The line of a horizon?

The vertical of a tree trunk?

The shape of that pony's body?

Then follow... Simple! Okay it's not simple. Or more accurately it's not easy, not to begin with, but then neither is driving a car, playing the violin or anything else that requires motor control (in your brain, not the car) and then there's the sensory awareness of what is around too... and a few other things I'll get to in a moment...

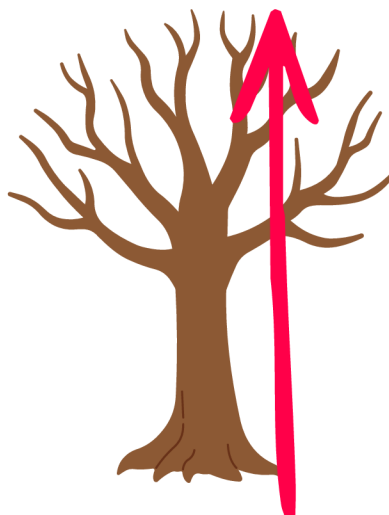
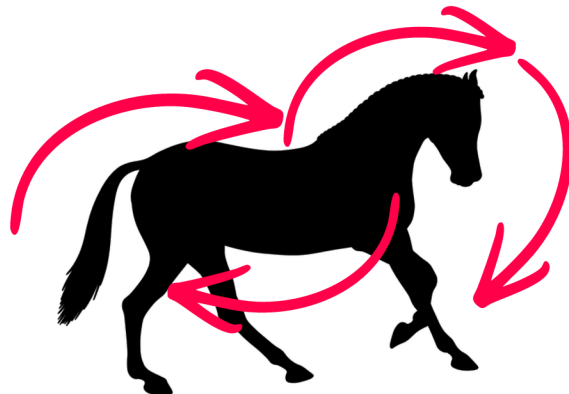
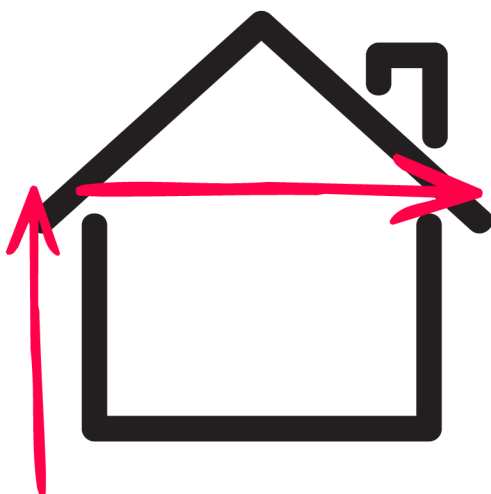
Follow the shape, follow the line... that's how to get started...

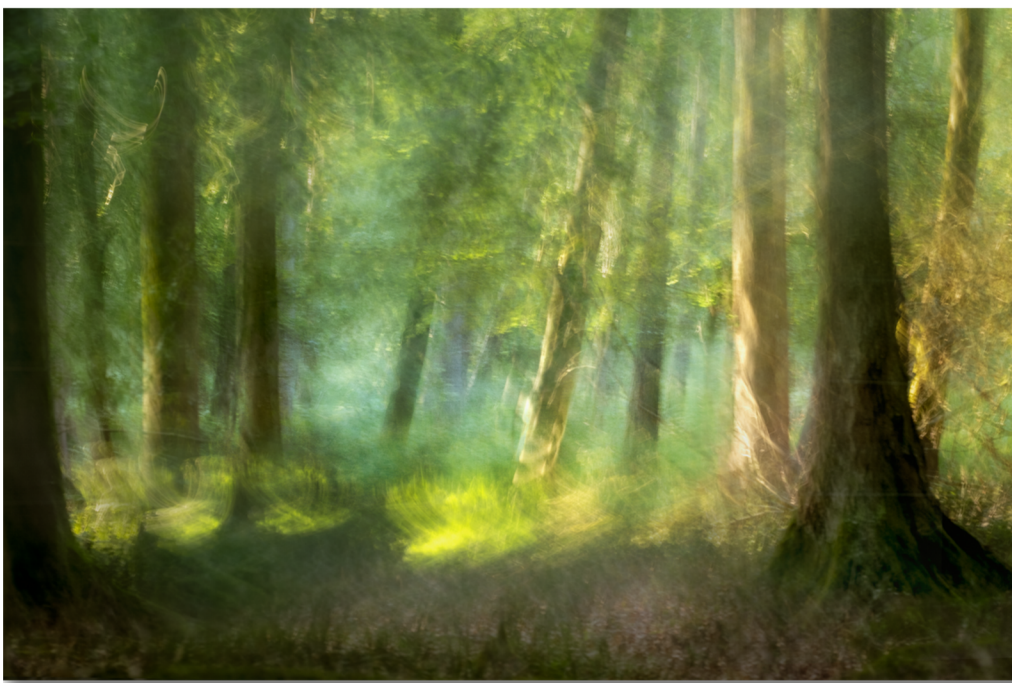
Animals – follow the shape of them

Trees – follow the line – pan up or down

Buildings – follow the shape

Water – flow with it... or against it... if it's flowing in and out up a beach – follow it! Literally...





CHAPTER EIGHT SYNCHRONICITY WITH THE PHYSICAL WORLD

AS PART OF MY CAMERA MOVEMENT FOR IMPRESSIONISM

It was autumn. Or rather, it was that strange liminal time where the colours are turning from one thing to another.

The greens of summer mingling with the shift of reds into the autumn. The weather wasn't sure whether it should radiate sunshine or threaten you with a dark cloud. So, it did both.

The blazing autumn sunshine was giving way yet again to heavy clouds as I turned down the narrow path, hurrying a little because, as another gust of wind came, it mustered surprising power. I glanced up, the sky had become oddly illuminated, threatening, the sun duelling with dark clouds. Bother, it was too late, large spots of rain started to fall with loud plops all around me...

With a quick look around I noticed a gap, and ducked into the sheltered hug of a tree cluster, turning to peer outside just as the skies opened and a torrent of rain fell, the wind whipping up ferociously, leaves swirling around outside my little den. As was. typical of the morning, it passed in a few minutes, the sun magically streaming back through the gaps in the trees as I stepped outside feeling oddly peaceful now. I love that smell don't you? The sweetness of damp pine... the rain had passed as fast as it had come, the place now shimmering in the golden sunlight of autumn.

