

CARBON DATING

Radiocarbon dating is a scientific method for dating organic materials. Wood, bone, ivory, horn, antler, leather, natural textiles can all be carbon dated.

Metal, stone and synthetic materials cannot be carbon dated.

In fine art, the materials we carbon date most often are wood panels and canvas or linen.

Contrary to other dating methods, carbon dating does not provide a specific or precise date. The result is expressed as a probability that the material dates from a time window of several decades.

As an example, a typical result could be that there is a 65 percent probability the material dates from 1860 to 1920.

For this reason, carbon dating is more useful for older items that are perhaps hundreds of years old, or sometimes thousands of years old for antiquities.

What is required is a small sample of the material to be dated.

