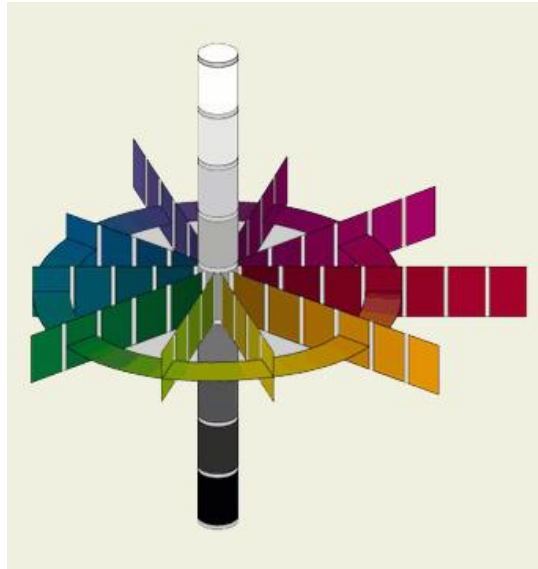


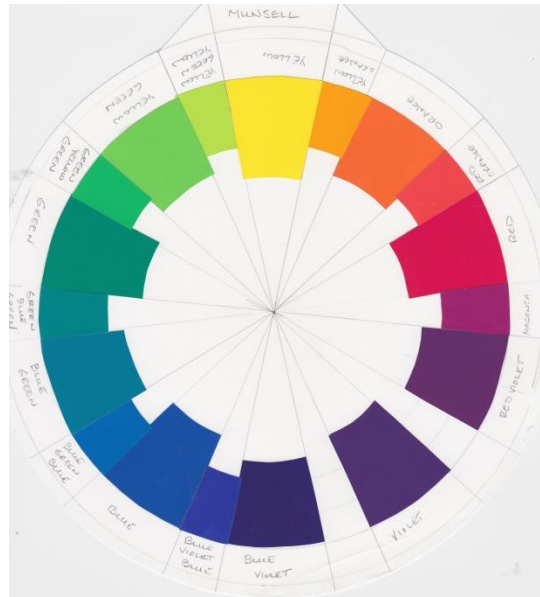
Article 12 – Munsell Wheel and Complimentary Colors

Now it's time to start applying some of the knowledge that I've gained in the previous 11 lessons. Before I get going on that I want to make a couple of points. These articles are my notes on color study and reflect my limited understanding and a lot of my opinions. You are welcome to agree or disagree with anything that I represent. That's OK. Color study and color theory is a science but there are several different aspects of it and people use it for different things. There's tons more to read and learn about it than what I have presented in these articles and I encourage you to explore it as much as you want. But what you are going to get here are my thoughts and opinions.



The most important of these opinions is my belief that the Munsell color system is the one most applicable to our creation of fiber art. Therefore all of the posts going forward will reference the Munsell wheel.

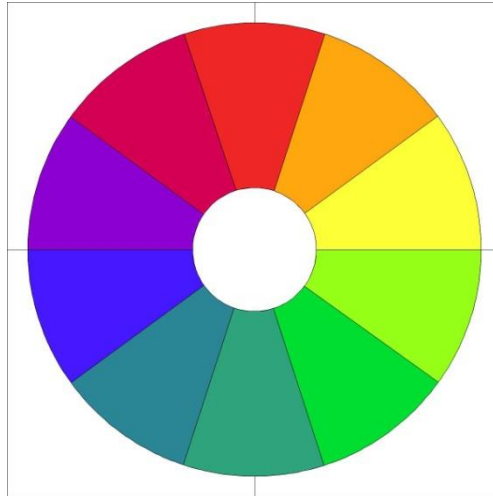
The Munsell wheel, actually more of an orb, includes not just the pure hues but also includes tints and shades. The Munsell wheel has 5 primaries: red, yellow, green, blue and purple. The 5 secondaries are blue-green, violet-blue, orange, red-violet and yellow-green.



Here's my own version of the Munsells wheel using only the hues with primary, secondary and tertiary hues. This is what I will use as the basis of the color choices for the remainder of my posts on the topic.



Next I pulled some of my hand dyed fabric color swatches to match the primary and secondary hues on the wheel. The photograph doesn't communicate it well but the 3 colors to the right of red are red-violet, violet and blue-violet. They really are different! Click on the photograph to see it larger.



