

Tales of shores and waters

Text and photos by Vladimir Kabelik



Bicycle

It is amazing how much significance little, fragile moments resonate in one's psyche and future development. When I arrived with my young family in Canada in the early eighties, my mind was set on nothing else but sheer survival. My days were busy job-hunting and my nights were often interrupted by a typical emigrant's dream: I'm back in communist Czechoslovakia, looking for something as insignificant as a toothbrush – but everybody is watching me, and it is only a matter of time before the police knock on my door.. In the morning, I sometimes felt like I never wanted to venture outside again.



White fence

People of a similar background probably find nothing new in these lines. They too have had to deal with their own nightmares and unwanted challenges. Luckily, I soon discovered a powerful remedy for such difficult times – walking along the endless shores of Canadian lakes and rivers. The empty piers, the misty air and the pristine sounds of water became my powerful healers. It is only now that I fully understand how these moments of comforting balance, delivered in the form of subtle shades, reflections and shadows, have helped me to become the person I am today.

As is the case for many newcomers, time passed very quickly for me while I looked for new jobs and new friends. Nonetheless, working night shift in the film lab left me enough daylight for my film and photo adventures. In 1984 I introduced my European work in my first Canadian solo exhibit, "Niches" (Ontario Arts Council grant, Limelight Dinner Theatre, Toronto). However, it took a few more years and many more quiet walks along the shorelines before I realized the full potential of the "water"

theme. In "Black & White Blues" (Eight Elm Street Gallery, Toronto) I started developing this subject further. Since then, I have painstakingly collected images and data about the healing spots of my life. Lately, I even decided not to include the water scenes in my recent showings, "Memories" (Cannington House Gallery, Oakville), in order to pay them a photographic tribute in the form of a tightly focused exhibition.

While noble ideas are surely important for our further development, more practical issues usually hijack our time and space. Teaching, filmmaking and commercial photography have fed my family since our early days in Ontario (I can't complain; the bills were always paid on time). Nevertheless, the creative mind is also very good at upsetting the daily routine by staging some unexpected rebellions. The inner voice keeps talking and anguing until one finally gives up and follows the orders. In this very fashion "Tales of Shores and Waters" has slowly become my obsession.

Although I'm not the typical camera-carrying type, I never leave home without it when heading for a trip where some



Lake Michigan