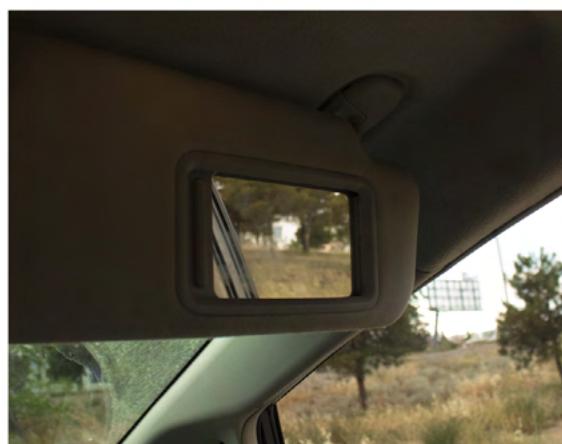
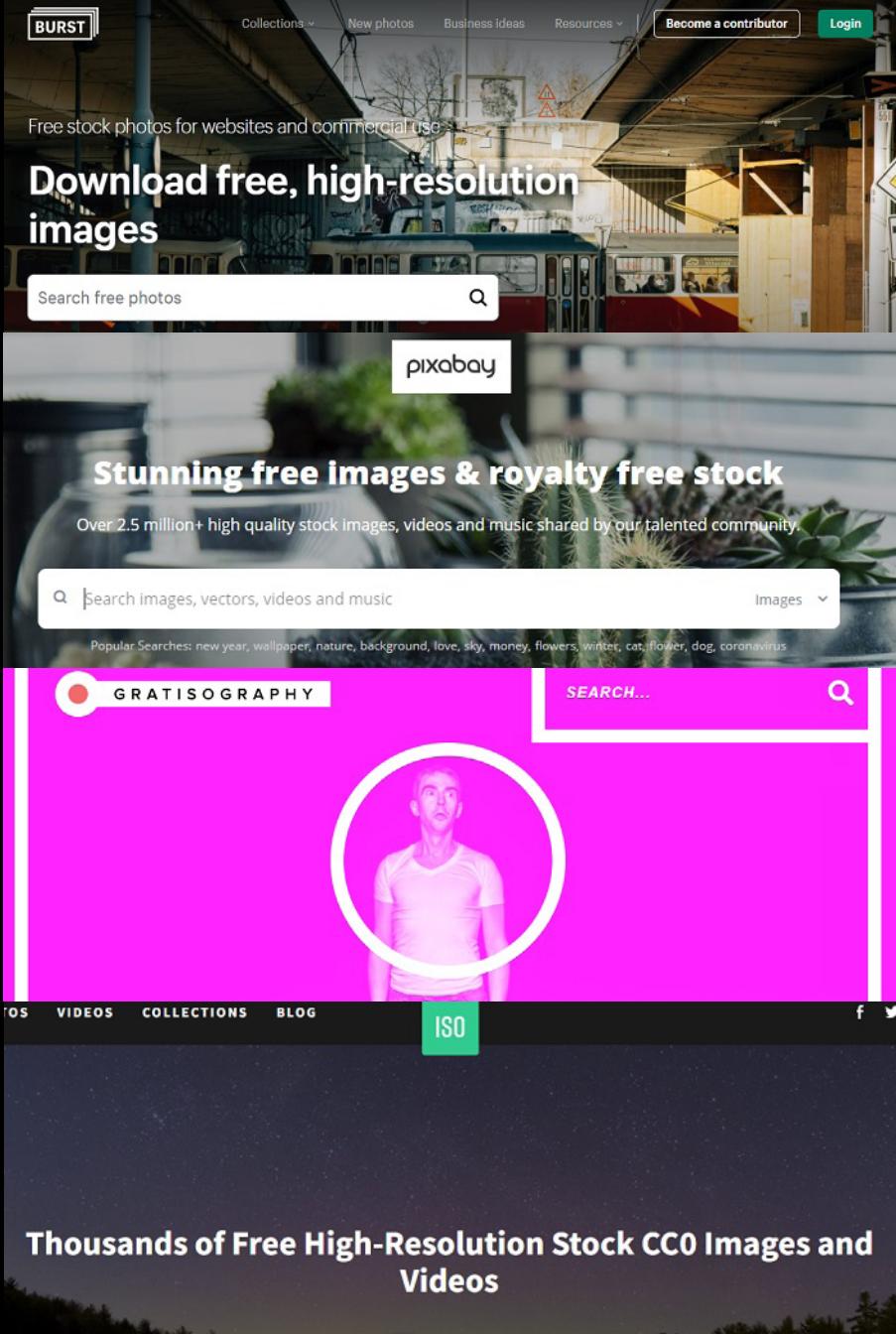


ANNA MAGHRADZE

STOCK PHOTO STARTER KIT



BONUS CHAPTER 1. STOCK PHOTO STARTER KIT



INTRODUCTION

Stock websites are an excellent source of materials for the type of art I create. Ideas often appear in my mind—sometimes fully formed. When that happens, I have a strong idea of the images I need to for digital collage. The problem is finding specific images. I can't always create my own with my camera because I might not have the right environment or landscape. If I want a snow scene, I can't manipulate the weather and make it snow on my command! I need a resource where I can find the pictures I need.

Thankfully, there are plenty of stock image websites we can use for source material. There are some paid options with extensive libraries, but there are some excellent free websites too. The free options may not have the same size libraries as the paid sites, but they have more than enough images to get started.

My personal favorite is [Unsplash](#). It has a superb selection of photos from some talented photographers. There's a broad variety, so I can nearly always find what I'm looking for. And if I can't find what I need on one site, I can always look at another.

Stock image websites are also a great source of inspiration. If I'm struggling to solidify an idea in my head, or if I have no ideas at all, I browse the images looking for something to spark my imagination. Often, I'll come across a picture that sparks my imagination and sets my mind ablaze with creative ideas.

All the stock sites have fabulous photography work by some excellent artists. So, when you're using material to create digital collages, you need to respect the other artists. Don't pass off their work as your own, and you need to make sure you're changing the work enough to make it your own. You also need to be careful not to include brand names, as this can cause legal problems. Plus, you shouldn't include any recognizable faces unless you have the person's permission.

With that in mind, let's look at some stock websites!

FREE STOCK WEBSITES

1. UNSPLASH

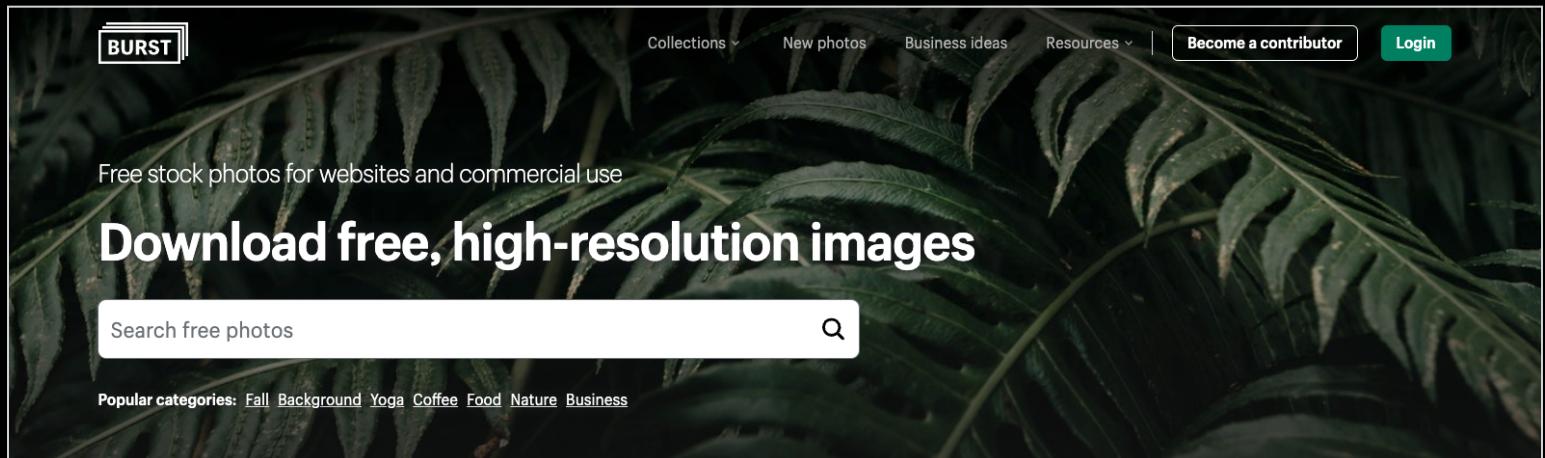
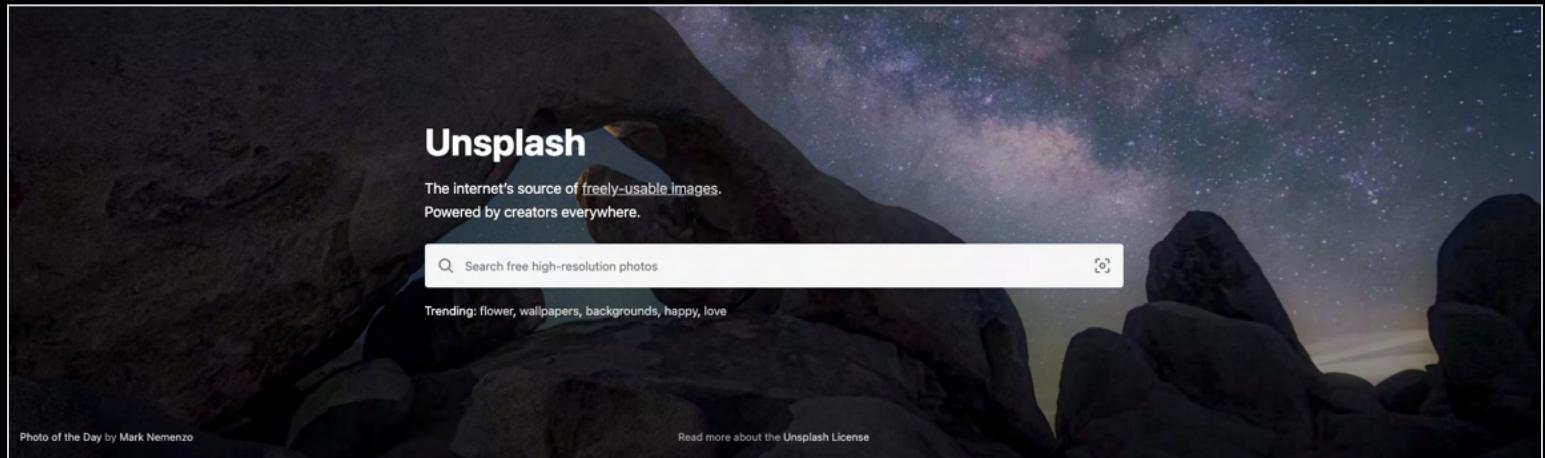
Of all the stock image websites available, Unsplash is one my favorites. The entire library is free to use, which is great when you're first getting started with digital collage. The Unsplash library is massive, with a huge selection of images in nearly any category you can think of. I come to Unsplash when I know the image I want, and when I'm looking for inspiration.

