

exploring color

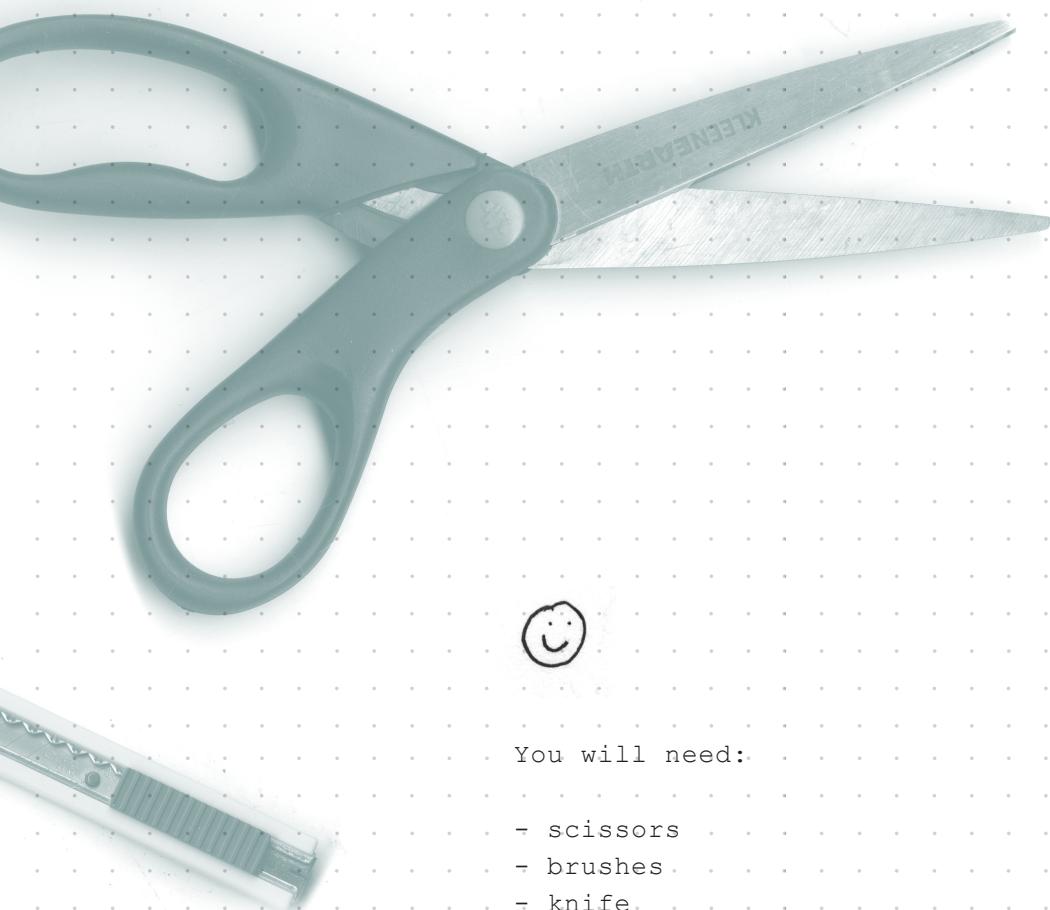
field notebook



In case found, please return to:

Kathy Wu
RISD 2 College Street
Providence RI 02903

for Aki Nurosi's Color class



You will need:

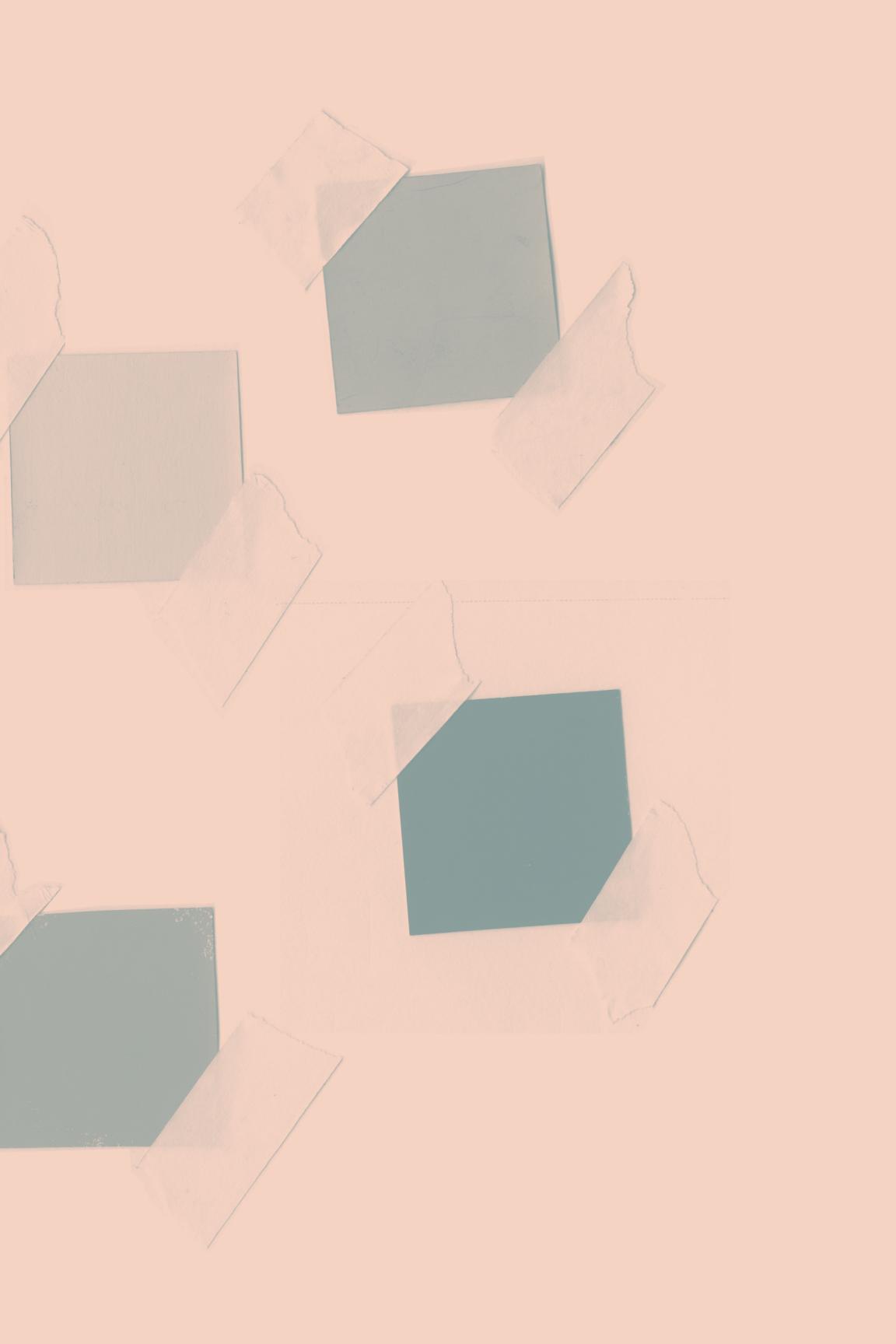
- scissors
- brushes
- knife
- gouache
- printer
- spirit of adventure





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Adventure #1:

color associations

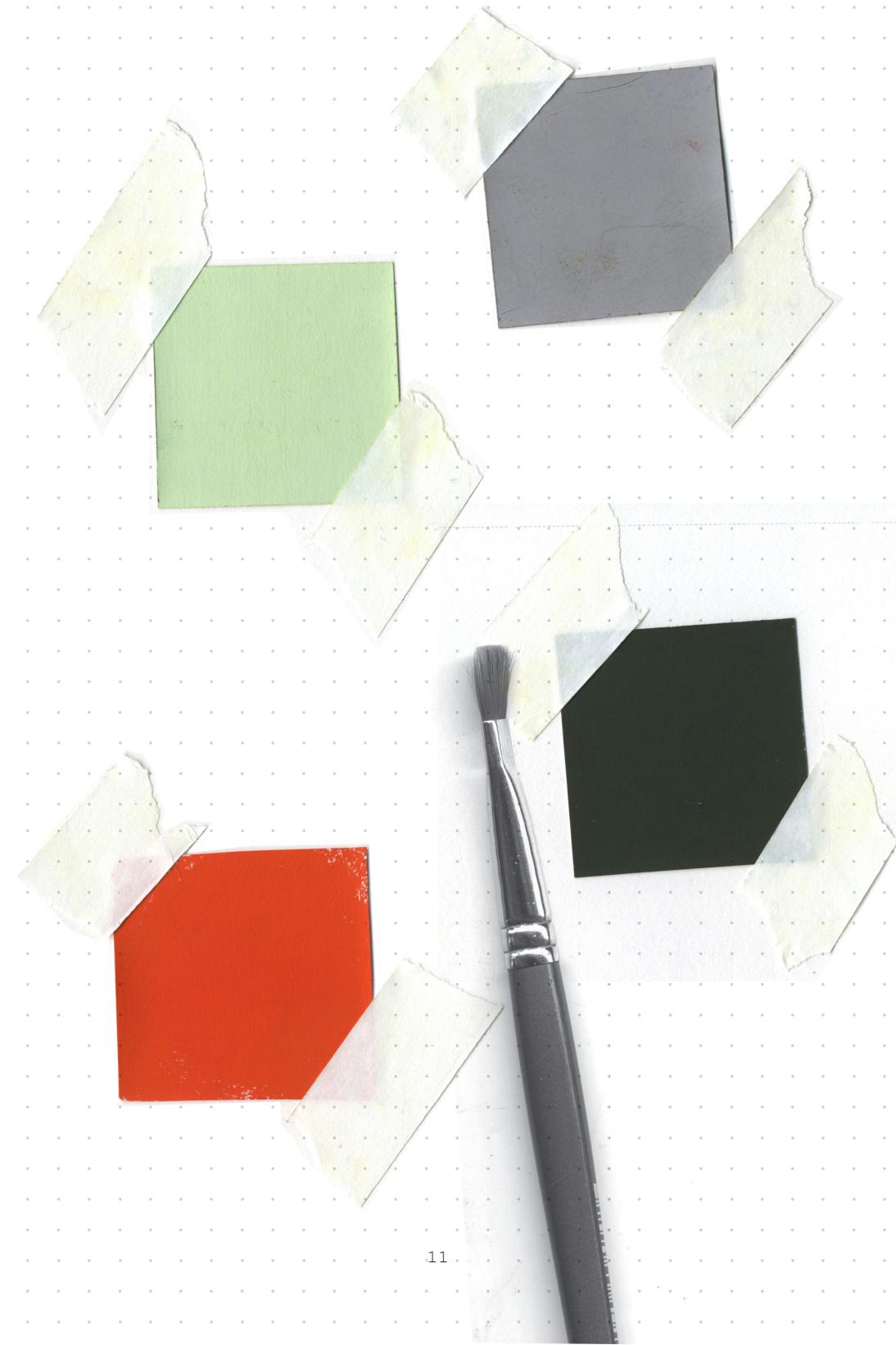
Let's explore emotive and expressive colors through painted swatches. What color is heavy? How about loud? Things start to get a little synesthetic.

