Color Imaging XIV: Displaying, Processing, Hardcopy, and Applications

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The CID number appears on each page of the manuscript. The complete citation is used on the first page, and an abbreviated version on subsequent pages. Numbers in the index correspond to the last two digits of the six-digit CID number.
Contents

ix Conference Committee

xi Abstracts from “Dark Side of Color” Session
A. Rizzi, Univ. degli Studi di Milano (Italy); R. Eschbach, Xerox Corp. (United States); S. Hoskins, Univ of the West of England (United Kingdom); G. M. Johnson, Apple Computer, Inc. (United States); J. McCann, McCann Imaging (United States); N. Moroney, Hewlett Packard Labs. (United States); S. Süsstrunk, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Switzerland); S. Westland, Univ. of Derby (United Kingdom)

SESSION 1 COLOR STUDIES

7241 02 A study on the equivalence of controlled and uncontrolled visual experiments [7241-01]
S. Zuffi, C. Brambilla, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Italy); R. Eschbach, Xerox Corp. (United States); A. Rizzi, Univ. degli Studi di Milano (Italy)

7241 04 Development of practical investigation system for cultural properties based on a projector-camera system [7241-03]
K. Miyata, National Museum of Japanese History (Japan)

SESSION 2 RETINEX-BASED METHODS

7241 05 Improved color reproduction based on CIELAB color space in integrated multi-scale retinex [7241-04]
W.-J. Kyung, T.-H. Lee, Kyungpook National Univ. (South Korea); C.-H. Lee, Andong National Univ. (Korea, Republic of); Y.-H. Ha, Kyungpook National Univ. (Korea, Republic of)

7241 06 Fast implementation of color constancy algorithms [7241-05]
J.-M. Morel, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan (France); A. B. Petro, C. Sbert, Univ. of Balearic Islands (Spain)

7241 07 Implementation of Retinex algorithm by eyegaze tracking interface [7241-06]
R. Ohtera, T. Horiuchi, S. Tominaga, Chiba Univ. (Japan)

SESSION 3 DISPLAYS I

7241 08 A multiprimary display model combined with a spatio-temporal behavioral display model for display characterization by simulation [7241-07]
C. Dolar, Dortmund Univ. of Technology (Germany); F. Lebowsky, STMicroelectronics (France)

7241 09 A subjective evaluation of high chroma color with wide color gamut display [7241-08]
J. Kishimoto, M. Yamaguchi, N. Ohyama, Tokyo Institute of Technology (Japan)
Preferred color correction for digital LCD TVs [7241-09]
K. T. Kim, C.-W. Kim, Inha Univ. (Korea, Republic of); J.-Y. Ahn, D.-W. Kang, H.-H. Shin, LG Display (Korea, Republic of)

Optimizing color quality for LED backlight modulated LCD TVs [7241-10]
F. Lebowsky, STMicroelectronics (France)

Sub-pixel-based MVA LCTV characterization and color modeling [7241-11]
J. Wu, Rochester Institute of Technology (United States); X. Feng, S. J. Daly, Sharp Labs. of America, Inc. (United States)

Evaluation of gray level reproduction in dark areas on plasma display panel [7241-13]
Y. H. Kim, C.-W. Kim, Inha Univ. (Korea, Republic of)

Compensating for non-uniform screens in projection display systems [7241-14]
S. A. Renani, Gjøvik Univ. College (Norway); M. Tsukada, NEC Corp. (Japan); J. Y. Hardeberg, Gjøvik Univ. College (Norway)

Extraction of memory colors for preferred color correction in digital TVs [7241-16]

Colour naturalness metric for evaluating image quality of mobile displays [7241-17]
J. J. Yoo, G. Cui, M. R. Luo, Univ. of Leeds (United Kingdom)

Color universal design, the optimal representation of the color red for protan-vision people: practical alternatives from the color universal design organization [7241-18]
Y. G. Ichihara, Kogakuin Univ. (Japan) and Color Universal Design Organization (Japan); M. Okabe, Jikei Univ. (Japan) and Color Universal Design Organization (Japan); K. Iga, Y. Tanaka, Color Universal Design Organization (Japan); K. Musha, Color Universal Design Organization (Japan) and Jikei Univ. (Japan); K. Ito, Univ. of Tokyo (Japan) and Color Universal Design Organization (Japan)