It's not just the size of the library that excites me. It's the quality of the images available to use. Some stock websites have a large library, but their images look like stock images. With Unsplash, all the photos have their own artistic merit. All contributing artists have a profile so you can find their websites and social media for further inspiration.

2. BURST

Burst doesn't have the biggest library of stock images online, but they have a quality over quantity approach. The quality of the photography they provide is excellent, and much of it has an editorial style. It's not just generic images of the major categories. The contributing artists are talented, and they provide unique and interesting photos. All artists are credited, and they make it easy to find their personal sites and social media pages.

I don't always find what I need on Burst, but I always feel inspired when I look at their collection. I'll go to the site with one idea in mind and leave with three more! Burst is a great place to visit if you're not quite sure what you need. The site is well organized so you can browse for hours, letting your imagination lead you through the site.



3. GRATISOGRAPHY

Gratisography is a stock website like no other. They pride themselves on their unique catalogue of quirky and whimsical photographs. This site provides something different, with a colorful outlook and a desire to make you smile. Their photos are fun and full of color, and the photographers are excellent artists.

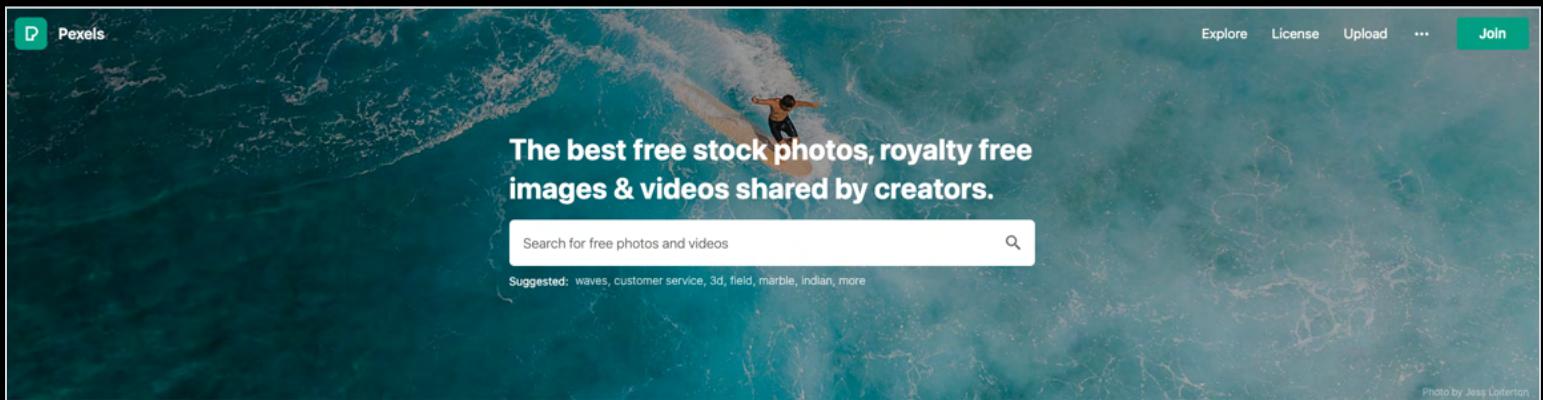
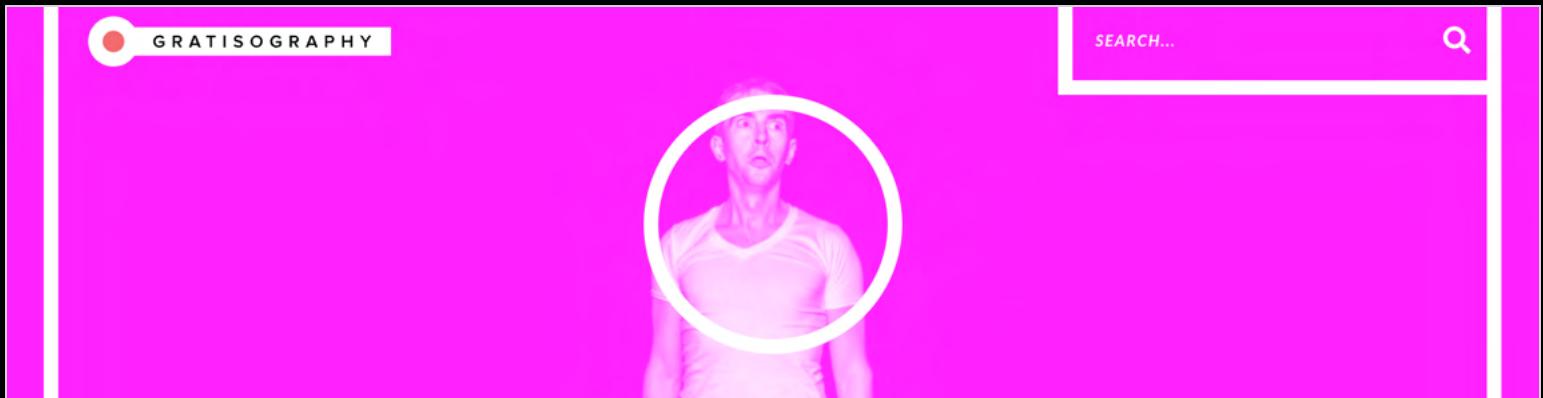
However, when it comes to sourcing images for digital collages, I don't always find what I need on Gratisography. Their off-the-wall mentality means they don't always have the basic images I need for the collages I want to create. But when you do need something a bit different, or if you just want to smile, Gratisography is the place to go.

■ **NOTE:** They primarily provide images in landscape (horizontal) format.

4. PEXELS

Pexels has one of the best libraries of any stock image website. Their collection is huge, with images in nearly any category you can think of. But the quality of the photos they provide is the most impressive aspect of their site. Every avenue you go down will be filled with amazing photography work by some excellent artists.

Pexels is one of the best resources for digital collage artists. I often find exactly what I need with very little browsing. The photos are well organized, with categories and keyword searches so you can find the right image in no time. The work is so wonderful that I often find myself browsing long after I've found the image I wanted. The artist profiles are great, so you can find new artists to follow. And there are Pexels photography challenges, which makes it feel like an active community of artists.



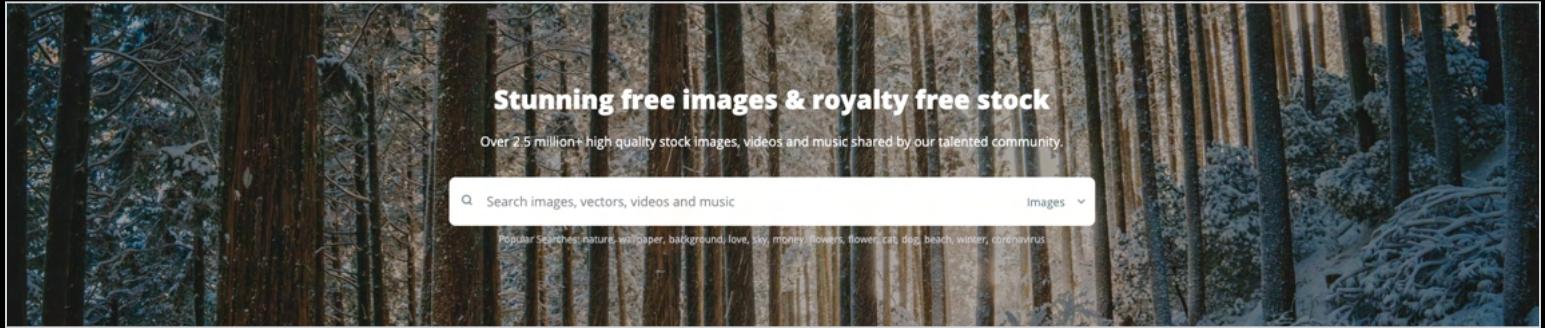
5. PIXABAY

Pixabay is a great source for photos and illustrations. I don't often need illustrations for the art I create, but these might be useful for different styles of digital collages. Their photography library is rich with fantastic options. Their landscape and natural scenery are some of the best you can find in any media library.

Pixabay is a great resource if you're a beginner with photography. All photos are credited to the creators, so you can follow your favorites. But it also gives you the photography details of the photo. It will tell you the camera used and the exposure settings for each shot. This is helpful if you want to create your own images for collage but you're lacking confidence in photography.

6. STOCKSNAP

Stocksnap has a large and well-organized library of photographs you can choose from. Browsing is easy and enjoyable, but this is one of the stock sites I use less often. They have a large selection of images, but they fit the style of classic stock photography. The images are often overly posed and unnatural, with subjects that look like they're acting. But despite this stock image feel, there are excellent images to be found.



The main content area has a dark, atmospheric background featuring a glowing, ethereal plant or vine structure. At the top left is the StockSnap.io logo. The top navigation bar includes links for "CATEGORIES", "ALL PHOTOS", "TRENDING", and a three-dot menu. On the far right are "LOG IN", "JOIN US!", and a "SUBMIT PHOTOS" button. The central focus is a large, bold heading "Beautiful Free Stock Photos" with a subtext line "New CC0 images added daily, free from copyright restrictions." Below this is a search bar with a placeholder "Search free photos..." and a magnifying glass icon. At the bottom, a "Trending" section lists various topics: people, technology, winter, food, business, fitness, happy, love.

