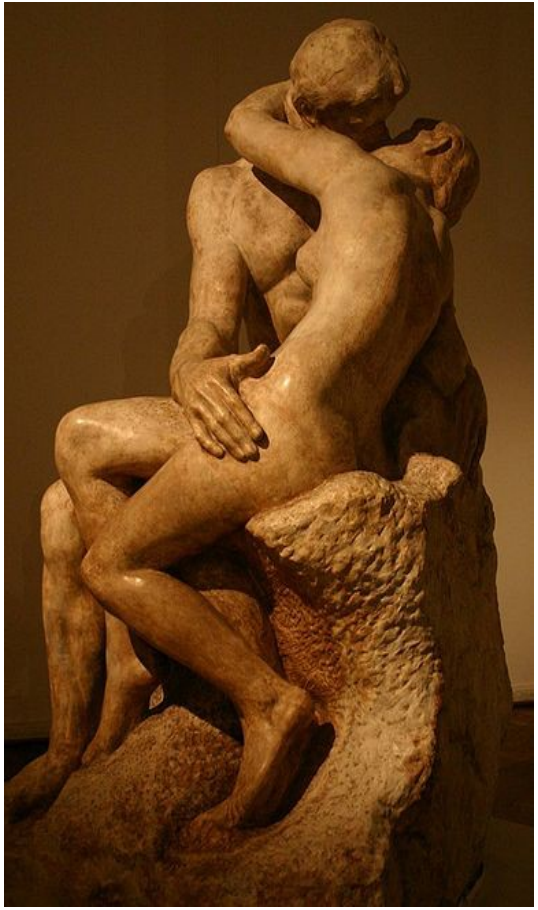
Elements of Design

(as opposed to Principles of Design)

Presented by Aaron Fine, Professor of Art, Truman State University

Form

Content



Rodin “The Kiss” 1882

Brancussi “The Kiss” 1913

Context

Realism vs. Abstraction may dominate your understanding of these artworks

But the artists are concerned primarily with controlling the form in order to impact the content

- And consider
Communication vs. Expression

(aesthetic modifications inside or outside the aes command)

Pause here

OK?
Today we are focusing on the “Formal Elements”

The things designers can control to impact how the viewer receives the information and even feels about what they are seeing

- Line
- Shape

- Value
- Scale
- Color

- Texture
- Space
- Motion

Line

Actual / implied

“Motion”

