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Performa 405: Losing Colors in the Finder (7/93)

Article Created: 2 June 1993

Article Reviewed/Updated: 8 July 1993

TOPIC -----

Sometimes when I look at the built-in desktop patterns in the General control panel of my Performa 405, the patterns are entirely in gray. At other times the patterns have some color.

Also, sometimes the icons on my Performa 405 are in black and white. I have colors in other places on my desktop, but not in any of my icons.

DISCUSSION -----

The Performa 405 (like the Macintosh LC II) comes from the factory with 256K of VRAM installed, which allows it to display a maximum of 16 colors at one time. This doesn't mean that it has an absolute set of only 16 colors to choose from; rather, it has millions of colors to choose from, but can display only 16 of them at once. The System polls all color resources of the items being displayed and tries to pick a set of 16 colors that will work as a happy medium. Colors not picked as one of those 16 get displayed as gray.

Some colors have precedence and cannot be bumped. The highlight and window colors (those set in the Color control panel) cannot be bumped from the list of 16 while the Finder is active.

As for the icons, you may have assigned not only highlight and window colors, but labels as well. Each of these choices locks up one of the 16 possible colors. After you assign more than two or three labels, the icons shift from color to black and white.

When an application, extension or control panel takes away colors from the Finder, the Finder tries to replace the colors. Unfortunately, the Finder is not intelligent about this. A "used" color is no longer available to the Finder. This is very noticeable in 4-bit mode, 16 colors. When the Finder doesn't have enough choices, it often defaults to black and white until the colors are given back. Restarting the computer is one of the actions that restores the colors. It may also be necessary to restore the label colors to their original values. Search on label colors for an article with more information.

The shift to black and white can be accelerated by assigning highlight,

window, and labels to different shades of the same color. This assignment reduces the range of colors available as well as the total number, causing the Performa 405 to drop into black and white icons sooner.

The loss of colors can be conclusively identified by a solid black apple over the Apple menu. For copyright reasons, the apple must appear with certain colors. If the system cannot find even one of the six colors, it displays the logo in black rather than making one or more of the color stripes gray. More colors can be freed up by using the color wheel to set all the label colors to black (open the Labels Control Panel to access this). Setting highlight and window colors to black and white (in the Color control panel) should free the maximum number of colors. If you set all the labels to black and white, but the black and white icons remain, try restarting the computer.

To increase the number of colors to 256, you need to install the 512K VRAM SIMM. Contact your local Apple authorized dealer for further details.

Article Change History:

07/08/93 - Updated to include LC II.

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Keywords: <None>

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19960215 11:05:19.00

Tech Info Library Article Number: 12261