COMPARE & CONTRAST

Everything Old Is New Again: Keith Haring Meets Michelangelo

5.40 Michelangelo. *David* (detail) (1501–1504) Marble.

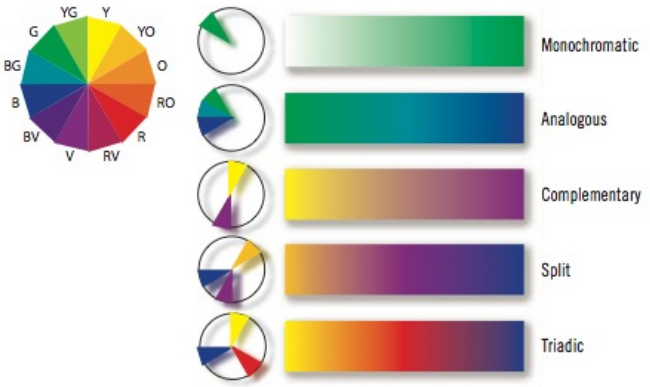
5.41 Keith Haring. *Untitled* (1984) Ink and DayGlo enamel on fiberglass (47" × 32" × 32").

It is often surprising to art history students that those pristine, glistening white marble sculptures of the ancient Greeks and Romans—the much-emulated standard of the "Classical style"—often, in fact, were painted. Even though only mere traces of pigment have survived, we do know that some of the colors that were used would be considered—by today's standards—garish. It is impossible to imagine Michelangelo, who painstakingly sketched and imitated some of the great ancient works in the collections of Italy's wealthiest and most powerful patrons of the arts, applying paint to his marble figures. *David* (Fig. 5.40) with brown hair, black eyeliner, and pink cheeks? Never. Green hair and eyebrows, bright red skin and lips, and a face overrun by a graffiti-like pattern of intertwining lines, letters, and figures? Unfathomable? Contemporary artist Keith Haring did just that in *Untitled* (Fig. 5.41), his fiberglass knockoff of the treasured icon enhanced with black ink and bright green DayGlo enamel. Haring revisited the sacrosanct in this work—Michelangelo's single most famous statue—coaxing with color, challenging the viewer to look anew and to validate the meaning of art—*this* art—to contemporary culture and society.

Go to CourseMate to further examine how Haring's use of color transforms Michelangelo's iconic statue with the chapter's Image Flashcards.

COLOR SCHEMES: HARMONY AND DISHARMONY

Artists use color in any number of ways and for any number of reasons. Sometimes they use color instinctively or intuitively. At other times they are quite conscious of the science of color in their compositions. On such occasions, the color wheel comes into play and color schemes are applied. *Monochromatic, analogous, complementary, split-complementary,* and *triadic color schemes* are harmonious; they are considered to have color harmony (Fig. 5.42). Disharmony, by contrast, describes colors that clash with one another.



^ **5.42 Color Schemes.** These color schemes or harmonies are based on knowledge of the color wheel.

The Monochromatic Color Scheme

A **monochromatic color scheme** features one (*mono*) dominant hue (*chroma*). To avoid monotony, monochromatic schemes often include a range of tints and shades of a single color, as in Tino Zago's *Venezia #27 Revisited* (Fig. 5.43).

Keith Edmier's cast resin and fabric sculpture, *Beverly Edmier, 1967* (Fig. 5.44)—rendered wholly in shades of pink—is a portrayal of his mother some four years after the year that President John F. Kennedy was killed by an assassin's bullets. Her 1960s hairstyle and two-piece, pink Chanel-style suit evoke the image of the First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, on that fateful morning in Dallas. She looks down at her pregnant body, a transparent bubble

monochromatic color scheme / A manner of using color in which one (mono) color (chroma) dominates and is sometimes combined with its various tints and shades.

^ **5.43 Tino Zago.** ***Venezia #27 Revisited*** (2011) Oil on canvas (72" × 54").
© Tino Zago. Courtesy OK Harris Gallery, New York.

< **5.44 Keith Edmier.** ***Beverly Edmier, 1967*** (1998) Cast urethane resin, cast acrylic resin, silicone, acrylic paint, silk, wool, and Lycra fabric, cast silver buttons, nylon tights sculpture (50 3/4" × 31 1/2" × 22 1/2"); lower plinth 14" × 34" × 46"; upper plinth 19" × 19" × 17".
© Keith Edmier, courtesy Petzel Gallery, New York.

