IMPOSSIBLE PHOTOS

For Adobe® Photoshop® CC, CS6, CS5, CS4

Adobe® Photoshop Elements 2015 or newer


User Guide

CONTENTS

1. The basics

1.1. About the effects

The "Impossible Photos" actions for Adobe® Photoshop® and Adobe® Photoshop® Elements create optical illusions of your photos, using a variety of the so-called "impossible objects" (triangle, square, heart, ellipse, and pentagon shapes).

You can read more on the impossible objects here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impossible_object

1.2. How the actions are organized

- The first 8 actions create impossible frames of various shapes (hearts, ellipses, squares, rectangles, pentagons) and give you the option to create unique "Out Of Bounds" effects!

- The "TRIANGLE OVERLAY" actions will display your photos through impossible triangle overlays.

- The "TRIANGLE OF CUBES" actions create an impossible triangle made up of 9 cubes. The first action uses the same photo on all cube facets. The second action uses 3 different photos for each cube. The third action lets you place custom photos on all facets.
  There is also a fourth action called "Update cubes reflections". You should run this whenever you change any of the photos on the triangle's 4 bottom cubes.

- The four "IMPOSSIBLE STEPS" actions create impossible staircases made up from cubes that show the same or different photos on their facets.
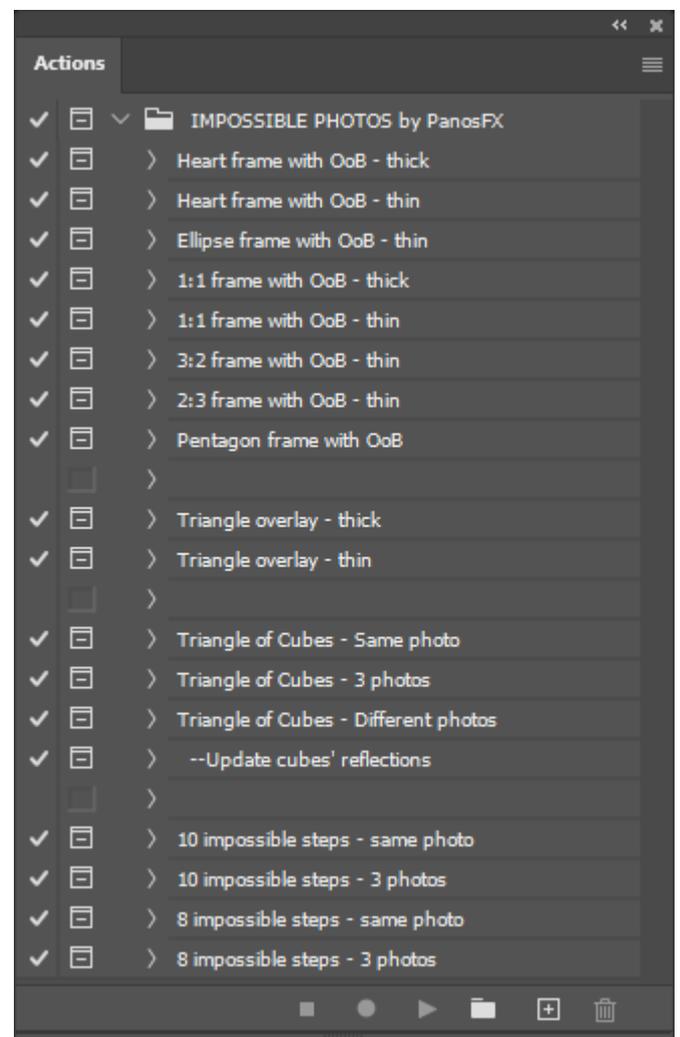
1.3. Installing the actions

To find how to install actions in Photoshop or in Photoshop Elements, please refer to this article:

https://www.panosfx.com/installation-troubleshooting

2. The impossible frames.

2.1 Description

These actions let you add one of these impossible frames to your photos:

- An impossible heart with a thick or a thin frame.
- An impossible ellipse with a thin frame.
- An impossible square with a thick frame.
- An impossible rectangle (3:2 or 2:3 ratio) or an impossible square, with a thin frame.
- An impossible pentagon.

