

COLOUR ILLITERACY - AN UNNECESSARY PROBLEM!?

NICOLINE KINCH

Kolormondo, Stockholm, Sweden

BACKGROUND

The Munsell Centennial Symposium 2018 has “To promote colour communication across disciplines” as its goal. Excellent! It is difficult to communicate among “experts” in colour, let alone the next-to-hopeless task to communicate to/from/within the general public. Why is it so difficult?

We at Kolormondo have a hypothesis that people in general often are “colour illiterate”, i.e. have no basic knowledge/understanding/capacity in this field.

Surprisingly enough, it is not only the “general public” who has the problem of colour illiteracy. One would expect professionals

to have basic knowledge in their field of expertise. But, having talked to thousands of such professionals (scientists, technicians, designers, art directors, artists, photographers etc.) we are not so sure. They often work with only one system (like Pantone or RGB) and/or are used to working with flat 2D presentations - on the screen or on colour charts/colour fan decks. The system they have specialized in is taken for granted and seen as the one and only system.

They often see no need to understand, or are not even aware of, the rest of the colour world; other systems, other aspects, other subjects.

DEFINITION OF COLOUR ILLITERACY?

Here are three possible definitions of colour illiteracy

“not being aware of the three properties of colour” or

“not being aware of additive/subtractive colour and the difference between these two”, or simply

“having no idea how to achieve brown...”

WHAT NOW?

The problem of colour illiteracy needs to be addressed. Who will do so if not the colour community? This global community should focus on spreading basic colour theory to the general public. In order for this to happen, educational tools, lesson plans, films etc. need to be produced.

Simply speaking, we need something like an “ABC-book” for colour. It should

1. Enable basic understanding, and at the same time give an overview
2. Create simple terminology that can be understood by all
3. Create a bridge between various ways of presenting colour

This “ABC-book” must be simple and serve the purpose of giving an introduction as well as an overview. One can have in mind, and compare with, a globe presenting our Earth, often found in class-rooms. Such a globe has no details, is incomplete and to some extent even incorrect. But it provides an introduction and overview to all subjects related to geography. And it is a good starting point to get a basic idea of what the world looks like, when discussing such varied things as travelling, climate change or political history. The globe, as opposed to a map, is 3D, essential for basic understanding of our world. Colour must also be in 3D to be understood.

KOLORMONDO IS ONE EXAMPLE OF SUCH AN “ABC-BOOK”

Kolormondo was developed out of the frustration felt by a colour illiterate person. It is based on the work of Runge, Göthe, Munsell and Itten and has modernized their concepts by using CMY as primary colours. It presents the world of colour in 3D DIY globes in various degrees of complexity. By playing with it for a couple of minutes, the user can see, touch and intuitively understand theoretical terms like value and chroma. As an extra plus, everyday language can be used: **around** for hue, **up/down** for value and **in/out** for chroma.

Kolormondo globes are being used at all intellectual levels, from kindergarten to factory workers to academics. It is used across

industries; fashion, paint, photo, architecture, textile, furniture, education etc., but only, so far, on a small scale.

