ctLow Photographer May 27 · 4 min read

# Photo-artist in (Pandemic) Isolation

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## In most ways I have it very easy. I am grateful.

It's a very first-world problem, especially in times like these; to have the luxury to lose myself with feeding my inner artist.

But feed him I must, and if I go 36 hours without, it begins to gnaw away, and I find myself heading out with my photographic gear. I don't have anything to decide, any more than I have to decide to get hungry or sleepy. I just go.

Allow me to start near where I left off last time. I showed the following photograph's partner then; this is the more dramatic version, and they both appeal to slightly different parts of me.

Sunrise over the St. Lawrence River. May 3

As usual, this wasn't what I went out to photograph, but on my way home from another photographic scene, I saw this sunrise, in a little cloud-gapeze on the horizon, over the St. Lawrence River, just downstream from Brockville, Ontario, overlooking upper New York State.

Again and again, I find myself back at the river - the mighty St. Lawrence River, to be precise. There is a lot of World to photograph besides the river, and I have been pondering the tension between exploring new venues (which I love, when I can) vs. learning to pull more out of old ones.

One of the Thousand Islands, at dawn, in fog, ... reflection May 10

So, the more persistent readers of this blog will recognize some "old" material, perhaps typical of me: river, dawn, fog, reflection. I will leave it to you to adjudicate whether it merited a return to this old haunt.

I feel that the following, made in the same session as the one above, is going out on more of an artistic limb. It may challenge the preconceptions of some viewers about what a photograph should look like.

1000 Islands island at dawn, in fog, with navigation beacon

I have also discussed with some of my valued art-critics (and an artist needs good critics, and has to be strong enough to be open enough to what they think), and I can see that, although I think I like it on several levels, I would not show it if not for the navigation beacon. It is, for me, the focal point of the image, but it is a man-made intrusion, and it is distinguished by there so many lines (although never in coincidence requiring the light), and it is incumbent upon me to admit that most viewers won't have that association. Whether the visual punctuation is sufficient to carry this image, in the absence of such a personal connection, I will again leave to you.

Next, still on the same photographic excursion, the other end of that island:

1000 Islands island at dawn, in fog, with natural frame

Individual perception naturally and quite rightly varies enormously, but what attracted my eye was the pattern of the foreground branches. (Does it matter that it was early Spring, so the sprouting leaves give a sense of life's renewal? Maybe.) The reeds and island provide a natural frame, and the fog an evocative (for me) background.

Time passes, the inner artist grows restless, and I slept late (relatively!) and/or the light, earlier in the day, was "wrong". I returned to the scene at dusk, a few days later:

1000 Islands island, dusk, reflection (no fog). May 28

Isn't it amazing what a change of light does?

As I was having, over several weeks, such a good time, I went back, just a hop further upstream, to the same island as the previous with beacon, although from a different vantage (and in a different light):

1000 Islands island, dusk, navigation beacon. May 21

What's hard to know, unless I tell you, is how very little light there was. I hung around, sometimes doing nothing for ten minutes, in a bit too much anticipation (while perversely a little bored) to call it meditation, waiting for the light to evolve. By this time, after 9 p.m., it was close to inky-black dark, with just the faintest wedge of sunlight barely glowing in the western sky behind me. This was a four-second exposure (on a tripod of course), and as a normal non-photographers from time to time, we don't need much light. We just need some light.

While I was there that evening, several ships trundled by, albeit at quite some distance, on the far side of the river, over 3 km distant. I photographed them all, and as the light faded I raised the ISO setting on the camera more and more in order to manage motion-blur. Eventually, I realized, I had another option, and this has become my favourite from that collection:

Freighter Julie C., up-bound near Chippewa Point, NY - May 21

Again, this required a four-second exposure.

More river at dawn:

Sunrise, St. Lawrence River. May 24

You tell me if I should be looking for new venues.

This brings me to this morning. For reasons known only to the Fates, I was up betimes, and feeling productive, so again found myself at the river, at dawn. I had an idea of where I wanted to go, and ... this was not it.

1000 Islands island, dawn, fog, reflection May 27

But this leapt out at me, and for a while I worked the scene: Island, twilight hours, fog, reflections ... I have a feeling that I'm not done with those yet.

That is not an island which I have photographed before. I have no idea if I will feel drawn to photograph it again. I only know that it drew me this morning.

The fog was only on the river, wafting across the road in spots, but essentially absent on land.

And then, not many minutes later, the sun arose:

Sunrise, 1000 Islands island, fog, reflection

Amazingly, apart from adjusting the exposure-time, nothing else changed with my camera settings between those two images. Mother Nature simply did what She will do.

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**There must be more to life, and to photography, than islands in the Thousand Islands at sunrise or sunset, on the St. Lawrence River, in fog, with reflections.**

But for my present purposes, there doesn't need to be.

If you wish to purchase any prints or other photographic services, then you know where to find me.

Thank you all so much for reading.

**Charles T. Low**
**Photographer**

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