Light: Emotion in Painting

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LIGHT:

Emotion in Painting

By
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An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

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Abstract:

As viewers, we are often unaware of the lengths that an artist goes to in selecting how they will portray their subject matter. While there is certainly value in appreciating paintings at a very involuntary level (letting yourself respond to a piece without inhibition from a cultivated knowledge base), there is also an argument to be made for understanding why our emotions are affected by a composition and, in the specific case of this thesis, by the sort of light (manifested in terms of color and value) that is used in a composition.

This thesis project is an exploration into the nature and influence of lighting in the composition, and subsequently the mood, of paintings. The primary focus of this exploration will be a series of nine paintings (each of which will seek to present its viewer with a strong sense of its mood). In order to support and expand this, I will also be pursuing a short analysis of the series and a discussion of some of the theory and movements of art that have been particularly concerned with light throughout the relatively recent history of painting. The joining of these components is, in essence, a sampling of the use of light in art. The goal of this guide is to introduce its reader to a greater degree of understanding of the relationship between the use of light in painting and the emotions that they take away from it, which can be understood regardless of their previous level of acquaintance to art.
**Introduction:**

This thesis project is, in a way, a response to many hours of both fascination and frustration. I have often been intrigued and confused by the symbolism in art and, in particular, painting. There has always been a part of me that rejected the idea of ‘literate’ symbols in art. I often find that symbolic traditions of symbolism require the over-cultivation of the artistic spirit’s ability to creatively solve the problem of communication. Rather, I revel in the emotional experience of art which takes the artist’s emotions and combines them with the viewer’s natural response by utilizing very direct and accessible technique. The simplest and most honest way that I have found to achieve this, is through manipulating the lighting of a subject to reflect the direct mood of the painting.

As I grow into this desire to create art in a way that conveys its spirit organically, I also wish to validate that my intuition (regarding how to honestly represent meaning in my paintings) does in fact reflect and is backed up by the experience of others. Because this is only one project and because of the enormous role it plays, I have chosen to focus these pages and this portfolio on the emotional effects of light and color as used in combination in painting. In the interest of this topic, therefore, I give you the following work which is essentially comprised of two basic parts; first, an intuitively-created portfolio of original compositions with my Artist’s Statement; and second, this written exploration of other artists who explored the use of light in their work, the insights of theorists on how light and color affects us on an emotional or physical level, and a brief discussion of my portfolio in response to that body of thought. This exploration will act as an expanded artist’s statement to explain the motivation behind my work and connect with those who have a less in-depth exposure to the world of art history and theory.

Because this project is presented in sections for the sake of clarity, one may find that it leans somewhat to the non-linear side of things. This is not an oversight. I have done my best,
in each section, to briefly remind us of important connections to other sections within the thesis. That being said, I hope that my reader finds as much joy in exploring these experiences as I find in using these concepts as tools to express my thoughts. More than that, I encourage the further exploration of these ideas as there is so much in this realm that simply cannot be put into words and certainly not into one undergraduate thesis.
In the physical world, it is easy to take the existence of light quite for granted. It is such a fundamental part of reality and yet we understand so little about it scientifically. Is it a wave, a particle, or something entirely different? Without light we can have no visual experience, which is arguably our most relied-upon sense. But beyond our dependence on the sun in visual terms, we know that even our bodies, as well as our minds, are strongly dependent on it as well—physically we depend on its heat for survival, and psychologically we now know that lack of sufficient sunlight can cause a variety of troubles such as depression and insomnia (a fact that can be testified to by those of us who have lived in the overcast Pacific Northwest for any length of time). So, in these ways we can understand the physical presence of light and its impact.

In the world of visual representation, we are also much accustomed to the use of light and color. We look and even create without thinking actively about why we use light in specific ways. In a combination of contextual and organic awareness, we utilize colors almost subconsciously in many instances. My goal in this body of work is to deliberately confront the use of light and color with the intent to compare the emotional effects of lighting situations.

This is in no way an entirely new subject, although my specific approach to it is my own. Instead, it is a response to a firmly established visual tradition which has been laid out before me by some of the most luminary figures of art history. Artists have been using light effects to create mood in their paintings for at least as long as modern painting has been
around. Most notably we find very strong uses of it in the works of such styles as Baroque painting, the experiments of Impressionism, and even the more modern Rayonism.

Even though the focus of these movements may seem disparate, because the way in which they each approach light is so completely different from one another, they hold a common fascination with the subject of light itself. Baroque Tenebrism utilizes selective illumination to create drama and strong focus, Impressionism (and specifically the works of Monet) focused intensely on the ability of color and light to define form as well as studying the changes in light, and Rayonism was founded on the interest of how light interacts with itself and solid objects.

My works then, seek to hold a conversation with these previous explorations of light, as a painter’s tool- In some instances, even utilizing familiar methods, as used in these movements, but always with the direct goal of provoking myself and my viewer to seek insight into why we respond the way we do to the color palettes in each painting.
Works:
**Historical Context:**

The following pages in this section are a review of the use of Tenebrism in Baroque painting, experiments with light and color in Impressionism, and explorations of light effects in Rayonism. This section seeks to document the intent and interpretations of these movements of art and a few of the prominent artists within them. In this discussion, I hope to introduce you to the employment of light and color in these movements and how beautifully varied it is, not only in terms of psychological intention (which deals with the way the artists were trying to communicate through their pieces) but also in terms of the processes of painting which these movements utilized in order to relay that intention.

There are two main motives for my inclusion of this section. The first is to identify the influence that the artists and ideas mentioned have had on my series, which we will discuss more towards the end of this paper. The second has to do with the way in which it will open a channel of communication for some of the color theory which we will be covering in the following section. In the theory section, you will be directed back to the concepts in this historic section for some examples of how that theory has been applied.

Within this brief history, we will also find a recurring theme of movement towards the freedom to express, and a moving away from traditional methods of symbolism, a more natural expression of content as a commonality between the artists represented. I find this to be important to our project because that is what I am also seeking in my thesis portfolio—a more direct way to communicate with my viewer through the composition of my paintings.

The movements which we are specifically discussing here are traditions of Baroque painting (in which Tenebrism is a recurring characteristic), Impressionism, and Rayonism. If I had to break these three movements down to the scarcest interpretation of their use of light and color (note that this is not referring to the expression of each movement as a whole), it
would be that the tenebrism of Baroque painting uses light in a natural, psychological way, Impressionism has a more scientific approach, using color also as structure per the result of repeated observation, and Rayonism approaches light experimentally as a direct subject of its own importance. All of these things have an effect on our emotional response, but not one of these movements directly sought light and color as a sole influence of emotional interpretation. This review of materials seeks to round up the stray concepts of these movements into one coherent body of ideas for the purpose of understanding their connection to each other and the relevance of that to this discussion.  

