

# DESN 110 VISUAL DESIGN

## Psychology of Color

Color is one of the most powerful tools that the designer has, because it has the strength to evoke specific emotional responses in the viewer – some personal and some universal. In this assignment we are going to discuss some factors that come into play when using color for an emotional response.

### COLOR DISCORD

Color discord is just the opposite of color harmony. Just as the word “discord” implies, these discordant color combinations seem to clash and have a negative emotion, rather than having a harmonious feeling. They will tend to give the viewer an uneasy, disturbed feeling. But used in small doses, or in a mild way, they can convey a feeling of excitement, and can also be eye-catching.

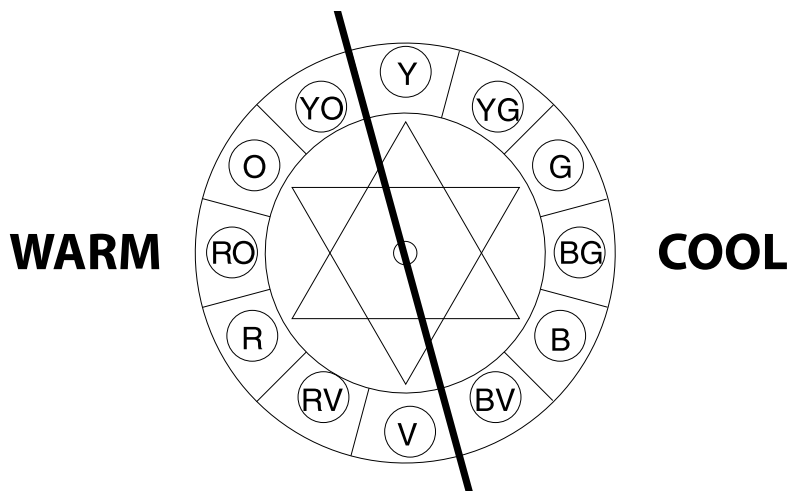
#### Here are some ways to make discordant color combinations:

- A primary and an intermediate beyond an adjacent secondary, such as red and blue-violet
- A secondary and an intermediate beyond an adjacent primary, such as orange and yellow-green
- Two intermediates on either side of a primary, such as blue-green and blue-violet

Color value is very important when creating discord. When the two colors have similar values, there is greater discord. When there is very much contrast of values, these color combinations will still look harmonious, not discordant.

### WARM AND COOL COLORS

The color wheel can be divided into two equal parts, with one half being considered as warm colors, and the other half considered cool colors. The warm side consists of reds, oranges, and yellows, while the cool side consists of blues and greens. Although these warm and cool colors can have a great effect on the emotion of a design, as we have seen with discordant colors, the combination of colors is even more important.



- Red, orange, and yellow are the colors of fire, so we automatically associate them with warmth. These warm colors can stimulate and excite the viewer, or evoke happy, cheerful emotions.
- Blue and green are the colors of sky, grass, and water, so we associate them with cooler emotions that are quiet and relaxing. They can also evoke feelings of sadness and depression.

Another point that should be made about warm and cool colors that is not related to emotion, is the power of the arrangement of warm and cool to create more depth in a design. Usually warm colors tend to come forward, while cool colors tend to recede. If you want an object to look like it is in front of a background, you would want to use warm colors on the object, and cool colors on the background.

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### COLOR ASSOCIATIONS OR SYMBOLISM

Color association or symbolism means what thoughts and emotions come to mind when we see a color, or if we just read the name of a color. There are two types of color associations; personal and universal.

Personal color associations deal with your own personal experiences that may have involved a particular color. This power of association can override what we have just discussed about warm and cool colors to you. For instance, a fond memory of something that was blue in color could evoke a warm feeling toward blue.

Universal color association is a culturally accepted association for a color. This is an association of a color and an idea that is so common that everyone knows what the color means, such as red for stop and green for go. These associations are even incorporated into our language with phrases like “feeling blue,” or “seeing red”.

Here are a few common generalizations to be used as guidelines. These are not absolutes because how we feel about color is a very complex psychology. But they may prove to be useful when trying to choose a color combination in a design.

- Red** – Excitement, energy, passion, desire, strength, power, heat, love, aggression, danger, fire blood, war, violence, aggression.
- Blue** – Peace, tranquility, calm, confidence, conservatism, stability, harmony, unity, trust, truth, security, cleanliness, loyalty, water, sky, cold, technology.
- Yellow** – Joy, happiness, optimism, idealism, imagination, hope, summer, sunshine, gold, dishonesty, cowardice, betrayal, jealousy, covetousness, deceit, illness, hazard.
- Green** – Nature, environment, healthy, good luck, renewal, youth, vigor, spring, generosity, fertility, jealousy, inexperience, envy, misfortune.
- Orange** – Energy, balance, warmth, enthusiasm, vibrant, expressive, flamboyant, demanding attention.
- Violet** – Royalty, spirituality, nobility, mysterious, transformation, wisdom, enlightenment, cruelty, arrogance, mourning.
- Brown** – Earth, hearth, home, outdoors, reliability, comfort, endurance, stability, simplicity.
- Gray** – Security, reliability, intelligence, modesty, dignity, maturity, solid, conservative, boring.
- White** – Reverence, purity, simplicity, cleanliness, peace, innocence, winter, snow, good, sterility, marriage, death, cold, clinical.
- Black** – Power, sexuality, sophistication, formal, elegance, wealth, mystery, fear, evil, anonymity, unhappiness, sadness, remorse, anger, death.

These color associations are very important when it comes to packaging and consumer products, as well as for corporate images. Some things to consider when choosing a color for a design are:

- Cultural associations with color
- The color preferences and associations of the target audience
- The personality of the company you are designing for
- Your personal preferences for color
- Awareness of current trends in color