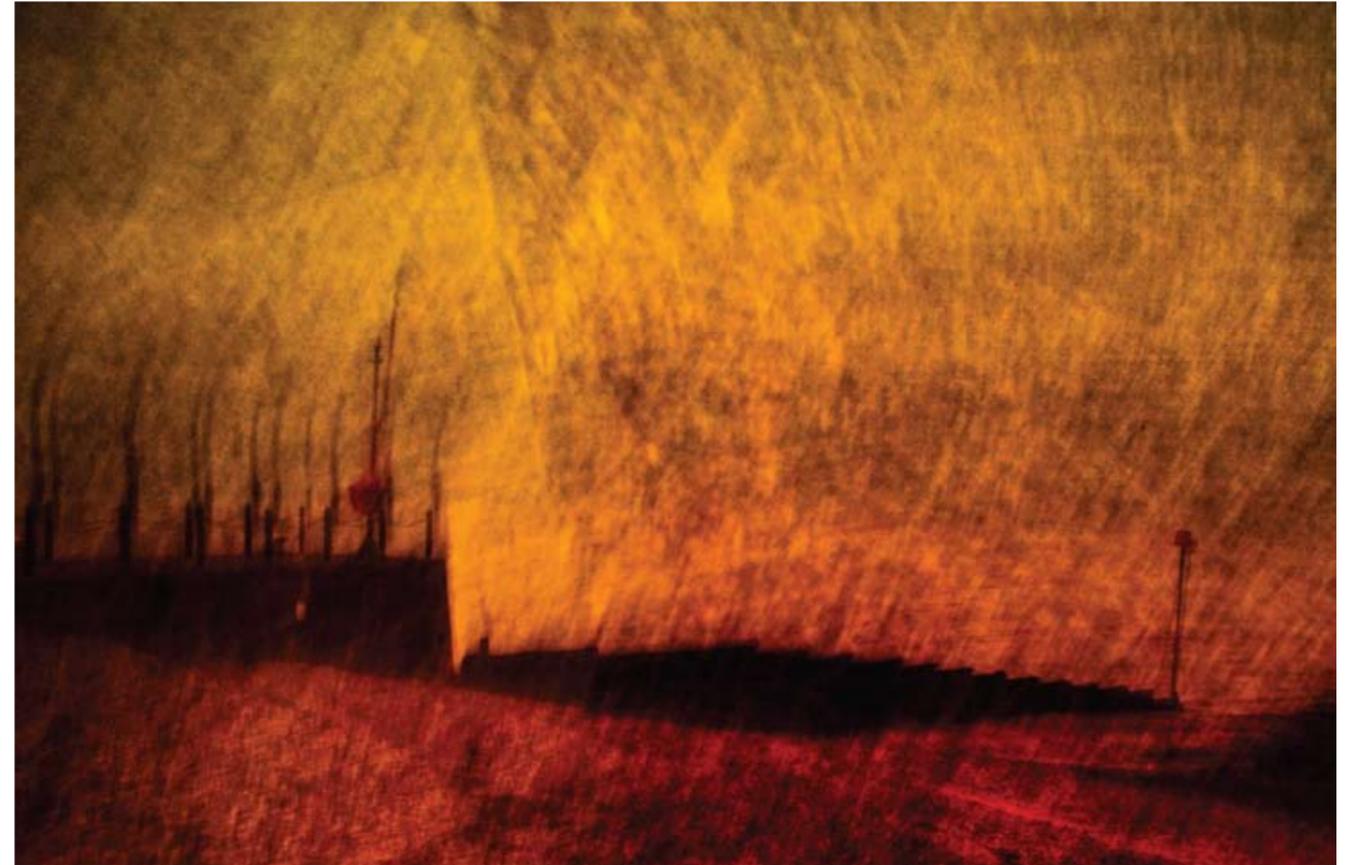


IN-DEPTH GUIDE TO...

INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT

Maybe bumping into your camera during capture doesn't have to result in a deleted image. This section is dedicated to those who've seen the artistic potential in shots normally consigned to the dustbin and have perfected the art of ICM, or intentional camera movement. By raising, lowering, twisting and spinning their SLR while the shutter's open, they create powerful still images that effortlessly convey motion and mood

.....
GET MOVING WITH CHRIS FRIEL'S MASTERFUL PORTFOLIO
.....