It was the light that caught my peripheral vision... Just across the lawns where there was a gap in the trees were sun poured through. I raised a hand to shield my eyes from the light, shimmering so brightly it was almost unbearable as the rain-soaked canopy of the tree was caught and held in the sun's spotlight. I nearly moved on, but then a random gust of wind came and....

I grabbed the camera, flicked it to two seconds...

No. That wasn't right. One second because with the movement of the wind to contend with, one second would be better... I twisted the ND Filter to manage the glare of light and watched mesmerised. In nanoseconds the scene was changing... One minute the sun was streaming and shimmering, dancing with the colours and the movement where the glistening of the rain, the bright light, the autumn and summer colours mingled with the movement of the wind...

... and then just as quickly the sun would go in, a cloud passing over it in the speeding wind...

Dimmed by the clouds, the tree was now quite different...

And then woosh, the light came again... with the wind... gusts of it blowing colour, light and spray with the intensity of a roaring engine to the left...

It wasn't just the tree.

It was the interaction of the tree and its semi autumnal colours with the wind and the light...

The sun was now blazing down from the right-hand side of the tree again, filtered through other trees that surrounded it at a little distance...

The wind shifting from a gentle breeze to occasional lazy gusts whipping all the colours and the stream of light around like a ragdoll.

Wow.

I put one foot in front of the other, just one step and pulled the camera to my eye pressing it against my forehead for a little gentle stability... and listened. If I were a dog I would have had an ear cocked, listening to the rumble coming up across the fields behind me because that was the wind coming... I got a focal lock on the tree, holding my finger lightly on the shutter, shifting my weight back onto my rear foot, my body angled to the same direction the wind would I suspected take the tree canopy...

It was coming, the roar, I could hear the rustle of trees drawing nearer...
Soften inhale, exhale, sink like melting chocolate into your pelvis, let the tension go...
As the wind arrived, I started moving slowly shifting my weight forward onto the front foot CLICK, going with the flow of the tree canopy as I continued to shift forward, softening my elbows giving the camera a tiny almost imperceptible shake...
Click, the shutter closed...

I looked at the image.
Kind of like it... slightly too blurry, too much movement as the wind and I were not quite synchronising. I needed to feel it, the force of it and flow not just in the direction but with the energy of it...
Set up again...
Listen...
It's coming...
Let the jaw go I could feel myself tightening in anticipation...
Sinking into the feet, wiggle my toes to let the tension go... breathe inhale, exhale...

It's nearly here - the roar lifting the tree canopy and pulling it and me going with it CLICK, rocking forward in more of a flow this time, aware of the energy and velocity of the wind flowing with it as if my body were being shifted along with the tree... CLICK. The shutter closed.

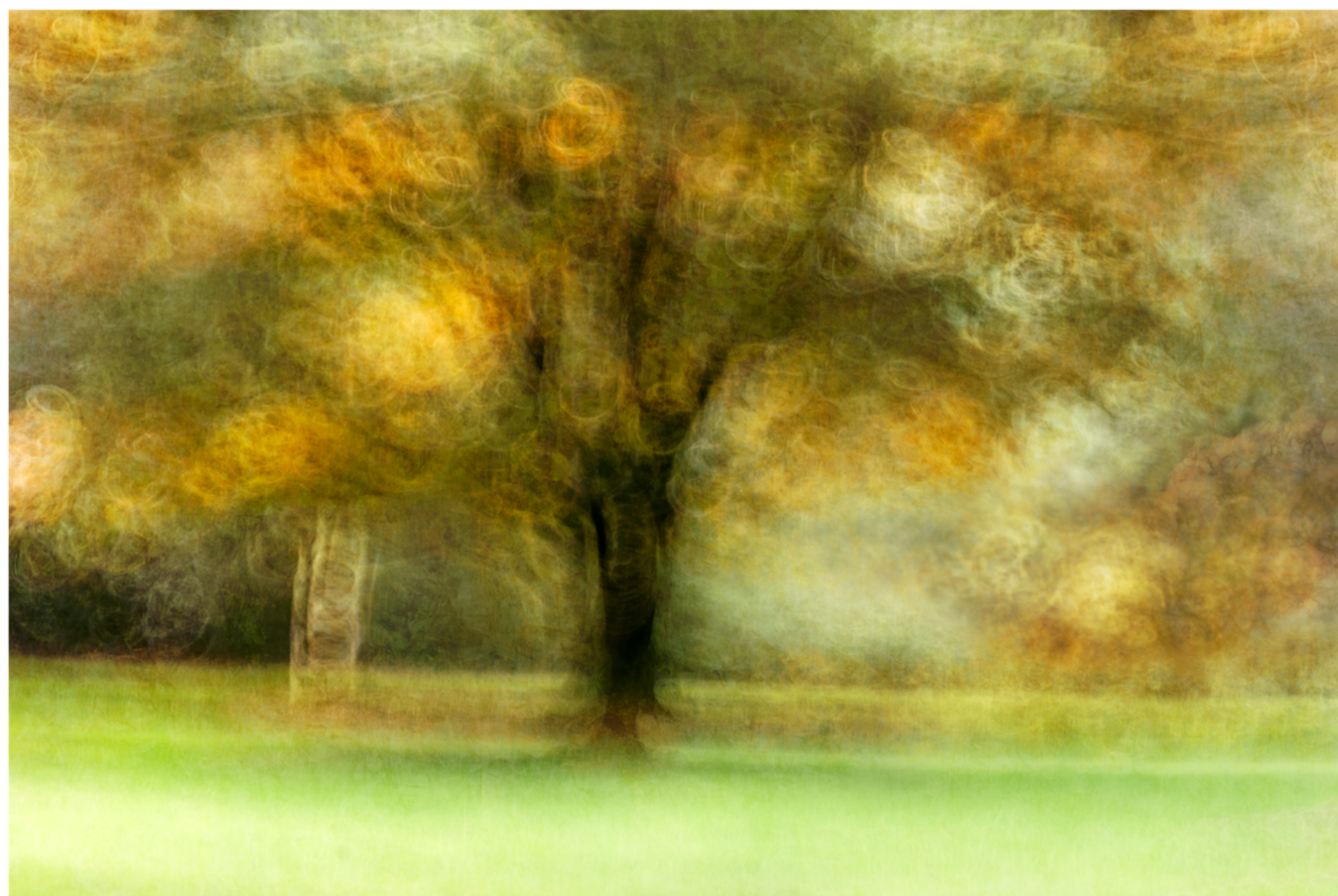
Yeesss. The image now looked as it had felt... the blinding bright light, the movement, the lines created as the tree was pulled blowing and dancing with wind.

