

Vocabulary

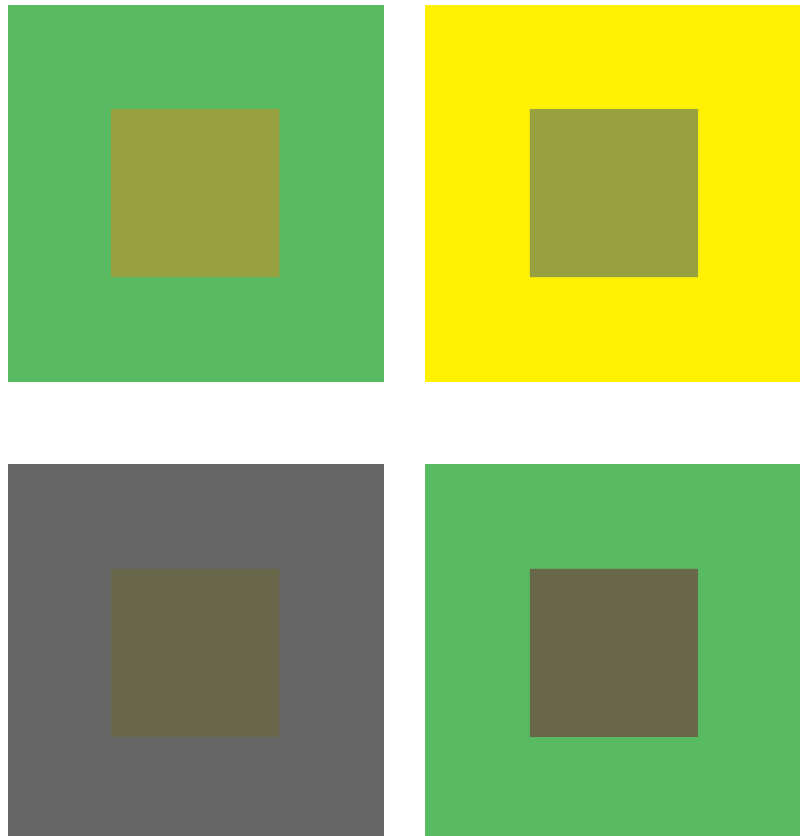
monochromatic
analogous colors

Color Schemes

Colors are like musical instruments. Each instrument has its own special sound. When you hear an instrument in an orchestra, the sound you hear is affected by the sounds of the other instruments. When the musicians tune up before a performance, you hear confusing, even unpleasant, noises. When they play together in an organized way, they can make beautiful sounds. In the same way, putting colors together without a plan can be confusing and unpleasant to your eyes. Color without organization can look like a visual argument. A plan for organizing colors is called a color scheme.

When two colors come into direct contact, their differences are more obvious. A yellow-green surrounded by a green looks even more yellow. A yellow-green surrounded by yellow, however, appears greener. Grayish-green will seem brighter when it is placed against a gray background. This effect is called simultaneous contrast (**Figure 6.12**).

A color scheme is a plan for organizing colors according to their relationship on the color wheel. By following a color scheme, you can avoid putting together colors in a confusing or unpleasant way. The following are some of the most frequently used color schemes.



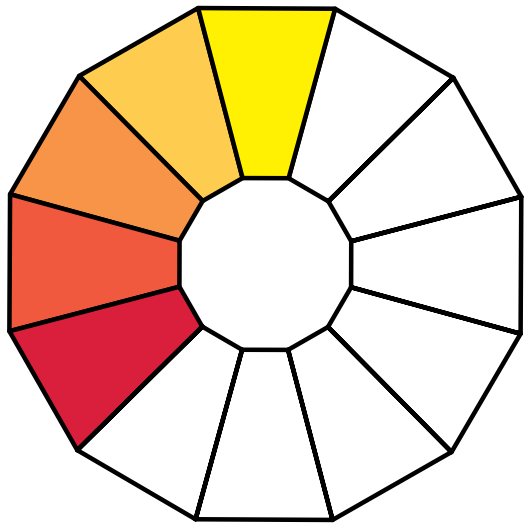
► **FIGURE 6.12**
Your perception of any color is affected by the colors that surround it. This effect is called simultaneous contrast.

