

Keywords: Colour, Intuition, Perception

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Within this essay I will be looking into three words which are reflective of my interests and ambitions for my independent project next year. My chosen words are colour, intuition and perception. I am interested in how the use of colour and colour theory is used in designs and the fashion industry, which links to my area of study. In terms of creating art and patterns, I am interested in how much our intuition affects our creativity and whether designers should base designs solely on our intuition or facts. Lastly, I am interested in the idea of perceptions and how we already have preexisting perceptions which can affect how we view art and design and how this also can link to fashion and surface pattern.

Firstly, colour is “the appearance that things have that results from the way in which they reflect light” (OED, 2023). This definition suggests colour is a simple concept, suggesting colour and light are dependent to one another, and this connection between the two effects how we see. Another definition describes colour as “a highly complex perceptual experience that is an integrative product of numerous characteristics of the physical stimulus, the observer and the environmental surround” (Elliot, A et al (2015) p.3-6). This suggests that colour is more than just the colour we observe, colours can have an emotional response. This is therefore important to consider when it comes to designing for surface pattern as the clothing individuals wear and textiles in homes can influence how one feels, due to the use of colour. According to Adolph Reinhardt (Horrocks, C (2012) p.15), “the process of symbol formation teaches us to expect that colour may signify something other than a visually perceptible hue”. Therefore, colour is more than what we see, and an understanding of colour is vital in terms of art and design, “the effects of colours should be experienced and understood, not only visually, but also psychologically and symbolically” (Itten, J. Birren F (1970) p.12). This suggests that through understanding the principles of colour theory and the psychological effect colours can play on people’s emotions and perceptions, designers can adapt this knowledge to their work in order to make designs more meaningful and attract the desired audience by influencing how they want people to feel. An example of this in terms of surface pattern is in the fashion industry and considering colour theory as a tool to create an emotional response from consumers give deeper meaning to clothing garments, other than just aesthetics.

Deeper understanding of colour can be achieved through knowledge of the meaning different colours hold and the psychological impact associated with colour. For example, according to a WGSN article the colour blue is the most liked colour worldwide as “we trust and love this tone because it’s the colour of the sky” and it is associated with “its feeling of

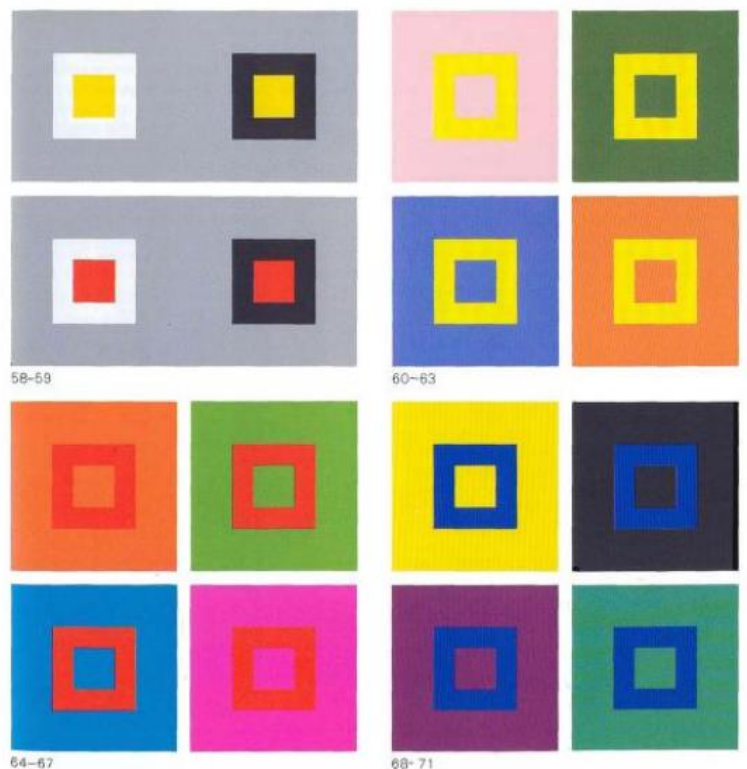
safeness” (Boddy, J (2017). Therefore, perhaps designers are considerate of the colour blue



(Figure,1. *Iride-print maxi dress*, 2023)

