

Sweet Movement.... Multiple Exposer Art Photograph

See the sketch on separate page to see the basic set-up for this example.

Equipment used:

Sigma Speedlights x 2 with Lastolite Diffusers, Phottix Receiver and Triggers,
Fixed Continuous Light – could be LED but I used a 150w Spot Light.
Work table with Black Card covering work area and Black Material Backdrop
Retort stand or similar to clamp and hold a tube 2" diameter at an angle
Camera with Remote Cable Release and Tripod (set the Flash/Speedlights to Rear
Curtain Sync). Kilner Jar with Large Bag of Jelly Beans

Procedure:

You need flash to light the bowl and to freeze the sweets as they fall, but at the same time you need continuous lighting to capture the movement of the sweets into the bowl.

Because I don't have a good studio flash, I used two Speedlights set side-by-side and synced to a trigger to obtain the maximum power. I used Auto FP High-Speed Sync on the master flash unit, this allows the flash to keep firing while the shutter curtain is running.

I set-up the flash units first, positioning them to the left-hand side of the table. On the table in the centre is a glass Kilner Jar and to the right of this I positioned a retort stand with a plastic/cardboard tube clamped at an angle so that when I drop jelly-beans into the tube they will drop into the jar.

Set the camera on a tripod approx. 80-90cm from the jar and the lens at approx. 35-50mm FL. Set the camera at an arbitrary setting to test for light contamination in the room from ambient light – I used 1/250sec shutter speed for flash, f/8 with an ISO of 100. All was OK but perhaps the exposure needed lightening by just one stop so I increased the ISO to 200. Once you've established the correct exposure for the jar now it's time to set-up a continuous light source. I used a 150w flood/spot directed at the falling sweets but set high behind the camera to its left side. Try to prevent too much light contaminating the back black-drop screen – you need this as black as possible.

Then, theoretically, it is time to have a go and start dropping sweets.

When you are at this stage you need to change the camera settings to capture the movement of the falling sweets. To do this set the shutter speed to 1/30th Sec and put the camera release mode on high shutter release so you get maximum shutter movements in a short duration. This way you have more chance of catching the sweets falling. Remember you want to capture the movement trail behind the sweet – so it's important you change the flash setting in the camera to Rear View/Rear Curtain Sync and sometimes referred to as 2nd Curtain Sync.

Now it's a game of chance trying to get the right number of sweets in the shot but once you have the set-up, it's only a matter of continually doing the same thing to collect as many shots as possible. It's important that you have a good depth of field in these images so if you need to change exposure, I tend to change the ISO by one or two stops rather than the aperture f/stop. It's also very important that when you remove sweets from the Kilner jar in preparation to dropping more through the tube, you do not move the jar or anything else in-shot for that matter. Eventually you will merge these images together, so the last thing you want is any part of the set-up moving and causing distortion or blur in the final image.

How's it looking – after a few trials you can evaluate your shots and whether you have enough to go to the next stage of post-processing. In all of my examples, I chose approximately 12 to 15 images for each photograph, so it means you need much more than that to make a good selection.

Post-Processing

Photoshop

Upload your images from the camera SD card to your hard drive - Photo Folder (Raw Images). I have specific ways of doing this but I know many of you have your own routines for this process. Once in the computer upload the images to Lightroom or whatever you use. This exercise is based on Adobe Lightroom Classic and Photoshop.

In Lightroom when all images are imported you need to go through all of them and select what you consider are worthy of being in your main image. I select the individual images in the film-roll at the base of the screen by highlighting them or marking with a flag – any method is good enough that allows you to go back and select all images as a group. Once all images are selected Right-Click on a selected/highlighted image and Go to "Edit in" and select 'Open in Photoshop 2024' – this will open PS and ask if you want to "Open 12 Images" this is obviously the number you have made in your original selection – Click 'Yes' to this and you will see the images appear one at a time in PS.

When all images have loaded – see the file names of each image on the top of the screen. Now you need to make a new file for all the images – to do this Go to 'File' on top menu bar and drill down the list to 'Scripts' now select 'Load into Stack' and Go to 'Add Open Files'. Click OK and see the layers for each image open in the Right-Hand Screen section.

At this stage once this has finished you have no need for the open files at the top of the screen – the highlighted image, the one on the far right of the other files is the new file, don't remove this one. Remove only the greyed out files now by hitting the X – it will ask if you want to save changes and you say 'No'.

Now with all the layers for each image in the right-hand column of the screen 'select the top layer and hold the shift key, move down the column to the last

but one from bottom image and click that image. Now you should have all the images apart from the last one highlighted.

Now look above the images and in a box you should see the word 'Normal' with a arrowhead at its side. Drill down this list and select 'Lighten'.

This will sync all the images together on the screen. If you click the eye icon of the layer it will close the image so you can go through all the images turning them 'on' and 'off' so that you can judge the best options/images to keep or discard for your final selection.

