

# BETWEEN ART AND COPY



ENGLISH



# BOUNCE FANTEN



## ***Tussen Kunst en Kopie (Between Art and Copy)***

Racks filled with plaster hands, feet and heads, with a familiar face here and there. Shelves piled with pieces of buildings, animals, flowers and leaves; all made of plaster as well. In the Bonnefanten, the Maastricht Institute of Arts is presenting a considerable part of its collection of plaster casts to celebrate the academy's 200th anniversary. The collection was started when the Stadsteekenschool was founded in 1823, and now comprises around 500 items.

The plaster objects are not original works of art, but copies of statues from Ancient Greece, or of ornaments from Gothic churches in the Netherlands or of pieces of work by 20th-century academy students. The items were selected by the teachers because they were considered 'beautiful' or important, and were therefore used to teach pupils the 'perfect' proportions. By copying the statues on paper with charcoal, the students would learn what 'good art' should look like.

Nowadays, art education is different, and plaster casts are hardly ever drawn as an exercise any more. One exception is in the lessons in anatomy of people and animals given on the Master Scientific Illustration course, at Maastricht Institute of Arts.

*Drawing materials are provided in the gallery and there is space to get down to work at the tables or easels. Help yourself to paper and pencil, choose a statue and find out how to draw a plaster statue.*

