

A Study of Painting Materials from the Studio of Yves Gaucher

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A retrospective exhibition of Yves Gaucher's work was recently organized by the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal. This exhibition, which opened in 2003, was the starting point for a research project on the studio painting materials of the artist. The three main aspects of the project were: to gather documentary information about the artist's technique, to develop a database of the materials found in his studio, and to analyse selected paint materials from the studio to determine their chemical composition. A total of 375 samples were taken from the studio, documented in a database, and archived for future use. Analysis of 36 of the purest materials was undertaken using scanning electron microscopy combined with energy dispersive spectroscopy (SEM/EDX), Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy, X-ray diffraction (XRD) and polarized light microscopy (PLM). The documentation and analysis provided information about the working methods and materials of the artist. Gaucher used a wide range of modern materials; three different types of acrylic media and a large number of pigments were identified. The pigments included organic compounds such as naphthol reds, Hansa yellows and phthalocyanine green, among others. Inorganic materials included pigments such as cadmium reds and yellows, iron oxides and ultramarine blue, as well as an unusual extender, nepheline syenite, a sodium potassium aluminum silicate.