

### **Artist Examples:**

Andre Serrano: Some of his work utilizes symbolism through the context that he places images in. For example: *Piss Christ*, placing a crucifix in urine, and photographing it. Also, Serrano tends to make people uncomfortable by taking imagery thought to be bad or disgusting and photographing it beautifully using formal elements. The combination creates tension in the minds of people.

Picasso: Several images from the Blue period Paintings represent sad individuals. Several images for the Rose Period Paintings represent happy individuals.

Jeff Wall: *The Birthday Party* Photography shows a scene of children watching a ventriloquist. Under the lighting conditions, the dummy tends to have an uncomfortable feeling and the whole scene doesn't have a "happy, go lucky" mood to it.

In the movie *Traffic*, events in Mexico are high contrast and yellow, while events in Washington D.C. are blue. Why is this?

In the movie *The Cell*, the imagery in the killer's mind is both visually engaging and has many references to power and control. Also when the killer is depicted as vulnerable, the killer is a child.

In the movie *One Hour Photo*, Robin Williams character has a certain color scheme throughout the entire movie. What does the color scheme imply to you?

### **Notes on Color And Symbolism:**

The following is from *Design Basics* by David Lauer: "For artists who wish to arouse an emotional response in the viewer, color is the most effective element. Even before we "read" the subject matter or identify the forms, the color creates an atmosphere to which we respond. In a very basic instance, we commonly recognize so-called warm and cool colors. Yellows, oranges, and reds give us an instinctive feeling of warmth and evoke warm, happy, cheerful reactions. Cooler blues and greens are automatically associated with quieter, less outgoing feelings and can express melancholy or depression. These are generalities, of course, for the combination of colors is vital, and the artist can also influence our reactions by the values and intensities of the colors selected."

Of course, it is also important to recognize that our reaction to color is contingent upon such variables as culture and language. Lauer points out later in the text that we will have widely varying responses to color because of different cultural references. The color of mourning in our culture is black. But in India it is white, in Turkey it is violet, in Ethiopia it is brown, and in Burma it is yellow. One could argue that the more specific and complex the cultural reference, the more likely it is that one will encounter unique expressions of color use and color symbolism. (This can't be proven but it's an interesting thought.) As regards language, we use a lot of references to color--often without realizing it or understanding its significance. Consider the differences in the following statements (quoted by Lauer): "Ever since our argument, I've been blue." (Emotional) "Don't worry, he's true blue." (Symbolic) Can you think of any other references to color that we use in our everyday language?

### **Coloring Vision, Appetite, and Mood**

If you think colors are pretty to look at but have no real impact on people, think again. Certain colors are known to have definite behavior-altering capabilities. Some colors or combinations of them irritate eyes and cause headaches. For example, bright yellows—either on walls or as the background on a computer screen—are the most bothersome colors and are not calming or relaxing in any way. Bright colors reflect more light, so yellow over-stimulates our eyes, causing strain and even irritability. You wouldn't ever want to paint a baby's room yellow, but you could certainly use it on important street signs to attract attention.

Other colors can alter how or what we eat. Blue is known to curb appetites. Why is this so? Blue food doesn't exist in nature, with the exception of the blueberry. There are no blue vegetables, and hopefully, if you encountered a blue meat, you certainly wouldn't eat it. Because of this natural color deficiency, there is no automatic appetite response to anything blue.

There are colors that can put us in a better mood, too. Green is the most restful color for the eye. It has the power to soothe and comfort. Studies have even shown that people who work in surroundings that are green experience fewer headaches, stomachaches, and other signs of sickness or fatigue.

In color photography, bright colors such as red, yellow and orange attract the eye just as readily in color photography as light tonality does in the black and white process. Psychologically, light hues and tones produce feelings of femininity, lightness, and grace while darker tones of the same colors create impressions of masculinity, romance and somberness. Contrasting colors are more dynamic and moving, subtle difference in tone and hue are much quieter. The selection of color is especially important in making pictures of people. A subject's brightly colored clothes, for example, can draw attention to themselves and away from the subject's face. At the same time, the colors of facial complexion are diluted.

### **GENERAL COLOR REACTION**

In broad way hues in the red area of the color wheel are called warm, while those in the blue and green range are referred to as cool. These terms are relative rather than absolute. Faber Birren defines this commonality of the colors of the spectrum by associating each with two moods. The warm colors are active and exciting such as a red and its neighboring hues. The cool colors which are passive and calming are blue, violet and green. Likewise, light colors are active, while deep colors are likely to be passive. Modern researchers in Japan put their finger on this point precisely. For example, Choku Akashi (1986) demonstrates a number of his research results which imply that red is often felt to be active and may be connected in some circumstances with aggressive. In contrast to the warm colors, the cool colors are inactive or passive (see figure-2.) Faber Birren said the rather strong observation is to be made that division of the spectrum into warm and cool colors holds very evident and simple meaning with reference to human personality. Indeed, though the conclusion may be largely empirical, warmth and coolness in color are dynamic qualities, warmth signifying contact with environment, coolness signifying withdrawal into oneself. In conclusion, emotionally the red is exciting the blue is subduing. Physically and physiologically, the same sort of complementation exists. Red colors tend to increase bodily tension, to stimulate the autonomic nervous system, but green and blue colors release tension and have a lesser physiological effect. It is to be granted, of course, that direct connections exist between the brain and the body and that reactions take place independently of thought or deliberation. (Birren '55)

### **CHROMOTHERAPY**

The ancient Egyptians, Chinese, and Indians had believed in chromotherapy, or healing with colors. In chromotherapy, red is believed to stimulate physical and mental energies, yellow to stimulate the nerves, orange to stimulate the solar plexus and revitalize the lungs, blue to soothe and heal organic disorders such as colds, hay fever, and liver problems, and indigo to counteract skin problems and fevers. (Paul '89) Most people have skeptical opinion about color healing, however, the medical profession makes use of color in certain treatments. For instance, premature babies with jaundice are cured by a chemical reaction triggered by exposure to blue light for several days. The relation between blue light and jaundice is beginning to be well understood scientifically. (Kaiser, '84)

### **Interior Design and Color:**

The follow are guidelines considered by Interior Decorators. Yes, I'm serious.

#### **Warm Hues**

Warm colors create a mood of excitement & warmth, stimulating activity and creativity

#### **Cool Hues**

Cool colors have passive, calming qualities that aid concentration and can create a mood of peacefulness and tranquility, reducing tension.

Reds:	Energy, Passion, Power, Excitement
Greens:	Health, Regeneration, Contentment, Harmony
Oranges:	Happy, Confident, Creative, Adventurous
Blue:	Honesty, Integrity, Trustworthy
Yellows:	Wisdom, Playful, Satisfying, Optimistic
Violets:	Regal, Mystic, Beauty, Inspiration
Neutrals:	are great for adding stability and balance in a room. They include white, black, gray and colors that contain an significant amount of gray.