When you are happy with your selection you can discard the images not being used and drag them into the dustbin.

Now if you want to carry on using PS to edit the work you can add layers to various images and make amendments. I prefer at this stage to leave PS and continue editing in Lightroom, so to do this I go to the top menu bar and select 'Layers' and drill down to 'Merge Visible' the images will all merge into one main image. Now go to top menu 'File' drill down to 'Save' and then save the PS file into a folder you know on your hard drive.

Lightroom

Upload this saved PS file into the original Raw files folder and import into Lightroom. Now you can begin the editing process in the Develop program of Lightroom.

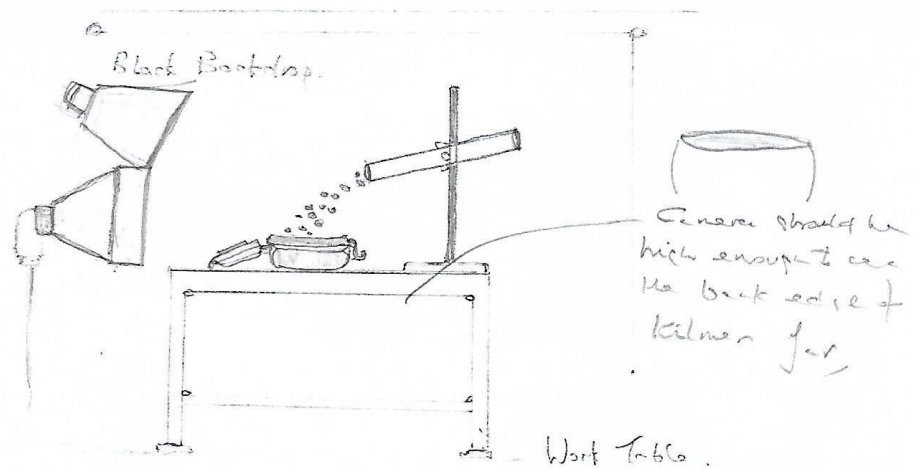
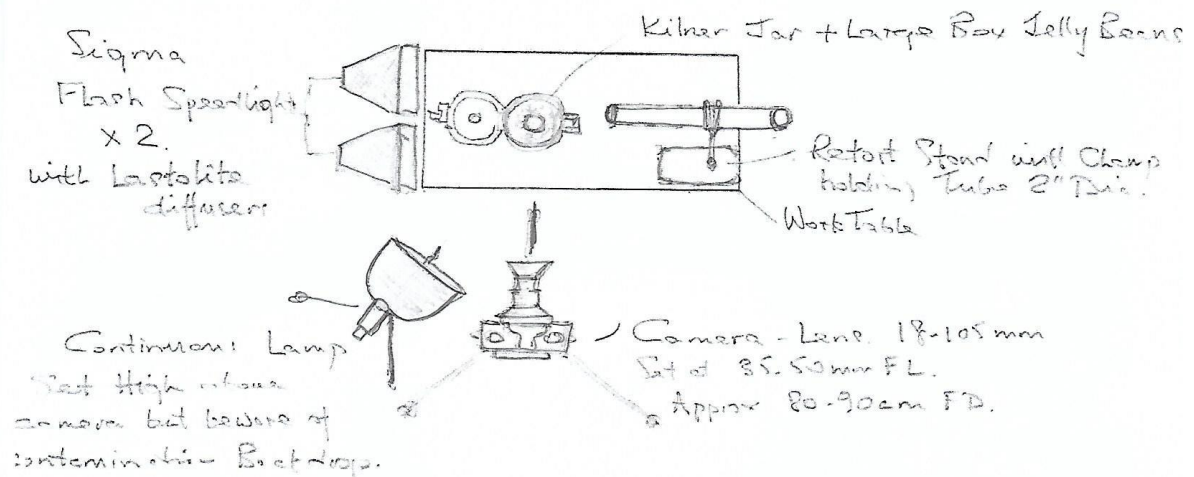
Routine process -Exposure, Highlights, Shadows, Increase Texture 28%, Clarity 31%. Select masking options – Background -Darken a small amount. Radial Gradient to darken sweets in jar. Select Healing Options for cleaning spots on foreground etc.

When finished – Right click Go to 'Edit In' go to 'Edit in Photoshop 2024'. When image opens in PS hold Ctl Key and press 'A'. This selects running ants around outside of image go to 'Edit' top menu and drill down to 'Stroke'. A new window opens with Width = 1px Colour – Choose White – Select Inside- Blending – Normal – Opacity 100% - hit OK and a Key-line will be placed around the image. Go to 'File' drill down to 'Save' – Open back in Lightroom and Export to File as a jpg and finished image.

See following page – Rough sketch of Camera, Lights set-up.....

Multiple Exposure Art Photography. Sweet Movement

Black Backdrop.



Use 2nd Curtain (Rear Curtain)
Sync to have movement behind
sweet.