

COLOR VOODOO #1



A GUIDE TO COLOR SYMBOLISM



JILL MORTON

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For Kecia and Zachary



How to use Acrobat Reader

Welcome to this electronic publication!

Adobe Acrobat Reader gives you exceptional control in accessing the information in this book. The next two pages include some tips to help you.



Viewing Options

The publication opens with the navigation window displayed at the left. This window contains "Bookmarks" (text) and "Thumbnails" (pictures) to assist in navigation. Use the appropriate buttons on the command bar to view either Thumbnails or Bookmarks, or to collapse this window. You may also select these options under "Window" on the menu bar or you may click the Bookmarks or Thumbnails tabs at the top of the navigation window.

The navigation window can be widened or contracted by dragging the two small triangles at the bottom of the right border of this window.

Control the viewing size of the pages in this publication by selecting any one of the page buttons on the command bar. Options include full magnification, fit the page in window, and fit the visible width of the page in window. As an alternative, use the viewing selections under "View" on the menu bar. The zoom-in (magnifying glass) button on the command bar can be used to zoom in and out of any area on a page.

(These instructions apply to Acrobat Reader 4.0. Minor variations may apply to version 3.0.)



Navigation

1. Use the triangle (arrow) buttons on the command bar to view the next page or the previous page. You can also return to "the previous view" or go to the first or last page.
2. The menu bar can be used to navigate. Choose View > Next Page or the destination of your choice.
3. Click on any bookmark in the navigation window (at the left). Click on the sideways triangle (right facing arrow) to open the bookmark header and to view other bookmarks in this category. You may also click on any thumbnail in the navigation window.
4. Custom red arrows have been added to the bottom of some of the pages. Click to link to related information and/or more pages.



How to Find Things

Let's assume that you want to find all the colors that are classified as "dignified." Here's how to do it:

1. Click the find tool (binoculars) on the command bar, or choose Tools > Find on the Menu bar.

A dialog box will appear. Enter the text to be found and click Find. When the program finds the text, the Find dialog box closes and the page containing the text is displayed with the text highlighted. This command will only locate one occurrence.

2. If you want to find out if there are more occurrences of the text, press Ctrl (Windows and UNIX) or Command (Macintosh) +G, or on the Menu bar, Tools> Find Again. You may also reopen the Find dialog box and click Find Again. With Windows, pressing F3 also finds the next occurrence of the text.

Note: You will be prompted to loop back to the beginning of the document if you start the process on any page other than the first page. Be sure to do this so that your search is complete.



About Printing

For best results, print to a postscript printer.

WINDOWS users: When printing out the text in this publication, you'll need to direct the printer to " PRINT TRUETYPE FONTS AS GRAPHICS." The following sequence may apply: On the menu bar, select FILE > PRINT > SETUP > PROPERTIES > FONTS.

Now select **PRINT TRUETYPE FONTS AS GRAPHICS.**

Other users: If the printout of text is irregular, check to see if this same option is available under "Page setup" or "Print." When printing to a PCL printer, select bitmap fonts instead of outline fonts. Consult your manual if other problems occur.

About Color Printing

This publication was designed for on screen viewing. Colors will appear different when printed with a typical computer printer. The colored inks are based on the CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, black) system which is different from the RGB system used by computer monitors and electronic publications.

Also, the color swatches take up a lot of area in this publication and will consume a large quantity of ink!



INTRODUCTION

About Color Voodoo

Computer Colors

Color Models

Design Applications

Web Site Design Applications

Tips for Color Communication

Global Design & Web Sites

About Color Voodoo

Like voodoo, color can sway thinking, change actions, and cause reactions.

Red means "stop" and green means "go." Traffic lights send this universal message. Likewise, the colors used for a logo, business card, product, packaging, web site, interior design, architectural elements, or clothing cause powerful reactions. Color sends a subliminal message, one which plays a critical role in success or failure. It will either attract or distract, work for you or against you.

The subliminal power of color is serious business. Consequently, the information in this book is presented in a methodical way. You might think the tone is a bit academic, but it will deliver clear concepts about color symbolism so that you can use it to your advantage.

Computer Colors

This publication was designed for electronic distribution and computer viewing. All colors represented in this publication are based on the 216 colors which are common to both Windows and Macintosh computers and can be viewed on 8 bit (256 color) monitors.

Every effort has been made to reproduce colors accurately. All illustrations were prepared on a system with full gamma correction and color synchronization. Colors may vary on different computers.

Anti-glare screens may cause color distortions.

If you have a PC running WIN 98, WIN 95 or WIN 3.1, make sure your computer system has full gamma correction. A high quality monitor is essential. A video or graphic card might be needed for accurate color readings.

Macintosh computers, Silicon Graphics workstations, and machines running NeXTStep should deliver highly accurate color and will not need any gamma correction. A corrected gamma of 1.8 is built into these machines. Older monitors may require some adjustments. A gamma control panel device should be used to check and adjust the gamma.

Color Models

Monitors and printers reproduce colors differently. Monitors use the red, green, blue (RGB) color model. Printing is based on the cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK) color model. Colors on-screen may look different when printed.

Design Applications

The color information and illustrations in this publication will assist in developing a successful color scheme for all areas of design. Since these illustrations and color formulas are based on the RGB color model, variables may occur when using other color systems. The following provides important information about these variables:

Labels, Packaging, Business Cards, Stationery and Signage

The RGB values of the colors may be used as a reference for appropriate specifications for printing and other media.

Products

The RGB values may be used as a reference for enamels, glazes, paint, textile dyes, and other color media.

Wardrobe

The color swatches may be used as a reference for wardrobe selections.

Note: The special information about the gender based appeal of the red family of colors is especially useful for color communication in wardrobes.



Interior Design and Architecture

The color swatches may be used as a departure point for interior or exterior color schemes. Caution should be used in paint and wall covering selections. The colors of the swatches in this publication will be quite different when applied to large interior or exterior surfaces. Muted colors will wind up looking much more colorful. Some colors may turn out too pale, others, too dark. Consult with a paint representative and/or a design professional. Large brush-outs will give you a better idea of end results. Similar caution should be used when selecting carpeting and other elements which cover large areas.

