COLOR THEORY

"The painter of the future will be a colorist in a way no one has seen before." Van Gogh

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COLOR WHEEL BASICS

Let's start with the basics for those of you new to painting. Colors are determined by how the light reflects off the surface; projecting back primary, secondary, and tertiary colors.

The Color Wheel is an arrangement of colors around a circular device that shows the primary, secondary, and tertiary colors and how they each relate to one another.

Primary Colors - There are three primary colors being red, yellow, and blue. These three cannot be created by mixing other colors.

Secondary Colors - When two primaries are mixed together in various proportions a rainbow of colors can be created.

Red + Yellow = Orange

Yellow + Blue = Green

Blue + Red = Purple

Tertiary Colors - When one primary and one adjacent secondary color is mixed together a tertiary color is created. A tertiary color will always have another tertiary color located the opposite of it on the color wheel. For example, Red Violet is opposite of Yellow Green.

Blue + Purple = Blue Violet

Red + Purple = Red Violet

Yellow + Green = Yellow Green

Blue + Green = Blue Green

Red + Orange = Red Orange

 Yellow + Orange = Yellow Orange

A **complementary color** is opposite its color on the wheel, so all colors have a complementary color. A complimentary color is used as an accent color that helps create harmony among the colors.

Warm Verses Cool Colors

Colors have temperatures and are categorized as either warm or cool in appearance. Red and yellow are warm, and blue is cool. Yet each color has an undertone. A color's undertone also has a temperature. For example, violet is a cool color, but it can have either a red or a blue undertone. Having a red undertone would categorize it as a warm violet. Having a blue undertone would categorize it as a cool violet. Green is a cool color, but it may have a yellow undertone which makes it a warm green or a blue undertone making it a cool green. Adding a noticeable amount of blue to the green will cool its undertone even further making it a cool blue green (tertiary color).

Warm Colors - Red, yellow, and orange are considered to be exuberant and aggressive colors. Bright warm colors demand the viewer's attention.

Cool Colors - Blue, green and violet are considered calm and inviting colors. Pale cool colors are also used to emphasize distance. For example, a tree receding in the background has a lighter color value (high key) than those in the foreground.
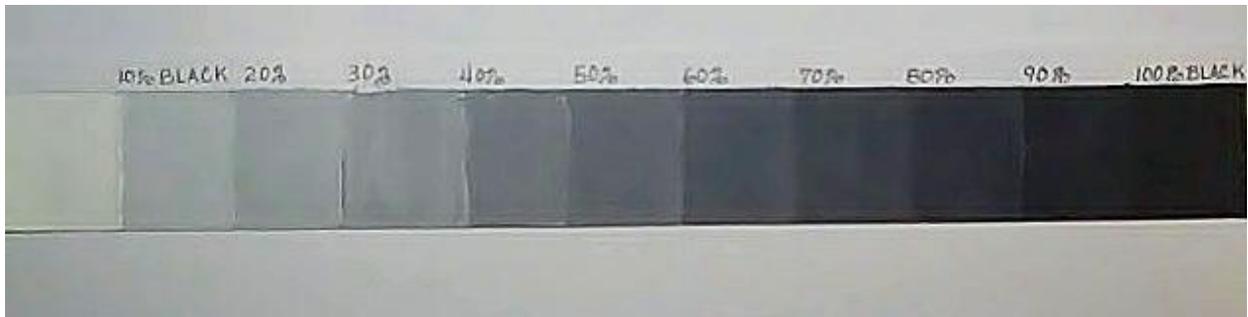
Value Scale

A value scale is based on a scale of 1 - 10, starting with white at 10% black and ending with 100 % black. A value is the lightness or darkness of a color. To change the value of a color, add white, gray or black, or its complementary color according to the value that you want to achieve.

Tint a color by adding white to it.

Tone a color down by adding gray or its compliment color to it.

Shade a color by adding black to it.

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

High Key Colors - The brightness of a color on the light end of the value scale. The color can have varying degrees of color saturation.

Low Key Colors - The brightness of a color on the dark end of the value scale. The color can have varying degrees of color saturation.