

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2017

# ChildArt

## the **COLOR** issue

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD ART FOUNDATION

**ART**

## Guest Editor's Corner

Color surrounds you. It is everywhere and you see millions of colors everyday. But what exactly do you see? When children are young, we teach them red, yellow, and blue as if colors are absolutes, but the more we learn about color, the less rigid our conception of color becomes. Perhaps the green you see isn't exactly the same as the green I see.

Scientists long believed we all saw the same colors. More recent studies show that color occurs in our minds as a response to our experiences of the outside world. We each develop similar yet not necessarily the same "color vision." Our understanding of color is shaped by our individual experiences. But even if we agree that a specific leaf is green or the ocean blue, colors can still fool our eyes.

Color can be like a chameleon that changes based on its surroundings. It can trick us because context changes not the color itself, but our perception of it. We rarely experience a single color all by itself, rather we find colors juxtaposed with other colors, influenced by different hues. A red square on a green background will seem brighter than the same red square placed on a bright, pure orange background. The logical part of your brain may know the red is the same, but the way we perceive it certainly changes.

The way we see color is constantly being influenced by lighting, the material or surface or an object, neighboring colors, and even how we feel. You could say that seeing color is not as much about what we actually see and more about what we think we see.

The renowned artist and color teacher Josef Albers said, "Color class prepares us to be fooled." Though Albers acknowledged the slippery nature of color, he also wanted his students to be delighted by the ability color has to deceive us. His goal in teaching color was "to open eyes," and that is the same goal I had as I selected the articles included in the "The Color issue" of Child Art magazine.

Each contributor has shared ideas about color that I know can open your eyes to seeing color more actively and your mind to thinking about colors differently. Throughout this issue you will find activities that give you a chance to experiment with color concepts and learn for yourself just how dynamic and powerful color can be.

When you approach color with a sense of wonder, its secrets will be revealed right before your eyes. You will discover the mystery and magic that has sparked the imagination and fascinated us for thousands of years. Color is so much more than simply an element of design. Color touches your heart, mind, and soul.



**Kate Smith**  
President and Chief Color Maven  
Sensational Color

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expressly written for 10 to 14 year-olds, but useful as a teaching tool for educators and inspirational for creative individuals of all ages. Subscribe to *ChildArt* online at [www.icafe.org](http://www.icafe.org).

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# The Color Issue



**The Power of  
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Plain Sight**

Kate Smith



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Sophia Ahmad



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See Color**

Kate Smith



**A Bolt  
From the Blue**

Sara Kapadia, PhD

# the power of

# COLOR

# hidden in plain sight

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Kate Smith

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There are millions of colors in the world, from the vibrant colors on a movie screen, to the subtle glow of a fading sunset, and the bright neon signs of a fast food restaurant. All you have to do is look around. You'll discover unique color is everywhere, and with the world as your palette, there are an infinite number of colors and never-ending color combinations.

## COLOR MULTIPLICATION

Now imagine if you took all of these colors and combinations and multiply that number by 7.5 billion people in the world. The huge number you would get as a result represents how many different ways people respond to colors. It is each person's unique experiences that makes the way they see, feel, or think about color different from the way you do.

To have a true understanding of how color influences all of us every day, you first need to expand your idea of what color is all about. There is more to color than what the eyes see.

## THE EFFECTS OF COLOR

Color finds its way into your eyes but also affects your heart, mind, and body, and you may not even realize

that this is happening. In fact, studies show that most of the time you aren't even aware of the influence color has on you, despite the fact that it is woven into your everyday moods and feelings.

Even when you are tuned in to the color around you, like on a sunny day when a room looks brighter than usual, or on a cloudy day when colors seem drab and lifeless, it can still be difficult to pin down exactly why you are feeling a particular way. That's because your responses to a color or color scheme is something that often occurs beneath the surface.

Many people have studied the effects of color. The research falls into three categories, which are color symbolism, color psychology, and personal color bias.

## COLOR SYMBOLISM: LEARNED RESPONSE

Color symbolism describes what you have learned about color in your childhood, the ideas and concepts shared by your family members and sometimes by your classmate and neighbors as well. In China, for example, red is a lucky color. It symbolizes good fortune and joy.

Red is found everywhere during the Chinese New Year and other holidays and family gatherings. However, in the United States red has many different color meanings, including getting attention and taking action. This is why the color red is used on sales signs.

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## Color finds its way into your eyes but also affects your heart, mind and body.

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Ask a person from a western culture what color a wedding dress is, and the answer will be white. Years of seeing images of smiling brides dressed in white have put the idea that white equals bride.

Ask about the traditional color for a wedding dress in another part of the world, however, and you'll get a different answer. For example, in India, red is associated with bridal gowns. Our association of color and how it relates to a wedding dress is a learned response based on experiences in our own culture.