

# COLOR INSPIRATIONS

DARIUS A. MONSEF, IV

more than 3,000  
innovative palettes from the  
**COLOURlovers.com** community



includes CD with 3,286  
downloadable swatch files

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**Dedicated to the creative, supportive and genuinely wonderful  
members of [COLOURlovers.com](https://www.colourlovers.com).**

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## About the Author

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Darius, aka “Bubs,” is the founder and CEO of [COLOURlovers.com](http://COLOURlovers.com) and he wants the whole world to find color enlightenment. He built COLOURlovers after an uninspired class on color theory left him searching for an online community to explore color and share creative ideas. He never found it. So he built it. COLOURlovers now reaches more than one million creative individuals each month and has been recognized as an award-winning design resource and community. Darius is an Internet entrepreneur, writer, web designer/coder and former student of fashion design. He’s a creative and social media consultant and former community organizer for Microsoft’s Photosynth software. He’s also the co-founder of the disaster-relief nonprofit All Hands Volunteers (<http://hands.org>) and has spent more than a year living in disaster zones around the world.

## About COLOURlovers.com

[COLOURlovers.com](http://COLOURlovers.com) is an international design community that helps creative folks around the world find inspiration and share their ideas with others. Reaching more than one million visitors each month, COLOURlovers is the largest color resource on the web. COLOURlovers has been nominated in the prestigious Webby Awards four years in a row (2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010) for Best Community. Starting as a simple service for sharing great colors and palettes, COLOURlovers has grown into a robust resource of more than 1.5 million palettes and 1.4 million seamless patterns ... and growing. The next brilliant color inspiration could be yours, and COLOURlovers wants to help you share it with the world.





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# COLOR PALETTES

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## Red

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Red-Orange

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Orange

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Orange-Yellow

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Yellow

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Yellow-Green

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Green

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Green-Blue

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Blue

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Blue-Violet

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Violet

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Violet-Red

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Pink

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Brown

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

## Grey

Monochromatic • Analogous • Triadic • Split-Complementary • Complementary • Other

# COLOR IN NATURE

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Birds

Fish

Landscapes

Endangered Species

Earth









# INTRODUCTION

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## THE RULES FOR COLOR ARE NOT BLACK AND WHITE

You shouldn't need to break rules: Make new ones. Play with color, try new things, be bold, be subtle, be creative—and be you. After all, you're a unique individual who sees the world like no one else does. Share that perspective and share your love of color.

We all have some common connections and associations to color based on cultural influences and popular theories, but color is ultimately a unique experience for all of us. And because of that, there is not just one set of rules for how to think about and use color.

We live in a global community with tools that allow us to create something independently and share it with the masses. This interconnected environment generates a much wider spectrum of color ideas and color applications.

When an artist's work can reach people all over the world without leaving the easel, or a girl walking down the street can appear immediately on a blog in front of the next generation of fashion designers, it is clear that influence has become democratized. When an individual can have an impact on global trends, you no longer need to know what color the experts think you should use. You can share with everyone the colors you love.

This book isn't meant to be the answer to all your questions about color because you already hold the answers. It is the starting place for your creative color ideas. It is a source of color inspiration for you to begin your creative process.

I believe in color like I believe in spiritual enlightenment. It isn't something that can be given to you, but rather something that with the right teaching, information, inspiration and practice you can discover on your own. I hope this book helps you find a bit of color enlightenment that has meaning to you.

We've organized the book into fifteen chapters of hues broken up by several color theories to help you navigate the more than 3,000 palettes collected here. To help stoke your creativity, there are also ten inspirational and informational color articles throughout the book.

Find your color enlightenment.

—Darius,  
Creator of [COLOURlovers.com](https://www.colourlovers.com)

**Note:** The CMYK color values in this book were converted from source RGB colors with an sRGB color profile to the CMYK color space with a U.S. Web Coated (SWOP) v2 color profile.











# THE BASICS OF COLOR

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There is a basic problem in color theory, which was known to the early theorists, and that still remains today. It is that the color of light behaves differently than the color of pigment (paints, inks and dyes). These two behaviors have been named *additive color* and *subtractive color*, respectively. The basics we know today are rooted in the practical applications and physical models based on these two behaviors.

## The First Theories

### RYP

This subtractive theory was developed by observing the mixing properties of red, yellow and blue pigments. It was established that all known colors could be created by mixing these three colors but that those three colors themselves couldn't be created by mixing any other colors. This fundamental idea established color theory back in the eighteenth century and was documented in at least two books: *Theory of Colours* (1810), by the German poet and government minister Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and *De la Loi du Contraste Simultané Des Couleurs et de L'assortiment des Objets Colorés* (1839), by the French industrial chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul.

