



The conservation treatment of the *Ghent Altarpiece* by the Van Eyck brothers started in October 2012 and is carried out by the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) at the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (MSK). Two exhibition rooms were redesigned as a conservation studio with a glass wall that allows visitors to view the treatment in progress. Until November 2017, the Provincial Cultural Centre Caermersklooster organises exhibitions on the *Ghent Altarpiece* and the ongoing treatment.

### Phase 1: October 2012 – October 2016 (completed)



Before conservation

After conservation

The **eight panels of the closed altarpiece** were treated first. During conservation it was discovered that around 70% of the panels and frames were overpainted. **The overpaint was removed to reveal the original paint work of Van Eyck that had been hidden for over four centuries.** The conservation treatment was unanimously praised, both in Belgium and internationally, and is the subject of the **exhibition *restoration/REVELATION. The exterior panels of the Ghent Altarpiece***, until 26 November 2017 at the Caermersklooster. The richly illustrated catalogue – available at the Caermersklooster, MSK and KIK-IRPA – surveys the conservation in a most captivating fashion.

## Phase 2: November 2016 – July 2018 (ongoing)



In October 2016 the panels of the closed altarpiece returned to St Bavo's cathedral and the second phase of the treatment started at the MSK: that of **the lower register of the open altarpiece**, with the central panel of the *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. The left panel with the copy of the *Just Judges* already underwent conservation in 2010.

First the yellowed and cloudy **varnish layers were removed and some test windows were made** to gain insight in the location and magnitude of old overpaint on these panels. **Additional research** is carried out to obtain a global view of the complex overpaint, to assess the state of Van Eyck's underlying paint layer and to verify whether and how it can be uncovered. Like the first phase of the treatment, the observations of the restorers are scientifically supported by analyses from the laboratories of the KIK-IRPA and state-of-the-art research by the universities of Ghent and Antwerp. **The results will be discussed in September 2017 with the international expert committee that guides the treatment.**

Within the strict timing of the ongoing contract, with a deadline in July 2018 for the current phase, it is however impossible to remove all the old overpaint and obtain a result similar to that of the panels of the closed altarpiece.

## Phase 3: August 2018 – January 2020 (planned)



Treatment of the **upper register of the open altarpiece.**

Project	Conservation of the Ghent Altarpiece by the Van Eyck brothers
Commissioner	Church administration of St Bavo's cathedral, Ghent
Project manager	Architectenbureau Bressers bvba
Contractor	Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), Brussels
Cost of the three phases	1 260 433,20 €
Cost of additional works during phase 1	149 113 € (treatment of the frames) 479 650 € (uncovering of the original paint layer)
Public subsidy	Flemish Region (Onroerend Erfgoed) Flemish Community (Kunsten en Erfgoed)
Sponsor	Baillet Latour Fund
Sponsor additional research	Gieskes-Strijbis Fund, the Netherlands
Location	Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent
Conservation studio	City of Ghent, sponsored by ArcelorMittal, Meyvaert Glas and the Baillet Latour Fund
Subcontractors	Jean-Albert Glatigny, Collection Care Mobull, Eeckman Art & Insurance, Meyvaert Glas
Scientific research	KIK-IRPA, Ghent University, University of Antwerp
Touristic-educational program	Province of East-Flanders
Substitute panels (photos)	KIK-IRPA

Location partners:



Conservation and research partners:



Partners touristic-educational program:

