Multiple Exposures: Without Special Equipment

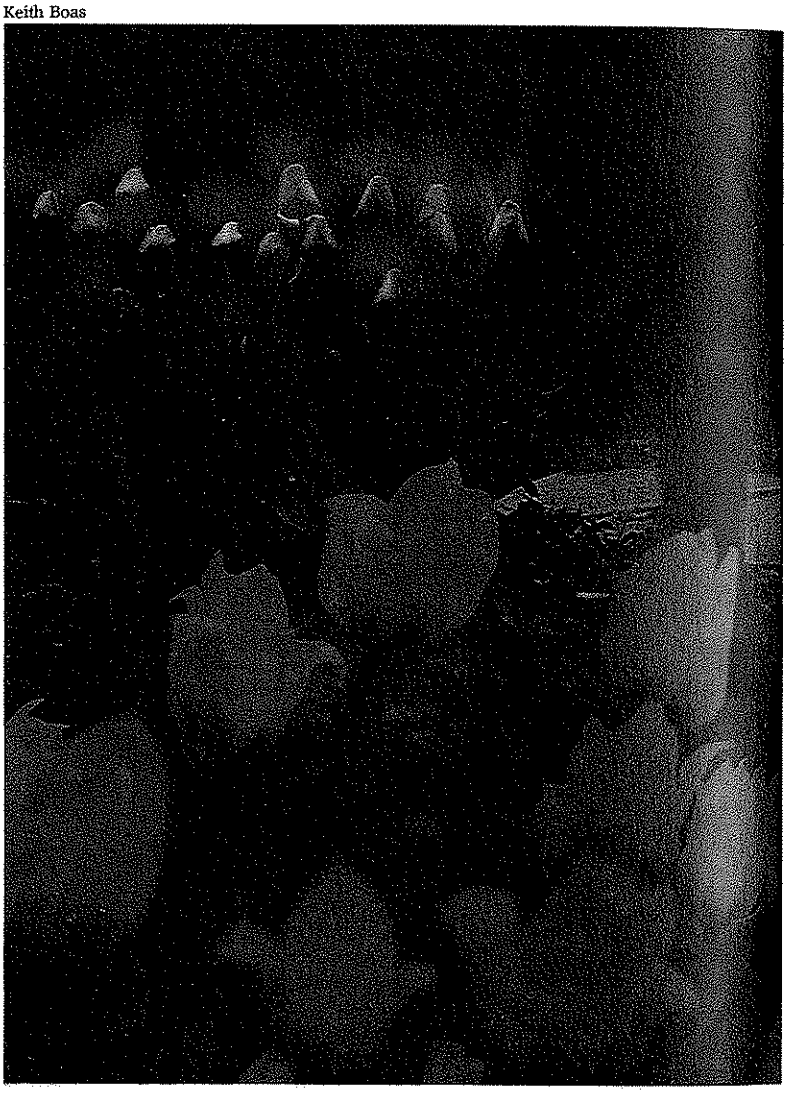
When two or more images are combined to produce another, the results can be extraordinary. One of the easiest ways to combine images is to make a multiple exposure on the same frame of film. You can photograph two different scenes and create a juxtaposition that is visually and thematically related, or you can rephotograph the same scene to create an intriguing illusion.

No special equipment other than a tripod is needed to produce most multiple exposures, although a motor drive accessory can be helpful, as we will see on page 230. If your camera doesn't have a special multiple-exposure button, you can accomplish the same effect by pressing in the rewind button while turning the lever to cock the shutter. To prevent the film from slipping, you will usually also have to turn the rewind knob first to take up the slack in the film magazine, and then hold the knob securely while depressing the rewind button and turning the lever. During time exposures in very dim light, you can also make a multiple exposure by setting the shutter-speed dial on B, locking the shutter open with a cable release, and then placing a lens cap or a piece of black cardboard over the lens between exposures.

When making a multiple exposure in which the images are superimposed on one another, you must reduce each exposure so that the total amount of light reaching the film does not exceed the amount it would receive during a normal exposure; otherwise, the film will be grossly overexposed. The table on page 228 lists the exposure reductions needed for various numbers of exposures. Where depth of field is critical, remember that you can also reduce exposure by increasing the shutter speed rather than by stopping down the aperture. Each shutter speed interval equals one stop. Another way of reducing exposure that is especially useful if you have an automatic camera that can't be switched to manual mode is to change the film-speed setting on your camera. To do this, simply multiply the ISO/ASA rating of your film by the number of exposures you plan to make, and set the resulting number on your film-speed dial. To give yourself as much exposure leeway as possible, it's best to use a slow-speed film when making multiple exposures.

In planning a multiple exposure, keep in mind that the relative brightness of areas in the image is very important. White and other bright areas will be recorded at almost their normal value, blocking the other images. On the other hand, black or very dark areas will almost disappear, letting the brighter parts of other images come to the fore.

