

Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz
Making and Knowing Project

Annotation for BnF Ms. Fr. 640, fol. 131r:
“Molded letter paper”

Illustrations

Fig. 1: Waterproof Ink

Waterproof ink, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: The waterproof ink, from the Higgins company, was selected because it would not run when the paper was moistened with brandy.

Fig. 2: Iron Gall Ink

Iron gall ink, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: Iron gall ink from the Phoenix-based company “Old World Inks” was selected because it was understood to closely approximate typical Renaissance ink recipes.

Fig. 3: Gum arabic solution

Gum arabic solution, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: A solution of gum arabic from the company Windsor & Newton proved not to thicken the ink, a fact that is hinted on the packaging, which indicates that this solution is typically used for watercolor paints.

Fig. 4: Gum Arabic Text

Gum arabic written text, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz

Caption: The mixture of ink and gum arabic solution in the upper right corner was not viscous. When the mixture was applied to paper in the shape of an ampersand, it did not create a raised surface. While the writing appears to have a gloss that may suggest a raised surface, this is a function of the ink’s wetness at the time the photograph was taken. When the ink dried, the surface was entirely flat.

Fig. 5: Tragacanth gum

Tragacanth gum powder, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: Tragacanth gum in the form of a powder was purchased from the New York company, N.Y. Cake. The gum had to be constituted with water.

Figs. 6-7: Tragacanth gum mixed, Tragacanth gum and ink mixed

Tragacanth gum and water mixture and tragacanth gum and ink mixture

Caption: The tragacanth gum was thick and viscous, and the addition of ink only slightly diluted this otherwise dense substance. The two did not mix together perfectly, as parts of the tragacanth gum retained its cloudy yellow color without turning black.

Figs. 8-9: CRAFT, frontal and side views

Frontal and side views of CRAFT, produced using waterproof ink and tragacanth gum, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: The mixture of tragacanth gum and waterproof ink created a very raised surface for the lettering, although after drying the mixture visibly shrank.

Fig. 10-11: ART, frontal and side views

Frontal and side views of ART, produced using iron gall ink and tragacanth gum, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: While the iron gall ink was much more pungent than the waterproof ink, there was no discernable difference in the dense volume of this mixture in comparison to that made with waterproof ink.

Fig. 12: Curled-up Paper

Curled-up paper, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: After the ink dried over a period of several days, the paper visibly curled as the ink contracted. This gave the paper a certain brittle quality, and any attempts to stretch it flat would cause a cracking sound.

Fig. 13: Laying Paper onto Clay

Laying paper onto clay and applying brandy, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: Brandy was applied to the back of the paper after it had been laid onto the clay. Because the paper was curled up, the brandy had to be applied slowly, allowing the paper to relax and flatten out.

Fig. 14: Rolling cylinder

Rolling cylinder, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz

Caption: A marble cylinder was rolled over the paper to ensure that it was flattened. This was not specifically mandated in the recipe.

Fig. 15: Removing Ink with Knife

Removing ink with a knife, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz.

Caption: By following the recipe exactly and applying brandy after laying the paper onto clay, it would seem the ink became stuck in the clay. Had brandy been applied to the surface of the paper beforehand, it seems less likely that the ink would have gotten stuck. The mixture using iron gall ink became stuck in the clay and had to be freed with a knife.

Figs. 16-19: Impressions of CRAFT and ART

Impressions of CRAFT and ART, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz

Caption: Impressions of both inscriptions molded similarly well into the clay. Small ridges in the well-gummed ink surface were also made in the surface of the clay. The inscription made with iron gall ink (ART) left a dark black stain on the clay, which would suggest that this ink was not entirely waterproof. By comparison, the inscription made with waterproof ink (CRAFT) left no visible coloration in the clay.

Fig. 20: Reverse Molded

Reverse of paper molded, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz

Caption: The surface of the paper did mold in the clay, and ridges in the paper were visibly reproduced.

Fig. 21: Warped Clay

Warped clay, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz

Caption: The slabs of clay were left to dry on a flat marble surface for several days and became visibly warped with time. The two slabs could not have interlocked with one another, raising the question of how to cast a finished product from both slabs together.

Fig. 22: Broken Mold

Broken clay mold, Raymond Carlson and Jordan Katz

Caption: The mold which contained an imprint of the back of the paper broke while being handled along its edge. The brittle quality of the clay would have been a problematic factor during the casting process.