



Interim report on condition and research, February 2014

International Commission for the Conservation of the Ghent altarpiece

Preparation for the session of 17 March 2014

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H el ene Dubois, editor

Foreword

This text is an extended version of a report required by the members of the Advisory Committee following the presentation of the discovery of antique overpaints during the 7 December 2013 committee meeting. It is mainly based on examinations and documentation carried out by the team of conservators named above as authors. Documentation and study by the KIK–IRPA laboratory (Jana Sanyova and C ecile Glaude) and documentation department (Jean-Luc Elias, Katrien Van Acker, and Sophie De Potter), observations carried out during a demonstration workshop of a 3-D microscope by the firm HIROX and Jaap Boon (photos by Herv e Le Golvan), and historical research by H el ene Dubois have all contributed to this work. This report sums up the outcome of investigations done between late 2013 and early 2014 and introduces research conducted on the extent and nature of the old overpaints, as presented to the International Commission of Experts on 17 March 2014.

Introduction

During cleaning of the reverse of the altarpiece, important areas of old overpainting were revealed that had not been diagnosed in the past – neither during the research and restoration of 1950–51, nor during subsequent examination and research campaigns in the 1970s, the 1980s, and 2010. (See background information in Appendix.) The presence of numerous varnish coatings that had accumulated and degraded over centuries, forming an obscuring veil marked by its own craquelure pattern, was the main factor that prevented the identification of the early overpaintings.

After the first phase of cleaning, which comprised the removal of the post-1951 ketone varnishes and the reduction of large, underlying zones of overpaint, the results were documented and then presented to the International Commission on 27 May 2013.

The experts unanimously supported the removal of non-original layers to reveal the pictorial quality of Van Eyck's original, bearing in mind that it would also reveal older damages and restoration.¹ Importantly, further cleaning would allow for a better consolidation of the paint layers, which was impeded by accumulation of varnish and overpaint. Their removal would enable a more thorough perception of the condition of the paintings and of its influence on the spatial coherence of the polyptych. This approach was supported by the Advisory Committee and followed regularly by Anne van Grevenstein and the Steering Committee.

Cleaning was carried out further as the conservators' observations were documented and supported by laboratory analysis and historical research. Extended overpaintings in other zones were progressively discovered as cleaning proceeded. These overpaintings are certainly old: Their craquelure patterns coincide with the networks of age cracks in the original, and their pictorial technique indicates that they were likely executed in the seventeenth century – some of them perhaps even earlier. (See the text in Appendix on historical sources.) These new observations are extremely important for the critical appraisal of the paintings, and the treatment of these areas needs to be considered carefully.

Progression of cleaning and localisation of overpaint

The conservation treatment, and especially the cleaning of the paintings, is intended to take all facets of the altarpiece into consideration, such as its formal cohesion, aesthetic quality, material condition, and history. After the identification and characterisation of non-original overpaints, their eventual removal must be slow and gradual, adapting to the different material conditions of the individual paintings while continuously considering the monumental unity of the altarpiece as a whole.

The removal of old, altered varnishes revealed original paint areas of high pictorial quality and, at first, large areas of darkened and altered overpaints covering the dark background, the architecture of the lower register and the grisaille figures. These restorations hid areas in a range of conditions, varying from a smooth surface with subtle suggestions of structure and material (such as in *John the Baptist*, and the background of *Elisabeth Borluut*) to damaged sections that conservators had already foreseen (as in the background of *Joos Vijd*, and the figure of *John the Evangelist*).

¹ See report on the session of 27 May 2013.

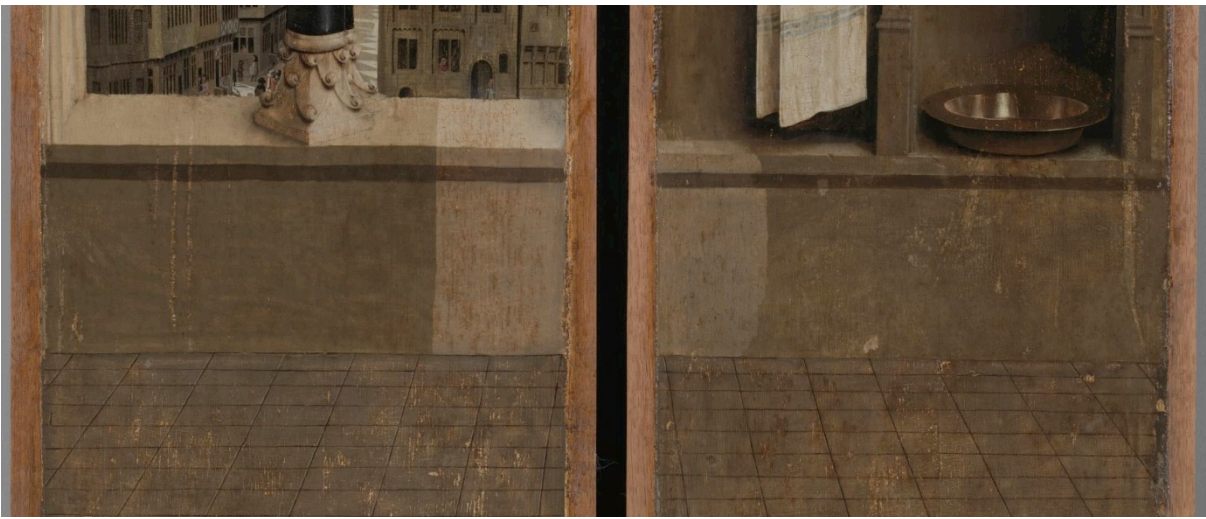


Overall view of closed altarpiece, showing overpaints and losses documented for the informal session of 17 September 2014.



***John the Baptist* (detail), after varnish removal and during removal of overpaint in the architecture. The yellowish overpaint has been reduced on the left side of the arch.**

As varnish removal progressed, large areas of overpaint on the architecture in the upper register also became more apparent, and in particular thick, opaque layers covering the walls at the back of the *Interior with Lavabo* and *Interior with City View*. Cleaning tests in these areas revealed smooth, translucent, swiftly applied original paint layers in relatively good condition.



