The Munsell Color System

A Practical Introduction for Artists

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Applications of the Munsell System:

- Isolating conceptual criteria for making colour decisions
- Colour communication (e.g. between manufacturers and artists)
- Organizing large colour sets (e.g. pastels)
- Determining shadow colours
- Mixing paints (Reilly system)
FIFTH EDITION

THE NEW MUNSELL STUDENT COLOR SET
Gray Scale & Value Finder

LIQUITEX VALUE FINDER

This value scale will enable you to find the matching gray tone to correspond to most colors. Place the gray scale over the color and squint through almost closed eyes. Where the color and gray seem to blend together through the holes you have found the relative lightness or darkness of a color called its "value".

In mixing for a color it is especially useful to know the values of all the colors used in the mixture. Where those have been adjusted to the same value the artist has the greatest control over color mixing problems. Also, the most effective visual color interaction results from bringing together selected colors of exactly the same value.

The gray scale here is numbered according to the position between the extremes of black (0) and white (10) in equal visual steps and complies with the Munsell value standards. The value number for each color is listed on all LIQUITEX Oil and Acrylic Colors, along with hue and chroma information. Neutral Grays are produced in LIQUITEX Oil and Acrylic Colors.

Don Rankin's™
Magic Value and View Finder

Value Scale

In the Munsell color system, a color's lightness or darkness is called its value. The theoretically darkest black has value 0, and is denoted N0 (N stands for "neutral"). The theoretically lightest white has value 10, and is denoted N10. These theoretical ideals are not reached in practice. Most artists' blacks, such as carbon black, are about N1, rather than N0. Similarly, titanium white is just below N0. Between N0 and N10 are 9 progressively lighter grays, denoted N1, N2, and so on up to N9; intermediate values such as N2.5 are also possible. The spacing between the grays is perceptually equal. For instance the visual difference between N1 and N2 is the same as the visual difference between N2 and N3, between N3 and N4, etc.

This card shows the Munsell grays at intervals of half a value step. The grays were measured with a spectrophotometer to ensure they agree with the Munsell Color System. The DE2000 deviations from the Munsell (under C/2 viewing conditions) are all less than 1.5, and usually less than 1; these accuracies are more than adequate for most practical purposes.

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This chart shows the Munsell greys measured with a spectrophotometer to ensure they agree with the 1943 Munsell Renotation, which standardizes the Munsell system. The DE2000 deviations from the Renotation (under C/2 viewing conditions) are all less than 1.5, and usually less than 1; these accuracies are more than adequate for most practical purposes.

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Rules of Thumb for Shadow Series

1. Keep the Munsell hue the same.
2. A shadow series is a straight line in a hue leaf.
3. A shadow series goes through N(-1).
Hue: 6GY