Using Color in Drawing

Color is one of the most powerful visual elements that artists have at their disposal. Color may be used objectively to record observed appearances with great fidelity to nature (Plate 10–16). Frequently, however, it is the subjective, expressive impact of color that reaches out and grabs our attention (Plate 10–4). Color affects us involuntarily—and we take it personally. Color harmonies, or the associations they awaken, can cheer us up or darken our mood. We may even notice our pulses quicken in the presence of some colors, and the clash or intensity of other color combinations may make us avert our glance.

The pervasive use of full-blown color in drawing is a modern phenomenon. Before the advent of modern art in the mid-nineteenth century, color drawings were infrequent; most drawn images either celebrated the use of line or were conceived on the basis of a tonal grayscale, an arrangement of varied steps of gray values. Interestingly, in seventeenth-century France, a commonly held opinion identified drawing with reason and color with irrationality. The gradual emergence of color drawing as we know it today is the result of many influences that have occurred during the Modern epoch. What follows is a brief, and less than exhaustive, summary of some of those contributing factors.

In one sense, technology set the stage for uniting color with drawing. By 1856, the first synthetic aniline dyes were manufactured, producing an array of brilliant colors previously unavailable to artists. The new dyestuffs also impacted the clothing industry. The new availability of more vibrant, high-key color apparel, coupled with the introduction of the more brilliant kerosene and gas lamps, conspicuously changed the artist’s environment.

The proliferation of new colors coincided with studies about the nature of color. From approximately 1850 until the turn of the century, numerous theories and principles of color organization were pioneered by prominent theoreticians and leading painters of the day, including Eugene Delacroix, Georges Seurat, and artists belonging to the schools of the French Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists. Their efforts were augmented by several scientific treatises on the relationship between color and the behavior of light, published during the same period.

The revival of printmaking during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was an important stimulus for the use of color in the graphic arts. This is especially true of lithography as practiced by Toulouse-Lautrec, Edouard Vuillard, and Pierre Bonnard, who by the end of the century were achieving color effects in lithography not possible in painting. Lithography is the printmaking medium most akin to drawing, and the success of the color lithographs by the above artists was probably in large part responsible for the new interest in color drawing in the twentieth century.

The twentieth century has been characterized by exuberant explorations of polychromatic images in all the visual arts. Gifted colorists like Matisse and Josef Albers, and entire art movements, from the Fauves during the first decade of the century to the color-field painters in the 1960s, have concentrated on abstract color interactions, free from the limitations of subject matter and objective references to nature. But as this century progressed, perhaps the most vital influences on color awareness have been the new palette of colors made available by technology and the mass media.

Today we are immersed in color images. Not as in touch as our ancestors with the colors of our natural environment, we nonetheless are saturated daily by literally thousands of artificially generated colors through print and electronic media, home and office decor, packaging, industrial design, and fashion. Entering the classroom or studio from this kaleidoscopic profusion of color, it is no wonder that the professional artist and student alike often gravitate toward full-spectrum color in drawing.

The purpose of this chapter is to inspire you to discover your own color aesthetic, while providing you sufficient introduction to the fundamentals of color so that you have a solid basis for experimentation. Before we proceed, there are two points to keep in mind: first, color is relative. Similar to the interrelationships of value in a drawing, our perception of a color is influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by the other colors around it. Second, there are no "bad" colors. Any color can be used successfully, depending on your ability to integrate that color into a work of art as a whole.

Basic Color Theory and Terminology

The three basic properties of color are hue, value, and intensity. We discuss all three in relation to the diagrams in Plate 10–1.

HUE

Hue refers to the common names used to distinguish colors, such as red, green, and yellow-orange. Mixing one color with another changes its hue. For example, blue added to red in gradually increasing amounts changes the hue of red to red-purple, then to purple, and finally to blue-purple (see the figures on the left in Plate 10–26). The term chromatic is sometimes used to refer to the property of hue.

The opposite, achromatic, means without hue and refers to the so-called neutrals: black, white, and gray. At times, artists selectively introduce hue into an otherwise black-and-white image to add another dimension of visual interest or meaning, as in Plate 10–2.

Figure 10–1a arranges the twelve major hues into a color wheel. These twelve hues can be divided into different categories of color relationships that are useful to the artist. The primary colors, red, yellow, and blue, cannot be made by mixing other colors. When mixed in pairs or in admixtures of all three, the primaries are the source for all other hues on the color wheel. The secondary colors, orange, green, and purple, are each the result of mixing two primaries; for example, yellow and blue create green. The remaining six tertiary colors are

*For more discussion of this work, see "Color Economy" (p. 226).
obtained by combining a primary and a secondary color: mixing yellow with green produces the tertiary yellow-green, and so on.