Interior with City View and Interior with Lavabo (details), during overpaint removal.

Experts present at the informal meeting of the International Commission held on 17 September 2014, as well as those of the Advisory Committee, supported the further removal of the overpaint in these areas.²

This operation is well on its way and is resulting in spectacular aesthetic improvements of the paintings, bringing them closer to the artists' original intent. The suggestion of depth and space and the formal coherence of the individual panels, as well as their unity, are being brought back to light.

Significantly, cleaning has also allowed for more extensive consolidation tests, in which sturgeon glue has given good results. Further progressive varnish removal has enabled the conservators to observe inconsistencies in the modelling and paint buildup in the draperies and in the skin tones of the *Annunciation* and of the portraits. These inconsistencies have recently been identified as overpainting and are described further below.

Observations of the overpaint layers

The overpaints on *all paintings* cover some abrasions and a few losses and, particularly in the architecture, large zones of the original in good condition. The overpaint layers were applied carefully, completely covering the forms, following the contours and imitating the original colours. However, they are opaque, dull, and gritty, in contrast to the smooth and translucent original. In the draperies, the folds were extensively modified. On the flesh tones, however, the overpaint is more locally applied.

The broadly applied overpaints that are now visible appear to belong to an antique restoration campaign in which all panels were treated in a similar fashion. Aside from this overall campaign, other old, more local overpaints have been observed.

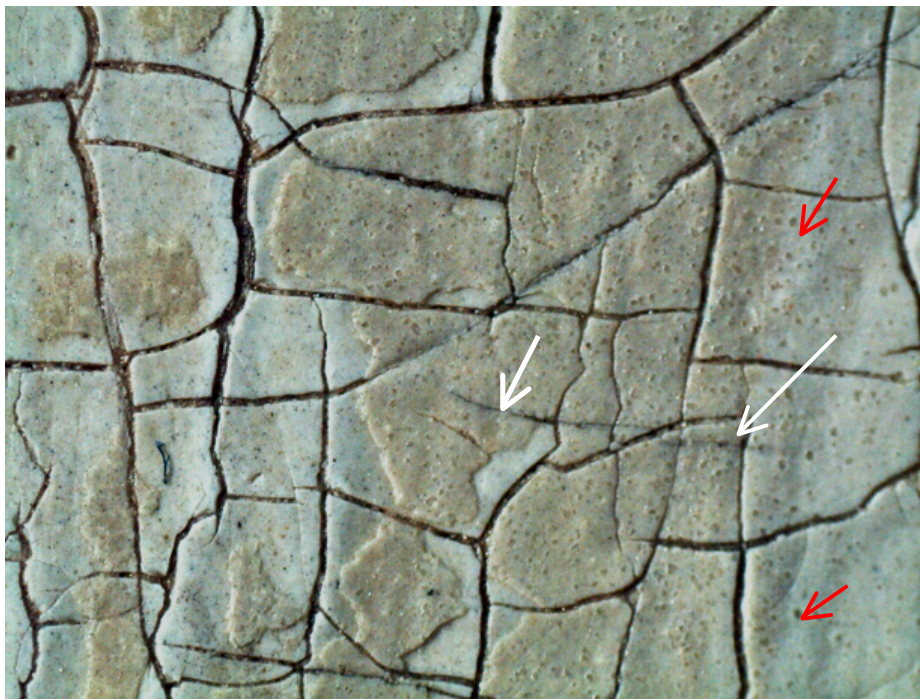
² See the report of the informal session of the International Commission of 17 September 2014.

Background, architecture, and grisailles

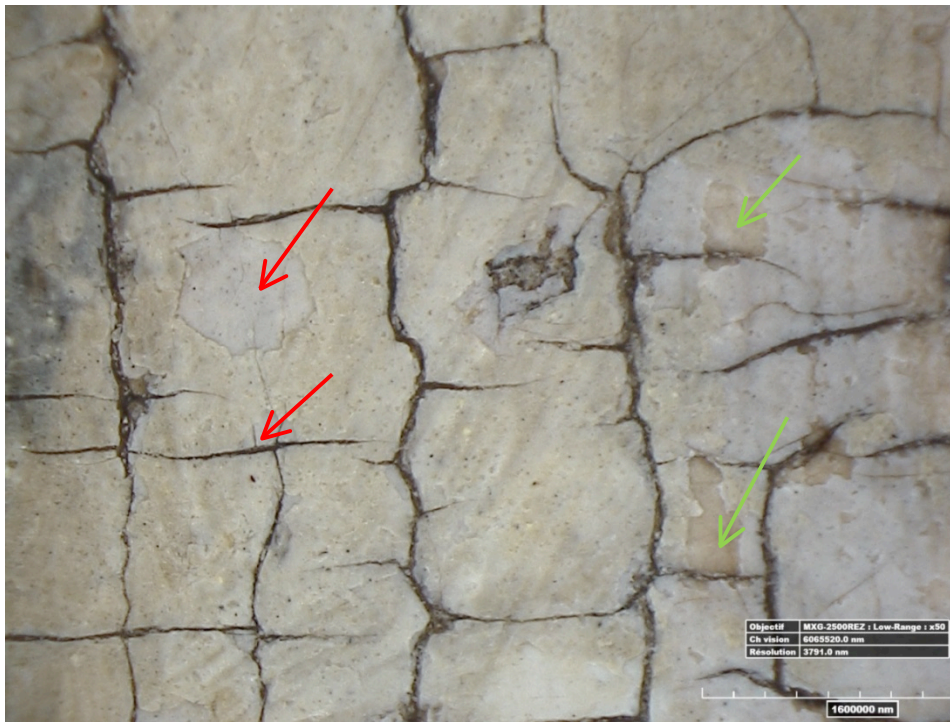
The beige overpaint layers on the architecture and on the grisaille in the lower register are similar and apparently correspond to the same intervention: The opaque zones contain mostly lead white, including large, translucent particles of that pigment, and occasionally blue, brown, and red pigments. The more translucent areas consist of a brownish, glaze-like layer containing black pigments, plus small amounts of white and brown, and a few red and blue particles.



