Color

Pair of Pears, Mimi Gaudet, 2019

Grade Levels: 9–12

Duration: One 45-minute to one-hour classroom period
MESSAGE TO EDUCATORS

Everyone has the ability to create and interpret images. This lesson-plan series guides students through the foundational elements of photography, outlines the artistic process, and strengthens their visual literacy skills. The lessons build upon one another and are developed to familiarize students with photography and become comfortable operating the camera as a tool for creative self-expression. Once your students develop an understanding of fundamental photography techniques, their photographic explorations can lead them on journeys that capture the world from their point of view.

You do not need to be practiced in the skills of photography and facilitating discussions about art to effectively lead this lesson, but we would encourage you to try some of the photography assignments included in order to share your experience with students. The Getty Museum is committed to supporting meaningful dialogue through art, and therefore this lesson plan was created with educators to carefully walk you through the steps needed to effectively facilitate and guide your students.

We encourage you and your students to use this lesson to spark ideas and conversations about the world around them.

Student Learning Objectives

- Students create four photographs that implement specific color components to enhance the aesthetic elements of an image.
- Students begin to digitally enhance photographs of their choosing and think about how to select a series of their best/favorite work.

Students create

- A photograph that uses warm colors
- A photograph that uses cool colors
- A photograph that uses complementary colors
- A photograph that is black and white

ASSOCIATED STATE STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9–10.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11–12.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible, and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

National Core Arts Standards

Anchor Standard #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

CA VAPA Standards

Adv.VA:Cr2.1: Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art and design that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.

Adv.VA:Cr2.2: Demonstrate understanding of the importance of balancing freedom and responsibility in the use of images, materials, tools, and equipment in the creation and circulation of creative work.

Acc.VA:Cr3: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

MATERIALS

- Projector/screen sharing on your monitor
- Photographs from Getty Museum collection (provided)
- Photographs from Getty Unshuttered community (provided)
- Getty Unshuttered challenge videos (Hyperlinked at the end of this lesson)
- A digital camera or smartphone

VOCABULARY

Complementary colors Located opposite of one another on the color wheel, these colors create the strongest contrast, for example, red and green, yellow and purple, and orange and blue.

Warm Colors Reds, oranges, and yellows. Warm colors tend to be more active and emotionally charged. These colors tend to jump out at the viewer, attracting attention and drawing the viewer’s eye.

Cool Colors Greens, blues, and violets. Cool colors are more subdued and gentle, and are more likely to be soothing or calm. Though these colors are quieter, this doesn’t make them less powerful. Often when used with warm colors, cool colors can provide an interesting balance in a photograph.

Soft Light A type of light in photography that creates minimal hard shadows. Soft lighting typically has more of a fuzzy gradiance, with no defined lines, and much smoother transitions than light variations from hard light.

Hard Light A type of bright light in photography that casts harsh, sharply defined shadows, and typically draws the viewer’s attention to a specific area.

Atmospheric perspective A method of creating the illusion of depth in a painting, drawing or photograph. This effect influences how we see objects as they disappear into the distance often by controlling color to simulate changes affected by the atmosphere. For example, objects closer to the viewer’s eyes often appear brighter, but objects further away are lighter or dimmer in color.

(Vocabulary available as Unshuttered Color Reference sheet in Resources below)
BEFORE CLASS PREPARATION & ACCOMMODATIONS

• Select which Unshuttered photograph(s) and Getty collection photograph(s) you would like to discuss with your class. Depending on your class size and class period length you may want to discuss two or more of each.

• Consider how students will share the images they take. Using Google classrooms, Dropbox or similar platforms can allow students to upload and share their photographs with their classmates.

• If working with students who may require visual accommodations, the website Teaching the Visually Impaired, provides useful resources for educators.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Lesson Description

This lesson guides students to explore color in photography by briefly reviewing foundational color theory principles and examples. Students are instructed to create four images, one with warm colors, one with cool colors, one with complementary colors, and an image that is intentionally black and white.