**“All images exist already.  
We keep on re-creating  
them in order to keep on  
understanding them afresh”**

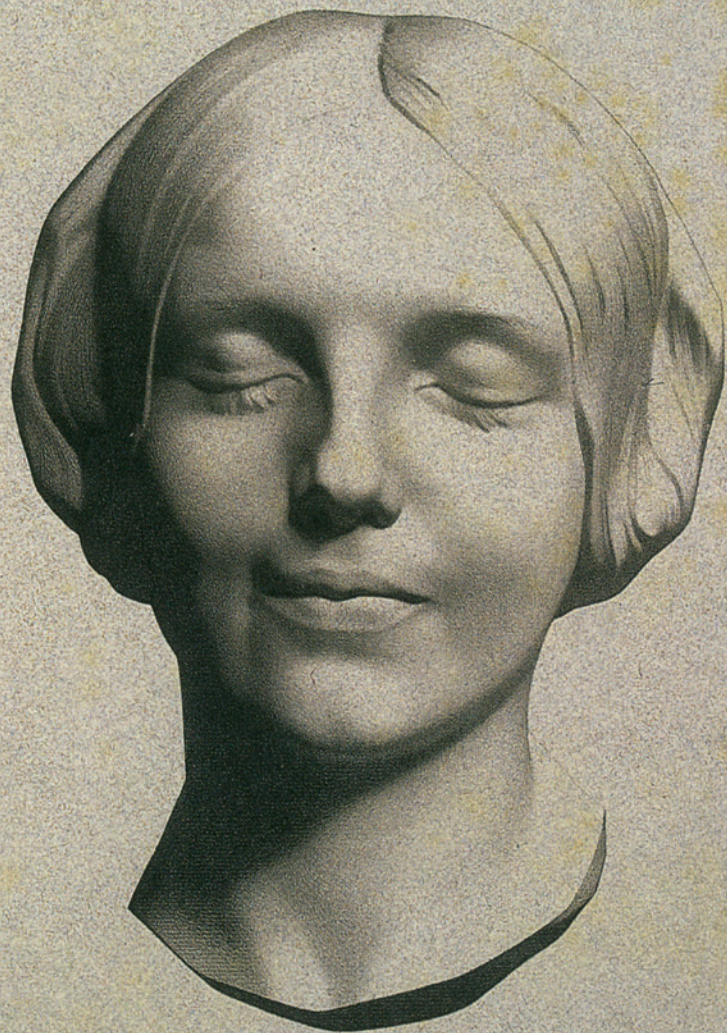
Niek Hendrix, guest curator

## ***Timeline throughout the years***

1823–1866	<i>De Stadsteekenschool in Maastricht</i>
1866–1898	<i>Tekenonderwijs at the Burgeravondschoon in Maastricht</i>
1898–1926	<i>Het Stadsteekeninstituut in Maastricht</i>
1926–1959	<i>De Middelbare Kunstnijverheidsschool in Maastricht</i>
1959–1990	<i>Stadsacademie voor Toegepaste Kunsten in Maastricht</i>
1990–2002	<i>Academy of Fine Arts at Rijkshogeschool Maastricht</i>
2002–2021	<i>Maastricht Academy of Fine Arts and Design at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences</i>
2021–present	<i>Maastricht Institute of Arts at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences</i>

# JEUNE FEMME

« Moulage sur nature »



COUVRS de DESSIN  
1<sup>re</sup> PARTIE  
MODELES J'Après la BOSSE  
PL. 53  
GONPIL & C<sup>ie</sup> EDITEURS



Previous page: Charles Bague, *drawing of a woman's head*. Open source, photographer unknown, part of the Bague drawing course.

Top: *Cellebroedersstraat*, Maastricht, 1968. Photographer unknown. © Zuyd Hogeschool.

## Drawing 'from plaster'

The French painter Charles Bague (1826-1883) is known mainly for the drawing course he published at the end of the 19th century. It is a good example of what academic drawing lessons looked like at the time. The course comprised 197 posters explaining how pupils could draw full-scale copies of plaster models and drawings by famous masters.

Only when this skill had been mastered could the young artist work from a live model. Famous artists like Picasso (1881-1973) and Van Gogh (1853-1890) also worked from these posters. Some of the statues from the Bague method are also found in the Maastricht collection.

## The first collector of 'plaster'

Even before the art academy was founded, Pierre Lipkens (1773 - 1826) gave drawing lessons at his home using his own collection of plaster statues. When the Maastrichts Teekenschool was founded in 1823, he was appointed director and teacher there. The aim was to teach 'fine' and 'decorative' arts to young children, sometimes as young as 8. At the end of the year, the pupils who did the best drawings won a royal silver medal.

New plaster statues were acquired regularly and the collection grew rapidly. The teachers who selected these models appear to have had a preference for Greek and Renaissance statues. For the applied arts, so-called 'architectural ornaments' were acquired, which were bits of historic buildings: decorations and details.

Making statues or fragments of buildings accessible is still important today, and copying them can play a big role in this. It is not necessary to climb a high ladder in order to see the Heimo capital. The copy is here, and at eye level. Neither do you have to fly to Greece to see the Greek statues shown here.

*Bust of Dionysos, 1823-1965.*  
Photo: Jonathan Vos commissioned  
by Zuyd Hogeschool.

## Drawing and choosing

Art academies originated in the 17th century. Young artists no longer served an apprenticeship with a master. They had lessons in drawing from life, which was seen as an essential part of their general training. A particularly important role was played by copying plaster casts on paper with charcoal. On a flat surface, the students had to give a good representation of the correct proportions, the anatomy and the contrast between light and shade.

The choice of specific plaster casts was related to availability, although political interests also played a role. Many of the plaster statues were distributed with the idea of bringing the population into contact with the best artworks. Those in power decided which ones were the best, and so the selection of statues reflected their ideas of what everyone should become acquainted with. Originally, the selection comprised mainly Greek, Roman and Renaissance works. Later on, more nationalistic preferences were added, such as Gothic statues in the Netherlands.





Cellebroedersstraat, Maastricht, 1968.  
Photographer unknown. ©Zuyd Hogeschool.

Studying Gothic plaster statues was very useful for architectural studies. Architecture students were trained as restorers of Gothic churches, for example, which often underwent restoration at the time in the Netherlands. The meticulous study of plaster statues in this style made it easier for students to enter professional practice.

