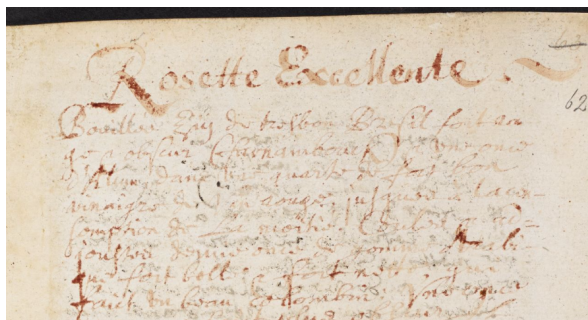


Workshop Art & Knowledge: **Reconstructing *tinctoria* recipes – Reperforming writing technology experiments – Replicating experimental documentation techniques**
source: [“Mayerne Manuscript” MS Sloane 2052](#) (ca. 1620-46)

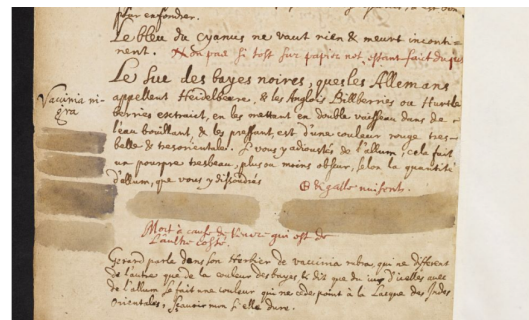
Organisers: Jenny Boulboulé (teaching materials prepared in collaboration with Jo Kirby Atkinson)

This workshop explores “*tinctoria*” recipes from a seventeenth-century set of collected notes that gained fame as a unique source for (Netherlandish) color making and painting techniques. The so-called “Mayerne Manuscript” ([MS Sloane 2052](#): *Pictoria, Sculptoria, Tinctoria et quae subalternarum Artium*, ca.1620-1646) has been compiled by and for Sir Theodore de Mayerne, an influential court physician and prolific writer. This multilingual collection of artisanal recipes, today at the British Library, contains leaves in a variety of formats written in several hands. Mayerne collected recipes from famous Dutch artists, such as Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck, but also from many other artisans and craftsmen of his time. This collection of handwritten notes has first been transcribed, and translated, and published in its entirety in 1901. Since then several editions and translations have been published that serve today as a much-used 'handbook' in conservation studies and technical art history for the study of Netherlandish painting techniques.

However, Mayerne’s MS is not only a repository for Baroque art technologies, but also a rich source document of an early modern investigative, material, and manual practice of *how to study* artistic practices and *how to document* experimental recipe trials and observations using different colored inks. The folios 23v-26r and 62r materially display Mayerne's practice of close observation and testing, turning the folio into a site for manual experimentation with natural colorants, see images below. We will reperform recipes for *Rosette tresbonne* and *Rosette Excellente* and experiment with different additives that testify to Mayerne's keen interest in art and writing technologies of his time. We hope that a reconstruction of these folio pages will give us deeper insights into past epistemic practices and the challenges of their translations into print. The reconstructions will also raise questions related to seasonality, substitutions, measurement indications, and ethnographic methods for the study of artisanal practices.



[@British Library MS Sloane 2052 fol. 62r](#)