Organic v. geometric

Line weight

Line quality

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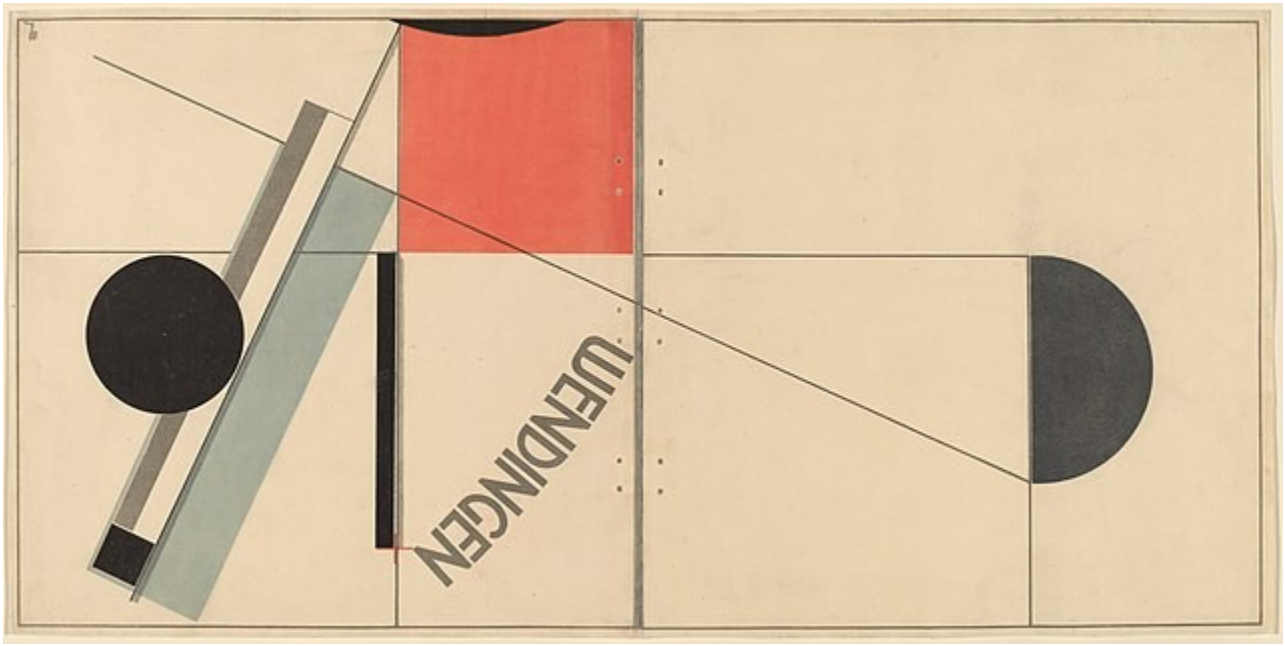
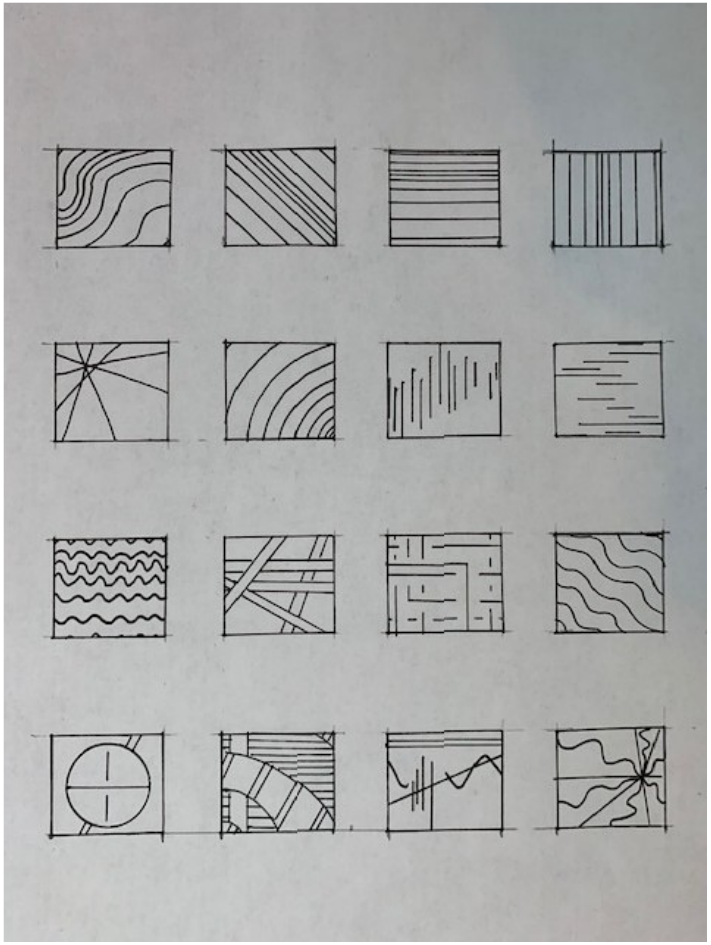


Constructivist design by El Lissitzky - early 20th c.