Emotive & Expressive Color

In this adventure, think deeply about the subjectivity of colors, and these associations we take for granted. Why blue for sadness, and not yellow?

These emotive color associations are more universal. More subjective color associations are called expressive. Using gouache, represent certain ideas and sensory experiences (loudness, for example) through color.

Next, using your camera phone, recreate these swatches photographically by capturing these colors wherever you see them in the world.



Challenges in the Digital Realm

We had to go through more than one level of color approximation. From real life to photograph, then from photograph to the world of print.

By the print stage, it was nearly impossible to get the color perfect on the first try. From one medium to the next, just like with languages, little things get lost in translation.

What I love is some of the synesthesia that starts to happen. These questions like, Why are heavy things darker? Why negative things? Expressive colors also tend to be more gray. Hmm, food for thought.

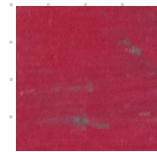
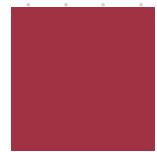


Emotive/Universal

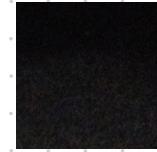
life



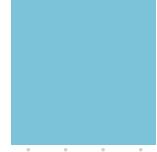
love



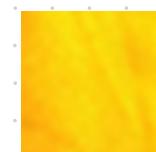
hate



peace



happy



sad



noble

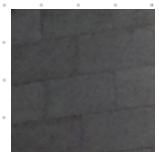


luminous

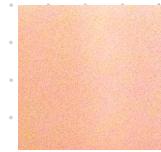


Expressive/Subjective

heavy



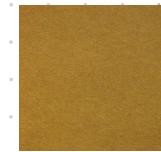
sweet



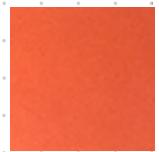
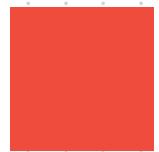
light



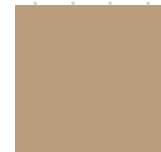
rough



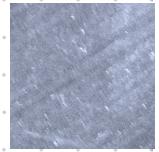
loud



smooth



soft



rough





Adventure #2:

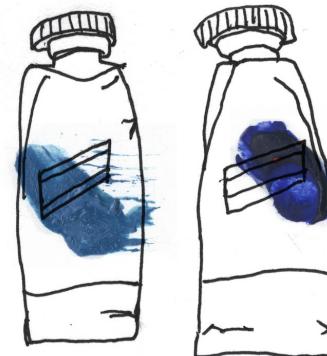
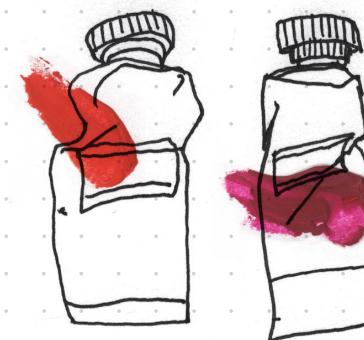
color wheel

Everything starts with the basics. First order of business is to mix cool and warm hues of primary colors. Next, secondary, then tertiary finally. Get ready for lots of print tests.

Process: Swatches

I've been making color wheels since I was a little kid. Yet there's so much complexity you can still find in the color "red," and how warm and cool shades mix to form stable, neutral primaries.

After primary neutrals came secondary and tertiary. I discovered with gouache that there's a spectrum of difficult-to-paint with—the yellows being least frustrating and Rose Tyrien and Ultramarine being the most.. (Funny that they're complementary!)



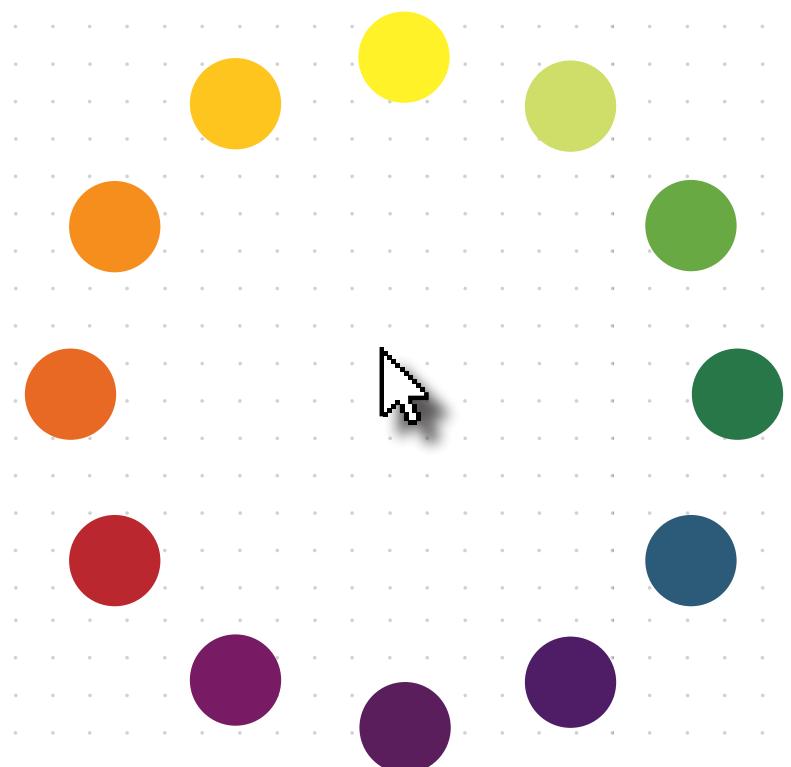
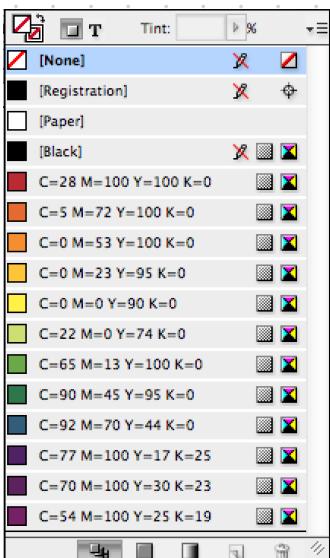
Process: Color Matching

It was surprisingly easy to make a color dark without adding black. With certain colors, like yellow, the difference between shades was really minute. With others like violet, the same 5% increment adjustment could make a color way off. Maybe our eyes are more sensitive to dark colors?



Color Wheel

The final color wheel could take any shape or form. I went with tradition circles.





Adventure #3:

positive negative

Ready to apply your new toolkit? Run with the idea of duality (black & white) as a way to not only make meaning, but examine after-image phenomenon.

Concept

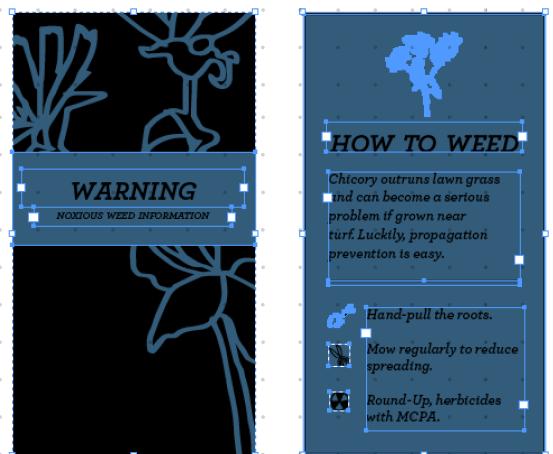
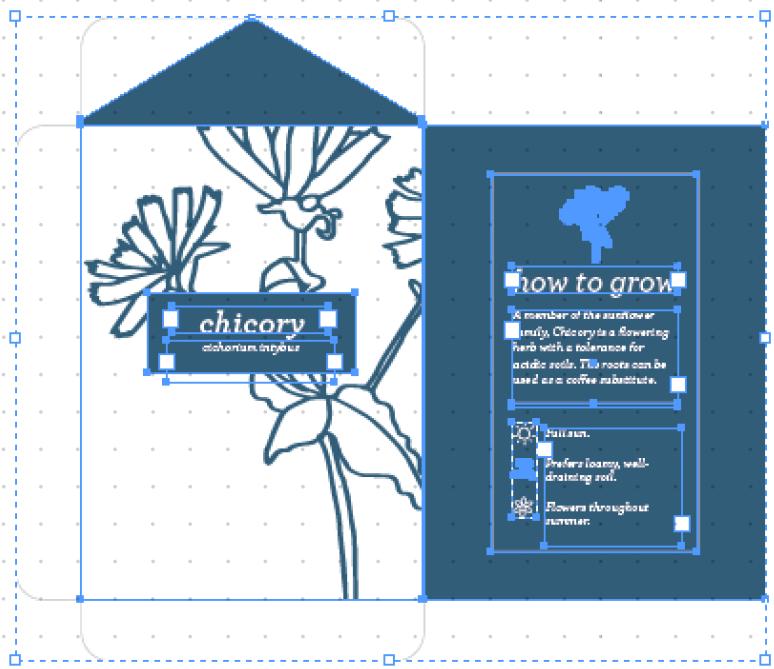
Duality: Weed? or Wildflower?