Application of categorical colors to area segmentation for road image [7241-19]
T. Ashiguchi, T. Yaguchi, K. Kijima, Utsunomiya Univ. (Japan); S. Ishida, Y. Nakanishi, Honda R&D Co., Ltd. (Japan); K. Shoji, M. Ayama, Utsunomiya Univ. (Japan)

The relationship between ambient illumination and psychological factors in viewing of display Images [7241-20]
T. Iwanami, Chiba Univ. (Japan) and Sharp Corp. (Japan); A. Kikuchi, Chiba Univ. (Japan); T. Kaneko, Sharp Corp. (Japan); K. Hirai, N. Yano, T. Nakaguchi, N. Tsumura, Chiba Univ. (Japan); Y. Yoshida, Sharp Corp. (Japan); Y. Miyake, Chiba Univ. (Japan)
SESSION 6  DARK SIDE OF COLOR

7241 ON  The opposite of green is purple? (Invited Paper) [7241-22]
N. Moroney, Hewlett-Packard Labs. (United States)

SESSION 7  HIGH DYNAMIC RANGE IMAGING

7241 0Q  A high-dynamic-range and high-resolution projector with dual modulation [7241-25]
Y. Kusakabe, M. Kanazawa, Y. Nojiri, NHK Science and Technical Research Labs. (Japan);
M. Furuya, M. Yoshimura, Victor Co. of Japan, Ltd. (Japan)

7241 0R  Color appearance and color rendering of HDR scenes: an experiment [7241-26]
C. Parraman, Univ. of the West of England (United Kingdom); A. Rizzi, Univ. degli Studi di
Milano (Italy); J. J. McCann, McCann Imaging (United States)

7241 0S  High dynamic range LCD using extended stencil-FSC method [7241-62]
P.-L. Sun, Shih Hsin Univ. (Taiwan)

7241 0T  Locally adaptive high dynamic range image reproduction inspired by human visual system
[7241-28]
K. E. Lee, W. Choe, J.-H. Kwon, S. Lee, SAMSUNG Electronics, Co. Ltd. (Korea, Republic of)

7241 0U  Spectral printer modeling for transparency media: toward high dynamic range scene
reproduction [7241-29]
J. McElvain, J. Miller, Digital Imaging Systems (United States); E. Jin, Aptina Inc. (United
States)

SESSION 8  SPECTRAL IMAGING

7241 0V  Handshake characterization and image stabilization for cell phone cameras [7241-30]
R. Safaee-Rad, M. Aleksic, Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. (Canada)

7241 0W  Spectral reflectance estimation using a six-color scanner [7241-31]
S. Tominaga, S. Kohno, H. Kakinuma, F. Nohara, T. Horiuchi, Chiba Univ. (Japan)

7241 0X  On determining the colour gamut of N-ink printers [7241-32]
Y. Wang, C. Parraman, Univ. of the West of England (United Kingdom)

7241 0Y  Data-driven spectral model for color gamut simulation [7241-27]
P. Soler, J. Morovič, Hewlett-Packard Co. (Spain); H. Doumaux, Hewlett-Packard Co.
(United States)

7241 0Z  Multispectral imaging with optical bandpass filters: tilt angle and position estimation
[7241-42]
J. Brauers, T. Aach, RWTH Aachen Univ. (Germany)
### SESSION 9 IMAGE ENHANCEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors and Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7241 10</td>
<td>Interactive image processing for mobile devices</td>
<td>R. Shaw, White Rose Digital (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 11</td>
<td>Color compensation of histogram equalized images</td>
<td>H. Lee, S.-J. Yang, B.-U. Lee, Ewha Womans Univ. (Korea, Republic of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 12</td>
<td>Bilateral filtering and adaptive tone-mapping for qualified edge and image enhancement</td>
<td>K.-J. Hu, T.-T. Chang, M.-Y. Lu, W.-J. Li, J.-F. Huang, Industrial Technology Research Institute (Taiwan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 13</td>
<td>HVS-based contrast stretching for color image enhancement</td>
<td>M. H. Kim, Kyungpook National Univ. (Korea, Republic of); I. H. Jang, Kyungwoon Univ. (Korea, Republic of); N. C. Kim, Kyungpook National Univ. (Korea, Republic of)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SESSION 10 IMAGE PROCESSING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors and Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7241 15</td>
<td>Robust subpixel shift estimation using iterative phase correlation of a local region</td>
<td>H.-G. Ha, I.-S. Jang, K.-W. Ko, Y.-H. Ha, Kyungpook National Univ. (Korea, Republic of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 16</td>
<td>Predicting the performance of a spatial gamut mapping algorithm</td>
<td>A. M. Bakke, I. Farup, J. Y. Hardeberg, Gjøvik Univ. College (Norway)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 17</td>
<td>A method to improve the invertibility of ICC profiles that use lookup tables</td>
<td>H. Zeng, Hewlett-Packard Co. (United States); I. Tastl, K.-W. Koh, Hewlett-Packard Labs. (United States); J. Holm, Consultant (United States)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 18</td>
<td>An RGB color management concept based on an improved gamut mapping algorithm</td>
<td>U. Caluori, K. Simon, EMPA (Switzerland)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SESSION 11 PRINTING I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors and Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7241 19</td>
<td>Compensation of printer MTFs</td>
<td>N. Bonnier, Telecom ParisTech, CNRS (France) and Océ Print Logic Technologies (France); A. J. Lindner, Telecom ParisTech, CNRS (France), Océ Print Logic Technologies (France), and Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Switzerland); C. Leynadier, Océ Print Logic Technologies (France); F. Schmitt, Telecom ParisTech, CNRS (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 1A</td>
<td>Dotgain estimation using linear least squares incorporating neighboring and clustering effects</td>
<td>T. Stamm, K. Simon, EMPA (Switzerland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7241 1B</td>
<td>Calibrating the ink spreading curves enhanced Yule-Nielsen modified spectral Neugebauer model with the two-by-two dot centering printer model</td>
<td>R. Rossier, R. D. Hersch, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (Switzerland)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recent trends in print portals and Web2Print applications [7241-48]
C. Tuijn, Agfa Graphics Group (Belgium)

Houston, we have a color issue! [7241-49]
H. J. Santos-Villalobos, Purdue Univ. (United States); V. Loewen, Hewlett-Packard Co. (United States); J. P. Allebach, Purdue Univ. (United States)

SESSION 12 PRINTING II

Creating variable data infrared signals for security applications [7241-50]
R. Eschbach, R. Bala, M. Maltz, I. Zhao, Xerox Corp. (United States)

Content-based gamut mapping algorithm for multiple engine printing [7241-51]
W. Wu, Z. Fan, E. N. Dalal, Xerox Corp. (United States)

Printability beyond the limits: alternative double printing method for inkjet [7241-52]
C. Parraman, Y. Wang, Univ. of the West of England (United Kingdom)

Cluster-based binary printer model [7241-53]
S.-G. Wang, Xerox Corp. (United States)

INTERACTIVE PAPER SESSION

Four-flux Kubelka-Munk model of the light reflectance for printing of rough substrate [7241-54]
N. Dong, J. Ge, Y. Zhang, Jiangnan Univ. (China)

The Murray-Davies reflectance model of halftone fluorescent ink prints [7241-58]
Y. Ning, Y. Zhang, Jiangnan Univ. (China)

The color prediction model of fluorescence prints [7241-59]
N. Dong, Y. Zhang, G. Shi, Jiangnan Univ. (China)

Color prediction for print based on Kubelka-Munk theory and under ink penetration [7241-60]
G. Shi, N. Dong, Y. Zhang, Jiangnan Univ. (China)

Colorization of grayscale images and videos using a semi-automatic approach [7241-61]
V. G. Jacob, S. Gupta, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (India)

Author Index
Conference Committee

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Session Chairs
1 Color Studies
Reiner Eschbach, Xerox Corporation (United States)

2 Retinex-based Methods
Alessandro Rizzi, Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy)

3 Displays I
Gabriel G. Marcu, Apple Computer, Inc. (United States)

4 Displays II
Choon-Woo Kim, Inha University (Korea, Republic of)

5 Vision
Reiner Eschbach, Xerox Corporation (United States)
6 Dark Side of Color
Alessandro Rizzi, Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy)