7. ISO REPUBLIC

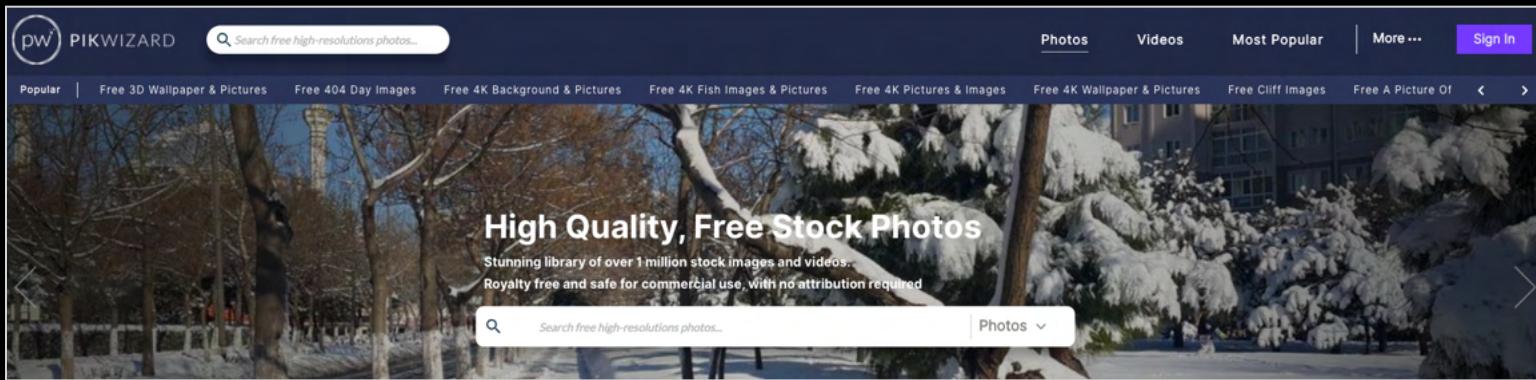
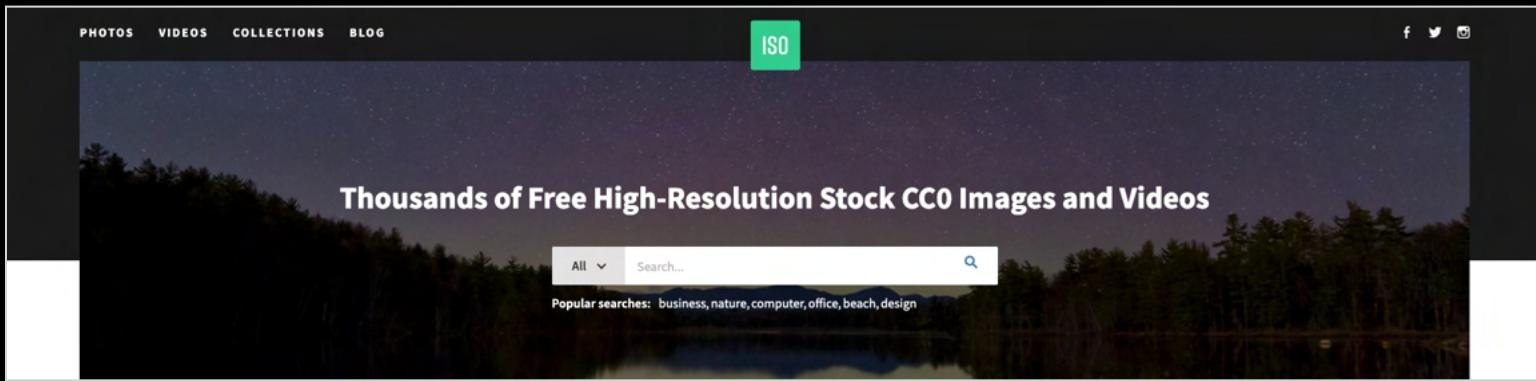
ISO Republic doesn't have the biggest library of images, but the standard of photography is high throughout their collection. The selection is more limited than other sites, but I'll often find they have the perfect picture. I use a lot of landscape and nature scenes, and these happen to be the strongest categories ISO Republic have. Their library is well organized into categories. You can find what you need without having to scroll through thousands of images.

8. PIKWIZARD

PikWizard has an extensive collection of photos you can choose from. But their images don't have the same artistic flair as those from Unsplash or Gratisography. Much of their catalogue is filled with posed images in set-up situations made for corporate or promotional use. Despite that, some of their images have a natural and spontaneous feel. Many scenes are clearly posed, but they're not cheesy or unnatural.

The problem with PikWizard is that there is no emphasis on the artist. The photos are more standardized and less artistic, but it would still be nice to see a profile for the photographer.

Their categories are predictable and generic. PikWizard isn't the site to browse for inspiration. But if you're looking for a specific type of image, it is worth a look. It's a good free resource when you know what you want.



9. NEGATIVE SPACE

Negative Space is one of the newer stock image websites, which means it doesn't have the biggest library of photos. You won't always find what you need on Negative Space, but their collection is interesting. You'll find unique and unexpected images, which can be great for digital collages. But it's hit and miss. Sometimes, I'll leave Negative Space empty handed, and other times I'll find the perfect image.

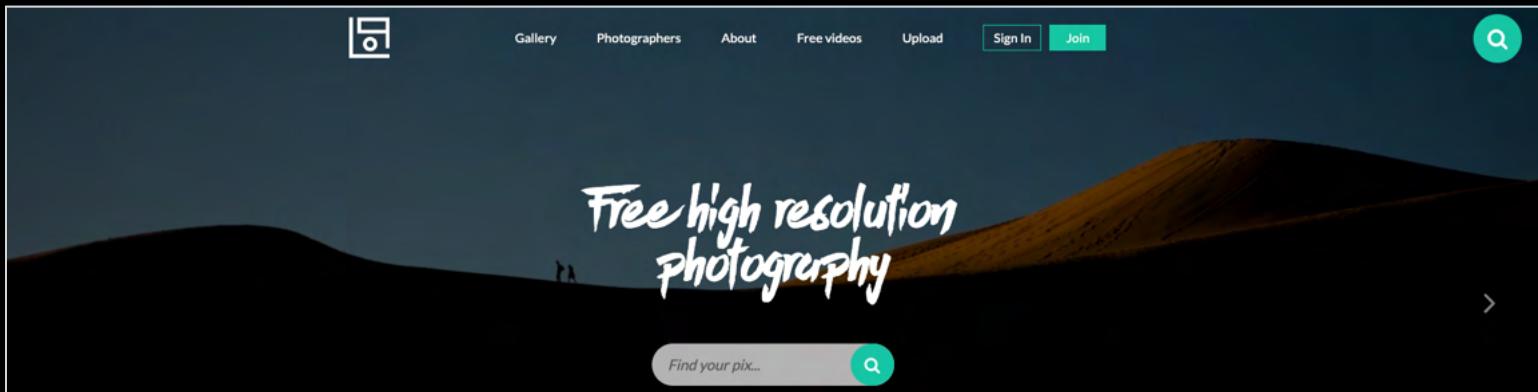
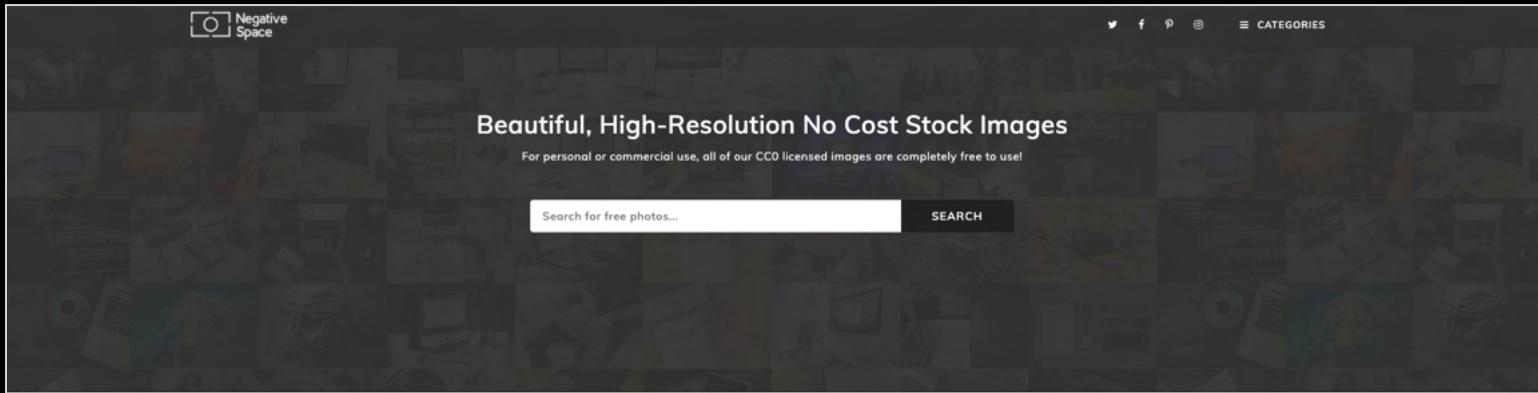
The photos are categorized well with keywords, but the site is difficult to navigate. There are many links that take you to other stock sites, which usually require a paid subscription. It's not a stock site I use regularly, but it has come to my rescue on several occasions. Negative Space is worth keeping in mind for those moments when you don't know where to turn for inspiration.

10. LIFE OF PIX

Life of Pix is another one of the newer stock sites. But it's fast becoming one of my favorites to use for digital collages. Their library isn't the biggest, but all the images are creative and interesting. They have everything from well-styled food photography to stunning landscapes.

Life of Pix is a photography-focused stock website. They don't just have pictures—all their images have artistic merit. And all the featured photographers have a profile, so you can like and follow your favorite artists. They also have links to their websites and social media pages.

The standard of photography is excellent, which can be a great inspiration when I'm trying to figure out my next collage idea. When I come to Life of Pix looking for images, I never leave empty handed. I always find something that excites my imagination. It's one of the best free stock sites for creatives.



