

ISSUE 05 - DECEMBER 2019

CRAFT & VISION

MAGAZINE

JOHN ALTON

FRANÇOISE BACHEM

DAVID DUCHEMIN

SHERRI MABE

“

THE THINGS THAT ARE
CLOSE TO YOU ARE THE
THINGS YOU CAN
PHOTOGRAPH THE BEST.
AND UNLESS YOU
PHOTOGRAPH WHAT YOU
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GOING TO MAKE GOOD
ART.

— SALLY MANN —

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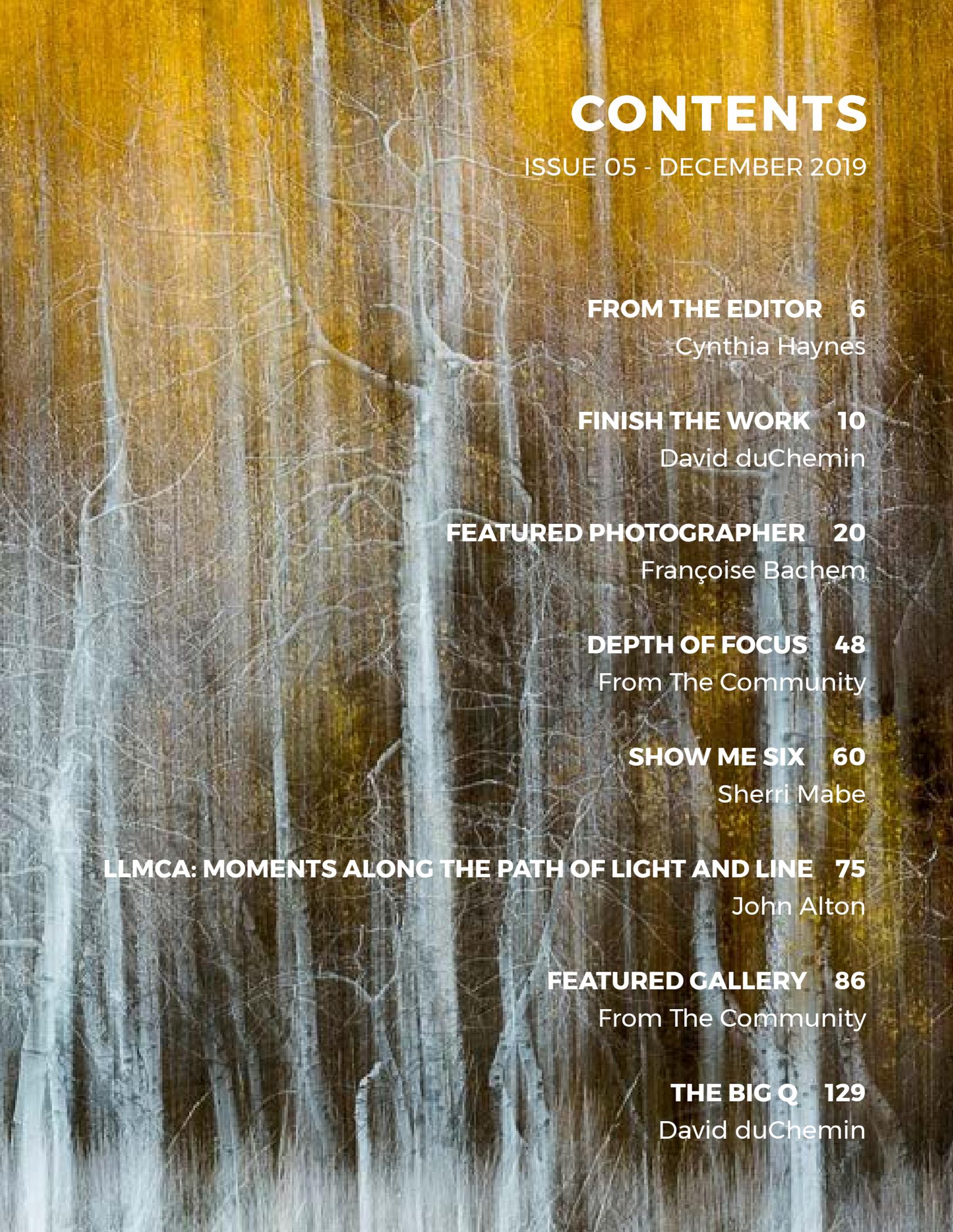
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F/ROM THE EDITOR

Cynthia Haynes

“THERE ARE THOSE WHO LOOK AT THINGS THE WAY THEY ARE, AND ASK WHY. I DREAM OF THINGS THAT NEVER WERE, AND ASK WHY NOT?”

