

# Design Elements: Understanding Color

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**Sponsored by Peterboro Matboard**

West Coast Art & Frame Expo, Las Vegas 2019

# Color

is the most emotional and  
expressive element in design.

# Principles of Design

**Elements**  
are the easily identifiable  
building blocks

**Line**

*Balance*

**Color**

**Texture**

*Emphasis*

**Space**

**Intensity**

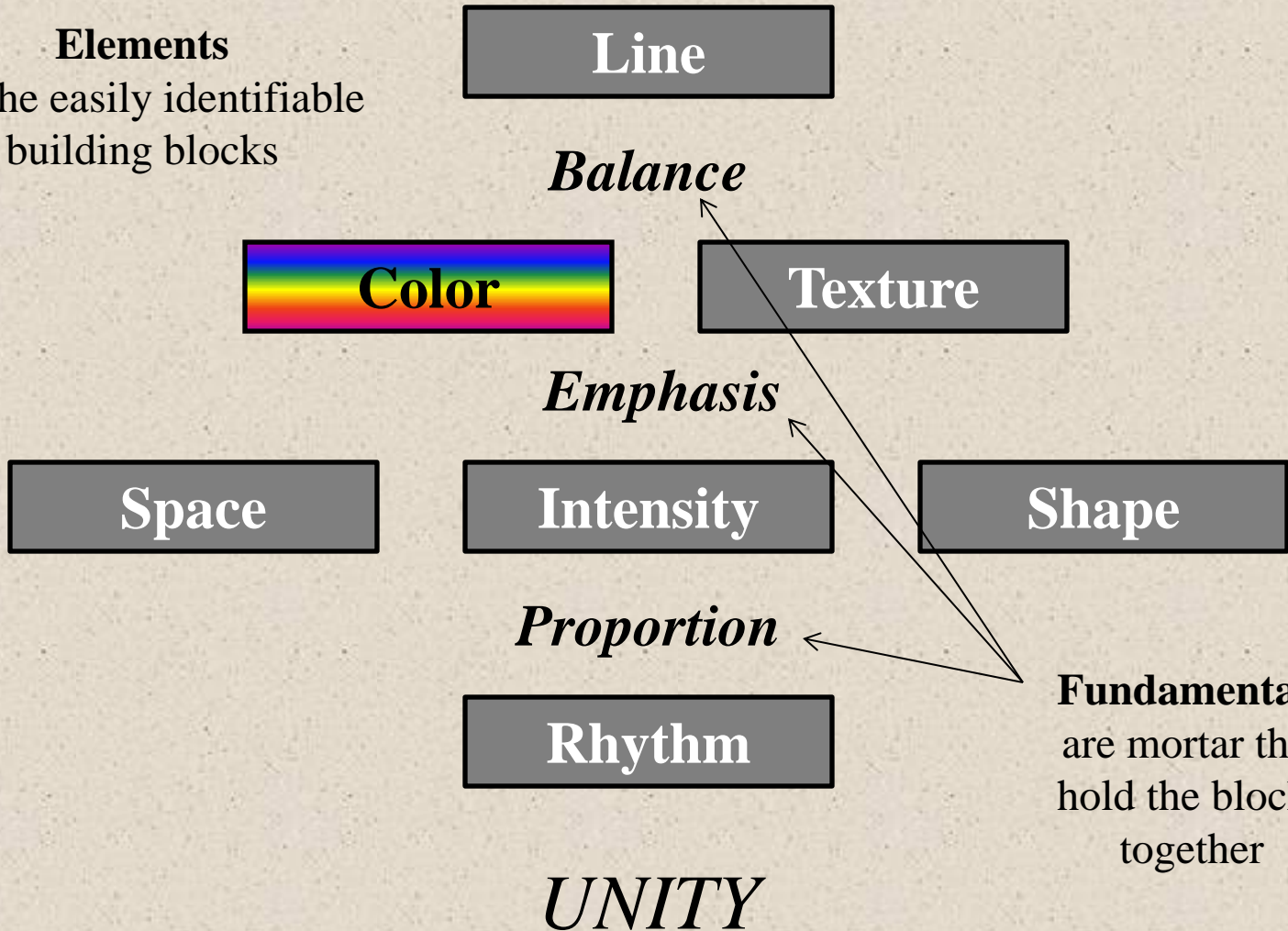
**Shape**

*Proportion*

**Rhythm**

**Fundamentals**  
are mortar that  
hold the blocks  
together

*UNITY*



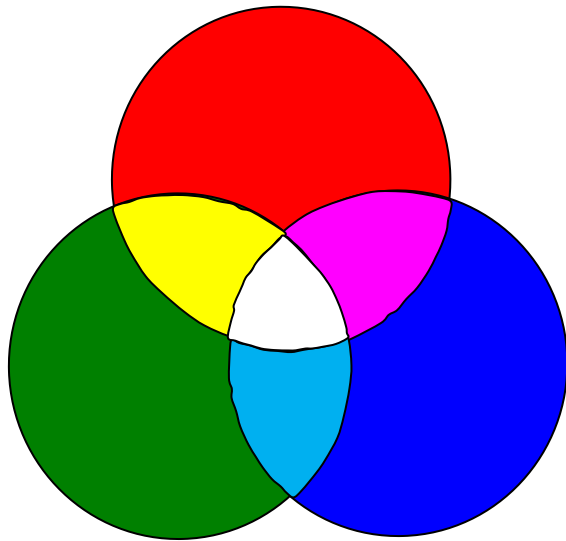
# Definition of Color

“Color is the character of a surface which is the result of vision sensitivity to reflected wavelengths of light.”

In other words...in order to see green all other wavelengths are absorbed and green is reflected back to the eye

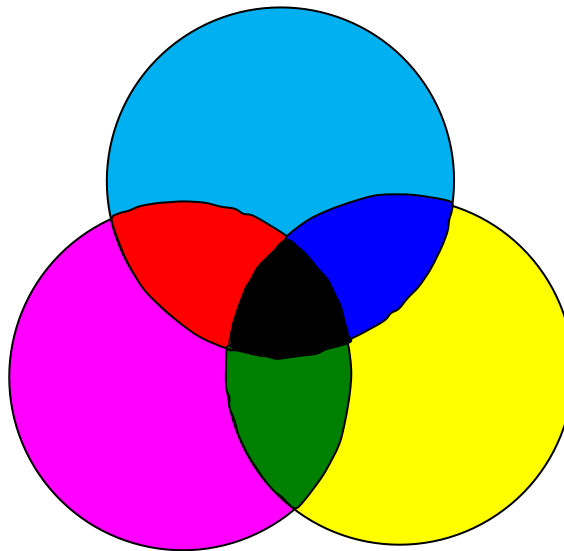
# Color Theories

Additive  
Light



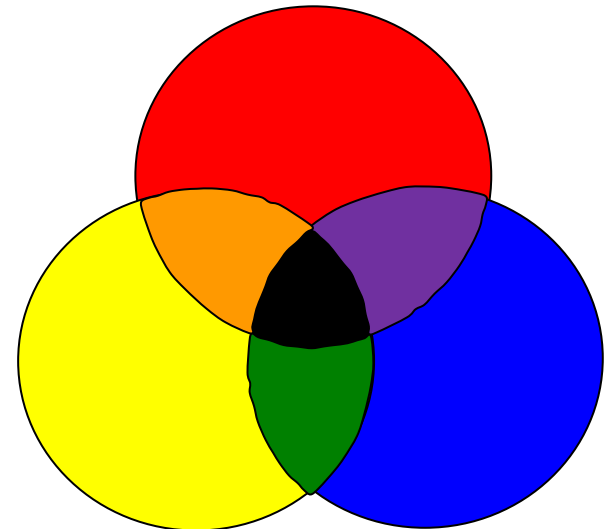
Lighting

Subtractive  
Digital Pigment



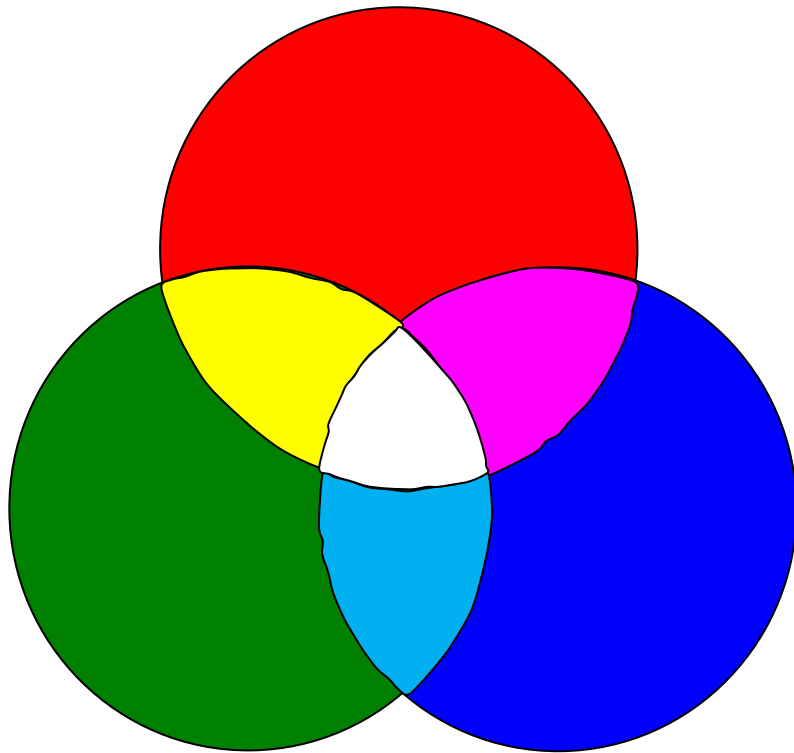
Printers

Subtractive  
Artist Pigment



Framing

# Additive Color Theory (LIGHT)



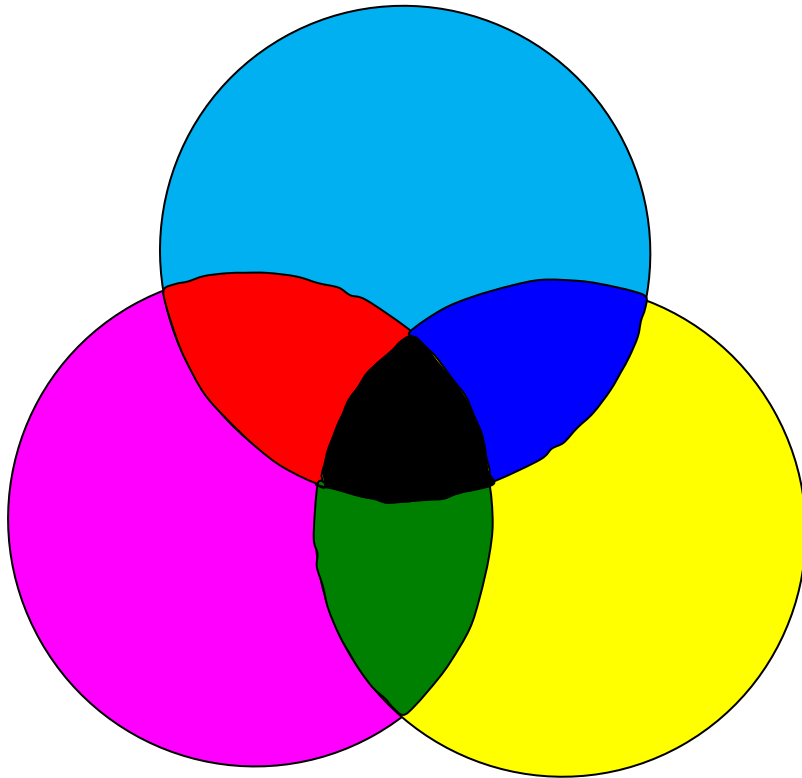
Primaries of red, green, blue (RGB) create secondaries of yellow, cyan, magenta.

