



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.

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



Before treatment

After treatment

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 was the subject of the **exhibition *restoration/REVELATION. The exterior panels of the Ghent Altarpiece***, which ran until 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 – end of 2019 (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** indicated that overpaint covered large parts of the underlying, well-conserved paint layer and that it could be removed. **After recommendation** of the international expert committee that supports the treatment and of the Flanders Topstukkenraad (Masterpiece Council), on 3 November 2017 the Flemish Minister-President Geert Bourgeois and Minister for Culture Sven Gatz announced **supplementary financing** for intensive restoration of the panels of phase 2. This implies removal of all overpaint in order to achieve a similar breathtaking result as the panels of the closed altarpiece. During the Van Eyck year in 2020, the restored panels will be on view at the new visitor centre at St Bavo's and the panels of the closed altarpiece at the exhibition *Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution* at the MSK.

## Phase 3: After 2020 (planned)



Intensive treatment of the **upper register of the open altarpiece**. Planned after the Van Eyck year in 2020.

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	1 410 592,54 €
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 (Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed) Flemish Community (Afdeling Cultureel 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:

