



Oxford Handbook of Synesthesia (Oxford Library of Psychology)

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Synesthesia is a fascinating phenomenon which has captured the imagination of scientists and artists alike. This inherited condition gives rise to a kind of 'merging of the senses', and so for those who experience it, everyday activities like reading or listening to music trigger extraordinary impressions of colours, tastes, smells, shapes and other sensations. Synesthesia research also informs us about normal sensation because all people experience cross-sensory mappings to an implicit degree. Synesthesia has a considerably broad appeal, and in recent decades the field has experienced a resurgence of interest. These advances have painted a detailed story about the development, genetics, psychology, history, aesthetics and neuroscience of synesthesia, and provide a contemporary source of study for a new generation of scholars.

The Oxford Handbook of Synesthesia brings together this broad body of knowledge into one definitive state-of-the-art handbook. It includes a large number of concisely written chapters, under broader headings, which tackle questions about the origins of synesthesia, its neurological basis, its links with language and numbers, attention and perception, and with 'normal' sensory and linguistic processing. It asks questions about synesthesia's role in language evolution, and presents both contemporary and historical overviews of the field. It shows synesthesia's costs and benefits (e.g., in creativity, memory, imagery) and describes how synesthesia can provide inspiration for artists and designers. The book ends with a series of perspectives on synesthesia, including a first-hand account, and philosophical viewpoints which show how synesthesia poses unique questions about sensation, consciousness and the nature of reality.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a fine reference book for specialists and newcomers to the field. * Glottotheory * An invaluable lucid and comprehensive guide to the multi-coloured world of synesthesia by two of the leading researchers in the field. * Daniel Tammet, writer, synesthete, and author of 'Born on a Blue Day', 'Embracing the Wide Sky', and 'Thinking in Numbers' * Synesthesia proves that perceptual reality is not one-size-fits-all. For the current state of the science, you won't find a more comprehensive collection of expert voices than the one you're holding now. * David Eagleman, Neuroscientist, and author of 'Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives', and 'Wednesday Is Indigo Blue: Discovering the Brain of Synesthesia' * I cannot praise the book too highly ... It is a matter of regret that its length has made it impossible for me to "read it from cover to cover" before producing a review. But it is with delight that I look forward to having it occupy a place on my bedside table for many weeks to come. * Joe Sinclair, New Nurturing Potential *

About the Author

Julia Simner, *Reader, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, UK*, Edward M. Hubbard, *Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*

Dr. Julia Simner is an experimental neuropsychologist and leading expert in the field of synesthesia research. She has a background in psychology, languages and linguistics from the Universities of Oxford, Toronto and Sussex, and she currently runs the Synesthesia and Sensory Integration lab at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Her work focusses on the sensory, cognitive, linguistic, developmental, and historical bases of synesthesia, and has been published in high impact science journals such as Nature, Trends in Cognitive Science and Brain. She is keenly interested in facilitating the public's understanding of science and her work has been reported in over 100 media articles world-wide, including the NY Times, BBC, CBC, Telegraph, Times, New Scientist, Scientific American etc. In 2010 she was recognised as an outstanding European scientist by the European Commission's Atomium Culture Initiative and her science writing has been published in some of Europe's leading national newspapers.

Dr. Edward M. Hubbard is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he directs the Educational Neuroscience Laboratory. He received degrees from UC Berkeley and UC San Diego and completed his post-doctoral training at INSERM's Cognitive Neuroimaging Unit and Vanderbilt University. He has investigated the perceptual and neural bases of grapheme-color synesthesia and synesthetic number forms for more than a decade, and his behavioural and neuroimaging work was critical in convincing the scientific community that synesthesia was a valid, tractable topic for investigation. More recently, he has begun to investigate the neural basis of numerical and mathematical processing in non-synesthetes, and the development of these abilities in children, to better understand the neural mechanisms that lead to the development of synesthesia in children.

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