The farther apart colors are from one another on the color wheel, the more their relationship is based on hue contrast. Hues that are directly opposite one another represent the strongest hue contrast and are called *complementary colors*. The three basic pairs of complements are red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and purple.

The closer colors are to one another, the more they exhibit hue concord. Hues that are adjacent to one another on the color wheel represent the strongest hue similarity and are called *analogous colors*. One set of analogous colors is red, red-orange, orange, and yellow-orange.

**Value**

*Value* refers to the lightness or darkness of a color when compared with a gray scale (black, white, and the steps of gray between). Look at the pure colors displayed in the color wheel and try to determine their relative values. To help you get started, observe that yellow is the lightest hue (closest to white on a gray scale), red and green are approximately middle gray, and purple is the darkest (closest to black). Squinting may help you to see the value differences more clearly.

The value of a color can be lightened by adding white to produce a range of *tints*, or darkened by adding black to produce a range of *shades*. Adding white or black to a color will not change its hue: pink, created by adding white to red, is a light-red hue; manao, achieved by adding black to red, is a dark-red hue (Plate 10-1b). But mixing a hue with either of these neutrals will diminish its purity to some extent, depending on the proportions of the admixture. (The purity of a color is discussed in more detail in the next section “Creating new colors.”) The purity of a color is useful, for example, when dramatic effects of form through chiaroscuro are desired (Plate 10-3). (For a related discussion, see the use of monochromatic color under “Color Schemes” on pp. 219–21.)

A color can be lightened or darkened without being neutralized by mixing it with a second pure color that is analogous and lighter or darker in value, as needed. Mixing two pure, analogous colors, however, will produce a hue change (the steps in Plate 10-1c move from yellow through yellow-green and green to blue-green and blue). In contrast to the use of tints and shades, adjusting color value in this manner has the advantage of creating colors that express a greater sensation of color light across a form, not only in the most illuminated passages but also in the most shadowed depressions.

**Intensify**

The term *intensity* refers to the saturation, or purity, of a color. Rich, pure colors, as they usually come directly from the tube, are at maximum intensity.

Students often experience difficulty at first in distinguishing between the concepts of color intensity and color value. Keep in mind that pure hues, as found on the color wheel, vary in their values (blue-purple is darker than red, yellow-green is lighter than red-orange), but all pure hues are equally intense.

Two concepts sometimes associated with intensity are color brilliance and luminosity. There is practical use in distinguishing between these terms. *Brilliance* refers to the quality of light that emanates or is reflected from color. (Remember, this is different from value, which designates the quantity of light reflected.) Both the brilliance (vividness) and the intensity (purity) of any single color will be diminished by mixing it with white, black, or another color. Note, however, that while it is true that the most brilliant colors are always fully saturated, not all fully saturated colors possess brilliance. A pure yellow ochre straight from the tube, for example, can be considered fully saturated although it is far less brilliant than a saturated yellow or green on the color wheel.

*Luminosity* refers to a glowing light that appears to be radiating from inside a color area, as in the large central shape of the drawing by Margaret Lantersman (Plate 10-4). The stunning effect of a mysterious emission of light from this drawing is achieved by juxtaposing the cool, light yellows and greens of the central shape against the series of warm and generally lower value forms that make up the remainder of the image. Also observe how the delicately modulated colors in the luminous area create the sensation of a translucent gaseous medium in contrast to the surrounding opaque and comparatively heavy masses. To help you grasp this concept, compare the luminous color light coming from within the major form in Plate 10-4 with Plate 10-5, where the objects are bathed by an external light source.

The concepts of hue, value, and intensity cross over when one artist mixes “chromatic grays.” The term *chromatic gray* refers to a gray created by adding hue to a neutral or by mixing complements to achieve a neutralized color. Chromatic grays are uncommon in nature; chromatic grays are not. Line up a series of small stones in daylight and you will probably be surprised by the number of chromatic grays you see. There are several ways to make a chromatic gray. Mixing a hue with an achromatic gray of a different value will neutralize the intensity of the hue and change its value. Mixing a hue with an achromatic gray of the same value will diminish the intensity of the hue without altering its value. Chromatic grays obtained by mixing a hue pigment with an achromatic gray are generally flat and dull in appearance and are, for example, excellent for depicting the opacity of surface and weight of solid forms.

