



The Making and Knowing Project

Intersections of Craft Making and Scientific Knowing

Painting esmail d'azur in oil (Folio 11r)

This is a secret that is hardly known to common painters. Some take the most delicate they can & grind it with ceruse, which binds it, and next prick with an awl in several places the area they want to paint with *azur d'esmail*, in order that the oil enters & leaks in, & does ^{not} cause the azure, which in itself is heavy, to run. Others lay the panel flat & put down the azure on it, which is also done in distemper. The main thing is to grind it well on marble, and before that, to have washed it thoroughly. Some grind it ~~with~~ thoroughly with an egg yolk & then wash it in five or six waters and lay it on not with a paintbrush, which would be too soft, but with a brush thoroughly softened & crimped, & layering it thickly as if one were putting it down with a trowel; settling down it evens out and flattens. I have experienced that grinding *azur d'esmail* with egg yolk & next washing it in several waters is good. However, it loses a little of its vividness in the grinding of it. I have also washed it in several waters &, when it had settled a little, I removed the water, still ~~a~~ blue, with a sponge and squeezed it into another vessel ~~thus~~ ^{where it settled, & from the residue} I had the ash, flower, and subtlest part of the azure without grinding it, which is the best, for in the grinding of it, it loses some of its tint. Those who make it in Germany compound it like enamel, in large pieces which they pestle, & pass through several sieves & wash.

To make azures beautiful, they wash or soak them in a rock water, as they call it; it is a water distilled from mines where azure or *vert d'azur* is found, which distills naturally through the veins of the mountain or is distilled through an alembic ~~par~~ from mineral stones of azure or copper.

^{Azure} ashes are only good for landscapes because they die in oil. Only true azure holds on. *Azur d'esmail* cannot be worked if it is too coarse. Try it, therefore, on the fingernail or the oil palette. If it ~~illegible~~ happens to be sandy, do not grind it except with the egg yolk or, better yet, wash it in clear water & with a sponge remove the colored water after it starts to go to the bottom, and in this manner you will extract the very delicate flower, which will be easy to work with.

Secrets of Craft and Nature in
Renaissance France Link



Azurite Resources Link





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Questions for consideration

Observation:

- What does the stone look and feel like?
- Other than the blue parts of the stone, what other inclusions (different types of stone) can you see?
- When the stone is ground, what does the powder look like?
- How does it behave in water?
- What do the particles look like?

Embodied experience:

- What kind of movements do you use in each step of the process (grinding, adding water, pouring, painting out)?
- How does it feel to grind the azurite stone?
- How does it change when you add water?
- Can you manipulate the separation of the particles? How? (time, amount, ratio of water, speed of pouring)
- How many different “grades” can you get?
- When painting the different grades out, is there a difference between the paler and darker colors?
- Is there a difference in the way each paint wants to be handled or flows off the brush?

Artisanal knowledge:

- What kind of knowledge would you need in order to prepare, apply, handle, appreciate these materials?
- How might you acquire that knowledge today and historically?
- Asking new questions:
- What new questions does this experience cause you to ask about paintings or other works of art in general?