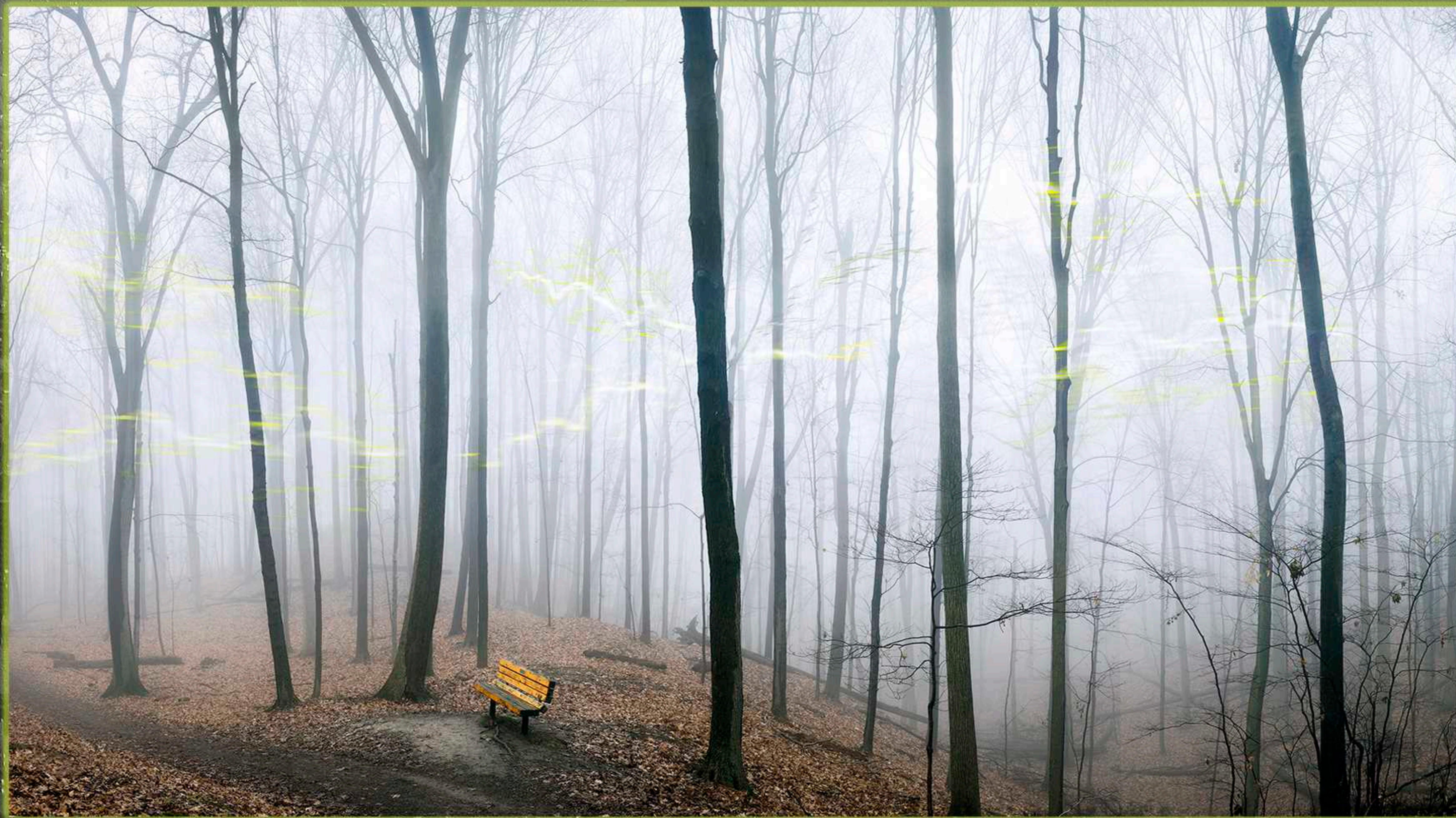


# Encounters



Janusz Wrobel



This summary covers the material of my past exhibitions in public and private galleries. I re-organized it as visually narrated presentations of processes in places you might never see and contemplate. The challenge was to prove their relevance, emphasizing their importance and still to attract by their visual appeal. They need to resonate within self referencing practice of our culture, a world for itself. A world detached from a biophysical world that has sustained livable conditions of both. The culture focused on urban environments and its relationships. This invisible support approaching the breaking point. To change the dominated mindset, it will take efforts of many to make a difference. I took a quite transparent approach to it.

