PLAYS OF LIGHT AND BLAZES OF COLOURS.
The Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, has recently published a second small but stunning exhibition catalogue showcasing lesser-known examples of early colour printmaking from its own collection, supplemented by objects from the nearby Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig. Lichtspiel und Farbenpracht: Entwicklung des Farbdrucks 1500–1800, Aus den Beständen der Herzog August Bibliothek by Melanie Grimm, Claudia Kleine-Tebbe and Ad Stijnman, with a foreword by Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, edited by Christian Heitzmann (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011, 108 pp., 62 col. illus., €14.80) expands upon the exploration of the relationship between book illustrations and single-sheet prints, from 1420 to 1515, in Hochzeit von Bild und Buch (see Print Quarterly, XXVII, December 2010, p. 401). The exhibition starts where the last left off, approaching the question of early modern colour printing holistically, concerning texts, images and diagrams throughout the history of art and the history of the illustrated book. With only 37 entries, the catalogue concisely demonstrates that colour was used by early modern printmakers in previously unrecognized ways and on a previously unrealized scale.

A fifth of the catalogue is dedicated to a succinct history of colour printmaking by Stijnman. Integrating single-sheet prints and book illustrations, it describes the development of relief and intaglio colour printing techniques over 350 years. The catalogue itself specifically addresses book decoration, title-pages, portraits, astronomy, anatomy, templates for metalwork, and reproductive art. The exhibits seem chosen to offer a chronological cross-section of each of these themes in just a few examples, encompassing different techniques, functions and visual effects. Many of the prints are unpublished or largely unknown, and several entries point at important but unpublished new research that could reshape our understanding of the use of colour in early modern printing. The focus is firmly on technique, and the catalogue is bursting with intriguing approaches to printing in colour. Like the previous exhibition catalogue, it raises numerous questions for future research.

The catalogue draws attention to the astonishing variety of ways in which colour was used in books in particular. Some colour prints covered cardboard bindings, such as the blue etching and aquatint from 1794 attributed to A. W. Küssner. Many were placed at the start of books; vast numbers of two-colour woodcut titles, with borders and vignettes, were printed in Europe throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and several technical variants, of which chiaroscuro is only one, are represented. Some were repeated on every page, like the pale green woodcut borders around black text and images on both sides of every folio of Petrus Michaelis, Serta honoris et exultationis (Cologne, Arnold Quentelius, 1567; fig. 43). Lest it be forgotten that text can form part of an image, examples of etched title-pages with the borders in black and text in red are represented with a puzzle print (Konrad Saldörffer, title-page to Nicholas de Nicolay, Der Erst Theyl von der Schiffart und Rayss in die Türckey und gegen Oriennt (Nuremberg, Dietrich Gerlatz, 1572)) and a print à la poupée (Wendel Ditterlin, Architectura, Liber I (Strasbourg, Bernhard Jobin, 1593–95)).

Another surprise is the significance of individual colours of ink. The authors argue that metalwork templates followed colour codes, interpreting Otto prints (intaglio designs for platters printed in monochromatic blue) as designs for silver and their counterparts in monochromatic red as designs for gold. This is illustrated by an anonymous Italian design for a platter, c. 1475 (S. Karr Schmidt, ‘A new Otto print’, Print Quarterly, XXV, 2008, p. 126–27).
that are now green-brown), and others are extremely unusual. For instance, the catalogue does not mention that the pale green of the borders in Serta honoris et exultationis (fig. 43) appears in few, if any, other sixteenth-century German colour woodcuts, and identifying what the colour was made from is as relevant as recognizing how it was printed. However, scientific analysis clearly lies outside the scope of this already very ambitious publication, as does the in-depth analysis of every object mentioned. The brevity leaves little room for the discussion of attributions, iconography and broader context (Serta honoris et exultationis, with its 400 green woodcut borders, is given only one sentence), but the catalogue seems designed to raise, rather than answer, crucial questions in this new field of enquiry.

The catalogue is richly illustrated. The colours are accurate; the difficulty of discerning the dark green and purple inks from the black in the etched text, printed à la poupée, on the title-page of Heinrich Zeising, Theatri machinarum (Leipzig, Hennig Grosse II, 1607–10), is true to the original, as is the sharp contrast of orange highlights against the navy body of an urn in an engraving printed à la poupée by the workshop of Johannes Teyler in 1688–97 (fig. 44). The reproductions include the full borders, not just the printed areas (excepting four small illustrations). Magnified details would have contributed to the discussions of technique, but all exhibits can be viewed in high resolution at www.virtuelles-kupferstichkabinett.de by searching for ‘Lichtspiel und Farbenpracht’. The catalogue challenges many assumptions about early modern colour printing, and the small scale of the publication belies the large amount of original research and new material it contains. L. ELIZABETH UPER

44. Workshop of Johannes Teyler, Urn with Mythological Scenes, engraving printed à la poupée, 367 x 265 mm (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek),

pp. 162–66), and a template in J. L. Roth, Unterschiedliche Zeichnungen von neuer Invention vor Goldarbeiter, 1768, respectively. Although it is unclear to what metal the faded greenish-brown ink of another template once referred, the three examples suggest that colours of printing ink had a hitherto unrecognized informative function, at least in studio models for metalwork, from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Other prints in which the colour of inks contributed meaning in unusual ways include the small red, green and blue (now green-brown) monochromatic sundials in Johann Wolhopter, Aın new subîll und fast kunstreich werk ... gennant Phephilabium (Augsburg, Hans Schönsperger, 1512). The hours of the day are divided into sections printed in different colours, and the instructions for telling the time clarify the section against which the reader should hold a needle by specifying the appropriate colour.

A discussion of materials would have been a welcome contribution to this study of techniques. Some colours of ink have now faded in surprising ways that may affect their interpretation (including the two prints mentioned above