

THE STRASBURG FAMILY TEXTS: ORIGINALITY AND SURVIVAL A SURVEY OF ILLUMINATING TECHNIQUES IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH GERMANY

Sylvie Neven

Département des sciences historiques, Histoire de l'Art et Archéologie, Université de Liège. Quai Roosevelt, 1B, B-4000 Liège, Belgium. Sylvie.Neven@ulg.ac.be

For a long time, the *Strasburg Manuscript* has been seen as one of the oldest German-language sources containing instructions on North European illuminating techniques. Lost in the 1870 Strasburg Library fire, the text survives in a nineteenth-century transcription made by Sir Charles Eastlake. Relevant studies like those of Emil Ploss and more recently those of Doris Oltrogge have highlighted the existence of texts with very similar contents, grouping them under the name of the 'Strasburg Family'. Since the appearance of these studies, a clearly defined corpus of manuscripts has been established as belonging to this family and new textual evidence has been discovered.

The artistic instructions of these manuscripts are mostly dedicated to painting and illuminating and, especially, to the preparation of colours. A great number of recipes are also concerned with suitable combinations of pigments and specific binding agents used in illumination.

Thanks to a philological and codicological analysis, we can propose not only a geographical area in which the manuscripts of the so-called Strasburg tradition were produced but also a chronological range from 1400 to 1560.

Through these texts, we thus have a survey of artistic materials and techniques within a precise framework. Moreover, it is now possible to make correlations between some specific practices and local workshops of illuminators.

Comparison with a larger corpus of medieval artistic texts emanating from German-speaking countries allows us to highlight the originality and the newness of certain processes for the manufacture of colours described in the Strasburg Family texts. In addition, it is also possible to relate the history of a number of prescriptions to, and to correlate them with, more widely diffused techniques.