

## Color Elicits Mood In Design

Given all of the elements that comprise any design project – composition, color, lighting, function, shape, texture – one of the most vexing tasks a designer must tackle is communicating the mood. Mood can be elusive, and it can be hard to evoke with precision and consistency, but there's one tactic that can make the job easier: the deliberate, careful use of color.

The colors play a major role in setting the mood. In general, high-key schemes — those that are mainly in the color range from mid-tone hues to white — have a light, upbeat tone. Low-key schemes — those that employ the range of colors from mid-tone to black — send a more dramatic message.

In order to better understand the role of high and low key color in creating mood, it's useful to examine several different examples that demonstrate the broad scope of emotion that can be evoked by the skillful use of color. Let's look at several examples of moods and see how high and low key colors work in them.



### **Tranquil or Calming**

You don't need to be a professional designer to know that tranquil schemes often use a palette of blues. The difference between a pro and an amateur, though, is that experience with using and understanding colors makes all the difference.

Low chroma, grayed out or light, cool hues are the kind of low-key colors that most easily create a calming effect. Employing a palette that minimizes stark contrast between colors adds to the soothing and relaxing mood.

The potential drawback of an all cool, low-key color scheme is that your design can feel impersonal because it lacks warmth. The use of natural neutral tones can provide just enough contrast and make the tranquil mood evoked here more complex and comfortable.

While blue is the primary go-to color for calming spaces, don't neglect other hues. Pale variations of green and lavender can work very well, too. Think in sea glass tones – pure hues that have been softened and worn, become comfortable and soothing.

It's the nature of designers to push boundaries – see if they can bend, or even break rules and still achieve their goals. In this vein, it is possible to create a tranquil space with warmer colors – red, yellow, and orange – as long as the hues are very low chroma and very close in value to minimize contrast.

### **Nurturing and Caring**

When the mood you're creating is one of tenderness, your best bet is a high key palette of both warm and cool tones, light in value and with low contrast. The peaceful nature of the cool tones balanced by the protective and nurturing warm tones evokes a unique mood. The key is to soften to the contrast of complementary colors by lightening the value and intensity of your color choices. Blue and orange provide the perfect example of a complementary scheme that is nurturing once the hues are softened to pastel blue and coral.



## **Engaging and Evocative**

Rich, sumptuous textures, and deep, high chroma colors make the most of the sensual, stimulating properties of low-key colors. Sultry red, orange, yellow, and ochre awaken the senses and complementing those colors with luxurious elements or a dramatic setting strengthens the impression. Color psychology reveals that red-violet colors have a sensual effect, and broaden the palette that most designers use to create a space that awakens and stimulates.

Again, though, a designer can achieve an evocative effect with cool colors, especially if the canny designer selects a low key, deep palette and blends in touches of sumptuous textures and opulent accents.

## **Dynamic and Energetic**

This contemporary mood can be achieved by a surprising, unexpected combination of vibrant, low-key colors in jewel tones combined with neutrals, creating a stark contrast that can leave one wondering what's around the next corner. Create a scheme with a high degree of contrast between colors combined with unexpected neutrals creates interest and a sense of energy.



## Whimsical and Playful

Playful moods are often created by using bright palettes with lots of vibrant, contrasting colors. Primary and secondary colors often play prominent roles, but you can also use multi-colored schemes or low key, high contrast accents in order to turn the expected on its head in a way that inspires a sense of carefree fun. Today, the whimsical mood isn't just for children. Adults are attracted to high contrast schemes and playful patterns. This seems to be especially true of those who value creativity and innovation.

Although the color scheme is only one of the design elements used to create mood, it's one that can create the framework around which other elements can be employed. By establishing the mood or tone of a design as one of the very first steps in the process, The mood you select guides many design decisions, beginning with the color palette.

## Color Branding Cues

We talk a lot about the importance of brand colors. Brands (the promise between a customer and the company) and color are inextricably linked.

Even so, color is an area that tends toward the subjective and much of our work at Market Illumination has been to educate brand managers and marketers that color is a strategic tool... not a mere decorative whim.

