

cannot be fully grasped analytically, the book shows that empirical research can improve our understanding of these manifold transformations. Thus, it is not only an important contribution in itself, but also a compelling invitation to further study.

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Bright Modernity: Color, Commerce and Consumer Culture. *Edited by Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Uwe Spiekermann.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. x + 287 pp. Index, notes, figures. Cloth, \$109.00. ISBN: 978-3-319-50744-6.

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#### Reviewed by Sven Dupré

In recent years, we have seen the emergence of a distinct and interdisciplinary color historiography. Long neglected as a topic deserving serious scholarly attention—and even receiving only secondary attention in disciplines one might expect to possess an above-average color sensitivity, such as art history—color has become a singular point of attention not just within these disciplines, but across the fields integrated into color history (or histories, as in the title of a recent book edited by historian of science Friedrich Steinle and art historian Magdalena Bushart, *Colour Histories: Science, Art, and Technology in the 17th and 18th Centuries* [2015], which in many ways exemplifies the emergence of an interdisciplinary color historiography). Art history and the history of science and technology are prominently represented in this new color historiography. This is not to say that other fields, such as material culture studies or linguistics, are not included. Another recent book, *Early Modern Color Worlds* (edited by Tawrin Baker, Sven Dupré, Karin Leonhard, and Sachiko Kusukawa, 2016), is, for example, attentive to questions of color naming, language, and terminology. Issues of color knowledge and expertise are a red thread in the new interdisciplinary color historiography and are also in Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Uwe Spiekermann's *Bright Modernity*. However, this book adds to the emerging field of color history an emphasis on commerce and consumption; in fact, rather than position the book in color historiography, editors Blaszczyk and Spiekermann recognize making color visible within the history of

consumer society as the goal of their volume. As they write in their introduction, historians “must grapple with the very real challenge of understanding color as a visible technology that invisibly connects so many puzzling aspects of modern consumer societies—research and development, manufacturing and selling, presenting and seeing goods, . . . and more” (p. 28).

The book opens with “a watershed moment in the history of color,” the discovery of a way to synthesize mauve by the chemist William Henry Perkin in 1856, which launched the synthetic organic chemicals industry; production of synthetic dyes, paints, and pigments would transform visual and material culture and “ushered in a period of what we might call bright modernity”—hence the title of the book (p. 1). *Bright Modernity* builds upon Blaszyk’s monograph *The Color Revolution* (2012), in which she explores the birth and growth of the passion for color in consumer goods (from fashion to cars), interior design, and architecture made possible by artificial colorants in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to 1970. *The Color Revolution* was first and foremost an American history, while *Bright Modernity* shifts the geographical focus to Europe, especially Germany, making the emergence of color professionals and color management practices—which Blaszyk also discusses in her own chapter in this volume—a genuinely transatlantic history. It is then most appropriate that the origins of this volume lay in a workshop held at the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C., in June 2012.

The opening chapter is a perfect instantiation of the book’s shifts of emphasis from production to consumption and from the United States to Germany, and as such, it forms the perfect backdrop for the rest of the book. In this chapter, Alexander Engel shows that the German manufacturers of synthetic dyes did not come to dominate the global market in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of the superiority of German chemists and their scientific knowledge. Instead, Engel argues, their success was rather due to innovative marketing strategies—that is, the ways in which the German dye industry marketed its products to textile manufacturers. Continuing the transatlantic connection, the next chapter focuses on the Massachusetts-based board game magnate Milton Bradley, who used his fortune to advance the kindergarten movement based on the ideas of German pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel. Nicholas Gaskill describes how Bradley developed materials to teach schoolchildren how to see color, preparing them for a life as efficient producers and consumers in a bright modern world. Bradley’s educational program was based on the development of color standards, which were as much an effective way of communication between warehouse and factory as a way of teaching children ways of seeing color as an abstract

quality. Here and elsewhere in the book, standardization emerges as a major aspect of the color management practices in the world created by the color revolution.

Together, these two chapters form the first section of the book, on industry and education. The book has four sections in total. The second, centered on gender, contains chapters on the global affective economy of pink (by Dominique Grisard), the development of a shared color language between female consumers and male business customers (Charlotte Nicklas), and the policing of boundaries between color as a science—dominated by male scholars such as Charles S. Peirce and Ogden N. Rood—and color as a cultural phenomenon defined by the emotions and sensations of female shoppers (Michael Rossi). Gender is equally important to the contributions brought together in the third section of the book, which nevertheless carries a different title referring to color innovations in material and visual culture in the early twentieth century, from the introduction of color in movies and residential electric lighting to color representations of art in *Life* magazine. Finally, the fourth section highlights color management practices (discussed in Blaszyk's chapter on the transfer of color forecasting methods from the United States to Great Britain), which are illustrated with two case studies from the twentieth-century fashion industry. Remarkably, Mary Lisa Gavenas again brings out the issue of standardization, in terms of the development of color cards.

In sum, *Bright Modernity* offers a colorfully illustrated book that, due to its emphasis on commerce and consumption, adds an important twist to the emergent field of color history.

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