Introduction

- The Dutch Method Unfolded is a masterclass that addresses the consequences of wax-resin lining for the today’s conservation and future preservation of the paintings that underwent this treatment.
- It is targeted to professionals in the fields of art history and conservation.
- It is organized by the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and funded by the Getty Foundation as part of its Conserving Canvas initiative.

1. Rationale behind the masterclass

- Wax-resin lining, also called the Dutch Method, is a treatment method that aims to consolidate canvas paintings. It was invented in the Netherlands in the mid-19th century and was extensively used worldwide until the 1970s.
- This lining method is now abandoned because research showed it was incompatible with modern attitudes towards conservation.
- The abandonment of the practice has resulted in mid-career conservators and curators who have no first-hand experience of wax-resin lining.
- This lack of knowledge may hinder their ability to provide a proper conservation assessment and treatment.
- Today many collections around the world house wax-resin lined paintings that require further conservation treatment.

2. Goals of the masterclass

- To contribute to the preservation of wax-resin lined paintings.
- To fill gaps of knowledge and experience related to wax-resin lining in the fields of art history and conservation.
- To increase the current body of knowledge on the topic of wax-resin lining by inspiring research and triggering collaborations.

3. Program and teaching methods

- The masterclass takes place in the Ateliergebouw in Amsterdam (figs. 1 and 2)
  - Lectures by experts in the field
  - Peer presentation session
  - Hands-on workshops on reconstructions
  - Group reflection sessions
  - Close examination of historical paintings
  - Networking activities

- Through the 2-week program the trainees revisit the Dutch method and share knowledge and experience through a range of activities,
  > Lectures by experts in the field
  The lectures address a broad range of wax-resin lining related topics including the history of the practice in the Netherlands, the unwanted effects to paintings, the ageing properties of the wax-resin mixtures, and the re-treatment of lined paintings. The views of collection managers and art historians on the topic are also addressed by the program.
  > Peer presentation session
  Each trainee presents a case study or other aspects of wax-resin related research to their peers and the lecturers involved in the program. Each presentation is followed by a feedback session.
  > Hands-on workshops on reconstructions
  The practical workshops explore the impact of wax-resin lining to reconstructions. The effects examined include color change in ground layers, surface texture, and mechanical behavior.
  > Group reflection sessions
  The trainees report observations and experience from the workshops and reflect on the outcomes of the workshops.
  > Close examination of historical paintings
  The Dutch museums partners involved in the program are the Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum, Bowmans van Beuningen, Frans Hals Museum, Mauritshuis.
  > Networking activities
  The aim is to encourage collaborations and build a sustainable community on the conservation of wax-resin lined paintings.

4. Achievements so far

- The selection process
  43 applications
  20 different countries
- The group of trainees
  15 trainees
  From 10 different countries (fig. 3)
  10 mid-carrier
  5 seniors
  13 conservators
  2 curators
- The reconstructions
  4 different types of reconstruction (fig. 4)
  25 reconstructions in total

3. Program and teaching methods

- A website
  https://dutchmethodunfolded.humanities.uva.nl/
- A webinar with a presentation by each trainee
- 16 recorded video lectures by 13 different lecturers
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Conclusion and future perspectives

The Covid-19 pandemic altered the plan to hold the masterclass in Summer 2020. Nevertheless, significant achievements were reached through online activities. This contributed to prepare the trainees to the program to be held in Amsterdam in Summer 2022.

References

https://dutchmethodunfolded.humanities.uva.nl/

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