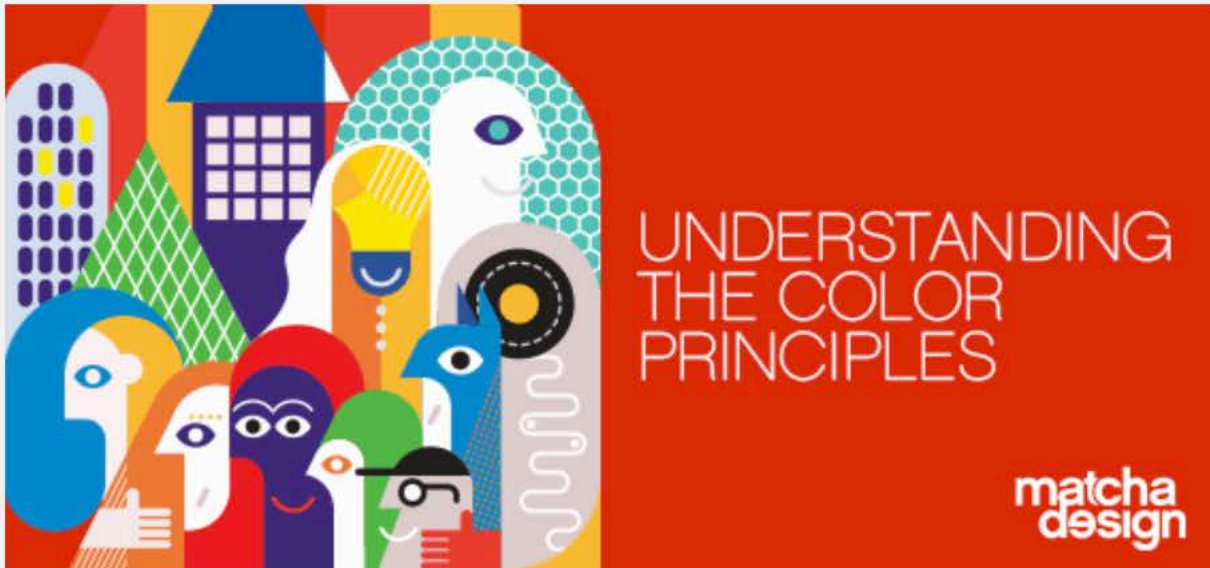


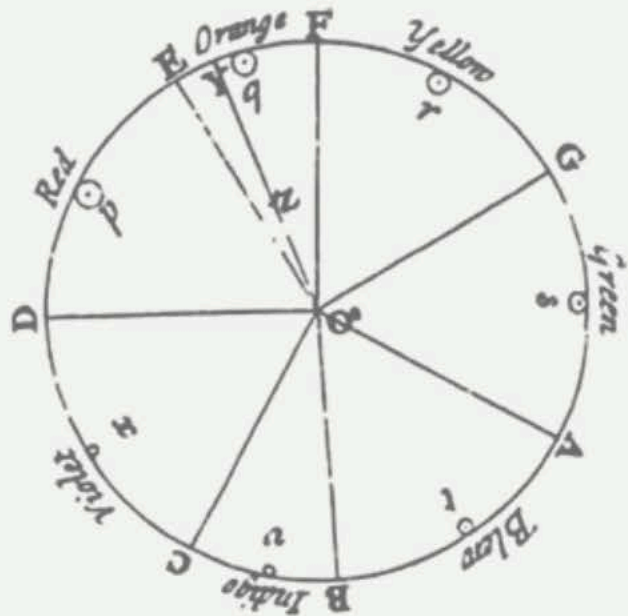
# Understanding Color Principles

Matcha Design - Friday, November 2, 2018



Color principles can make your design dynamic, once you understand them. Sir Isaac Newton, the founder of modern physics is the scientist attributed to the color wheel, in 1666.

This circular diagram shows how colors are organized, and reveals their relationships to each other; as well as illustrating the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary colors.



## Natural Inspiration

Human perception of color begins with how we interpret nature. For example, think of how the hue of the sky makes you feel — a bright blue sky can indicate hope and excitement for the future, while a gray sky can spell uncertainty and worry. Green grass, or a flourishing mountaintop filled with trees can also makes us think of growth and life.

Further analysis of how we perceive color can yield even more complex associations. If the trunk of a tree is brown, sturdy, strong and natural, then an image of a wooden door can offer that same connotation — being natural, strong, and beautifully carved to emphasize that connection to nature.

## Cultural Complexity

Color perception is also associated with our past experiences and observations. Like anything else in design, it's important to factor in cultural differences when trying to understand how color can impact the perception of your work. Red symbolizes good fortune and luck within Chinese culture; East Asian stock markets use red to denote a rise in stock prices.

This cultural difference of how the color red is used in the East and West is significant. Misunderstanding the complexities of your audience can result in unexpected negative interpretation.

## Color Harmony

When creating a captivating design, and a memorable visual experience, you can emphasize relationships colors have to one another — by using complimentary colors, or purposely breaking the rules to disrupt the tradition, to more effectively elevate the emotion of your audience.

If telling a story about the aftermath of a disaster, you would most likely use faded, subtle colors — possibly even limit your pallet to black and white. In this design, choosing a cheerful color like pink wouldn't convey the message properly.

However, if your design goal was to share the message of a charity, raising funds to help tornado victims with a high impact ad, disruptive color choices can be beneficial:

Imagine a split scene of a girl's room. One side is filled with a soft pink wall, toys, and plush bedding. The opposite side of the image shows the bedroom destroyed, splattered in mud, and covered in gray.

Is this an example of color harmony? No. Does that choice lead to an impactful design? Absolutely!

## Painting a Colorful Story

When piecing your design together and make your color choices, it's important that you do your research and look at the whole of the story you're trying to tell.

- Use common sense.
- Be willing to experiment.
- Will the time of the year impact your design?
- Does cultural interpretation play a role in your design?

Ultimately, you should be conscious of the mood you wish to convey. Take a look at this image of the giant yellow rubber duck floating in a blue ocean. The unexpected sight in Hong Kong, created by Florentijn Hofman, is a great example of disrupting an audience's perception. And