Web Site Design Applications

The color information and illustrations in this publication are specifically applicable to web site design. All web site graphics (gifs and jpegs), background colors, text and link colors are based on the RGB color system. Since this is an electronic publication, the same RGB color system was used for all color illustrations. What you see in this publication is an accurate representation of web site colors, one which will help you develop successful colors for web site design.

The HEX code is included for each color swatch. This may be used to specify background colors, text, or link colors in html documents. The RGB values are also supplied and may be used for non-dithering colors for graphic illustrations.

Since these illustrations and color formulas are based on the RGB color system, variables may occur when using other color systems. If you print this publication, the colors may deviate from their on screen accuracy.

Tips for Color Communication - Global Design & Web Sites

1. Know your target market.

As a case study, let's assume you're selecting colors for a bank. Financial institutions require colors which support a sense of security, trust and reliability. The color of currency also comes into play. A risky color would be purple since many of its primary associations are related to the intangible world of creativity, spirituality, mystery and the sub-conscious. Nevertheless, if that financial institution is located in Charlotte North Carolina, the home town of the famed Charlotte Hornets basketball team, whose colors happen to be purple and teal, and if the membership of that bank is primarily female, purple combined with another color is worthy of consideration.

As a general rule of thumb, you have a lot more flexibility in color selections for a regional business. If, on the other hand, the business intends to expand its base nationally or globally, off-beat color selections should be avoided.

2. Use extreme caution with global audiences.

When designing for a global market, designers must subject their color selections to stringent cross-examination. If a color's symbolism does not support the fundamental characteristics of a product, service, person or place, and if it is insensitive to a specific culture, that color may communicate in surprising ways.



Consider again the color purple. It may work as a symbol of creativity for art and as a symbol of the extra-terrestrial for science fiction, but it's a polarizing color. People either love it or hate it. Furthermore, it's potentially hazardous on a global level. It may symbolize mourning and death in many cultures in the same way that black does in American culture.

A significant example of purple failure is the initial design of EuroDisney's signs. The color palette was intended to rival Coca Cola's red, but the final selection of vast amounts of purple was a tragic mistake. Purple symbolizes death and the crucifixion in Catholic Europe. It's not surprising that visitors thought the signs were morbid. How did this happen? The CEO liked purple. [1] Personal preference and "avant-garde" tactics frequently cause color disasters. When the wrong color is used on a web site, the damage extends to a global audience.

[1] *Euroclash, ID Magazine, January 1992, p.61*

3. Use caution with "in" colors.

Just because a certain color is a color marketer's "in" color for the year (or next year, or the decade) doesn't mean it will work for everything and it certainly doesn't mean that it will work globally. The late 20th century bore witness to the popularity of yellow-green which ranged in hue from a soft avocado-green to an acidic lime-green. It infiltrated fashion and home furnishings in American culture. Print advertising, television and web sites embraced it for a "cutting edge" look. The more acid the hue, the more it became an "in your face" symbol of the avant-garde.



In spite of this, most shades of yellow-green do not enhance the image of baked goods, toothpaste, cosmetics or gastro-intestinal products. Consequently, this color would only add negative or confusing associations.

4. Don't use personal preference.

The most common color mistake is selecting a color because you like it. Some people will argue that they feel very comfortable with a certain color or that they like the way it looks in a certain context. One designer fell in love with the aqua and yellow color combination of Bahama's license plates. He proceeded to use these colors as the core color scheme on a web site for a paper manufacturer located in Maine. Not by any stretch of the imagination do these colors support this product. They serve only to confuse the viewer, thus discouraging exploration of the web site. Surround yourself with your favorite colors but remember, color communication is a science. Objectively analyze the product or theme of your project. (Advise your client to do the same!)

5. When in doubt, don't.

Most people have an intuitive warning system. If you're feeling a little queasy about a color selection, chances are it's wrong. Test it out by selecting a color one step removed such as a blue-green instead of a blue. You may be close to your mark or way off!



6. When in doubt, stick to timeless symbolism.

The timeless psychological associations and natural references of any given color should be foremost. For example, red is the color of fire and blood. Psychologically it is a dynamic energizing color. It is far removed from any symbolic association of serenity or dependability.

(Refer to the text descriptions in this publication.)

7. Prepare for color mutations on the web.

Think about the last time you were in an electronics store and viewed dozens of television sets in a row. The picture was darker on some sets, the contrast varied, and, on closer examination you may have noticed that flesh tones and even the colors of the trees and sky were different. The possibility for color mutations is even greater in web site design.

Here's what you can do:

a. Make sure your computer has good color vision.

Start by establishing the best color standard in your computer's operating system. If you're designing on a PC (Windows), correct your gamma by buying the best components and components that work well together. If you're designing on a Mac or SGI workstation, sufficient gamma correction is built into your system. Beware of anti-glare screen devices.



b. Use the 216 web color palette.

Although each browser has a vocabulary of 256 colors, only 216 colors are common to both PC's and Macintosh computers. Using a web-safe palette will ensure that the colors you select are standard on all computers and all Web browsers. Also, if you select colors outside of the 216 palette, the color may consist of speckles of colors. This effect is called dithering and can cause severe problems in background colors, text, and all link colors. Note: This palette does not mean that the color you select will look exactly the same on all computers. Colors are generated by the computer's operating system and monitor, not the palette. Nevertheless, the 216 web-safe colors are a very reliable standard.

(Note: All colors in this publication are part of the 216 color web-safe palette.)

c. Foresee the variables on other computers.

Preview your work on several different computers. If you're on a Mac, check out your designs on a Windows PC with 256 colors (8 bit). You may be surprised by the relative darkness of your hues as well as non-linear color shifts. Teal greens may appear much bluer, sandy beiges may shift into peachy tans. If you're on a PC, chances are you'll be amazed at how much lighter colors are on a Mac. The previously described color shifts will also be evident.



COLOR SYMBOLISM

Introduction to Color Symbolism
Categories of Color Symbolism

The Symbolism of Red

The Symbolism of Purple

The Symbolism of Blue

The Symbolism of Green

The Symbolism of Yellow

The Symbolism of Orange

The Symbolism of Brown

The Symbolism of Black

The Symbolism of White

The Symbolism of Gray

Idioms in American English



Introduction to Color Symbolism

Nature provides a significant starting point for color symbolism. Natural references, such as fire and water, play a powerful role in the symbolic meaning of the respective colors. This symbolism can be considered timeless. Other symbolic meanings change over time and are considered timely. These are linked to politics, fashion, religion, myths, and geography.

