Color as Applied to Various Types

CHAPTER TEN

We know that one of the chief considerations of the designer is to create costumes to suit the particular type for which they are intended. One of the mediums through which this may be accomplished is color. You are already familiar with the meaning of the various colors and their functions in design, and you are ready to avail yourself of the knowledge you have gained and to put it to practical use.

Make a mental picture of the wearer of your costume. What are the traits of her character that are especially evident in her actions, her bearing, and her demeanor? Does she possess physical beauty which can be intensified, or has she any defects that should be hidden? Keeping in mind the outstanding personal characteristics of the person who is to wear the garment, you will be so guided in your work that your design will fulfil all requirements; but there are certain rules which should be followed closely.

For instance, it is a recognized fact that white is especially becoming to persons with good complexions, as it serves to give a healthy appearance to the eyes and the hair, and sets off to good advantage the color of the cheeks. On the other hand, should a person with a sallow complexion wear white, it would, by
contrast, create an unpleasant effect. Black is excellent for people with high color, luminous eyes, and shining hair; but when worn by others, it serves only to dull the appearance, and should, therefore, be used in small areas only, and when one wishes to secure a subdued tone. Those who are of a white pallor can intensify that feature by wearing black, and thus produce a striking effect.

Let us further caution you against using black with one warm and one cold color. While yellow and orange can be well combined with black, the same does not hold true of the combination of yellow, blue and black.

White, however, can be used with one warm and one cool color; and you will secure pleasing results by combining orange, white, and blue; or yellow, white, and violet.

We shall now consider color as applied to design, keeping in mind the silhouette.

In the case of the stout figure, the object of the silhouette is to make the figure seem narrower, and we find that by using dark colors this effect will be obtained. The reason is that these colors are not vivid, and therefore do not attract the eye to the figure; indeed the form seems to literally recede into the background and is thus made less conspicuous when these colors are used.

Avoid the use of contrasting colors at the sides of the costume for the stout figure. Another thing that should be avoided is the use of light material on the sleeves, and dark material on the rest of the garment. Such an arrangement of light and shadow would cause the eye to move from one side to the other, and thus bring the person’s width into full evidence.
COLOR AS APPLIED TO VARIOUS TYPES

The age of the wearer must be constantly considered by the designer in order to intelligently choose color schemes. The child can wear bright colors, for they will reflect the buoyancy and airiness of youth; and white especially is effective in imparting that clean, wholesome air that should pervade the garments worn by children.

For the mature woman, there are the reserved, neutralized colors; and if a touch of brightness is desired, it can be obtained through the use of the more vivid colors in the trimming.

For the young woman, there are the colors between those worn by the child and those worn by the mature woman; and she need not confine herself to the moderately warm colors, as the elderly woman must do, but she may wear the bright, more attractive colors to good advantage.

The next point to consider is the temperament of the wearer. If she is, by nature, care-free, and cheerful, yellow—or even red—is suitable; but if she is quiet and reserved, blue and violet will be appropriate.

Although the person of severe mien would not appear at her best in light, airy colors, still it would not be pleasant to see a type such as this clad continually in dark, heavy clothes, as the effect would be depressing and disagreeable.

There are, of course, exceptions to these general principles—some persons who are eccentric, and wish to make themselves conspicuous, delight in wearing extreme styles, but such people do not consider good taste.

It is wise to keep in mind that in street or tailored costumes two colors should not be used except in an embroidery motif.
INSTRUCTIVE COSTUME DESIGN

In the designing of stage costumes, however, extremes of color may be used; and indeed in this case they are most appropriate, as they serve to intensify the characters portrayed by the wearers. Then, too, the general atmosphere of the theatre permits the use of colors ordinarily disapproved by convention.

The occasion for which the costume is intended should be given much thought. There are some occasions for which certain colors would be excellent; on the other hand, these same colors might lose their entire effect if used elsewhere. You would not expect to see a young girl wearing a bright multicolored afternoon frock; yet, in a sport costume, she could carry the same intense color combination becomingly.

Seasons, too, have their place in the general study of appropriate colors and color combinations. Our clothes are generally of lighter shades in the summer than in the winter. Why? Because the spring and summer demand these light tones which reflect the general brightness and airiness of these seasons. Furthermore, light shades are cooler, since they reflect the heat. Dark shades are said to absorb heat and are consequently warmer.

No infallible set of rules can be laid down; general principles, only, can be given, and you must use your own discretion and good taste to achieve effective results.

You will no doubt think that in designing for manufacturers it would be impracticable to choose colors for a certain individual, in view of the fact that manufacturers make great quantities of the same design. What you are to do in this case is to choose such color combinations as will meet the approval of the greatest
number of persons. Each succeeding fashion season has certain colors prominently in vogue, so that after all it is not difficult to please the public.

Here is where you can use to good advantage your knowledge of color harmony. Become thoroughly familiar with the various classes of harmony, so that you will readily know just what colors harmonize, and what colors are in contrast.

In the selection of colors for trimmings, the designer is allowed greater liberty than in colors for the costume itself; and he may use colors which would ordinarily produce a sharp contrast, as for example: blue and orange, violet and yellow, blue and red, and other similar combinations.

Refer to Chapter Seventeen—Color Type Chart.