

CROSSFADE ANIMATION with AFTEREFFECTS

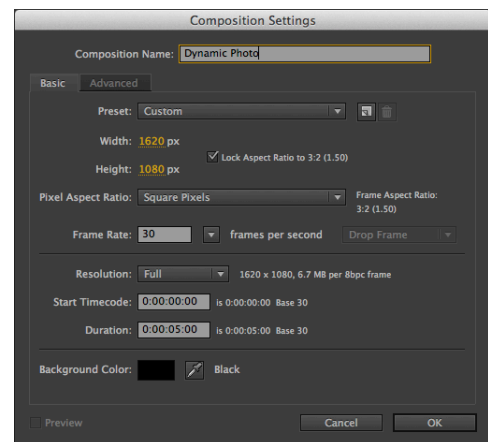
Computer monitors and the Internet can be used as a new presentation medium for photographs. The fluid nature of the medium allows for the removal of photography from its typical static state and allows for dynamic change. The real challenge however, is to make the dynamics non-narrative and minimal to avoid making a video piece. It is possible to create a 'dynamic photographic' piece with AfterEffects from a sequence of picture files created in Photoshop.

CREATE the PICTURE

resize a sequence of pictures in Photoshop
use a size that will fit nicely on screen with sufficient borders
1080p is a reasonable goal (the height of the photos will be 1080 pixels)
[2:3 = 1620 x 1080, 4:3 = 1440 x 1080, 16:9 = 1920 x 1080]
save the pictures for the web using **FILE> SAVE FOR WEB** [CMD] [OPT] [SHFT] S
use jpeg high to retain quality as well as reduce file size
leave progressive turned off

CREATE the AFTER EFFECTS PROJECT

open Adobe AfterEffects
create a new project
with **FILE> NEW> NEW PROJECT** [CMD] [OPT] N
create a new composition
with **COMPOSITION> NEW COMPOSITION** [CMD] N
set the width and height
to match the picture sizes
(variable x 1080)
adjust the frame rate to 30 fps
set the duration to the duration of
any single frame
(*ex: for 5 seconds set duration to 0:00:05:00*)
AE thinks in minutes:seconds:frames (*video speak = 30 fps*)



IMPORT the PICTURE FILES

import the picture files with **FILE> IMPORT FILES** [CMD] I
navigate to the desired source folder
shift-click on all files to be imported
hit [OKAY] to import all files at once

The pictures should appear in the **PROJECT** window when finished.

CREATING the ANIMATION

SET the STAGE

The picture files will appear in the **PROJECT** window on the left. All pictures need to be dragged into the **TIMELINE** window to be animated. The first picture needs to appear twice, once at the beginning and once at the end, to make a smooth loop. Each pictures will appear i on its own separate **LAYER**.

click on the first picture in the series
shift click on the last picture in the series

this will select all picture files
in the **PROJECT** window

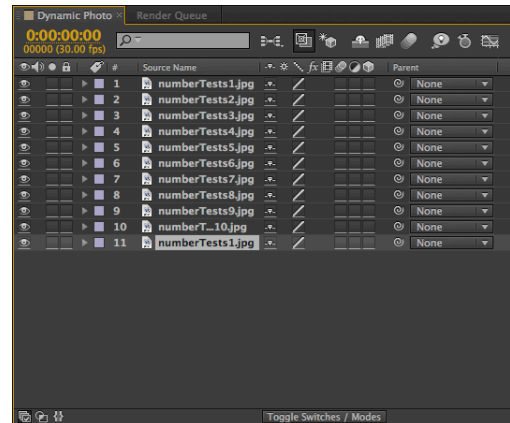
drag all pictures
into the **TIMELINE** window,
all layers will have a duration
equal to the full length
of the composition

select only the first picture of the series
in the **PROJECT** window

drag the first picture
into the **TIMELINE** window *again*

place it at the *bottom* of the stack of layers

all tracks should be the same duration (ex: 5 seconds)



