LIGHTING FOR EMOTIONS
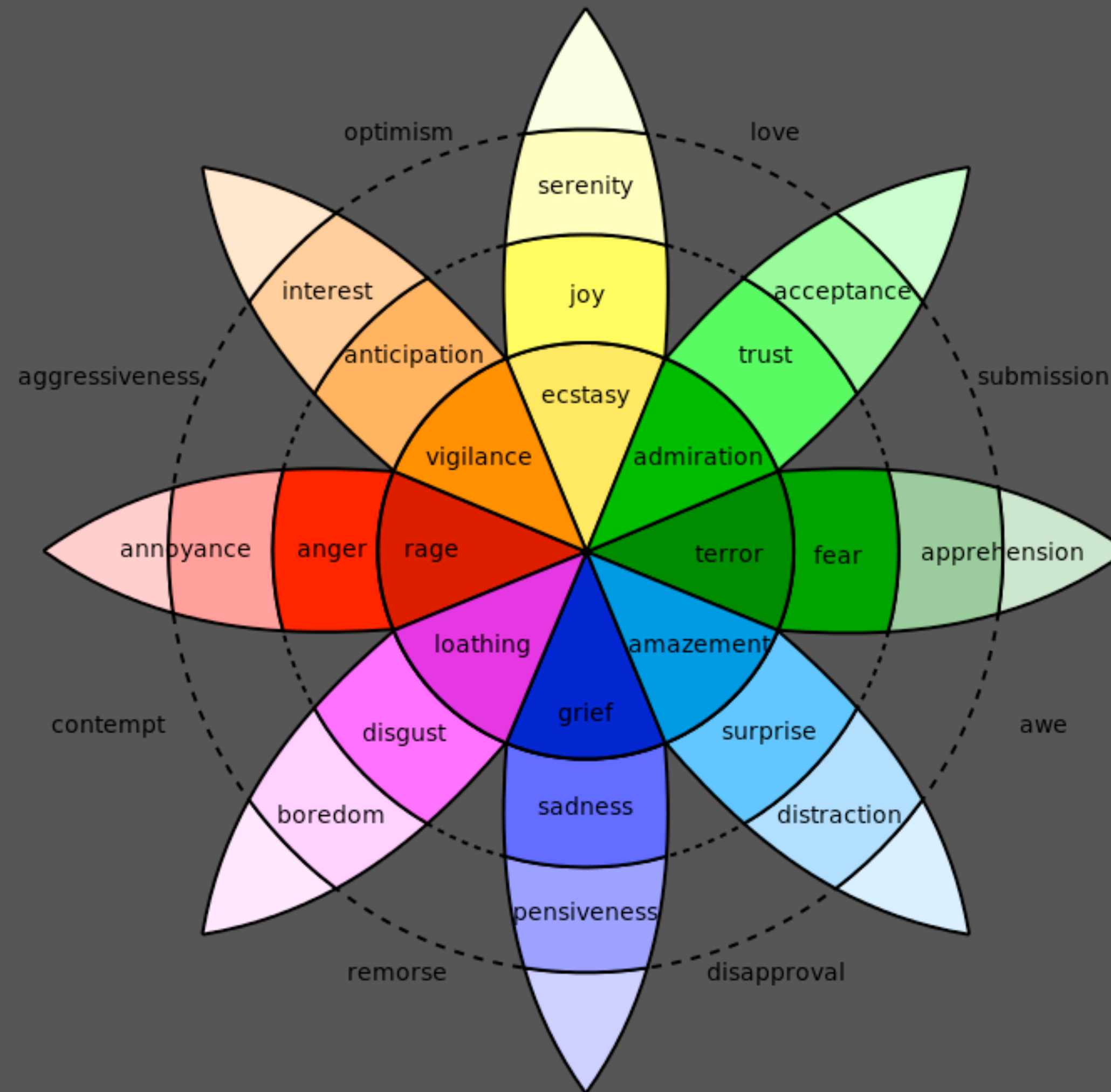
Robert Plutchik's theory

COHERENT ENVIRONMENTS

COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

When a musical piece is too simple we tend not to like it, finding it trivial. When it is too complex, we tend not to like it, finding it unpredictable – we don't perceive it to be grounded in anything familiar. Music, or any art form for that matter, has to strike the right balance between simplicity and complexity for us to like it.

This is Your Brain on Music

Daniel Levitin

LIGHT
LOCATION

NATURAL LIGHT

FRONT LIGHT

SIDE LIGHT

THREE DIMENSIONAL SUPER SEXY DOUBLE SIDE LIGHT

BACK LIGHT

SIDE AND BACK LIGHT

GUERILLA
LIGHTING

NATURAL LIGHT

COHERENT ENVIRONMENTS

FRONT LIGHT

GUERILLA LIGHTING

SIDE LIGHT

SIDE AND BACK LIGHT

THREE

ARTIFICIAL AVAILABLE LIGHT

DIMENSIONAL LIGHT BACK LIGHT

SUPER SEXY LOCATION COMPLEX

DOUBLE SIDE LIGHT ENVIRONMENT

NAVIGATE THROUGH AN IMAGE
BRING ABOUT A SENSE OF EMOTION
ADD MYSTERY IN A MOMENT
AND, CAUSE US TO STRONGLY DISLIKE AN IMAGE
WHICH WE WOULD OTHERWISE FIND APPEALING.

