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Degradation of heritage cans: monitoring of museums' collections

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Abstract – This paper presents the outcomes of the CANS project (Conservation of cAns in collectionNS), an interdisciplinary research aiming at proposing conservation strategies for full cans, still retaining their original contents, in museums and collections. The paper includes the results of the condition report, measuring the state of conservation of 150 cans from 5 Swiss collections, the correlation between state of conservation, content and age of the can and the extensive characterization of the cans' materials for a better understanding of the corrosion mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage consists in artworks (painting, sculpture...) but also in usual and everyday objects (tools, machines...) sometimes unexpected, such as food preserves, like the ones illustrated in Figure 1. Cans are presented in several museum collections as witness to different time periods and significances.



Figure 1. Example of cans belonging to Swiss collections.

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