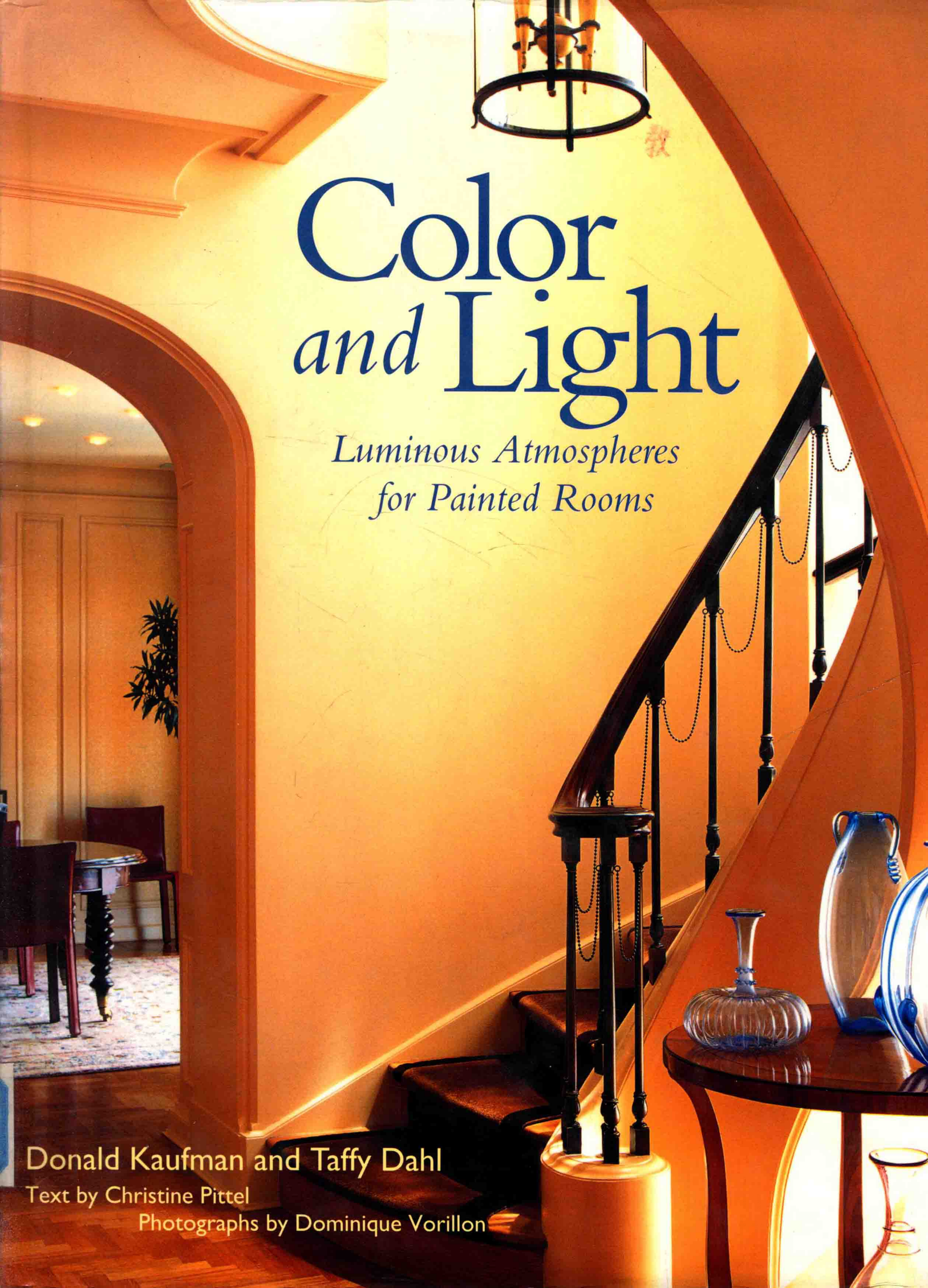


# Color *and* Light

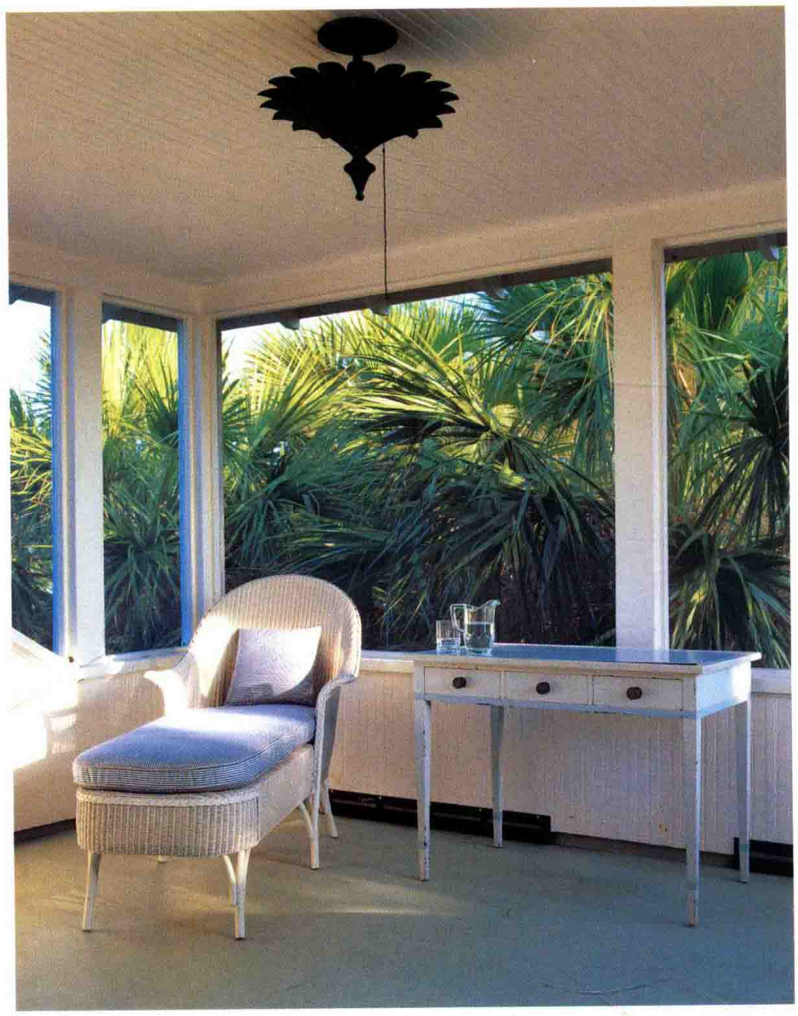
## *Luminous Atmospheres for Painted Rooms*

Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl
Text by Christine Pittel
Photographs by Dominique Vorillon

Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl

# Color *and* Light

*Luminous Atmospheres for Painted Rooms*



Photography and reproduction processes may cause colors to vary from the actual paint colors.


Published by Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 201 East 50th Street, New York, New York 10022.
Member of the Crown Publishing Group.
Random House, Inc. New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland
www.randomhouse.com
CLARKSON N. POTTER, POTTER, and colophon are trademarks of Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.
Printed in Japan
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kaufman, Donald.
Color and light : luminous atmospheres for painted rooms / Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl. — 1st ed.
1. Color in interior decoration. 2. Interior walls—Decoration. 3. Lighting, Architectural and decorative. 4. Exterior lighting—Influence. I. Dahl, Taffy. II. Title.
NK2115.5.C6K37 1999
747'.94—dc21 98-44338
ISBN 0-517-70401-3
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First Edition

