

Göteborg University  
Institute of Conservation  
Box 130  
SE 40530 Göteborg, Sweden

Tel: +46 31 773 47 00  
Fax: +46 31 773 47 03  
Email: conservation @icug.gu.

Program in Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies in the Discipline of Conservation

*Dissertation for the Ph.D. Degree*

Author: Agneta Freccero  
Mentor: Dr. Jan Rosvall, Professor

ROMAN PAINTING  
Wall Painting, Fayum Portraits and Polychrome Statuary  
Conservation, Materials and Context

*Abstract*

Ethics in conservation and the relation between theoretical guidelines and their application in real life is the comprehensive subject of this study. Choices of materials in conservation, whether traditional or modern products are, or should be preferred, and issues regarding the basis on which such choices are, or should be made, are problems relating to the level of applicability of theoretical programmes in real life.

Some ancient techniques, encaustic painting and ganosis, are at focus in this dissertation, and the materials used have been studied. The principal material, connecting these techniques is beeswax, used in its natural, or raw, state as a paint, or transformed into saponified wax, or Punic wax, either as a paint or as a surface coating. The techniques are related to Fayum portraits, i.e. painting on wooden panels, to Roman wall painting, and to Hellenistic and Roman polychrome statuary as a coating. The materials beeswax and natron, ingredients in such paints and coatings are studied and described, as well as the relation between paints and preparations. Some pigments used during Antiquity, relevant in this study, are shortly described, being part of ancient paints. Ancient and modern interpretations of the terms *encausto* and *ganosis* have been studied. Issues concerning whether or not these materials and techniques might be accepted in professional conservation and modern building construction are discussed. Experiments have been made with the intention of reconstructing these ancient materials and techniques, and testing their applicability in modern environments. Finally, theories have been exposed to situations in real life, and the results are presented in six case studies.

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*Cover picture:* Garden painting. From the Casa di Venere in Conchiglia, Pompeii.

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