- ROBERT KENNEDY

On any given day, we’re all likely anticipating something we want to create, whether it’s in our thoughts, dreams, screenshots, scribbled furiously on a random piece of paper or typed quickly into our smartphones. Our photographer minds seem particularly suited for ruminating on the images we want to make. We go out with our cameras and hope to see that perfectly magical scene that’s so apparent in our mind’s eye—but perhaps maybe not in reality. The resulting disappointment in what we *did* find can blind us to other possibilities because it wasn’t the thing we had been so focused on wanting to see. Hasn’t

every dream realized come through hopeful expectation?

In Issue 04, I touched on the possibility of heading down so many diverse roads, including those that take us far from where we began: wide-eyed and full of the wonder that made us want to pick up our cameras in the first place.

“FOR ALL THE SAD WORDS OF TONGUE AND PEN, THE SADDEST ARE THESE, ‘IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.’

- JOHN GREENLEAD WHITTIER

Dreams can serve as a bridge between the reality of where we are and the desire to create something different than that. What we make of the time in between those two worlds is every bit as worthy of our thoughts and patience—perhaps to see in a new way—as the outcome itself.

Within these pages are photographs and stories that show how we can choose to look at the wonder and dreams of our ourselves and our fellow creatives. For Françoise Bachem, that meant taking her 100mm macro lens, pointing it at a micro scene, and discovering a whole new world of dream-like photographs. Sherri Mabe's wonder led her to trade colourful landscapes for infrared dreamscapes of the Colorado praries right outside her front door. In their respective interviews, both Françoise and Sherri said that they don't know exactly what they're making when photographing; they wait to finish their images in post-processing, which reminds me of this quote:

"I DREAM OF PAINTING AND THEN I PAINT MY DREAM."

- VINCENT VAN GOGH

Comparing and contrasting his photographs from the 1970s to those he's making today, John Alton uncapped the

wonder of seeing how his skills and photography have (or haven't) changed in those 40+ years. In "Finish the Work," David duChemin echoes those sentiments in saying that "there's a missing piece in the creative puzzle for those who don't finish their work and make something with it," something that all our featured photographers have done through different processes that started with them thinking, "What if?"

In Depth of Focus, we asked what photography does for you; why do you do it? The Featured Gallery continues to make us shake our heads in amazement of the work this Making The Image Community is creating. Keep those thoughts and images coming!

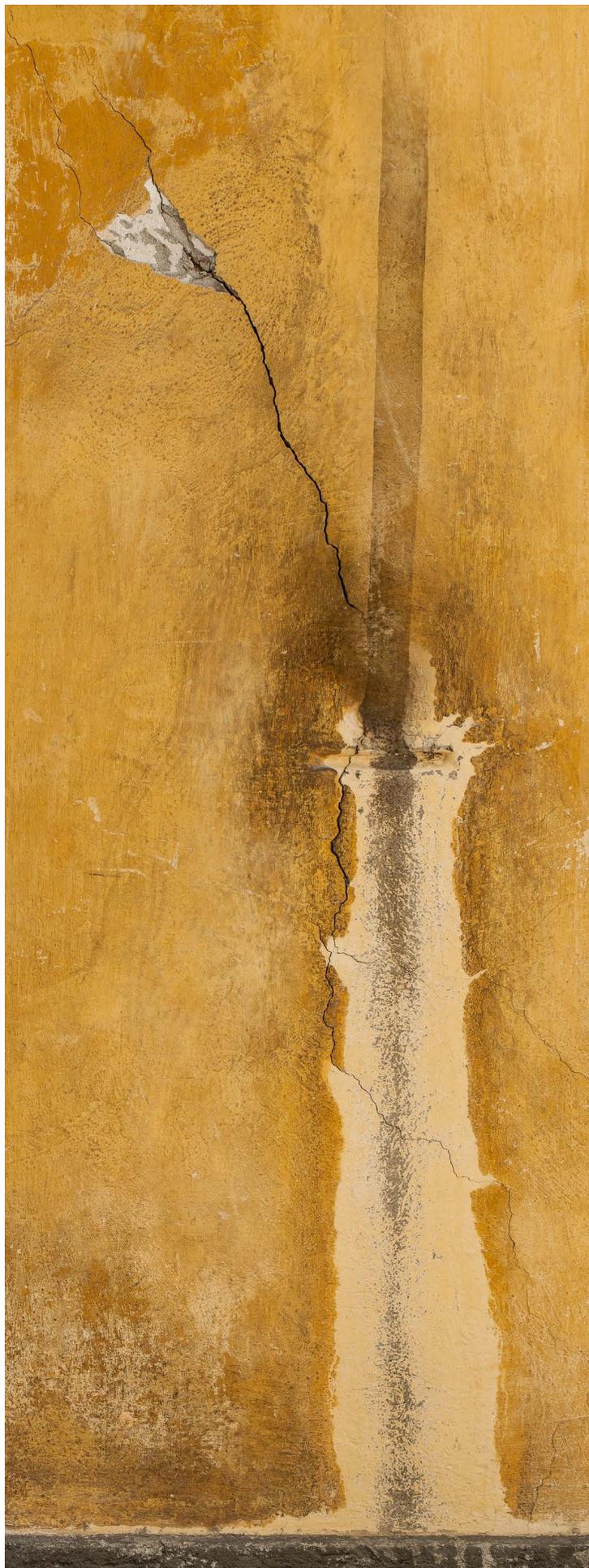
For those of you who never thought you'd see yourself featured in this magazine, I hope you now realize that dreams are yours for the taking, so long as you're willing to embrace the wonder of it all. For those we haven't heard from yet, I hope you'll find new inspiration for your work