All six combined create white, as all the colors in light are present and absorbed.

In order to see a red apple all other wavelengths of light are absorbed into the apple, reflecting only the red waves, allowing us to see it as red.

# Subtractive Color Theory

## (DIGITAL/PRINT)

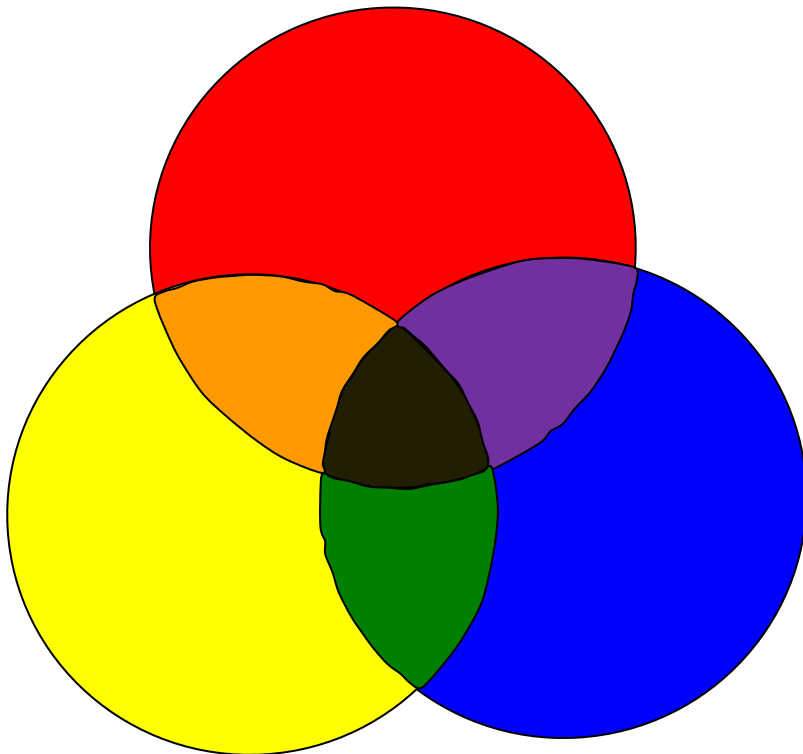


Primaries are cyan,  
magenta, yellow (CMY)  
which create secondaries of  
red, green, blue.

All six combined do not  
add color, but subtract or  
absorb all light wavelengths  
creating black - the absence  
of color.

# Subtractive Color Theory

## (ARTIST PIGMENT)



Pure pigmented primary colors red, yellow, blue are mixed to create secondaries of orange, green, purple.

When three primaries and three secondaries (all six) are blended...the result is muddy grey, brown or black.

Unlike light waves, no amount of color mixing will ever produce white.



# Glossary of Color Terms

Primary Colors - Pure colors that cannot be mixed

Red, Yellow and Blue on wheel

Secondary Colors - Orange, Yellow, Purple

Mixed from Primaries

Complimentary Colors - Opposites

Shade – Color plus black, darker than normal value

Tint – Color plus white, lighter than normal value

Tone – Color plus Grey

Monochromatic – Shades and Tints of same color

# Color Properties

Every color has three basic color properties: *hue, value, chroma*

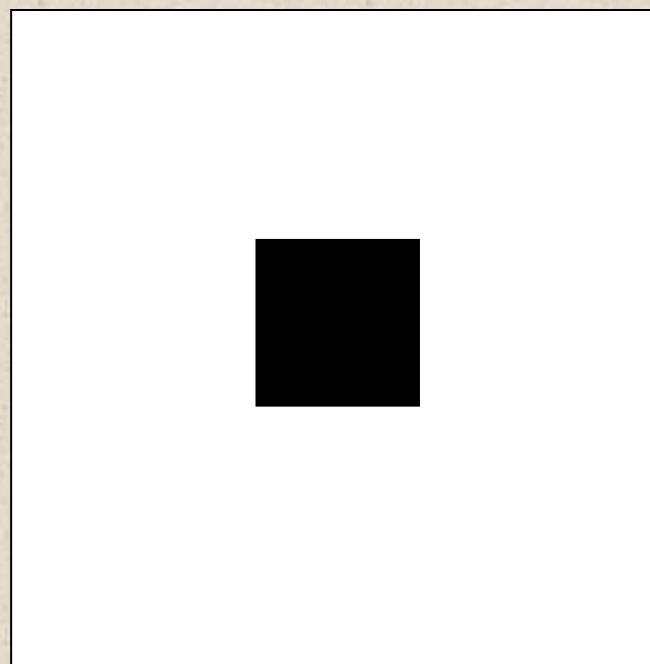
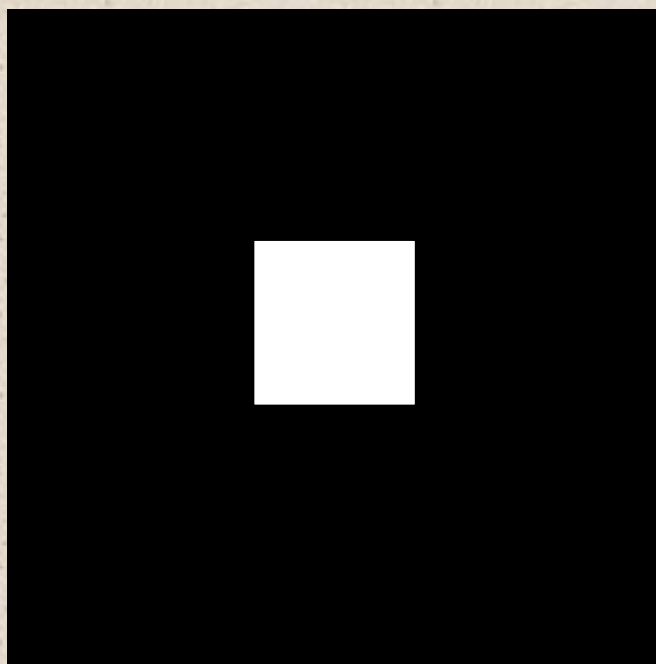
**Hue** - Position of a pure color in the spectrum that has not been dulled or diluted, no white, black or color added

