X2 Week 3 Discussion: How does cultural or national background influence color choices?

We could also ask, in relation to the above question: apart from the artist's use of color, do you think that each viewer's cultural or national background influence the way that they view or create a work of art?

Please reply to one or two other student's post as well.

P.S. Critical thinking here. Try to be contentious and play 'the devil's advocate,' even if you don't agree with the stance. Possibly, taking an oppositional opinion, to challenge your own thinking.

> Cultural or national background can influence a viewer's interpretation of a work of art or design. It seems like it would be difficult for art/design to be completely devoid of influence by the culture or nationality that either an artist/designer has personally experienced, that they are currently creating in, or the cultural context the viewer of the work is viewing the work in. Depending on the intent of the work, this influence may be encouraged in the final design of a work or it might be required that the influence be replaced with a different influence to better reach a specific target audience. In the case of commercial design projects this question should always be explored and considered as part of the target audience research phase.

>> I agree with you, and feel that sometimes, a "controversial" color, or a color that could be interpreted in many different ways depending on the culture, is best supported by the additional colors associated with the brand or design, which lend to our the audience interprets the idea. I also do highly agree that especially in commercial projects, where global recognition is a possibility, this is a consideration, especially in 2019.

>> Amy,

>> Good point you added at the end of your response. I agree that in art and design, the question of color can be reconsidered several times before the work is completed - especially when you are able to bounce your work off of other heads. But when you are working alone as an artist or designer, I think it's important to consider whose story you are telling and how it will effect your audience.

To answer this question I would say that culture and national background do influence an artists choice because in different cultures color varies with meaning but over most color is considered to be similar in meaning. Every artist is different than one another and having a different culture influence art immensely. Although there could be 2 artist from different sides of the world who only use black and white. Thus arguing that culture doesn't impact culture. Each artist is their own, having different technique, and ideas all going into what we consider to be a work of art. No matter the culture or national background.

Hi Moweaqua,

I like your opposite take regarding culture not impacting culture by way of an artist having their own ideas and techniques as a basis for their work. I would also raise the question that if cultural influence is considered when designing for commercial purposes then it must be a dynamic component of design? And if it is a dynamic, rather than fixed element of a creative work couldn't such an influence be removed altogether?

To take it a step further, an artist is influenced by the culture where they grow up and develop, and if conceptual meaning of color is ingrained in the culture, the artist will absorb that whether directly or subconsciously. Even if they choose to ignore the cultural meaning of color, or mold it to their personal vision or technique, it is still a component of the work.

This semester I am also taking a graduate class in communication research methods, which is influencing my thinking on this week's prompt.

Instead of asking **how** cultural or national background influences color choice, I wonder how **much** it does.

In my cultural experience, black is the color of death as well as the color of sophistication and elegance. Which one it is depends on other elements. When I imagine the grim reaper, I see a warm, rich black, somewhat faded and maybe slightly gray. When I think of a black cocktail dress, it is more of an alternative rich black with a strong value.

So when I read that red symbolizes danger, I want to know which values, tints and/or shades of red connote danger. How would my viewers or potential customers respond to a warm red vs a cool red?

A light red, or pink, probably doesn't signal danger, so where on the spectrum does it become a warning?
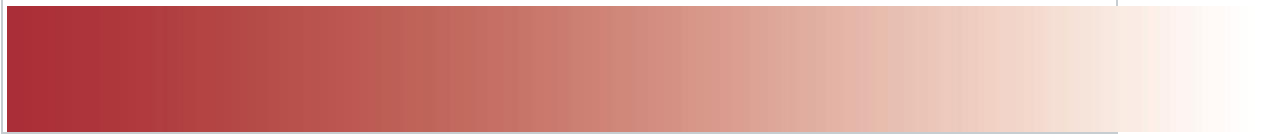
My other class comes into play because I'm also thinking of ways to test it by showing color swatches and asking people to say how they feel, or even measuring brain waves or heart rate when colors are shown.

Hi Megan,

The questions you raised are very interesting and I agree with you.

I think we need to be critical towards color meaning guides, which can be a little simplistic sometimes. Yes, red means danger, but as you said, what red exactly? We learned that each color has so many colors underneath them when adjustments are made in value and saturation.