RESET the DURATION

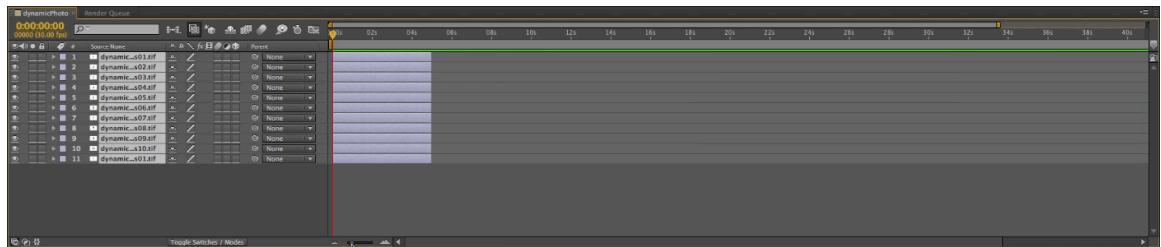
open Composition Settings **COMPOSITION > COMPOSITION SETTINGS** [CMD] K

reset the duration to the duration of the **entire** piece

(ex: *number of pictures * amount of time each picture will appear*)

(ex: 10 pictures * 5 seconds each = 50 seconds 0:00:50:00, or -

(14 pictures * 5 seconds each = 70 seconds 0:01:10:00)



This is a 50 second timeline with a stack of 5 second layers, waiting to be animated.

ANIMATING the SEQUENCE

SETUP the ANIMATION

select all layers with **EDIT> SELECT ALL** [CMD] A
set up the sequence with **ANIMATION> KEYFRAME ASSISTANT> SEQUENCE LAYERS**

The Sequence Layers dialog box will open

click on **overlap**

set duration to half the length of the layer duration

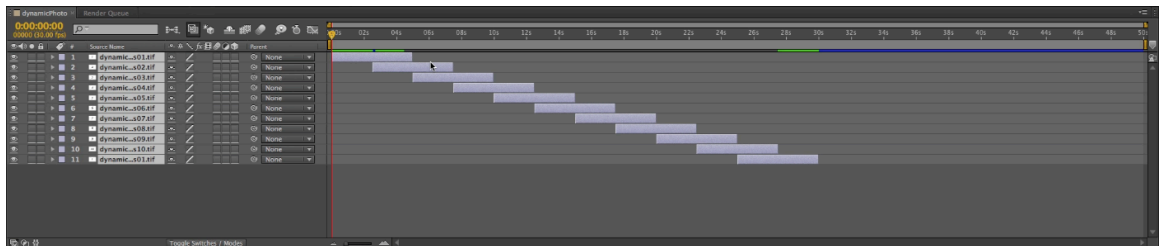
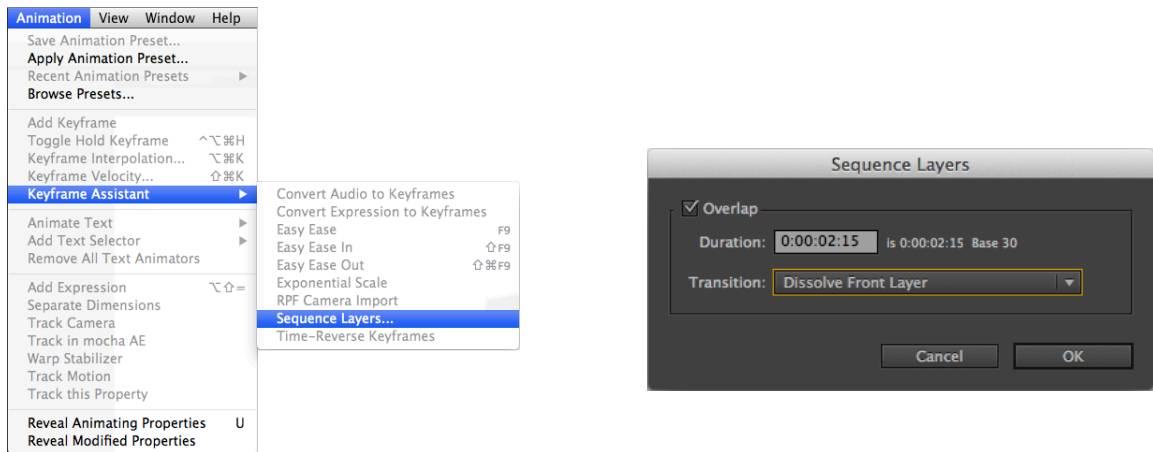
(ex: 5 seconds each picture duration / 2 = 2.5 seconds, 0:00:02:15

AE thinks in minutes:seconds:frames (*video speak = 30 fps*)

set crossfade to front layer only

this will fade the front layer out, revealing the layer behind

that remains at 100% opacity keeping overall density consistent



This is 11 animated layers waiting to have first and last layers trimmed.

TRIM for the LOOP (simple to do, hard to write down...)

