

Multiple Images | Diptychs, Triptychs and More-tychs! | Photo Project

Multiple Images | Diptychs, Triptychs and More-tychs!

If an image speaks a thousand words, then can two or more be better than one?

The concept of using multiple images is not new and has been used for centuries, first in religious works, to tell a story across a number of pictorial panels [<http://images.google.co.uk/images?um=1&hl=en&lr=&q=religious+triptych&btnG=Search+Images>]

These were often even made pocket-size, as icons, for people to carry with them as permanent reminders of the god or gods to whom they devoted their lives and their prayers.

The Japanese are also well known for their use of multiple images, not only across screens or panels in their dwellings, but also as folded, pull-out stories which evolved into what we know as manga and cartoon-strips today.

The triptych in particular has endured as a method of visual storytelling. One early silent film, Napoleon [1927] used a style of triptych in some scenes. More modern movies have used split-screen – a derivative of the triptych it could be argued – to portray a number of different but allied visual images to make a point in storytelling. A notable and successful example is The Thomas Crown Affair [1968] in which the director, Norman Jewison, used split-screen imagery to capture and compress sections of the story which did not need extended coverage. Lee H. Katzin's 'Le Mans', again starring Steve McQueen, is another notable example of the effective use of split-screen in the movies, coming some years after another iconic motorsport movie – 'Grand Prix' – first made dramatic and very successful use of the technique.

In stills photography the use of multiple images was perhaps first and most iconically used by the pioneering stop-motion photographer, Eadweard Muybridge. Although Muybridge's use of multiple images is in part down to the fact he was working on capturing the detail of motion in his subjects and needed to show the various frames one after the other and side-by-side in order to show the progression of movement, there is also, in retrospect, an artistic quality to him having done so. The images not only work together well because they depict the transitions between one position and the next in the people or animals he was shooting. They have a non-technical beauty to them as well.

Looking back over the 20th Century, certain photographers stand out through their use of multiple and allied imagery to create pieces with a special dynamic. Here are some names to research a little further:

- Bernd & Hilla Becher
- Rene Burre [famous shots of Che Guevara presented as contact strips of sequential 35mm frames]
- Ger Dekkers
- Robert Hausser
- Barry Le Va
- Duane Michals [a master of storytelling through multiple images]
- Eadweard Muybridge
- Helmut Newton [particularly his two images which make up 'They Are Coming']
- Erich Salomon
- Erich Spahn [explorations of texture through multiple, repetitive imagery]



Multiple Images | Diptychs, Triptychs and More-tychs! | Photo Project

Brief

Using more than one but no more than four images – displayed on the same page/print/Photoshop canvas - convey various attributes of an object and its immediate environment. You can either choose to set this object up as a still-life or take photographs of a 'found' object.

Things to pay attention to:

- the object's texture
- it's immediate environment, surroundings, place amongst other nearby objects or place in the 'world'
- look at how to establish a clear idea in the viewer's eye and mind regarding some detail of the object whilst at the same time making it clear what whole that details is a part of

This can be shot in colour and black and white.

Examples

Here is a recent photo I shot which uses the diptych format to satisfy focus on both detail and wider context of an object, in this case an old postbox on a wall in Tokyo.