PAID STOCK WEBSITES

1. ADOBE STOCK

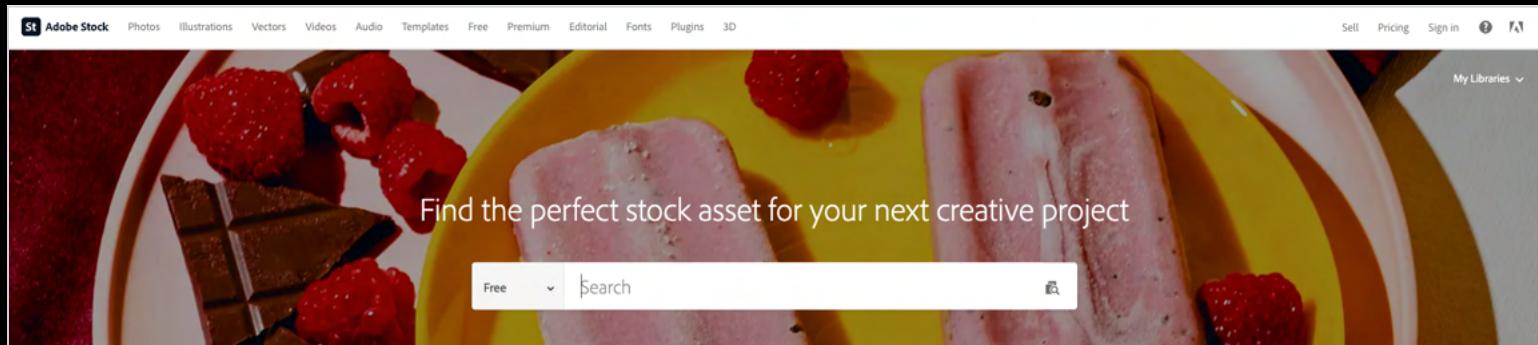
If you use Photoshop for your digital collages, you'll be familiar with the name Adobe. They are the leader in image manipulation software, and their Adobe Stock image library is great too. The library of images is extensive, with excellent options in pretty much any category you can think of. And it's not just photos. They have stock video footage, illustrations, and even music.

It's not free, so you'll need to sign up and become a member, even if you have a subscription. There are different subscription plans, and the more you pay each month, the more photos you are allowed to use. The image and media library of Adobe Stock is impressive, but it's expensive. When you're making digital collages, you will need a lot of images. With Adobe Stock, you'll find yourself paying to produce art.

2. DEPOSITPHOTOS

DepositPhotos has a massive library of stock images. No matter what you type into the search bar, it will give you results. But the results aren't always the type of image I like to use. Much of the photos on DepositPhotos look like stock images. They are posed and styled, and they often don't look natural. There are some gems in there, but you must wade through a lot of stock to find them.

DepositPhotos isn't the most expensive of the paid options. If you need photos for other reason, then it might be a good option for you. But due to the price and the style of photo that dominates their collection, it might not be an ideal resource for some digital collage artists.



3. ENVATO ELEMENTS

Envato Elements is an excellent resource for artists right across the creative industries. They have stock photos, music, and templates for graphic design and web pages. For photos alone, their library has more than 54,000 to choose from.

The price is very reasonable for an individual account. But Envato Elements also has options for teams and businesses, which I think this website is geared towards. The subscription isn't terribly expensive, but for a digital artist working alone, this might not be the best resource. But if your creative work goes beyond digital collage, Envato Elements is one to consider.

4. EYEEM

EyeEm offers a photo library like no other. Their photos are far removed from the standard stock images. Nothing feels staged or stale about their photos. They have thoughtful and unique categories for their photos, and they promote the contributing artists.

The photos are fabulous, but the prices are not cheap. This may not be a resource for all digital artists. The images offered by EyeEm are already works of art and might be too expensive for some.

 Envato Elements

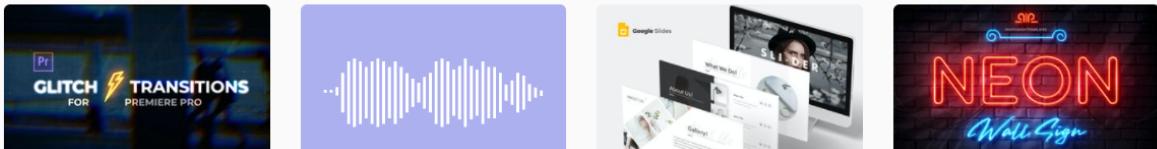
All items  Search... 

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Stock Video Video Templates Music Sound Effects Graphic Templates Graphics Presentation Templates Photos Fonts Add-ons More Categories

The unlimited creative subscription

Unlimited downloads of 57+ million creative assets. From just €14.50/month.



 EyeEm [Buy Stock Photos](#) [Book Photoshoots](#)  [Pricing](#) [More](#)

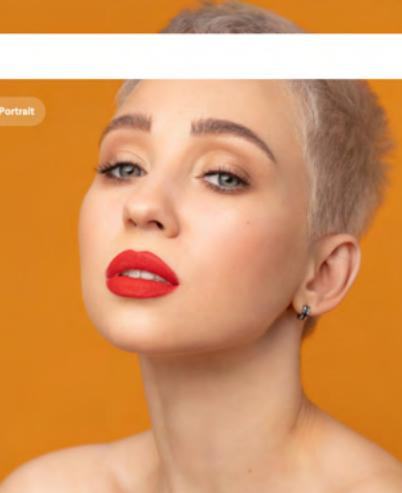
 Q. Search for photos



Authentic Stock Photos That Make A Statement

The best place to buy premium, royalty-free stock images from a global creative community.

[Find Photos](#)



...

5. ISTOCK

iStock is a great multi-media resource. They have an excellent selection of high-quality photos, all neatly filed in hundreds of categories. They have everything from landscapes to retro photos, which are excellent for digital collages. Their collection is one of the most appealing for a digital collage artist, like me. They have plenty of image options that are great to work with.

Their prices aren't bad compared to some of the other paid options. But it amounts to a lot of money if you need as many pictures as I do. I'd recommend iStock if you're part of a company or if you have a professional budget to play with.

6. SHUTTERSTOCK

Shutterstock has a big library of images. It's not just photos—they have illustrations and graphic designs you can download too. Their images aren't the best quality, and they are often too standard looking. But the one thing that does appeal to me is their library of animal images. I love working with animals in my collages, and it's hard to find usable photos. Shutterstock has plenty of animal photos to choose from.

The subscription price is like others in the paid section. The subscription plan for a single user isn't terribly expensive, but it may not offer enough images for a digital collage artist. Your monthly allowance will likely be gone after your first few collages.

iStock by Getty Images

Videos ▾ Photos ▾ Illustrations ▾ Music

Pricing | NEW Video Editor ▾ Boards ▾ Login Connection

Find the perfect stock photos, vectors and more...

Pictures ▾ Search by image

Videos that can be taken in minutes

Create your own ads, social media posts, product demo videos, and more! All it takes is some imagination and customizable, ready-to-use templates.

Cut into it

shutterstock

IMAGES ▾ FOOTAGE ▾ MUSIC ▾ TEMPLATES ▾ EDITORIAL ▾ 3D MODELS ▾ TOOLS ▾ BLOG ▾ ENTERPRISE

Pricing | Log in | Sign up

One library, millions of ways to tell your story

Unleash your creativity with 370M+ images, videos, and music tracks.

Image ▾ Search for images

Aerial | Summer | Dancing | Vector | Community

7. JUMPSTORY

Jumpstory's collection of images has a fun and natural feel. All the photos seem personal, like the artists and the subjects feel at ease with one another. The standard of photography is very high, and it doesn't feel like a stock library. The collection is well organized and a joy to look through, but it's difficult to find specific images. This is something very important to my process of working, so it can be frustrating.

The monthly price is higher than most, but once that is paid, there is no limit to the number of images you can use in a month. If you have the budget, Jumpstory could be an excellent resource for digital collage.

 **TIP:** Get a 25% discount on Jumpstory plans with Expert-Photography's code: EP25.

8. 123RF

One of the best things about 123RF is the filing system. There are categories, sub-categories, and various filters you can use to find the images you need. And the library is massive, with pictures in hundreds of categories. The problem is that many of them are typical stock images, which feel overly posed and unnatural. But the big selection does make up for that slightly, as you can usually find usable images.

123RF has an on-demand payment option and the usual subscription-based service. The on-demand option allows you to pay for individual photos rather than committing to a full year-long subscription. This is interesting, as you can select the images you want to use. But the price isn't cheap. It's cheaper to subscribe. But even then, it's not great value for money. And the biggest problem is perhaps the annual limit on image downloads. It's only 150 and might not be ideal for a prolific collage artist.



JumpStory

Compare Features Global insurance Pricing Search Login Get a Free Trial

Get unlimited access to **millions of authentic** stock images



123RF PHOTOS VECTORS FOOTAGE AUDIO TOOLS PRICING SUPPORT EN ▾ LOGIN SIGN UP

Millions of Stock Photos and Vectors
Download Instantly!

180,630,813 Royalty Free Stock Photos

9. CANVA PRO

Many digital artists will already be familiar with the name Canva. It's an excellent digital imaging tool. Now, they have a stock image resource for creatives to use along with their tool. It has an image library, with photos and illustrations. And you can use their stock animations and videos. It's a great creative resource.

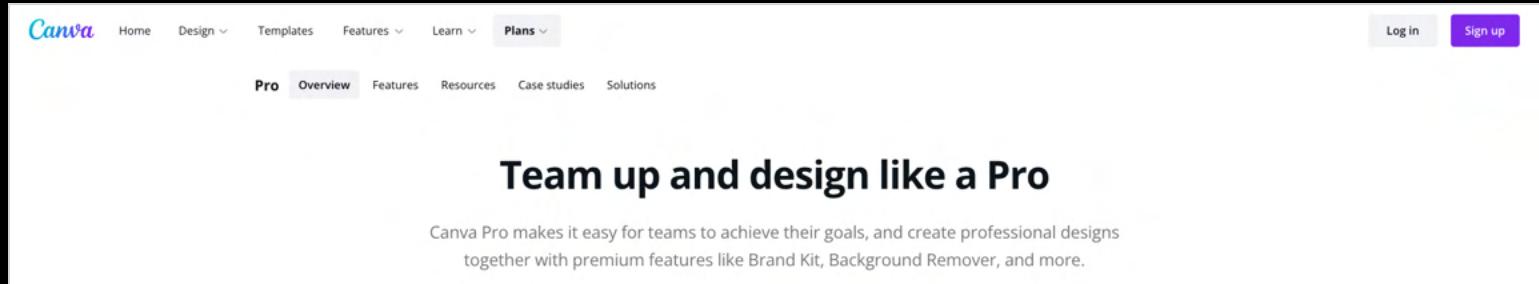
The price is reasonable, and you also get a free month when you sign up. But it is designed for creative teams, rather than individual artists. It's designed so teams can share and collaborate easily. The stock image library isn't their focus, but it is excellent. If you to work collaboratively or as part of a team, Canva Pro is worth looking at.

