

Assignment 4 Color Strategies¹

Objectives

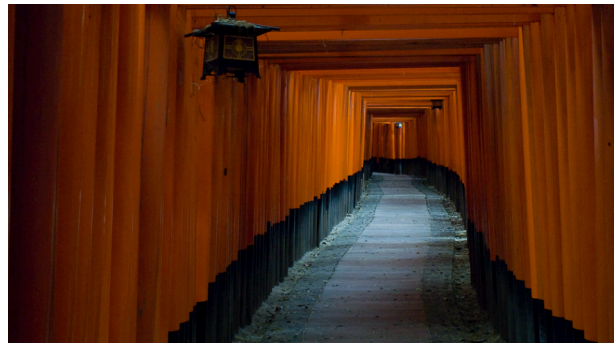
We have reached a point in this course where color has become a bit less intimidating and mysterious. Many of the technical aspects regarding where color comes from, how it actually *works*, and how different visual systems interpret color are now a part of a deeper photographic inventory of tools and techniques. Aesthetically speaking however, the deliberate application of color in images requires more practice but can manifest into compositions with strong design and visual impact. When equipped with several color strategies on field sessions, students can communicate ideas with photographs.

Procedures

The following examples offer various strategies to effectively and persuasively use color in photographs. *Review each description, and then produce images that represent at least two of these color strategies for the Final Portfolio; each image must be a unique composition, and use a different color strategy.*

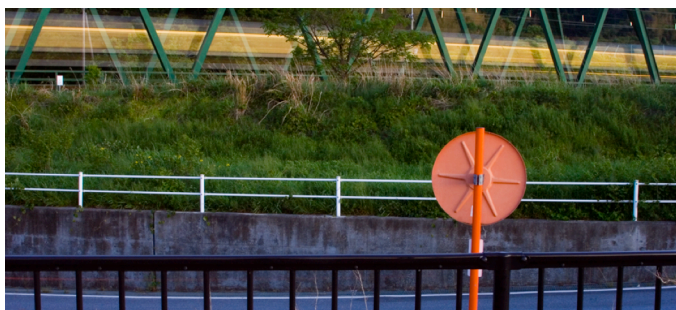
Active / Passive Contrast

Use a warm color against a cool color. The proper proportions of each are critical in making this work. Warm colors tend to advance toward the viewer and are called active colors, whereas cool colors tend to recede and generally remain more passive. These don't need to be complementary colors, but colors that represent the idea of warm vs. cool.



Primary Contrast

The juxtaposition of two primary colors can create a bright, vibrant composition. Consider drawing from either the additive or subtractive primary color systems to complete this. Yellow for instance, is known as a subtractive primary color of light—unlike the additive primaries of red, green, and blue. So, for this component, consider a yellow/magenta contrast is just as effective as a red/blue contrast. Attempt to use a polarizing filter to increase their levels of saturation.



Complex Contrast

Attempt to contrast many primary colors. Consider yellow a primary color in addition to red, green, and blue for this assignment component. Be aware that the interaction of several primary colors makes it more difficult to create a focal point and can confuse the viewer. Used effectively, this multiple color contrast can make an image with impact, and color-unify a couple, or several visual elements.

¹ Adapted from Exploring Color Photography by Robert Hirsch, 3rd & 4th Editions, McGraw-Hill.

Complementary Contrast

The utilization of two colors that oppose one another on the color star produce the strongest possible contrast, and emphasize form. Blue & Yellow; Green & Magenta; Red & Cyan are the keys to be sought after.



Color Harmony

Harmonic colors are closely grouped on the color wheel and present a limited use of color in a composition. Any quarter section of the color wheel is a boundary of color harmony. The simplest harmonic compositions contain only two colors that are not saturated. This requires the absence of any complementary color. An even light source, with no contrast, can enhance the harmonic color relationship. Cool, passive colors tend to be more successful in establishing a tranquil, harmonic image than warm, active colors.

Dominant Color

The *Color Isolation*

assignment encourages the utilization of a neutral background with a note of color activating the composition. With this strategy, attempt to replace the neutral background with a “color field” and then place a note of contrasting color against it. When these types of compositions are created, the colors themselves can become the major focus or subject. The color relationships will become the primary conveyors of mood and emotion to the viewer, and can actually de-emphasize the identification of the subject matter [figure]. In this case, color can be used to express what cannot be said through conventional iconography.



Monochrome

Similar to what the *Color, No Color*, assignment attempts to articulate, good color images don't always need to include several hues of the visible spectrum to be successful. Sometimes restricting the number of colors in a composition can convey a very specific idea, and ultimately be a more effective strategy. Monochromatic images utilize a single hue from any part of the visible spectrum and rely heavily on compositional technique, just as black-and-white images do.