# *Contents*

## High Light



## Amplifying Light



## Animating Light



## Coloring Light

# *Color and Light*

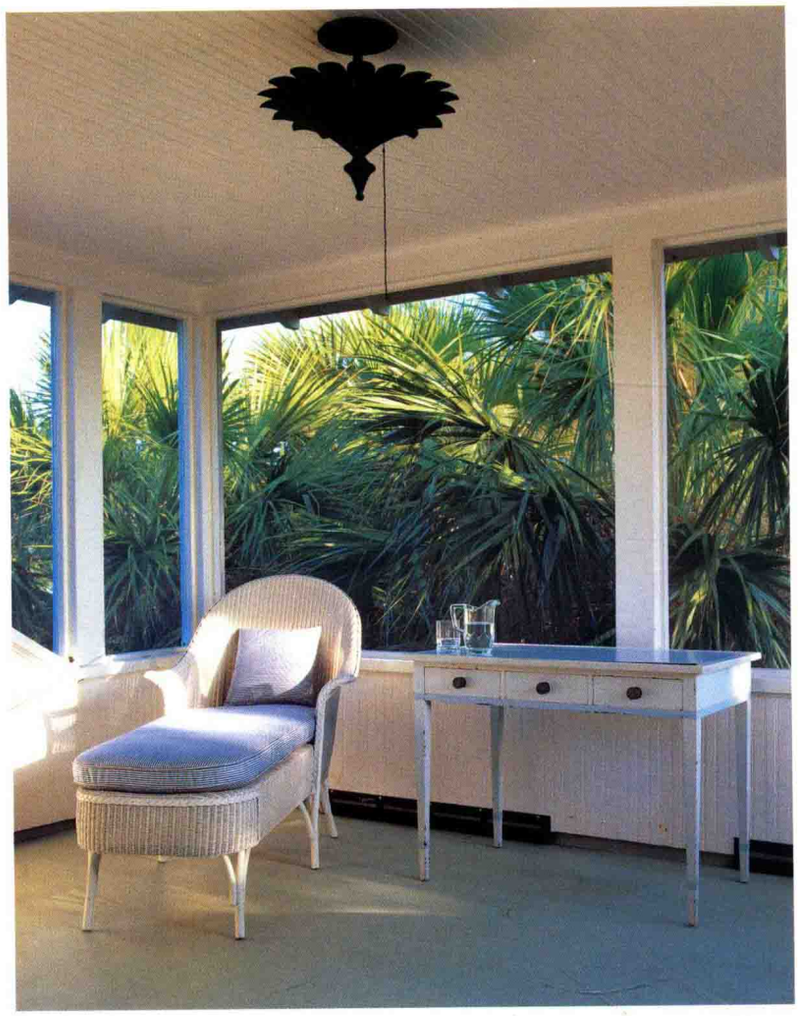
*Text by Christine Pittel*
*Photographs by Dominique Vorillon*
*Design by Eric Baker Design Associates, Inc.*

Clarkson Potter/Publishers
New York

Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl

# Color *and* Light

*Luminous Atmospheres for Painted Rooms*



Photography and reproduction processes may cause colors to vary from the actual paint colors.


Published by Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 201 East 50th Street, New York, New York 10022.
Member of the Crown Publishing Group.
Random House, Inc. New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland
www.randomhouse.com
CLARKSON N. POTTER, POTTER, and colophon are trademarks of Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.
Printed in Japan
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kaufman, Donald.
Color and light : luminous atmospheres for painted rooms / Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl. — 1st ed.
1. Color in interior decoration. 2. Interior walls—Decoration. 3. Lighting, Architectural and decorative. 4. Exterior lighting—Influence. I. Dahl, Taffy. II. Title.
NK2115.5.C6K37 1999
747'.94—dc21 98-44338
ISBN 0-517-70401-3
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First Edition

# *Acknowledgments*

One of the most difficult tasks concerning this book is adequately thanking everyone for their contributions and generosity. First and foremost we would like to thank all those who helped us take our pictures and allowed us to follow the light around their wonderful homes.

We wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to Joseph Giovannini, who provided our mass of disorganized information with the critical and insightful focus needed to make what we hope is a coherent whole.

Special thanks and gratitude go to Ann Forrest, who went far beyond the call of duty to assist us in locating our wonderful Southern California locations. Sidney Baumgarten, we thank you for your help and Lockwood de Forest lore.

Thank you, Phil and Helen Colcord, for guiding us to unique sites and arranging for all our practical needs.

Many thanks to Jack Holzhueter and his crew at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and to Joe Garton for his personal help and, especially, for his commitment and vision in saving the great resource of American theatrical and decorating history, Ten Chimneys.

Thanks also to Janet Jenkins at Robert Isabell for all her beautiful flowers, and to Eric Baker and Sabina Sieghart for their labors with the design.