10. DREAMSTIME

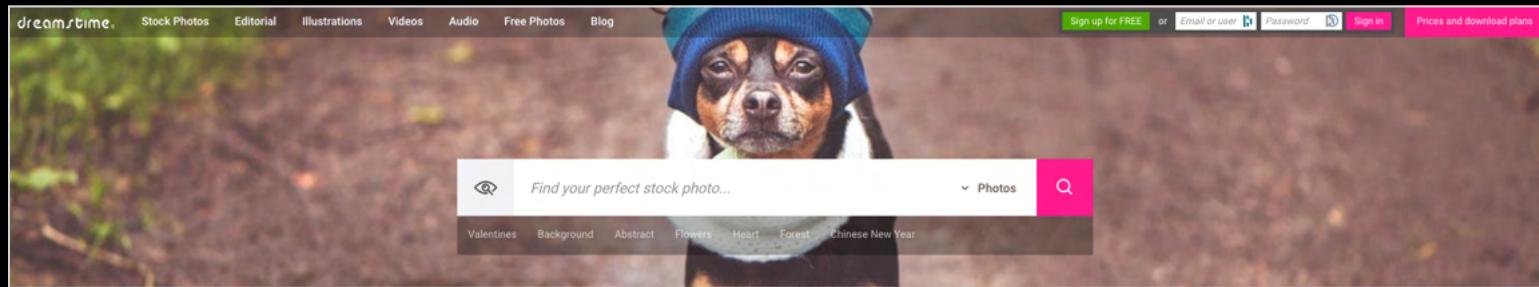
Dreamstime has one of my favorite image libraries of all the paid stock sites. They have literally millions of images and media you can download and use. And their photos look fantastic. The images are full of artistry, with creative flair and skill. There are a few photos that look generic and stocky, but overall, they have a wonderful photo collection perfect for digital collage.

The library is well organized so you can easily find what you want. And if you don't know what you want, you can find inspiration by browsing their collection. They also credit the artists, which I always like to see.

Dreamstime have different options when it comes to payments. You can purchase one-time credit bundles that will give you a certain amount of image downloads, or you can opt for a monthly or yearly subscription. The subscription packages work out cheaper in the long run, but not everyone wants to be dialed into a plan for so long. They give you good flexibility when it comes to payment. And the image quality is excellent.



The screenshot shows the Canva Pro landing page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Design, Templates, Features, Learn, and Plans. The 'Plans' link is highlighted. On the right side of the header are 'Log in' and 'Sign up' buttons. Below the header, there's a sub-navigation bar with 'Pro' selected, followed by Overview, Features, Resources, Case studies, and Solutions. The main content area features a large heading 'Team up and design like a Pro'. Below it, a subtext reads: 'Canva Pro makes it easy for teams to achieve their goals, and create professional designs together with premium features like Brand Kit, Background Remover, and more.'



The screenshot shows the dreamstime stock photo search interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Stock Photos, Editorial, Illustrations, Videos, Audio, Free Photos, and Blog. On the right, there are buttons for 'Sign up for FREE', 'Email or user', 'Password', 'Sign in', and 'Prices and download plans'. The main search area features a placeholder 'Find your perfect stock photo...', a search icon, and a dropdown menu set to 'Photos'. Below the search bar is a horizontal menu with categories: Valentines, Background, Abstract, Flowers, Heart, Forest, and Chinese New Year.

200 STOCK IMAGE LINKS

I have compiled 200 thumbnail image links to free stock photos you can use to start creating your own collages! It can be a jumping-off point for you to explore even more images and ideas. Clicking on each photo will take you to the stock website page where you can download the free image. Happy creating!