At the end of the 19th century, the individual preferences of teachers began to play a role in selection. Not only was there an increasing availability of different plaster statues, but they also looked for 'beautiful' examples of anatomy or statues that lent themselves well to judging proportions and three-dimensionality. People began experimenting more with teaching methods. For example, they played with artificial lighting, creating dramatic effects of light and shade on the statues that had previously been impossible. And a greater variety of materials was used to make studies based on the plaster statues, such as paint, clay and graphics. Eventually, this also gave rise to some very strange lessons, such as learning to draw with your left hand if you were right-handed (and vice versa). Or students were challenged to draw a good copy without looking at the paper. Or they learned to depict a plaster statue by drawing only its background on the paper.

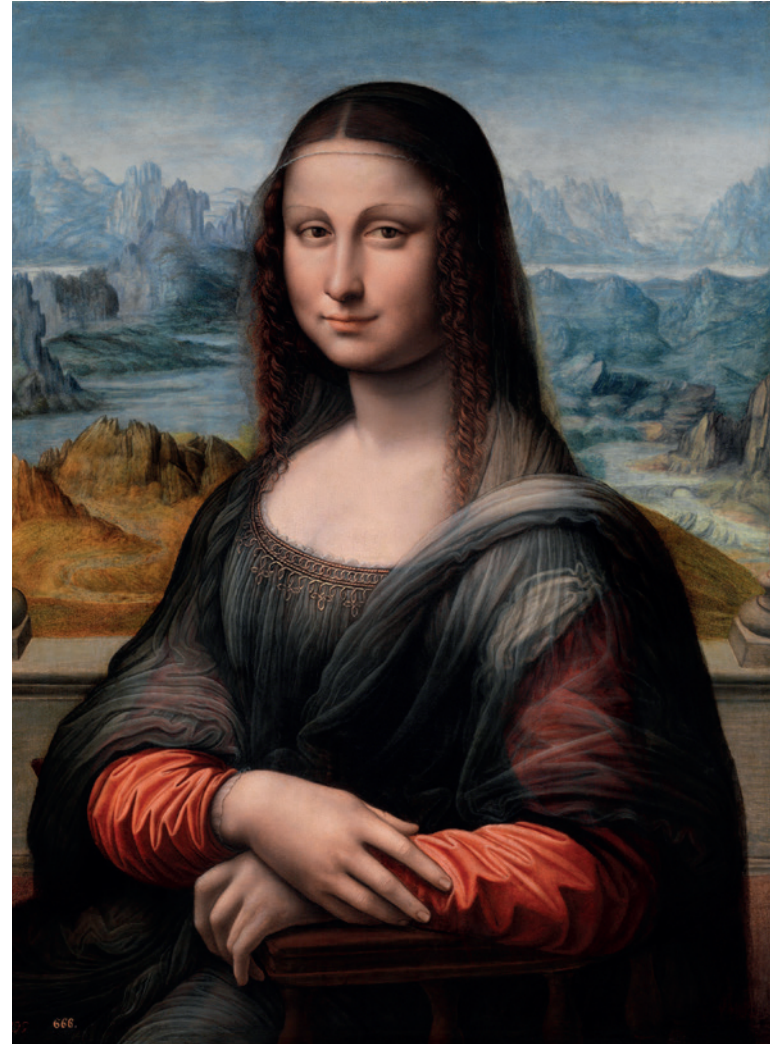
## A copy sometimes says more than an original

Sometimes a copy shows things that the original no longer can. Sometimes the original has been lost or has changed a lot, or a very fragile work can no longer be seen from close up.

Many early copies were made of *La Gioconda* (mostly referred to as 'the Mona Lisa'), the painting by Da Vinci (1452-1519), such as the panel that has been in Madrid since 1666. Research carried out in 2012 showed that the work was painted at the same time as the Mona Lisa that is on view in the Louvre in Paris, as the same adjustments are to be found in both works. For centuries, it was seen as an insignificant copy and was therefore left alone. The original Mona Lisa has been stolen several times and undergone restoration, and it is concealed beneath a thick layer of yellowed varnish. The Madrid version shows what the Paris version probably looked like originally. It turns out, for example, that the world-famous woman once had eyebrows.

In this way, a copy can sometimes provide more insight into the intentions of the artist than the original work.

Most people will think that the portrait of the Mona Lisa is the most reproduced artwork. However, this is not the case. The most reproduced image is this plaster relief made of Queen Elizabeth II by Arnold Machin. The image has been reproduced on over 220,000,000,000 British postage stamps.



Left: Leonardo da Vinci, *La Gioconda*. ca. 1503-1506, oil on panel. Open source, photographer unknown.

Top: Maker unknown, *La Gioconda*. ca. 1503-1516, oil on panel. Open source, photographer unknown.



## The greatest forgotten sculptor of the Netherlands

The discus thrower in the gardens of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is seen by a great many people. It is a work by the sculptor Mathieu Kessels (1784-1836), who was born in Maastricht. He went to Paris and Rome, and became world-famous. In 1828, he created his version of the classical Greek subject, the Discus Thrower; a bronze copy of which was made for the Rijksmuseum in 1920. Kessels tried to surpass the Greek models, and his version is therefore found in collections more often than a cast of the original Greek statue. This applies to Maastricht as well.

The plaster version belonging to the art academy is in poor condition and some parts have been lost, as you can see from the photo. That is why the statue is not shown in the museum.



Left: *Discus thrower*, 1823-1965.  
Photo: Jonathan Vos commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool.

Right: Mathieu Kessels, *Discus thrower*, 1828. Open source, photographer unknown.



## Idiosyncratic choices

Compared to other plaster collections in the Netherlands, the Academische Gipsotheek Maastricht is quite large and diverse. Most collections comprise mainly Greek and Roman casts. Examples of the Greek items in Maastricht are fragments of the famous Laocoon group and the Parthenon frieze. There are hardly any Roman statues in the collection. Although they were abundantly available, there appears to have been no interest in them in Maastricht.

The large number of Gothic architectural fragments and statues from the Netherlands is unique. They were acquired as examples of Dutch national art. There are many leaf-shaped ornaments, which were often referred to in the art history lessons as 'krulsla' (curly lettuce). In addition, there was a striking preference for works by the sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider. Riemenschneider, who has four statues in the collection, worked at a time when Gothic was shifting towards Renaissance. You can see this in the lifelike faces, pleats and wings of his angels and saints.

In 1903, an inventory was made of the Maastricht collection, which revealed that twenty-seven pieces were missing, including the choir stalls from the Grote Kerk in Dordrecht. They were obviously considered important, as they were promptly re-ordered. Five of the six known pieces are included in the exhibition.



Top right: Tilman Riemenschneider, *Gotische engel*, 1823-1965.  
Photo: Jonathan Vos commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool.

Below: Tilman Riemenschneider, *St. Sebastiaan*, 1823-1965.  
Photo: Jonathan Vos commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool





Previous page: *Dog*, 1823-1965. Photo: Jonathan Vos commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool

Top: *Fragment of the tympanum of the Parthenon*, 1823-1965. Photo: Jonathan Vos

## Victor de Stuers

You could write a thick book about the life of Victor de Stuers (1843-1916). Born and bred in Maastricht, De Stuers energetically fought for the conservation of national cultural heritage. For him, art was a way of educating the population. So he founded a school for drawing instructors and ensured that drawing from plaster casts had a prominent place in their education. He made the plaster casts more accessible, by giving them to art academies for free.

Between 1830 and 1839, Belgium split off from the Netherlands. Up to then, the Belgian cities had formed the cultural centre of the Netherlands. A Dutch replacement for the best of art and architecture in Belgium was hastily sought. For instance, Gothic became the model of a truly Dutch style, to replace the Belgian Baroque. Thanks to the efforts of De Stuers, the re-evaluation led to the promotion and restoration of Gothic churches. These restorations created an opportunity to make plaster casts.

So a great many plaster casts found their way to the relatively poor academy in Maastricht. The showpieces in the Maastricht plaster collection are thus due to the work of this exceptional 'son' of the city. The house where he was born, on Brusselsestraat, was left as a bequest to the Stadsteekeninstituut.

