

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY



DEPARTMENTAL COLLOQUIUM

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Aesthetic Science of Color: WAVES of Color, Culture, Music. And Emotion

Color preference is an important aspect of human behavior, but little is known about why people like some colors and color combinations more than others. Recent results from the Berkeley Color Project (BCP) provide detailed measurements of preferences among 37 colors and other relevant aspects of color perception. I will describe the fit of several models, based on cone outputs, color-emotion associations, and the ecological valence of colored objects. The best model predicts more than 70% of the variance in average preferences from the Weighted Affective Valence Estimates (WAVEs) of correspondingly colored objects. I will also describe how hue preferences for single colors differ as a function of object-type, gender, expertise, culture, and personality. Further results concern people's preferences for pairs of colors, which are well predicted by their perceived "harmony" with smaller effects due to preferences for the individual colors. Individuals differ greatly in the extent to which they prefer harmonious colors, however. These differences seem to generalize to other aesthetic domains, such as preference for simple, symmetrical shapes, good-fitting spatial compositions, and possibly even harmonious music, suggesting the possibility of "aesthetic personalities" across aesthetic domains.

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