The use of tenebrism in Baroque painting is the chronological elder of both Impressionism and Rayonism, having come into being in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.  

It is impossible to really discuss tenebrism without mentioning Caravaggio, who is truly one of the greatest empirical masters of all time, and like many true masters was very disapproved of in his time. Caravaggio was (and is still) considered something of a miscreant. He was often in trouble with the law, but because of his spectacular talent, frequently being released from legal discipline. 

Despite, and sometimes because of, the controversial nature of his work (as with Conversion on the road to Damascus), Caravaggio sparked a great deal of interest in the world of art. He was not only the primary instigator of tenebrism but also inspired many followers who would imitate his tenebristic style. During his time, Caravaggio rebelled against institutionalism and its focus on the Renaissance style which was comprised of light open spaces and states of idyllic calm. His focus was on the act of empiricism not just in form, but also in psychology. 

Caravaggio’s tenebrism exists within the broader framework of the Italian Baroque movement. He was deeply faithful to form throughout is body of work, seeking strict
empiricism in all of it, breaking away from the methods of his predecessors and contemporaries who tended to idealize their subjects. His use of extreme deep values (which is known as painting in ‘the dark manner’) was to emphasize and dramatize those moments in each piece which the viewer should be drawn to, the result of which are deeply impactful scenes full of tense action (Guasti and Neri, 8). This last point encompasses the only notable difference between tenebrism and chiaroscuro which uses shadow only as a way to create the illusion of three-dimensionality. This is commonly described as ‘value as the basis of form’ and is the philosophy in painting that value (that is lights, darks, and the shades between) are what should be used to distinguish one form from another rather than line or color. Caravaggio goes one vast stride forward from that and manipulates his values in a deceptively naturalistic way in order to draw dramatic attention to the most poignant subjects of each piece. This is what we call tenebrism.
Caravaggio

*Conversion on the Road to Damascus*, 1601.

Oil on Canvas, 91x69”

(230x175 cm).

Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.
As mentioned previously, paintings such as *The road to Damascus* and *Sacrifice of Isaac* were considered exceptionally controversial. Caravaggio was not exactly known to be politically correct and his paintings often offended traditionalists by confronting the rigid placidity of biblical and historical works. Even though many of his religious pieces were commissioned specifically for display in churches, he refused to comply with the idealism usually applied to sacred figures, insisting on depicting his saints in as realistic a way as possible without shying away from either blemishes or dramatic violence. This is evidenced in both *Conversion on the road to Damascus* and *Sacrifice of Isaac* in which the characters
are ‘flawed’ with wrinkled, rather non-placid expressions, and in the case of the first painting we are confronted with the wrong end of St. Paul’s horse. This resulted in some discomfort for many if not most of the firmly religious and academic who had not been exposed to similar styles before. He was once confronted by a contemporary who questioned him on the matter asking “Why have you put a horse in the middle, and Saint Paul on the ground? … Is the horse God?” No, the horse was not God, but he did stand “in God’s light” the man was informed by the stubborn artist.  

In a way similar to Caravaggio’s tenebrism, Impressionism as a movement was a breaking free from artistic standards that had become overbearing for artists who sought purity of expression over adherence to tradition. This change could not have occurred without the shift in social climate that took place in France during the 19th century. As author Phoebe Pool states, before the revolution, artists fell somewhere within the bounds of a “higher domestic or lower civil servant” an existence which permitted only a rigid acquiescence to the political and religious subjects which were deemed suitable by society. The Romantics began the drift away from some of these standards with their light subjects, but they were thought of as frivolous and were distained by artists who had more serious issues in mind.  

It wasn’t until 1874 that a group of artists calling themselves “Painters, Sculptors, Engravers, etc. Inc.” put up an exhibit which included Claude Monet’s *Impression, Sunrise*, which quickly became a mascot of the Impressionist movement. Théodore Duret, who was both an art critic and a supporter of the Impressionist movement, stated in 1878 that if Impressionism became a term to describe this group of artists, “It is certainly the peculiar qualities of Claude Monet’s paintings which first suggested it.” Saying that his works painted not only “the immobile and permanent aspect of a landscape, but also the fleeting appearances which the accidents of atmosphere present… his canvases really do communicate impressions.”
Where the Romantics had fought against the need for heavy religious connotations in their art, the Impressionists cast their lines even further and began painting not only unexpectedly trivial subject matter (such as a stacks of grain, or fishermen out on their boats at dawn), but they did so in a way that completely disregarded the former masters’ preference for art that drew heavily on empiricism. For centuries artists, like Caravaggio, had painted in a style that required each subject to be set forth in a manner that reflected as near to exactly the natural world as possible, down to the most minute detail on the trim of a garment or a glint of light off the scale of a fish. And then came the Impressionists, who swept through
with their loosely handled brushes and their brightly saturated pigments and most importantly their desire to capture the soul, rather than the embodiment, of their subject.

The fact that their methods were not entirely empirical in form does not mean that the Impressionists were not at all influenced by observation and scientific reason, or that their methods did not somehow also convey an empiricism of expression. Impressionism coexisted alongside an era of great discovery for scientists, and the Impressionists were not unaware of the advancement in knowledge, especially, and unsurprisingly, with regard to the science of vision. They were inspired by the ideas of theorists and inventors regarding light and optics and this affected the direction of Impressionism in more ways than one.¹¹

Perhaps the most likely point of interest for an Impressionist of the 19th and 20th centuries were the works of a theorist by the name of Eugéne Chevreul whose most prominent work was The Principals of Harmony and Contrast of Colors, and their Application to the Arts (1860). The book’s main premises are that colors have an effect on each other when seen in close proximity, and also produce some optical effects, including the haloing of a single color with its complementary which is what creates the negative after-image which we are frequently fed as “optical illusions.” These ideas, among others, are almost certainly the reason that artists like Monet began to mix their colors on the canvas optically, instead of physically mixing the paints, and by necessity of the method this lead to the looser quality which notably characterizes Impressionism.¹²

Aside from the influence of scientific ideas, there was also the influence of scientific method, the obsessive process of repetition with minute change to find the perfect and absolute answer. We see this especially in Monet’s series paintings, such as Haystacks (which includes twenty-five paintings) and Rouen Cathedral (which is even more expansive). Although they are not his only series, they are perhaps the most extensive and well-known of
Monet’s series paintings and they attest to an exhaustive attentiveness for learning and understanding the way natural differences in light (from time of day, to season, to weather) plays into the character and feel of a subject. While these two series were a study for Monet on a theoretical and practical level, it was the seeming spontaneity with which they were perceived that earned them a place in the public’s heart. In 1980 Gustave Geoffroy wrote about them saying that they were “the poetry of the universe in the small space of a field…” and many agreed with him in acknowledging their importance not only to art but also to culture.