I might notice an object, scene, or a process unfolding in front of me, and I know it is just the beginning. Too many unconnected things to ignore or forget. Curiosity is a powerful drive. It could guide us to dead ends, or into meaningful connections and insights. Life has many dimensions, as has the world it inhabits. Taking a chance of seeing and experiencing them enhances our lives, and it's worth living it.

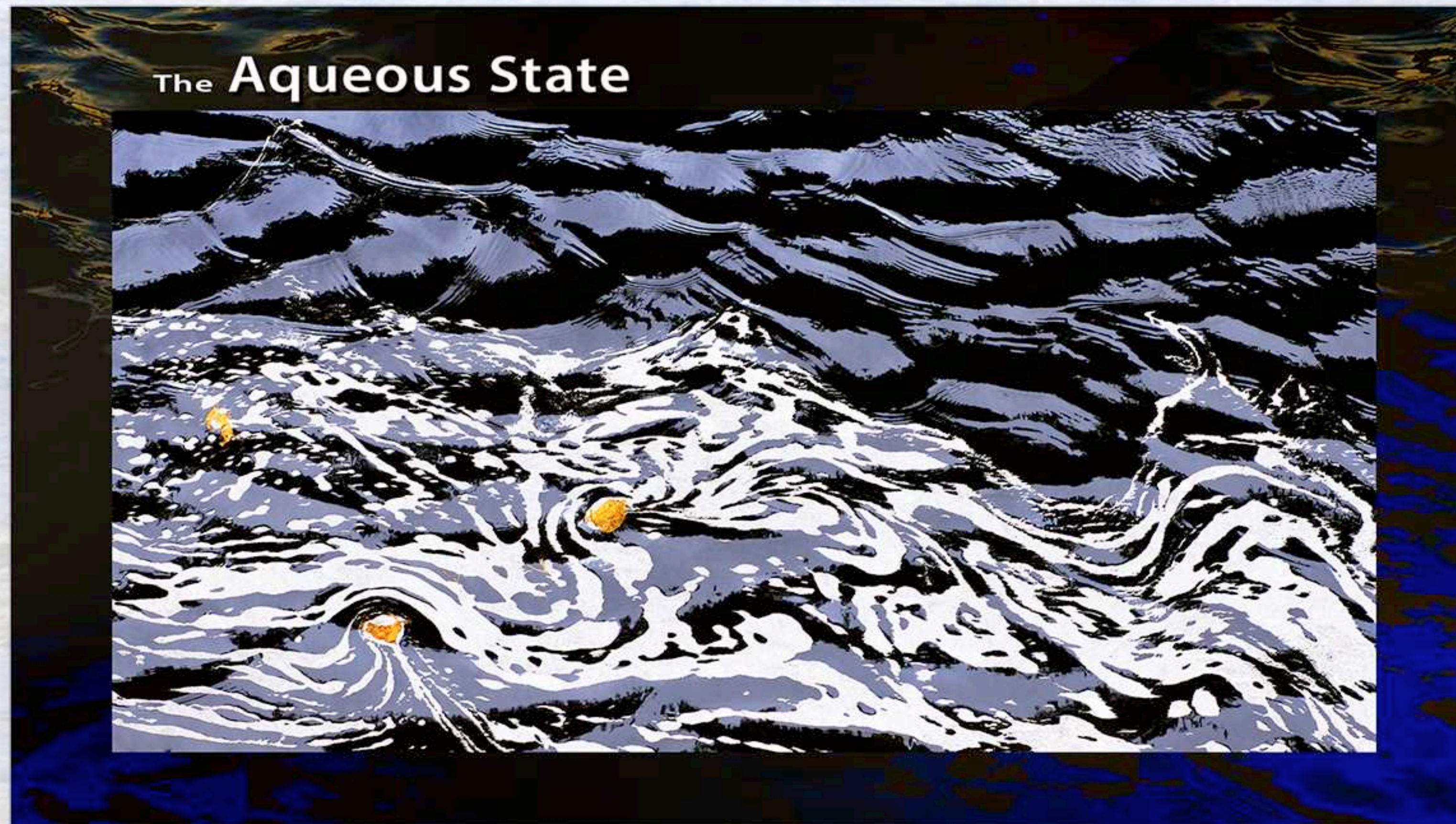
The camera serves as my reference tool, allowing me to revisit what I saw or missed. It helps me return with a wiser tools and perspective. This process uncovers stories and outlines that need further exploration. It draws me into relationships with subjects and their environments, revealing the wisdom of human civilizations summed up as "**I am because we are**". Yet, it raises the question: why does our world become less livable despite our progress and best intentions?

