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Book Reviews

Photographic Optics, by Allen R. Greenleaf

Published (1950) by Macmillan, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York 11. 197 pp. + 2 pp. bibliography + 8 pp. appendix + 6 pp. index. 81 illus. 6 × 9 in. Price \$4.75.

The objective of this book is to supply the photographer with a knowledge of optics. The first six chapters describe the general properties of lenses and their aberrations, and also include the usual general formulas of first order optics. The history and kinds of optical glasses are then covered in 4¹/₂ pp. Image formation by small apertures receives half as much space. Lens descriptions, based on Kingslake's classification of patent literature, comprise 64 pp. and two appendixes

of 8 pp. Choosing and testing a lens, focusing, shutters, camera accessories, estimating exposure, perspective, printing, slide projection and stereoscopy are briefly discussed in the remaining 100 pp.

The definitions given are clear and should be helpful to a beginner in this field. A possible objection to the book is that it gives so little information on so many topics. Some of the author's choices will not please many readers. In testing lantern slide and film projectors, for example, he cites one American Standard on illumination and temperature measurement, but makes no mention of another on lens resolution testing. Two pages of the 5½ pp. allotted to filters are used for transmittance curves of four filters. Rather than republish these, might it have been more useful to have explained what the transmission of combined filters would be, and how computed, rather than stating that one particular combination would transmit too little light for practical importance?

To have compressed as much in so small a book is a real accomplishment. The material may be adequate and not too technical for a large audience. To the reviewer it seems to have too little information on any subject other than lenses, for more than orientation. Perhaps it will stimulate the reader enough so that he will turn to more complete books.—OSCAR W. RICHARDS, Research Laboratory, American Optical Co., P.O. Box 137, Stamford, Conn.

A Grammar of the Film, by Raymond Spottiswoode

Published (1950) by University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif. 328 pp. including charts and index, 12 pp. illus. 6 × 9 in. Price \$3.75.

A Grammar of the Film, subtitled "An Analysis of Film Technique," will be interesting to the engineer or technician who considers the philosophy of the motion picture. Here is an attempt to set forth the functions of the cinema from out of a somewhat scholastic atmosphere which assumes that the medium's reason for existence is to fulfill an aesthetic ideal. We can understand the author's rather academic pronouncements along these lines when we learn that the text was written in 1933, when he was a student at Oxford.

However, since any careful consideration of the film in this aspect is worthy of attention and since the impact of the film on the finer senses ought not to be disregarded, even by engineers, Mr. Spottiswoode's early and later thoughts on what constitutes the foundations and the superstructures of film aesthetics are stimulating, even though sometimes controversial and often obscure.

Here, for instance, the reader may find an extensive discussion and definition of the much-abused term "documentary" as applied to films, the nature and significance of the abstract film, montage and cutting from the point of view of the film's advance as an art form, in addition to many of the author's original theories, with which the reader may or may not agree.

Because of the time at which it was written, some of the discussions are inconclusive and it is interesting to note the actual developments of sound and color in comparison with the author's earlier predictions. The text progresses from definitions to film categories, technique of the film through analysis and synthesis and various critical opinions and polemics.—RUSSELL C. HOLSLAG, Precision Film Laboratories, Inc., 21 W. 46th St., New York 19.