THE DESIRE TO MAKE SENSE OF OUR SURROUNDINGS. FIND A COGNITIVE MATCH IN OUR MEMORY TO HELP US INTERPRET AND UNDERSTAND THE NEW ENVIRONMENT.

WE WANT THE ENVIRONMENT TO BE INTERESTING, TO INVITE US TO EXPLORE AND ENGAGE, AND GIVE US A SENSE OF COMPLEXITY AND MYSTERY. THIS UNDERLYING PURPOSE OF INVOLVEMENT MAKES SOME PHOTOGRAPHS SEEM EXCITING RATHER THAN JUST PLAIN WEIRD OR OVERWHELMING, OR JUST TOO UNINTERESTING TO US.

COHERENCE IS CRITICAL, BUT A PHOTOGRAPH THAT IS COMPLETELY COHERENT BUT OVERLY SIMPLISTIC FAILS TO PROVIDE THE STIMULATION AND INVOLVEMENT THAT WE DESIRE. COMPLEXITY IN THE PHOTOGRAPH RELATES TO OUR INNATE DESIRE TO ENGAGE, TO BE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS. THIS COGNITIVE LINK BETWEEN COMPLEXITY AND PREFERENCE ALSO OCCURS IN THE REALM OF MUSIC APPRECIATION. IN HIS EXCELLENT BOOK, THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON MUSIC, LEVITIN WRITES:

COHERENCE AND COMPLEXITY.
COHERENCE RELATES TO OUR ABILITY TO MAKE SENSE OF THE PHOTOGRAPH – DOES THE PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDE US WITH CUES THAT ENABLE PROPER INTERPRETATION? ARE THERE ENOUGH FAMILIAR ELEMENTS IN THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT ALLOW US TO MAKE MENTAL MATCHES TO OUR PRIOR EXPERIENCES? IF WE ARE ABLE TO QUICKLY MAKE SENSE OF A PHOTOGRAPH THAT IS COHERENT, THEN THE LIKELIHOOD THAT WE WILL DEVELOP A POSITIVE PREFERENCE FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH INCREASES.

"IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT A TEXTURE OR BRIGHTNESS IN THE PHOTOGRAPH IS ASSOCIATED WITH SOMETHING IMPORTANT GOING ON IN THE SCENE. IN OTHER WORDS, SOMETHING THAT DRAWS ONE'S ATTENTION WITHIN THE SCENE SHOULD TURN OUT TO BE AN IMPORTANT OBJECT OR BOUNDARY. . . IF WHAT DRAWS ONE'S ATTENTION AND WHAT IS WORTH LOOKING AT TURN OUT TO BE DIFFERENT PROPERTIES, THEN THE SCENE LACKS COHERENCE."
SO A BRIGHTNESS EMPHASIS THAT HELPS TO MAKE SENSE OF AN ENVIRONMENT INCREASES ITS COHERENCE, MAKING IT A MORE PLEASANT PHOTOGRAPH. CONVERSELY, BRIGHTNESS THAT IS UNRELATED TO ANYTHING IMPORTANT IN THE PHOTOGRAPH CREATES A LACK OF COHERENCE, MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO PROPERLY MAKE SENSE OF IT, AND THEREBY REDUCES A PERSON'S PREFERENCE FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH.

important in the visual scene creates a lack of coherence, makes it more difficult to properly make sense of the space, and thereby reduces a person's preference for the space.

Coherence is critical, but a space that is completely coherent but overly simplistic fails to provide the stimulation and involvement that we desire. Complexity in the environment relates to our innate desire to engage, to be active participants with our environment. This cognitive link between complexity and preference also occurs in the realm of music appreciation. In his excellent book, This is Your Brain on Music, Levitin writes:

"When a musical piece is too simple we tend not to like it, finding it trivial. When it is too complex, we tend not to like it, finding it unpredictable – we don't perceive it to be grounded in anything familiar. Music, or any art form for that matter, has to strike the right balance between simplicity and complexity for us to like it."

Apparently, our desire for a certain level of complexity holds true for a wide range of stimuli, whether a musical piece or an architectural environment. We desire coherent environments that we can easily interpret, while at the same time we desire an appropriate level of complexity to keep us interested.

emotion.

- **SETUP FIVE**
  Intrigue Lighting
  By placing a single back light high above and between the two talents, you create yet another mood. Again the mood of loneliness or danger can be portrayed or perhaps forbidden love. The single light acts like a street light in some lonely corner of the world. If you add some fog to the mix, you will have a decidedly powerful lighting setup.
- **SETUP SIX**
  Silhouette Lighting
  Taking the theme we have created one step further, think silhouette. This adds a sense of danger, forbidden romance or maintaining a secret identity. For this setup to be effective, you have to make sure that no spill light is reflected onto the talent. Point a single light at the set behind your talent, lighting the background while leaving them in shadow.

light source (normally the sun in the sky, but it could be a flash in a studio or a window indoors) and if the light source is strong whatever is in the foreground will be silhouetted or semi-silhouetted.

Another approach is to expose for the foreground, and the background will be overexposed. Two different techniques, two different types of mood.

A third approach is to shoot a backlit portrait and use flash to light your subject from the front or side. This technique is used when you don't want to overexpose the background too much and still show detail in your subject's face.

For the most part, it's the *location* of the light that is most important.

we can add legibility by [balancing flash with the ambient light](#).

And the result looks as if the camera was recording the scene *the way our eye sees it*, instead of how a camera sees it. And that phychological translation is an important concept for a lighting photographer.