

Color, Commerce, and Consumption (Washington, 21-23 Jun 12)

Washington DC USA, Jun 21-23, 2012

Deadline: Feb 15, 2012

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“Color, Commerce, and Consumption in Global Historical Perspective”

June 21-23, 2012

Conference at the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C.

Convener: Regina Lee Blaszczyk

Call for Papers

Historians of business, technology, and industry have examined the role of the nineteenth-century German chemical industry in revolutionizing the production of dyes, paints, and pigments. We know a good deal about chemists, R&D directors, and managers in the global chemical industry, but we know less about how their color inventions and innovations had an impact on markets, product design, and consumer culture during the great industrial era that stretched from the 1850s through the 1970s.

This workshop seeks to attract scholars in various disciplines (including history, anthropology, art history, design history, sociology, and cultural studies) whose original research on broad historical topics (e.g., the history of marketing, the history of international business, the history scientific knowledge) touches on the history of color in some way. We hope to assemble a diverse group of scholars for an interdisciplinary dialogue that makes sense of the global history of color, consumption, and commerce in the 19th and 20th centuries. We welcome contributions from university scholars, museum curators, librarians and archivists, and independent researchers. We are particularly interested in papers that make innovative use of historical primary sources, such as corporate archives, trade and industry journals, import-export data, designers’ diaries, notebooks, and correspondence, and advertising and marketing ephemera.

We welcome proposals on a range of topics, but are especially interested in new research about color as it relates to three major historical themes: markets and management, product design and development, and consumer culture.

Papers dealing with color, markets, and management might take some of the following approaches: Histories of the use of color in retailing, advertising, graphic design, and corporate branding; histories of marketing practice by the global chemical industry with regard to dyes, paints, varnishes, plastics, and pigments; studies of organizational, corporate, or individual efforts to standardize colors and to create color systems for managing the plethora of new color opportunities; the

impact of management gurus such as Frederick Winslow Taylor or W. Edwards Deming on color decision makers; the transfer of color management practices and color systems from West to East and vice versa.

Papers on color in product design and development might consider the following topics: Discussions of how architects, interior designers, industrial designers, and fashion designers have used color in design, branding, and marketing; the impact of camouflage techniques on commercial color practice; the effects of new media technologies (e.g., chromolithography, television) on color practice in graphic design, advertising, packaging, and corporate identity.

Topics on color and consumer culture might include: Studies of how consumers have used color to engage or challenge mainstream discourses about commerce and consumption in interior decoration and fashion; debates over color pedagogy, taste, and visual perception; discussions of how consumers have used color to construct sub-cultural styles or discourses (e.g. Arts and Crafts, street styles); historical analyses of consumer responses to color in architecture, in trade shows, and at world's fairs; discussions of the cultural and symbolic meaning of color in relation to gender, class, ethnicity, and local, regional, or national identities.

Please send a paper title, a one-page abstract, and a one-page CV (preferably in pdf format) to Susanne Fabricius (fabricius@ghi-dc.org) by February 15, 2012. Applicants will be notified by March 1, 2012. Workshop participants will be asked to circulate papers to fellow participants prior to the event. The workshop will consist of a keynote address on the first evening and two days of individual paper summaries and discussions. Expenses for travel (economy class) and accommodations in Washington will be covered, although we also encourage participants to defray travel costs with funds from their home institutions if possible.

Reference:

CFP: Color, Commerce, and Consumption (Washington, 21-23 Jun 12). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 16, 2012 (accessed Jun 9, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/2552>>.