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How To Create Pseudo Lith Prints Using Digital Image Processing

This page illustrates one possible approach to lith-like effects by using digital image processing. I've used Photoshop for this, but you can use nearly all modern image processing programs with success.

The main advantages of this digital approach are:

- The results are controllable and reproducible.
- It's fast! Real lith printing, on the other hand, is *very* time-consuming!

So, is the traditional 'wet' lith printing dead? Surely not. It's still a lot of fun!

How To Do It

In the following, I describe my own approach. There are many possible variations to this. Marc Jutras describes one of them on his site and even provides a Photoshop action for it.

Let's start with an example:

This is the original.
It's a plain print of an infrared shot with Kodak HIE:

Process this original in two different versions,
one for the highlights and one for the shadows.

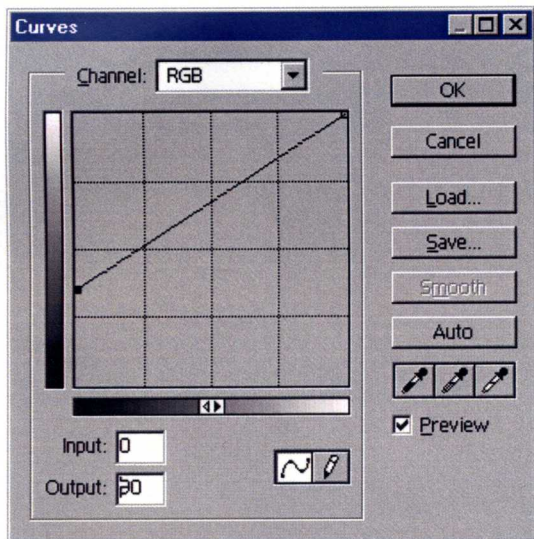Use the function "Curves" to decrease contrast and
clip the shadows:

Use the function "Curves" to increase contrast and
clip the midtones and highlights:

Curves

Channel: RGB

Input: 0
Output: 90
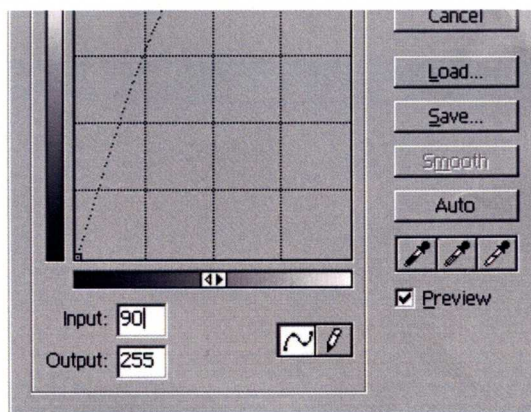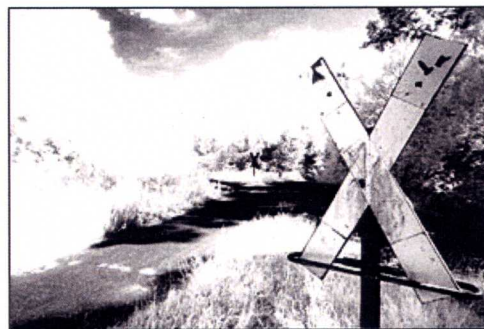
⬇

The result is the highlight version:

⬇

Let's color the highlights in a warm sepia to get the real lith feeling!
You can use the function "Hue/Saturation" for this:

Input: 90
Output: 255

⬇

The result is the shadow version:

⬇

Let's make the shadows grainy to get the real lith feeling!
First we duplicate the layer.
All processing is on one layer only.
Both layers are blended via the option "Darken".
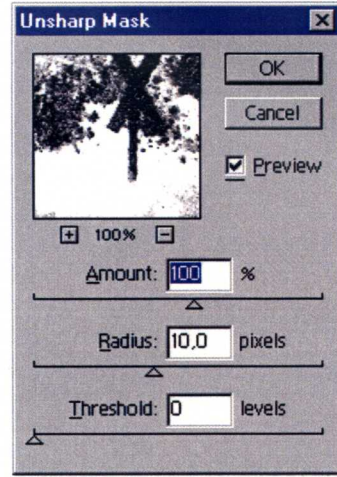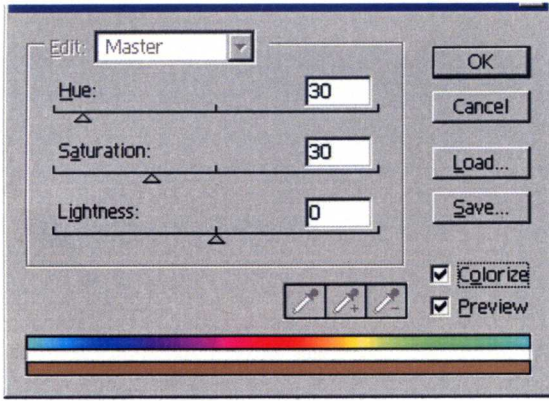(This helps to keep the shadows dark.)

Layers Channels Paths

Darken   Opacity: 100 %

☐ Preserve Transparency

Background (grainy)

Background

Now add some initial grain by applying an unsharp mask with a huge radius:
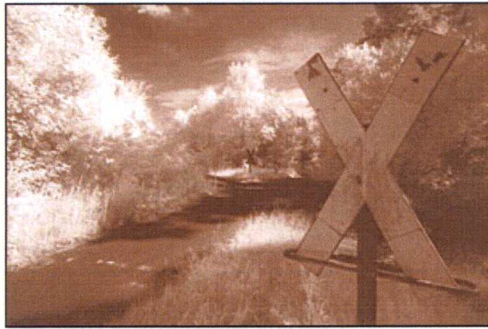
Afterwards, you can further increase the grain by applying the filters "Sharpen More" and "Blur" and again "Sharpen More".
You may even repeat this sequence.

Now we have colored highlights:

Now we have grainy shadows:

Finally, merge the highlight and shadow versions using the blending option "Multiply":

This is the result:

Very 'lithy', isn't it?!

Some More Examples
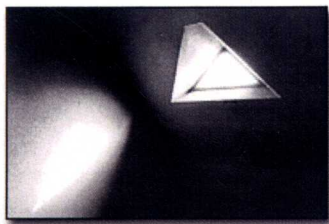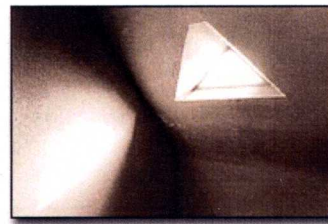
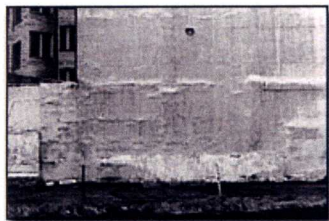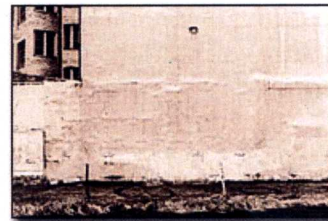| Original	Pseudo Lith
untitled (1981)	untitled (1981)
untitled (1985)	untitled (1985)
untitled (1980)	untitled (1980)

More Information?

If you want to contribute some kind of information, or if you want to post a question, please do so by adding it to the comment page.

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