The color symbolism in this publication is based primarily on Western culture. In some situations, different countries in the Western world may attach different meanings to some colors. The colors of the nation's flag, the colors of a nation's sports team, and other conventions will affect the symbolism of certain colors. For example, the symbolism of orange will be quite different in the Netherlands, where the Royal House is referred to as "The House of Orange."

Much of the information about color symbolism comes from data gathered from "The Global Color Survey" located at the [Color Matters](#) web site. This database consists of thousands of entries from all points on the globe.

Categories of Color Symbolism

The first category, "References in Nature," includes natural elements that one would find at any time on Earth.

The second category "Psychological Symbolism," includes positive and negative associations.

Other symbolic categories that may be applied to a color, include:

"Contemporary Culture" (objects and associations that have evolved in the Twentieth Century), "Religious," "Historical / Political," "Other Cultures," and "Fashion." These categories are included only when they are relevant to a color.

Of special note are the color codes from OSHA (Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration). Although this an American standard for industry, there are significant similarities to psychological and natural associations.

A list of idiomatic expressions in American English is also included as a final reflection on symbolism.

THE SYMBOLISM OF RED

Psychological Symbolism

energy
warmth
strength
impulse
dynamism
activity
courage
excitement
love
passion
dominance
rebellion
aggression
war and combat
violence
sexuality
prostitution

References in Nature

fire
blood
raw meat, flesh
roses, carnations, and other flowers
apples, berries, tomatoes, and other fruits
cardinals and other birds
rubies and other gemstones

Contemporary Culture

traffic lights and signs designating “Stop”
fire engines in many countries
associated with the planet Mars
hearts (Valentines Day)
Christmas

Religion

the devil

More 

Historical / Political Associations

associated with communism in the 20th century

Other Cultures

an important color in China and Japan

Fashion

attention getting, sexy

OSHA Coding

Red: danger, stopping, fire protection equipment

Optics

Red advances, thereby creating the impression that red objects are closer than they are.

Etc.

Reds are classified as yellow-based or blue-based.

Yellow-based reds, such as tomato, appeal to males.

Blue-based reds, such as raspberry, appeal to females.

THE SYMBOLISM OF PURPLE

Psychological Symbolism

spirituality
mysticism
magic
faith
the unconscious
dignity
mystery
creativity
awareness
inspiration
passion
imagination
sensitivity
aristocracy and royalty
conceit
pomposity
cruelty
mourning
death

References in Nature

orchids, irises
grapes, plums
cabbage
purpura shellfish (from the Mediterranean)
(Note: purple very rarely occurs in nature)

Contemporary Culture

Purple Heart
(American military award for bravery)

Historical/Political Associations

the imperial color of ancient Rome

More 

Fashion

associated with mourning in some Western and Eastern cultures

OSHA Coding

Purple: hazardous nuclear energy

Optics/Physiology

the hardest color for the eye to discriminate

THE SYMBOLISM OF BLUE

Psychological Symbolism

spirituality
trust
truth
cleanliness
tranquility
contentment
immateriality
passivity
understanding
conservatism
security
technology
masculinity
coolness and cold
introversion
melancholy
depression

References in Nature

sky
oceans and lakes
blueberries
bluebirds
fish
mold
blue bonnets and other flowers
lapis and other gemstones
Note: blue is not commonly found in natural objects

Contemporary Culture

denim (blue jeans)
Police uniforms (U.S.)
IBM - Big Blue

More 

Historical/Political Associations

the color of robes representing the station of
philosopher in ancient Rome
signifies spiritual and pacific virtue in Christian art

Other Cultures

the color of immortality in China
the color of holiness for Hebrews
the color of the god Krishna in Hinduism

OSHA Coding

Blue: cautions against the starting, use, or
movement of equipment under repair

Optics/Physiology

Blue recedes, thereby creating the impression that
blue objects are farther away than they are.

THE SYMBOLISM OF GREEN

Psychological Symbolism

nature
growth
fruitfulness
renewal
freshness
tranquility
hope
youth
health
peace
good luck
coolness
envy
immaturity

References in Nature

all vegetation
lakes and other inland waters
emeralds, jade, and other gemstones
birds
fish

Contemporary Culture

traffic lights designating “Go”
ecology and conservation
American money (greenbacks)
Christmas

More 

Historical/Political Associations

Celtic myths: the Green man was the God of fertility

Fashion

avored by sophisticated Europeans for a long time

avocado greens: popular in the '60's in the US

stable pure shades of green: the color of the '90's

OSHA Coding

Green: used for designating safety and locations of
first aid equipment

Optics/Physiology

the most restful color to the eye

The lens of the eye focuses green light exactly on the
retina.

The range of green hues is very broad.

THE SYMBOLISM OF YELLOW

Psychological Symbolism

cheer
hope
vitality
luminosity
enlightenment (mental and spiritual)
communication
expansion
optimism
philosophy
egoism
dishonesty
betrayal
cowardice

References in Nature

sunlight
sand
autumn leaves
corn, squash, and other vegetables
lemons, bananas, and other fruits
sunflowers, daffodils, and other flowers
canaries and other birds
fish
gold, topaz and other gemstones
human hair and animal fur
urine, phlegm, pus, jaundiced skin

Contemporary Culture

traffic lights and signs designating slow or caution
taxis (Yellow Cab-U.S.)
quarantine flags
butter, mustard and spices

More 

Religion

Deities in Greek mythology had yellow hair and robes. (Therefore, it was not popular with the early Christians.)

Historical/Political Associations

Yellow Fever

Other Cultures

a symbol of the emperor in China
a sacred color in Hinduism
the color preferred by Confucius
an important color in Early Egypt

OSHA Coding

Yellow: cautions against physical hazards, such as projections

Optics

the color the eye processes first
the most visible and luminous color of the spectrum

Swatches 

THE SYMBOLISM OF ORANGE

Psychological Symbolism

energy
cheer
activity
excitement
warmth
crassness

OSHA Coding

Orange: designates dangerous parts of machines or energized equipment which may cause injury

References in Nature

fire
sunset
oranges, mangoes, apricots, and other fruits
pumpkins, yams, and other vegetables
flowers and autumn leaves
goldfish
human hair and animal fur

Contemporary Culture

life rafts
copper
symbolizes that a product is inexpensive (U.S.)
Halloween (U.S.)
school buses (U.S.)

