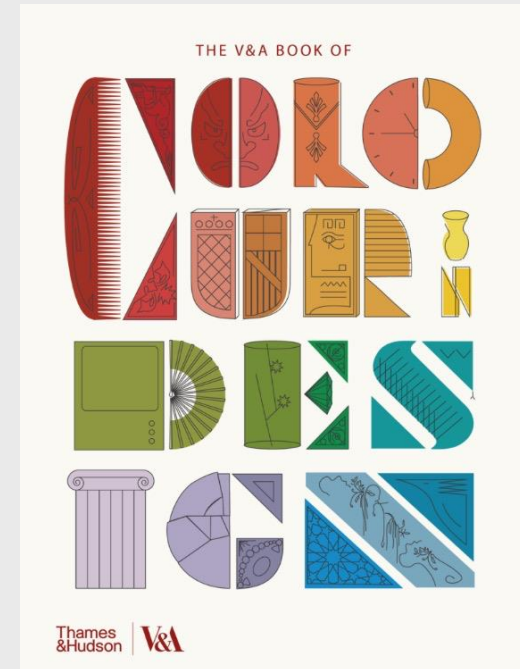




# Key Sales Points

- No other book offers such a visual, coloured survey of design and the applied arts.
- Beautifully presented by multi-award-winning graphic design studio Here Design.
- Includes a wide range of objects from all periods of history and all regions of the world, offering a genuinely global perspective on this fascinating theme.



## INTRODUCTION

In H. P. Lovecraft's 1927 short story 'The Colour Out of Space', a meteorite lands on a farm in Massachusetts and sinks into the earth, glowing with an unearthly colour that none of the witnesses can describe and that defies scientific analysis. The next harvest yields a bumper crop of unusually large fruit and vegetables, but they are foul-tasting and inedible, crumbling into grey dust. Subsequently, the surrounding vegetation, wildlife, farm animals and eventually the farmer and his family are all affected too. The humans succumb to psychosis, then a mysterious wasting disease and finally a horrible death, all in the lurid glow of the now dreaded 'colour'. Abundance turns to monstrosity, and what seemed a natural wonder becomes a menacing blight, reducing the whole district to a grey dust-filled desert abandoned by the local population and passing into lore as 'the blasted heath'.

Like most horror stories, 'The Colour Out of Space' and its subsequent incarnations in film speaks to the anxieties of its time, but it also taps into a longstanding ambivalence about colour, historically regarded with a mixture of fascination, fear and disdain. The artist David Batchelor, in *Chromophobia* (2000), traces an aversion to colour running through western culture from ancient Greece to modernity. Colour is regarded either as an attribute of the alien other, 'usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological', or is dismissed as subjective, unstable and secondary, 'relegated to the realm of the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic.' When societies are convulsed by iconoclastic episodes of reform or revolution, decadent colour is usually one of the first candidates for purging.

One source of this ambivalence may be the relative imprecision of colour vocabulary. Two people sharing a common language and perfectly capable of distinguishing between one shade and another can still disagree about the basic colour term for it. The same shade of maroon may be called red, purple or brown by different observers. Queen Elizabeth II's outfit for the State Opening of the UK Parliament after the 2019 General Election sparked a lively debate in the press and on social media about whether her coat was green or blue (incidentally, some languages have only one word for green and blue, which anthropologists render in English as 'grue').