I looked up distracted by something, the shift in light. The loss of it as the sun vanished, losing its battle with the thick cloud now providing a grey soft box light to the world.
The tree now completely different.
The wind gone. Silence.
The tree, now sat still and quiet as if unmoved by all the drama.

How everything had changed. Now the colours were so... I grappled for the word. Vital. The grey soft box sky flattering the mix of autumn and summer colours, green and gold, saturated and intensified by the rain.



The tree and I danced
with the wind and the light...



I put the camera to my eye... the colours, the colours... the camera is a brush...
I want to smear the colour, I want to say something about the colour...

I turned to face the tree, square on this time, feet slightly apart for balance, I started moving my upper body, presumably invisible inside my giant puffy coat but I didn't care if anyone did wonder what I was doing... honestly, I never even thought of it. Just rotating my torso ever so slightly, imagining a letter C... no, that wasn't quite right... I adjusted it ... a little Z running backwards as if the top of the letter were the front and I'm pulling back through the movement... I dropped the camera from my face and held it at chest height experimenting with the movement in my body and then only in my hands... decided on the body for stability and flow...

Inhale... exhale...in - click - hale... rocking that Z shifting weight from front going backwards, feet still... so subtle.

Two women were wandering up the path where I had lingered now for over 40 minutes, lost in my game where the wind, rain, tree, camera and me were doing some sort of strange tango together...

'You look utterly lost in whatever you're doing,' one spoke as they paused and then added with a warm smile. 'My late husband used to look like that when he played the saxophone... you look like you're creating some sort of music with that camera...'

And it had begun to feel just like that ...



CHAPTER NINE THE NEXT PART OF THE JIGSAW

And so, the world was leading me...

Think of the movements your body makes naturally:- twist, shiver, shake, rock, bend, step back, step forwards...

Now try adding them to your moving the camera in a shape around your subject...

Follow the Shape in front of you + Move your Body = An image that is partly you...

Simple isn't it... and enormous fun and here's the real beauty...

Every single image has you painted into it. Your movement, unique that moment and day. And that movement is an interaction with nature and the world you inhabit. The camera the bridge between you and a paint brush.. The tension in your body, which can be soft, tight or somewhere in between, – all an interaction, physical, emotional and mental and a representation of your interaction with your world.... It's quite amazing if you think about it. And your creativity with that image is also created by the interaction...

And remember.... shhhh... exhale and slow right down.

And when you think you're going super slow...

Slow some more...

It will likely feel awkward at the beginning, like driving the car did or typing on a keyboard...

Instructions on technique, like prescriptions, will only get you so far... then it's the connection, the awareness, the interaction, timing and rhythm that count from what shutter speed to what white balance to how am I going to move with the land... how far can I push this...





There are opportunities to play with colour and light everywhere...

I was wandering through town feeling very bored and alone one bank holiday and caught this on the village green... the flat grey light really helping me out - using just an iphone camera...
...and so much more when you learn Photoshop and have fun at home then immersing yourself in colour and creative play

Imagination is you - add a camera and some inspiration and photoshop and you've got an artist....



You can find me at -
<https://thephotographicartisan.com>
or amandanewell.com gets you to the same place.

Links to YouTube and substack on the back page or the website.....



CHAPTER TEN AN AMAZING REALISATION JOY & THE SELF-HEALING PROPHECY

It was many months since this had all begun as I headed down to the harbour one afternoon. I ambled through town, wending my way through the market stalls on a Saturday afternoon in early spring.

It was only when I'd reached the bottom of the steep high street and reached the cobbles that I realised.

I'd not parked in the Quay car park. Instead, without thinking, I'd parked at the top of town, like I did in the old days before I so incapacitated and ill... I'd not even thought about it because...

Huh.

Of course. I was sooo much better. I touched my neck reflexively because for some time it had been so tight and inflamed there were moments I was struggling to breathe. I'd never not walked down because of some vague 'anxiety' that needed reframing. I'd not walked down because there was a real risk I could not get back....

I stopped dead at what was before me - the colours. Woah!!

The rain that had fallen earlier had made the cobbles wet and now light was shining up the little street from the harbour catching light on the front of the buildings... Love it.

I stopped and ignoring the people who muttered about me being weird and in the way... I caught some images, moving slowly, panning up, capturing the lines and colours...

Hmmm.

I just need a person to come along now... It was a tall order, the crowds on a Saturday are often thick and people were lingering, crowding the narrow street. I backed up and leaned against the wall. Nonchalant, that's the way I've learned on the street, using the phone camera to go incognito... I'd wait; pretend I'm scrolling... One eye on the people moving about... I need that decisive moment...

My mind wandered as I gazed at the blank screen...pretending to scroll, one eye on the crowd, covert, looking away... Allowing my mind to just unpack the seeming miracle of recovery of my health, I'd not properly thought about so far... How interesting.

What was this? A miracle? Magic? Or something else, because without medication (I'd walked away from the medical system I'd been a part of)... This was very curious... I arched an eyebrow and looked up distracted.

Someone coming? No, the opportunity passed; too many people. I carried on studying my blank screen intently, one eye scanning as I thought... I was even back at work just one day a week, I'd reopened my business. And yet at warp speed I guess, although it hadn't felt like it...

I mean, what is this? Some weird esoteric magical miracle? No, I don't believe in such things.

Or... a misdiagnosis? Nope. Multiple blood test results confirmed that.

BINGO. It hit me. And then a man came along pushing a bike at the same moment.

I picked up the camera just as a crowd were coming the other way... set up for it anyway, teeth gritting slightly because... they're in the way...move, move move... Yeeess... they shifted just in time and by a sheer luck he pauses to fix something on the bike right in the frame right between the bollards...

