Hand-Colouring of Natural History Illustrations (online/Konstanz, 26-27 Feb 25)

Online / University of Konstanz (Building C, Room C 423), Feb 26–27, 2025

Giulia Simonini

The Hand-Colouring of Natural History Illustrations in Europe, 1600–1850.
This hybrid workshop will explore from different perspectives how and for what purposes printed illustrations of natural history books were hand-coloured. A special focus of the workshop will be the activities and practices of hand-colourers known also as “colourists”, “afzetters” (in Dutch) and “Illuministen” (in German), which remain until today understudied.

Organisers: Joyce Dixon (Independent) and Giulia Simonini (Technische Universität Berlin)

University of Konstanz, Universitätsstraße 10,
78457, Konstanz, Building C, Room C 423
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Program:

Day 1: 26 February 2025

9:00–9:30 Arrival and registration

9:30–10:15 Introduction / Round table

10:15–10:30 Coffee break

10:30–12:00 Panel 1: Colourists
• Stefanie Jovanovic-Kruspel, Leah Karas, Mario Dominik Riedl (Naturhistorisches Museum Vienna)
“The Role of Child Labour in Natural History Illustration”

• Joyce Dixon (Independent)
“‘A School of Females’: Hand-Colourers in the Edinburgh Studio of William Home Lizars”

• Luc Menapace (Bibliothèque Nationale de France)
“The Hand-Colouring of Natural History Illustrations in Paris in the 1st Half of the 19th Century”

12:45–13:30 Lunch (offered by the workshop)

13:30–15:30 Panel 2: Capturing Changeable Colours
• Cynthia Kok (Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Rijksmuseum)
“Investigating Iridescence: Mother-of-Pearl in Early Modern Natural Illustrations”

• Christine Kleiter (Deutsches Studienzentrum Venice)
“How to Represent Iridescent Feathers in Hand-Coloured Prints? Colouring Practices in Pierre Belon’s L’Histoire de la nature des oyseaux (1555)”

• Paul Martin (University of Bristol)
“Accuracy and Consistency in Colouring of Antiquarian Ichthyology Engravings”

15:30–15:45 Coffee break

15:45–17:45 Panel 3: Colours in Botanical Illustrations
• Jessie Wei-Hsuan Chen (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW))
“Which Colour Comes First? Hand-Colouring Gradations on Plants in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”

• Magdalena Grenda-Kurmanow (Academy of Fine Arts Warsaw)
“Ultimate Documentation. Between a Plant Illustration and a Botanical Specimen”

• Eszter Csillag (HKBU Jao Tsung I Academy of Sinology)
“Michael Boym’s Hand-Coloured Images in Flora sinensis (Vienna, 1656)”

19:30–22:00 Optional dinner

Day 2: 27 February 2025

9:00–10:00 Keynote Speaker:
• Alexandra Loske (Curator of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton)
“Botanical Illustrator, Flower Painter and Colour Theorist: Mary Gartside’s Path from the Figurative to the Abstract in Her Early 19th-Century Illustrated Books”

10:00-10:15 Coffee break

10:15–12:15 Panel 4: Working Processes

• Katarzyna Pekacka-Falkowska (Poznan University of Medical Sciences)
“The Colours of Nature in the Early 18th Century Danzig/Gdańsk: Johann Philipp Breyne, Jacob Theodor Klein, and the Hand-Coloured Illustrations”

• Cam Sharp Jones (British Library)
“Colouring Seba’s Thesaurus”

• Giulia Simonini (Technische Universität Berlin)
“The Master Plates for August Johann Rösel von Rosenhof’s Insecten-Belustigung. A Family Enterprise”

12:15–13:00 Lunch break

13:00–14:00 Closing remarks and discussion

Reference:
CONF: Hand-Colouring of Natural History Illustrations (online/Konstanz, 26-27 Feb 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 9, 2025 (accessed Nov 29, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/43636>.