Growing up I found it perplexing how people viewed beautiful things in nature as pests. Without knowing the inherent harm in these species, I'd appreciate wild plants like dandelions and clovers growing in the yard because they looked so lovely.

In this project, I created seed packets advertising beautiful weeds as wildflowers (sometimes with herbal health benefits!) At the same time, within each packet is a guide on weed-removal.

Just in case.





Beautiful weeds

Red

Red Clover
Corn Poppy

Orange

Sumac
Scarlet Pimpernel
Orange Hawkweed.

Yellow

Mustard
Dandelion

Green

Crab grass

Blue

Dayflower
Musk Hyacinth
Spiderwort
Chicory

Magenta

Dame's Rocket
Red Clover
Foxglove
Meadow Knapweed

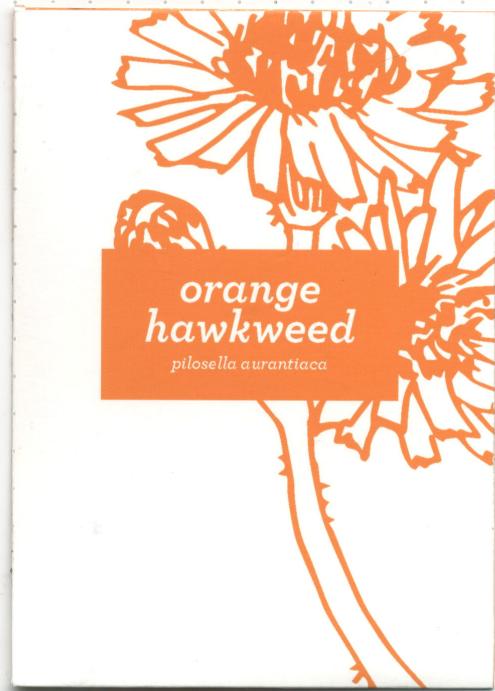
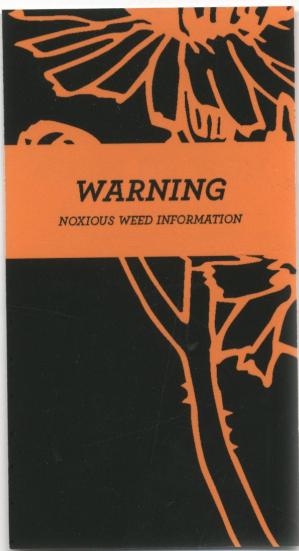
Violet

Periwinkle
Purple loosestrife
Wild violet
Butterfly

Blue-Violet

Black nightshade
Thistle

initial research



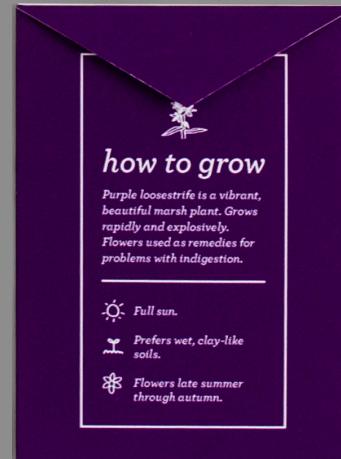
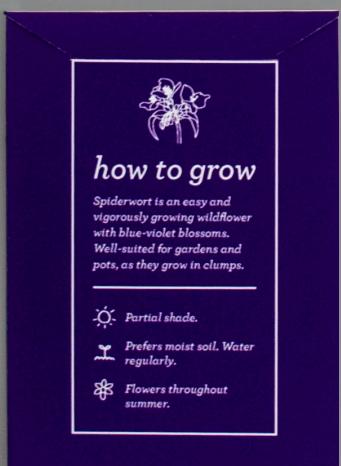
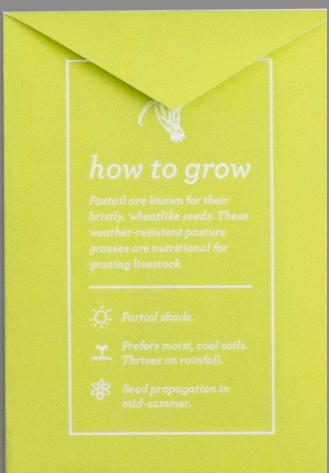
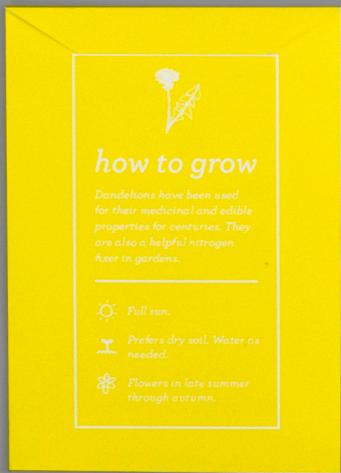
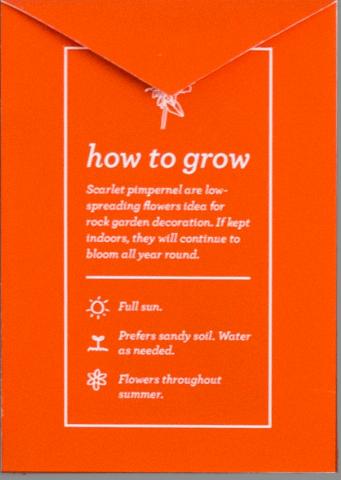


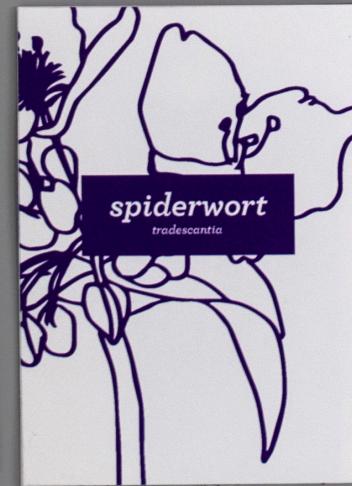
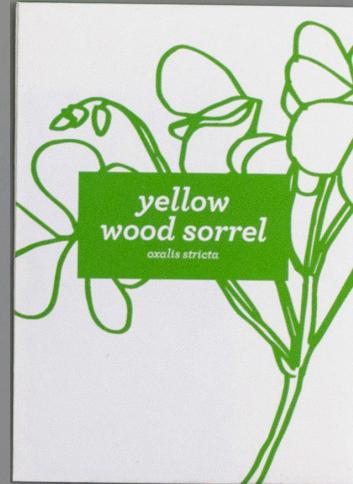
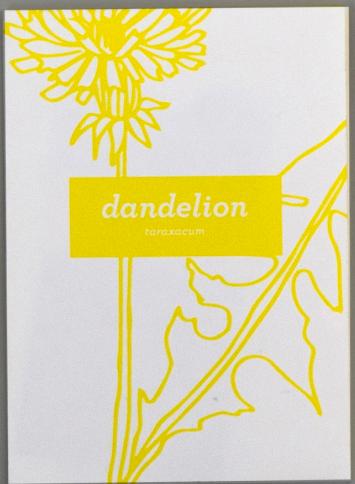
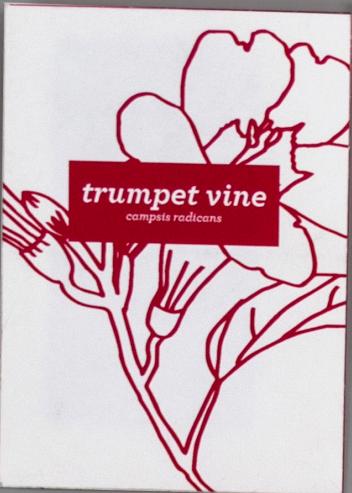
34

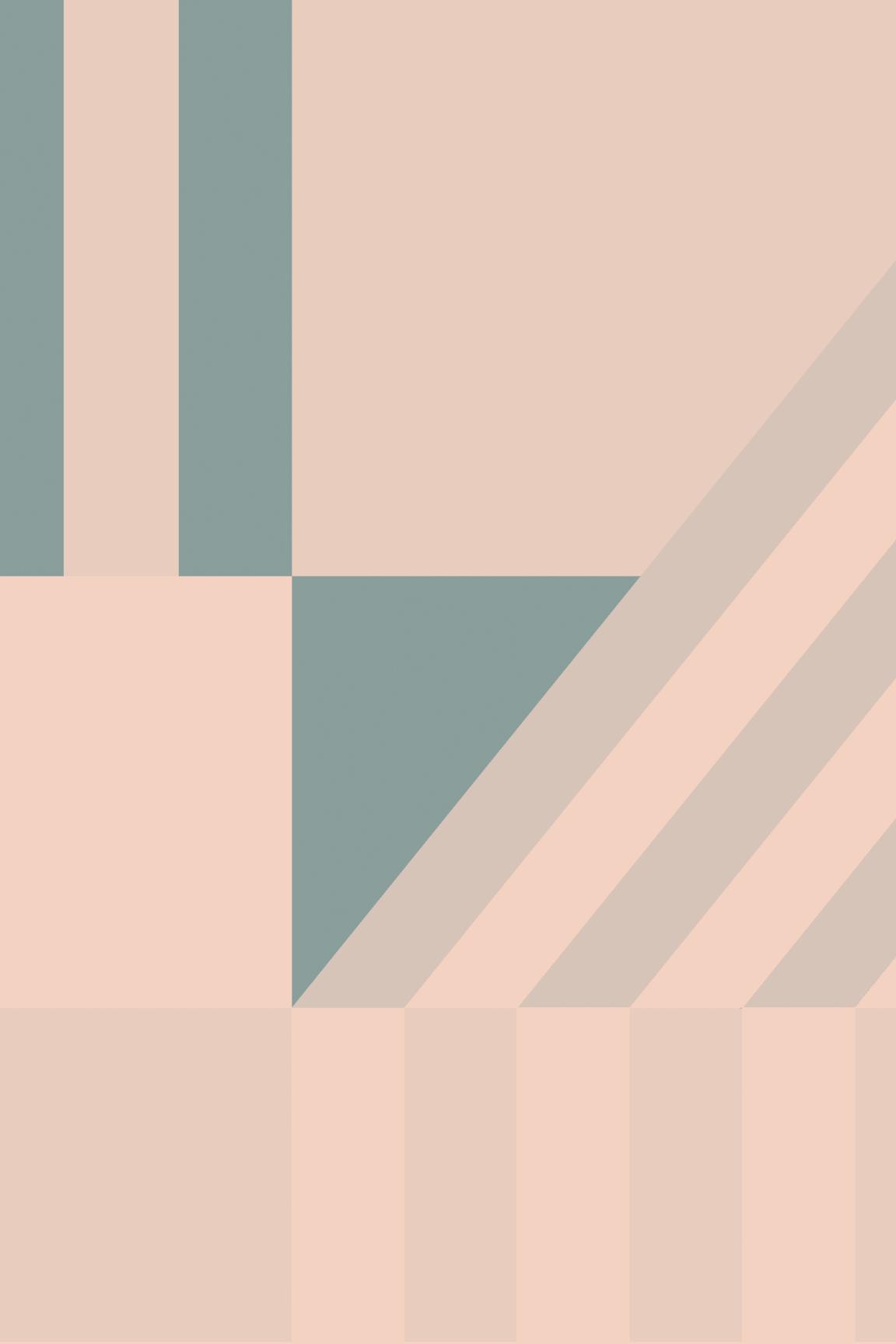


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Adventure #4:

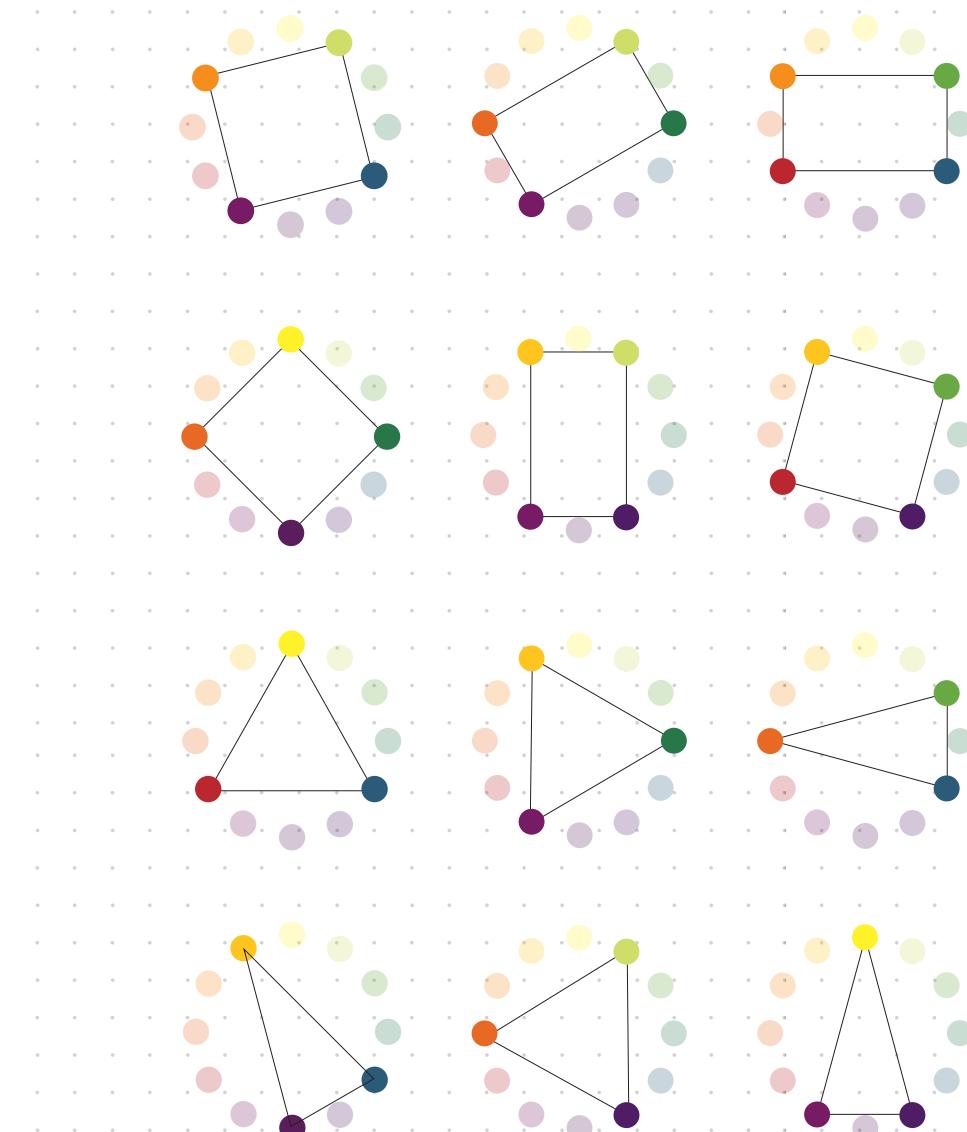
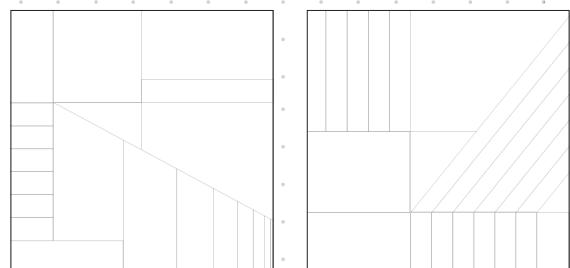
after-image compositions

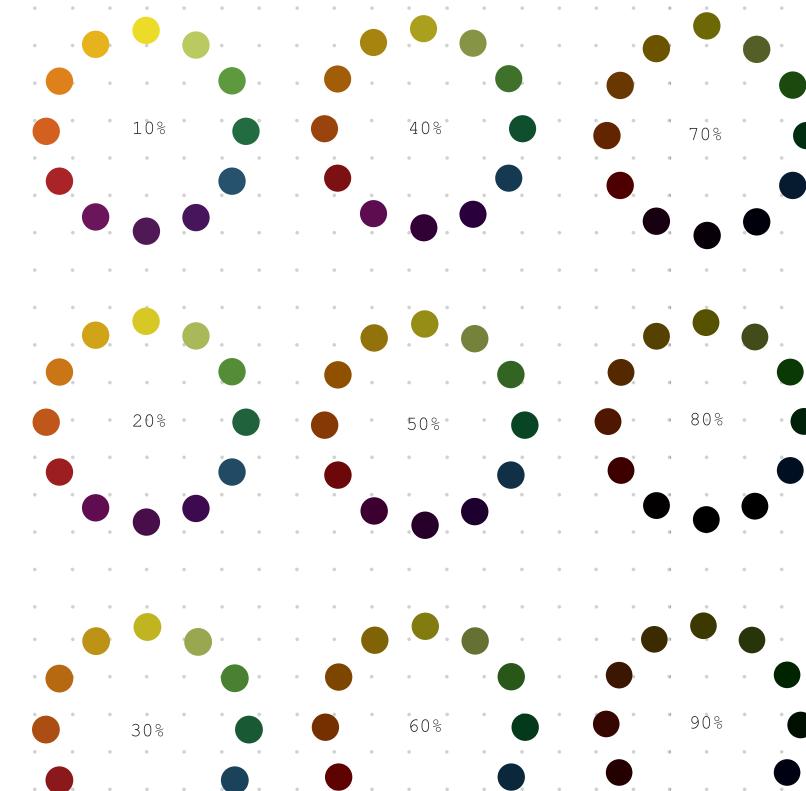
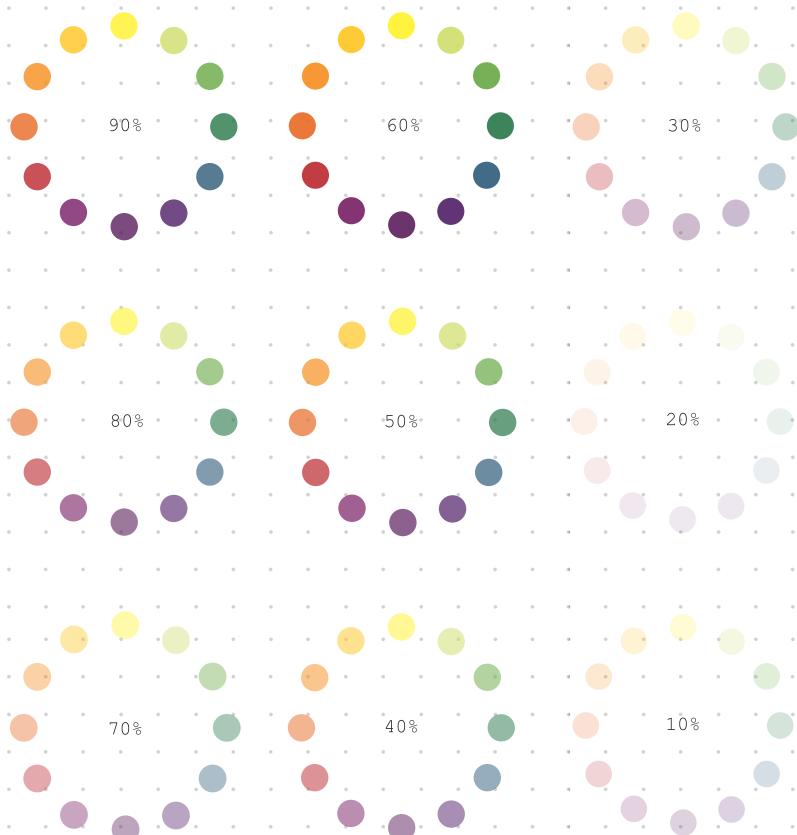
No color exists in isolation. Take a look at simultaneous contrast and the after-image effect. How do the surrounding colors change the way one hue is perceived?

