**From Rome to Brussels. Science and art in the care of paintings.**

**Geert Vanpaemel**

What is the use of chemistry in the study of paintings? Twenty years after the conference in Rome (1931), the question was still hotly debated in the 1950s, even after the creation of many museum laboratories in the preceding decades. One further element in the discussion was the position of the conservator-restorer between science and art. Could he be considered as an artist, who by this privileged position could interpret the artistic ambitions of the original creator? Or was his work closer to the material and objective investigation of the scientist? How should either art critics or scientists give advice to the conservator, and what if their conclusions would be conflicting? In the lecture we present the work of two people who have pivotal in the creation of a consensus on these issues. The chemist Paul Coremans, director of the Belgian Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) proposed a multidisciplinary approach to the study of art works, successfully combining art history and scientific research. The art historian Paul Philippot, inspired by the work of Cesare Brandi, developed a critical theory on the preservation of art, which reserved a central role for the conservator. Through their work for UNESCO, ICCROM and other organizations, Coremans and Philippot have had an enormous international impact on the field.