I rocked gently on my feet, the motion on the iPhone slightly different to the Fuji camera, my body and mind instinctive now, the movement on automaticity, the front part of my brain had shifted this responsibility, like driving a car or typing, so it just happens...

Good. That would do for here, I was keen to see the harbour, to see what it offered today as I set off down the cobbles, the jangle of the yacht masts soon filling my ears as I gazed unseeing in the quirky little shop windows, my thoughts wandering back to this curious miracle that isn't a miracle.

Of course!

Blinding flash of the obvious... or maybe the not so obvious...

Wow... I realised –this practice with the camera has been doing something quite extraordinary, not just mentally and emotionally but physically, not magical or crazy or esoteric but...

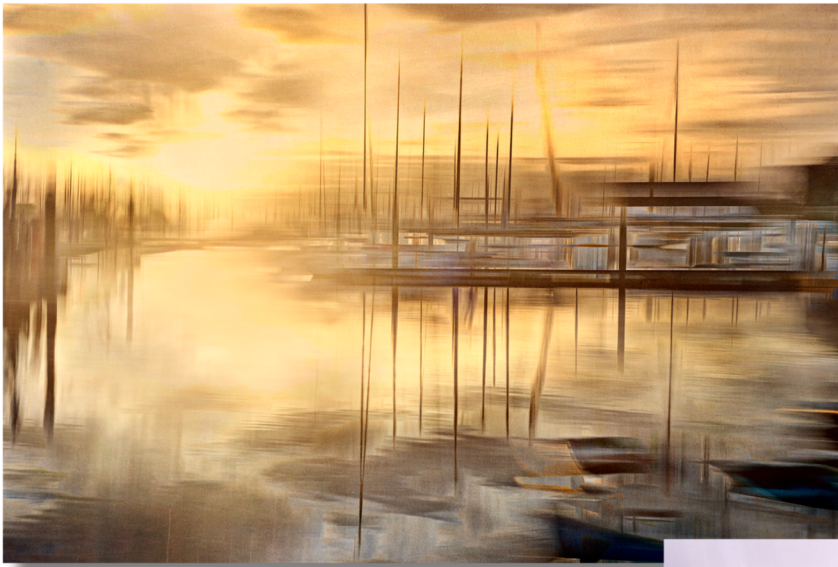
It's Thomas Hanna's use of pandiculation. He had taken the natural stretch and yawn of the body, mapped it out into tiny incremental movements that, when repeated consciously, give the mind back conscious control over muscles that have long ago been wound so tight they can no longer be thought freed with words like soften or just relax... Ha.

And I'd been doing it naturally, with camera movements so subtle. And that was what had created these images I just love and can't believe are mine.

Blimey!

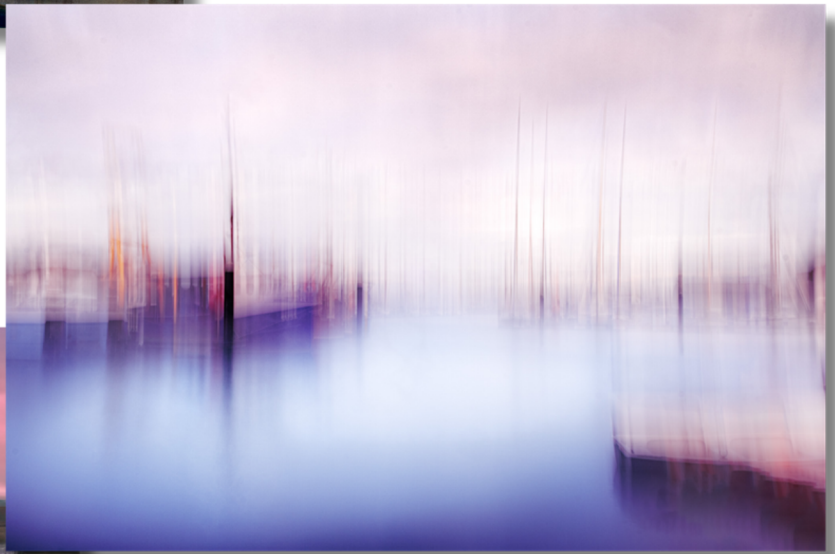
Who knew...

I sat down on the bench that someone had just vacated. How funny I'd not connected the dots before. I sat and gazed into nowhere for a little while waiting for some folks in my favourite shooting spot to move on....



The same
place....

is never....



the same....



When I finally saw the space clear at the end of the harbour I stood there myself and gazed down the length of the space, marvelling at how this same place can always be the same but always be so different...

And this matters, because I know there are others like me, maybe it could be you one day. So, here's the short version; you find stuff out in illness. I'd had a full busy life. As I deteriorated and was told I was imagining it, my life shrank not out of choice but necessity, I did what I could. And now I am very isolated. I have no family, friends vanished. Luckily my ex/friend is amazing... I've rarely gone more than 25 miles from home in many years. The odd day out less than once a year often. Am I sad? Isolated? Does it sometimes feel hollow and so empty? Yes. Of course. I don't want to live like this. I hope things will change...

However, because I return to the same places over and over, in the midst of this, I noticed something quite wonderful.

**That the world around me is always the same...
....but always SO DIFFERENT!**

What had often felt like a prison had become a dawning realisation that just the weather provided something like a bag of candy of opportunities to shoot. One place and so many looks... Or maybe it's more like a film you don't really intend to watch that turns out to be the most surprisingly entertaining thought provoking thing you've seen in ages.

After that I did it on purpose. Going to the harbour repeatedly excited at what possibilities might be there that day. Gold or blue, orange, red, pink?! The possibilities were endless. Then the lines, shapes, reflections, clouds...

What do I want to do today? Make something of the clouds and the reflections, box the sun rise in a frame of lines created with the camera and the yacht masts or linger and drift expressing the dreamy blues of a late summer evening?

I leaned on the little rail at the end of the harbour and gazed down the rows of yachts. I should be bored rigid with it, but how can I be, because it's never the same; but always the same...

And when you awaken all your senses the briny smell, the sounds of the yacht masts jangling, the colours, the textures... there's more to explore than a glance with the eye might realise...

I'm amazed at how much light I found in the darkest period of my adult life.



