



Balancing Act

by Margie Deeb

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Cool, refreshing, pale blue



Spring yellow-green for warmth



Whether you're decorating a room, painting a canvas, or designing jewelry of colored stones, you will face the challenge of balancing the proportions of colors.

Balance in this case does not mean equality or symmetry. In fact, equal portions of each color is usually the very thing to avoid. In a 2-color composition, equal amounts of each color can cancel each other out. We are seeking a dynamic balance, not one of stasis or stagnation. The balance we seek in color combining is that of a harmonious or satisfying proportion of each color.

Finding a dynamic balance is subjective. The eye is the best device to use, no scales, no formulas. There are basic guidelines from which to start and that's what we'll look at now.

To keep this succinct, let's imagine we're designing a 2-color combination.

First, make the big picture decision: what is the effect you want you color combination to achieve?

Do you want a gentle, harmonious overall feel, or an exciting, stimulating look? Subdued and soft, or

bold and forceful? Do you want this to come across as refreshing, friendly and open, or more rational, cerebral and sharp? Playful or serious? Do want to the colors to give the impression of refined dignity, or casual chic?

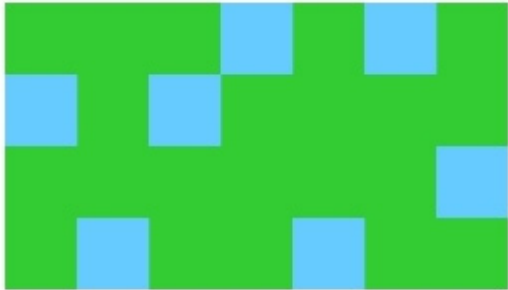
Keeping the effect you want in mind will make a lot of your choices easier, including the next one: what do you want the overall temperature to be, warm or cool?

Let's say we want to create something using a favorite light shade of blue because we like the refreshing, tranquil, clean purity of the color. Let's decide that what we like about it is just what we want to convey when we use it.

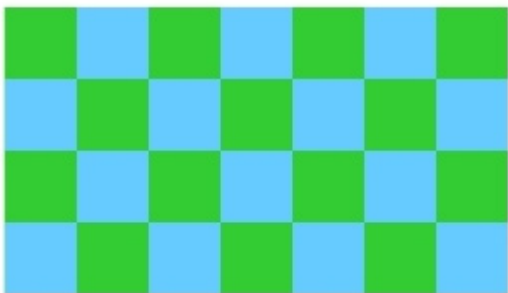
"With this color palette I want the viewer to sense just a hint of what I did years ago on that first day of spring after a long winter when I leaned back into the grass in the middle of a field, felt the wind whip the grasses around me, and gazed into the cloudless, brilliant sky for an hour." Now there's a lofty aspiration for a color scheme!

Let's choose another color to reinforce and enhance the effect. The obvious choice would be in the yellow-green range because these

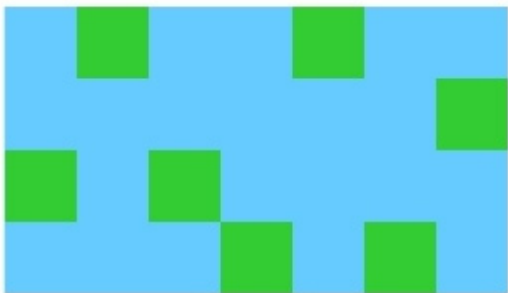
(Figure 2) 25% Blue / 75% Green:



(Figure 3) 50% Blue / 50% Green:



(Figure 4) 75% Blue / 25% Green:



(Figure 5) 75% Blue / 25% Green:



greens speak of springtime and rebirth.

What temperature would best work to achieve what we want? Since blue is already the coolest of colors, I think we should go for a very warm yellow-green to convey the warmth of that day and to counter the temperature of the blue. (See image on page 1.)

Now we know the effect we want, we've chosen the 2 colors (pale cool blue and warm yellow-green) and we know we want the overall scheme to be relatively warm. We're ready to decide how to balance the proportions of colors.

Let's consider the value of both colors first. The green is slightly darker than the blue.

Now let's look at intensity. The green is more intense than the blue. We can see the blue has more white in its composition than the green.

In temperature the yellow-green color is warmer than blue.

Because we want an overall warm temperature, let's look at what happens when we use

more yellow-green than blue. (Figure 2, above left.)

If we use a whole lot more yellow-green than blue, we lose the effect we said we wanted - one of refreshing purity. This is because the yellow-green is the stronger color of the two: it is more intense, warmer, and slightly darker.

Using equal parts blue and yellow-green creates a stasis. There's no movement, and no focal point without a dominant color, especially since these two are so close in value. These proportions bore me. (Figure 3.)

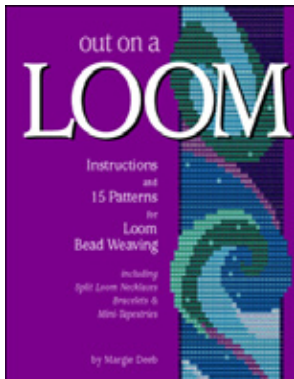
In a mix of 3/4 blue and 1/4 yellow-green, we have sufficiently warmed up the combination just enough for the desired affect. (Figures 4 and 5.)

Even though we are using much less of yellow-green, the warmer color, the whole scheme is warmed because that yellow-green is so strong. We don't need more than 1/4 of it, in fact we could use a little less and still achieve the desired effect.

Ahhh... can you feel the spring breezes?



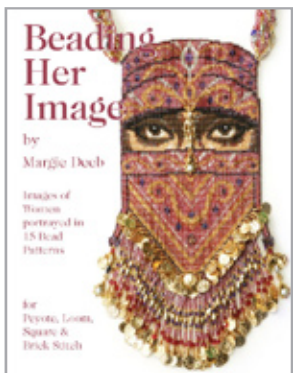
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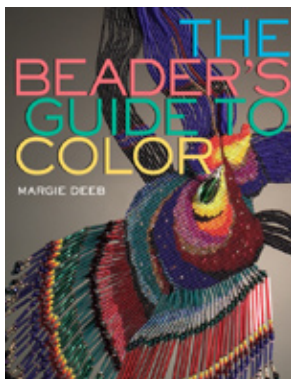
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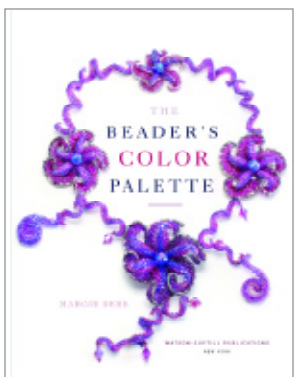
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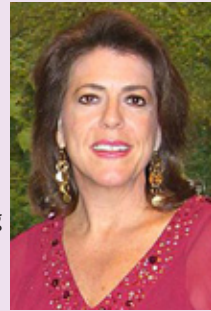


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Artist, designer, musician, and color expert

Margie Deeb is the author of several beading books, including the popular *The Beader's Guide to Color* and *The Beader's Color Palette* (Watson-Guptill, 2008).



She teaches color courses for artists, interior designers, and bead-ers and her free monthly color column, "Margie's Muse," is available on her website. She produces a free graphically enhanced podcast, "Margie Deeb's Color Celebration," available on iTunes.

Her articles have appeared in *Bead & Button* and *Beadwork* magazines, and she writes a regular color column in *Step-by-Step Beads*. Visit Margie's website for her books, patterns, jewelry, inspiration, and more:

www.MargieDeeb.com

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