within these pages—and I hope you share it with us soon.

Whatever you might be anticipating this holiday season, here's to the joy and wonder of the process of getting there. If given the choice to delight in the unexpected or to never look beyond the safest option, I hope you dare to dream, dancing with the astonishment of things that, as yet, may be unseen to you. Wishing you a merry little everything.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynth'.

Cynthia Haynes
Senior Editor



“

THE CAMERA
ALWAYS POINTS
BOTH WAYS.
IN EXPRESSING
YOUR SUBJECT,
YOU ALSO EXPRESS
YOURSELF.

— FREEMAN PATTERSON —

SHOW ME SIX

Sherri Mabe

Eventide













Infrared photography adores the austere ruggedness of western scenes,” says Sherri Mabe. “The West is my muse.” Never more at home than when she’s wandering the vast Colorado prairie that lies beyond her front door, Mabe creates dreamlike photographs using an infrared (IR) camera, which sees and records light that is beyond the visible spectrum. She finds that IR accentuates the silence found in the wide-open spaces and the sacredness of the Great Plains she calls home. Where so many other photographers see colour-filled mountain views, Mabe sees the invisible light of the prairies and deserts in monochrome and uses IR to accentuate the silence she finds in this series, called Eventide. The result? Ethereal, otherworldly photographs that feel timeless. “IR lets me create how I want the world to look, because the reality of this world is pretty harsh.”

Infrared (IR) is its own interesting form of photography; how did you get started in that?

Since the mid-1980s, I’ve been photographing and reading books on the masters in photography. During that time, I began taking courses in black and white photography, learning how to use settings on my camera, manipulations with negatives, toning, hand-colouring, and mastering black-and-white printing in the darkroom. Many photographers have influenced me: Ansel Adams, Edward Westin, Imogene Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, Clyde Butcher, Jill Enfield, and Sally Mann, whose images of her children enticed me to photograph my children more creatively while they were young. I’ve also previously emailed the queen of infrared, Laurie Klein, for advice.

In the mid-1990s, I was living in Tampa and began three years of photography courses at a local college. My instructor, Suzanne Camp-Crosby, was a student of Jerry Uelsmann, so she brought a certain amount of that surrealistic process into her teaching. While I enjoyed learning all of this, it was

the day Suzanne sent us out to buy a roll of Kodak HIE film that changed my path in photography. Infrared has fascinated me since that day—it was love at the first roll of film. Infrared’s ethereal and otherworldly qualities enchanted me; it was very much how I wanted to portray landscapes of Mother Earth, in a magically surreal sort of way. A sacred way.

What is it about IR that draws you the way it does?