Since at least the seventeenth century, philosophers have debated whether colour even exists as an objective phenomenon, or is just an arbitrary way of organizing subjective experiences. For much of the twentieth century, many anthropologists subscribed to a theory of 'linguistic relativity' – the idea that language shapes our perceptions such that we cannot recognize a colour as distinct unless we have a word for it. Experiments by cognitive psychologists in the 1950s, comparing the ability of English speakers to remember shades of yellow and orange with Native American Zuni speakers, who had one word for both colours, seemed to back up the theory. But studies of a wider pool of cultures and language groups by the anthropologists Paul Kay and Brent Berlin,

René Henri Digeon, *cercle chromatique* (colour wheel), a plate from Michel Eugène Chevreul, *Des Couleurs et de Leurs Applications aux Arts Industriels: à l'aide des cercles chromatiques* (On Colours and their Applications to the Industrial Arts: with the help of chromatic circles) (Paris, London and Madrid, 1864)





## YELLOW

In March 1888, when Vincent van Gogh first arrived in Southern France, he wrote to his brother Théo: 'The sun dazzles me and goes to my head, a sun, a light that I can only call yellow, sulphur yellow, lemon yellow, golden yellow. How lovely yellow is!' Deriving its pigment from clay, yellow is thought to have been one of the first colours used in prehistoric cave art, over 17,300 years ago. Yellow has embodied many emotions and ideas, falling in and out of favour throughout history depending on its shade, its application and its connotations. At times the colour of the natural world, of the sun gods and Imperial China, symbolizing warmth, wealth and status, yellow gained a new visual vocabulary in the modern age, as a transgressive, attention-grabbing colour.

Language has not always been kind to this colour. To yellow is to age and wither. In English slang, 'yellow-bellied' refers to a coward, and 'yellow journalism' describes fake news. In French and Italian, a yellow person ('jaune', 'giallo') is deemed a traitor, while in German 'gelbe laune sein' means to be jealous. Jaundice, yellow fever and bubonic plague are all linked to the colour, and some sources of yellow pigments, such as cadmium, lead and chrome, can be toxic. But when yellow turns to gold, it becomes positive and valuable: we talk of a golden age, a golden handshake, a golden child.

Yellow clothing is burdened by its past association with dishonesty, jealousy and discrimination. Xanthophobia, fear of the colour yellow, is evident in numerous Christian depictions of Judas Iscariot, the yellow-clad disciple who betrayed Christ, while iconography of the Middle Ages often portrayed executioners dressed in yellow.

In Nazi-occupied parts of Europe, persecuted Jewish people were forced to wear the yellow Star of David on their clothing as a demeaning marker of their religious identity.

But wearing yellow can also represent hope. During the First World War, women in Canada would wear a yellow ribbon as they waited for loved ones to return from battle. In 1979, at the beginning of the Iran hostage crisis, many Americans revived the tradition to support those held in Tehran. Since 2004, Singapore's Yellow Ribbon Project has promoted the rehabilitation of ex-convicts and encouraged integration and re-employment.

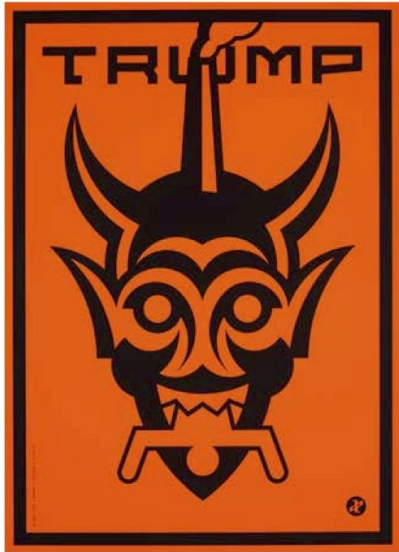
A link between yellow and the sun was established early. For the Greeks and Romans, Apollo, the sun god, was typically depicted as a young man of radiant beauty (pp. 86–87) and considered a beneficial healer, dispelling darkness and bringing harmony to the mortal world. Sunshine is often associated with good health; it is a positive source of vitamin D, and the slightest ray of sunlight can uplift the gloomiest of days. Because of its affiliation with the sun, yellow has become a symbol of warmth, positivity and joy. The sixteenth-century King Henry VIII of England certainly agreed, and famously wore yellow each of the six times he married, demanding that his new queen and all the court wear it too.