On the following pages is a small sampling of each series which illustrate how vastly different of a feel Monet managed to capture with each subtle change of light.
Claude Monet  
*Haystack. End of Summer, ~1890/1891.*  
Oil on Canvas, 23.8x39.7”  
(60.5x100.8 cm).  
Musée d’Orsay, Paris

Claude Monet  
*Stacks of Wheat, End of Summer, 1897.*  
Oil on Canvas, 23.6x39.4”  
(60x100 cm).  
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago

Claude Monet  
*Grainstacks in the Sunlight, Morning Effect, ~1890/1891.*  
Oil on Canvas, 25.6x39.4”  
(65.5x100cm).  
Private Collection

Claude Monet  
*Painting of Wheatstacks, Snow Effect, 1891.*  
Oil on Canvas, 25.5x39.25”  
(64.5x99.7 cm).  
J. Paul Ghetty Museum
Claude Monet
*Painting of The Portal of Rouen Cathedral in Morning Light*, ~1894.
Oil on Canvas, 29.5 x25.63” (100.3x65.1 cm).
J. Paul Ghetty Museum.

Claude Monet
*Rouen Cathedral. Facade (Morning effect)*, ~1892-1894.
Oil on Canvas
Essen, Germany.

Claude Monet
*Kathedrale von Rouen (Das Portal bei Morgensonne, Harmonie in Blau)*, 1893.
Oil on Canvas, 35.8x24.8” (91x63cm).
Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Claude Monet
*Rouen Cathedral, The Façade in Sunlight La cathédrale de Rouen, le portail*, 1894.
Oil on Canvas, 41.9x29” (106x73.7 cm).
Clark Art Institute, Williams Town, Massachusetts
One could say that each of the movements we’ve discussed so far were extraordinary steps forward in the modernization of painting, and it would be uncontestably true, but neither one compares to level of modernity that Rayonism achieved. While Baroque tenebrism only uses its particular variety of light as a tool by which to expand a narrative and Impressionism experiments with how a subject can be simplified and exaggerated by way of optically mixing light on the canvas, Rayonism is unique in that it approaches rays of light not as a product of their environment, but rather as the most important aspect of a subject.

Rayonism is a true child of modernity. It is small, individual, and, in a way, exclusive. Its invention seems almost too deliberate (as with many other modern artistic movements), seemingly a way for its creators to differentiate themselves from other movements of the time. It lasted as a movement for barely two years (from 1912-1914).

The primary source for any information on this movement is in ”Rayonists and Futurists: A Manifesto” written by the movement’s two creators, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov, which reads more like a statement on artistic politics than the artist’s statements we are used to now. From this manifesto we read a strong contempt for mediocre artists attempting the avant-garde process that proclaim “new ideas of art” which rages against the popularity of modern art that it deems unsuitable to be called real art. The irony of this is that, in their statement of liberation from artists who claim to have found new ways to make art, the Rayonists themselves fall under the category of the avant-garde.

Along with the many paragraphs the manifesto spends on explaining their political motivations and not talking about their creations, there are a few very short paragraphs that somewhat state the direction that their art intends to take:

“The style of Rayonist painting that we advance signifies spatial forms arising from the intersection of the reflected rays of various objects, forms chosen by the
artist’s will… That which is valuable for the lover of painting finds its maximum expression in a Rayonist picture. The objects that we see in life play no role here, but that which is the essence of painting itself can be shown here best of all—the combination of color, its saturation, the relation of colored masses, depth, texture; anyone who is interested in painting can give his full attention to all these things.”

Because it was such a short-lived movement, there is little besides the Rayonist’s own manifesto to explain their work. Luckily, as visual art, it speaks for itself. While Visual-arts-cork describes the Rayonist style as following the, “unscientific notion of invisible rays,” as a viewer of the art and a reader of the Rayonists’ one piece of literature, I find their approach to be in the strictest terms, scientific. While it is true that the Rayonists were interested in conveying “maximum expression,” as stated above, their whole method in this is to isolate “reflected rays” from their environment and study them as subjects, to see how they interact with each other rather than with the outside world. While other movements seek abstraction in order to be released from the duty of realizing form in a physically accurate way, the Rayonists use it as a tool by which they can single out an elusive entity that is often neglected.
Natalia Goncharova

Green and Yellow Forest, 1913.
Mikhail Larionov

*Nocturne*, 1913-14
Oil on canvas, 50.2 x 61 cm.
Tate Gallery, London, UK

Looking at the paintings of the Rayonists feels like what it might be to look at light under a microscope. It is what we would see if light were not just an abstract concept, but the actual subject or material. In Goncharova and Larionov’s paintings, light behaves crystalline and rigid, like shards of glass. It jetties out sharply into other similarly styled structures in a way that at the same time looks both wild and precise.

To review, we have seen that the role of light in painting has, at least since the post-renaissance period (and arguably before then) been an important one, and that often a change in it comes along with a shift toward greater expression and experimentation. What begs further exploration is whether artists, especially those we mentioned in this review, have
actually been using formulas that contain meanings which are translatable as emotion on a universal level. This concept is made understandable when you realize that the question is not regarding some set of symbols which hold power to sway the perception of a viewer whether or not they have taken the time to have learned them, but rather I am suggesting that, based on the common factors of human experience, we (all humans) might have the same basic reaction to a variety of light and color combinations, and that this sort of reaction can allow us to experience an artist's intended emotion when viewing a painting if he has used them in this common way. This will be further explored in the section on Color Theory which follows.
Color Theory:

Art theory has a complicated identity in both abstract terms and in terms of application. Art is subjective by nature and (to be cliché) rules are meant to be broken. This is an adage which is especially relevant when you stop to realize that many, if not most, of us who are self-described artists tend to rely primarily on intuition as a form of guidance. It is the belief of this author, however, that intuition is at times in need of some encouragement and so I do not consider study of the theory of my pursuit a poor use of time in any way. Even beyond understanding theory for the purpose of creating art, I have found that many viewers, who are interested in understanding and appreciating the content of a piece also find themselves somewhat thwarted by the intricacy of symbolic and structural aspects of composition. To add to the confusion, I also find that most instructional materials, which claim to expose these concepts, are written in a way that is neither accessible nor enjoyable for the reader. While some of this is due to the complicated task of translating a visual experience into linguistic terms which, though it is filled with broad flexibility, is unsuited to expressing all of the many facets that make up a composition, some of it can also be ascribed to an unfortunate lack of enthusiasm and desire to truly connect to the reader on the part of those who lay out these treatise.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, I will not be discussing the more deliberately refined symbolism (such as is found in much of the world’s religious art), nor will I be talking about theories such as color harmony. While these are both interesting subjects and certainly important for study by artists and viewers alike, they have not so much to do with the natural process of communication by light as some of the other areas I would like to touch on. This section then is broken down into two basic units which are the Physical attributes of color theory, and the Psychological effects of color. Both of these do involve the
In the way in which we perceive light, and the border between them can be somewhat difficult to make out, but the main difference is that the former is primarily compositional in nature, and the latter has to do mainly with the raw condition of color.

