



Identifying trace amounts of brain-tissue-specific proteins in emulsion cured animal skins

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Simon Hantaï (1922–2008) was a highly influential postwar painter in Paris whose innovative serial practice, creative curiosity, and theoretical convictions inspired a number of his contemporaries. His palette is typical of the period, consisting of commercial artists' products, sold in tubes and cans, available to artists in Europe and beyond. In the context of a large partnership involving the universities of Paris-Saclay, Pisa, and Bologna, we have studied a series of samples coming from his studio from the brands Lefebvre-Foinet, Lefranc & Bourgeois and Valor using a combination of optical and electron microscopy, accelerator- mass spectrometry, carbon-14 dating, infrared spectroscopy, structural analysis, chromatography, and mass spectrometry techniques.

This presentation will couple chemical interpretation of the paint formulations, including the study of the main binders and pigments, as well as additives, such as free metal soaps, beeswax, and pine resin, with an art historical perspective on Simon Hantaï's creative process. Of particular interest is the rare access to a coherent artist's studio collection and the dating of the material studied in relation to the painter's works. The dating of the paints showed that they cover several of the pivotal moments in his artistic journey from the beginnings of *pliage* to after his "active silence". This illustrates the little-known use of oil paint tubes by Hantaï towards refining his creative process for making large-format paintings. The colors of the tubes reflect his evolution in choice of color throughout his lifetime. This study provides a rare glimpse into the most creative phases of his artistic life which can be correlated with archival documents and direct testimonies from those with whom he was closest artistically.

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