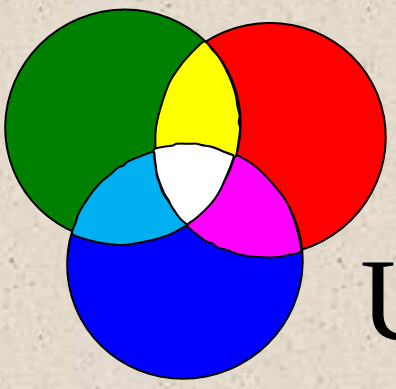
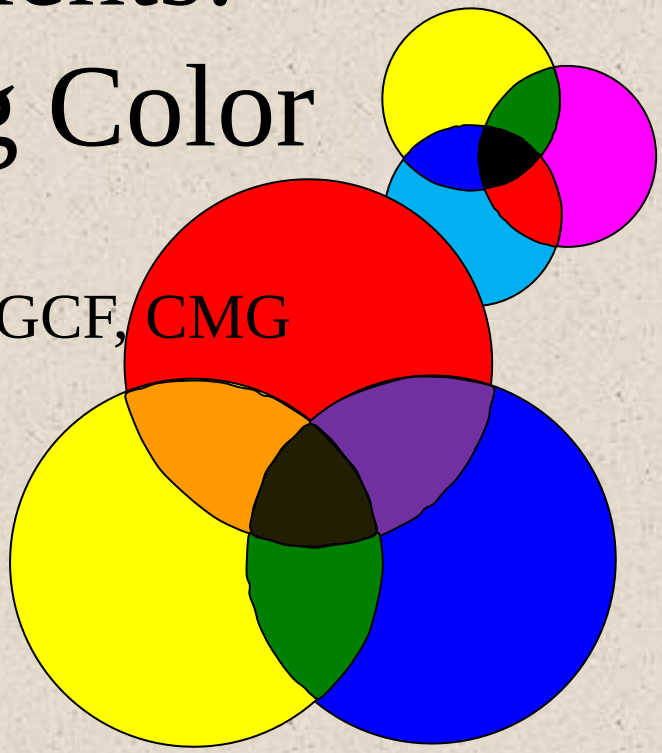


Design Elements: Understanding Color



Chris A. Paschke, CPF, GCF, CMG

West Coast Art & Frame Expo, Las Vegas 2020

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

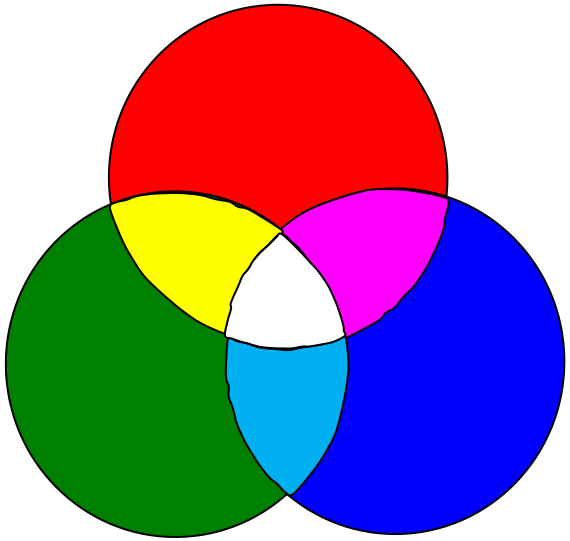
"Color is the character of a surface which is the result of vision sensitivity to reflected wavelengths of light."

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

Color Theories

Additive

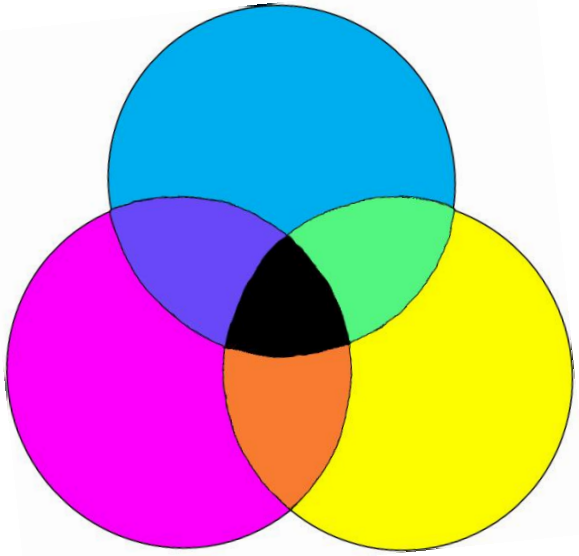
Light



Lighting

Subtractive

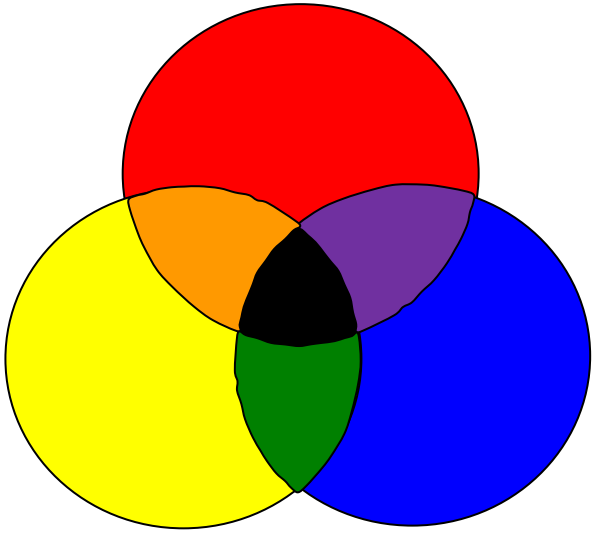
Digital Inks



Printers

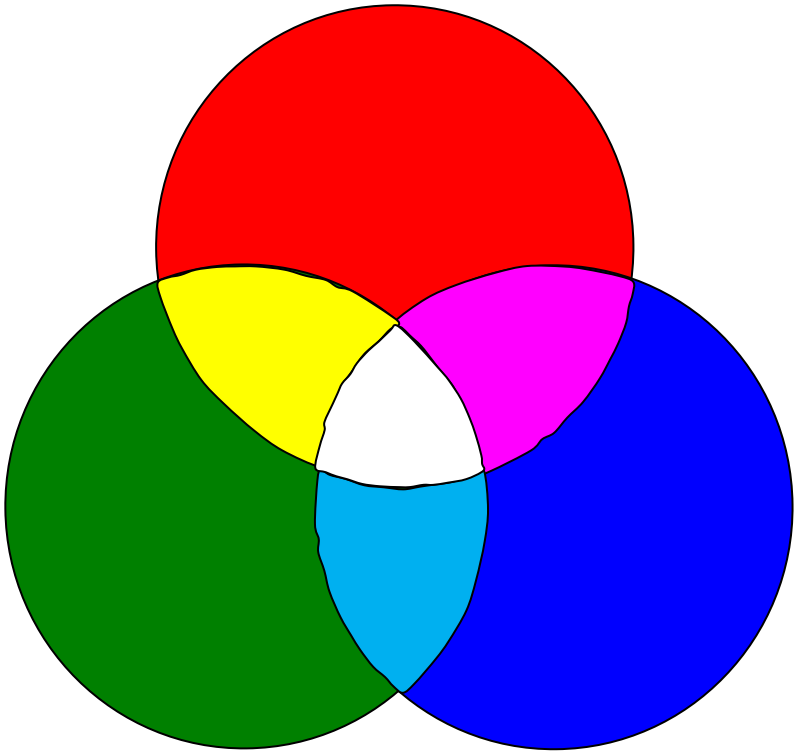
Subtractive

Artist Pigment



Framing

Additive Color Theory
(LIGHT)

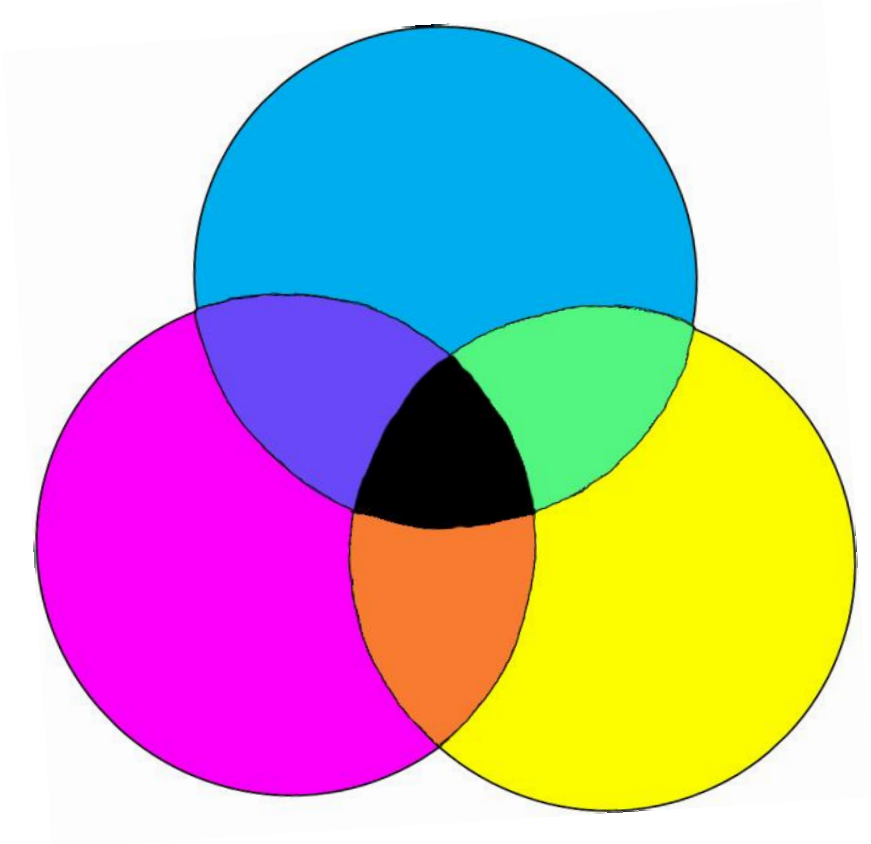


Additive theory begins with black. All six combined create white, as all the colors in light are present and absorbed.