And when you mention black, I thought it was funny to think that I actually see both blacks (grim reaper + cocktail dress) exactly the same, or very similar: rick black with strong value. I wonder what the other classmates think?

Hi Megan,

I thought your comment was really insightful and thought provoking—thanks for sharing! I think the intersection of science and art is super interesting. In two graphic design courses I'm taking this semester we've already had discussions about scientific research conducted on typeface design in regards to legibility and cognitive processing—and it's something I've been fascinated by!

I'd be interested in reading results from a study about specific values/shades/tints of colors and how different people physically react to them. Most research I've read about the physical impact of color on humans often reference only a general hue rather than more specific saturation and value characteristics, and I agree there's a big difference in one's reaction based on where a color falls on these spectrums.

I've had the same thoughts about red for a while, because it is also highly associated with love/passion. I think when it is a pure red, it is probably more up to the individual person what they associate it with, and shape can also play a big part. Take stop signs, for instance. They may start out pure red, but can fade to pink over time. The shape is what keeps the meaning there even if you can barely see the letters. Aside from pure red, I think there is a tendency for people to associate warm reds more often with danger, and cool reds more often with love/passion.

I would say that culture and national background do influence an artist when they create a work of art, because colors are perceived differently in different parts of the world.

But I would also go a bit further and say each individual in the world probably perceives color in a different way. Maybe not completely different from one another, but never the same. I think personal experiences and taste can also influence greatly the way we perceive color, even if we don't think about it.

Let's say your room was painted blue when you were a baby and growing up as a kid. You will probably feel a certain way towards that color that another person wouldn't. I think that is the reason why we all have a different "favorite" color, whether or not we are from the same country or come from the same cultural environment.

All that being said, I think it takes practice to let go of some of our personal experiences/taste and be able to focus on what color is best for a commercial project. When you have a target audience, of course it's impossible to know exactly what personal experiences they all had which influenced their color taste. But it is important to understand what colors influence the target audience in a cultural way.

You're right, we can never account for all the possible associations a person has with specific colors. The best we can do is be sensitive to general cultural meanings.

Hi Lilia,

I resonate with what you mentioned here a lot. Cultural and national background, together with personal experiences and taste can shape how one use colors and view a piece of artwork. And I also agree that every one perceive colors differently despite the same country or cultural environment. To me, there are universal understandings towards colors in each culture and nation, which is a more high-level thing, but on the individual level, other elements like personal experiences, the environment one grows up with, the trend happening (including music, art, films, fashion) also need to be taken into account regarding the influences towards one's color choices.

Best,

Stacy

Undoubtedly, colors have various associations in different cultures, and it's interesting to think about how this impacts the creation and viewing of a piece of art. While it's impossible to escape one's subconscious, where I believe the majority of these associations are stored, a thoughtful artist with a message will take into account the potential cultural associations of the viewer. I believe this not only applies to color, but with other forms of symbolism as well.

Taking into account a culture's subconscious color associations is especially important in the realm of commercial art and design. This is relevant when marketing and advertising, which is why the importance of understanding your audience cannot be stressed enough. In the marketing industry, it's best

practice to segment a brand's audience on many levels, the broadest of which being geolocation or culture. I've seen campaigns with the same purpose move forward with completely different messages, concepts, or creatives—purely due to cultural differences. At my last job, we had different marketing teams in charge of

In the end, I think it comes down to the profile of the intended viewer it was created for. An artist could create a piece that is intended to be viewed by those of a similar cultural background, keeping alike associations in mind, or the artist could be creating a piece that is intended to be viewed internationally, by anyone and everyone. In regards to the latter of these two situations, context is vital. For example, the title of the piece or gallery exhibit in which the work appears can help set the stage for the viewer's interpretation.

> Whitney, I think your observation also points to one of the differences between and "artist" and a "designer."
>
> An artist has more freedom to use color as they want and express their own emotion with it. A designer has to be much more cognizant of the viewers' associations.