Yellow's happy hue is found in children's toys and cartoons, notably Pokémon's Pikachu and Winnie-the-Pooh. In 1963, Harvey Ross Ball was commissioned to create an image to raise the morale of employees at the State Mutual Life Company in Massachusetts, and came up with the beaming yellow smiley face symbol that would become a widespread emblem of radiant joy. Yellow's association with happiness has led to



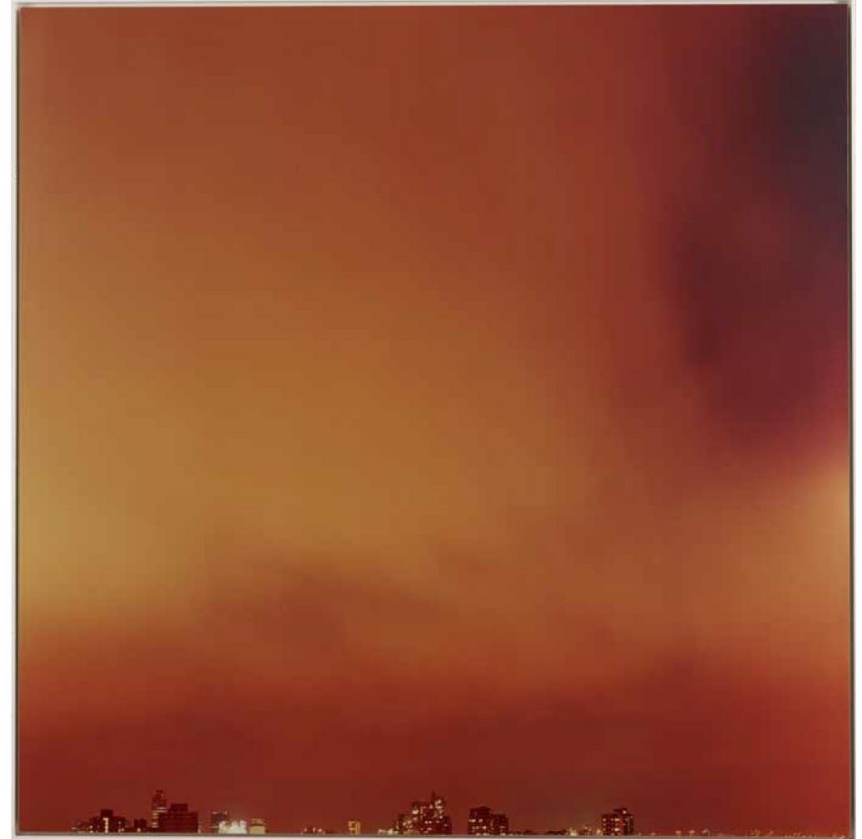


Yellow and gold have long been colours of divinity. In Hindu mythology, the eagle-like deity Garuda is often depicted as golden yellow – in this painting (c.1825, opposite), he delivers the vase of immortality nectar, Amrita. Egyptian amulets were worn for their protective properties. This golden example from 1400–400 BC (above left) represents Taweret, goddess of maternity, and was believed to ensure fertility and heal souls in the afterlife. The worship of relics became significant to Buddhist ritual. This small gold reliquary casket (2nd–5th century, above centre), preserving the bone fragments of a distinguished religious teacher, was excavated from the great Indian monastery of Takht-i-Bahi. Gold also surrounds the Virgin Mary and Christ-child in this Renaissance painting (right), lending its colour to their glowing halos and blonde hair. A brass menorah (above right) celebrates the Jewish festival of Hanukkah; sword in hand, Judith stands atop this lamp, referencing the Torah story in which she saves Israel from the siege of Holofernes.



In nature, and consequently design, orange can be a colour of warning. Ori Gersht's photograph *Rear Window II* (2000, opposite) captures the unnatural, glowing orange of the London skyline, the result of atmospheric and light pollution. *The Faraday Chair* (1995, below), a conceptual work by Dunne & Raby, also focuses on environmental danger. Constructed in orange Perspex, as used in safety goggles and laboratory partitions to protect and warn of danger, the structure fits a single occupant connected to the outside by a breathing tube, shielding them from the electromagnetic energy given off by technological devices in homes and workplaces.