Line exercises*



Shape

Actual / implied

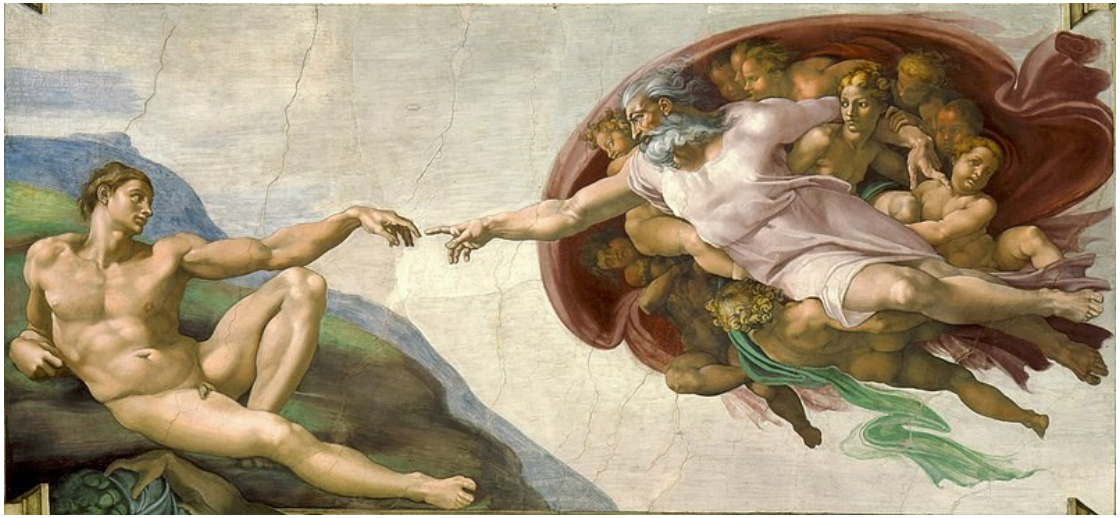
Basic, simple, complex

Rectilinear v. biomorphic

Visual weight

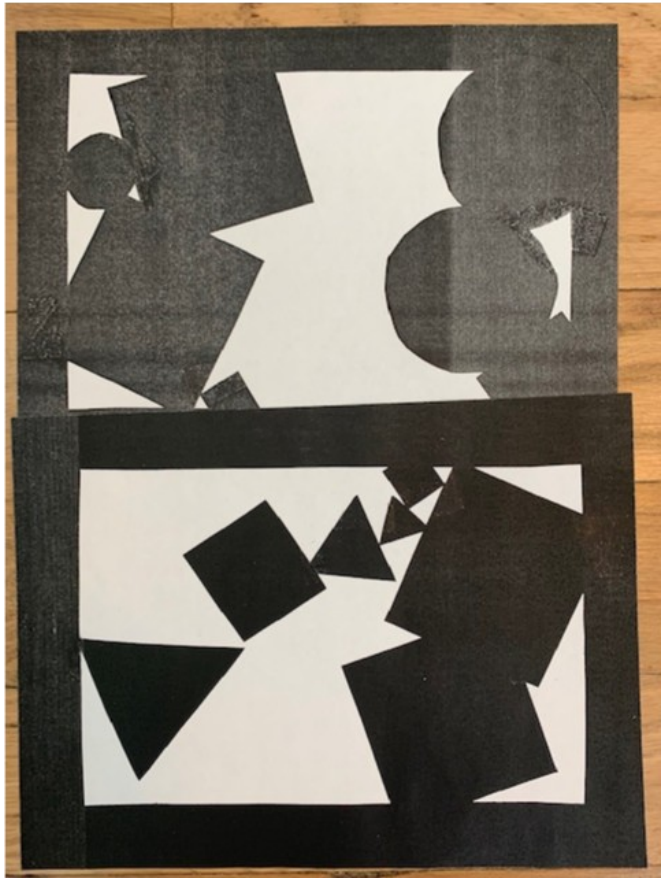
Stability / symmetry

