

LET'S PAINT FLOWERS!

ANNIE O'BRIEN GONZALES

COLOR: THE LANGUAGE OF EXPRESSIVE PAINTING

Art is a language and color is one of its basic parts of speech. Painting with bold exciting color is the characteristic most associated with the expressive style of painting. In order to speak the language of expressive painting, a basic understanding of color theory is essential. But learning to use color doesn't have to be painful and you don't need a chemistry degree to learn to use color. Think of gaining a working knowledge of color as a series of adventures that you will master with experience. The following basic color terms are essential whether you are a designer, illustrator or painter so that we are speaking the same language.

Color Terminology Every Painter Should Know

- **Hue:** the basic color family (red, blue, yellow, etc.)
- **Primary Colors:** colors that cannot be mixed from other colors (red, yellow, blue)
- **Secondary Colors:** colors composed by mixing two primary colors (orange, green, purple)
- **Tertiary Colors:** colors made by mixing a primary color with a secondary color— red/orange, orange/yellow, yellow/green, green/blue, blue/purple, purple/red
- **Tint:** hue variation created by adding white to any color
- **Tone:** hue variation created by adding gray to a color
- **Shade:** hue variation created by adding black to a color
- **Temperature:** warm vs. cool color; think water for cool colors-blue, green, violet & sun for warm colors-yellow, orange, red. Color temperature can be relative according to surrounding colors, i.e., a blue can look warm next to a cooler purple.
- **Value:** lightness vs. darkness of colors regardless of their hue
- **Color Scheme:** a color strategy chosen for a project
- **Monochromatic:** colors which are variations on the same hue.
- **Analogous:** colors beside each other on a color wheel
- **Complementary:** colors directly across from one another on the color wheel; this scheme provides the greatest contrast

Purchase a commercial color wheel so you have a general idea of what happens when you mix colors. Basic color concepts are easy to visualize on a color wheel but at the art store you quickly realize that there are lots of variations on the same color. Using a purchased color wheel will get you in the ballpark of color mixing but you will need to practice mixing with the colors you have on hand to really understand color. When painting in the expressive style, you are not trying to match colors to reality. This can be freeing, but it can also quickly become overwhelming if you have no plan for a color scheme. You often end up with a carnival of colors and wonder why the painting isn't working.