

MED 370 Blog #3

1. Symbolism of Color:

In the film "*In the Mood for Love*", Wong Kar-Wai uses color to show the secret feelings that Su Li-Zhen and Chow Mo-Wan are too afraid to say out loud to each other. Red is the most important hue in the film, representing a type of passion that feels both beautiful and dangerous. You can see this clearly in the deep red curtains of the hotel where they meet and in Su Li-Zhen's stunning red dresses. The color acts as a physical display of the love they are trying to hide from the world.

The director also uses orange and yellow hues to create a sense of stolen time. During their famous scenes under the amber glow of street lamps, these warm colors could reflect the small grain of comfort they find in each other's company. This warmth contrasts the gray and muted values of their everyday lives. By using bright colors only when the two characters are together, the film shows that their world only feels "alive" when they are in each other's presence. When the colors eventually fade into the dusty, neutral tones of the ending, it symbolizes that their vibrant romance has now finally become a faded memory.

2. Character Representation

In the film "*In the Mood for Love*", clothing is something that functions as a visual guide of the characters' hidden hearts. Su Li-Zhen's high-collared cheongsams represent her social restraint and the firm expectations of 1960s Hong Kong, yet their vibrant hues betray her true feelings. For example, when she wears a bold red dress during her secret meetings at the hotel, the color could be symbolizing a "burning desire" and a passion that contradicts her stoic facial expressions. This creates a powerful visual conflict because, while her dress is physically restrictive and modest, its red fiery hue cries of a love she refuses to voice aloud.

Chow Mo-Wan's attire also reflects this internal struggle through a shift in value and hue. He is often dressed in drab, gray or dark suits that show his loneliness and the "shadow" of his wife's betrayal. However, his ties frequently feature subtle orange or yellow patterns. These small pops of warm color could signify a small flicker of hope and the domestic warmth he feels only when he is with Su. By saturating their clothes with these specific colors during their time together, Wong Kar-Wai shows that their inner lives are full of vibrant color, even though their outward reality remains stuck in a world of dull and muted values.

3. Narrative Function

In the film "*In the Mood for Love*", the shifting interplay of hues foreshadows the tragic reality of the movie, that the characters' love is a temporary dream. Like I said previously Wong Kar-Wai uses a contrast between warm orange light and dark, cool shadows to enhance the theme of suppressed desire. This is best seen in the nighttime rain scenes where the couple stands under amber street lamps. The warm hue suggests a shared intimacy, but the heavy black values surrounding them foreshadows that their bond is trapped in a secret that can never come to light.

As the story progresses, the vibrant red hues that dominate their early meetings begin to fade, signaling the end of their romance is coming. This transition tracks the film's central theme of "lost time." By the final scene in Angkor Wat, the fiery reds and ambers are replaced by dull, mossy grays and some earthy tones. This shift in color tells the audience that their once-burning passion has cooled into a distant memory. Through this use of hue, the film visually proves that while desire is vivid and bright, the passage of time can eventually turn anything into a muted and neutral value.

4. Influence of Color Psychology

In the film "*In the Mood for Love*", Wong Kar-Wai uses specific hues to manipulate how we feel about the characters' secret world. Like I also said previously, by flooding the screen with red, he triggers a feeling of intense tension and or intimacy to the viewer. In the scenes where the couple is squeezed into narrow, red-walled hallways, the color makes the air feel hot and even heavy. This can influence us to feel the same claustrophobia and hidden passion they do, making their polite, restrained behavior feel almost painful to watch.

The use of amber and yellow hues during their rainy night time meetings create a sense of stolen warmth. These colors make their brief moments together feel like a safe sanctuary, which helps the viewer sympathize and relate with them. Instead of seeing them as unfaithful, the warm lighting makes us see their bond as a necessary comfort against their cold, lonely lives. When these vibrant colors eventually fade at the end of the film, the viewer feels a sense of emotional loss. This shift from bright hues to neutral values mirrors the characters' heartbreak, leaving us with a lingering feeling of sadness. By using these colors, the director ensures that we don't just watch their longing, but we actually experience the weight of it.

5. Color Harmony

In the film "*In the Mood for Love*", Wong Kar-Wai uses similar color harmonies, by grouping neighbors on the color wheel like red, orange, and yellow, creating a thick atmosphere of longing. This harmony is most obvious in the hotel scenes, where red curtains, amber lamps, and gold wallpaper blend together visually. Because these colors are so closely related, they create a visual "fever" that mirrors the characters' the feeling that their desire is everywhere, feeling like it's saturating even the air they breathe.

The film also uses complementary contrast to show the couple's isolation. In the nighttime scenes, the warm orange light of the street lamps clashes with the cool, blue-gray tones of the rain and shadows. This contrast makes Su Li-Zhen and Chow Mo-wan pop against their environment, visually proving that they only have each other in a cold, and uncaring world. This interplay of harmonies ensures the film isn't just pretty to look at, but it tells the story of a vibrant and colorful love that is trapped inside a dull and gray reality.