Chromatic grays of a different order can be achieved by mixing two complementary colors. When made with complements, these chromatic grays appear as though they are permeated with light, and they are coloristically richer than grays arrived at by mixing achromatic neutrals with color. As Plate 10-1d illustrates, when complements are mixed, they generally result in neutralized color tones. However, if the mixture is carefully adjusted, a chromatic gray will result, as demonstrated in the middle box of our example, where a slate gray appears. (The richness of a chromatic gray will be more apparent if a small amount of white is added, as in our illustration, but that will further neutralize the color intensity.) The hue and value of the gray that results depends on which of the two complements was used in the larger amount. With some commercially available pigments, a pure gray can be achieved by scrupulously mixing equal amounts of both complements.

In Plate 10-6, color grays are obtained by using what is often called “optical color.” Optical color refers to the eye’s tendency to mix small strokes of color that are placed side by side or overlapped. For example, adjacent strokes of red and yellow in a drawing will be perceived as orange from a normal viewing distance. Note, however, that complements applied this way will cancel each other’s intensity as they blend in the eye to produce vibrant chromatic grays. In Plate 10-6, red, orange, blue, and yellow were applied in a dense tangle of strokes, dots, and dragged lines, with the addition of white, to produce neutralized complementary relationships of red-purple with yellow and yellow-green, and blue passages flecked with orange.

**Color Schemes**

The term *color scheme* refers to an association of selected colors that play a major role in the organization of a work of art. A color scheme also establishes a
principal color harmony or color key in an artwork and in so doing is an important carrier of content. Two or more color schemes can coexist in a work, usually in a dominant–subordinate relationship.

The inventory of color schemes is large, but five in particular can be considered fundamental since they are used most often, either individually or in combination, and they form the basis from which more personal color schemes can be improvised. They are the monochromatic, triadic, analogous, complementary, and discordant color schemes.

A monochromatic color scheme is limited to the value and intensity variations of one hue. A monochromatic work can be achieved by adding white to all hues back to a hue, as in Plate 10–3, in which the monochromatic color scheme is effectively used in creating a total grissaille to depict the illusion of three-dimensional form and space. A second means for producing a monochromatic color scheme is to dilute a hue pigment to various strengths, as in Plate 10–7. Here, the monochromatic red ground, extremely harmonious and consistent in its visual dynamic, establishes a subdued backdrop for the smaller, more intricately colored image.

Tricolor schemes are based on three hues that are equidistant from one another on the color wheel. There are three categories of triadic relationships: the primary triad (red, yellow, blue); the secondary triad (orange, green, purple); and two sets of tertiary triads (red-purple, blue-green, yellow-orange; and red-orange, yellow-red, blue-purple). The primary triad is the most common, not only in fine works of art, but also in mass-media advertising. This is because of the bold, elemental potency of this triad, as in the high-key color drawing by Al Held (Plate 10–8), has broad appeal.

The secondary and tertiary triads tend to produce more subtle relationships. One reason for this is that, in contradistinction to the primary triad, which consists of hues that are unique and basic, each of the hues in the secondary and tertiary schemes shares a color with the other two hues of the triad. For example, in the secondary triad, orange shares yellow with green and red with purple; in one of the tertiary triads, red-purple shares red with yellow-orange and blue with blue-green.

So although each of the triads is based on contrasting hues that can enliven the surface of a drawing, the colors that constitute the secondary and tertiary triads have built-in bridges that shorten the intervals of difference. Artists frequently capitalize on the unifying potential of secondary and tertiary schemes, as in Plate 10–9, in which roughly the upper half of the drawing is pulled together by a secondary triad.

As alluded to earlier, artists often use a particular color scheme to establish a dominant harmonic key or mood, without precluding the coexistence of other colors in the work (as in Plates 10–8 and 10–9). A more rigorous application of the triadic concept can be found in Plate 10–10, all of whose colors have been mixed by using the same three hues of red, yellow, and blue in conjunction with black and white.

Analogous color schemes involve several hues (usually three or four) that are adjacent to each other on the color wheel, Yellow, yellow-green, green, and blue-green constitute one analogous color scheme. Analogous hues create extremely harmonious color relationships because of the short intervals between the neighboring hues on the color wheel, and also because one common color links the hues in any analogous sequence (yellow is the common color in this example).

The dominant colors in Jim Nutt drawing (Plate 10–11) lie within the analogous scheme of red-orange, orange, yellow-orange, and yellow. This warm set of colors expresses an almost claustrophobic sense of intimacy and homesickness.

*For more discussion on this concept, see "Warm and Cool Color" on p. 222.

USING COLOR IN DRAWING

up the tension in the facial female/male relationship. Smaller areas of the comparatively cool hues of blue-green, blue-purple, and red-purple act as color accents to jangle the nerves of the viewer. This group of colors slips over blue and purple, demonstrating that an analogous color scheme does not necessarily depend on all the colors in a contiguous series on the color wheel being represented.