Portrait of Joos Vijd, detail, left column: Removal of degraded overpaint on the architecture.



Micrograph of the drapery of *John the Baptist*. White arrows: Overpaint covers fine age cracks. Red arrows: Gritty particles of lead white.



Micrograph of the drapery of *John the Evangelist*, showing the gritty beige overpaint (HIROX image, 50x). Red arrows: Losses in the overpaint reveal the smooth original paint layer. Green arrows: Losses in the original paint show the preparation layers.

These overpaints have altered in the course of time and, predominantly in the light areas, small chips have flaked off, revealing the original paint. The subtle tonal transitions, suggesting depth, and the structural effects in the dark backgrounds of the portraits and of the grisailles were overpainted with a flat, gritty, opaque layer.³

Certain zones had been completely covered and others spared from any overpainting. For example, in the *Interior with City View* the back wall had been entirely overpainted, whereas the sky and the houses were not. Other compositions were almost entirely covered with a new coat of paint (for example, in *John the Evangelist* and the background of the *Interior with Lavabo*).

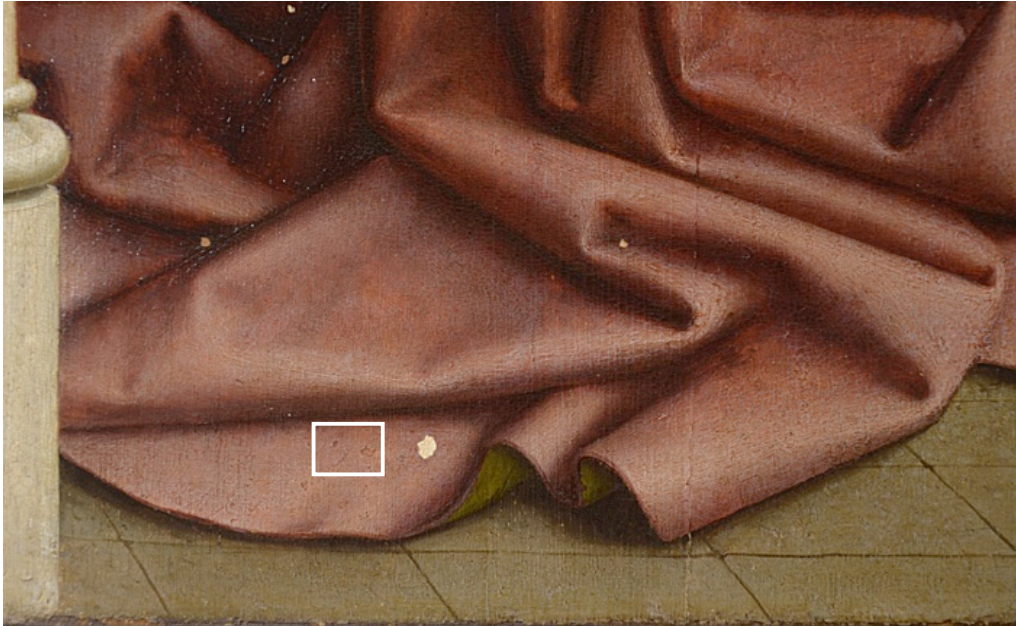
As work progressed, antique overpaints were discovered in significant areas of the paintings: the draperies and the flesh tones.

Elisabeth Borluut's veil and drapery

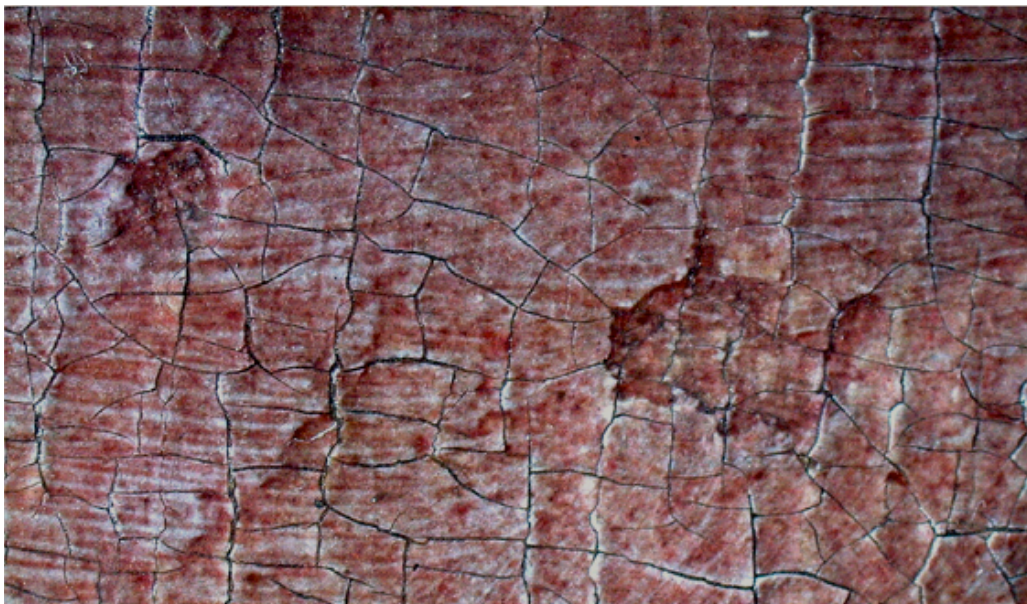
In the portrait of *Elisabeth Borluut*, the sitter's veil is abraded in places and marred with a few losses. Many areas were covered with bright white retouchings that were clearly overlapping the age cracks; these retouchings have now been removed. Many small losses under the pinkish drapery had been noticed on the X-radiograph in the early stages of the treatment. At that time, it was suggested that they might correspond to

³ The overpaints in the dark backgrounds of the portraits were identified in an earlier stage of the treatment because they had been partly removed in the past.

damages that had occurred in the course of the original execution over several years and might have been overpainted by Van Eyck himself. The paint of the dress is generally crackled like the underlying original but, in a few places, it also overlaps finer age cracks.