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

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

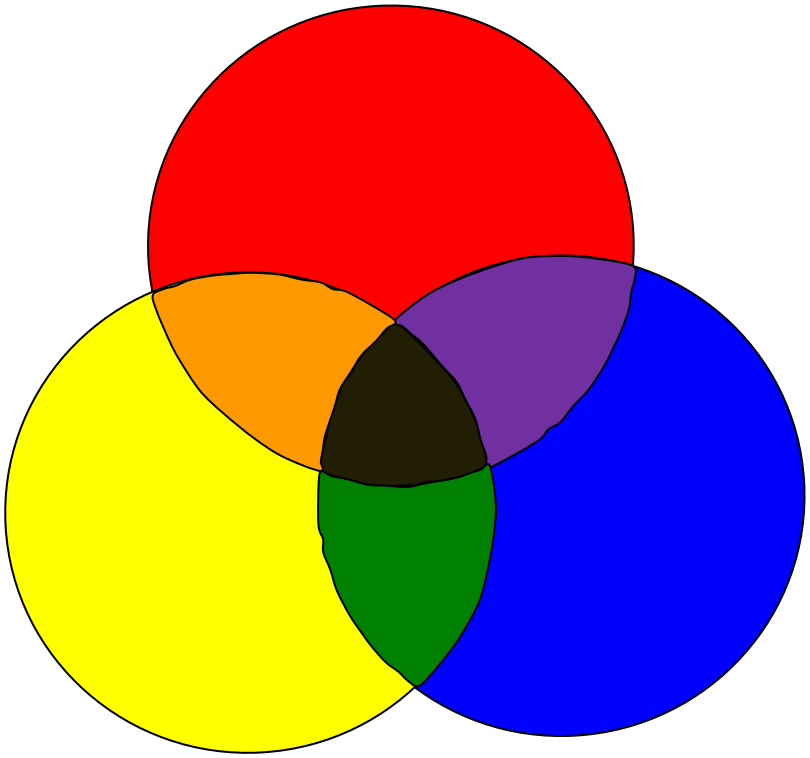
Subtractive Color Theory
(DIGITAL/PRINT)



Primaries are cyan, magenta, yellow (CMY). These blend to create other colors such as violet, orange, green…and black.

Final colors integrate the selective absorption of light (altered by light colors) to produce final colors.

Subtractive Color Theory
(ARTIST PIGMENT)



Subtractive theory begins with white, as colors are added the result gets darker to brown, gray or black.

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

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

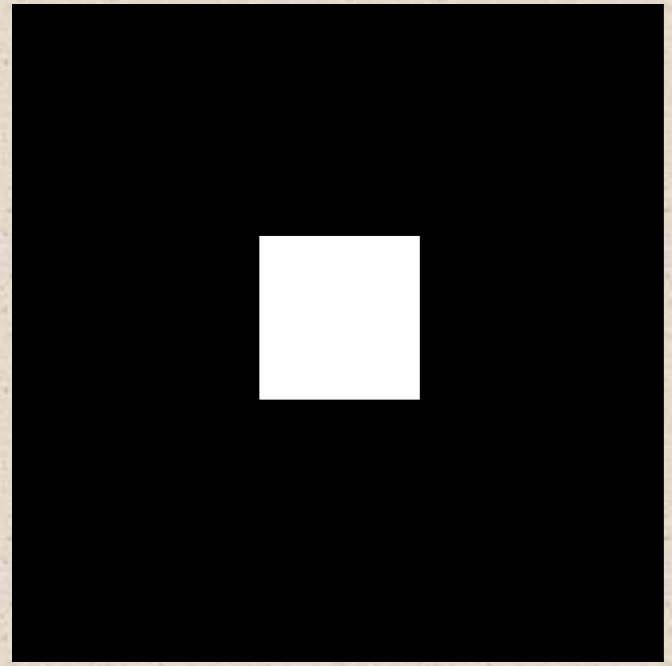
Every color has three basic color properties: *hue*, *value*, *chroma*

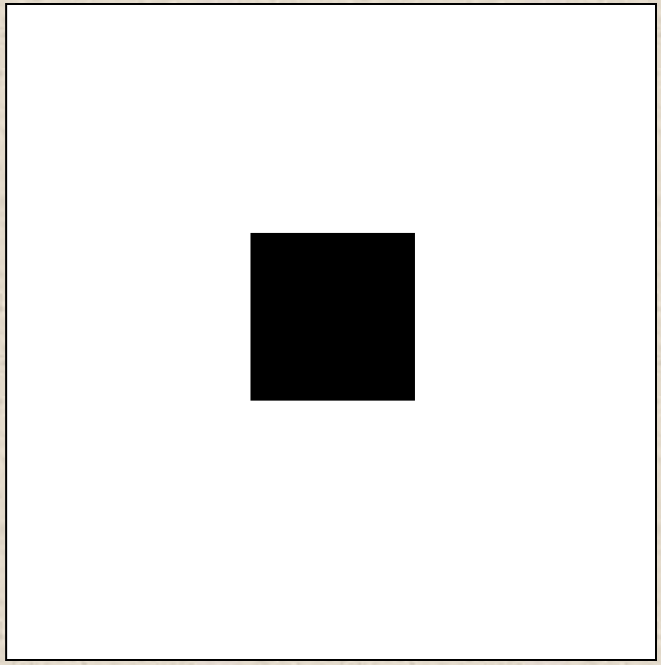
Hue - Position of a pure color in the spectrum that has not been dulled or diluted, no white, black or color added

