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English translation of Brolliet’s account

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Brolliet’s fixative for prints for transfer printing.

Put in a glass retort placed on a bath of sand four or five ounces of Karabe or ground yellow amber. Arrange a receptacle with the joints closed with wads of glued paper. Distil it without putting the dome of the retort on the fire. The distillate passes through, then the volatile salt and finally the oil. When the vessels are cold again, take the oil out without letting out any part of the volatile alkaline salt. Put the distillate and the oil into a wide [necked] glass capsule to evaporate the distillate and concentrate the oil. The distillate boils, crackling with the oil until it is all evaporated. Continue to concentrate the oil until if one puts a small drop with a straw on an earthenware plate and if one touches it with a finger it produces a thread and when the drop cools it congeals like well cooked syrup. Then stop the heat, take the pot from the sand and leave it to cool completely. Then pour out the fixative into an earthenware pot where it remains sticky and flows very little. It can be made to dissolve with a little tar of Judea.

To print on porcelain Brolliet

Brolliet to print on porcelain or on a slab of enamelled copper the opposite impression of any print: first clean the engraved copper plate with rectified spirit of wine and wipe it with a well dried linen to remove all grease that might remain in the grooves from the burin: then run a little of the fixative… across the top and force it [into the grooves] with a roll of flannel bound up extremely tightly with a fine string: then wipe it with the palm of the hand, which is itself wiped, up to a point, by a leather lightly coated with French chalk, rubbing it on top, and then wipe it with a white linen. When all the surface of the copper plate is no longer greasy, apply on top as a printer would do for a light engraving a paper moistened in the morning and having heated the copper plate pass it twice between rollers where the face of the cylinder are covered by flannel, then the design is printed in a reddish-pink colour: which is the colour of the fixative. Leave the paper to dry if it is still damp: but not so much as to let the fixative itself dry; because that must remain sticky: otherwise the lines of this reddish print would not hold the colour one wants them to hold. Crush some enamel or vitrified colour in water on a sheet of glass with a glass or stone pestle just to the point where the pestle makes no sound when crushing and the enamel is like oil. Let it dry well on the sheet of glass and then remove it with a palette knife to keep it dry on a piece of paper. With a piece of very clean cotton take this colour and apply it gently on top and bring it on to the print made by the fixative which must not be dry, but sticky. Then take a small piece of cotton, which has never been used, rub the print very gently to remove all the colour which has found its way on to the places which must remain white. Wipe and degrease with spirit of wine the piece of porcelain on which one wishes to have the opposite impression of that print of which the engraving is coloured and wipe it with a white linen. The place the print, coloured side down, on to the porcelain. Place on top another white paper and with an ivory polisher rub lightly but firmly on the second paper making sure not to move the print or to leave any spot unrubbed with the ivory polisher. After a quarter of an hour lift the print and find the porcelain printed in the colour blue, green or red which had been put with the cotton on to the reddish-pink lines of the print itself. Leave it to dry, taking great care that nothing touches it because one would remove the colour and the print would be spoiled. Then fire it either in the muffle kiln or in the painting kiln, as one would fire the other paintings done with a brush. It is clear that by this method one can produce on porcelain all the designs which one can make on a copper plate and each new plate will give 1500 prints: and a further 7 to 8 hundred when retouched.