

« De blanc et de noir ». La grisaille dans les arts de la couleur en France à la fin du Moyen Âge (1400-1530)

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Research theme

[3. Transfers, exchanges, movements in European and extra-European areas](#)

[4. Actors, institutions, networks: socio-cultural conditions of artistic activity](#)

[5. Materials, techniques, crafts: theoretical and practical approaches to artistic making](#)

Thesis

Summary

This survey sheds light on the phenomenon of grisaille in the polychrome environment in which it was practised and perceived at the end of the Middle Ages. It offers the first analysis of the development of grisaille in France between 1430 and 1515, taking into account the challenges posed by the reduction of colour in all the media of the arts of colour. The diversity of these works leads, in the first section, to a vast documentary survey aimed at understanding the ways in which grisaille painting could be named, thought about and reflected upon over a period extended from 1350 to 1600. The analysis demonstrates the conventional force of the expression “*de blanc et de noir*” (“*of white and black*”), which defines a chromatic mode distinct from that of the polychrome work. This formulation therefore covers a wide range of effects and admits of degrees of coloration that are sometimes very significant. On this basis, the second and third sections highlight the coexistence of two distinct manners of working “of white and black” in works painted or imported into France from 1430 to 1515. By adopting the point of view of painters and their clients, the study aims to define the ways in which these two manners were used and disseminated: one imitating works of stone, the other limiting the colour reduction to the hues of the draperies.

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