

Colour & Dress Designing

Unit

8

Unit 8

Colour and Dress Designing

Learning Outcomes

On the successful completion of this Unit the learner will be able to:

- Explain the main areas of fashion wear production including an understanding of the key terms, concepts, facts and principles, rules and theories of the field, discipline or practice.
- Describe the Importance of colour in designing
- Explain the relationship of colour in a garment and choosing the appropriate colour for a garment

Colour has been investigated and used for more than 2000 years. Throughout history, different civilizations have experimented and learned more about colour. We are still learning today about how colour affects us and its importance in our lives. Colour is simply light of different wavelengths and frequencies and light is just one form of energy made up from photons. Colour is a visual language. It evokes our feeling and affects our lives. It is one of the basic components of fashion, the other being, texture, details and silhouettes.

They are inter-related to one other.

The study of colour may be approached from any one of the following five angles.

- **Physiologist:** The physiologist is concerned with the way in which the eye receives the sensation of colour.
- **Chemist:** The chemist studies the chemical properties of the natural and the artificial colouring materials used for the manufacture of dyes and prints.
- **Physicist:** To the physicist the significance of colour is merely its wavelength and its intensities.
- **Psychologist:** the psychologist shows the effect of colours on persons and on each other.
- **Artist:** The artist is the persons who play with colours and are those who mix paints and dyes.

The first two is not necessary, as they do not affect the ordinary problems in the use of colours. Fifth and fourth are more important for their use in (fashion).

Prang Colour System

Basically colours are divided into three groups.

1. Primary colours
2. Secondary colours
3. Tertiary Colours

Primary Colours

Light is comprised of the colour spectrum. This spectrum is what we see in the rainbow. It is amazing that this splash of colour is built upon only three fundamental colours or hues. They are called the primary colours because they exist alone and are not created by the mixing of any other colours. These are red, blue and yellow. These colours lie an equal distance apart on the colour wheel.

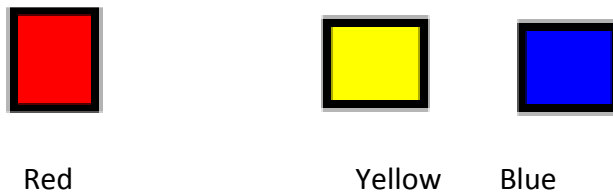


Fig 8.1

There are three Primary colours: RED, YELLOW and BLUE (Fig 8.1). Primary colours cannot be created by mixing with other colours.

Contrary to popular belief, there are actually two types of primary colours - Subtractive and Additive. Subtractive colours are colours that are used in conjunction with reflected light. In this case the subtractive colours are blue, red and yellow.

Additive colours are colours that are used in conjunction with emitted light. In this case the additive primary colours are red, green and blue.

Subtractive Colours

These are the colours that are associated with the subtraction of light and used in pigments for making paints, inks, coloured fabrics, and general coloured coatings that we see and use every day.

All printing processes use subtractive colours in the form of cyan (blue) magenta (red) yellow and black. This is known as CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) the K stands for black in the printing process. If all three of the subtractive primary colours were combined together, they would produce black.

Additive Colours

These are the colours that are obtained by emitted light. The additive primary colours are red, green and blue. If all three of the additive colours were combined together in the form of light, they would produce white.

Secondary Colours

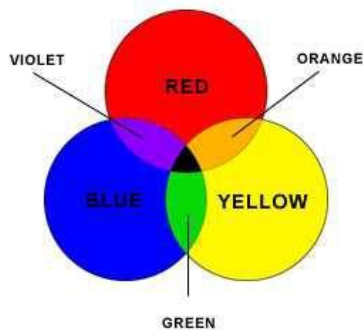


Fig 8.2

A colour created by mixing two primary colours is called a secondary colour.

For example: orange is a secondary colour which is created when the subtractive primary colours red and yellow are mixed together (Fig8.2). Secondary colours can only be created by mixing true primary colours.

Tertiary Colours

This mixing process can be extended further to create the tertiary colours. These are also called the intermediate colours. These are created when one primary colour is combined with one secondary colour in equal parts. I.e. a blue- purple hue is developed when the primary colour blue is combined with the secondary colour purple. The colour wheel demonstrates how the different hues visually relate to one another.

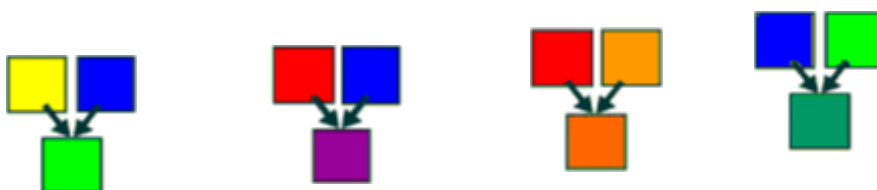




Fig 8.3

Dimensions of Colour

There are three properties or qualities which may be called the dimensions of colour and which are just as distinct from one another as the length, breadth and thickness of an object. These colour dimensions are:

1. The Hue or name of the colour (their warmth or coolness)
2. The value of the colour (their tightness or darkness)
3. The intensity of the colour (their brightness or dullness)

All these three are present in every colour, just as every object has length, breadth and thickness.

Hue

Hue enables us to tell one colour from another, such as red from blue or green.

Value

Value refers to the use of darks and lights; it is the variation of light strength in a colour. The value scale runs from white to black. White is pure light, black the total absence of light; adding white lightens a colour and adding black darkens it.

a) Tint: the lighter values are called tints. Add only white to create a tint of a particular colour i.e. the colour pink is actually a tint of red.

b) Shades: the darker values are called shades. Add only black to create a shade of that colour.

c) Tone: add various degrees of both black and white to a colour to create a tone of that colour.

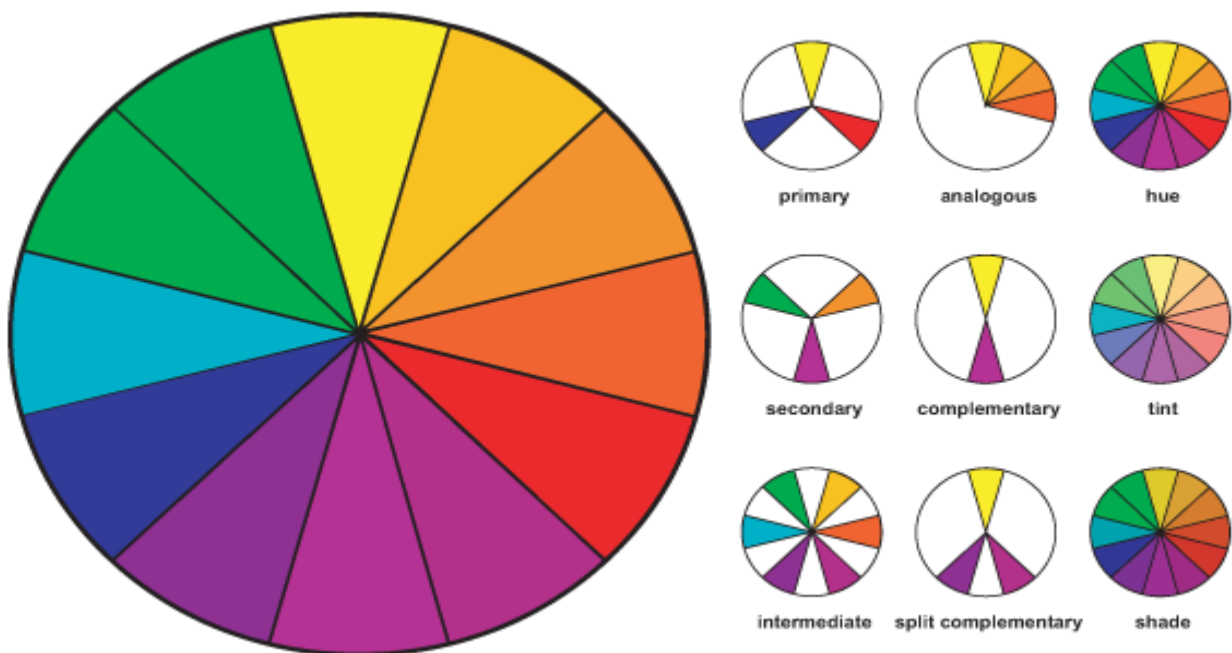
Every garment has value contrasts, even if only those created by normal gathers and folds. Strong value contrasts (pure black against pure white is the strongest) achieve a dramatic

effect. Close value contrasts lend a more conservative, refined impression that is easier for the average person to accept.

Intensity

Intensity is the relative brightness (strength) or paleness (weakness) of a colour. Bright colours are considered high-intensity, pale ones low-intensity. For instance, when paint is paled by adding water, the intensity of its colour is lowered. Within the blue hue, marine blue is high intensity and soft pastel blue is low.

Generally, vivid colours should be combined with others of the same intensity for balance. However, balance is also achieved when large amounts of pale or dark colour are used in combination with a touch of bright colour in a trim, top stitching, or embroidery.



Texture plays so important a part in colour use which cannot be ignored. Surfaces having more or less roughness reflect light in tiny accents and throw little shadows that have the effect of dulling the intensity of a colour. The texture of a smooth surface seems to blend colours used together and give the appearance of vibrating colour on a shiny surface.

Colour Harmonies

Creating colour harmony with a colour wheel:

The standard colour harmonies may be divided into two main groups.

- Harmonies of related colours
- Harmonies of contrasting colours

Harmonies of Related Colours

Related colour harmonies have one hue in common

Complementary Harmony:

Complementary Harmony results from using hues opposite each other in the colour wheel.

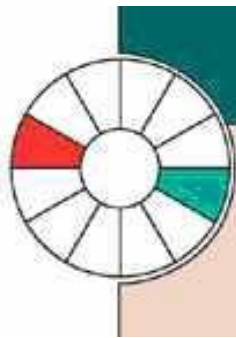


Fig.8.4

Blue and orange, red and green, yellow orange and blue-violet are an example of complementary harmony shown in Fig 6.4. Simple complementary schemes of two hues can be extended by using tints, tones, or shades of the selected hues.

When complementary hues are used in their full strength and in equal quantities, they intensify each other and produce sharp contrasts. This causes a vibration that is often painful to the eye. Red will seem redder when placed next to its complement, green, than when red is used with yellow. Green appears greener next to red than when used next to yellow. This phenomenon is called simultaneous contrast. The effect of the vibrations caused by these combinations can be lessened by using a smaller amount of intense colour or by substituting a tone or shade of the desired hue.

Split complement harmony

This is a variation on the complementary colour scheme in a slightly more sophisticated way. It is composed primarily of one dominant colour and two hues that sit across on either side of its complementary colour directly across the colour wheel.

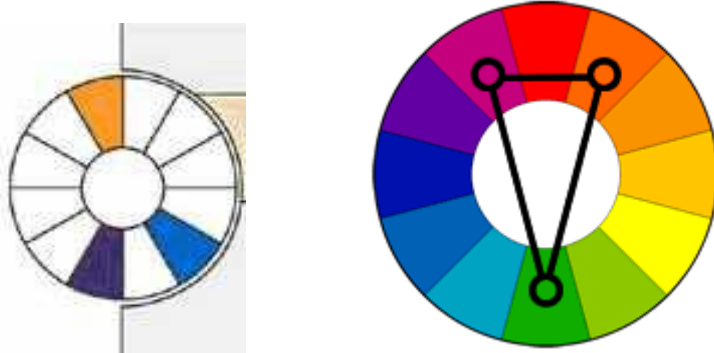


Fig 8.5

An example Fig 8.5 of a split complementary colour scheme would be yellow joined with red-violet and blue –violet

Triad harmony:

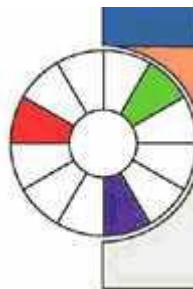


Fig 8.6

A Triad harmony uses three hues placed on equal distance on the colour wheel.

In Fig 8.6 sample triad colour schemes are yellow, red, and blue or orange, purple, and green.

Contrasting Colour Harmonies

Contrasting colour Harmonies have no hue in common.

Analogous Harmony

Analogous Harmony uses colours that appear next to each other on the colour wheel.

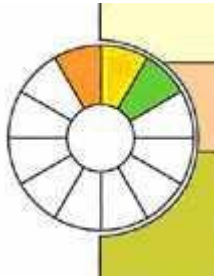


Fig 8.7

Monochromatic Harmonies

Monochromatic Harmony uses one hue.

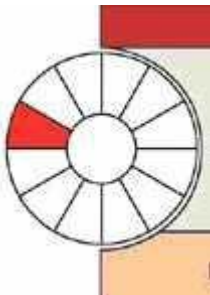


Fig 8.8

Various tints, tones, and shades of one hue are used in Monochromatic Harmony (Fig 8.8) for instance, light pink, rose, maroon, and watermelon. If value and chroma gradations are too close together, the effect may be unpleasant because of ambiguity of colours, giving the impression of a mismatch. These schemes require noticeable differences to avoid a fatiguing and monotonous effect.

Achromatic colour scheme:

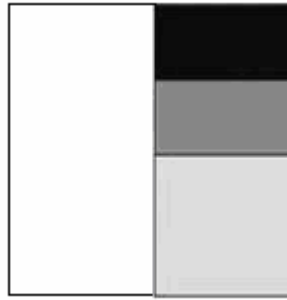


Fig 8.9

Achromatic means absence of colour. This scheme has white and black at the two extremes with tones of grey in between.

Application of Colour on Fashion Figure

Colour is one of the first things people notice about clothing. The use of colour can create illusions of the figure size in the same way as line does. Colour should be selected on the basis of complexion-hair, skin, and eyes-as well as the figure's size.

Colours should complement the complexion. A complexion that tends to be sallow (yellow tones) should wear colours that bring out the pink/red tones of the skin. A complexion that is florid (red/blue tones) should avoid colours that emphasise the redness of the skin.

Colours are classified as warm-reds, yellows, and oranges-or cool-blues, and greens. Warm colours tend to create an illusion of greater size. Cool colours tend to create an illusion of reduced size.

The brightness or dullness and the lightness and darkness of colours also affect the illusion created. Dull and dark colours seem to recede and make the figure appear smaller. Bright and light colours have the opposite effect.

Contrasting colours in tops and bottoms create a horizontal line where they meet and tend to shorten the figure. A single colour outfit gives a vertical feeling and creates an illusion of height and slimness.

Basic Principles of Colour in Design

Dominant or Controlling Colour

The dominant or controlling colour is one which either dominates the large area or gives strength of colour in a smaller area. Decide whether the foundation or background colour is to be the dominant or a secondary colour. Plan to use a large amount of quiet background colour, a small amount of bold, strong colour. All large foundation areas should be in light tones.

Greying

Greyed tones are more restful and their harmonies more subtle. Mixing grey with bright colours brings them into relation with other colours in the room. As red and yellow in bright tones seem to clash. Mixed with grey, they become rose and tan and go very well together. Use this principle also in buying materials. Avoid too much greying. It gives muddy tones.

Relief and Contrast Colours

Decide on relief and contrast colours and bring them into all parts composition. Soften strong contrast colours with white. Soften darker contrasts with grey.

Accent Colours

Use pure bright intense colours only in accessories, etc., Distribute them so they will not be spotty. The smaller the area the brighter the colour may be. The larger the area the softer the tone should be. Don't use large amounts of pure bright colour.

Keying

This is another tool of creating harmony. A key colour is the one about which the colour scheme is built- the dominant or controlling colour. All other colours in the scheme must be "keyed" with it- harmonised. Two colours in which any part of a third colour is present will be linked together.

Application of Colour on Dress Designing

Garments have combined design elements of texture, colour and line, each must be selected in relation to the figure. The effects of texture in fashion influence how colours appear and how design lines function.

When several colours are used in a single outfit, the amount, placement, and contrast between the colours used, determines the effect. If the colour is printed in the fabric design, the size of the design, as well as the colours used must be considered. Generally, the size of print should be selected in relation to the figure size. Small figures look best in fabrics with small designs. Large figures look best in fabrics with large designs.

Beautiful Colours Correctly Used

It is just as essential to fully understand and make use of the proper application of colour in design as is the application of any of the other elements of design.

Colour Types

It is quite difficult to lay down hard and fast rules as to the colours which different individuals may wear. This may be readily understood, as hardly any two people are identical as to colour of hair, eyes, skin and general contour of features and body. All of these points have a direct bearing on the colours which are suitable to be worn. For example the small, frail, flaxen-haired blonde may look attractive wearing a certain colour which on the blonde of the same complexion, but with a very large figure, would look most displeasing.

The Blonde

For blondes with grey blue or green eyes, there seems to be the opinion that greyish colours, like, blues, greens and violets, are far more suitable than the warm brownish tones. This isn't true when speaking of the fair-haired, brown-eyed person, whose skin is somewhat inclined toward the brunette type and who usually, looks well in shades of brown. As a rule, the blonde should not wear tailored clothes. She is not at all the masculine type, so she will look much better in simple, soft effects. She should not wear tweeds or very heavy materials. Her type calls for jersey, crepes, velveteen and chiffons which are much more suitable.

Heavy jewellery should be avoided by blondes. They should select small beads, dainty chains and stones such as jade, amethyst, turquoise and topaz.

Titian Haired Blonde

The titian haired girl, the one who has hair with reddish-brown shade or red should avoid the light shades of green which is the complement of red. Some of the very darkest shades of green may be suitable. The bright blues also tend to bring out the redness of the hair and should therefore be avoided. Navy or midnight blue and the soft, silent tones should be very pleasing. The deep shades of brown, also black and the cream and ivory hues, will be found to be very good.

The Brunette

If the brunette has a clear skin or good colour, any shade is possible. If she is pale she should avoid colourless dull or pastel shades. The brunette having an olive complexion, especially if she is young, should never wear dark colours as they will make her look older. The warmer tones by contrast emphasise the lustre of the dark hair and are therefore desirable. It is generally best for the brunette to use the warm colours such as reds, red orange, yellow, etc.

The Grey or White Haired

When the grey-haired lady wearing black looks well, but she must not forget that a touch of white in the form of a yoke or collar to relieve the black near the face is most necessary. White of course, being a neutral colour is very good for this type. Some of the dull warm shades may also be pleasing, if the colour of the eyes and the features warrant their use.

A Sallow Complexion

For a person with sallow complexion great care must be taken in the choice of colours. Of course there are certain colours that will help a great deal. In fact, it is far better to select those which will reflect colour in the cheeks, and in order to do these choose warm tints such as red, shades of rose, a grey colour having a tint of pink or colours of this particular type. If the complexion is very sallow avoid yellow, tans or browns for it only tends to make the complexion look yellow.

Shades of blue green, navy and blue will help to bring out the colour in the cheeks helping the skin look less yellow. However, one should be very careful in choosing shades of green, because bright greens are hard to wear by most types and should be carefully avoided by this particular one.

Florid Complexion

A person with florid complexion should not select red or shades of red. A repetition of the same colour, even though the tones and shades are different will bring out the colour. However, purples may be worn; also dark blues, dark brown or black can be worn. To be sure, light shades are attractive for some people, but for this type of person the darker shades should be chosen.

Suggested Further Readings:

- **Fashion Design Essentials: 100 Principles of Fashion Design (By Jay Calderin)**
- **Introduction to Fashion Design (By Patrick John)**
- **Fashion A Very Short Introduction (BY Rebecca Arnold)**
- **Colors for Modern Fashion (By Nancy Riegelman)**