

GLOSSARY OF COLOR TERMS



Analogous Colors- A group of three or four colors that are adjacent to each other on the color wheel.

Achromatic - Using the tints, tones, and shades of black, gray, and white.

Chroma - The brilliance (high intensity) or dullness (low intensity) of a color.

Color Temperature - Colors are warm or cool in appearance. Red and yellow are warm whereas blue is cool. Yet each color within its category is also considered either warm or cool. For example purple is warm if it has more red in it than blue, and green is more warm if it has more yellow in it than blue. This is true within each category of color due to its undertone which determines its temperature. There are warm blues and cool yellows.

Complementary Colors - The color opposite of another color on the color wheel.

Contrast - The marked difference between things placed next to each other as in shapes, colors, and light. For example, black and white, light and dark, smooth and rough.

Diad - Two colors that are spaced two colors apart on the color wheel.

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

Hue - The name assigned to a color. Note: When the word "Hue" follows the name of a paint color, it means that the color is similar to the pure pigment, but cheaper and less toxic.

Intensity - The strength of a color.

Intermediary Colors - Colors created by mixing a primary and its closest secondary color on the color wheel.

Juxtaposition - Colors placed next to each other.

Key Color - The dominate value or color in the color palette.

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

Monochromatic Colors - Using different shades (values) of one color.

Palette - The colors chosen by the artist for a composition.

Primary - Red, blue, and yellow are the three colors that cannot be created by mixing other colors.

Saturation - Is the degree of intensity or strength of a color. Highly saturated colors will leave behind a stain on the surface when removed.

Secondary - When two primary colors are mixed together in various proportions, they can create a rainbow of colors. The secondary colors are green, orange and purple.

Shading - A mixture of color with black or a dark mix that changes the value of a color to a lower key. Is applied to an area requiring less light, or to create more depth in a painting. This will also lessen the transparency of a color.

Split Complementary Colors - A color plus the two colors adjacent to the complementary color. The complementary color is not included. For example, green as the starting color, and red violet and red orange are the two split complements adjacent to red. Red is the complement of green which it is not included in the split.

Tertiary - When one primary and one adjacent secondary is color mixed. Tertiary colors are always the opposite of each other on the color wheel.

Tetrad - Using four colors on the color wheel that are equally spaced in the form of a square or rectangle.

Tint - When a color is mixed with white or a lighter value color.

Tinting Strength - How strong a color is.

Tone - When a color is mixed with gray or a color that will reduce the intensity of that color.

Triad - Three colors that are equally spaced from each other on the color wheel that form a triangle.

Value - The lightness or darkness of a color.

Value Scale - A value scale is based on a scale of 1 - 10. A value is the lightness or darkness of a color. To change the value of a color, you would add white, gray or black according to the value that you want to achieve.