

General Press Release - *Secrets of Craft and Nature*

The Making and Knowing Project (www.makingandknowing.org) celebrates the publication of *Secrets of Craft and Nature in Renaissance France. A Digital Critical Edition and English Translation of BnF Ms. Fr. 640*. The anonymous manuscript from 1580s Toulouse (France) includes over 900 “recipes” for colormaking, metal casting, and medical remedies—to name just a few. Created over the course of five years with the help of more than 400 students, scholars, artists, and researchers, the edition shares new insights into making and materials, from a time when artists were scientists.

Published for the first time in English translation (and French transcription), the Edition includes a dual-pane reading display, a glossary, commentary, and a list of entries providing helpful sixteenth-century context for a modern audience. Research on a technical manuscript cannot be limited to archival texts. In order to fully explore the world of Renaissance artisans, it was necessary to recreate the recipes. A laboratory seminar at Columbia University allowed over 75 undergraduate and graduate students to learn the importance of historical reconstruction and hands-on research. Through this process of “making” and “doing,” students and Project staff alike made new discoveries and found new avenues for exploration. The result is over 100 research essays from students and scholars that study the manuscript in detail. These multimedia essays include images, videos, and field notes to help bring the laboratory experience to life.

Secrets of Craft and Nature in Renaissance France is unique not just in its scholarship, but also in its methods. The Making and Knowing Project is an experiment in intensive collaboration, the integration of teaching and original research, and hands-on work in laboratories and classrooms. It seeks to reimagine the 21st-century university through interdisciplinary collaborations, hands-on techniques in the humanities, and new questions about past and present.

The digital critical edition is openly accessible at <http://edition640.makingandknowing.org>.