

How Color Works: Color Theory in the Twenty-First Century
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Chapter Five: Color and Ideas

Chapter Summary

This chapter moves away from the perceptual and into the subject of how color is used as a tool of signification. This begins with consideration of the fact that many ideas and associations we believe are natural, inherent properties of color are inherited and vary culture to culture. Attention to cultural differences in understanding color was a break in much nineteenth and early twentieth-century color theory, which understood color as a universal experience. The chapter explores the different ways color operates to lend meaning to images and objects, stressing that meaning is always context-dependent.

Suggested Projects

- *Try.* Like McCandless or Lopéz, create an informational design using at least three colors to describe a set of information with at least three variables. Like Lopéz, try using colors associated with the subject of the chart.
- *Try.* Use a historical color scheme in a way that alters the meaning of an object or image. Inspired by Hammons, alter the colors of a well-known or iconic image. Can the subject be changed by simple color change?
- *Try.* Choose a color, or four different colors, to make four painted variations of the same subject on paper, in which a single color predominates visually and plays a significant role in the work's meaning. Repetition of the same image in different colors will reveal what the color brings to the image. Repetition of varying tones of the same color can be explored, too.

Recommended Links for Chapter Five: Color and Ideas

5.1: David McCandless, *Colors in Culture*, digital media. Courtesy of David McCandless, [informationisbeautiful.net](http://www.informationisbeautiful.net).

Link: <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/about/>

5.2: *A World of Languages*, Alberto Lucas Lopéz / South China Morning Post.

Link: <http://www.lucasinfografia.com/>

5.3: Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013. Video still. Courtesy of the artist and kaufmann repetto, Milan/New York.

Link: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/adrian-paci>

5.4: Freddy Mamani Silvestre, *The Principe Alexander*, El Alto, Bolivia. Photo: Georg Ismar/dpa/Alamy Live News.

Link: <http://www.archdaily.com/778892/the-new-yorker-releases-stunning-portfolio-of-the-works-of-freddy-mamani>

5.5: David Hammons, *African-American Flag*, 1990, dyed cotton, 56" x 7' 4". Gift of The Over

Holland Foundation. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Courtesy of the artist and Lois Plehn.

Link: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/222169?locale=fr>

5.6: MVRDV, Didden Village, Rotterdam, NL, 2007, aerial view. © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / c/o Pictoright Amsterdam.

Link: <https://www.mvrdv.nl/>

5.7: Natalya Zahn, poster, 2015. Hand printed on a 1960's Vandercook SP-20 letterpress at Repeat Press, Somerville MA. The printing process for these used a split fountain technique to achieve the gradient of green shades, resulting in a truly unique print for each poster. Printed on Neenah Classic Crest 80lb cover stock.

Link: <http://www.natalya.com/>

5.8: Preston Singletary, *House Beneath the Water*, 2013. Courtesy of Russel Johnson.

Link: <http://prestonsingletary.com/>

5.9: Henri Matisse, *La Japonaise: Woman Beside the Water*, oil and pencil on canvas, 13 7/8" x 11 1/8" (35.2 x 28.2 cm), 1905, The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY.

Link: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80294>

5.10: Lynda Benglis, *Fling, Dribble, and Drip*, February 27, 1970, *Life Magazine*, 13 1/4 x 10 1/4 in. Photo by Henry Groskinsky/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images. Thanks to the artist and Cheim & Read, NY.

Link: <https://art21.org/artist/lynda-benglis/>

5.11: Andy Warhol, *5 Deaths on Orange (Orange Disaster)*, 1963, silkscreen ink on synthetic polymer paint on linen, 30 1/8 x 30 1/8 inches. Image and Artwork © 2016 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Link: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/4176>

5.12: Black Seto Tea Bowl, known as "Iron Mallet" (Tettsui), Momoyama period (1573–1615), late 16th century, Japan, Glazed stoneware (Mino ware, Black Seto type), Dimensions: H. 3 11/16 in. (9.3 cm); Diam. of rim: 4 3/4 in. (12 cm), Ceramics, Mary Griggs Burke Collection, Gift of the Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, 2015.

Link: <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53001>

5.13: Kerry James Marshall, *Portrait of the Artist a Shadow of His Former Self*, 1980, egg tempera on paper, 8 x 6 1/2". Courtesy of the Artist and Koplín Del-Río Gallery.

Link: <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/view?exhibitionId=%7B175f55d3-dbd8-4be6-b248-9dc2025021f0%7D&oid=668284>

5.14 Laura Letinsky, *Untitled #1*, Fall Series, 2008, archival pigment print. 45 x 37 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery, NYC.

Link: <http://lauraletinsky.com/>

5.15: Robert Ryman, *Untitled*, 1961, oil on unstretched linen. 10 3/4 x 10 1/4" (27.3 x 26 cm). Digital Image: The Museum of Modern Art, NY. Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource NY. © 2016 Robert Ryman / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Link: <https://www.moma.org/artists/5098>

5.16: Jasper Johns, *Light Bulb I*, 1958. Sculpt-metal. 4 1/2 x 6 3/4 x 4 1/2 in. (11.4 x 17.1 x

11.4cm). Collection Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. Gift of Mrs. Jack M. Farris, 2005.81.1–2. Photo: Pablo Mason.

Link: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/03/arts/design/03voege.html>

5.17: Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*, 1946, oil on canvas, 37.5 x 45.7 cm., Tate Gallery, London, Great Britain. Art Resource, NY. © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome.

Link: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/giorgio-morandi-1660>

5.18: Ridley Howard, *Holly, High Park*, 2007, oil on linen, 66 x 66 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Link: <https://www.marinaro.biz/ridley-howard>

5.19: Deborah Kass, *OY/YO*, 2015, painted aluminum. 96 x 204 x 54.5 inches, 243.8 x 518.2 x 138.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery.

Link: <https://deborahkass.com/oy-yo-sculpture.html>

5.20: Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled*, 1985, acrylic and pencil on canvas, 213.5 x 152.5 cm. Private Collection. Banque d'Images, ADAGP / Art Resource, NY.

Link: <http://basquiat.com/>

5.21: Simon Starling, *Red Rivers (In Search of the Elusive Okapi)*, 2009, HD video, HD projector, media player, speakers. Duration: 24:12 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

Link: <https://www.themoderninstitute.com/artists/simon-starling>

5.22: Henrick Plenge Jakobsen, *If the People Have No Bread, Let Them Eat Cake*, 2002–2003. Courtesy of the artist.

Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2017/09/21/t-magazine/art-in-the-wild/s/gardens-slide-U7PY.html>

5.23: Katharina Fritsch, *Bettlerhand (Beggar's Hand)*, 2007, polyester, paint, 3 3/4 x 6 3/4 x 4 1/4 inches (9 x 17 x 11 cm). © Katharina Fritsch / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn / Courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Link: http://whitecube.com/artists/katharina_fritsch/

5.24: Chris Ofili, *Egyptian Blue*, 2005, charcoal and pastel on paper, 63.6 x 48.9 cm, 25 1/8 x 19 1/4 in, © Chris Ofili, Courtesy Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin, Photo: Jochen Littkeman.

Link: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/chris-ofili-2543>

5.25: Joseph Beuys, *Untitled*, 1963–1964, four works on paper, oil paint: (upper left) 29.2 x 40.7 cm, (lower left) 29.6 x 40.8 mm, (center) 30.4 x 22.5 cm, (right) 57.5 x 40.2 cm. © Tate, London 2016. © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Link: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beuys-braunkreuz-ar00652>