Color and Emotion

Psychologists have been studying color for a long time. In 1960 there was a breakthrough, a psychologist by the name of Charles E. Osgood conducted a series of tests that tested his theory that color effects emotion. After about a year of testing and hundreds of individual studies of all cultures around the world, Osgood wrote this in his final conclusions of results "...specific assets of certain stimuli [including color] elicit distinct, innate and unconditioned responses."

Osgood went on to study the concept that color can actually elicit an specific emotional response and change your behavior and/or feelings. In doing so – he discovered that the length and density of a light wave (the characteristic of a light that determines color and brightness) is directly related to specific emotions. For example, he found that white, which has faster wave forms, causes a higher energetic response of joy and freedom. He also found that Blue, which in contrast has slower wave forms, actually stimulates a peaceful and calm reaction. Which is exactly why in a good movie we associate a blue overtone with either peaceful or cold.

Needless to say, there is no question that color affects our emotions. When used in an event with either multi-screen or environmental projection, the atmosphere, environment and emotion can be altered simply by the color of content or lighting we choose to use.

Every color tells a story. And every color tells a different story. Take a look at the chart, it will help you understand which emotions can be associated with each color.

When choosing color for your artwork be aware of what emotion you want to convey. Color will help tell the story or emotion you want to express. Also be aware of how many colors the artwork may contain. Do you want to have a rainbow of colors (which may lead to a weaker emotional reaction) or do you want rich color? What story do you want to tell? What emotion do you want to amplify? Once you know the answers to these questions, you should not have any issue determining which color you want to choose.