CHRIS FRIEL

By simply moving his camera during exposure, Chris creates beautiful and otherworldly images of the landscape around him

WORDS CHARLOTTE GRIFFITHS PICTURES CHRIS FRIEL

BIOGRAPHY Location Whistable, Kent **Day job** Sound recordist **Favourite location** On the beach in front of my house at sunset, with my kids and a beer

Learning photography through a combination of “trial, error, and the Internet,” landscape and intentional camera movement (ICM) specialist Chris Friel has only been taking photographs for about four years. “I was a part-time painter for ten years and bought my first camera to document some of my paintings,” Chris said. “I bought a Canon EOS 20D on the spur of the moment in a local camera store, and then I got a bit excited because it took nice pictures. Eventually I traded that for an EOS 50D because I liked Live View, then traded that in for an EOS 5D MkII last year in order to go full-frame. My camera’s taken a fair battering but it just keeps going.”

Based on the south coast, Chris’s day job as a sound recordist in travel and adventure TV production takes him away from his home and far overseas on a regular basis. Sadly, his 5D rarely travels with him: “I tend to do a month-on, month-off arrangement with my work. I don’t take my camera with me – there’s never any time. I do take a Panasonic Lumix GF1 with its pancake 20mm lens, but all my shots are out of car windows as that’s the only downtime I get.”

To give you an idea of the exotic locations that Chris regularly finds himself in, his forthcoming diary includes a month in Bangladesh, followed by Papua New Guinea for four weeks. “Great locations. I wish someone would pay me to go to Papua New Guinea with a proper camera, but they won’t,” he laughed. “It’s so frustrating. When I am working away I generally have to forget about photography.”

As a result the majority of Chris’s images tend to depict landscapes surrounding his home, taken when he has more time to shoot. “I think my technique may be partly a result of where I live and my time constraints,” he said. “I am lucky enough to live on a beach in a relatively rural area in southern England, where the surrounding countryside is beautiful, but in a rather tame southern England sort of way. Whenever I get to Scotland and its dramatic hills, I tend to fiddle around with images less. My aim is to take one photo a day that I vaguely like and learn through that process.”

“One of the joys of shooting intentional camera movement images is that they’re not so weather or ‘golden-hour’ dependent. I’m not good in the early mornings”

Like many photographers Chris owns a bookcase full of Ansel Adams books, though as much as he admires Adams’s work Chris finds himself drawn to photographers who are less clinical and accurate in their depiction of the world. “The Canadian photographer Frank Grisdale once said he was interested in ‘interpretation rather than duplication’, which is along the right lines.”

Method in the madness

As his portfolio makes clear, Chris is very different from traditional landscapers. “I would describe myself as an aspiring landscape photographer,” he said. “One of the other joys of ICM images is that they are not so weather or golden-hour dependent. I am not very good in the early morning.”

His unconventional approach extends to his use of kit: as the unusual depth-of-field evident in his images might suggest, Chris now shoots primarily with tilt shift lenses, normally the preserve of high-end studio or architectural photographers.

“It’s very decadent. My lenses cost considerably more than my car – priorities,” he joked. “After messing around with various old prime lenses I bought a Lensbaby, and I thought ‘this is rather good’, so I bought a second-hand 24mm Canon tilt shift lens, and thought ‘ooh, this is rather wonderful’ – followed shortly by the 45mm and 90mm versions, all second-hand. The 45mm is really the only one I use now. Unlike most landscape photographers I use the lenses to reduce the depth-of-field, not increase it. I love the shallow depth-of-field

on them. I suppose I’m using them upside down, really. Abusing them.”

Chris carries the bare minimum on his shoots, usually just his Canon EOS 5D MkII and the 45mm tilt shift lens along with a couple of filters – for his ICM shots he makes use of a polariser and a B&W 6-stop ND filter. The movements he makes while capturing the images are different every time, but he finds that he prefers the results if he uses a fairly long exposure, usually four or five seconds long. “I keep the camera still for the first couple of seconds and then move it. A movement towards or away from the subject seems to work best. I did buy a tripod last year, but it has seen little use.”

Both Chris’s use of tilt shift lenses and his ICM work have the theme of distorting the landscape in some fashion, which has the effect of leaving a little more to the viewer’s own imagination. Even though Chris’s technique renders the landscape as abstract, it’s still important for each of his images to have a defining feature. “I always think if you can’t recall an image after viewing it briefly as a thumbnail then it doesn’t work,” he said. “Up until recently everything was rather random in terms of content, but I am just starting to pin down themes and projects. I still have an appalling shooting ratio – I generally shoot about 400 images a day, of which I’d keep ten and print one if I am lucky. I am getting better at knowing what that one image will be in advance. I have never shot anything on film: I just wouldn’t have the patience. The instant feedback of digital has certainly helped when experimenting with ICM.”