**Value** - lightness or darkness of a color in relation to a scale ranging from white to black

**Chroma** - (saturation, intensity) Brightness or purity  
Cannot change value without changing chroma



Value Scale



Liner warm white  
expands image

Bevel wrap brings  
eye into tree

Top picks up  
neutral tan





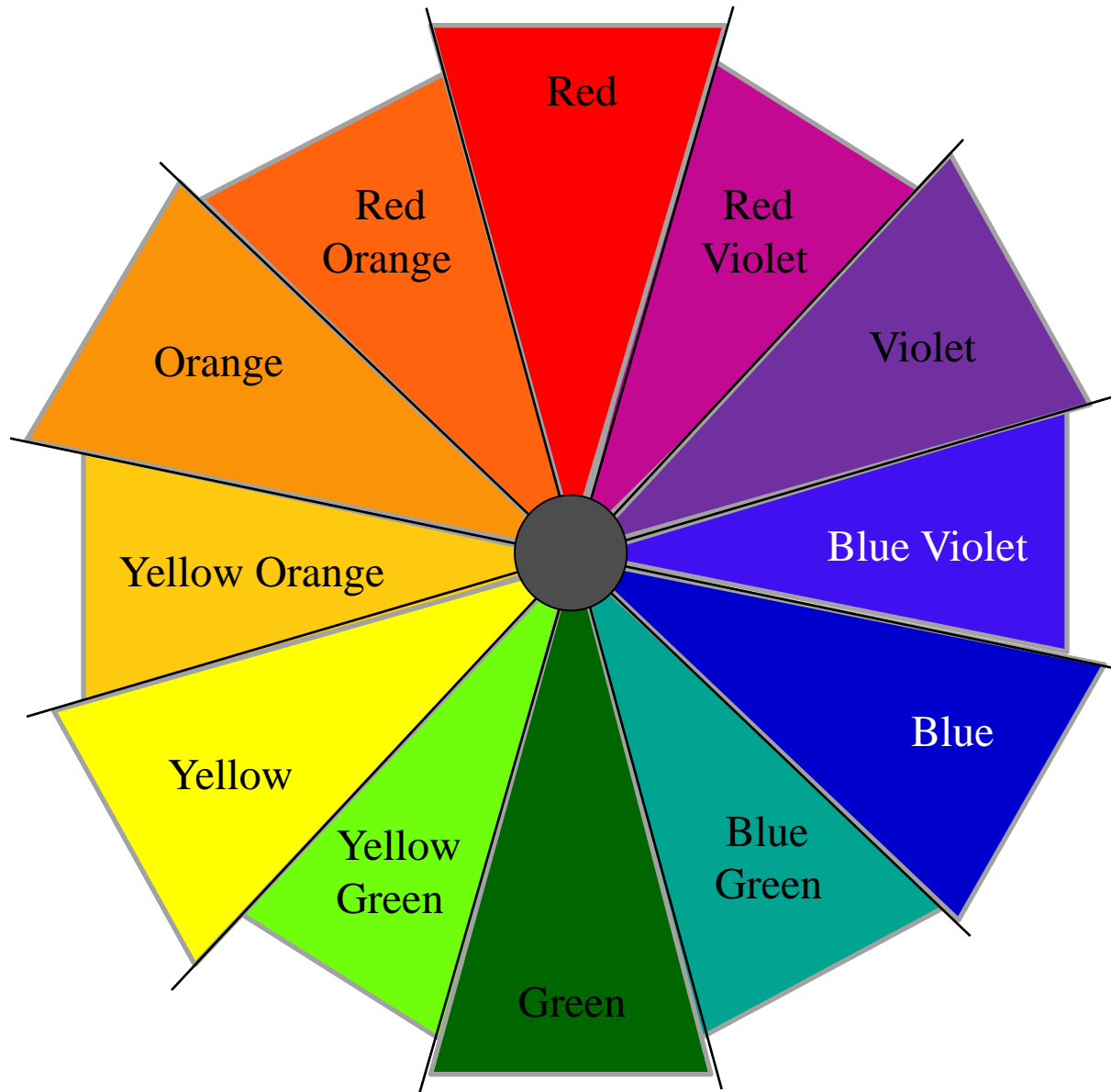
Warm white  
expands image

Spacer adds  
depth and  
shadows

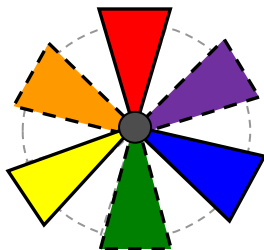
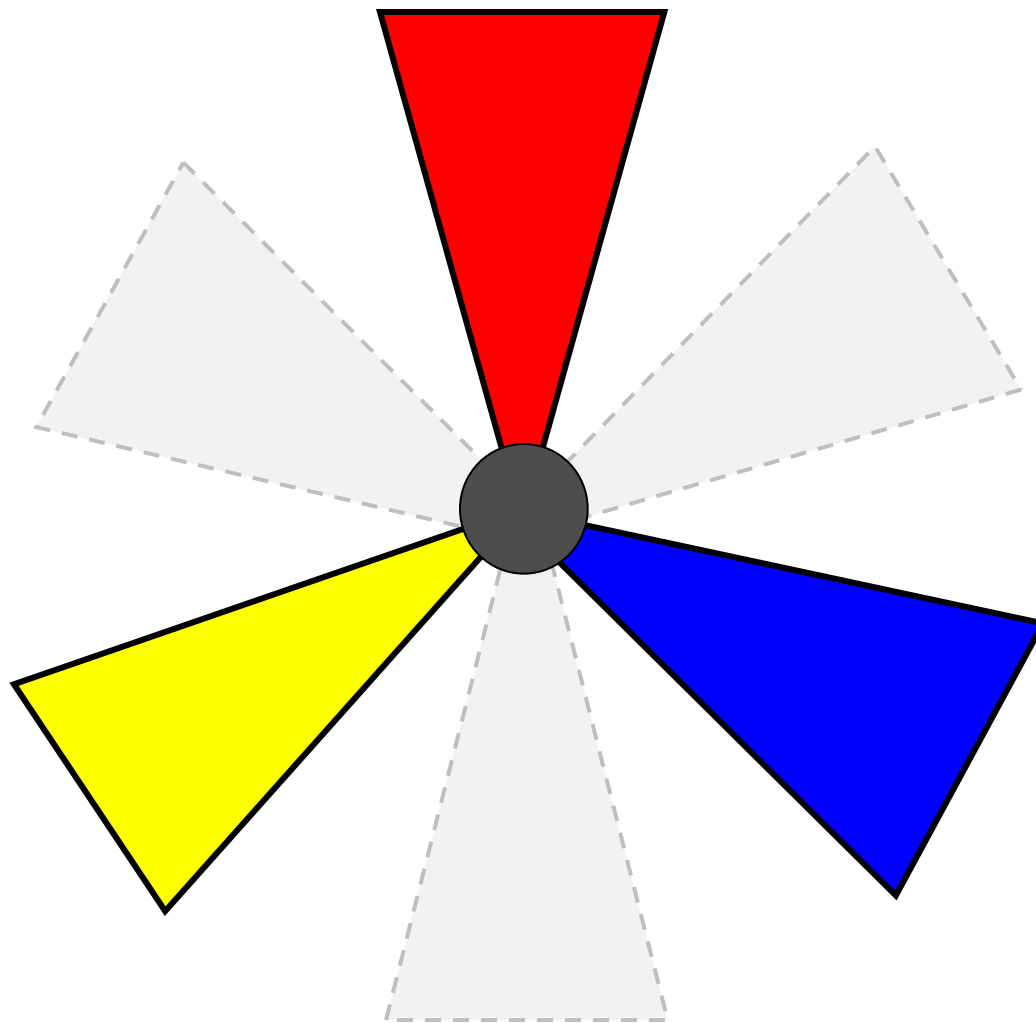
Top warm gray  
Draws the eye  
into the leaves



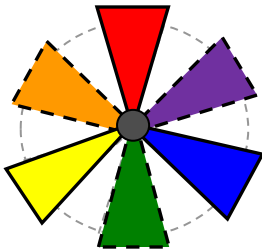
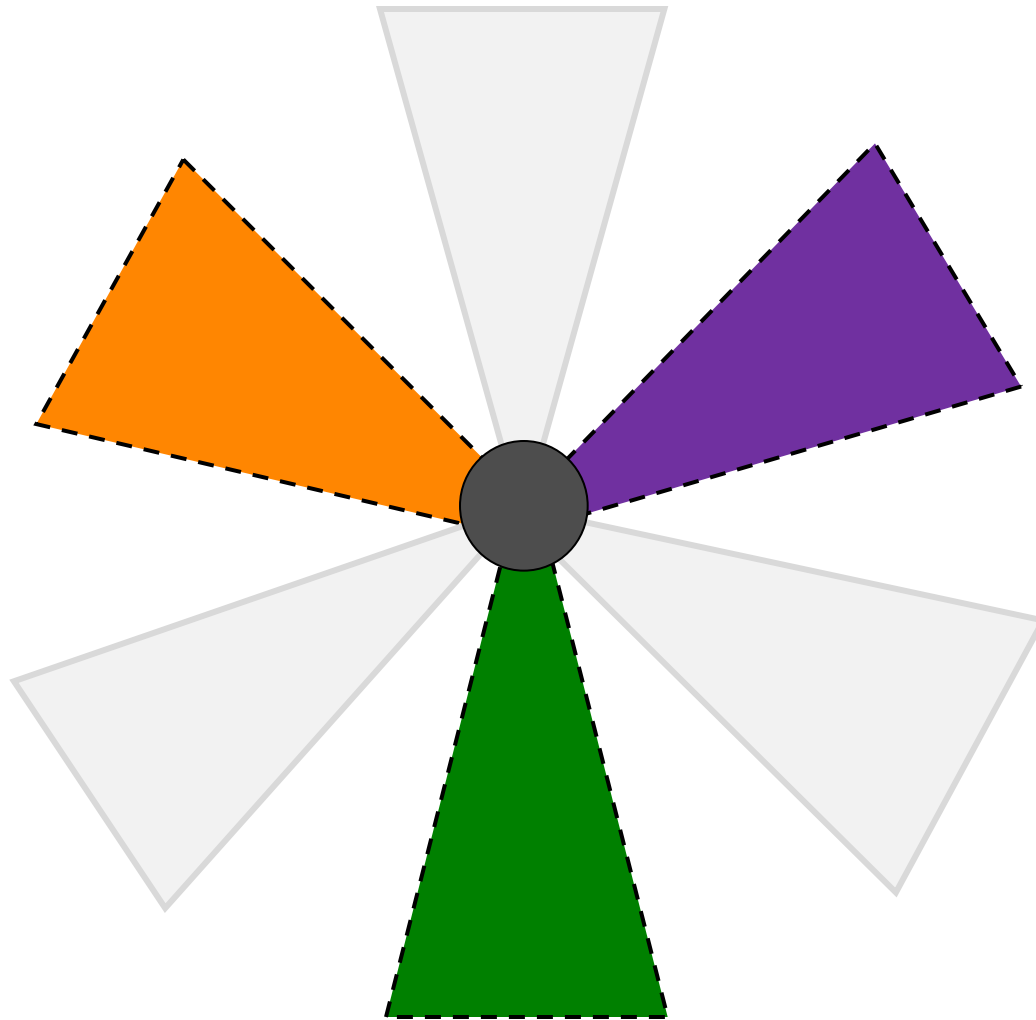
# Color Wheel



# Primary Colors

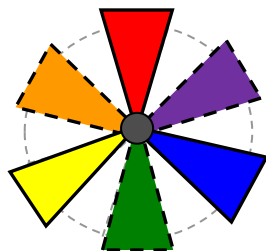
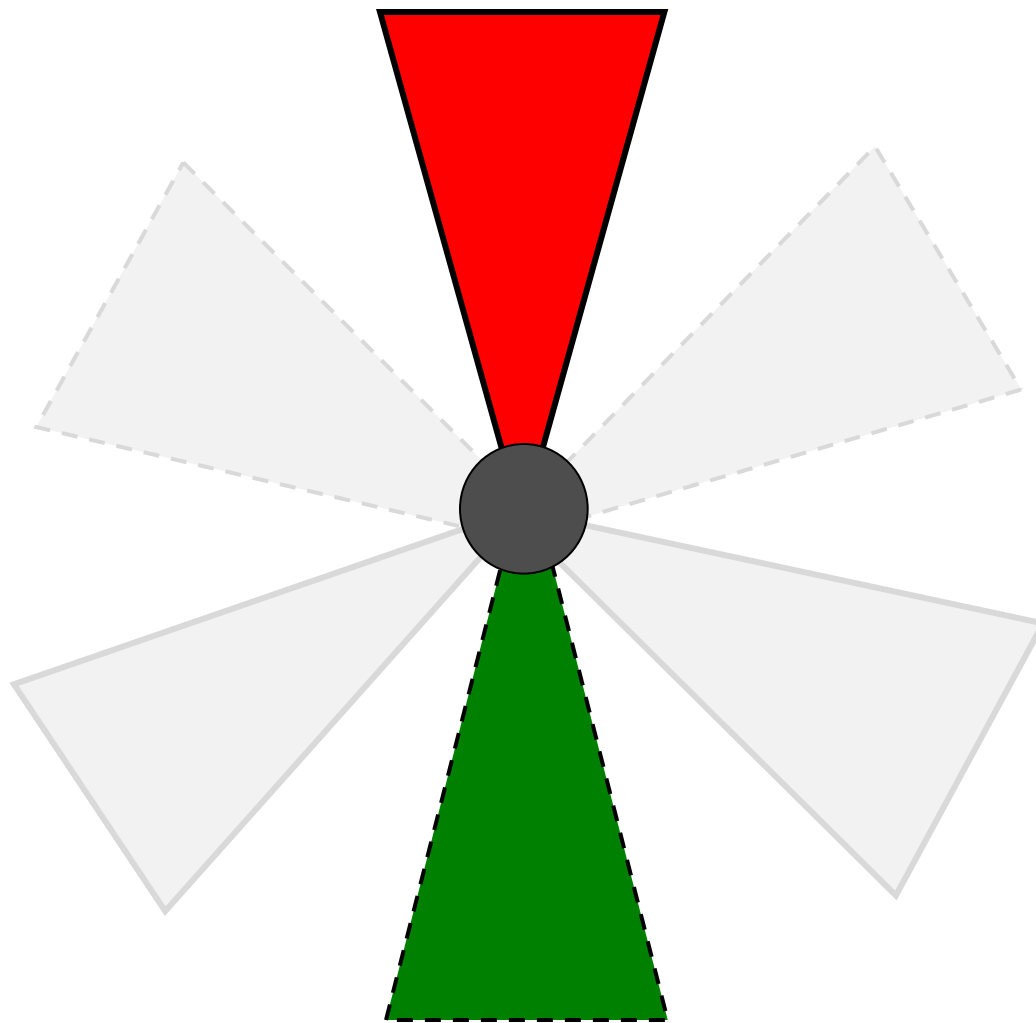


# Secondary Colors

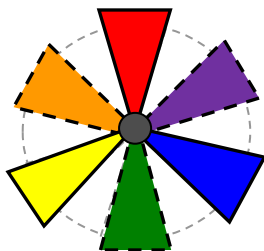
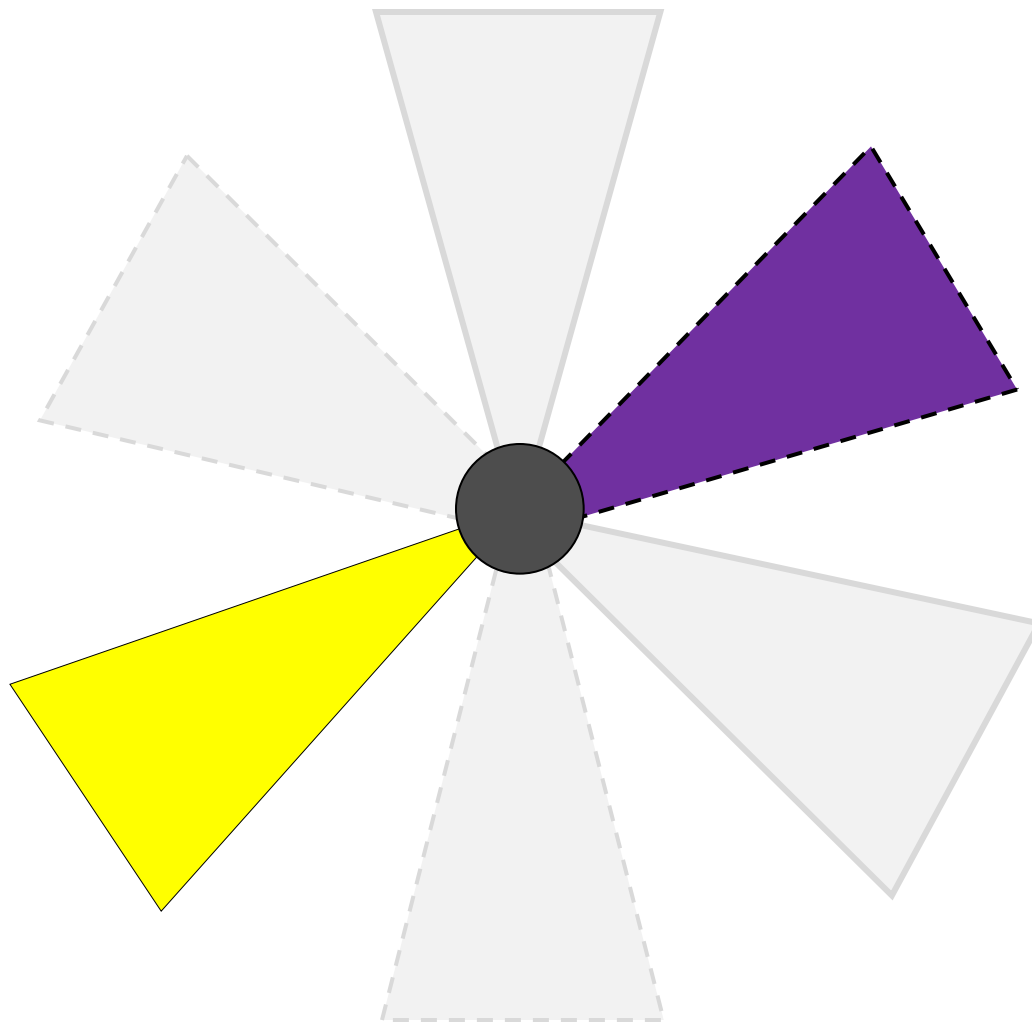




