

Color Temperature

Did you know that colors have temperatures? Don't call the doctor if a color is warm or the undertaker if a color is cool or worse, cold. Cool colors, warm colors, oh my. Many know warm colors are colors of the sun or fire, that is yellows, oranges, and reds, while cool colors are the color of the sea, blues, turquoise and purples.

Warm greens and cool greens. Hey, they both are green what's the big deal? One day my husband tried to show his independence by wearing a lime green golf shirt with a peacock blue pair of shorts. It was a scratch your nails on the board outfit. Clash, clash. A cool green has more "blue" mixed into it and a warm green has more yellow mixed into it. But the cool green can be subtle, like a jade green. And a warm green might be a grass green.

Let's look at the two rose pics below:



The leaves of the left red rose are warm. Look carefully and see the yellow especially in the light areas.

On the right pink rose the leaves are cool. Again, look carefully at the light areas and one should see a jade or blue color green.

So ok now I know what a cool green is, and a warm green is and that most of the time don't mix them when dressing oneself. But there is a lot to know when placing cool colors or warm colors in a painting. There are some guidelines. Cool colors recede and are often placed in the back or under warm colors. Warm colors come forward.



In this famous floral the warm “yellower” leaves are on the forefront. Look at the leaves in the lower right. The leaves behind it are cool or bluer. Of course, rules are mostly a guide. A warm leaf can be pushed to the back of a painting by making it a darker value of the warm leaf. But let’s not go there now.



In this palette knife oil painting the warm leaf in the forefront on the right. Cool colors are in the back on the left



And lastly this color pencil painting places warm leaves in the front and cool leaves in the back or under the front leaves.

So, it doesn't matter what medium one uses to paint. Using a guideline of warm in front and cool in back is a "good rule of thumb".