It is the visual component people remember most about a brand followed closely by shapes/symbols then numbers and finally words. When color is used as a strategic tool versus aesthetics only, you can actually stretch (I think the "in" word these days is 'optimize') your communication budget.

Recently, we have noticed brand builders are using their logo colors beyond the logo. Research has reinforced that 60% of the time people will decide if they are attracted or not to a message – based on color alone!

And the decision may be based more on an "unconscious cue", then a "conscious decision" by the viewer. These studies show color is the hurdle that must be overcome before your audience can hear or read the message in your advertising.

Three recent commercials I saw demonstrate this color trend



The Campbell's Soup ads which show an all white background and people wearing all white scooping nothing from empty white bowls. The chef comes out with a tall pot of Campbell's soup. The Campbell's logo is the only color in the ad at this point. The soup that poured is red—again in sync with the logo color.

Sprint is taking the same approach with their logo colors of yellow and black. Their commercials have their spokesperson wearing a black suit while the background is yellow.

The Tylenol's "I love my job" commercials also use only the logo colors (red and white).

These ads are all branding ads, reinforcing the brand attributes the companies are working to establish without an overt mention or call to action which a product or service ad would do.

## Blue Packaging Says Healthy Eating



OKI Printing Solutions, a company specializing in printing solutions, polled 100 weight loss club members last month to test a theory that health-conscious buyers are more likely to be drawn to foods in blue wrapping.

Survey results: 76% of those shown two brands of breakfast cereal, orange juice and a yogurt drink believed the blue packaged products to be the healthier choice.

In their press release, OKI Printing Solution quoted color psychologist Angela Wright. "The 76 per cent agreement rate comes as no surprise to me. Blue is not a natural food color, however it can be wisely used in the marketing of low-fat foods as it encourages people to eat less," she said.

"Blue is the color of the mind and evokes a sense of responsibility, tending to encourage us to be on our best behavior so unconsciously consumers believe the product is lower in fat than other brands," she added.



## Color Trumps Taste

The color of a drink influences our perception of how sweet it tastes and can even fool our taste buds

In the same way we can make a snap judgment about a product by the color of its packaging, we judge a drink by its color. In the case of orange juice the brighter the hue of orange the sweeter we think it tastes.

The March issue of the Journal of Consumer Research finds that our perception of taste is directly influenced by the color of a drink. While that might not seem so surprising, what

might be is the fact that researchers found that color was more of an influence than the product's quality or price.

Researchers are looking at how individual attributes — such as color, price, or brand — can affect which products we prefer. Hoegg and Alba measured what influenced people's perceptions by changing the color of orange juice, changing the sweetness, or by labeling the glasses with brand and quality information.

While brand name influenced some people's preferences for one cup of juice over another, they found that simply labeling one cup a premium brand and the other an inexpensive store brand had no effect on perceptions of taste.

However the same wasn't true when it came to the color of the orange juice. The color had a huge effect on the taster's perception of taste. As the authors put it: "color dominated taste".

When presented with two glasses of orange juice, one of which had its color enhanced with food coloring, the sampler's perceived differences in taste that did not exist. However, when given two glasses of orange juice that were the same color, with one cup sweetened with sugar, the same people failed to perceive taste differences.

"It seems unlikely that our consumers deliberately eschewed taste for color as a basis for discrimination", write the authors. "Moreover, our consumers succumbed to the influence of color but were less influenced by the powerful lure of brand and price information."

## The Value Of Tiffany Blue

Whether you catch a glimpse from across a busy street or receive a precious package under the soft glow of candlelight, the box is unmistakably from Tiffany & Co.

Since 1837, the blue box has contained the exquisitely designed jewelry and high quality gifts that have made Tiffany's a legend.

The particular shade of "robin egg" blue over time has become so closely identified with the Tiffany brand that it is often called Tiffany Blue. The blue box is an American icon that has come to symbolize exclusivity and unmatched craftsmanship.



When someone gives you a gift from Tiffany's they are communicating that they care enough to give you something very special.

For those lucky enough to have received a gift from Tiffany's it is very likely that upon catching sight of the blue packaging you breathed in a bit deeper, felt your heart rate increase and silently whispered the word "Tiffany's" before you ever opened the box.