When the execution of the action is completed, you'll get 3 different renditions (documents) of the original photo in your work area. The section 2.3 below shows you how to use each one of these 3 documents:
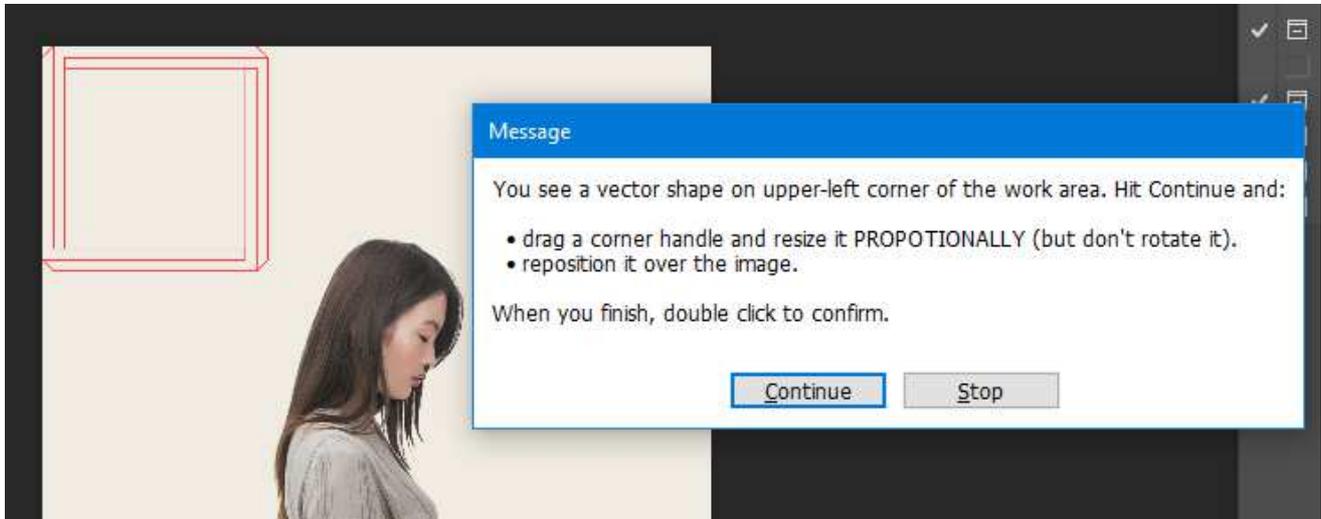

Out of Bounds   Sketched background   Washed out background

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2.2 Creating the impossible frame

Load a photo, choose one of the 8 framing actions and hit the Play button at the bottom of the actions panel.

A vector shape of the impossible frame will appear on the upper left corner of your photo:

Hit Continue.

Drag a corner handle to resize the shape**.** Use your mouse to reposition the shape. This way you define which image pixels will be included inside the impossible frame.

When you finish, double click on the shape to confirm your changes and continue the execution of the action.

The action will give you the option to modify to **frame color**. Move the Hue and Saturation sliders to your taste and hit OK. You can go back and amend your settings by double clicking the "Frame color" layer after the action execution is completed.

In a few seconds the action will create 3 different renditions of the original photo. Each rendition is a different Photoshop document, open in your work area.

The following section shows you how to work with each one of these documents.

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2.3 Working with the three different documents

2.3.1 The Out of Bounds rendition

In the first document, the layers are arranged in a special way that lets you create unique Out of Bounds (also known as "OoB" or "Pop-out") effects.

TIP: In order to create an OoB, you must use a suitable photo, one in which you can easily extract part of the subject from its background.

When the action execution is completed, everything is ready for you to begin creating the OoB: the brush tool is activated, the mask of the "Frame layers" layer is selected and the foreground color is set to black.

Simply paint over the frame to hide its pixels.