This book would also not have been possible without the support and indulgence of many good friends, including Ellen and Peter Johnson, Phil and Judy Richardson, Chris Cozzarin, Joan Gers, Cynthia Conigliaro, and Suzanne Butterfield.

We would especially like to thank our editors, Carol Southern and Lauren Shakely, our art directors, Marysarah Quinn and Jane Treuhaft, and our all-important backups, Joan Denman and Camille Smith.

And finally, without the dedication and perseverance of our team, Christine Pittel and Dominique Vorillon, we simply wouldn't have a book. Thank you!

# *Contents*

## High Light

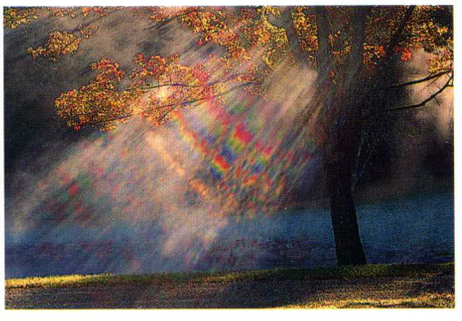


## Amplifying Light

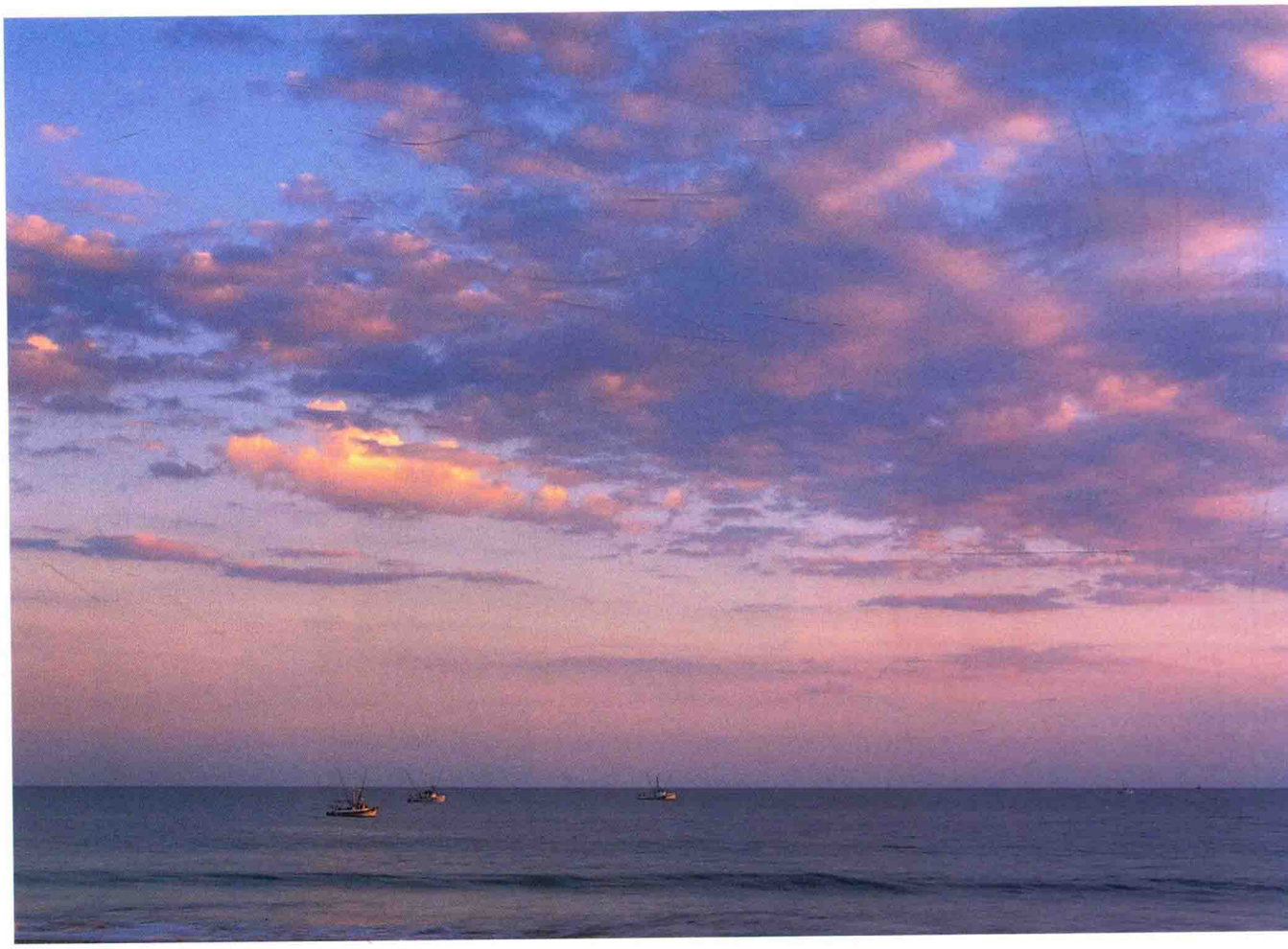


## Animating Light





## Coloring Light



# *The Path of Light*

Color is light made visible.

Before the sun rises, the world is pale and wan. Only with daybreak will objects reveal their true colors. The paint in a room takes on a whole new character when sunlight darts across its surface.

Patterns of light we barely notice have a profound effect on how we perceive a room. Le Corbusier once defined architecture as the masterful play of light over forms in space. The quality of light in a space is so fundamental to our experience that it becomes the virtual fourth dimension of a room. Subconsciously, we recognize this primacy when we describe great buildings in terms of how they handle light. Designers will try to catch it, enhance it, reflect it, filter it, or otherwise exploit it.

Human beings feel a universal attraction to light. It is the source of life-giving energy, the property of the universe that God summoned first, the medium of prophetic revelation—and where there is light there is color.

Color is more than a film of paint on a wall. In scientific terms, a series of complex interactions between light, air, and surface culminate in our impression of red, yellow, or blue. The path of light starts at the sun. Perpetually in the process of nuclear fusion, the sun emits light that contains every wavelength, which means sunlight is pure white—the sum total of all the colors in the spectrum. But in the black vacuum of outer space, this radiance is energy alone and not yet luminosity. Light, in order to be seen, must strike something.

