

## 3. Photography

### Synopsis

This module provides an introduction to photography. It emphasizes that it is important to develop a worldview and extend this into the realm of photography. Basic exercises for understanding the camera and certain aspects of the history of photography are addressed in the appendix.

### Lectures

- 3.1 The Increasing Popularity of the Camera
- 3.2 Going beyond Pretty Pictures
- 3.3 Creative Imagery through Photomontage
- 3.4 Rumi Under the Palas
- 3.5 The Camera as an Extension of the Eye



Fig. 3.3.00

## 3.3 Creative imagery through Photomontage



Fig. 3.3.01a



Fig. 3.3.01b



Fig. 3.3.01c

Digital layering of multiple images has made special effects photography much simpler than before. In an earlier era an image such as the one above would have required painstaking multiple exposures. A digital artist has to imaginatively blend multiple images to create a montage that is engaging.

When the camera was first invented, it might have unsettled a few artists whose skill in realistic renderings was challenged by a device that could do so much better and much faster. Instead of several hours that the landscape artist or the portrait painter took to create a realistic representation, a photographer could achieve in far less time and often with much greater realism. The camera soon appropriated the mimetic talent of the painter. However, a painting still had its special quality and continued to be practiced as an act of representing. Some painters took the view that since the camera was so much better in 'mimicking' reality, this was best done with a camera. Instead, they as painters began to explore other realms such as the psychological or the spiritual. Since these realms were intangible and inaccessible objectively, the camera was incapable of delving into these.



Fig. 3.3.02

This is possibly a 'straight' picture and not a montage. The ethics of photography has become much trickier now that digital manipulation has undermined earlier claims of undistorted objectivity from the photograph.



Fig. 3.3.03

As the popular song goes, 'some like tea, some like coffee, but I would like you to dance with me.' A montage by a student of photography that skillfully merges horses and hair.

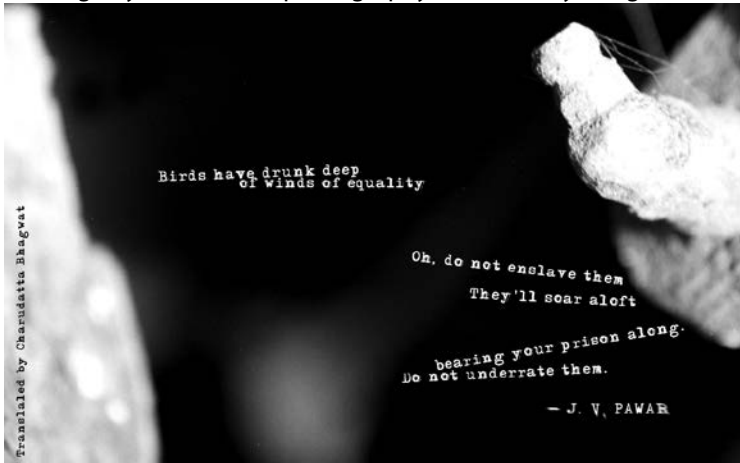


Fig. 3.3.04a



Fig. 3.3.04b



Fig. 3.3.04c

In the images above a student chooses to layer dramatically lit black and white images suggesting bondage with the voices of the marginalized that appear as poems.

Some photographers, who felt that realism was a limitation of the photographic image, began to explore other ways of overcoming this limitation. Special effects photography attempts to capture photographs that are realistic but at the same time not realistic. One might for example want to create a special effect photograph where a man was shown walking on water. Such 'trick' photography often relied on techniques such as masking and multiple exposures.

The creation of digital tools for photo-manipulation simplified the creation of special effects. One could layer several images and merge them skillfully in order to create a composite image that looked realistic but depicted things that were not objectively possible.





Fig. 3.3.05

A visual play where associations of a hatching egg are subverted by an electric bulb. Surprises such as these work best when formal juxtapositions are reinforced by associations suggested at the level of meanings. An electric bulb and an egg have little in common by the way of meanings and visual play can succeed only partially, unless it tides over the question of 'meaning'.



Fig. 3.3.06

The image acquires a little more disbelief if a viewer has an association with the spaces depicted. Those from the Industrial Design Centre at IIT Bombay will respond to the image a little differently than those who are not familiar with the pencil – which happens to be a real larger-than-life object and not an element in the montage.