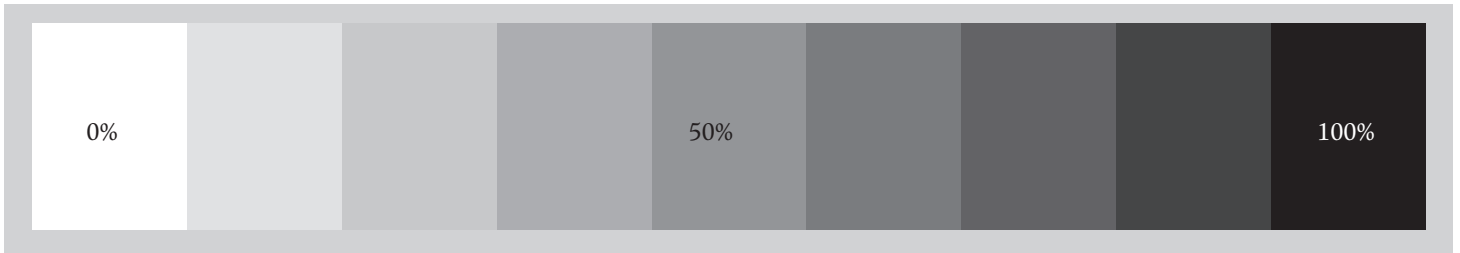


9 Step Value Scale/ Value Keys Susan Stillman



Understanding tonal value relationships begins with a study of the VALUE SCALE. Observe the 9 step value scale above. Think of white as 0% tone, black as 100%, and all the gradations between as increasing percentages. Another set of terminology uses “high” for lighter values, “low” for darker, and “middle” as you get to the center of the scale.

Notice the contrast or visual difference between any two adjacent swatches are the same throughout. Think in terms of edge quality. The greater the contrast between two adjacent tones, the sharper the edge between them will appear. A minimal contrast between two tones will create a softer edge between them, and they may seem to blend together. Each step on the value scale should be equal in its increments from one to the next. There should be no intervals where the edge contrast is sharper than the others.

Value is only one of four properties of color: Hue, Saturation, Value, Temperature. Value is the property that can stand alone and it is most important to resolve a composition in value before proceeding to any other properties of color. A value sketch is an essential tool in preliminary studies.

VALUE KEYS, excerpt from Pat Lambert, Controlling Color

“Seven different organizations of values may be used to evoke specific emotional responses in the viewer. These are called Value Keys. The value key of a work describes the organization and relationship between specific values, which in turn are read subliminally by the viewer as a translation of light or light level on a two-dimensional plane. We respond to light level or to our sense of lightness and/or darkness before we respond visually to hue and/or color. Our response to light is immediate, and it is both physical and emotional. We each have a preference for a quality of light, a time of day with which we feel most comfortable. We react so universally to light levels that values may be orchestrated to obtain predetermined responses.”

“The seven value keys fall into two large categories, major and minor. Major tonalities in music tend to be direct, outgoing, and assertive, with greater tonal distances or contrast between intervals. Minor tonalities are closer in interval relationships or have less contrast between intervals, and they give a more subdued, quiet, or perhaps sad feeling.

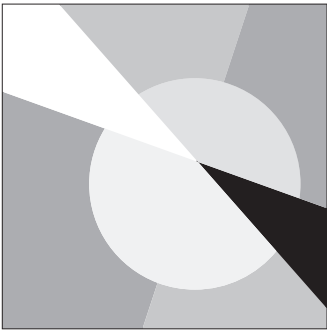
The value keys in the visual arts work in a similar way. The major keys all show contrast, they all contain both black and white, with changes in the proportion, quantity or dominance of the values used.”

“The principal difference between the major and minor keys involves contrast. The minor keys do not include the entire value scale; instead, the keys consist of groups of closely related values within a limited range.

The 7 Value Keys (3 Major, 4 Minor)

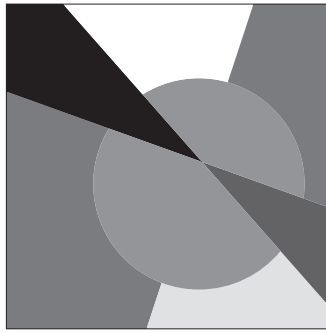
Major Keys (greater value contrast between shapes)

All show contrast: contain both black and white with changes in proportion, quantity or dominance of the values used.



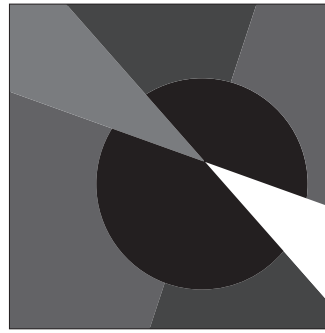
1. High Major

Dominant high or light values, with white and values perceived as white that contain a small amount of black.



2. Middle Major

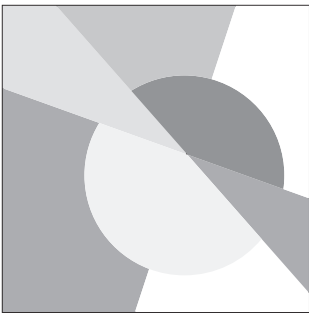
Dominant middle values—equal amounts of black and white.



3. Low Major

Dominant low or dark value range—black and values perceived as black that also have a small amount of very light or white value.

Minor Keys (closer value distances and less contrast between intervals) The Minor keys do not include the whole value scale.



1. High Minor

Consists entirely of values from the light or high end of the value scale—0 to 25%



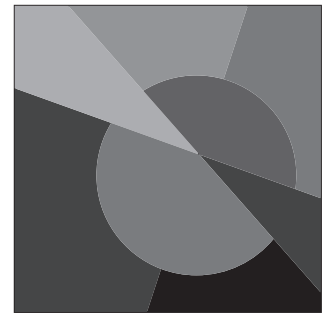
2. Middle Minor

Takes values from the middle range—40 to 60%



3. Low Minor

Takes values from the low or dark range—75 to 100%.



4. Extended Middle

Takes values from 25 to 75%. Extends range of middle minor to extend range of contrast.