

General talk

Modern oil paints continue to be very popular with artists. However the paintings they create are distinctly different from traditional paintings and provide unique challenges for conservators and curators.

Industrial developments in the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries have resulted in significant changes to the composition of the paints, offering artists to work in many different ways. In addition, many paintings are unvarnished and so oxygen, light, dirt and atmospheric pollution interacts directly with the, often delicate, paint surface.

The research presented includes insights in the production philosophy of the oil paints and their evolution in composition, especially based on research in the production archives of the Dutch artists' materials manufacturer Royal Talens. Particular phenomena such as phase separation, sensitivity to cleaning with solvents, efflorescence are discussed along with the chemistry underlying these phenomena.