

# STUDY UNIT I

## Colour Awareness

Welcome to the LAC course in colour theory. We intend to make you wiser about a subject which is very enjoyable, but enormously complex. There are plenty of theories and theorists who have contributed to this area of human knowledge.

We aim to show you some of the fundamental aspects of this subject, providing an authoritative (but not exhaustive) terminology and give you ideas and exercises to work with allowing you to build upon your experiences and knowledge with confidence.

The course is based upon a painters' approach to colour; it consists of five study units which you can work on at your own speed.

These units will cover:-

1. Preparation for the course - colour awareness
2. Colour perception and context
3. Types of colour contrast
4. Analysis of colour
5. Colour theory in relation to commercial printing

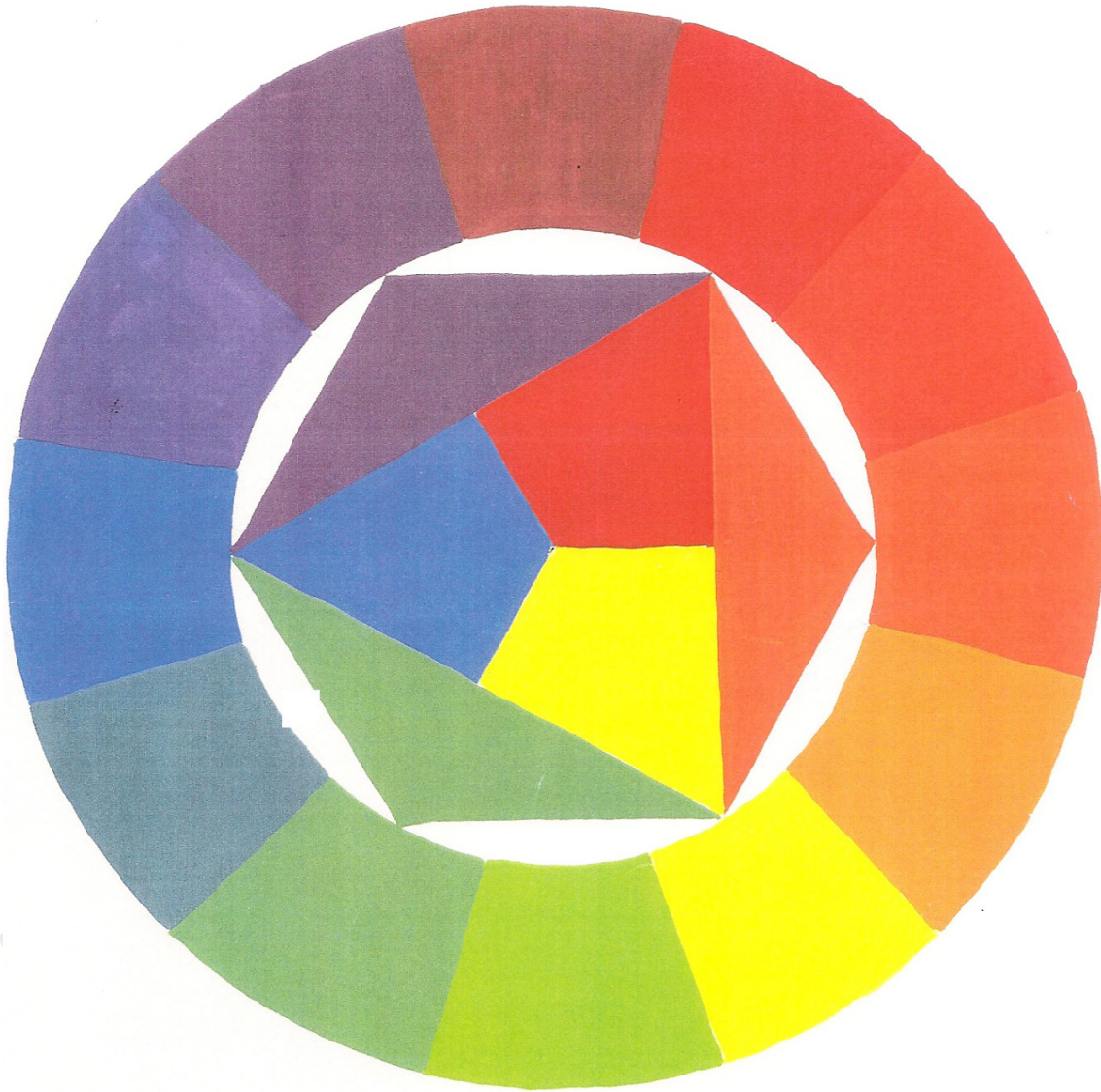
### MATERIALS

To make the best use of your learning time you will require a few basic materials which are listed as follows.

- Paint brushes (round and flat, sizes 2 - 6, for acrylic painting)
- A selection of cartridge paper and white mounting card
- Pencils and eraser
- Ruler and compass
- Mixing palette (see later)
- Daylight adjusted bulb
- Gouache paints - spectrum res, blue and yellow. A tube of lamp black and one of zinc white.

In addition to this you will need a flat table to work on and occasional use of a photocopier. If you haven't got all of these things it is worth buying them now as it will be worth it in the end. Try to buy the best quality you can afford, and get what brushes you think you need, but please stick to the specified types and colour of paint as these are crucial to the course.

The refractive index of a pigment gives us an account of its light reflecting and absorbing properties. This varies for each different pigment, so it is not possible to simply mix equal amounts of two primary pigments to obtain a perfect secondary colour. You have to use your skill and judgement - which is why we have provided an example to guide you. Once you have completed this stage of the project there will be a number of gaps between the primary and secondary segments of colour on the wheel.



All you have to do now is mix quantities of primary and secondary colours to make tertiary colours within the wheel. So, mix Spectrum yellow with orange to make orange/ yellow and mix orange with spectrum red to make orange/ red etc. Notice as you mix these colours how bright the yellow is and how dark the violet is.

# STUDY UNIT 3 - Part I

## Types of Colour Contrast

In the last unit we began to look at an important aspect of colour contrast - complementary colours. Those colours which form pairs opposite one another on the colour wheel are referred to as complementary pairs. Examples are - red/green, yellow/violet and orange/blue. Consider some other examples. Note that the word complementary is not the same as complimentary - which means something different. You would send your compliments to the chef, if you had a nice meal at the restaurant, but colours are defined as complementary if they can be mixed to produce a neutral grey. If this cannot be achieved then the colours are not truly complementary. However, it is useful to know how to mix watercolours to various greys, darks and 'blacks' (each with different characteristics).

The phenomenon of after images implies that the human eye requires a colour to be balanced by its complementary colour and the eye will actually generate a complementary colour if it is not actually present. This is very important when we work with colour. It is about balance.

We find many clear examples of complementary colour in nature - one example is our illustration of Crocus and Tradescantia - demonstrating yellow / violet contrast.







Le Bec du Hoc, Grandchamp - Georges Seurat, 1885



Bathers, Asniers, - Georges Seurat