To begin with we will be speaking on what I have decided to call the physical attributes of light and color, which are the things about color which happen outside of the viewer’s interpretation (color mixing, perceived scale, etc.). Much of what is taught in art theory stems from the treatise by Goethe, which is commonly known as “Goethe’s Color Theory”. Unfortunately for us Goethe, and those who have translated him, are not the easiest to wade through and for that reason I will be extracting a few of his relevant ideas and discussing them along with other sources in this section (although I strongly suggest, if you find this section intriguing, getting yourself a copy of his work, as there is a great deal of insightful and sometimes comedic observation within it, if taken at a moderate pace).

The first thing to understand about color in painting is that pigments behave in a vastly different manner from the perceived color in a 3-dimensional world, and this in itself has been a timelessly recurring obstacle with which painters are faced. If you will recall, at the beginning of this thesis I said that we don’t know very much about light and how or why it manages to exist and yet remain one of the only completely intangible things in nature. That being said, we have begun (over the last few centuries) to discover some of the ways in which light and subsequently color (for the two are incapable of separation) behave.

Our perception of color can essentially be divided into two basic categories. These categories are Additive and Subtractive color. Subtractive color is often the only variety that is brought up for artists (although this is certainly changing with the growing relevance of digital art and with exception to theatre and performance art), and this would seem to make sense as it deals with pigments (that is the physical surfaces of objects). On the other hand,
additive color is most easily described as the color of the *actual light*, either by way of origin or by way of filter, which we only perceive through its interactions with the physical world (i.e. things that are inevitably pigmented). Unsurprisingly, these two different “sources” of color behave *very* differently, not just in terms of how our eyes deal with them, but also in the way they deal with each other. Let me explain.

Many people are fairly comfortable with the rules of subtractive color, thanks to those patient few responsible for our early educations who taught us about mixing our primary colors (that is Red, Yellow, Blue) to make secondary colors (Green, Orange, Violet, etc.), and, if you were really into it, tertiary and so on. Only somewhat fewer people find themselves right at home with a color wheel or the term ROYGB(I)V (Red, orange, yellow, green blue, (indigo), violet) and chances are you don’t even have to think about it to execute its principals-- you may even be acquainted with some of the corresponding rules on color harmony.

What people aren’t told about nearly as often, aside from perhaps a brief overview in an introductory lecture and neglected thereafter, is additive color. You might think that as a physical, pigmented process painting couldn’t have less to do with additive color, but this assumption would be unfortunately misguided. Here’s the thing: we don’t get to see *any* subtractive color without the influence of additive color (and vice versa). Our whole visual experience is based on an inseparable combination of the two and that is exactly why it is so difficult (and amazing when done properly) to capture the idea of light in a painting. We’ll be brought back to this a little later as well when we talk about color vibration.
So how does additive color work? The basic aim of additive color is in reaching pure “white” light, whereas the goal in subtractive color is to get pure and unadulterated black pigment. I am not saying that is the goal of the artist or technician, but that this is the goal of pigment vs. light. When all the purest forms of the primary pigments (subtractive) are combined we reach black. This is because what we see as color from pigment is the length of light that is not accepted or absorbed by the texture of the pigment, so when we continue to add the different pigments on top of each other, we are making an increasingly light-absorbent surface. This is also why adding a color’s complement results in a more neutral (that is less saturated) color and why we can’t perceive subtractive color without taking into account additive color. Take a deep breath and read that again if you need to. If this is your first time hearing such a thing it is a difficult concept to grasp, which is why we have color wheels to help us.

The image on the left is our subtractive color guide. What you might notice is that magenta and cyan have replaced red and blue as primary colors, which is a relatively recent and not yet fully incorporated occurrence, which we won’t go into here. All this to say that Additive color works in the opposite way. Additive is the light that we are projecting onto a
surface; in a dark room each primary selection added to the next will reach closer to white. This is because instead of color being caused by the reflection of light into your eye off a textured surface, the light is being filtered from the source, so as we add more colors we are adding more lengths of light rather than taking them away. Think about it as reverse-engineering a rainbow, which we know is the product of sunlight being broken into its different wavelengths by water droplets in the air. Additive color is what we would have if those colored water droplets were the source of light (rather than the scattering point) shining on one area all adding up to create one bright spot of white light in the distance.

The reason it is so important to painting to understand both of these concepts, and for a painter to spend time familiarizing themselves with them, is because neither additive nor subtractive light can be perceived without being touched by the influence of the other. Obviously, we can’t see a reflection of light without there being an original source, and yet we cannot perceive light cast into space unless there is something for it to reflect off of (unless you look directly at the source which I strongly advise against). For this reason, a painter must be made aware of how these two types of color interact with each other in the real world in order to accurately represent them on a canvas.

Now that we have established that there are two separate ways for our eyes to ultimately receive color, we can continue on into some of the aspects of physical color which ultimately have a great deal to do with the concepts of structure, dominance, and movement in the composition of a painting. One of the many things which we learn from Goethe is that value has everything to do with the illusion of size, and therefore dominance in a composition. You may have heard somewhere from a magazine or online column to wear dark colors if you want to look more slender, and in a way this is not entirely untrue, because according to Goethe, two circles of the same size,
one being white on a black space, and one being black on a white space, will appear to be
different sizes. The white will seem to be somewhat larger than the black.\textsuperscript{17}

What this means is that if we have a composition that is primarily dark, in which one
area has been selectively illuminated (think back to those pieces by Caravaggio), those light
areas are going to become extremely dominant. Your eye will be drawn to them far more than
any other area in the painting, conversely, a darker area in a primarily lighter setting, while it
will still draw attention, will not draw the eye quite so much, allowing the viewer more pause
and making for a quieter, less dramatic experience. We’ll come back to this later when we
talk about the psychological aspects of light and color.