Drapery of Elisabeth Borluut (detail), during cleaning (with box showing location of detail in next illustration).



Macrophotograph of Elisabeth Borluut's drapery: Losses in the layer below (original) are covered with the overpaint.

In fact, Elisabeth Borluut's drapery has been extensively overpainted in the past, covering small losses that are visible in the X-radiograph. *The pinkish robe is completely covered with thick overpaint, to the extent that the original is not visible.* The green fabric of the sleeves, however, is free of this overpaint. In some areas, the underlying losses are not filled. Most paint samples show the presence of two overpainting campaigns in the pink robe.

Most of the visible overpainting was carefully applied and is of relatively good quality. Dark lines in the deepest folds on the front of the dress, on the other hand, appear very heavy and opaque.

Joos Vijd's drapery

A large number of small losses, fillings, and retouchings in the subject's drapery at the lower right corner of the donor portrait of *Joos Vijd* had already been documented in 1951 and in 2010. They are clearly visible in the X-radiograph and in the infrared (IR) reflectogram, but not on the paint surface. Slight differences in the craquelure and tone became noticeable as more discoloured varnishes were removed in the cleaning.

Examination with the binocular microscope disclosed in many places the presence of thick, opaque layers on top of glazes, indicating that the drapery had either been altered by the artist or overpainted at an early stage. The top layers are mostly cracked along the same network as the original layers. However, as more varnish was removed, it became apparent with the microscope that the top layers locally overlap very fine age cracks and losses in the underlying layers. *These observations led to the conclusion that the red coat is completely covered with overpaint, in a way similar to that of Elisabeth Borluut's robe.*

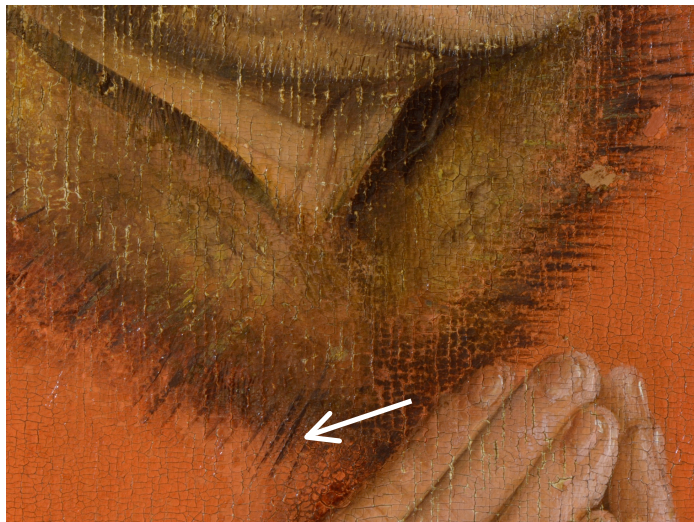
On Vijd's right shoulder, the overpaint had been locally removed in the past in an aggressive cleaning campaign that also damaged the background and the fur collar. The collar was then again retouched with thick greenish black-and-ochre hair. The fur around the wrists was also extensively retouched, presumably at the same time as the red coat. The fur along the hem was only locally retouched and looks smoother than that at the wrists.

The visible overpaint is generally in good condition, although it is a bit dull and discoloured in places.

Ongoing study shows that the shapes of several folds have been modified and that the strong contrast of the original modelling with dark, saturated glazes has been subdued.



Portrait of *Jos Vijd* (details). Dark patches in the infrared reflectogram correspond to fillings and retouchings under the overpaint that covers most of Joos Vijd's robe.



The long, spiky hairs in the fur along the collar are later retouchings applied after severe paint loss caused by an aggressive cleaning that also damaged the old overpaint.

The Archangel and the Virgin's robes

The white robes in the *Annunciation* have also been provided with extensive overpaints. Some of these were noticed and documented early on in the project (in macro- and microphotographs, as well as in HIROX examination), but their characteristics and extent are now more clearly understood. Their thicknesses vary, from heavy and opaque on the lighter zones, to thinner, semi-transparent layers applied on broad areas of the drapery.

On some sections of the *Archangel's* robe these layers had been partly damaged, probably during an earlier cleaning campaign and because of the overpaints' weak cohesion with the original paints.

In certain zones, where the overpaint was fragmentary and looked very disturbing and blached, it was locally removed, revealing a fast and thinly painted original, marked by a fine craquelure network and (apparently intentional) visibility of the underdrawing in the final stage (see photos below).



Detail, overpaint on the *Archangel Annunciate's* drapery, before removal.



