



The Stories That Colours Tell: Historical Paintings, Dyes and Varnishes

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Message from the Guest Editors

Dear Colleagues,

Pigments, dyes and varnishes tell many stories. Some pigments were only used for rich clients, artists were unable to give others up despite their toxicity, and others required long manufacturing and purification processes. Sometimes, the artist himself prepared them or some workshop people helped to ground them, although not too much to lose the coloring strength. The skilful use of colors has made it possible to create the works that we can admire today in museums and on the street, thanks to graffiti art.

Often the paintings were covered with layers of varnish, obtained from the processing of terpene resins which served to protect the paintings. But today resins are also found inside ancient ceramic vases used as waterproofing or to give a particular fragrance to wine.

To tell these stories, it is necessary to recognize these materials within the works which can be obtained through non-invasive and invasive investigations. XRF and multispectral imaging analysis may be followed by Raman spectroscopy, SERS, FTIR, SEM-EDS and HPLC techniques are only some examples of investigations which can allow us to recognize them within the paintings.