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

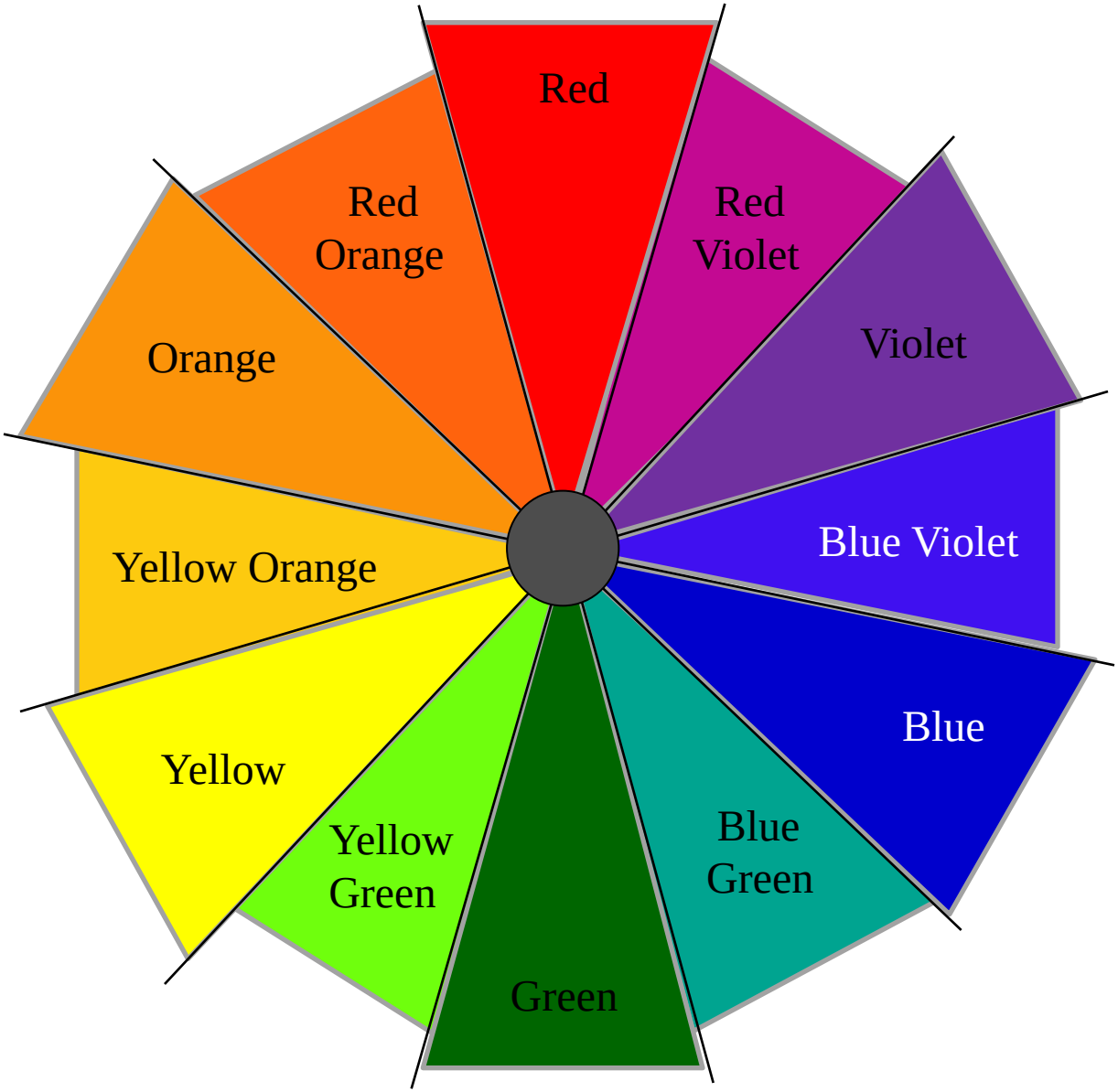
Top picks up neutral tan

Warm white expands image

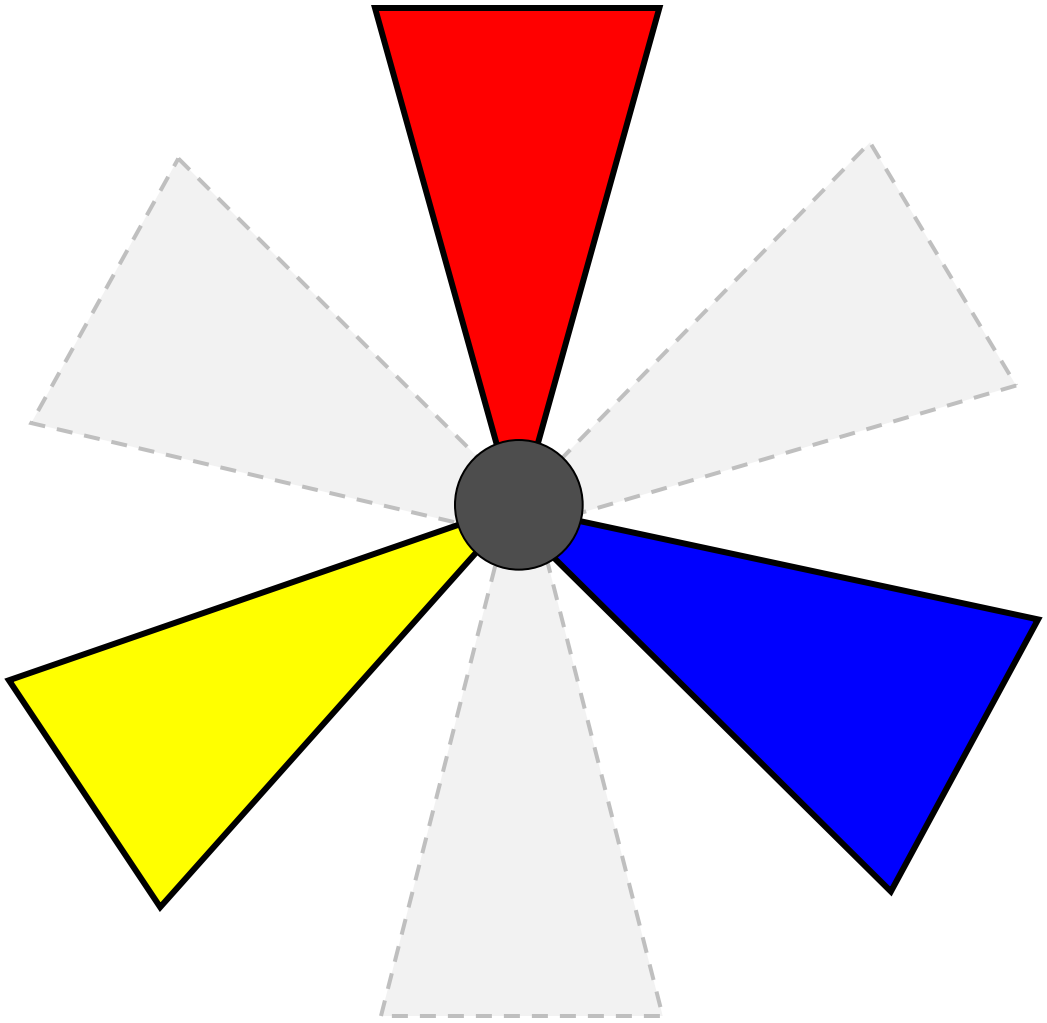
Spacer adds depth and shadows

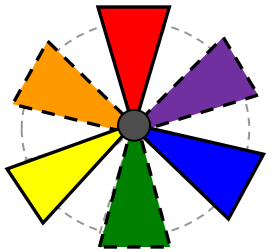
Top warm gray Draws the eye into the leaves

Color Wheel

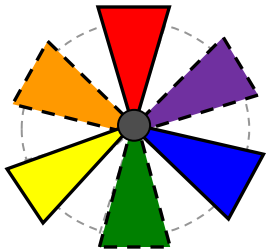

Red
Red Violet
Violet
Blue Violet
Blue
Blue Green
Green
Yellow Green
Yellow
Yellow Orange
Orange
Red Orange

Primary Colors

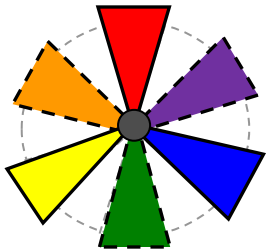


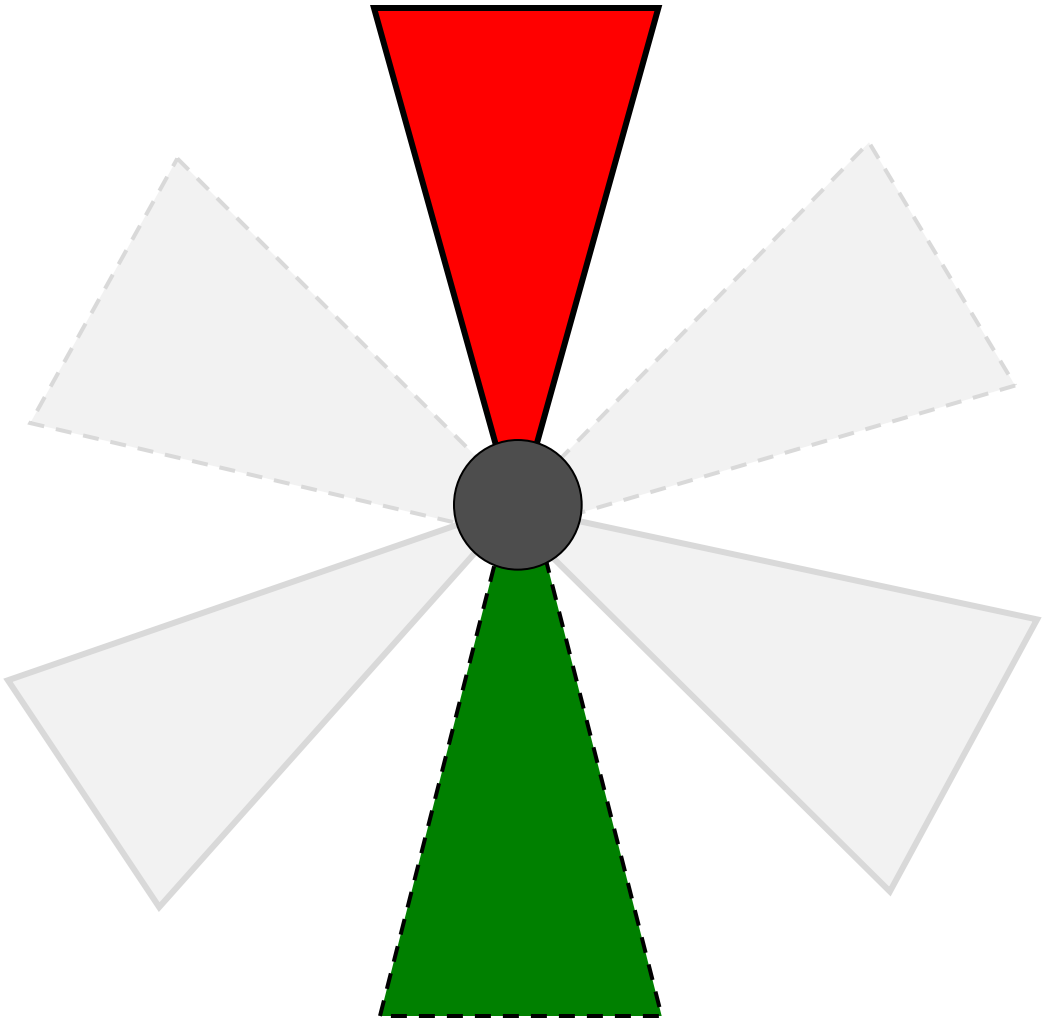


Secondary Colors

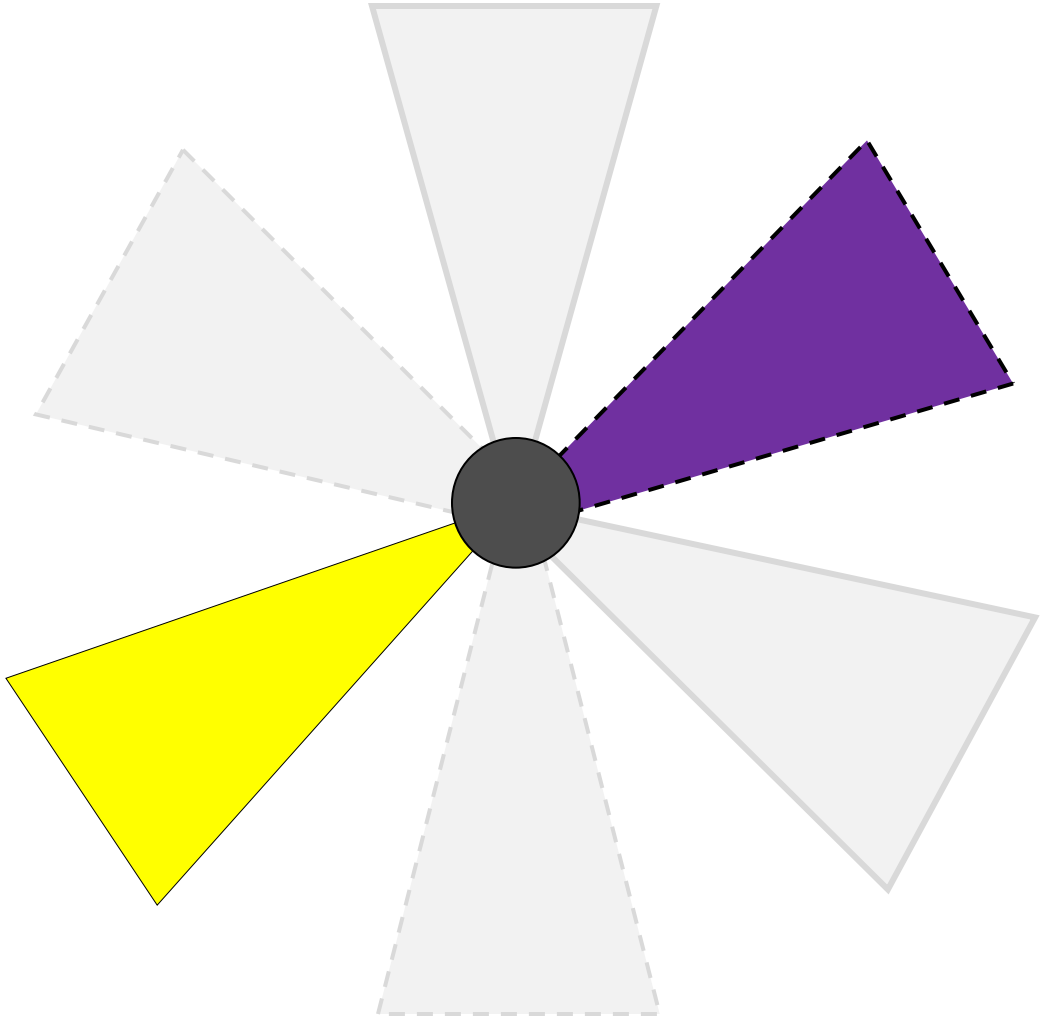


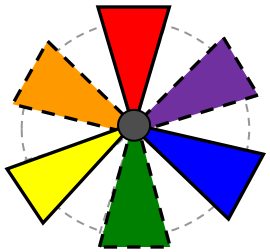
Complementary Colors



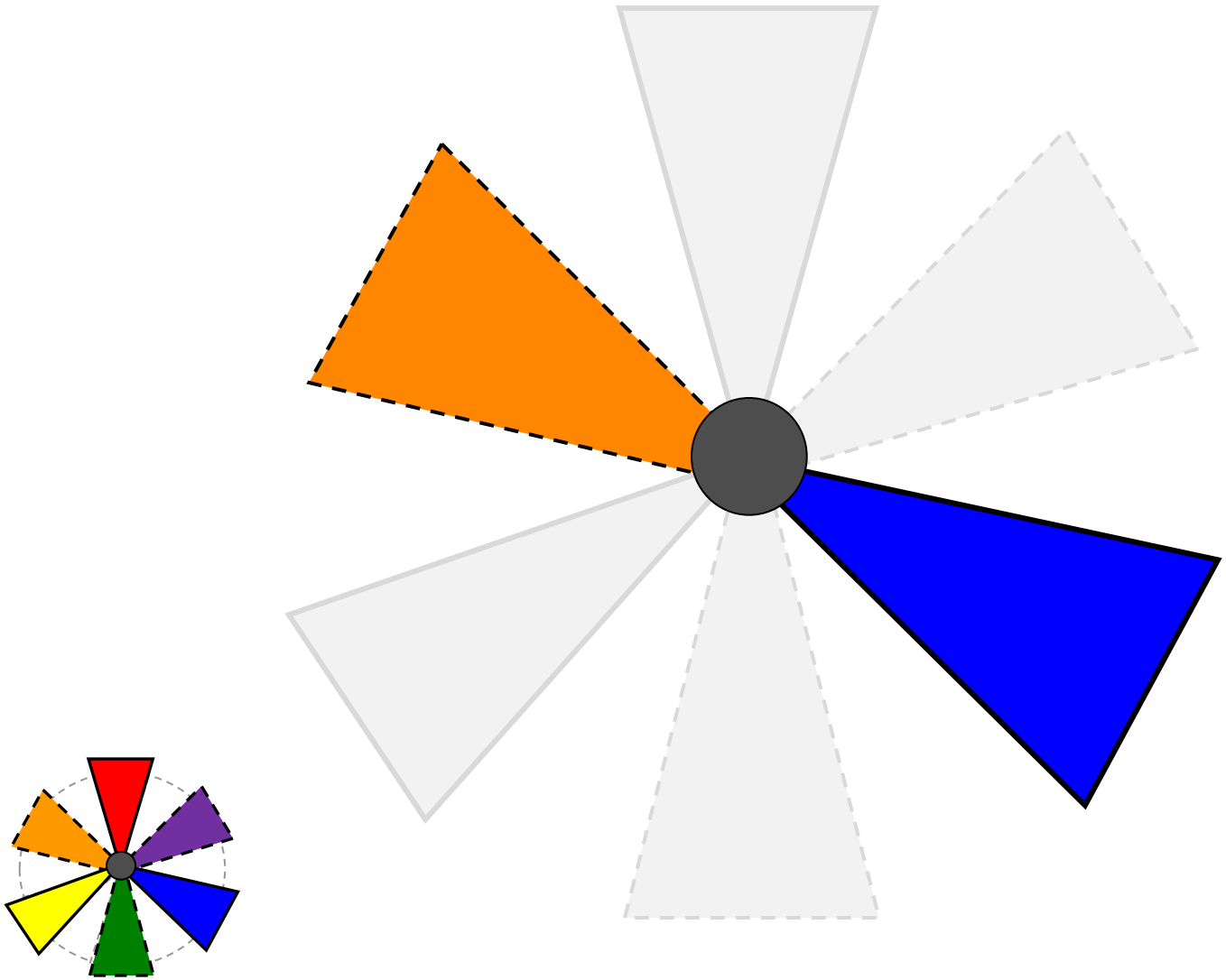


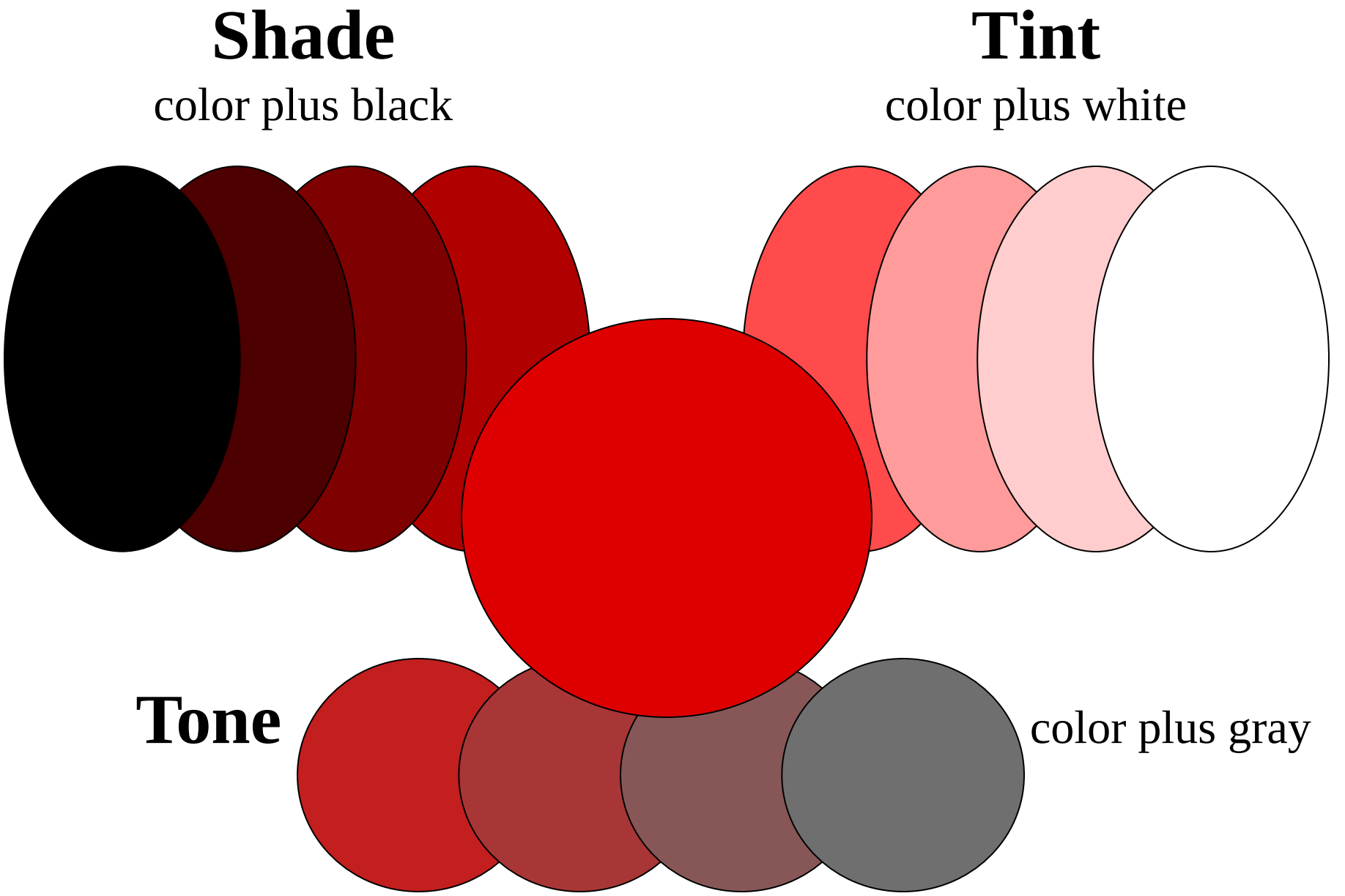
Complementary Colors





Complementary Colors