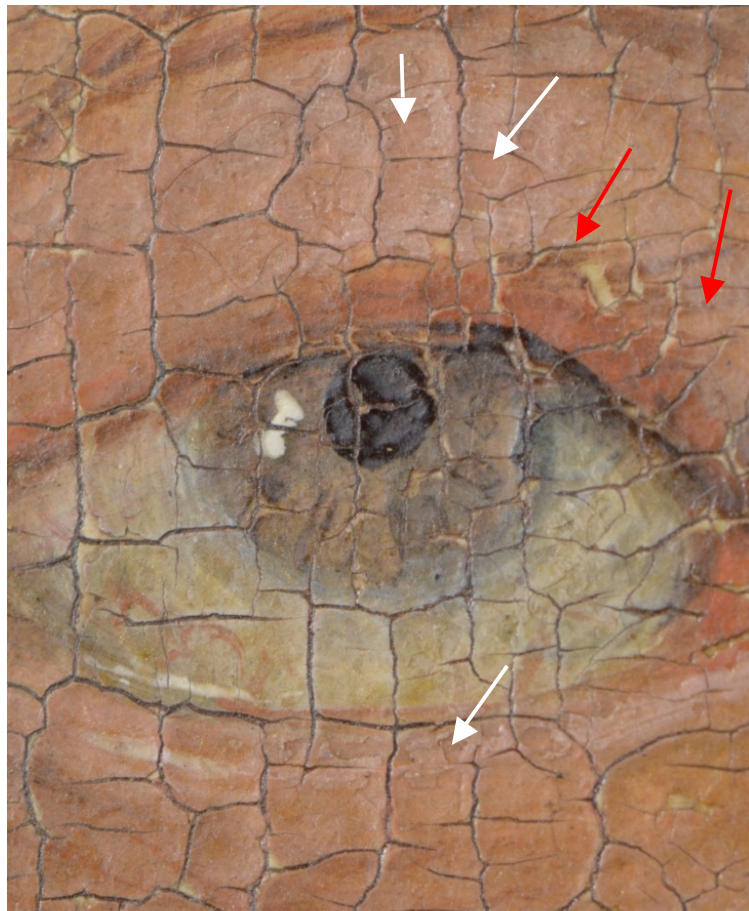
Micrograph of the Archangel's drapery, showing the overpaint delaminating from the original (HIROX image, 140x).

On the *Virgin Annunciate's* robe, the overpaint layer is in better condition, but the robe appears mostly covered. The overpaint is thick and opaque on the right side of the garment. Most of the shadows are reinforced. In the light areas, the overpaint is thin and transparent, covering the damaged original, which had probably been abraded in aggressive cleaning.

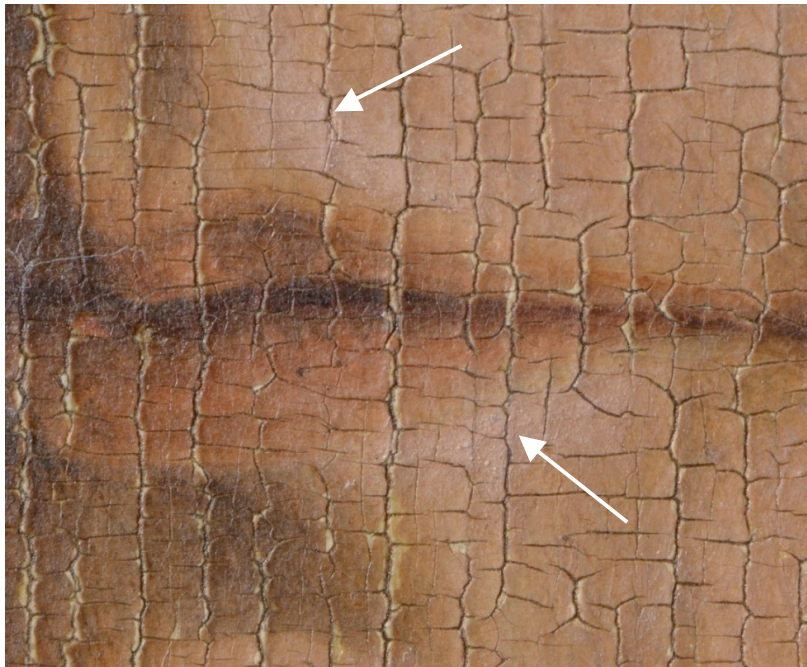
Flesh tones

The faces and hands of the donors and of the Archangel are extensively retouched with pale pink scumbles on the lighter areas and thin washes on large areas of the faces and hands. The thick pink retouchings have a stripy, gritty texture and comprise large aggregates of lead white. Their craquelure pattern generally coincides with that of the original, indicating that this intervention was very early. In some places, the retouchings cover finer cracks in the original, along with small losses and abrasions. As well as hiding abrasions, the painter–restorer probably attempted here to enhance the contrast by reinforcing highlights that were already obscured by old varnishes.

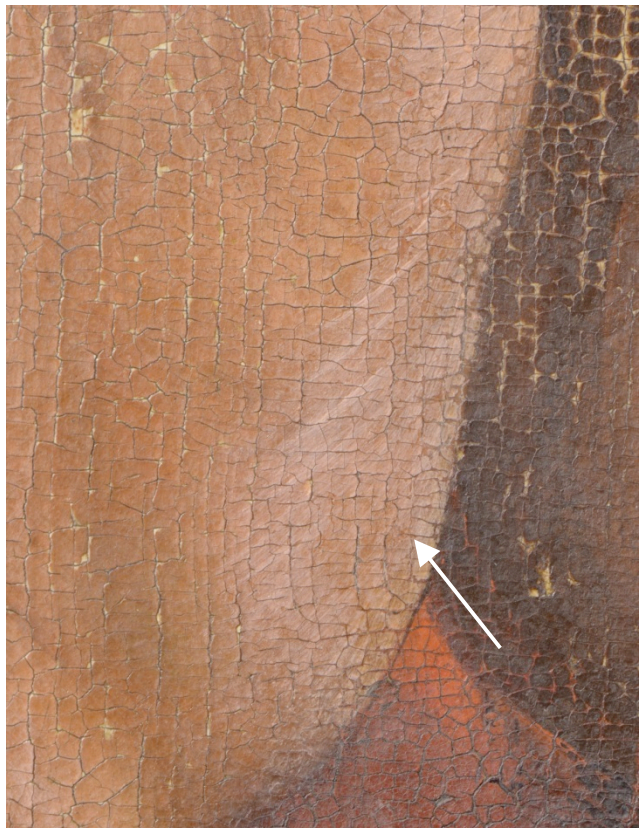
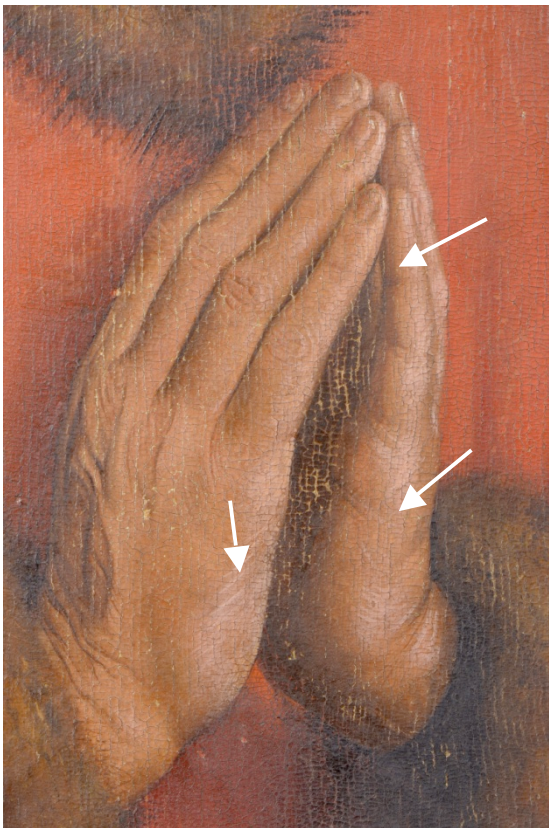
The overpaint on the flesh tones, however, tends to delaminate from the original and has flaked off in small pieces. In 1951, this condition was thought to affect the original final touches on the faces and other areas. The cohesion of the overpaint with the surface of the original is weak in these areas.



