



The Dyer's Handbook: Memoirs of an 18th Century Master Colourist

Dominique Cardon

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Persian blue, pomegranate flower, spiny lobster, wine soup, pale flesh, dove breast, golden wax, grass green, green sand, rotten olive, modest plum, agate, rich French gray, gunpowder of the English.....just some of the color names of old fabric to fire the imagination. Memoirs on Dyeing concerns a unique manuscript from the eighteenth century; a dyers memoirs from Languedoc, containing recipes for dyes with corresponding color samples. It is an exceptional document, hugely rare and of great significance not only to textile historians but dyers and colorists today, as thanks to the information in the manuscript the colors can be reproduced exactly, with the same ingredients, or reproduced using modern techniques by matching the color samples. To the English translation of the text, together with facsimile pages reproduced in color from the original manuscript, are added essays meant to situate it in its historical, economic and technological contexts. For those historians who have long been fascinated by the change in scale and the amount of innovation that occurred in woollen cloth production in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries, the Memoirs on Dyeing bring firsthand insight into the daily preoccupations and tasks of a key actor in the success story of the Languedocian broadcloth production specially devised for export to the Levant. Even non-specialists may be interested in understanding the clever management and technical organization that made it possible for the author to produce, dye, finish, pack and export up to 1,375 pieces of superfine broadcloth per year, representing nearly 51 km of cloth.

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