Historical / Political Associations

The Royal House of the Netherlands is referred to as the House of Orange

Swatches 

THE SYMBOLISM OF BROWN

Psychological Symbolism

nature
durability
reliability
realism
warmth
comfort
homeyness
boredom

Contemporary Culture

chocolate
coffee, cola and other beverages
rice, grains
sugar
tobacco
UPS trucks

References in Nature

earth
tree trunks
roots
rocks
autumn leaves
cooked meat
human hair and skin
animal fur
birds
fecal matter

Etc.

Note: Although browns are very muted versions of oranges and reds, the swatches are grouped independent of the parent colors. In some cases, the dividing line between a muted orange and a brown is not rigid.

Swatches 

THE SYMBOLISM OF BLACK

Psychological Symbolism

power
sophistication
sexuality
the unknown
the end of a cycle
(after the fire, after the day, comes the dark)
death
corruption
ominous forces
emptiness
depression

References in Nature

the darkness of night, absence of light
rocks
hardened lava
charred wood and other objects
soot
crows and other birds
the pupil of the eye
human hair and animal fur
onyx, slate and other minerals

Contemporary Culture

ink
cast iron and other metals
industrial machinery

More 

Religion

the color of the Christian priesthood, representing
self-denial
evil forces

Historical/Political Associations

the color of the Egyptian God Osiris, representing
the seed of life that grows in the dark
the Black Plague
Black Panthers (U.S. Militant Organization)

Fashion

power color
the color of mourning in many Western cultures

Etc.

In subtractive color theory, black is the result of the
combination of all colors.

Swatches 

THE SYMBOLISM OF WHITE

Psychological Symbolism

purity
cleanliness
truth
innocence
chastity
spirituality
sophistication
refinement
newness
blandness
sterility
death

References in Nature

the non-color of light
clouds
snow
sea foam
flowers
doves and other birds
opals
teeth, hair, whites of the eyes
animal fur
cooked meat (chicken) and fish

Contemporary Culture

the white dove of peace
the “White House”
 (presidential residence in U.S.)
processed food
 (white bread, rice, sugar, etc.)
detergents

More 

Religion

salvation
the holiness of the God figure
the purity of the priesthood

Historical/Political Associations

the color of the flag of surrender
the color of mourning in ancient Rome &
medieval France

Fashion

wedding gowns symbolizing chastity
the color of mourning in some Western and
many Eastern cultures
uniforms for doctors and nurses

Optics/Physiology

Pure white can produce glare and cause
optical fatigue when used in large
quantities.

Etc.

In additive color theory, white is the result of
the combination of all colors of the spec-
trum.

THE SYMBOLISM OF GRAY

Psychological Symbolism

neutrality
intelligence
futurism
modesty
technology
secure
liberalism
tranquility
cold
retirement
indifference
sadness
decay
dreariness

References in Nature

rocks
smoke
clouds (stormy or overcast skies)
shadows
human hair

Contemporary Culture

concrete
silver, platinum, steel and other metals
industrial machinery

Optics/Physiology

the simplest color for eye to see

Swatches 

IDIOMS IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

Although idiomatic expressions are representative of the culture from which they arise, they demonstrate significant associations, many of which reinforce the general psychological symbolism of specific colors. The following represents a sampling of idioms in American English.

Red

red-blooded (hearty, healthy)
red-neck (low class, uneducated)
red light district (prostitution)
to be caught red-handed (with evidence)
to be in the red (in debt)
red tape (a mire of details)
red ticket item (a special item)
a red letter day (a fantastic day)

Green

green thumb (good gardening abilities)
green with envy
green around the gills (sick)
green behind the ears (immature)
green alien beings

Blue

blue chip stocks (solid, profitable)
singing the blues (songs with melancholy lyrics)
feeling blue (sad, depressed)
blue laws (puritanical conduct laws)
blue collar worker (laborer)
blue ribbon (the highest award)
blue blood (aristocratic)
blue streak (fast movement)
blue lightning (fast movement)
blue book (a publication listing car prices)
out of the blue (unexpected)

Purple

to turn purple with rage

More 

Yellow

yellow press (unscrupulous, sensational journalism)

to be yellow (cowardly)

to have a yellow streak (cowardly)

yellow-bellied (derogatory, cowardly)

White

white magic (good, kind)

white lies (falsehoods for a higher purpose)

white collar worker (professional, upper class)

to white wash (cover up)

Brown

to brown bag (to bring your lunch)

brownie points (credit gained by flattering someone)

to brown nose (to flatter someone for personal gain)

Gray

gray areas (shadowy areas or concepts that lack specificity)

seeing things in shades of gray (with an open mind)

gray matter (the brain)

Black

black magic (evil)

to be in the black (making a profit)

to put someone on a black list (a list of undesirable / rejected people)

black sheep (a member of a family or group who is a disgrace)

little black book (an address book listing special people)

black ball (cast a negative vote against someone)

black list (a list of persons who are disapproved of and are to be punished)

black market (illicit trade in goods)



COLOR SWATCHES

Color codes & formulas
About the layout
About the terms used

Red Swatches

Purple Swatches

Blue Swatches

Blue-Green Swatches

Green Swatches

Yellow Swatches

Orange Swatches

Brown Swatches

Black & White Swatches

Gray Swatches

Color Codes and Formulas

The color swatches in this publication were selected from a set of colors which are common to both PC and Macintosh computers. The RGB formulas and the HEX code (for web site HTML specifications) are on the left side of each color swatch.

R: 000	←	The RGB (Red, Green, Blue) formula
G: 255		
B: 204		
00FFCC	←	The HEX code for web site design

Refer to "Design Applications" for related information. ▶

About the layout of the swatches

The colors in this publication are divided into the following groups: red, purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, brown, black, white and gray. In some cases, the dividing line between the color groups is quite fluid and can not be considered an absolute. The primary focus is on the symbolic descriptions of each color rather than on a rigid positioning.

The colors are arranged in chromatic order. For example, greens begin with "teal green" (a green with a slight blue cast), progress to pure green, and end with olive green (a green with a yellow cast).

Similar versions of the same color are grouped sequentially. These groupings may include a light version, a medium version, a dark version, a bright version and a muted version of the same "parent" color.