### RGB

In the late nineteenth century a new model was developed by Thomas Young and Hermann von Helmholtz based on the additive mixture of three monochromatic lights: red, green and blue, and the ability to create all other colors by overlaying them. This model is based on their theory known as *trichromacy*: possessing three independent channels for conveying color information, derived from the three different cone types in our eyes.

### CMYK

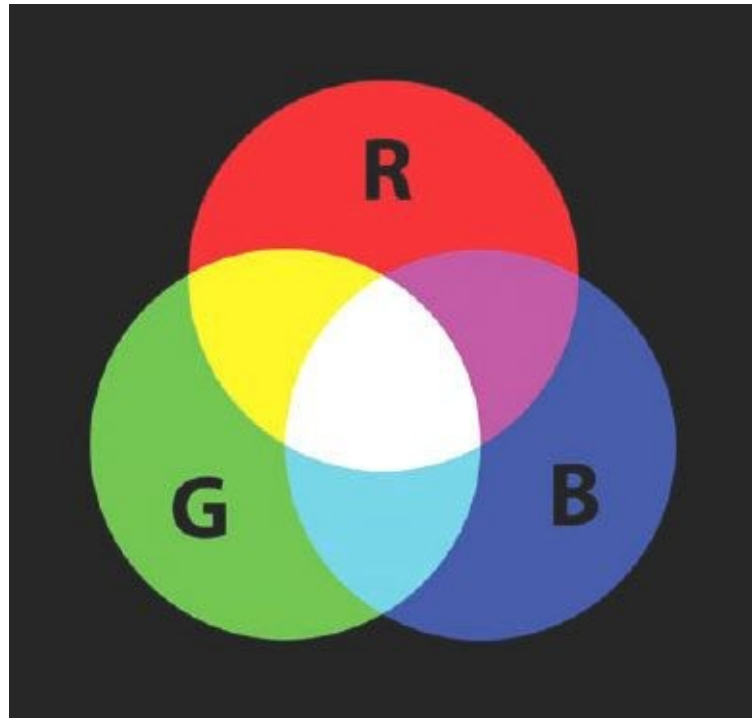
CMYK (process color or four color) is a color model developed for printing. The model is based on the same subtractive properties as RYB but adds a fourth color, black (k). This saves ink during the printing process instead of mixing the CMY to create black every time.

Again, in contrast to the additive RGB color theory, where the summation of the primary colors equals white light and an absence of color is black, the CMYK color model is opposite. Subtractive theory begins with white being the basic color of paper and canvas and the combination of the primary colors creates black. In other words, you can “subtract” wavelengths of light from white until you get black.

## Munsell Color System

Albert Munsell's system is rooted in visual perception of color and based on

measurements of human subjects. The system specifies color using three dimensions: *hue* (a specific color), *chroma* (color intensity or saturation) and *value* (lightness and darkness). It is sometimes abbreviated HSV.



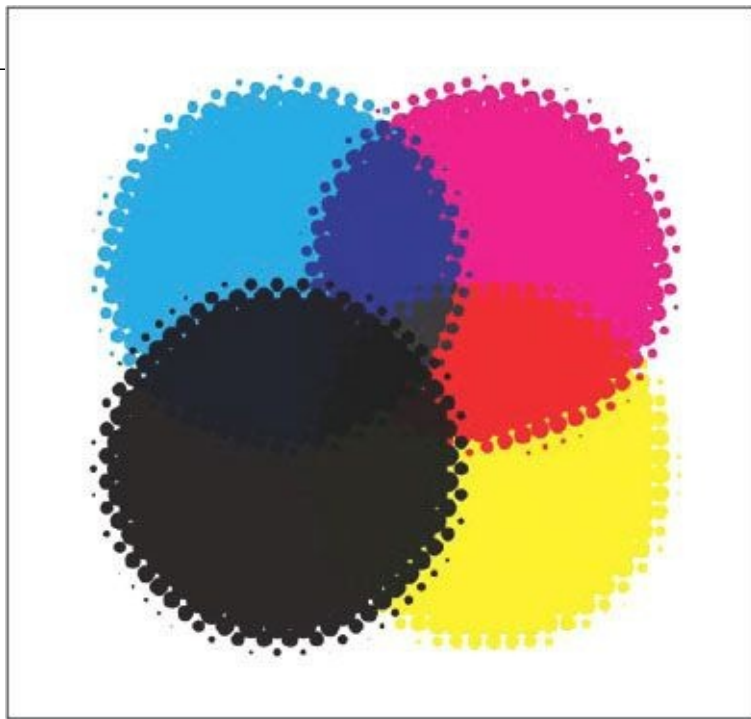
Public domain; Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AdditiveColor.svg>

The RGB model was based on the additive mixture of three monochromatic lights: red, green and blue, and the ability to create all other colors by overlaying them.