Freedom

To express

Explore possibilities

Immerse myself in something completely and utterly new

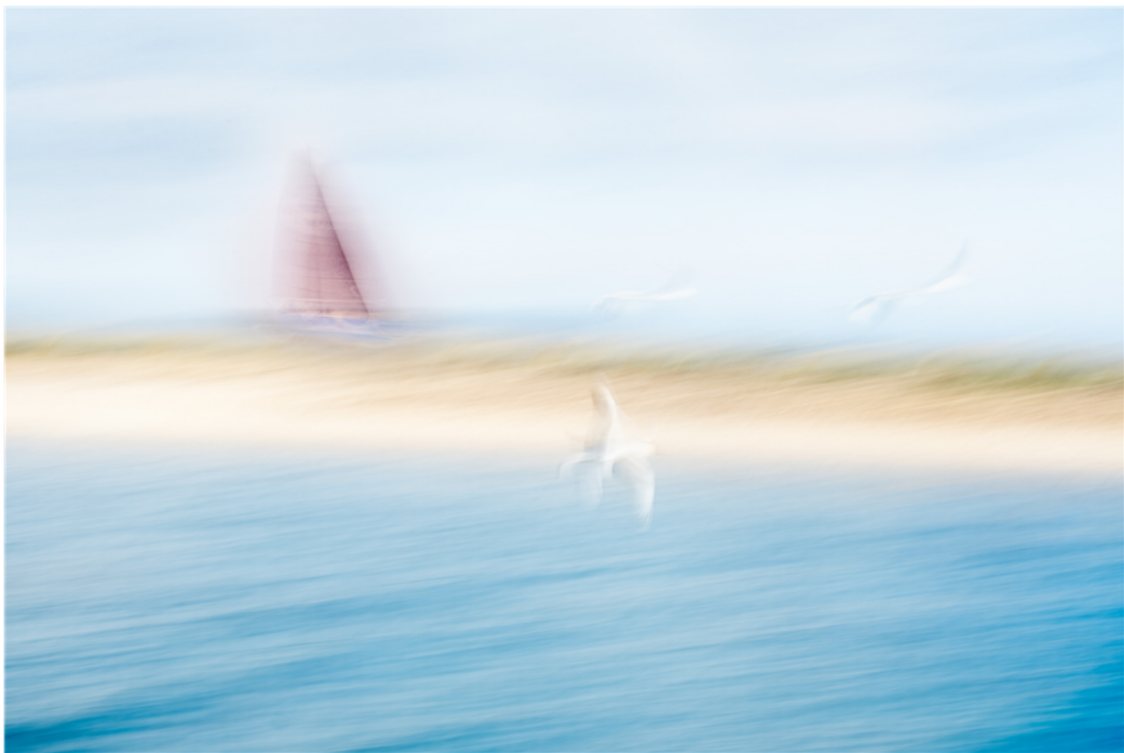
And... amazingly to connect in some distant way with others... as emails and thoughts had started to land in my mailbox almost daily now...

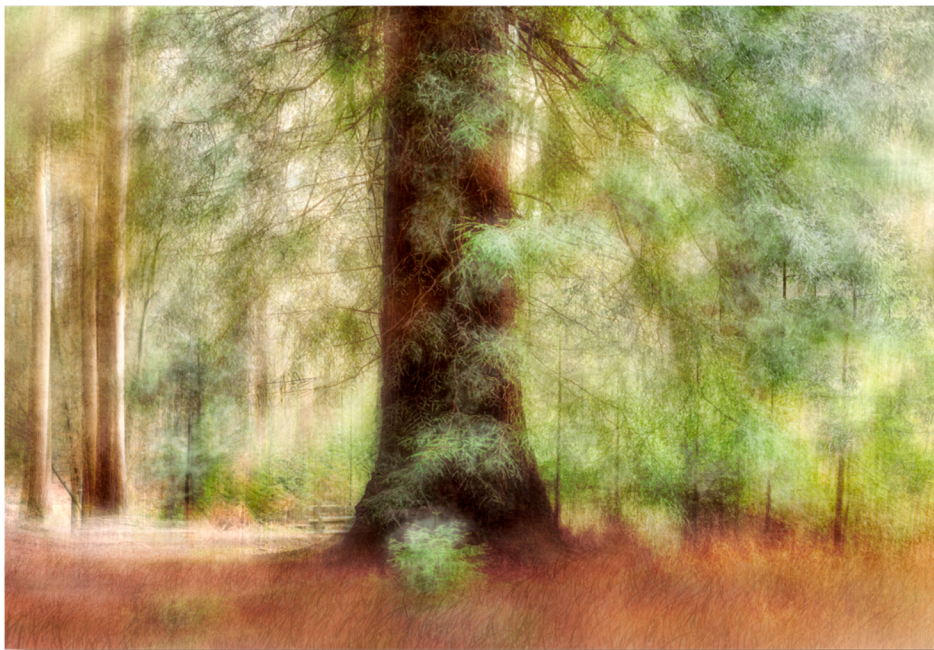
That my serious mucking about with a camera has led others to do the same...

I smiled and wondered what will happen next....

Maybe, just maybe I'll be able to go somewhere different. Maybe this is the start of a new chapter, back at work, loving this camera practice...

But dark clouds were already forming over my camera practice... That would teach me another unexpected lesson.





CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PRISONS WE PUT OURSELVES IN...AND ESCAPING!

W^{inter...}

It was cold and damp as I shrank into my coat and wandered down to the empty Quay so different from the throngs of summer... The colours — beautiful pinks of the early morning winter skies... I pulled the camera from the bag and set myself up to continue my project wondering what movements would capture the beauty before me... a double in camera, several singles with different movements for the different parts of the scene to blend later?

Inhale, exhale...

Click.

Oh. No good

Try again...

Ever tried, ever failed...

It's the cold?

Yes, that's going to account for it, I can't concentrate when I'm so cold... and cold affects my Lupus and makes my hands so painful...

But you never concentrate, I thought to myself, that's the point...

You just do...

So...

Try again...

Nope.

What's happened...

I can't do it. That's what...

I tried and repeatedly failed to make the camera movements work...

I went for a short walk and come back – still couldn't do it.

I tried not to think too much into it... to feel anything judgemental about this.