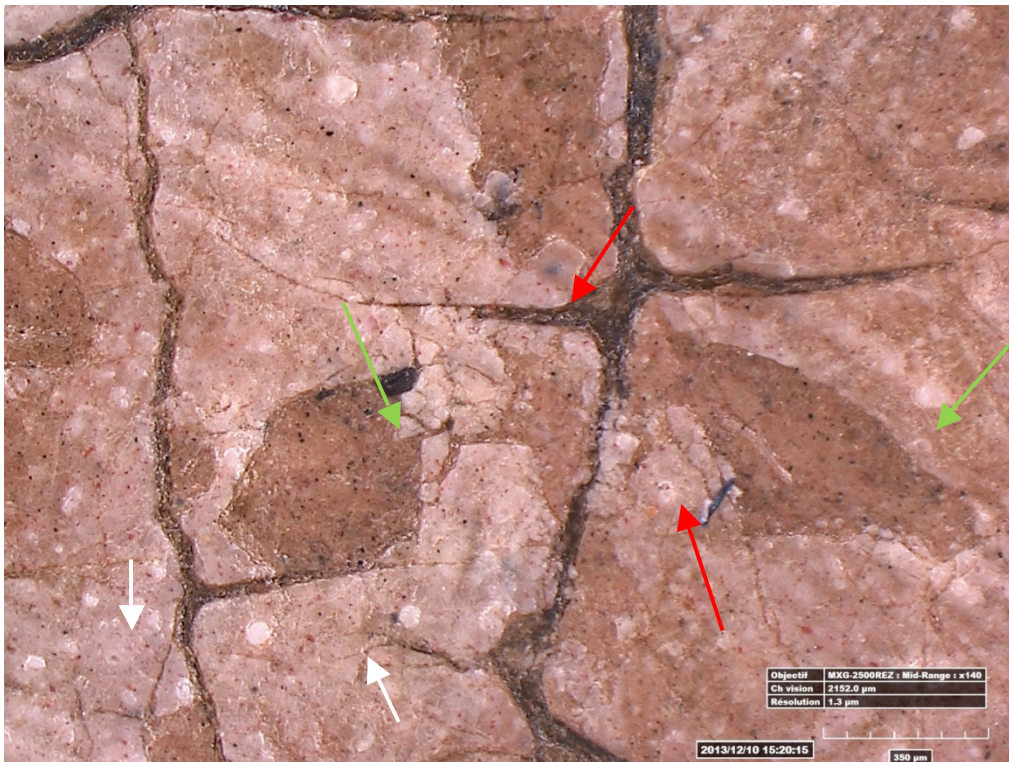
**Non-original pink scumbles and highlights around the right eye of Joos Vijd.
White arrows: Losses in the overpaint show the underlying original.
Red arrows: Overpaint covers the original eyelashes.**



White arrows: Non-original highlights—scumbles on Elisabeth Borluut’s face.



Non-original highlights on Joos Vijd’s hands.



Micrograph of a pink highlight on Elisabeth Borluut's hand, clearly showing that the paint overlaps cracks in the original (red arrows). Note the large lead-white aggregates in the overpaint (white arrows) and the losses in this layer revealing the original, still covered with brown varnish layers (green arrows). (HIROX image, 140x.)

Preliminary observation of the materials under high magnification and laboratory analysis

The overpainting intervention is separated from the original by two to three layers of degraded varnish. This is clearly visible in all cross-sections taken from overpainted areas. These intermediate varnish layers are dark and degraded, and sometimes appear to contain dirt or pigments.

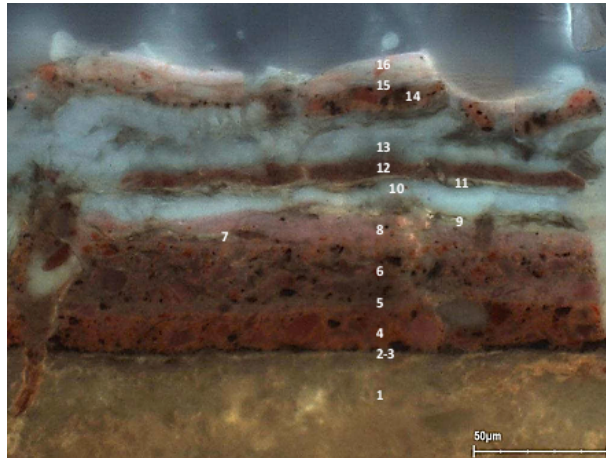


Cross-section of a microscopic paint sample from Joos Vijd's left hand. Varnish layers are clearly visible between the two pink paint layers.