Borrowing the visual language of hazard symbols, Design is Play's 2017 poster *Trump (Moloch)* depicts the head of child-eating monster Moloch on a fluorescent background (left). The screen-printed design was created in response to the US Republican party and President Donald Trump's 'anti-scientific, anti-environmental policies', the choice of colour perhaps also a tongue-in-cheek nod to Trump's famously not-so-natural skin tone.



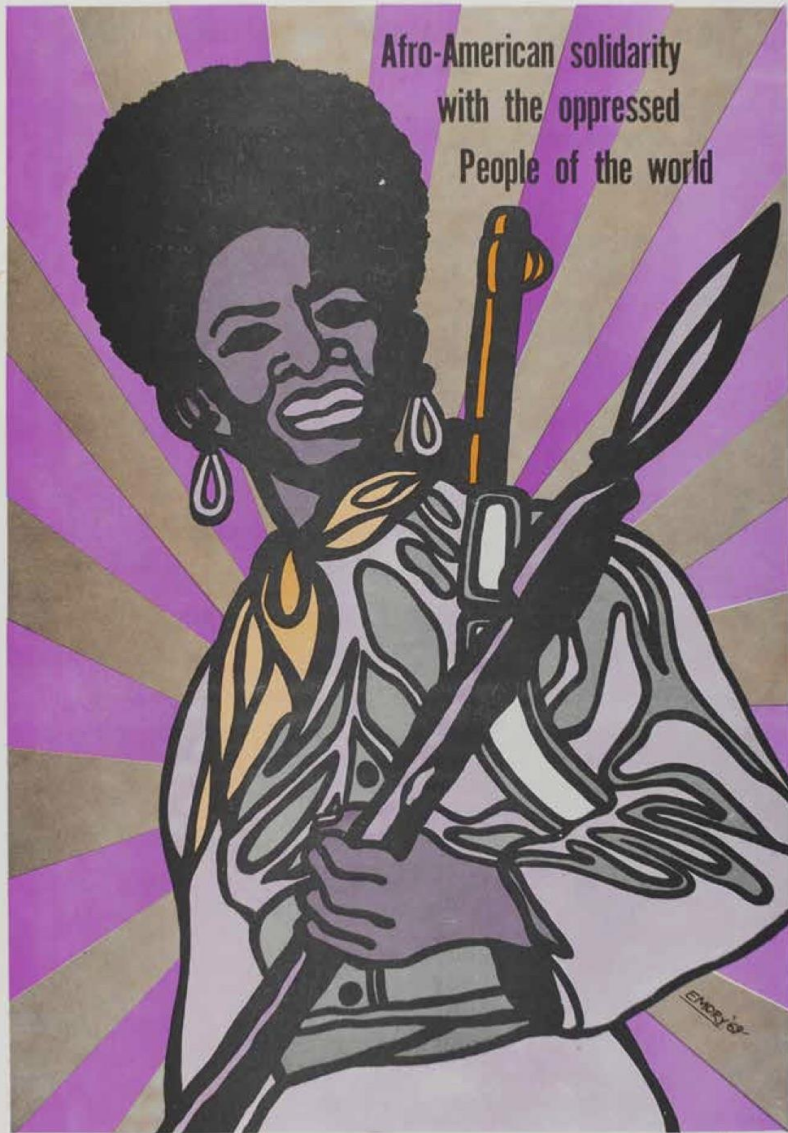




From the fresh face of a bouncing baby to the rosy-fingered dawn of a new day, red radiates all the vibrancy and promise of youth. In Japan, red is a popular colour for the *furisode* (swinging sleeves) kimono worn by unmarried girls, such as this early-19th-century example, opposite. The red gingham bows on Maiko Dawson's shoes (2010, above left) evoke the same playful exuberance of a young heart running free.

