
Color Wheel Basics: Working with Paints and Colored Pencils with Molly Hatch

Chapter 1 - Color Wheel basics

Introduction

Hi, my name is Molly Hatch. I'm an artist designer, and I work with companies like Anthropologie to bring new goods to your homeâ€” everything from ceramics to wall art. And I'm also an artist. I sell my work through my gallery in New York, and we show my work internationally at museums and other galleries. Color plays a large role in my work. It can often be intimidating, but we're going to go over a few different exercises to help you better understand color. We're going to talk about primary, secondary, and tertiary colors and their differences. You'll gain a better understanding of how to use white and black through shade and tint line blends. And finally, I'll show you how to use color to develop your own palette.

Overview

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Materials

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- You'll need some basic art supplies to complete the exercises in this class. I suggest that you get watercolors or gouache. A palette and I'm just using a plate for the palette. A range of your favorite colored pencils. A few brushes and I usually have a range of brushes with me. Anything that you're comfortable using. A paper towel for blotting. Water. And we have some pdf printouts for you which you can just print out in your normal printer.

Understanding Color

Mixing color

- We're gonna start building our color wheel by using primary colors to start. Primary colors are red, blue, and yellow and they're the only colors that you can't mix. Just adding a little water to your brush. I'm gonna start with red and add it to the paper we've printed out. Just fill in that top dot with red. And now I'm gonna move on to yellow. Same thing, cleaning my brush between so it's nice and fresh. Watering down the yellow. I'm gonna blot my brush 'cause I have a lot of water on there. And blue. So these are your primary colors. That was with paint. Now let's do one with colored pencils. Starting with a red color pencil. Just gonna lightly shade in the top. Same placement as with

the paint. Gonna make it nice and strong. And now yellow. And finally blue. And those are primary colors in colored pencil. Next we're gonna mix secondary colors. And you can get secondary colors by mixing primary colors together. So to get orange, which is the first secondary color, we're gonna mix red and yellow together in equal parts typically. So now I'm gonna put that orange down on the paper. So you can see here that my paper is oriented inverse of the last time than when we were doing our primary colors, so instead of this dot being at the top of the paper, it's now at the bottom of the paper. Now we're gonna mix green, which is a combination of yellow and blue in equal parts, again, usually. Now I'm gonna put that down on the paper at the bottom. And finally we're gonna mix red and blue together to make purple and fill in that last dot with purple. And those are your secondary colors in paint. We're gonna move on to doing secondary colors using colored pencil. And unlike paint, colored pencil is an optical illusion, or an optical blending of layers of color, so your eye is actually the one mixing the color together. So let's take a look at that and make the secondary colors using colored pencil. Starting with a red colored pencil, I'm gonna very lightly shade. So I think, depending on the colored pencils you're using, practice a little bit. You might have to do this a couple times to get used to your colored pencils, but a lighter sort of blending almost of the colored pencil is probably best. And I'm gonna mix that with yellow to create an orange. You can see just that layering creates an orange. And again, your eyes kind of blending those colors together to read it as orange. Next we're gonna move on to yellow and blue. So I'm gonna start with yellow. Again, just a light blend of the yellow. And I'm gonna add the blue over that. And that starts to give you green. Very lightly shading. And we can do blue first. (chuckles) And layer red over blue to achieve purple. So it's great to know that you can use colored pencils and other media to apply the same theory. These are your secondary colors in colored pencil. Now we're gonna move on to painting tertiary colors. Tertiary colors are when you mix primary colors and secondary colors together to achieve an additional color. Let's get started with paint. I'm gonna start mixing our first tertiary color by mixing red and orange to get a red-orange. And more orange. We'll put that at the top of our color wheel. The next color, we'll mix orange and yellow together to make a yellow-orange. And we'll put that down. We can move on to mix red and purple together to get a red-purple. Almost a violet color. Moving down the color wheel, we'll mix blue and purple together to get a blue-purple. Gouache is different than watercolor because it's more opaque. But you can use it similarly. So we'll move on to mixing blue and green to make a blue-green. And finally, mixing yellow and green to make a lighter green, a springy green-yellow. Yellow-green. Those are your tertiary colors in paint. Now let's do the same thing only using colored pencils. So we're gonna start with a red, mixing a red-orange, and in this case I'm gonna use the orange colored pencil as my secondary orange color instead of layering yellow and red together to make the orange. It's just, with colored pencils, it'll be a little bit easier to read and will blend better to make that red-orange. So now we have the orange. I'm gonna go over the orange with red to achieve the red-orange. Again, blending lightly. And now we're gonna go with the orange and yellow to get a yellow-orange. Yellow over. And... red and purple. Gonna start with red. So in this case, the secondary color I'm gonna blend with the red is purple. I'm gonna use the purple colored pencil to achieve the reddish purple. And now a purple-blue. Maybe I'll start with the purple since I have it in hand. And go over that with the blue. And since I have the blue in hand, we're gonna go over with blue-green. The secondary color that I'll be using is green. So I will use that green colored pencil that's already the mixture of blue and yellow to make a blue-green. Since I have the green in my hand, I'll use that as the first layer for the yellow-green. And go over that with yellow. And those are your tertiary colors in colored pencil. So now that you have made the primary, secondary, and tertiary color wheels,

