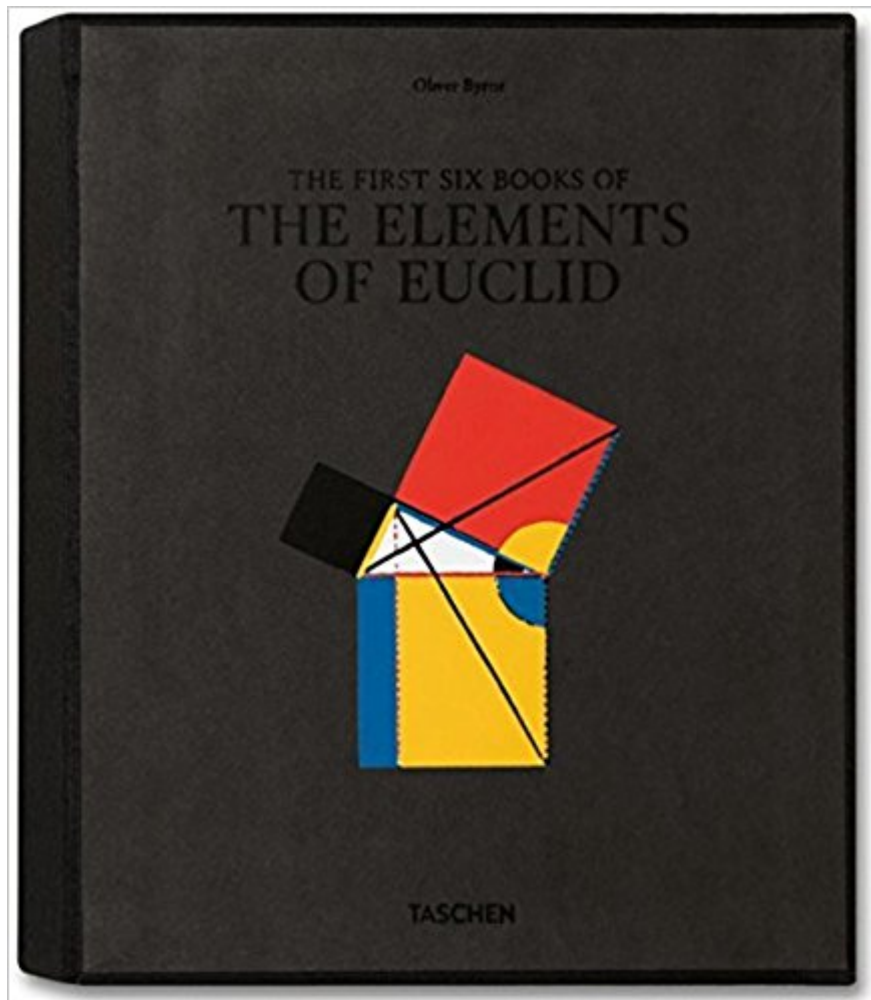


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# The First Six Books Of The Elements Of Euclid Oliver Byrne



## Synopsis

A rare and beautiful geometry primer from the 19th century. Red, yellow, blue and of course black are the colours that Oliver Byrne employs for the figures and diagrams in his most unusual 1847 edition of Euclid, published by William Pickering and printed by Chiswick Press, and which prompt the surprised reader to think of Mondrian. The author makes it clear in his subtitle that this is a didactic measure intended to distinguish his edition from all others: "The Elements of Euclid in which coloured diagrams and symbols are used instead of letters for the greater ease of learners." Byrne is not content to trust solely in the supposed intuitive "logical" structure of Euclid's axioms and theorems who doesn't know the first famous sentences of Euclid's Elements: "I. A point is that which has no parts. II. A line is length without breadth" etc., but translates them into colourful diagrams and symbols. He thereby thinks in terms of the school classroom: he compares his colours to the dyed chalks in which figures are drawn on the blackboard. Oliver Byrne (c. 1810–c. 1880) was an Irish author and civil engineer. Little is known about his life, though he wrote a considerable number of books. As Surveyor of Her Majesty's Settlements in the Falkland Islands, Byrne had already published mathematical and engineering works, but never anything like his edition on Euclid. This remarkable example of Victorian printing has been described as one of the oddest and most beautiful books of the 19th century. Each proposition is set in Caslon italic, with a four-line initial, while the rest of the page is a unique riot of red, yellow and blue. On some pages, letters and numbers only are printed in colour, sprinkled over the pages like tiny wild flowers and demanding the most meticulous alignment of the different colour plates for printing. Elsewhere, solid squares, triangles and circles are printed in bright colours, expressing a verve not seen again on the pages of a book until the era of Dufy, Matisse and Derain.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Werner Oechslin (b.1944) studied art history, archaeology, philosophy and mathematics. After doctoral studies in Zurich in 1970 he taught at MIT and Harvard University. Since 1985 he has been a professor at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, where he led the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture from 1986 to 2006. His research focuses on architectural theory and the cultural history of architecture. His most recent publication is *Palladianismus: Andrea Palladio - Werk und Wirkung* (2008). He is the founder of Bibliothek Werner Oechslin in Einsiedeln.