Public domain; Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Color\\_mixture.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Color_mixture.svg)

RYB subtractive theory established that all known colors could be created by mixing red, yellow and blue, but that those three colors themselves couldn't be created by mixing any other colors.



Public domain; Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CMYK-circles.png>

CMYK is a color model developed for printing. The model is based on the same subtractive properties as RYB but adds a fourth color, black (k).

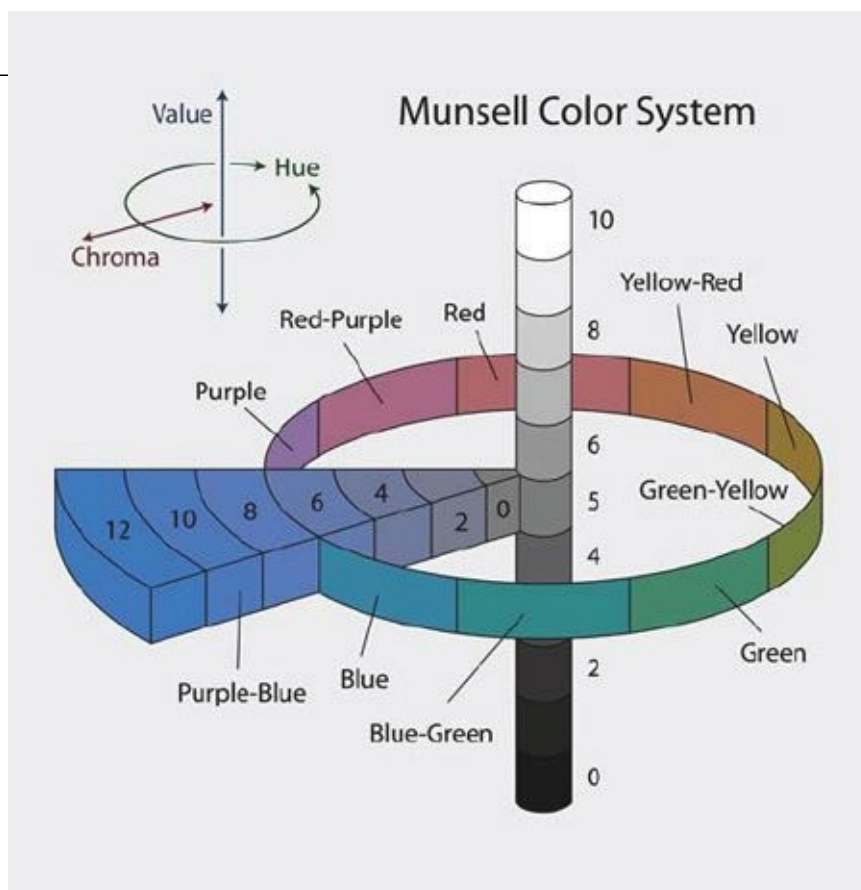
He is the first to illustrate color in a three-dimensional space.

## **Hue**

Hues are pure colors, or the primary and secondary colors commonly found on a color wheel: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet.

## **Chroma (Saturation, Colorfulness)**

Saturation is the intensity or purity of the hue. Whether it appears more grey and dull rather than bold and rich has to do with its saturation.



by Wikipedia User Jacobolus; Creative Commons;

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Munsell-system.svg>

Albert Munsell's system specifies color using three dimensions: hue (a specific color), chroma (color intensity) and value (lightness and darkness).

## Value

Value is the lightness of a color. It is the amount of white or black interpreted in the color.

## CIE Color Space

In 1931, the Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage (CIE) created the first standard of color values based on the tristimulus values, known as the CIE XYZ color space and represented by the chromacity diagram.

The CIE XYZ color space is the first quantitative model for color from which all color communication and technology has developed. Assigning specific values to colors made it possible to communicate color across different channels.

In the CIE XYZ color space, every color has an X, Y and Z value. These values were formulated from a "standard observer's" perception of color in relation to the value amount, in terms of wavelengths of the three primary colors; red, green and blue. The values, known as *tristimulus values*, are the amounts used by the standard observer to recreate test colors using the additive theory.



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