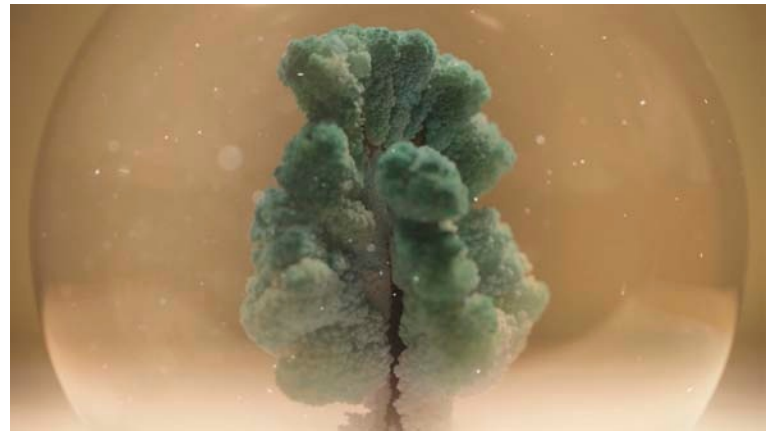


JENNIFER WOLFE

PURE IMAGINATION

The Mind and Methodology of Digital Artist Kurtis Hough



Based in Portland, Oregon, Kurtis Hough (@kurtishough on Twitter) is a digital artist and filmmaker who has been making experimental time lapse films for more than a decade. Hough's interest in the rhythms of the natural world is evident in his work, which combines the visual style of a nature documentary with CG animation to create a dreamlike, otherworldly feel.

"The goal is almost always a compulsive desire to express an image I have while listening to a piece of music, and to visually provoke a heightened feeling to the notes," Hough says of his work, which includes 2004's "Stumble then rise on some awkward morning" and, more recently, "Toyland," "Cryosphere" and "Warm Earth, Which I've Been Told," which were completed last year.

Set to music from Canadian trio A Silver Mt. Zion, the elegiac "Stumble then rise" is completely 3D animated, with elements created in Autodesk 3ds Max and then duplicated and manipulated in Adobe After Effects. "I saw in computer animation an entirely new art form that had endless possibilities, and I wanted to learn for myself what was possible," Hough explains. "Lately I've found a similar approach with the emergence of DSLR cameras, which allow for accessible high-quality digital video."

Hough acquired a Canon EOS 5D Mark II DSLR camera in 2011 and, combined with his existing

photography lenses, found it opened up exciting visual possibilities. "I would do long solo hikes into the wilderness with a backpack that included the 5D, a 100mm macro lens, two other lenses and a lightweight aluminum tripod," he describes. "I'll often use and learn whatever tools are needed to express an idea I have. As the years go on, I employ a lot of techniques I've learned along the way, and I try to keep an eye open for new tools that can be used in a fresh way."

The concept for "Warm Earth, Which I've Been Told"—an 18-minute experimental film set to music by folk outfit Six Organs of Admittance that illustrates the movements of the passing of a single day—initially drew Hough to experiment with digital video and time lapse imagery. The nine-minute "Mossgrove/Bed of Moss," a two-part time lapse film of slugs frolicking in the moss near the Columbia River Gorge outside of Portland, was a result of his early test runs with the Canon 5D prior to undertaking "Warm Earth."

To create the time lapse films, Hough edits image sequences in Adobe After Effects, layering, manipulating and scaling the imagery to build the shots. More than 100,000 4K resolution images of blue sky, rain clouds, forest canopy, star trails



Above: From "Toyland"
Left: Kurtis Hough

and solar movements were combined to make "Warm Earth," which Hough describes as "a planetary eye on a passing day in the universe." "Warm Earth" took nearly two years to complete. Footage for the continuous time

lapse shot was captured over the course of 24 hours in the woods of the Pacific Northwest using a Canon 5D and Canon's 180-degree circular fisheye lens, which allowed the entire horizon and sky to be visible in frame.

"I continue to combine and add these techniques to recent work as I look for unique ways to utilize these tools," says Hough, who has been using After Effects and Premiere Pro for the last 10 years and incorporates them into the majority of his projects.

Other experiments, such as "Toyland," a festive Technicolor dreamland of time lapse crystals and animated jellyfish set to music from The Ocean Floor, was conducted with the restriction of seeing

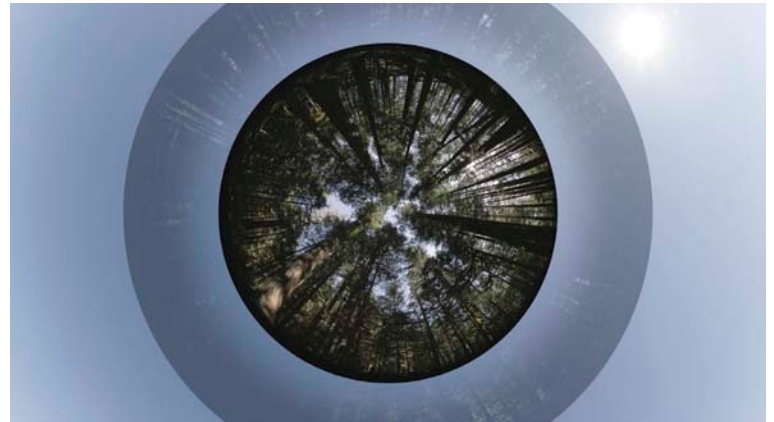


From "Bed of Moss"

what sort of video he could conjure up in a week.

Recent projects include collaborations with Constellation Records of Montreal, whose musicians inspire much of Hough's work. "Walking Through Mist" was made in memory of the musician and singer Lhasa de Sela, who died from breast cancer in 2010. Other recent work includes the video "In Mirrors" for Colin Stetson's newest album, which came out in April.

Hough is currently raising funds for a film to complement "Cryosphere," which was filmed on



From "Cryosphere"

the Mendenhall Glacier in Juneau, Alaska, and took four months to complete. Hough describes "Cryosphere" as an attempt to "capture the heartbeat of the ice and experience for myself the dramatic changes occurring to this landscape." For the companion film, he plans to travel to Hawaii to film lava flowing from the Kilauea volcano. The

footage will be combined with animated elements of geometric plants growing. Where the melting blue and white ice of "Cryosphere" signified death, the hot orange and black lava will signify birth.

"Certainly the majority of my recent work has been live action, but I am always looking to combine added elements to the image to build a unique surreal world," Hough says. "I'm excited about future work, where I hope to combine more of these techniques I've been experimenting with for years." **dv**



Kurtis Hough's videos are available online: vimeo.com/khstudios



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