

Thinking and Experiencing Techne

Victoria and Albert-Royal College of Art Students

2016

How to Cite

Victoria and Albert Museum-Royal College of Art Students. “Thinking and Experiencing Techne.” In *Secrets of Craft and Nature in Renaissance France. A Digital Critical Edition and English Translation of BnF Ms. Fr. 640*, edited by Making and Knowing Project, Pamela H. Smith, Naomi Rosenkranz, Tianna Helena Uchacz, Tillmann Taape, Clément Godbarge, Sophie Pitman, Jenny Boulboulle, Joel Klein, Donna Bilak, Marc Smith, and Terry Catapano. New York: Making and Knowing Project, 2020. https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/essays/ann_513_ad_20 (https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/essays/ann_513_ad_20). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7916/3m2d-gh51> (<https://doi.org/10.7916/3m2d-gh51>)

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Since Spring 2015, the Making and Knowing Project's laboratory seminar and the Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art Postgraduate Programme in the History of Design have collaborated on researching and reconstructing Ms. Fr. 640's recipes. Students and team members have worked together on counterfeit coral, varnishes, and the blue pigment the author-practitioner calls "*azur*."

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Since Spring 2015, the Making and Knowing Project's laboratory seminar and the Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art Postgraduate Programme in the History of Design have collaborated on researching and reconstructing Ms. Fr. 640's recipes. Students and team members have worked together on counterfeit coral, varnishes, and the blue pigment the author-practitioner calls "*azur*."

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Terry Catapano. New York: Making and Knowing Project, 2020. https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/essays/ann_513_ad_20 (https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/essays/ann_513_ad_20). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7916/3m2d-gh51> (<https://doi.org/10.7916/3m2d-gh51>)

Collaboration

Since Spring 2015, the Making and Knowing Project has collaborated with Dr. Marta Ajmar, Dr. Simona Valeriani, and the students of the Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art Postgraduate Programme in the History of Design (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/history-of-design-postgraduate-programme>) (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/history-of-design-postgraduate-programme>) to integrate research on Ms. Fr. 640 into the course content of the V&A/RCA MA and PhD program.¹

2015–16

In 2015–16, the Making and Knowing Project's lab seminar students and History of Design students had occasional group skype meetings to review their respective research and

reconstructions.² In 2015, Alessandra Chessa, PhD student in the History of Design program, researched and wrote an essay on “Counterfeit Coral” (fol. 3r) for the critical edition.

2016–17 Varnishes

In 2016–17, in their course module on “Thinking and Experiencing Techne,” History of Design students and instructor Dr. Simona Valeriani worked with V&A furniture conservators to reconstruct two varnish recipes, following instructions in Ms. Fr. 640 on fol. 101v (<https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/folios/101v/f/101v/tl>):

Varnish

The Germans make minium boil well in linseed oil, & to give it the body of varnish, they mix in thoroughly pulverized yellow amber.

and on 73v (<https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/folios/73v/f/73v/tl>):

Varnish

Take two ounces of spike lavender oil & one ounce of sandarac. Take a clean pot, & warm it, & then take it from the fire, and next put the drugs inside, and next put them into a vial, & apply it on the wood.

These varnish reconstructions replicated some of the experiences of Making and Knowing students in reconstructing varnish recipes in Ms. Fr. 640.3

Varnish Reconstructions

The V&A/RCA students produced a number of blog posts and films about these reconstructions, that can be found in the V&A blog under “Thinking and Experiencing Techne” at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/tag/techne> (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/tag/techne>).

Two students, Vivien Chan and Charlotte Slark, made three films about the varnish reconstructions:

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Vivien Chan and Charlotte Slark, “Filming the History of Design Experimental Lab Class,” Victoria and Albert Museum/Royal College of Art Postgraduate Programme in the History of Design, V&A blog, “Thinking and Experiencing Techne,” <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/projects/filming-the-history-of-design-experimental-lab-class> (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/projects/filming-the-history-of-design-experimental-lab-class>).

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Vivien Chan and Charlotte Slark, “Thinking and Experiencing Techne. Episode 1: Copal Varnish,” <https://youtu.be/Qupwmqlky3s> (<https://youtu.be/Qupwmqlky3s>).

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*Vivien Chan and Charlotte Slark,
“Thinking and Experiencing Techne.
Episode 2: Amber Varnish and Lavender
Varnish,” <https://youtu.be/vXW9sq3S-WM>*

(<https://youtu.be/vXW9sq3S-WM>).

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*Vivien Chan and Charlotte Slark,
“Thinking and Experiencing Techne.
Episode 3: Brushing out the Varnishes,”
<https://youtu.be/WCKIWkqF6DY>*

(<https://youtu.be/WCKIWkqF6DY>).

Other Collaborations

Like the Making and Knowing Project students, the V&A/RCA students considered reconstruction and authenticity in “Historical Culinary Reconstruction” exercises, and, in 2017, when the Making and Knowing Project was testing blue pigments to gain insight into the author-practitioner’s use of *azur*,⁴ the History of Design program worked with Hamilton Kerr conservator, Dr. Spike Bucklow, on the grinding of azurite to make a deep blue pigment. See the processes and results of all

these collaborations on the V&A blog, “Thinking and Experiencing Techne” at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/tag/techne>

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