



Palani Mohan
**WATCH
WITH
WONDER**



WATCH WITH WONDER

The distant rustle of a tusker emerging one morning from the forests of Nepal. The crack of the shifting expanses of ice in northern Mongolia. The swirl of mist around a lantern atop Hong Kong Island. The squeaky whistle of diving kites over the holy waters of Varanasi.

This book of images is a personal look at places of silence, stillness and space where I have found peace and meaning. It is a search for the magic and the miracle that lie within the smallest things that surround us. Moments of life filled with richness, waiting for us to pull the reins, stop and take notice.

When you look down into the magnificence of the Nubra Valley in the Himalayan ranges it's easy to overlook the family of white doves flying just below the mist line. There is so much going on, so much to see, so much to think about and do in our busy minds. But once you start paying attention to all the smaller things in the much wider canvas, the doves are just as breathtaking as the thousand-year-old monastery clinging to the cliff's edge. The passing clouds filled with ice and rain and the arrival of the first soft light over the snowy mountains are miracles for us to watch with wonder.

As a photographer, your senses are sharpened and you start seeing with your soul, along with your eyes. The fog within clears, and you can find truth through the viewfinder of your camera. It's a moment of time that is created just for you: a wonderful gift waiting for you to collect and carry with you on your life journey. These moments will go on to shape how you see the world and, I believe, will have a profound impact on the art you make in faraway lands at another time.

Noticing the dance of the Arctic winds turn and twist the mane of a white horse on a frozen lake one morning in Mongolia will influence how and what you see in the blue gum forests of Queensland. This I know with all my heart to be true, and I try to follow the dotted lines that connect all of these things as one.

These are the moments I seek as the days go by. These are the images that give me the greatest satisfaction. Simple, spectacular, mundane and the miracle of ordinary life.

My hope is that the viewer will pause, slow down and take notice. Pay attention to the small, magical things that are happening within each one of the images on these pages and find your own place within them. There we can meet in silence—be still, and watch with wonder.

Palani Mohan



For Edith

THE STILLNESS WITHIN

There are moments when the world holds its breath, and we do, too; perhaps they're akin to the moments when we find a new love or are rendered speechless by a sudden flight of birds. The head is stilled, the heart is quickened and we're on high alert; we step out of our daily selves, and touch something that makes us believe in wonder, even if we have no need to put a word or explanation to it.

These moments, of absolute stillness, tell the secret story of our lives. Our resumes, our calendars chart the everyday rites and commitments we observe, but underneath that is a shadow story, of the moments that transform us.

I think I recognize some of the places in these images—Hanoi, Varanasi, Mongolia—but the names are not important: this is a collection of those moments when we're out of time and place. They can come, as Palani Mohan shows, in the middle of a crowd, they can come when there seems to be almost nothing there.

My wife once took a picture of my little blue folding chair on a thin terrace and a book and a cup of tea beside it; I told her it was the deepest portrait of me I'd ever seen. So I rejoiced to see a similar image in this book. That transporting quiet is hidden in the fabric of every day, and almost every location: a lazy summer afternoon in a garden, the tiptoed journey through a jungle to see what might be hiding there, the sudden jolt of spaciousness that knocks the wind out of you. We all know that attention is the sweetest fruit of prayer, or of love; here you see how keeping still may be the surest way of being truly moved.

Pico Iyer











Witnessing the photographer's act of witness is, for a writer like me, somewhat humbling. The indefatigable word is defeated time after time as the visceral image reigns. The colours of light and life wash over us, supreme.

Here, however, the light dims. It is an elusive guide, escorting us through subtle regions. Then comes the silence. A quiet rebellion against the noise of data, of argument and distraction. For here, the eye is still, the breath shallow, and we emerge, blinking from the dark of pandemics and other emergencies. Light's texture flowers immaculate. Ever so gently, ever so silently, we are returned to the beauty of our planet and the extraordinary creatures that share their fragile eternity with us.

Glimmers of hope. Downpours of recognition. It is not a picture anymore. It is a soul that sees and speaks in whispers. A cathedral of silence standing perfectly still.