Try again...

Nope.

What is going on with me?

Why am I like this?

I tried to capture a slightly different scene and couldn't do that either.

Pants

What is going on?

I sat down on the same bench yet again and rubbed my jaw. I'd been trying to ignore the grinding tension in the muscle there. I flexed my fingers, slightly terrified of the clicking sensation that seemed to be returning... Everything had been going so well. I'd even managed to get my business reopened, something I'd been told I'd never manage and now...

What is going on?

I gazed at the boats. A little blue one was moored close by. I frowned. That hasn't been here for some time, in fact... the last time I saw that was the day I sat here in tears in the rain thinking I'd have to give up photography.

Oh. It was like a smack around the head.

Of course.

I've gone full circle.

I rubbed my jaw, shaking my head at my own foolishness as it dawned on me; I'd put myself right back where I started.

I was rushing around doing all the things that I'd been doing before... trying to shoe horn myself back into my old life and old ways of doing things including...

Trying to fit in...

Wanting to belong somewhere.

I swallowed.

So I'd been trying to meet criteria, pass qualifications, gain... what?

Validation? Credentials?

'You alright love,' a stranger's voice. A man and his dog. He paused a frown and stared at me.

I brushed my tears away feeling very foolish. 'Yes, sorry,' I muttered. 'I'm fine, I just realised something...'

He nodded sagely. The dog gazing up at him as if nodding in agreement.

'Well, whatever it is you've realised, go with your gut,' he said and nodded to himself as he turned and carried on adding. *'Whatever it is, listen.'*

Tim Ingold, whose work I studied when I did my Anthrozoology training, it turns out hasn't just researched and written about human/animal interactions. He's also written about human interactions with creativity.which, he concludes, are not conjured up like magic from our heads but the result of an interaction...

I turned the thought over like a prism of light in my head.

And there was me... This whole practice had been an interaction. Me, mind and body, interacting with this amazing technology we call a camera and the land and its light and colours... not one of us able to create these images without the other. It was where my practice had started with the camera right back then taking images for that course, the interaction with the land my passion, the thing I wanted to capture with the camera, to express as an interaction with me...

And now... Desperately trying to do the things we're supposed to do... need to do...

To fit in, be a part of something... To be included. Honestly, been trying to shoehorn this practice into a framework so I could belong, fit in...

How ironic that I'd suppressed one interaction to gain another... only it didn't gain me anything... I'd just lost instead...

And imagination is suppressed by all the thinking, trying to follow rules and guidelines and criteria... And imagination is what fuels the interaction of creativity. I frowned. Maybe this is why Land & Jarman in the 1960s discovered that we are all born creative geniuses but somehow as we pass through childhood and teens and arrive in our twenties only a tiny percentage of us still have it...

By trying to belong, to fit in... Or having to!
I'd flattened it... squished the thing that had brought me so much joy and pleasure and healing. My imagination, freedom, creative craziness...

Right.
Stop.
Rewind.

I got up and went back to the end of the harbour, mind rummaging through the archives in my head and landing (*and this is weird so please don't tell anyone else*) on the first of the Matrix films.

Did you ever see that?
That's what popped into my head. The scene where Neo has received a download for jujitsu and he's now fighting Morpheus, but he can't do it. *Because he's thinking, not trusting that he knows...*
'Stop trying to hit me and just hit me,' Morpheus advises.

I tried to not think, just move.
But of course, consciously trying is part of the problem. And in neuroscience they know that once the brain has learned a script it will automatically load it up - so thinking, trying, following a script becomes scripted itself...

Botheration, I thought (or some other phrase I won't write)...

Okay..
So this is like writers block.

Interaction will help.

Thinking will not.
Getting frustrated, tight, cross, trying, worrying – *all got to stop.*



The following morning, I went to the Forest, to a spot I love so much. As I pulled the car off the main road over the cattle grid, I felt a frisson of excitement, as if I've arrived in Narnia. It's the smell, that part of the Forest has the most incredible aroma. It's sort of sweet and herbilicious. Tantalising, you can't help stopping and taking a deep inhale of it it's so intoxicating. Like coming home.

I slipped from the car and inhaled deeply gulping in the delicious sweet scent of the place before gathering up my bag and little stool and ambling down the road, just enjoying the wonder of the place... Camera still in the bag, just settling here, as if re-inhabiting. I wandered a short distance and found my way across the ditch, crunching across the fallen leaves and twigs

And then it started. This thing I'd been doing and hadn't realised. I was doing it now... only I caught myself this time, teeth gritted staring about looking for a composition like a hunter after prey. I laughed. I had to. This was so ridiculous. I couldn't "see" anything, and I'm a trained observer (ethnographer) and I'd become unglued, trying so hard to fit in to be a photographer... Inhale, exhale...notice the sensations of the place, the cool breeze on my cheeks, I touched a tree for a moment with my finger tips... Smell and touch bypassing the thinking brain inhabiting me to the place first... Ah, that's why I feel so intensely here... Smell bypasses the thinking brain and goes straight to our feeling core, we feel first and then think it...

I found myself a fallen tree to sit on amongst the mushrooms. And I just sat there and let the thoughts unfold...

Belonging matters.

Being validated matters.

We all want those things, and I had found myself more isolated now than I have been since I was a teenager... All that belonging I thought I had; I hadn't. And now I was trying to do it again. Desperately trying to belong to this photography world. Wanting to just be visible, somewhere...
... but belonging meant doing things the way the world said, not how I had been....

And now I'd ended up thinking again, not feeling the world...

And thinking hard, trying to follow frameworks and meet criteria forces the thinking brain to work hard and the neuroscience shows that this is like putting a plug in your creativity so...

I had a choice.

To continue to do that.

Or to sink into what has brought me so much healing and joy...

Holding this thought, I got up and ambled back down the road towards the little bridge near the car park and instinctively found myself making my way down the slope to the path alongside the river... pausing to peer into the flow of the dark water and then turning, my peripheral vision catching a beautiful beam of light coming through the trees and catching the furthest corner of the bridge... Mesmerised, I pulled the camera from the bag and flicked it to double exposure, dark blend mode...

