

The color "variable": a system of connections.

"Tying color to information is as elementary and straightforward as color technique in art, 'To paint well is simply this: to put the right color in the right place,' in Paul Klee's ironic prescription. The often scant benefits derived from coloring data indicate that even putting a good color in a good place is a complex matter. Indeed, so difficult and subtle that avoiding catastrophe becomes the first principle in bringing color to information: Above all, do no harm."

These observations by Edward Tufte relate directly to the field of visual design, as defined by the pair information-communication. However, by quoting the painter Paul Klee, he suggests that we can often look at art for the solution of visual design problems.

Phase I

Analyze the relationship nature-culture as an analogy of the evolution of color from quantity to quality.

Select an example of a color system* from the fields of science, art, or design, and analyze its validity in terms of information, expression, and communication.

Color is a flexible, open system with a precise topological space. A space that can be stretched or compressed, depending on the various chromatic needs of a given context. The relationships between the colors constitute the system.

This is the research component of the problem.

Phase II

Based on the research conducted, develop one or two mini-systems of your own. Refer to diagrams for selections: expression and/or communication mode**.

This is the applied component of the problem.

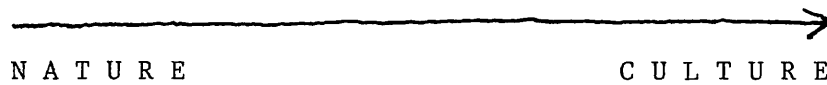
*System is used here in a broad sense. Examples could be: a painting, a color-coding system, the rainbow. Also, two or more examples from the same field can be studied at the same time.

**6-credit students are to choose one of the two.
9-credit students are to explore both.

Color as a process involving four parameters*



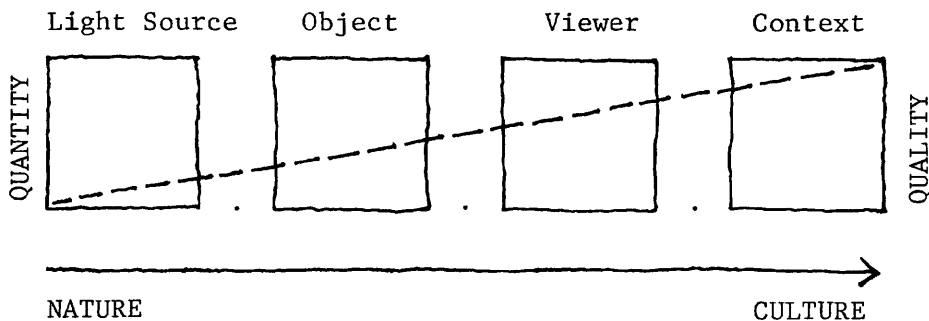
The process evolves from NATURE towards CULTURE.



the "QUANTUM" (how much, quanto) quantity is the constituent of nature the "WHICH" (quale) quality is the constituent of culture

