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Influence of Colour on Visual Arts

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Abstract:-*When we talking about the visual arts, painting is heavily dependent upon the use of colour for its impact, mood and depth. The impact of colour on the visual senses of the viewer is extremely potent and even one tiny dab of brightly coloured pigment in an otherwise monochromatic picture can transform the work. Even the earliest exponents of prehistoric cave painting (30,000-12,000 BCE) were experts in the use of primitive pigments, as exemplified in the monochromatic Chauvet paintings, the polychrome Lascaux murals and the vivid paintings at Altamira.*
Colour entices us to eat, consume or at least to buy. Colour likely has helped us to survive as a species. Our (Known) contacts with the world and the universe are by way of our five senses. Persons with a normally functioning visual system obtain what is probably the largest amount of information about the world surrounding them from vision, and colour experiences are an important outcome of this flow of information.
Key words: *colour, pigment type,* Varnika-bhanga

I. Introduction

Artists invented the first pigments a combination of soil, animal fat, burnt charcoal, and chalk as early as 40,000 years ago, creating a basic palette of five colors: red, yellow, brown, black, and white. Since then, the history of color has been one of perpetual discovery, whether through exploration or scientific advancement. The invention of new pigments accompanied the developments of art history's greatest movements from the Renaissance to Impressionism as artists experimented with colors never before seen in the history of painting.

Vatsayan enumerates the *Shadanga* or Six Limbs of Indian Painting in his *Kamasutra*, laying down the main principles of art.

1- *Rupa-bheda (*secrets of form)
2- *Pramanani* (proportion)
3- *Bhava (emotional Disposition)*
4- *Lavanya-yojanam (*gracefulness in composition*)*
5- *Sadrisyam* (similitude)
6- *Varnika-bhanga* (colour differentiation)

Varnika-bhanga (colour differentiation) pertains to 'colour' that lends soul to an artwork. The beauty of colour is not in the colour but in its application. A master painter magnifies the splendour of different shades on the surface with the strength of the stroke of his brush. The myriad hues are not only an aspect of appearance but are the expression of inner character. In the hands of a versatile artist even ordinary colours pronounces extraordinary exuberance.

History of Pigments

II. Colour Painting During the Stone Age

In the famous prehistoric cave paintings at Chauvet, Lascaux and Altamira, Stone Age artists relied on basic earth pigments like clay ochres, in yellow, brown and various hues of red, along with charcoal.

III. Colour Painting in Egypt

This crude but effective colour scheme was extended during early Antiquity by Egyptian artists who decorated their temples and tombs with murals and panel paintings which included new paint colours like: Egyptian Blue Frit, the rich lemon yellow pigment Orpiment, the red-orange realgar, the green Malachite and its blue variant Azurite. White colours were derived from Gypsum and Chalk.

IV. Colour Painting in Ancient Greece and Rome

From Greek archaic painting onwards (c.650 BCE), the available range of colours for both panel paintings and frescos was adequately wide. Greek painting techniques were tempera and fresco; on wood and marble, encaustic and tempera - a process in which colours were mixed with wax, painted onto the surface and then 'burnt in'. In addition to the range of pigments used in Ancient Egypt, Greek artists added new reds like the gum "Dragons Blood", and Vermilion. New purples included Indigo, Madder and Tyrian purple, while new greens featured. Verdigris and green earth (Terre Verte). Massicot and Naples Yellow were two new yellows.

V. Colour Painting in the Renaissance

Painting during the Renaissance was transformed by the development of oil painting. This new medium made colours look extra good, and added a new dimension of reality to figurative works, notably portraiture. Not surprisingly it stimulated the discovery and use of many new hues. These included the red pigments Carmine (Americas), "Red Lac" (India) and a new red Vermilion; plus the fabulous dark-blue Ultramarine and the yellow Gamboge, as well as Lead White.

VI. Academic Traditions of Colour Painting

Several important principles of fine art were laid down by Renaissance art. These principles consisted of conventions relating to all aspects of picture-making, including subject, composition, line, and colour. Colour (colorito) was regarded as secondary to the overall design (disegno), as illustrated by the fact that art students or apprentices spent the vast majority of their time learning drawing, and only learned the art of pigments and colouring at a much later stage. But see also: Titian and Venetian Colour Painting (c.1500-76), and Legacy of Venetian Painting.

VII. Colour Painting During the 17th and 18th Century

After the Renaissance, this approach to fine art painting was adopted by all the major European Academies and became enshrined in the style known as academic art. Painting was not even on the curriculum of most academies - students had to learn painting skills in the atelier of a master - and colour continued to have a secondary function, as more of a supportive element. Thus during the Baroque Rubens attracted criticism for his dramatic use of pigment, while Nicolas Poussin was revered as an exemplar of more balanced colourism. A century or so later, the same debate errupted over the respective colour practices of the Romantic painter Delacroix versus those of the more sobre Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. One of the cardinal principles of academic painting concerned the primacy of the naturalistic palette: colours were to reflect the natural colours found in nature, thus grass was green, the sea was blue, and skin was flesh-coloured. This situation endured until the 19th century when a revolution occurred. No major new colours were discovered in the 17th century, but Prussian Blue was produced during the 18th century, as were several new Cobalt and Chrome colours.

VIII. 19th Century: Impressionism and Other Schools

The 19th century - essentially the start of modern art - was a period of massive change for both oil painters and watercolourists. New pigments seemed to pop up every few years. Cobalt Blue emerged first, then Chromium

Green Oxide, followed by Indian Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Cerulean Blue, a cheap synthetic Ultramarine, Zinc White, Rose Madder, Aureolin, Viridian, and Cobalt Violet. Nineteenth century painters now possessed a cheaper, more convenient and more reliable means of colour painting. The Fauvists and German Expressionists took full advantage of these technological advances in pigmentation to produce an outburst of multi-coloured pictures.

IX. The Impressionist Revolution

Impressionist painters caused a revolution in the theory and practice of colour painting by their insistence on capturing the "fleeting moment": the exact condition of light/colour which they perceived when painting plein-air from nature. Thus for example, if during this fleeting moment a tree-trunk - which is "naturally" brown - appeared red in the light of a setting sun, Impressionists (like Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and Sisley) painted it red. In fact, it might appear in any of several differing hues, depending on the effect of light, and was coloured accordingly. The "paint-what-you-see" approach to colour seen in most Impressionist paintings shattered the conventions of the time, and opened the gates to further experimentation by schools, such as Neo-Impressionism (with its technique of Pointillism), as practised by Georges Seurat and Paul Signac.

X. Expressionism

Impressionism represented the ultimate in "copying nature". But after two decades of slavish copying, progressive artists rebelled. Tired of simply "painting-what-they-saw" they injected more subjectivity into their canvases, in a general style known as Expressionism. Pioneered by Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gogh, the expressionist movement was developed first by so-called Fauvist painters in 1905. For two years Fauvism was the hot thing in Paris: everyone tried it, even Georges Braque. Its influence spread to Germany triggering an explosion of German Expressionism spearheaded by progressive art groups like Der Blaue Reiter and Die Brucke. It also spread to Britain where it influenced the Scottish Colourists and others.

XI. Abstract Expressionism/Colour Field Painting

Colour experimentation errupted again during the immediate post-World War II period in America, where European emigrant artists (eg. Arshile Gorky, Josef Albers, Mark Rothko and others) mixed with locals like, Clyfford Still and Barnett Newman to produce a style of Abstract Expressionism known as Colour Field Painting. Typically, this featured huge canvases containing large areas of colour which were designed to "envelope" the viewer and engender an emotional reaction. See, for instance, Mark Rothko's paintings (1938-70). Pigment was now "the" key element of the canvas: it was the high point of colour painting. And despite the eventual collapse of the movement in the early 1960s, colour has continued to maintain its independent status in the process of disegno.

History of Color in Art

XII. Red colour

Red colour found in iron-rich soil and first employed as an artistic material (as far as we know) in prehistoric cave paintings, red ochre is one of the oldest pigments still in use. Centuries later, during the 16th and 17th centuries, the most popular red pigment came from a cochineal insect, a creature that could only be found on prickly-pear cacti in Mexico. These white bugs produced a potent red dye so sought-after by artists and patrons that it quickly became the third greatest import out of the “New World” (after gold and silver), as explains Victoria Finlay in *A Brilliant History of Color in Art*. Raphael, Rembrandt, and Rubens all used cochineal as a glaze, layering the pigment atop other reds (like red ochre) to increase their intensity. A non-toxic source for red pigment, the cochineal bug is still used to color lipsticks and blush today.

XIII. Blue colour

Ever since the Medieval era, painters have depicted the Virgin Mary in a bright blue robe, choosing the color not for its religious symbolism, but rather for its hefty price tag. Mary's iconic hue called ultramarine blue comes from lapis lazuli, a gemstone that for centuries could only be found in a single mountain range in Afghanistan. This precious material achieved global popularity, adorning Egyptian funerary portraits, Iranian Qur'ans, and later the headdress in Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1665). For hundreds of years, the cost of lapis lazuli rivaled even the price of gold. In the 1950s, Yves Klein collaborated with a Parisian paint supplier to invent a synthetic version of ultramarine blue, and this color became the French artist's signature. Explaining the appeal of this historic hue, Klein said, "Blue has no dimensions. It is beyond dimensions."

Yellow colour

Some artists in history have been known for their use of yellow, though Joseph Mallord William Turner and Vincent van Gogh are the most notable exceptions. Turner so loved the color that contemporary critics mocked the British painter, writing that his images were "afflicted with jaundice," and that the artist may have a vision disorder. For his sublime and sun-lit seascapes, Turner used the experimental watercolor Indian Yellow a fluorescent paint derived from the urine of mango fed cows. For brighter touches, Turner employed the synthetic Chrome Yellow, a lead-based pigment known to cause delirium. Vincent van Gogh also painted his starry nights and sunflowers with this vivid and joyful hue.

XIV. Green colour

Colour green evokes nature and renewal, its pigments have been some of the most poisonous in history. In 1775, the Swedish chemist Carl Wilhelm Scheele invented a deadly hue, Scheele's Green, a bright green pigment laced with the toxic chemical arsenic. Cheap to produce, Scheele's Green became a sensation in the Victorian era, even though many suspected the color to be dangerous for artists and patrons alike. The French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's bedroom wallpaper even featured Scheele's Green, and historians believe the pigment caused the revolutionary's death in 1821. By the end of the 19th century, Paris Green a similar mixture of copper and arsenic replaced Scheele's Green as a more durable alternative, enabling Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir to create vivid, emerald landscapes. Used as a rodenticide and an insecticide, Paris Green was still highly toxic, and may have been responsible for Cézanne's diabetes and Monet's blindness. Not surprisingly, it was eventually banned in the 1960s.

XV. Purple colour

Claude Monet once declared. "It's violet. Fresh air is violet." The purple shadows and lavender specks of light that enliven Monet's haystacks and waterlilies owe much to a little-known American portrait painter named John Goffe Rand. In 1841, Rand grew frustrated with the messy practice of storing paint in a pig's bladder, which was the prevailing method for preserving pigments at the time, and invented a more practical and portable option: a collapsible paint tube made of tin. This enabled artists like Monet to paint *plein air*, easily transporting their color to outdoor locations to capture impressions of the environment, and in turn led to the production of nuanced, pre-mixed paint shades in tin tubes, such as Manganese Violet, the first affordable mauve-colored paint that meant artists no longer had to mix red and blue to make purple. The Impressionists especially Monet so adored the new hue that critics accused the painters of having "violettomania."

XVI. Black colour

The darkest pigment found in Old Masters paintings is aptly named "bone black," and is produced by burning animal bones in an air-free chamber. While the Impressionists avoided black paint finding areas of darkness to be filled with color American artists in the '50s and '60s returned to black with avengeance.

Frank Stella, Richard Serra, and Ad Reinhardt all created monochromatic black paintings, stripping the canvas of any subject matter other than the paint itself. Taken together, these painters prove that black is as nuanced a color as any other, capable of many permutations, tones, and textures. Speaking about his practice in 1967,

Reinhardt quoted the Japanese painter and printmaker Katsushika Hokusai, saying, "There is a black which is old and a black which is fresh. Lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow."

XVII. White colour

The 17th-century Dutch method for manufacturing the pigment involved layering cow and horse manure over lead and vinegar. After three months in a sealed room, these materials would combine to create flakes of pure white. While scientists in the late 19th century identified lead as poisonous, it wasn't until 1978 that the United States banned the production of lead white paint. In this era, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Ryman, and Agnes Martin turned to titanium and zinc whites to create monochromatic white paintings, while artists like Dan Flavin bypassed pigments altogether in sculptures that emitted white light directly.

Meaning of Colors in Color Psychology

Red is the color of energy, passion, action, ambition and determination. It is also the color of anger and sexual passion. *Orange* is the color of social communication and optimism. From a negative color meaning it is also a sign of pessimism and superficiality.with the meaning of colors, in color psychology, *Yellow* is the color of the mind and the intellect. It is optimistic and cheerful. However it can also suggest impatience, criticism and cowardice. *Green* is the color of balance and growth. It can mean both self-reliance as a positive and possessiveness as a negative, among many other meanings. *Blue* is the color of trust and peace. It can suggest loyalty and integrity as well as conservatism and frigidity. *Indigo* is the color of intuition. In the meaning of colors it can mean idealism and structure as well as ritualistic and addictive. *Purple* is the color of the imagination. It can be creative and individual or immature and impractical. *Turquoise* is communication and clarity of mind. It can also be impractical and idealistic. *Pink* is unconditional love and nurturing. Pink can also be immature, silly and girlish. *Magenta* is a color of universal harmony and emotional balance. It is spiritual yet practical, encouraging common sense and a balanced outlook on life. *Brown* is a friendly yet serious, down-to-earth color that relates to security, protection, comfort and material wealth. From a color psychology perspective, *Gray* is the color of compromise - being neither black nor white, it is the transition between two non-colors. It is unemotional and detached and can be indecisive. *Silver* has a feminine energy; it is related to the moon and the ebb and flow of the tides - it is fluid, emotional, sensitive and mysterious. *Gold* is the color of success, achievement and triumph. Associated with abundance and prosperity, luxury and quality, prestige and sophistication, value and elegance, the color psychology of gold implies affluence, material wealth and extravagance. *White* is color at its most complete and pure, the color of perfection. The color meaning of white is purity, innocence, wholeness and completion. *Black* is the color of the hidden, the secretive and the unknown, creating an air of mystery. It keeps things bottled up inside, hidden from the world.

XVIII. Conclusion

My goal for this in-depth article was to show the various opportunities that colors can bring who work with color do not just use color randomly, they use color wheels and color theory to help create a piece that conveys meaning and emotion. Color has a powerful way of creating "mood," especially when used in a cool, warm, or a monochromatic color scheme. Artist accurately used their style and techniques when rercreating one of their masterpieces. A considerable number of processes and materials can result in colour experiences. Many have been discovered by artisans and craftsmen over the course of millennia, but until recently, the underlying causes remained mostly hidden. Coloured material are commonly thought to interact in similar ways with light, but their apparent colour is in fact caused by a variety of specific physical phenomena.

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