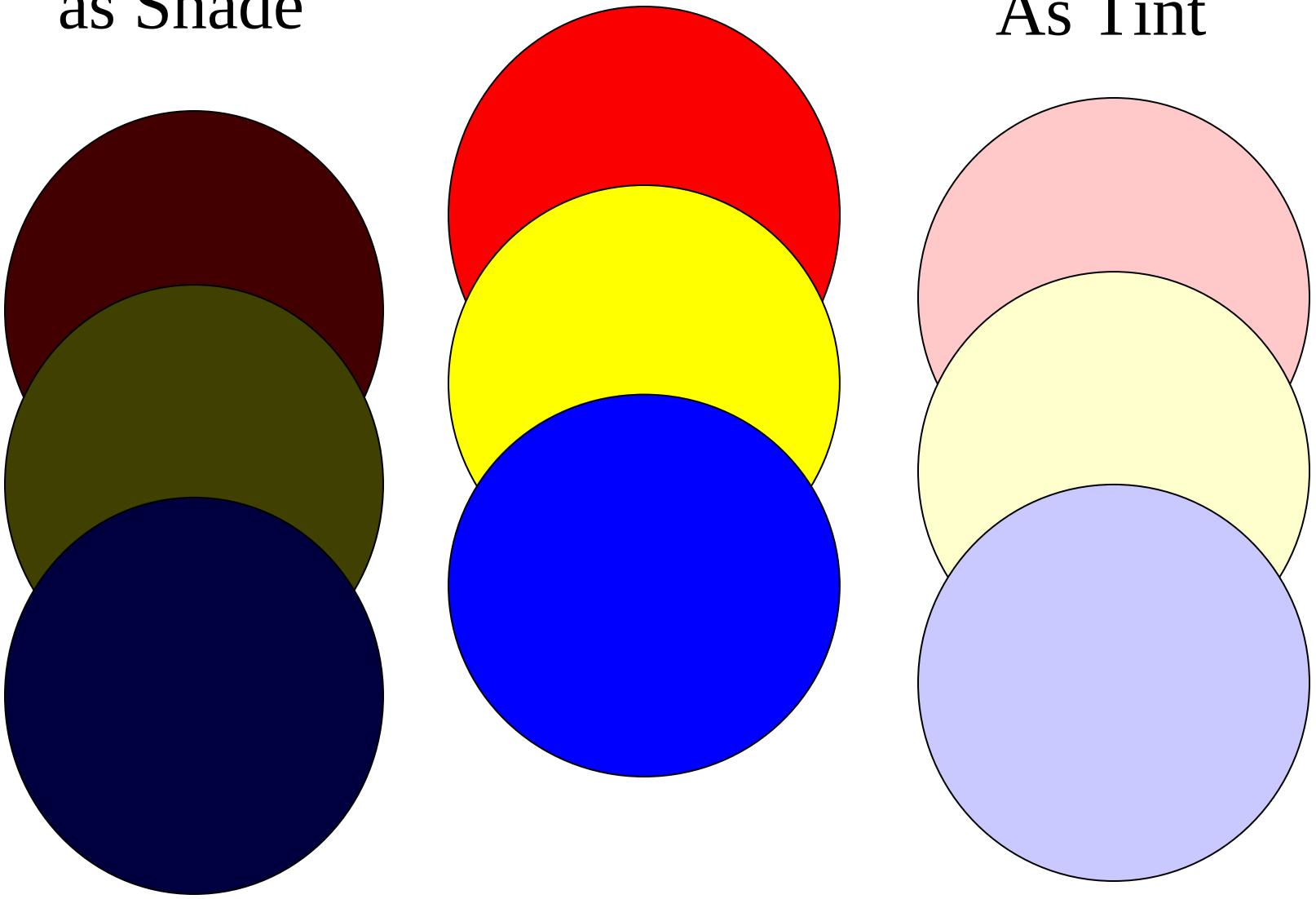



Shade
color plus black
Tint
color plus white
Tone
color plus gray

Primary as Shade

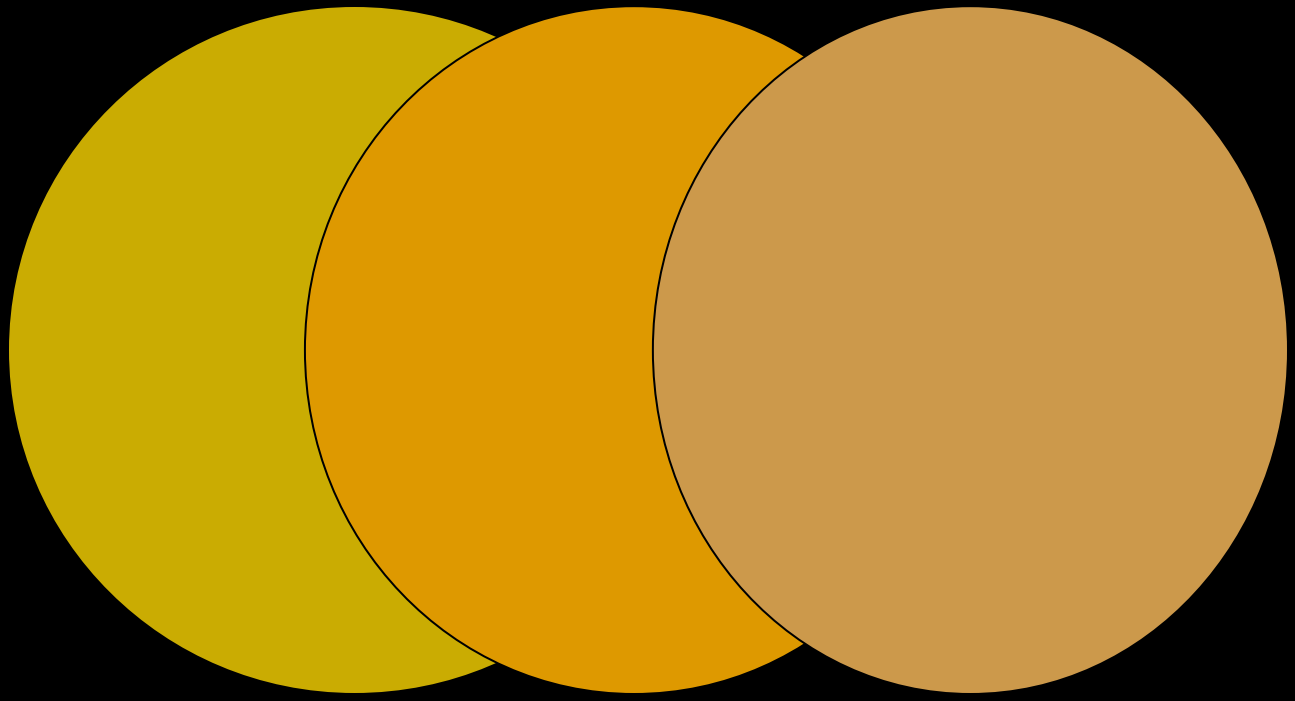
Primary Colors

Primary As Tint



Metallics

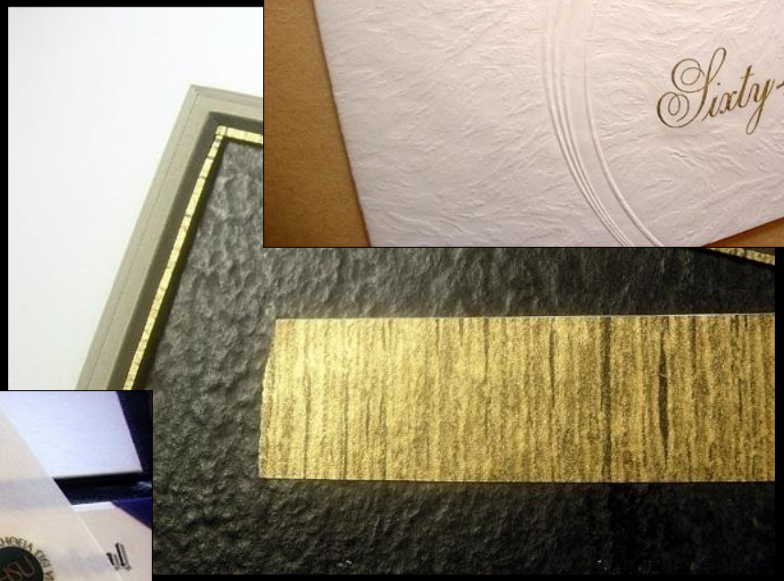
Metallic Bases

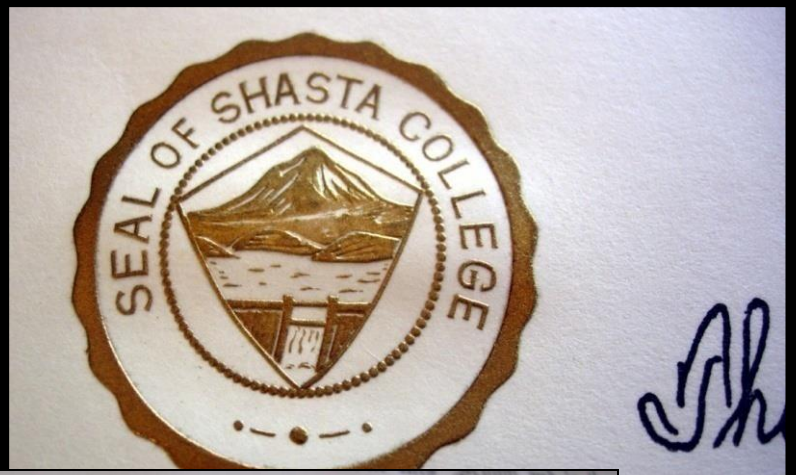


Yellow Base Red Base Blue Base

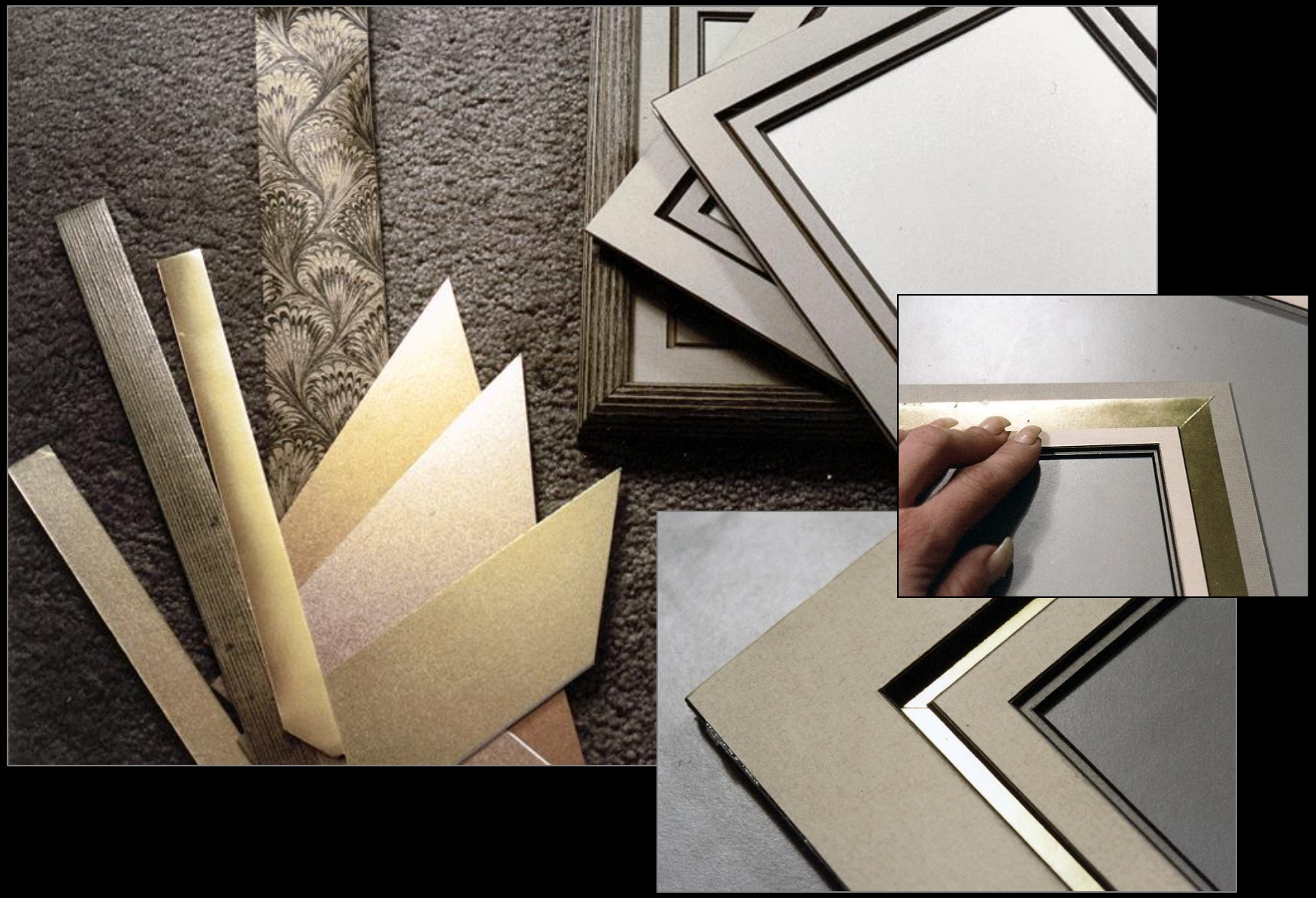