About the terms used

The English language does not support a wide range of color terms beyond the names of basic hues, such as “red” and “blue.” In addition to the basic color names, colors may also be described by references to naturally occurring objects, such as “burgundy” or “lime”. Designer color terms such as “Antique White” and “Riviera Blue” are not accurate and are not used in this publication.

In order to differentiate each color, the following descriptive terms are used:

Dark - a dark version of the color, one which is a “shade” of the original color

Medium - a medium or medium-light version of the color

Light - a light version of the color, one which is a pastel or “tint “ of the original color

Muted - a dull, less colorful version of the color

Bright - a very pure, very intense, very saturated version of the color

Deep - a very rich version of the color, a full bodied color in spite of its relative darkness

Some colors may also be described with terms such as “yellow-based” or “blue-based.” For example, a tomato red is a “yellow-based” red. In other words, tomato red is a red with a slight yellow-orange cast to it. Raspberry red is a “blue-based” red, one with a slight blue cast to it. These distinctions affect the gender-based appeal of red. In other colors, they serve to differentiate one from another.

Since the emphasis is on constructive applications of colors, positive descriptions are used for the symbolism of each individual color. Refer back to the symbolic analysis of each color for possible negative associations.

RGB
Hex

Red Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 153
G: 000
B: 000
990000



Dark Brick Red (yellow-based red)
earthy, friendly, robust, strong, tasty, warm

R: 204
G: 000
B: 000
CC0000



Medium Dark Red (yellow-based red)
invigorating, powerful, zesty, tasty, spicy, hot

R: 255
G: 000
B: 000
FF0000



Tomato Red (yellow-based red)
dynamic, powerful, aggressive, rebellious, impulsive, strong, sexy, exciting, festive, good luck, fast, war-like, demonic, hot

R: 255
G: 102
B: 102
FF6666



Salmon Red (yellow-based red)
healthy, happy, tasty, friendly, cosmetic, warm



RGB
Hex

Red Swatches 5-8

Name & Symbolism

R: 204
G: 102
B: 102
CC6666



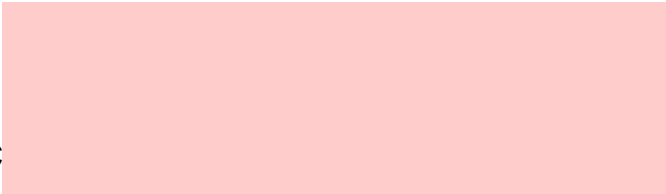
Muted Brick Red (yellow-based red)
healthy, tasty, comforting, warm

R: 204
G: 153
B: 153
CC9999



Mauve Beige
sophisticated, relaxing, cosmetic, warm

R: 255
G: 204
B: 204
FFCCCC



Light Warm Pink (yellow-based red)
comforting, gentle, delicate, sweet,
happy, floral, spring-like, babyish,
feminine

R: 255
G: 000
B: 051
FF0033



Bright Cherry Red
festive, dynamic, energizing, sexy,
fruity, warm



RGB
Hex

Red Swatches 9-12

Name & Symbolism

R: 153
G: 000
B: 051
990033



Dark Red (blue-based red)

formal, majestic, sophisticated, elegant, rich, warm

R: 255
G: 102
B: 153
FF6699



Deep Pink (blue-based red)

healthy, happy, fun, floral, sweet, fruity, warm

R: 204
G: 000
B: 102
CC0066



Raspberry Red (blue-based red)

vibrant, fruity, feminine, warm

R: 255
G: 000
B: 153
FF0099



Bright Raspberry Pink (blue-based red)

zany, electric, festive, vibrant, ecstatic, tangy-fruity, whimsical, tropical, hot



RGB
Hex

Red Swatches 13-16

Name & Symbolism

R: 255
G: 153
B: 204
FF99CC



Raspberry Pink (blue-based red)
happy, fun, comforting, sweet, child-like,
feminine, cosmetic, spring-like, floral,
warm

R: 102
G: 000
B: 051
660033



Deep Burgundy Red (blue-based red)
sophisticated, aristocratic, majestic,
dignified, elegant, high quality,
expensive

R: 204
G: 051
B: 153
CC6699



Light Muted Burgundy Red (blue-based red)
romantic, intimate, floral, tender,
feminine, cosmetic, sentimental

R: 153
G: 000
B: 102
990066



Deep Plum Red (blue-based red)
elegant, majestic, spiritual, fruity,
feminine



RGB
Hex

Red Swatches 17-19

Name & Symbolism

R: 255
G: 102
B: 204
FF66CC



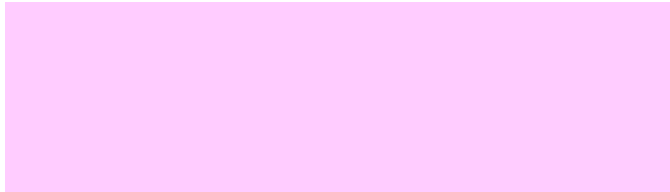
Light Hot Pink (blue-based red)
happy, fun, festive, tropical, feminine,
cosmetic, floral, warm

R: 255
G: 000
B: 255
FF00FF



**Fuchsia/ Bright Magenta
(blue-based red)**
zany, electric, festive, magical,
whimsical, exotic, tropical, hot

R: 255
G: 204
B: 255
FFCCFF



Light Pink (blue-based red)
happy, delicate, floral, cosmetic,
feminine, child-like, floral

The Symbolism of Red ▶
(Text)

Purple Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Purple Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 102
G: 000
B: 102
660066



Burgundy Purple

sophisticated, aristocratic, majestic, elegant, expensive, dignified, spiritual, fruity

R: 153
G: 000
B: 153
990099



Medium Burgundy Purple

vibrant, spiritual, passionate, floral, fruity

R: 204
G: 102
B: 204
CC66CC



Medium Light Burgundy Purple

romantic, cosmetic, floral, warm

R: 204
G: 153
B: 204
CC99CC



Light Red Purple

spiritual, delicate, romantic, spring-like, floral



RGB
Hex

Purple Swatches 5-8

Name & Symbolism

R: 102
G: 051
B: 102
663366



Dark Mauve Purple

sophisticated, elegant, philosophical,
spiritual, artistic

R: 051
G: 000
B: 102
330066



Dark Purple #1

regal, dignified, elegant, expensive,
philosophical, intelligent, spiritual,
mysterious