Students are encouraged to digitally enhance images of their choosing from weeks 1–3 and share them with their classmates during the next lesson. Students may share a before and after screenshot of one of the photographs and describe the artistic choices made to make their photograph better. Selected photographs will be used in preparation for a cohesive body of work curated by each student.

Set the Stage: Classroom Discussion

Tell Students Before we begin taking our photographs and experimenting with new techniques, we will be talking about color in photography.

Brief history of color photography: Photography was invented in the late 1830s, but the first commercially successful color photography process wasn’t made available until 1907. That was followed by decades of innovation and then widespread use. As a fine art form, though, color photography was not embraced by galleries and museums until the 1970s. Prior to that, museums only collected and exhibited black-and-white photography. (Part of the reluctance to accept color photography was initially due to the difficulty of conserving it, as the pigmentation in early color photographs was highly unstable.)

Ask Students What colors are you personally drawn to? How do colors influence your mood?

Students take turns answering the question.

• Tell Students: Colors can influence us on a subconscious level, let’s take a look at some photographs that use colors in interesting ways.

• Review the Vocabulary: As a large group review the Unshuttered Color Reference Sheet. Encourage your students to keep the worksheet handy either printed or saved on their computer or mobile device.
Unshuttered Artworks  Project one of the three student photographs shown below. Ask students to watch for about 30 seconds to simply observe the image and then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.

Image 1  Untitled, Violet Stoeker, 2019
Image 2  Untitled, Melissa Barales-Lopez, 2018
Image 3  Untitled, Kalani Ball, 2018

- 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
- 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
- Transition to next artwork.
- Repeat as time allows

Suggested Questions

- What do you notice first about this image?

  Students describe the image, encourage your students to be descriptive as possible. This is not about interpreting the image but rather simply describing details students notice.

- What stands out to you the most about the color of this photograph?

  For example:
  - Image 1: The photograph is black and white. You may want to ask students if they believe this was an artistic choice by the artist or an afterthought. How would the photograph change if it was in color?
  - Image 2: Red appears in three different sections of the photograph (the man's shirt, the trim of the cart, and the red car behind the fruit seller). The image is rather colorful, mostly containing warm colors.
  - Image 3: The photograph uses a contrast of a warm color (the poppy field) and a cool color (the blue sky).

- How is the photo framed?

  For example:
  - Image 1: The foreground covers a majority of the image—at least ⅔ of the photograph is filled with corn, which is lighter in tone compared to the background in grayscale.
  - Image 2: The man on the left and the palm tree on the right of the image provide a type of framing in the photograph, drawing the viewer's attention to the fruit cart and the woman selling the fruit in the middle of the image.
Image 3: The image uses atmospheric perspective. The man is in the bottom right portion of the image, surrounded by the poppy field. The foreground of the image takes up about \( \frac{2}{3} \) of the frame. The cool blue sky provides a break and balance in the photograph.

What is going on in the foreground and background of the image?

For example:

- Image 1: Behind the corn in the foreground, the woman behind is slightly blurred, with an equal amount of negative wall space on her left and right sides.
- Image 2: The man wearing the red shirt is in the foreground, the fruit cart and vendor are in the middle ground and the car and street are in the background.
- Image 3: The poppies begin in the foreground and continue into the middle ground, where they are less dense and show more green between them.

Explore Further!

**Getty Collection Artwork(s)** Project one of the three Getty Collection photographs shown below. Ask students to pause for about 30 seconds, to simply observe the image then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.

**Image 1**

**Image 2**

**Image 3**

- 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
- 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
- Share the artist's description with your students.
- Repeat for the next photograph.

**About the Artist** (Image 1) Marian Drew is an Australian photographer. Her art practice spans more than 20 years, and is characterized by innovation and exploration of photo-media. Drew’s unsettling and beautiful photographs serve as a reminder of the fragility of life and the impact that man has on our natural environment.
About the Artwork  Drew’s tabletop still life compositions feature fruits, vegetables, and dead animals and birds presented as game. While the unusual angles and lustrous colors bring to mind post-impressionist paintings, the richness of the fabrics and dramatic lighting seems to be inspired by traditional European still life painting from the 17th century. (For an example from the Getty collection, view here.) For this series of photographs, Drew gathered animals that had been killed by cars (roadkill) for her compositions. Roadkill gives Drew’s photographs a twist that calls into question humankind’s stewardship of the earth and its creatures.

