

SECTION: 4: Investigating Design Principles and Art Elements to Communicate Store Image and Build Profitable Retail Sales

Part 1: Examine the Six Basic Principles of Display

Part 1: 1-3 Select Color (and Texture) First and Then Define Line

Introduction to Color:

For a review of color concepts as related to color and its utilization in merchandise presentations discussed previously in **Section 3: Part 2: Merchandise Presentation by Color**, please refer to those explanations for background information. For a brief recapitulation of the salient facts, the reader may examine the following summary of important points:

- Color is the single most important selling element of the merchandise presentation.
- Color may create or become 80% of the merchandise/display presentation.
- Reaction to color is a personal, individual, private experience that is influenced by culture, regional and global locations, and environmental background.
- There are physiological and psychological impacts of color that affect the viewer's perception of the merchandise presentation.
- Color creates a mood and binds the overall theme and merchandise in the visual presentation.
- Color is symbolic for seasons, holidays, and occasions.
- Color is the first element in any visual presentation that attracts the customer's attention and motivates the consumer to buy.
- Merchandise presentations begin with color; the color scheme (i.e., color story) for the store begins at the store's entrance and culminates at the top or Vista walls.
- Color emphasizes product features and/or highlights the product.
- All colors have value (i.e., degree of lightness and darkness) and intensity (i.e., degree of brightness or dullness).
- Colorize merchandise in a sequence of neutral to warm to cool colors.
- Warm colors advance and are aggressive and exciting; cool colors recede and are calming and relaxing.
- Neutral warm colors include winter white, beige and brown; neutral cool colors include stark white, black, and grey.
- Warm colors include red, pink, yellow, orange, peach, brown, rust, and purple; cool colors include blue, green, blue-green, and violet.

The same above color concepts also apply to merchandising the display. To further investigate other color characteristics which apply to guidelines when creating and building displays, this part addresses a) color terminology, b) color mixing, c) color schemes, d) color coordination, e) the psychology and symbolism of color, and f) planning the background color.

Color Terminology:

Color has a language of its own. *Hue* is the word used to describe a pure or "true" color. Frequently the word is used as a synonym for the word "color." All colors have both value and intensity. *Value* is the lightness or the darkness of a color. If white is added to a color the results become a *tint* or a *pastel*. On the other hand, if black or grey is added to a color, the results are a *shade* of that color. *Intensity* is the amount of saturation or purity of a color; or, it is the brightness or dullness of a color. If gray or the complement of the color is added to a color, the results are a dull color.

Color Mixing:

In order to understand the relationships of various colors, one needs to view a color wheel. The three colors or pigments from which all other colors are derived are the **primary colors** or *red, yellow, and blue*. If two primary colors are mixed together, the end result becomes a secondary color. The three **secondary colors** are *orange* (i.e., red is mixed with yellow), *green* (i.e. blue mixed with yellow), and *violet or purple* (i.e., red mixed with blue). When adding a secondary color to a primary color, the results become an **intermediate color**. For example, when mixing blue and violet, the color results are a blue-violet. If two secondary colors are mixed the results are a **tertiary color**.



Color Schemes:

As previously discussed, when planning the merchandise presentation or display itself, the *color scheme* or color story is frequently a combination of two colors and a neutral. Of course, the seasonal merchandise assortments purchased by the retail buyer will dictate what color schemes will be prevalent during any given season.

Additionally, selection of color schemes are based upon the store image, the fashion authority of the store, and taste level of the target consumers. Further, the visual merchandiser considers the merchandise zone in which the product is produced, the position of the goods on the Buying-Selling Curve, and the product type and classifications when selecting the most effective color scheme. The price of the item and the mood, symbolism, and ambience that the color scheme brings to the display also influence the visual merchandiser's decision on the choice of the color story for the display. Thus,

all of these aspects impact the selection of the color scheme and ultimately the effectiveness and aesthetic success of the presentation.

The frequently most used color schemes, with explanations, include the following:

- **Monochromatic:** color scheme is a single color or hue in different tints and shades with varying values and intensities. The scheme may range for the lightest pale of the hue to the darkest shade of that same color. The monochromatic color scheme is very restful and easily seen from a distance. For example, the scheme might range from the palest beige to the darkest brown.



- **Analogous/Adjacent:** color scheme is composed of colors next to each other on the color wheel. These colors support each other and are very compatible. An example of this type of color scheme is yellow, yellow orange, and orange.
- **Complementary:** color scheme is based on two colors opposite each other on the color wheel. This scheme can be strong and vibrant. Usually, it is bright, attention-getting, and fun or exciting, dynamic, or motion provoking. When combining these colors, tints and shades are frequently used since the intensity of the color is heightened. For example, the color scheme could be coordinated with green and red, in which instance the colors will more than likely be tints and shades of those colors used together.