The answers might come only from the revitalized working frameworks of our society, by the identification of our common objectives, and unifying us within the means of reaching them. I don't think it would be possible using the communication channels that extract commercial fees at the expense of our reasoning and emotions. The cultural institutions could be a platform if they can adapt constructively to these challenges.

*"The painter constructs, the photographer discloses."* Susan Sontag







*"Let us see how high we can fly before the sun melts the wax in our wings."*

Edward O. Wilson

That is how I found myself in a need to rethink my worldviews and adapt a different lens to my reasoning and sense making. If maturity comes with age, so do the responsibilities of the generational change.

I began seeing the policies getting stretched to satisfy my delusions and politician's electability prospects, tolerating the accumulation of deferred risks. The results of "winning strategies," "first-mover advantages," and the economic fallacy of internalizing profits while externalizing costs in the world of consequences "growth". Humanity's addiction to use of the sun's energy stored in fuels at rates millions of times faster than their sequestration. The growing level of heat in world's ocean endangering prospect of the oxygen supply. And the byproducts of these fuels, like plastics, in Life cycles of every living being, redistributed by water fluidity.

At the water's edge, I ponder how Life has lost the control over processes it managed for billions of years. Or, how I've lost my understanding of Life, regardless of my personal anxieties I had. How could this happen?

As the era of machines approaches, I long for the wisdoms exchange in human relationships. Or days with the full spectrum of accepted values.

My brain is 80% water. Despite having the highest evolutionary and security guards in my body, more artificial impurities get into it at no time. None of them was created by the natural world processes. None of nature's processes could deal with what's in my brain, either.

The captivating water fluidity of my childhood on riverbanks is still edged in my memories. It led me later to a decade of studies that included calculations of molecular bond energies and their subatomic scales. Back then, I didn't see it, absorbed by the constant demands of adaptation to the necessities of living. Family responsibilities, new sociopolitical frameworks, countries, cities, languages, homes, children, professions, managing teams of employees, and more. During my break times, I paddled the wild country rivers. My unintentional ignorance had no chance to be sustained forever.

And there it was, one day, the enlightening awareness of harmonious unity in coexistence between all living cells in my body, a water vessel of sort. Keeping it in the very narrow margins of safe temperature, empowered by the sun's captured energy. The elusive miracle of Life, hidden from my consciousness, with all its evolutionary wisdoms, in the world where minutes define the margins of human attention.





*"A lifetime can be spent in a Magellanic voyage around the trunk of a single tree"*  
Edward O. Wilson

For a couple of decades, I continue the habit of my daily walk among trees. To inhale the scent of pine trees. To bring often back memories of prowling pine woods with my parents and siblings in hunts for mushrooms. Summers with my kids, or memories of my travels; with friends and the solitary ones. Sleeping under white pines gentle whispers. Our memories are recording of all relevant relationships in Life, I realized. They are, more that I will admit, bedrocks shaping not only my views of the future.

Being among trees allows me, as I think, to activate original connections in my brain, tapping into layers of primordial nature. The brain reasoning, or wiring, formed within both close human tribal-like and ecological relationships. The implications seem to be embedded in the human psyche. Being away from daily noise helps me to reflect on human collective wisdoms expressed as "Tree of Life", "Tree of Knowledge" or "Mother Tree". To validate my own relationships, why they failed or endured, or how to preserve them in the disintegrating fabric of not only my social life. What's the cost of consequences?

There are relationships acknowledge, accepted or not. Felt, visible, remembered, indifferent, loving, contributing, or not. No one has full control over them in a world of interconnected consequences like the family, friendship, workplace, or in unconditional relationships, such as the parenthood. And our sense of realities that is often shaped by the information search algorithms curated to grab or takeover our attention.