Plate 10–12 more strictly follows a series of analogous steps across orange, yellow-orange, yellow, yellow-green, and green. Note in this work the striking illusion of colored light achieved by mixing analogous hues in varying proportions to adjust intensities and values.

Complementary color schemes employ hues that are directly across, or opposite, from one another on the color wheel. For example, red-green, orange/ blue, and yellow-green/red-purple are all pairs of complementary colors.

A complementary color scheme can be built around one pair of complements, or pairs of complements can be used in combination. In the watercolor and colored-pencil drawing by Looutt (Plate 10–13), three pairs of complementary hues are used: red-orange/blue-green, red-purple/yellow-green, and yellow-orange/blue-purple. A variation on the complementary color scheme may be achieved by using three hues in a "split-complementary" relationship. Split complements are obtained by using a hue in combination with the colors on either side of its true complement. In Plate 10–23, for example, the intense yellow shapes in the center and on the right of the drawing are juxtaposed with blue-purple and red-purple areas.

A discordant color scheme is based on hues that compete or conflict, resulting in a relationship of disharmony. There are no absolute rules for creating discordant color schemes, but generally speaking, a combination of hues that are far apart on the color wheel (except complements) will achieve discord. Also, an already discordant relationship can be heightened by equalizing the values of the colors or by reversing their natural value order.

The clash of some discordant schemes can agitate, even shock, an audience, grabbing its attention. The content embodied in such a combination of colors is valued by artists who wish to create visual metaphors for extraordinary phenomena. The power of Plate 10–26, for example, is not derived from the imagery but from complementary contrasts and the combination of the following colors in a series of intensely discordant relationships: yellow-orange/blue-green, orange/yellow-green, and red-orange with purple and blue-purple.

More gentle discord can still arouse unsettling feelings. In Plate 10–14, the reversed tonal order of the light purple strokes to the left of the figure in relationship to the darker greens of the ground, together with the passages of yellow interpenetrated among areas of blue-green, are visually unpleasant (the viewer may feel subtle waves of queasiness). In the final analysis, the color discord in this drawing is inseparable from the content associations it evokes: the self-absorbed, anguished characterization of the figure and its state, sickly aura of decadence.

Using Color to Represent Space and Form

A spatial dynamic is inherent in the perception of color. In the world around us, color is light, and light reveals the dimensions of space and form. It is up to the artist to control the interactive energies of color pigments to convincingly depict the volume of individual forms and the impression of depth. This section concentrates on four concepts that are basic to representing space and form with color: local color, warm and cool color, color value, and the optical phenomenon of push-pull.
LOCAL COLOR

Local Color refers to what is generally understood to be the actual color of an object's surface, free of variable, or unnatural, lighting conditions. The yellow of a lemon, the blue of a swimming pool, the color of a fruit, or the color of a flower, are examples of simple local color. Local color, as the readily identifiable characteristic of an object, provides a conceptualized home base for more complex local-color explorations.

Complex colors are brought about by the natural range of hues of the objects that are influenced by light. In Plate 10–15, for example, many of the orange peppers appear as yellow-orange with subtle patches of white, and red and orange. (The peppers that are half green and half red represent a variation on the idea that they do not possess a dominant local color. A red-and-white-checked tablecloth and a plaid shirt are two more examples of objects with more than one local color.)

An allied concept is perceived color. Perceived color refers to observed modifications in the local color of an object because of changes in illumination or the influence of colors reflected from surrounding objects. Dramatic changes in the color of objects can occur, for example, at twilight, under artificial illumination, or during volatile atmospheric conditions, such as stormy weather. Plate 10–16 records the darkened colors of crops, grasses, and earth under an overcast sky. In Plate 10–17, notice the radial hue and value changes on the side of orange and the right-hand corner of the drawing. This color change is caused by reflected dark green from the surface of the object, with the bowl's local color of light green. In Plate 10–24, we see the apple a combination of complex local color (the orange, green, and yellow-green on the illuminated side) and perceived color (the bronze-green mixture on the shadowed side, the result of reflected color). And in Plate 10–15 observe the varied muted colors that make up the shadowed sides of the cardboard box and paper bag.

So on the one hand, the problem posed for the artist is to render sufficiently well the rich colors that appear on an object so that its image in the drawing rings with authenticity. On the other hand, there should not be such a profusion of hues describing an object that the integrity of the local color is compromised. Furthermore, the colors selected to describe an object should serve the needs of the illusion of three-dimensional form and the design motives of the work.

