

## [CFP for Renaissance Society of America 2020: Collecting Color in Renaissance Science](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

July 20, 2019

Location:

Pennsylvania, United States

Subject Fields:

History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Early Modern History and Period Studies

### **Collecting Color in Renaissance Science**

A sponsored session at the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 2-4 April, 2020

The history of color has been an important subject in the recent history of science, lying as it does at the intersection of craft, alchemy, the secrets of nature and emerging experimental science. Scholars have explored color in particular disciplines such as alchemy and natural history as well as more holistic trends such as color worlds and ways of picturing in science. Color has yet to be a focus, however, in the history of collecting and information management in early modern science. Naturalists experimenting with color often did so across a wide range of substances and color phenomena, many of which travelled lengthy itineraries, subject to issues of translation, cultural reinterpretation, and subjective perception. Collectors featured colorful, opalescent and luminous phenomena among their curiosities; the Ulm merchant Christoph Weickmann displayed, for example, a chameleon, colorful boa constrictors, earths, metals, gems, corals, shells, a rainbow-producing prism, American featherwork, Japanese mother-of-pearl, Chinese inks, Tyrian purple, and various viols of wonderful liquors: a “wonderful violet liquor” that was sensitive to warmth, an “element glass” of four differently colored liquors that, not matter how shaken, would always return to their appropriate levels, and a sapphire-blue liquor that would turn transparent when another liquor was added to it, and regain it with the addition of another uncolored liquor. Such color phenomena were often fragile and fugitive; the curiosity cabinet has to be resurrected as a site of color collection. What forms of color and optical phenomena were brought together, through what networks? How were colors preserved, cross-referenced and managed for the purposes of natural study? How was color displayed and demonstrated? Possible topics include:

- color phenomena in cabinets of curiosities
- systems of color use in alchemical manuscripts
- apothecary shops as experimental sites of color
- color charts
- color change and fluorescence
- global itineraries of color
- the use of color in medical diagnosis
- chemical gardens
- experimentation with inks, paints, dyes, cosmetics, varnish, lacquer, glazes, and glass
- pedagogical use of color displays and experiments

To propose a paper, please send a paper title (15-word maximum), an abstract (150-word maximum), curriculum vitae (.pdf or .doc upload, no longer than 5 pages), PhD completion date (past or expected), and full name, current affiliation, and email address by July 20 to Vera Keller at [vkeller@uoregon.edu](mailto:vkeller@uoregon.edu). This session is sponsored by the division representative for science and medicine and is therefore approved for the program. For general submission guidelines, see: <https://www.rsa.org/page/2020SubmissionsGuide#indiv>

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