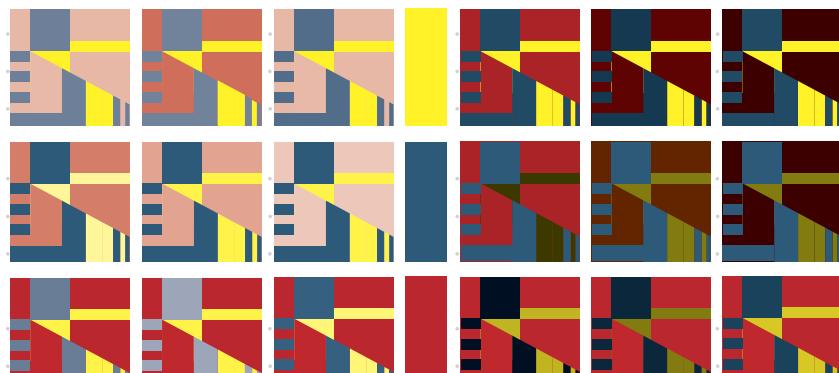
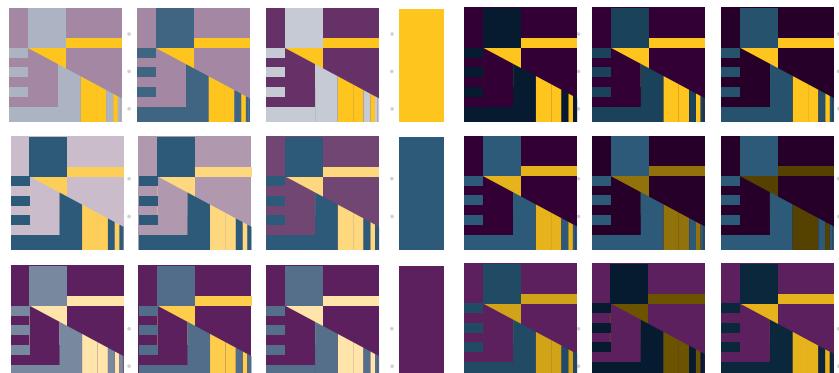
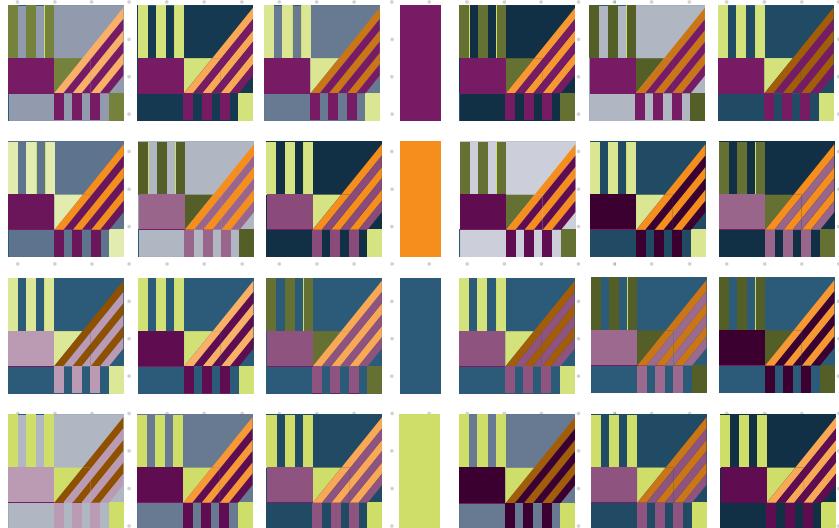
Color Combinations

Various complementary combinations for my first exercise with simultaneous contrast and the after-image effect.

After creating a toolkit of tints (adding white) and shades (adding black), I applied them to the compositions below.





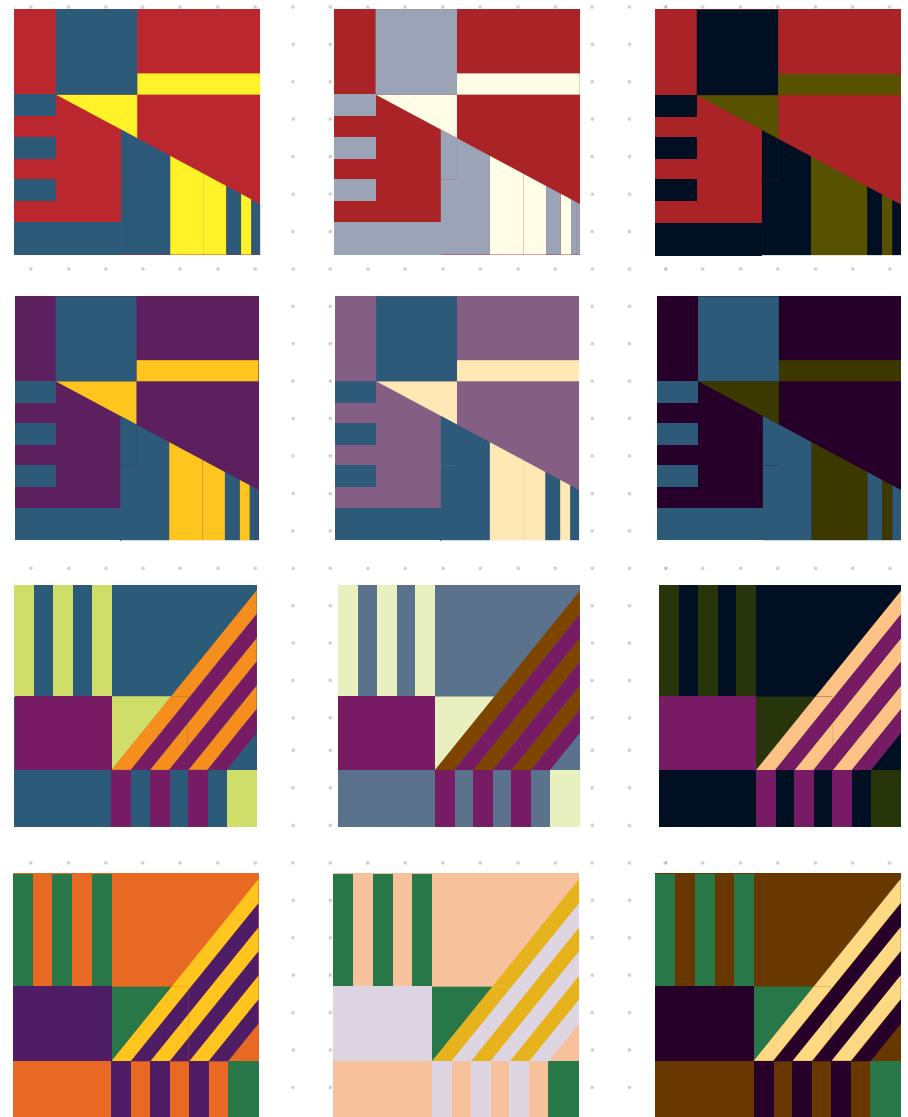


Final Compositions

After all my iterations, I realized I didn't really need to make sooo many. Being a little more intentional made for much more successful compositions. What I really needed was radical shifts and decision-making.

Being selective with my "control" color was really important. The prominence in the composition influenced space relationships a lot.

Being thoughtful about these decisions led to more effective after-image and hierarchy play.





Adventure #5:

simultaneous contrast

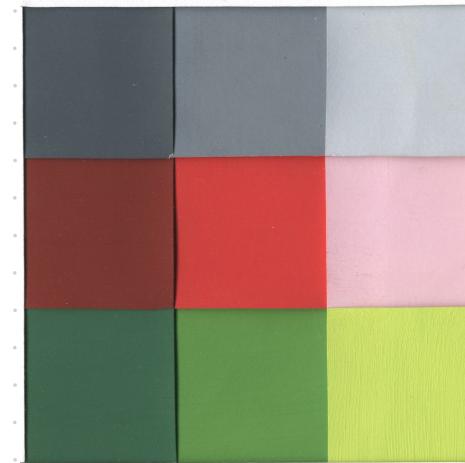
Using gray-scale, monochromatic, and analogous palettes, create a set of visuals exploring simultaneous contrast. Factors at play are scale, foreground & background colors.

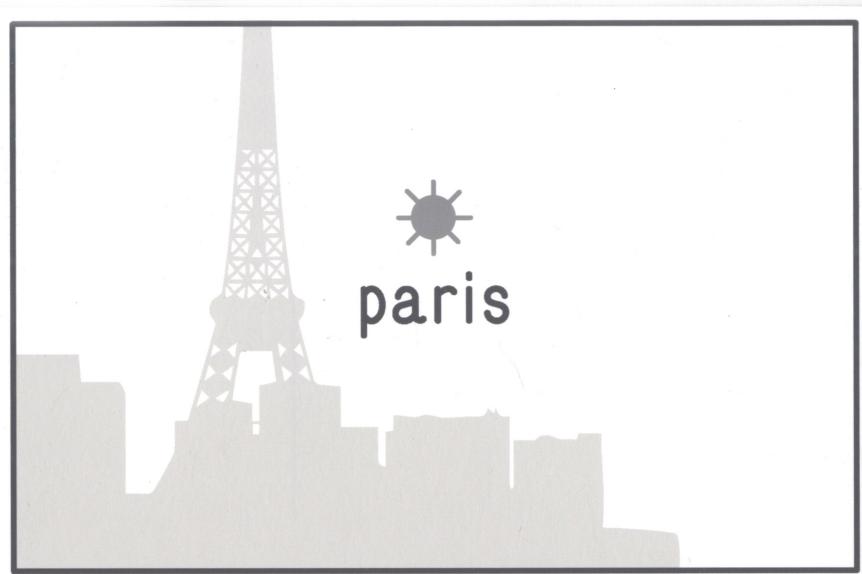
Concept

My family loves to travel. I've had the fortune of visiting so many great places around the globe. For this adventure, I made a set of postcards contrasting each location's daytime and nighttime activities.

On the right here is my color palette. Each color matched with a place category. Grays on black/white backgrounds were cities, reds on black/white were mountains. Greens on color backgrounds were coasts, and lastly, grays on color were lakes.

Finally, I presented them all in a set of 4 envelopes and tied it up like an air mail package. Ready to send!