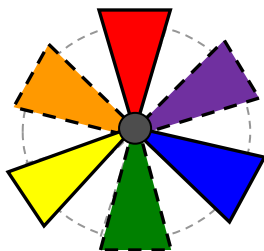
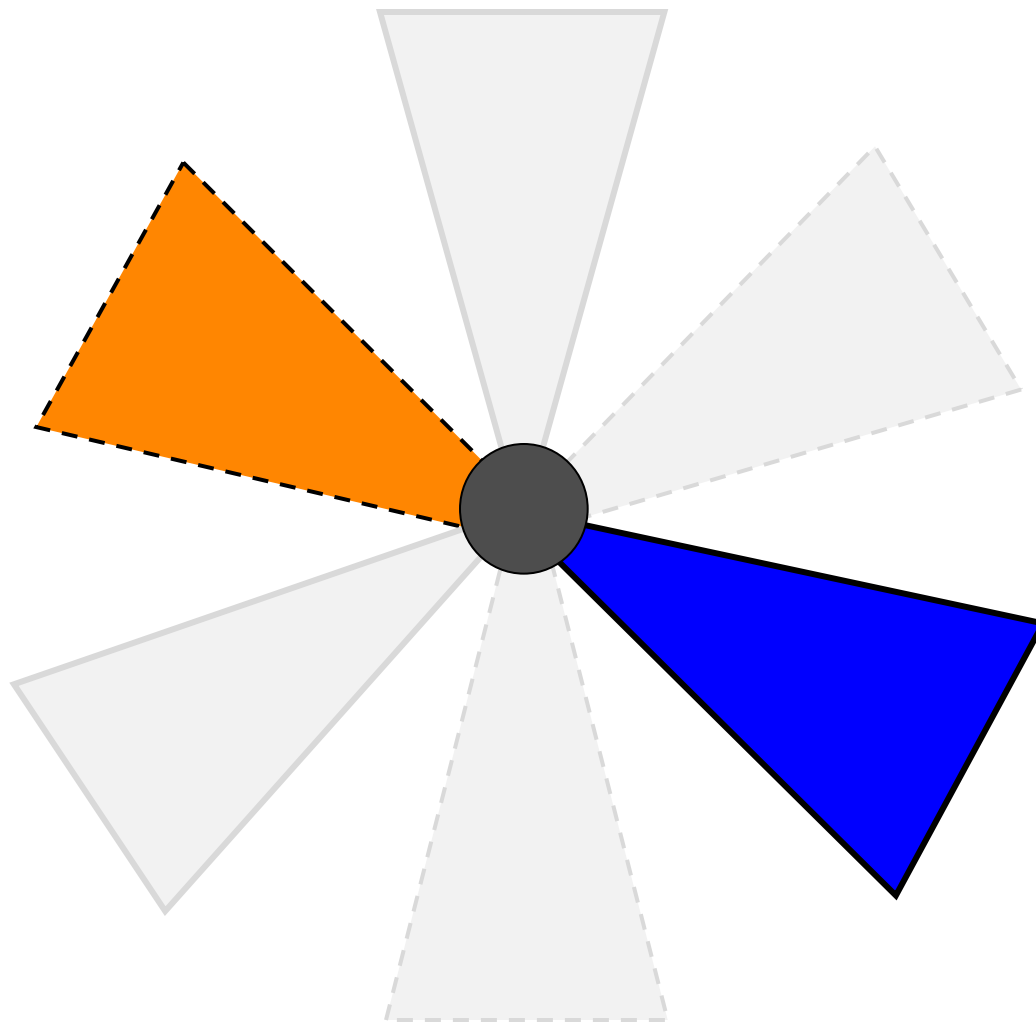
# Complementary Colors



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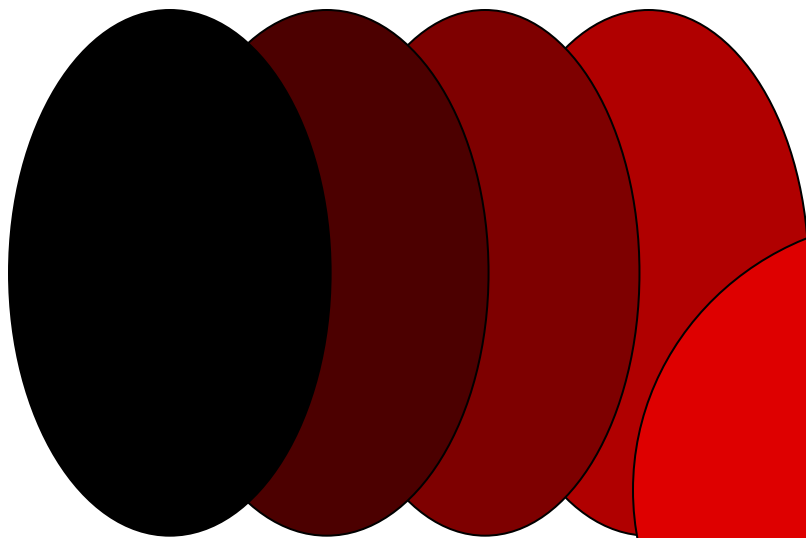
# Complementary Colors





