



# Color and Light: A Guide for the Realist Painter

*James Gurney*

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From New York Times best-selling author of the Dinotopia series, James Gurney, comes a carefully crafted and researched study on color and light in paintings. This art instruction book will accompany the acclaimed *Imaginative Realism: How to Paint What Doesn't Exist*.

James Gurney, *New York Times* best-selling author and artist of the Dinotopia series, follows *Imaginative Realism* with his second art-instruction book, *Color and Light: A Guide for the Realist Painter*. A researched study on two of art's most fundamental themes, *Color and Light* bridges the gap between abstract theory and practical knowledge. Beginning with a survey of underappreciated masters who perfected the use of color and light, the book examines how light reveals form, the properties of color and pigments, and the wide variety of atmospheric effects. Gurney cuts through the confusing and contradictory dogma about color, testing it in the light of science and observation. A glossary, pigment index, and bibliography complete what will ultimately become an indispensable tool for any artist.

This book is the second in a series based on his blog, [gurneyjourney.com](http://gurneyjourney.com). His first in the series, *Imaginative Realism*, was widely acclaimed in the fantastical art world, and was ranked the #1 Bestseller on the Amazon list for art instruction.

"James Gurney's new book, *Color and Light*, cleverly bridges the gap between artistic observation and scientific explanation. Not only does he eloquently describe all the effects of color and light an artist might encounter, but he thrills us with his striking paintings in the process." --Armand Cabrera, Artist

## Color and Light: A Guide for the Realist Painter Details

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# From Reader Review Color and Light: A Guide for the Realist Painter for online ebook

## Bengt says

Good introduction to colour and light.

Interesting perspectives into the thought processes on how to look at a scene and deconstruct it, explain it and then paint it.

James Gurney also has a nice youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/gurneyjourney>.

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## Marco Klein says

Packed with so much information. I am amazed at how the author has at least one of his works available to illustrate each and every effect and technique that is mentioned. He also gives great insight into the physical and practical reasons behind why things look as they do. Great for studying light and color for any painter.

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## Telyn says

A companion volume to Gurney's excellent "Imaginative Realism," "Color and Light" provides intelligent, practical advice on what the author describes as "the painter's two most fundamental tools." Gurney discusses elements of color, color mixing, surfaces and effects, light and form, atmospheric perspective, and much more in clear, understandable terms. The book is lavishly illustrated with examples and includes a brief but comprehensive history of the title subjects from the Renaissance to the present. "Color and light" is an invaluable resource for anyone who paints—professional or amateur. Highly recommended.

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## Parka says

(More pictures at [parkablogs.com](http://parkablogs.com))

*Color and Light* is the latest book from James Gurney and it's fantastic. It is a very accessible guide that's filled with interesting and useful information on color and light. It's fortunate we have so many colors today at our disposal, and now with this book, something to help make sense of them.

The book talks about color in a very practical sense, as you would see them in life. The lessons are observations of light and colors from James Gurney's years of painting experience. He brings his points across with his own beautiful paintings as examples, clearly explaining why and how he uses colors. It amazes me the amount of work James Gurney has created over the years, and this book is filled with them, from his plein-air to Dinopedia paintings.

There are lessons on sources of light, light and form, understanding the color wheel, how light reacts with surfaces and other elements, and visual perception. You'll learn interesting things like why the moon looks blue, when happens to light when it travels through green canopy, tips on mixing colors, and a whole lot more. There are lots of tips and techniques included. The book is also well researched and I enjoy reading the history of color as they were used in the past by other artists.

It's really a no-brainer to pick this up if you're into creating art, or even if you just want to check out the beautiful paintings in the book.

Highly recommended reference. And you should also check out his other book *Imaginative Realism: How to Paint What Doesn't Exist*.

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## **Makingamark says**

**Summary review: HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** - Let me be very clear on this point. This book comes very highly recommended by me. James Gurney's coverage of the topic of colour and light is comprehensive. Plus it is accessible art instruction of a very high order. I've not come across any other book about colour by a practising artist and illustrator which covers this topic in such breadth and depth and makes it accessible as well.

- \* I've got ones which are more technical - but they're much less accessible.
- \* I've got ones which are as accessible - but they don't cover as much as he does
- \* It does not attempt to dumb down or omit important aspects of the way in which colour and light function and interact.
- \* It articulates very clearly how you can make choices about how to use different features of colour and light in a painting.
- \* it makes excellent use of images and graphics

This is a book for students and improvers and all those who want to know more about colour and how light and colour interact - in life and in a painting.

I am so confident about the impact of this book that I am happy to predict that if you buy and study this book your paintings will improve!

(Note: You can find my detailed review of this book on my reviews blog [Book Review: Color and Light](#) by James Gurney. I was sent a copy of this book to review in advance of publication.)

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## **Carol says**

An amazing book! This book is so full of helpful information that I am glad I purchased a copy rather than borrowing it from the library. I am sure I will return to this book constantly to review the valuable information and admire the beautiful artwork.

