

Long Exposure Case Study #10

ICM

by Kent DuFault

Intentional Camera Movement, also commonly known as ICM, is another long exposure technique that is quite fun. A considerable part of the enjoyment comes from the element of surprise. Every attempted exposure will be completely different.

ICM is similar to panning in that there is motion, a long exposure, and camera movement. Where they tend to differ is in how the camera is moved.

For panning, you incorporate a smooth fluid motion in a single direction, most often the direction that the subject is moving in.

For ICM, the subject may not be moving at all, as in Image 001, or it may be moving as in panning, and the camera movement is not typically a fluid motion in a single direction. With ICM, the camera movement is often erratic and, in any direction, or at any speed. Even vibrating the camera can have exciting results.



Image 001



Image 002

I created Image 002. It was an unintendedly 'Intentional Camera Movement' photograph- if that makes sense. I was set up to do a standard daylight long exposure photograph at the seashore. I didn't realize that I had opened the shutter, and I was touching the camera. (I think I

talked about this moment in the long exposure guide.) I bring it up again to hit home on the fun aspect of unplanned imaging. This photograph is my absolute favorite captured that day on the beach in Oregon.

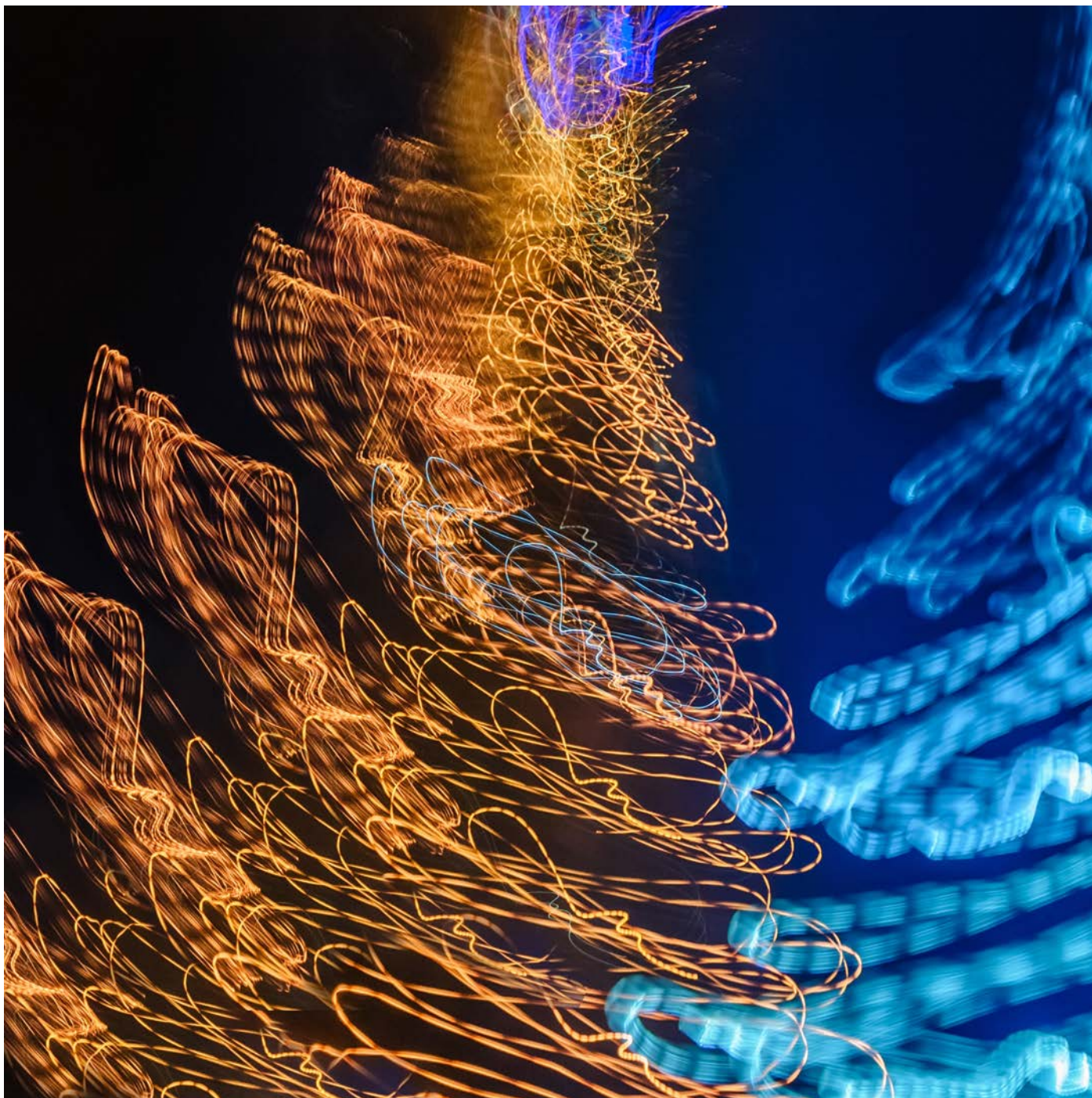


Image 003

When attempting ICM, you use a long exposure setting that would typically be between $\frac{1}{2}$ of a second up to four or five seconds. However, there is no limitation. My abstract photograph (Image 002) was somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty seconds before I realized that the shutter was open. (By the way, my camera was mounted on a tripod, which I think helped give the photograph some structure.)

You can move the camera in any direction that you please.

Pro Tip: Scenes with distinct high contrast tend to work better for ICM. Bright lights always work well, as in Image 003. But they aren't necessary if your subject has good highlights and deep shadows.



With ICM, make sure you experiment with different shutter speed lengths. The effect will vary widely with even a small change of exposure length. You'll want to explore from 1/30th of a second to at least 30 seconds. Make sure you set your camera to the camera raw format so that you will have the most extensive range possible for

manipulating the color and tonal range of the final picture.

If you shoot the same scene several times at different shutter speed settings, you can also combine them in layers (such as in Photoshop) for even wilder and exciting options.

Your Challenge

Spend a day or two out shooting ICM pictures. Never let your shutter speed get any faster than $\frac{1}{2}$ of a second. Handhold your camera for every shot taken. Experiment with different subjects, lighting conditions, and types of movement.

Evaluation

Did you have fun? Did you capture some shots that excite you? Just a warning, ICM photography can be addictive!