About the Artist  (Image 2) Laura Aguilar spent most of her prolific career examining her identity as a Chicana lesbian artist. Aguilar is best known for her bold and intimate photographs of herself, her friends, her family, and marginalized groups such as women, people of color, and the LGBTQ community. A key figure in the Chicana and queer art scenes of Los Angeles, Aguilar challenged idealized, contemporary depictions of beauty and highlighted the intimate link between the female form and nature. She also took on pressing subjects, like mental health and equity in the art world. Despite the fact that she started taking photographs in the 1970s, it is only recently that her work has been given its due.

About the Artwork  Aguilar’s images are focused on her identity as a working-class queer Chicana woman. This image is a self-portrait of the artist, with a border based on Lotería cards (a Mexican game of chance played with cards), and a handwritten message about her queer identity and general self-image at the bottom. Aguilar shows herself full-length, smiling, facing the camera, and surrounded by her possessions, in a pose that may communicate a proud acceptance of her circumstances and identity.

About the Artist  (Image 3) Malick Sidibé was a Malian photographer who primarily worked in black and white to capture lively portraits and scenes of celebration. His best-known works depict the pop culture and nightlife of the Malian capital of Bamako during the 1960s.

About the Artwork  The photograph is mounted to a piece of glass that has been painted with a blue border, and red, green, and yellow leaf-shaped elements. The glass has a brown paper tape border, is backed with cardboard, and has cotton twine for hanging on the back. In this series, the artist documented young people and their dress in elegantly posed studio portraits with patterned backdrops, which either match or deliberately clash with the sitters’ outfits and poses. While Sidibé took a black and white photo, the patterns of the cloth, and his decision to use color and pattern in the frame creates visual energy and interest for the viewer.

Suggested Questions for Discussion

- What do you notice about this image?
  - For example:
    - Image 1: The photograph is taken at an unconventional angle. (From high above and focusing on a specific corner of the table.) A piece of green fabric drapes over the corner of the table and there is a plate with a deceased bird at the top center of the photograph. The bright green of the fabric and the vividness of the bird’s feathers are accentuated by the white cloth.
    - Image 2: The woman in the photograph stands next to a bookshelf. She is surrounded by books, toys and sculptures. There is a poster of a painting by Frida Kahlo (a renowned Mexican artist) behind her. The frame is also surrounded by Lotería cards (A game of chance played with illustrated cards. It has 15th-century origins in Italy, and is particularly popular in Mexico), there is a handwritten note by the artist underneath the photograph.
Image 3: The woman in the photograph is facing away from the viewer. She appears to be sitting on a bed, there is a striped fabric draped in front of the woman. Only the frame around the image includes color, but the patterns give the image a lot of visual interest.

What artistic choices did the photographer make?

For example:

- Image 1: The viewer’s attention bounces back and forth between the bright green cloth and the orange of the parakeet’s body. There is a pretty strong color and light contrast. The photograph is taken from an unusual angle and the placement of the green fabric moves the viewer’s eyes into the photograph and to the bird.
- Image 2: The artwork is black and white, and is surrounded by hand-drawn Loteria cards. The image is paired with handwritten text by the artist.
- Image 3: The photograph is black and white surrounded by a hand-painted bright blue border and a red and yellow pattern. For this image you may want to point out that there could be other ways to include color in an image (like adding a colorful hand painted frame to a black and white photograph.)

Transition to the practice portion of the lesson Depending on how much time you have or if you are teaching in a hybrid model, you may want to provide students with additional time to take photographs at home.

PRACTICE

Suggested Time: 35–40 minutes + At Home Practice

Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to apply their knowledge of color and create four photographs that implement thoughtful color and lighting components.

Students create

- Four photographs that implement color and lighting components that enhance or alter an image.

Let’s begin!

1. Tell Students It is important to remember that photography is all about the process. Today you’ll begin experimenting with four photographs, particularly focusing on color.