Keith Boas



This lyric tribute to tulips was made by photographing the same scene twice with different filters and using a large lens opening that limited depth of field and allowed the photographer to focus selectively. For the first exposure, a blue filter was used and the camera was focused on the flowers in the rear, blurring the ones in the foreground. For the second exposure, the focus was changed to sharpen the foreground and to allow the background to become blurred. The filter was also changed – to one of vivid magenta.

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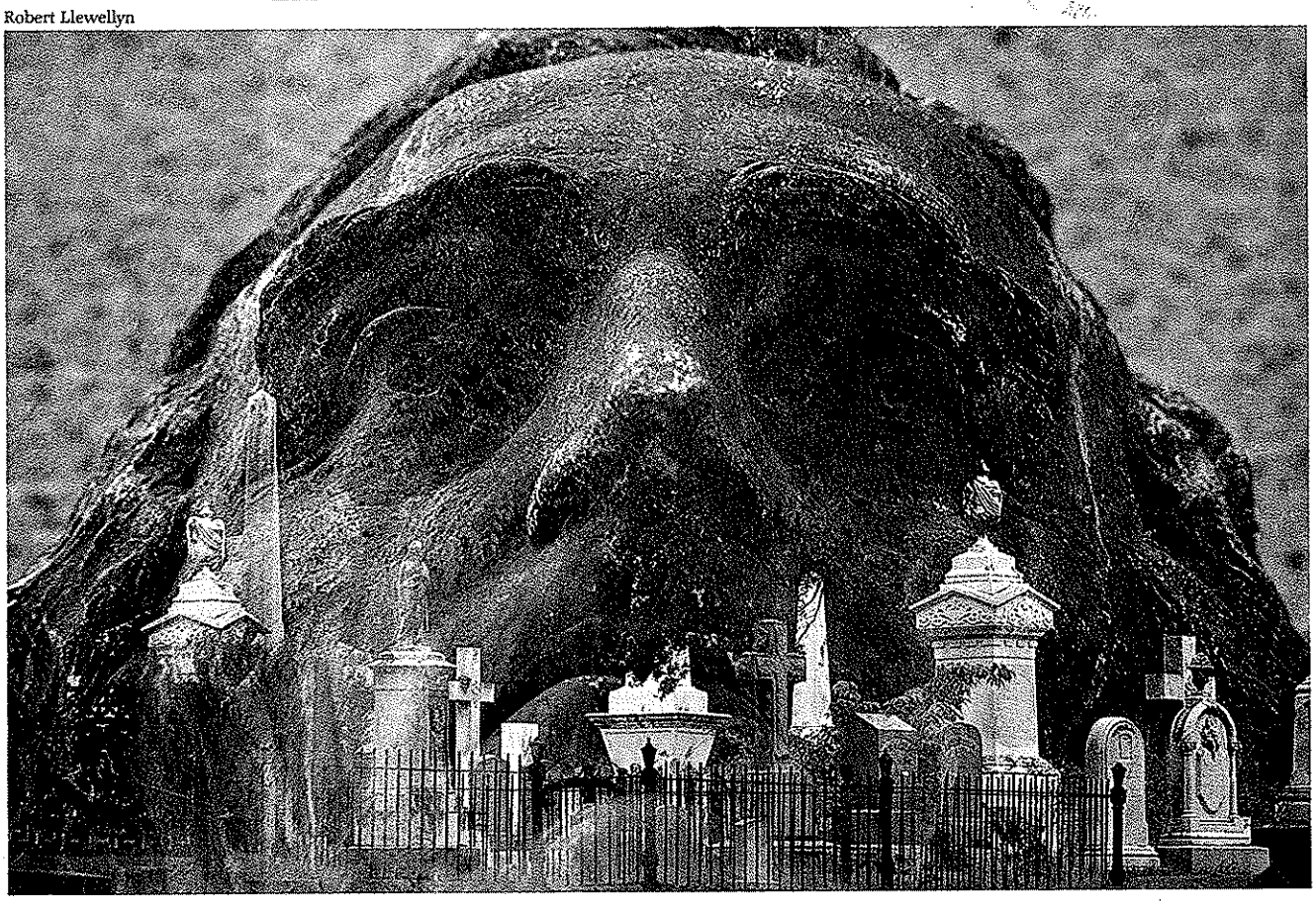
Dennis Hallinan/FPG

This illustration of multiple moons was created by panning the camera from left to right while the shutter remained open, pausing at equal intervals for a fraction of a second.

For this powerful composition, a face of a statue was photographed to combine with an image of a graveyard. When mixing very different subjects, it's usually best to keep one image simple and straightforward. It also helps if one image has a dark area upon which the other can show up crisp and bright.

Robert Llewellyn



Robert Llewellyn

Buildings appear to be mirrored in a street of water in this unusual double exposure. After making the first normal exposure, the photographer turned the camera upside down and reshot the same scene on the same frame of film.

Multiple Exposures

NUMBER OF EXPOSURES	EXPOSURE DECREASE (*F*-STOPS)
2	1
3	$1\frac{1}{3}$
4	2
6	$2\frac{1}{2}$
8	3
16	4