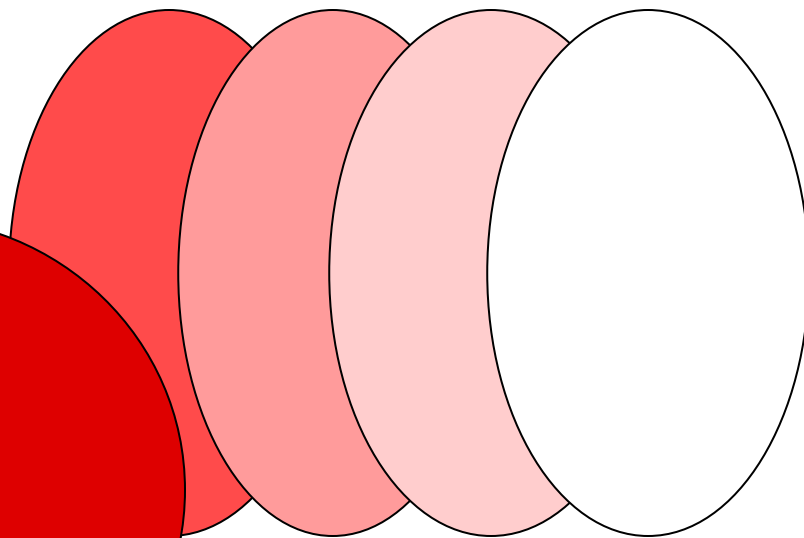
# Shade

color plus black



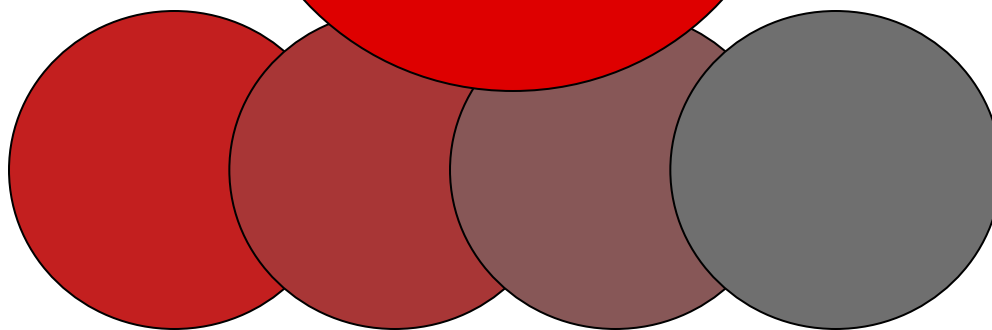
# Tint

color plus white

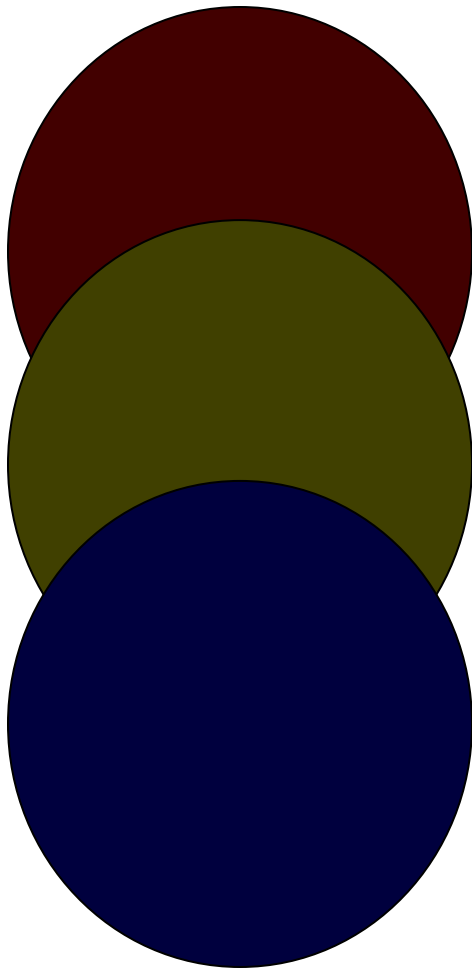


# Tone

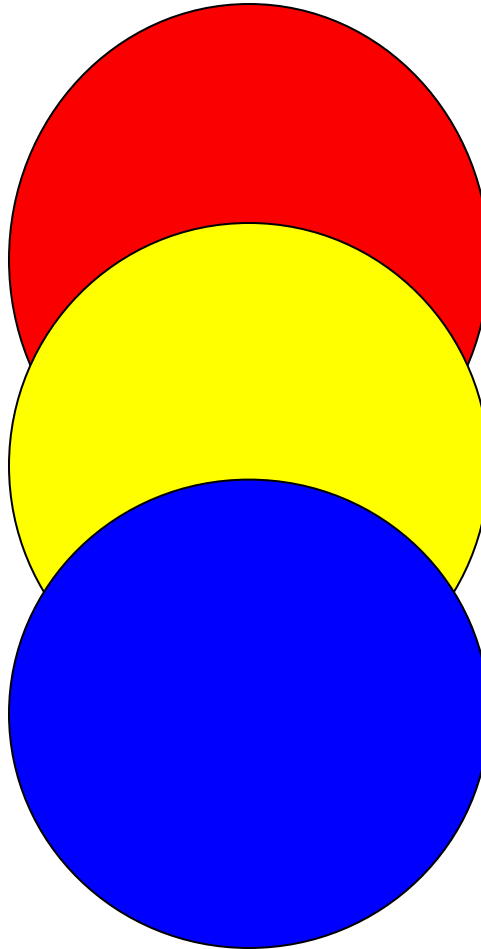
color plus gray



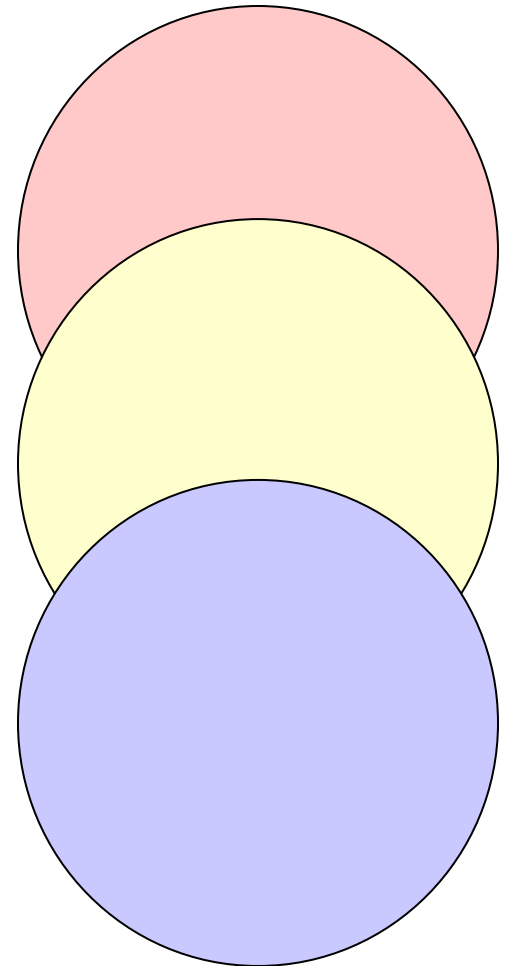
Primary  
as Shade



**Primary  
Colors**



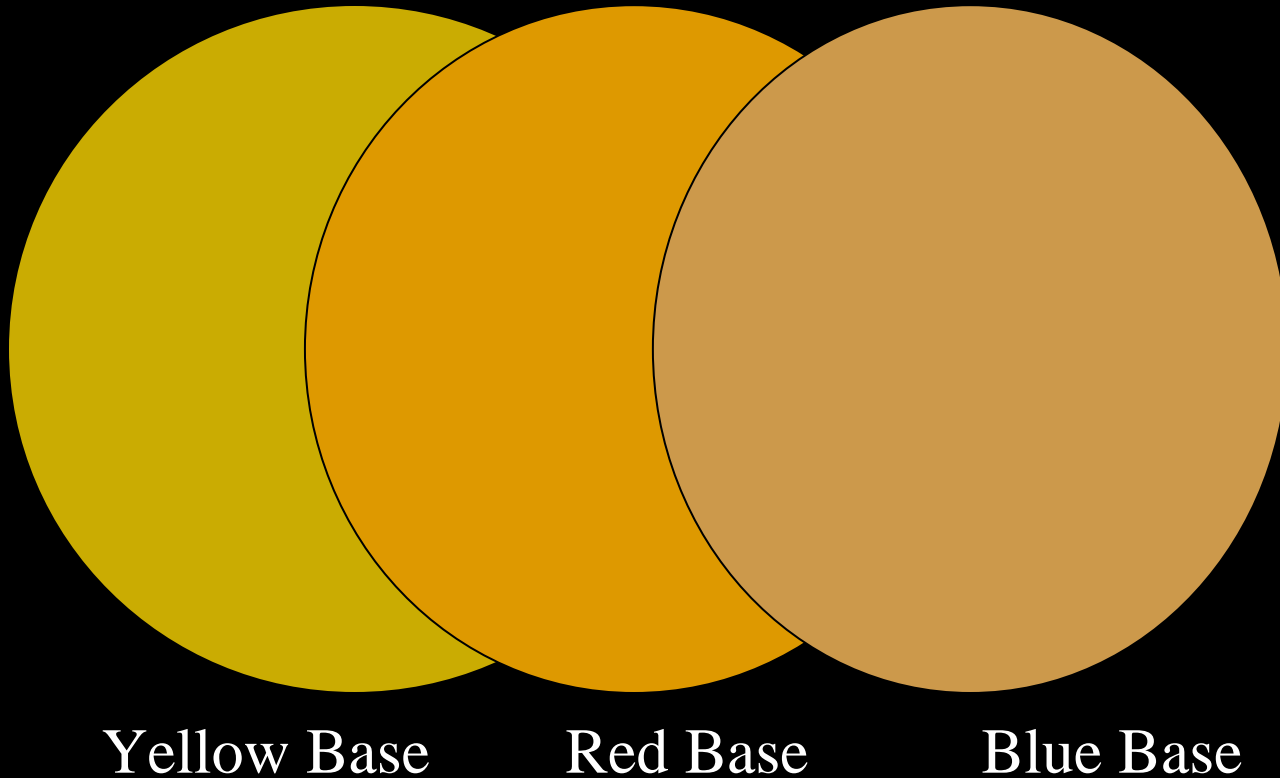
Primary  
As Tint



# Metallics



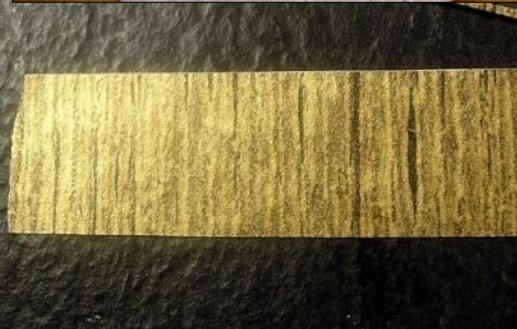
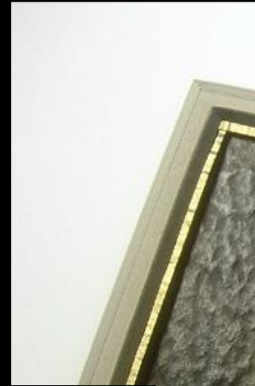
# Metallic Bases

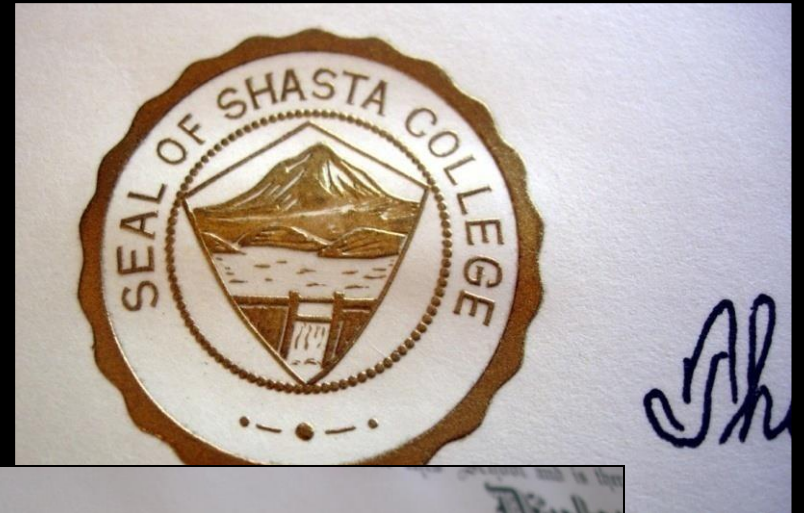




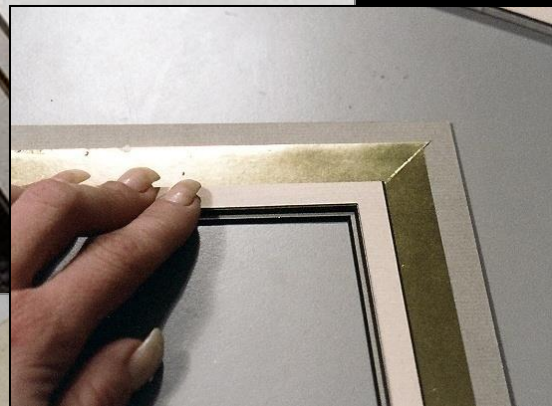
# Metallic Bases

Must match frame,  
mat, fillet and gold  
used within art  
or document





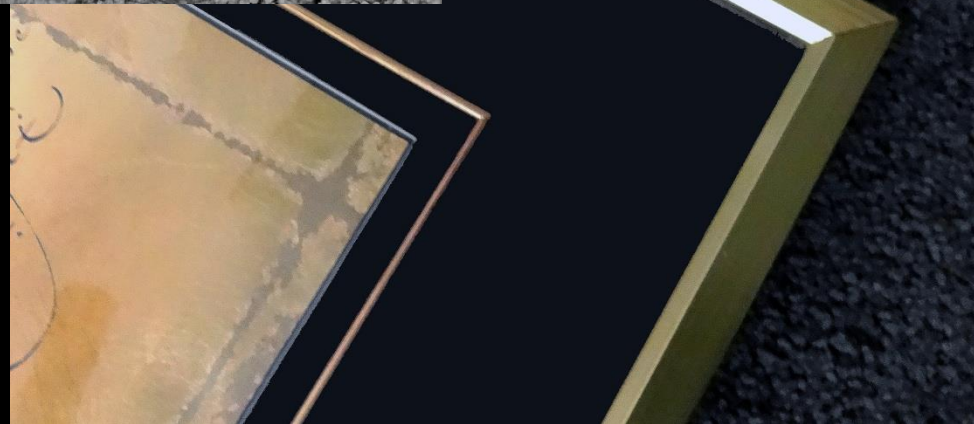
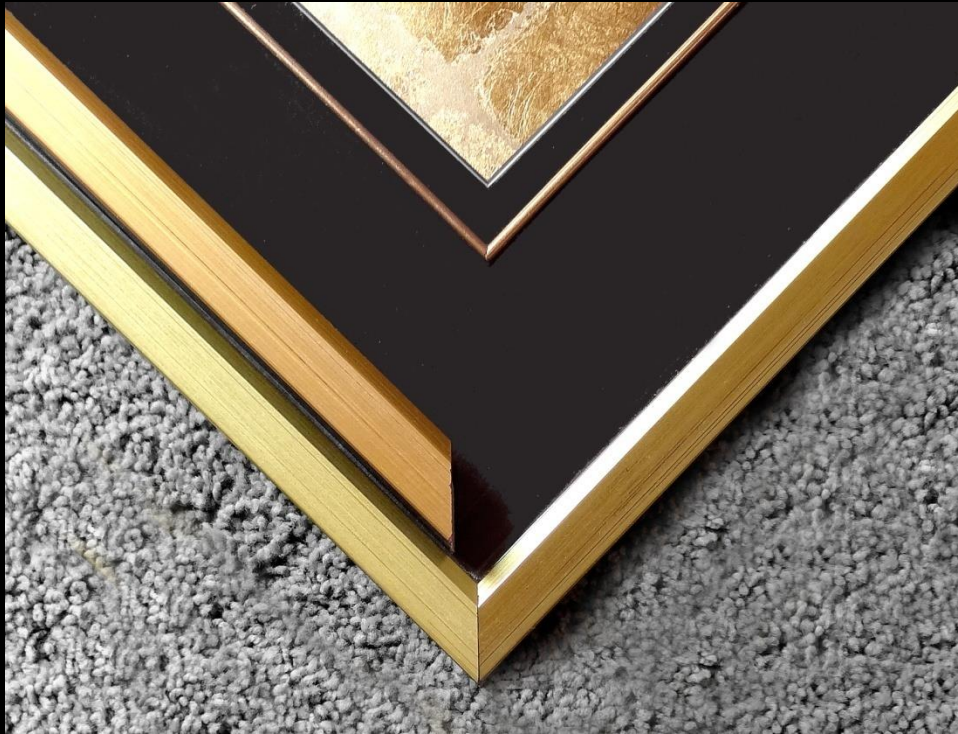








