



Visual Experience: Sensation, Cognition, and Constancy

By Gary Hatfield, Sarah Allred

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'Seeing' happens effortlessly and yet is endlessly complex. One of the most fascinating aspects of visual perception is its stability and constancy. As we shift our gaze or move about the world, the light projected onto the retinas is constantly changing. Yet the surrounding objects appear stable in their properties.

Psychologists have long been interested in constancies, exploring questions such as: How good is constancy? Is constancy a fact about how things look, or is it a product of our beliefs and judgments about how things look? How can the contents of visual experience be studied experimentally? However, philosophers have long been interested in characterizing visual experience and have become widely interested in the constancies more recently. As psychologists and philosophers have interacted, new questions have arisen: should we regard any departure from constancy as a failure of the visual system, or might it be a reasonable or adaptive response? In what circumstances is 'seeing' highly conditioned by cognitive factors such as background assumptions, and in what circumstances not?

Visual Experience explores size constancy and color constancy. It considers methodologies for studying conscious visual perception, efforts to describe visual experience in relation to constancy, what it means that constancy is not always perfect, and the conceptual resources needed for explaining visual experience. This interdisciplinary book is invaluable for both vision scientists and philosophers of mind.

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Editorial Review

Review

Review from other book by this author: "Laudably, Hatfield's work incorporates abundant experimental and theoretical details from scientific psychology. He excels at bringing those details into contact with abstract philosophical questions. Few philosophers attempt such a fine-grained interface with mainstream vision science." --Michael Rescorla, *Philosophical Quarterly*

"Gary Hatfield's training in experimental psychology, history of science, and philosophy is on full and magnificent display in the sixteen essays collected in this volume." --Lawrence Shapiro, *Mind*

"Trained both in philosophy and experimental psychology (mainly vision research) Hatfield is equally at home in both disciplines and brings an unusually well-grounded approach to the many foundational issues discussed... Hatfield's coverage of much of the mainstream literature and its historical antecedents is impressive... this book provides a rich and essential source of study." --Max Velmans, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*

About the Author

Gary Hatfield has studied visual perception for more than three decades. His works include experimental studies of shape constancy, theoretical papers on perception, and philosophical studies of the fundamental concepts and theories of visual perception and cognition and their history. His work in the history and philosophy of psychology extends from the seventeenth century to current controversies on qualia and perceptual representation. He has published books on Descartes and the *Meditations* and *The Natural and the Normative: Theories of Spatial Perception from Kant to Helmholtz*, his essays have been collected in *Perception and Cognition: Essays in the Philosophy of Psychology*, and he has translated Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. He is the co-founder of the Visual Studies undergraduate program at Penn and has co-taught, with psychologists and art historians, courses and seminars on all aspects of visual perception.

Sarah Allred studies visual perception and memory through psychophysics, probabilistic computational models, and neurophysiology. She is also interested in the philosophy of perception and evolutionary psychology. This range of topics reflects her academic training: a BS in Applied Physics in 1999, a PhD in Neurobiology and Behavior from the University of Washington in 2006, and postdoctoral work in the lab of David Brainard at the University of Pennsylvania. Since 2009, Sarah has been teaching and researching as an assistant professor in the psychology department at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She is the recipient of an NSF Career Award (2010-4).

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