Color Charts as Trading Zones between Science and Art (Bologna, 31 Aug-3 Sep 20)

Bologna, Aug 31–Sep 3, 2020
Deadline: Dec 5, 2019

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This is a call for abstracts for a symposium proposal to be submitted to the 9th International Conference of the European Society for the History of Science (ESHS) that will be held in 2020 in Bologna (https://sites.google.com/view/eshsbologna2020/home)

Title of the proposed symposium: Color Charts as Trading Zones between Science and Art 1500-1800

The seminal role played by color in the progress of science, technology, industry and commerce during the early modern period and enlightenment has never been thoroughly analyzed from a broad perspective. Today we tend to compartmentalize the historical investigation of color science, artisanal technology, and commercial endeavors as separate fields.
However, historically, coloring substances represent a clear-cut intersection between these three worlds. The opening of communication channels between artisanal and academic worlds has been defined by Pamela O. Long a “trading zone” (Long 2011). From the early modern, the growing interest of natural philosophers in the processes of manufacturing pigments and dyestuffs and the ability to control their use with systematic and scientific approaches were fundamental factors in the technological and commercial advancements that are usually associated with this period. The tacit color knowledge of artisans was gradually traded to the sciences and popularized in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and academic journals.
Besides the publication of color recipes and mixing instructions as handbooks, this specific trading zone allowed the production of (colored) visual tools, like color charts, painting palettes, sample cards and pattern books, relating to color technology, color teaching, and color selling. These visual tools have been generally regarded as painters’ instruments and teaching aids for amateur painters, and only in few recent studies linked to the sciences (Lowengard 2006; Kuehni and Schwarz 2008; Bushart and Steinle 2015; Karliczek and Schwarz 2016). We propose a symposium which will focus on intersectional aspects of trading color-related information and knowledge, from chemistry through commerce to art, with a specific focus on color charts. We invite historians of science and from other disciplines to submit cross-disciplinary papers discussing topics like:

- Color charts and raw materials relating to botany, zoology, mineralogy, pharmacy.
- Color charts and experimenting and developing colors for dyeing, porcelain, enamel, watercolors, oil painting, glass manufacturing.
- Color charts and scientific illustrations (cartography, petrography, zoology, botany, mineralogy)

- Color charts and color selling (color samplers, color cakes, color cases, color price and relating fraud)
- Color charts and teaching (paintings, printing, dyeing)

Please send your abstracts (300 words) with a cv (150 words) to Giulia Simonini (giulia.simonini@tu-berlin.de) by December 5, 2019.

Cited literature:

Pamela O. Long, Artisan, practitioners and the rise of the new sciences, 1400 - 1600, The OSU Press Horning visiting scholars publication series (Corvallis, 2011).

Sarah Lowengard, The Creation of Color in Eighteenth-Century Europe. (Gutenberg-e, 2006), http://www.gutenberg-e.org/lowengard.html

Rolf G. Kuehni und Andreas Schwarz, Color Ordered. A Survey of Color Order Systems from Antiquity to the Present (New York 2008)

Magdalena Bushart und Friedrich Steinle (eds)., Colour histories: science, art, and technology in the 17th and 18th centuries (De Gruyter, 2015)

Reference:

CFP: Color Charts as Trading Zones between Science and Art (Bologna, 31 Aug-3 Sep 20). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 23, 2019 (accessed Jun 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/22159>.