# Faded Gold Moulding



Gold matches  
tones and warmth  
in painting







Common plein air profile  
Good color match to cooler tones in art







Soft brushed gold  
tones harmonize  
with the encaustic  
medium



Soft brushed  
antique silver  
works with melted  
opaque waxes





Crème rag top mat

Wrapped textured  
bevel for rhythm

Liner white to  
match background







Torn paper  
accents







Mat color vs. Wide frame color

# Mat Color Selection – Rules of Thumb

1. Dominant art color = top mat color selection

There are exceptions to every rule

Consider textures and contrasts

2. Secondary art color = middle mat or first accent

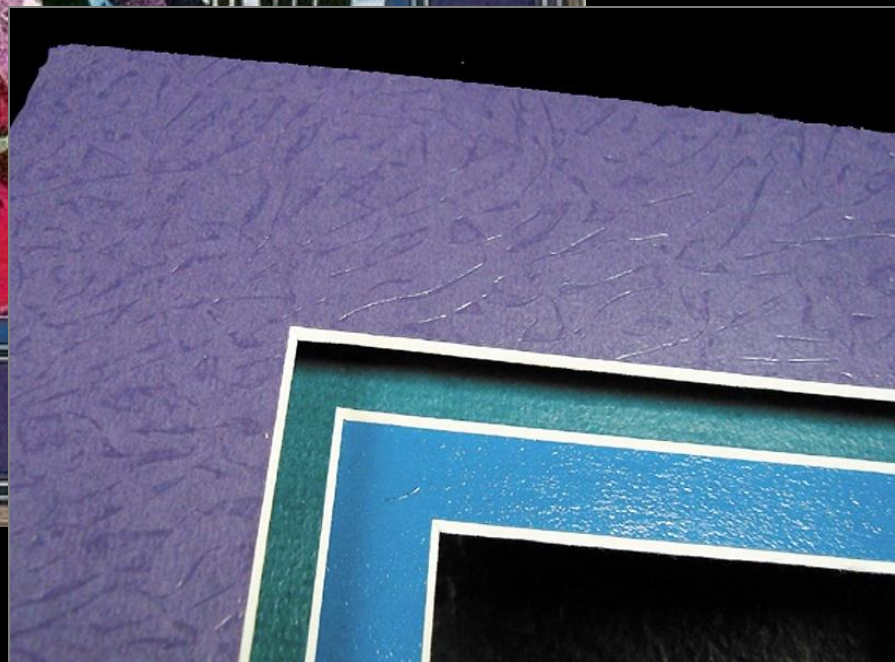
Second mat width does not have to be middle

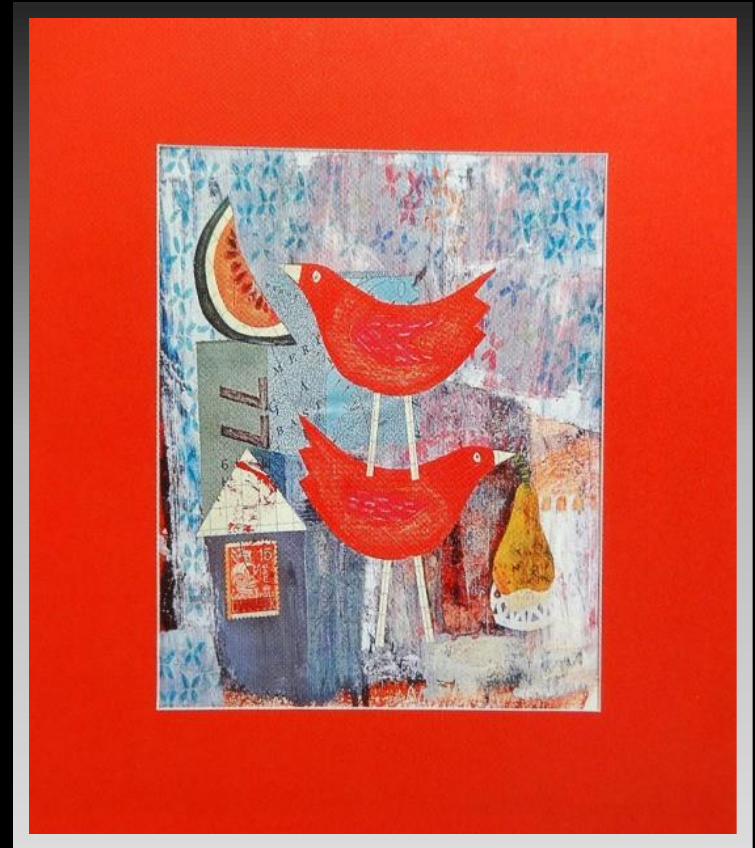
3. Third art color = third mat or second accent

Can be as simple as red line on frame edge

Or under tiered mat







Visual emphasis through color

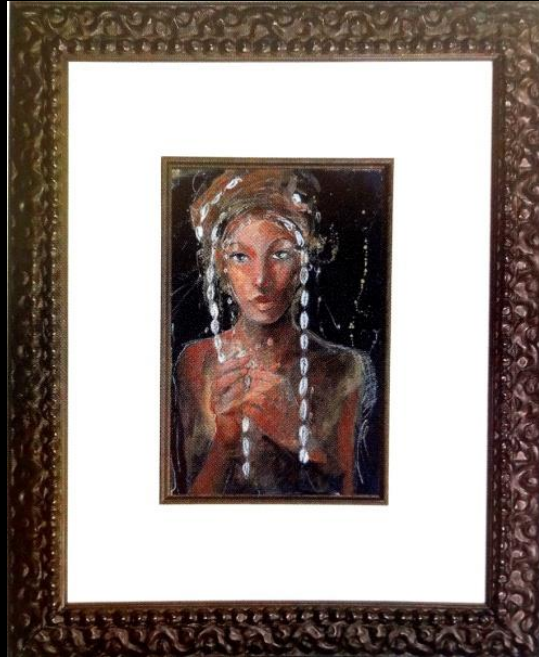
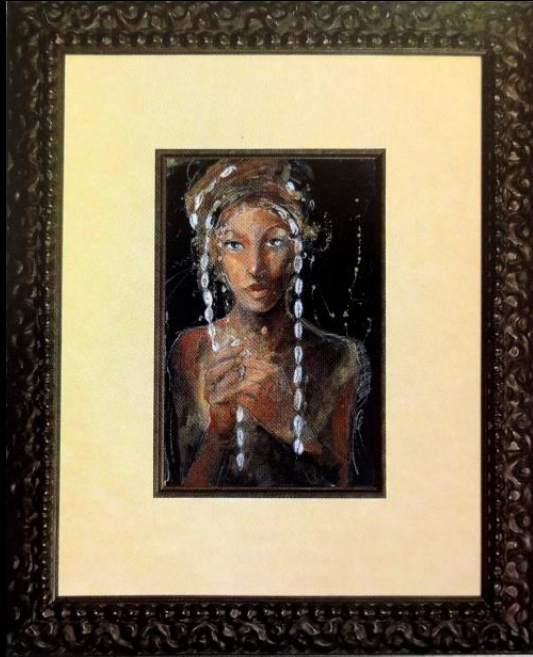




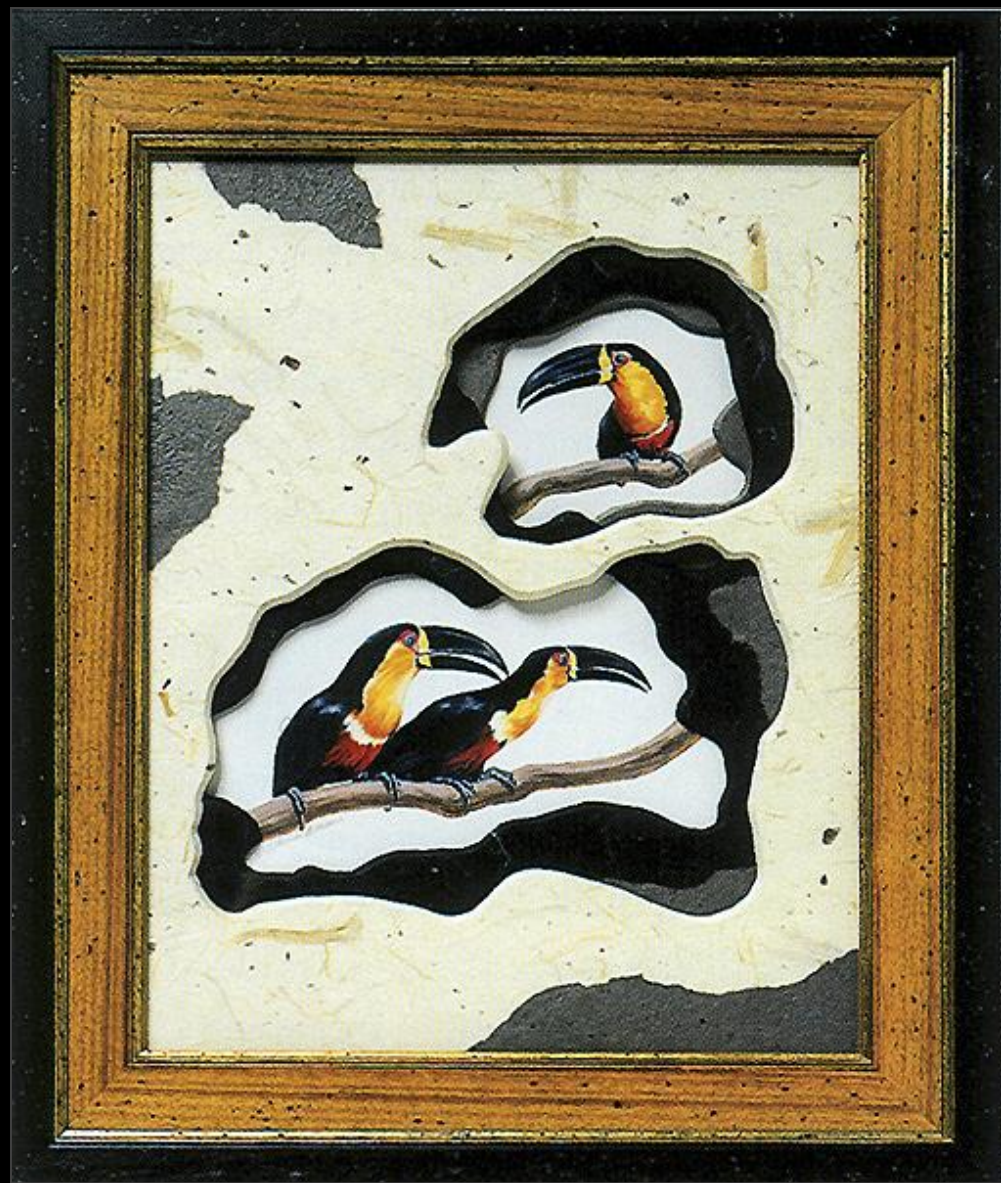
## Color and Visual Focus



Grey Ansley stem frame pulls into the ink washes  
Soft gold Cintra draws into the warmer yellows