Moving on from just black and white, there are two kinds of physical color
interactions which I would like to directly address and these are color strength (with regards
to interaction between a color and black or white) and color vibration (an interaction that
takes place between two hues).

Color strength is another topic that Goethe brings up in his treatise and it is especially
interesting to our study because it begins to lean toward not just the visual experience of
color, but also suggests that there is (as we have assumed all through this work) a
psychological aspect. The reason that I haven't put it in the later section is because it is not
focused on interpretation so much as it is on observation. What has been formed by this
observation is the theory that the strength of different kinds of color is affected in different
ways by light or dark values than other colors would be. Goethe says that the “active” side of
the color wheel loses strength when mixed with white but gains it when mixed with black,
while the passive side does the exact opposite. We can simplify this a bit to meaning “warm”
vs. “Cool.” If you look at a traditional color wheel, you’ll notice that the colors on the warm
side of the wheel are lighter in value that those that are on the cool side, which would seem to
contradict what Goethe just said. My interpretation on Goethe’s, however, is that when he is adding white or black he is beginning with colors that are at the intensities with which they are seen in a traditional color wheel rather than first bringing them all into a neutral shade. So, let’s test:
Comparing these partial wheels to the original, we see can confirm that, indeed, the intensity or (as Goethe calls it) “strength” of the cooler colors increases when we add white and decreases significantly when we add black. In the case of the warm colors, while green and red seem both to suffer less, the strength of the colors decrease when white is added (though less significantly than with the cool and black), while they become quite fierce with the addition of black.

Our last topic for the more direct aspects of color theory is Color Vibration. This concept is traditionally broached in discussion with other theories described by its author, Joseph Albers, and can be read directly from his book “Interaction of Color.” Although he mentions it only briefly, it put into words the color mixing techniques that were used by the Impressionists. The theory essentially states that “…between colors which are contrasting in their hues [and] also have close or similar intensity” there is a visually energetic reaction in which the colors presented to the eye mix in the viewers sight to create new “shadow” colors. He describes the sensation to the viewer as “aggressive and often uncomfortable” and also notes that in many situations it is avoided for the disagreeable effect it can have due to its ability to dominate.¹⁸

Squint your eyes at the complementary colors provided here on the left to notice that the shade (or value) is the same. Also notice that the border between the two rectangles is incredibly difficult to look at. This is because, as Albers said, although these two colors are quite opposite from each other on the color wheel, the similarity of the value is enough to cause your eye to visually mix the two. If you jump back
to the Monet paintings that were provided for you earlier in the text, you will see that, used in varied quantities, this can be an extremely attractive technique, but, as seen above, when it is in too great a quantity (where it is just one set of complimentary colors being compared) it becomes hyperactive and potentially headache-inducing.

Our final step for this section of this thesis is the actual psychological effects of color. Although much of what has been specifically observed about this topic is focused primarily on individual colors for the sake therapy and even the presentation of interior space, we will be combining what we just learned about some basic physical color theory with it to explain the phenomenon in a way that is applicable to fine art painting.

To preface, much of the following can be incredibly subjective; personal experiences with color can drastically affect an individual’s response for any number of reasons. Much of the information that has been compiled so far is also predominantly Western in influence, so cultural differences may cause some bias on the part of the research and or confusion on the part of the reader (for example, environmental associations to a color). This being said, some cultural differences can be considered another variety of literate symbolism (something you have to be taught rather than something purely reactive) and while this is worth investigation, it is not where our focus lies in this project.

For this section, I will first discuss the interpretation of hue, second will be value, and third will be a discussion on saturation. Lastly, I want to briefly recap some information on contrast because of its relation to all three of the concepts and our interpretation of lighting.

As we discussed before, hue is most effectively explained in terms of a color wheel and is most easily divided into two halves: warm and cool.19 We will discover in this section how the two sides of the color wheel create very different reactions for the viewer. In basic separation, we know that cool colors have a way of being less energetic, more rejuvenating,
and as a whole less emotional. Warm colors on the other hand reflect a greater amount of light making them far more stimulating and can become overwhelming or tiring in too high of concentration—they also have strong associations with food and warmth, which are both basic human necessities. These things will be made more evident as we look into how individual colors affect our physiological state.

Red is often seen as a very powerful color and frequently misstated as the most visible color to humans, but this is not without reason. What red is, actually, is the longest wavelength in the color spectrum, which is what makes it so attention-grabbing (note its prevalence among traffic signs). On a purely physical level, it has the ability to elevate our pulse which speeds up our perception of time and also lends to its interpretation as the color of romance or sexuality. It has the combined force of liveliness with aggression.

Yellow is opposite red in terms of its place on the warm side of the color wheel, as well as in terms of the way it affects our mind. Where red has very physical results, yellow has more emotional power. It tends to heighten the viewer’s sense of self-esteem when used with moderation but can have the effect of lowering it when it is pushed too far towards green or black and can cause anxiety. This may be due to associations with illness.

Orange is essentially the balance between the physical, abrupt force of red and the emotional force of yellow. It is high energy, the warmest of all the hues (while you can technical have a “cool” red or yellow, you cannot have a cool orange since it is sandwiched in the middle of the warm group), and thus tends to remind us of physical comfort. Its effects are typically very optimistic.

Where red is the longest wavelength, violet is the very shortest one before ultraviolet. This elusive property is what encourages its association with the spiritual, or in other ways
notions of the elite. Because it can be so difficult to perceive, it also serves to encourage contemplation and creativity.20

Green is found in the very middle of the visible spectrum, making it (purely due to its physical value) far easier to look at than other colors. It is extremely comfortable to the eye and becomes representative of balance because of this. Beyond that, however, it also tends to be psychologically reassuring because of its close association to vegetation and the presence of water, along with the sheer frequency with which the color occurs in the natural world.

Blue, similarly to the position of orange on the warm side, is the coolest possible color, and because of its position between green and violet offers a balance between the comfortable qualities of green and the intellectual violet. This combination of characteristics allows the viewer to distance themselves from strong stimulus and creates a calming experience, which is also why it is sometimes used in office spaces because it encourages an absence of emotional involvement. However (because it is also the antithesis of orange, which often instills those values of comfort and well-being) blue also has the ability to induce a sense of sadness when used in some settings.

We already spoke some on the importance of value to the visual experience when we learned about Goethe’s observations on how light and dark spaces interact with each other to create areas of dominance. Here, I want to explain some of the psychological effects of it in a similar manner to the way we discussed hue.