Metallic Bases

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



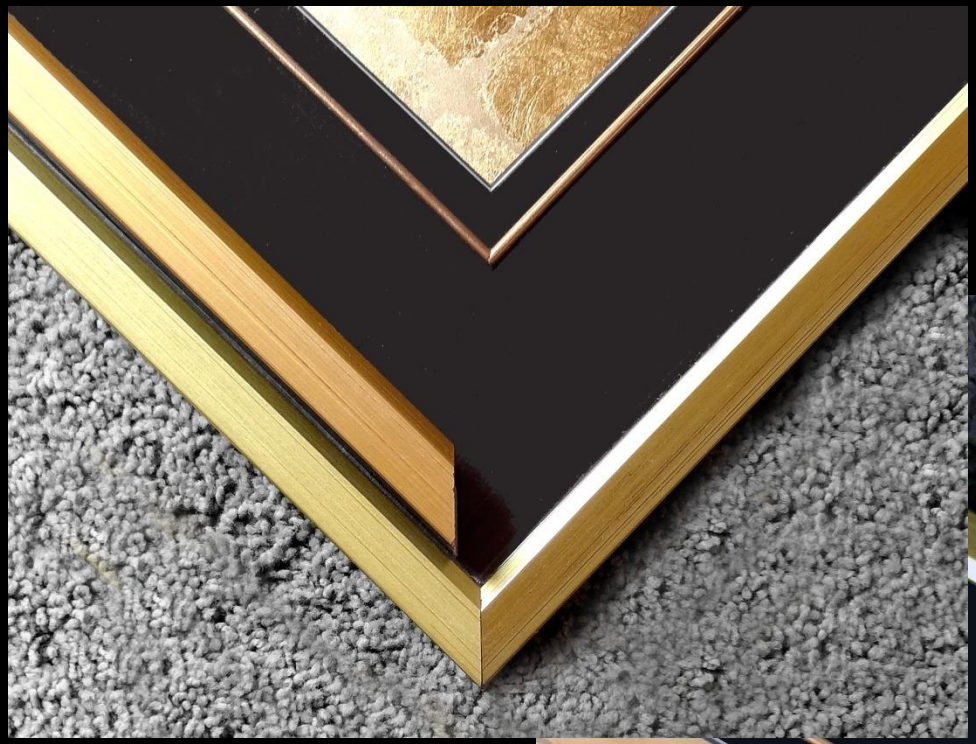

SEAL OF SHASTA COLLEGE

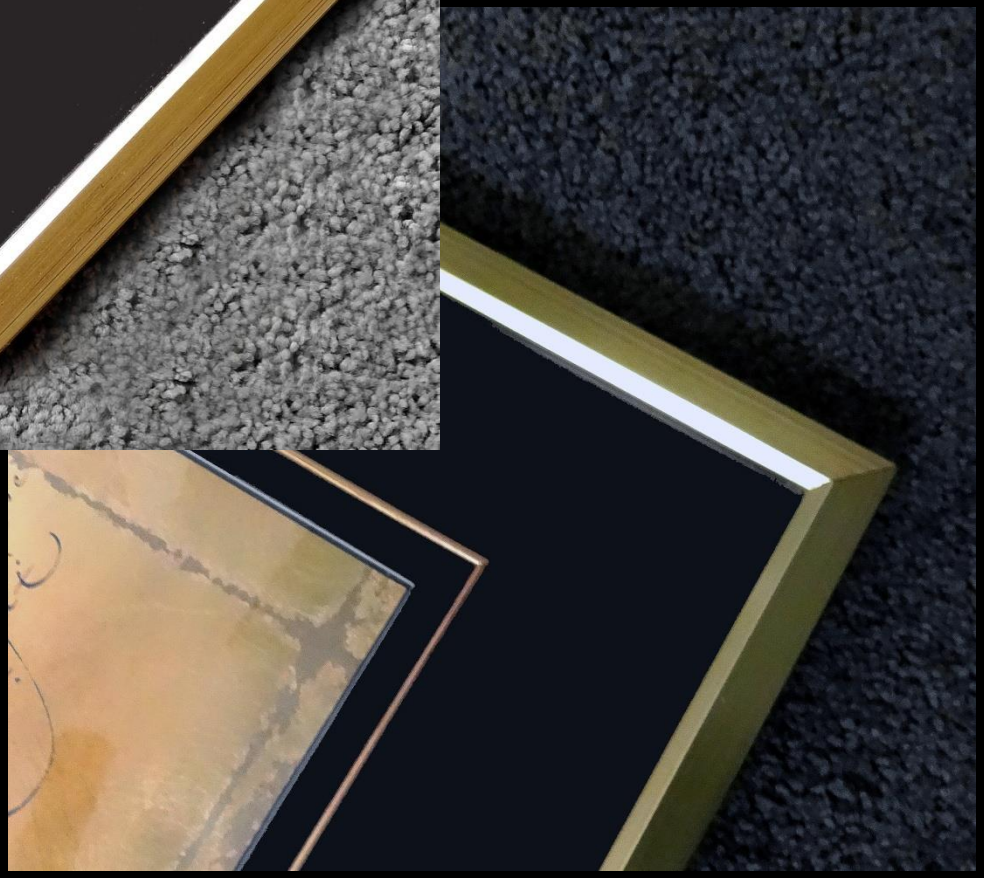
Given this sixth



ARLYN

Faded Gold Moulding

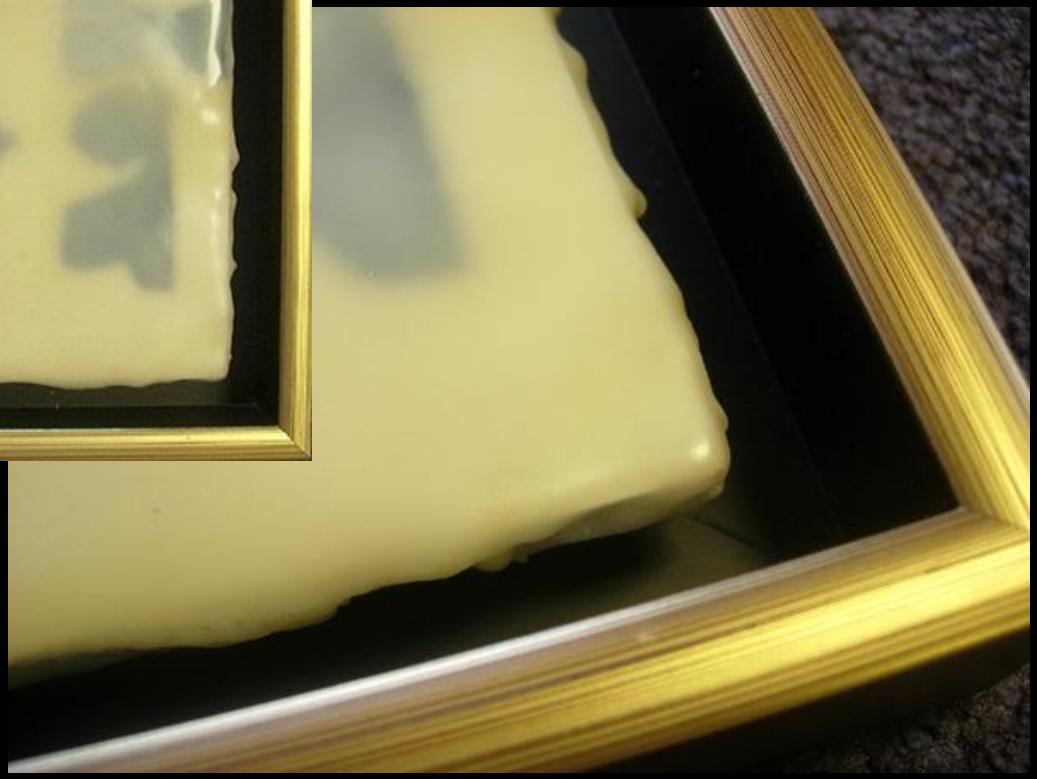




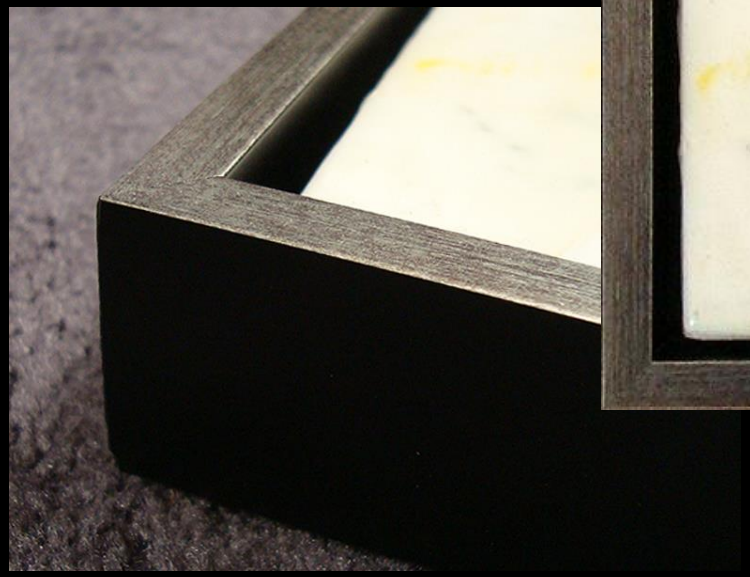
Gold matches tones and warmth in painting

