

Photographic and Cinematographic Applications in Lucid Dream Control

Kenneth Moss

Wayne State University

Through the application of photographic and cinematographic principles the lucid dreamer can be the director of various visual phenomena, thereby synthesizing creative dreaming and photography within the dream. A photographer needs to utilize certain techniques to either replicate a given scene or to create an altered scene. I found that these techniques could be simulated to achieve certain visual effects in the dream. They were accessible to dream control due to the perceptual nature of lucidity and the visual elements represented in the dream. The lucid dreamer may use a “dream camera” as a prop to facilitate the usage of the through-the-lens viewing techniques. However, it may be easier to use only the essential factor, such as a filter. Alternately one may visualize the process without using specific aids. Although the resulting visual phenomena can occur independently in dreams the usage of these photographic applications may increase their frequency and quality.

Given the importance of the visual experience in dreams there are several advantages to this undertaking. The extension of an artistic pursuit into the dream state can be fun and exciting, as well as aesthetically pleasing. Photographic works are often referred to as having dream-like qualities. However, by closely working with dreams one may further stimulate waking photography so that it more accurately reflects dream experience. The lucid dream can be a studio of direct imagination and experimentation. The dreamer can determine to what extent one can control the dreamscape. I have been unable to identify any absolute limitation. Hence, this approach may help to elucidate the special characteristics of the visual elements in dreams. It may also help to define the interrelationship between visual phenomena and certain experiential states.

Lighting Effects

In my lucid dreams I have had a wide variety of lighting effects that at times have played a vital role in the dream. All of my lucid dreams have been dreamed in color. One application that takes advantage of this property is a prism filter which breaks light into its component colors. A star filter creates light rays extending from a light point. The rays may scintillate perhaps giving the impression of movement or blinking. A diffraction filter combines these effects to produce spectral rays arranged in a star pattern about a light source. This effect has been reproduced in lucid dreams on numerous occasions with dramatic results.

A polarizing filter is one technique that can control luminosity, typically from diffuse or reflective light sources. For example it can deepen a blue sky or reduce glare from water and glass surfaces. By reversing the process increased luminosity can result. Color and

tinted filters can also change the color and intensity of the light. A different process is to go beyond direct through-the-lens viewing and attempt to visualize shutter and aperture effects immediately. Stroboscopic lighting involves changes in luminosity rapidly through time. This may involve single or multiple lights that can be synchronized. The light source can be viewed from various angles including those that allow viewing of the reflections. In dreams I have been able to control both the frequency and luminosity of the lights. This can be accomplished through eye blinking, motor drive shutter advancing, and by moving a succession of columns (i.e. trees, fingers, etc.) in front of the light. An equivalent effect occurs when elements or even the entire visual field blinks without an apparent light source. Stroboscopic lighting can occur in connection with other effects such as star and diffraction effects. It can be synchronized with sounds or music and lattice or kaleidoscopic patterns. This can have a profound effect on the subjective experience of the dreamer. There is a close synchrony and integration of sensory and mental experience. Specific phenomena can include synesthesia and vibrational resonance.

Other lighting techniques that have occurred in my lucid dreams include silhouettes, diffusion, fog, rainbow, sunset and halo effects.

Viewpoint

The viewpoint of the dreamer is an important feature and in lucid dreams one has the ability to improve it. A more advantageous vantage point can occur by simulating the positioning actions a photographer employs to get the best viewing angle. Another method is to use framing techniques such as cropping and focal length variation. In general perspectives that allow greater dreamer participation, as opposed to spectator roles, are preferred. This usually requires a first person viewpoint. The camera viewfinder, in which the dreamer has a through-the-lens view, usually retains the first person viewpoint. The dreamer may also have a first person viewpoint that resembles waking stereoscopic visual fields. In autoscopic viewing the dreamer views himself. While this may be a secondary viewpoint it can be first person as in the example of mirror viewing.

Screen viewing occurs when the visual field appears to be existing on a screen. By bringing the screen closer or by utilizing certain movement techniques one can facilitate visual interaction. In close-up or macro viewing small objects are enlarged to predominate the field of view. Important subjects include nature scenes and the identification of lattice and crystalline structures. In expanded field viewing the angle or content of view is greater than the usual range. This may occur if a wider field is compressed into the normal viewing range, such as with a wide-angle lens. However, it may also occur if the angle of peripheral vision itself is increased with the possibility of a 360 degree or even spherical horizon. I have tried to accomplish this by using various rotational techniques.

A frequent viewpoint in lucid dreams is an above ground or aerial view. This may occur in flying, falling, mountain and transportation dreams. Its occurrence in non-lucid dreams offers a common and efficacious opportunity for lucid induction. On several occasions I have had an underwater view. Sometimes one has the impression of remote or vista viewing.

The gaze effect is an often reported viewing phenomenon. By fixating the vision on a specific dream element, such as the hands, there is a secondary consolidation of the lucid consciousness. I have noticed a similar effect when investigating characteristics such as depth of field, perspective, detail, color, composition, and contrast in lucid dreams.

Visual Fields and Elements

The shape and essential content of the dreamer's visual field is highly variable and mutable. With tunnel vision or telescopic effects only the center of the field is present, noticed or in focus. This can be accomplished by movement techniques, frame molds, center-spot filters, fish-eye lens or by identifying certain visual elements. In a mirror field all or part of the visual field is a reflective mirror that the dreamer can view. In a double-exposure field there is the appearance of two or more image fields superimposed on each other. A split field has at least two distinct visual field sections side by side. A mirage field is a type of slit field in which the top and bottom sections reflect each other. In a collage field the elements tend to have a random arrangement. By using these models I can create new dream sequences by splicing together visual elements in a manner simulating a cinematographic editor.

In abstract and non-representational fields elements do not have conventional form. In an off-focus field the visual elements may be blurred even to the point of total abstraction. The focusing can be controlled and even reversed. Sometimes the elements can resemble posphenes or fire flashes. A grainy field has a pointillistic appearance. Kaleidoscopic patterns and changing variegated patterns. Multi-image filters provide scenes that are readily adapted to this. Geometric and lattice patterns have a definite organization. Other patterns include spiral, tunnel, funnel, and cobweb structures. By simulating eye closure phenomena such as multi-colored floaters and entoptic patterns can result. The visual field can have a quality resembling photographic materials as though one is dreaming the photo.

Visual fields can also simulate telephoto, wide-angle, fish-eye and macro lenses.

Visual Movement

Visual movement refers to the apparent movement of the dreamer in relation to the visual field. This may be due to either the movement of the dreamer or the visual elements. One

class of movement involves speed effects. This may be introduced as the result of linear or rotary movement. As a result of this speed effect the scenery can be blurred or streaked. Some of these results are similar to zooming with a telephoto lens. The transition to macro viewing can include movement that may lack the speed effect. The early stages of visual field involution can be simulated by a wide-angle lens. Oscillating and scintillating elements can also give the impression of movement. These visual movement techniques can be implemented to produce the vortex phenomenon, in which the dreamer has the sensation of whirling through a vortex.

Original source: *Lucidity Letter* 4(2), December, 1985, p. 98.