We already know that black, in subtractive terms, is essentially the result of the concentration of pigments allowing for a surface to completely absorb light. This level of absorption is what gives it the appearance of weight and tendency towards oppressiveness. This is also what gives it the qualities of being serious and closed off or intimate, because it does not allow for excessive stimulus.
White, as we know, is the result of a lack of pigment, which allows a surface to reflect light back into our eyes in its original, pure form. As Goethe noted, this causes it to take up more visual space because it dominates the eye’s perception. As a color, it also has the associative interpretations of being clean or sterile because of its lack of chromatic involvement.

Also in the realm of value, are the various shades of grey. As you might suspect, since it is merely the mix between the hue-less black and white, it lacks the emotional properties of most colors as well as the strength of either pure black or pure white. This means that it essentially acts as a moderator for the colors that it affects, giving the eye time to pause in an image, therefore becoming a suppressant of whatever other emotional influences are present.

This leads us back to our earlier discussion on the strength of colors when made either lighter or darker. If you’ll recall, the basis of this was that warm colors carry their greatest power when they become darker (not to be confused with less saturated), while cool colors become stronger when made somewhat lighter. We have to realize that both of these conditions are subject to a certain amount of constraint, as movement too far in either direction is going to cause the colors to become difficult to distinguish. What the theory indicates is that warm colors can go farther from their shade on the color wheel to the dark side and cool colors can go farther to the light side before becoming too difficult to distinguish from each other. What this means for us here is that, whatever emotion those colors carry with them is going to be impacted by the emotional tendencies of white or black when added. Again, we have not yet gotten to saturation, we are merely discussing value.

So, if a warm color, such as orange (which, as we mentioned before tends to remind us of physical comfort, as it is a balance between yellow and red, and of life necessities like food and fire because of being a warm color), is lowered to a darker value becoming closer to
black, which is characterized by being closed off or oppressive, what sort of emotion do we get? Remember, the color orange itself is darkened, not a clear color surrounded by dark.

First, look at this shade of orange on its own. It looks decently happy, maybe it makes you think of summer or citrus, or pumpkins. Now, look at it compared to the darker orange. The light orange starts to look almost washed out and powerless in comparison to the darker one. But, if you cover the light orange and look at the darker orange by itself, you might notice that some of the optimistic qualities have disappeared. It starts to feel a little overwhelming. However, if you increase the darkness too much, as is done in the third figure, it starts to lose the potency of color, even though it maintains or increases the oppressive feeling of the black, it begins to lack the specific comments of the orange. Even so, if we were to compare it to a complete black, we start to notice them again, which reminds us that when it comes to the interpretation of colors, there is always going to be a factor of comparison to local colors, so while a piece will have an over-arching theme to it, the way we interpret individual elements is indicated not just by the element itself but also by the elements surrounding it.

From this experiment we can expect that the same would be true of other warm colors when combined with black, with the enhancement being, of course, in relation to the original emotional effect of the hue. Dark red will be a more intense and oppressive version of red, while yellow, which begins to lean towards the direction of cool in comparison to the other
hues, takes on the sickly or anxious cast that we mentioned earlier. At first this might seem a little self-contradictory, but what we deal with in terms of yellow boils down to the tension between the two expected reactions. Since yellow is usually hyper-emotional and black is the opposite, the eye has to struggle to reconcile the two, making the combination psychologically uncomfortable, which might be heightened by our environmental experience with the dark yellow shades (bruises, rot, etc.).

On to the cool colors. We will do our experiment with blue, since it is the most cool, and look at its interaction with white to see why this combination makes it more prominent. We already know that blue’s basic result is to distance us from emotional connections and create a space in which to be objective. Already we can see why white would serve to heighten this feature, since white also has the impression of being uncorrupted or pure. So, when we combine the two effects we are left with something that is other than the emotional human existence, an experience that could be both calming and also seems to leave the viewer behind because it makes the subject feel untouchably serene.

Think about this in context of the other cool colors then, and we notice that purple, which is more mentally rigorous than blue, when combined with white, is going to feel a bit more active than blue, but still lacks the emotional connection of a warm color, which is again heightened by its combination with white, while green’s association with balance, heightened by the sterility of the white, creates that idea of freshness or newness (which is encouraged, again, by comparisons to the natural world and the idea of vegetation and growth).
And now we will mention saturation. Saturation refers to the chromatic purity of a color rather than its value. One color can be exactly the same value as another color and yet be completely different in terms of saturation. There is really only one way in which saturation affects a color, and that is in terms of potency. This is why I was concerned earlier that the reader might become confused between saturation and value, because according to that discussion, value can also affect potency. The difference, is that, with regards to saturation, the effect is the same on all colors regardless of whether they are warm or cool. In every situation, the introduction of grey to a color (which, remember, always serves as a suppressant, devoid of its own direct influence because it is the balance between white and black and has no chromatic impact) will always cause that color to become less dominant in comparison to the original state of the color. If you squint your eyes at the images on the left, you will see that, while the value of the each set of squares is identical, the strength of the emotion changes due to the respective effect of adding in the grey.

Our last thing to mention, then, is contrast. We have already covered the way that it affects greyscale in terms of prominence, and hue in terms of color strength and emotional effect, in the physical theory, we also talked about how contrasting hues of equal strength also have the ability create a certain amount of activity based on tension. What this means for us now, is that, along with what we have already discussed about the specific qualities of hues, values, and levels of saturation, the amount of contrast in a composition and the way in which it is used has an enormous effect on the activity level of a painting—whether that be towards the side of ecstatic, as we might
experience in a predominantly high-key setting, or in the direction of melodramatic as might be expected from something which is predominantly low-key. The fact that contrast can come from more than just value, however, allows us to create that kind of tension between complements and saturation, which is what gives us the ability to create more nuanced and specific emotions in a composition than would ever be possible if we were required to use only one range of emotion.
Self-Critique of Works:

It is a difficult thing to put into words something that is based so much on a responsive process and which varies so greatly from one’s physical and mental condition from day-to-day. Up to this point we have focused mostly on concepts which are either historic or theoretical—in essence: teachable. Now we must turn to a topic that is by its own nature subject to change based on every possible condition— from the minute shifting of an easel to the ever-changing Oregon weather, to the amount and sort of energy that the artist has at the time of painting.

According to the factors mentioned above, I hope that you will accept the variation in composition from one painting to another in each set as no more than evidence of the painting’s originality. That being said, I will not neglect to take into account how those variations may, at times, compromise or alter the expression of the theories I will be relating them to in the following pages.

