

Color Relationships

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about color relationships and their importance in recognizing harmonious color schemes. Specifically, this tutorial will cover:

1. Complementary Colors

Complementary colors are two hues which sit directly opposite each other on the color wheel.

If you were to draw a straight line from one color to another color on the opposite side of the wheel, you'd get that color's complement.

Yellow and purple are complementary colors.



This light orange and blue are complementary colors.



Below is a painting by Johannes Vermeer entitled *The Milkmaid*.¹ You can see the use of complementary colors in this work.



TERM TO KNOW

Complementary Colors

Two hues which sit directly opposite each other on the color wheel.

2. Split Complementary Colors

Split complementary colors are a combination of three colors, consisting of a main hue and the two hues that sit on either side of its complement on the color wheel.

Basically, if you draw a line that forks two ways, you get split complementary colors.



Below is a painting by Matisse called "The Dance." The three colors used are quite obvious since they are the only colors used in the painting.



TERM TO KNOW

Split Complementary Colors

A combination of three colors, consisting of a main hue and the two hues that sit on either side of its complement on the color wheel.

3. Analogous Colors

Analogous colors on one side of the color wheel are considered warm colors and on the opposite side are considered cool colors.



Take a look at the analogous colors used in this beautiful painting by Georgia O'Keeffe called "Blue and Green Music."



This painting is an example of how colors placed next to each other often interact in surprising ways.



TERM TO KNOW

Analogous Colors

Hues which are next to each other on the color wheel; analogous colors on one side of the color wheel are considered warm, and on the other side, cool.

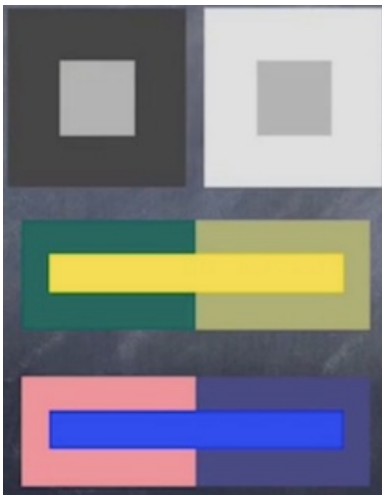
4. Josef Albers

Josef Albers was an American artist, teacher, and author of *Interaction of Color*. Albers was actually a student at the quite prestigious Bauhaus in 1920, and studied under Johannes Itten, who developed the commonly used color wheel.

Josef Albers was a very accomplished artist and is best remembered as an abstract painter and theorist. He was really fascinated by the effects of color and their interaction; he created a lot of pieces that seemed rather simple, but played with the notion that colors interact with one another in interesting ways.

One example of these interactions is **simultaneous contrast**, or the effect that two neighboring colors have on one another. This effect is contained in one of Albers' laws of interaction.

Below is a pretty basic example of simultaneous contrast. You can see in the top image, there's a darker square on the left, with a gray square enclosed. On the right, there's a lighter square and another gray square enclosed within it.



THINK ABOUT IT

QUESTION: Which gray square is lighter?

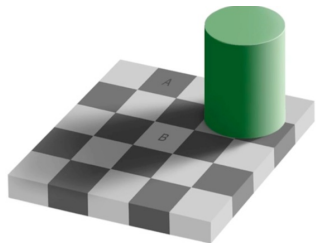
ANSWER: A fair number of people would say the one on the left. The reality is that they are both the same color and value. But the contrast between the light gray and the dark gray, and the light gray and the same gray again gives you this perception of contrast and value.

Josef Albers really tried to drive home the idea that it's those combinations of colors that can create such interesting interactions.



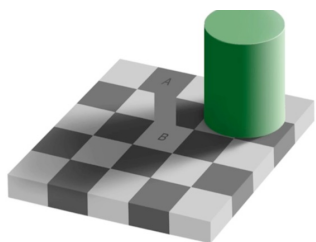
THINK ABOUT IT

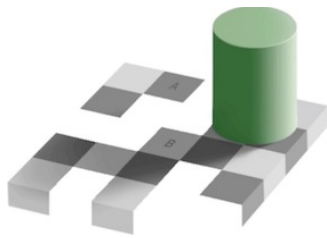
QUESTION: Which checkerboard is lighter?



ANSWER: If you said A, you were close. If you said B, you were really close. In fact, they're actually both the same value. And the values are interacting in such a way that your eyes perceive different contrasts.

If you were to draw an extra line between the A and B checkerboards, it would really change your perception of color and value in this image again.





TERMS TO KNOW

Josef Albers

American artist, teacher, and author of "Interaction of Color", one of the most important books on perception and the study of color theory.

Simultaneous Contrast

The effect two neighboring colors have on one another; this effect is contained in one of Albers' laws of interaction.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how to use the color wheel to identify **complementary colors**, **split complementary colors**, and **analogous colors**. Complementary colors are opposite each other, while analogous colors appear as three in a row on the wheel. You also learned that **Josef Albers** was the artist responsible for the idea of simultaneous contrast, explaining how neighboring colors can impact perception.

Keep up the learning and have a great day!

Source: SOURCE: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR MARIO E. HERNANDEZ



TERMS TO KNOW

Analogous Colors

Hues which are next to each other on the color wheel; analogous colors on one side of the color wheel are considered warm, and on the other side, cool.

Complementary Colors

Two hues which sit directly opposite each other on the color wheel.

Josef Albers

American artist, teacher, and author of *Interaction of Color*, one of the most important books on perception and the study of color theory.

Simultaneous Contrast

The effect two neighboring colors have on one another; this effect is contained in one of Albers' laws of interaction.

Split Complementary Colors

A combination of three colors, consisting of a main hue and the two hues that sit on either side of its complement on the color wheel.