THE POOL OF POSSIBILITIES PROJECT

by Photographer Courtney Milne

After thirty years of photographing sacred landscapes on all seven continents, in the past nine years I have focused my camera in one place – my swimming pool.

I now have more than 40,000 images of this 20' x 40' space; they are all different, and the project shows no sign of coming to an end. I am constantly amazed at what I see, which for me is an endorsement of philosopher Marcel Proust’s statement that “the real voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

When I photograph the pool, which is literally one step outside my patio door, I almost never go with a preconception of what I will find there. Clearing the mind is fundamental for me in learning to open my eyes.

I come with an open heart – ready to receive, and to give unconditionally. For me that means suspending any value judgment on what I experience. I choose to love the pool, accept the space for what it is – clean or dirty, tidy or in chaos, colorful or monotonous, interesting or boring, rainy or sunny, windy or calm. When I look at the space without the usually negatives that can so easily check me out of my game, I am then able to explore what is really there, and can begin to appreciate what is in front of me.
The best example of this was one day last winter when the pool looked gray and lifeless.

I almost went back in the house, but decided to kneel down to look at tiny disturbances in the sheen on the ice.

I photographed them, and when I looked at the images on the computer and increased the contrast, I discovered the most incredible clusters of perfect crystals protruding from the surface!

I will never take “gray” for granted again!

Photo: Spontaneity

Photo: Generosity
Now, instead of seeing through the filter of a preconceived reality,

Photo: ‘Wealth’

I can enjoy and record what is possible in the way of endless variation.

Photo: ‘Forwardness’

I am not amazed that an open heart and an open mind are fundamental to exploring possibility,

Photo: ‘Nobility’

Every day I am opened to wonder and awe. It just does not stop, as I keep on looking. It is like my observing affects the water, resulting in endless new creations.

Photo: ‘Joy’
The Pool of Possibilities project has also honed my ability to see with new eyes in other areas of my life. My perspectives on my world now seem endless, full of possibilities in every direction, and exciting! My relationships have more depth, my appreciation of my surroundings is richer, and my awareness is greatly expanded.

Photo: ‘Openness’

For example, I feel more connected to the people I meet, as I feel totally open to seeing their experience. I listen at a deeper level and am more patient with my responses, rather than feeling the need to be heard immediately. My life is quieter; I am more content to be alone than I have ever been before. My life feels expanded in so many ways.

The more I share my experiences, my artwork, and my new understanding, the more others seem to resonate with the Pool of Possibilities. The ultimate joy is the feedback that this sharing, with each of us immersed in our own pool of possibilities, has the power to raise consciousness and transform lives.

Photo: ‘Imagination’

I have designed an online delivery of the Pool of Possibilities Daily experience to assist others to transform their ways of seeing the world. Each day subscribers receive a pool image to contemplate, my Poolside Wisdom which is a commentary on the image and a reflection on human values, plus an opportunity to create a personal journal and send e-cards.

Feedback from subscribers is phenomenal, with reports of alleviating depression, feeling more connected to nature, prompting personal creativity, and sharing insights with community.

Example 1.
A teacher of adult students with Learning Disabilities has subscribed her whole class to the Pool of Possibilities Daily. One of her students wrote us an unsolicited e-card in response to the image called “Self Confidence.” She said, “I don’t have self-confidence right now because I’m dealing with depression. Doing the Pool of Possibilities helps me a lot with self-confidence and other things in my life. If it wasn’t for your Pool of Possibilities I probably would be taking depression pills everyday and staying at home. This is a therapy to me.”

Her teacher later commented to us: “I had no idea she felt so helped by this daily ritual. I know that she has gone from being a student who couldn't get to school before lunch, to someone who has an
almost perfect attendance rate. I can see changes in all of the students. I'm sure they don't realize the growth they have made both academically and emotionally."

Example 2.
A subscriber with chronic fatigue syndrome writes, “Sometimes, when my illness has me by the throat, your photo is the only beauty I can see that day.”

Example 3.
Another says, “When I open the Pool up every day, the image displayed there tugs at my heart, I feel a connection between my heart and my mind.”

Example 4.
Another writes: “Amazing things are pouring forth! For me, it has been a stimulus to write at least something every day.” This subscriber has her whole family on the Pool of Possibilities and they share their journaling every week.