BACKGROUNDS IMAGES

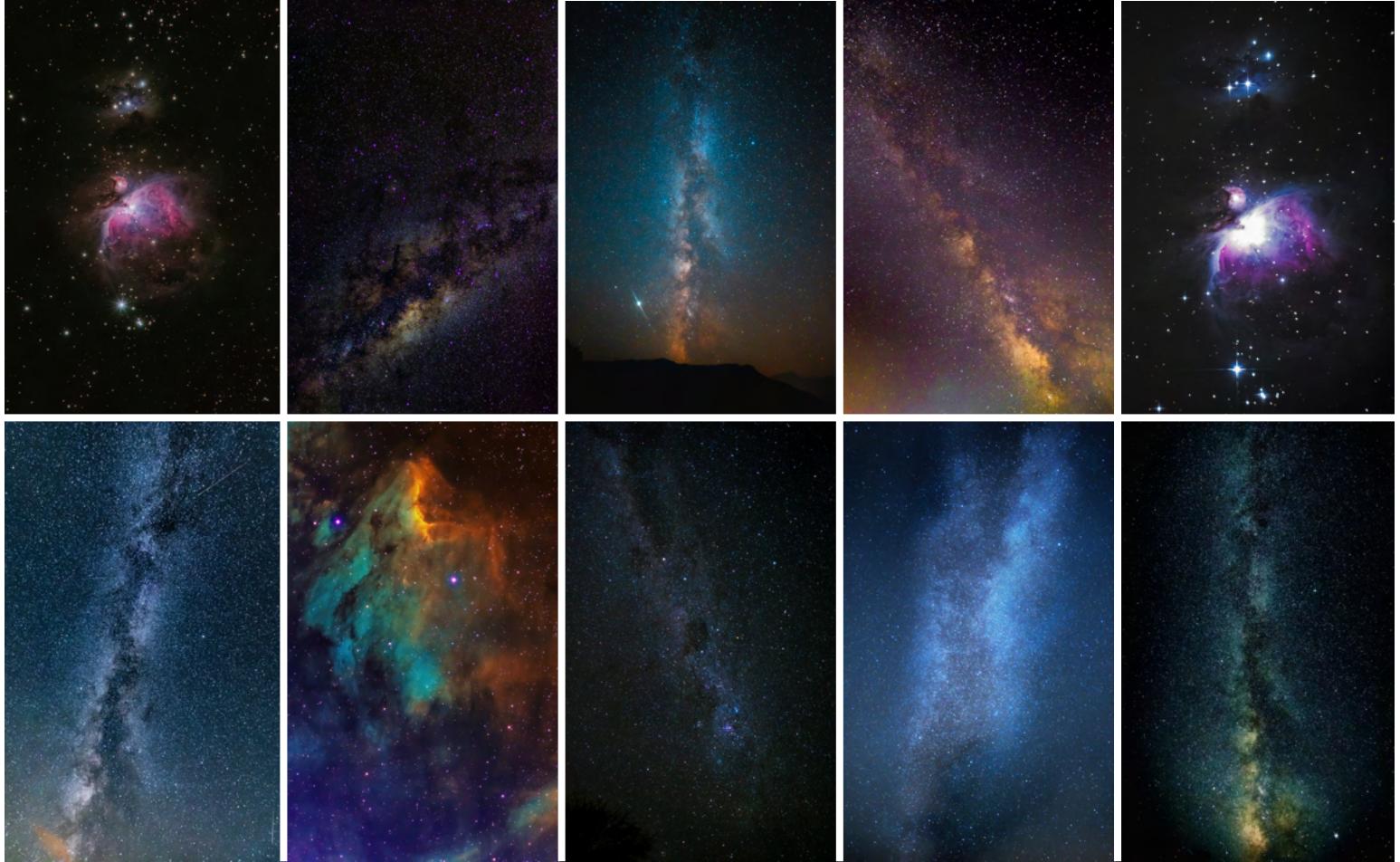
INDOOR SCENES



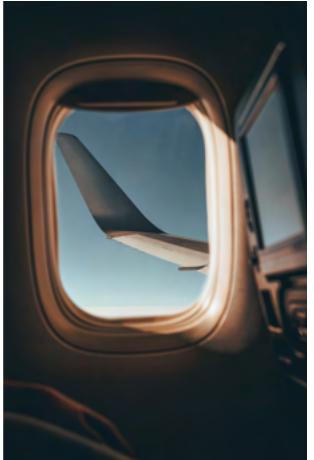
OUTDOOR SCENES



OUTER SPACE



WINDOWS



DOORS



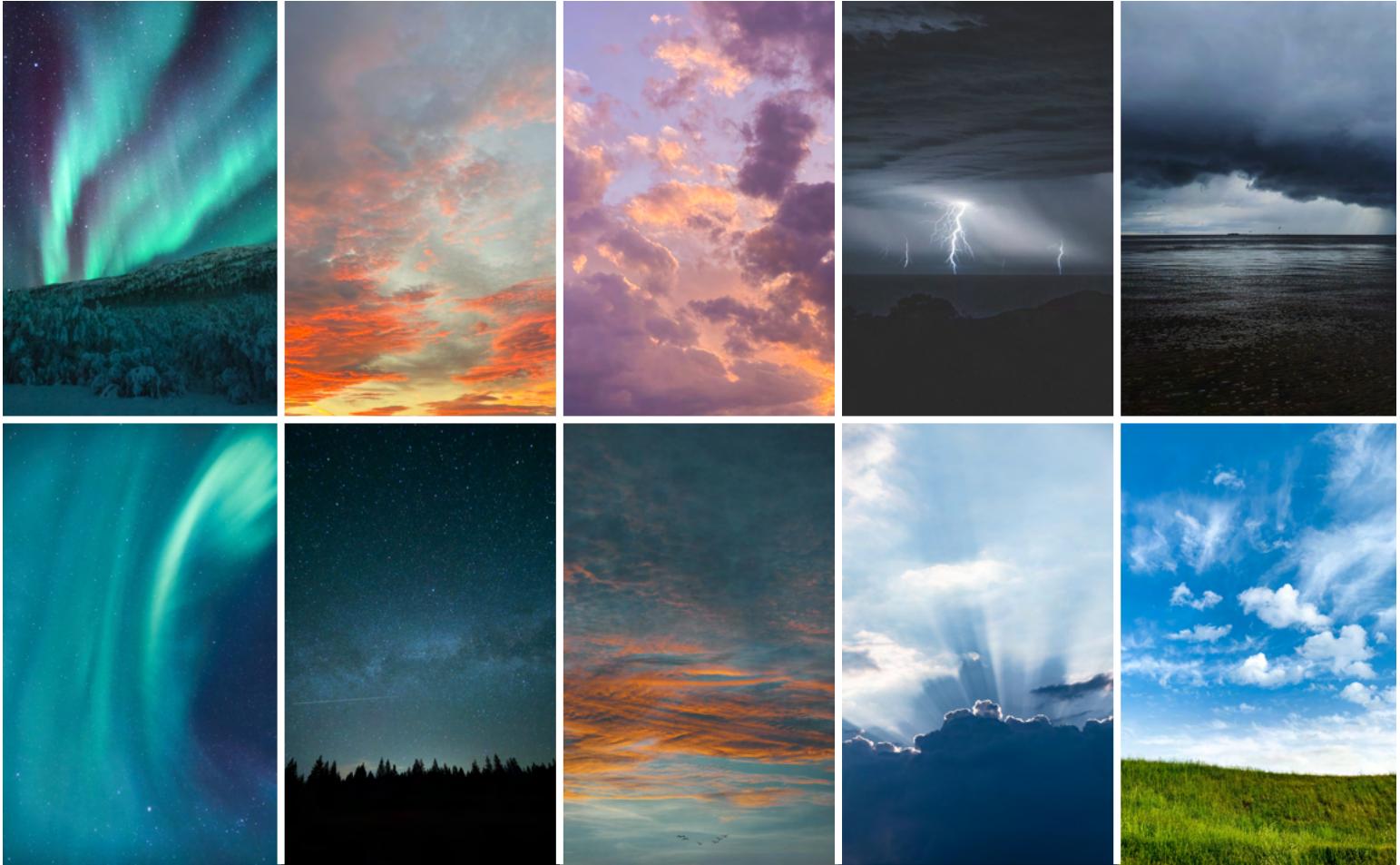
MIRRORS



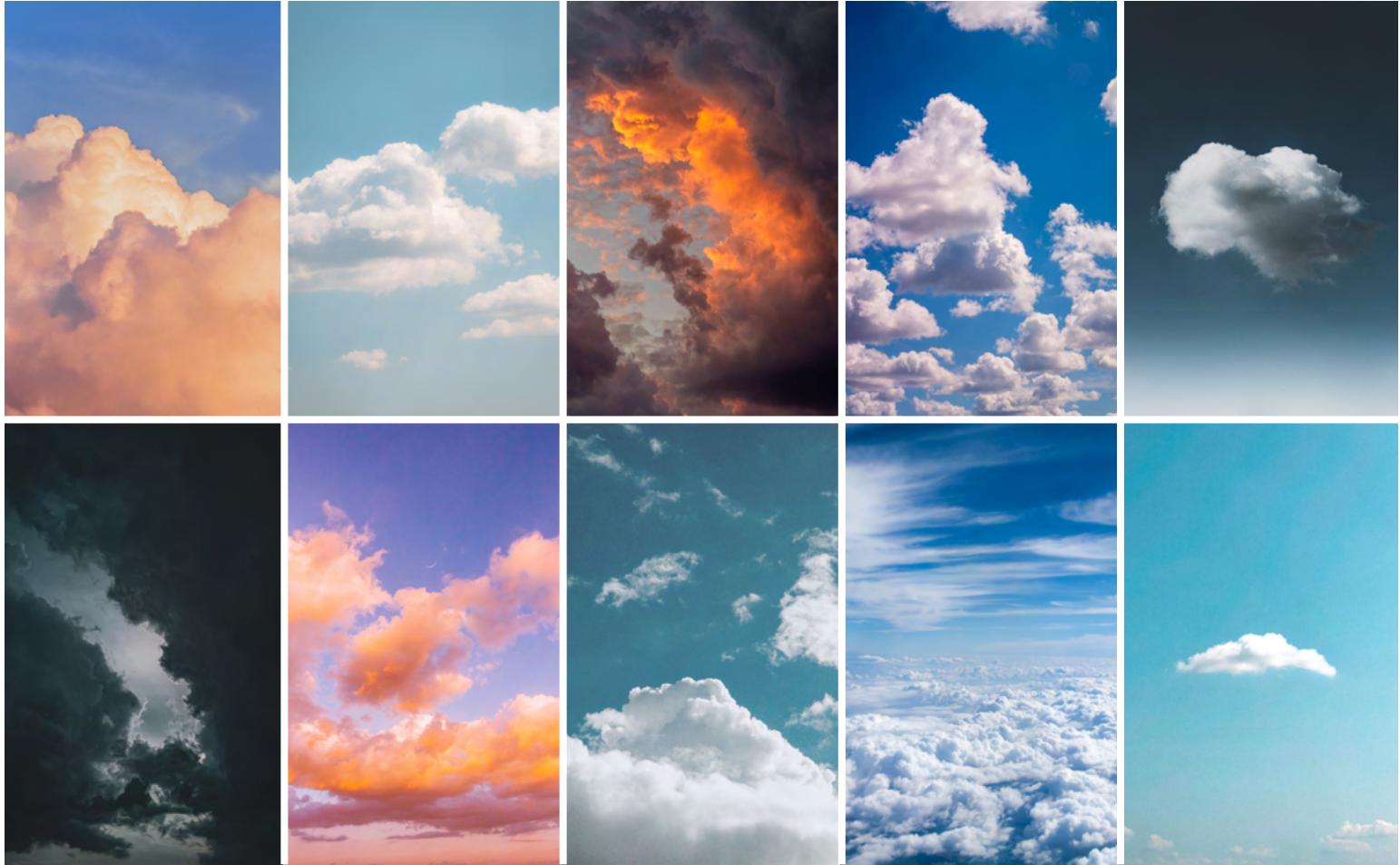
TREES AND FORESTS