   You’ll create:
   - A photograph that uses warm colors
   - A photograph that uses cool colors
   - A photograph that uses complementary colors
   - A photograph that is black and white

2. Tell Students Let’s look at a few videos that experiment with color in different ways.

3. Show the following videos Colored Light, Traditional Portrait and Environmental Portrait.

4. Begin Creating Grab your cameras, take photographs with intention and have fun!
5. **Begin Editing** (Tell your Students) Once you have taken your photographs, select which images you would like to digitally enhance. You may do so on your phone’s editing software or other photography editing software. Consider ways you can enhance the color in the images from lessons 1–3. For the next class session you will be asked to share a before and after screenshot of one of the photographs and describe the artistic choices made to make that photograph better. The photographs you select will be used in preparation for a curated body of work.

- Students may edit their photographs at home and upload them to a shared google drive or other platform once they are digitally enhanced.
- Some apps students can use are: VSCO, Adobe Photoshop Express Editor, Adobe Photoshop Lightroom, Canva, Pixlr or Instasize

6. **Write (Optional)** Artists often sketch or write down their ideas in a sketchbook or journal. This helps you keep track of your ideas and become helpful in the future when developing new ideas.

7. **Reflection** Suggested Time: 5 minutes

   We encourage you to take the last five minutes of class to check in with students to learn about what techniques worked, did not work as well, and what can be improved for the next class. Reflection can take place in the group setting or individually. It can be verbal or written. Encourage your students to continue taking photographs and experimenting with color. Students should come prepared to discuss one of their photographs.

**About the Artist** “Inspired by my Tata, I grew up with a camera in hand from a young age, but I really started honing my skills in high school. People are my primary and favorite subject to photograph, though I also enjoy exploring form, lines, color, and movement in some more experimental works. Now, I am bringing my photographic skills forward with me in combination with other interests of mine through filmmaking.”

Mimi Gaudet

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**THANK YOU...**

...for your commitment to inspiring young people to create art and tell their stories.

Please adapt and improve upon this lesson plan to meet the needs and age range of your group

**OTHER RESOURCES**

**Related photography video skills**
- Colored Light
- Traditional Portrait
- Environmental Portrait

**Resources**
- Unshuttered Color Reference Sheet
- Condensed Instructional Plan
- Practice Worksheet
**FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 3**

**UNSHUTTERED COLOR SHEET**

**Complementary colors** Located opposite of one another on the color wheel, these colors create the strongest contrast. For example, red and green, yellow and purple, and orange and blue.

**Warm Colors** Reds, oranges, and yellows. Warm colors tend to be more active and emotionally charged. These colors tend to jump out at the viewer, attracting attention and drawing the viewer’s eye.

**Cool Colors** Greens, blues, and violets. Cool colors are more subdued and gentle, and are more likely to be soothing or calming. Though these colors are quieter, this doesn’t make them less powerful. Often when used with warm colors, cool colors can provide an interesting balance in a photograph.

**Soft Light** A type of light in photography that creates minimal hard shadows. Soft lighting typically has more of a fuzzy gradiance with no defined lines and much smoother transitions than light variations from hard light.

**Hard Light** A type of bright light in photography that casts harsh, sharply defined shadows and typically draws the viewer’s attention to a specific area.

**Atmospheric perspective** A method of creating the illusion of depth in a painting, drawing or photograph. This effect influences how we see objects as they disappear into the distance often by controlling color to simulate changes affected by the atmosphere. For example, objects closer to the viewer’s eyes often appear brighter, but objects further away are lighter or dimmer in color.

![Color Wheel Diagram](image-url)
FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 3
CONDENSED INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Student Learning Objectives

• Students create four photographs that implement specific color components to enhance the aesthetic elements of an image.
• Students begin to digitally enhance photographs of their choosing and formulate artistic ideas to curate a series of photographs that tell a cohesive narrative.

Instructions for Educators

Suggested Duration: 15 minutes

Essential Question: What draws your eye in a photograph?