7 High Dynamic Range Imaging
Shoji Tominaga, Chiba University (Japan)

8 Spectral Imaging
Michael A. Kriss, Consultant (United States)

9 Image Enhancement
Chris Tujin, Agfa-Gevaert Group (Belgium)

10 Image Processing
Michael A. Kriss, Consultant (United States)

11 Printing I
Reiner Eschbach, Xerox Corporation (United States)

12 Printing II
Gabriel G. Marcu, Apple Computer, Inc. (United States)
Abstracts from Session “The dark side of color”

Alessandro Rizzi*a, Reiner Eschbachb, Stephen Hoskinsc, Garrett M. Johnsond, John McCanne,
Nathan Moroneyf, Sabine Süsstrungg, Stephen Westlandh

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As part of the "Color Imaging XIV: Displaying, Hardcopy, Processing, and Applications" conference, a novel special session entitled, "Dark Side of Color" has been presented at Electronic Imaging 2009. This session aims at introducing innovative thinking, and discussion from experts working in a wide range of disciplines related with color, to foster ideas and stimulate about open issues and common misunderstanding in color science and technology. It is composed by a limited number of invited short presentations that are presented as summaries in this paper together with an overall description of the session point of view.

What is the dark side of color?

Color is a very complex phenomenon that cannot be explained with only physics principles. The human vision system is what transforms the physical stimuli into the colors we see.

Color related topics are sometime taught and communicated without presenting their inner complexity, their limits and the simplifications that sometime are at their base. A-critically following pre-defined "recipes" can lead to the risk of loosing the overall framework and consequently a complete understanding of the chosen technique.

Classic colorimetric methods, specifically designed to deal with color in aperture mode (isolated, out of visual context), have become dominant in digital color science and technology. Their use has been extended to deal with a great variety of situations in which color is considered inside a visual context, thus outside its initial scope. Color science is facing this transitional evolution in order to deal with color in context and appearance, but without substantial changes in their original foundation.

There is a need for widening the scientific debate and discuss about paradigms. This can be achieved by, for example, new questions, different attention for details; information in the margins that so far are often discounted or overlooked. These aspects are what we consider to be the "dark side of color".

The invited speakers of this section have been asked to stimulate ideas and discussions on the needs and the characteristics of possible alternative approaches and/or point of view. This session aims at suggesting paradigm shifts, lateral thinking and bottom up experimentation by re-addressing the current state of the evolving situation in color in sciences, arts and technologies.

Following these principles, every speaker has choosen a topic of his/her preference and presents open issues and problems in a short 10-minute presentation. The presentation abstracts are reported in the following sections to give the reader a glance on the discussed topics.

We would like to stress that basically no answers are expected to arise from the presentations of this session, but more likely questions and perspective shifts.
1. THE SPEAKERS

Here are the abstracts of the speakers that will participate at this first session of the Dark Side of Color. They are listed in alphabetical order.

1.1 “Well asked questions” Reiner Eschbach

We apologize with the readers, but for technical reasons this abstract was not available at the moment of printing this book.

1.2 “Pictorial information as transcribed by the artist or designer” Stephen Hoskins

Current technologies are designed to capture a pictorial image by reflectance of light upon the sensor, in order to create the potential to render a colour image pixel by pixel, which can then be re-rendered repeatedly without losing colour information or fidelity. Whilst this may be the method that is used when taking a photograph. It may not be what the user is thinking they are doing when they capture a digital image. Pixels only render colour, an image is only represented by coloured pixels there is little or no other information, should there be? As an example Artists and designers make a series of choices before rendering a pictorial image, whether through paint, print or photography. Those choices can be influenced by many factors often bearing no relation to accurate rendition of the colour viewed. They are however closely related to the accurate rendition of the pictorial image that the artist has chosen to represent. This talk will try and articulate some of the approaches that an artist makes, with visual examples for each approach and then try to demonstrate how those decisions will affect the outcome of the image the artist then creates.

1.3 “Consider the Size: And Other Display Features” Garrett M. Johnson

Modern display technologies are being developed at a breathtaking pace. We now have the ability to watch movies on our mobile phones, or display pictures taken with these phones on our home theaters. In addition to changes in image size, these displays offer a wide range in contrast, resolution, dynamic range and color gamuts. As the number of viewing devices increases so does the variety of viewing conditions. Color or image appearance models, while also making great strides, have not yet come close to being able to predict the changes in appearance that these modern displays may cause. As a result, we often find content creators needing to manually adjust the appearance of images based upon the desired output device. Many times these same creators are viewing images on one type (or size) of device and mentally adjusting them for a different type.

Consider this paper a call to arms, or perhaps a plea, for increased study on the effects of display size and technology on color appearance. Do our traditional viewing condition descriptors still hold valid for a tiny or giant screen? What happens when the surround and background blend into one? Is the increased contrast and sharpness of a mobile display perceptual or a function of the display itself? What happens when we view our mobile display outside or in a train tunnel? These are just a subset of many of the questions that still remain for color and image appearance.

1.4 “Adaptation! … What Adaptation?” John McCann

In almost ever conversation with vision scientist one hears the statement “the eye adapts…” Always, this statement is true. The problem is that there are so many ways that the visual system ‘adapts’ that the words have no meaning. The visual system exhibits chemical dark-adaptation, neural light-adaptation, diurnal melatonin-adaptation, pupil adaptation, chromatic adaptation, von Kries adaptation, Blakemore spatial-frequency adaptation, McCulloch colored-stripe...
adaptation and many more kinds of adaptation. All neurons adapt. There are more than $10^6$ retinal receptors that adapt, and potentially $10^{10}$ cortical neurons that adapt. What do we mean when we say “the eye adapts”?

1.5 “The Opposite of Green is Purple?” Nathan Moroney

The conventional understanding of opponent colors has red and green as one axis and yellow and blue on a second axis. This perceptual opponency is a result of the trichromatic nature of human color vision in combination with subsequent processing in the visual system. This red-green and yellow-blue opponency is fundamental to many different color spaces. CIELAB, CIELUV, CIECAM02, IPT, YCC and more all incorporate this concept of chromatic opponency. In most cases the yellow and blue opponent axes are reasonable. However for the red-green axis it is more like a purple-green axis due to a consistent, significant bending of the red-green axis.

Is dark purple the opposite of green? This paper summarizes the result of analyzing a wide range of color spaces based on their actual opponency. The consistent limitation of a shared matrix formulation for opponency is discussed and finally a simple, invertible color space is considered. The angular differences between quadrants and computed antonyms is shown to be significantly more consistent using this hypothetical alternative color space.

1.6 “Now...what color was that again?” Sabine Süssstrunk

Classic colorimetry is based on color matching. We assume that people judge (and compare) colors under the same viewing conditions, and that these “colors” consists of relatively large uniform patches. If the viewing conditions are not similar, color appearance models are applied, but these again were developed based on uniform patch psychophysics. It is, however, well known that the spatial organization of a scene and temporal characteristics of a video have a large effect on perceived color appearance. While once in a while a new study is published, we as a community have not achieved real progress in systematically investigating and modeling this spatio-chromatic interactions. I will give a short introduction on some of the more promising research, and will outline where I believe more research is needed.

1.7 “Stepford – the city for Colour Engineering” Stephen Westland

The Stepford Wives is a 1972 novel by Ira Levin in which the protagonist becomes convinced that the wives of Stepford are actually look-alike androids. Attendees at recent color-engineering conferences could draw similar conclusions about international research projects in the area of color imaging in that research seems to be becoming less and less varied and more incremental in progress. The convergence of color research is in part due to the remarkable success of the 1931 CIE system and the various systems and processes that have been developed based upon 1931 (or 1964) CIE colorimetry. Although the CIE system was developed from color-matching experiments for the purpose of color specification, subsequent developments such as CIELAB and CIECAM02 allow for the prediction of colour appearance whilst the lack of non-uniformity in CIELAB has been corrected by metrics such as the CMC color-difference equation to allow the reliable prediction of colour difference. Despite the success of colour-difference equations for use in textile, plastic and paint industries the application of color-difference metrics to what are commonly referred to as complex images (images of natural or man-made scenes) has been less successful. Given certain constraints the notion of calculating pixel-by-pixel color differences has been effective; for example, when the two images have a pixel-by-pixel correspondence, S-CIELAB can predict differences between images. However, it is difficult to imagine that the pixel-by-pixel calculation of color differences will be able to reliably predict differences between images in the more general case. Similarly, color-appearance models are now sophisticated and allow the prediction of some complex color appearance phenomena. However, recent findings that the spatial pattern of color backgrounds can affect color appearance would seem to demand more than could be reasonably expected from the current crop of color-appearance models. In this presentation some potential limitations of color-difference equations and color-appearance models will be introduced and shown to stem from fundamental common assumptions; these key assumptions will be challenged.