The sun's energy is first made visible when lightwaves hit the atmosphere that surrounds the earth like a forty-four-mile-thick skin of an onion. When the photons arrive at Earth's gaseous doorstep, they strike a range of tiny

molecules—predominantly oxygen and nitrogen—and light becomes color as the waves interact with the particles they illuminate. The sky appears blue because the shorter blue wavelengths have more chance of hitting something and being scattered—and therefore seen. Light has to traverse the least amount of atmosphere when its path is perpendicular to the earth's surface, which is why the sunlight at the equator is more intense and warm than the indirect sunlight at the poles, which must slant through more miles of air. Different hemispheric regions receive different degrees of light that produce different nuances of color. The light also changes according to the time of year. The light of winter in North America is cooler than the light of summer.

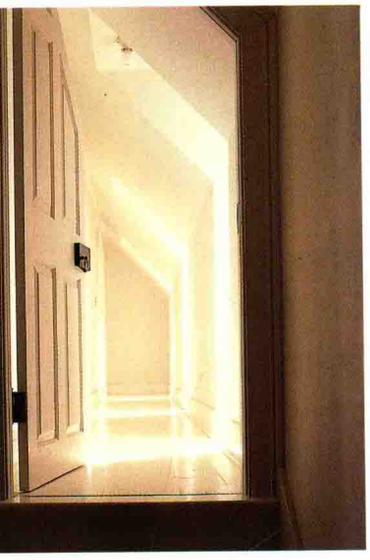
As the air thickens with molecules closer to the earth, light takes on local colors. In the tropics, water vapor combines with salt particles in the air to scatter and diffuse the light. On a hot, humid day at a Caribbean beach, the silvery mist of light will blur edges, while the sky on a day registering the same temperature in the high, dry desert of New Mexico will be a deep blue, the stark light outlining every object. In a dust storm in the red sand of the Arabian desert, light seems to phosphoresce. Man manufactures his own contribution to the atmosphere, and pollutants tint innocent light just as much as natural particles, usually shifting it toward the red end of the spectrum. In a city teeming with cars, a murky orange-brown haze settles in along the horizon. In Los Angeles, this lurid gloss can provoke preternatural effects—the sun setting over the Pacific ignites panoramas of surreal scarlet, saffron, and hot pink.