For more complex OoBs, you need to use the extraction tools to select those pixels that will pop out from the frame.

I have created a detailed video tutorial that shows you how to create an OoB effect from this image. You can watch it here:
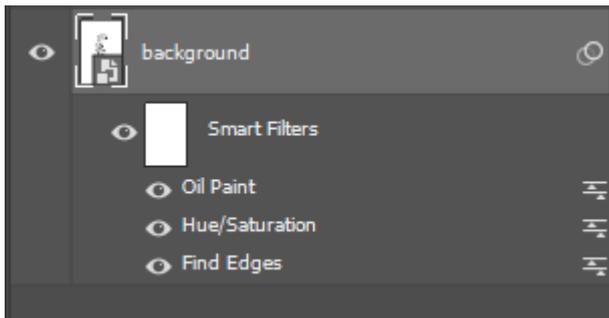
www.panosfx.com/creative-ideas/impossible-oob

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2.3.2 The 'sketched background' version:

In the second document, the pixels outside the frame look like a black and white sketch.

Modifying the sketched part in Photoshop:

To change the filter settings in Photoshop, go to the Layers panel and double click each one of the smart filters of the "background" layer:

To delete the default sketch effect and add your custom filters to the pixels outside the frame:

Right-click on "Smart Filters" and then select "Clear Smart Filters" from the pop-up menu. Finally apply your custom filters to the "background" layer.

Modifying the sketched part in Photoshop Elements:

To delete the default sketch effect and add your custom filters to the pixels outside the frame:

Go to the Layers panel and delete the "Sketched background" layer. Then duplicate the "background" layer (press Control+J or command+J). Finally apply your custom filters to the duplicated layer.

2.3.2 The 'washed grayscale' version:

In the third document, the pixels outside the frame are grayed out.

You can double click the adjustment layers above the "background" layer, to modify the intensity of the effect.

2.3.3 The Layer panel:

When the action completes, the layers that make up the frame are grouped in the "Frame layers" group.

You can expand it to view its contents. Notice that the opacity of the "Frame background" layer contained within the group, is set to 70%. You can change this to your preference.

The "Frame color" adjustment layer lets you change the color of the impossible frame. Double click its thumbnail and move the sliders to your liking.

The "Frame photo" layer contains the photo inside the frame. You can try to be more creative by applying certain filters to this photo.

Finally, the pixels outside the frame are contained in the "background" layer. You can try to duplicate this layer and apply certain custom filters to it.
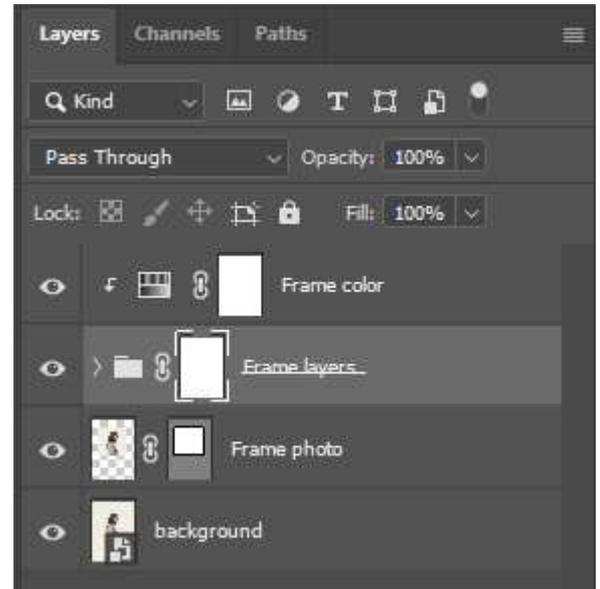
3. The 'Triangle Overlay' actions

The two "Triangle Overlay" actions create an optical illusion of your photos, by displaying them inside an impossible triangle. The first action creates a thicker triangle, allowing you to display more pixels of the original photo. The second action creates a triangle with thinner sides:

Impossible Triangle
Overlay - Thicker shape

Impossible Triangle
Overlay - Thinner shape

The actions work similarly with the 3 framing actions described in the previous section: you need to open a photo **prior to running** these actions. The action will begin by placing a vector shape on the upper left corner of your photo. This shape lets you define which pixels will be included to the impossible triangle.