quantum: unity of energy

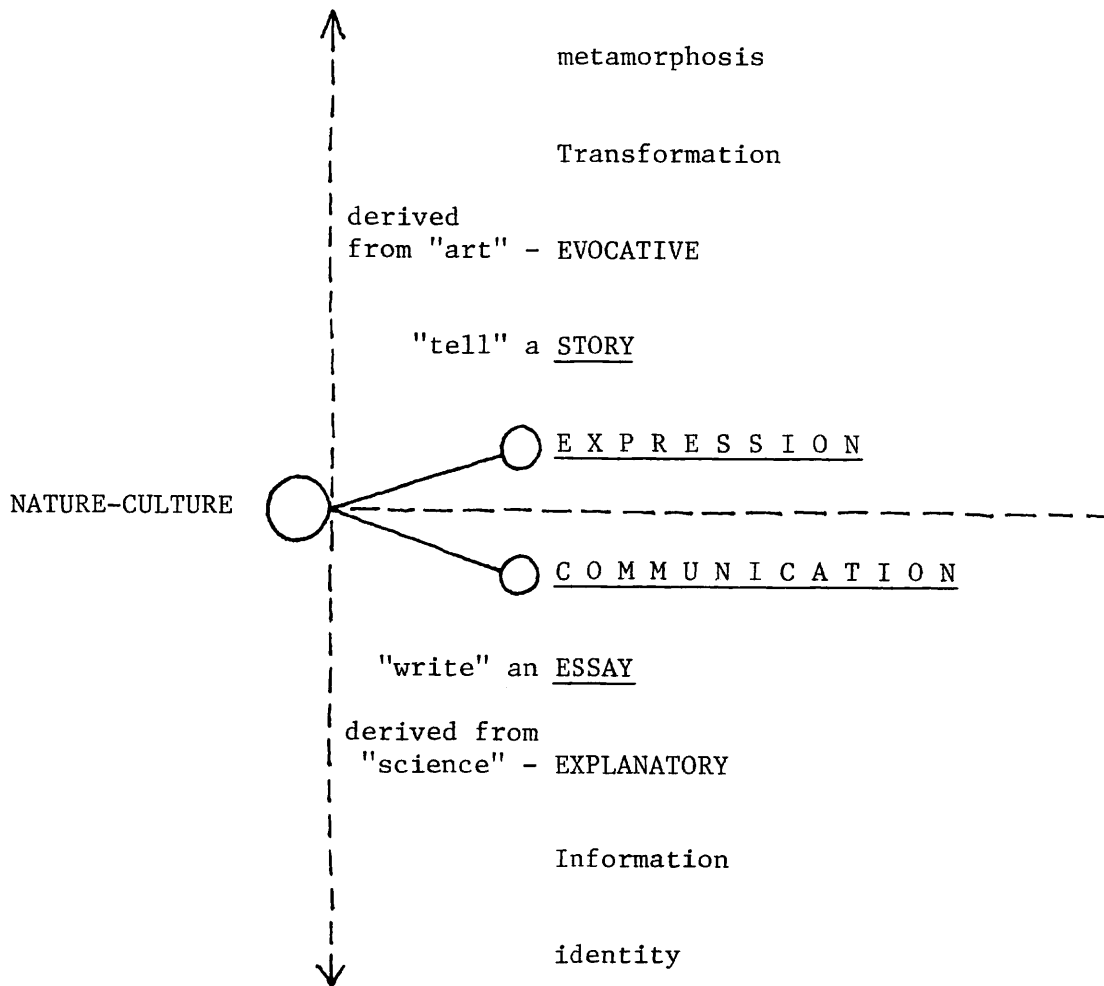
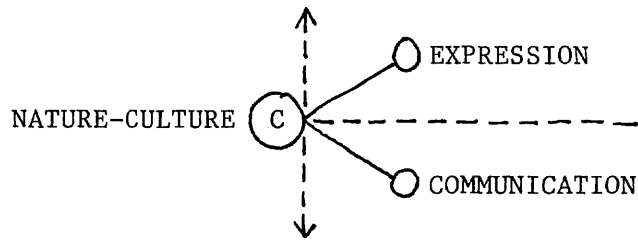
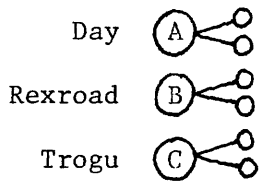
photon: unit of visible radiation



The element of culture increases as we move from color as quantity towards color as quality.

*Narciso Silvestrini, 1981.

Problem/Semester Structure



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Reading materials

Required:

TUFTE, Edward
Color and Information (pp 81-95)
in: Envisioning Information
Cheshire: Graphics Press, 1990

SILVESTRINI, Narciso
The color "variable"
in: Colore: Codice e Norma
(translated from the Italian edition)
Zanichelli: Bologna, 1981

Suggested:

BERTIN, Jacques

Value Variation (pp 73, 76, 77)
Color Variation (pp 85-91)
in: Semiology of Graphics
University of Wisconsin Press, 1983

KLEE, Paul
(chapter on color) (pp 467-511)
in: The Thinking Eye
New York: Wittenborn, 1964