

HUGH MILSOM FRPS MFIAP EFIAP^{D2}

There's a deeply felt veil of sadness lies across our photography world following the very recent passing of Hugh Milsom. Hugh was a Lode star in my own and in the lives of many others within photography. He carried an aura of permanence, reinforced by an extensive and emotively brilliant body of work. It's difficult to articulate what he meant, first and foremost to his family, and beyond that to the countless photographers he guided along a different path in their landscape photography.

Leigh Preston



"The Serious Still." Hugh Milsom, a life in photography and a fragile farewell.

All of Hugh's ninety one years were richly spent - from his youth in Langley, through his days as a fiercely competitive endurance cyclist – racing events lasting twelve and sometimes twenty four hours. There were years of study and an outstanding, acclaimed career as a materials scientist.

Then came what most of us know him for: his obsession with photography, his escape. A rich seam of accolades followed. An RPS Fellowship and a panel that earned him his MFIAP distinction, not forgetting over a thousand acceptances in international exhibitions. His landscape photographers 'voice' was revered by those who attended the workshops he ran with Iain McGowan. It was the mark of a man married to his own sense of amazement, one which once echoed in many clubrooms, now sadly unheard. His many books remain with us, filled as they are with deeply resonant pictures, pages holding a printed legacy that rewards repeated viewing.

Beyond the photography lay a full family life with Janet, his wife and their two sons Peter and Keith. Peter carries forward his father's legacy, as an accomplished sports photographer, while Keith was at one time a member of Ilkley CC. There was a life in Hertfordshire, national Service in ill-fitting khaki, an interlude in Northumberland, involvement with Shillington Camera Club, an unfolding story of pressures within his chosen career path, and above all Hugh's unwavering devotion during Janet's years of needed care.

His defiantly darker images from that period were troubled in tone and mood, associated as they are with Janet's death in 2007. They speak of hidden feeling, of a haunting hypnotic stillness that Hugh chose to reveal photographically. Remarkably he emerged from that enduring hurt, photography being his own therapy. There is much to reflect upon as we shuffle our favourite anecdotes and a parade of visual memories. What is remarkable for someone who grew up within touching distance of Slough, is the way he made the natural world look like a painting! I mean that calls for amazement in itself!

Hugh possessed an unerring skill in expressing what he felt in such a significant and emotionally intelligent way, allowing an underlying spirit to animate and inhabit his pictures. While others play on the obvious notes, Hugh looked for descant and improvisation, employing lost, often foreboding chords or delicate, pearlescent nocturnes. His collaborative work with his companion, Pat Broad, gave him opportunity and chances to travel further afield. Hugh became transfixed by the wonder in Iceland, and produced some stunning imagery from Tuscany, North America and Cuba.

Hugh held a succinct, defined attitude toward the photographic medium. His work has an honest individualism, is deliberately non-conformist and principled - side-stepping the mainstream. Much is allegorical, pensive, undefined and rooted in abstraction, while other pictures use deep impact apertures to benefit distant detail. Across his extensive portfolios runs a questioning unease, revealing the measured beauty of an apprehensive calm, that perturbing silence before the storm. It carries Hugh's own truth and gold standard empathy, echoes of seasons and rain washed shadows.

A member of Arena and The London Salon, Hugh was hardly ever seen without a tripod and frequently in 'muckmaster' wellies. He courted indifferent weather - he called them "seven layer days" - when he battled winter conditions or stood against the curtain of an incoming storm. This is someone who would rush outside on location in Harris or the remote Isle of Eigg during dinner if the light exhibited the promise he craved in a picture. Cooking was not Hugh's forte, but he could 'shuffle' sausages so I'm told! On one occasion he managed to leave his tripod outside overnight, only to find it frozen rigid by morning!

Hugh "graduated" on his own terms in the darkroom, with an aptitude for chemistry & film development. He was a master with Infra-Red film and a gifted, outstanding printer. The arrival of digital capture transformed his output. It brought him a softer lyrical style using harmonic pastel colours, likened to personal psalms and arias, with a euphoric cadence and balanced precision, in reality marvels of economy and craft.