Resize the shape **proportionally**. Use your mouse to reposition the shape.

When you finish, double click on the shape to confirm and move on. The action will create the impossible triangle in a few seconds.

The action will create 3 different renditions of the original photos, as was discussed in section 2.3 above.

When the action execution is completed, you can go to the layers panel and change the opacity of the various "Shade" and "Glow" layers, to your preference.

There are 9 layers grouped under the "Glow & Shade layers" group. When the action finishes the "Shade top" layer is selected.

The default opacity of these 9 layers has been set to 50%.
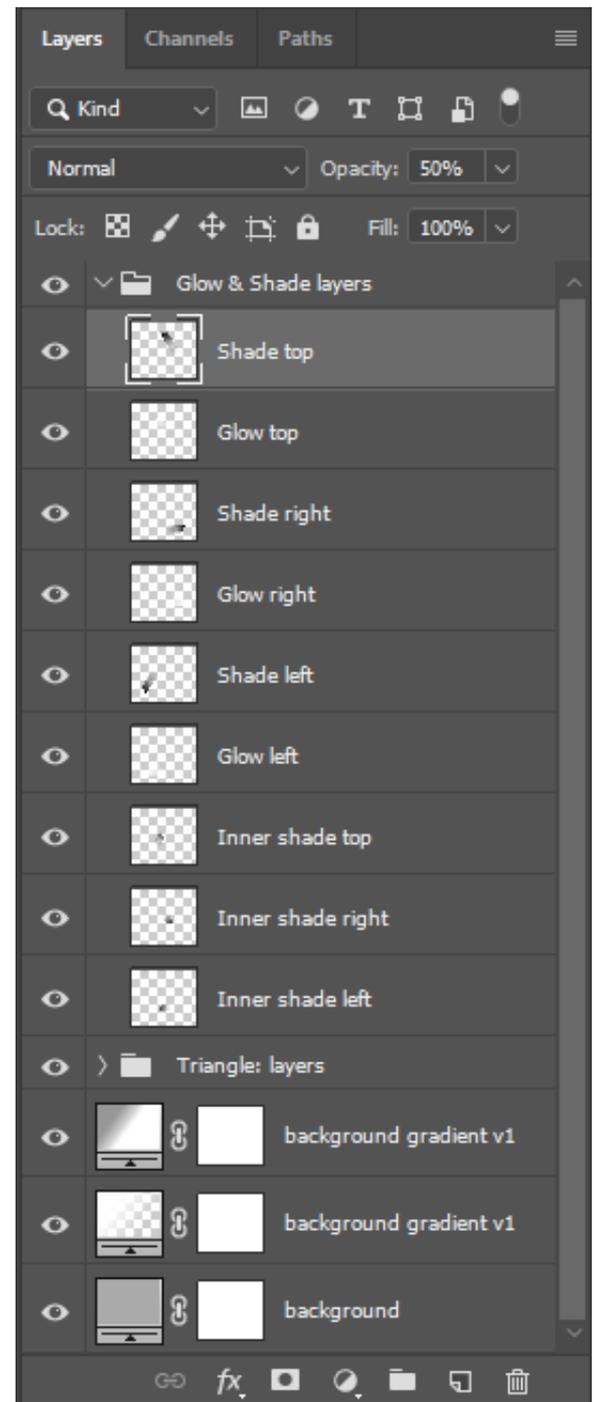
4. The "Triangle of Cubes" actions

The "TRIANGLE OF CUBES" actions create an impossible triangle made up of 9 cubes.

- The first action uses the same photo on all cube facets.
- The second action uses a different photo on each one of the 3 visible cube facets.
- The third action lets you place your custom photos on each visible cube facet (36 facets in total).

