

THE COLOUR OF MEDIEVAL PORTUGUESE ILLUMINATIONS: MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Maria J. Melo

REQUIMTE-CQFB and Department of Conservation and Restoration, Faculty of Sciences and Technology, New University Lisbon, Campus da Caparica, 2829-516 Caparica, Portugal. mjm@dq.fct.unl.pt

In the past five years, we have undertaken a systematic study of the materials and methods of Portuguese medieval illuminations [1,2]. In first, the experimental design was optimized and as a result information concerning the materials and techniques was obtained for "Lorvão Apocalypse" and "The book of birds", both from the twelfth century. Powerful complementary techniques such as microRaman, microFTIR, microXRF, microXRD were used and new techniques such as microspectrofluorimetry were developed. These techniques can be used in situ or in previously collected micro-samples. During the second, an ongoing project, we proposed to access the existence of a correlation between the evolution and genealogy of form and the evolution and genealogy of colour for medieval manuscripts. It was concluded that, the green colour is one of the important colours in which concerns the identity of Portuguese medieval illumination and the influences it has integrated.

Colour is still a relatively neglected aspect of the history of Western art, although John Gage and Michel Pastoureau have made paramount contributions in the past decades, such as "Colour and culture" and "Couleur, images, symboles", respectively. Both scholars conclude that the study of colour in Western art developed along broadly anthropological lines is likely to be the most fruitful one. "Storia dei colori" by Manlio Brusatin is also a landmark. Based on our analysis of the Romanesque manuscripts it was found that colour was clearly an element of identity of Portuguese illuminations, beyond the influences from Burgundy with the Cistercians, and from the south of France with the Augustine orders. We are also convinced that carried out in specific context, within an interdisciplinary approach, these studies will bring new insights for the story of medieval Portuguese manuscripts.

In this presentation an overview of the main results concerning the materials and techniques used for colour production in Portuguese medieval illuminations will be presented, and the main findings highlighted.

(1) "An interdisciplinary approach to the study of colour in Portuguese manuscript illuminations", POCTI/EAT/33782/2000

(2) "The identity of Portuguese medieval manuscript illumination in the European context", PTDC/EAT/65445/2006

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