Monochromatic Colors

Monochrome means one color. A **monochromatic** color scheme is a color scheme that uses only one hue and the tints and shades of that hue. Because this is such a limited scheme, it has a strong, unifying effect on a design (**Figure 6.13**). It is very easy to organize furniture or clothing using monochromatic colors. The drawback to a monochromatic color scheme is that it can be boring.

Analogous Colors

Analogous colors are colors that sit side by side on the color wheel and have a common hue (**Figure 6.14**). Violet, red-violet, red, red-orange, and orange all have red in common. A narrow color scheme would be limited to only three hues, such as violet, red-violet, and red. An analogous color scheme creates a design that ties one shape to the next through a common color (see Figure 13.34 on page 380).



▲ **FIGURE 6.14** Analogous colors are related.



▲ **FIGURE 6.13** The artist has captured the sad mood of these people by using a monochromatic blue color scheme. He has kept it interesting by using the full range of tints and shades from white to black. Where are the whitest areas? Where are the blackest areas? Look at the title. Does the painting evoke this feeling?

Pablo Picasso. *The Tragedy*. 1903. Oil on wood. 105 × 69 cm (41½ × 27⅞"). National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. © 1998 Board of Trustees, Chester Dale Collection. © 2003 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Complementary Colors

The strongest contrast of a hue is produced by complementary colors. When a pair of high-intensity complements are placed side by side, they seem to vibrate. It is difficult to focus on the edge where the complements touch. Some artists use this visual vibration to create special effects. They make designs that sparkle, snap, and sizzle as if charged with electricity (**Figure 6.15**).



▲ **FIGURE 6.15** Which set of complementary colors dominates this painting? Where is the contrast the strongest? Which area has the dullest contrast? Explain how the artist has done this?

Piet Mondrian. *Sun, Church in Zeeland*. 1910. Oil on canvas. 90.5 × 62.1 × 2.9 cm (35³/₈ × 24¹/₂ × 1¹/₈”). Tate Gallery, London, England. © Tate Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY. ARS, NY.

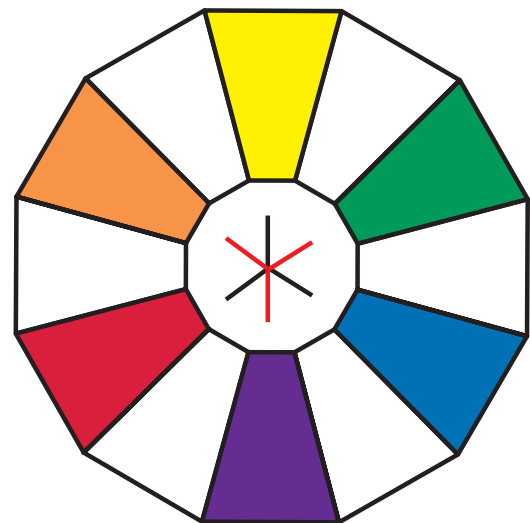
Complementary color schemes are exciting. They are loud, and they demand to be noticed. They are frequently used to catch the viewer's attention. How many ways do people use the red-and-green color scheme? Where else have you seen complementary color schemes used to grab attention?

Not all color schemes based on complements are loud and demanding. If the hues are of low intensity, the contrast is not so harsh. Changing the values of the hues will also soften the effect of the design.

Color Triads

A color triad is composed of three colors spaced an equal distance apart on the color wheel. The contrast between triad colors is not as strong as that between complements. The primary triad is composed of red, yellow, and blue. The secondary triad contains orange, green, and violet (**Figure 6.16**).

A high-intensity primary triad is very difficult to work with. The contrast between the three hues is so strong that they might make people uncomfortable. A triad can be made more comfortable to the viewer by changing the intensity or values (**Figure 6.17**). A triad of secondary colors is less disturbing.

