



PSNZ Help Sheet No 7

January 2001 Edition

**Photomontage**  
**By: Sally Mason FPSNZ**

*Produced for the Affiliated Camera Clubs of the Photographic Society of New Zealand Inc. by PSNZ*

The art of blending together a series of photographs to create a visual story - of a place, a family, an occasion...

The ingredients: An active and creative imagination and photographs.

Taking photographs for such a project involves learning a completely different way of seeing things. This is often the hardest barrier to cross for a "photographer" who is used to composing each individual image to stand on its own merits, as a completed whole. Photomontage makes you step sideways, and see things that are parts of a whole and that how the photograph is taken dictates how it can be used.

Photomontage is like creating an interlocking jigsaw puzzle. However, in the case of a jigsaw you have the finished picture to aim for and recreate. With a photomontage, you are letting things happen in front of you, creating the finished product as you go along. All is not revealed until the end point, and your mind has to be free enough to go in any direction, at any time.

It is an art that can only be understood and learned by doing, because only by going through the process do you understand what you are doing, and why.

There are several layers of thinking involved:

- (a) What you are trying to show - what story you are trying to tell.
- (b) The composition of the overall picture. This must include an understanding of balance, proportion, 3D effect, colour balance etc so that the finished product is one completely balanced work rather than just a collection of photographs.
- (c) The construction elements, and the techniques and visual tricks that you can use to create the effect you want, whether it be careful blending, or abstract.
- (d) Lighting is important, and the most successful works will result from using photos that have been taken within the space of an hour or so, on a bright overcast day. This means that the light will be even throughout all the photos, with no harsh, dark

shadows. If a collection of photos, taken over a period of time, are put together, there is difficulty in blending them together successfully.

Photomontage is an individual art form. Each person sees, and creates things, in his or her own way.

As part of my night classes and workshops, each group of students will shoot a film at the same place, then use these photos to learn how to montage. Each will produce an amazingly different result.

In working and learning together as a group, we extend each other's perception of how to approach things, and learn the most valuable lesson of letting yourself think sideways.

Workshops can be run over a weekend or for 5 - 6 days. Both are very focused, fun, learning experiences. Photomontage is, after all, learning by doing.

An audio visual "Beyond the Frame" is available from the PSNZ library and shows examples of montage work.

Sally is available to Clubs for workshops at \$250.00 per day plus travel costs.

This PSNZ Help Sheet Was Written By:

Sally Mason FPSNZ  
41 Balrudry Street  
Christchurch

E-mail:

Statements made or opinions expressed are those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect the views of PSNZ.

The right of the Author to be identified as the author of this work in terms of section 96 of the Copyright Act 1994 is hereby asserted.

This Help Sheet and others in the series are available from the Director of PSNZ Help Sheets

Refer under Director of Publications and Services in the Directory or download from the web site at [www.photography.org.nz](http://www.photography.org.nz)

Also available from PSNZ:      The Recorded Lecture Services see our website  
[www.photography.org.nz](http://www.photography.org.nz)