Christopher Kremmer





Appendix

End papers - Ancient fresco of sitting Buddhas. Ladakh, India 2017

P2,3 - Clouds gather at the height of a summer's day. Hong Kong 2016

P4 - Moon rises through the clouds on a stormy night over Kowloon. Hong Kong 2006

P6 - Table and chair at Edith's farm, where for years we sat with our tea and our thoughts. Stanthorpe, Australia 2020

P8 - Waves at Nimbin Beach. Norah Head, Australia 2023

P9 - White stallion on a winter's morning at Khövsgöl Lake. Northern Mongolia 2018

P10 - Granite boulders at Girraween National Park. Queensland, Australia 2014

P11- Ancient mural of Buddha at the Lamayuru Monastery. Ladakh, India 2017

P12 - Soft afternoon light over Gurnard's Head looking onto the Celtic Sea. Cornwall 2023

P13 - Looking out to sea at a passing sailboat. Penberth Cove, Cornwall 2023

P14,15 - The Star Ferry seen through a salt-crust window after a storm in Victoria Harbour. Hong Kong 2012

P16,17 - Cooling off at the end of the day on the Mekong River. Cambodia 2010

P18,19 - Looking down on the frozen Khövsgöl Lake in the middle of winter. Northern Mongolia 2018

P20,21 - The black and white cliffs of Phang Nga Bay. Southern Thailand 2023

P22,23 - Tibetan prayer wheel at a monastery. Ladakh, India 2017

P24 - Heavy mist over the tropical forests on Victoria Peak. Hong Kong 2017

P25 - Pilgrims arrive through the mist at the Maha Kumbh Mela. Allahabad, India 2005

P26,27 - White-bellied drongos flock over an old wooden boat in the Ganges. Varanasi, India 2005

P28,29 - The shape of a white water dragon appears over a jetty in Victoria Harbour. Hong Kong 2017

P30,31 - An elephant has his morning dip in the Anaimalai Hills. Southern India 2003

P32 - Wheat stalks blow in the wind before harvest. Cornwall 2023

P33 - A cat looks out at the newly fallen snow. Mongolia 2013

P34 - The path down to Wineglass Bay in Freycinet National Park. Tasmania 2012

P35 - Sarah carrying our son Charlie. Uluru, Australia 2006

P36 - Frozen white mountain at Khövsgöl Lake. Northern Mongolia 2018

P37 - Emirati children play in a water feature. Dubai, United Arab Emirates 2021

P38 - Statue of King Jayavarman VII. Bayon Temple, Cambodia 2019

P39 - Young boys at a sing-sing (gathering of tribes). Papua New Guinea 1997

P40,41 - Wild horses run through Doolboong country grasslands. Kimberley, Western Australia 2015

P42 - A Kazakh man walks through grasslands with the golden eagle he uses to hunt. Altai Mountains, Mongolia 2011

P43 - Portrait of a Peregrine falcon. Mongolia 2019

P44 - A lone white cloud in the bright blue Queensland skies. Australia 2020

P45 - Wild flowers on the windswept coast of Lamorna. Cornwall 2023

P46,47 - The clear waters of a soon-to-be-frozen river. Altai Mountains, Mongolia 2017

P48,49 - A field of sheep against the sharp winter's light. New South Wales, Australia 2022

P50,51 - Gathering of wild elephants at Zambezi National Park. Zimbabwe 2012

P52 - A billabong (an Australian term for an oxbow lake) in the bushlands of Ngarabal country. Girraween National Park, Australia 2014

P53 - A tusker emerges one morning at our camp site. Nepal 2008

P54,55 - Abandoned statues of Taoist gods near the waterfront. Hong Kong 2017

P56,57 - A family walks past ancient carvings of elephants at Ellora Caves. Aurangabad, India 2006

P59-67 - The celebration of Holi at Banke Bihari Temple. Vrindavan, India 2008-2011

P68 - Children on the way to school through the coconut forests. Goa, India 2008

P69 - Frozen clock in a field. Hokkaido, Japan 2018

P71 - An elephant smiles as it rests during the heat of the day. Lampang, Thailand 2002