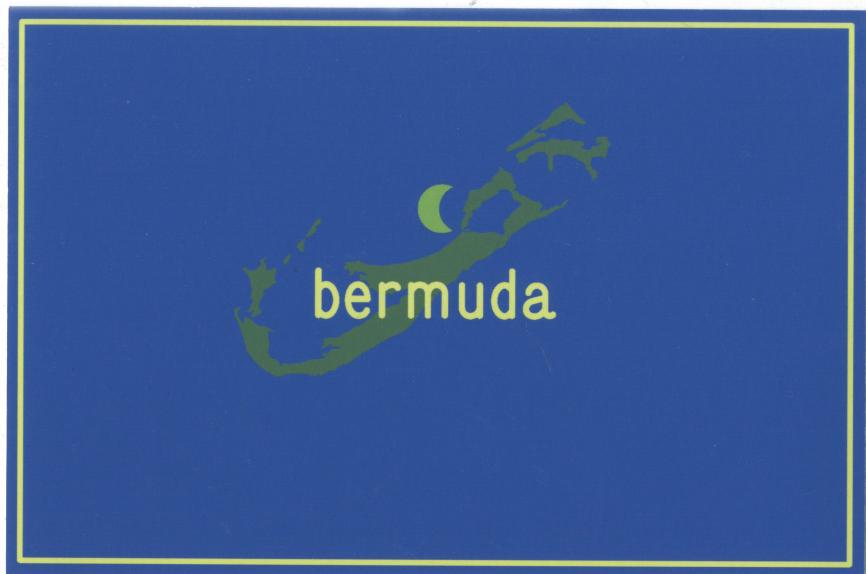




sun
grand tetons

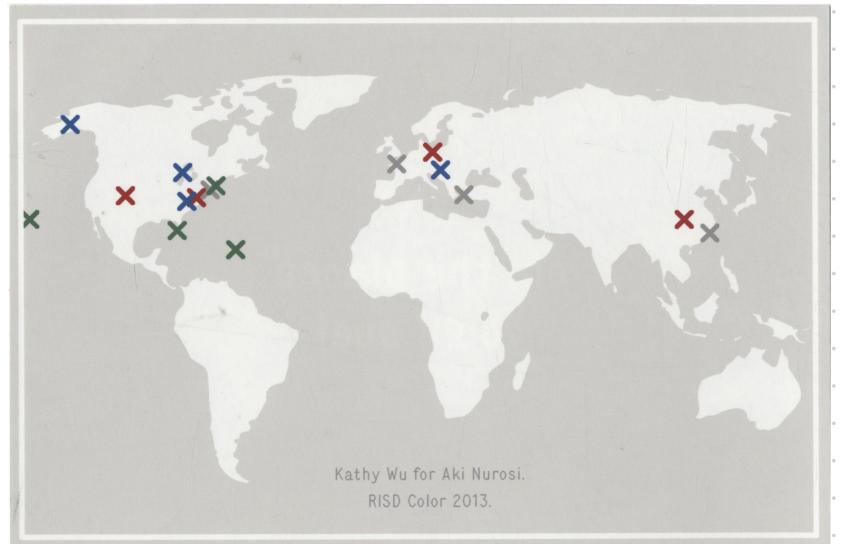
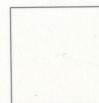


moon
grand tetons



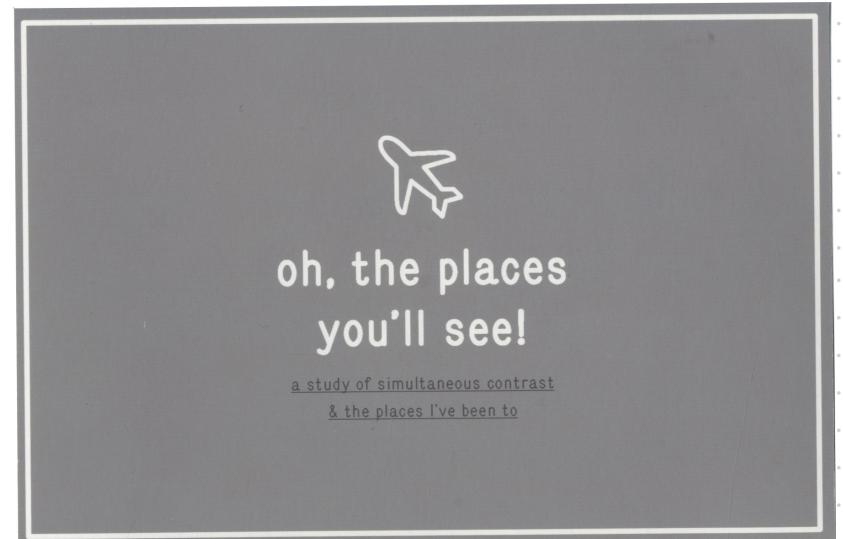
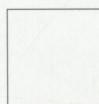
PARIS, FRANCE

Swing by the Louvre or Centre Pompidou and window shop on the Champs-Elysee. People-watch from the cafes.



PARIS, FRANCE

Go to the top of the Tour Eiffel and see the city in all its romance. Cruise on the Seine, and don't forget to tip the accordianiste.

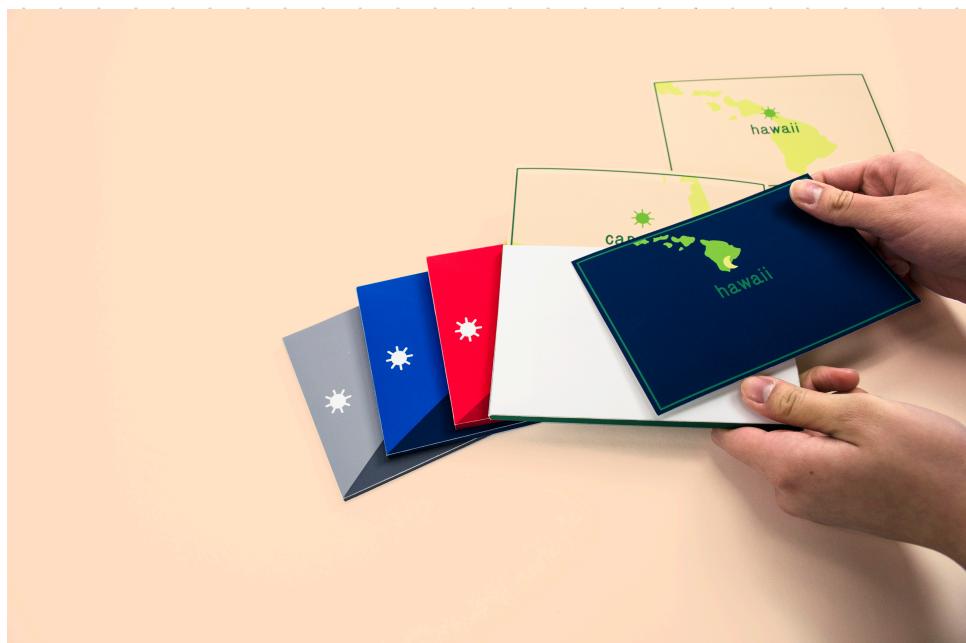




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63



64



65



austrian alps

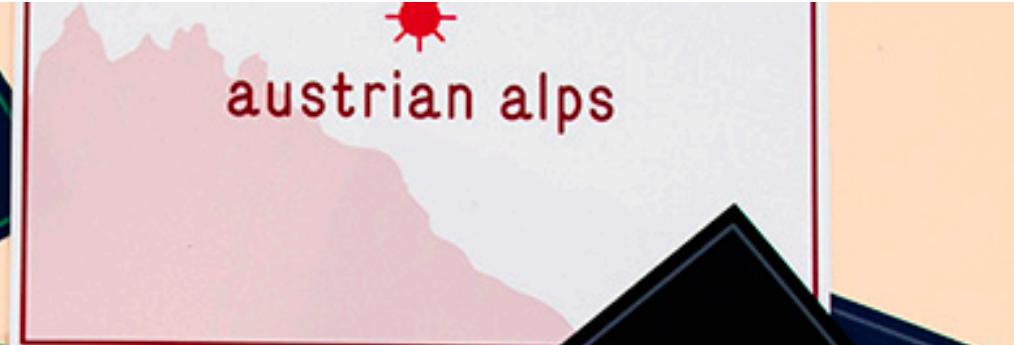
oh, the places
you'll see!