The "information technology", though, allows me also to do many fast queries, revealing the indispensable role of trees in the Earth's ecosystems. As in the circulation and redistribution of energy, water, and nutrients. In social science, to illustrate the wisdoms like "resilience and community in diversity", "that evolution is the co-evolution". And that the survival of the fittest, is the adaptation to existing conditions and as well as affecting them.

It might be up to us, and each of, to find effective ways of reasoning in the fast-changing world. As our history provides, today's winners never last. There is plenty of evidence of what had mattered in people's lives.

Over the years, I found many reasons to escape the dark woods of hidden predations. To recover in a world of trusted and transparent relationships.





*"The most dangerous worldview is the worldview of those who have not viewed the world."*

Edward O. Wilson

How to reason with something that I never seen? Or juggling the scale of things not seen or experienced. The human visual sensory functions dominate how we all relate to something or form the public opinions about.

My first encounters with North American ecology were along Niagara Bruce Trail, the restored Carolinian forest in Dundas Valley, trails in Terra Cotta. Drawing conclusions from it about the Ontario ecology would be just irrational. Looking at a map of Ontario, focusing only on the strip of arable land on the south, would be also misleading. It might lead to false conclusion, ignoring daily losses of hundreds of acres of cultivated lands to the "development". Or trying to balance the public interest with the industrialization and urbanization policies.

The Canadian Shield comes to the surface only 100 km from the GTA edge. 250 km farther north, the massive boreal forest zone begins. It covers 60% of the country, with the largest preserved forest on the continent. And contains the largest area of wetlands of any ecosystem of the world. It matters a lot.

I found the vast landscapes of northern Ontario as a Petri Dish of nature processes of many scales. They are visible on the rock surface, therefore more transparent about all interconnected relationships. Unlike elsewhere, hidden undergrounds. What matters is much easier to see there and reflect upon.

The large scales hiding a myriad of small things. Connecting them forms our world views. Take, as an example, the water vapour in the air, essential for all lives. Not enough, or too much, may kill Life. As a transient energy state, regulates our planet in-and outflow of solar energy. Without it, would be too cold. More than enough, is not good either. Life on the "great rock" starts with a symbiotic relationship of small plants covering it. If the rock doesn't cool enough at night, the morning dew won't condensate and be absorbed by mosses to keep plants alive even feet away from the water's edge. There are millions of square kilometres of bedrock out there that we don't see.

It is a complicated relationship we have with the lands of our country. It might come briefly into a public focus when a half of continent gets shrouded with a smoke of burning fires. But there is more to it than just the smoke.



## In Full View



## Projects/In Full View

*"People would rather believe than know."*

Edward O. Wilson

It gets harder, though, to comply, living in two separate worlds that used to be one. The one I often have revisited to be quieter than I ever remember. Busy, working like it always did, but with the signs of distress showing more frequently. It is for the focused eyes and minds to see. The web of life complexity hides in the symbiotic relationships and processes between multitudes of living species inhabiting both scales. The visible and imaginable ones. They both need the instrumentations and receptive minds.

The advantage of medium I chose relies on conveying tangible aspects of realities. So, to portraying scenery, I am not focused on "artistic innovations", "shifting perceptions" exploited in other media. I concentrate my work on giving a broad stage to interactions between the physical and biological world's processes. Many components of these processes I exploited in my previous Encounters' projects. Staging processes and environment gives viewers a chance to incorporate their expanding view on what matters in our relationships with the natural world. The beauty then comes from understandings sprouting in the minds of beholders.

We face new challenging chapters in human history. The collecting scoring cards might have run its course. It could be a time to choose the history before history chooses us. As we try to reassure ourselves within the status quo, with our heads on planets resting in the palms of our hands.

