

The Dutch Method Unfolded

a masterclass to revisit the wax-resin lining method and facilitate the future conservation of wax-resin lined painting



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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 UvA facilities in the Ateliergebouw in Amsterdam (figs. 1 and 2)



Fig. 1 Ateliergebouw in Amsterdam view of the outside



Fig. 2 Paintings conservation studio of the UvA

- 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, Boymans 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-career
5 seniors
13 conservators
2 curators
- **The reconstructions**
4 different types of reconstruction (fig. 4)
25 reconstructions in total

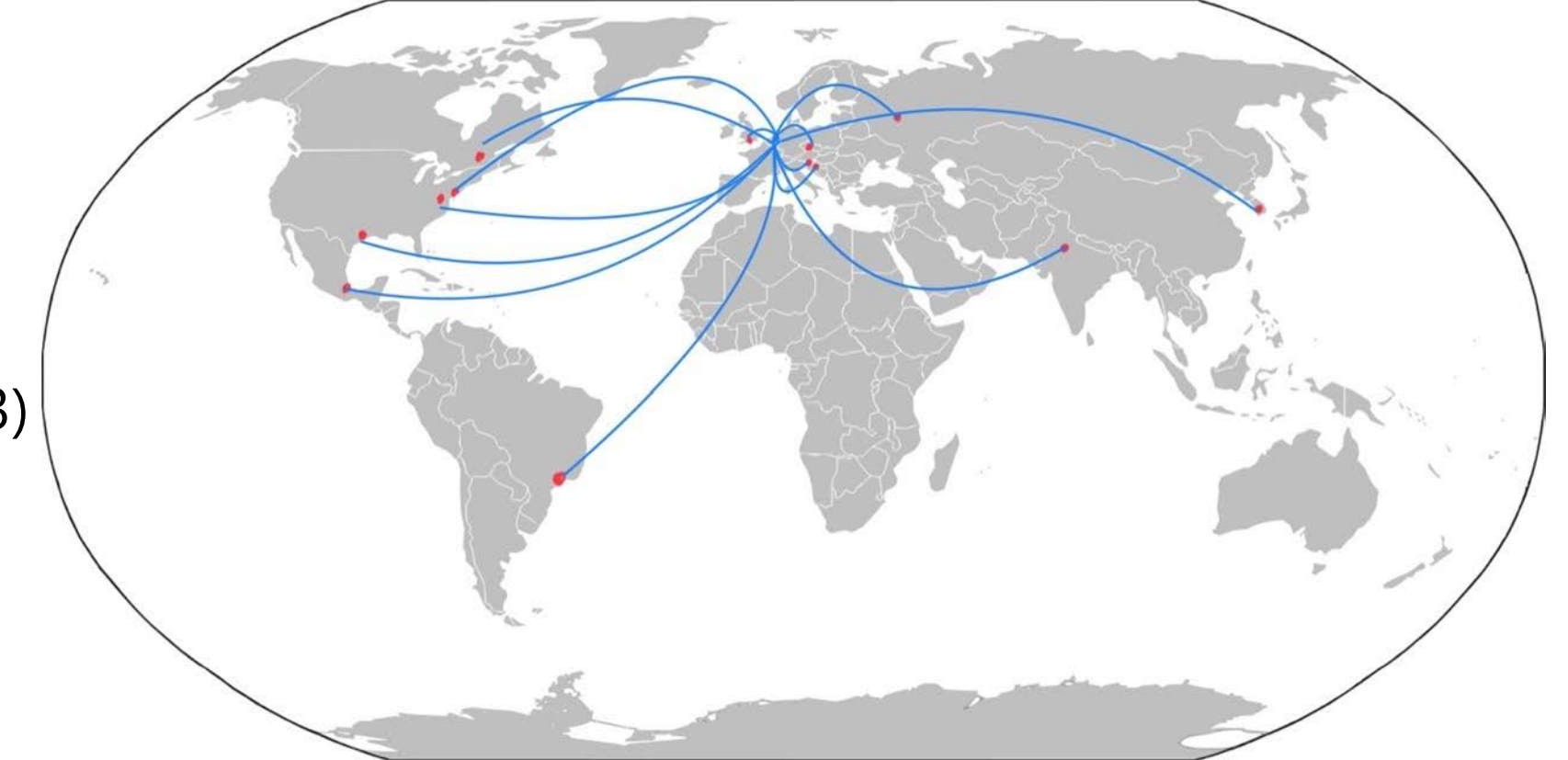


Fig. 3 Home countries of the trainees

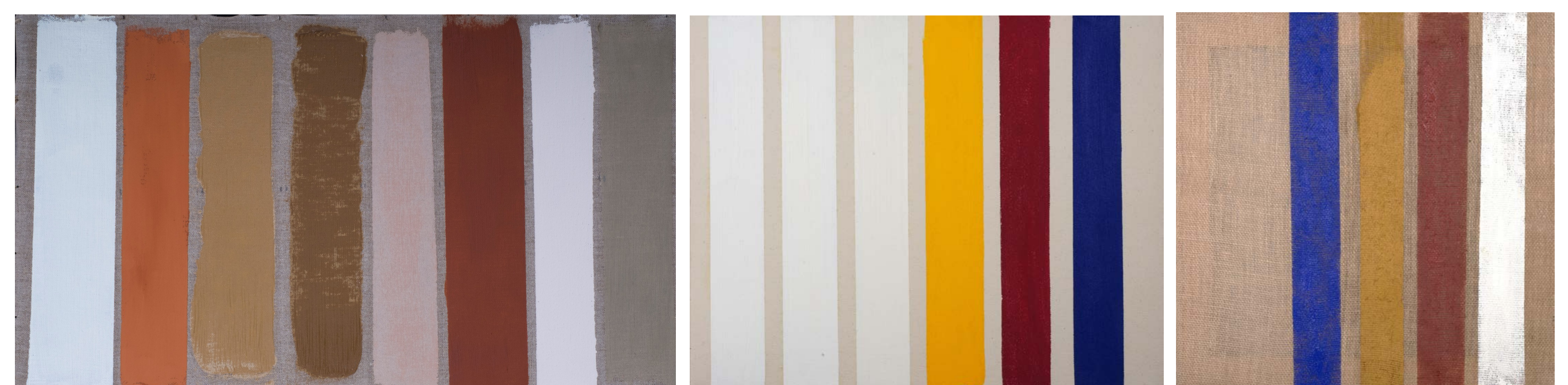
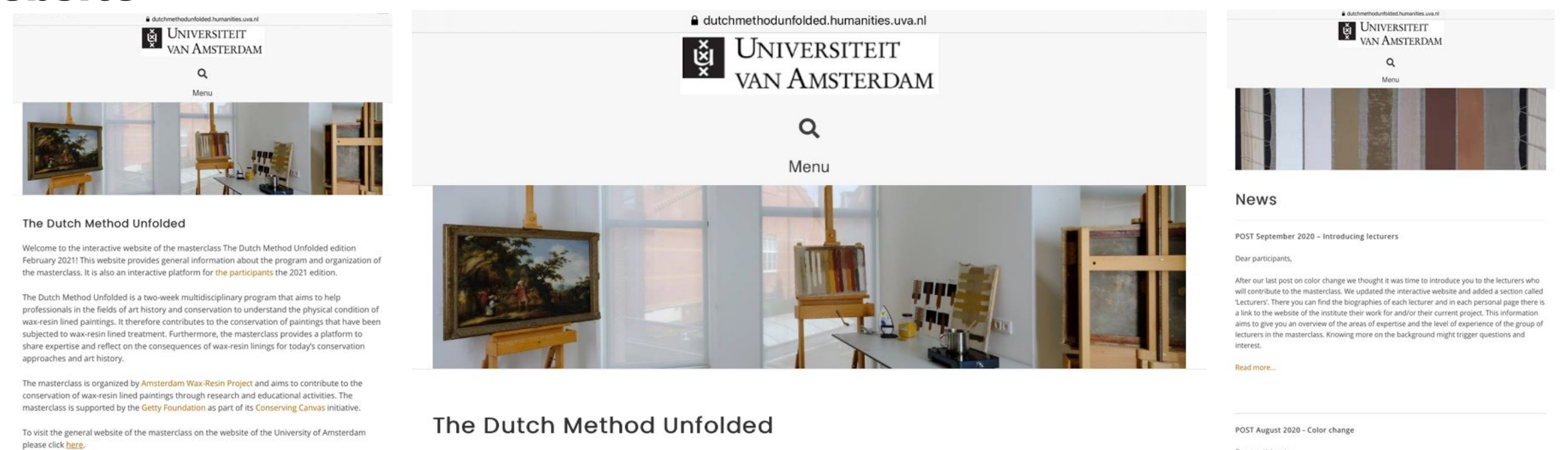


