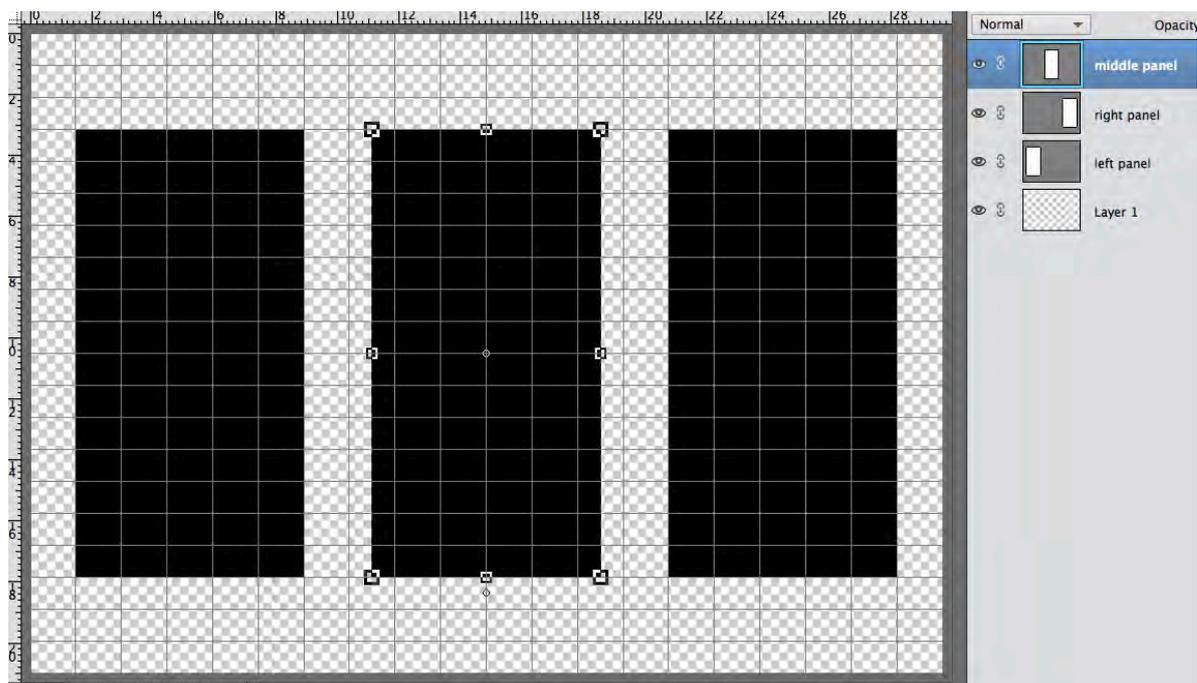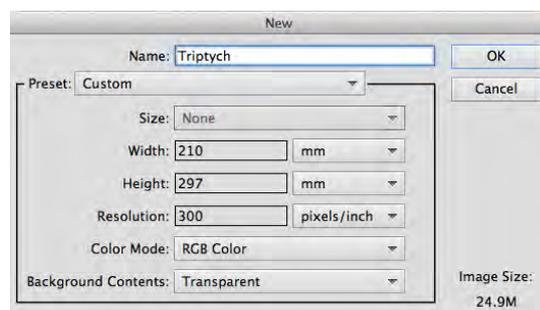# BASIC TRIPTYCH TECHNIQUES