Here's yet another version that I created in EQ. I'll use this one of for any quilt image samples. The colors that are in the wheel are the RGB conversions for the Munsell colors from a book that I have on the Munsell system.

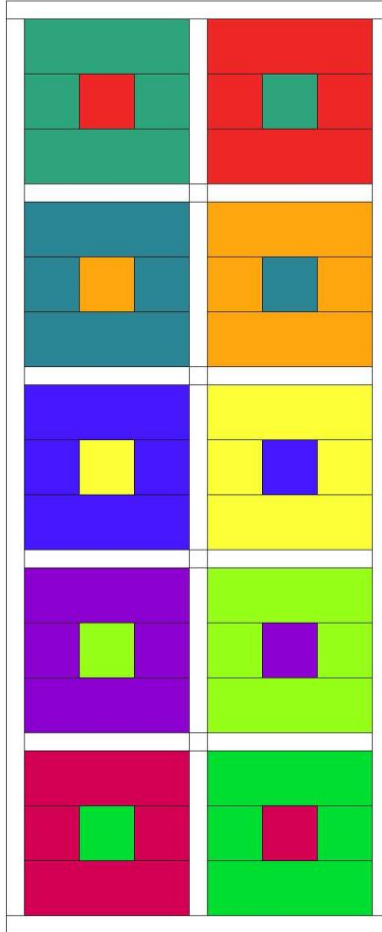
None of these 3 things are going to match exactly due to monitor and perception differences but you will get the idea I think. This is a good time to make the second point.

Color theory is not a law. I use it as a guideline. I may reference the wheel to identify a color that I could add to my quilt to make it more vibrant or I may use it as a starting point for fabric selection knowing that I will make lots of additions and adjustments along the way. It's just one more bit of knowledge to help you through the fabric or materials selection process but don't get too hung up on it. If you nephew wants a quilt in some horrid color scheme that seems to follow no rules, so what. The point is to make him happy and if the colors work for him then they are perfect.

The third point I want to make is that in these articles I am talking about using materials. I am not talking about mixing dyes or paints. That's a whole different subject.

Complimentary Colors

Complimentary color schemes are something we are all familiar with. Complimentary hues are those that are directly across from each other on the color wheel.



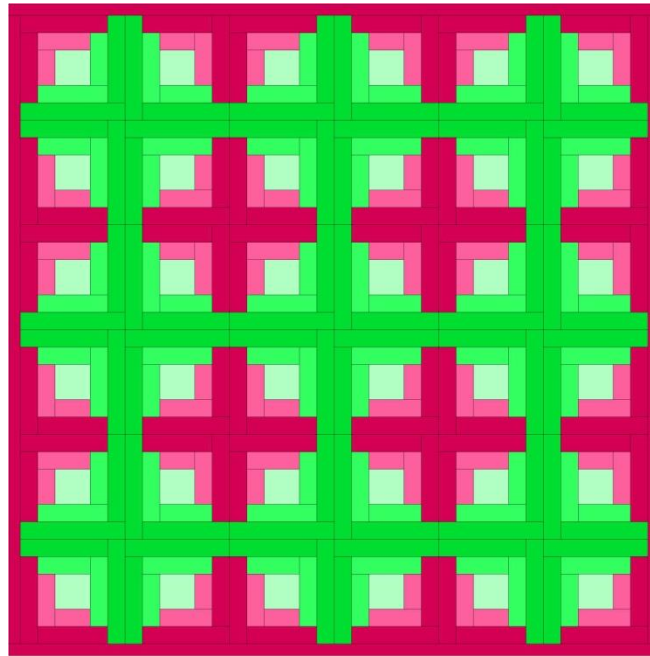
These blocks show each electronic complimentary pair. Each row of blocks is one pair with the dominant hue alternated. Munsell complimentaries are the result of afterimaging.