The positive emotional responses that are evoked by the sight of the blue box during the gift giving process have a very real and significant value. Their color is a registered trademark of the company and Tiffany's takes great care to protect this asset. The blue designated by Pantone as number 1837 is not shown in the regular fan guide. It is interesting to note that 1837 is the year Tiffany's was founded.

UPS Big Brown



Founded in 1907, six years before the U.S. Postal Service, UPS has grown from a messenger service to a worldwide delivery company recognized for excellent service and identified by the color brown.

Initially founder James E. Casey's employees delivered the messages on foot, then made some deliveries via motorcycle and later purchased model-T Fords. The many vehicles were painted different colors so the public would see that they had a fleet rather than just one car.

In 1916, Charlie Soderstrom joined UPS and selected brown for their uniforms and delivery vehicles. He chose a hue of brown that was similar to "the color used on Pullman rail cars because the color reflected class, elegance, and professionalism – and dirt is less visible on brown uniforms and vehicles", according to UPS. By 1929 the color brown that is still used today was adopted across the company.

UPS has recently gone one step further than most companies to 'own their color' by incorporating it into their slogan "What can brown do for you?"

Interesting to me is that while the public has long recognized brown as the color of the company it wasn't until 1998 that UPS actually registered an official trademarks on this particular hue to prevent other delivery service companies from using their signature color.

# COLOR PSYCHOLOGY

## WHAT COLORS COMMUNICATE

### INFLUENCE

COLOR IS THE FIRST THING PEOPLE WILL NOTICE ABOUT YOUR WORK OR PRODUCT.

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT



OF THE SNAP JUDGEMENTS ARE INFLUENCED BY THE COLOR ALONE.

### FACTS

FIRST COLOR THAT WE DISTINGUISH AFTER BIRTH IS COLOR RED, HOWEVER, COLOR BLUE IS THE FAVORITE ONE AMONG HUMANS WORLDWIDE.

PEOPLE WHO ARE COLD PREFER WARM COLORS LIKE RED AND YELLOW WHILE PEOPLE WHO ARE HOT PREFER COOL COLORS LIKE BLUE AND GREEN.

THE LOWER THE MEAN SATURATION OF SUBJECT, THE MORE COMFORT IS FELT WHEN BEING AROUND IT.

### PROPERTIES

#### COLOR

COLOR IS PROPERTY POSSESSED BY ANY OBJECT. EACH OBJECT REFLECTS OR EMITS LIGHT AND IS PRODUCING DIFFERENT SENSATIONS ON THE EYE. OBJECTS REFLECT LIGHT IN DIFFERENT WAVELENGTHS WHICH WE RECOGNIZE AS COLOR.

COLOR	WAVELENGTH
RED	700 - 635 nm
ORANGE	635 - 590 nm
YELLOW	590 - 560 nm
GREEN	560 - 520 nm
CYAN	520 - 490 nm
BLUE	490 - 450 nm
VIOLET	450 - 400 nm

#### COLOR PROPERTIES

COLOR PROPERTIES ALLOW US TO DISTINGUISH AND DEFINE COLORS.

HUE IS ACTUAL COLOR OR

12 COLORS AFFECT HOW WE ACT AND FEEL SUBCONSCIOUSLY. PROVIDED ARE 12 HUES WITH MEANINGS AND USES IN ART, DESIGN AND LIFE.

	EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
RED	EXCITEMENT ENERGY PASSION COURAGE ATTENTION	ENTERTAINMENT FOOD SPORT FIRE PROTECTION CHILDREN PRODUCTS	STIMULATE CREATE URGENCY DRAW ATTENTION CAUTION ENCOURAGE
ORANGE	OPTIMISTIC INDEPENDENT ADVENTUROUS CREATIVITY FUN	ART ENTERTAINMENT FOOD SPORTS TRANSPORTATION	STIMULATE COMMUNICATE FUN DRAW ATTENTION EXPRESS FREEDOM FASCINATE
YELLOW	ENTHUSIASM OPPORTUNITY SPONTANITY HAPPINESS POSITIVITY	FOOD SPORTS TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL LEISURE	STIMULATE ENCOURAGE RELAXATION AWAKE AWARENESS ENERGIZE AFFECT MOOD
LIME GREEN	GROWTH HARMONY FERTILITY KINDNESS DEPENDABILITY	ENVIRONMENT LEISURE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION	RESTORE ENERGY PROMOTE GROWTH NUTURE REJUVENATE
KELLY GREEN	SAFETY HARMONY STABILITY RELIABILITY BALANCE	ENVIRONMENT BANKING REAL ESTATE FARMING NON PROFIT	RELAX BALANCE REVITALIZE ENCOURAGE POSSESS
SKY BLUE	FREEDOM SELF EXPRESSION TRUSTWORTH WISDOM JOY	ENTERTAINMENT COMMUNICATION CHILDRENS PRODUCTS TECHNOLOGY AEROSPACE	DRAW ATTENTION INSPIRE TRUST SUGGEST PRECISION COMMUNICATE CONSCIOUSNESS STIMULATE PRODUCTIVITY
ROYAL BLUE	TRUST RESPONSIBILITY HONESTY LOYALTY INNER SECURITY	SECURITY FINANCE TECHNOLOGY HEALTH CARE ACCOUNTING	REDUCE STRESS CREATE CALMNESS RELAX SECURE CREATE ORDER
VIOLET	IMAGINATION SPIRITUALITY COMPASSION SENSIVITY MYSTERY	HUMANITARIAN PSYCHIC RELIGION	ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY INSPIRE COMBINE WISDOM AND POWER CREATE IMPRESSION OF LUXURY INTUITION
PINK	COMPASSION LOVE IMMATURE PLAYFUL ADMIRATION	CHILDRENS PRODUCTS WOMANS PRODUCTS BEAUTY FASHION	COMMUNICATE ENERGY INCREASE PULSE MOTIVATE ACTION FASCINATE ENCOURAGES CREATIVITY
BROWN	RELIABILITY STABILITY HONESTY COMFORT NATURAL	AGRICULTURE CONSTRUCTION TRANSPORTATION LEGAL FOOD	STABILIZE IMPLY COMMON SENSE SUPPRESS EMOTIONS CREATE WARMTH



# WHAT COLORS COMMUNICATE

12 COLORS AFFECT HOW WE ACT AND FEEL SUBCONSCIOUSLY. PROVIDED ARE 12 HUES WITH MEANINGS AND USES IN ART, DESIGN AND LIFE.

## INFLUENCE

COLOR IS THE FIRST THING PEOPLE WILL NOTICE ABOUT YOUR WORK OR PRODUCT.

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT



OF THE SNAP JUDGEMENTS ARE INFLUENCED BY THE COLOR ALONE.

## FACTS

FIRST COLOR THAT WE DISTINGUISH AFTER BIRTH IS COLOR RED, HOWEVER, COLOR BLUE IS THE FAVORITE ONE AMONG HUMANS WORLDWIDE.

PEOPLE WHO ARE COLD PREFER WARM COLORS LIKE RED AND YELLOW WHILE PEOPLE WHO ARE HOT PREFER COOL COLORS LIKE BLUE AND GREEN.

THE LOWER THE MEAN SATURATION OF SUBJECT, THE MORE COMFORT IS FELT WHEN BEING AROUND IT.

## PROPERTIES

### COLOR

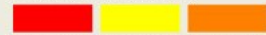
COLOR IS PROPERTY POSSESSED BY ANY OBJECT. EACH OBJECT REFLECTS OR EMITS LIGHT AND IS PRODUCING DIFFERENT SENSATIONS ON THE EYE. OBJECTS REFLECT LIGHT IN DIFFERENT WAVELENGTHS WHICH WE RECOGNIZE AS COLOR.

COLOR	WAVELENGTH
RED	700 - 635 nm
ORANGE	635 - 590 nm
YELLOW	590 - 560 nm
GREEN	560 - 520 nm
CYAN	520 - 490 nm
BLUE	490 - 450 nm
VIOLET	450 - 400 nm

### COLOR PROPERTIES

COLOR PROPERTIES ALLOW US TO DISTINGUISH AND DEFINE COLORS.