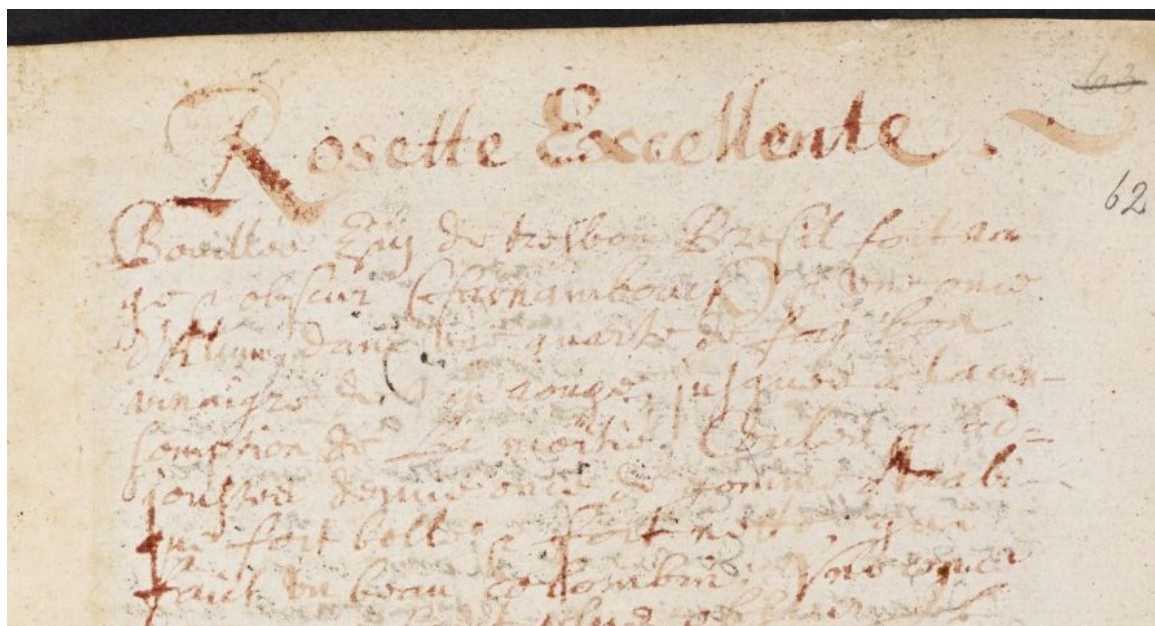
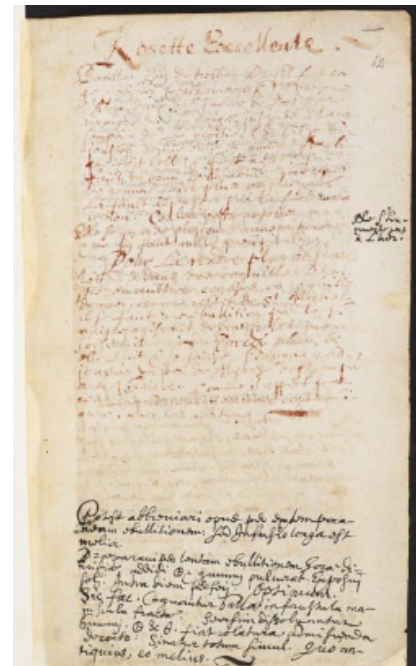
[@British Library MS Sloane 2052 fol. 23r](#)

Folio 62r

Rosette Excellente

Bouillés iij [3 ounces] de tresbon Bresil fort rouge & obscur (Farnambouec) & une once d'Alun dans une quarte de fort bon vinaigre de Vin rouge, jusques à la consommation de la moitié. Coulés et adjoustés demie once de gomme Arabique fort belle & fort nette qui faict un beau columbin. Une once de gomme faict plus obscur. Il la fault adjouster sur la fin de la coction. Coulés votre rosette. Elle se garde plusieurs années bonne & ne s'y faict nulle precipitation.

Pour la rendre plus obscure jettés dedans des coquilles d'huistres ou austres conches ou coquilles de mer, comme celles de St. Michel. Is se faict une ebullition par le Vinaigre agissant dessus et la liqueur s'obscurcit. Encore plus et elle luit et se seiche, si vous y adjoustéa un peu de Myrrhe¹ destrempée avec Vinaigre. Comme il appert par ces Lignes ecrites avec ceste liqueur, avec les additions.



¹ The previous recipe *Cynabre coulant pour Ecrire* on fol. 61v, gives the following details for adding Myrrhe: *adjoustés a cela de la Myrrhe trespure, dissolte [...] à part, & meslée bien: fort peu de myrrhe suffit, comme la grosseur d'une petite febue ordinaire, ou d'un gros pois, pour accommoder une once de Cynabre.*

and four ounces gum Arabic previously dissolved in alum or water and strained through linen. Mix it and let the strained liquid sit in a cold place.

