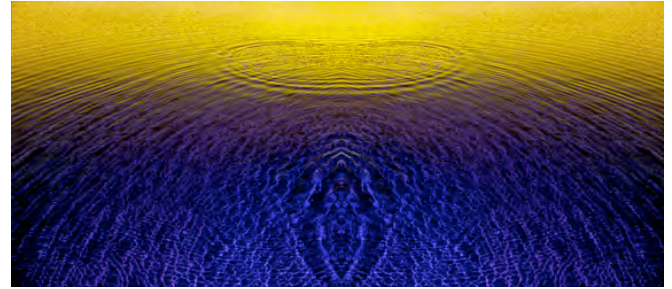


JOHN PAUL CAPONIGRO

CREATIVITY



Wake VII, 2004



Wake XII, 2004

AN ARTIST'S PALETTE

One of the most distinctive things about an artist's work is his or her use of color. Using a consistent palette is one of the keys to developing a signature style. An artist may work with a single palette for a lifetime. Or, palettes may be vary between periods and series. Often, the color treatment that works well with the strongest images will define the palette for an entire series. However, on occasion, you may find a palette works well with one or even a few images but can't be sustained in a compelling manner throughout an entire series of images; in this case, consider modifying the palette of the few with the whole in mind. If an artist's palette is constantly changing from piece to piece their work in general may seem indecisive, unfocused, or unclear.

An artist's consistent use of color's three essential components (luminosity, hue, and saturation) as well as the amount and type of contrast within them are the keys to successfully structuring a distinctive palette. Possibilities abound.

A majority of successful palettes use a high degree of contrast in one component of color, a medium amount of contrast in a second, and a low amount of contrast

in the third. Rembrandt used a high degree of contrast in luminosity, a medium degree of contrast in saturation, and a low degree of contrast in hue. Monet used a high degree of contrast in hue, a medium degree of contrast in saturation, and a low degree of contrast in luminosity. While this "rule" provides a useful set of guidelines, there are significant exceptions to prove it. Ansel Adams used a neutral palette with no contrast in two color components (hue and saturation) and a high degree of contrast in the third (luminosity). Henri Matisse used a high degree of contrast in all three color components – luminosity, hue, and saturation.

Consider contrast as energy. Too little energy tends to make images lifeless and inert. Too much energy tends to make images unstable and chaotic. Many different balances can be struck between these two poles. Each color dynamic has a life and personality of its own.

It's very helpful to identify what makes your use of color distinctive or even unique. Use the following chart to help you identify your palette. You can also use the chart to analyze another artist's palette. Try both; you'll find that you will better understand color in general as a result.

ARTIST'S PALETTE

USE OF COLOR

super-saturated, high, medium, low, semi-neutral, neutral, varied

USE OF CONTRAST

HUE

high, medium, low, none, varied

SATURATION

high, medium, low, none, varied

LUMINOSITY

high, medium, low, none, varied

USE OF LUMINOSITY

KEY

high, medium, low, none, varied

HIGHLIGHTS

light, dark; warm, cool; high saturation, low saturation

LUMINOSITY CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

HUE CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

SATURATION CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

MIDTONES

light, dark; warm, cool; high saturation, low saturation

LUMINOSITY CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

HUE CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

SATURATION CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

SHADOWS

light, dark; warm, cool; high saturation, low saturation

LUMINOSITY CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

HUE CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

SATURATION CONTRAST

high, medium, low, none, varied

USE OF SATURATION

super-saturated, high, medium, low, semi-neutral, neutral, varied

USE OF HUE

warm, cool, varied

full spectrum, split complements, complements, analogous,
single, varied

quadchrome, trichrome, duochrome, monochrome, varied

primary (red, green, blue), secondary (cyan, magenta, yellow),
tertiary (orange, purple, brown), earthtones, semineutrals,
neutrals, varied

imbalanced, balanced, dominant, accent, varied

SPECIFIC HUES

How frequently do you tend to use specific hues?

RED a lot, some, a little, none

ORANGE a lot, some, a little, none

YELLOW a lot, some, a little, none

GREEN a lot, some, a little, none

BLUE a lot, some, a little, none

PURPLE a lot, some, a little, none

BROWN a lot, some, a little, none

BLACK a lot, some, a little, none

GRAY a lot, some, a little, none

WHITE a lot, some, a little, none

Add specifics if useful (i.e. dark red, light red, saturated red, reduced saturation red)