“Home”

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Home is a concept more than a simple place, since one can create a home anywhere. Home is something people bring to a place, not something they find there. Home is more than the site of a dwelling, or a temporary habitation, more than a place of daily living. Home is where one puts down roots, joins with others, celebrates or grieves, feels joy or sadness, solitude or community, anxiety or peace. Home is where humans work, play, create, share, rest, recover. Home is necessary for peace of mind, freedom from fear, solace from loss. Home is a house or apartment, a neighborhood, a town, a state, a country, a world, a universe. It is as small or large as one wishes, because home is a human experience, not a place.

In my own life, I have lived in many places, from growing up in Ohio to moving to New England and settling in Camden for the past 35 years. Some places felt more like home, some less. Here are some photographs I created on this theme, shinking or enlarging the ideas of home. They are based on my personal world, my locale, and my feelings toward my community. I have come to learn that one does not just find a home, one must grow it. Maine is home to me, not because it is Maine, but because I have chosen to live my life here, have a career, raise a family, create friendships, and love those around me. I hope you will enjoy this exploration of home as I have over the decades.

Rob Merrill
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The Photographs

Summer Breeze

This photo was pulled from a short video that I took when passing by this window, hearing the gentle tones of a wind chime, and seeing the lace curtain gently blowing inward as the breeze washed into the house. To me, it evokes the sweetness of a gentle Maine summer day.

Pink Hydrangeas

The pink hydrangeas are a burst of color on the grounds of Bartlett Woods where they brighten even the cloudiest day for weeks on end. They just represent the joy of color and profusion of possibility to me.

Interior Window

During a renovation of my house in Camden, our architect suggested an interior window looking from an entryway to the family room. What seemed like a silly indulgence turned out to be a stroke of genius as it allows light into the hallway and lets the arrival see into the room before entering. I have filled the sill with various and sundry items picked up on beach walks and tossed together like flotsam and jetsam. Like life, things wash up and wait for us to find them.

Camden On A Snowy Day

Home is more than a house or apartment. It can be an entire community that welcomes one and shares its beauty and purpose. Camden is small enough to live in, work in, share life in, surrounded by the natural world just outside the village. This special place brings a sense of home to me just for being here.

Field of Lupines, Whitefield

One of my more dramatic photos, this field of wildflowers appears every year in the town of Whitefield, Maine. Another photographer shared this unique location with me and I had an experience of pure childlike joy seeing and photographing the scene. To me, this represents home as the flowers fill the landscape of the farm, simply to bring pleasure and peace at the beauty of the natural world around us.

Red and Pink Rhododendrons

These expansive flowering bushes have grown and grown since I planted them on my children's births over 30 years ago, pink for my daughter Amelia and red for my daughter Francie. Although the girls are grown and flown, the flowers come back every year to remind me of the joy of raising them and the ongoing love we share.

Homeward Bound on the Schooner Olad

After a wonderful sunset cruise on the wooden schooner Olad, the Camden Hills came back into view with the setting sun turning the sky and sails orange. This memory of a warm summer evening reminds me of the sense of home that this community enables, and the simple pleasures of living in a place with an unhurried pace of life we share.

Bull's Eye Glass Window
Shelbourne Museum, Vermont

I included this photograph taken inside the museum, because it reflects the sense that people have been creating home for many years in New England alone. The beauty of the simple scene caught my eye as I walked past and a cell phone photo became a memory. This photo creates an impressionistic view of the world just outside, letting in the light and color which surely has warmed the hearts of people for centuries.

Memory of Home

This abandoned homestead in Waldo County left me thinking about the people who inhabited this place, the lives they lived, and the forces that took them away. Perhaps a farmer's family once thrived here, then faded slowly, and finally left. The house is returning to a natural state and is perhaps a home to birds and creatures who welcome its shelter. Who knows its past and who knows its future?

Blue Hydrangeas and Flowers

This tiny garden in Rockport jumped out with color as I drove past, calling me to return for a photograph. Someone cares for their home with love, creating beauty in the corners and recesses of their little roadside garden for no reason but to enjoy. The crazy blue hydrangeas burst like miniature fireworks with the question "Why not?"

Snowed In, Camden

The simple Greek Revival front door of our house presents a sense of formal welcome even with snowdrifts creeping up to the sill. A Christmas wreath symbolizes the hope of life within the depth of winter, sharing a sense of peace and joy for passerbys. The palpable history of our house, town, and region gives us a feeling that we are not alone in loving this place, or making it our home.

Lupines and Old Barn, Owls Head

Lupines while not native to Maine, have made it their home and spread across the state, often thriving in disturbed land along roadsides, fields, and homes. This old but not abandoned barn is filled with the utensils of work, and reminds me of my grandfather's barn with its wonderful smells of musty age.

Moon over Curtis Island Lighthouse

This full moon rising silently over Camden Harbor's lighthouse shares its light across the water and lets us know that we have safely arrived. The serenity of Camden and its surroundings is a welcoming beacon as one comes by sea, air, or land to our region. We look forward to leaving our travels behind, shedding our cloaks, and returning home to friends, family, and famiiar places.

Milky Way over the Great North Woods

This final photograph reminds us that our home in the universe is unique, precious, and beautiful. We are at home here, we find love and joy here, sustainance and shelter here. We must create our home in the universe or perish. The starkly black sky and millions of stars suggest we may not be alone, but for now, we have only each other and this tiny blue ball spinning in space. Earth, our home.