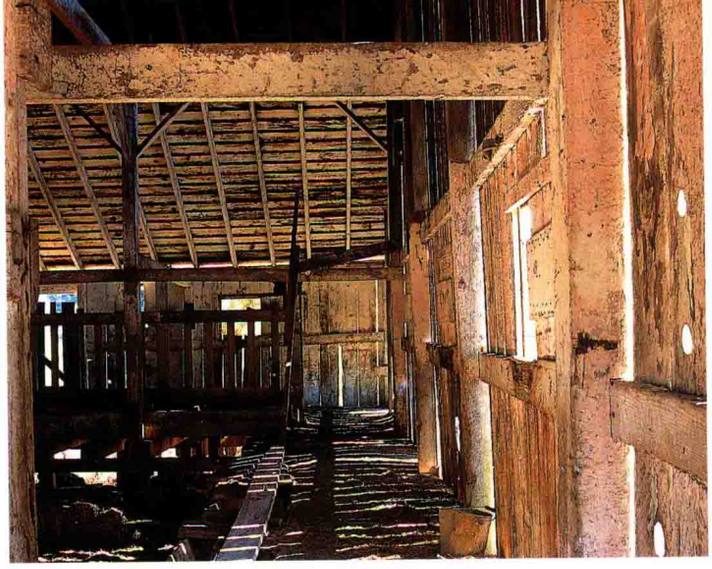
The air itself can seem colored. Distant mountains look blue because there is inevitably more blue light between you and a remote object. This blue veil is called airlight, which is simply sunlight scattered by the air molecules between you and the view. "Skylight" is the term physicists reserve for sunlight scattered by clouds and molecules in the sky. Most of the light illuminating our world is reflected. We rarely look directly at the sun. Instead, we experience its rays secondhand—bounced off buildings or the grass beneath our feet, scattered by all those invisible particles in the air.

When sunlight eventually hits the ground, it comes back altered. A Renaissance artist would add a hint of green to the face of a woman walking across a meadow. As in a theater, sunlit grass becomes a virtual uplight, tinting the air and everything it touches. Trees and plants in lush gardens have the same effect as they filter the sun through their leaves.

The light that lands on the windowsill, then, is layered—the result of many chromatic shadings on its journey from the stratosphere to the sidewalk. The influences only intensify as it enters a room. Curtains frame light and can shift its hue and temperature. A diaphanous fabric acts like a gel, coloring sunlight passing through.

Inside, light is a nimble captive of four walls plus the floor and ceiling, subject to all sorts of variations in surface from matte to mirror. "Material is spent light," said architect Louis Kahn, and every material reflects light differently. White paint scatters light uniformly in all directions, which is why it covers a





wall more efficiently than any other color. Glazed walls refract the light—bending each ray as it moves through two different mediums, from the translucent layers to the more opaque undercoat. (Whenever you glaze a wall, if you make the undercoat lighter and warmer than the topcoat, it will create a more luminous effect.) Dark woods absorb light. Metal, the most dense of all materials, is also the most reflective, especially when polished.

Colors, too, look different in different lights. A vivid rug that looked great in the clear, strong light of Santa Fe might seem garish in Manhattan, or a pale rug that showed all its colors in Charleston might go flat in Seattle. In bright light, we see warm colors more easily. Dim light brings out the cool colors, which is why blue flowers look more intensely blue at dusk.

A room becomes more pleasurable when you bring some of nature's effects indoors. Color in the sky is of a different type than color on the ground. It seems to float disembodied and dimensionless. Even when it becomes objectified by clouds or fog, it tends to softer boundaries and subtler shifts. These blurred transitions feel more atmospheric than sharper outlines. A gray sky is actually more luminous than a blue sky. Re-creating this luminosity in a room is as simple as keeping color values close. The less contrast of light and dark between hues, the more they tend to dissolve into one another.

Trees and rocks are composed of more opaque matter than clouds and fog, but their texture causes colors to break up in a similar way, giving us infinitely shifting nuances of warm and cool shades. We can juxtapose similar warm and