- **Split Complementary:** color scheme consists of three colors, with one color being the major or central color and the two other colors on either side of the complement. An example of this type of color story is red, yellow-green, and blue-green.
- **Double-Complimentary:** color scheme is formed from four colors with two colors plus their complements. In this theme, the visual merchandiser must decide which two colors are dominant and which are accents.
- **Triadic:** color scheme utilizes three colors equidistance from one another on the color wheel. These colors form a triangle.

Color is the “central” thread that binds the merchandise to the display and theme or concept. It helps to establish ambience and image for the display; therefore, all aspects of color from value to intensity to combination of hues are considered when establishing the color story for the display presentation.

Color Coordination:

Judy Bell, the author of *Silent Selling*, has also grouped color by intensity. This is a most important factor to consider when creating color schemes for both merchandising presentation and display. In fact, the intensity of one color dictates which colors with other intensities may be combined. For example, *mid-tones* or colors with an intensity between *bright* (i.e., rich, lustrous, radiant primary color) and *pastel* (i.e., tints or colors with white added) colors may be combined with either of those groupings and both colors groupings will contribute to the mood, symbolism, and ambience of the display.



On the other hand, *mute or dusty tones* (i.e., mid-tones developed from adding gray to a color) cannot be combined with colors of other intensities. If the dusty tone is contrasted with a pastel, both of the colors look murky or unappealing. Other tones include *jewel tones* (i.e., saturated colors – gemstone colors such as emerald, ruby, and sapphire), *earth-tones* (i.e., colors of the earth) and *neutrals*. Jewel tones may be combined with both bright colors and earth-tones. Neutral colors blend with every color grouping and can be used as a foil for bright, jewel, or earth-tones.

Psychology and Symbolism of Color:

Although reaction to color is a personal, individual, private experience that is influenced by culture, regional and global locations, and environmental background, the consumer is instinctively impacted by colors with which they are confronted every day in their environment. For example, blue reminds the adult consumer of the ocean or water and the sky. It is a universal color that is calming and restful. In fact it is a color that is selected by both men and women as a favorite.

On the other hand, the blue color that children usually choose is a rich primary blue color. When the young child has not developed a clear distinction between various tints and shades of a color, he/she selects colors seen most often in toys, clothing, and other surroundings. Frequently stores that cater to the younger child use the red, blue, and yellow décor to attract the attention of the small consumer. Of course, color schemes for retailers are also trendy and change with the fashion cycle. For example, the tween consumer is currently responding to purple tones and various tints and shades of pink, since their world revolves around those colors.



In some instances, color can be therapeutic or very stimulating. Both paint companies and cosmetic companies have lines of product that relate to color therapy. In fact, research has been conducted on the impact of color on the individual in hospitals, prisons, and sporting arenas. Additionally, different generations react differently to color. For example, the young male now selects attire colored in tints such as pink, aqua, and lavender. Their fathers and grandfathers considered these colors as feminine or not appropriate in the male wardrobe. However, the younger male became accustomed to these hues when the colors were featured in their little league uniforms or other children's clothing.

Furthermore, there are general concepts with the regard to the effects of color on consumers and how color impacts the shopping behavior of those consumers. Beginning with the warm tones and proceeding to the cool and neutral hues, generalities concerning the psychology, symbolism, and seasonal implications of color will be explored.

Red is a stimulating, warm color that can be both exciting and frightening. It is the color of Valentine's Day, Christmas, and July the Fourth. Yet, it can be the symbol of blood or fire. Thus, it negatively impacts the viewer. The pastel of red, or *pink*, denotes femininity, prettiness, and sweetness. In fact, pink is the color that symbolizes breast cancer week; pink ribbons "speak" to the eye of the viewer and automatically denote cancer research. Pink announces the presence of little girls and dolls, the spring season, Easter eggs and bunny ears, and an elegant approach to Christmas. With regard to food, sometimes pink symbolizes raw, undercooked, or fleshy foods. These negative vibes are very unsettling to some consumers. However, as previously stated, pink is now a universal color and is worn by both men and women.