5.45 Mark Messersmith. *Lost Hindsight* (2010) Oil on canvas with carved wood and mixed media (65" × 82").

through which a fetus—the artist—can be seen. When Edmier created the work in 1998, the image of Jackie Kennedy, her pink suit spattered in her husband's blood, no doubt remained seared in the memories of those who witnessed the event, even if the symbolism of his color choices may not have been clear to the so-called Millennial generation.

analogous color scheme / The combination of two or more colors that lie adjacent to one another on the color wheel, tending to create a feeling of harmony.

The Analogous Color Scheme

Analogous colors are adjacent on the color wheel and are more similar to each other than to colors elsewhere in the spectrum. When used together in a composition, as in Mark Messersmith's *Lost Hindsight* (Figs. 5.45 and 5.46), **analogous color schemes** create a feeling of harmony. A palette of shades and tints of red, pink, mauve, and peach visually unify the complicated patchwork design of flowers and colored squares. It bears mentioning that squares of highly saturated red are concentrated in a diamond-shaped area at the center of the heart-shaped canvas, creating emphasis and focal point in the otherwise frenzied field.

5.46 The Analogous Color Scheme. Analogous color schemes employs colors that lie next to one another on the color wheel.

TRY THIS

Itten applied his color theories to people and their traits, assigning them to groups corresponding to the four seasons. So-called seasonal color analysis was later popularized through the success of books like Color Me a Season *and* Color Me Beautiful. *One book guided readers in finding their "thirty special colors" analogous to their dominant skin tones. "Winters," for example, were described as having very white, pale pink, or beige skin and dark brown hair; "Springs" as having creamy ivory complexions, sometimes with golden freckles and rosy cheeks; "Summers" as very pink, rosy-brown, or pale beige with delicate pink cheeks; "Autumns" as ivory-skinned, peachy, golden beige, or coppery. The "best colors" for an individual were keyed to the season that best described their features.*

Find and print a photograph of yourself that has fairly neutral lighting and accurately represents your skin color. Applying seasonal color analysis, pick the season that best describes you. Choose ten colors that you think are analogous to your season; use them to replace or cover all of the original colors in the photograph except your skin, hair, and eyes. Does the "best colors" theory hold up, in your view?

< **5.47 Mary Cassatt.** ***In the Loge*** (1879) Pastel (25 5/8" × 32").

^ **5.48 The Complementary Color Scheme.** The complementary color scheme uses colors across from one another on the color wheel, frequently creating strong contrasts. Figure 5.47 employs red and green.

Complementary Color Schemes

Because **complementary color schemes** are based on colors that are across from one another on the color wheel—colors that "tug" equally at the eye—these schemes are very dynamic and can be used to great effect. Mary Cassatt's extraordinary pastel painting, *In the Loge* (Fig. 5.47), is organized completely around the bold contrast of red and green (Fig. 5.48). The emphatic, alternating bands of red and green, along with the bright red vertical strip that runs along the right edge of the composition (and defines the loge of the theater), are balanced by the dominant central shape of the green fan. The woman's clothing is accented with complementary strokes of green and red. Touches of raw red pigment seem here and there to be iridescent—from her hair, to her fan, to her high-necked lacy blouse. This "unnatural" combination of colors recreates the rosy atmosphere of a theater bathed in artificial light.

The dramatic contrasts found in complementary color schemes can heighten the expressive or emotional quality of a work. In *Sunset Over Florence* (Fig. 5.49), Audrey Flack used related pairs of complementary colors—orange and blue, yellow and violet, yellow-orange, and blue-violet—to suggest the subtle nuances of changing color over the duration of a sunset. But the relationship of orange to blue is dominant (Fig. 5.50).

complementary color scheme / The combination of two or more colors that lie across from one another on the color wheel; the combination tends to create feelings of dynamic contrast and disharmony.

^ **5.49 Audrey Flack.** ***Sunset Over Florence*** (1971). Oil on canvas (46" × 66").