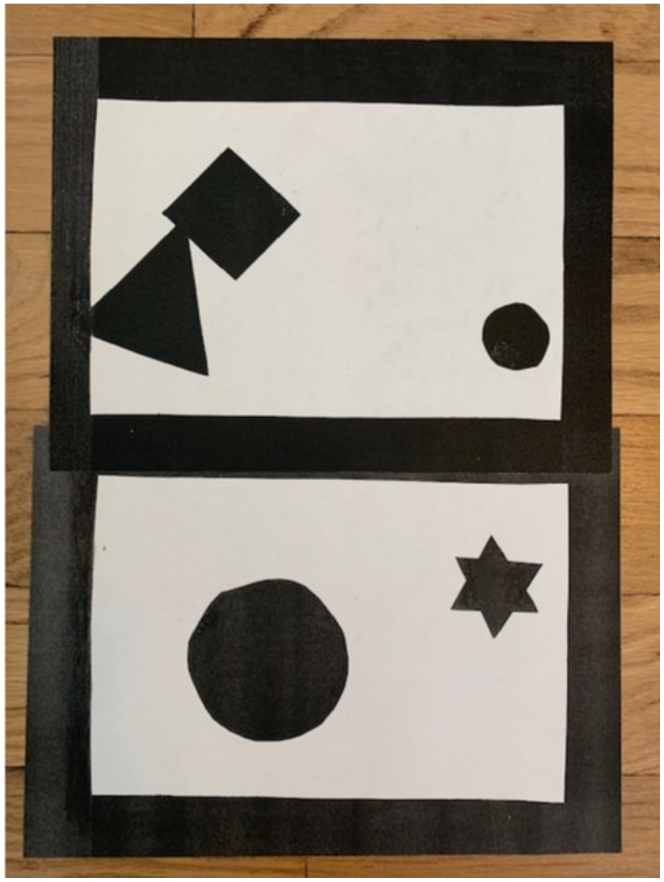
Positive / negative



FedEx®
Express

Shape Exercises*
(good idea to control for one variable at a time)





Value
(key, tone, brightness, luminosity)

