

ICM + ME = OMG

Using movement and multiples to create an expressionistic feeling

By Ellen Zimmermann

My fascination with ICM (intentional camera movement) began in a class with Eddie Soloway [anaturaleye.com] where our assignment was to show motion. My first efforts were with vertical and horizontal panning at our nearby ginkgo grove – and I was hooked.

I also experimented with in-camera multiple exposures (ME) and experienced that same sense of excitement. Since I began combining ICM with ME, I am occasionally lucky enough to produce images that feel magical, painterly, otherworldly.

In a class with photographer Susan Burnstine [susanburnstine.com], I learned that I am drawn to creating images with rich, surreal color. As Susan said, “We don’t see the world like this; you show us the world like this.”

I’m now working on what I call dreamscapes – expressionistic images that are often a blur of shapes and textures designed to capture the feeling of a place. Like the examples offered here, they are suggestive rather than descriptive.

(See Dreamscapes Page 2)



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This Japanese maple, standing guard over the small lake behind it, was experiencing its last explosion of autumn color. While I loved the scene as most people would see it, I wanted to explore the feeling of it for me. I wanted to experience the blend of color, texture, and shape all at once – in a single view. So I switched to manual focus to blur it a bit while shooting with slight intentional camera movement. In Lightroom, I cropped far into the vignette, showcasing the dominant red color that is softened by the branches and leaves of nearby maples, with golden light reflecting off the lake.

The color palette of reds, browns, grays, and yellows felt exactly like fall’s last gasp.



Maple Over Water – manual focus, ICM – f/20, 1/13th



Night Falls - ICM – f/2.8, 1/5th



Silence has settled on the landscape. The only sounds are the birds' nighttime calls. The sky above turns midnight blue – that color of blue that takes a deep breath before dropping to black. The final light of day shines between the trunks of the trees, in shades of orange and gold. They seem slender, almost delicate, as if holding onto the last vestiges of the sun's warmth. The leaves begin to blur together, until they are nothing more than ragged-edged smudges, punctuated by stray sparks of light from the traffic behind. The final light of day decreases in intensity minute by minute, until the trees muddle into darkness.

This blurry scene captured exactly how I felt to be out there, with no one else around, as the light of day vanished.

Hidden Colors of Sunset – ICM and ME – f/16, 1/8th 

Near the end of day, I shot toward the west, using ICM to blur out the strong structure of the tree. We see hints of trees and shrubs to the right, left, and below the main skeleton, but they are all subdued to the color. Here, the powerful colors are partly a result of choosing the bright blend mode for multiple exposures, giving us the lush pinks, golds, and purples that are strongest at the bottom and become more gentle as you look higher, reflecting how low the setting sun was.

I also intensified the colors to create the surreal, painterly look. A watercolor artist actually reached out to ask if she could use this scene as inspiration for a new piece.

(See Dreamscapes Page 3)



(Dreamscapes From Page 2, see also on 4 & 5)

Please share my journey at ellenzphoto.com, @ellenzphoto on Instagram, or ellenzphoto on Facebook. And feel free to leave a comment.



Golden Golden - ICM and ME - f/14; 1/15

Photography in the Valley

A periodical for and by the
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A note on reproduction

Your newsletter is going to be heavy on pictures, as it should be, but that means the PDFs in which we deliver it could be very large, indeed. To deal with that, we are going to employ an app to slim down the files as far as we can and still maintain picture quality. We make the assumption that viewing will be 99% online and will build the letter accordingly. Let us know how we're doing.

Coming attraction...

. . .Members Ryan and Kristin Wilson tell the amazing story of how they sold their house, bought an RV and headed west for a life of photography, exploration, art and creativity.



Wonderland - ICM and ME - f/11; 1/15



In the Clouds - ICM and ME - f/32; 1/13



Fairy Land - ICM and ME - f/5; 1/15

All images by Ellen Zimmerman