^ **5.50 The Color Scheme in Figure 5.49 Emphasizes Complementary Blue and Orange.**

5.51 The Split-Complementary Color Scheme. This color scheme uses a color along with the two colors that are adjacent to its complementary color (see Figure 5.52).

Split-Complementary Color Schemes

A **split-complementary color scheme** uses a color along with the two colors adjacent to its complementary color (Fig. 5.51). In other words, the artist selects a color, identifies its complement, which lies opposite it on the color wheel, and then uses the colors that lie on either side of the complement rather than the complement itself. For example, the artist might select red. Green is the complement of red. But instead of using "green green," the artist chooses to use colors that lie adjacent to green on the color wheel. Thus, red might be balanced by blue-green and yellow-green (rather than green-green). This is what Georgia O'Keeffe did in her painting titled *Red and Orange Streak* (Fig. 5.52).

The effect of a split-complementary scheme in Sandro Chia's *Incident at the Tintoretto Café* (Fig. 5.53) is dramatic but not as extreme as that of a strict complementary scheme. Chia juxtaposes violet with colors once removed from its direct complement of yellow, namely yellow-orange and yellow-green. The colors are still quite powerful, but somewhat easier on the eye.

split-complementary color scheme / A color scheme that uses a color along with the two colors adjacent to its complementary color, which tones down the contrast between the complementaries.

5.52 Georgia O'Keeffe. ***Red and Orange Streak*** (1919) Oil on canvas (26" × 23").

5.53 Sandro Chia. ***Incident at the Tintoretto Café*** (1982) Oil on canvas (88 5/8" × 130").

∧ **5.54** J. Howard Miller. ***"We Can Do It!"*** (1942) Color lithograph (93" × 120").

< 5.55 Vitaly Komar and Aleksandr Melamid. ***The Origin of Socialist Realism*** (1982–1983) Oil on canvas (6' × 4').

Triadic Color Schemes

The most common **triadic color scheme** is that of red, yellow, and blue—colors that are equally spaced on the color wheel and can be connected with diagonal lines to form a triangle (Fig. 5.27 on page 95). There is probably no more familiar, accessible, and direct color scheme than one that incorporates the three primary hues, as in an inspirational poster created during World War II (Fig. 5.54). Other triadic color schemes derive from the connection of secondary colors (orange, green, and violet) and intermediary colors (red-orange, yellow-green, and blue-violet).

Russian artists Vitaly Komar and Aleksandr Melamid parodied decades of propagandistic Soviet official art in *The Origin of Socialist Realism* (Fig. 5.55). Adopting the aggrandizing Neoclassical style favored by authoritarian prototypes such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Komar and Melamid depict a transfixed Joseph Stalin receiving inspiration from a partially draped Classical muse. Against a background of a nondescript muddy brown (the brown of Communist military fatigues), the saturated red and blue of the drapery and yellow of Stalin's ceremonial uniform seize our focus and seem to lift figures out of the shadows.

A triadic color scheme consisting of secondary hues is the basis for—if not principle subject of—Jasper Johns's *Scent* (Fig. 5.56). The field is completely

triadic color scheme / A twelve-point color wheel with yellow at the top, such that an equilateral triangle connects the three primary colors.

< 5.56 Jasper Johns. ***Scent*** (1973–1974) Oil and encaustic on canvas (three panels, 6' × 10' 6 1/4").

covered with clusters of hatched lines rendered in red-orange, yellow-green, and blue-violet. The overall effect of a secondary triad is subtler.

Color Disharmony

We define harmonious colors as visually compatible and colors that clash or don't seem to "go together" as disharmonious. A palette of disharmonious colors includes complementary colors as well as those that are distant from one another on the color wheel, but not as distant as their exact complements. Frank Owen's use of color disharmony in *Raft III* (Fig. 5.57) exaggerates the contrast and magnifies the tension between geometric and organic forms.

Color discord in a work of art can be eye-catching—literally and figuratively. Complementary colors or colors of equal value and intensity will each fight for attention. And works of art that feature unpredictable and somewhat jarring color combinations will appear stimulating, surprising, forceful, and impassioned.

Local, Optical, and Arbitrary Color

Artists who aim to recreate visible reality as accurately as possible will likely use what is referred to as **local color**—the color that we typically associate with the natural appearance of things. We think of the sky as blue, the sun as yellow, and the grass as green. And because most of the world does too, local color is seen as objective. It is something that is known and seen, rather than something that exists in the mind of an individual.

