

MAKING COLORS POP WITH CURVES

This technique comes originally from Dan Margulis' book *Photoshop LAB Color*.

Step One:

From the menu, choose Mode>LAB to change from RGB to LAB color mode.

Step 2:

Click on the New Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the layers palette to add a CURVES adjustment layer to the palette. You need the small grid in the Curves box so Press and hold the Alt Key (Mac: Option) and click on the Curves grid to make it smaller.

Step 3:

From the Channel Pop Up Menu at the top of the dialog, choose the "a" channel. Click on the top right corner of the curve and drag the point one square in to the left on the grid. Now click on the bottom left corner point and drag that point one square to the right. Now, switch to the "b" channel and do the same thing.

Here's the result of adjusting both the "a" and "b" channel curves in the Curves Dialog. If you are completely satisfied with the result, change the mode back to RGB. This will flatten the layers.

OPTIONS

As an additional step *before* changing back to RGB, in the Curves dialog box, click in the center of the curve and drag straight up very slightly to lighten the image. Once finished, change back to RGB.

Since you may want to repeat this technique over and over, consider making this an action. Refer to Marianne's Tutorial on Creating an Action.

NOTE: Once you have an adjustment layer in your image, you'll get a warning dialog when you switch from Lab Color to RGB since layers cannot be included when you switch modes. Your choices are to Merge (Flatten) which will make your adjustments permanent, Cancel or OK. (O.K.discards the effects of the adjustment layer). Unless you aren't happy with the adjustment layers, you will want to choose Merge (my screen says Flatten).

VARIATIONS:

In the original image the "a" and "b" curves were moved in one grid square. Each image is different so you might experiment with pushing those curves a little further. Here's the same photo with the "a" and "b" curves moved in two grid squares.