They visually differ from clear layers that are sometimes found in the paint buildup of Van Eyck's original⁴, and in some paint samples it is evident that the varnish layers have seeped through age cracks.

⁴ The recent restoration of the Groeningemuseum's *Portrait of Margaret Van Eyck* by Jill Dunkerton at Britain's National Gallery have brought more insight into the technique and materials used by the master. The analysis of a few paint samples carried out at the National Gallery's scientific department showed that in the red draperies, Jan Van Eyck used an intermediate layer of varnish between the red glazes, a practice that was also documented in earlier medieval

A first examination of the cross-sections taken from the draperies of Joos Vijd and Elisabeth Borluut revealed the presence of three successive stages of painting, separated by several clear varnish layers. The original paint layers appear covered with a thin, red glaze (perhaps a first restoration?), and then thick, opaque red layers (a second restoration?).



Cross-section from a microscopic paint sample from Joos Vijd's red drapery, under ultraviolet (UV) light. The original paint layers (4–8) are superimposed with varnish (9–11), then overpaint (12), then varnish (13) and overpaint again (14–15), and finally varnish (16).

Approach to overpaint removal and its results

The overpaint seems to be mostly separated from the original by degraded brown varnish layers, which facilitate the non-original paint removal by protecting the original paint. Removal is done with a combination of solvents and scalpels, plus the help of a binocular microscope. The condition of the original paint layers in these areas varies. So far, overpaint removal is ongoing in the architecture and background of the lower register and on the images of the two grisaille sculptures.

Cleaning dark, opaque overpaints from the background has revealed gradual tonal transitions and details, such as the suggestions of a corner and cobwebs behind Elisabeth Borluut. These details are less perceptible in the background of the portrait of Joos Vijd, since this area is, as conservators had earlier noted, very damaged.

This difference in condition is also noticeable between the background of the grisailles where, particularly in the case of *John the Evangelist*, damages mostly correspond with wear in raised paint and ground layers along the wood grain. A few losses are present, including a very large one on the right side of the drapery.

paintings. These findings were documented in the report accessible online (<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/the-restoration-of-margaret-the-artists-wife/the-restoration-of-margaret-the-artists-wife>) and presented at the *Van Eyck Studies* Symposium in Brussels in September 2012 by Jill Dunkerton, Rachel Morrison, and Ashok Roy. See Christina Currie et al., *Van Eyck Studies: Papers presented at the Eighteenth Symposium for the Study of Underdrawing and Technology in Painting*, Brussels, 19–21 September 2012. Leuven: Peeters 2017.

Removal of overpaint on the columns and archways has improved the perception of volume and depth and, on the sculptures, revealed a suggestion of veins in the stone, as well as a hard, polished finish.

The progressive removal of overpainting from the grisailles has improved the visual cohesion between them, and the virtuoso technique of the very abraded *Evangelist* has been recovered to a great extent.

Overpaint removal in the *Interior* scenes in the upper register has revealed smooth, transparent, and swiftly applied paint layers that are in varying condition. The wall in the *Interior with City View* is marred by a great deal of fine craquelure and tiny, raised paint flakes. In the *Interior with Lavabo*, the wall is in a better state.

The drapery zones of the *Archangel* that have been recovered display a more convincing suggestion of depth and volume. The original paint there is thinner and smoother, and was applied swiftly.

The investigation of the original draperies' condition and characterisation of the overpaint are under way. Examination and laboratory analysis are accompanied by historical research to gain a detailed insight into these complex areas. 'Cleaning windows' (small, rectangular patches of cleaning) are being made [as of February 2013] to help determine the suitability and feasibility of overpaint removal in these areas, and these will be presented to the commission on 17 March [2014].



Detail, Archangel's robe, during removal of the overpaint.



Same detail of the Archangel's robe after removal of the overpaint. Remains of old varnishes are still present.

Conclusion

Important areas of the reverse of the wing panels of the Ghent Altarpiece are covered with old overpaintings in varying states of conservation. Some are altered, darkened, and damaged, while others are in good condition, of relatively good quality, and well integrated into the whole. These overpaintings cover parts of the architecture and background, most of the draperies, and parts of the flesh tones. They overlie areas that had been damaged or abraded, such as parts of the sitters' draperies, but also sections in very good condition (as in *John the Baptist* and the *Interior with City View*).

The age cracks in the original and in these overpaints are similar. Occasionally, some very fine cracks in the original are covered by the overpaints, implying that the latter are very old. Analyses of cross-sections reveal that the combinations of materials in the overpainting were mainly used during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. More precise information will be obtained by further analysis of the paint samples and will be presented to the commission on 17 March.

The overpaints and original seem to be mostly separated by a minimum of one or two degraded varnish layers. The overpaints were applied in different phases; on the sitters' drapery, for example, there are clearly two main interventions at least. The overpaint that is visible now, though, appears to result from a single major intervention, following the shapes and respecting the colour scheme, covering damages and abrasions, and modifying the modelling by adding contrast and weight to the swiftly, thinly executed original. The folds of

the original draperies have, however, been extensively modified. Importantly, unlike those in the *Adoration of the Lamb*, the overpaints do not appear to comprise important iconographic additions to the original, but do completely hide original texture and light effects.

The removal of the overpaint in the architecture and background of both registers is already well advanced and is resulting in considerable aesthetic improvements, bringing them closer to the original.

It is likely that overpaint removal in other areas would lead to similar results. At this stage, though, further tests need to be carried out to assess whether such removal can be achieved without damaging the underlying original. Significantly, it would allow for a better consolidation of the paint.

In the case of the donors' draperies, the removal of hardened old overpaint is likely to be difficult, since the underlying original is painted with thin, fragile glazes. Current examination is also revealing extensive damages in the first paint layers of the draperies, particularly in Joos Vijd's red mantel.

