



Sources of Color Science

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Speculation on the origin and nature of color is centuries old, and although this book spans a period of some 2000 years it makes no attempt to cover all the material on the subject. Instead, this is primarily a collection of little-known, often inaccessible, yet historically significant writings by pioneers in the theory of color: George Palmer, Thomas Young, Hermann Grassman, James Clerk Maxwell, Johannes von Kries, Frederic Ives and Erwin Schrödinger. Works of principal figures—Newton's *Opticks* and Helmholtz's *Treatise on Physiological Optics*—are of course exceptions from which the editor has extracted only the most pertinent and interesting passages on color. The book is not a scholarly compendium; selections have been pruned, freely edited and translated in the interest of comprehensibility and flow for contemporary readers. Goethe's *Theory of Color* has been omitted, but a translation by Charles Locke Eastlake (London, 1840) has been reprinted by The MIT Press. From Newton on the book focuses almost entirely on physiological optics, the trichromatic concept, and work in color metrics. The latest works included, by John Guild, Lewis Fry Richardson, Stephen Polyak, and Sir Wilfred E. LeGros Clark, are stimulating pointers to the future.

Physicist James Clerk Maxwell remarks on the "theory of triple sensation" that "we are indebted to Newton for the original design, to Young for the suggestion of a means of working it out, to Helmholtz for a rigorous examination of the facts on which it rests, and to Professor Grassman for an admirable theoretical exposition of the subject." Maxwell's own experiments in color reproduction, resulting in the simplified "trichromatic" principle, made color photography feasible and formed the basis for modern color printing and color television. Frederic Ives, inventor of the half-tone screens used in all commercial color printing, championed Maxwell's ideas and was able to carry them out with more suitable photographic materials. In addition, Ives, along with Grassman and Schrödinger, made basic contributions to the modern technology of color measurement, that is based on spectrophotometry.

The book invites color scientists to return to the half-forgotten and often misunderstood principle that guided Maxwell and Ives to the proper sensitization, which characterized color photography at the turn of the century. It also brings to light two recently rediscovered monographs by George Palmer (1777 and 1786) which anticipated Thomas Young's explanation of color blindness by 26 years, and reveal that Palmer was prepared to explain more types of color blindness than Young knew existed. The modern practitioner in color science can still mine deeply from the comprehensive selection of writings that Dr. MacAdam has thoughtfully brought together in this book.

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