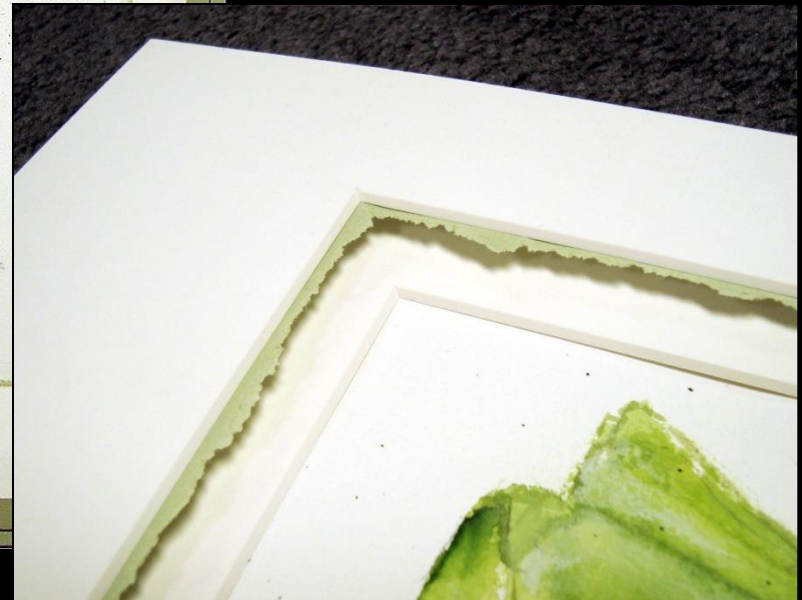






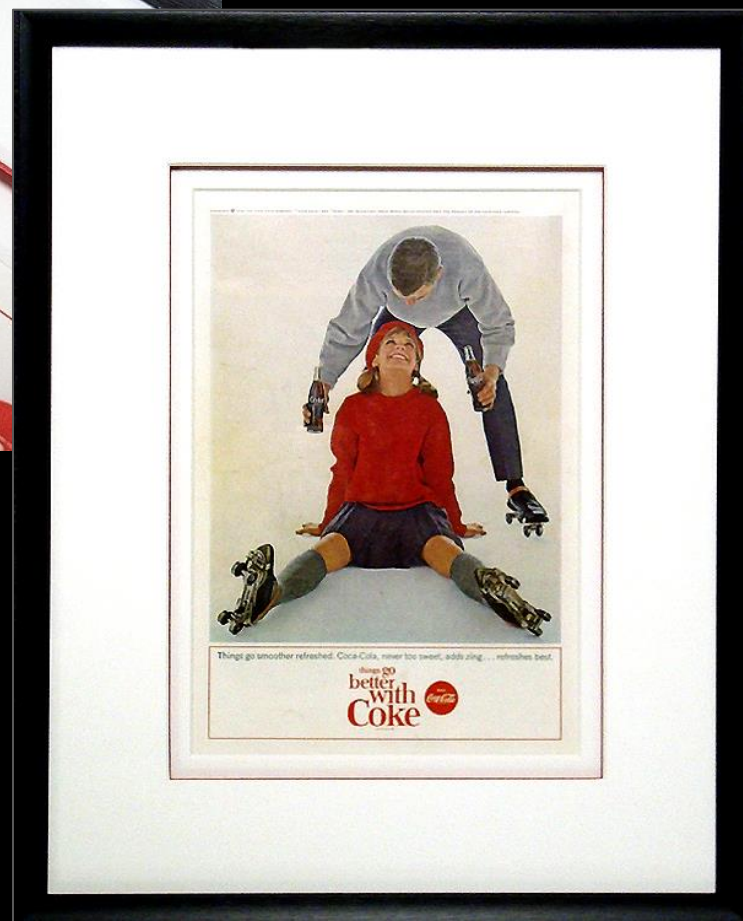


White background  
Green frame & deckle  
Grey edge highlight





Under tiered top mat  
Liner mat varied to  
match aged ad





1970s original framing

Reframed to protect  
original watercolor







Dominant blue is too dark for top mat.  
Brushed aluminum accents the airplane.  
Deep bevel wrap and gray help integrate.



The traditional  
pastel concept of  
using white mats  
to allow the art to  
showcase itself

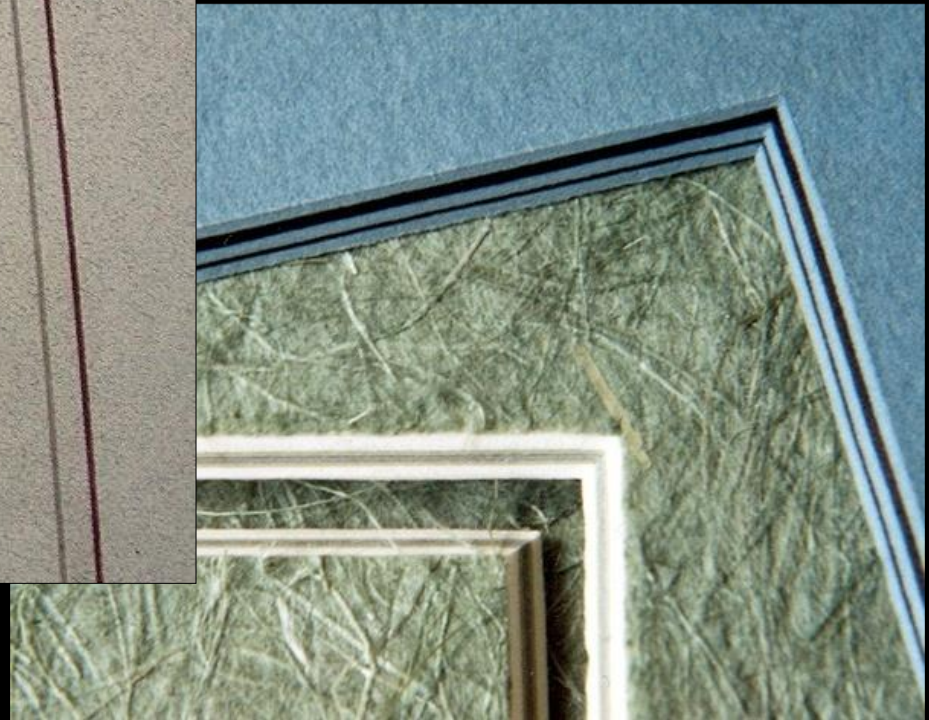




Softened transition  
of antique whites,  
brightest on top,  
using a copper  
frame to unify  
with color



## Color and Line









# Color, Line & Texture











Color and Rhythm







Warm white and Gray repeated as top mat and deep bevel.





Surface tiered (T)  
Matte laminated (B)



