34 Warhol-style images

A prolific painter, Andy Warhol is perhaps best known for his posterized images of soup cans, movie stars, and endangered animals. He used the photographic and printmaking technology available in the '60s and '70s. This technique shows you how to use Photoshop to do what he did. First, open a photograph and use adjustment layers to remove the color and posterize it. You can also selectively burn in or dodge out certain areas of the photo. Once you've prepared the image, you'll add the color. To be true to the Warhol style, use very bright colors. As a final step, add just a few painted highlights to accent certain areas of the image. Following the technique are instructions on how to put your image into a grid of repeated images—another Warhol form for visual impact.

Basic Warhol-style image

1   Open an RGB image. The images that work best with this technique are ones with the subject isolated from the background in some way. If the subject contains similar textures or colors to the background, it will be more difficult to separate the subject from its background in later steps.

Open an RGB image

2   Choose Window > Layers to view the Layers palette. Drag the Background layer thumbnail onto the New Layer button at the bottom of the Layers palette to duplicate the layer. It will be named Background Copy.

3 Click the New Adjustment Layer button at the bottom of the Layers palette. Choose Channel Mixer from the pop-up menu. Select the Monochrome option, and change the Source Channels to the following values: R = 24, G = 68, B = 8.

Don't worry if your image still needs adjustments—you'll come back to this layer later.

Duplicate the Background layer   *Create an adjustment layer*
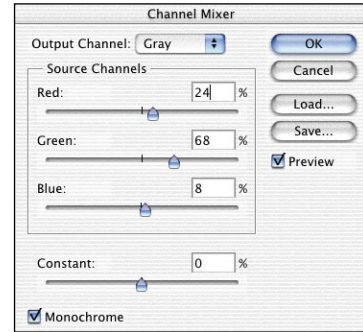
4 Click the New Adjustment Layer button at the bottom of the Layers palette. Select Posterize from the pop-up menu. Make sure that the Preview option is turned on. Enter a number between 2 and 5. Using a value higher than 5 will make the image look less posterized than Warhol's work. Some of the shapes may blend; you'll fix that in the next few steps.

Posterize the layer

5   Double-click the Channel Mixer adjustment thumbnail in the Layers palette. Make sure that Preview is turned on. Start making small adjustments to the R, G, and B source channel settings to improve the look of your image. Click OK.

In this example, the R and G settings were changed to enlarge the white area around the eye.

Change the Channel Mixer adjustment layer settings

6   Select the Background Copy layer in the Layers palette. Select the dodge tool in the toolbox. In the tool options bar, set the Exposure to about 15%.

Adjust exposure settings for the dodge tool

7   Working on the Background Copy layer, use the dodge tool to lighten areas in the image. Use the burn tool (also set to 15% Exposure) to darken areas of the image.

This example shows the lower beak lightened and the upper beak and lower eye darkened.
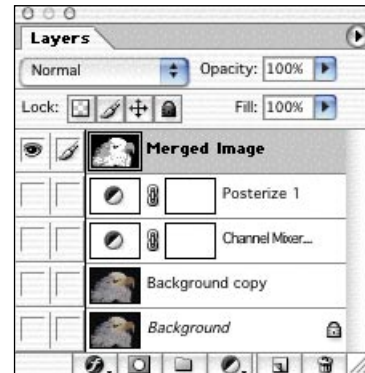
Use the dodge and burn tools to enhance the image

8 Click the New Layer button at the bottom of the Layers palette to create a new layer. Name it Merged Image. Make sure that it is at the top of the layer stack. Turn off the Background layer.

9 Press Option/Alt while choosing Merge Visible from the Layers palette menu. The visible layers will be merged onto the Merged Image layer. Pressing Option/Alt retains a copy of the original layers. Turn off all the layers except the Merged Image layer.

Retaining a copy of the other layers is useful if you want to go back and re-edit the image.
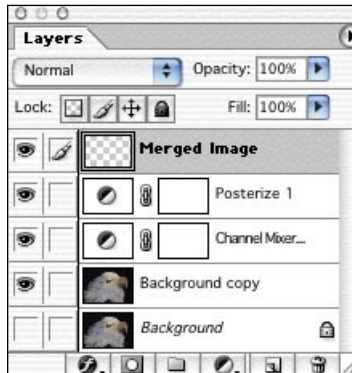

Create the Merged Image layer   *Merge visible layers*

10 Select the magic wand tool in the toolbox. In the tool options bar, set the Tolerance to 0; turn off the Anti-aliased and Contiguous options.

