

COLOR

HISTORY OF COLOR:

Colors are often symbolic. In China, yellow had a religious significance and remains the imperial color today. In Greece and Rome, red was believed to have protective powers. Long ago, purple was restricted for use by nobility.

Egyptians adorned the walls of tombs and temples with brilliant colors of blue, tangerine, green, and carmine. Greece and Rome were decorated with colored marble floors, brightly painted walls and ceilings, and rich tapestries and silks. Early Christians used gloriously colored stained-glass windows. Today these windows remain as a supreme creative achievement of Western culture. Italian Renaissance colors were vibrant reds, greens, golds and blues.

During the Rococo period, feminine taste had a great influence and colors became less vibrant. When Marie Antoinette dominated the court of Louis XVI, colors became even more delicate and softly pastel. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, France influenced the Western world. French colors were vogue wherever beauty and luxury were cherished.

The eighteenth century in England was one of great elegance. Colors were rich, showing a strong Chinese influence in the use of red and gold. The excavation of Pompeii inspired the Adam brothers to introduce the neoclassic look. Colors became more delicate, with Adam Green being the favorite.

The Victorian era was a period of eclecticism known for its abundance of "things". Colors were predominantly dull reds, greens, browns, and mauves. This era is referred to as the Mauve Decades.

The 20th century introduced the monochromatic room with sleek surfaces and strong contrast with black, gray, silver, brown, beige, and white as favorite colors.

The 20's preferred all-white interiors which gave way to delicate pastels with bright accents. Favorite colors were cocoa brown with hyacinth blue, mustard yellow with gray, and prune with turquoise.

Light colors were preferred through the 50's, but soon American interest turned to Mexico and a shift to bright colors with bright contrast.

Colors for the 90's are regal gold, blue, and red. The Southwestern look remains popular and the Victorian look is being revived. The Ivy League look is also popular with forest greens and cranberry reds as favorites.

COLOR

A ray of light is the source of all color. Without light, color does not exist. Color is light broken into electromagnetic vibrations of varying wavelengths, which cause the viewer to see different colors. This can be demonstrated by shining a light through a glass prism. The light beam divides into the colors of the spectrum. The longest wavelength is perceived as red and the shortest as violet. You often see a variety of colors in a bright beam of light striking a soap bubble, the beveled edge of a mirror, or a rainbow.

Pigments are substances that can be ground into fine powder and used for adding color to dyes and paints. Before people learned how to produce pigments through chemistry, they were derived from animal, mineral, and vegetable sources. Mayans in Central America extracted purple from shellfish. Robes of Roman emperors were dyed from shellfish found in the Mediterranean. People in the Near East extracted red dye from the dried bodies of scale insects.

Color can alter the appearance of form and space, affect our performance abilities, and change our moods. Color is derived from reflected light. It is perceived in the brain through a response of the eyes to different wavelengths of light.

THE COLOR WHEEL

The color wheel is a basic tool we use when working with colors. It is based on the standard color theory known as Brewster/Prang. In addition to the traditional color wheel, there are two color systems that are useful when more detailed colors are required.

1. The Munsell system has five principal hues: red, yellow, green, blue, and purple, and five intermediate hues, yellow-red, green-yellow, blue-green, purple-blue, and red-purple. A numbering system helps designers identify the exact hue they need.
2. The Ostwald system is made from three pairs of complementary colors: red and green, blue and orange, and black and white. The color circle has twenty-four hues.

Show the class a color wheel. Discuss the twelve hues found in the spectrum of color. They are divided into three categories:

1. Primary hues: red, yellow, and blue
2. Secondary hues: green, violet, and orange (made by combining primary colors)
3. Tertiary hues: yellow-green, blue-green, blue-violet, red-violet, red-orange, and yellow-orange (made by combining secondary hues)

Colors are created in different ways.

1. Analogous hues are near each other on the color wheel.
2. Complementary hues are opposite each other on the color wheel.