

Simultaneous Contrast

Art & Design

A colour changes appearance according to what surrounds it.

The same colour looks different against different grounds. Chevreul described the effect in 1839; Albers built a whole teaching course on it in *Interaction of Color*, 1963.

CHEVREUL
1839

ALBERS
1963

- A grey looks warmer against a blue ground.
- A colour shifts towards the complement of its ground.
- Value contrast is the strongest of the effects.
- Two different colours can be made to look the same.
- One colour can be made to look like two.
- The effect is perceptual, not a property of the paint.

LOOK FOR IT

A mid grey square on black looks lighter than the identical square on white.

Never judge a colour in isolation. Mix it and check it against the colours it will actually have to sit beside.