Basic Palette of Oil/Acrylic Hues/Pigments

Shane McDonald Studios

O = opaque pigment
sO = semi-opaque
sT = semi-translucent
T = translucent

- **White** — Titanium (O)
- **Yellow** — Cadmium Yellow Light or Lemon Yellow (O)
- **Yellow-Orange** — Cadmium Yellow Deep or Cadmium Orange (O)
- **Warm Red** — Cadmium Red Light or Medium (O)
- **Cool Red** — Permanent Alizarin Crimson or Quinacridone Red (T)

warmer → cooler

HIGH CHROMA WARM COLORS

Colors closer to yellow on the spectrum are warmer (think of the sun) and likely used in mixing light values of lit objects. Since most light is daylight-neutral to warm, *some* yellow will likely be used in the mixture of the lit areas. Conversely, the darker the shadow, the more ultramarine and/or crimson pigment will be used in the mixture. Warm colors generally advance and are likely used to emphasize dominant elements in a composition.

- **Yellow Ochre** (sO)
- **Burnt Sienna** (sT)

TONING COLORS

These earth pigments are inexpensive and are part of this basic palette for painting efficiency. Used primarily for toning the painting ground and drawing. Mix these earth-tones with high-chroma colors to decrease the chroma (color's intensity) in a subtle way.

warmer → cooler

- **Warm Green** — Sap Green (T)
- **Cool Green** — Viridian (sT)
- **Warm Blue** — Cerulean (O)
- **Cool Blue** — Ultramarine (sT)

HIGH CHROMA COOL COLORS

Colors closer to violet on the spectrum are cooler and likely mixed into darker values of shaded areas of objects. In normal warm lighting, if the local color of an object is cool, a warmer cool pigment would be used in the lightest lit areas. For example, on a royal blue object, try using cerulean in the lit areas instead of ultramarine. Cool colors generally recede and are likely used in subordinate elements to emphasize the dominant elements in a composition.

- **Black** (sO)

BLACK

Black can be used to deepen the accent darks in shaded areas where little or no light is present. Black can also be used as a cool tone in light values when tinted with white.

DEFINITIONS

Value: lightness or darkness of a color

Contrast: the difference of opposite elements (light vs. dark values, intense vs. dull colors, hard vs. soft edges, rough vs. smooth textures, large vs. small shapes, etc.)

Pigment: the chemical component of a color

Hue: (descriptive name of a color) Manufacturers mix pigments to mimic the color of another pigment and label it a "hue."

Local Color: the apparent color or hue of an object

Opacity/Translucency: Opaque pigments cover previous layers of paint while translucent pigments screen or mix visually with previous layers.

Tint: color with white added to make lighter value

Tinting Strength: degree to which a pigment retains its brilliancy as white is added.

Tone: color with neutral gray added to make to lower intensity (more muted chroma)

