

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: Forensic Examination of Glass and Paint

Forensic examination of glass and paint. Caddy B, editor. Taylor and Francis, New York, NY, 2001. 292 pp. ISBN 0-7484-0579-8.

This book expands the Taylor and Francis series in forensic science with the topics of glass and paint and their examination in the forensic laboratory. Overall, the book is a solid addition to a forensic scientist's library, but only as an addition (more on that later). The chapters are all written by experts in their respective fields hailing from Europe (8), the U.S. (5), Canada (3), and Australia (1). The book has a European feel, which may give some U.S. readers pause to wonder; some "popular" methods in Europe are not used in the U.S., and vice versa. In reading the entire book, it becomes noticeable that the individual authors did not confer with each other and/or that the book was not edited with an even hand. Some chapters contradict each other and many repeat introductory material. Nevertheless, *Forensic Examination of Glass and Paint* remains a remarkable reference in a discipline with too few books.

DeForest's 23 page introduction is a wonderful *zeitgeist* of trace evidence at the turn of the 20th century. The paint chapters generally outshine the glass chapters in clarity, accuracy, and coverage. Stoecklein's chapter on color and microscopy, Beveridge, Fung, and MacDougall's chapter on IR, and Henson and Jergovich's chapter on SEM/EDS are particularly well done and are excellent as academic course materials or reference.

The glass chapters have their uses but should not be given to the uninitiated as their sole reference. Many statements are offered as

fact without substantiation or reference, such as "The luminescence is usually quite distinctive but the intensity can be variable. It has been suggested that weathering of the glass surface reduces the intensity of the luminescence." A citation as to which suggestion it was would have sufficed. Also, several authors make blanket statements that are not entirely accurate. For example, the statement "(i)n the forensic science community it is generally accepted that glass is measured at a nominal 589nm wavelength and the RI is quoted at its match temperature" (page 58), according to my sources, does not hold true for the FBI or BKA Laboratories. Thornton's chapter on the physical examination of glass stands out among these as the best written and clearest.

As one may imagine, significant differences continue to exist between methods of evidence interpretation in Europe and the U.S. The short version could be titled "*Bayesian v. Frequentist*," but that belies a deeper and subtler discrepancy that cannot be explicated in a short book review. So the interested reader is forewarned: some chapters are firmly based in one approach or the other and this may limit their intelligibility and/or utility depending on where you stand.

Forensic Examination of Glass and Paint is a welcome addition to my bookshelf, although it should not fall into a novice's hands too readily. It takes an experienced eye to sort out what may be cultural, systematic, or institutional variances in methods and practices; students beware. But for the majority of practicing forensic scientists, it is a must read.

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