Instructions are for using Elements 12 – Photoshop CS instructions will be slightly different and note that there are other ways to do this. This particular method is used as it can be easily modified to produce a range of templates.
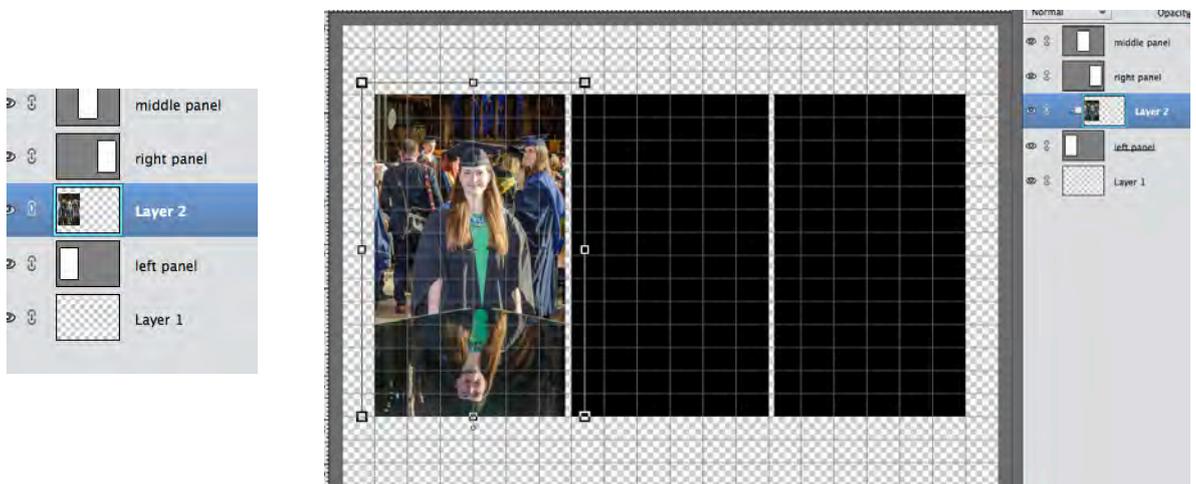
Note if using a mac, for shortcuts where Cntrl is used, use the command key, where alt is used, the option key.
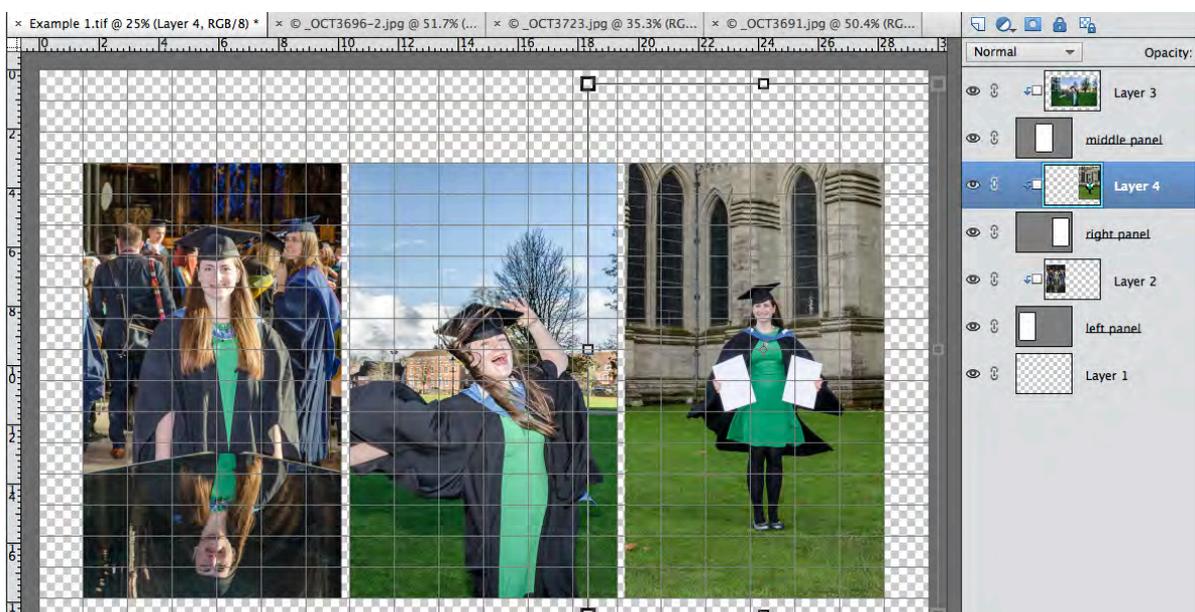
3 Separate Images

1.   Preparation - decide on the theme and place the image or images into a folder – it helps to resize them to the approximate shapes you envisage for the triptych and to locate them easily later.

2.   Select File / New > Blank File and enter settings for your paper size – for this exercise we will use International paper / A4, resolution: 300, Color Mode: RGB Color; Background: transparent.

3.   Change the blank page from portrait to landscape by selecting the rotate symbol or Image / rotate.

4.   Set foreground and background colours to default (press D key).

5.   Turn on the grid – View / Grid and then duplicate the layer (Ctr-J) and name the layer 'left panel'. Adjust the Grid to your personal preferences, by selecting Edit / Preferences > Guides & Grid (for mac: Photoshop elements editor / preferences > guides & grid). For this exercise gridline every 5% subdivision 1 was selected.

6.   Choose the rectangle tool (U) and draw a rectangle using the grid as a guide. Then copy the layer (Cntr-J). Click on the rectangle and drag the shape to the right. Rename this layer 'right panel'. This gives you two equal sized rectangles. Again duplicate the layer , move the shape to the middle and rename it 'middle layer' don't worry if the gaps aren't even between the shapes.