WARM AND COOL COLOR

In addition to the qualities of hue, value, and intensity, colors are perceived to have temperature. Colors are usually classified as either "warm" or "cool" (of course, the visual mercury may rise to a hot color or dip to a cold one). Dividing the color wheel in half provides an easy means for general identification: in our color wheel (Plate 10–1a), the top half is occupied by the warm colors yellow, orange, red-orange, red, and red-purple; the bottom half by the cool colors: green, blue-green, blue, blue-purple; the division should serve as a reference point, not a formula. Warm blues and cool yellows are common phenomena in works of art, and color interaction can cause the temperature of any hue to change, or appear to change, in the background plane, and the strategic use of small shapes of saturated color at various pitches of brilliance (yellow to orange to red to blue) that act like jewels sparkling out from under encrusted surfaces.

Related to the definition of warm and cool color is the broader concept of color climate, which associates sensations of moisture or aridity with color temperature. In Plate 10–12, for example, there is a conspicuous difference

*For a discussion about a similar concept in black-and-white drawing, see Local Value in Chapter 7.
the cloth napkin are rendered with delicate arrangements of chiaroscuro indicating the subtle rise and fall at the edges and creases—note also how the addition of blue to the peach on the back plane of the note card results in a rich color value that securely holds its spatial position in the illusion. All in all, the keenly measured proportions of tonality express a solidity and weightiness of form bathed by uniform lighting. Correspondingly, although the color interactions between the oranges, blues, pinks, and greens at one and the same time are restrained and richly dynamic (most notably the visual “zing” of the peach-colored bar on the note card in contrast to the blue-gray ground and the powder blue bottom of the large bowl), hue selection did not constitute the crucial set of choices in this work. (Would you know the difference if another set of hues were used in the same pattern of relationships?) It is also important to note that when looked at by themselves, the blue ground and green table surface are on the warm end of the blue and the green ranges. It is only the surrounding oranges, pinks, and warm blues and blacks that enable us to perceive the blue and green as relatively cool.

PUSH–PULL

Up to this point, we have focused on the use of color in image-based drawings to clarify volume and space. Colors by themselves, however, have dynamic energies that can create a sensation of space that is free of both subject matter connotations and the traditional methods for achieving three-dimensional illusion (perspective, chiaroscuro modeling, etc.). Spatial tension created purely on the basis of color interaction is often referred to as push–pull.

Push–pull can be loosely described as shifting relationships among colors that appear to attract or repel one another as if magnetized, with one color pressing to rise and pull forward and another pushed back. This refers to a manipulation of color that creates an “optical space” that, remarkably, appears to exist within the flat picture plane. Optical space is not a space that we understand rationally; it is a space that we react to in terms of our involuntary sensory response to color. So optical space exists as a physiological fact. This is in contrast to the representation of three-dimensional space in a two-dimensional work, creating the illusion of space you can walk through inhabited by things you can touch.

Controlling the push–pull dynamic depends on many coloristic factors. The intensity, value, and temperature of an individual color must be considered relative to other important influences on the creation of color space, such as texture, placement, context, and the shape and area of a color (intense warm colors generally appear to expand, intense cool colors to contract).

Typically, artists achieve push–pull energy by working with relatively pure areas of color in a shallow or flat space. The Hecker drawing (Plate 10–19) combines aspects of linear perspective with push–pull activity to create a limited, but compelling, layered space. The black-and-white photo image provides an illusion of depth through converging parallel lines receding diagonally from the picture plane. A series of intense color splashes and gestural scrawls superimposed on the white paper create a dynamic color arrangement based on push–pull. These areas of color establish a sequence of color planes that, for example, appear to be pressed against the back of the transparent picture plane (the green shape in the upper left), compressed into the picture plane (the blue shape), rising to the surface (the red shape in the center), sitting on the surface (the white splash at the bottom), or lifting off the surface to glide in front of the work (the yellow shape in the center graduated to a red-orange passage along the right-hand margin).

A selective use of push–pull color action serves up surprises in the otherwise-consistent spatial fabric of the Colescott drawing (Plate 10–20). Push–pull is most pronounced in the purple-edged blue area at the center, which, rather than receding as we would expect a cool color to do, appears to balloon upward to assert the flat picture plane. Similarly, in the upper left-hand corner, the cerise smear advances, again contrary to our expectations of this portion of a picture, which we normally associate with sky or distance. However, the strategic placement of such a warm color there firmly anchors that corner to the drawing’s ground plane and we repeat the cool red and yellow-green forge a bold, diagonal cross tension. This is in contrast to the series of overlapping shapes, starting at the lower left-hand corner, that march counterclockwise around the margin. Finally, observe how further advancement of the blue and red areas is thwarted by the shapes of the yellow-green shirt and yellow hair, which pull forward to hold their slightly more frontal planes.

