Techniques *of* **Visual Persuasion**

+ Create powerful images that motivate

New Riders | VOICES THAT MATTER™

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The Histogram is primarily used for still images, while both the Waveform Monitor and the Vectorscope are used more in video. The Vectorscope will be extremely helpful in finding and fixing color problems.

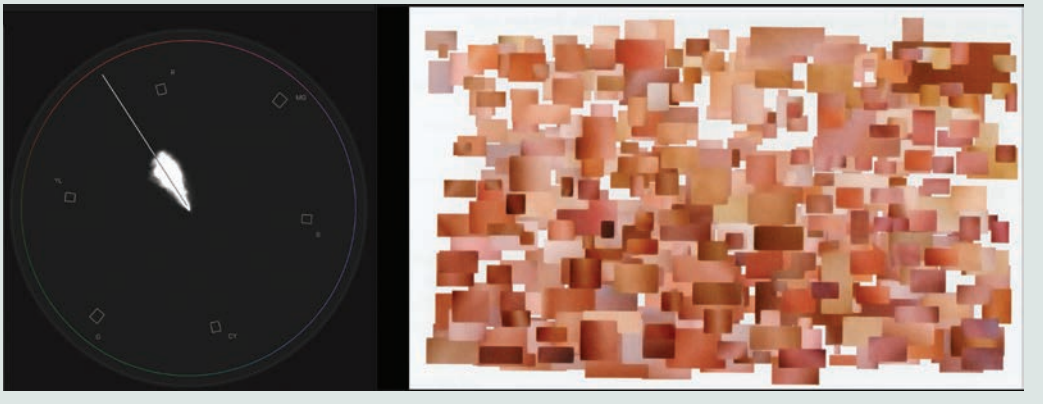
While the tools we use to adjust color vary between still and video images, the concept is the same: Adjust the grayscale values first then adjust color values. I'll cover how we make these adjustments in future chapters.

Measuring Skin Color

We use the Vectorscope to measure and verify color settings. A common use is to measure skin color, as shown. Let's take a look at the skin swatches we first saw earlier. If you look carefully at the Vectorscope image, on the left, you'll see all the skin colors fall into a *very* narrow range of hues (angle), though a fairly large range of saturation (distance from the center). As I tell my students, "We are all the same color—but not the same grayscale."

Look even more closely and you'll see a thin line radiating up to the left in the Vectorscope. This is called the "skin-tone line" and represents the hue of normal human skin under "normal" lighting. (By normal, I mean normal daylight or studio interview lighting, not some dimly lit disco with flashing neon red lights.)

If skin tones fall very close to this line, as they do in this example, you know skin color is accurate. If they wander, you know that you have a color cast problem that needs to be fixed.



Note how a wide variety of skin types fits within a very small area of the Vectorscope.

KEY POINTS

Color is a complex subject. Here's what I want you to remember:

- Color attracts attention.
- Color is a powerful emotional driver, but the interpretation varies from one culture to another.
- Because our goal is persuasion, pick colors that enhance your message.
- The Six Priorities remind us that "different" attracts the eye.
- Pick colors that make your elements readable.
- Pick colors that have different contrast values.
- Some viewers are color blind; don't base your entire message on a single color or colors with the same grayscale value.
- Don't get fancy—fewer colors and styles are always better.
- Ask others their opinions to make sure your perceptions of how colors are interpreted matches with your audience.

PRACTICE PERSUASION

Extend the exercise we did in the previous chapter with fonts to colors. Using a word processor, set this headline in different colors and against different color backgrounds. How does the choice of color and contrast affect the perception, emotion, and urgency of the message?

New Look! New Colors! New Style!

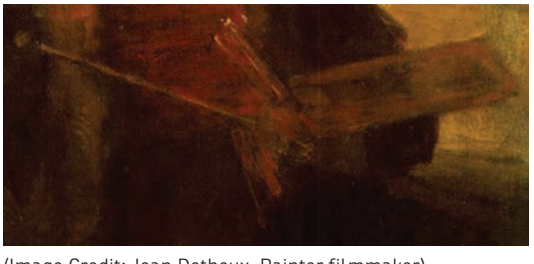
PERSUASION P-O-V

SEEING WITHOUT KNOWING

Jean Detheux
Painter/filmmaker

As a painter and filmmaker, I am often surprised by how little people who deal with visual communications (including video game design) seem to know about first-person perception.

Indeed, the way most people operate is not rooted in how we experience "the real." It is most often stuck in a model of the world that posits photo-realism as a valid representation of how we experience visual "reality."



(Image Credit: Jean Detheux, Painter filmmaker)

That misconception has a significant impact on everything we do; it conditions the scope of the field in which we will contemplate doing whatever we will undertake. Yet, if one explores first-person perception, one quickly discovers a world that does not conform at all to the photorealism model.

"The eye works like a camera and we all see the same things" is a deception, a lie, one of the most prominent aspects of what has been called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness."

Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, called this "ontologizing." Ontologizing posits "the world" as objective, finite, constant, and our experience thereof as merely subjective, transitory.

But unlike the most common worldview would have us believe, we do not start from an "objective" view of "the world"; our primary connection with it is subjective, through and through.

Freely paraphrasing Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his masterful *Phenomenology of Perception*, our knowledge of the world, including scientific knowledge, relies on our particular point of view. ("Each one of us is a different point of view in the world.")

Perception works in mysterious ways, but if one starts to pay attention to how one's perception works, it starts to open up like a book that one knew well but had (almost) forgotten about.

To see we must forget the name of the thing we are looking at.
—CLAUDE MONET

After all, we are not talking here about a perception that is remote from one's very being, a perception one would have to learn then apply to one's experience; we are indeed talking about what constitutes and has always constituted our first, most immediate, and intimate rapport with "the world."

It is the perception we often overlook, that which we utterly take for granted and want to do something "with." Yet, if we could simply "see" it, on its terms, and how it comes about, we likely would no longer want to "do something with" it; it is such a fertile ground, some of us will not have enough of a lifetime to explore all that it offers.

Many painters, like Claude Monet, know well that they must "forget" the name of a thing to truly see it. They know that investigating preverbal perception is as sophisticated and worthy an area of exploration as it is utterly basic; in the most noble sense of the word.

While I could show many examples of works by painters who understood this well, I will simply compare the image shown at the start of this article, with the image in full: a painting by Rembrandt.

(Image Credit: Jean Detheux, Painter filmmaker)

Look at the difference in this painting between the light and detail of the face, compared to the barely sensed brushes and palette in his hand. Artists call this "sense-giving" (the face) and "sense-receiving" (the hand and palette). This is a beautiful example of central and peripheral vision, of the origin of abstraction in perception, the abstraction that links the greatest artists from cave painting to today's art. The face is the central focus, while the rest of the image, senses peripherally, gives the face and total painting context.

When building a visual presentation, it can be easy to overlook the fact that, in spite of the content of that presentation, its form also plays an immense role. That form operates on at least two axes: the form of the individual "slides," seen as still images or frames, and the form of the presentation unfolding in

"The eye works like a camera and we all see the same things" is a deception, a lie.

—JEAN DETHEUX

time. In other words, both the information on each slide and the context of how they are presented over time are important.

Much of what one can learn about the behavior of elements on one axis applies to both, something that surprised (and delighted) me when I was forced many years ago to leave the world of painting (sudden and severe allergies to natural media) for that of the digital workflow, which quickly opened up the time dimension for me.

When building a visual presentation, it can be easy to overlook the fact that, in spite of the content of that presentation, its form also plays an immense role.

Elements at play are numerous, one of the most important being the qualitative relationship between "sense-giving" (Rembrandt's face/gaze in the full painting) and "sense-receiving" elements (Rembrandt's hand and palette shown at the beginning of this story).

Not all elements are equal and not all carry the same amount of meaning, but the least important ones are needed by the most important if they are to deliver a clear and lasting "message," a content they build and have to build together, hence their qualitative relationship.

And those different elements are not always present, visible, at the same time: In something like a Keynote or PowerPoint presentation, they may be present on different slides and yet communicate across time through the meaning they are building together (and this, of course, occurs in the viewer's "mind").

An element barely mentioned at one point in time may gain significant meaning retroactively when another element makes reference to it later, giving it increased meaning, meaning it did not seem to have when first presented (possibly creating in the viewers something akin to an "aha!" experience).

In the field of painting, this dialogue in space between elements has been called "echoing shapes," and I was very pleasantly surprised when I discovered, after I made the switch from painting to movies, that these echoing shapes also begged to be "used" in film as well and are very powerful.

In keeping with the form of a visual presentation, there are many other elements that are often ignored by the people making the presentations, and I was struck years ago by one in particular: the material presented on one slide is often placed in such a way that when the switch to the next slide occurs, there are "jumps" in the content thus revealed and often, this jump supersedes in the viewers' attention the content the presentation hoped to convey.

The placement of elements that carry from moment to moment (from slide/frame/scene to slide/frame/scene) has not been shaped to participate fully in the unfolding of the content.

These techniques are not rocket science. Many years ago, I taught them to my 8-year-old son who was building a Keynote presentation for his school, and he really got it. It was amusing to see my young son competently using elements many of my professional colleagues often overlooked.

Viewing and viewing and viewing again previews of one's presentation should start revealing weaknesses (and strengths), and any new knowledge gained this way will build up an awareness of the attitude needed to access this mode of perception with some confidence.

"Seeing without knowing" is not negating knowledge; it is a way of being that provides access to the very source of all knowledge.

Perception works in mysterious ways, but if one starts to pay attention to how one's perception works, it opens like a book one has forgotten about.

—JEAN DETHEUX