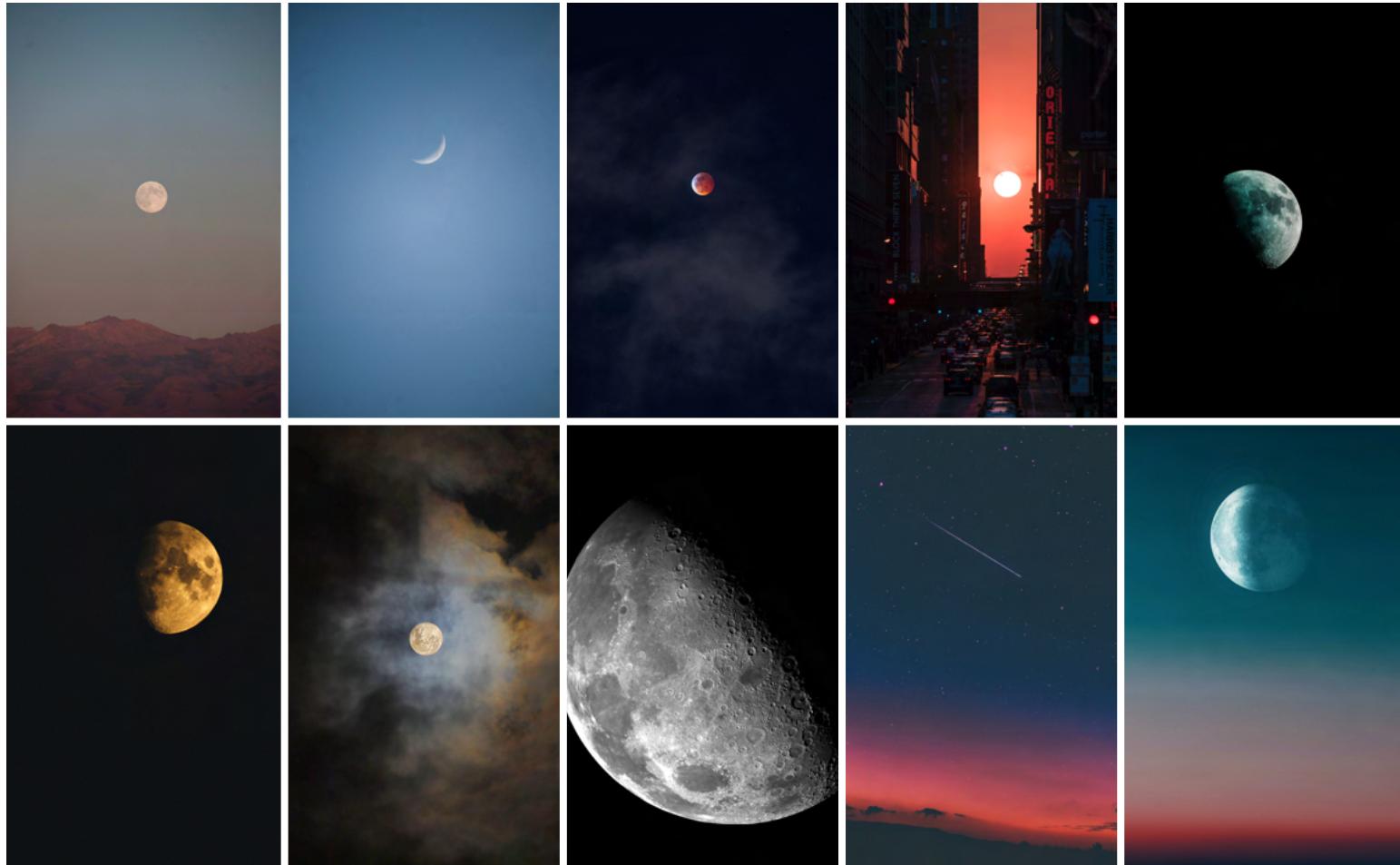
SKIES



CLOUDS



CELESTIAL OBJECTS

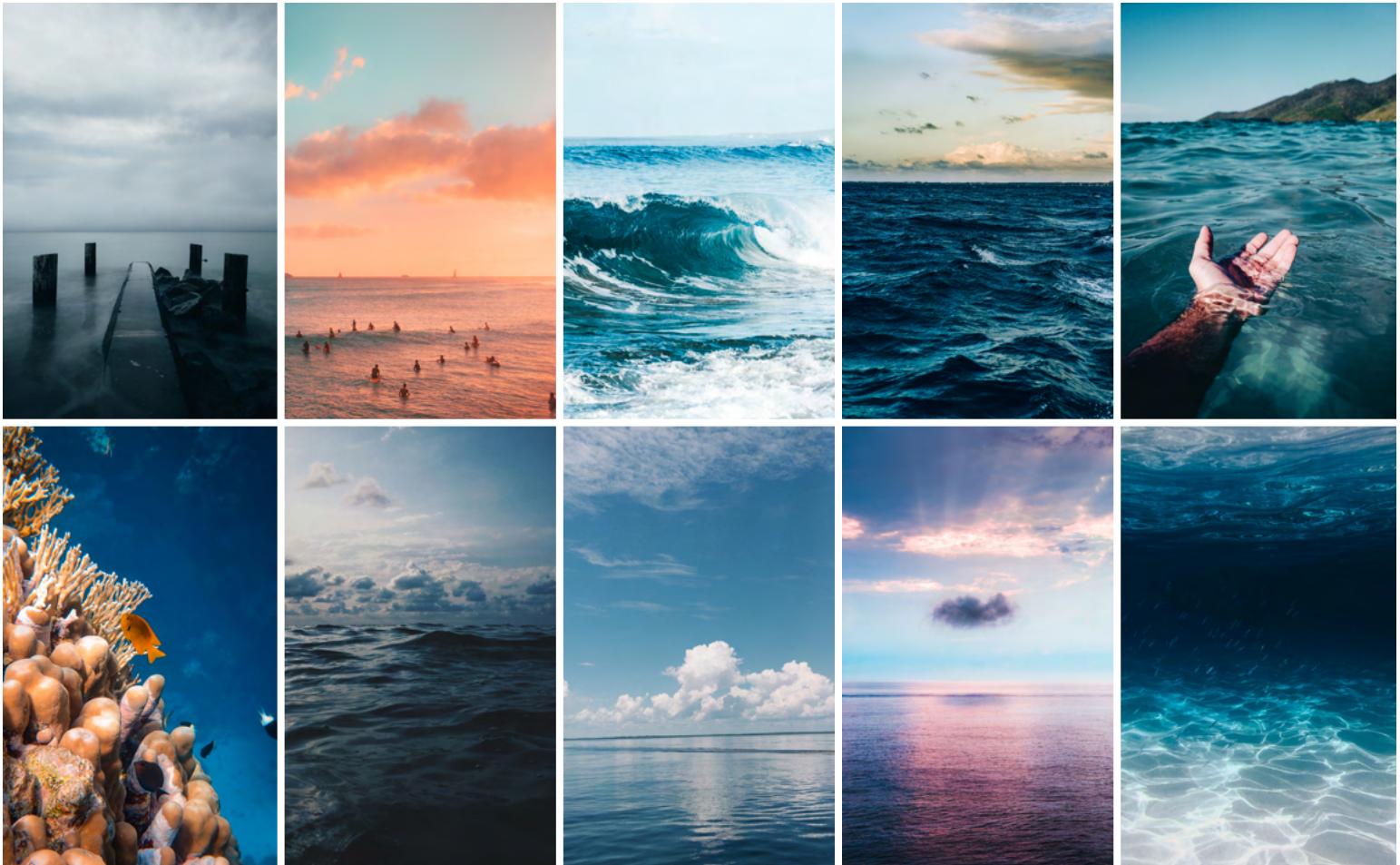


ANIMAL PATTERNS

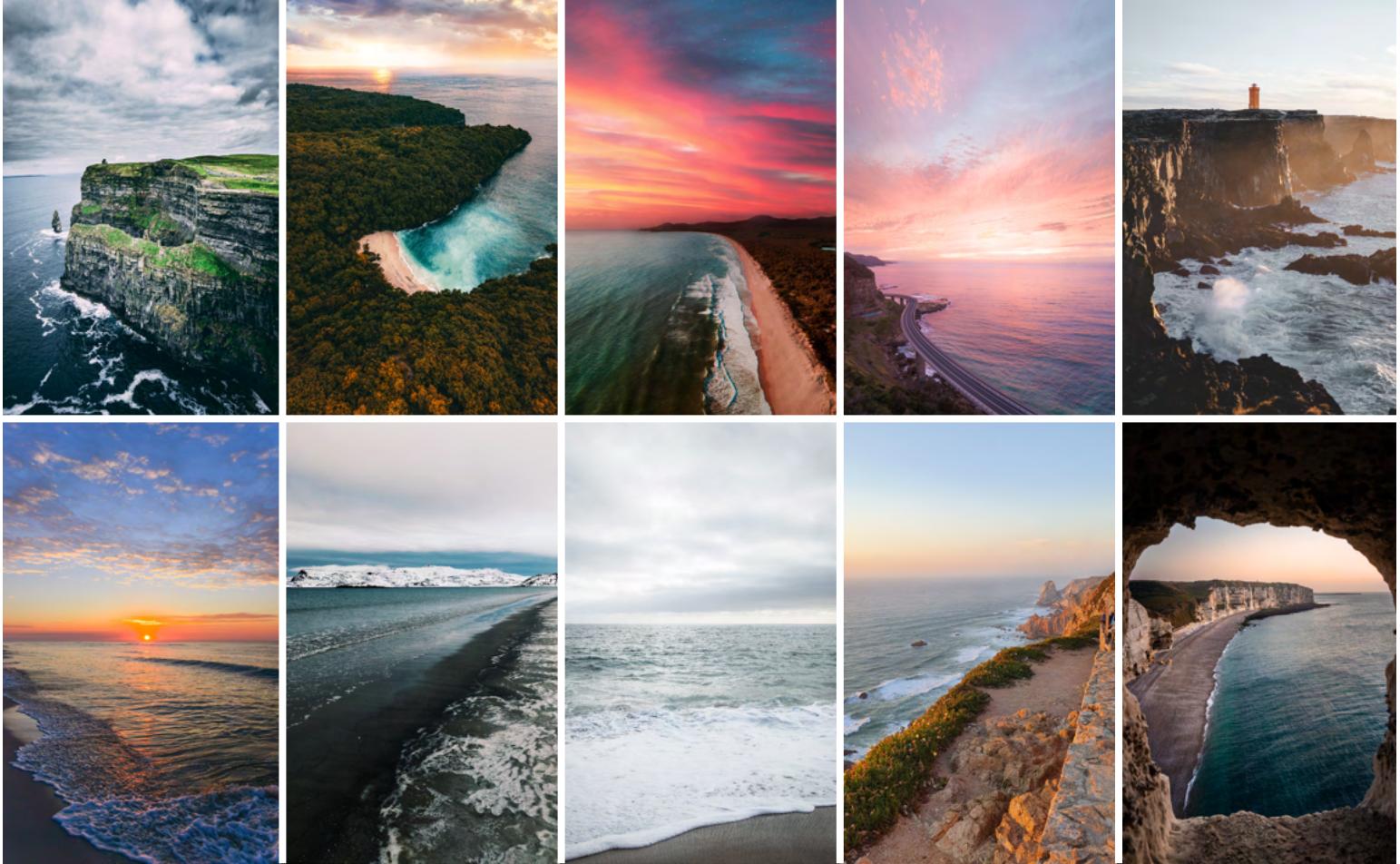


WATER

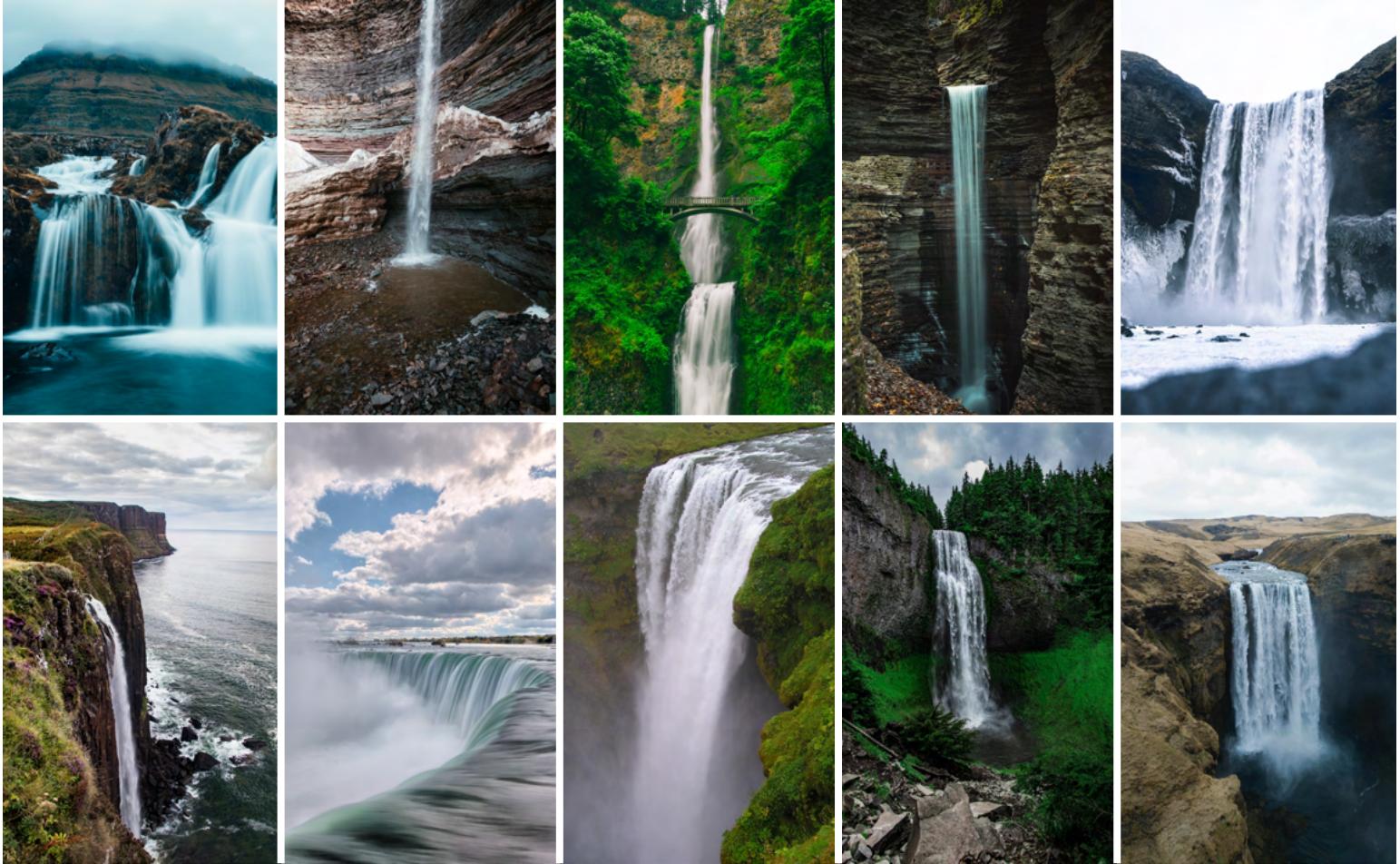
SEAS OR OCEANS



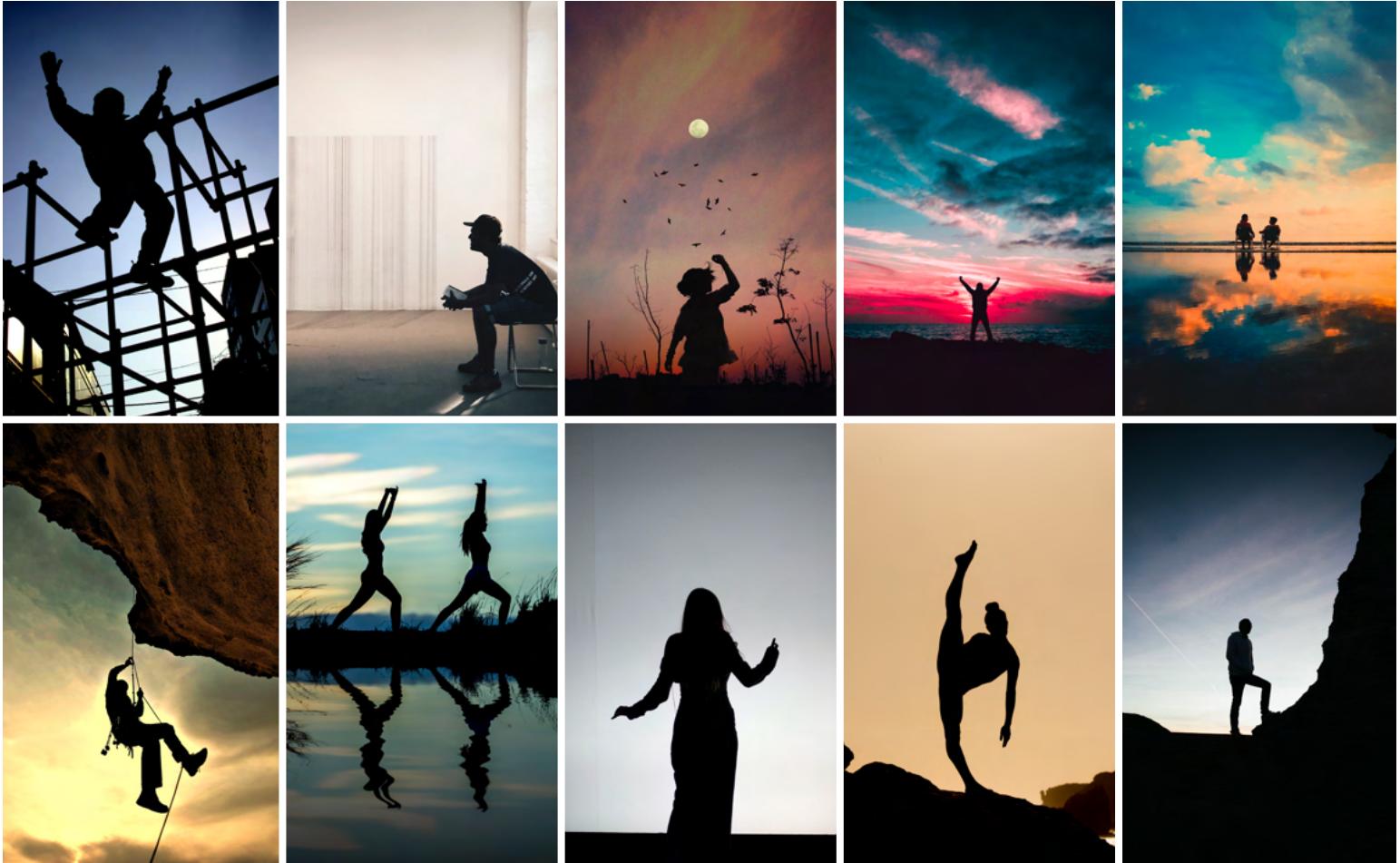
COASTS



WATERFALLS

