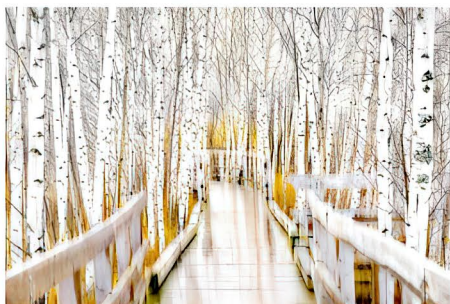
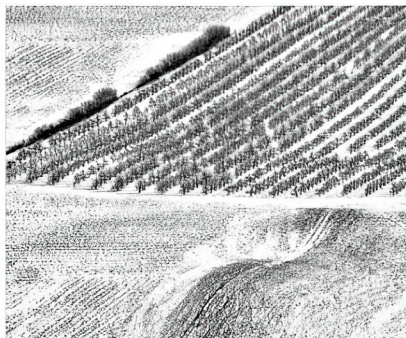


# More Than Landscape Photographs?

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I am reluctant to call myself a landscape photographer. Granted, I do spend a lot of time exploring the wild outdoors with my camera in hand, and my images almost always include rocks, water, sky or trees. But that title, “landscape photographer”, conjures up a mental image of a person, a location, a bag of gear and a checklist of techniques that has very little to do with me and my image-making process.

For me, and I suspect for many other On Landscape readers, the important thing about landscape photography is not the photography itself. Nor even the beautiful landscapes we travel through. What’s important are our experiences in those landscapes and the larger meaning-of-life questions we ponder when we are out there. It is those questions, and our attempts to answer them, that propel us beyond merely documenting the pretty scenery, and instead make images that tell stories, express ideas, evoke moods and spark conversations.

What we bring to this kind of image-making is, well... our whole lives! In my case, this includes happy formative years on Canada’s Atlantic coast, some turbulent years stranded in its largest city, and all the wonderful outdoor adventures that have punctuated my journey. It encompasses my eclectic studies in philosophy, literature, earth science and natural history, and an earlier career writing about wilderness travel and environmental issues. It also flows from my craving for solitude and freedom, and, paradoxically, my enjoyment of the company of good friends. It is inspired by the work of other photographers, and by paintings, poetry, music and the songs of birds.

In short, a whole medley of sensory, emotional and intellectual input goes into the making of my images, in a process that begins long before I press the camera’s shutter button, and often continues long afterwards in my digital darkroom. Indeed, it even persists in the creation of titles for my images to complement and enrich them (a lively topic that merits its own essay!).