

FOREWORD

Martin Scorsese

History is always broken up into turning points and categories, I suppose because they allow us an efficient and convenient framework for thinking about developments over time. A historical shorthand. The Middle Ages came to a halt with the Renaissance. The agrarian way of life was overturned by the Industrial Revolution. Figurative painting branched into photography on the one hand and abstract art on the other. Silent cinema ended with the coming of synchronized sound in the late '20s. And there are black-and-white movies and color movies.

Of course, we all know that on close inspection, everything looks more complex, and these clean breakthroughs and beginnings and endings become less and less useful. In the matter of color in cinema, for instance, you have to ask: which color process? Technicolor? 2-color or 3-strip? Eastmancolor? Are we talking about color from the '70s onward? Printed on which film stock? And now—is the movie in question shot on film or HD? Has the color been altered in postproduction? And at any given period in film history, you have to ask: whose color? Jack Cardiff's?

Néstor Almendros's? And for which director? Hitchcock's sense of color is as different from Michael Powell's as Jean-Luc Godard's is from Hou Hsiao-hsien's.

And when we're talking about the earliest color in cinema, we're not even talking about a process, but an artisanal practice—a bridge between the handmade and the industrially produced. In the images so lovingly assembled in this book, complementing the thoughtful and informative essays of Giovanna Fossati, Tom Gunning, Jonathon Rosen, and Joshua Yumibe, you can feel the links to the 19th century, to magic lanterns and stereopticons and stage tableaux. In other words, the single image (in this case, the single 35mm image) and the frame that contains it.

I could gaze at the images in this book for hours. They are as fascinating as illuminated manuscripts or magic lantern slides. And each one, isolated from the greater whole of which it was originally a part, offers us a sublime miniature world in which a thousand and one stories are about to take place.

