

Through The Lens

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.
After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*



Intentional Camera Movement

by Lynda Buske

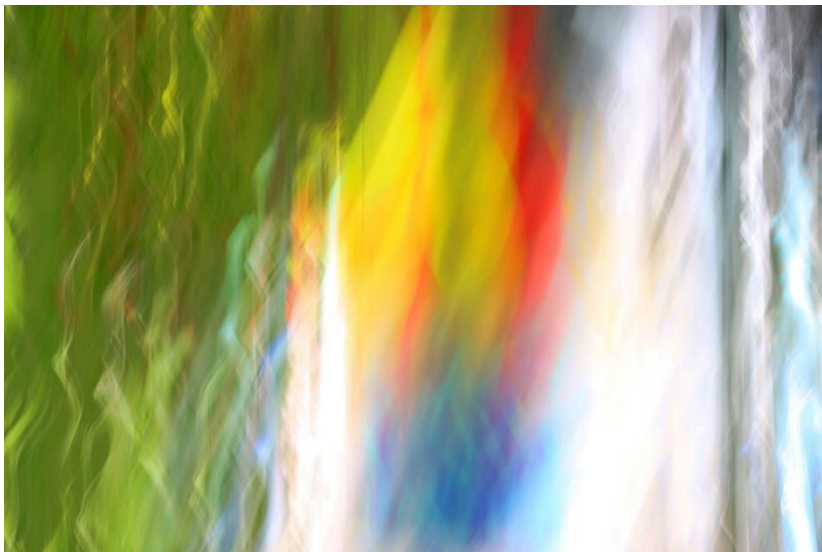
No, really, I did this on purpose!

Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) is when you purposely move the camera while the shutter is activated. You may wish to create an ethereal image where the viewer can still probably identify the items in the image (e.g., leaves in Figure 1) or you may wish to have the effect result in a purely abstract depiction. Figure 2 is a photo of wall graffiti but is now completely abstract.

Figure 1



Figure 2



In terms of camera settings, there is a lot of trial and error so don't be surprised if you keep only one image out of 10 or 20. The idea is to give yourself enough time to move the camera up and down, side to side, or even in a wavy motion to create an interesting effect.

If you shoot mostly in Auto, your camera will never give you a shutter speed of 1-2 seconds as it assumes you want the image to be sharp so it will either open the aperture wider to let in more light or it will bump the ISO (sensitivity). The easiest way to set up your camera for ICM photos is to set the dial to shutter priority (S or Tv). Select a speed of at least one second, then see if the aperture can close tightly enough to ensure your shot is not overexposed. If it is a bright day, this may not be possible depending on how small an opening your camera can create since you may need an aperture of f/20 or more.

If your camera's smallest aperture is f/8 or f/10, it is still possible to create an ICM image during the day. You may have to move your camera very quickly to get the image during the half second or less exposure time. Or you can attach a neutral density filter that will block some light and allow for a longer exposure time.

I often use the ICM technique in December when I am shooting festive lights around the neighbourhood. I have no trouble creating long exposures because there is so little ambient light at that time of day. Typically, I am looking for between 1 and 3 seconds to provide enough time to execute the motion. This means you will need a smaller aperture than usual so the lighter sections will not be overexposed. Even if your camera has an aperture of f/10 or less, there should be no difficulty at night getting an exposure time of one second or more. If needed, you can eliminate any distracting background by darkening the image with free photo editing software such as Windows Photos or Photoscape X. See images below.