For your convenience as you read the following section, the thesis portfolio is reproduced in a more compact scale for comparison of the works to each other on the following page:
Process Notes:

For my compositions, I settled on doing a self-portrait, a hand study, and an abstract piece. The reason for these choices was to hopefully show that no narrative and no particular subject is necessary for the interpretation of the emotion presented in each painting. Within each of the compositions I used three different lighting situations (applied to each of the three compositions). That’s nine separate paintings, three separate subjects, and each subject is painted in a consistent manner within the lighting situations.

I assume it will be clear to the viewer that the abstract pieces especially are very much an academic exercise within this project, but I find them the most necessary as they offer a slate on which no assumptions are typically made—while organic variation in a self-portrait or a still-life cannot be helped by the nature of painting from life, abstract or non-objective pieces give an exact structure for comparison with the others. In effect, the abstract pieces are my “purity control,” which not only show my viewer that I mean business, but also help my eye to remain honest as I work on the other paintings.

I wanted to pick lighting situations based on my own intuition, so I decided on those before doing any research on the psychological effects of light and color. This has two lines of reasoning behind it. The first reason is that it serves to test the consistency of perception, “if my research says that a certain lighting situation affected a person in one way, but I intuitively felt another way about it based on my own experience, how does that effect the solidity of the theory?” The second reason is that it allows me to paint honestly from how I experience the world, rather than playing to an agenda based on how I feel about the research and my support of it. The difference may be subtle, but the idea is to keep my work my own, rather than parroting the ideas of someone else.
The lighting situations I chose are in technical terms: high-key warm, high-key cool, and low-key selectively-illuminated warm. But I did not choose them based on these technical terms, but rather on emotional context. This section was written well in advance of my research in previous sections, so you might notice a few redundancies— I have left them in so as to allow the viewer to see for themselves how an individual’s concepts of color interpretation might align to the more specific studies that have been done on the subject. Your experience with colors in the past may have been vastly different due to local conditions. I advise you not to dismiss these differences as ineptitudes on the part of the researchers, myself or you (the reader/s) but to take them into consideration when viewing and making art.

I chose the high-key warm lighting situation with the purpose of expressing joy. In terms that I prefer this means bright yellows and goldenrods. In my experience, bright warm colors feel exuberant, happy, hopeful. There’s nothing disturbing, no tension (because it’s lit clearly there’s no mystery), and the warmth of the color is reminiscent of things that are fundamental to survival (the sun, a hearth for cooking, ripened crops) and are therefore things that we feel good about.

I’m using the high-key cool lighting situation in the hopes of conveying a sense of peace or tranquility. Again, the actualization of this is muted blues, not so vibrant as to make them active, but soft to keep them calm. My reasoning for the middle range key is that it is not overwhelmingly in either direction—too bright and it might be overly exciting or busy, too dark and it would create tension or mystery, a level of seriousness that is unwanted in a hopefully peaceful situation. The blue is for a similar reason, cool colors are generally very passive and quiet. The things I see in nature that are blue are also usually calm—a lake when it is still, or the sky when it is clear. But also keeping it low in saturation is important as any sudden temperature changes may cause too much energy.
The low-key selectively illuminated warm is intended to create a great deal of tension, hopefully even induce some level of fear or unease. I’ve chosen darkness for this because darkness is something that is associated usually with fearful or dramatic things, and further than that, selective illumination is dramatic in the same way that a spotlight on a stage is—it singles out and makes important the things that you want to see and conceals others. I’ve chosen warm because of the sense of vitality it has. Even though, as I mentioned earlier, warmth is associated with things that we need in order to survive, it is also associated with serious, deadly or banal things that are reminders of mortality (blood, lust, fire).

One of the hardest challenges that I faced early on in the painting portion of this project stemmed from the second lighting situation that I decided on for the compositions. I’ve found that the line between calm and sad is a very thin one when it comes to using cool colors to express those ideas. Working on both the self-portrait and the hand study, I found that the flesh tones very easily grew sickly or, when I attempted to correct this, did not situate well with the rest of the painting. My solution to this problem was to continue graying out the blue further than I had originally intended, to see if that would alleviate the problem and bring the painting closer towards my desired vision, which it did quite significantly.

Another difficulty that I found was in keeping the proportions the same throughout the repeated compositions. This was especially true of the self-portraits. The two culprits that seem to be the most involved with this are the canvas size, which forced the portraits to be larger-than-life and so I was dealing with scaling up along with repeating myself, and also possibly the fact that I was painting from life and not from a design or a compiled photograph as was done with the other paintings. Because of this, it is difficult to tell what compositional changes are from the structural differences, and what is actually caused by the light and color that I used in each of the paintings.
Along with the issues of maintaining precise repetition with the self-portrait, I also had the added difficulty of having fluctuated in weight between the first two self-portraits and the third (yellow) one, meaning that structure of my actual face had become less full when I went to paint what should have been the most cheerful looking piece. Add to this the problem of stress (our subject is a college student worker on her thesis, remember) and no matter how hard I tried I simply could not make the portrait look blissful in the way I desired. While this was (and still is) a frustrating contradiction to my thesis in that the warm bright colors didn’t seem to be lifting the gloom off of the painting, it does not necessarily hold true that if I could re-hue that exact painting with its exact proportions and emotions, it would not still alter (however minutely) the precise level and direction of emotion that can be seen in the painting. But, if I must concede that light and color do not hold all power in the narrative of a face, then I am willing to admit to the following, especially with regards to portraiture:

Regardless of a painter’s intended message, when painting from life we are painting not just the body but also the human soul. The mood of the person is always reflected somewhere on that person’s physical body, even if it means only the slightest change in posture. In this personal case, it meant the eyes sank a bit further back and the lids and whites were reddened from lack of sleep, the attempt at a natural placid position for the mouth fell into the firmer set of concentration since the subject was also the painter.

What I do take assurance from is that, even with the relatively unsuccessful nature of the portrait pieces, the other two sets do seem to uphold the thesis objective. And when taking time to consider it, this does make a lot of sense. Although it is a cliché to say it, the eyes really are the window to a person’s soul, and so when painting a close cropped portrait such as I attempted—especially on a scale that is somewhat larger than life, they become an extremely dominant feature and it is a difficult thing as a viewer to not focus almost all our attention on the area where in a real person we would hope to find so much communication.
In the same breath, as a painter, it’s also exceptionally difficult not to spend proportionately more time on the eyes, than in any other area, not only because they are more detailed and complex, but because, as with the viewer, that is where we constantly return to focus. In contrast to this, the narrative of a hand or an abstract piece has far more open possibilities for a primary point of focus, and with the exception of a few hand gestures that do have very specific cultural meaning (which does change drastically from place to place), there are therefore far fewer pitfalls for a painter who is going into a painting with a particular goal in mind, since he has more freedom to articulate exactly what he means without sacrificing honesty to the subject at hand.