Conservation and revelation of Van Eyck's original have so far been priorities in the cleaning campaign. This approach needs to be reassessed in the light of the new discoveries.

Final remark

The iconic status of the Ghent Altarpiece has played an important role in the relatively slow insights into the presence and extent of old overpaints. These paintings have always been praised unconditionally as absolute masterpieces. For this reason, it was difficult for us to come to the conclusion that they are so extensively overpainted.

APPENDIX (Hélène Dubois)

1. Background research

During the examination and restoration of the polyptych under the direction of Paul Coremans in 1951, it was suggested that several areas of the inner side (in particular the *Adoration of the Lamb*, the *Enthroned* figures and especially the *Deity*, and the *Singing Angels*) had been overpainted early on, presumably in 1550 by Jan van Scorel and Lancelot Blondeel.⁵ This conclusion is based on the historian Marcus van Vaernewijck's 1568 testimony that these renowned artists had washed and cleaned the painting in many places⁶, and also on the fact that many features of the older overpainting are reproduced in a copy of the altarpiece that Michiel

⁵ Paul Coremans (dir.), *L'Agneau mystique au Laboratoire: Examen et traitement*, Antwerp, 1953 (*Les Primitifs flamands*, III. *Contributions à l'Étude des Primitifs flamands*, vol. 2). See, on pages 98–99 and 101–17, the red and green draperies of the *Singing Angels* (pp. 98–99), the brocades and floor tiles by the *Enthroned* figures (pp. 101–5), the faces of the *Virgin* and the *Baptist Enthroned* (p. 102), and large areas in the *Adoration* (pp. 106–17).

⁶ Marcus van Vaernewijck, *Den Spieghel der Nederlandscher audtheyt...*, Ghent, 1568, f° 117, v°.

Coxcie made in 1557–58. The representation of the tower of the Cathedral of Utrecht in an overpainting phase in the *Adoration of the Lamb* reinforces the assumption that Van Scorel, a Canon of Saint Mary in the same city, likely painted that area.

The paint buildup in the red and green draperies, as studied in microscopic cross-sections, is very complex, comprising alternating applications of opaque and translucent paint layers. Intermediate, unpigmented layers separating the paint applications were considered by Coremans to be varnish layers separating the original from the overpainting.⁷ Due to the short period allotted for the conservation treatment, the researchers could not conduct a thorough examination of the paintings on the reverses of the panels that are being treated at the moment.

J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer, who conducted a technical study of the polyptych over several years, nuanced Coremans' conclusions. The Dutch scholar attempted to unravel the complex structure of the paint layers, but his conclusions remained conservative, as he found it difficult to conclude on the basis of available research that so many prominent areas had been overpainted.⁸

Van Asperen de Boer noted many changes introduced in the course of painting, especially in the *Angel* panels and in the *Adoration*, and he suggested that these alterations could have been introduced by Jan Van Eyck in response to directions from scholars and theologians.⁹ He also suggested that some parts might have been overpainted very early on, perhaps by others than Van Scorel and Blondeel, and in any case before 1557, since these details are reproduced in Coxcie's copy. In Van Asperen's opinion, other revisions had been introduced later, such as the face of the second *Singing Angel*, repainted between 1557 and 1625.¹⁰ He made no references to overpainting on the reverses of the panels that are being treated today.

The laboratory analysis carried out in the 1980s by Léopold Kockaert, Luc Maes, and Jan Wouters (KIK–IRPA)¹¹, mostly performed on samples taken in 1951, also disagreed with the conclusions of Paul Coremans and Jean Thissen about the presence of overpainting. Those researchers believed that the complex paint-layer buildup was original and that neither the *Angels'* nor the *Enthroned Deity's* draperies had been overpainted.¹²

⁷ See note 5 above.

⁸ J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer, *A Scientific Re-examination of the Ghent Altarpiece*, in *Oud Holland* 93 (1979), pp. 172–78.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 155–63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹¹ P.W.F. Brinkman et al., *Het Lam Godsretabel van Van Eyck: Een heronderzoek naar de materialen en schildermethoden, 2. De hoofdkleuren: Blauw, groen, geel en rood*, in *Bulletin de l'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique* 22, 1988–89 (1990), pp. 26–49.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 35–37.

2. Possible dating of the overpaint

Laboratory analysis that will be carried out in the next few months should help to determine whether the overpaints described here effectively belong to the same phase. In any case, studies of the oldest photographs of these paintings and of their history of restoration indicate that they predate 1821. Mainly cracked like the original layer and close to its scheme of shapes and colours, the old overpaints' aesthetic and technical qualities indicate that they were applied in the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

Several sources mentioning early restorations have been published already, and other documented facts suggest interventions on the altarpiece:

- Historian Marcus van Vaernewijck wrote of a brutal cleaning before 1550 that caused the destruction of a '*Voet*' [foot] of the altarpiece that had been painted in distemper (*watervurf*).
- Van Vaernewijck mentioned Van Scorel and Blondeel's cleaning in 1550.
- It is documented that Michiel Coxcie worked for two years on a copy of the altarpiece (1557–58), and thus he might also have carried out some restoration on the original.
- A payment is recorded to the Brussels painter Noveliers (probably David) for work on the altarpiece in 1612. The Noveliers family (Pieter – the father – and his sons David and Salomon) worked for the court of the Archduke and -duchess Albrecht and Isabella as painters and curators of their collection. David Noveliers restored several early Netherlandish paintings, such as Dieric Bouts's *Justice* panels from the Leuven town hall (now in the Brussels Museums), the Master of Frankfurt's *Descent from the Cross* from the church of Watervliet, and Rogier van der Weyden's *Justice* panels from the Brussels town hall (destroyed). He was also known for his skill in imitating the style of older masters.
- Gianbattista de Bruyn was paid significant sums by the church for restoration of the altarpiece (four bills, 1617–18). De Bruyn was a painter who registered with the Brussels guild in 1616.