

COLOR(FUL) PREDICAMENTS IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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1 **ABSTRACT**

In this paper, I examine the history of ideas, themes, and debates about color in landscape architecture. I use the successive theories of five prominent English landscape and garden designers—Humphry Repton, J.C. Loudon, William Robinson, Gertrude Jekyll, and Sir Reginald Blomfield—who dominated the evolving color taste in 18th- and 19th-century England. These color outlooks provide a lens for understanding several discursive themes that were active in the evolving Western discourse on color and landscape architecture, including natural versus artificial, native versus exotic, and sensation versus concept. I use primarily primary texts to map affiliations, oppositions, and intersections of theoretical color models and ideas between landscape design and the disciplines of art, architecture, optics, chemistry, and botany of the time. I demonstrate specific shifts in color concepts from structural color, to decorative color (or blinding polychrome), to natural color harmony, to pointillism, to plain color mass, the latter of which continued to dominate the modern garden scene. I further show that color propensities in landscape architecture have been historically linked to media technologies and, especially, to disciplinary attitude about nature and art, a perpetual conceptual dichotomy that have perhaps muted the creative use of color to affect and transform human experience.

1.1 **Keywords**

color theory, landscape architecture, art-nature debate, print media technology, 18th- and 19th-century England