P72,73 - Thai conservationist Lek Chailert gets a kiss from one of her favourite elephants. Chiang Mai, Thailand 2003

P74 - Portrait of Vietnamese singer. Dubai, United Arab Emirates 2022

P75 - Frozen patterns of ice on Khövsgöl Lake. Northern Mongolia 2018

P76,77 - The magical and tranquil glades of Trevaylor Woods. Cornwall 2023

P78,79 - Bush fire. Langkawi, Malaysia 2006

P80,81 - The Star Ferry navigates a storm in Victoria Harbour. Hong Kong 2020

P82,83 - A young girl runs along the promenade. Hong Kong 2017

P84,85 - Watching a storm roll in one morning. Scotts Head, Australia 2022

P87 - Family on Dal Lake on a winter's morning. Kashmir, India 2003

P88 - The view from Thiksey Monastery. Leh, India 2017

P89 - Tibetan monk in Lhasa. Tibet, China 2003

P90 - The curves of the sand dunes of the Empty Quarter. At the border between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates 2021

P91 - Nike of Samothrace at the Louvre Museum. Paris 2015

P93 - Portrait of a Kazakh elder. Western Mongolia 2014

P94,95 - Men riding with their eagles in the Altai Mountains. Western Mongolia 2012

P96,97 - A Kazakh man cradles his eagle. Western Mongolia 2012

P98,99 - Sand dunes of the Empty Quarter. At the border between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates 2021

P100,101 - Beauty of a white wave. Coogee, Australia 2022

P102,103 - Raindrops on the harbour. Hong Kong 2018

P104,105 - Moments of joy standing in a water feature. Dubai, United Arab Emirates 2022

P106,107 - Black storm approaching after a hot day. Balapitiya, Sri Lanka 2019

P108 - Faces of Angkor. Siem Reap, Cambodia 2019

P109 - Fresco painting of Venus and the Three Graces by Sandro Botticelli at the Louvre Museum. Paris 2015

P110 - The curve of trees at Angkor. Siem Reap, Cambodia 2016

P111 - Family of alpacas at Barbara and Martin's farm. Queensland, Australia 2023

P112,113 - The tall cliffs of Phang Nga Bay after a storm. Southern Thailand 2023

P114 - Young Buddhist monks walk up to a monastery. Northern Sri Lanka 2006

P115 - Frozen patterns of ice on Khövsgöl Lake. Northern Mongolia 2018

P116 - Buddha statue wrapped by a tree at Angkor. Siem Reap, Cambodia 2019

P117 - Portrait of a Padaung woman at the border with Myanmar. Thailand 2005

P118 - The Diskit Monastery clings to a cliff in the Nubra Valley. Ladakh, India 2017

P119 - A horse's mane blows in cold winds. Northwest Mongolia 2012

P120,121 - The Star Ferry in a black rain storm. Hong Kong 2017

P122 - A camel walks over the red deserts outside Jaisalmer. Rajasthan, India 2006

P123 - Setting of the summer's sun over the South China Sea. Hong Kong 2017

P125 - An old pine tree at the farm we once had. Stanthorpe, Australia 2022

P126 - Flamingos fly through the desert sky over Al Qudra Lake. United Arab Emirates 2021

P127 - Lamma Island ferry makes its way through the evening mist. Hong Kong 2018

P128 - Mist spray over Victoria Falls. Zimbabwe 2012

P129 - Portrait of a Sadhu holy man through smoke during the Kumbh Mela. India 2010

P130 - Horses walk on the frozen Khövsgöl Lake. Northern Mongolia 2018

P131 - Clouds move across Kamilaroi country. Queensland, Australia 2020

P132 - Tall grass blows in the wind. Dubai, United Arab Emirates 2022

P135 - My son Charlie floats on the salt water of the Dead Sea. Jordan 2019

P138,139 - Diving kites over the holy waters of the Ganges. Varanasi, India 2013



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To my friends Ana, Chris, Gary, Karen, Nang, Pico and Thomas,
and to my dearest Sarah, Charlie and Jaya. Thank you! ♥

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