Impossible Triangle
9 photo cubes - 3 different photos

The actions begin with prompting you to enter the preferred size for the cube facet (default: 400x400 pixels):


The width of the final, "impossible" triangle will be 5 times the width you enter at this step, while its height will be 5.7 times bigger. For example, if you set the size of the cube facet to 300 x 300 pixels, the size of the final triangle will be (roughly) 1500 x 1700 pixels. If you plan to show off your optical illusions on the web, you don't have to set the cube facet size too high.
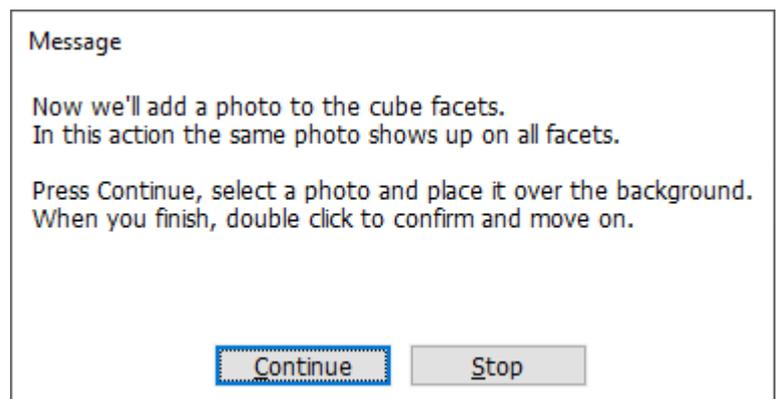
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Press Continue. The image size window shows up:
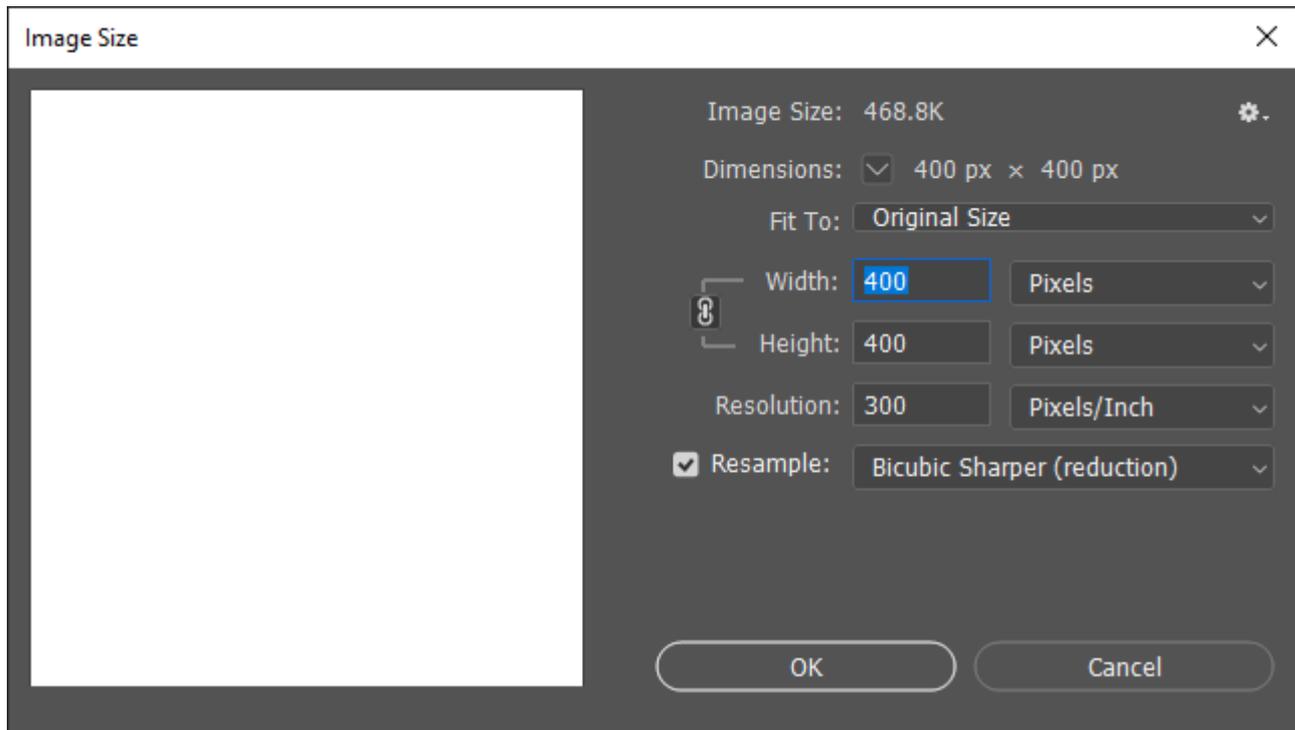
Change the image width (or its height) and hit **OK** to move on.

