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Color Science and the Visual Arts: A Guide for Conservators, Curators, and the Curious

by Roy S. Berns. Getty Conservation Institute, July 2016. 208 p. ill. ISBN 9781606064818 (pbk.), $55.00.

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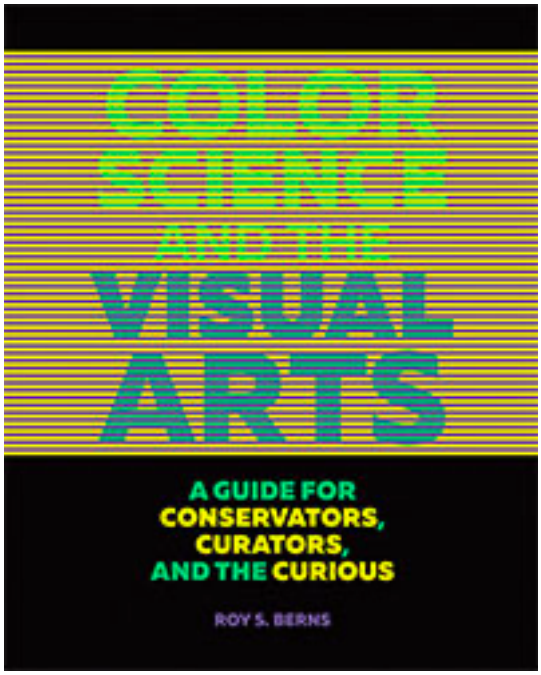

Bridging the gap between chemistry, mathematics, psychology, art conservation, art history, and the fine arts, Color Science and the Visual Arts provides an unparalleled look at the way these discipline intersect and how the science of color relates to the display, creation, and reproduction of works of art.

Divided into seven chapters, Berns expertly examines topics ranging from “Spectral Measurements” and “Color and Spatial Vision” to “Displaying Artwork” and “Color Reproduction.” The first half of the text offers a scientific approach of the subject by describing the functions of cones and rods in the human eye and variability in color vision to color specification, spectral reflectance properties and the tools that measure them. Particularly relevant for art-related fields, the final three chapters explore the effects of various light sources on color in the immediate and long term; the absorption, scattering, and color mixing properties of pigments; and current issues with accurate color reproduction for digital representations of works of art. Each chapter builds upon the next, providing the fundamental elements of creating, describing, measuring and looking at color, and then moves on to the exploration of color as it relates to conservators, connoisseurs, and creators of works of art. The text is succinct, clearly written, and non-overtly technical, making it relatable to both the non-specialist and the expert, while also providing numerous supporting references to give professionals in the field a point of departure for further inquiry.

The richly colored illustrations, reproductions, and graphs that provide clear, visual

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explanations of every topic described in the text are a defining feature of this publication, and arguably its strongest. With over 200 color images to demonstrate key points, Berns proves that the visual is a powerful learning tool when used in conjunction with the written word and transforms our understanding and interpretation of color. Moreover, the book contains an annotated bibliography for further reading, citing essential texts and recently published works to fully understand the science of color and how it applies to works of art.

Color Science provides indispensable information for a range of museum professionals, particularly conservators, curators, imaging specialists, and museum technicians for lighting and art installation. This text is ideally suited for all museum libraries with collections related to technical art examination, but would also prove extremely useful for academic and special libraries wishing to provide resources that examine the properties and impact of color as they relate to the fields of art history, museum studies, and the fine and visual arts.