

Visual Elements - Color

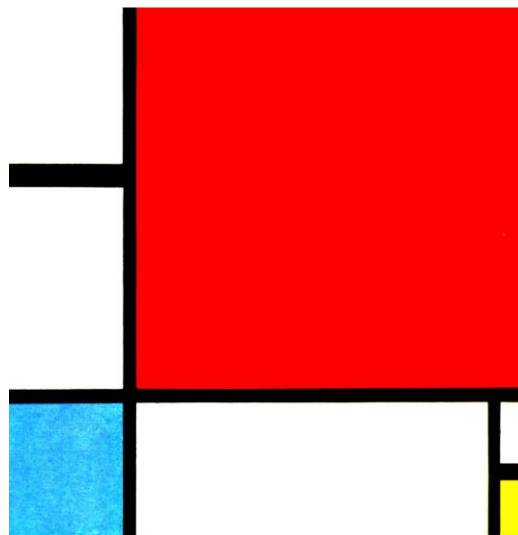
I. Term: Color

II. Definition of the term: Color is the effect on our eyes when we perceive light waves of differing frequencies. Objects that appear to have color are reflecting the colors in the light that illuminates them.

III. Examples of the term:



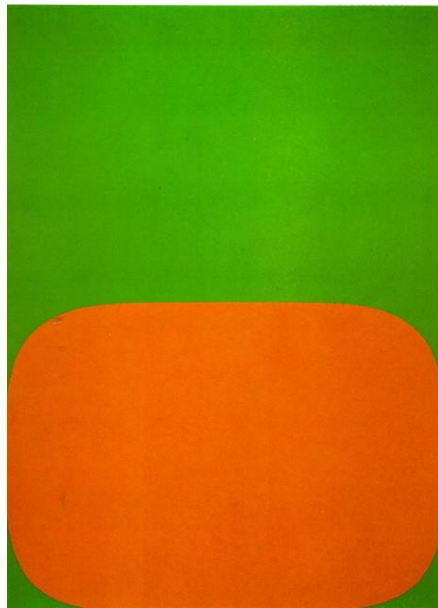
PRIMARY COLORS – Red, Yellow, and Blue



Piet Mondrian *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* 1930

- These are colors you cannot get from mixing any other colors. You must have the primary colors to start, and with them, you can create all the rest of the colors. If you are a starving artist and can only afford 3 tubes of paint, I would recommend you buy one red, one yellow, and one blue!

SECONDARY COLORS - Orange, Green, and Violet

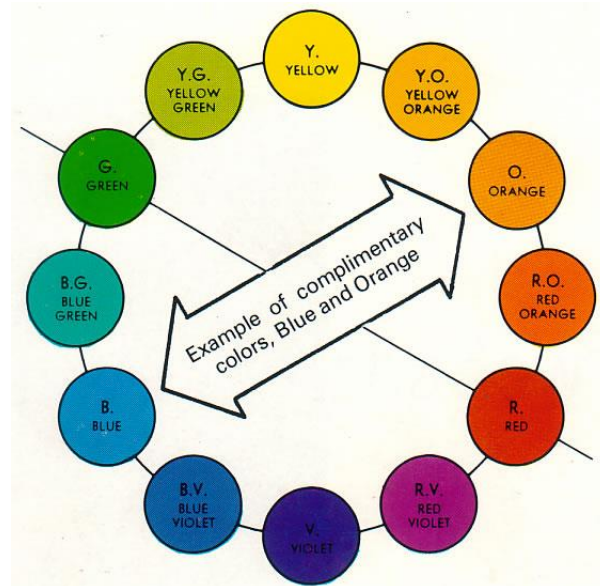


Ellsworth Kelly *Orange and Green* 1966

- Secondary colors are made by mixing two primary colors. On the color wheel you can see the secondary color is in between the primary colors you would combine. Red mixed with yellow makes orange. Yellow mixed with blue makes green. Blue mixed with red makes violet.

TERTIARY COLORS: Tertiary colors are made by mixing a primary color and an adjacent (i.e., neighboring) secondary color. For example, when you mix the primary color red with the secondary color orange you get the tertiary color, red-orange. Notice that all of the names of the tertiary colors start with the primary name.

