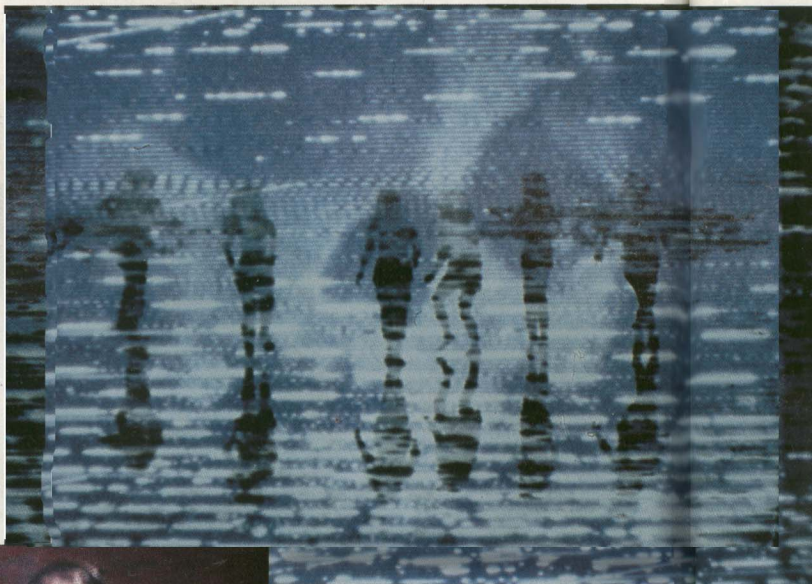


LIGHTROOM MANIPULATION

*The magical, mysterious,
and fun-filled world of
multimedia image making*

By Mary Ross

The people in high-tech, high-priced labs are not the only ones who can manipulate photographs electronically. I've been doing it with devices you probably have in your own home. Basically, my technique is to rephotograph a slide, negative, or print—even super 8 movies or my own videotapes—with a video camcorder. Once I've captured it electronically, I can then display and manipulate the image and rephotograph the TV screen with a 35mm camera. The ideal end result: photographs



Danse Macabre: The first ingredient in this eerie slide sandwich was a black-and-white photograph of a Peruvian mummy. I photographed it with my camcorder, then played back the tape, using the VCR's pause and tracking controls to create the video "noise." Then I rephotographed the TV screen on daylight-balanced slide film to get the bluish image. For the second element, I made an 8x10 litho from a slide of figures at the beach, placed this against a TV screen, created "snow" in the background by playing a blank videotape, and photographed the result on black-and-white print film. Finally, I sandwiched the black-and-white negative with the color slide. Pretty creepy, eh?



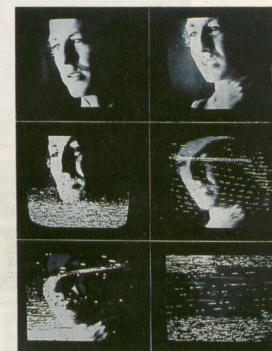
Distortions can be beautiful: Glitches sometimes occur when camcorders are powered off and on, or when the battery gets low. For me, the rainbow distortion added a musical feeling to the image. I put the VCR in pause mode and photographed the screen with a still camera.

Tape the tape: I played back tape of dancer, adjusting tilt, color, and contrast on the TV set, and shot it with the camcorder. This softened the image, gave me more control of color, and created an appealing moiré pattern. Now I put this second tape on pause and photographed it with my still camera.



to a wall; make sure they're flat and evenly lit. Now mount your camcorder on a tripod facing the photograph and focus in on the entire image or just an interesting portion of it. Connect the camcorder to your VCR so you can see the images on the TV screen.

Now the fun begins. You can change the TV image by fiddling with the tint, color, and contrast controls. (Turn off the automatic color-control feature if you can.) You can also adjust color on the camcorder by manipulating the white balance and



Video suicide: It began as a videotape of a man making the "cut" gesture (two fingers across the throat). I shot black-and-white still photographs of various stages of the movement from TV screen, then assembled the prints.



Background title: Elinor Stecker used the digital-titler feature of a camcorder to block out a background and change it to a solid color. Moving the tripod-mounted camcorder slightly produces the bas-relief effect.

with a unique feeling of movement, texture, and visual excitement.

If you want to get into all this fun and games, the first step is to shoot your original with a camcorder. If you're starting with slides, project them onto a screen or a sheet of smooth white cardboard. Do the same with negatives after placing them individually in slide mounts. Tape prints

exposure controls. If you can, change the f-stop on the camcorder lens to make the picture darker or lighter, or adjust the gain control to create unusual effects.

To make high-contrast black-and-white images, play with the color and contrast controls on your TV set. If your camcorder or VCR has built-in special-effects capabilities, exploit them; depending on

the unit, you can create negative, posterized, digitized, streaked, and other wild images.

The final step is recording these glorious images on film. Load your 35mm SLR camera with an ISO 100 daylight-balanced slide film, set the shutter speed to 1/8 sec, and focus on the TV screen. I turn off all the room lights so there won't be unwanted reflections off the tube. I usually cover the top of my slide projector with a piece of black cloth to block stray light. I use a .40 red color-correction filter to counteract the slightly bluish light emitted by most TV screens. With a shutter speed of 1/8 sec, my in-camera exposure meter reads about f/5.6 for subjects of average brightness, but I usually bracket around this reading (changing the f-stop, not the shutter speed) at exposure intervals of at least one stop. For soft, pastel colors or scenes with large light-colored areas, I'll give one stop more exposure. I use the camera's self-timer or a cable release to be sure I get maximum sharpness. At this stage, I frequently employ all sorts of creative camera techniques, such as using special-effects filters, colored gels, or infrared film.

When my own videotapes are the source material, sometimes I rephotograph the TV screen with my camcorder; then I play back the new tape, put it on "pause," and rephotograph the image with the still camera. This additional step not only gives me a softer result and more color control, but also often creates a moiré pattern, which adds a nice texture to the image. (I caution you not to leave your VCR in "pause" mode for longer than two minutes at a time, as it's quite likely to cause tape dropouts and damage to the machine's heads.)

This video picture is not always my final image. For example, I sometimes sandwich a video slide with a normal one. Or I may sandwich a positive and a negative video version of the same image, slightly out of register, to get a bas-relief effect. I've even photographed the manipulated images onto black-and-white negative film and then further manipulated them in the darkroom. The possibilities are endless. By combining familiar techniques from still photography with video's, expanding your bag of tricks, you can expand your image-making horizons into the far reaches of your imagination.

One final word of caution: Image manipulation is addictive, so don't forget to replenish your store of pictures and refresh your eye by getting out in the field with those old-fashioned tools—a camera and film.