It’s the ethereal appearance that it creates. It’s a dream-like state that changes the realistic perception of the subject to something otherworldly and timeless. As a little girl, I spent a lot of time in my head; I loved science fiction and music and writing. IR offers me a way to reach back into my childhood and find the joy that I had in that fantasy world and transpose it into my images. For a while, I thought maybe I should do black and white like I used to, but I kept trying and it just didn’t bring the joy that it once did. When I went out and shot infrared and came home and opened the files, I thought, “Oh, yeah. This is it!”

A ROLL OF KODAK HIE FILM CHANGED MY PATH IN PHOTOGRAPHY.

I rediscovered myself through that work, and that’s when my IR photography really took off.

So how do you believe IR differs from regular black and white or colour to soften that harsh reality?

I began with black and white film in the courses I took in college when I was in my late 30’s, so the progression to IR black and white film was pretty natural for me. It was just an assignment one day, but it blew my mind. I knew that was it—that was what I wanted to do. I’ve always preferred black and white because I think it minimizes distractions that colour creates.

IR provides a bit more contrast to black and white and a greater variety of tones, including a wider spectrum of greys than regular black and white. It has a softer light, which sometimes makes it difficult to focus. I always had to use a tripod with my Nikons, but with my Sony, I can handhold and it's pretty sharp, but there are some desirable effects: in film, it's soft, so I pretty much stick around f/8. It's my sweet spot. I get that softness a little more than if I was to go up to f/11 or higher. I've seen a lot of people do that and it's just too sharp; it's not how film looks.

To keep the look of film, I keep it in that 720 nanometer (nm) range. IR also accentuates the sky much more than regular black and white does. And interestingly, it cuts through haze. I was in Florida and it was extremely hazy, but IR just cut right through it. It also cuts through the smoke from the fires in the West. Those are the things I find to be markedly different than regular black and white or colour.

What's your creative process? How much do you accomplish in camera, and how much with your post-processing tools?

A photographer friend of mine told me that I see in infrared, and after thinking about it, I agreed. After 25 years of shooting IR, I tend to pre-visualize compositions that will stand up well in an IR landscape and usually have a good idea how they will turn out in post-processing. I always check the weather because clouds are especially desired with this type of photography; skies are much more dramatic with IR than regular black and white. Personally, I love to return several times (if possible) to an area I'm photographing. I want to get to know a location intimately so that I can portray that familiarity, or the "soul" of my subject, via the image.

After using Nikon DSLR for years, I switched over to mirrorless, and it has been the best decision! Mirrorless cameras allow me to handhold (though I usually still

IR OFFERS ME A WAY TO REACH BACK INTO MY CHILDHOOD AND FIND THE JOY THAT I HAD IN THAT FANTASY WORLD AND **TRANSPOSE IT INTO MY IMAGES.**

use a tripod), and the images have more contrast and are sharper. My first mirrorless camera was a Sony A7R, and I recently purchased and converted an A7R III to a 720nm filter, which is most like Kodak HIE film. This filter lets in a small amount of dark red light which reveals a bit of colour, if desired. I have the white balance set in my camera so that what I see in the viewfinder is very close to what I will get as an end result. (In IR photography, I never really know exactly how the image will turn out until post-processing). I use Photoshop and Luminar in a pretty simple series of layers and adjustments. With HIE film, the grain and glow occurred naturally; in contrast, with digital, both must be added. I use Luminar for that process and have created my own preset that works 90% of the time.

A PHOTOGRAPHER FRIEND OF MINE TOLD ME THAT I SEE IN INFRARED, **AND AFTER THINKING ABOUT IT, I AGREED.**

Overall, what do you want people to feel when they see this series?

I want people to see a dreamscape that is our magnificently beautiful planet, that she is alive and a breathing being, and we are her stewards: that there is magic out there in nature which is unseen. IR sees invisible light, which creates a different kind of beauty—a sacred beauty. Like many landscape photographers, I'm very much an advocate of conservation and protection for our environment, public lands, and wildlife.

What do you find to be your biggest creative struggle?

My struggle has been putting my work out there for others to see. My husband said to me a few years ago that I was a “gathering storm,” which is probably true; it took years to feel comfortable enough with digital infrared to begin sharing images on social media or in shows.