Color and Design

Color should be wedded to design from the early stages of a drawing’s conception. In a successful work, it is impossible to separate the contributions of color from the organizational relationships that constitute an image; but when color is added as an afterthought, the result is often as disjuncted as a colorized photo.

The remainder of this section focuses on design concepts already introduced in Chapter 4, but our purpose here is to suggest the mutuality of color and two-dimensional design in a drawing.

UNITY AND VARIETY

Since color adds to the potential for greater variety in an artwork, it is important to find new ways of coloristic similarity as a means of creating a sense of unity and energy in a design. The first color variation, a series of analogous reds, yellows, and oranges organizes most of the major planes of the image, with cooler blues and grays used judiciously as contrasting accents to guide the eye and open up the spatial illusion. The second variation reorganizes the pictorial shape formations in conjunction with a general muting and cooling of the color scheme. Note the way in which much more effectively integrated the triangular deployment of intense yellow-orange shapes is in this variation.

VISUAL EMPHASIS

A powerful way to create strength or emphasis in a work of art is to use simultaneous color contrast. **Simultaneous contrast** refers to the enhancement of contrast that occurs between two different colors that are placed together. Color contrasts are created by differences of hue, value, intensity, brilliance, and temperature. The artist will opt for different degrees of simultaneous color contrast. For example, a grayed red-purple appears relatively intense against a neutral gray ground, but it seems more charged against a chromatic gray ground that has a yellow-green cast. On the other hand, that same mixture appears less intense if surrounded by a saturated red-purple.

Hues in a complementary relationship produce the most striking effects of simultaneous contrast (Plate 10–22). When two complements are unequal in saturation, the hue of the lower-intensity color will seem strengthened, as in the case with the recumbent figure in the middle of Plate 10–22, which appears more decidedly green than it would in a context of less color opposition. When high-intensity complements of equal, or nearly equal, value are used, the pair of colors will appear to vibrate, as can be seen with the smaller, blue archike
shape against the red-orange ground in the same drawing (Plate 10–22). Remember that complementary contrast depends on at least one of the pair of colors occupying an area in the artwork that is comparatively large. As mentioned earlier, small adjacent shapes or strokes of complements will neutralize each other.

Plate 10–23 is a good example of how diverse gestural energies and color ideas in a drawing can be ordered into a hierarchy of visual emphases based on color contrast. Observe first the larger framework of similarities consisting of a geometry of facades and flattened cubicles colored with a series of generally close- valued, darkish hues.

The large blue-purple facade with its bright-yellow doorway is the main focal point of the image. The near-complementary contrast of these two colors, heightened by their differing quantities and stark contrast in value and color brilliance, creates a nucleus around which the smaller, congested areas circle and group. The larger yellow rectangle to the right moves us out of the center and adjacent to the red-purple square that completes the split-complementary relationship. All three yellow shapes create an area of emphasis at strategic points in the drawing. Notice also the secondary network of accents that enliven the surface, which is based on relatively subtle changes in value, hue, and saturation (the lime green rectangle in the lower left, situated against a ground that slips from orange to pink, is especially rich). Before you leave the drawing, be sure to note the brilliance of color light that issues from the yellow shapes, in contrast to the comparatively dull light of the hues that have been heightened with white.

COLOR ECONOMY

Related to visual emphasis is the economic use of color in a drawing to achieve dramatic expressive or aesthetic effects. Refer back to the drawing by Ilatani (Plate 10–2) and note how the introduction of muted red-orange charges the emotional relationships among a group of figures that, by virtue of their almost stereotypical heroic bodies and achromatic depiction, might otherwise seem distant from each other and from the viewer. Color economy can also contribute to formal clarity, as in the Currier drawing (Plate 10–24). Notice here how expanses of cream and white-yellow contrast with the subtle handling of gradually more saturated hues (climaxing in the intense yellow-green of the apple). These differences are united at diagonally opposed corners by russet triangles that, like wedges, hold everything in place.

