Miniature Painting and its Recipes in the Early Modern Period (1500-1800)

Deadline: Jan 15, 2025

Matthieu Lett

Miniature Painting and its Recipes in the Early Modern Period (1500-1800): the Transmission of Technical Knowledge in the East and West.

Peer-reviewed volume edited by Mandana Barkeshli (UCSI University) and Matthieu Lett (Université de Bourgogne/LIR3S, Institut Universitaire de France), to be published in Brill's book series Studies in Art & Materiality (Editor-in-Chief: Ann-Sophie Lehmann).

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In art history, the practice of miniature painting raises unique challenges in terms of definition. This is partly due to its material hybridity—both in terms of supports and pictorial layers (pigments, binders)—but also because of its size and the variety of objects it encompasses. The term miniature covers a wide range of techniques, including painting on paper, vellum, or ivory, as well as enamel and illumination.

In both the East and the West, the early modern period marked a pivotal moment of technical experimentation, coinciding with the development of both professional and amateur practices of miniature painting. During this time, miniature painting was practiced by professionals but also by high-ranking figures such as Shah Tahmasp I and the Spanish queen Marie Louise d'Orléans. The distinctive properties of miniature paints—such as the lack of staining or odor, unlike oil paints—along with the ease of copying compositions, may have encouraged its adoption in courtly settings.

The simultaneous emergence of practical treatises in both the East and West—notably the Qanun us-Suvar by Sadiqi Bek (ca. 1570–1600) and A Treatise Concerning the Arte of Limning by Nicholas Hilliard (ca. 1600)—reflects this phenomenon. These treatises provided recipes for mixing colors, advice on representing certain motifs, and instructions for preparing various supports. They signaled a major shift in how the knowledge and techniques of miniature painting were transmitted. While these texts could not entirely replace the traditional master-apprentice model, some manuscripts and books enabled students to grasp the basics independently. Independent learning was especially encouraged for women, who increasingly pursued miniature painting in Europe from the second half of the 17th century onward. Similarly, Persian women artists made notable, though less documented, contributions to miniature painting during the Safavid and Qajar periods. However, professional training primarily took place within workshops, where the secrets of the craft were closely guarded.

This volume, building on discussions initiated during the 36th CIHA Congress (Lyon, June 23–28, 2024), seeks to study the technical recipes and transmission methods of miniature painting in the East and West from a comparative perspective. By doing so, it aims to illuminate the material hybridity of miniature painting and provide new insights into the conditions of its production.

We invite contributions from academics, museum and library professionals responsible for Eastern or Western miniature collections, and conservation scientists specializing in materials analysis. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

1. Materials used in miniature painting (supports, paper colors, sizing, dyes, pigments, inks, binding mediums).
2. Rediscovery of technical knowledge and practices based on historical recipes and/or scientific analysis.
3. The conditions of transmission through oral traditions or written sources, especially recipes.
4. The social (workshops, courts) and/or gendered contexts of transmission.
5. Terminology in historical manuals and recipes, including challenges in translation and understanding the historical context of recipes through modern chemistry.

Comparative approaches are especially encouraged.

The selected contributions will be published in Brill's Studies in Art & Materiality, a peer-reviewed series dedicated to innovative scholarship on the intersections of art, materials, and making (Editor-in-Chief: Ann-Sophie Lehmann). Authors will be required to submit a full manuscript of up to 50,000 characters (including spaces and references) by November 15, 2025. Each article may include up to 12 images, which should be provided as JPG or TIFF files at 300 DPI resolution. All submissions will undergo a double-blind peer review.

To submit your proposal, please email Mandana Barkeshli (mandana@ucsiuniversity.edu.my) and Matthieu Lett (matthieu.lett@u-bourgogne.fr) by January 15, 2025, including the following documents:

- Title of the proposed paper (concise and reflective of the paper's content).

- Abstract (350–500 words in English), including 4–6 keywords and a brief bibliography.

- Short Curriculum Vitae.

Reference:
CFP: Miniature Painting and its Recipes in the Early Modern Period (1500-1800). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 21, 2024 (accessed Nov 6, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/43211>.