R: 102
G: 000
B: 153
660099



Grape Purple

sophisticated, aristocratic, expensive,
elegant, dignified, philosophical, creative,
passionate, mysterious, spiritual, fruity

R: 204
G: 153
B: 255
CC99FF



Light Grape Purple

spiritual, romantic, spring-like, floral



RGB
Hex

Purple Swatches 9-12

Name & Symbolism

R: 153
G: 000
B: 255
9900FF



Bright Purple

electric, potent, aware, passionate,
vibrant, spiritual, mystical, magical,
tropical, tangy, floral

R: 153
G: 102
B: 255
9966FF



Medium Purple

spiritual, sensitive, romantic, spring-like,
floral

R: 102
G: 000
B: 255
6600FF



Ultraviolet Purple

powerful, intense, intelligent, creative,
aware, vibrant, high tech, electric,
radioactive

R: 153
G: 153
B: 255
9999FF



Medium Light Ultraviolet Purple

spiritual, meditative, tranquil



RGB
Hex

Purple Swatches 13-16

Name & Symbolism

R: 051
G: 000
B: 153
330099



Dark Purple #2

regal, dignified, elegant, expensive,
philosophical, intelligent, spiritual,
mysterious

R: 204
G: 204
B: 255
CCCCFF



Light Purple

spiritual, meditative, calming, soothing

R: 102
G: 102
B: 153
666699



Medium Gray Purple

dignified, intellectual, respectable,
expensive, sophisticated, creative

R: 153
G: 153
B: 204
9999CC



Light Gray Purple

philosophical, creative, sophisticated,
spiritual, peaceful



RGB
Hex

Purple Swatches 17-18

Name & Symbolism

R: 051
G: 000
B: 204
3300CC



Blue Purple

dignified, high tech, potent, electric,
intelligent

R: 102
G: 102
B: 255
6666FF



Medium Blue Purple

inspirational, spiritual, mystical, sensitive

The Symbolism of Purple ▶
(Text)

Blue Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Blue Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 000
B: 102
000066



Dark Navy Blue

dignified, trustworthy, professional, official, intelligent, respectable, secure, sophisticated, expensive, nautical

R: 051
G: 000
B: 255
3300FF



Cobalt Blue (purple-based)

high tech, powerful, electric, strong, sporty, cool

R: 000
G: 000
B: 153
000099



Navy Blue

dignified, trustworthy, professional, official, intelligent, respectable, secure, sophisticated, expensive, nautical, masculine

R: 000
G: 000
B: 255
0000FF



Bright Blue

strong, knowledgeable, clean, high tech, sporty, marine, masculine, cool



RGB
Hex

Blue Swatches 5-8

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 051
B: 204
0033CC



Blue

dependable, understanding, secure, calming, masculine, cool

R: 102
G: 153
B: 255
6699FF



Medium Light Muted Blue

calming, soothing, understanding, ethereal, spiritual, melancholic, marine, light, cold

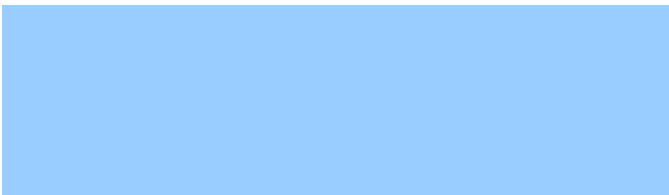
R: 051
G: 102
B: 204
3366CC



Medium Muted Blue

secure, trustworthy, understanding, calming, cool

R: 153
G: 204
B: 255
99CCFF



Light Blue

peaceful, calming, quiet, passive, ethereal, spiritual, cool



RGB
Hex

Blue Swatches 9-12

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 102
B: 255
0066FF



Medium Blue

clean, refreshing, marine, aquatic, cool

R: 000
G: 153
B: 255
0099FF



Cerulean Blue

clean, refreshing, aquatic, cool

R: 051
G: 102
B: 153
336699



Medium Blue Gray

dignified, dependable, professional,
respectable, intelligent, peaceful

R: 102
G: 153
B: 204
6699CC



Light Blue Gray

peaceful, intelligent, understanding,
spiritual, wintery



RGB
Hex

Blue Swatches 13-14

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 102
B: 153
006699



Dark Turquoise Blue

relaxing, dependable, aquatic, cool

R: 000
G: 204
B: 255
00CCFF



Aqua

refreshing, clean, aquatic, cool

Blue Green Swatches

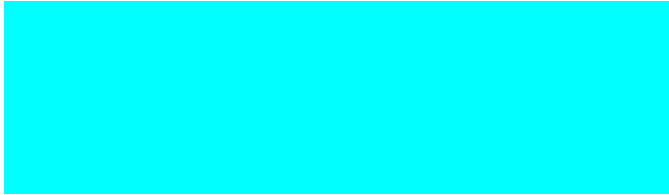


RGB
Hex

Blue-Green Swatches 1-2

Name & Symbolism

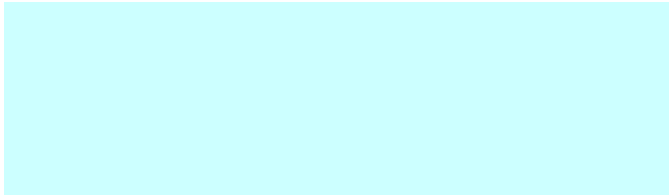
R: 000
G: 255
B: 255
00FFFF



Cyan

festive, whimsical, zesty, refreshing,
aquatic, clean, tropical, cool

R: 204
G: 255
B: 255
CCFFFF



Light Cyan

peaceful, soothing, clean, cool

The Symbolism of Blue ▶
(Text)

