

Making Invisible Colours Visible:

Natural Dyes and the Methodology of Historical Colour Reconstruction

REFASHIONING THE RENAISSANCE WORKSHOP

19–21 September 2019, Aalto University Väre, Dye Kitchen



What did colours in clothing and textiles look like in the past? How can we visualize and understand colour in early modern documents, and what sources we need to put together, in order to reconstruct different shades and tones of dyes?

Focusing on reds, greens, blues, yellows and blacks, this workshop tests several historical dye recipes from the period of 1550–1650. The aim is to deepen our understanding on the range of colours that were found in visual and documentary evidence concerning ordinary people's dress, as well as to gain access to the processes and materials that were involved in creating the astonishing colours. At the same time, this workshop also asks, to what extent is it possible to reconstruct colours using visual, material, archival and printed evidence as a source, and how colour reconstruction can be further developed as a methodology in cultural analysis of early modern dress.



PROGRAMME

Thursday 19 September: What is an artisan black?

- 09.00–9.30 Introduction to the workshop:
- Paula Hohti: Aims and purpose of the workshop
 - Jo Kirby: Our recipes, ingredients, and safety
- 09.30–11.00 Presentations
- Natalia Ortega-Saez: Black dyes
 - Sophie Pitman: Black dye recipe from the Making and Knowing manuscript
 - Paula Hohti: Black in artisans' clothing
- 11.00–17.00 Dye experiments: Black
- 17.00–18.00 Discussion and results



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Friday 20 September: Green, blue and yellow dyes. Colourful clothes and novelties in shades

- 9.00-10.00 Presentations:
- Natalia Ortega-Saez: Dyeing blue: how to prepare a historical indigo bath
 - Paula Hohti: Blues, greens and yellows in artisans' clothing
 - Jo Kirby: Our recipes and day's programme
- 10.00-17.00 Dye experiments: Green and Yellow
- 17.00-19.00 Discussion and results

Saturday 21 September: Red dyes. Precious reds and cheaper imitations

- 9.00-10.00 Presentations:
- Jo Kirby: Dyeing Red, recipes and day's programme
 - Paula Hohti: Red in artisans' clothing
- 10.00-16.00 Dye experiments: Reds, flesh-colours and orange
- 16.00-17.00 Discussion and results
- 17.00-18.00 Final discussing, sum up and cutting out of samples



IMAGES:

Still life with Fruit by Vincenzo Campi (Pinacoteca Brera)

Susanna and the Elders by Lorenzo Lotto (Uffizi Gallery)

Giovanventura Rosetti: *Plictho de larte de tentori* (courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)



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