Enzymatic restoration and authentication of Guiseppe Arcimboldo’s “Vertumnus”

Court painter Guiseppe Arcimboldo is one of the most illustrious artists, and his allegoric portrait of the Emperor Rudolf II as the God Vertumnus is of world renown. This art work landed in the collection at Skokloster Castle, north of Stockholm, Sweden, after a series of dramatic events and under partly unclear circumstances. Due to its remarkable artistic qualities the painting is quite often temporarily exhibited at other venues in Sweden or abroad.

Environmental changes in combination with the indoor climate at Skokloster have caused stress in the panel, and subsequent decay of the ground and the paint layers. This publication is on the restoration of the painting in 1988 and again in 2010 by enzymatic means. Enzymes also have been used for authentication of another painting attributed to Arcimboldo, with Vertumnus as reference, a hypothesis that could not be supported.

Frantisek Makes has worked as conservator-scientist for Swedish museums, private collectors and stakeholders, and he has been guest lecturer at the Dept. for Integrated Conservation at Gotland University.
Cover illustration:
Detail of the portrait of Rudolf II as Vertumnus by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Skokloster Castle
Inv. No. 111615

Makes delicate restoration of Arcimboldo’s famous painting Vertumnus using enzyme system from Antarctic krill inspired our choice of company name to honor his achievement. Arcimboldo AB, is a bio-pharmaceutical company dedicated to research and development of krill enzymes (Krillase®) in medicine.

Institut för biometrisk forskning och konservering, F. Makes PhD, artist, conservator-restorer.