With each leap in my learning curve, I gained a small bit of confidence. At one point, I attended local camera club meetings, entered a few shows, and actually

lost confidence because no one seemed to understand the properties of infrared photography and I didn't know anyone else shooting IR, so I had no one to talk to. I even bought a new camera and considered giving up on IR and going back to regular black and white, believing that perhaps infrared didn't have a place in the world of photography. Around the same time, a friend serendipitously suggested I get on to Instagram. "Social media—ugh," I thought, but I did just that. Other infrared photographers gradually found me and were reacting positively to my images, so that ended my self-induced echo chamber. I've now met a few of them, as well as learned from their work—the good side of social media.

For you, what makes a good photograph?

I think light is the most important thing, probably in most cases, but also in infrared. And for me, I look for scenes that make me ask, "Does it stir an emotion? Is it familiar? Will it recall a memory from whoever's looking at it?" I have friends who live out on the prairie who are always saying, "Yes,

MY BIGGEST CREATIVE CHALLENGE IS HEEDING THE ADVICE I GOT FROM MY MOTHER: **JUST LET GO.**

you got it," and that makes me happy. And then there are the usual things—lines and shapes and subject and composition and all that. But I think I kind of work intuitively when I'm out there.

What's your biggest creative challenge in working toward making a good photograph?

Technically, the image must be good in camera, so the light and subject must be captured there, not dressed up in post-processing—no swapping out skies for me. Hotspots are also an issue with many lenses, so I must be aware of the lens I'm using and

the appropriate aperture setting to avoid the dreaded hotspot (because lenses are designed for visible light photography and the coating on the inside of the lens barrel can be reflective of IR light). Since IR contains no real colours, I may find a slightly light blue spot in the middle of the frame adjust by opening up the aperture a bit.

Emotionally, my biggest creative challenge is heeding the advice I got from my mother: just let go. I heard it again when I was in a darkroom obsessing over a photograph when my professor came in and said, “Let it go. It’s perfect.” It applies to a lot of different things beyond photography. Being by myself when I work allows me to get into the flow of things and check into that creative place in my head instead of being in my left brain all the time.

Tell me about a memorable response you’ve had regarding your work.

I was making a series of farmhouses a few years ago and posted an image. A friend I’ve known for 20+ years commented, “I love the haunting quality of your photography. Your photos have an otherworldly sense of half-remembered dreams.” She has no idea about the technical part of it. But that is what I wanted to portray. I was like, “Yes! That’s exactly what I wanted.” That validation was wonderful.

If you could go anywhere in the world to make photographs, where would it be and why?

The Great Plains, which is right outside my front door! I feel a little like the shepherd boy in *The Alchemist*, who goes all over the

I LOVE THE WIDE, OPEN SPACES; IT’S VERY EASY TO ISOLATE A SUBJECT AND **ALLOW FOR NEGATIVE SPACE.**

world in search of treasure only to return home and find it there. I don't know what it is about the prairie. I spent a year with my grandmother out in eastern Colorado when I was a kid, so it plucks at my heartstrings. It's very deep in my consciousness, the memories from my childhood—it might even be DNA. I love the wide, open spaces; it's very easy to isolate a subject and allow for negative space. The prairie loves infrared, the skies pop, and it softens the harshness and loneliness of the land.

But I still want to go to Nebraska, South and North Dakota, the Badlands, and the Bighorn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming. Mongolia is also on the list: such vast space.

Is it fair to say that you're a bit like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, who believed that there was no place like home?

Yes. Minus the ruby slippers and Toto. 🐶

Sherri Mabe is an infrared landscape photographer and a native Coloradan whose heritage connects her to both the historical settlers of Colorado and the Native American tribes of Colorado and New Mexico. Sherri's focus is on environmental, historical, and cultural documentation, and she's drawn to capturing the whispers of the past, including her ongoing project of photographing farmhouses. History and stories found in different places drive her creativity, as does music (especially rock and roll). She believes that people want photography to evoke a memory, to touch their heart, or to instill a feeling of familiarity in their bones. A pensive, honest, silent photographer, Sherri enjoys the solitude of being alone anywhere in nature and letting her subjects present themselves, touching the land, and listening to ghosts dancing in the past. Infrared photography has given a voice to her vision, allowing her to share the unique way she connects with the land that she loves. To see more of Sherri's art, visit her website (www.sherri-mabeimages.com) or find her on Instagram (www.instagram.com/starlitwaltz).

“

I VERY STRONGLY BELIEVE
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— JOYCE TENNESON —

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