

PORTRAIT PAINTING COLOR NOTES:

Theories about color are fun and great to know but above all trust your eye to study and capture the color before you. *The key to color is observation!*

Before mixing a color ask **3 Questions**:

1. **Value:** How light or dark is your color?
2. **Hue:** What is your color family? Yellow, orange, red, violet, blue, or green?
3. **Intensity:** how much pure color or chroma does your color have?

For example:

To get my brain and eye on track when looking at color I ask:

What is its value, hue, & intensity?
Followed by a brief statement that looks something like this:

- “ It’s a dark, dull, blue-green. “
- “ It’s a bright, mid-tone, orange. “
- “ It’s a light mid-intensity, blue. “

Notice how these simple statements have formulated the color in your mind’s eye?

This gets you on a strong track to getting the right color because you’ve taken a moment to observe and analyze the color before mixing it!

Temperature (the add-on)

As you work with color you’ll notice there are warm and cool variations of each hue This applies to the grey as well.

But first, ask the big three (V, I, H) then consider the temperature of the color you’re analyzing in a way that is relational to surrounding colors and the warmth or coolness of the light.

- “ It’s a dark, dull, *cool* green. “
- “ It’s a mid-tone orange that is bright and *warm*. “



Complements by EF

KEYS TO COLOR MIXING

Keep your paint brush and palette knife clean. Once a brush becomes dirty it's hard to make a fresh decisions about color.

Keep separate areas on your palette for mixing lights, half-tones and shadows. This keeps things in proper sequence and allows you to think, plan and paint in a disciplined, orderly manner.

Lay out and mix enough paint so you won't have to stop, squeeze and mix just when you're getting into a flow or things are going great.

Always keep a clean mixing area on your pallet so you don't end up with mud.

PRACTICAL COLOR MIXING (Value, Hue, Intensity)

1. Always begin your mixture with that color (standard or premixed) that most closely approximates the general hue you're after.
2. Gradually include the additional colors to help bring it up to the correct value
3. Use a gray or complementary color mix and mix toward the desired intensity
4. Finally observe compare and adjust until the accurate mixture is achieved not on the canvas, as some advocate, but on the pallet! When it's correct on the pallet put it in its proper place on the canvas

COLOR AXIOMS

(from master colorists of the past)

- Color cannot be right until its value is right.
- Colors is affected by other influences such as reflected light striking it.
- All colors and shadow receive reflected light from other colors and change accordingly.
- A local color retains its identity to some degree even in shadow.
- Adding a complementary color serves to grey down its complement.
- No color in shadow can be more intense than it would be in light or in half tone. However a color in halftone can be more intense than in light.
- Gray, neutral, or cool color tend to recede. While warm intense color tends to advance.
- Sound color judgments are based on observation rather than on systems rules are theories.

THE WORLD OF TONE:

Suggestions for getting your values right.

- Always aim for a strong simple tonal effect rather than a complex fragmented one, which usually serves only to weaken the unity and design of the painting. Thus, we start with a simple tonal statement of three values in our painting and develop it from there.
- When painting cultivate the habit of looking at values in relationship to at least two other values in the picture.
- Be skeptical of reflected lights in the shadows as they tend to appear brighter than they actually are. Nothing kills a shadow faster than a gorgeously overstated reflected light.
- **SQUINT!** To better see and group value relationships.



Anders Zorn

HOMEWORK:

Navigating Color Space

by Robert Gamblin

<https://www.gamblincolors.com/navigating-color-space/>

Watch the twenty minute video by Robert Gamblin explaining the color wheel in 3-D. Apply these ideas to the Zorn color palette and pretend they are your primaries.

Practice color mixing this week by painting a small master copy of Anders Zorn or another artist (past or contemporary) whose work you admire.

Remember to block-in your shadow, mid-tone and light *shapes* simply and translate the colors you see. Work from an average and establish the background/foreground relationships until you get the big picture look of the painting

Color Notes: alla prima Portrait Painting



SQUINT and notice how well the light, mid-tone and darks are described in these block-ins.

- Simple shapes.
- Foreground/ Background established.
- Big Picture Look.
- Great start to a painting!