Cultural and national background undoubtedly influence many aspects of a piece of art, including color choices, even if that influence occurs on a subconscious level. I think there are probably more factors that go into those choices in artwork (how the artist is feeling, ideas that they want to reference, what they want the viewer to think of and feel) than in advertising design and branding. It is easier to say how culture would impact color choice in branding because the designer would generally be focused primarily on appealing to an audience.

One of the main reasons we have discussed for why colors are chosen for branding is originality. We avoid choosing a color palette that is already associated with another major brand, especially a competitor. Obviously different countries, or even regions of a country, have their own local brands that people living there associate certain colors with.

> I just replied to Whitney before I read your post. You expressed it more eloquently than I did :)
>
> I really appreciate the point you bring up regarding color and brand association. As a professional (Artist, Graphic Designer, etc..) one has to be extremely mindful of cultural appropriation when using colors (Yellow is the color of mourning in Mexico). In tandem, it is just as important to choose your palette wisely based on what

I like how you included colors being apart of a brand! I think thats a super important aspect of why artist choose the color they want to create!

I think cultural or national background definitely influence and shape one's color choices, but the color choices may change along the cultural shift and trend happening, together with personal experiences. Cultural background includes high-level universal understanding of colors among one's nation, or going deeper into the cultural influences of trending music, art and films during certain era in the region which directly impact one's personal preference and taste.

When I research for the cross-cultural meanings of colors, there are different meanings for a specific color across different cultures worldwide. For example, in Western cultures, white symbolizes purity, elegance, peace, and cleanliness. We all know that brides in Western countries traditionally wear white wedding gowns at their weddings. But in China and some Asian countries, white represents death, mourning, and bad luck, and it is traditionally worn at funerals. However, nowadays some well-developed regions in these countries which are heavily influenced by Western cultures such as Hong Kong, the cultural shift alters how the people in these regions perceive the color white, and people in Hong Kong now wear white wedding gowns plus red chinese wedding gowns at their weddings, which is the result of successful melting of two different cultures. So we know that when using a color intentionally for delivering a specific meaning in a piece of art, we need to take into account of the cross-cultural meanings of colors, as the audience from different cultures/ national background will perceive and interpret a piece of art differently based on their perception towards the colors used in the work, according to the cultures they live and grow with.

Recently, I studied the works of an American photographer Gregory Crewdson for my photoshop course, and found that he was heavily influenced by various famous American realist painters and film makers such as Edward Hopper, Alfred Hitchcock and Steven Spielberg when he grew up. So he portrayed his

photography works like realist paintings with ethereal horror beauty. He consistently adopts cool tone color palette with a restricted use of warm tone color to portray urban loneliness happening in the time being. This is an example of how cultural background influences one's color choices and how he/ she creates a piece of art.