Perception of 3-D space

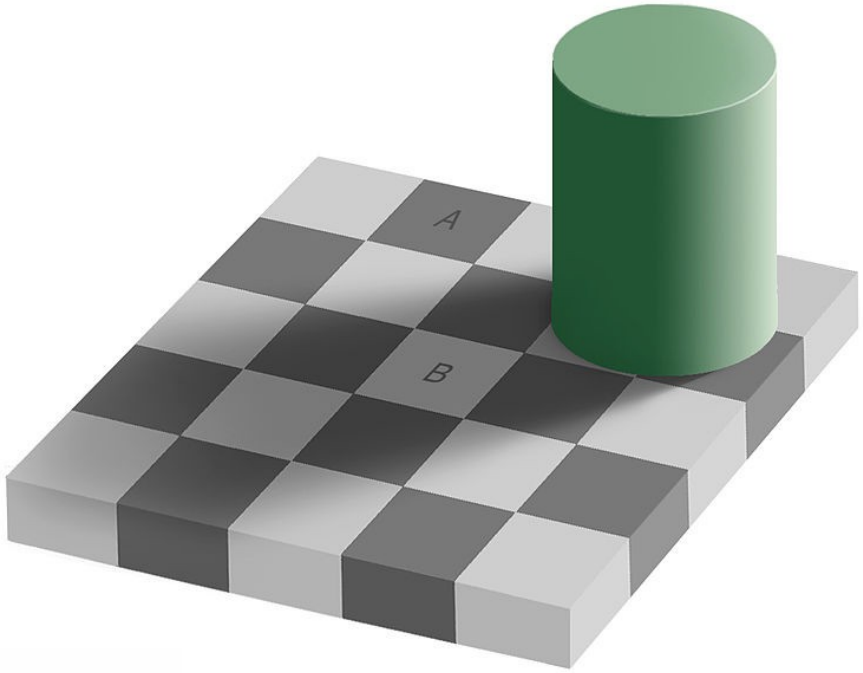
Dependence on media

Use of contrast and gradation

Relative and perceptual

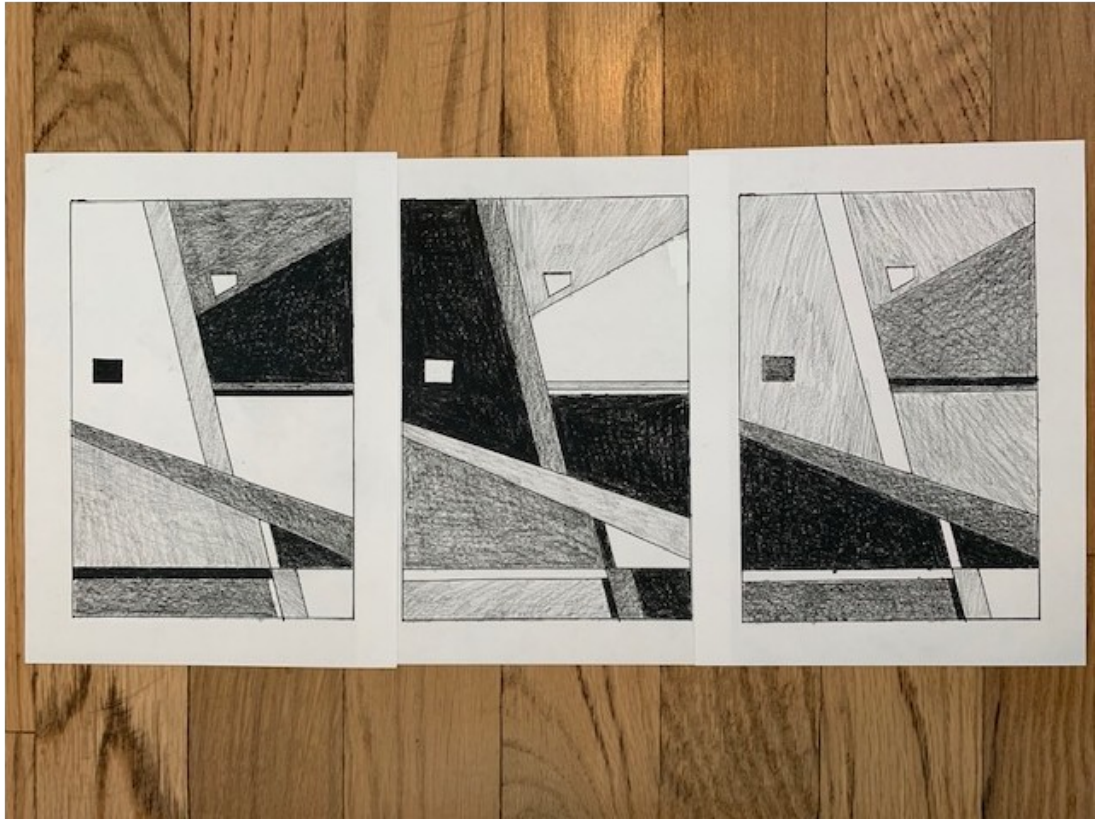
Prud’hon 1810-20

Relative perception of
gray values



Perception of gray values
based upon multiple factors

Value Exercises*



End 1st Video

Recall:

Form and Content
Context
Line
Shape
Value

Moving on to:

Scale
Color

Space
Texture
Motion

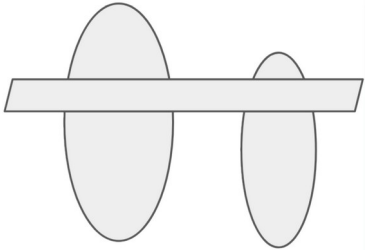
Scale
(Not “scale” as used in ggplot)
(physical scale)

Relative

Spatial
(train coming at us)