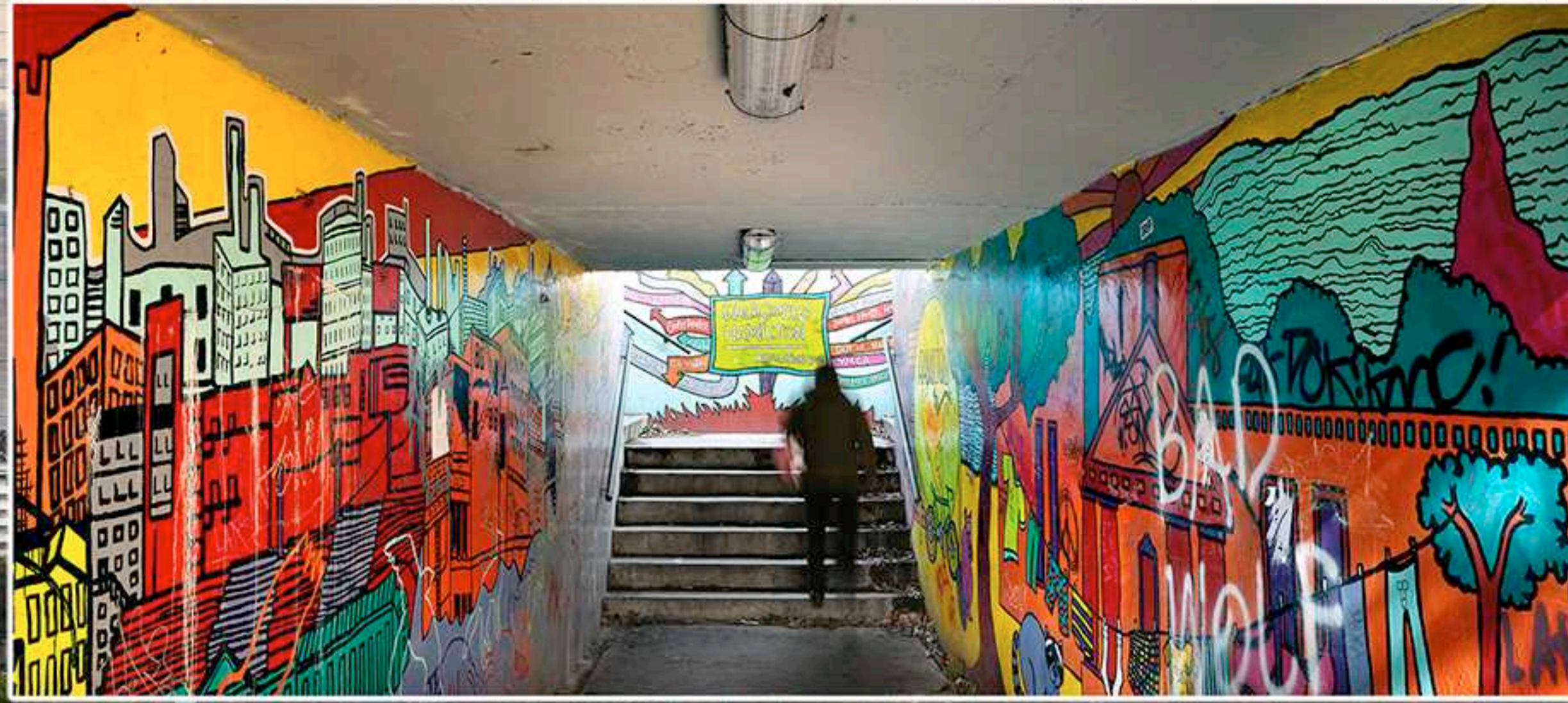
The first Earth photograph from space is still etched in my memory. Suspended in emptiness, lit by sunlight. The unforgettable, fragile looking sphere in the veil of blue mist still evokes powerful emotions. Images from Mars helped us to visualize the Earth's surface throughout most of its history. The inner workings of Life have been shaped and tested for most of our planet's history within the ocean's safety before coming ashore.

This picture gets me to return to the same questions over and over. Is Life the outcome of chance or purposeful evolutionary adaptation? Do we expect, or most of us, for Life processes to adapt to our expectations, or we must, or we would be forced to adapt to the limits of these processes? What are the risk factors and the evaluations of consequences? I heard a way too many times that it was too much to ask.

With no answer's forthcoming, educated guess is all I have. Our history always has been the winner's stories. Until they were not. Abundance of clues, no guidance. Debates with bought arguments, or just out of fashion.



## Intermission



*"The real problem of humanity is we have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions and godlike technology".*

Edward O. Wilson

In Hamilton, I found preserved, fragmented relics of the last century, remnants of small, tribal like communities, centred around ethnicity, temples of faith, stores and watering holes. The mosaics of city block with traces of a distinctive character and identities. I could relate to, brought up in a small town where nobody was allowed extorting anything or be stupid for too long on our street. The industrial neighbourhoods bred social movements and unions. In what I saw, I sensed the evidence of past social coherence and integrity. The affluence progressed south, away from industrial parts, toward the Mountain”.