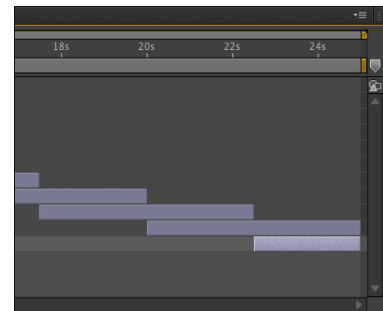
Zoom in to see the timing exactly.

cut the length of the **first** layer to half

drag the start point to half the length

cut the length of the **last** layer to half

drag the end point to half the length



READJUST the TIMING

drag all layers back to time zero

select all layers

with **EDIT> SELECT ALL** [CMD] A

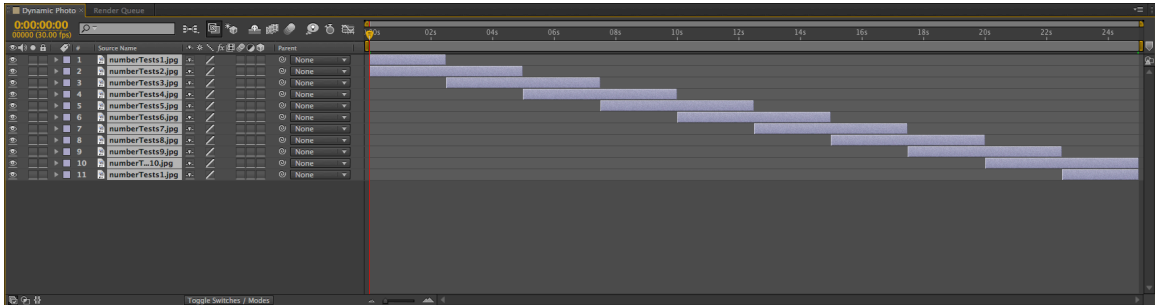
drag the first layer to time zero

all others will follow, maintaining their relative positions

FINISHING the ANIMATION

RESET the COMPOSITION LENGTH

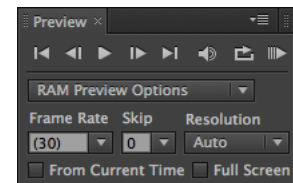
use COMPOSITION > COMPOSITION SETTINGS [CMD] K
reset the duration to the new duration of the **entire** piece



This is 11 layers distributed through time, with the first photo and added to both ends.

TEST the ANIMATION

play the animation by hitting the **PLAY** button
in the **PREVIEW** palette
turn on looping
(next to last button)



EXPORT the ANIMATION

The best way to get the animation onto the web is with the mp4 format. The codec is H.264. This generates a smaller file size than a QuickTime movie, about 1/10th the size.

export the file with **FILE > EXPORT > ADD TO RENDER QUEUE**
a **SAVE AS** dialog box will open

render settings = best settings

output module = H.264

(click on the small triangle)

clicking on the orange text

also opens a window where

H.264 can also be set

log = errors only

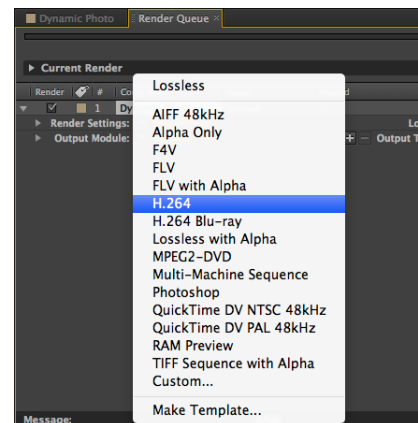
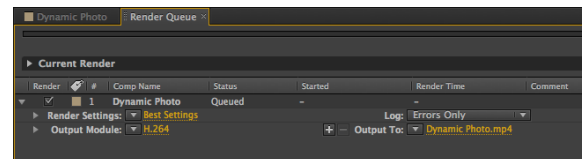
output to = comp name (should already be set)

click on the orange text to open

a navigation window

select the desired destination folder

click [**RENDER**] in the far right-hand corner
of the render window



PLAY the FINISHED DYNAMIC PHOTOGRAPH

Navigate to the folder containing the final file

[**DOUBLE-CLICK**] the file

QuickTime will open the file

hit **VIEW > LOOP**

hit **VIEW > FULL FRAME**

Make sure the file lops cleanly.

[**CMD**] [**OPT**] L

[**CMD**] [**CTRL**] F