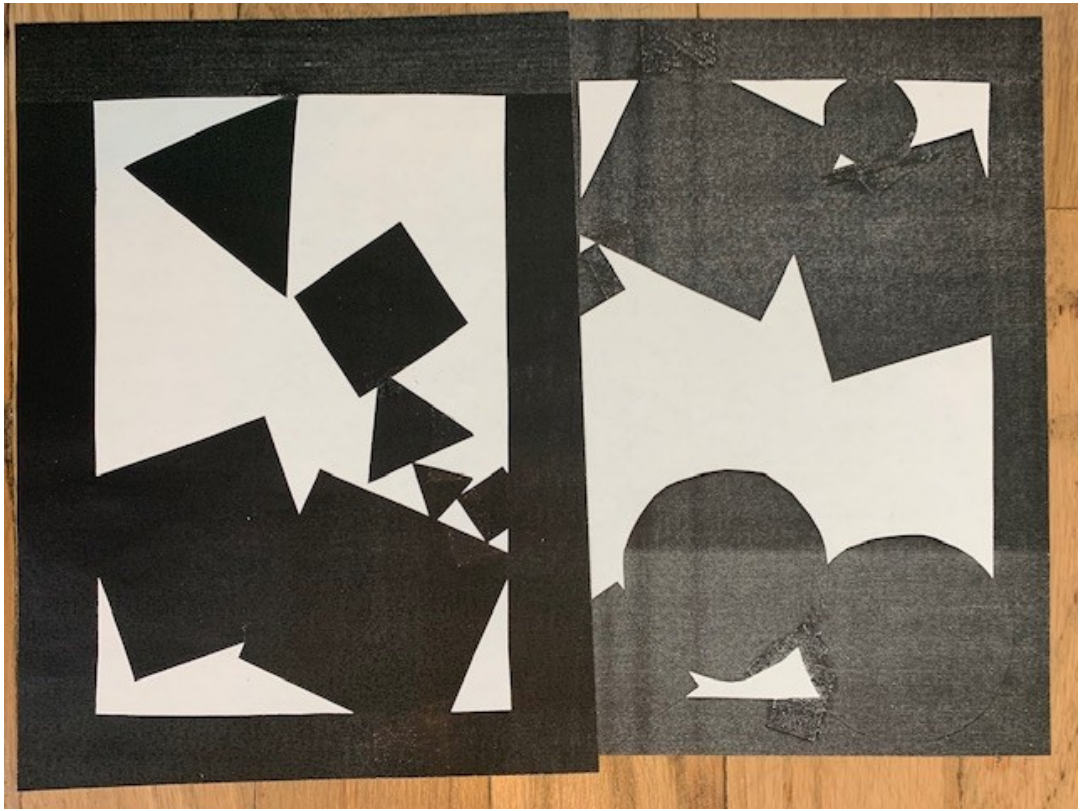
Visual weight and hierarchy

Compression or truncation
(Adam and Aaron at the pool)



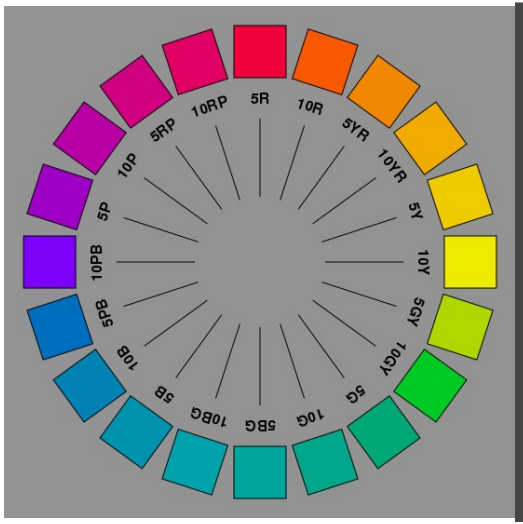
Scale Exercises*

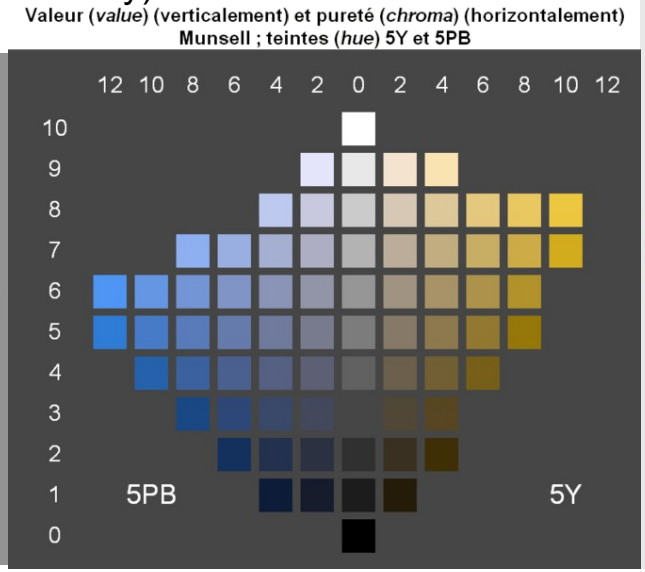
(Look familiar?)