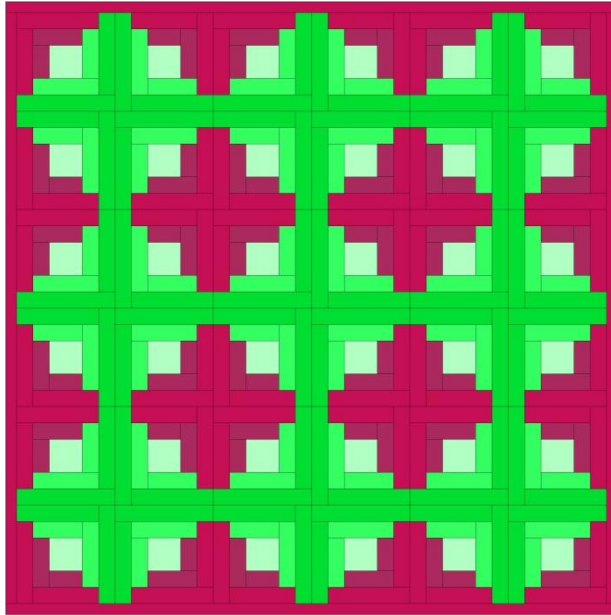
Here are the same complimentary pairs using my fabric samples.

Remember when we talked about the effect of one hue on another and showed how different one fabric can look when placed beside other fabrics? This is the one time that there is no effect. True complimentary colors placed side by side do not alter each other's hue. They each serve to brighten the other. That is why quilts that use pure complimentary colors seem to vibrate. Complimentary hues give the strongest contrast between temperature (red and blue-green) and value (yellow and blue-violet).

Here are a couple of examples.

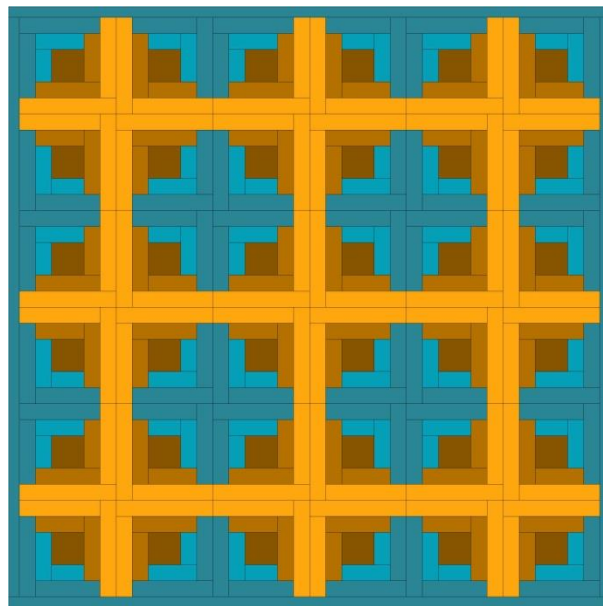


In this quilt I have used the pure hues of green and red-violet with tints (lighter shades) of both. Because the green and red-violet are both pure hues they are both fighting for prominence. There's nothing wrong with that if it's the effect you are after.

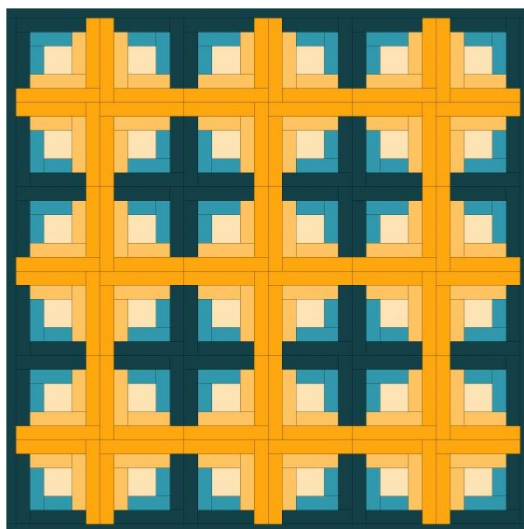


However, if you wanted the green to be the more dominate color you could use a shade (darker) of the red-violet. It is still a compliment but by using a darker shade you are giving it more of a back seat to the green.

Here's another example with blue and orange.



In this example I am using the pure hue of the complimentary colors with shades of orange and a tint of blue. It creates a very vibrant, almost electric, quilt.



Shade the blue and replace the orange shade with an orange tint and you have something a bit calmer but still complimentary.

Complimentary doesn't have to mean a simple and bright quilt. Complimentary hues are the starting point for an effective color combination. Take the 2 colors in lighter and darker directions to add some sophistication to your quilt design.

For the next few articles we will explore more color schemes.