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# SETTING STILLS IN MOTION

Simple yet powerful – cinemagraphs are conquering the internet and the advertising industry



**Armand Dijcks**  
Dutch photographer  
and cinematographer  
[armanddijcks.com](http://armanddijcks.com)

I'm a cinematographer and photographer working with moving as well as still images and, of course, cinemagraphs, a hybrid of the two, where only one part of the image moves in an infinite loop. I often combine techniques from the worlds of still

and motion photography, to achieve innovative and unusual results.

Last year, programmes to make cinemagraphs became available and social media sites started to auto-play cinemagraphs in endless loops, so I started experimenting and working with them.

You can now see them anywhere from Facebook and Instagram to digital magazines and outdoor ad displays. They capture your attention, but in a more subtle and stylish way than video – a good cinemagraph makes you do a double take and wonder what you're actually looking at.

## 1. Armand used images from the International Space Station to create this cinemagraph.

Nikon D3S, AF-S NIKKOR 24mm f/1.4G ED, ISO 200, 1/250s @f/8

## 2. To see the finished cinemagraph, download the Nikon Pro app or visit Armand's website.

Nikon D4, AF Nikkor 85mm f/1.4D IF, ISO 160, 1/1000s @f/8

## TOP TIPS

### Shooting for cinemagraphs

Think of a cinemagraph as a still image, but with a moving element. So compose your shot like a still image, but with some interesting motion that can be made into a loop and record a few seconds of video. Don't forget to use a tripod.

### Software

Armand uses motion graphics software Adobe After Effects to animate sections, Final Cut Pro X for slowing down the space-time lapses as well as Cinemagraph Pro. This app has built-in tools for creating and tweaking loops. You can also choose to make a 'bounce', where the cinemagraph moves back and forth between two points.

### File format

MP4 files are best for online use, since they are small and accepted by all social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, where they will auto-play and auto-loop (this is not built into the file format, it's something that social media sites

do). For other websites and applications, you sometimes need to set the image to 'repeat indefinitely'. For this you can either use one individual loop, which will load quicker, or make a longer version with various repeats of the loop, which sometimes plays more smoothly.

### Hardware

Nikon cameras allow you to capture stills and moving images in high quality. Reliability is important – these two cinemagraphs were captured in extreme environments, not easily repeated.



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### SPACE CINEMAGRAPH

I had access to RAW time-lapse images, shot by astronauts on the International Space Station, using top-of-the-line Nikon equipment. I compiled them into very high-resolution time-lapse films and slowed those down to make them look like what astronauts experience from space, instead of the typical rushed look of time-lapse films. The next step was to create seamless loops.

Although technically it's easy to create a looping cinemagraph, it can be challenging to make it look convincing. With some of the space sequences, there were recognisable features on Earth, making it obvious that you were watching a loop, instead of the Earth rotating. I had to loop a different segment of the time lapse and use a long and smooth transition between beginning and end of the loop.

### WAVE CINEMAGRAPH

I made each cinemagraph from one single still image by Ray Collins, which I animated in Adobe After Effects and turned into a loop.

I use the 'Puppet Warp' feature, which lets you animate an image by only distorting certain parts of it. I was amazed at how I could make them look like high-res, super slow-motion video – the results look convincing, as long as you animate the wave how it would move in real life. To do this, After Effects overlays a mesh onto the image, in which you place a number of virtual pins, which you can move and the software interpolates the movement of every pixel in the image based on that information.

I then used Flixi Cinemagraph Pro to create a seamless loop and mask out the areas in the image that should remain static. ■



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