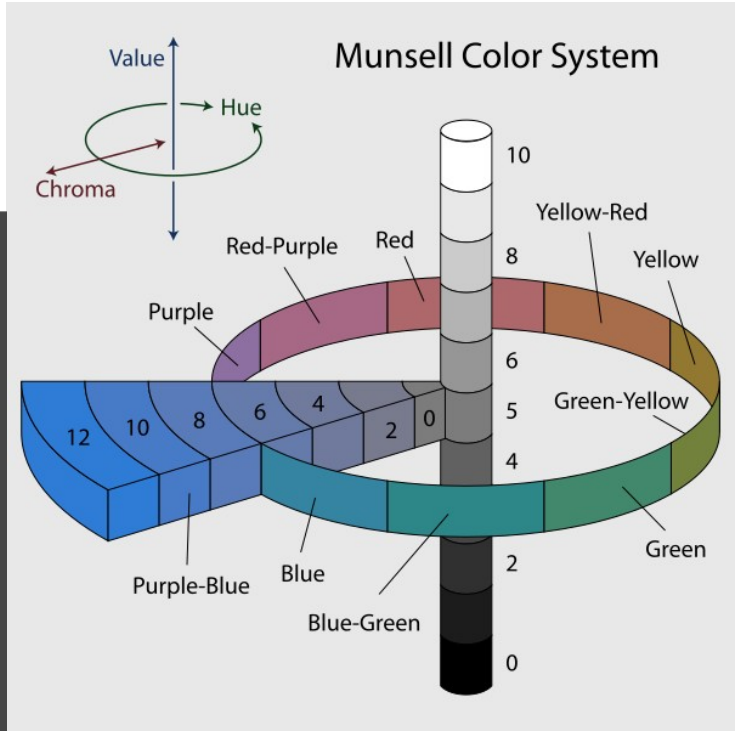


Color

- Value
- Hue
- Chroma (saturation, intensity)







An example of a cylindrical coordinate system mapping the 3 dimensions of color measurement

Color

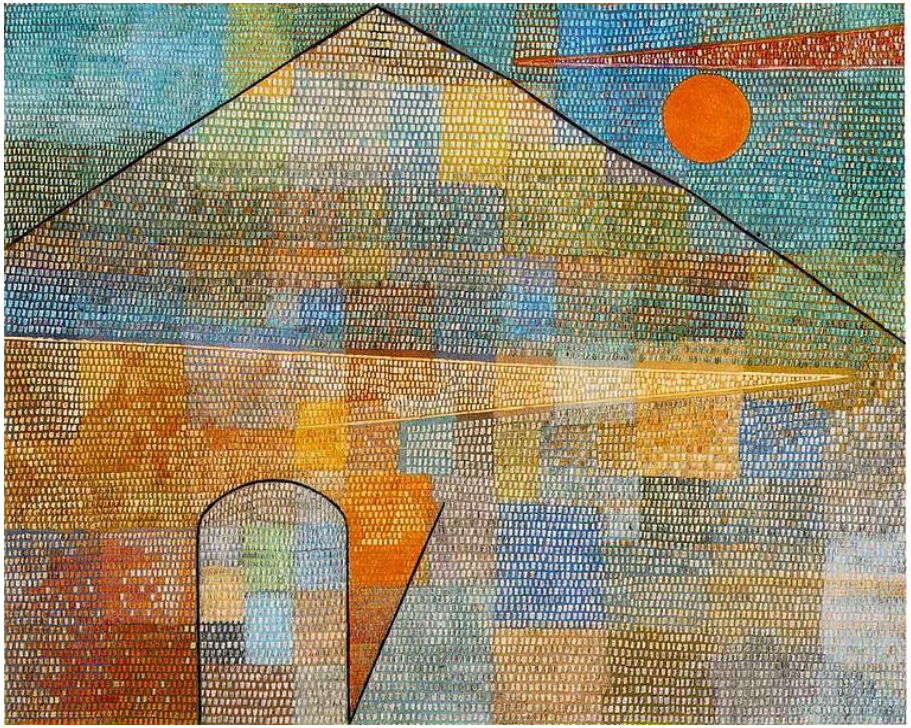
Relative and prone to illusory effects

Contrast may be achieved using any of the 3 properties of color

Contrasting colors may vibrate when juxtaposed - or they may make mud!

Colors opposite one another on a color wheel or model tend to contrast more

But color wheels and models disagree!