IMPORTANT: Make sure you maintain the image size proportions: **do not** uncheck the little chain icon on the left of the Width / Height fields.

In the next step the action asks you to place your photo(s) on the cube facets.

Hit **Continue** and then load a photo file. Place it over the square background.

To resize the photo **proportionally** while placing it over the background, hold down the **Alt** key (PC) or the **option** key (Mac) and drag a corner inside / outside.

When you finish, double click to confirm and move on. The action will update the photo on the facets on all 9 cubes, as well as the facet reflections.

4.1. Replacing the photos on the cube facets (Photoshop only)

When the action execution is finished, you can go back and **replace one or all facet photos**.

It's easy: press **V** to select the Move tool; right click on a cube face and select the layer with capital letters:
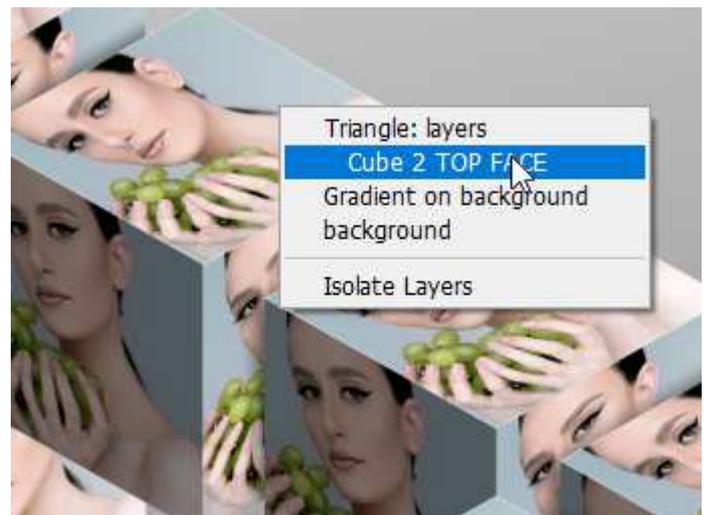
The respective cube face layer is automatically selected in the layers panel. It's a smart layer; hence its contents are fully editable. Double click its thumbnail to open it. Delete the layer that contains the old photo. Select the menu command **File > Place (embedded)** and place a new photo. Press **Ctrl+S** (Mac: **cmd+S**) to save your changes and close the document. The impossible triangle will be updated with your new photo.

4.2. Updating the reflections (Photoshop only)

If you replace any of the photos on the left and/or the right cube facets, don't forget to run the " --Update cubes' reflections" action. This action will update the reflections with the new photos.