A second excellent ink can be made if just as much liquid as above is added to the [leftover?] dregs. Allow it to steep a few days, boil as above. Add vitriol and gum.

(Ms. p. 62)

EXCELLENT ROSETTE.

(130)

Boil three ounces of the best very red and dark pernambuco wood and one ounce of alum in a quart of very good red wine vinegar, till it is boiled down by half. Strain it, add half an ounce of the most beautiful, and purest gum Arabic, this gives a beautiful columbine; one ounce of gum makes the color too dark. It is added at the end of the boiling. Strain the rosette; it keeps well for a year and forms no precipitate.

It does not become damp in the air.

To make it darker throw in oyster shells or other bivalves or ocean snails, for example such as come from St. Michel; it bubbles up from the vinegar which reacts to it and the liquid becomes darker. [It gets] even more lustrous and desiccating if you add a little myrrh mixed with vinegar, which these lines show which are written with this liquid together with the additive.

[Continuation of No. 129]

The work can be shortened by immediate boiling, but long soaking is better.

I let it boil for half an hour, added the vitriol and pulverized gum and set it in the sun, finished it in one day; [it's] superb.

Make it in the following way. The gallnuts, broken in moderately small pieces are boiled.

(Ms. p. 62
verso is
blank)

Gum, vitriol, and alum dissolved separately, and straining done and the decoction added. Everything is then poured together; the older it is, the better.

(Ms. p. 63)

MINIATURE PAINTING.

(131)

To paint illuminations on well prepared, very smooth vellum, one should before hand rub a thin layer of white onto it with fish glue and then paint on that. This layer hinders the peeling of the paints and they will stick better.

[ACCORDING TO A] CONVERSATION [WITH] M. BLONDEL.

(132)

Take vellum from the skin of a stillborn animal or one that died in the womb, and so that this skin be thin enough, scrape it as much as possible with freshly broken glass that cuts like a razor, transparent, so the skin looks like Venetian glass.

Folio 23r

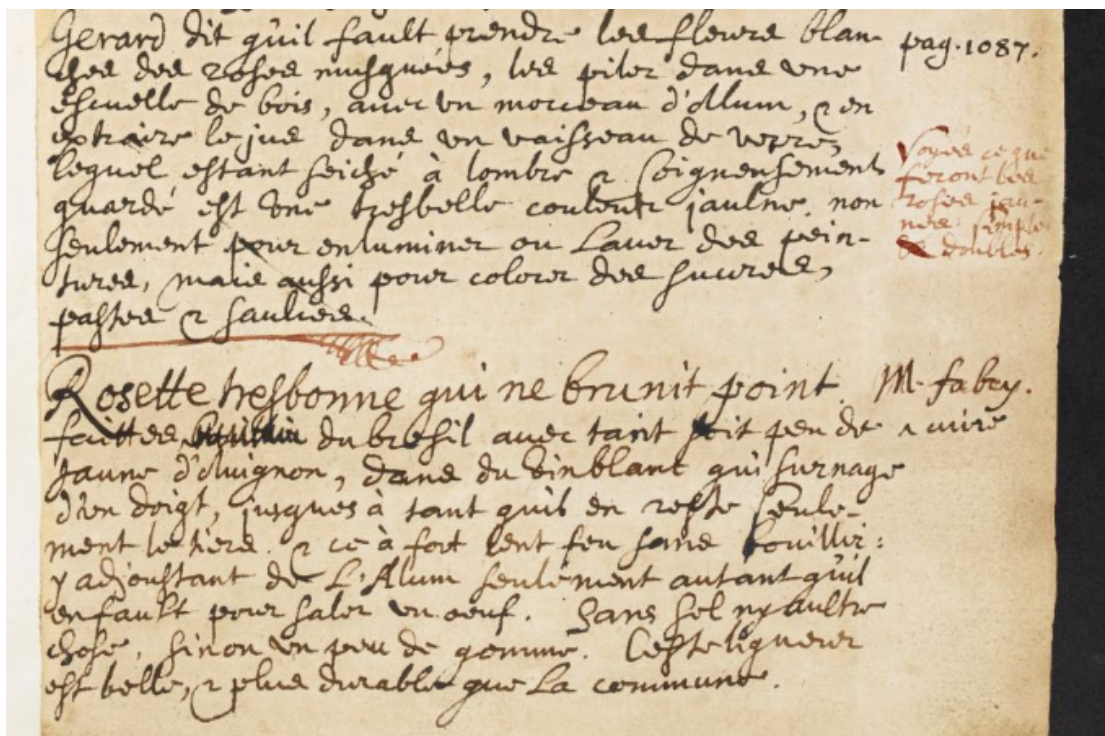
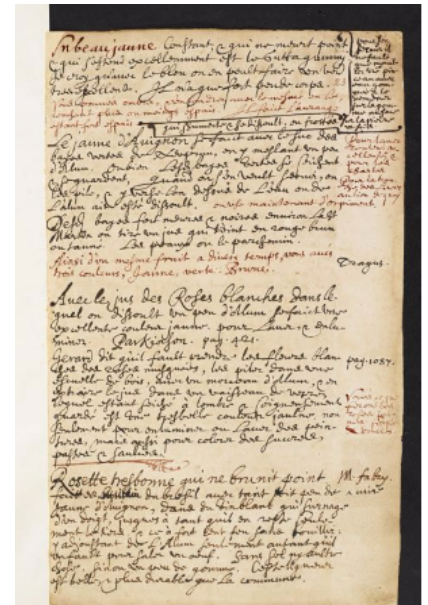
[...]