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

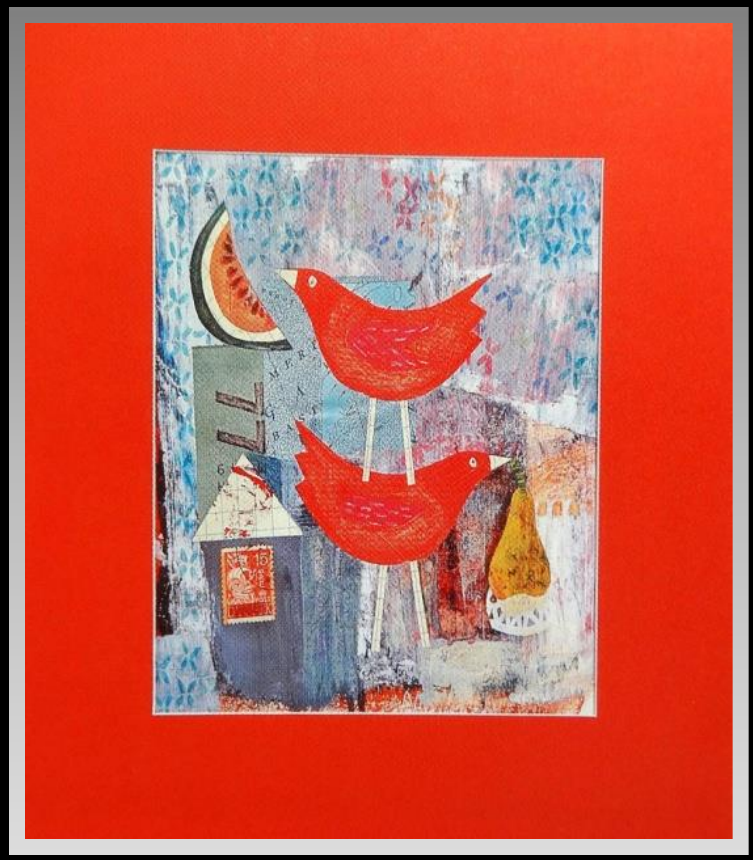
Liner white to match background

Torn paper accents

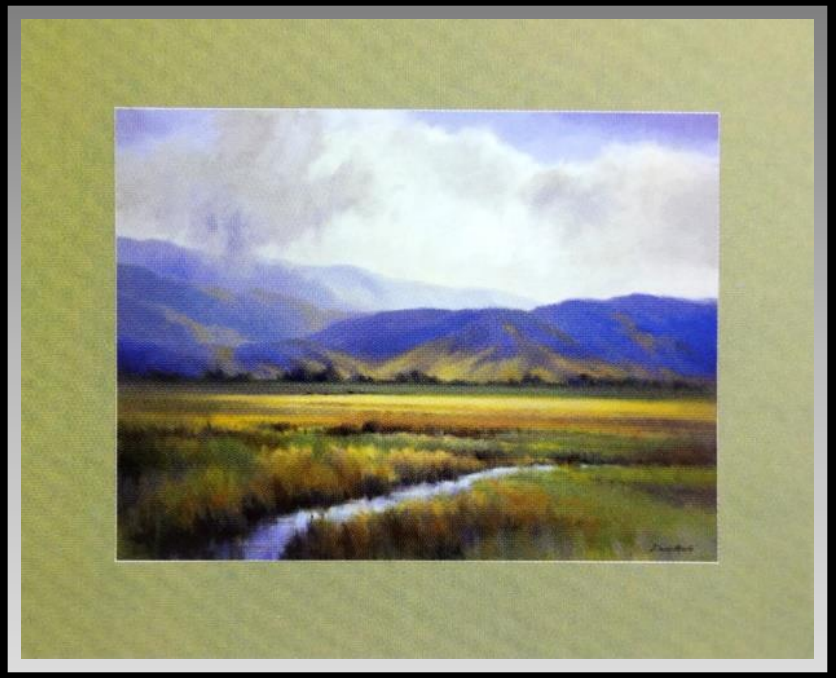
Mat color vs. Wide frame color

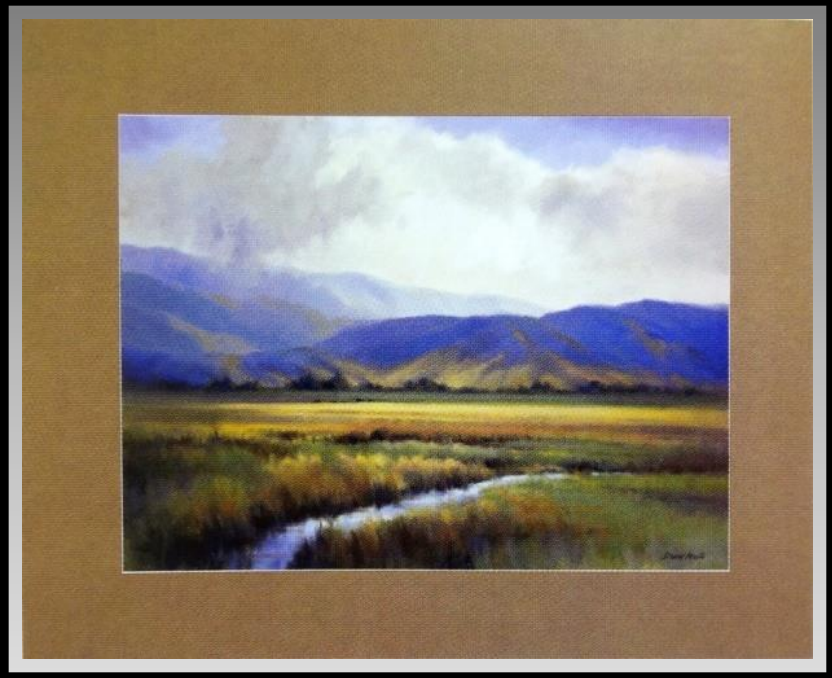
Mat Color Selection – Rules of Thumb

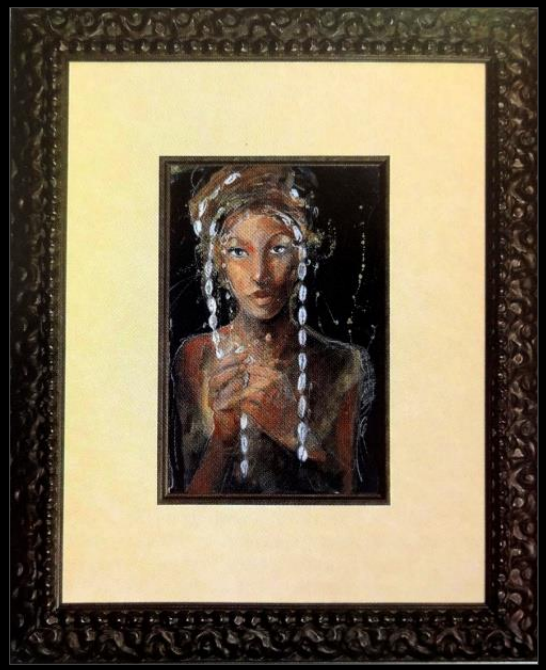
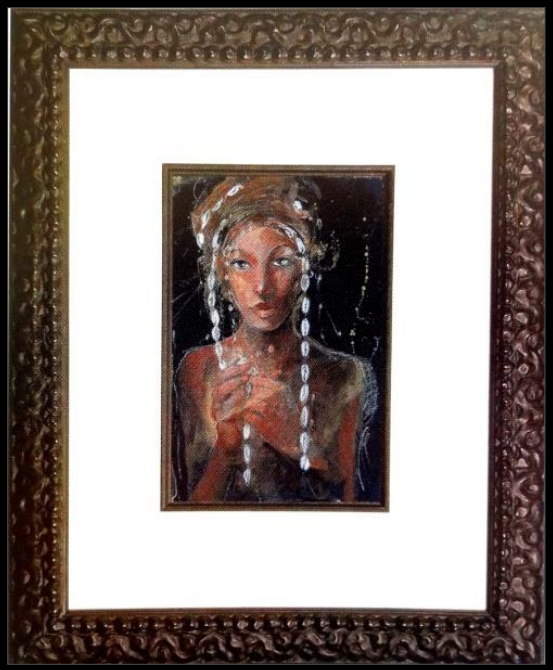
1. Dominant art color = top mat color selection
   There are exceptions to every rule
   Consider textures and contrasts
2. Secondary art color = middle mat or first accent
   Second mat width does not have to be middle
3. Third art color = third mat or second accent
   Can be a simple as red line on frame edge
   Or under tiered mat



