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Jan. 21, 2016

Media website: <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

Smithsonian Libraries Opens “Color in a New Light”

Exhibition Links Science, History, Art and Culture Through Color

The Smithsonian Libraries unveils a new exhibition, “[Color in a New Light](#),” at the National Museum of Natural History beginning Jan. 23. “Color in a New Light” will be on display through March 2017.

Most people take color for granted. They simply see it the moment that light beams from or reflects off an object, enters their eyes and is processed by their brains. But do they stop to think what color actually *is*?

“Color in a New Light” explores the theme of color through the vast collections of the Smithsonian Libraries, including rare books and Trade Literature materials. The exhibition features the science and nature of color, spectrum analysis, camouflage, synthetic dyes, color models and trends in products from cars to clothes.

“Color is part of almost everything we do, yet it is still full of mystery,” said Jennifer Cohlman Bracchi, curator and librarian at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Library. “Some of our greatest minds have studied color, from Isaac Newton to Josef Albers, and helped better our understanding of it. Each of these books tells a story about color that could be an entire exhibition of its own.”

“Color is a shared cultural experience that is at once amazingly simple and deliciously complex,” said Carl Minchew, vice president of color innovation and design for Benjamin Moore. “‘Color in a New Light’ will enrich your understanding whatever your level of technical knowledge.”

“Color in a New Light” features Sir Isaac Newton’s *Opticks* (London: 1704); Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Zur Farbenlehre* [Theory of colors] (1810); Michel Eugène Chevreul’s *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs* [On the law of simultaneous contrast of colors] (1839); Shinobu Ishihara’s *The Series of Plates Designed as Tests for Colour-blindness* (Tokyo: 1936) and Richard Waller’s *Tabula colorum physiologica ...* [Table of physiological colors] from the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (1686). Also on display will be objects

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such as early synthetic dyed silk (1860), a Bradley color wheel from the Milton Bradley Co. (1893–1898) and a model of Ford Model T (1915–1930).

Support

“Color in a New Light” is made possible by support from lead sponsor Benjamin Moore. Additional funding is provided by The Shepherd Color Company.

Educational Programs

Public programs accompanying the exhibition will engage the museum’s diverse audiences from K–12 to adult, including lectures, workshops and hands-on sessions.

About the Smithsonian Libraries

The Smithsonian Libraries maintains a collection of more than 2 million volumes and serves as an educational resource for the Smithsonian Institution, the global research community and the public. The Libraries are located in Washington, D.C.; Edgewater, Md.; New York City; and the Republic of Panama. For more information, visit the [Smithsonian Libraries website](#).

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