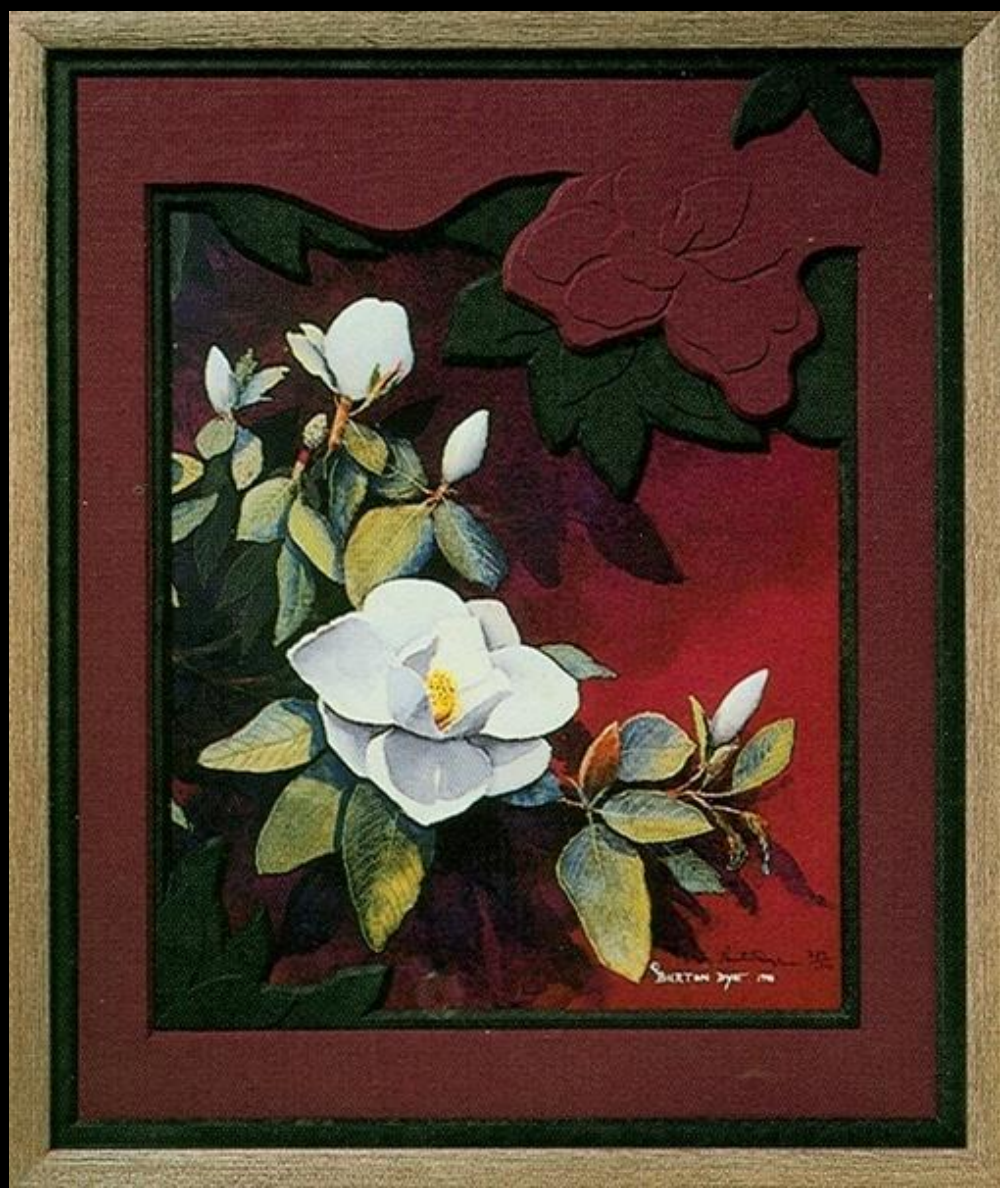




Color and Shape









## Color & Style (Era)

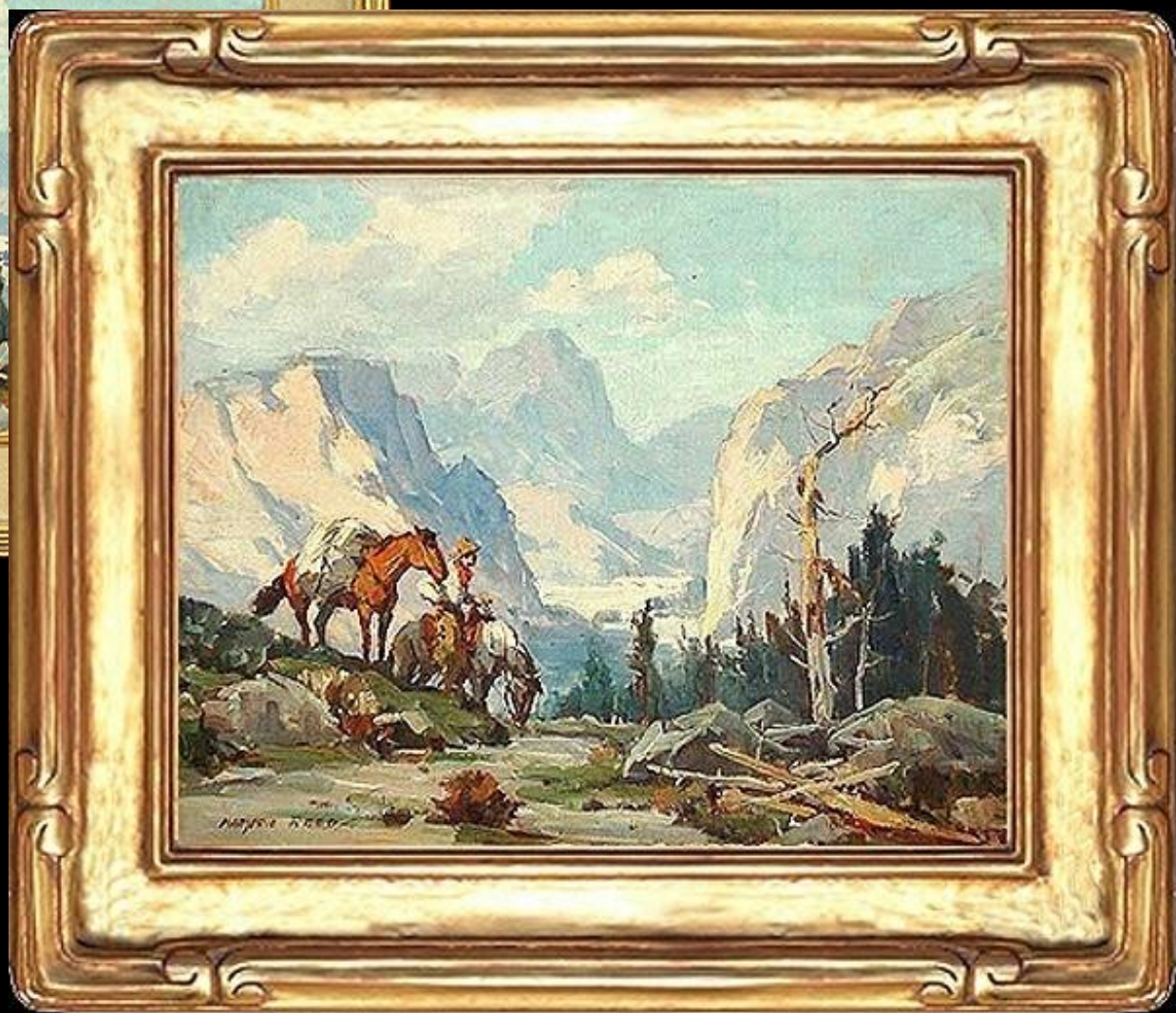
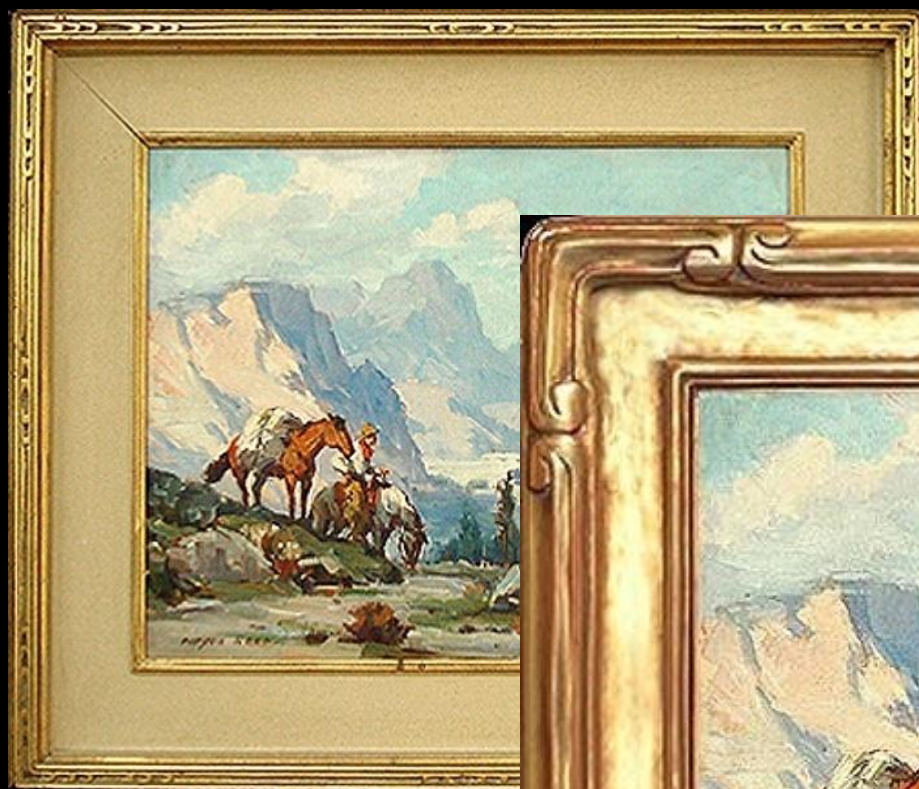














## European

Black = Grief, death, void, nothingness

White = Purity, innocence

Yellow/Orange = Warmth, newness

Pink = Tenderness, poetry

Red = Love, passion, desire, fire

Violet = Meditation, mystery, occult, exotic

Purple = Aristocratic, royal, worldly

Blue = Loyalty, isolation, honesty, sadness

Green/Blue-green = Earth, naturalism, Zen

Brown = Earthiness, solidity, firmness

## Asian

Black = Immortality, knowledge, power

Grey = Dullness, indefinite

White = Death, mourning, spirits, ghosts

Yellow = Clarity, reliability, royalty

Orange = Change, spontaneity

Pink = Love

Red = Wedding, luck, happiness, joy, life

Purple = Spiritual healing, strength,

Blue = Healing, calmness, immortality

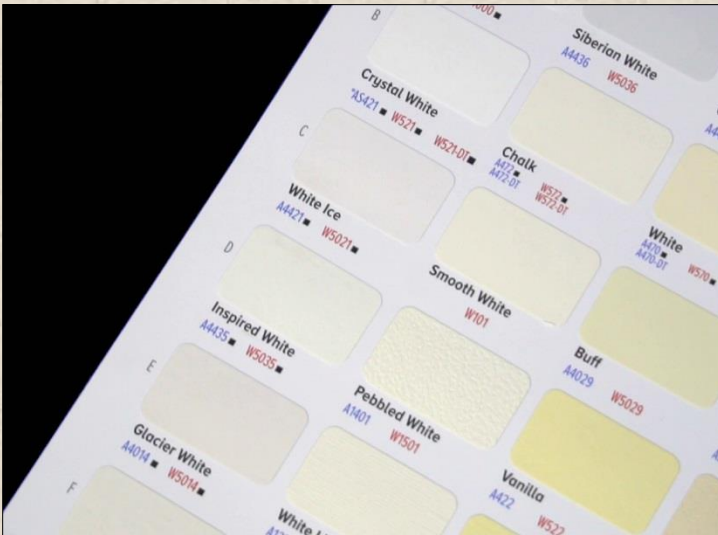
Blue/Green = Vigor, vitality, longevity,

Green = Calm, healing, health, harmony

Brown = Industriousness, grounded

# OPTICAL BRIGHTENING AGENTS

## O.B.A



Contains  
OBAs

Contains  
No OBAs

**X**  
PRESERVATION FRAMING

**OPTICAL BRIGHTENERS  
ARE NOT TO BE USED IN**

PPFA CLASS I



PPFA CLASS II

**PETERBORO  
CONSERVATION**

**PETERBORO  
MATBOARDS**

[www.peterboromatboards.com](http://www.peterboromatboards.com)

Optical Brightening Agents - OBAs

<http://www.peterboromatboards.com/videos.php>



# Science of Color

Physicists tell us about the make-up of color composition and explain how the human eye perceives a given color.

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Psychologists tell us how color affects us physically and emotionally.

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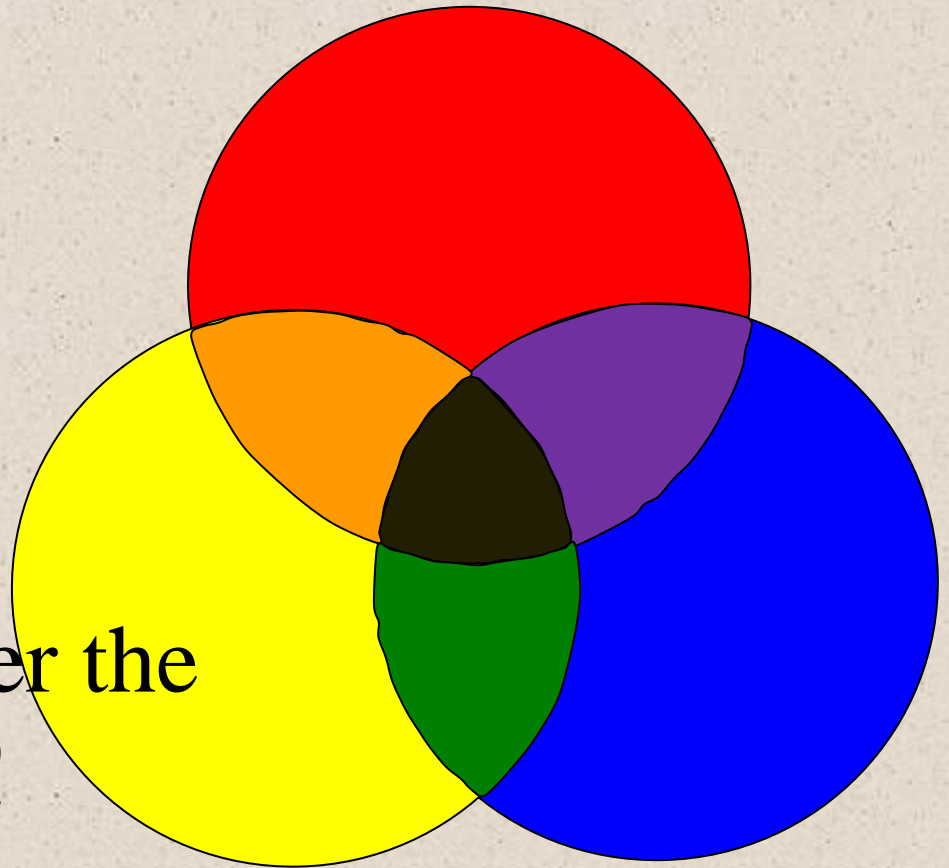
Physicists tell us about the make-up of color composition and explain how the human eye perceives a given color.

Psychologists tell us how color affects us physically and emotionally.

It is up to the frame designer to assimilate all of this information and sell it to the client as the most dynamic solution possible.



Color...consider the  
possibilities!



## **Additional Resources**

Bevlin, Marjorie Elliott. DESIGN THROUGH DISCOVERY.

New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1984.

Graves, Maitland. ART OF COLOR DESIGN. 1951.

Itten, Johannes. THE ELEMENTS OF COLOR. New York: Reinhold, 1970.

Leland, Nita. THE CREATIVE ARTIST. Cincinnati: North Light Books, 1990.

Mayer, Ralph. A DICTIONARY OF TERMS AND TECHNIQUES.

New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1969.

**Perkins, Greg. GREAT FRAME DESIGNS. New Jersey: PFM Books, 2009.**

Wong, Wucius. PRINCIPLES OF COLOR DESIGN.

New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987.

**Paschke, Chris A., Designs Ink, <http://www.designsinkart.com/library.htm>**

***"The Design Process"*, PFM, 12 part series, 1994.**

***"Design And Critique"*, PFM series, 1997.**

***"The Essence of Design"*, PFM, 12 part series, 2000-2001.**

# Other Paschke classes WCAF 2019

## **Mastering Mounting: Sensitive Items**

Monday, 9:00-11:30am

## **Design Elements: Shades of Gray**

Monday, 4:00-6:00pm

## **Design Elements: Pop of Color**

Tuesday, 10:00am-12:00pm

## **Mastering Mounting: Creative Mounting**

Lecture = Tuesday, 12:30-3:00pm

Workshop = Tuesday, 3:30-6:00pm

## **Mastering Mounting: Challenging Items**

Wednesday, 10:00am-12:00pm



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