Green Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 102
B: 102
006666



Teal Green

dependable, comfortable, secure, natural, dignified, sophisticated, professional

R: 000
G: 153
B: 153
009999



Medium Teal Green

healthy, relaxing, soothing, refreshing, aquatic, cool

R: 051
G: 102
B: 102
336666



Dark Gray Green

dignified, sophisticated, dependable, secure, professional, peaceful

R: 153
G: 204
B: 204
99CCCC



Light Gray Green (celadon)

peaceful, soothing, sophisticated, subdued, cool



RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 5-8

Name & Symbolism

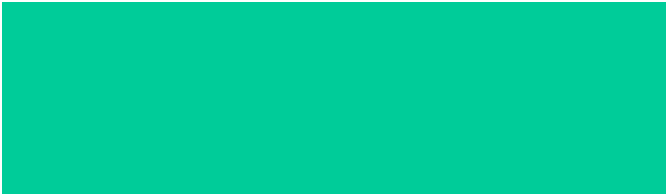
R: 000
G: 255
B: 204
00FFCC



Cyan Green

refreshing, stimulating, electric, astringent
whimsical, clean, aquatic, cool

R: 000
G: 204
B: 153
00CC99



Viridian Green (blue-based)

healthy, refreshing, relaxing, aquatic, cool

R: 000
G: 255
B: 153
00FF99



Bright Green

healthy, zesty, botanical, fresh, clean,
cleansing, electric, minty, cool

R: 153
G: 255
B: 204
99FFCC



Light Green

refreshing, soothing, minty, cool



RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 9-12

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 051
B: 051
003333



Dark Green

dependable, dignified, professional, respectable, secure, sophisticated, expensive

R: 000
G: 153
B: 102
009966



Green #1

botanical, ecological, natural, lucky, healthy, healing, cool

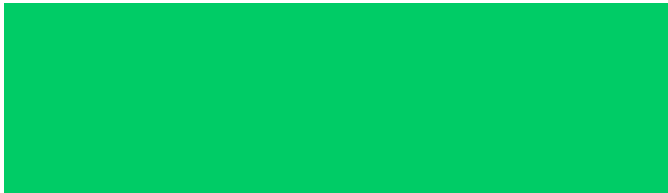
R: 102
G: 204
B: 153
66CC99



Muted Medium Light Green

healthy, relaxing, soothing, peaceful, natural, cool

R: 000
G: 204
B: 102
00CC66



Green #2

botanical, ecological, natural, lucky, fresh, refreshing, healthy, cool



RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 13-16

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 102
B: 051
006633



Dark Forest Green

dependable, professional, secure,
botanical, ecological, natural, steadfast,
healthy, quiet, cool

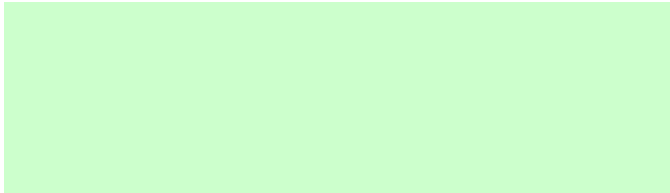
R: 153
G: 255
B: 153
99FF99



Medium Light Green

natural, healthy, soothing, refreshing,
botanical, fresh, cool

R: 204
G: 255
B: 204
CCFFCC



Light Green

peaceful, soothing, healthy, refreshing,
cool

R: 000
G: 051
B: 000
003300



Dark Green (yellow-based)

earthy, woody, dependable, natural,
ecological, steadfast, secure, wise



RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 17-20

Name & Symbolism

R: 102
G: 204
B: 102
66CC66



**Muted Medium Light Green
(yellow-based)**
botanical, natural, healthy, raw,
refreshing, cool

R: 102
G: 153
B: 102
669966



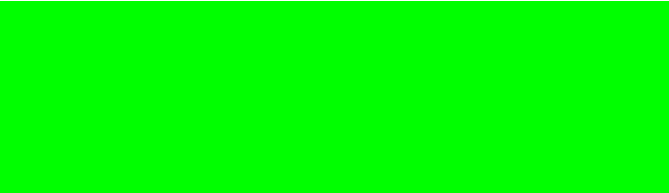
**Muted Medium Light Green
(yellow-based)**
natural, botanical, peaceful, dependable,
calming, cool

R: 153
G: 204
B: 153
99CC99



Light Celery Green
natural, botanical, dependable, calming,
delicate, cool

R: 000
G: 255
B: 000
00FF00



Lime Green
primordial, extraterrestrial, electric, raw,
stimulating, acidic, sour, cool



RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 21-24

Name & Symbolism

R: 051
G: 102
B: 000
336600



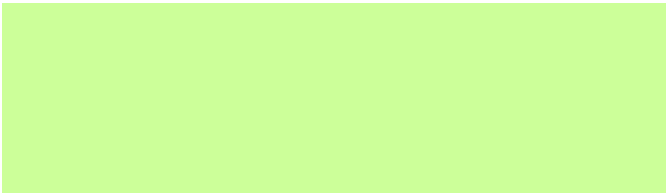
Dark Avocado Green
earthy, botanical, natural, cool

R: 102
G: 204
B: 000
66CC00



Bright Avocado Green
botanical, raw, acidic, primordial, sour

R: 204
G: 255
B: 153
CCFF99



Muted Light Avocado Green
botanical, refreshing, natural, healthy,
cool

R: 153
G: 255
B: 000
99FF00



Bright Yellow Green #1
primordial, electric, astringent,
extraterrestrial, acidic, raw, sour



RGB
Hex

Green Swatches 25-27

Name & Symbolism

R: 153
G: 153
B: 000
999900



Olive Yellow Green
earthy, raw, sour

R: 153
G: 153
B: 102
999966



Muted Yellow Green
earthy, restful

R: 204
G: 204
B: 153
CCCC99



Light Muted Yellow Green
natural, restful, subdued

The Symbolism of Green ▶
(Text)

Yellow Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Yellow Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 204
G: 255
B: 000
CCFF00



Bright Chartreuse Yellow

sour, primordial, electric, astringent, raw, acidic

R: 204
G: 204
B: 000
CCCC00



Dark Chartreuse Yellow

botanical, primordial, earthy

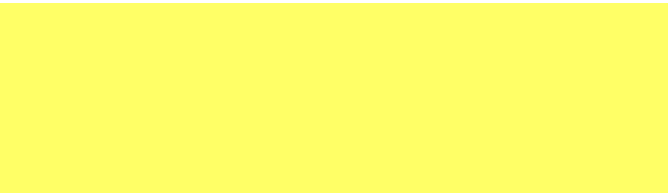
R: 255
G: 255
B: 000
FFFF00



Yellow

joyous, vibrant, spiritual, luminous, energizing, sunny, floral, tangy, citric, warm

