

Workshop III: Taste after taste

The following workshop is intended to help you explore your visual associations and sensibilities when making colour choices. The workshop is intended to last two hours and can be undertaken as a solo activity although created artefacts would benefit from group discussion at the end.

Background

As humans we have a multitude of senses and Aristotle (384–322 BCE) is credited with the classification of our five traditional senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. However, our sense of taste, which also has five recognized categories – sweetness, bitterness, sourness, saltiness and umami – has relatively only recently been agreed upon. The last category ‘umami’ or savouriness was only recognized as a scientific term in 1985.

Brief

The object of this workshop is to visually explore our sense of taste by trying to represent these five taste categories using images and colour. Our findings are going to be collated in a mosaic that depicts our notions of taste.

The workshop can be divided into two halves. Steps 1–6 involve the visual association of colour and image, whereas step 7 is about the practical application of selecting a set of connected web colours.

Note: You may choose to use this exercise as an opportunity to become more familiar with online image libraries by helping you find and select compelling images to use.

Step 1 | Create a grid

In a graphics package of your choice, e.g. Adobe Photoshop, create a document that is 500 × 500 pixels then divide the image into 100 × 100 pixels using guides to create a 5 × 5 square grid.

Step 2 | Literal image

Think of images that literally represent each of the five categories of taste: sweet, bitter, sour, salty and savoury. Find representative images and place them in the first column grid. Literal is defined as understanding words in their usual or most basic form without metaphor or exaggeration.



3.88 | sweet-01.png

The row of images and colour collected by Luke Emmerson is an example of how the category ‘sweet’ could be depicted by using literal, metaphorical and abstract images as well as natural and cultural association. [Photo credits: hypermania2, oksun70, cokemomo/123RF Stock Photo.]

BODY LINK HOVER ACTIVE VISITED

3.89 | sweet-02.pdf

This row shows web colours that could represent ‘sweet’. Text size and background colour often affect our choice of colour.

Step 3 | Metaphorical image

Next find images that metaphorically represent each of the categories and place them next to their literal counterparts in the adjacent column. A metaphor is a thing that is perceived to represent or symbolize of something else, e.g. a chrysalis is a metaphor for change or a light bulb is a metaphor for an idea.

Step 4 | Abstract image

Find images that abstractly represent each taste category and place them in the third column. Abstract for the purpose of this exercise is defined as a non-literal idea attempting to represent reality through shape or texture, e.g. a motion-blurred shape is often used to represent speed.

Step 5 | Natural colour

Choose a single colour for each category of taste. The colours must have a natural association with the sense. For example, we might associate fire with the colour red. Fill each square of the fourth column with carefully considered shades of your chosen colours.

Step 6 | Cultural colour

Similar to step five, choose colours that represent each category with a cultural connotation, e.g. we often associate purple with luxury or royalty. Again fill each square with your chosen colour in the fifth column.

Step 7 | Web colours

Now that you have explored the categories through image and colour it is time to for a more practical application. Imagine what body text colour you would choose to represent each taste category on a web page and the four link-state colours too: link, hover, active and visited.

Either extend your current document by 500 pixels or create a new document that is 500 × 500 pixels divided by another 5 × 5 grid. The background colour should be white and for each of the five categories write the words body, link, hover, active and visited in adjacent boxes. Each word should be written in a representative colour of your choice.

Although it may seem appropriate to have the body text pure black, you may decide to have something a little lighter with a hue to represent each taste category. Also think carefully about the link-state colours – how should an active link appear when clicked or a link look once visited?

The mosaic/s is now complete

Share your mosaic with others and discuss whether they have similar or different visual associations with notions of taste.