Le jaune d'Avignon se fait avec le suc de bayes verte de Neprun, en y meslant un peu d'Alum. Ou bien lesdictes bayes vertes se seichent y se gardent. Quand on se veult servir, on les pile, & y verse-lon dessus de l'eau ou de l'Alum ait esté dissolt. Desdictes bayes fort meures & noires environ la St. Martin; on tire un jus qui teint en rouge brun ou tanne les peaux our le parchemin. Ainsi d'un mesme fruit a divers temps, vous avés trois couleurs, jaune, verte, brune.

Rosette tresbonne qui ne brunit point.

Margin right next to title: M. Fabry

Faittes cuire du bresil avec tant soit peu de jaune d'Avignon, dans du vin blanc qui surnage d'un doigt, jusques à tant qu'il en reste seulement le tiers, & ce à fort lent feu sans bouillir: y adjoustant de l'Alum seulement autant qu'il en faut pour saler un oeuf. Sans sel ny aultre chose, sinon un peu de gomme. Ceste liqueur est belle & plus durable que la commune.



A very beautiful blue for illuminating. Take leek blossoms, but only those of a velvet violet color, cut off all yellow with a scissors, press out the juice and condense it by storing it in a bladder like the green. This is a very suitable color, excellent on paper.

See whether a little alum should be added.

A very beautiful blue for writing with a pen: tournesol [or] litmus with a very little indigo dissolved in ethanol.

Red ink. Grind vermilion as finely as possible with urine. This liquid makes it thick.

Put it in a glass container without any additive. It forms like a mass that hardens. When you want to use it, make a little hole with a tool and dissolve it with a little gum Arabia.

(Ms. p. 23) A very beautiful durable yellow that does not fade and can be excellently applied with a brush is gamboge. I believe with blue an excellent green can be achieved. It just has very little body.

You can shade or undercoat with it, by applying it more or less thickly. In very thick layers it produces an orange.

The yellow of Avignon is made from un-ripe buckthorn berries [see above] by mixing in some alum.

Or the cited berries are dried and stored.

Before they are needed they are crushed and put in a solution of alum and water.

From the same berries, very ripe, and black a juice is drawn in the vicinity of St. Martin which dyes skins and parchment reddish brown or chestnut brown.