Last December saw Chris switch over to shooting in Raw format, having previously shot everything in JPEG. As well as forcing him to take fewer images before his card fills up, shooting Raw allows Chris more leeway in post-production without the colours starting to break up. This is doubly important to Chris as he’s colourblind (red/green), a condition which originally caused the photographer to question the natural appearance of his colour images and as a result he limited himself to black & white. Embracing ICM and a more free-form, abstract approach to capturing images

enabled Chris to experiment and establish his current way of shooting. “When shooting JPEG I used to set the camera to the wrong white-balance, but now that I shoot in Raw I just change it in post production.”

Editing wise, if Chris finds that an image needs more than five minutes’ work then “it’s no good,” he said. “I use Adobe Lightroom, mainly to just change the colour balance a little and bump up the contrast and bring down the sky. I’m afraid to say that I don’t even own a copy of Photoshop.”

Once Chris is content with his shots, a selection will be uploaded to Flickr or set aside for his exhibitions and books. “Flickr is a great testing ground for new ideas as well as a source of inspiration. With a painting it would be months before I got any idea whether anyone liked a particular work or not, but with the Internet you can get 100 comments on a picture in just 24 hours.”

“My next exhibition is a group show called ‘Master of Vision’ and runs from 29 July at Southwell Minster. I’ve also just finished my first solo book, commissioned by a Chilean publishing house. I’d love to attend the launch in Santiago but I don’t think it’ll happen.”

A quick search of the web for ‘Chris Friel’ reveals his growing number of admirers and the many photographers attempting to recreate his signature images. Along with his ‘100 blurred images’ project (see web links below), Chris has established both an impressive reputation and a formidable body of work from a technique that some naysayers might decry as ‘blurring pictures’ – but he remains modest about his achievements. “Oh, it’s all haphazard. It sounds like I’ve got some sort of plan, but I don’t. I’m still not sure that they are valid pictures!” Chris laughed. “Having said that, a well-respected British photographer is now offering a one-day photography course for people ‘inspired by the photography of Chris Friel’ – so maybe I am doing something right?” O

CONTACT:

www.chrisfriel.co.uk
100 blurred images: www.cfriel.com
flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/cfriel

THE STORIES BEHIND THE PICTURES



One of my early attempts at colour ICM. I like the contrast between the roads and the fields. Changed colour balance and contrast in Adobe Lightroom.

Canon EOS 5D MkII, EF 24-70mm, 32mm, 1.3sec, f/11. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.



Just after sunset on a snowy day. I bumped up the contrast in Lightroom but otherwise this shot is straight out of the camera.

TS-E 45mm tilt shift lens, 1sec, f/2.8. Polariser and Hoya ND 0.4 filter. Some inappropriate colour temperature. JPEG.



An overcast day. I brought up the colour of the bluebells in Lightroom.

TS-E 45mm tilt shift lens, 1sec, f/22. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.



Shot in the late afternoon. The texture in the sky comes from panning the camera down over the shingle beach. Contrast bumped in Lightroom.

TS-E 45mm tilt shift lens, 1sec, f/16. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.



Midday. I liked the white of the ground and the sky with the black trees. Mainly vertical movement, reduced what little colour there was in Lightroom.

TS-E 45mm tilt shift lens, 1sec, f/6.3. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.



Oare marshes near Faversham – one of my favourite spots as I always find something new to shoot. Took 800 photos that afternoon. Liked the lights in the warehouse and the tree.

EF 24-70mm, 42mm, 1sec, f/2.8. Polariser and Hoya ND 0.4 filter. JPEG.



A short cycle ride from my house – a favourite spot as the sea is always different. Sky darkened by shifting the lens upwards to the maximum.

TS-E 45mm tilt shift lens, 3sec, f/18. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.



Shot at midday from a snowy beach with vertical movement. Minimal editing.

EF 24-70mm, 35mm, 2sec, f/2.8. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.



Longer exposure and more movement than the other pieces. Sunset, with a rough sea. Minimal editing.

TS-E 45mm tilt shift lens, 4sec, f/22. Polariser and B&W ND 0.6 filter. JPEG.

All photos taken with Canon EOS 5D MkII at ISO 100