The Color Wheel

Intro to Color Theory
What is Color?

• **Color** is the element of art that is produced when light, striking an object, is reflected back to the eye.

• There are three (3) properties to color.
  – **hue**, which simply means the name we give to a color (red, yellow, blue, etc.).
  – **intensity**, which refers to the strength and vividness of the color. For example, we may describe the color blue as "royal" (bright, rich, vibrant) or "dull" (grayed).
  – final property of color is its **value**, meaning its lightness or darkness. The terms **shade** and **tint** are in reference to value changes in colors.
Primary Colors

- **Primary Colors:**
- Red, Yellow, Blue.
- These 3 colors are the base colors for every other color on the color wheel. This is why they're called "primary."
- When you mix two primaries together, you get a secondary color.
Secondary Colors

- **Secondary Colors:** Orange, Green, Purple.
- These 3 colors are what you get when you mix the primary colors together.
- They're located in-between the primary colors to indicate what colors they're made from. Secondary colors are usually more interesting than primary colors.
Intermediate Colors
Also called Tertiary colors

- **Intermediate Colors:**
  - These are those "in-between" colors like Yellow-Green and Red-Violet.
  - They're made by mixing one primary color and one secondary color together.
  - There can be endless combinations of tertiary colors, depending on how they're mixed.
Basic Terminology:

• **Warm Colors**: Colors such as red, yellow, and orange. These colors evoke warmth because they remind us of things like the sun or fire.

• **Cool Colors**: Colors like blue, green, and purple (violet). These colors evoke a cool feeling because they remind us of things like water or grass.

• **Neutral Colors**: Gray, Brown. These are not located on most color wheels. Found in nature.
Basic Terminology:

• **Value**: Usually refers to the amount of black in a color. The more black a color has, the darker its value.

• **Brightness**: Refers to the amount of white in a color. The more white a color has, the brighter it is.

• **Saturation**: Refers to the amount of a color used. When a color is at full saturation, it is extremely vibrant.
What is Color Theory?

• A set of principles used to create harmonious color combinations.
• Color relationships can be visually represented with a color wheel — the color spectrum wrapped onto a circle.
What are Color Schemes?

• The harmonious color combinations are called **color schemes** – sometimes the term 'color harmonies' is also used.
• Color schemes remain harmonious regardless of the rotation angle of the wheel.
Monochromatic

- A variety of lights and darks within a single color.
- Monochromatic color schemes are easy on the eye – blues and greens are calming.
- Example?
Monochromatic Example
Analogous

- Colors that sit side by side on the color wheel.
- One color may be used as a dominant while others enrich the color scheme.
- Example?
- Red, Red-Orange, Orange
Complementary

• Two colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel.
• High contrast!
• Examples?
• Most common examples: Red & Green, Violet & Yellow, Blue & Orange.
Split Complementary

• One color and two colors beside the complementary color.
• Example?
• Blue, Red-Orange, Yellow-Orange.
Triadic

• Three equally spaced colors on the color wheel.
• Form an equilateral triangle.
• Creates strong contrast while maintaining harmony.
• Example?
• Red, yellow & blue!
Jasper Johns, *Map* 1961

Piet Mondrian
Assignment

• Draw out a color wheel in your sketchbook
• Label Primary, Intermediate (Tertiary), and Secondary colors
• Paint colors in wheel
Tint, Tone & Shade

• Tint – white added to a color
• Tone – grey added to a color
• Shade – black added to a color
• Pure Color – color with no white or black added
• Paint in sketchbook