So three colors come from the same fruit at different times: yellow, green, brown.

From the sap of the white rose in which a little alum is dissolved emerges an excellent yellow paint for glazing and illumination.

Parkinson p. 421.

Gerard says the white blossoms of the nutmeg rose [musk rose]. [*Rosa muscatta*] must be taken, crushed on a wooden block next to a piece of alum and the juice extracted. The pigment is to be dried in the shade and when carefully stored gives a very beautiful yellow paint, not only for illumination and glazing, but also for coloring sugared dough and jellied meat.

VERY GOOD ROSE PINK THAT WILL NOT TURN BROWN.

Cook Brazil wood with a very little buckthorn yellow of Avignon in white wine that stands a finger's breadth above the wood on a low fire without simmering until only a third is left, then as much alum as it takes

(41)
M. Fabri saw in the
Pharmacop.
Cella.

Of the same.

(42)
Idem.

Grind 2 or 3 hours.

(43)
To use it you just have
to wet a brush with gum
water and rub it on the
gamboge, or grind it on
the stone as you know.

(44)
For glazing a superb
color and for cards, for
book edges in place
of the now customary
orpiment.

(45)

p. 1087.

See what simple
and double yellow roses
will make.

(46)

M. Fabri.

to salt an egg. Add neither salt nor anything else except a little gum. This liquid is beautiful and more lasting than the usual.

(Ms. p. 23
verso)

That in
brackets is
crossed out
in Ms.

[Cyanoblue.] The cornflowers that are found in the fields provide a very beautiful blue when their juice is pressed out without any additive and it is mixed with alum. The color does not change, is also beautiful without addition when it is used, but after drying it turns paler. When you add a drop of oil of tartar it turns a beautiful sea green that comes out for the moment but spoils a little later and turns a dirty yellow, like dirty ocher.

I have taken some of the juice and poured litmus or tournesol over it. At first it reddened a little, later, though, it produced a blue like indigo, neither too deep nor too bright, that is very good for undercoating for the first plant sap blue.

If you pour a little oil of tartar over the first blue that has before hand been mixed with a little alum, it then produces a superb green, as if it were verdit (verd de gris).

The first blue mixed with gamboge makes a dirty green, good for shading. Take saffron tincture one part, cornflower blue three parts, mix this and add one or two drops of oil of tartar, thus it makes a strong lively green, like sap green, which in drying becomes no less dark and is good for undercoating.

Cyanoblue is good for nothing and fades immediately. Not so quickly on clean paper if it is prepared from the juice [alone].

The juice of the blackberry, which the Germans call Heidelbeere and the English call bilberries or hurtleberries, is extracted by simmering [the berries] in a double boiler with water and pressing it out. It is a very beautiful and luminous red color. When alum is added a very beautiful purple emerges, more or less dark according to the amount of alum.

Vitriol and gall apples spoil it.

[color test]

[color test]

In his herbal *Gerard* speaks of *vaccinia rubra* that is distinguished from the other only by the color of the berries, and says that a color is made from the juice together with alum that is not inferior to Indian lake, that is, when it is hard.

(Ms. p. 24)

PREPARATION OF THIS COLOR FROM BLACKBERRY.

November 4, 1646. In a tin vessel on a good fire I put a quantity of bilberries that were black on the outside and columbine on the inner pulp; I let them simmer in pure well water until more than half the water was consumed. The decoction remained very colored, and was put through a

(47)

(48)

Vaccinia nigra.

(49)

Lost Secrets of Flemish Painting

Including the first Complete English Translation
of the De Mayerne Manuscript, B.M. Sloane 2052

With Text, Commentary and Drawings by
Donald C. Fels, Jr.
and Paintings by Joseph H. Sulkowski

With German translations by Richard Bedell, from the Original 1901
German Version of the De Mayerne Manuscript.

Taken from
Quellen für Maltechnik während der Renaissance in deren Folgezeit
by Ernst Berger

And with French Translations from the Original Text in French of
B.M. Sloane 2052 by Rebecca McClung

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