The painter inside his soul constructed; the photographer in him disclosed. Hugh offered photographic confessions to the viewer, we've lost such a highly acclaimed landscape photographer who dealt not just in landforms and geology but in loyalty to his art and the telling atmosphere of solitude - he's given us all a sublime and coherent portrayal of the 'serious still' *Leigh Preston.*



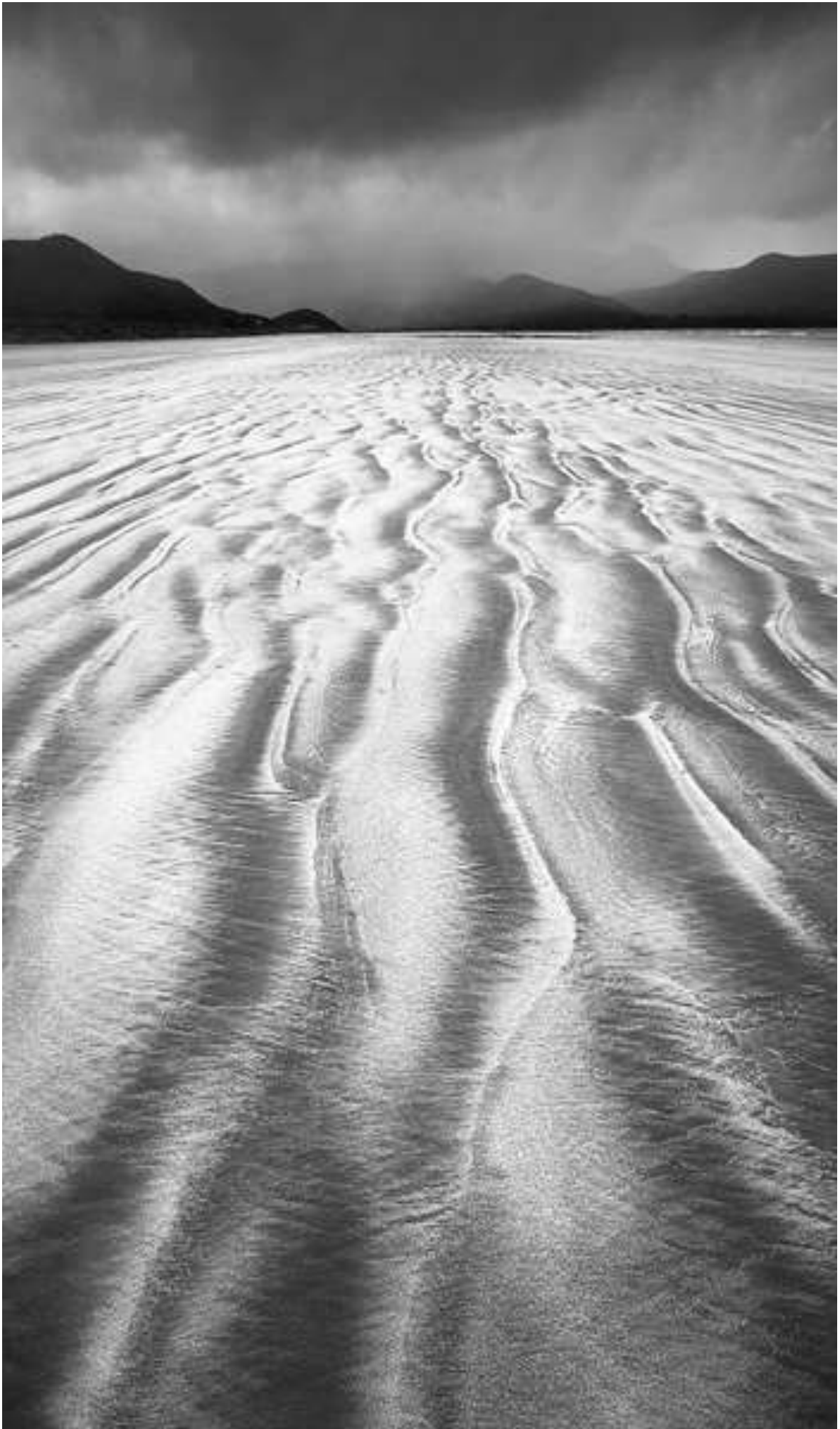














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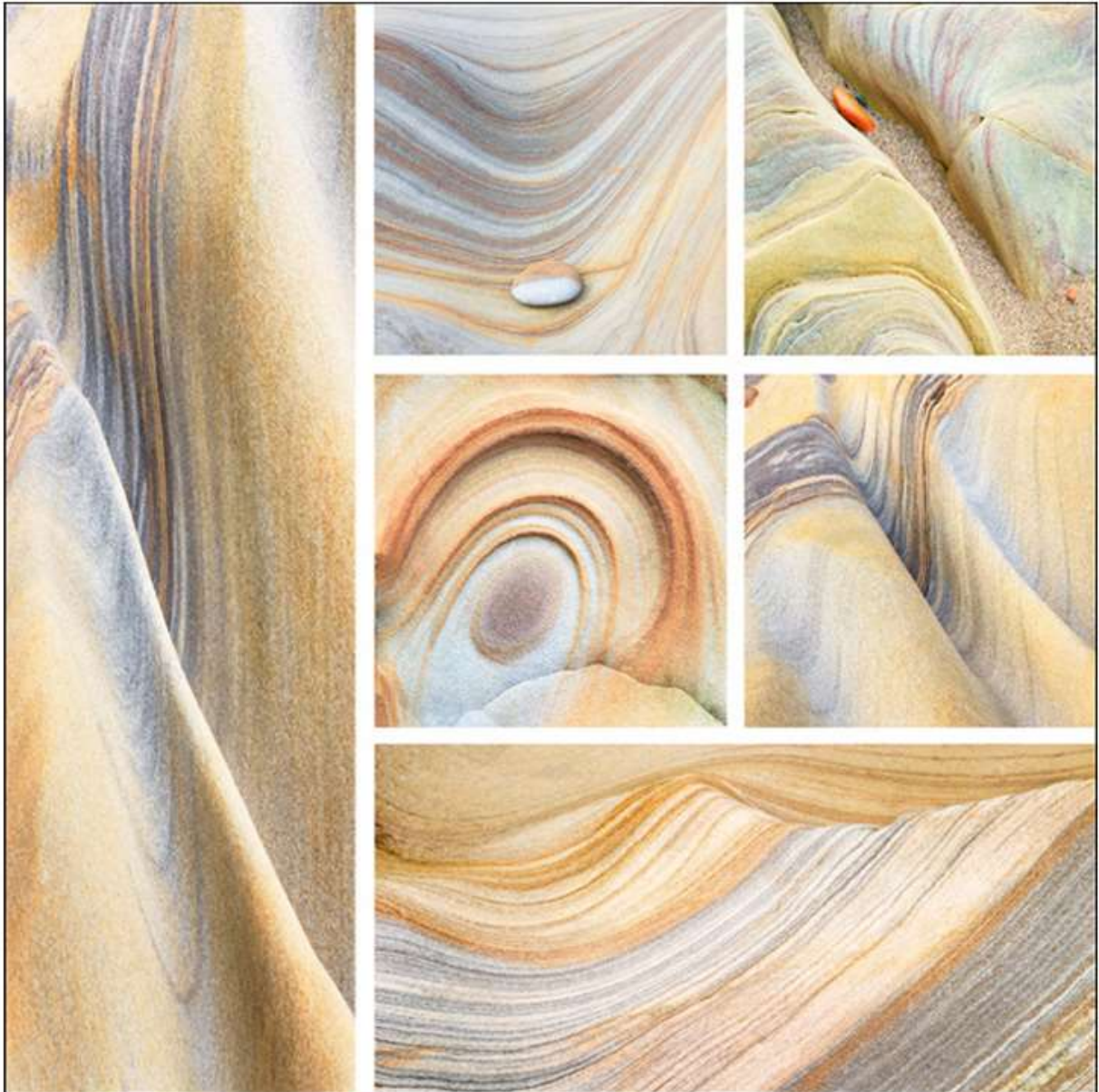




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"HUGH & I". LECTURE BY HUGH MILSOM with some input from Leigh Preston.



It's a privilege to offer an appreciation of Hugh's pictures. Here you will see 50 Years worth of Hugh's emotionally intelligent landscape work. I have done my best to reveal something of that journey over 90 minutes or so, using Hugh's pictures, but adding in some relevant ones of my own.

Hugh is one of the very few photographers I know that have an unerring ability to express what they feel in a significant and individual way. His mastering of technique is only part of the necessary equation here. He allows an underlying spirit to animate and inhabit his pictures.

Rules are of no consequence, the barriers that often defend other club photographers work are broken here. While others play on the obvious notes, Hugh looks for descant and improvisation, lost often foreboding chords and delicate nocturnes. Hugh has always shown utter conviction in his portrayal of the landscape, and he is widely regarded as both a maverick and national photographic treasure. These initial images are like souvenirs from a lost era of photography, enduring, hard to define, stark, thoughtful & timeless.

This lecture is accompanied by my spoken narrative, and also offers a contrast between a few of my images and those of Hugh's taken in the same locations. This is why it is titled "Hugh & I" These are our confessions to the viewer, we both share similar emotions in what we portray. This collection covers both traditional darkroom monochrome work and digital colour pictures, and shows places we have both travelled to, and themes that attracted our attention. It also shows a few "as taken" pictures, and then reveals the refined version of that photograph. Both of us make our pictures to print, and although a projection can give a very good likeness, they obviously don't have the tactile feel of a crafted print on the Permajet Art papers which we both use for our prints in colour and monochrome. Leigh

This lecture is mainly about Hugh's phenomenal landscape photography, which has that dichotomous ability to both haunt and inspire.



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