7.   Alternatively you can create 3 blank layers and manually draw a rectangle on each one using the rectangle tool and grid as a guide.

8.   You should now have three layers, left, right and middle with one black rectangle in each.

9. The gaps around the middle rectangle are too wide so select it then select Image / Transform Shape > Free Transform (or Ctl T). Adjust the width to close the gaps. Note that each rectangle can be reshaped this way.

10. Now save this file. Later on you will reopen this file, merge the 3 layers and save it as Triptych Flat Template for producing a triptych using a single image but for now we will use 3 images.

11. Now save the file again under another name (in this case example 1) which you will use for the remainder of the exercise and final print.

12. Ensuring that the left panel layer is selected, open your folder containing the images, select one and drag over to elements. This places it into Elements under another image tab. Select this image using Cntr A, then Cntr C to copy it . Select 'example 1' image file and paste Cntrl V.

13. The image should now be in a new layer just above the left panel (named Layer 2) and on the work screen may need moving to the left. On the Layers panel, hover the mouse on the line between this image and the left panel layer, press alt and the curser changes to overlapping circles. Left click to create a clipping mask and the image will only show through the area defined by your shaped rectangle as shown below:

14. You may reshape (Cntr T) the image as required but this can be adjusted later.

15. Follow processes 12 and 13 for the middle and then the right panel layers - your workspace should now look like this:

16. As each shape layer is separate and not combined into one layer you can easily reshape these to better match the images.

17. Select the left panel (not the image!) and reshape (Ctrl T) to narrow it. Do the same with the right panel to the same amount using the grid as a guide. Don't alter the images just yet. Now select the middle panel and adjust its shape to widen it (Cntl T).

18. Select each image in turn and adjust as required.

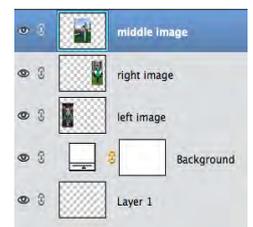19. Now select Layer 1 and insert a new layer - Layer / New > Layer.

20. Click on the foreground colour swatch and select your background colour (instead an image can be used (hit X to swap foreground / background swatch colours, D to switch to default). Select Layer / New Fill Layer > Solid Color, name it background.
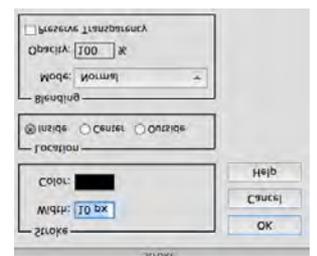
21. Turn off the grid (View / Grid) and save your work!

22. It makes sense to rename the image layers before moving on. Rename your image layers to whatever is appropriate – layer 2 'left image', layer 4 'right image', layer 3 'middle image' would be appropriate in this example (right click Rename Layer). You could of course have re-named the layers after importing the images.

23. If you want to add a border (stroke) to each frame then each image will need to be merged with its clipped panel. Select left panel and image above then right click 'merge layers'. Do the same with the middle panel and then the right panel. Your workflow should look something like the image on the right:

24. Hit X to reset the swatch then select left image layer then Edit / Stroke (outline) selection. Select 10px for a bold outline ensuring that colour is black (or change to whatever colour you require). Do this for middle and right images.

25. You should now have a Triptych comprised of 3 images with a 10px border.

Triptych with one image

26.   Reopen file Triptych (you should have saved as instructed in para 10).

27.   Select left, right & middle panel layers. Right click and select Merge Layers. Rename this layer triptych panel. Now save your work as Triptych Flat Template (or any other name).

28.   Ensuring that triptych panel layer is selected, open your folder containing the images, select one and drag over to elements. This places it into Elements under another image tab. Select this image using Cntr A, then Cntr C to copy it . Select your Tryptich Flat Template image file and paste Cntrl V.

29.   The image should now be in a new layer just above the triptych panel layer. Hover the mouse on the line between this image and the triptych panel layer, press alt and the curser changes to overlapping circles. Left click to create a clipping mask and the image will only show through the area defined by your shaped rectangles.

30.   Select the triptych panel layer (not the image!) and reshape (Ctrl T) to adjust as required.

31.   Now select Layer 1 and insert a new layer - Layer / New > Layer.

32.   Click on the foreground colour swatch and select your background colour (instead another image can be used (hit X to swap foreground / background swatch colours, D to switch to default). Select Layer / New Fill Layer > Solid Color, name it background.

33.   Turn off the grid (View / Grid) and save your work under another name.