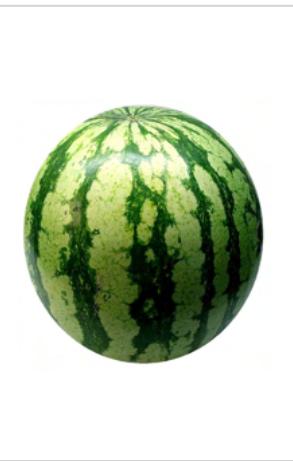


SILHOUETTES



OTHER ELEMENTS

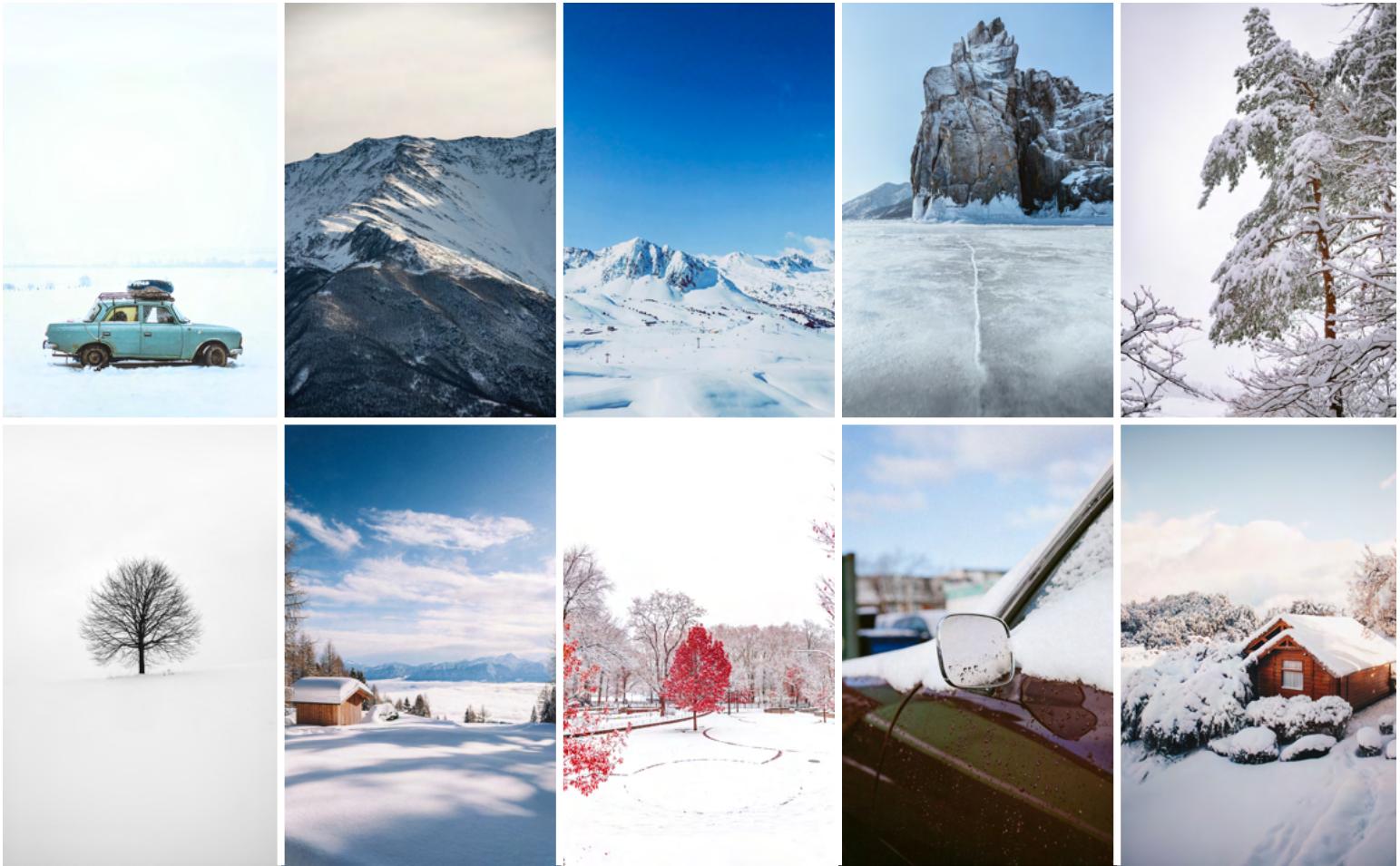
FRUIT



FOILAGE



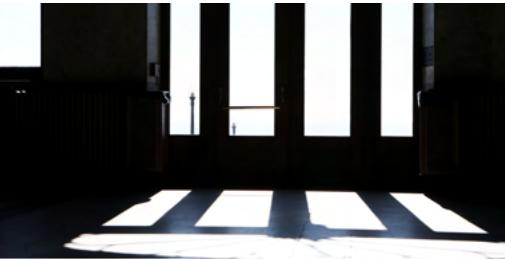
SNOW



FIRE



HORIZONTAL CINEMATIC IMAGES



Digital Dreamworlds

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