Set the Stage

Background Information for Educator During this lesson, students will explore color and color techniques in photography. After discussing the photographs, students will create photographs inspired by the exploration and discussion.

Classroom discussion

• Tell Students Before we begin taking our photographs and experimenting with new techniques, we will be talking about color in photography.

  Brief history of color photography: Photography was invented in the late 1830s, but the first commercially successful color photography process wasn’t made available until 1907. That was followed by decades of innovation and then widespread use. As a fine art form, though, color photography was not embraced by galleries and museums until the 1970s. Prior to that, museums only collected and exhibited black-and-white photography. (Part of the reluctance to accept color photography was initially due to the difficulty of conserving it, as the pigmentation in early color photographs was highly unstable.)

• Ask Students What colors are you personally drawn to? How do colors influence your mood?
  Students take turns answering the question.

• Tell Students Colors can influence us on a subconscious level, let’s take a look at some photographs that use colors in interesting ways.

• Review the Vocabulary As a large group review the Unshuttered Color Worksheet. Encourage your students to keep the worksheet handy either printed or saved on their computer or mobile device.

• Transition to the conversation and examination of Unshuttered Artwork(s) and the Getty Collection Artwork(s).

• Tell Students Let’s take a look at a few artwork examples that intentionally used color in an image.
• **Examining the Artworks**

Unshuttered Artwork(s): Project one of the three student photographs shown below. Ask students to pause for about 30 seconds, to simply observe the image. Then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.

![Image 1](image1.png)  
**Image 1**  
*Untitled*, Violet Stoeker, 2019

![Image 2](image2.png)  
**Image 2**  
*Untitled*, Melissa Barales-Lopez, 2018

![Image 3](image3.png)  
**Image 3**  
*Untitled*, Kalani Ball, 2018

- 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
- 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
- Transition to next artwork.
- Repeat as necessary.

 Getty Collection Artwork(s): Project one of the three Getty collection photographs shown below. Ask students to pause for about 30 seconds, to simply observe the image then begin by asking students what they notice about the photograph.

![Image 1](image4.png)  
**Image 1**  

![Image 2](image5.png)  
**Image 2**  

![Image 3](image6.png)  
**Image 3**  
· 30–45 seconds examining the artwork.
· 2–4 minutes discussing the artwork.
· Share the artist description with your students.
· Repeat as necessary.

· **Transition** to the practice portion of the lesson. Depending on how much time you have or if you are teaching in a hybrid model, you may want to provide students with additional time to take photographs at home.
FOUNDATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS LESSON 3

PRACTICE SHEET

Student Learning Objectives

• Students will be able to apply their knowledge of color and create four photographs that implement thoughtful color and lighting components.

Suggested Time 35–40 minutes + at home practice

Students Create

• Four photographs that implement color and lighting components that enhance or alter an image.

Let’s begin!

1. Tell Students It is important to remember that photography is all about the process. Today you’ll begin experimenting with four photographs, particularly focusing on color.

   You’ll create:
   
   · A photograph that uses warm colors
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   · A photograph that uses complementary colors
   · A photograph that is black and white

2. Tell Students Let’s look at a few videos that experiment with lighting in different ways.

3. Show your students the following videos: Colored Light, Traditional Portrait and Environmental Portrait.

4. Begin Creating Grab your cameras, be intentional about composing your photographs and have fun!

5. Begin Editing (Tell your Students) One you have taken your photographs, select which images you would like to digitally enhance. You may do so on your phone’s editing software or other photography editing software. Consider ways you can enhance the color in the images from lessons 1–3. For the next class session you will be asked to share a before and after screenshot of one of the photographs and describe the artistic choices made to make that photograph better. The photographs you select will be used in preparation for a cohesive body of work.

   Students may edit their photographs at home and upload them to a shared google drive or other platform once they are digitally enhanced.

   Some apps students can use are: VSCO, Adobe Photoshop Express Editor, Adobe Photoshop Lightroom, Canva, Pixlr or Instasize.

6. Write (Optional) Artists often sketch or write down their ideas in a sketchbook or journal. This helps you keep track of your ideas and become helpful in the future when developing new ideas.