

Weekly 2 hour sessions, colour and tone. (take more time over this if needed)

This week the brief is quite a simple but effective way of ascertaining the colour mixes, tones and greys of colour.

Introduction

Working with superimposing colours last week, I expect you noticed how different the colour mixes were when working with the six primaries. Some were bright clear secondary colours while others were dull, verging on the grey, in some cases, for example when the reds and blues were mixed.

This is very important. When you work with paints/inks etc. you need to understand that you need **two primary colours each** i.e. six in total. Only using three primaries; red, yellow and blue, **are not good enough** when you are painting. This is why you have two yellows, two reds and two blues in your paint box.

A yellow that is a green yellow, *lemon yellow* and a yellow that is an orange yellow *cadmium yellow*. A red that is an orange red, *cadmium red* and a red that is a violet red, *crimson red*. A blue that is a violet blue *ultramarine blue*, and a blue that is a green blue in your paint box it is called *intense blue* (but you can use *cerulean blue* or *Phthalo blue*). This I expect you investigated in depth last semester when you did the 12 point, colour theory star exercise with Chris and Jon.

I expect they explained to you that when using paint there is not a good enough pure mid-range yellow, red or blue primary in order to mix a good quality acidic green, a bright enough orange or a pure enough purple.

You may all remember trying to mix purple at school. You were told that mixing blue and red makes purple but when you mixed them together the result looked like a muddy brown or grey. This can be frustrating when you want a pure purple but useful to understand when you want to mix greys or browns.

Brief

You need to understand the practice of colour mixing so that you can mix colours you want, not colours that just occur randomly, and you need to be able to adjust them fast when working from life. The few exercises below will enable you to revise how colour mixing works. In order to achieve the purest secondary colours, you need to mix the primaries that are placed next to each other on the colour wheel.

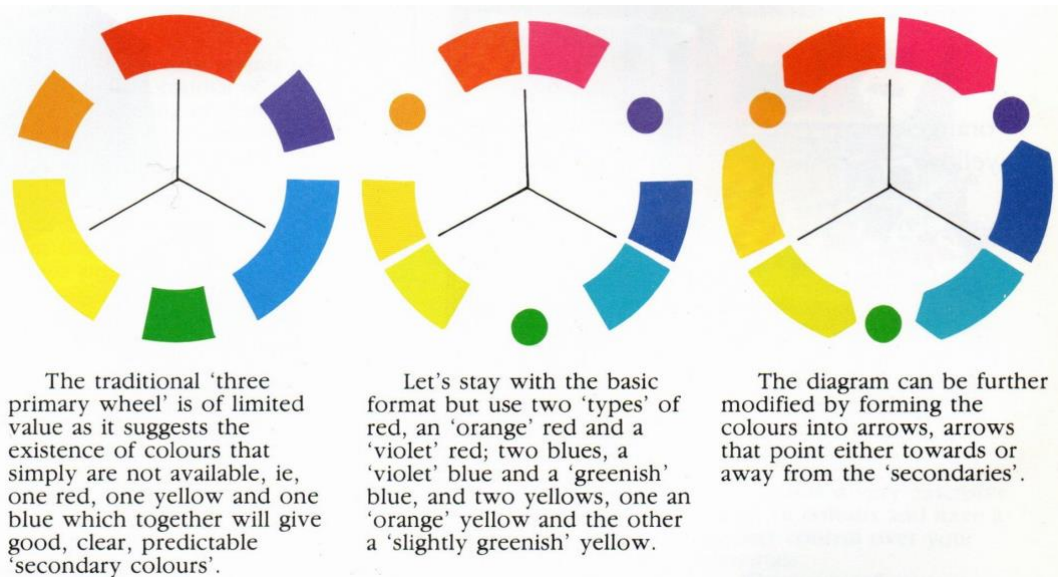


Illustration taken from Michel Wilcox book blue and yellow don't make green showing the two primaries closest in hue in order to create the purest secondary mix. For example, to make a bright orange you will need to use the yellow that is an orange yellow and the red which is an orange red.

Exercise one 15 minutes to do the basic exercise, but you can continue experimenting/playing with colour mixing/blending in the week in your own time.

Using your watercolours from your paint box that you used last week make sure you have two jars of clean water and plenty of space to mix your colours on a palette/white plate etc. Colour can become contaminated very quickly, so in order to work out how colour works you must keep your colours pure in order to see the subtle but important changes.

