

Preface

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Colour Studies: A broad spectrum

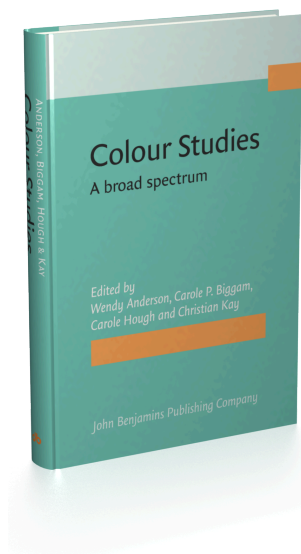
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Preface

The field of colour studies is of increasing interest across a wide range of academic disciplines, notably anthropology, archaeology, the fine arts, linguistics, onomastics, philosophy, psychology and vision science. Both this breadth and the inherent inter-disciplinarity of colour studies are reflected in this volume.

The contributions to this volume are based on papers and posters presented at the Progress in Colour Studies 2012 conference (PICS12), held at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, from 10 to 13 July 2012. The aim of the conference, as for the two earlier PICS conferences in 2004 and 2008, was to provide an accessible, multidisciplinary forum for discussion of recent work in colour studies from numerous angles (for the volumes arising from these conferences, see Biggam and Kay 2006; Pitchford and Biggam 2006; Biggam, Hough, Kay and Simmons 2011).

The volume begins with the conference keynote talk, “Prehistoric colour semantics: A contradiction in terms”, by Carole P. Biggam. The chapter explores the extent to which it is possible to draw conclusions about colour semantics in periods of time for which there are no written records. Biggam takes the view that even small snippets of evidence, when derived from a number of different disciplinary sources, may point us towards a largely consistent and robust picture of prehistoric colour semantics. Reflecting in microcosm the interdisciplinary nature of this volume, she draws on evidence from various branches of linguistics, as well as from anthropology, archaeology, art history and early literature to explore how we can establish word meaning for prehistoric times. The focus is on the colour categories RED and GREEN, and Biggam suggests that there was no cool-hue basic colour term in the parent language of the Indo-European language family.

The volume then continues with three further sections, each with a short preface outlining its scope. Section II, “Colour and linguistics” deals with aspects of colour in Arabic, Aramaic, English, the Himba dialect of Otjiherero, Italian, Portuguese and the Finnic languages. It discusses the emergence of new colour categories, metaphor and metonymy, the motivation for colour names, and the desirability of a project to map the colour terms of the Near East. Section III, “Colour categorization, naming and preference”, deals with colour cognition in infants, visual searching strategies, gender differences and colour preferences, with excursions into Polish colour associations and a philosophical approach to categorization. Section IV, “Colour and the world”, finally, includes aspects of synaesthesia, the lighting of Shakespearean drama, Scottish place-names, advertising, the influence on perception of biological and environmental aspects, an early female colour theorist, Spanish colour terms for wine, and the interaction of colour, music and emotion.