The image to the right is an example of this. Continuing with the colour blue, Johannes Itten explains “blue on yellow has a very dark effect, indeed, devoid of radiance” and “when blue is dimmed, it falls into superstition, fear, grief and perdition”. It is interesting how when the colour blue is seen to be darkened it takes on completely different associations to what blue has previously been associated with in the WGSN report. In contrast to this, “on black, blue gleams in bright, pure strength” (Itten J. Birren, F (1970). Perhaps Emilio Pucci provokes a feeling of power and boldness when combining

in designs as it appeals to a global market and is ‘most liked’. The image to the left is a current garment taken from the fashion designer Emilio Pucci whose designs are visually very colourful which could suggest that colour theory plays a significant role in his designs. Perhaps by deconstructing the image in relation to colour theory it can help define what the word ‘colour’ means in terms of fashion and how it can give a deeper meaning to design. Firstly, the colour blue is prominent which highlights what I previously looked at about the associations to the colour blue being linked to feelings of trust and safety. Black and yellow are also prominent in this image. In the book ‘*The Elements of Colour*’ Johannes Itten (Itten, (1970) p.87) simplifies colour theory and his squares of colour are interesting in terms of creating colour combinations and demonstrating how certain colours can change in appearance.



(Figure,2. *The Elements of Colour*, 1970)

blue with black in his design as the contrast makes the blue appear brighter to the eye. Furthermore, the contrasting colour of yellow on the bag is a considered approach and links to colour theory and opposing colours as highlighted by Isaac Newton (Gregory, R (2015) p.14-23). Therefore, this suggests that colour theory does have a role in fashion and perhaps designers refer to it as a way to connect to consumers on a deeper psychological level.

Figure 3 also links to this and is possibly inspired by Johannes Itten's blocks of colour which I previously looked at (Itten J. Birren, F (1970)).

Therefore, defining colour is complex and there are external factors that impact how we see colour such as light, this makes one definition impossible as colour is both what we literally see and the associations, symbolisms, and psychological effect it has on us.



(Figure,3. United Colours of Benetton, 2023)

My second keyword is Intuition which is “an ability to understand/ know something immediately based on your feeling rather than facts” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Therefore, artists and designers can be described as being intuitive as creating art is often influenced by feelings and movement around a blank canvas. This can be demonstrated by Jackson Pollock's work whose style is very much abstract and expressive, “when I am in my painting, I am not aware of what I’m doing” (Lucie-Smith, E (2020) p.11). This quote taken from Pollock suggests that the way in which he paints is very intuitive and perhaps he doesn’t put too much thought into what he wants the outcome to be. This can also link to the theories carried out by psychologist Sigmund Freud, there is “suggestion that we humans are not always conscious of our reasons for doing what we do” (Oatley, K (2018) p.7). This quote from Freud suggests an understanding of Jackson Pollock feels when he creates his work, suggesting intuition is more of a feeling and experience happening in the unconscious rather than a conscious thought. Therefore, art and designing are a way that people can express their unconscious thoughts in a visual way.



(Figure,4. *Painting In His Long Island Studio*)

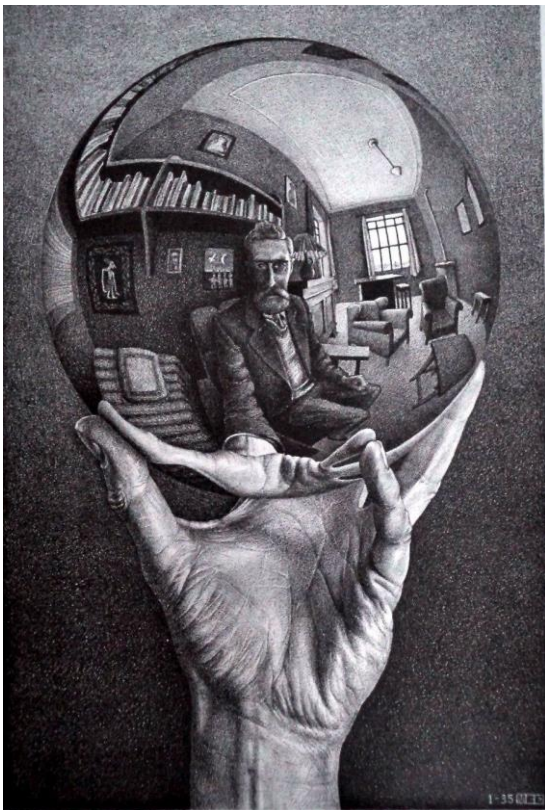
Figure 4 shows Jackson Pollock creating one of his paintings. Jackson pollock was a big part of the Abstract Expressionism Movement and it is clear from the image that Pollock is expressive when painting and continuous movement is a prominent factor. He states “on the floor I feel more at ease. I feel nearer, more part of the painting...and literally be in the painting” (Lucie-Smith, E (2020) p.11). This suggests that he is expressive within his work and perhaps intuition is more about removing yourself from reality and allowing yourself to embrace feelings and emotions without thinking too much on the meaning. For example, “Intuitions are spontaneous thoughts i.e., rapid, automatic and effortless” (Chudnoff, E (2014) p.1-22).

