

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Spiritually and aesthetically, I aspire to communicate the message that we need to awaken to nature and the land from which we all have sprung and on which we continue to be totally dependent. This message is one cast through the wholistic imagery of photography. To describe nature only in words – even in powerful words – is to exclude much because of the cultural construction of language. Through the art of photography, I capture and compose a portion of the universe and leave interpretation to the viewer: art consciously binds us to both the land and to nature.

Through photography, it is my deepest hope that I communicate the values and strength of land, place, and nature that the North particularly holds for me – as well as for all of us, in these increasingly uncertain times. With these images, I offer reflections on how a life with meaning can be realized through a closeness with the land as our current “globalized” world founders on the shoals of placelessness and impermanence – collectively, we have lost the meaning of place in our lives. These images of northern travels are footprints to lead a viewer of my work with me into truly amazing lands.

Geographically, I channel artistic intent through a northern, largely maritime region which is portrayed in my life’s work as a photo essay in progress, “The Far Northeast: Sense of Place”. So named by anthropologists, The Far Northeast extends from the State of Maine north through the Canadian Maritimes, Newfoundland and Labrador, and into the new Canadian Inuit Territory of Nunavut and then over to Western Greenland; its people include Down Easters and Maritimers, Métis and Labradorians, Québécois and Acadians, Innu and Inuit. From my home on coastal Maine when I look

northwards, I continue to see and travel further to the northeast which has become the place where my story plays out. Through photography and field notes, I chronicle my continuing discovery of this region as, with each trip, I continue my exploration. My work is a celebration of the beauty and value of northern places, which, I believe, hold significance for urbanized locations where culture has precluded celebration of the land and nature.

Writing almost a century-and-half ago in 1854 in *The Maine Woods* (1988, 212; orig. 1864), Henry David Thoreau sought wilderness as the “raw material” of civilization since without it, we would “be civilized off the face of the earth”. This same expansive northern region occupied the life of Robert E. Peary from his home on Eagle Island in Casco Bay to the northern reaches of Greenland and northern Canada. This latter place is now Nunavut (“our land” in Inuktitut the language of the Inuit), an autonomous territory of Canada. Thus, knowing this place, The Far Northeast is – for me – knowing the touch of the sea through the skin of a kayak slightly skimming waves. It is hearing the first snow of winter hiss as symphony of crystals land on the dry forest floor. It is the taste of fog off the cold waters of the North Atlantic. It is annually cutting, hauling, and drying firewood; central heating does not warm the soul while a hearth does. It is feeling and celebrating the return of the sun as the first golden rays of morning light penetrate 40 to 50 degrees of frost on the walls of a tent.

Only through experience, through use of the senses, do we develop an identity with a place – a sense of place. Through what I variously entitle nature or field photography, I share that experience with others who view my work. These are experiences that can

be more effectively “portrayed” through photographs than through words to school assemblies of children and young adults, environmental organizations, elder hostels, and associations of travelers. As recently pointed out by Bradford McKee in *The New York Times* (April 28, 2005. Pp. D1, D9), today’s children – tomorrow’s adults and citizens – are particularly at risk as they grow up “denatured”. “Cultural pressures have pushed children too far from the natural world...[with] children’s fixation on artificial entertainment rather than natural wonders.”

The more intimate our connection is with the land, the greater is the possibility of wisdom being realized through the direct experience of life on the land, as well as on the sea. From my own travels and peoples whom I have met and through photography, I offer a principle. With a sense of place, individuals establish roots and from those roots wisdom can grow. As wisdom originates from sensual experience, this connection to place and the realization of wisdom may sometimes be euphoric and sometimes be utterly depressing as when one gains self-knowledge. Confused is the culture and individual who lack a connection to place as wisdom and contentment remain elusive. For one, through my travels, thoughts, and images, I seek a land, a culture, a place that transcends a condition of all-consuming materialism. Through my art and travels, I continue to seek a place where technology supports life but does not completely determine the human condition and deny connection with the land.

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