Purples, which mix makes the clearest brightest purple?

- Mix the *cadmium red* in your paint box with the *intense blue* (you can use *cerulean blue* or *phthalo blue* but be aware that *phthalo blue* has a lot of staining power so use it sparingly).
- Mix the *cadmium red* with *ultramarine blue* what do you get?
- Mix the *Crimson* with the *intense blue* what do you get?
- Mix the *Crimson* with *ultramarine* what do you get?

Greens, which mix makes the most acidic green or the green that is quite 'mossy' in colour?

- Mix *cadmium yellow* with *ultramarine blue*.

- *Lemon yellow with ultramarine blue*
- *Cadmium yellow with intense blue*
- *Lemon yellow with intense blue*

Oranges, which orange is the brightest?

- *Mix lemon yellow with crimson*
- *Lemon yellow with cadmium red*
- *Cadmium yellow with crimson*
- *Cadmium yellow with cadmium red*

Even though on the last mix when mixing purples, you get a really good clear purple it is not as good as shop bought purple. This is the same with the orange if you want a really bright clear orange you need to buy one that is very pure. It is the same with the green that is why you have *viridian* in your paint box, when you mix it with your lemon yellow it produces the brightest acid green of all (check it). For very detailed info on colour mixing refer to the book by Michael Wilcox, *Blue and Yellow don't make Green*.



Making purple mixing reds and blues; Left to right, mixes of cadmium red with intense blue (from your watercolour box), cadmium red with ultramarine blue, crimson red with intense blue, crimson red with ultramarine blue. The reds and blues look very similar but they are not, the red and blue on the left have hints of orange in the red and green in the blue thus they contain yellow which in effect which negates the purple. This illustration shows that a fraction of change in the hue can alter the resulting colour mix from grey to purple.

As soon as you have any hints of the opposite colour on the colour wheel mixed together it will produce a duller colour verging towards the brown or grey. You can use this method to darken your colours. For example, if you want to darken your yellow then use a touch of purple, if you want to darken your red then use a touch of green etc. (You do not need to use black). To be able to achieve this you need to know the opposites on the colour wheel. Use your colour wheel that you did with Chris and Jon to see the opposites. I have also included an illustration of a simple colour wheel below.

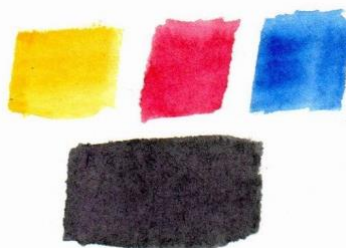


During the week practice and have some fun making greys and browns with your primaries and note down the mixes. Of course, this is an exercise in colour mixing and understanding colour. If you had a large area in a painting that was brown you would not necessarily mix your pure, expensive, artists quality primary coloured pigments to achieve a brown but would probably use the earth colours which are cheaper.

Black

To make black you need to mix three primaries. Basically, because all of the light will be absorbed into those three colours and nothing will be reflected back it creates black.

Try this out, if the brown you create verges on the red side add more green (yellow and blue). If it verges on the yellow side add purple (red and blue) etc. until you get black.

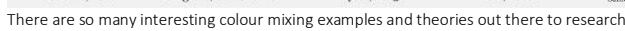


Three primaries used here to create black

Either set up a still life, paint a view from the window, paint a member of your family etc. paying particular attention to the tonal value of your colours. Work out your composition and lighting. When painting, try to get the colours and tones to be as accurate as possible. Again, if you wish to, use the colour chart you worked on last week. If you need to draw a simple pencil sketch first that's fine. For this exercise, you can either carry on working with your watercolour paints or work in any other media you want to, even digitally, but you must work from life.

Exercise 3 duration 40-60 minutes or longer if wished

If you find that the tones are not accurate when you compare the two black and white images, then paint the study again using your photo as a reference guide for the tones only. You still need to work from life for this second study. If you find that you have a perfect tonal rendition do another study of a different subject again observing the tones.



Hand in an image of the initial painting you have done both as a colour and black and white copy. The photo of the actual subject you have painted as a colour and black and white copy and the next colour study you carried out using the photo as a tonal reference.

You will be working/experimenting with colour, use any colour materials you wish and have good quality paper to hand.