BALANCE AND MOVEMENT

The quantity and quality differences among colors, and the way in which they are consolidated or divided, affect our perception of balance and movement in a drawing. In Plate 10–25, a nearly symmetrical image is created by the massing of color into large planes that are roughly equivalent in size and emphasis on either side of a vertical axis and by an essentially even distribution of visual accents across the field of the drawing. The sense of color balance is strengthened by the use of complementary colors, which by their very definition as complements make the impression of “completing” each other. In terms of movement, the color contrasts among the shapes along the border create an almost hypnotic series of irregular beats. In the lower half of the main image, the movement is more regular, sustained by the comparatively subtle hue contrast of the muted-green tree trunks against the pink sky, the graduated progression of analogous colors across the landscape; and the evenly spaced value contrasts represented by holes in the ground, mounds of dirt, and saplings to be planted. And note that when you arrive at the illuminated center of the drawing, the resting place

*The notion of complements completing one another is based on physiological fact: Staring at any intense hue tires the eye, and to compensate, the eye perceives in that intense color the flicker of the color's complement. And less intense or neutral colors adjacent to an area of intense hue will appear to have the cast of that color's complement.
PLATE 10-2
Michael Inouye
Unfaded, 1991
Mixed media on paper, 22 x 30
Courtesy, Dionne Ferrier Gallery and Friends of Art Gallery, Chicago

PLATE 10-3
Tom Jones, University of Montana
Shedding Grooming: monochromatic color
Courtesy, the artist

PLATE 10-4
Margaret Lapham
Chair for Don Juan, 1983
Pastel on paper, 26 x 30
Courtesy of the Red Rooster Gallery, Chicago

PLATE 10-5
Jim Butler, Middlebury College
Seating Machine, 1984
Pastel on paper, 12 x 16
Courtesy, the artist

PLATE 10-6
Arnaldo Roche Rabell
We Have to Eat, 1986
Oil on canvas, 84 x 60
Courtesy, Stone Galley, Chicago
PLATE 10-7
Ernst Ley
 wary, 1991
Watercolor, 36 x 29""n
Courtesy of Bag Royal Gallery, Chicago

PLATE 10-8
As I Left
Arc IV, 1986
Watercolor on paper, 27" x 36"
Courtesy, June and Lewis Wolf

PLATE 10-9
Tadeusz Finausk: University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point
Student drawing: use of secondary triad as a unifying factor
Pastels on paper
Courtesy, the artist

PLATE 10-10
Joy Neugebauer
Arizona State University
Student drawing: primary triad
Courtesy, student

PLATE 10-11
Jim Nutt
Really? (Large Hump), 1966
Color pencil, 34 x 16"
Courtesy of the Buffalo Salt Gallery, Buffalo and New York, Photo: Max M. Braguta

PLATE 10-12
Jan Gregory
University of Arizona
Student drawing: analogous color
PLATE 10-15
ROBERT LIGUSTER
Javish Forest Kingfisher, 1992
Watercolor, pencil on paper, 41.5 x 31".
Courtesy of the Javish Fine Art Gallery, Chicago and New York, Photos: Ric St. Bagnato.

PLATE 10-16
GEORGE ARMICH
East of Haywood, 1987
Pastel on paper, 25 x 45".
Courtesy, Bruce Gallery, Chicago.

PLATE 10-17
ROBERT SHANSER
Unistill, 1988
Pastel on paper, 21 x 20 1/2".

PLATE 10-18
NELL BLAZIE
Gray Maize, 1992
Watercolor and pastel on paper, 12 x 16".
Courtesy, Fieldmark Gallery, New York.

PLATE 10-14
FRANCESCO CLIMENTE
Unfinished, 1987
Pastel on paper, 20 x 19".
Courtesy, Spanierman Gallery, New York.

PLATE 10-19
ED BOCKMANN SHAW
CHARLOTTE BOCKMANN SHAW
Pepperbox, 1979
Watercolor, 60 x 60".
Courtesy, Bay Bluff Gallery, Chicago.
PLATE 10-19
Michael Huzzi
Massachusetts, 1985–1987
Silkscreen, oil pastel, colored pencil, gouache, 48 x 48
Courtesy, the artist

PLATE 10-20
Robbie Colcomb
A Letter Home, 1991
Artist's proof, acrylic on paper, 40 x 28
Courtesy, the artist

PLATE 10-21
Jan Gregson, University of Arizona
Student drawing: preparatory color studies
Courtesy, the artist

PLATE 10-22
Bill Cote
The Good Man, 1988
Watercolor on paper, 25 x 30
Courtesy, Nagoya Gallery, Chicago

PLATE 10-23
Richard Hall
Untitled, 1987
Crayons on paper, 20 x 30
Courtesy of the Puffin End Gallery, Chicago and New York, Philip Mox II, Brussels
Color and Expression

The potential of color in art to evoke associations and express feelings, from the most powerful of emotions to the most delicate of aesthetic insights, is inalienable. Correspondingly, since color perception is grounded primarily in the deep structures of personal experience, each artist will capitalize on color’s expressive potential in a different way.

