

Review of *The Science of Scenery* by Jon Burley, Michigan State University

There is a new book about landscape visual quality that is well worth obtaining and reading. Over time, an update was needed (the last broad comprehensive update was 1986) as the knowledge concerning how to measure and study visual quality has greatly expanded. *The Science of Scenery: How We See Scenic Beauty, What It Is, Why We Love It, and How To Measure and Map It* by Andrew Lothian (2017) is the type of update many people have been waiting for. This is an excellent book about visual quality, much better than edited anthologies. Dr. Lothian's book is the effort of one person and thus is not as scattered in thought as edited books tend to become. The book flows nicely in content leading one from historic precedent to practical application. One of the best features of Andrew's book is that it is much longer than any journal article (which must be short and to the point) and in book form can thoughtfully and deliberately explain concepts and ideas in detail that are too quick, often veiled, implied, and fleeting in journal articles.

After the introduction, the book opens with thirteen chapters reviewing mostly Western perspectives addressing the evolution in thought concerning visual perception, values, and beliefs. The author then includes five chapters exploring more contemporary issues around the science of landscape visual quality, ending with a well written summary of the current knowledge. Dr. Lothian presents compelling evidence that land cover type plus other features such as land form and specific land-uses are highly associated with visual quality. He also suggests how to utilize this information in planning and design.

Two important chapters are devoted to measuring and mapping scenic beauty. These chapters are followed by a look forward concerning the topic. The book is practical and useful in its application.

This book is presented in a large format with well illustrated color images of landscape from many parts of the world with over 800 photographs, figures, graphs, maps and tables spread across 23 chapters (almost 500 pages). The book is of great value for the price. The global view is facilitated by the author being Australian, as such individuals often have a more broad world view and extensive travel experiences.

Individuals with knowledge in this field will admire the extensive bibliography drawing from 1,300 citations. In addition, many visual quality investigators will have much to appreciate in the book. If one is new to the topic, the book will require reflective time to consider the ideas presented in the book as it takes time to digest, accept, and understand. There are many perspectives about visual quality, generating disagreements and some confusion. So it is not always easy to quickly and readily accept some well established ideas concerning scenic beauty. But Dr. Lothian makes the transition interesting and understandable. The key concept derived from the book is that aesthetics is a subjective quality that can be measured objectively through surveying respondents.

As an independent scholar in visual quality research with no previous contact with the author until the publishing of this book, I greatly appreciate the similar perspective that Dr. Lothian and myself have converged upon concerning how to understand, map, and study visual quality. Other scholars may only wish to present broad general principles and not be so numerical, or defend numerical synthetic indexes based upon normative design theory but contain little statistical evidence to support the index. Meanwhile Dr. Lothian has pursued a logical science based line of inquiry that merits great approval. If one desires to understand that state-of-the-art in visual quality, this is the resource to purchase.

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