A spotlight... and dancing with the tree canopy as it moved with the grace of a dancer doing the rumba in a gentle breeze. I shifted myself a little closer to the gorgeous red wood of the tree closest to me, the colour of the bark embellished by the autumn sunlight... wiggling my toes, sinking into my pelvis, inhaling, exhaling... the water on the river whooshing merrily beside me, some birds chirping noisily filling my ears against the hushed silence of the early morning...

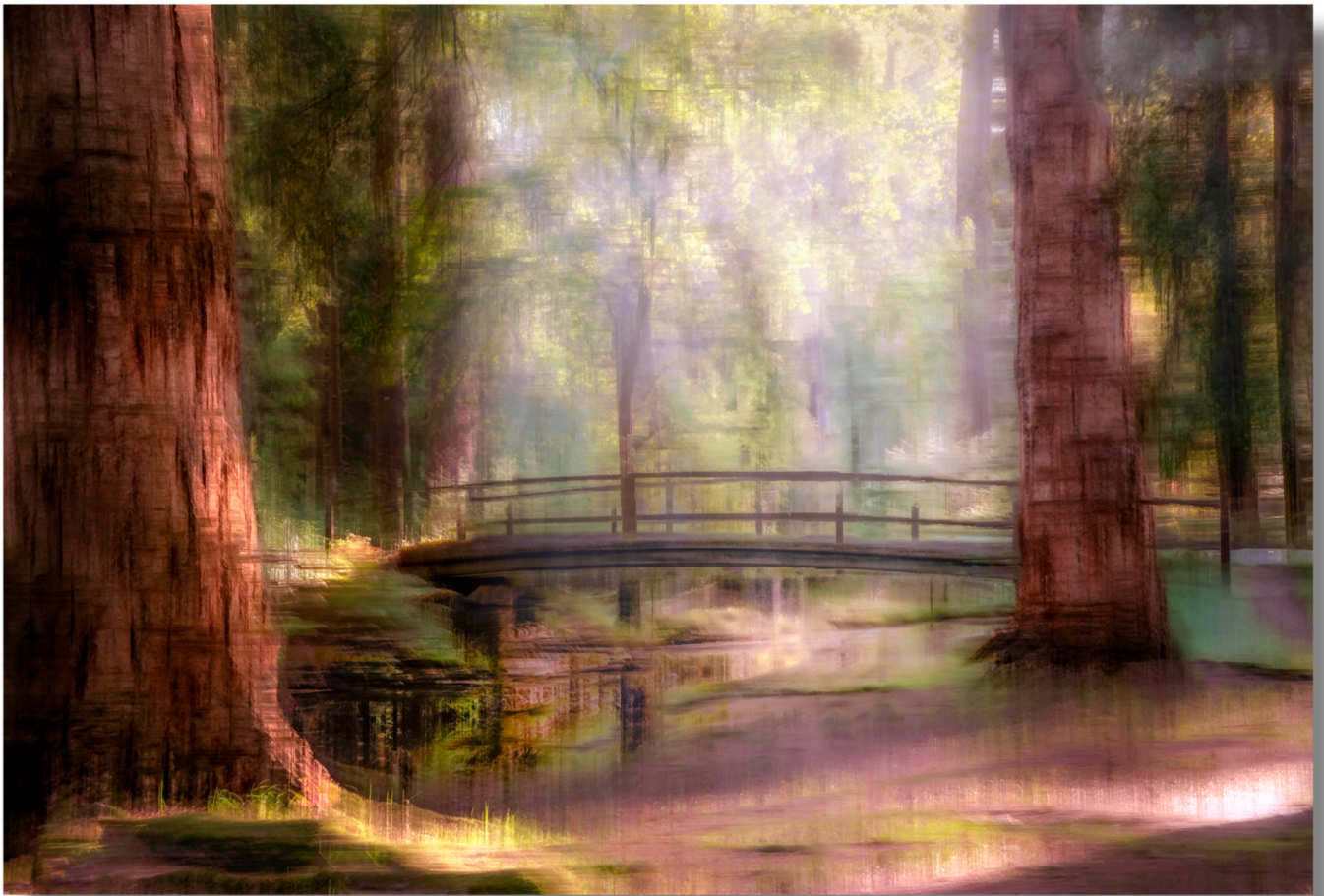
1 second inhale, exhale... flowing on the exhale across the horizontal line, following the little bridge...click the shutter closed...

Dropped the lens a little to point slightly south, soften my feet, focal lock... inhale, exhale... inhaling flowing – click – floating the camera upwards. Click the shutter closes...

Wow...

I did it I did it I did it...

I was so happy I actually announced this out loud to two ponies I'm sure aren't supposed to be wandering up that part of the Forest, but I was grateful for their company I didn't think about that at the time. They paused, stared at me as though I was quite mad (wisely maybe) blinked carefully and then turned their heads and continued on their way...



Two camera movements caught in-camera on the Fuji XT4

Panning horizontal letting the land lead me across the
bridge...

Then vertical up the tree on dark blend mode...

I'm not a photographer.
I'm an artist and inhabitator of the land
capturing it from and with my heart...

Trust me, that feels good...

What has the decisive moment, line shape and form got to do with intuition?

Everything, it turns out!

I found this old recording of Henri Cartier-Bresson being interviewed. It baffled me for some time, that he spoke of intuition. How could he talk about intuition but be quoted constantly talking about line shape and form? I thought this to myself rather grumpily, it makes no sense. And then, he talked elsewhere of spontaneity too! How can that live alongside all these rules of and principles and thinking of the decisive moment, or the aforementioned line shape and form... I scratched my head.

Whether it was the lines of the little bridge that morning and thinking about the cross hatch of the bark on the trees... or simply a shift in my own unravelling from being “wound up”... When I got home from the Forest, it hit me... of course! Henri Cartier-Bresson talked of intuition because he meant he knew the world in lines and shapes and form, he knew how it bolted together from his design and art training. He didn’t then think it because he just knew it like I “know” where the keys are on the keyboard are to type but can’t actually tell you where the yare if you ask me. And, duh, I *knew* the world from my background in human ecology/anthrozoology... and I’d studied design to express it too, but then... you forget it. Well, not forget it literally, more like you don’t consciously think about it...

And all I’d been doing trying to fit in, trying to be good enough was think about what I was supposed to be doing.