5. The "Impossible Steps" actions

Similarly to the "Triangle of Cubes", these actions create an impossible object made up from different cubes. The object in this case is an impossible staircase.
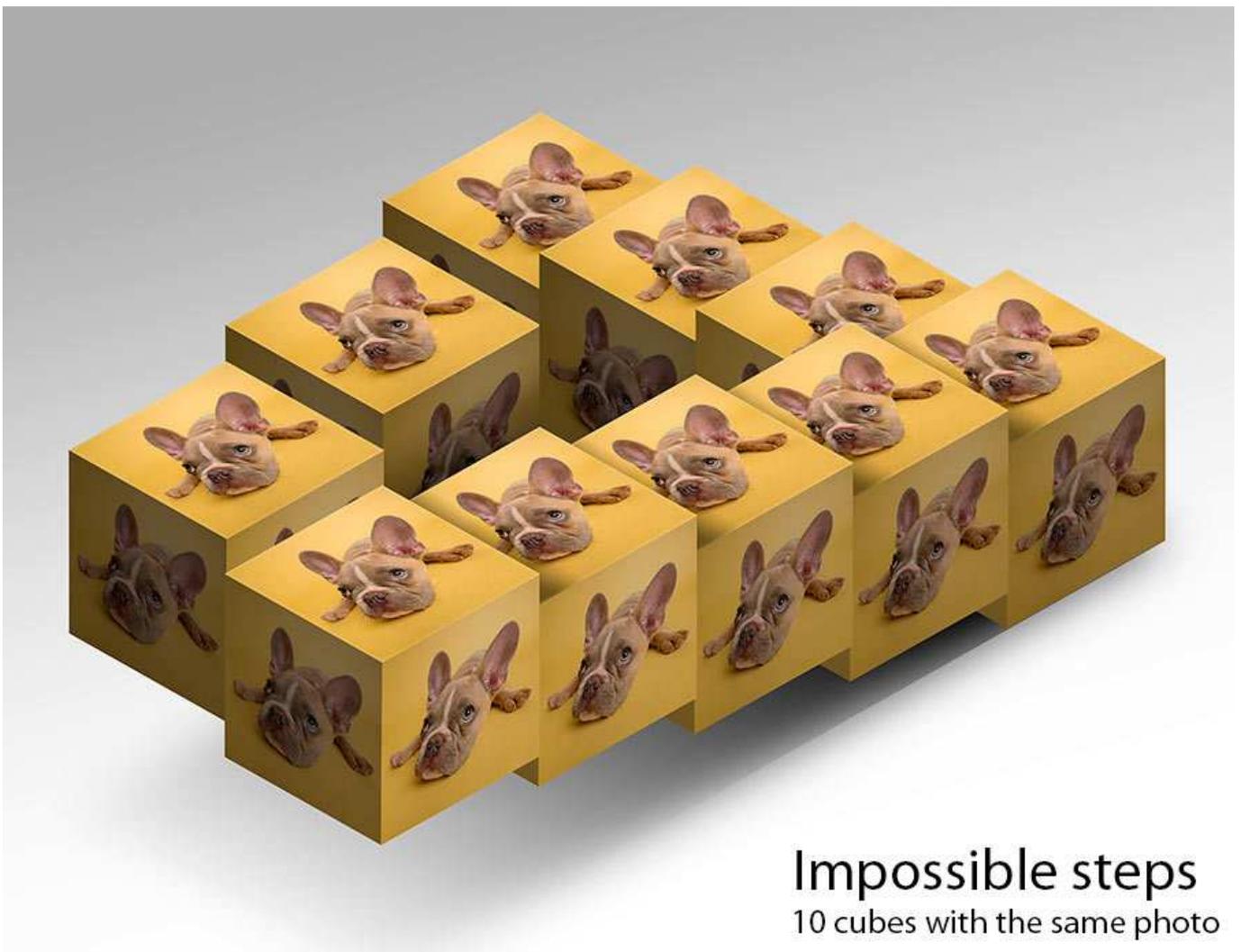
Impossible steps
10 cubes with the same photo

There are 4 different effects:

- Impossible steps with 8 cubes – same photo on each facet.
- Impossible steps with 8 cubes – different photos on the facets.
- Impossible steps with 10 cubes – same photo on each facet.
- Impossible steps with 10 cubes – different photos on the facets.

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6. Credits:

The photos used in this guide are available at unsplash.com. The links to the images are as follows:

Photo by Mihai Stefan

Photo by Mihai Stefan

Photo by Karim Manjra

Photo by Mihai Stefan

Photo by Icons8 Team

Photo by Karsten Winegeart