Rediscovering the Art of Capturing Vibrant Color Images with Black and White Film:

An introduction to trichrome film photography



As a newbie to trichrome photography, I didn't have any preconceived notions about what to expect. I stumbled upon this captivating technique by accident after reading an article by Jasper Fforde on the Ilford photo blog and then discovering Andrew Keedle's breathtaking trichrome shots in a feature on Shutter Hub. (@apkeedle on Instagram). The endless possibilities for creative expression with trichromy intrigued me, especially after seeing Keedle's mesmerizing wheat fields and powerline shots with bubblegum skies.

Coincidentally, I had just bought an old Zeiss folding 6x6 camera from my friend Joey at @awesomecameras a week prior, which came with a set of six or seven colored filters in a plastic accessory bag. After reading about trichromy, I eagerly rummaged through the bag and picked out the red, green, and blue filters, ready to embark on my trichrome photography journey. The green filter I had was a lighter shade, more towards the yellow spectrum than the typical green filter. Similarly, the blue filter was a lighter



shade of blue. While unsure if they would be effective, I felt it was worth trying, especially since I had the gear on hand. I delved into the article multiple times and conducted further research to better understand the mechanics behind it. The YouTube video posted by

attic darkroom also proved to be a valuable resource. My first attempt at capturing trichrome images took place during a summer day trip in California. It was a bright, high-contrast day, and I used a handheld incident meter. To keep expenses down, I stocked up on a few rolls of HP5+ (this was before Kentmere 400 became available).

Unfortunately, most of the images I captured turned out to be subpar, and one roll was ruined due to overlapping. Despite these setbacks, I learned a great deal from that day. I created this one image and from that point on I was all in.

There's one aspect of shooting film already that leaves much up to uncertainty. The process can be intimidating but the results are worth the effort. The cost of entry was secondary in my mind. In order to capture a single trichrome, three exposures must be used to produce one final image. So shooting on 6x6 provides 4 final trichromes per roll.

How It Actually Works

The process is actually pretty simple if you do a little bit of prep work ahead of time. I created this original trichromatic photo by taking three identical exposures. Each one with its own colored filter, using a tripod to keep the frames identical. I tend to try to keep an order of R - G - B so that later on organizing the images will be much quicker.



1st Exposure



2nd Exposure



3rd Exposure



Quick Process

Once the images are shot and developed. They need to be converted to

digital scans. The process is as follows:

- Expose
- Develop
- Scan
- Organize
- Create a new Photoshop Document
- 1. Drop in the scans one at a time and rename them to R G B.

(note: do not resize/adjust unless done to all three layers at once)



2. Rasterize the layers



3. Edit > Auto Align



- 4. Scale all the layers up if you dislike the borders
- 5. Double-click the Red layer. In blending options deselect the check

_			
Layer Style			
	Name: R		
	Styles	Blending Options	
	Blending Options	Blend Mode: Normal ~	
	Bevel & Emboss	Opacity:	
	Contour	Advanced Blending	
	Texture	Fill Opacity: 100 %	
	Stroke	Channels: 💟 R 🗌 G 🗌 B	
	Inner Shadow	Knockout: None ~	

boxes for G, B

6. Repeat step 5 for the Green and Blue layers. (each layer should only have its own color checked). That should immediately yield a base-level trichrome and from there the creative direction is endless with color balancing and hue/saturation adjustments. Moving layers around

individually will enhance the Harris Shutter effect resulting in amazing rainbow effects. Anything that changes between the three frames will have channel separation resulting in the same effect.

Detailed Shooting Methodology

When it comes to shooting trichrome photography, exposing can be the most challenging step in the process. The filters themselves block certain wavelengths of light, which can make exposing a bit tricky. The red filter loses 3 stops of light, while the green and blue filters lose 2. To calculate the exact loss of light for your specific filter, simply meter through the filter and do some quick math. I typically use a spot meter from Minolta and set the aperture to f/22 for my initial reading. Then, I open up to f/8 and take my first image at 1/60. For the next two images, I adjust the shutter speed to be 1 stop faster, while keeping my aperture at f/8, so my shutter speed will be now at 1/125.

The old Zeiss post-war folding camera that I use is a dream for this type of photography. With its fully mechanical shutter and the ability to advance the film without causing camera vibration, it's the perfect tool for the job. The Tessar lens is wonderfully sharp, especially when stopped down to around f/8 and smaller. Plus, since it's a rangefinder, the filters don't affect the color of the viewfinder.

To ensure that my shots are in focus, I usually focus on an object or zone in the foreground. However, if the background of the shot is more interesting, I'll focus on that instead. Planning out each shot and allowing a few minutes between exposures helps me stay organized and get the shots I want.

While developing and scanning trichrome images can be a nuanced process, I've found that doing it myself allows me to turn around and learn much faster. It also establishes a sense of pride in the fact my work is now solely produced.



Hues of the Sea: A Kaleidoscope of Colors

Final Thoughts and Insights

Since discovering the original pieces on Andrew and trichroming, I have embarked on my own artistic and creative journey to lean into developing the work that most inspires me. The process of creating these magical colorful illusions is both creative and technical. It scratches the itch I have to express a unique vision while also presenting a challenge that keeps it fun and exciting.

The images come to life in the final stage when color grading. With the right amount of tweaking the image can be made to look natural and much like a true-to-life color image, other than in the channel-separated areas.

Once I became comfortable working with medium format, I experimented with a simulated panoramic format using a crop frame 35MM.

I hot-glued a filter ring to the front of an Ansco Pix Panorama and pushed the film in development since it has no controls and is simply a point-and-click, fixed aperture and shutter toy camera.



Chromatic Coastline: A Stunning Display of Ocean Colors

This set was definitely more challenging to bring to completion. It took about three rounds of shooting and developing to get the results I was after. I messed up the framing in the first go and then overdeveloped the second roll. So I was floored when I finally nailed it and got some stellar results.



A Chromatic Walkway to the Sea: A Place for Daydreamers



Chromatic Shadows: A Vibrant Reflection of the Past

Thanks for reading!

Instagram: Zachallenfilmphotography Website: <u>https://www.zr-filmphotography.com/about</u>

Resources, References, and Links:

"Close Up: Andrew Keedle - The Joy of Trichromes"



"Trichromes - Colour Photos With Ilford HP5" by Jasper Fforde



"Trichrome Photography Basics" by attic darkroom

