PHOTOS AT ZOOM

Color Theory

With Dylan Yarbrough, Curatorial Assistant

MoCP Museum of Contemporary Photography | Columbia College Chicago
Deep Seeing

We will stare at the next slide for 30 seconds. When the 30 seconds is up, I will ask you to look at a blank white wall. You can also close your eyes.
What did you see?

We all have a slightly different sensitivity to color, so results may vary. You should have seen a faint orange after image - the opposite of blue.
Fundamentals

Color is often taken for granted, but it has phenomenal effects on us, both physiologically and psychologically. It can drastically change the way people perceive an image. Let’s take a look at the fundamentals of color theory.
Johannes Itten, *The Elements of Color*, 1961
Not in the MoCP collection.
The Elements of Color

- 12 Hue Color Circle
- 7 Color Contrasts
- Emotional Experience
12 Hue Color Circle

Looking at the 12 Hue Color Circle allows us to map out how hues function individually and in combination with other hues. This includes Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Complementary, Analogous, Warm, and Cool color.
Not in the MoCP collection
A Primary Color (Red, Yellow, Blue) is a color that cannot be made from a combination of other colors. All other colors are made by mixing primary colors.
William Mebane (American, b. 1972) & Martin Hyers (American, b. 1964), *Sunbeam Bread 7055*, 2006
A secondary color (Purple, Green, & Orange) is a color created from a combination of two primary colors. For example, Blue and Yellow make Green.
Tertiary Color

Tertiary colors are combinations of primary and secondary colors. There are six tertiary colors; red-orange, yellow-orange, yellow-green, blue-green, blue-violet, and red-violet. An easy way to remember these names is to place the primary color name before the other color (blue-green).
Lucas Foglia (American, b. 1983), Stacy Before Church, Diamond Valley, Nevada, 2012
Complementary Color

At the heart of color theory, complementary colors are the opposite hues on the color wheel. In their most basic form, they are one primary color and the secondary color that is created by mixing the other two primaries.
Eirik Johnson (American, b.1974), *Untitled (#13 red sweater tied to brown shirt)*, 2012
Analogous Color

Analogous colors are groups of at least three colours that are next to each other on the color wheel, and a tertiary. In this example, Blue, Blue Violet, and Violet.
Patty Carroll (American, b. 1946; resides in Chicago, IL), *Wallpapered*, 2017
From the Midwest Photographers Project
Warm Color

Warm colors include red, orange, and yellow, and variations of those three colors. Warm colors are usually intense and tend to advance in space.
Garrett Baumer (American, b. 1981; resides in Chicago, IL), *Alarm*, 2012
From the Midwest Photographers Project
Cool colors are typified by blue, green, and light purple. Cool colors are not overpowering and tend to recede in space.
Alec Soth (American, b. 1969; resides in Minneapolis, MN), Charles Lindbergh’s Boyhood Bed, Little Falls, MN, 1999
From the Midwest Photographers Project
Color Contrasts

Itten was one of the first people to define and identify strategies for successful color combinations. He devised seven methods for coordinating color contrast.
7 Color Contrasts

- Contrast of Hue
- Light – Dark Contrast
- Cool – Warm Contrast
- Complementary Contrast
- Simultaneous Contrast
- Contrast of Saturation
- Contrast of Extension
Color Photography
Ralph Arnold (American, 1928-2006), *Above this Earth, Games, Games*, 1968
William Eggleston (American, b. 1939), *Untitled (Room with Old TV, Lamps, Wildwood, New Jersey)*, 2002
Penelope Umbrico (American, b. 1957), Excerpt from 8,146,774 Suns from Flickr, 2010
From the Midwest Photographers Project
Birthe Piontek (German, b. 1976), *Holding*, 2015
Ayanah Moor (American, b. 1973), *Seventy-Three*, 2018
Not in the MoCP collection.
Barbara Karrant (American; resides in Chicago, IL), *Red Room: Floor 4 #3*, 2013
Paula McCartney (American, b.1971), *Untitled (yellow sweater), from Hide the Sun*, 2014-2017

From the Midwest Photographers Project
*Online resources, not in the MoCP collection.

Next Week: Constructed & Staged Images
Wednesday, April 22nd at 12pm CST

With Kristin Taylor, Curator of Academic Programs & Collections

MoCP Museum of Contemporary Photography | Columbia College Chicago
Next Week: Behind The Lens with Jay Woke
Friday, April 24th at 12pm CST