



The Craftsman's Handbook (Dover Art Instruction)

Cennino Cennini

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This is D. V. Thompson's definitive English translation of *Il Libro dell'Arte*, an intriguing guide to methods of painting, written in fifteenth-century Florence. Embodying the secrets and techniques of the great masters, it served as an art student's introduction to the ways of his craft.

Anyone who has ever looked at a medieval painting and marveled at the brilliance of color and quality of surface that have endured for 500 years should find this fascinating reading. It describes such lost arts as gilding stone, making mosaics of crushed eggshell, fashioning saints' diadems, coloring parchment, making goat glue, and regulating your life in the interests of decorum — which meant shunning women, the greatest cause of unsteady hands in artists. You are told how to make green drapery, black for monks' robes, trees and plants, oils, beards in fresco, and the proper proportions of a man's body. ("I will not tell you about the irrational animals because you will never discover any system of proportion in them.") So practical are the details that readers might be tempted to experiment with the methods given here for their own amusement and curiosity.

Today artists are no longer interested in specific directions on keeping miniver tails from becoming moth-eaten. *The Craftsman's Handbook*, in which these are ordinary parts of the artist's work, appears quaint and naïve to us. And that is much of its charm. But when we remember the magnificent mosaics, paintings, and frescoes these methods produced, the book takes on an even greater value as a touchstone to another age.

"Recommended to the student of art." — *Craft Horizons*.

"Obviously of great merit." — *Art Material Trade News*.

"Delightful flavor." — *New York Herald Tribune*.

Recommended in Harvard List of Great Books on Art, Shaw's List of Books for College Libraries.

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