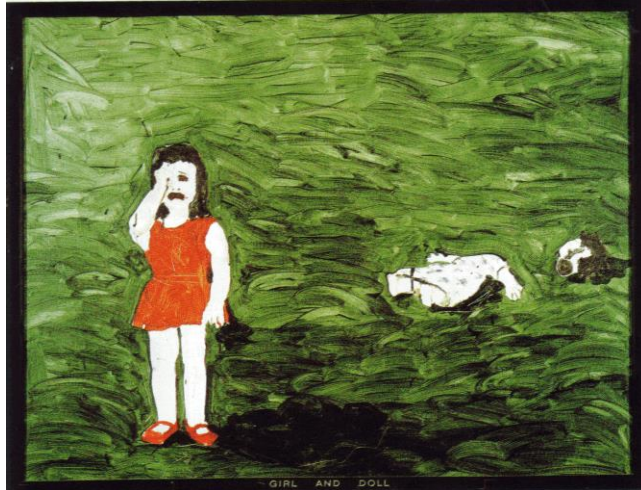
COMPLIMENTARY COLORS: Red & Green, Blue & Orange, Yellow & Violet



- All of the primary colors have a *complimentary* secondary color. Complimentary color pairs are located directly across from one another on the color wheel. A color is intensified when it is next to its compliment.



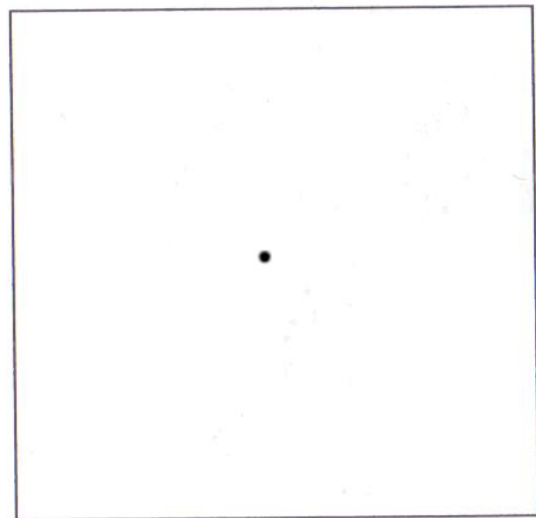
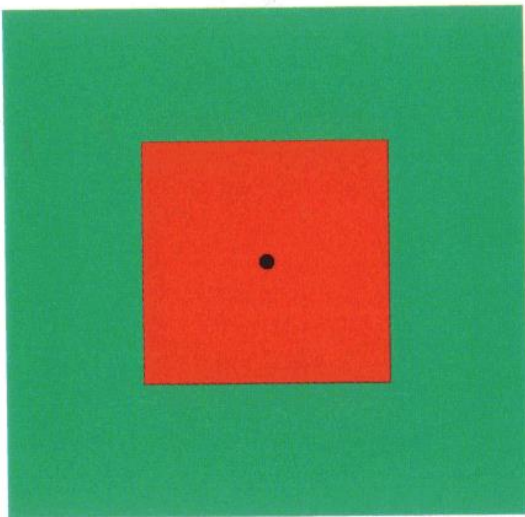
- In this portrait of my dog, Leeloo, I used complimentary colors blue and orange. Both of these colors seem more intense when they are used next to each other. The blue color of Leeloo's fur pops with contrast against the orange background.



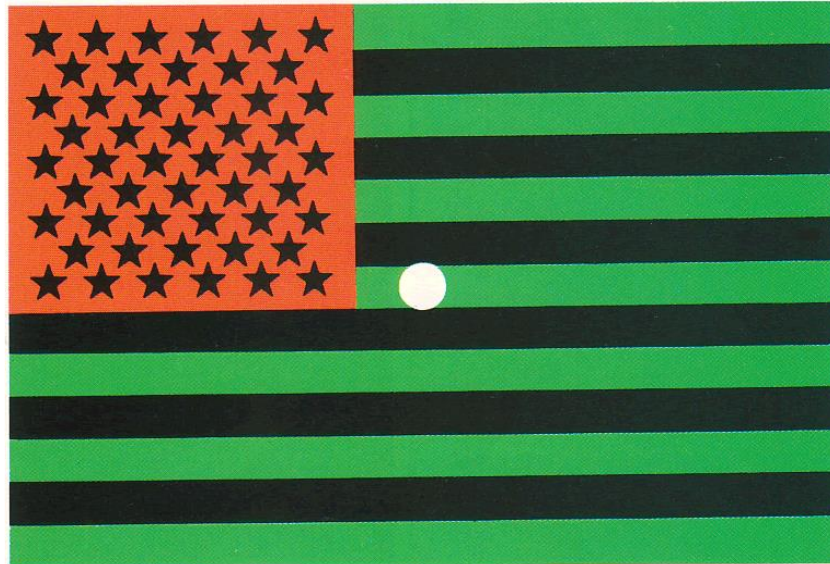
Neil Jenny *Girl and Doll* 1969

- The subject of an artwork can also become more intense when the artist uses complimentary colors. This image of a decapitated doll and crying little girl is already a bit disturbing. Neil Jenny's juxtaposition of complimentary colors (red and green) exacerbates this effect. I think it would be quite different if the girl was blond, tan, and wore blue.

AFTER IMAGE EFFECTS: A color is enhanced by its compliment as a result of an optical effect known *afterimage*. In an afterimage a color reverses as its compliment. The best way to understand this concept is to experience it for yourself.



