

Farbpigmente – Farbstoffe – Farbgeschichten

Carin Maria Schirmacher
in: kunst und kirche – 01 / 2012

Peach stone, grape seed and cherry stone black on lamp black – what sounds like a magic spell describes in words and colours the black cover of the book «Farbpigmente Farbstoffe Farbgeschichten». It's a magical book about colours.

The large exhibition in the «Gewerbemuseum Winterthur» of 2006/2007 with the title «Farbe materiell – virtuell» was dedicated to the complex phenomenon of colour. An important crowd puller was the «Farblabor» that presented 224 pigments and dyes in a systematic and artistic form. The «Farblabor» arose as a result of the close cooperation between Georg Kremer representing Kremer Pigmente and the painter and colour research scientist Stefan Muntwyler. They came up with the idea to present the physical, sensuous side of colours in a way that goes beyond a presentation limited in time and space. Two experts and characters shaped the project from its very beginning and supported it with their enthusiasm and knowledge: the artist and colour research scientist Stefan Muntwyler and Hanspeter Schneider representing Team hp Schneider für Gestaltung und Druck.

The book's great strength lies not only in its visual aspects, but also in its content. In addition to an informative introduction to the linguistic roots of the word colour, the book includes also a wide range of meaning that provides a detailed overview on the topic. At the heart of the publication is the compendium with its portrayal of 317 natural organic and synthetic pigments and dyes. The illustrations show the hand-made colour samples as well as the corresponding base materials – minerals, earth, natural substances or chemical formula. The dyes are arranged according to their origin. This arrangement was chosen over an alphabetical arrangement because pigments of the same origin have a close affinity and thus have similar chemical properties. There is, however, an alphabetic index at the back of the book facilitating the search of a particular dye. A detailed description of the binders and their properties can be found in the glossary.

While the first edition was produced with a 14-colour print, the second edition includes another colour, a dark shade of blue (Pantone Blue 072). The difficulty lies in the nuanced reproduction of the original colour samples and pigments. The labour-intensive colour co-ordination and the complex printing method have paid off. The 15-colour print is astonishing: the four classical process colours cyan, magenta, yellow and black, the five additional chromatic colours red, green, two dark shades of blue and violet, as well as six fluorescent colours create vibrant and intense colours, turning the book into a visual experience.

Colours have always inspired imagination and art. 11 portraits of colours illustrate the many fas-

cinating stories colours can tell: from the first colours of human history to the latest developments in organic chemistry. Referring to the triumph of indigo as a colonial good, the book shows how a textile colourant went down in the history of global economy.

Moreover, the 8 sample analyses of pigments reveal which pigments were used in different epochs from Giotto to Polke, and explore the impacts innovations in the paint manufacturing had on painting. Polke's painting «gold lump» (Goldklumpen, 1982) vividly illustrates how the knowledge about the pigments used for a painting can increase its intensity.

The book's full-page colour prints are exceptional. The colours leap to the eye in all their splendour, such as the Ferrari red, and the beholder is drawn into the depths of the manganese blue. In one of his 11 colour stories, Stefan Muntwyler, the artist, tells readers about the colour manganese blue and his search for the Apulian blue in such a beautiful and personal manner which reflects the book's sensuousness:

«I have become insatiable in my colour kitchen. I turned away from traditional painting a long time ago. I paint colours. Painting has become a culinary delight.» In this sense, the book is about the diversity of colours: Egyptian green alongside lead-tin yellow, from Venetian red to gold ochre, bluish green earth from Cyprus alongside Russian green, smalt alongside Chinese purple, Indian date, Ultramarine blue, Naples yellow, realgar and many more!

Stefan Muntwyler / Hanspeter Schneider / Georg Kremer

FARBPIGMENTE – FARBSTOFFE – FARBGESCHICHTEN

Introduction by Hugo Anthamatten

alataverlag Winterthur 2011

256 pages – with 200 colour illustrations, some of them full-page

ISBN 9783033029682

The coloured black book

Tatiana Wagenbach Stephan, book maker, Zurich – www.diebuchherstellung.ch
in: Schweizer Monatshefte – December 2010

A black book. Not black, but peach stone black and grape seed black and cherry stone black and lamp black. That's how the book looks at you. A black book about colours. Very odd. As soon as I hold it in my hands, however, I start reading: Bologna chalk, Carrara marble, Rügen chalk, Champagne chalk. Confused and fascinated at the same time I put the book on the table and start looking and reading. After two hours I glance at my watch and I'm lost.

Farbpigmente – Farbstoffe – Farbgeschichten

A book that tells me about Vermeer's «Girl with a Pearl Earring» and about the stucco work of the monastery church in Einsiedeln. It is also about white lead and indigo, carmine red and ultramarine. About colour pigments and mineral dyes, about colour dyes and vegetable dyes. This beautiful and sensuous book about the world of colours was compiled by the artist and colour research scientist Stefan Muntwyler and the walking encyclopaedia of colour pigments, Georg Kremer. Reading this book, the drab monotony of everyday life becomes colourful. You will read that the German word for colour («Farbe») is etymologically linked to the word for trout («Forelle»). That there are English words such as colour and paint and dye; whereas there is only one word in German: Farbe. The book also offers a comprehensive definition of the differences between dyestuffs and binders, fillers and mediums. And it explains what the sample book of the Glarus «Tüechli» (scarfs) has to do with the «Madonna of Humility» by Benedetto di Bindo.

And it teaches us to look and to marvel at colours: You will find bluish green earth from Cyprus, ultramarine blue very dark next to ultramarine blue dark and light. 317 different colours beam at the reader of this book. As colour samples, as stones, in ground and crushed form, as stone powder. You will admire the colours you have always wanted to see: Indian date and Naples yellow, spinel black and Stil de Grain.

At the same time, this book is a compendium of knowledge: What are natural and synthetic mineral dyes? What are natural animal and vegetable dyes? Everything is clearly labelled, systematically arranged, accompanied by large and detailed illustrations.

And for whom is the book written, yourself excluded?

For geographers, who will learn that sodalite can be found in Brazil, that the last manufactory of ochre is located in the department of Vaucluse and that the stone powder Alba Albula can be found at the Albulapass. For art historians: Which colours were used by Vermeer to paint «Girl with a Pearl Earring» and which paint did Claude Monet choose for his «Bathers at la Grenouillère» in

1869? For historians: the triumph of indigo as a colonial good. For chemists: The chemical formula of diketopyrrolopyrrole (DPP) and of Ferrari-red. For bon viveurs: the carmine red used for lipsticks and Campari. For language analysts: the melodious names of some colours: Sap green, bone black, Milori blue or Naples yellow. For cooks: What can you make with walnut shells? For non-cooks: Which formula is used to produce stil de grain. And above all, this book is for people who love books: A beautifully printed book. In 15 colours. Hanspeter Schneider has designed a clear, lucid typography which works really well. Bound in a proper, precise way. A book with an index and a glossary! A sight for sore eyes and a feast for the senses. Speaking of feast: Get that book.