Visual emphasis through color

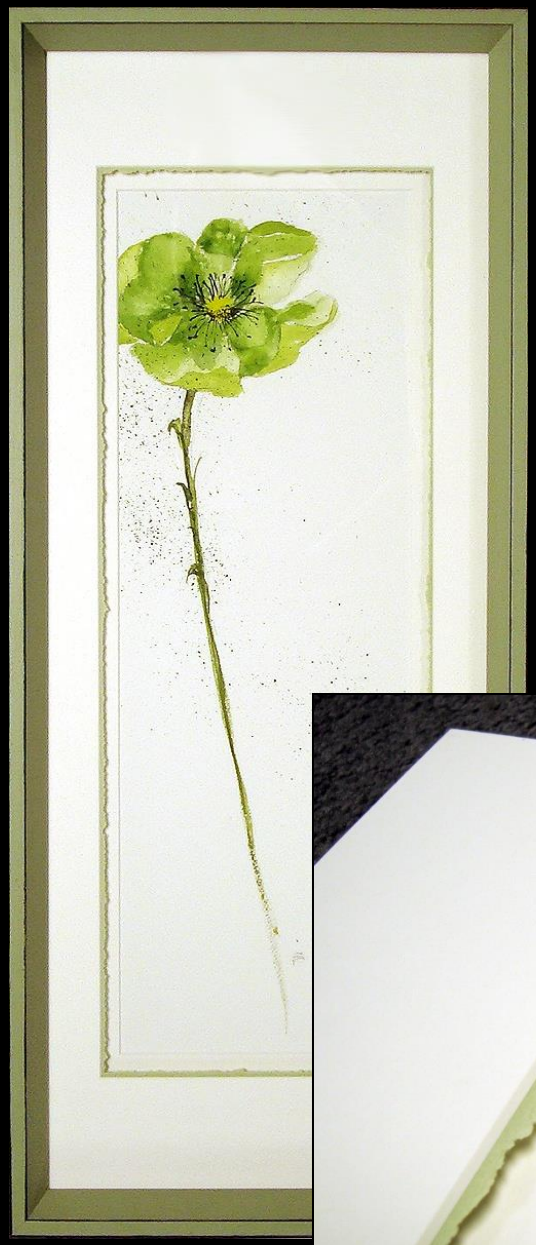




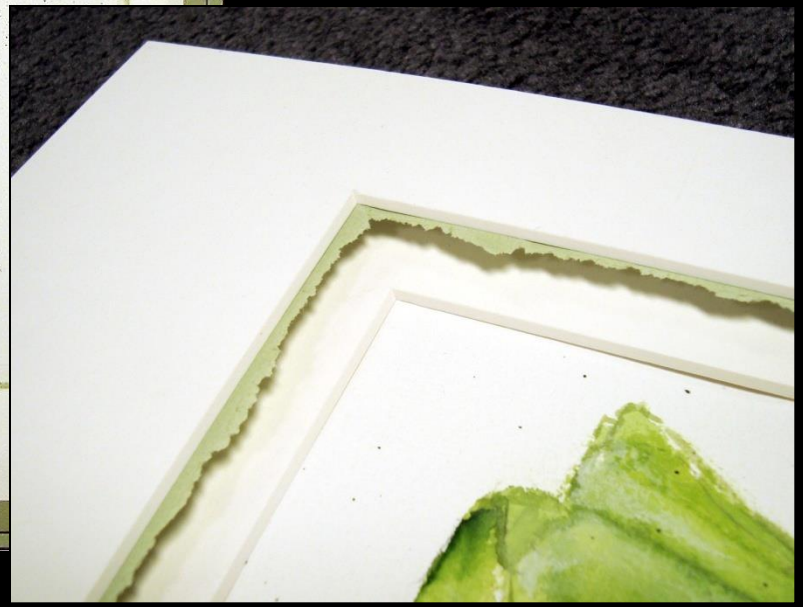



Color and Visual Focus

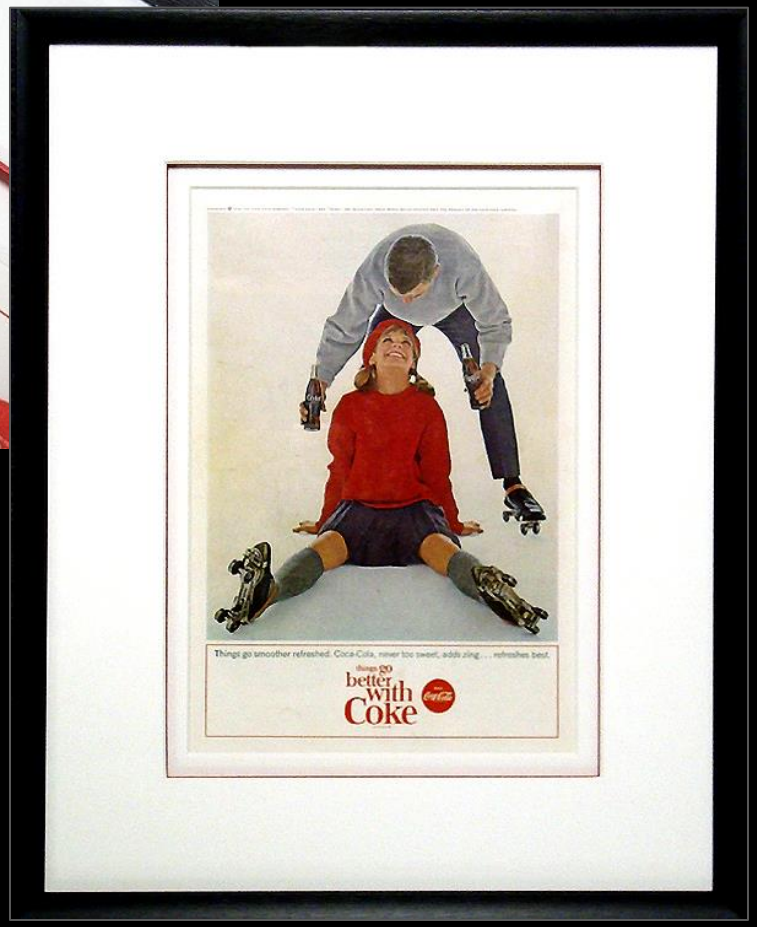
Grey Ansley stem frame pulls into the ink washes
Soft gold Cintra draws into the warmer yellows



White background
Green frame & deckle
Grey edge highlight



Under tiered top mat
Liner mat varied to match aged ad

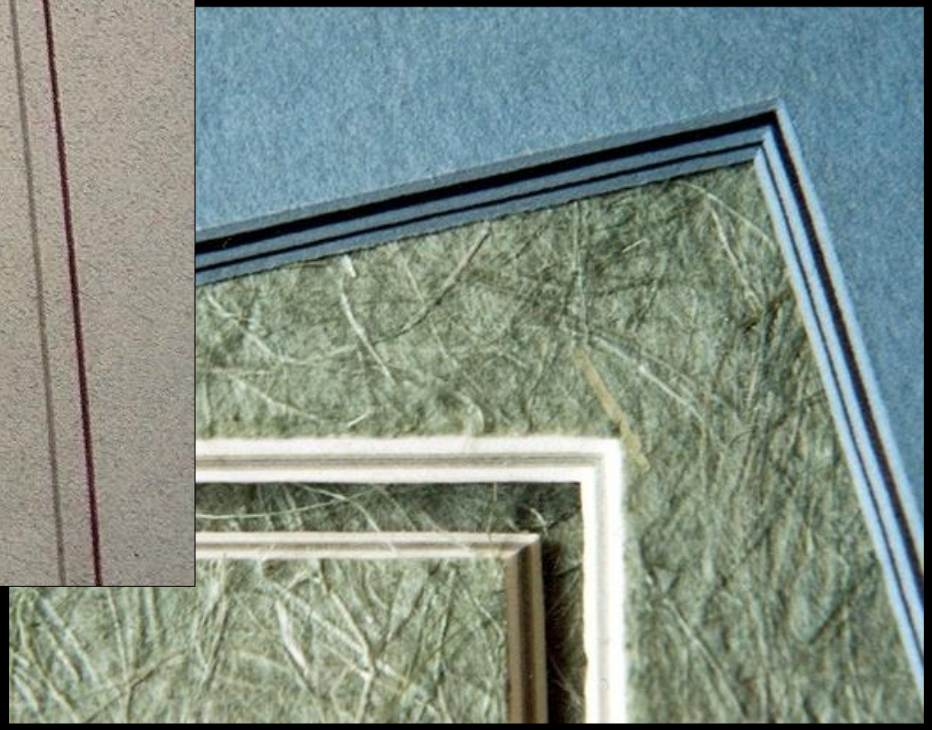


Dominant blue is too dark for top mat.
Brushed aluminum accents the airplane.
Deep bevel wrap and gray help integrate.

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 & Line



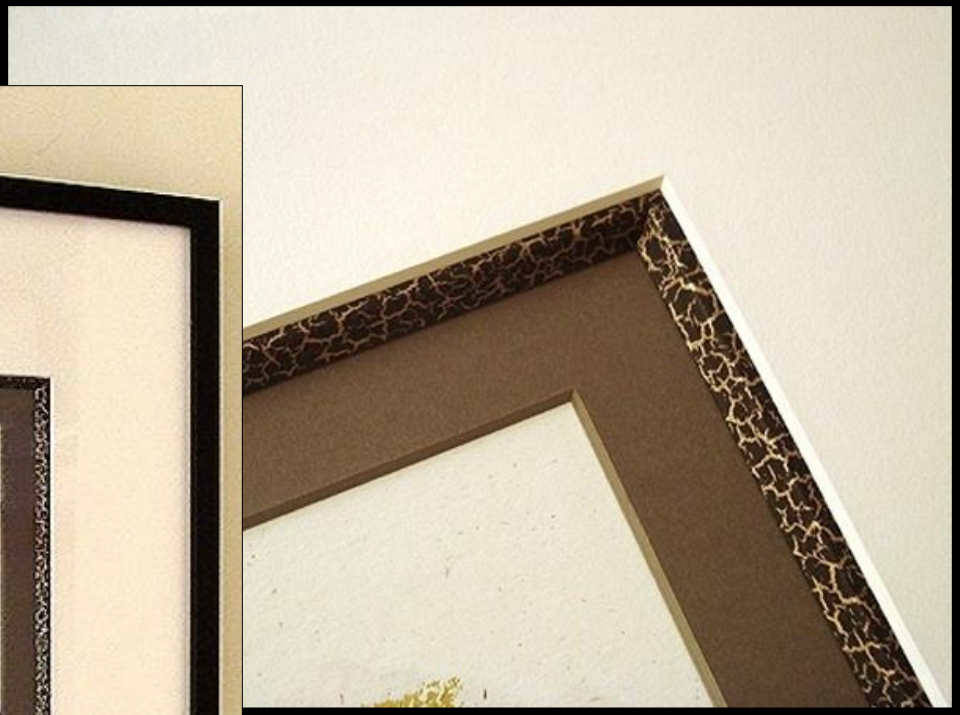
Color, Line & Repetition

Color, Line & Texture

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BOSTON

Color & Rhythm

Surface tiered (T)
Matte laminated (B)



Color + Shape, Space

Shape = positive, object use
Space = void or negative use

Little Birds

Double deep wrapped bevel freeform window mats of 3/16”
AF foamboard, spacers, topped with white rag paper shaped to break up the textured bark paper.

Color & Style (Era/Period)

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

Science of Color

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

Science of Color

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.

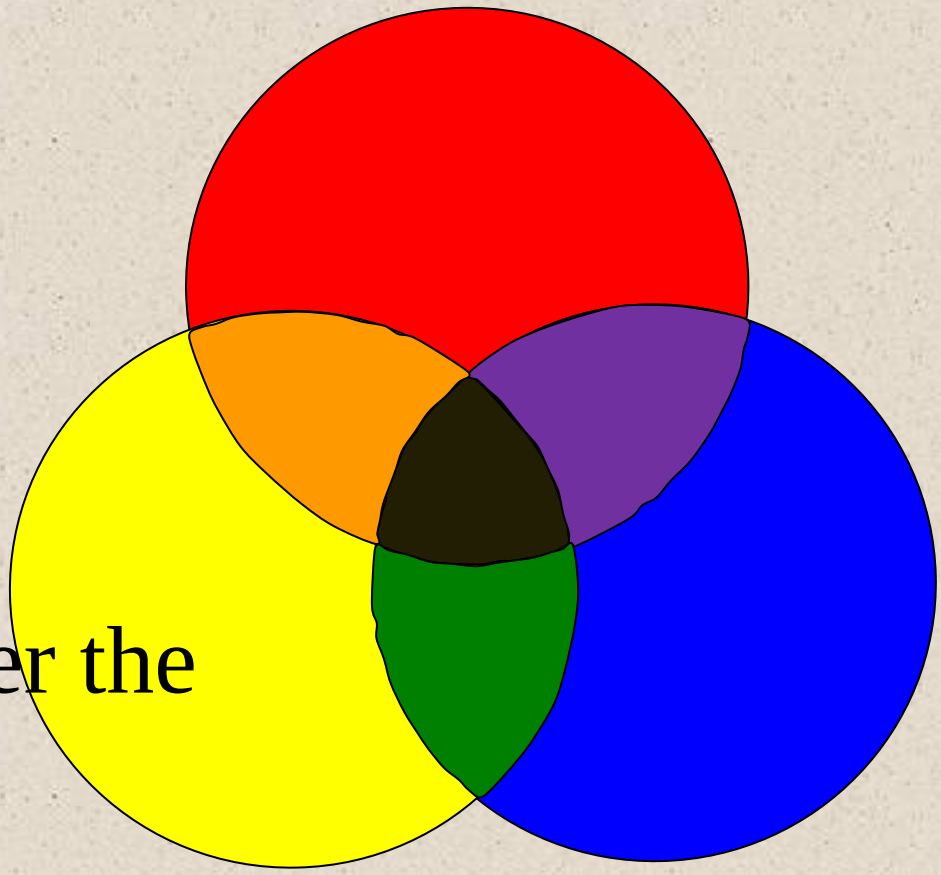
Science of Color

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 2020

Design Elements: Shades of Gray
Monday, 12:30-2:30pm

Design Elements: Pop of Color
Monday, 3:00-5:00pm

Mastering Mounting: Sensitive Items
Tuesday, 9:00-11:30am

Mastering Mounting: Challenging Items
Wednesday, 9:30am-12:00pm

Paschke Online
Article Archive and Reference Library

https://designsinkart.com/library.htm

Articles by Subject:

West Coast Art & Frame PowerPoint and PDF

Chris A Paschke, CPF GCF CMG

Designs Ink

Tehachapi, CA

www.DesignsInkArt.com/Library.htm