

## Mary Swartz – Artist Statement

*“The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.”*

Henry Miller

The above quote says better than I can what photography means to me. When I have my camera in hand, I see tiny things and big things and colors and patterns and designs. I notice the transition from bud to flower to seed. I notice the perfection in nature as well as the less than perfect and I find beauty in both. When I have my camera in hand, I see things I would have never noticed without the camera. I see with camera eyes and I pay attention.

For a long time, I saw only trees, leafless, exposing their bare branches, later cloaked in green and then red and golds and finally, once again, without leaves. I noticed trees and often admired them but paid little attention to the details. And then I started taking pictures. At first, it was still the big picture that I wanted to capture, but the more I wandered with my camera in hand the more the details caught my eye. I began to wonder about the process of the tree going from bare to full of leaves and back to bare again. I started to notice leaves emerging from their buds. I noticed leaves changing from bright spring green to a deeper summer green. I marveled at the changing of those green leaves to what I like to think of as nature’s paintbrush, painting the landscape in the brightest colors imaginable. I watched for the transition of leaves from the tree to the ground and finally the process of returning to the earth to nourish the soil for the next year’s cycle of birth, growth and decay.

*“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take  
but by the moments that take our breath away.”*

Maya Angelou

This portfolio is a small collection of images that started with that quick intake of breath that meant I had found something that captured my attention. There are many things in this beautiful world that take my breath away but this series focuses on leaves, from their emergence to their final return to earth. I paid attention and this is what I found. I do not know what better gift I can give to this world than to pay attention. If one of my images encourages someone else to pay attention, then I am happy.