Nighthawks by Edward Hopper
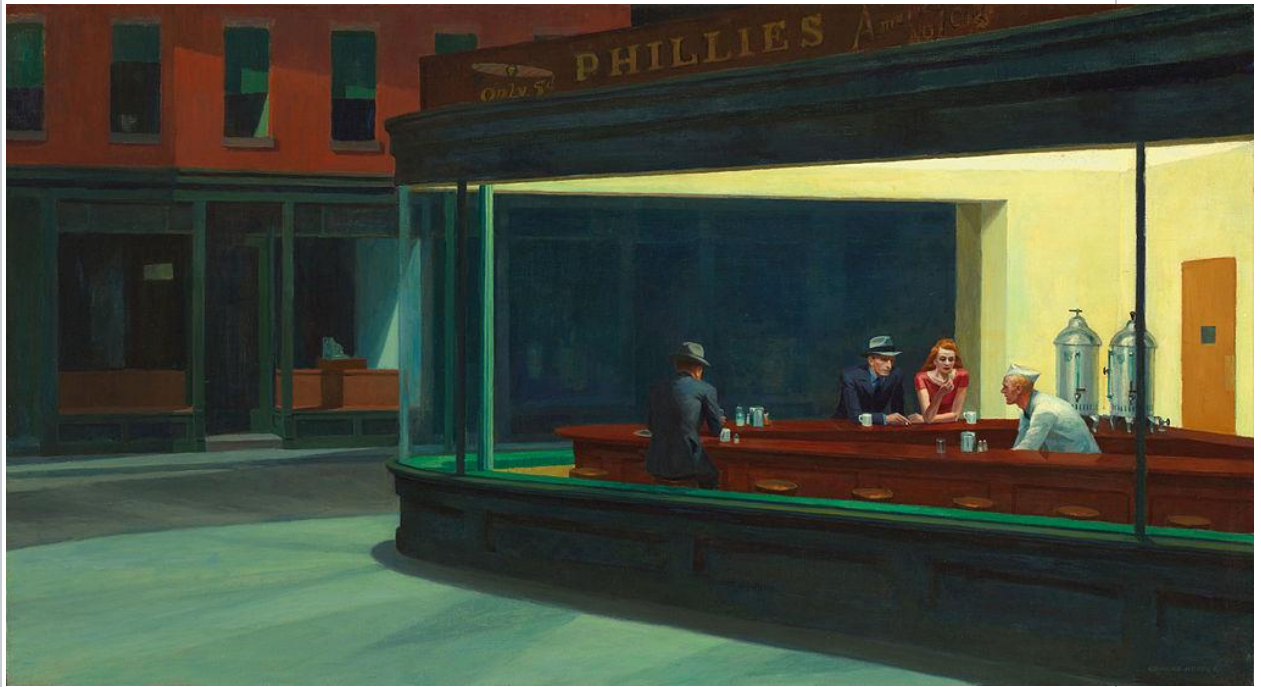
Work by Gregory Crewdson

Stacy, it's fascinating to hear how a cultural tradition of the bride wearing red has shifted slightly in Hong Kong based on western influence. I also realized that wearing black and white as a guest would not be culturally accepted either.

I actually came across this link which has a breakdown of what colors symbolize for various cultures that is really fascinating!

https://www.six-degrees.com/pdf/International-Color-Symbolism-Chart.pdf (Links to an external site.)

Stacy,

Thanks for bringing in some real life examples in your response. It's interesting to see how both a painter and a photographer use cool colors to evoke emotional responses. Both of these artists definitely chose their surroundings to influence their color choices.

Alexandra,

Great link! Saved it! :-)

I do believe that color choice can be influenced by differences in cultural or national background.

Cultural and national origins are what shape one's world view as a whole, and interpretation of color is a large part of how one navigates through life.

Something as simple as the standard color of vehicles in different areas of the world can have a huge effect on daily life. Imagine trying to hail a cab in New York City without the signifying "yellow" color. Even the names of colors can vary between cultures and nations. "Fire Engine Red" might not mean anything to a Brit, but is common knowledge to Americans.

Though color is a universal language, specificity in the use of color is distinct across different cultures and places across the world.

I Like how you associated color with key objects in America, it shows that culture does vary in color choice and you gave prime examples to support this claim!

To understand a designer or artists' choice of color, it is impossible not to take into consideration color associations and meanings throughout the world. If you are creating something on a global scale, this is exceptionally challenging. However, if the project is executed correctly, using a color with multiple interpretations can become tricky- I believe at that point possibly the other colors associated with the brand/logo become more of a factor. Those colors will act as the driving force to target the audience and effectively communicate their idea. Take red: red could read as danger, passion, love, etc. Pairing black and red has a much greater intensity, and therefore could read as more alert and danger oriented just by looking at those colors together. Additionally, if you paired red with white, this combo could have more of an elegance and romantic feel. In this case, the white is a strong "supporter" of the design, assisting in the direction of the material and how the information is interpreted.

Cultural or national background influences how people view works of art or how they create art, but I don't think it is a main determinant in color choice. For example, maybe my art has nothing to do with my upbringing or my cultural surroundings but is more influenced by something internal. Artists choose their palette based on several factors, not just culture or environment. However, it is a complicated answer because aren't we all nurtured by our

surroundings and create narratives through our artworks based on where we come from. I think the answer lies more in your identification and if you hold a strong national or cultural identity. When thinking critically about art and diving into art history, I definitely think that critics theorize based on an artist's cultural and national background. This doesn't mean that it is the biggest influence.