

TRANSLATING COLORS

New Educational Video on Daltonism (color blindness)

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Introduction

In the summer of 2005 I spoke at the International Color Conference in Granada Spain. I focused on the historic fear and prejudice towards the topic of color blindness, in spite of the fact that this condition is something that affects more than 10% of the males of the world. (Never mind the many males and females who are now acquiring it because of drug side effects, trauma and other reasons). This, at a time when color-coded information has flooded the world as never before in history, and often requires real-time decision making, especially via computer, and obviously, in daily life decisions.

At the conference I met Josep Giribet, a professor of video production at the Institut Universitari de l'Audiovisual (IUA), Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. He is also a professional photographer and independent producer of documentaries for television, as well as an artist who is color blind. As an artist, he has wished to paint in full color although he has this inherited condition, and cannot see some of the colors as others might. He has deuteranopia, or "green-vision" problems. He thus developed a system for himself. With this system he managed to produce some lovely realistic artwork. At the conference he spoke of his personal system, which uses the computer as color translator.

This was the first time this conference tackled this topic of color blindness in 30 years. The topic is too often ignored. We met we decided to produce an educational video because, like so many others who live with this condition, he felt that no one had ever understood what he was trying to explain about his color vision, and he had the expertise of production, while I had the expertise of understanding the details of the vocabulary of the color confused and the human factors involved. It was a perfect match.

This was our aim:

1. To show that persons who have the condition, do most often see colors and use color names, but their references often do not often match what most people see.
2. To explain the known genetics, and the Ishihara test that is available to all.
3. To explain the daily problem faced by such persons.
4. To show that this does not mean they lack in creativity or intelligence.
5. To mention the historical prejudice against such persons, which has led them to keep silent, and kept the public in the dark, all ignoring this problem.
6. To show how Josep Giribet has triumphed as best as possible in spite of odds.
7. To open a dialogue and offer awareness to the public

We produced this video in a span of six weeks. Production work took place in the summer of 2006 in Tarrega and Barcelona Spain. Giribet was in charge of the technical

production. Some interviews that I had taped more than 20 years ago with colorblind persons were included. Radio Tarrega helped with taping my voice. I wrote the script.

In my current presentation, I intend to explain some of the problems we had in production- due to Giribet's color vision condition. I will also offer observations on how the very mention of this video has already made waves and opened dialogue.

This unique video, TRANSLATING COLORS, will be shown in its entirety. It is 17 minutes long. Its first showing was in October 2006 at Josep Giribet's first exhibition in acrylics, at the Museu Comecal de l'Urgell in Tarrega, Spain. More than 600 people attended the exhibition, with many repeat visits, and school classes watching attentively.

Conclusion

There is a desperate need for the public at large to understand the problem of color use for non-verbal visual communication, if this segment of society is not to be ignored. This is not a small group, but it has been a silent group till now. We are currently looking for backers to expand the video to an hour's presentation for TV, as there is nothing as clear and detailed available on this topic in any language. Catalunya Television Channel 3 in Barcelona has shown interest in partnering on this project. The time is ripe.

References

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Author's Biography

Odeda Rosenthal is the author of *COPING WITH COLOR BLINDNESS (1997)* and many articles in publications that range from the New York Times to Optics and Photonics of the Optical Society of America. She has been a consultant on the topic for over 20 years. She has researched color vision confusion ever since she came across the problem as a young teacher of graphic design in an all-boy's high school in New York City in the 1960's. The computer graphics industry was the first to realize it should invite her to speak in 1983. She holds degrees from CCNY and Hunter CUNY. She has also produced graphic art and been curator of major historical exhibitions. She is a member of the ISCC and AIC. At 72 she still teaches some courses as a member of the faculty of the Advertising and Graphic Design Department of Pitt Community College, Greenville NC.