

July 2000

## Preface

J.L. Benson

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/art\\_jbgc](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/art_jbgc)

---

Benson, J.L., "Preface" (2000). *Greek Color Theory and the Four Elements*. 3.  
Retrieved from [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/art\\_jbgc/3](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/art_jbgc/3)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Greek Color Theory and the Four Elements by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@library.umass.edu](mailto:scholarworks@library.umass.edu).

## PREFACE

Besides presenting the theoretical framework on which my views on Greek painting as a scientific and historical phenomenon rest, I offer a detailed analysis of the colors of selected vases and wall paintings as a demonstration of that framework. In some cases a matching analysis from the side of pure form will be presented in a companion volume on periodicity in Greek sculpture (see Introduction).

In carrying out this project I was constantly reminded how deeply indebted I am to my students in the Art History Program of the University of Massachusetts, particularly those in my seminars, and to the students in my seminars in the Division of Classical Archaeology and of Art History at the University of Freiburg-i-B (1976 and 1984) for their sympathy, empathy, criticism and enthusiasm for my ideas. Because of them it seemed worthwhile—and even imperative—to work out, after my retirement, the philosophical underpinnings of my views in written form. Moreover, I am indebted to my colleagues, particularly Laetitia LaFollette and Mark Roskill in Amherst and Eric Forssman in Freiburg, for help and encouragement, and not least to the enlightened policy of former Provost Richard D. O'Brien in providing secretarial assistance to retired professors on a generous scale. I am also indebted to the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Berlin, which supported the project by granting me two sojourns, in 1988 and 1989, for the use of its superb library facilities. There have been many others along the way both in this country and Europe who have contributed in minor but never unimportant ways to the completion of this work. These cannot all be named, but it would be most inappropriate not to mention Professors Arthur Zajonc and Bodo Hamprecht of the Physics Departments of Amherst College and the Freie Universität in Berlin, respectively, who patiently suffered my questions about optics and color theory, which I had to understand in order to make sense of the statements of early Greek philosophers. A course in optics at the 1983 summer session of the Rudolf Steiner Institute taught by the late Hans Gebert also stood me in good stead. Moreover, I am deeply indebted to Hans-Georg Hetzel, formerly of Freiburg-I-B, for many stimulating

conversations about Goethe's color theory, practical demonstrations of various facets of it and discussions of it before paintings in various museums. Two of the fruits of this are the interview recorded in Appendix B and the color plates 40–50 generously prepared by him. I am grateful for useful suggestions about organization of the text to Dr. Karl-Martin Dietz of the Friedrich von Hardenburg Institut (Heidelberg), who read the manuscript at a critical stage and particularly to Professor J. J. Pollitt of Yale University, who convinced me that my ideas on color should be presented as a separate volume.

It is a great pleasure to express my gratitude to the Libraries of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst which, through the good offices of Linda Seidman, Head of Special Collections and Archives, Rachel Lewellen, Librarian for Digital Initiatives, and Charity Hope, Research Library Resident, all of the W.E.B. DuBois Library, have demonstrated the high degree of commitment to humanistic studies characteristic of the University of Massachusetts.

Not the least I am grateful to J.A. Burton, whose lawyer's mind reviewed the manuscript and persuaded me to recast not a few obscurely expressed thoughts.