when you put them all together, you get a full color wheel. You can download this PDF of a full color wheel on the site and once you've done that you can use the practice of mixing paint and mixing and layering colored pencil to achieve your own full color wheels, both in paint and in colored pencil.

Tints and shades

- We're going to mix tints. Tints are when you add white to any color. We're gonna start with blue, but you can use this process for any color. To start a line blend, you just want to start with the color that you're going to add white to to create a tint just as a reference. I'm gonna add blue to the far left square without anything added to it, just blue. Fill the whole square. As you add more white, you're going to fill in squares progressively from left to right in your line blend. Line blends are a great way to see a range of tint in any color. Now I have added a little bit of white to the blue. Fill in that next square in my line blend. And I'm gonna go back and continue adding a little bit of white, not very much so that you're gradually increasing the amount of white and increasing the tint. Add water as you need to if it's starting to dry out. Continue to fill in your squares and ideally you get to almost a pure white on the right hand side. And this is various tints of the color blue. The opposite of the tints is shades of a color, so in this case we're going to slowly add black to blue to create a shade of blue. You can do this again with any color just by adding black in various degrees to create different shades of that color. So when you're creating a shade of a color, it's actually often a little bit easier to create a shade by starting with black and adding blue to it slowly. So in this case we're just gonna add a very, very small amount of blue to the black and get a blue black, and I'm gonna fill in the right hand square, the darkest side here. And now I'm gonna continue adding blue and increasing the amount of blue in relationship to the black and fill in each rectangle, each square, moving from right to left in the line blend. Ideally, you end up with basically pure blue at the end. And that is various shades of blue. When first working with color, it's great to experiment with different shades and tints of color to see their full range.

Creating a Color Palette

Create a color palette

- I made a pattern that you can download and work along with, and we're going to fill it in with a color palette, monochrome color palette to start, using the color blue. So I'm gonna start with a pure blue, and a monochrome color palette is one color and a use of its tints and shades. It could be just tints, it could be just shades, or a combination of both. And in this case, we're gonna use a combination of both to fill in the image. I'm just gonna paint where I feel like the colors should go. Just trust your instinct. But it also might be fun just to copy what I'm doing using your own paints or colored pencils just to kind of get a sense of what decisions I made along the way and how it feels to do something just like I am, and then try playing around on your own with your own color choices. We'll paint all these different smaller flowers with this regular blue color. And you might find that as you're working on a photocopy, that the paper kind of buckles and bends and soaks up water funny. And if you're finding that frustrating if you're using paint, then definitely try printing it out on a different, thicker card stock or a thicker paper if it's possible, or doing a drawing of your own and then filling that in with color. Now that I've filled in all that primary blue color, I'm gonna move on to a shade, the darker shade of blue that I'm gonna use, and fill in all the leaves. And I'm