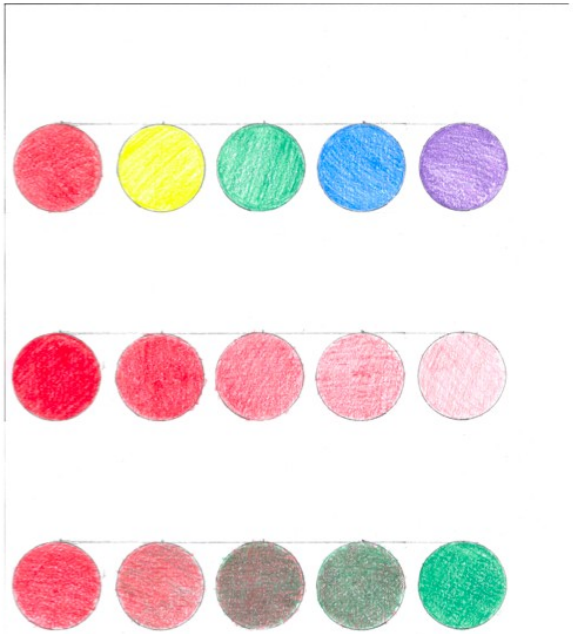
Klee “Ad Parnassum” 1932

Color dimensions*

Contrasting Hues
(qualitative)

Contrasting Values
(quantitative)

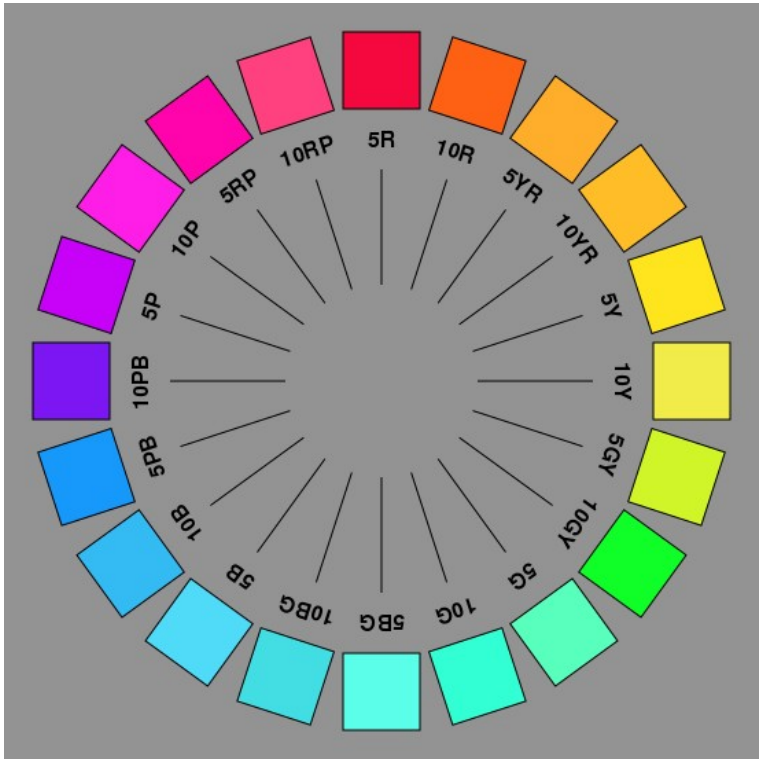
Contrasting Chromas
(uhhhh… maybe both?)
(or maybe it defeats the
purpose?)



Itten's color wheel.

Itten’s Color Wheel

- A cultural construct, not empirical
- Easier to remember and use when making art or design



Munsell’s Hue Circle

- Based upon empirical measurement of “Standard” human perception
- More suited to science and industry

Color

These things are probably more useful than the color wheel

Warm v. Cool

Advance / Recede

Active / Passive

Exciting / Subdued

High Chroma vs. Muted

Dramatic / Calm

(Getting attention / Straining the eyes)

Value

Hofmann mid-20th century

Color Exercises*

Space

Sculpture, perspective, positive/negative

Texture

Actual / perceived, appeal / revulsion

Motion

Film, dance, animation, implied
Speed, consistency, in perspective

- **And more...**

Image credits in order of appearance

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