In the Swinging London of the 1960s, fashion designer Mary Quant was in the vanguard of the 'youthquake'. With bright, informal designs like this 'Peachy' dress (1960, above right), she allowed young adults to adopt their own unique style, distinct from that of their parents. The glossy 'Valentine' typewriter, left, designed by Ettore Sottsass and Perry King for Olivetti in 1969, was a product of the same movement – the 'it-bag' of its day even graced the bedroom of teenage tearaway Alex in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971).





Ministry of Culture  
1969

Ministry of Information  
1969



The eye-catching boldness of purple makes it a strong choice for use in protest graphics. It is used to dramatic effect by Emory Douglas in this poster for the Black Panther Party (1969, opposite). The emanating lines of regal purple and gold transform this freedom fighter into a warrior queen. The Black Panthers formed in the USA in 1966 as a response to police brutality in Black communities, and Douglas was their Minister of Culture. His bold style and punchy colours could be inexpensively reproduced to create maximum impact.

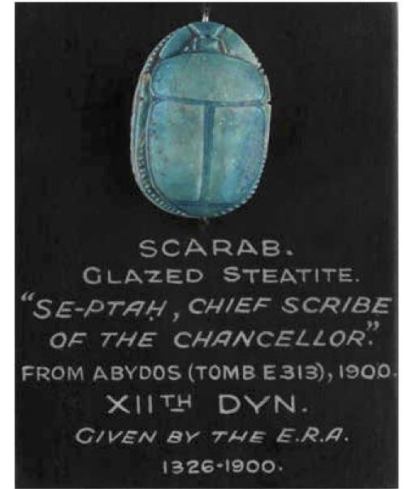
In Britain, the Women's Social and Political Union made purple synonymous with their cause by asking their members 'to wear the colours', making them instantly identifiable. It has been said that the group chose green, white and purple (or violet) for merchandise like this silk driving scarf (c. 1910, left) because the first letter of each represented 'Give Women Votes'. But the slogan was not commonly seen on banners, so this may just be poetic hindsight.





In ancient Egypt, shabtis were typically of turquoise faience; the above example is particularly complicated, with an inscription in purple-blue glaze. Zahed Taj-Eddin's *Nu shabtis* (2014, left) are inspired by ancient colours and techniques. Shabtis were designed to serve the dead in the afterlife; Taj-Eddin's have awoken in a world with no afterlife, and have chosen to join modern society.

The 19th century saw increased popular interest in ancient Egypt. This late 19th-century ring (opposite, above left) is inspired by ancient scarabs like the example opposite, above right, which is made not of faience but blue-glazed steatite. The 1922 discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb sparked another worldwide craze for Egypt in art and design. The colours gold and turquoise became synonymous with the boy king, and jewellery and fashion tapped into the craze. This Cartier box (opposite, bottom) is a particularly high-end example.



CUT inlaid in

CUT no labour needed

CUT in November 1922

CUT, disseminated and reproduced in mass-media

CUT incorporated these colours to



... AND I COULD FEEL MYSELF FALLING FORWARD, TUMBLING DOWN INTO NOTHINGNESS.



For centuries, black ink has been used to capture thoughts and ideas. For his poem *Celebration of Hangul* (a Korean alphabet) (2008–9, left), Lie Sang-bong has forgone paper for white bone china. In a similarly unorthodox use of the pigment, Alexander Cozens drew his abstract scenes almost unconsciously, as in this example of his 'blot' drawings (1750–86, below), which he worked up into landscapes curiously devoid of the colours of nature. Charles Burns's comics, such as *Black Hole* (1995–2005, opposite), are influenced by 1960s American horror magazines, published in black and white to circumvent 'Comics Code' censorship. Burns takes things deeper, viscerally and psychologically. His crisp black inks are no longer a necessity but an aesthetic: in the literal darkness of his pages lurk nightmarish themes of alienation and sexual anxiety.