In Review:

What strikes me most about my portfolio and the theories that we discussed here, is how close my initial intuition was to what I discovered in the theories of others. In a way, this really should not come as a surprise, since if those studies are truly descriptive of the average human reaction to color and not a prescriptive idea which is what we were trying to avoid by doing this study, my reaction should have at least some similarities to the average physical and emotional responses. The question I still have on this topic is to wonder how much of that correlation lies in the fact that many of my external associations with those colors are likely influenced in the same way culturally and environmentally as those of the authors of those studies. If we were able to completely remove ourselves from other environmental influences, would those wavelengths of light affect us in the same way?

In some ways I feel that they might, especially in terms of the red, green and violet whose interpretations are notably based on physical responses (such as blood pressure and their respective placements on the wavelength scale). But in other ways it seems like our associations stem very much from environmental factors (such as orange reminding us of warmth from a fire or food, and green reminding us of vegetation or the presence of water).
Again, this would require an entirely separate study to untangle, due to the vast complexities of the questions and all of the personal factors that anyone studying it would have to be able to disassociate themselves from.

For me, the first and most obvious connection between my work and the work of those movements I mentioned before, is in the set of dramatic pieces and their recollection of Baroque tenebrism, which had such a specific goal in mind (to create intense psychological drama). What it expresses is that we can prove both intuitively and in the research of color theorists, such as Goethe, that Caravaggio’s approach to creating drama is indisputably successful—when there is a stark contrast in value and the lighter aspect is the figure rather than the ground, it can (and usually does) create an environment of tension and dominance. It is almost overbearingly tense at times. This also says something about our intuitive abilities when it comes to artistic choices such as these.

At the end of the day we can each only account for our own natural response to a specific piece or effect, and when we spend too much time cultivating a set rule for anything, but especially regarding art, we will always run into an exception. There is most likely at least one person who, for example, relates to dark pieces in a very different, maybe less dramatic way than I do. This could be for any range of reasons from experiential (perhaps they have very warm or calm memories that take place in light settings such as this) to psychological (some mental states simply don’t allow for the deep connections to the environment that so many of us are accustomed to). What this means for painters and creators is that, while it’s always good to be aware of the theoretical approach to our trade, it is equally if not more important to question those approaches and ask if they are actually true for ourselves. If they are, wonderful; utilize it, move forward, and take it to places that you wouldn’t have gone on your own. If you question it and you find that you cannot agree, test it, figure out why it isn’t true, fashion your own art around its failures and share that insight
with the world in whatever way you can, because we wouldn’t have the theories that we have now if people such as Goethe, Albers and Monet hadn’t done the same thing.

The next strong influence from the artists that I have already discussed involves both Impressionism and Rayonism. Once you remove yourselves from some of the nit-picky details on how these two styles of painting were founded, there is a somewhat surprising similarity between them. Although they approach it in dramatically different ways, both of these movements, and the artists involved, were seeking to focus on their respective subjects by way of eliminating focus on all other aspects that would usually interfere with the observation of it. In the case of Rayonism this meant abstraction nearly to the point of non-objectivity in some cases (although if you have been exposed to a great deal of art theory you will know that there is nothing that is truly non-objective), for Impressionism it meant the obsessive pursuit of color as the basis of form. And this is what inspired the basic approach to my series. In order to extract the commentary that I wanted and to prove that it worked more than once, I had to remove distractions. Of course, as you’ll recall, I wasn’t entirely successful because I did find that some subjects (specifically faces) have more power over a narrative regardless of the light setting than others.

What this brings into focus is the importance of degrees. As I mentioned earlier, there is nothing in my results to say that if I took that exact portrait which caused me so much trouble and were able to change the lighting situation without the slightest alteration to its form it would not vary the degree of expression. It should not be at all surprising to us that, while it is the subject of this study, light and color are not the only things that can alter the emotion of a painting, our only assertion here is that they can play a hugely transformative part in that process and that the way in which they do this can be predicted.
Symbols that have been decided or cultivated in a culture or place with a specific interpretation and are only understandable to those who have either grown up into them or deliberately studied them. A good example of this sort of symbolism can be found (though is not exclusive to) religious painting, such as the tradition of symbolism in Christian painting throughout the European regions. While these symbols are rich with cultural and historical information they do not communicate as directly in terms of emotion (though one could argue them to be more direct in some ways in terms of illustrative power) as the psychological approach we will be discussing in this project. An example of the usual analysis symbolism is evident in Sister Wendy Beckett’s “The Story of Painting.”


The information on artistic styles in this artist’s statement was synthesized from the following resources:


The general information on these movements here was gathered, again, from the sources listed in 2 (above) and will be discussed with more depth further on.

The Information on Caravaggio and Tenebrism is synthesized from the following texts:


This information was gleaned from:


Further information on Caravaggism can be found at:


This interaction can be found on page 66 of Gilles Lambert. *Caravaggio*, Taschen


- Information on Rayonism was collected from:

And


You can read about the change to magenta and cyan further on John Law’s website: [johnmuirlaws.com/art-and-drawing/unified-theory-colo](http://johnmuirlaws.com/art-and-drawing/unified-theory-colo)


All of the information in the section that follows was collected from the following sources:


  Goethe does have a section on the interpretation of colour, however much of what he says I find leans a little too heavily on the circumstantial or social interpretations of colour, which are exactly the sorts of things I am trying to avoid here. You can read his thoughts on the psychological interpretations of colour in his treatise:


To delve a little further into the interpretation of violet, there is also the physical rarity of the pigment to consider, which was not mentioned in the body because it falls a little too far inside the line of environmental. An additional note is on the creative qualities that are mentioned in the paragraph. To clarify, the idea that these qualities of the color stem from illusive properties has to do with the amount of focus required to differentiate the hue itself. It
is sometimes easily confused for grey or blue because our ability to see the full range of the hue is so limited. The concentration that this then involves is what induces the concepts of creativity, meditation, or the spiritual.

21 The rest of the theory section extrapolates ideas from the sources mentioned in 20 as well as Goethe and Albers, along with my own observations. All of those sources will be of use to readers who wish to understand more about how I came to the conclusions I did if the concept still seems unclear.
Bibliography:

The following are the works which aided me in my research. Although not all of them were used directly in the text, the reader will find here the comprehensive list of books and resources which I found helpful in this process so that, if they are so inclined, they might further explore the way we interact with color even outside the necessary boundaries of this paper.


<https://www.britannica.com/art/Impressionism-art>

http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/rayonism.htm

Gilles Lambert, *Caravaggio*, Taschen


http://www.artble.com/artists/caravaggio