In doing it I’d put up this huge roadblock to my imagination, my movement, all of it. It was as if i’d walked into a bog and now stuck wasit deep in mud.

Oh botheration... I didn’t say that; you know that!

But I was so relieved...

Phew...

I just had to *not* fit in, and I was good at that so... being weird, excluded and odd... maybe that’s the best way to be!

Intuition isn't some mystical thing either. I re-visited the interview with Henri Cartier-Bresson and remembered...

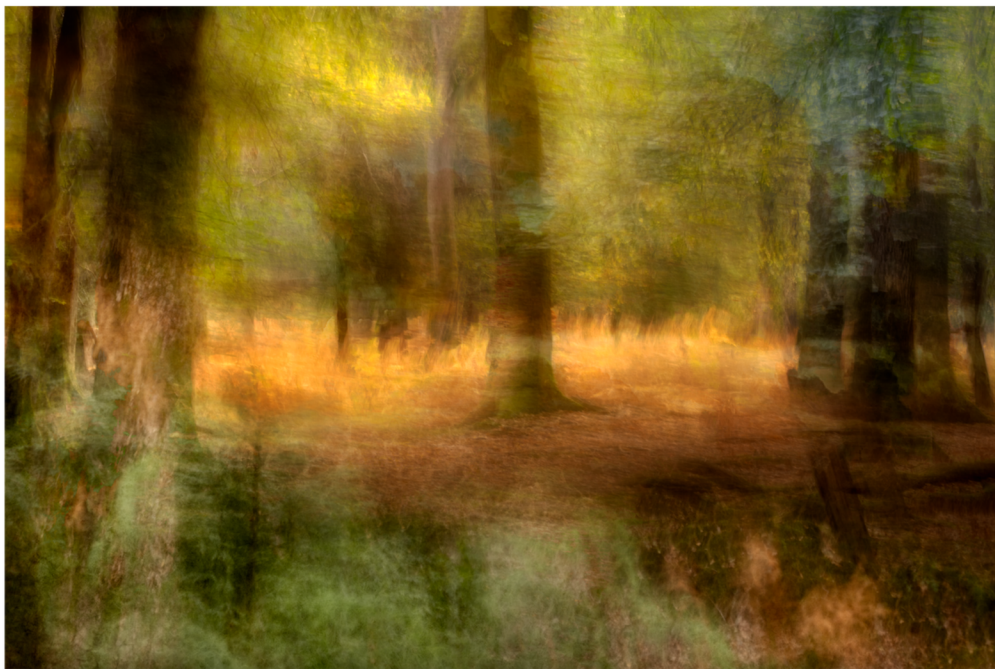
Gavin de Beker, a former FBI agent wrote a book called the Gift of Fear.

He writes that he has to retrain his clients to listen to their gut feelings, to trust their awareness because we are taught to override it. We are taught that the subtle clues we sense when something is off are irrational, wrong and not to be trusted. Those clues he says are intuition... It's not mystical or esoteric it's the peripheral vision and the vast pool of information from the world around us that the narrator in our head cannot narrate because there's not time to say that many words so we just know it...

So, we learn that this awareness is irrational...

I cogitate on this for a bit and realise I always did *feel* the world before I *think* it and I've learned to hide it until... I started seriously playing with the camera and by then of course nothing else was possible so I didn't think about it - I was free... In a strange paradoxical manner of speaking!





CHAPTER TWELVE WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...

I gave up my health job and immersed myself in photographic art for many months...

Exploring design and art like Cartier Bresson, so I could *know* it so well I could just trust it without thinking about it, like changing gear in the car...

Then I studied some art history to find out what those people, our photographic ancestors, really said or meant or were motivated by...

Why? Because I realised some time ago that learning about what got us here often explains it...

And here's something I discovered that helped me, I hope it helps you...

The first impressionists, Claude Monet, Renoir and their colleagues, they were not accepted. Their work was discredited, they were excluded, they didn't belong. The term 'impressionism' was initially an insult to undermine them... What did they do? They simply found another place to exhibit, funnily enough in the studio of Nadar born Gaspard-Félix Tournachon one of the most famous photographers of the era in his studio on the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris 1874. And of course, impressionism has become one of the most beautiful contributions to art...and so loved.

Nothing new, fun, different ever really came from fitting in.

Here's another interesting snippet –

...if you try and focus on something specific with your eyes, neuroscience and ophthalmic research shows that the fovea, the tiny part of the eye responsible for sharp focus, mutes the peripheral vision — not switching it off but using up the resources it would otherwise have...

There's nothing wrong with the thinking brain — you can't learn anything without it. But once you've learned, you have to trust that the other parts of the brain just know. You don't need to think, think and you're in your own own way...

....constantly trying to work to frameworks, prescriptions and instructions keeps you stuck 'thinking' and thinking mutes creativity simply because the resources are poured into the thinking as priority.

And when you do, it's like creative jet fuel. That's why I'd been coming up with so many endless creative ideas in illness, nothing mattered... I'd stopped thinking and just felt my way through it...





CHAPTER THIRTEEN THE MAP

I love to share my passion these days and to do that I worked out not a prescription but ingredients... And just like a chef if you learn the ingredients so they are second nature then you can create your own recipes, throw in some ingredients of your own...

Movement — breath, movement, softness, the physical technique of moving the camera as an extension of you if you feel like doing ICM but also possible to “control” the camera on a long shutter speed without a tripod.

The Shape of The World — how design principles are the land and then...run on intuition not thinking.

Connection – inhabiting the world, feeling it with all the senses for that interaction that invokes imagination and creativity follows...

You – expressionism, freedom, following playful experimentation...

The art – bringing things together in the digital dark room, another layer of play to bring out what you felt there...

I wrote this to share what might help –
please share freely if something here resonates with you...

I teach and create online resources.. please find more on the next page
with best wishes,

Amanda x



WHAT NEXT?

Want to come on a creative journey with me?

You can find me at:-

<https://thephotographicartisan.com>

or amandanewell.com gets you to the same place.

Links to YouTube and substack are below..

- One to One Mentoring programme
- How To Be A Photographic Artist - The Tutorial Library - learn at your own pace, pick and mix, affordable membership...
- Live On Line Workshop
- Books



YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@thephotographicartisan>

<https://substack.com/@thephotographicartisan>