

WORKSHOP – IN DEPTH ANALYSES ON OTTAVIANO NELLI

“AT NELLI'S WORKSHOP.
LET'S MAKE COLOURS”



Regione Umbria

Realizzato con il contributo della Regione Umbria

IN DEPTH ANALYSIS



OTTAVIANO NELLI

- Schooled in the late Gothic culture, Ottaviano Nelli was an absolute protagonist of the 15th century in the city of Gubbio. He knew how to blend local tradition with elements taken from Lombard painting and French miniature, developing a personal language close to the solutions of Lorenzo Salimbeni and Gentile da Fabriano. In Gubbio, where he was repeatedly appointed consul of the city, he directed a very active workshop that exerted a certain influence in Umbria and the Marches.
- «*Ottaviano Nelli's pictorial strength was his ability to cross registers and mix levels, the music of the angels and the sour smell of the stables, the sacred hymn and the irreverent masquerade, the lilial tenderness of his Madonnas and the crudity of the blood in streams of martyrs, the melancholy sweetness and the smug vulgarity*»

CHIESA DEI LAICI



CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DEI LAICI

- The hypogea oratory of the beaten retains some of the frescoes with scenes of the dramatic representation of the Passion of Christ, frescoed around 1470 by a pupil of Nelli.

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In a video the virtual reconstruction of the original environment is presented

- The original decoration, some of which has been lost, also included a statue of the dead Christ in a sepulchral niche. On the occasion of the exhibition, a video presents the virtual reconstruction of the complete crypt.

THE VIRTUAL RELOCATION



- The representation must have started on the left wall facing the altar with the Last Supper, followed by the Oration in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Washing of Feet, while the Flagellation, two fragmentary scenes with the Exit from Jerusalem and the Ascent to Calvary and finally the Nailing to the Cross occupy the right wall.
- The Crucifixion is painted on the altar wall while the centrepiece of the dramatic narrative seems to be the Lamentation over the Dead Christ.

- "What did painters use before the advent of tube paints?" This is how our journey of discovery into the secrets of Ottaviano Nelli's painting begins. In ancient times, painters made their own colors by mixing natural substances according to jealously guarded recipes: they used finely ground hard stones, spices, herbs and flowers crushed and left to infuse.
The aim of this workshop is precisely that of retracing this creative, at times almost magical, path of pigments and binders.

- After looking at the fresco of the Madonna del Belvedere, the young artists will try their hand at preparing the colors they will use to paint. Yolk, vinegar, natural pigments and spices are the materials that will form the basis of their special tempera.

AT NELLI'S WORKSHOP



PIGMENTS

- Pigments are substances that are used for coloring and do not dissolve in water, but must be mixed with other substances. Throughout history, starting as early as ancient times, artists have used different expedients, techniques and recipes to obtain them.

