

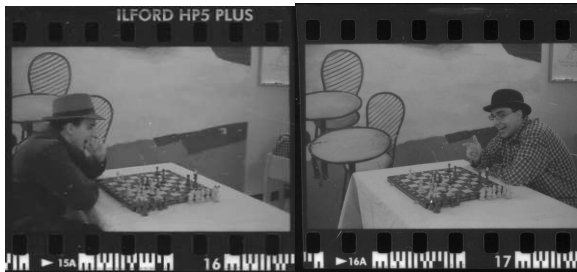
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SP.757 Final Project

My final project involved spending hours in the darkroom on something that you can easily do in Photoshop in a few minutes, namely compositing images. Why? Well, for one, it's more fun, probably because it's more retro.

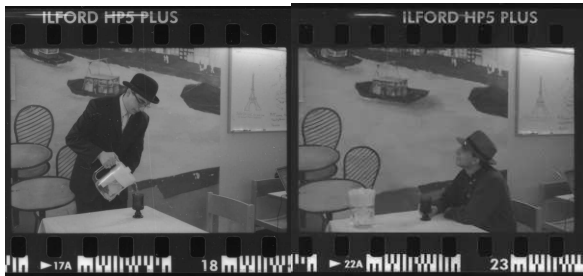
I had three scenes in mind: playing chess with myself, pouring a glass of water for myself, and looking in a mirror and seeing something other than my reflection.

Here are small versions of my source images (scanned from my contact sheet):

Chess:



Water:



Reflection:



The original plan to composite these images was to make two prints, as above, cut them up, tape them together, and make a paper negative out of them (thereby unifying them). From there, I was going to print a positive from the paper negative, and voilà!

Unfortunately, that's basically impossible. Any sort of cutting and taping leaves a mark that is absolutely visible on the resultant paper negative, and is extremely difficult to get rid of. So I had to come up with something better.

The next idea I had was printing them both on the same sheet of paper (so, only one positive this time, instead of positive-negative-positive) with a mask blocking one half of the image or the other.

This seemed to work, but there were two problems:

1. It's virtually impossible to line up the negatives such that the composite image gets lined up properly
2. It's extremely difficult to mask *just right* – usually there's a little overlap (or underlap) which leaves a line across the image.

So, to solve these problems I had two solutions. For the first, I standardized my setup such that my sheet of paper was in the same place on the enlarger every time. Then, I *traced* the image from one of the negatives on to a piece of paper. After that, I printed one half of the image from that negative, and then put the paper back in the paper safe. Then, I retrieved the other negative, and aligned it, using my traced image as a guide (ensuring it would end up at the right place), retrieved my paper, and printed the other half. This solved the negative-alignment problem (though it is somewhat tedious).

Now, for the mask, instead of attempting to cover up exactly one half of the image, I waved the mask around, dodging around the overlapped area. There is a bit of tolerance here, but in theory if you let in 50% of the desired light onto the overlapped area each time, it will look good and not leave any marks. In practice, it's somewhat visible if you look for it, but I still think it looks pretty good.

Since this is a *digital* as well as darkroom class, I felt obligated to do a little Photoshop. Below is a before-and-after of a quick Photoshop job of me telling myself a joke, and laughing at it. The sad (or good, depending on your point of view) part is that my hasty low-quality Photoshop job, which took on the order of five minutes, looks comparable to the darkroom work, which took much much longer.

Before:



After:

