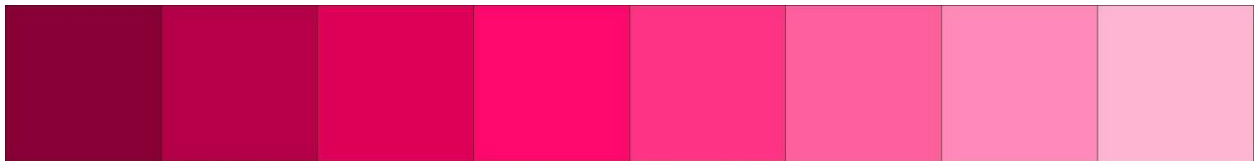


Article 13 – Monochromatic and Analogous Color Schemes

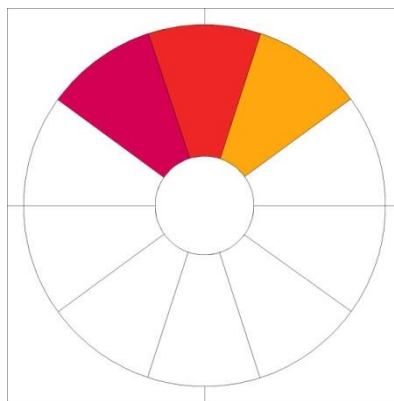
Two weeks ago I started exploring different color schemes. Color schemes are not definitive rules but they are time tested “recipes” that will help you chose effective color palettes for your projects. Today I’ll look at monochromatic and analogous color schemes.

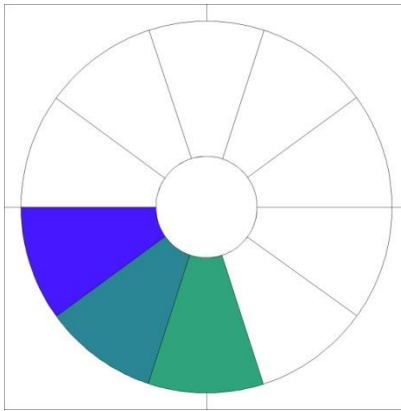
Monochromatic and analogous color schemes are referred to as “related” because of the harmony and unity of the visual impact. Contrasting schemes, like the complimentary scheme that we looked at last time, bring greater balance to your finished project than related schemes. Of course, the color palette you use is determined by the effect you are going after but knowing how they are perceived may help you with your starting point.



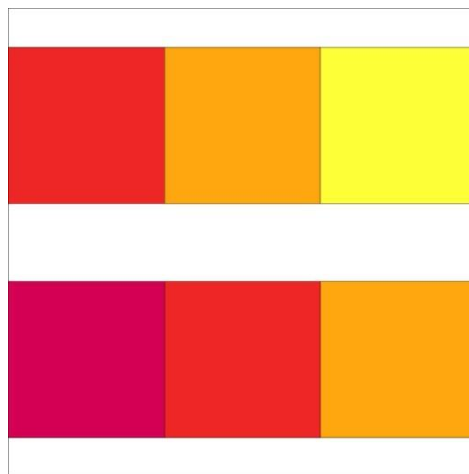
Monochromatic color schemes use one hue (or color) and all of the variation in the composition is from value. Artist Marilyn Wall uses monochromatic schemes for a lot of her fiber portraits. Monochromatic compositions, like Marilyn’s portraits, are like black and white photo in that they are more timeless. The viewer focuses on the line and shading details and is unable to focus on color. The trick is to have enough value differences to keep the composition interesting. A portrait with 8 value steps allows you to include more detail than one with 4 value steps.

Analogous color schemes are based on 3 or more hues/colors that are next to each other on the color wheel.

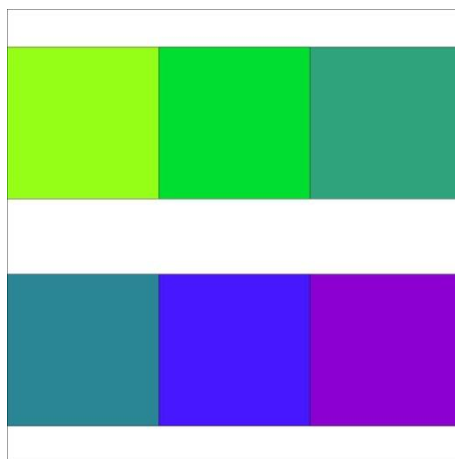




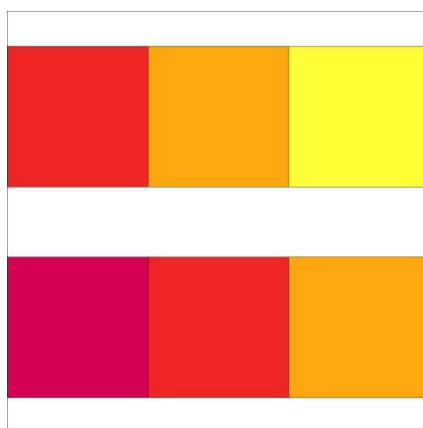
I think that as quilters we sometimes call a quilt monochromatic when it is really analogous. This is especially true with scrap quilts. You might pull out your blue scrap bin and decide to make a blue quilt. Most likely you are pulling a wide range of blues for your quilt including teal, aqua and royal blue. If that's the case, you are creating an analogous color palette, not a monochromatic one. You are focusing on color, not value.



In an analogous color scheme the middle color is considered the “common” hue that is shared but the other 2. It's the color that connects the 3 hues together. In the example above the second set with red in the middle color would be considered to be more harmonious than the top one.



Here are 2 other examples with green and blue as the connecting colors. Remember that in the Munsell wheel that there are 5 primary colors (red, yellow, green, blue and violet).



When I think of this in terms of designing quilts I do agree that the bottom palette (red as the middle color) is the more harmonious. It has some coolness in the red-violet to balance the heat of the red and red-orange. But I would not shy away from the top one. If I used red, orange and yellow I would probably be more aware of proportion and use a little less yellow than red.

Either way, I love quilts made with analogous color schemes. I think it's especially effective with scrap quilts with white and/or black added. Quilts like that sparkle.