PIGMENTS



TEMPERA

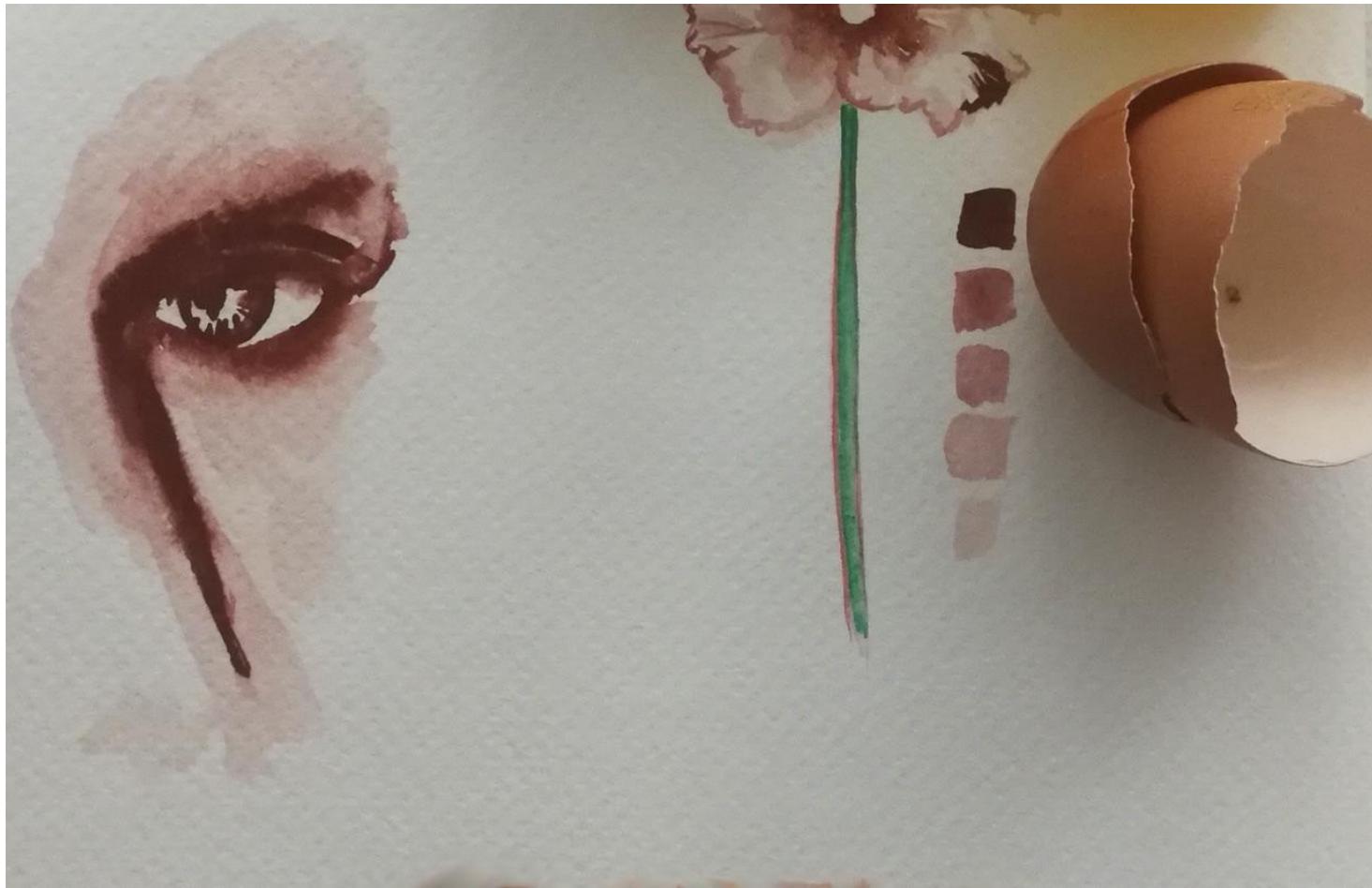
Tempera is perhaps the oldest painting technique: it was used by prehistoric man, who mixed earths of various colors with vegetable and animal substances to make a paste that was then spread on rocks. In the Middle Ages, until the 15th century, colors were made up of powders called pigments that were bound with egg yolk, milk and fig latex. The color thus obtained was applied in very fine brushstrokes on wooden boards prepared with a thin layer of plaster.

EGG YOLK TEMPERA

- Egg yolk tempera is an all-Italian invention invented and perfected by 15th century painters. All the artists of the time (up to the 17th century) used it to create their extraordinary works. For example: Giotto painted the Scrovegni chapel with egg tempera, Botticelli his splendid 'Primavera', etc.

- If you would also like to try this technique, follow this guide to learn how to prepare egg yolk tempera.

EGG YOLK TEMPERA



THE RECIPE

- A fresh egg
- Demineralised (or distilled) water 30 g
- Pure alcohol 95° 5 g
- An airtight glass jar
- Powder pigments

PREPARATION

- Now you can start the preparation. First you have to separate the yolk from the egg white. This operation must be carried out with extreme care and attention, to prevent the two parts from mixing irretrievably. In fact, as a result of this operation, the egg white could compromise the good exit of the tempera. For this reason, to eliminate any residue, we recommend that you roll the yolk gently on a sheet of kitchen paper.
- Add 30 grams of demineralised water to the yolk, or use distilled water as an alternative. Close the jar and shake vigorously for at least five minutes. Add alcohol to maintain the mixture.

PREPARATION

- Now you can mix your mixture with the colored powders. This is called "mestica". With the help of a spatula, you mix the pure pigments of the desired shades with a few drops of water.
- The resulting paste, which has the consistency of the temperas you normally buy in tubes, can be stored in glass jars, covered with a layer of water.

Camphor is usually added for long term storage.

AND NOW, HAVE FUN!!!

I wonder if Ottaviano Nelli used this procedure?



Made with the contribution of the Umbria Region