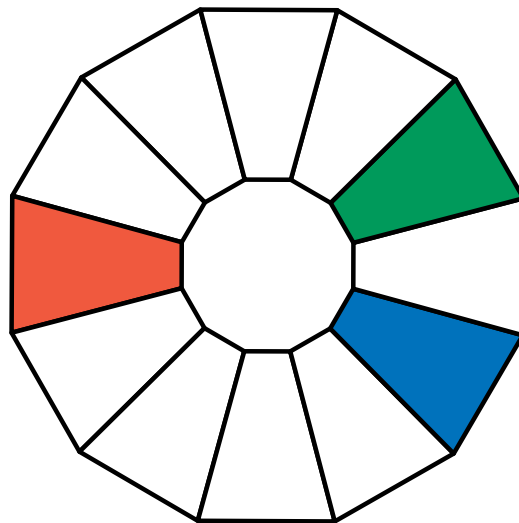


▲ **FIGURE 6.16** Color triads.



▲ **FIGURE 6.17** Even though this painting is based on the primary triad, it is very comfortable to view. How has the artist organized the colors to make this painting easy to look at?

Fritz Glarner. *Relational Painting, Tondo #40*. 1955–56. Oil on Masonite. Diameter: 111.8 cm (44"). Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Gift of the T. B. Walker Foundation, 1956.



▲ **FIGURE 6.18** Split complement.

Split Complements

A *split complement* is the combination of one hue plus the hues on each side of its complement (**Figure 6.18**). This is easier to work with than a straight complementary scheme because it offers

more variety. For example, start with red-orange. Check the color wheel to find its complement, blue-green. The two hues next to blue-green are blue and green. Red-orange, blue, and green form a split-complementary color scheme.



▲ **FIGURE 6.19** Warm and cool colors.

Warm and Cool Colors

Sometimes the colors are divided into two groups, called *warm* and *cool* (**Figure 6.19**). Warm colors are red, orange, and yellow. They are usually associated with warm things, such as sunshine or fire (**Figure 6.20**). Cool colors are blue, green, and violet. They are usually associated with cool things, such as ice, snow, water, or grass (**Figure 6.21**). Warm colors seem to move toward the viewer and cool colors seem to recede, or move away.



▲ **FIGURE 6.20** Albizu is a Puerto Rican artist. Many of her paintings were commissioned by jazz musician Stan Getz to be used as covers for his record albums. Can you see how the small areas of black jump out from the warm colors to visually suggest music with a Latin jazz beat?

Olga Albizu. *Growth*. c. 1960. Oil on canvas. 127 × 107 cm (50 × 42 1/8"). Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Miami, Florida. Gift of Esso Inter-American, Inc.

The amount of warmth or coolness is relative. Violet on a red background appears much cooler than violet alone. However, the same violet on a blue background seems much warmer than the violet alone.

Activity

Using Color Schemes

Demonstrating Effective Use of Art Media in Design.

In your sketchbook, draw several squares. Arrange your initials or the letters of your name in a design in one of the squares. The letters must touch the four edges of the square. Do several different designs using the remaining squares. Play with the letters—turn them upside down, twist them out of shape, make them fat, or overlap them. Consider the letters as shapes. They do not have to be readable.

When you find a design you like, reproduce it on four squares of white paper. Now paint each design using one of the following color schemes: monochromatic, analogous, complementary, triad, split-complementary, warm, or cool. How do the color arrangements affect the design?

Computer Option. Create a design with the initials or letters of your name. The letters must touch the four edges of the screen. Experiment with the letters—make them different sizes and turn them upside down or twist them out of shape. They do not have to be readable.

When you find a design you like, save it. Use various tools to fill in all the shapes, lines, and spaces with each of the following color schemes: monochromatic, analogous, complementary, triad, split-complementary, warm, and cool.

When you finish all the color schemes, evaluate their effect on the basic design.



▲ **FIGURE 6.21** The title for this work can be translated as “sad fact” or “sad figure” or even “metaphor for sadness.” Examine the work to find a figure sitting in the center with legs and torso bent. The figure is surrounded by intersecting blue, black, and white shapes. Does the color scheme enhance the mood the artist intended to convey? Explain.

Francis Picabia. *Figure Triste*. 1912. Oil on canvas. 118.1 × 119.4 cm (46½ × 47”). Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Gift of the Seymour H. Knox Foundation, Inc., 1968. © 2003 Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York/ADAGP, Paris.



Check Your Understanding

1. Describe a monochromatic color scheme.
2. What types of colors, when placed side by side, seem to vibrate?
3. Compare and contrast the color schemes in Figures 6.20 and 6.21.