A study of simultaneous contrast
& the places I've been to

huang shan

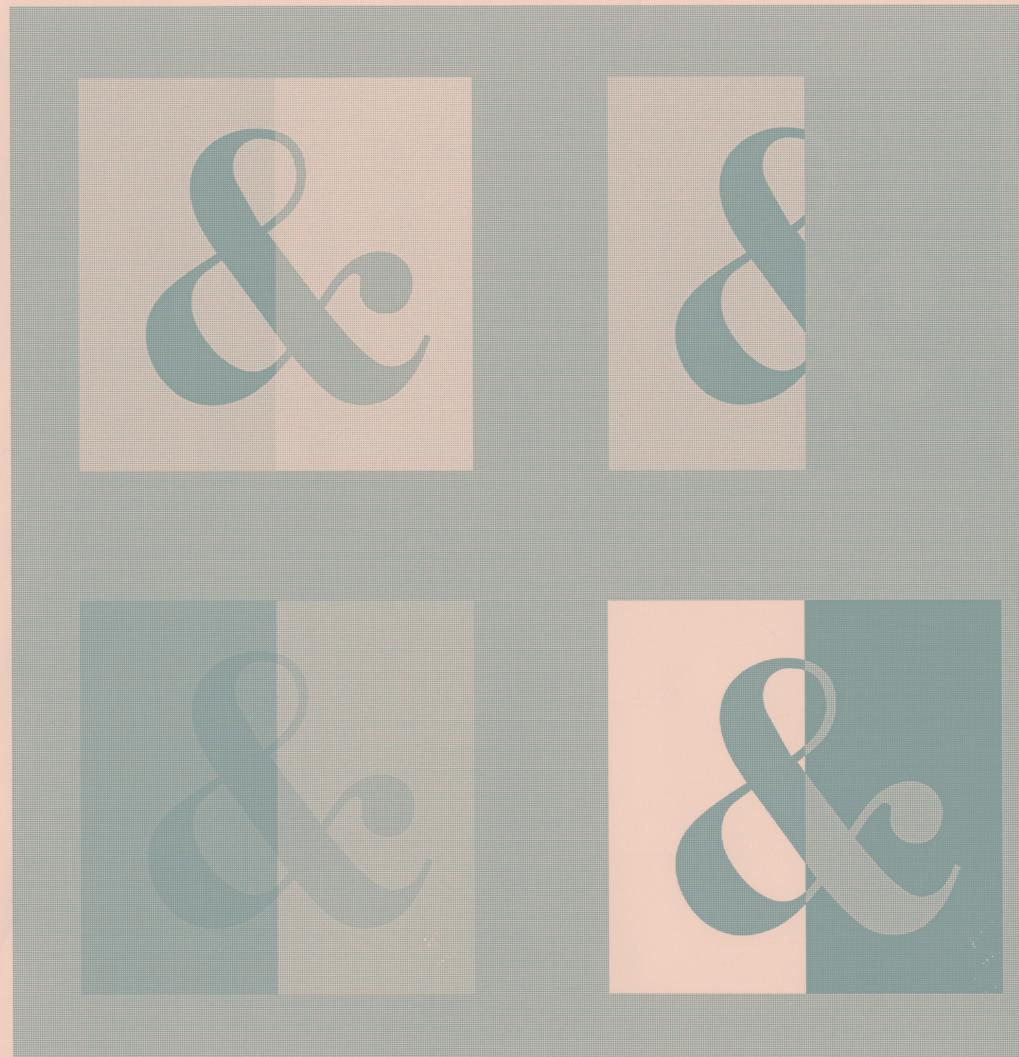
new york city

austria





Adventure #6:



cmyk separations

Remember when you'd mix all the colors together as a kid and wind up with mud? You may not have realized it, but you were making chromatic grays. This next adventure is a look at chromatic grays and levels of contrast.

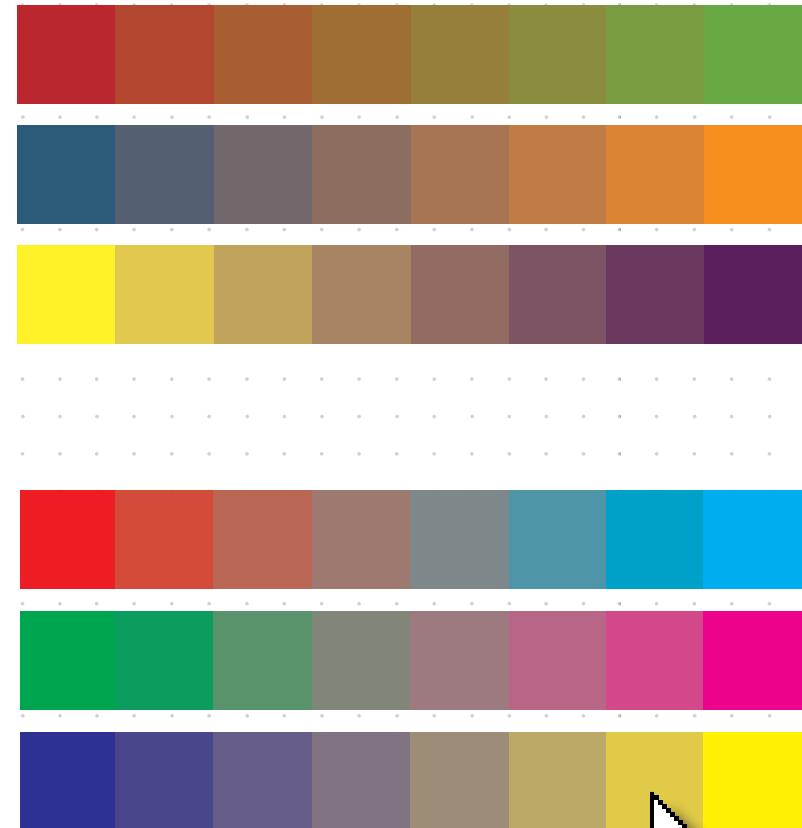
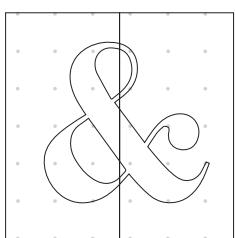
Additive vs. Subtractive

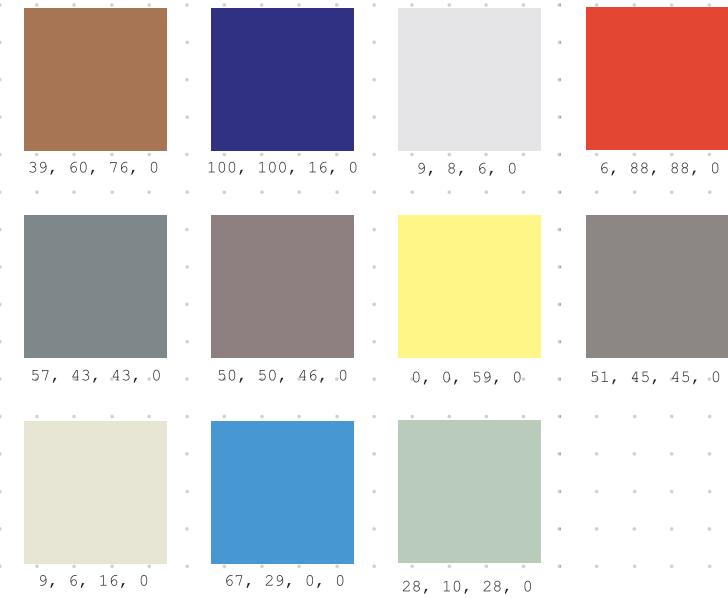
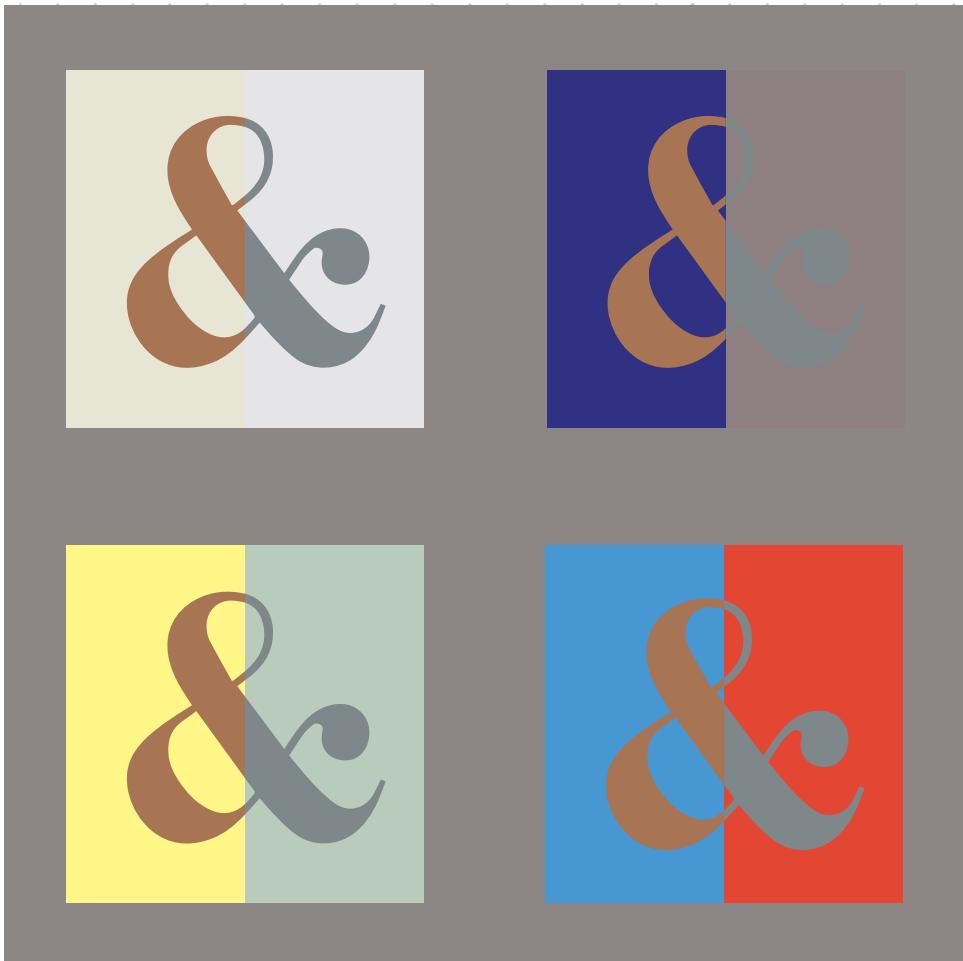
Complementary colors again! Take a close look at these sets and how they're made.

The top stripes show an additive color process. (Like in painting, you would make black by adding color.)

The bottom features your subtractive color process. In the digital realm, you would subtract color and light to make black.

In the middle column are your chromatic grays. Playing with de-saturation and values, watch how a colored shape reacts to its context.





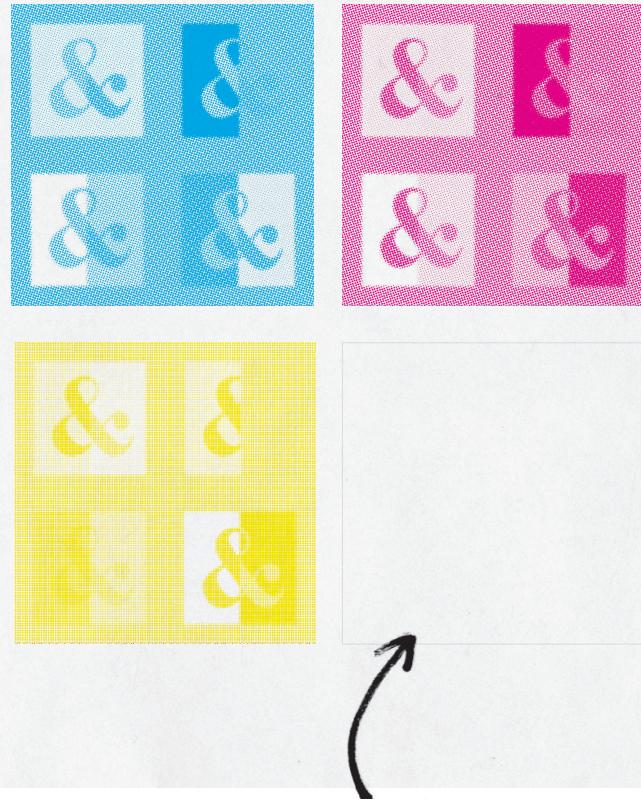
For the two halves of the shape, apply one warm gray and one cool gray. For the background halves, play with:

1. Two lighter values
2. One dark cool, one warm of the same value
3. Any warm, any cool value
4. Two complements of the same value

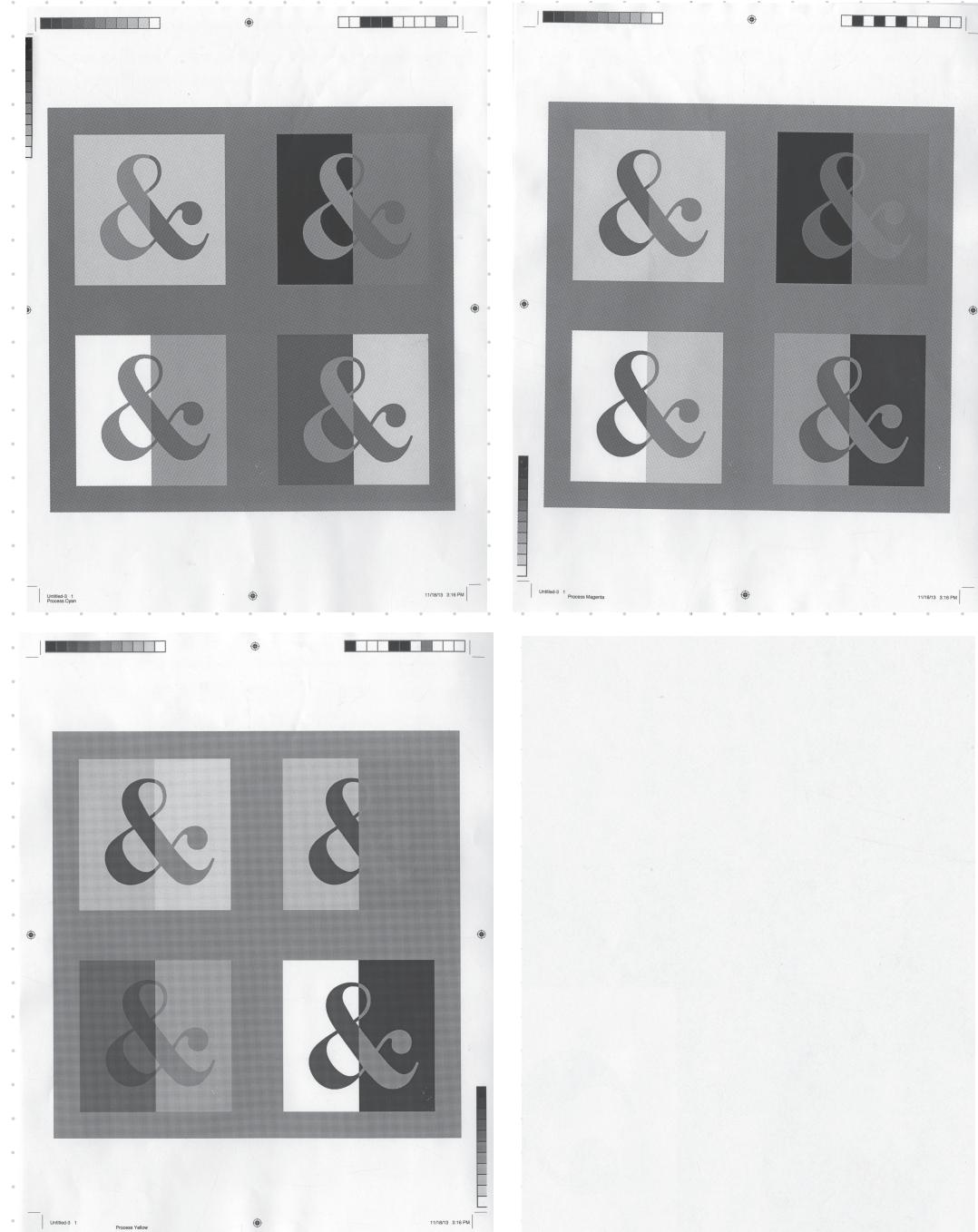
But how is color made?

In the print world, you can see the precise densities of cyan, magenta, yellow, and key (black) in these CMYK separations below.

Impressively, I managed to unconsciously not use any black in my compositions!



There was no K!





Adventure #7:

postage stamps

Using every tool we've covered so far, create a postage stamp based on an object in nature. After all, nature is the world's best designer.

Think you can handle it?

Concept

My natural object? A radish, because I love the vivid hues and the form. They're the perfect example of complementary colors in nature, too.

I began by observing the radish's palette, moving from the most obvious hues (bright red, green) to subtle jewel tones. I investigated tints, shades, and beautiful complementary mutes.

After doing a bit of research, I found that Oaxaca, Mexico holds a fantastic Radish Festival called Noche de Rabanos. This event was the basis of my stamp collection.





My palette:

- monochromatic leaf greens
- analogous violets
- complementary magenta and green.



38, 9, 60, 0

64, 20, 92, 0

85, 52, 100, 0



48, 72, 73, 0

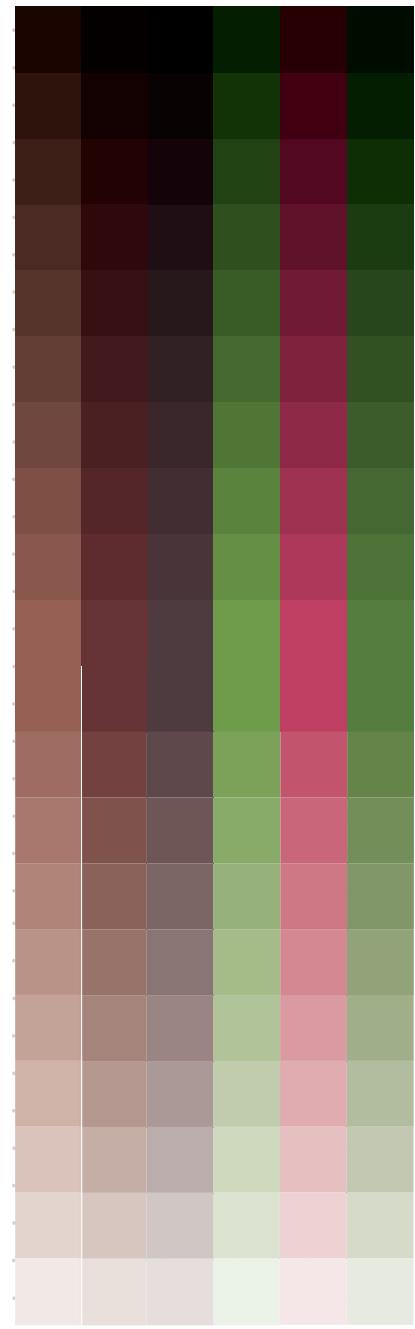
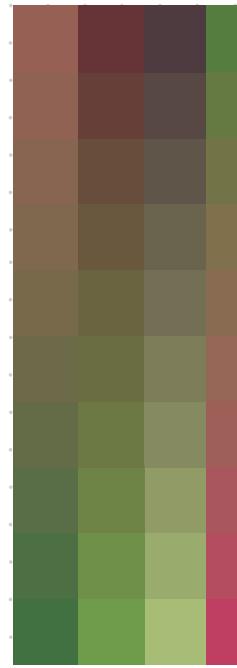
77, 100, 100, 0

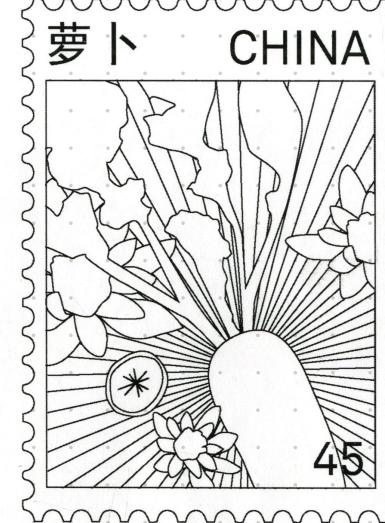
88, 95, 90, 0



25, 90, 50, 0

75, 40, 100, 5





Some early sketches.

The radish originated near China, so I also did a Chinese one...

Yet I was still most fond of the initial, whimsical illustrations...

Final stamp collection
features happy radishes and
festive stars.





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Stamps to scale.

Send simultaneous
contrast mail with
nature-inspired,
color transparency
postage!

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notes



congratulations

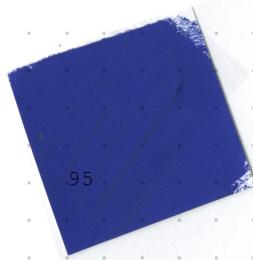
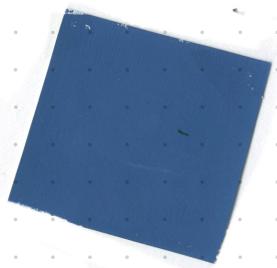
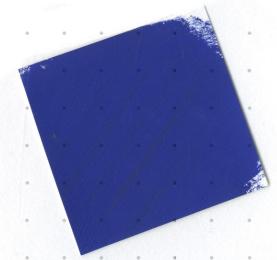


Great work! You've earned a badge for exploring color theory like a pro.

But don't stop exploring now. Use the tools you've discovered, and keep your eyes peeled for new observations, because color is everywhere.

Use these pages for additional notes.

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