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Quantifying the unquantifiable: The color of cinematic lighting and its effect on audience's impressions towards the appearance of film characters

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Type of Paper

Research paper describing new results from scientific work

Abstract

This study is an attempt to investigate the ability of different colors used in cinematic lighting designs to affect audience's impressions towards the appearance and mood of film characters. The study critically appraised existing cinematic lighting techniques and identified the two basic color groups (i.e., warm and cold colors) that should be examined in order to answer the research questions and formulate its conclusions. To provide the needed empirical evidence for this research work, some experiments with a representative sample of viewers were conducted. These experiments confirmed the existence of direct relationships between various colors of lighting and the perceived appearance and mood of film characters. Moreover, specific color hues of lighting appeared to be more effective than others in altering the perceived appearance and mood of film characters. The study concluded that audience's perception of appearances and moods within cinematic images is linked, even in part, to different colors of lighting.

Key Words

Color; Cinematic Lighting; Film; Perception; Appearances; Moods