

Choosing Colors color exercises

An exercise was assigned for most weeks of the forum. They did not necessarily relate to the weekly article and were meant mostly to stimulate participants visual awareness of color dynamics.

When it comes to color usage there is no right or wrong choice, only what works for you. Color is unpredictable. Many surprises happen as we place one color yarn next to another but we can get better at guessing what to try first, or maybe next if our first thought did not accomplish the effect we wanted. Lets explore...

Observe your weft yarns. Start by considering how they are currently organized. List any opinions you have about these yarns. Is yarn selection a fun task or a chore? Can you see your supply while you weave or walk through your workspace? Do you have colors that are quite old and if so, are they hoarded for special use or being avoided? Are there colors you just haven't been able to use successfully or even been able to try? What are your mainstays? Do you keep a large supply of colors on hand or purchase or dye yarns only once a project is determined? Are they stored on open shelves and if so, is it arranged according to the spectrum?

For people who are struggling to move out of a weaving/design slump, sometimes breaking up the formal color wheel style of arrangement can help. Or maybe you need to be getting your yarns more clustered by color. Suggested by Linda Rees

Peep Hole. Since 90% of color issues are really about light, find a subject outside and photograph it from several angles every few hours over the course of a relatively sunny day (water is great for this). Cut a small (1/4"-1/2") hole in the middle of an 8" x 10" paper and place over one of your images. You can also do this on a computer screen so you don't have to print your photos. Note the colors you see and which ones are adjacent. What you may have assumed was gray may in fact be purple. Nature has a way of making colors work that is not always readily apparent. Repeat with all of your images to see how the light has changed your subject through the day. Suggested by Margo MacDonald

Chose a color. Select a yarn to study for whatever reason, whether it pleases or puzzles you. Then spend a bit of time in the art section of the library, or a book store that has good art books, looking at the work of at least two artists who you think use color well. Focus on how each one uses the specific color you have in mind. Is that color in shadows mostly? Does it pop out or work as a transition? Do the different artists use it for similar effects? Once you can make some generalizations about how each artist uses the color, how does it relate to your own current experience and expressiveness? Suggested by Linda Rees

Quick Dyeing. Many years ago I took a design workshop in which we used watercolors (this could be an inexpensive child set) and cotton balls to get an idea of combining colors and fiber. As I recall, we were given pieces of yarn that were already dyed and the task was to match their color, by mixing the watercolor and using it to color the cotton balls. It was a great exercise and could be a very easy method to test colors for yarns to dye. It was very helpful to me later when I realized that I had to dye my own yarn to achieve my vision. Suggested by Karen Benjamin

Personal pallet exercise. This requires paper, a box of crayons, pastels, or colored pencils and an empty box. From the first box I will choose a color, any color, and draw until I need a new color. After that, the first one goes to the second box. After I use second color, this crayon goes to the second box too. For the next color the rules change, that color comes from first or second box, does not matter. Choose any color from one of those boxes. Whatever box it came from, it goes to the second box. Do this one time or for a week, it is fun. You can end up with only one stick, or hue, or the whole box. Suggested by Anna Kochevosky

Search for the combo. Ask someone to randomly select three different color yarns, perhaps from thrums. Then find some example in your day-to-day environment where these three colors appear together. It is not restricted to nature – any material or atmosphere that reveals the combination will do. Once found, start exploring how you would use these colors. What proportion looks best if you were to use them as a striped or plaid pattern? How do they look as a blend? No matter how unlikely the combination seems, try weaving a pass (over and back) of each color and repeat the process until you can see the blend. Then weave half passes (one way across) of the three until you can see what that looks like. Does one color dominate? Do they look muddy? How were they used in your search? (For the Choosing Color Forum I sent each member three yarn butterflies. I scanned all the possible groupings and could send anyone who wanted one a color picture of a combo. Not nearly as effective as working from the real yarn though.) Suggested by Linda Rees

Create a face, or conceive of one that is predominantly green and define its character. How would you define the character of a yellow or purple face? This isn't meant as a drawing exercise so any means of working that simulates a face and conveys your idea can work. Written descriptions are OK for this exercise because it would be an early design element. Suggested by Linda Rees