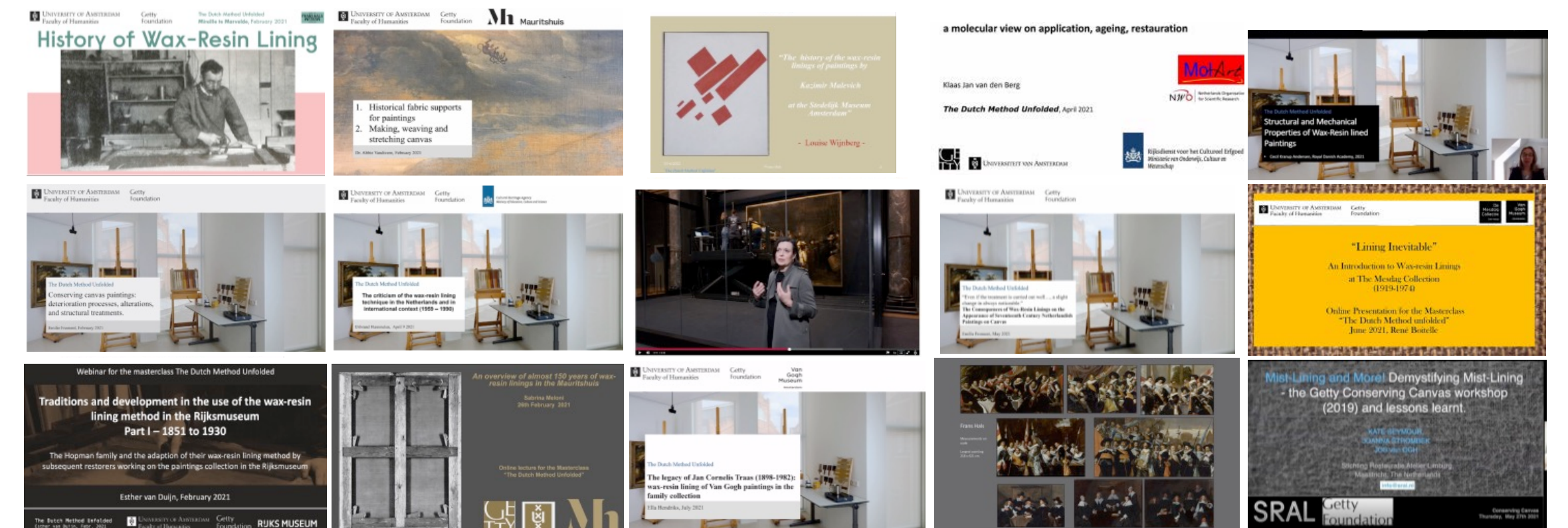
Fig. 4 Various ground reconstructions on linen, cotton, and jute supports

• A website



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

• 16 recorded video lectures by 13 different lecturers



• A webinar with a presentation by each trainee

Eunijn Kim National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Korea, South Korea	History of wax-resin lining and current condition of lined paintings in South Korea.
Simona Skorja National Gallery, Slovenia	Can doing nothing be the best solution at the time?
Camille Polkownik Courtauld Institute of Art, UK	Wax-resin linings in the 1930s and 1940s in London.
Michael Duffy The Museum of Modern Art, USA	The history of wax-resin linings in the collection of the MoMA: rationale behind these historic treatment methods and their consequences for the present conservation of the paintings.
Lauren Bradley Brooklyn Museum, USA	The history of wax-resin lining at the Brooklyn Museum.
Margarita Karasoulas Brooklyn Museum, USA	Sheldon Keck and William Williams' portrait of Deborah Hall (1766).
Rodrigo Villalobos Ruiz Museo Casa de la Zacatecana, Mexico	Wax-resin lining behaviour at a house museum: two case studies from the Museo Casa de la Zacatecana.
Desirae Dijkema The Menil Collection, USA	Wax-resin extraction treatment and current investigations.
Anupama Gaur ARC Resources & Services, India	Effects of humid climate on the condition of wax-resin lined paintings in India.
Aleksandra Orlovskaja The State Tretyakov Gallery, Russia	The history of Ivan the Terrible and his Son Ivan, 1885, oil paint on canvas by Ilya Repin (1844-1930), in the collection of the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Jelena Zagora Croatian Conservation Institute and Arts Academy University of Split, Croatia	A variant of the Dutch lining method practiced in Split during the 2nd half of the 20th century.
Hana Bilavcikova National Gallery Prague, Czech Republic	Examples of the problems and related questions concerning the treatments of selected wax-resin lined paintings from the collection of 19th century art and classical modernism at the National Gallery Prague.
Meaghan Monaghan and Georgiana Uhlyarik Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada	The influence of wax-resin linings on the condition of paintings in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario.
Amber Kerr Smithsonian American Art, Museum, USA	How lining materials degrade and what influences mechanical and environmental conditions have on the lining recipes and reconstructions as they age.

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 hold in Amsterdam in Summer 2022.

References

Emilie Froment, *The Consequences of Wax-Resin Linings on the Present Appearance and Conservation of Seventeenth century Netherlandish Paintings*, PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2019.

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