Audrey Flack's oversized Photorealist still life paintings—such as *Marilyn (Vanitas)* (see Fig. 1.20 on page 18)—take advantage of local color to underscore the familiarity of her everyday objects. An orange is orange; grapes are green. Even our "concept" of lipstick is confirmed as a pillar of creamy red. Between the objective colors and the enormous scale of the work (this painting is eight feet square), the viewer cannot escape the reality of the commonplace and the eventuality of death symbolized by objects like the hourglass, burning candle, and overripe fruit.

Local color is color as it would be perceived in direct sunlight. But changes in light change our perception of color. That is because the color that is perceived by the eye is related to the quantity of light

color discord / The result when colors that do not balance one another are used, as in colors that are neither analogous nor complementary.

local color / The color we typically associate with objects as they would be seen in direct sunlight.

▲ **5.57 Frank Owen. *Raft III*** (2008) Acrylic on canvas (84" × 81 1/4").
© Frank Owen, courtesy Nancy Hoffmann Gallery, New York.

▲ **5.58 Claude Monet. *Rouen Cathedral: The Portal (in Sun)*** (1894) Oil on canvas (39 1/4" × 25 7/8").

< 5.59 Yinka Shonibare. *Victorian Couple* (1999) Wax printed cotton textile (approx. 60" × 36" × 36" and 60" × 24" × 24").

that is reflected off an object. When artists simulate the visual effects of different lighting conditions and their effect on the objects we are looking at, they are working with the principle of **optical color.** Consider Claude Monet's use of optical color in *Rouen Cathedral* (Fig. 5.58). The cold stone surfaces of the medieval church façade seem to dissolve into fine dabs of color as Monet tries to reproduce the visual effects of light and atmosphere on the tangible solids before him. These are not colors that we associate with Gothic buildings in our minds. Rather, Monet would maintain that these are colors that we actually see if we look hard enough.

Both local and optical color are rooted in experience. Whether it is color that is perceived in daylight and fair weather or dusk during a storm, visual effects are being reproduced in some way. **Arbitrary (subjective) color,** by contrast, does not accurately reflect the visible reality of things (see Fig. 5.12). Artists use subjective color for purposes other than realism—perhaps to convey emotion, to find the pictorial equivalent of inner feelings.

Color and Symbolism

The connectedness between emotion and color often explains an artist's palette choices. But abstract notions and ideas also have their symbolic color coordinates. For example, what does it mean if one is true to the red, white, and blue? If you are an American citizen, it means, of course, that you are loyal to your country—the United States of America—as symbolized by the red, white, and blue colors of the flag. But this would also be true if you were, say, British or French, because their national flags (the Union Jack or the Tri-Color) have the same color combination, albeit with different designs.

In a subtle but chilling commentary on issues of equality, oppression, and difference, contemporary Nigerian British artist Yinka Shonibare reworked typical Victorian costume in fabrics expressing African identity, both constructed and adopted. In *Victorian Couple* (Fig. 5.59) the profiles of the coat and bustle may seem familiar, but the colorful textiles and printed designs create a cultural disconnect with symbolic ramifications. Shonibare was born in London of Nigerian parents and spent most of his childhood in Nigeria. He returned to England to study at the University of London and has focused his art on issues of African identity and authenticity in which the symbolism of color play a central role. The symbolism of colors, their meanings, are culture-specific.

optical color / The depiction of colors as they are perceived under different lighting conditions.

arbitrary (subjective) color / The use of a color that is not normally associated with the subject being depicted.

TRY THIS

Color is so ever-present in our lives that we probably pay little attention to it—unless it catches our eye and makes an impression, or unless we are purposefully looking for one particular color or another. However, there are some colors that we encounter so often that they become ingrained in our visual memories. If you are familiar with Photoshop, *try this little color memory test. Open the Color Picker window in Photoshop. Now close your eyes and try to remember what the specific shades of red and blue used in the American flag look like. Open your eyes and try to pick out* Old Glory Red *and* Old Glory Blue *(the red and the blue used in the flag). Starting with* Old Glory Red, *use your mouse to scroll over the different color options and click on the shade that you think is correct. Write down the six-digit number that comes up in the box toward the bottom of the Color Picker window. This Hex # (a color code based on a hexadecimal numbering system) corresponds to the exact color that you selected. Now you can take a look at the answers below. Type the true Hex # for* Old Glory Red *into the same number box and press Enter. The correct shade of red should now be selected. Go back and forth between the Hex # you guessed and the true Hex # below. How close were you? How is your color memory? Do the same with* Old Glory Blue.