R: 255
G: 255
B: 102
FFFF66



Medium Light Yellow

joyous, lively, spiritual, luminous, sunny, summery, floral, warm

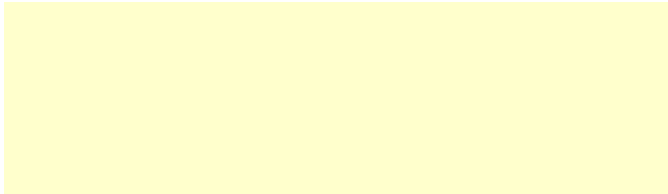


RGB
Hex

Yellow Swatches 5-8

Name & Symbolism

R: 255
G: 255
B: 204
FFFFCC



Light Yellow

mellow, optimistic, cheerful, spring-like, warm

R: 255
G: 204
B: 000
FFCC00



Golden Yellow

radiant, cheerful, stimulating, energizing, invigorating, sunny, floral, fruity, warm

R: 153
G: 102
B: 000
996600



Golden Yellow Brown

earthy, natural, healthy, woody, autumnal, warm

R: 204
G: 153
B: 051
CC9933



Light Golden Tan

earthy, natural, healthy, tasty, arid, warm



RGB
Hex

Yellow Swatches 9-11

Name & Symbolism

R: 204
G: 102
B: 000
CC6600



Dark Yellow Orange

zesty, spicy, tasty, healthy, invigorating,
earthy, autumnal, warm

R: 255
G: 153
B: 000
FF9900



Yellow Orange

stimulating, healthy, invigorating,
energizing, happy, sunny, tasty, fruity,
warm

R: 255
G: 204
B: 102
FFCC66



Light Yellow Orange

cheerful, friendly, healthy, invigorating,
sunny, warm

The Symbolism of Yellow ▶
(Text)

Orange Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Orange Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 255
G: 102
B: 000
FF6600



Orange

stimulating, energizing, exciting,
cheerful, fruity, autumnal, inexpensive,
warm

R: 204
G: 102
B: 051
CC6633



Terra-cotta Orange

zesty, spicy, natural, invigorating, tasty,
healthy, earthy, autumnal, warm

R: 255
G: 153
B: 102
FF9966



Light Salmon Orange

healthy, friendly, cheerful, invigorating,
tasty, warm

R: 255
G: 204
B: 153
FFCC99



Light Orange

healthy, cheerful, tasty, flesh-like, healthy,
warm



RGB
Hex

Orange Swatches 5-6

Name & Symbolism

R: 204
G: 051
B: 000
CC3300



Dark Red Orange

invigorating, spicy, tasty, earthy,
autumnal, warm

R: 255
G: 051
B: 000
FF3300



Red-Orange

exciting, aggressive, invigorating, raw,
impulsive, tasty, hot

The Symbolism of Orange ▶
(Text)

Brown Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Brown Swatches 1-4

Name & Symbolism

R: 102
G: 000
B: 000
660000



Dark Red Brown

dependable, strong, robust, friendly,
natural, earthy, tasty, warm

R: 153
G: 051
B: 000
993300



Russet Brown

earthy, natural, tasty, spicy, autumnal,
warm

R: 153
G: 102
B: 051
996633



Medium Light Brown

dependable, friendly, tasty, healthy,
earthy, natural, woody, warm

R: 204
G: 153
B: 102
CC9966



Light Coffee Brown

earthy, tasty, friendly, natural, healthy,
warm



RGB
Hex

Brown Swatches 5-7

Name & Symbolism

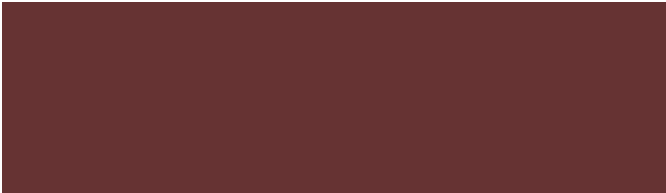
R: 051
G: 000
B: 000
330000



Dark Chocolate Brown

dependable, strong, sturdy, natural, rich, tasty, earthy, woody, warm

R: 102
G: 051
B: 051
663333



Medium Brown

dependable, relaxing, friendly, natural, tasty, earthy, woody, warm

R: 153
G: 102
B: 102
996666



Maive Brown

relaxing, friendly, natural, tasty, warm

The Symbolism of Brown ▶
(Text)

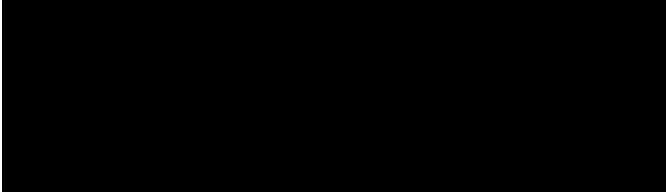
Black & White Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Black & White Swatches

Name & Symbolism

R: 000
G: 000
B: 000
000000



Black

powerful, sophisticated, strong, sexy,
magical, demonic, ominous, expensive

The Symbolism of Black ▶
(Text)

R: 255
G: 255
B: 255
FFFFFF



White

pure, spiritual, clean, sterile, truthful,
chaste, innocent, peaceful

The Symbolism of White ▶
(Text)

Gray Swatches ▶

RGB
Hex

Gray Swatches 1-2

Name & Symbolism

R: 102
G: 102
B: 102
666666



Medium Gray


dignified, intelligent, high tech, creative,
efficient, expensive, unadorned, subtle,
neutral, cool

R: 204
G: 204
B: 204
CCCCCC



Light Gray

calming, unadorned, unpretentious,
neutral, subtle, subdued, cool

The Symbolism of Gray 
(Text)

About the author

Jill Morton resides in Hawaii, the crossroads between East and West. This multi-cultural environment has been an ongoing source of information about color symbolism. The colorful natural landscape of the Hawaiian Islands has served as a reference for the color associations and harmonies found in nature.

The most significant data has come from her web-based research. Since 1995, more than 3,000 responses and 60,000 entries have been received from the Global Color Survey, located at her educational web site, [Color Matters](#).

Ms. Morton holds a Masters degree in the Fine Arts and has served as faculty at the University of Hawaii and Chaminade University.

COLOR VOODOO

Color Voodoo #1 - A Guide to Color Symbolism

Color Voodoo #3 - 50 Symbolic Color Schemes

Color Voodoo #4 - Color Logic

Color Voodoo #5 - Color Logic for Web Site Design

Color Voodoo #6 - Color Voodoo for the Office

<http://www.colorvoodoo.com>