

Printing Colour and Colouring Prints (Warsaw, 23–24 Jun 2022)

Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw, Poland, Jun 23–24, 2022

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Note: Deadline extended

Printing Colour and Colouring Prints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe: Comparative Perspectives

Early prints were generally polychromatic. Most fifteenth-century woodcuts were coloured free-hand or with the use of stencils. The text of the Gutenberg Bible (Mainz, c. 1452–1455) was printed in red and black. Several copies of this book were additionally richly illuminated (e.g. British Library, shelfmark C.9.d.3,4). Apart from monochrome or two-colour printed type, musical notations, initials, vignettes and printers' devices, colour was applied mechanically to engraved paper instruments (as in Lazarus Beham's *Buch von der Astronomie*, Cologne: Nicolaus Götz, c. 1476) or scientific illustrations (as in Johannes Regiomontanus's *Kalendarium*, Augsburg: Erhard Ratdolt, 1485). Some printers, like Erhard Ratdolt, gained renown for their inventive colour printing techniques, others, like Nicolaus Götz, experimented with it only accidentally. Some innovations, like chiaroscuro woodcuts, had a broad and long-lasting reception; others, for instance so-called jigsaw-printing, were short-lived and used sporadically. The chronology and geography of colour printing, although studied since the turn of the nineteenth century, remains rather patchy. Even the much-studied phenomenon of the chiaroscuro woodcuts calls for further research on the range of their imitations and reception outside Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

The aim of the conference is to initiate more extensive comparative research on the phenomenon of colour printing and print colouring so that the significance of colour in prints, reflected by a variety of cultural, political, social, economic and confessional backgrounds, can be better understood. We hope to contextualize local experiments with colour printing and the role of colourists in the adaptation of prints to local needs and tastes. A transregional overview will enable us to gain an understanding of the mobility of printmakers and the role it played in the transfer of know-how as well as the mobility of the prints, which were often professionally or amateurishly coloured far from their original printing site. This approach also opens up the possibility of incorporating less studied regions into the ongoing, quickly developing studies on colour printing and print colouring, which so far have been focused mainly on the print production in Western and Central Europe.

We welcome proposals for papers that tackle such problems as for instance:

- The geography of colour printing and print colouring;

- Experiments with colour printing outside the main printing markets;
- Techniques of colour printing and the materials used in various parts of Europe;
- Transfer of know-how, the social networks and mobility of printers, publishers and form cutters;
- Organization of colour printing and print colouring along with the regulation of their production;
- Reception and consumption of colour and coloured prints as well as theoretical reflections on colour in prints in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries;
- Print colouring by amateurs, its 'styles', techniques and functions;
- Workshops of professional colourists and their relationship with printers and publishers;
- The interplay between printed and painted colour in the early printed page up to 1600.

We invite all early-stage and senior researchers of every discipline interested in various aspects of colour printing and print colouring in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to join us in Warsaw to share their expertise and discuss the potential of the comparative approach for this field of study. Please send proposals (of not more than 300 words) for 20-minute presentations in English along with a brief biography to printsandcolours@uw.edu.pl by 30 November 2021. Notifications for acceptance will be issued by 20 December 2021. There will be no conference fee.

We plan to publish selected contributions in an English-language collected volume.

Reference:

CFP: Printing Colour and Colouring Prints (Warsaw, 23-24 Jun 2022). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 2, 2021 (accessed Mar 17, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/33331>>.