Color used to expressive ends is not the domain of a particular artistic style. It would be a mistake to conclude that the expressive values of a highly representational, or naturalistic, artwork are necessarily any less rich than those of a more blatantly expressionistic image. Absorbed in local and perceived color, representational artists do not necessarily copy the color relationships they see in the world before their eyes but rather use some combination of reason and intuition in interpreting those relationships. Even when using color to capture the particulars of light, space, and form of a subject, you will find that the abstract processes of color selection and the orchestration of color with compositional motives inevitably influence your so-called naturalistic work with a sensibility unique to you. What is important, regardless of the style in which you work, is to use color in a way that contributes to the content and structure of your painting.

Having said that, it is important to note that throughout the twentieth century to the present day, the visual arts in Western society have been characterized by the coexistence of two fundamental streams of color conception: one stream continues the Renaissance practice of descriptive color, based on references to nature; the second stream has liberated color from its purely descriptive role, broadening the artistic inventory of expressive response. The remainder of this section focuses on the latter, that is, the more overt manipulation of color for subjective purposes, as distinct from a more objective approach aimed at emulating nature. (We distinguish between the terms subjective and objective for the sake of clarity only. Once again, we acknowledge that the application of these terms is as relative as color itself.) Accordingly, we begin with a definition of subjective color.
Subjective color refers to arbitrary color choices made by the artist to convey more powerfully emotional or imaginative responses to a subject, or to compose with color in a more intuitive or expressive manner. 

Realize that the use of the word arbitrary in this context is not meant to imply superficial motives for deciding on an arrangement of colors. Instead, it suggests deeply felt impulses or convictions about color that are not dependent upon references to the natural world.

In the drawing by Adolf Wölfli (Plate 10-28), subjective color is used both to promote the design and to serve decorative rather than spatial purposes. The evenly applied, pleasing colors have an ornamental, almost ceremonial splendor. Carefully plotted into active zones, the intense hues are balanced against the gray areas of rest to enhance sensations of order and harmony. Moreover, the motif of brilliant yellow accents, accompanied by variously scaled human and animal heads, some in multicolored womblike sacs, all circling around the central black and brown shapes that are in a yin--yang relationship, imbues this drawing with an air of formality usually reserved for symmetrical images.

Heightened or exaggerated color can strengthen our emotional identification with a subject. The color in Dan Leary's self-portrait (Plate 10-29, for example, expresses a radiance that transcends realism. Certainly, the facial expression drawn close-up suggests the head and even the neck contribute to the poignancy of this image. But it is the scalding intensity of the color that is paramount in creating an immediacy of emotional impact; we cannot help but respond to such an acute state of mind without attributing our own subjective feelings to the plight of the subject.

The central role of color in setting the mood of Leary's work is instructive. In general, color can stimulate a wide range of psychological and associative responses, consciously or unconsciously. It is not uncommon, for example, for a viewer to associate certain colors and properties of colors with specific feelings (warm colors get our attention and can inspire a robust, aggressive, or hopeful temperament; cool colors are more withdrawn, suggesting a serene, reserved, or melancholy disposition—"I got the blues"). Associations can also be made with sensory experiences (red is often equated with a sweet taste and things hot to the touch, green with outdoor smells, and orange with brassysours). Particular hues may also trigger symbolic associations with abstract concepts: for instance, we are culturally conditioned to associate yellow with treachery or cowardice and purple with royalty; we may even have a red-letter day because of our green thumbs.

Returning to the Leary drawing, note that the face is an island of intense oranges, a color that often symbolizes irradiation, surrounded by dark values that concave brooding or introspection. In comparison to the naked emotion displayed in Leary's drawing, the substitution of a fanciful color system for local color in Roche Babell's self-portrait (Plate 10-6) results in a concocted image of ritualistic power that conceals the sitter's identity. A dead giveaway is the flamboyant color of the hair. Looking as if it has just ignited, with curls of flame licking the edges of the face, this badge of an assumed persona might summon responses of fear, amazement, or even reverence, but it is not easily ignored. The claylike color grays of the face suggest inertia and depersonalization and as such are the perfect foil for the animated, intimidating stare of the eyes, the only clue to the true personality behind the disguise.

Initially, it may be easiest to understand the emotive force of color when a specific set of colors is intimately linked with identifiable subject matter. However, nonobjective artworks, in which abstract color interactions form not only the structure but also carry the content, can be just as emotionally charged an experience for the sensitive viewer. (Indeed, some artists would contend that...)

*Having a subjective sensation accompany an actual sensory experience, such as hearing a sound in response to seeing a color, is known as "synesthesia," a phenomenon explored by many, particularly nonobjective, artists during the twentieth century.*