

FRIABLE

Valorisation and Preservation of friable medium on paper. Caste Study on the collection of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB)

Contract - B2/202/P2/FRIABLE

SUMMARY

Context

Friable media artworks on paper, such as pastel, charcoal and chalk drawings, represent a fragile and understudied part of cultural heritage. Their vulnerability to handling, transport, exhibition and environmental change complicates conservation and collection management. The FRIABLE project (2022-2026) addressed these challenges through an interdisciplinary collaboration between heritage, conservation and research institutions, using the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium collection as a case study.

Objectives

To establish a representative corpus of Belgian friable media artworks; reconstruct their collection and conservation histories; characterize materials, techniques and degradation mechanisms through non-invasive analysis; assess risk factors affecting stability; and develop practical tools and recommendations for preservation, transport, exhibition and collection management.

Conclusions

FRIABLE significantly advanced knowledge of friable media by demonstrating the importance of material composition and layer build-up in determining fragility. The project delivered standardized documentation methods, technical datasets, handling and assessment protocols, a terminology thesaurus, and contributions to the AGATO decision-support platform. It strengthened Belgian and international expertise while providing practical guidance for the sustainable preservation of friable media collections.

Keywords

Friable media; works on paper; preventive conservation; technical art history; heritage science; risk assessment; non-invasive analysis; collection management.