Posterized images have no soft edges, so you don't want the first two options. Contiguous lets you select only one shape at a time. You want to select all of the shapes filled with the same color at once.
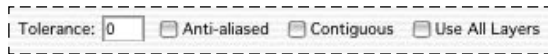
Adjust settings for the magic wand tool

11 Click one area of color in the image to select all shapes painted that color. In this example, all of the black shapes are selected.

Use the magic wand tool to select a single-color area

12 Select a foreground color in the Color palette. Press Option+Delete/Alt+Backspace to quickly fill a selection with the foreground color. Choose View > Extras to hide the selection edges so that you can evaluate the image. If you are satisfied with the color, continue to the next step. If not, choose another color and refill the selection until you are satisfied.

Shortcut: Add or subtract from selections

You can set the options for the magic wand tool in the options bar or you can use the keyboard to modify the tool's behavior as you work. Select the magic wand tool and click an area you want to select. Then use the following keyboard shortcuts to modify the tool:

- Press Shift to add to a selection.
- Press Option/Alt to subtract from a selection.
- Press Shift+Option/Alt to select an area that intersects with other selections.

Fill the selection with the foreground color

13 Repeat steps 11 and 12 until all the areas are filled with color. If you want to fill a certain shape with color but not fill all of its companion shapes, before selecting, turn on the Contiguous option in the options bar.

In this example, the background was selected separately so that its color wouldn't be part of the eagle's head.

Fill other areas with color

14 As a final Warhol touch, make a new layer and add a few contrasting brush strokes to highlight certain parts of the image. If you have a pressure-sensitive tablet and stylus, you'll get the most authentic-looking results.

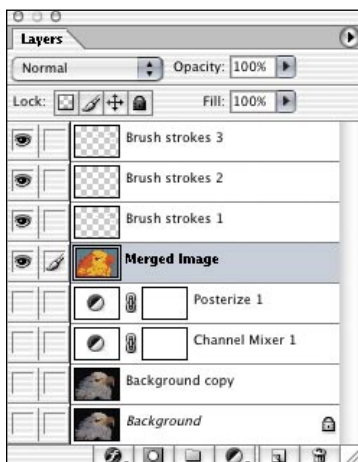In this example, the new brush stroke layer was set to the Difference blending mode.

Add brush stroke details

Different color versions

Many of Andy Warhol's paintings were color variations of the same image. Make one color version, and you can make variations quickly using the Replace Color command. It allows you to change one color at a time while previewing.

1   Follow the Warhol-style Images technique. To preserve the original file, save it, and then choose File > Save As and rename the file.

2   Select the Merged Image layer in the Layers palette.


Select the Merged Image layer

3 Choose Image > Adjustments > Replace Color. Use the eyedropper pointer and click the color area that you want to change. Adjust the Hue, Saturation, or Lightness sliders until you are satisfied with the color change. Click OK.

In this example, the background purple color was selected and changed to a teal color.

Use Replace Color to change the color

**4** Repeat step 3 for each color that you want to change.
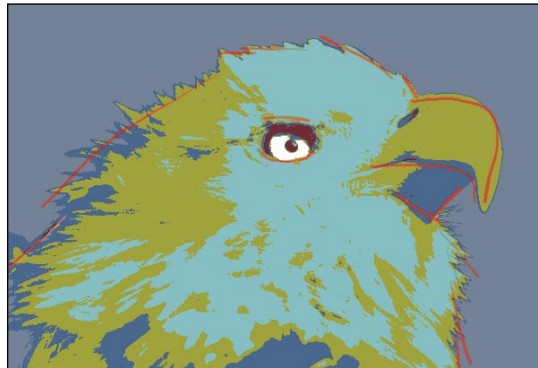
Final color variation

Multi-image grid

Many of Andy Warhol's paintings were grids of the same repeated image, sometimes with the same color scheme, sometimes with varying color schemes. You can make a multi-image grid with Photoshop using the Picture Package feature.

1   Choose File > Automate > Picture Package. Select a page size from the Page Size pop-up menu. Select a layout from the Layout menu.