Shade: color with black added to make darker value

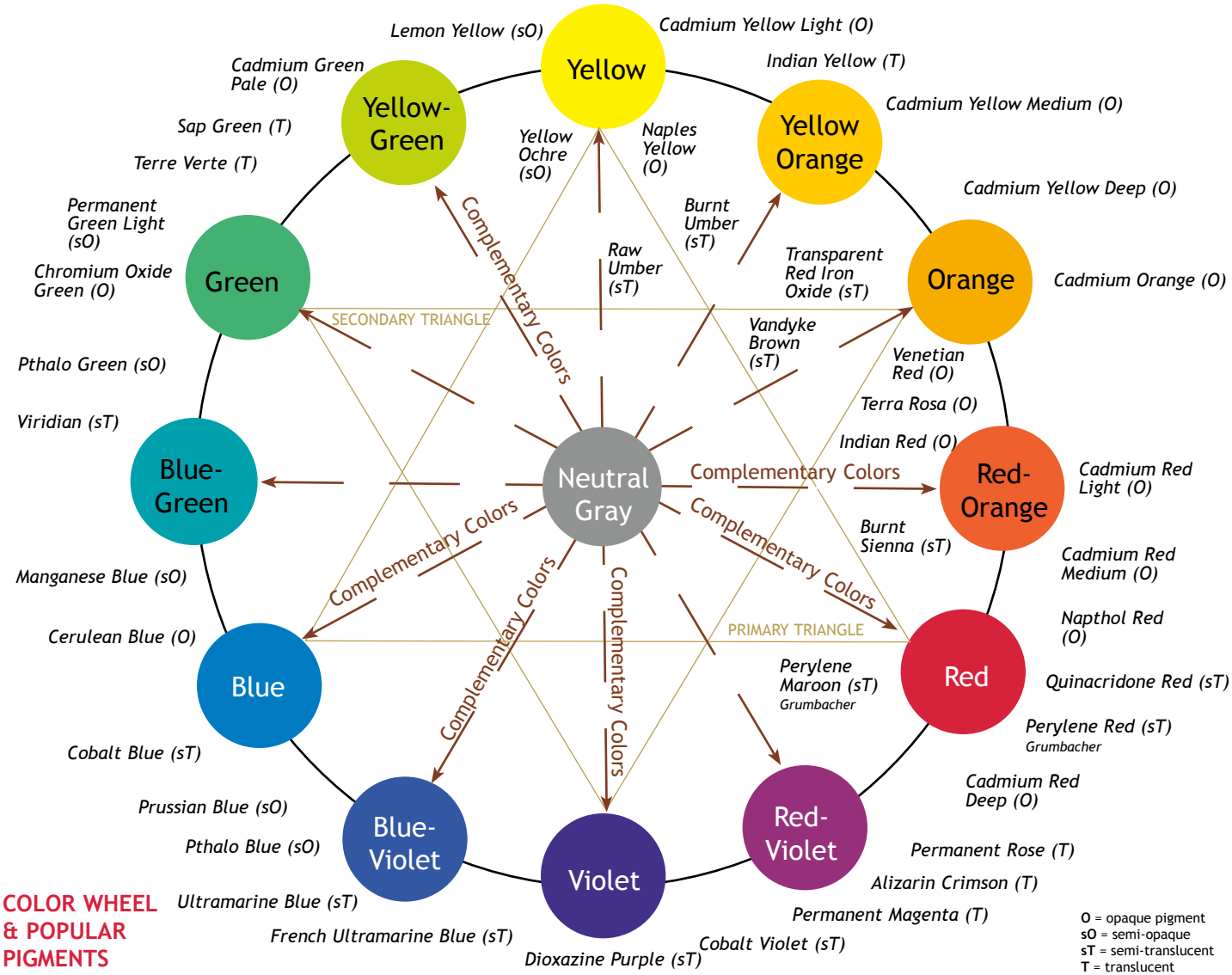
Key Color: dominant color in a color scheme or color mixture.

High Key: color scheme with mostly light valued colors

Low Key: color scheme with mostly dark valued colors

Intensity or Chroma: brightness or dullness of a color

COLOR WHEEL & POPULAR PIGMENTS



COLOR SCHEMES

Monochromatic: using any shade, tint, or tone of one color

Analogous: using any shades, tints, or tones of colors that are at 90 degree angles on the color wheel

Acromatic: a colorless scheme using blacks, whites, and grays

Diadic: using two colors that are two colors apart on the color wheel. Example: red and orange

Triadic: using three colors equally spaced from each other on the color wheel

Tetradic: a contrast of four or more colors on the color wheel

Complementary Harmony: combining a shade, tint, or a tone of one color and crossing over using shades, tints, and tones of an opposite color. (example: blue & orange)

Split Compliment: one color with the neighbors of its opposite.

FORM, LIGHT & COLOR THEORY

Harmony: Colors in a composition have something in common automatically when using a limited palette. Keep the color of the light in mind and use that color on everything.

Distance: Objects in the distance are lighter, have lower value and color contrast, are more dull, and are usually cooler than colors of objects up close.

Surface Properties: Refractive and reflective qualities of object surfaces will affect the colors we see, so look closely to see colors that may be different from the local color.

Painting Technique: Always start with your mid-darks, they are your foundation. Light color + local color = color mixed. Opaque lights, transparent shadows. Paint retains its greatest luminosity when not too heavily applied. Don't over-saturate--explore the grays. Complementary colors can be more attractive if one of them is softened or neutralized (or separated by a neutral line or area, absolute black or white lines are the most effective). Keep tones of blocked-in shapes simple, but keep the edges rich in color complexity.