Stare at the green and red square for a minute or so. Then, quickly glance over to the white square and notice how the image changes.



This flag was made with the complimentary colors of blue (orange) & red (green). Stare at it for a minute or two. Then look quickly down to a black, white paper. It changes to the recognizable colors!

MIXING COMPLIMENTARY COLORS: Although complimentary colors intensify when they are side by side, if they are mixed the intensity is lowered. Mixing complimentary colors result in a dulled, brownish color. This is why many children end up with a brown “mud puddle” when they finger-paint!

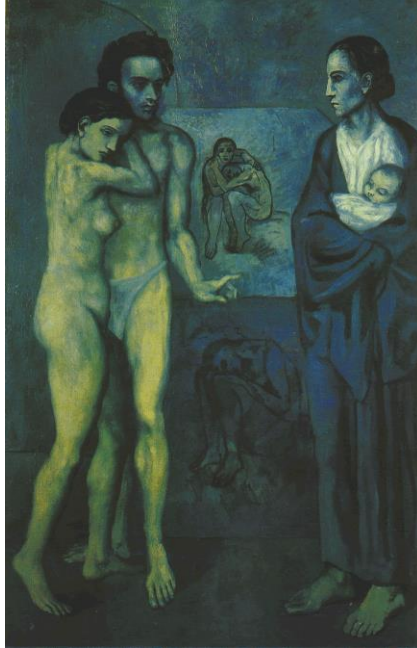


Yellow

Dulled

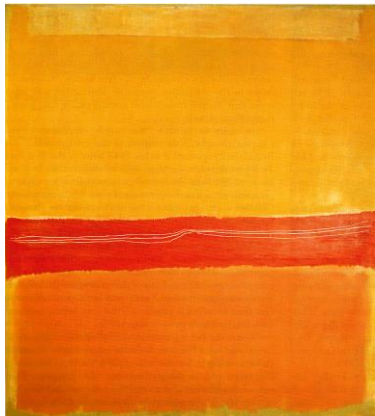
Violet

ANALOGOUS COLORS: Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel. When an analogous color scheme is used it often creates a soothing or harmonious effect because the sequential colors naturally look like they belong together.



- Picasso's *La Vie* uses an analogous color scheme. The colors that dominate are yellow-green, green, blue-green and blue – all adjacent on the color wheel. (It probably does not surprise you that Picasso painted this during his “Blue Period.”)

WARM COLORS: Red, Orange, and Yellow



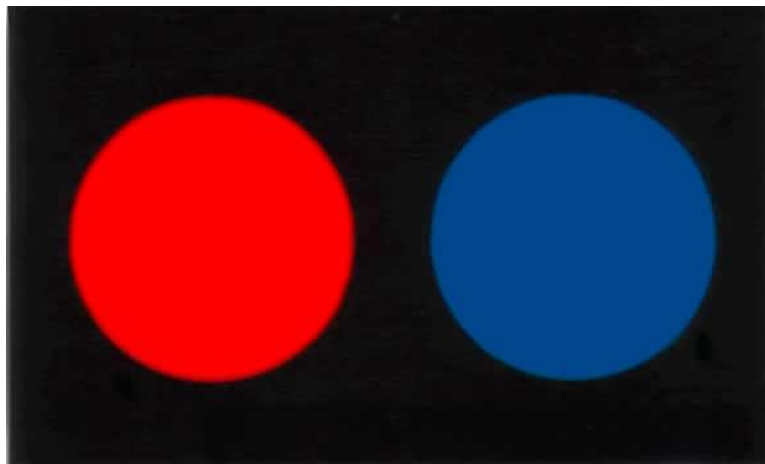
- The warm colors are red, orange and yellow. Most people associate these colors with things that are hot to touch. These are colors you see in flames or heated metal, such as an electric burner. Mark Rothko used these colors in his painting entitled *Number 22* (1949).

COOL COLORS: Green, Blue, and Violet



The cool colors are green, blue and violet. These colors tend to be associated with things that are cool in temperature. You may even have a faucet on your sink or shower with a blue ring indicating the cold water. Morris Louis used mostly cool colors in this piece entitled *Tet* (1958).

EFFECTS OF WARM AND COOL COLORS: For most people, warm colors tend to stand out or project while cool colors tend to recede. Think about the colors used to get your attention in traffic lights and signs. Most of the lights and signs that grab your attention as you drive are warm colors. Red signs and lights are particularly important to notice!



See if you experience the same effect as you look at this painting.



Hans Hofmann *The Gate* 1959-60

TINTS AND SHADES/ MONOCHROMATIC COLOR SCHEME: This painting uses a monochromatic color scheme. A *monochromatic* artwork only uses a single color.



Tints of the color are created by adding white and adding black creates *shades*.



Tints of red Shades of red