If there isn't a layout that you want, just click a layout that's close to it and you can edit it later.
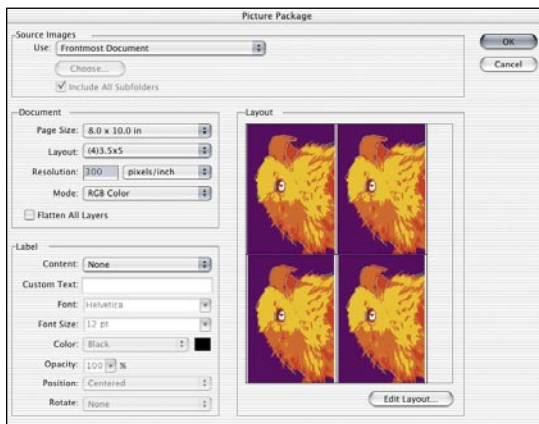

Select a page size and layout in the Picture Package dialog box

2   If you don't need to edit the layout, skip to step 3. If you need to edit the layout, click the Edit Layout button to open the Edit Layout dialog box. Add, remove, resize, or reposition the zones until you are satisfied with the layout. Name the layout in the Names text box. Click Save and name your layout.
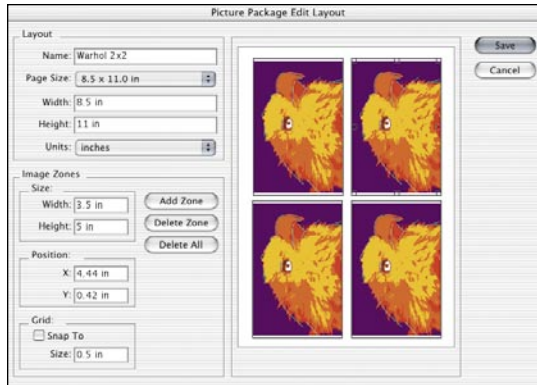
In this example, the images were moved and centered on the page with a small gutter between them.
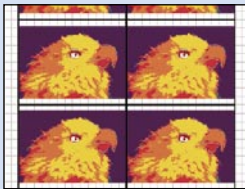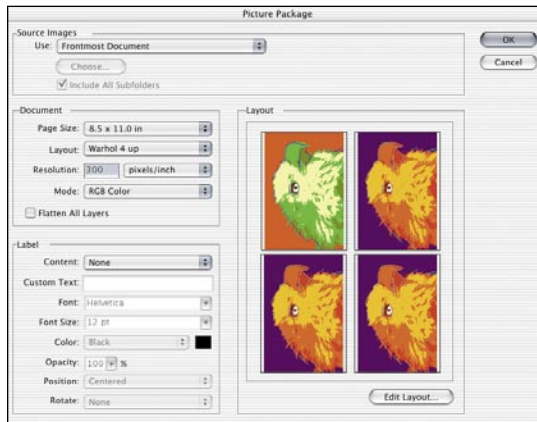
Grid turned on

*Change the zones, in the Picture Package Edit Layout dialog box*

3 If you want to make multiple versions of the same image, skip to step 4. If you want a grid of different images, click the thumbnail image of the file you want to replace. Locate the file in the Select an Image File dialog box that appears, and click Open.

Click the thumbnail to select a different image

4 Once you have selected one or more images for your grid, deselect the Flatten All Layers option.

Deselecting this option places each image on a separate layer in the final Picture Package file. Separate layers give you more flexibility if you want to rearrange the images; you can always flatten the file later.
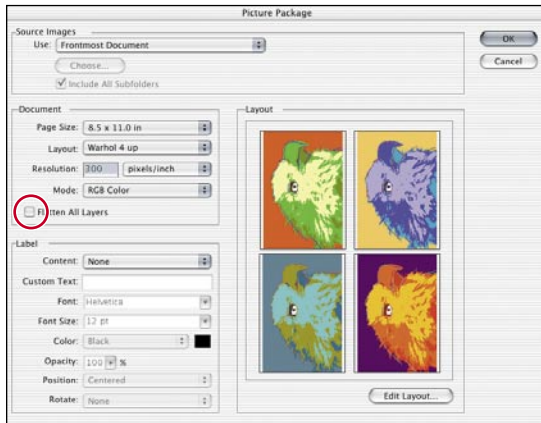
Deselect Flatten All Layers option

5   When you have completed placing the files, click OK. Picture Package automatically opens the files needed and resizes and places them in position.

Final Picture Package image

Shortcut: Flatten and save all at once

If you want a flattened version of your file and an unflattened version, use the Save As dialog box to do it all for you. With the unflattened file open, choose File > Save As. Deselect the Alpha Channels and Layers options; the As A Copy option automatically becomes selected. Enter a name for the flattened file and click Save. Even though the dialog box doesn't say "flattened" anywhere, that is what has just happened.