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The Use of Color

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COLOR

THE USE OF COLOR

Honors Special Studies

Lois Kirkpatrick

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With receding colors or appropriate contrasts, the apparent size of a room can be markedly increased. Ceilings can be made to seem higher or lower with a coat of paint. Where there is no sunlight, its effects can be simulated with yellow walls, and excessive brightness or glare can be reduced with cool, darkish surfaces.

Complementary hues, when placed next to each other, contrast vividly. Each color seems more intense and the effect is strong, bright, and sometimes harsh if the area of each hue is large enough to be perceived as a separate color. But if the areas of two complementary hues are very small, as in a textile woven of fine red and green yarns, the effect at normal distances is lively, luminous, and neutral. If opposites are mixed together, grayness results.

Reds, yellows, and oranges seem warm. Blue, green, and violet look cool and restful. Good use can be made of the warmth and coolness of hues. Furnishings appear more related against warm walls. Shapes, especially outlines of objects, are emphasized when object and background contrast in hue. A sofa upholstered in red or yellow will seem larger than one upholstered in green or blue.

Intermediate degrees of harmony and contrast come when hues neither adjacent to nor opposite each other on the Color Wheel are used. Yellow and blue-green, for instance, give an effect midway between harmony and contrast because blue-green is midway between yellow and its complementary hue, violet. Yellow and green, being closer together, bring a little more harmony. Yellow and blue, which are farther apart, produce more contrast. The effect of

combined hues depends on their degree of harmony or contrast, on the size of the area allotted to each of them, and on their value and intensity.

Monochromatic color schemes are based on a single hue with small amounts of other hues used as accents. Use of monochromatic color assures that unity and harmony are firmly established, spaciousness and continuity are emphasized, the effect is quiet and peaceful, and some degree of success is almost assured in advance. The major danger is possible monotony which can be avoided by using different hues. Monochromatic color schemes are liked today because they let us see the room and the people in it. They are good for whatever can be seen through large windows, for distinctive furniture, or for individual collections of any kind.

Analogous color schemes are based on three or more related colors that contain some degree of one hue. They have more variety of hue, and consequently more variety of warmth and coolness, than do monochromatic.

The walls of the rooms, including the windows and their treatment, the doors, and fireplaces are the largest color areas. Floors and ceilings come next in size, then furniture and accessories. Floors are usually moderately dark in value and low in intensity to give a firm, unobtrusive base and to simplify upkeep; they are warm in hue because cold floors are seldom liked. Walls are lighter in value than floors to provide a transition between them and the ceilings, quite neutral in intensity to keep them as backgrounds, and are more often warm than cool. Ceilings are very light in value and very low in intensity for sense of spaciousness and efficient reflection of light; frequently they are white but may be tints of

either warm or cool hues.

Cool hues, light values, and low intensities make rooms look larger. Rooms too long and narrow can be visually shortened and widened by having one end wall warmer, darker, and more intense than the side walls. Rooms that are too square and boxy seem less awkward if one or two walls are treated differently from the others, or if one wall and the ceiling or the floor are similar in color.

Complementary color schemes are built on any two hues directly opposite each other on the Color Wheel. Double complementaries are simply two sets of complements. Split complementary color schemes are composed of any hue and the two hues at each side of its complement. This makes the contrast less violent than in the simple complementary type and adds interest and variety. Triad color schemes are any three hues equidistant apart on the color wheel. Full-intensity hues are seldom used, however.

I am using plum mist walls, a deep purple rug, iris mauve ceiling, Antiqued white wood furniture with rose cushions, a robin's egg-blue bedspread with matching draperies, white lamps and shades, and white accessories. This is an analogous color scheme based on the relationship of blue, violet, red, and purple; white contrasts with the harmonious hues.



The purpose of this project is a study of the art principles as I may relate it to the re-decoration of my bedroom. This will also include the psychological effect of color and why I chose purple as my basic color.

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