HUE IS ACTUAL COLOR OR COMBINATION OF COLORS (RED, YELLOW, ORANGE)



VALUE IS HOW LIGHT OR DARK IS IT (TINTS AND SHADES)



CHROMA POINTS TO THE COLOR'S INTENSITY OR SATURATION.



	EMOTION	INDUSTRY	USED TO
RED	EXCITEMENT ENERGY PASSION COURAGE ATTENTION	ENTERTAINMENT FOOD SPORT FIRE PROTECTION CHILDREN PRODUCTS	STIMULATE CREATE URGENCY DRAW ATTENTION CAUTION ENCOURAGE
ORANGE	OPTIMISTIC INDEPENDENT ADVENTUROUS CREATIVITY FUN	ART ENTERTAINMENT FOOD SPORTS TRANSPORTATION	STIMULATE COMMUNICATE FUN DRAW ATTENTION EXPRESS FREEDOM FASCINATE
YELLOW	ENTHUSIASM OPPORTUNITY SPONTANITY HAPPINESS POSITIVITY	FOOD SPORTS TRANSPORTATION TRAVEL LEISURE	STIMULATE ENCOURAGE RELAXATION AWAKE AWARENESS ENERGIZE AFFECT MOOD
LIME GREEN	GROWTH HARMONY FERTILITY KINDNESS DEPENDABILITY	ENVIRONMENT LEISURE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION	RESTORE ENERGY PROMOTE GROWTH NUTURE REJUVENATE
KELLY GREEN	SAFETY HARMONY STABILITY RELIABILITY BALANCE	ENVIRONMENT BANKING REAL ESTATE FARMING NON PROFIT	RELAX BALANCE REVITALIZE ENCOURAGE POSSESS
SKY BLUE	FREEDOM SELF EXPRESSION TRUSTWORTH WISDOM JOY	ENTERTAINMENT COMMUNICATION CHILDRENS PRODUCTS TECHNOLOGY AEROSPACE	DRAW ATTENTION INSPIRE TRUST SUGGEST PRECISION COMMUNICATE CONSCIOUSNESS STIMULATE PRODUCTIVITY
ROYAL BLUE	TRUST RESPONSIBILITY HONESTY LOYALTY INNER SECURITY	SECURITY FINANCE TECHNOLOGY HEALTH CARE ACCOUNTING	REDUCE STRESS CREATE CALMNESS RELAX SECURE CREATE ORDER
VIOLET	IMAGINATION SPIRITUALITY COMPASSION SENSIVITY MYSTERY	HUMANITARIAN PSYCHIC RELIGION	ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY INSPIRE COMBINE WISDOM AND POWER CREATE IMPRESSION OF LUXURY INTUITION
PINK	COMPASSION LOVE IMMATURE PLAYFUL ADMIRATION	CHILDRENS PRODUCTS WOMANS PRODUCTS BEAUTY FASHION	COMMUNICATE ENERGY INCREASE PULSE MOTIVATE ACTION FASCINATE ENCOURAGES CREATIVITY
BROWN	RELIABILITY STABILITY HONESTY COMFORT NATURAL	AGRICULTURE CONSTRUCTION TRANSPORTATION LEGAL FOOD	STABILIZE IMPLY COMMON SENSE SUPPRESS EMOTIONS CREATE WARMTH
GRAY	NEUTRAL PRACTICAL CONSERVATIVE FORMAL QUIET	ALL INDUSTRIES * MOSTLY USED IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER COLORS	CREATE SENSE OF COMPOSURE DEPRESS ENERGY ASSOCIATE TIMELESS COMMUNICATE MATURATION
BLACK	POWER CONTROL AUTHORITY DISCIPLINE ELEGANCE	ALL INDUSTRIES * MOSTLY USED IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER COLORS	HIDE FEELINGS INTIMIDATE RADIATE AUTHORITY CREATE FEAR ASSOCIATE WITH MYSTERY