The Sources of Colour: the Gobelins Dyeing Workshop (Paris, 7-8 Oct 21)

Paris, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Oct 7–08, 2021
Deadline: Mar 12, 2021

Marie-Anne Sarda

The Sources of Colour: the Gobelins Dyeing Workshop
Study days, 7–8 October 2021, INHA

The National Institute of Art History (Institut National d'Histoire d'Art, INHA), in conjunction with the Archives Nationales and the Mobilier National, will be holding two study days specifically devoted to the Gobelins dyeing workshop.

Jehan Gobelin, a dyer from Reims, set up a workshop in the mid fifteenth century not far from the Bièvre River, whose water was particularly suitable for dyeing purposes. His descendants, who were experts in the dyeing of wool in Venice scarlet, soon acquired vast stretches of land that ran alongside the Bièvre and constructed large workshops. Henri IV rented them and had tapestry workshops installed on the sites.

In 1662, Colbert acquired the property for the Crown, and he brought together and placed the various workshops under the direction of Charles Le Brun. To reorganise the dyeing workshop, Le Brun solicited the help of a Dutch master dyer, Josse Kerchove. Since this time, the Gobelins dyeing workshop, which is the oldest European workshop of its kind that has been operating continuously since its foundation, has remained in the same place inside the Gobelins enclosure, to the north of the chapel.

This rich diachronic and multidisciplinary history is the topic of these study days, the first ever devoted to the Gobelins dyeing workshop, in its long history. Based on unprecedented sources or sources seen from a fresh perspective, these study days aims to focus on the latest knowledge concerning the dyeing workshop.

Using new research findings and sources compiled since 2015 by the teams working at the Mobilier National and made available to researchers, various themes will be addressed during these study days:
- the role of the dyeing workshop in the evolution of regulatory texts relating to the métier of dyer, from Colbert's reorganisation to the beginning of the twentieth century;
- the contributions made by the successive directors of the dyeing workshop; generally speaking, all prosopographical research into the staff working in the dyeing workshop is welcome;
- the contributions made by industrial chemistry to all of the fabric preparatory and dyeing processes;

- the school of dyeing founded at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the Gobelins and the courses held by Chevreul, which were replaced by instruction in dyeing in Paris, throughout the nineteenth century (similar training was provided by Payen and Persoz at the Centre National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM), and in the 1830s in Lyon, Mulhouse, and Rouen);
- the status of national laboratory of expertise acquired by the dyeing workshop in the nineteenth century, initially during the First Empire in relation to the manufacture of Lyon silks, and subsequently in the context of the development of the dyeing industries in the colonies (madder and cochineal in Algeria; indigo in Senegal), and more generally in the Western world.

For each of these themes, information about other dyeing workshops or other international experiences involving the transmission of knowledge and dyeing techniques is very welcome, from a comparative viewpoint. Likewise, the participation of researchers conducting studies into the history of the sciences, history, literature, textile design, and colour, or in the conservation sciences is particularly welcome.

The conference will be held both online and face-to-face, requiring particular care with regard to the way in which the discussions are conducted. We will ask participants to focus on their statements very precisely for fifteen minutes to optimise the discussion times. Participants may communicate in French or in English.

Contributions (2,000 characters), accompanied by a short biography/bibliography, must be sent before 12 March 2021 to: marie-anne.sarda@inha.fr and alexia.raimondo@culture.gouv.fr

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Sources on the Gobelins dyeing workshop:
(More detailed information about the collection may be obtained from the members of the scientific and study day organisation committee)
- The Archives Nationales, the Pierrefitte-sur-Seine site:
Sub-series AF/IV (the Secretariat of State): https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/IR/FRAN_IR_003821
Sub-series F/12 (commerce and industry): https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/IR/FRAN_IR_000185: https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/IR/FRAN_IR_000379
Sub-series F/21 (fine arts): https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/IR/FRAN_IR_000390
Sub-series O/2, O/3, O/4, and O/5 (the Maison de l'Empereur or Maison du Roi): https://www.siv.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr/siv/POG/FRAN_POG_04/c614xe1cee4--1dzu2cdzz452g
- The Mobilier National, Paris (online search tools): http://www.mobiliernational.culture.gouv.fr/fr/collections-et-ressources/centre-de-documentation
- Several digital sources are currently being published online: https://fr.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Cat%C3%A9gorie:Collections_du_Mobilier_national
- The Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (online Calames union catalogue): http://www.calames.abes.fr/pub/mnhn.aspxx
An inventory of the Eugène Chevreul collection is currently being compiled, so any requests for

information or requests to view the archives must be sent to: patrimoinedbd@mnhn.fr
- The Manuscript Department of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (online catalogue): https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/pageCollections.html?col=1

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Scientific and organisational committee:
Muriel Barbier (the Mobilier National)
Anne-Laure Carré (the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, CNAM)
Hélène Cavalié (the Mobilier National)
Claude Coupry (the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CNRS)
Joëlle Garcia (the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle)
Clémence Lescuyer (the Archives Nationales)
Alexia Raimondo (the Archives Nationales)
Charlotte Ribeyrol (Paris-Sorbonne University)
Marie-Anne Sarda (Institut National d'Histoire d'Art, INHA)

Reference:

CFP: The Sources of Colour: the Gobelins Dyeing Workshop (Paris, 7-8 Oct 21). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 3, 2021 (accessed Nov 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/33336>.