The Byrne book is absolutely gorgeous. Over 130 years ago, Byrne had the idea of removing almost all words from Euclid, and replacing the words with visually obvious color pictures. His demands on the publishers were tremendous. No color printing of this magnitude had been done before (in the 1800's), and they feared the high cost of the book and the high printing cost would bankrupt them. They were right. This book destroyed them. It remained an obscure collectors item. Most mathematicians know nothing about this book, and are stunned when they see the pages. The pages aren't viewable here, but are available at the publisher's site. Well worth a look. Oh... and Euclid's Elements. Most famous math book in the past 2500 years. This is arguably the best presentation of this material ever made.

Do you love Euclid? Do you love color and art? Are you interested in the history of printing or pedagogy? This book is for you. No, it's not the best way you could study Euclid as a newcomer. The use of colors and symbols instead of words can be a little confusing if you're not ready. This book is certainly geared more toward the lover of all things geometric. And what a marvelous book it is. As a faithful reprint of the 19th Century edition, it comes with warts and all, including some errors and omissions. That's ok. That's what makes this book so special. It comes beautifully bound and packaged, with high quality paper. A lot of love went into this. You will love it too.

I love this book. It takes Euclidian geometry and develops it graphically. Very creative. Very stimulating. If you care about geometry or graphic arts you may find this a treasure you don't need

but delight in. Very high quality production, cloth bound hard cover book within a cloth covered box. A word of warning: the book was originally published in the mid 19th century. If this isn't a facsimile it is virtually a copy. Consequently the shape of the letters and the language used is early Victorian English, thus not all will find the text easily accessible. Also, given the accessibility issues, do I not think that it is realistic to use this as a textbook to teach a child geometry. An interesting project would be to keep the graphics and rewrite the text in contemporary English. It may be very useful to help the visually oriented to understand geometry.

This edition is a facsimile of the original 19th century edition. It is gorgeous, comes in a box matching the cloth binding. The unique way the propositions and demonstrations are described as color illustrations makes this edition a must for those who understand the importance of Euclid. I am very happy to see this published with such a quality. The original edition was so ahead of its time with its colorful illustrations that it bankrupted the publisher, only the optimism and passion for technical things of Victorian era could produce this improbable gem.

This book is not only a remarkable artifact, it's the book that makes Euclid more accessible than any before it. As Euclid explains each proof, the lines and angles depicted are color coded so a reader can immediately get an image in mind of the steps being described. It's really an exhilarating thing; the proofs become much more immediate and memorable. I recommend this to anyone who wishes to learn or revisit this foundational work. If one is already familiar with Euclid's achievement, then there is no doubt that this is a must-have addition to your library. To Euclid lovers, the diagrams are actually breathtaking when you open the book and see them for the first time.

I first encountered Oliver Byrne's illustrations of Euclid while looking for rare books. The original copy was 'available' for \$1700 on bid. I have admired this work and its depictions. Now I own this beautifully rendered copy. This is a boxed set and would make a lovely gift for anyone interested in illustrations, mathematics, history, etc. Very well done. I am very happy with this purchase.

Loved it!

If you appreciate the origins of geometry, this book is beautiful to have. It comes in a nice cover. The proofs are in color. It really is spectacular to see how Euclid wrote these compared to how we write proofs now.

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