

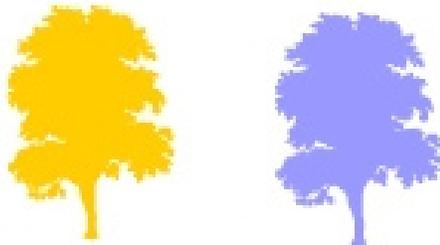


## Color and Space

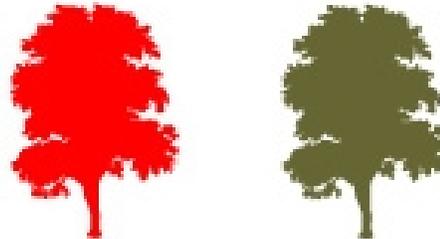
by Margie Deeb

April 2006

Warm colors advance in relation to cool colors



Brilliant, saturated colors advance in relation to muted colors



Color influences how we perceive objects in space - not outer space - but in relation to each other, whether objects seem near or far. You can create the illusion of something appearing nearer or farther away, larger or smaller by changing its color... either its value, hue, saturation, or any combination of the three.

Let's look at some of the ways we can create illusion magic with color in spatial relationship.

### COLOR TEMPERATURE:

Next time you are outside and can look out at a vista not obscured by buildings, look as far into the distance as you can. You'll see that the tones in the distance are cooler than most of the ones you see up close. The ones up close are warmer.

Warm colors advance in relation to cool colors. When you see both in a color scheme, the warmer tones will seem nearer.

Warm colors have inherent qualities of "nearness" and naturally appear closer. They visually advance toward you. Cool colors, like light blues, have an inherent quality of "farness" and seem to recede, to move away. Study effective landscape paintings and you'll notice the greens of the

foreground grasses and foliage pulsate with warm yellow. As grass, foliage, or mountains roll into the distance they cool off to blue and purple tones.

### COLOR SATURATION

As you are outside looking far off into the distance you'll also notice that the colors are muted and grayed. You are viewing them through space and everything that fills that space, including air, dust particles, and who knows what else. So those distant colors become softer in tone, less saturated. The ones up close are more vibrant, more saturated.

Brilliant, saturated colors advance in relation to muted colors. They seem more clear and crisp, as if they are closer.

### LIGHT

Objects that are lighter in color appear larger than objects darker in color. This is why black is considered a slimming color.

However, when dark and light samples are laid against the same background color, the color that has the greatest contrast in value with the background will advance, seem larger. The color closer in value to the background color will

Lighter objects appear larger than darker objects when on a white background



Against backgrounds other than white: The color whose value contrasts the most against the background will advance, seem larger. The color whose value is closest to the background value will recede, appear smaller.



Let's test it in color:



Even the darker tree looks larger and seems to advance because its value contrasts so sharply against the background.

recede.

The key to understanding all of these principles, especially the light/dark is to consider the context: how the colors interact in relation to each other. Not just any warm color will advance. A warm color advances in a painting when juxtaposed against one much cooler. Not any lighter color will appear larger. Its possible that you may use a darker color that is so visually heavy that it appears larger in relation to the lighter objects or colors around it. Consider a color's relationship to its palette members when trying to make colors advance or recede.

The most effective and interesting color schemes are not one-dimensional and flat. A palette whose members are all of similar temperature, saturation, and value spells B-L-A-N-D. No one color recedes or advances - all is flat and monotonous.

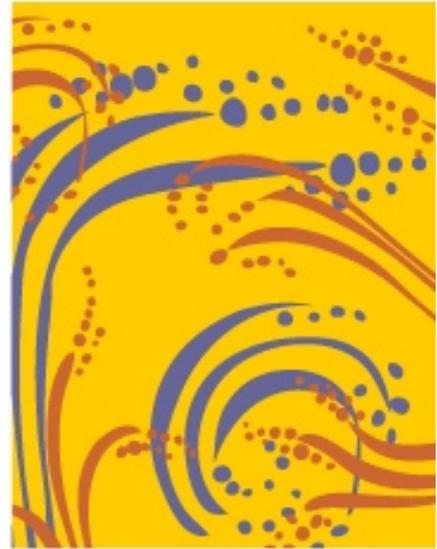
If you want an in-your-face scheme, include a color or colors that advance and appear large against a receding background. For conservative or traditional scheme, keep in mind colors that recede or appear smaller.

Create depth and complexity by learning to consciously juxtapose colors so they advance or recede, appear larger or smaller. Effective use of these principles can also create visual order and harmony. Or delightful chaos, depending on what you want! (See bottom right example.)

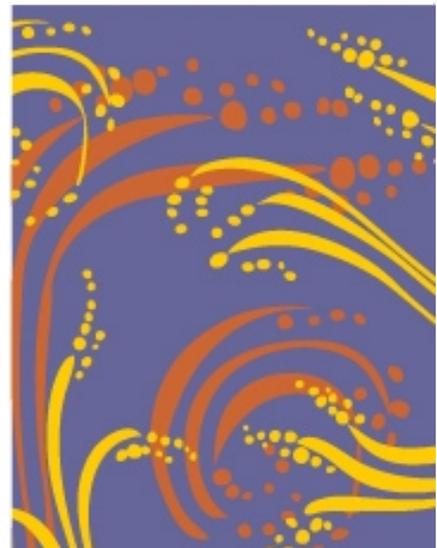
palette:



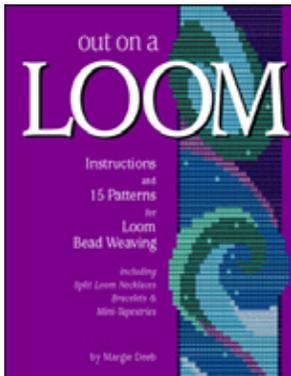
Arrangement without attention to how the colors' temperature, saturation, and value affect the appearance of spatial relationship:



Arrangement using warmest, brightest, lightest color in the front, and the coolest, least saturated, darkest in back:



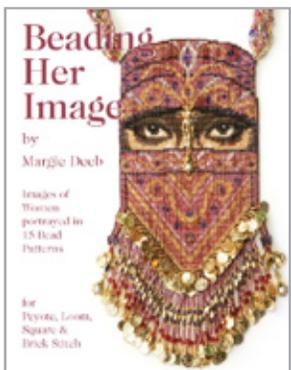
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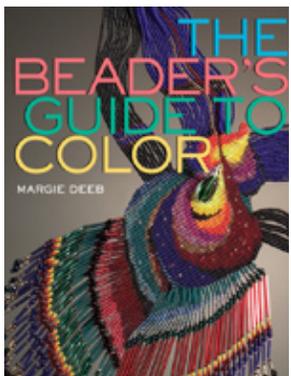
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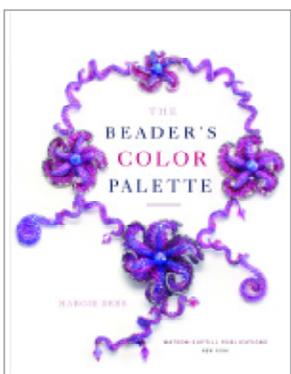
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Artist, designer, musician, and color expert

**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](http://www.MargieDeeb.com)

Also available at [MargieDeeb.com](http://MargieDeeb.com):

- Exquisite **seed bead patterns** in peyote, brick, square stitch, and loom available as downloadable PDFs or hardcopies
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