Furthermore, perhaps intuition can be linked to Spirituality. According to the book *‘Situating Spirituality: Context, Practice and Power’* Spirituality can be referred to as “healing oneself by discovering the natural, authentic, or true self that is hidden underneath layers of socialisation” (Steensland, B et al (2022), p.89). The word ‘healing’ is interesting as art can be associated to a form of therapy to help people overcome personal issues. Furthermore, ‘hidden underneath’ can relate to what I previously looked at in terms of Freuds unconscious mind, suggesting art can be a way to express our intuitive hidden thoughts to ‘heal’ and communicate our emotions.

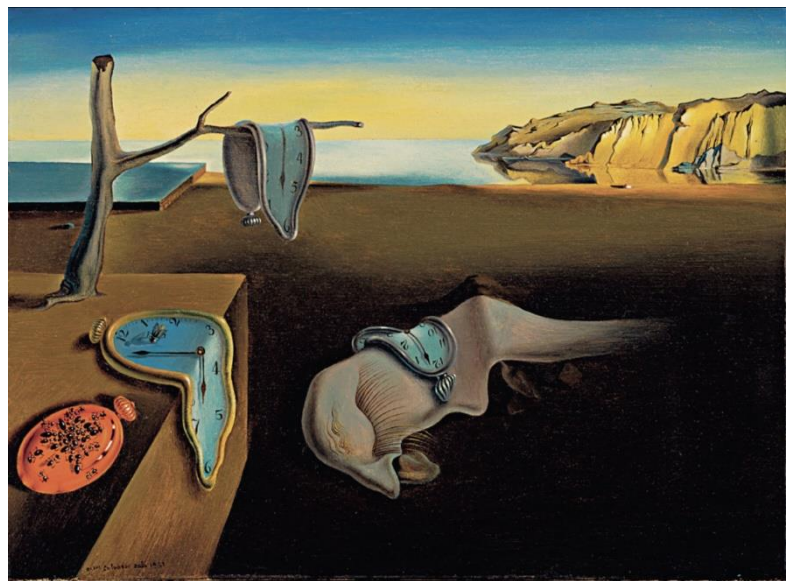
Similarly, according to the book *‘Intuition: Its Powers and Perils’* intuition is “pondering the connections between subjective and objective truth, between feeling and fact, between intuition and reality. I’m predisposed to welcome unhidden hunches, creative ideas, the spirits workings” (Myers, G, D (2002) p.1). It is interesting to contemplate whether creating intuitive designs for surface pattern and fashion have the same effect as paintings. For example, fashion is based on predictions and following trends to increase sales which seems limiting in terms of designers being guided by their intuition and creating work that they enjoy. Perhaps designers should focus more on their intuition and that ‘gut feeling’ to feel

more connected to what they are creating, which consequently may appeal more to consumers.

Lastly, my final keyword is perception. According to the dictionary, perception is “an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something” (OED,2023). We are often predisposed to perceptions, and I am interested to understand how we visually perceive artwork and how perceptions are also factored into fashion. In order to gather an understanding of visual perceptions in art, the surrealism movement is a good link.



(Figure,5. *Hand with Reflecting Sphere*, 1935)

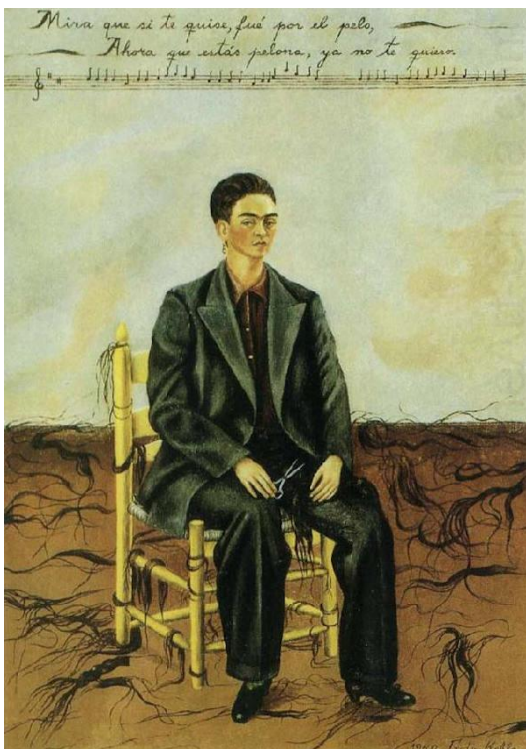


(Figure,6. *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931)

