Literature

  Chapter 9 (Edns. 8 and 9): *Perceiving Color*

  Chapter 10: *Red and blue together are hard on the eyes*  
  Chapter 12: *The meanings of colors vary by culture*
Overview

- Introduction to color
  - Functions of color and how we perceive it
- Theories of color vision
  - Trichromatic and opponent-process theories of color vision
- Color in the cortex
  - Color-related processes that occur in the visual areas of the brain
- Color and Light Constancy
  - Perceptual stability during environmental changes
Hungry? Find the berries...
Hungry? Find the berries...
Hungry? Find the berries...
From berries to Van Eyck

Arnolfini Portrait,
Jan Van Eyck, 1434
Introduction to vision - Pigments and perception
Wavelengths
Wavelengths

- Reflectance curves
- for surfaces

TABLE 9.1  Relationship Between Predominant Wavelengths Reflected and Color Perceived

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAVELENGTHS REFLECTED</th>
<th>PERCEIVED COLOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long and medium</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long, medium, and short</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Color Mixing: Lights (additive)

• More colors => lighter => towards white
Color Mixing: Lights (additive)

- More colors => lighter => towards white

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TABLE 9.2  Mixing Blue and Yellow Lights (Additive Color Mixture)

Parts of the spectrum that are reflected from a white surface for blue and yellow spots of light projected onto the surface. Wavelengths that are reflected are highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WAVELENGTHS</th>
<th>SHORT</th>
<th>MEDIUM</th>
<th>LONG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spot of blue light</td>
<td>Reflected</td>
<td>No Reflection</td>
<td>No Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spot of yellow light</td>
<td>No Reflection</td>
<td>Reflected</td>
<td>Reflected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlapping blue and yellow spots</td>
<td>Reflected</td>
<td>Reflected</td>
<td>Reflected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Color Mixing: Paints (subtractive)

- More colors => darker => towards black
Color Mixing: Paints (subtractive)

• More colors => darker => towards black

| Parts of the spectrum that are absorbed and reflected by blue and yellow paint. Wavelengths that are reflected are highlighted for each paint. Light that is usually seen as green is the only light that is reflected in common by both paints. |
| WAVELENGTHS |
| SHORT | MEDIUM | LONG |
| Blob of blue paint | Reflects all | Reflects some | Absorbs all |
| Blob of yellow paint | Absorbs all | Reflects some | Reflects some |
| Mixture of blue and yellow blobs | Absorbs all | Reflects some | Absorbs all |
Remember: **Wavelengths don't have color!**

**Introduction to vision - Transforming light onto electricity**

- Retinal is the part of the visual pigment that is sensitive to light
- Isomerization \(\rightarrow\) activation of the entire receptor
Theories of Color Vision: Trichromatic Theory

- Thomas Young (1773-1829) and Hermann Von Helmholtz (1821-1894)
  - Psychophysical color-matching experiments
  - Light's wavelength signalled by activity of three receptor mechanisms
  - Physiological evidence (1960's)
  - Cone pigments: (S)hort-, (M)iddle- and (L)ong-wavelengths
Theories of Color Vision: Trichromatic Theory

- $(S)_{\text{max}} @ 419\text{nm}$;
- $(M)_{\text{max}} @ 531\text{nm}$;
- $(L)_{\text{max}} @ 558\text{nm}$
Color Deficiency

• Monochromatism
  • Hereditary **color blindness**
  • 10 per million people [LeGrand, 1957]
  • Shades of lightness
  • Rod vision in both dim and bright conditions

• Anomalous trichromats
  • Not as good as trichromat at distinguishing wavelengths that are close together
Color Deficiency

- Dichromatism
- Protanopia
  - 1% males;
  - 0.02% females
Color Deficiency

- Dichromatism
  - Protanopia
  - Deuteranopia
    - 1% males;
    - 0.01% females
Color Deficiency

- Dichromatism
  - Protanopia
  - Deuteranopia
  - Tritanope
    - 0.002% males;
    - 0.001% females
Color Deficiency

- Dichromatism
  - Protanopia
  - Deuteranopia
  - Tritanope
  - Trichromats
Ishihara Plates

(a)

(b)
Theories of Color Vision: Opponent-Process Theory

• Ewald Hering
• Based on behavioral observations
  • Observers describe perceived stimuli
• Color vision caused by opposing responses
  • Red / green; Blue / yellow
  • Simultaneous color contrast
• Physiological evidence
  • Opponent neurons (1950's and 1960's)
  • Single- and double-opponent neurons
Contrasting Theories of Color Vision?

• No...
  • Opponent responding can be created by three receptors
  • Physiological evidence from different parts of the visual system
  • Signals for color sent to brain are based on the difference in responding pairs of cones
  • Trichromatic: ratio information (earlier)
  • Opponent-process: difference information (later)
• Why two different methods necessary?
Contrasting Theories of Color Vision?
Color in the Cortex

- Faces (FFA), bodies (ESB) and places (PPA)
- Is there a single color area?
- Semir Zeki
  - V4: cerebral achronmatopsia
  - Distributed?
  - Opponent neurons in V1, IT and V4
  - Activity in many different visual areas that respond also to other qualities such as form
Color Constancy

- Keep color perception stable as illumination changes
  - Impressive achievement

Wavelength distribution: sunlight and tungsten lightbulb
Reflectance curve and reflected light from sweater
Chromatic Adaptation

- Eye adjust sensitivity to affected by the color of the illumination of the overall scene
- Keiji Uchikawa et al. (1989)
Some other factors

- Effect of surroundings
  - Object's perceived color also affected by its surroundings
- Memory and Color
  - Our knowledge of the usual colors of objects in the environment has small effect
  - Memory color
Lightness Constancy

• Achromatic colors (white, gray, black) perceived to stay same shade when illumination changes
• Lightness determined by the object’s reflectance
• Not by intensity of illumination hitting on object
• Percentage of reflected light, not amount
Ratio Principle

• Ratio of reflectance of object to reflectance of surrounding objects
• As long as ratio remains the same, perceived lightness will remain the same
  • Works for flat, evenly illuminated objects
  • 3D scenes are usually illuminated unevenly
Uneven Illumination

- Reflectance edges
  - (a)-(c)

- Vs.

- Illumination edges
  - (a)-(b)
Shadows

- Shadowed and unshadowed areas are bricks with same lightness
- Less light falls on some areas because of shadow cast by tree
Take-home messages

• Connection between wavelength and color
• Wavelengths are colorless
• Isaac Newton (*Optiks*, 1704): “The Rays...are not coloured” but “stir up a Sensation of this or that Colour...”
• Color is a construction of the nervous system
• Nervous system affects what we experience
• Experience *is created* by the nervous system
Red and blue together are hard on the eyes

The meanings of color vary by culture

- Use of red: financial trouble
- Colors of surroundings may affect mood
- Orange in US makes people agitated
- Browns and blues more soothing
- Some invariant: e.g. gold

**Takeaways**

- Choose your colors carefully, taking into account the meaning that the colors may invoke.
- Pick a few major cultures or countries that you will be reaching with your design and check them on the cultural color chart from InformationIsBeautiful.net to be sure you're avoiding unintended color associations for that culture.

Literature


• Weinschenk, S.M. (2011). 100 Things Every Designer Needs to Know About People. Chapter 10: *Red and blue together are hard on the eyes*

• Chapter 12: *The meanings of colors vary by culture*