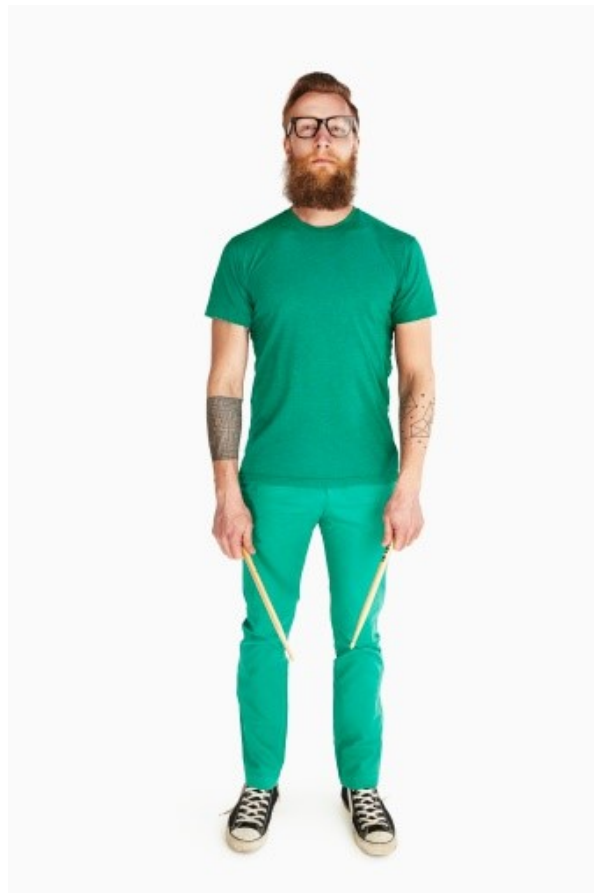


Yellow exudes a cheerful, vital, and happy aura. It is a symbol for sunshine and suggests optimism. It signifies spring and summer as well as Easter. However, the darkened shade of yellow or *gold* announces fall and change with the turning of the leaves and the introduction of cold weather. *Orange*, a mix of red and yellow, is also a very exciting and vibrant color denoting the rising sun, fire, flames, and autumn leaves. When paired with black, it is the major color scheme of Halloween.

Peach, a pastel version of orange or a pastel earth-tone, is a happy color that has become the “new neutral” for display backgrounds and décor. The color is easy to live with and is a good foil as a background color for highlighting the merchandise itself. *Brown*, another neutral, is a soothing color that does not create excitement or stimulation. It is a warm color that announces autumn. On the other hand, *rust* is a deep, rich earthy tone that personifies the autumn season.

Blue is a cool color that can be both calm, cool, and comfortable or cold, moody, and depressing. A lighter blue is symbolic for spring and Easter, while a darkened blue, with black or grey added to the hue, announces cold snows and wintery weather conditions or thunder storms. Also, when paired with red and white, it is one of the major colors designating the Fourth of July and other patriotic U.S. holidays.

Green is a cool hue that is found in nature in grass, plants, leaves, and trees. It is symbolic for growth and living. Green announces the change from a drab, dreary February climate to a vibrant spring growing season. It signifies the celebrations of St. Patrick’s Day and Christmas. However, if green is combined with an unusual amount of yellow, it becomes connotative of the khaki worn during wartime and can be a very disturbing color. If *blue and green* are combined, the color creates a sensitive, restful, and peaceful combination. *Blue-green* is a color of summer and is also found in nature.



The purple family from the lavender tint to the purple shade has a double meaning. These colors can be regal or aloof and overbearing. In fact, *lavender* can symbolize old-fashion charm or shrouds or linings in caskets. *Purple* is not only the color of royalty but also a fashion color that is a favorite of the youthful consumer. Purple symbolizes grapes, wine, and autumn.

Background Colors:

The background color must be planned when the display color scheme is determined. It should never detract from, but should add to the color of the merchandise. The background color is based upon the store and fashion image, the type and classification of the merchandise to be displayed, and the price of the merchandise.

Usually the best background colors include white, beige, gray, black, and pale peach. White is a foil and contrast for colorful merchandise. Beige is easy to live with and compliments and enhances the merchandise. Gray is an elegant, chic, sophisticated setting for exclusive and expensive merchandise such as fine jewelry, silver, furs, and designer items. Also, gray is utilized to tone down bright colors. Neutral backgrounds are utilized to enhance brightly colored merchandise and pastel backgrounds are used to assure that drably colored merchandise is enhanced and presented at its best.

Lighting affects the color of both the merchandise and background. For example, white merchandise against a white background is smart, sophisticated, and subtle. For a dramatic effect, lighting with red filters used to flood the white background softly outlines the merchandise. White against a black

background is dramatic and striking. For an elegant setting, lighting with blue or violet filters eases the sharp contrast. Lighting techniques will be discussed in more depth in *Part 1-5* of this section.

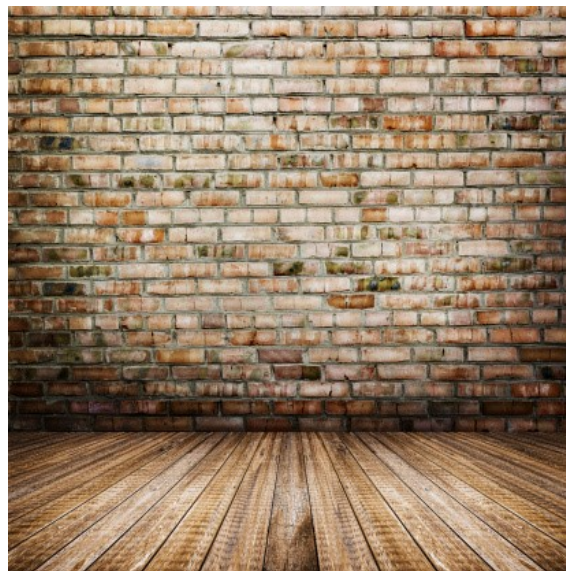
In summary, color is the first component of the merchandise presentation or display that attracts the customer's attention. There is a psychology to color that impacts the mood of the shopper and also becomes symbolic for seasons and events. Background colors of displays must be selected to enhance the merchandise and sell more product.

Texture is Symbolic:

Another important factor of color is texture. *Texture* refers to the surface treatment or "feel" or "hand" of any material. All materials have texture and all textures are symbolic. Textures are either smooth and shiny or rough and nubby.

Smooth and shiny textures reflect light and make an item appear lighter in weight and color. Therefore, these textures appear to take up less space in a display. Examples of materials and fixturing that have a smooth and shiny texture and that are used in displays are chrome, enamel, and lacquered and waxed woods. Smooth and shiny merchandise and background materials, such as silk and satins, become symbolic for or suggest femininity, softness and sensuousness.

On the other hand, *rough and nubby textures* absorb light and make items appear darker. These textures appear heavy and suggest weight. Thus, rough and nubby textures give the illusions of occupying more space and volume in a display. Examples of materials and fixturing that have a rough and/or nubby texture are carpet, dark woods, burlap, coarse linen, gravel, sand, stone, brick, and cork. Merchandise fabrications and background materials in displays that are rough and nubby include velvet, nubby woolens, and tweeds. Velvet suggests elegance, expensiveness, and richness or symbolizes darkness and mystery. Rough textures, such as tweeds and nubby woolens, suggest masculinity, naturalness, and ruggedness, reminding the viewer of the earthy outdoors.



Thus, texture of both the merchandise and the display materials is an integral component of the display, imparts a message about the theme and merchandise itself, and usually functions as a background for the display. In the display, a contrast in textures enhances particular points of the merchandise

presentation and accentuates specific qualities and differences in product classifications. Opposite textures are attention-getting in a display; contrasting textures may add humor, surprise, or shock to a merchandise presentation or display.

In the majority of displays there are contrasting textures; these textures must be balanced in order to create unity and rhythm in the display. For display backgrounds, neutral textures – neither smooth nor rough – are the most effective. Select felt, jersey, suede, or seamless paper for the most effective background materials that support the theme, symbolism, and message emitted from the textures in all other materials and fabrications in the display.

Then Define Line

After color, line is the second major component of a composition. *Line* provides direction and is symbolic. Product types dictate the types of lines utilized in the display. The four major types of lines include vertical, horizontal, curved, and diagonal. Select a major line component, usually either vertical or horizontal, for building an effective display. Then balance vertical and horizontal lines to establish harmony and rhythm within the display. Curved lines are needed in every display in order to create rhythm and continuity. Diagonal lines are lines of action, and if utilized in a display, should be carefully planned to create stability and excitement.

Vertical lines are straight elements connecting the floor and ceiling. They exude a message of strength, height, pride, majesty, dignity, poise, balance, pride, forcefulness, elegance, and refinement. Displays presenting product classifications such as furs, evening wear, bridal attire, tailored suits, and other expensive items call for the major line component to be vertical lines. The symbolism of the line should complement the merchandise and tie to all other elements of the display.



Taken from nature's horizon, *horizontal lines* are long, low, wide, and spreading lines. They emit a relaxed, restful, peaceful, calm, quiet, and tranquil ambience. These lines are the major line component utilized to display sportswear, activewear, funwear, nightwear, robes, and loungewear.



Curved lines are derived from the arc, circle, or sphere. They lead the eye from one object to another object in the display and are needed in all displays. The message of the curved line is grace, charm, femininity, softness, action, and flowing continuity. Lastly, *diagonal lines* suggest movement and excitement. The diagonal line is the line of action and forcefulness. It can be a strong, dynamic force in a display. The diagonal line is most appropriate for displaying active sportswear.

Additionally, the boundaries of the display as well as the shapes of the merchandise in the display must be planned in order to create the best use of lines for the most effective display. Lines should complement each other and should create a pleasing flow with continuity and rhythm in the display.