The divisions in social structure grew with the unequal access to better tools and capital that could effort them. Capital is fluid, always in search of better returns. Forged human relationships less so. The Americanisation of lifestyles, suburbs, a first mall in the city's heart, starved established city merchants. The neighbourhood stores, the hubs of the local wisdom exchange, followed. Along with them, the social cohesion in self identified interests of each community. More industry plants closures sped up by cheap labour found abroad, exposed a lack of the long-term policies in market economies.

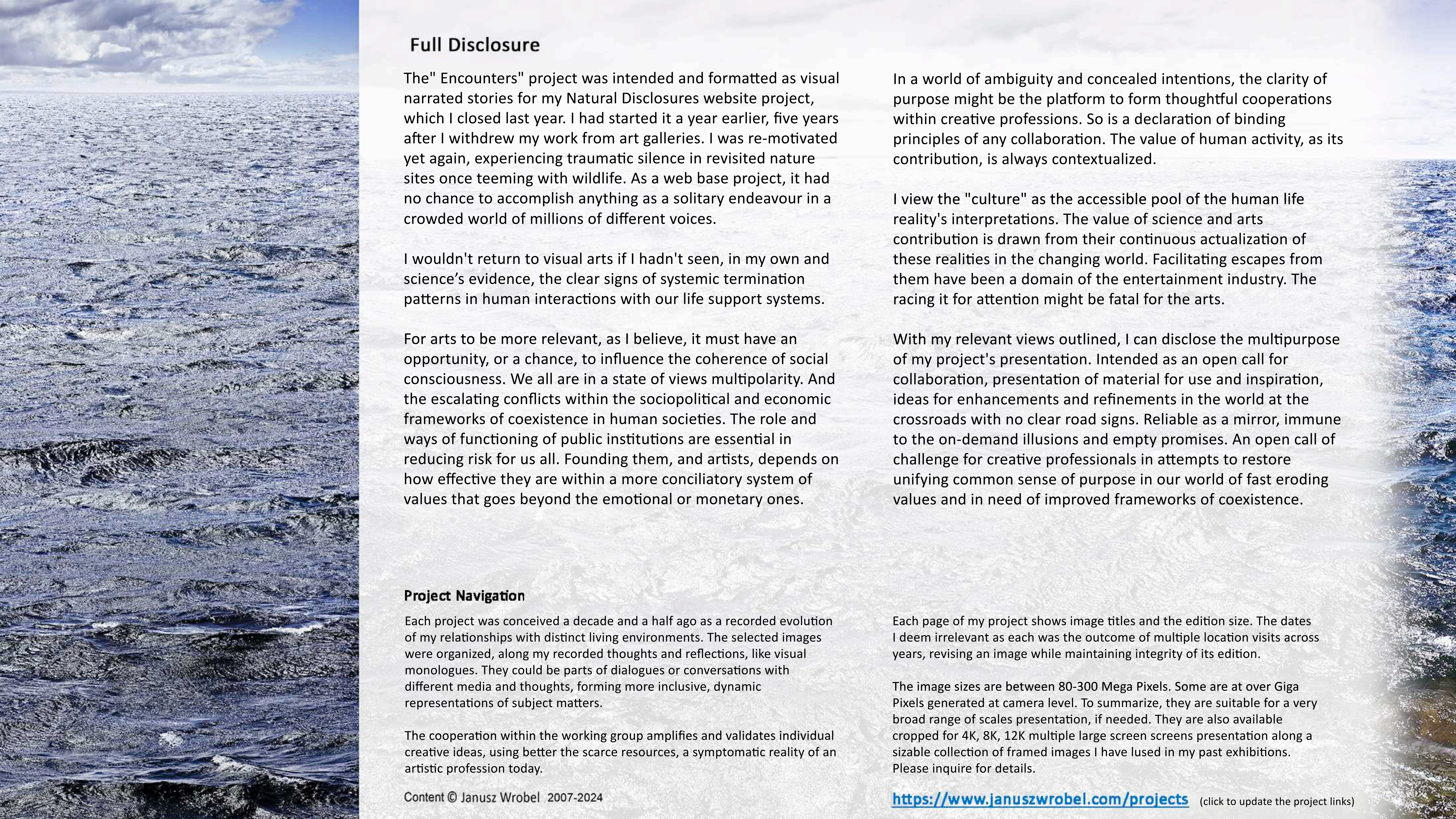
The “virtual communities” further eroded the social cohesion, and I focused on of all above tracing processes in the city. In a single image, I captured city issue raised in public media. Like the relocation city’s stadium, “LRT project”, “revitalization” of a particular community, “Art on James Street”, etc. Then I use some, finished to gallery standards, in the interactive public engagement projects “I Take Back My City.” The comments written on their surfaces testify the depth of public reaction to issues of their living communities, reflecting the state of public consciousness, and its prospect of democratic resolutions.