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## **Kevin de Ataíde says**

Right. I'm looking again at this lovely, lovely book. It will certainly make a handy reference guide later on, but its real power is its scientific approach to painting. It doesn't go far enough, but that would make it less approachable. It is good to hear from a professional that realism is not the slavish copying of nature to the point of imitating photography. Such an approach is visible around the internet and is discouraging for those who don't have the patience for it. One of my criticisms about the presentation of this book is that it is fairly over-sized, but still a soft-cover, so it is easy to damage. Also, I had hoped it would contain more exercises for training novices in the use of colour and various paints, but I can see that that beginning painters are not necessarily its target audience. Overall, I loved the book, especially all the illustrations from the Dinotopia books, and I do recommend it to beginners and everybody else. By the way, the author also has an excellent and well-updated Youtube channel that takes this book further.

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## **Lori says**

For years I didn't read this book thinking it was about dinosaurs etc. This guy knows his stuff. This is serious information packaged in an imaginative cover, probably one of the most serious art instruction books out there & probably not for a beginner either, unless you are serious about learning.

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## **Melanie says**

This is definitely a good book, specially for people who use watercolor. It explains how light and color work on several different scenarios in a very thorough and detailed fashion, always with several examples. It also contains a ton of references and indications of other books on the subject. The book is heavy on technical content, but it is still a pleasant and informative reading. Definitely recommend it!

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## **Nate B says**

James Gurney is the best. This book is a practical and unadorned guide to color and light, and from my limited experience the first book I'd recommend someone interested in the subject. The book is filled with useful information and contains no unnecessary fluff. Each section is paired with useful examples that clearly shows the principle he is discussing. I'll be returning to it for years.

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## **Void lon iXaarrii says**

Overall I found the book quite interesting, his works and illustrations are also often impressive and there are a lot of interesting fun facts in it... however these latter two points are also the places where I think the book could have been better. I was expecting based on the promotion for the book to be more of an educational book, with more teaching, instead a good portion of it seemed to be oriented towards showcasing the author's works and trivia. I would have appreciated it even more if the great works would have been dissected more and more of the descriptions would have been about the how to do it and less about the stories behind his

particular works, the stories about the actual content, not about how he made it/problems he hit & how he solved them. That being said there is a LOT of interesting and fascinating content in there that got me thinking about a lot of stuff, and his skills and works are a great role model and inspiration for harder work. Very interesting book!

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### **Natik says**

This is another book every art person should own. However, it is a little "hand-wavy" as most art books unfortunately are. James Gurney at least stays away from weird mythical art mumbo-jumbo, as he actually has a formal scientific background (archeologist). He has a very active, informative blog on which you can see his rather rigorous methods. This book is more like a discovery channel documentary than a serious textbook. Nonetheless, Gurney's attention to detail shines through and he at least alerts you to the existence of very subtle phenomena like that the difference in atmospheric density at high altitude IS artistically relevant. I treat this book as my little library of such isolated tidbits.

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### **Vincent Sargenti says**

You simply can't give this book enough stars, even if it were showered by every light in the heavens. This is the top book in it's field for artists in every media. This is the gold standard. There simply is no more authoritative voice than Gurney's. He is related to Dan Gurney the great race car driver and that makes him one of the greatest living artist of our time. Racing and painting: it doesn't get any better than that at any end of the gene pool.

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### **Darkvine says**

I am more of a sketcher, so perhaps not the most practical art book to me but it is a great insight on how a professional fantasy, science fiction, and palaeological illustrator goes to work. Delving deeper into colour theory and the theoretical side of painting, it is perhaps a duller read than James Gurney's Imaginative Realism: How to Paint What Doesn't Exist, which I would advise to buy first. Unless of course, you are specifically looking for colour theory.

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### **Sarah (CoolCurryBooks) says**

I'm usually not a fan of instructional art books. All too often, they devolve into breaking things down into a series of steps, or simply showing a the different stages of one image. While this breakdown might be helpful in creating that one painting or drawing, it rarely helps you develop the skills needed to apply to original work.

Thankfully, Color and Light is not that sort of book. Instead it is a wonderfully useful guide to how color and light works and how to incorporate them into your artwork.

That's another benefit of the book – since it focuses on color and light and not on a specific medium, it is applicable for all sorts of media and field. While it's geared towards artists, either traditional or digital, who create their artwork from the ground up, the information on color schemes could also be useful to a photographer.

This book is full to the brim of all sorts of useful information, from different types of lighting, to ways to think of the color wheel, to how you create different surface effects. Each topic is covered in a two page spread, which, while simple, effectively conveys what you need to know.

Which brings me to another topic. I can't believe that I'm already five paragraphs into this review and haven't mentioned how wonderful James Gurney's art is. If you know anything about James Gurney, you'll know that he's the creator of Dinotopia, and luckily for us, he uses his own highly imaginative and beautiful paintings to help illustrate the principals in his book.

If you are at all interested in art, this is a book that you should at least flip through. Even if you don't create your own artwork, you may very well want to marvel at the beauty inside this book.

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