

Dirty Laundry in Early Modern Italy & Denmark

REFASHIONING THE RENAISSANCE WORKSHOP

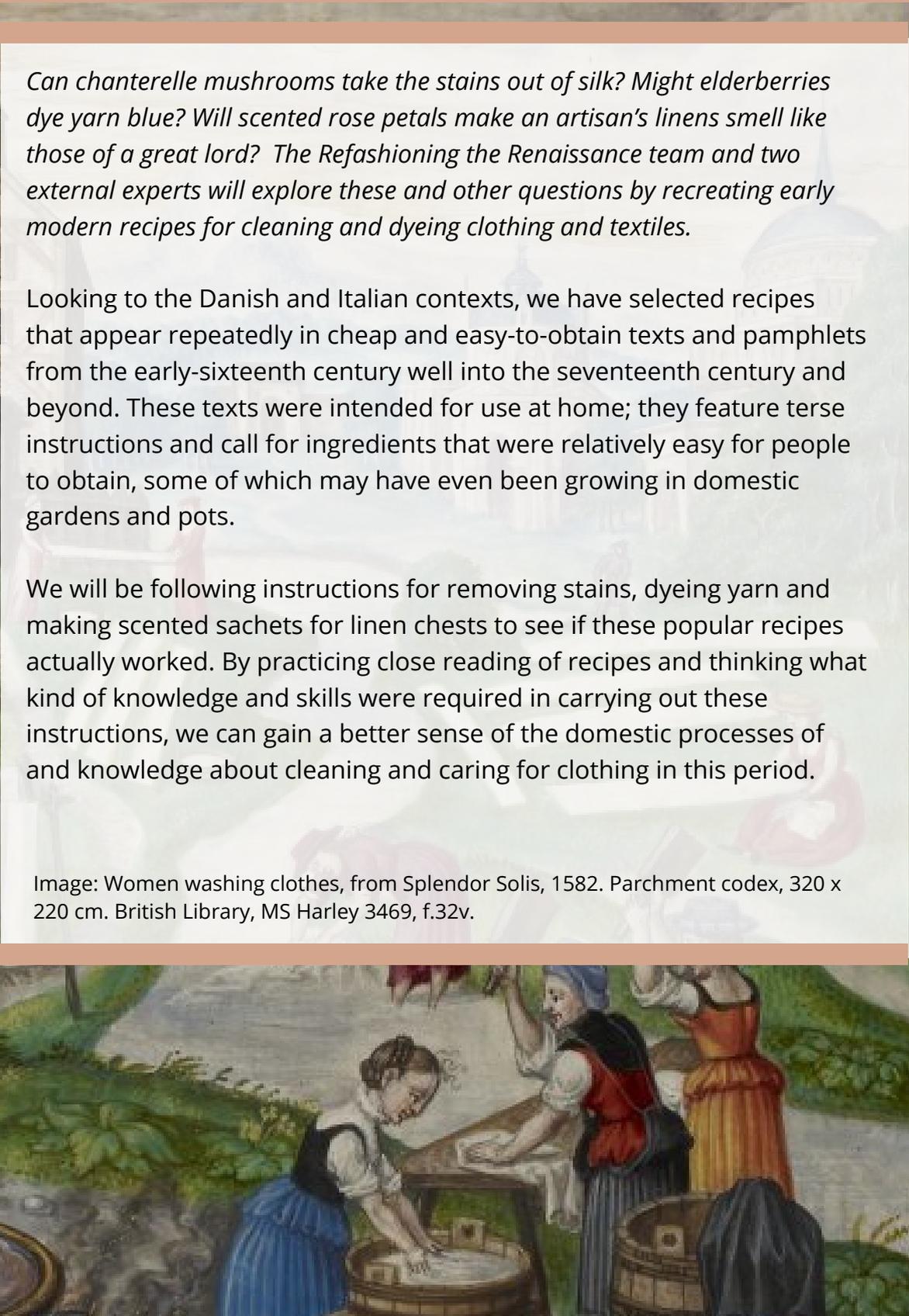
11–12 April, Aalto University Väre, Dye Kitchen

Can chanterelle mushrooms take the stains out of silk? Might elderberries dye yarn blue? Will scented rose petals make an artisan's linens smell like those of a great lord? The Refashioning the Renaissance team and two external experts will explore these and other questions by recreating early modern recipes for cleaning and dyeing clothing and textiles.

Looking to the Danish and Italian contexts, we have selected recipes that appear repeatedly in cheap and easy-to-obtain texts and pamphlets from the early-sixteenth century well into the seventeenth century and beyond. These texts were intended for use at home; they feature terse instructions and call for ingredients that were relatively easy for people to obtain, some of which may have even been growing in domestic gardens and pots.

We will be following instructions for removing stains, dyeing yarn and making scented sachets for linen chests to see if these popular recipes actually worked. By practicing close reading of recipes and thinking what kind of knowledge and skills were required in carrying out these instructions, we can gain a better sense of the domestic processes of and knowledge about cleaning and caring for clothing in this period.

Image: Women washing clothes, from Splendor Solis, 1582. Parchment codex, 320 x 220 cm. British Library, MS Harley 3469, f.32v.



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Thursday 11 April

09.00-10.30: Welcome and overview

Overview of the recipes we will be recreating, review of the safety regulations and strategies for making observations and taking notes during the experiments.

10.30-11.00: Coffee Break

11.00-12.30: Experiment: Stain removal

Removal of stains from wool, linen and silk. We will prepare four different recipes, apply them to different kinds of stains and return to these later in the day to check our success.

12.30-13.30: Lunch

13.30-16.30: Experiment: Simple Dyes

The second set of experiments will help us explore simple dyes. Each group will prepare one recipe and use it to dye wool, linen and silk yarn and fabric.

16.30-17.30: Experiment: Stain removal II & Clean up

The third and final block of experiments will be dedicated to checking and completing work started earlier.

17.30-18.00: Discussion and wrap-up day one

19.00-21.30: Dinner for participants

Friday 12 April

09.30: Overview of day II

09.30-11.30: Experiment: Perfumes for linen chests

We will prepare scented rose petals for linen 'cushions' used to perfume chests and the clothing and textiles with in them.

11.30-11.45: Clean up and coffee break

11.45-13.00: Wrap up discussion for experiment

We will discuss the results and the effectiveness of the recipes. What did we learn? How can we use these experiences and results to inform our research, and what does this tell us about 'fashion' for average early modern people?

13.00-14.00: Lunch & Farewell



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