

The Conservation of the Brothers van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece*

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Since 2012, the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage of Belgium has been in charge of the conservation treatment of the brothers van Eyck's altarpiece of the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb (1432). This monumental masterpiece has been admired for centuries for its stunningly convincing suggestion of space and light, materials and expressions, reflecting extraordinary sensibility and level of technical accomplishment that determined the course of western European painting. The tumultuous material history of the altarpiece, marked by wars, civil unrest, fires, changes in tastes and values has deeply influenced its condition and its appearance.

The conservation campaign is carried out in public view by a team of conservators in the Ghent Museum of Fine Arts. The discoveries carried through multidisciplinary research involving the conservators, chemical analysis, technical imagery, archival and art historical investigations reveal completely unknown, yet fundamental facets of the altarpiece.

This paper will illustrate the discovery of early overpainting campaigns, the diagnostic of the condition the original paint layers and the recovery of the original.