



CHROMATWEET: CAN YOU FEEL COLOR NOW?

A conversation with the artist behind «the color chronicle»

The link between color and emotion is a daily topic at Pantone, where we often pair color values with single words that explain their allure, their importance, and the effect they have on the viewer. As we think through the applications and implications of Pantone's thousands of colors, we are inexorably drawn into a conversation about what each color says to us and about us.

Artist Aleksander Macasev has his own daily conversation about emotion and color – which he has made public in the form of **ChromaTweet**. Macasev's project is a daily color journal, with a single color posted at the end of each day. That color is meant to express the artist's mental and emotional state. Over two years of ChromaTweet-ing Macasev has created a record of one man's interaction with color – and, movingly and enigmatically, his personal life.

You can experience ChromaTweet daily on Twitter and Facebook. Or you can head to Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood, where non profit public art organization **ArtBridge** has installed murals of Macasev's daily color choices on street level.



Macasev shared some thoughts about his gorgeous project with Pantone color studio member Keith Recker.

KEITH RECKER: *How did you imagine this beautiful project?*

ALEKSANDAR MACASEV: It was born out of frustration. In my art and design practice I was actually never very good with color. I was more interested in form and composition. Color was something superficial, with no communication value, something added later to beautify the final product. But even though I was not good at using color, I always sensed that color is emotion, and I always wanted to establish a connection between my emotions and color.

The first thing I did on the way to developing ChromaTweet was to shed all of the imposed rules about color that I had learned — all of those harmonies, matching and contrast principles and theories from Goethe to Bauhaus; generalized principles of how colors affect our mood; the notion of trend colors introduced by consumerist culture, and of course color meanings that have been generated from within our cultural matrix – such as red meaning stop and green meaning go. I just wanted to experience a very personal and unconstrained relationship between color tones and my own feelings.

Since I often use an intimate blog/diary form in my practice, I decided to start a diary where I would mix a color tone that would summarize my entire day. I was interested in moving beyond Twitter's micro-blogging format of 140 characters, to compress my online communication even more. So all these ideas converged into a nano-blogging experiment. And I started posting just one color tone a day, which began to create a sort of personal, emotional footprint.

KR: *How did ChromaTweet achieve its very eye-catching physical form in Brooklyn? There must have been a complex process of sponsorship and community approval.*

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physical outgrowths. One of the biggest is the 300 ft-long print of two years worth of ChromaTweets in New York. The print is produced by Art Bridge (www.art-bridge.org), a New York-based organization that connects art and public space. The Dumbo Arts Festival in 2011 was looking for an outdoor piece that would use the very long scaffolding over the Empire Stores on Water Street. 730 ChromaTweet colors – my personal color journal – fit the bill perfectly.



KR: How you determine the color for each day?

AM: At the end of the day I contemplate my emotional experience and then I summarize it in a single color tone. I use the 24-bit Truecolor picker that contains 16,777,216 colors. First I try to find a suitable hue, and then I adjust saturation and lightness. It's actually all about mixing, not picking. I try to keep it more emotional and intuitive and less cerebral.

Finding the right color is of course arbitrary, because the perception of color depends on many factors beyond our control, like the technology we use (print, paint, screen, textile), to the surrounding context and overall light, to receptors in our own eyes (I often wonder whether someone else sees the same color tone as I do). And then I add to the process something as elusive as my emotional state. But if you manage to free yourself from thinking about color you start noticing patterns, your own patterns and relations. It becomes deeply personal.

KR: Do you have a favorite?

AM: No. I try not to judge the color tones. Especially not in any aesthetic way, whether I like them or not, nor whether they are good or bad. I never use white or black, because they are not colors after all.

KR: Looking over your archive of choices, I am intrigued by the occasional sharp shift in tone. Bad days? Good days?

AM: One blogger described ChromaTweet as colorful and moody and a lot of my friends agreed. When I mix a color I don't look at what color I chose yesterday or the day before, because I want to avoid any kind of preconception about color matching or aestheticizing. I just focus on what happened that day. Honestly speaking, I am moody, but not as moody as it may appear from all those chromatic twists and turns. I have a big question for people looking at the project: What do you see in those colors? How do you interpret them and what emotion do you attach to the color?

KR: What happened in April, May and June of 2011?

AM: That was a period of very intense personal crises. I was lost and disoriented, with a deep feeling of anxiety. My partner would probably be able to describe more accurately what was happening as someone who was looking closely, but from the outside. Even in this rather unhinged state I tried to express it all in color.

KR: And what happened on Jan 27, 2012?

AM: We were coming back from a vacation in Key West. I was totally freaked out by the tiny plane (that looked more like a dustbin with wings) we flew to Fort Lauderdale. This high anxiety and fear colored my whole day. The color tone is very intense and «unnatural.»

KR: What sort of feedback have you gotten about the project?

AM: In the beginning people were puzzled. Then I started putting it out there by posting my daily color to Twitter and Facebook. I found a Tweet once that summarized the typical reaction pretty well: «Thoughts on ChromaTweet: What? This is pointless and stu... oh hey look at all the pretty colors.» (posted by @secondfret).

People also used to ask me about the meaning of particular tones. I was kind of secretive about it. The whole point is to avoid the written/spoken language, to try to communicate emotions with color only. I even avoid using the usual color names. There's only this hexadecimal color code for each tone that makes it easy to reproduce if necessary.

The outdoor print in Dumbo garnered a lot of attention. Even during the installation of the piece people were coming out of the stores delighted that the neighborhood was getting a vibrant artwork of that scale.

A regular stream of Flickr and Hipstamatic photos started after the artwork was installed. My favorite is one of a bride in front of the print.

KR: What's next for you?

AM: Although I started ChromaTweet as a personal experiment I always had in mind some sort of social network where people would ChromaTweet their own feelings. Something very minimal and very emotional. Right now it is in its development stage and it will be launched for the public very soon with an iPhone app in mind. The main tag-line question will be «How do you feel?»

It would be interesting to see how people get to know each other through getting to know each other's chroma-emotional vocabulary.



As for my own ChromaTweet feed there is more and more demand for applying it in various forms. From using my daily ChromaTweet as a background for a website that changes daily to various applications, to design products and apparel. Think July 2009 mug or September 2011 socks. On the other hand I use various segments as standalone artwork. A sequence of colored strips is one of the most straightforward ways of doing it. The possibilities of structuring color segments into a field are enormous.

So after all I'll end up aestheticizing the whole thing without the intention of doing it. The pleasing effect of it is in the eye of the beholder. But one thing is for sure: there's no such thing as mismatching colors.

—Keith Recker
Images: Courtesy of Aleksandar Macasev



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