

Color It Yours

by Maddy Cranley

"Blue and green should never be seen except in the washing machine!" The first time I heard this little rhyme, I was standing in the general store on Main Street in the little prairie village of Rosetown. The town belied its name. Unlike a lush and vibrant flower, it was a dry and dusty place. Colors had been bleached by the sun or blown away by the wind. Even still, it had a charm that only a small prairie town can muster. It was the middle of August and I was spending a week with family friends who had a daughter my age. Main Street was our recreation center and the general store, our mall. Shopping was limited but Ellen had spotted a pair of green shoes sitting on their box in the store window. She loved the style but wanted them in navy blue to match her new school clothes. Alas, the coveted shoes only came in one color - bright green. For me, it was not a problem - one could wear green with blue. My suggestion was promptly rejected with a rhyme.

I always thought that blue and green did perfectly well sitting next to each other. After all, think of trees and sky. Choosing colors for a knitting project that are both pleasing to the eye and in a balanced combination, is usually achieved by artistic instinct or by employing the scientific method of color theory. Most of us react to color emotionally, often attaching certain colors to certain memories. On instinct, we respond positively or negatively when faced with a particular color combination.

We also absorb color suggestions that are displayed in nature and in the various media that enter our lives. You can't help but notice the color combinations just outside our windows and doors at this time of year. The subtle gradation of green leaves into shades of orange, gold and russet can only inspire us to combine these colors in a simple stripe or complex Fair Isle pattern. Interesting color combinations are displayed in cultivated landscapes and designed living rooms featured in gardening and home decorating magazines. Keeping a file of clippings that one finds inspirational can supply an endless mix of color for a new knitting project.

Since our artistic color choices are also limited by yarn being available in limited shade ranges, a "basket" method can be quite helpful. Place all the colors of yarn that might work together for a particular project into a basket. Place the basket where it can be passed many times during a day. On some passes, stop and rearrange the colors, hiding more of one and exposing more of another. Other times, offer just a quick glance, or a long gaze. It may be days, but eventually the color combination becomes either a pleasing option or one to be discarded as unsuitable.

A scientific approach to choosing a color involves the study of color theory. It certainly can be a useful aide as a starting point when deciding on a certain color combination or as a problem solver if a particular "artistic" color decision becomes difficult. The color wheel describes the relationships between colors. It is laid out so that any two primary colors (red, yellow, blue) are separated by the secondary colors (orange, violet, and green). Primary colors are basic and cannot be mixed from other elements. One can mix two primaries to get a secondary color. On a color wheel, each secondary color on the color wheel is bounded by two primaries. These are the components that one would mix to obtain that secondary color. Color complements are color opposites and contrast each other, and are therefore placed opposite each

other on the wheel. A color wheel can be obtained from an art supply store as well as other tools that can aide in selecting and matching colors.

Whether it is artist's instinct or science that you use, both can assist you in finding a balance of color that pleases you. There's the key - it pleases you and therefore, it will be uniquely yours.

Maddy Cranley is a professional knitwear designer, who has created exclusive designs for knitting and craft magazines, authored and published three books on the subject of creating felt garments and projects from handknitting, and produces an ever-growing line of maddy laine handknitting patterns. For additional information, see <http://www.maddycraft.com>

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