not super worried about staying in the lines. I like the lines being static and the painting being a little more fluid. But you can do it however you like. I'm moving on to the final color of my painting, a tint of blue. Using another printout of the same pattern, I'm going to apply paint using a polychrome palette, which means using multiple colors. I'm gonna start with orange. I'm gonna paint in sort of these back areas to these smaller flowers. And also, to retain a little bit of balance in the composition, I'm gonna add a little bit inside of these, these smaller areas in the largest flowers. 'Kay, I'm gonna move on to the yellow, which is actually sort of like a yellow ochre. It's like almost like a, hmm, very lightly, little bit of orange in there. Might even be some green in there that I want. So experiment with colors and then you can test them. Sometimes I'll have a piece of paper on the side or I'll test on the side of the page, and I'll show you that in a moment here, just to make sure that the color is what I want it to be. So here, I'll just put like a little brushstroke so I can kinda say, oh, is that really mustardy enough or green enough. I'm gonna add a little more. Having control over mixing your own color will mean that you can develop your own color sense, your own palette, and not have anything that you just squeeze out of a tube, which is what everyone else has. I'm gonna paint the centers of the flowers with the yellow, and the larger center areas, the largest flowers. 'Kay, and I'm going to end the yellow with filling in all the dots with yellow as well, creating a little bit of rhythm in the composition. I could stop here with this warmer palette of oranges and yellows or continue adding more warmer colors, but to add more weight to certain areas of the pattern and to balance out the pattern, I'm gonna use a dark blue. And this darker color really makes those leaves pop out off of the white of the background. And it starts to add a little bit more movement of your eye around the page. Now, in order to differentiate the edges of the largest flowers in the composition, I'm going to paint them primary blue, which is a different blue from the leaf color. To add variety, I'm going to mix one more color. I'm gonna make a pink for the small flowers. I want it to be a tint of red, which is pink. When trying to develop a color palette of your own, it's great to make photocopies along the way, at any point where you think maybe you would wanna stop, but you're not sure, and you wanna try new colors or add new colors, or maybe you wanna leave it with one color palette and try filling in just the background. I have a photocopy here that's in color of the painting that I just did, and I wanna try what this will look like with a yellow background. So I'm just gonna make a really light wash. So adding a lot of water to the yellow. And I'm just going to gently go over and fill in that back area around everything that's white with yellow. And this way, I don't have to make something that I don't like and worry about having ruined the painting that I just spent all that time working on, and the photocopy gives me a sense of how I might go and finish that original painting. 'Cause oranges and yellows are across from blues on the color wheel, they can often act as complementary colors in a composition. So they make each other kind of pop out visually. This is a good thing to know in your color wheel and a great way to use your color wheel to figure out what colors go well together or might complement each other. I wanted to share with you another version of this same pattern, but with a green background. I also tested it with this green background just to see how different it would look with a different color. This is the process that I used to develop color palettes for fabric design and posters and wall art and everything that I do, really. I try multiple different colors with different palettes and different backgrounds, no background. I test and test and test until I find the result that I like. I wanted to share with you a couple more images of similar ways of using color in artwork that I've developed. So this is a poster that I developed recently for Anthropologie. And my initial design didn't have a colored background. It had just the white-ground. And then the end result and the one that was printed for Anthropologie was one with the green-ground. And that green really made all the colors in it pop

out. It really separated out the background from the foreground, which is the horse and all the text and everything. And it was really fun to see what a difference it made to have the green-ground versus the white-ground. I also wanted to share with you an image of a partially colored piece. So I colored just the mushrooms, and the chicken was left without any color. And in the end, I decided to color it, but in this case, it was really fun to see the difference between what your eye is drawn to where there is color, and what sort of recedes to the background because there isn't color. Experiment with color in many different ways and many different media. Try mixing every kind of color you can possibly imagine, 'cause the more you do, the more you'll have in your toolbox for making new color palettes and new images. I use Pinterest as a source for inspiration to find new color palettes all the time. Try using that and other internet resources. The more you play with color, the better results you'll get.