

THE COLOUR CIRCLE

The COLOUR CIRCLE is a theoretical model to help artists understand the complexities of colour mixing and colour characteristics.



PRIMARY COLOURS (cannot be mixed from any other colour)

Red

Yellow

Blue

SECONDARY COLOURS (made by mixing two primary colours)

Orange (red + yellow)

Green (yellow + blue)

Purple (blue + red)

TERTIARY COLOURS - All mixes of primary and secondary colours produce tertiary colours.

BROWN - To make brown mix all three primary colours (different proportions give different hues of brown from warm to cool)

HUES - are all the resulting colours you get from mixing the three primaries eg. hues of red - vermilion, crimson, scarlet and cadmium red.

TINTS AND SHADES - are hues subject to light and dark. Dark hues (shades) are achieved by adding black or more commonly a mixture of red, blue and a little yellow. Light hues and highlights (tints) are achieved by adding white.

HARMONIOUS COLOURS - are colours, (hues, tints and shades) that are close to each other on the colour circle. They harmonize but do not provide contrast. They are often used in combination with smaller amounts of their 'complementary colour' to provide vibrancy and contrast.

COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS - are colours directly opposite each other on the colour circle. They complement by making their opposite look more intense. eg. orange and blue.

MONOCHROMATIC COLOURS - are tints and shades of the same colour.

COOL AND WARM COLOURS - Warm are all those that have a yellow undertone, such as bright red, oranges, yellows, and green-yellows, and are typically thought to express warmth, comfort, and energy. These colours also tend to make things stand out and advance towards you from the picture.

Cool colours have a blue undertone, and include violets, blues, aquas, and greens. When they are used together, cool colours seem to recede from the viewer, and express coolness, detachment, stability, and calmness.

NEUTRAL COLOURS - Black, grey, and whites are neutral; browns, beiges, and tans are sometimes considered to be neutral as well. Neutral colours are intended to send no messages but often work harmoniously with other colors.

However grey is a very common colour and you will find that choice of a warm or a cool grey can be important. It is the grey made from purely black and white that is totally neutral and lacks life.