Photography as a credible documentary has been used since its inception. Used as a reference for rebuilding cities after war's destruction, to supply viable material for sociologic and anthropologic studies of evolving populations. To chart a future, understanding the past could be indispensable. For generations of photographers, the documenting has been a call of duty. There are some blank spots, like decades of documents faded away a result of excessive faith in the marketing plot, "Kodak for Life."

The migrations and establishing new relationships are an integral part of our history. As an immigrant, I had an interest in tracing the records of integration by various small communities of different European nationalities. In Hamilton, an industrial Canadian city, there were still visible records of their integration and adaptation. I was intrigued by what caused the disintegration of these relationships’ generations later.

Our lives are the outcomes of the complex social structure we form to coexist. They are interpretational, unlike in the natural world, where they are formed, codified and forged into DNA's molecular framework.





## Full Disclosure

The "Encounters" project was intended and formatted as visual narrated stories for my Natural Disclosures website project, which I closed last year. I had started it a year earlier, five years after I withdrew my work from art galleries. I was re-motivated yet again, experiencing traumatic silence in revisited nature sites once teeming with wildlife. As a web base project, it had no chance to accomplish anything as a solitary endeavour in a crowded world of millions of different voices.

I wouldn't return to visual arts if I hadn't seen, in my own and science's evidence, the clear signs of systemic termination patterns in human interactions with our life support systems.

For arts to be more relevant, as I believe, it must have an opportunity, or a chance, to influence the coherence of social consciousness. We all are in a state of views multipolarity. And the escalating conflicts within the sociopolitical and economic frameworks of coexistence in human societies. The role and ways of functioning of public institutions are essential in reducing risk for us all. Founding them, and artists, depends on how effective they are within a more conciliatory system of values that goes beyond the emotional or monetary ones.

### Project Navigation

Each project was conceived a decade and a half ago as a recorded evolution of my relationships with distinct living environments. The selected images were organized, along my recorded thoughts and reflections, like visual monologues. They could be parts of dialogues or conversations with different media and thoughts, forming more inclusive, dynamic representations of subject matters.

The cooperation within the working group amplifies and validates individual creative ideas, using better the scarce resources, a symptomatic reality of an artistic profession today.

In a world of ambiguity and concealed intentions, the clarity of purpose might be the platform to form thoughtful cooperations within creative professions. So is a declaration of binding principles of any collaboration. The value of human activity, as its contribution, is always contextualized.

I view the "culture" as the accessible pool of the human life reality's interpretations. The value of science and arts contribution is drawn from their continuous actualization of these realities in the changing world. Facilitating escapes from them have been a domain of the entertainment industry. The racing it for attention might be fatal for the arts.

With my relevant views outlined, I can disclose the multipurpose of my project's presentation. Intended as an open call for collaboration, presentation of material for use and inspiration, ideas for enhancements and refinements in the world at the crossroads with no clear road signs. Reliable as a mirror, immune to the on-demand illusions and empty promises. An open call of challenge for creative professionals in attempts to restore unifying common sense of purpose in our world of fast eroding values and in need of improved frameworks of coexistence.

Each page of my project shows image titles and the edition size. The dates I deem irrelevant as each was the outcome of multiple location visits across years, revising an image while maintaining integrity of its edition.

The image sizes are between 80-300 Mega Pixels. Some are at over Giga Pixels generated at camera level. To summarize, they are suitable for a very broad range of scales presentation, if needed. They are also available cropped for 4K, 8K, 12K multiple large screen screens presentation along a sizable collection of framed images I have lused in my past exhibitions. Please inquire for details.