Figure 5 is a work by M.C Escher who was influential in terms of the surrealist movement, and according to the book '*Dada and Surrealism: a very short introduction*' "Surrealism can be understood as constituting the ideology it professed to oppose, caught in a distorting mirror" (Hopkins, D (2014) p.154). This quite literal drawing shows a hand holding a reflective sphere. This links to our perception as Escher was capable of recreating how we see reflections which often distorts our visual perception of how we see things. Furthermore, surrealist artwork can also challenge our pre-existing perceptions and represent the issues surrounding what is reality and fantasy. An example of this is the 'Persistence of Memory painting' (see Figure 6) by Salvador Dali. The painting consists of 'dripping' clocks which therefore can link to the idea of pre-existing perceptions as it challenges what we consider normal. For example, the clocks appear soft which is incorrect and unfamiliar as we do not consider clock to look this way. Therefore, artwork can be a

visual way to challenge our perceptions, suggesting that we have pre-existing perceptions of the world which we may not be consciously aware of.

To continue, we have perceptions of clothing and fashion which may have been embedded into us from society and what was considered as socially acceptable in the past. For example, according to the book '*Introducing Fashion Theory: From Androgyny and Zeitgeist*', perceptions of fashion have changed, such as "from a modern perspective there are expected rules to follow... from a post-modern perspective these rules are challenged" (Reilly, A (2020) p.1-28). This is similar to what I previously looked at in terms of the surrealist movement which opposed the conventional topics of art, and it challenged our thoughts and the way we view the work. An example of an artist who challenged perceptions and can be linked to the fashion context is Frida Kahlo.



(Figure,7. *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940)

Figure 7 is a self-portrait of Frida Kahlo showing her wearing a man's suit which was not socially acceptable of that time, "the suit was adopted as the basic and classic example of mens attire" (Reilly, A (2020) p.69-94). Therefore, this painting would have challenged society and peoples pre-existing perceptions of what is expected of women in terms of what they wear and femininity. Perhaps challenging the perceptions of what is considered masculine and feminine has allowed views to change and develop over time. Therefore, our perceptions these days have developed from the past and are constantly evolving. To illustrate this, Figure 8 shows that the tailored suit is considered as "gender fluid" and according to a WGSN article "boundaries of traditional workwear have been redefined" (Yiannakou, L (2022) which is a contrast to what was previously expected, "working woman in offices were expected to don dresses and skirts" (Reilly, A (2020) p.69-94). Therefore, this



(Figure,8. JACQNY, 2023)

shows that perceptions in fashion have changed, and fashion is becoming more inclusive and less based on gender or class. Perhaps our perceptions are heavily influenced on societies views and expectations, making perception less associated with our unconscious thoughts.

By researching my three chosen words, I have formed connections and similarities. Firstly, by researching into colour and more specifically colour theory, colour can be linked to perception. For example, our perceptions on how we see certain colours can change when two colours are placed together, as shown by Johannes Itten and his 'blocks of colour' (see figure 2). Therefore, colour and perception are linked and the choice of colour that designers or artists use can impact our emotions. Perhaps, more consideration of colour and its impact can lead to interesting concepts in terms of design. Furthermore, colours have certain associations which can challenge our perception. An example of this is the colour pink and its associations with femininity. Pink is often associated as a 'girly' colour whereas society has been challenging this perception with the increase of the colour pink in men's fashion.

(See figure 9). Colour and intuition may be different as colour can require more thought compared to an intuitive reaction which is "spontaneous" and "effortless" (Chudnoff, E (2014) p.1-22). Having said this, the use of colour can create an unknown feeling to people. An example of an artist who has a strong sense and consideration of colour is Althea Mcnish who said, "colour is mine" and colour shape and pattern are my medium of expression to produce spontaneous reaction" (Black History Month, 2023). Therefore, this suggests that colour and intuition are both similar and different; selecting colours in a design is less intuitive but the feelings colour can create to an individual is an intuitive "spontaneous reaction". Perhaps colour is cultural, and associations or "reactions" are made which therefore links to our perceptions.



(Figure,9. Bottega Veneta, 2017)

Perception and intuition can be linked as they both involve our unconscious mind, and both take into consideration Freud's theories on the unconscious as previously mentioned. For example, it can be suggested that surrealist artists such as the ones I looked at use their intuition to create their surrealist paintings which were based on dreams and not their conscious thoughts or reality. Furthermore, surrealist artists such as Andre Masson use the concept of 'automatism' to create work. This intuitive process of creating art links to perception as it allows viewers to interpret and perceive the work in their own way and adopt their own meaning, without the artists' thoughts.

To conclude, my research into these three words and looking into my own interests has allowed me to consider a question to lead me into my individual project next year. My proposed question for Independent Project is 'How can designers use colour and their own intuition to make designs more meaningful for consumers and less influenced by current trends?

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