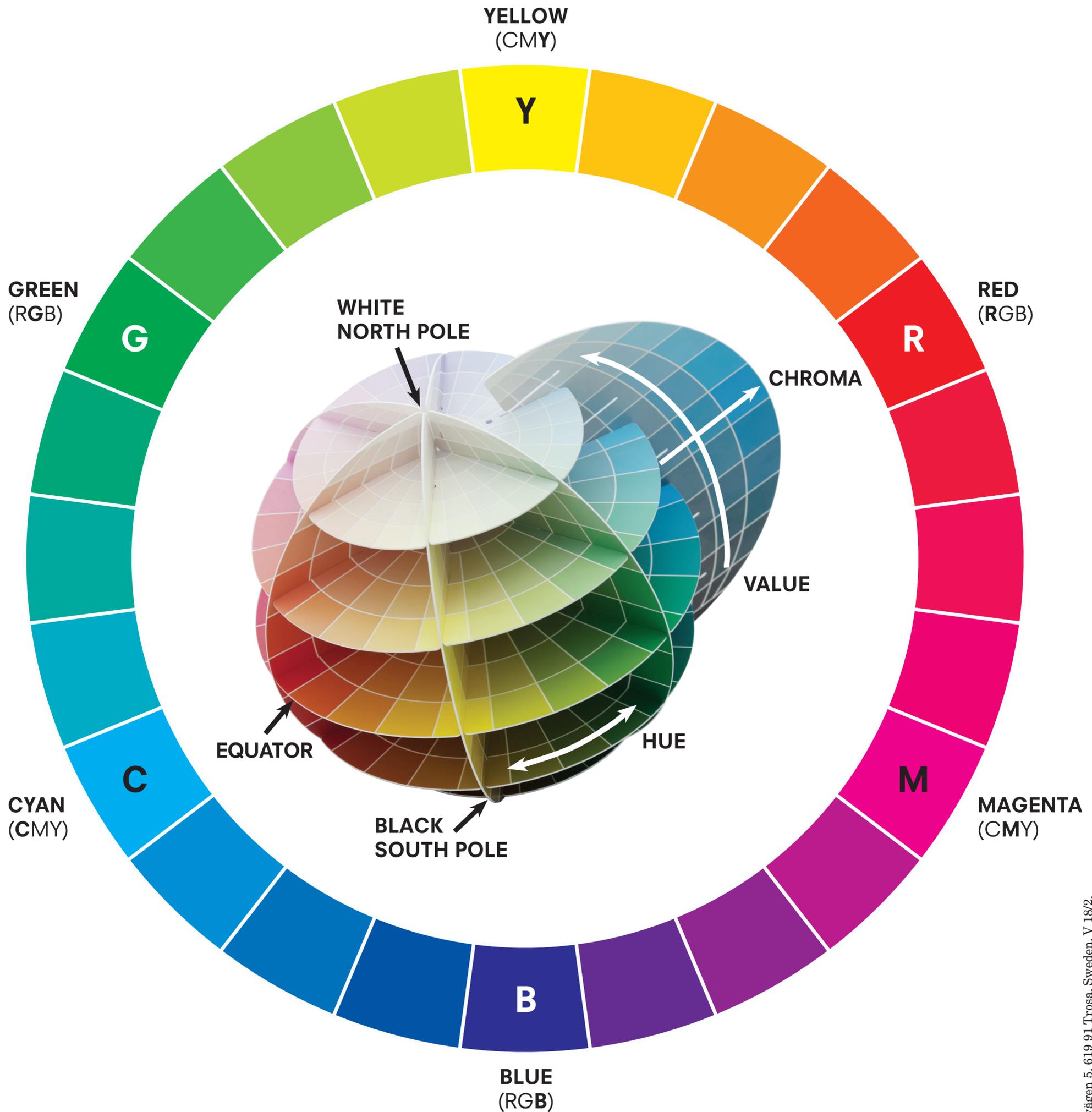
Is the Kolormondo concept and products sufficient as an “ABC book” for colour? The answer is of course: no!

What more is needed? At the Kolormondo company, we are gaining experience and knowledge about spreading colour knowledge. We have recently started developing educational materials that complements our core products, the globes, such as lesson plans. It is challenging to realize how much work remains to be done in this field.



KOLORMONDO

THE 3D COLOUR WHEEL



THE EQUATOR - COLOR WHEEL

This is the Equator of the Kolormondo globe; the outer circle of the biggest round piece. It is often also called the color wheel or color circle. It shows CMY; Cyan, Magenta and Yellow - as well as RGB; Red, Green and Blue.



KOLORMONDO.COM

COLOUR IS THREE DIMENSIONAL

- Hue moves around the Equator.
- Value moves from the dark South Pole up to the light North Pole.
- Chroma moves from the neutral grey center out to the surface of the globe.