The Department of State Marking Policy Style Guide states that Old Glory Red *is Hex #BB133E and* Old Glory Blue *is Hex #002147.*

Key Terms

additive color (p. 84)
analogous color scheme (p. 104)
arbitrary (subjective) color (p. 109)
Bauhaus School (p. 83)
chroma (p. 90)
CMYK printing process (p. 85)
color discord (p. 108)
color wheel (p. 83)
complementary color scheme (p. 105)
complementary colors (p. 93)
hue (p. 82)
intensity (p. 88)
intermediate triad (p. 96)
local color (p. 108)
monochromatic color scheme (p. 103)
neutral colors (p. 88)
Op Art (p. 87)
optical color (p. 109)
pigment (p. 82)
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primary triad (p. 95)
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saturation (p. 90)
secondary additive colors (p. 84)
secondary pigment colors (p. 83)
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tint (p. 89)
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triad (p. 95)
triadic color scheme (p. 107)
value (p. 88)
visible spectrum (p. 82)

ARTISTS ON ART

Color

Harmony is the analogy of contrary and of similar elements of tone, of color, and of line, conditioned by the dominant key, and under the influence of a particular light, in gay, calm, or sad combinations.
—George Seurat

Instead of trying to reproduce exactly what I have before my eyes, I use color more arbitrarily so as to express myself forcefully.
—Vincent van Gogh

Colors, like features, follow changes of the emotions.
—Pablo Picasso

All colors are the friends of their neighbors and the lovers of their opposites.
—Marc Chagall

If one says "Red" and there are fifty people listening, it can be expected that there will be fifty reds in their minds. And one can be sure that all these reds will be very different.
—Josef Albers

I want a red to be sonorous, to sound like a bell; if it doesn't turn out that way, I add more reds and other colors until I get it. I am no cleverer than that. I have no rules and no methods; anyone can look at my materials or watch how I paint—he will see that I have no secrets.
—Pierre Auguste Renoir

There are tonalities which are noble and others which are vulgar, harmonies which are calm or consoling, and others which are exciting because of their boldness.
—Paul Gauguin

It is not pure fantasy to say that the color red is like the sound of a trumpet.
—Joyce Carey

Colors should be laid out on the palette in an orderly way. I prefer to put the full intensity colors around the outside edge of a large rectangular palette. Starting with yellow-orange in the upper left hand corner and moving to yellow and yellow-green around to the right, so that orange and blue come opposite each other at the middle of either side. The neutral tones are then laid along the lines of their color scales. The spaces in between are used for mixtures with white.
—John Sloan

There's something about black. You feel hidden away in it.
—Georgia O'Keeffe

[The artist] who knows how to appreciate color relationships, the influence of one color on another, their contrasts and dissonances, is promised an infinitely diverse imagery.
—Sonia Delaunay

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Image Flashcards

View how Mary Cassatt organized her painting *In the Loge* around a complementary color scheme of red and green with the image flashcards.

Practice

Multiple choice, essay, and critical thinking quizzes.

Videos

Learn it faster with video.

art21

YouTube

Watch artist Trenton Doyle Hancock use color to communicate in his work.

Art Talk

Listen to the Chapter 5 podcast with Lois Fichner-Rathus on color and symbolism.

Try This

Set up a camera outside to take photos of a landscape throughout the duration of a sunset. Make sure you start early enough and end late enough to capture the sunset in its entirety. Take one photo per minute. Make sure that the frame stays the same for each photo. Later, assemble all of your photographs in chronological order. Examine how the *saturation* changes over time. Place the first and last photographs side-by-side. Notice the shift in color *intensity*. Finally, using all of the photographs, make a large grid or a collage that portrays the passing of time as witnessed through the changing colors.

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