

Josef Albers: Interaction Studies/(or pp. 69-72 in David Hornung's "Colour")

Goal:

This project will further develop your ability to use color effectively through deepening your understanding of color relationships. Our perception of a given color is greatly influenced by the colors that surround it – this basic property of color is crucial in the color choices that an artist makes. The initial color experiments of this assignment will highlight the impact of colors upon each other; the final response piece will explore how to use the color relationships that you discover in a simplified manner that may provide a foundation for further color explorations in your personal work.

Materials:

- 2 sheets of paper (8x10 inches or larger)
- 4 sheets of white sketch paper (8x10 inches or larger)
- 1 larger white watermedia paper (about 16 x 20 or 18 x 24 inches, no smaller than 12 x 12 inches)
- Use either colored paper, found paper, painted paper or bought papers.

Process:

- a. Select two sheets of colored paper and tape or glue them side-by-side on a piece of white sketch paper. Create three of these pairs total, each pair on its own piece of sketch paper, according to the following:
 - Pair 1*: one paper is a muted/dull color, the other is a highly saturated (or noticeably more saturated) color (i.e. grayish brown and bright red)
 - Pair 2*: one paper is a color with a very light value, the other paper is the same or similar color but in a dark value (i.e. pale green and dark green)
 - Pair 3*: one paper is a primary color, the other paper is its complementary color (i.e. blue and orange)
- b. Create 4-6 pairs of small squares, about 1x1 inch each. Each pair should be an identical color and painted in watermedia, found or bought. *The paint must be opaque and applied evenly and dry between applications*
- c. Create multiple color experiments by placing the identical pairs of 1x1 inch squares in each of the larger sets of squares
- d. We are looking for combinations where the background colors contrast with the center squares in such a way that the center squares no longer appear to be an identical color – do the background colors in one set make it seem like the center squares are either warmer or cooler? Or that one seems more saturated or muted than the other? Darker or lighter? Note what combinations have the most noticeable effects and select your two most interesting color experiment sets (this means that you will have 4 background colors total and 2 center square colors total).

Create a response piece based on your color experiments

- a. Create a composition that is simplified completely into geometric, planar shapes. There should be a range of squares, rectangles, etc. of different sizes but no organic shapes.
- b. *(Tip** Consider basing the composition on an architectural scene out a window, or the classroom interior, or a still life of geometric objects or one of your own artworks or a collection of your works.)*
- c. Using only the 6 colors selected from the first step, paint or create a composition with one color per shape. Keep in mind that you want to create a dynamic sense of depth and light in your painting even though it is abstract and simplified. Make the edges of shapes as sharp and crisp as possible to make colors resonate.
- d. *(Tip** If you are observing and abstracting, base the color choices you make for each shape on the lights and darks, warm and cool tones of the room, rather than the “local color” of objects – i.e. if a wooden door is brightly lit, choose the color with the warmest/lightest/most saturated qualities rather than a dull brown color, even if the door is brown.)*