## Unfinished pieces

There were huge developments in art in the years following World War II. For instance, figurative art was over and done with, and new scope for self-expression was sought. Copying plaster casts was no longer relevant. Many academies got rid of the 'old' and 'boring' statues. Quite often, this was done drastically and the statues ended up in pieces in rubbish skips.

In Maastricht, however, there was still interest in the plaster statues, precisely because of the church restorations after World War II. A large part of the collection from the academy in The Hague ended up in the South. They arrived in such quantities that some statues that were cast and transported in parts were never actually put together. The Greek god Silenus with the small Dionysus in his arms, which is included in the exhibition, is an example of this.

Parts of *Silenus who carries Dionysus* after Lyssippe de Sycione, 1823-1965.  
Photo: Jonathan Vos commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool.



## Art or copy in society

In the spring of 1955, the art community of Maastricht was invited to make an artistic contribution to that year's Heiligdomsvaart (a religious procession held every seven years). Especially for the occasion, the students of the Middelbare Kunstnijverheidsschool made a gigantic plaster statue of St Lambert on horseback, which was based on a smaller model. Here, plaster was used as a material for making something new.

At the time, it was considered a matter of course that artists contributed to this type of religious festival, but nowadays it is a rare occurrence.



Spatial sculpture in honor of the sanctuary voyage in Maastricht. Photographer unknown. ©Zuyd Hogeschool



CPR manekin. Open source, photographer unknown.

## The most kissed woman

The 'Unknown Lady of the Seine' could be the most kissed woman in the world. She was probably found in 1880 in the River Seine, close to the Louvre Museum in Paris. Nobody knew who she was. Even after her death, her beauty was appreciated so much that a death mask was made of her face, of which plaster copies were soon made.

In 1950, this plaster cast was used for the practice dummies for mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. So in the end, the 'Unknown Lady of the Seine' was to become the woman who received the most kisses. Meanwhile, she has saved the lives of millions of people. Unfortunately, despite being so popular elsewhere, the cast is not included in the Academische Gipsotheek Maastricht.



*The Muscle Man, 1823-1965.*  
Photo: Jonathan Vos  
commissioned by Zuyd  
Hogeschool

## **“You can always throw it out later”**

In Maastricht, the collection was kept because – in the words of director Lou Duijsends – “you can always throw it out later”. In the 1980’s, items were brought down from the attic for the anatomy drawing lessons. Some of the statues were in poor condition. They had become so dirty that they were no longer fit for teaching purposes. To avoid them being thrown out, the teacher Jacques Spee and the retired plastic surgeon Gerard Jongejan decided to restore

the statues by painting them white again. The issue of when to restore art and how is viewed differently over the years. Whereas Jongejan and Spee restored the plaster casts to their original state by painting them white, nowadays we actually value the traces of time. This ‘patina’ is no longer polished away. So each statue tells its own unique story.

## **19th and 20th century**

The items from the 19th and 20th century are mainly casts of portraits. They are works by students that were considered exemplary. When cast in plaster, they can be kept longer.

In between the unknown faces, we also find portraits of directors of the academy. For instance, the big dark-brown bust is a portrait of Théodore Schaepekens (1810-1883). Right next to it, there is the bronze-coloured relief of Jos Postmes (1896-1934).

On the far right is Jef Scheffers (2006-2009), and the portrait in the middle is probably Rob Graafland (1875-1940).



Bust of Theodore  
Schaepekens, Portrait  
of J. Postmes, director  
of the MKS, bust of an  
unknown man, bust of  
A.J.J. Scheffers, director  
of the MK, 1823-1965.  
Photo: Niek Hendrix  
commissioned by Zuyd  
Hogeschool



*The Thorn Puller*, 1823-1965. Photo: Jonathan Vos  
commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool.

## The Academische Gipsotheek Maastricht today

Many items in the collection have been given a permanent place in the building. Some plaster casts are used for the anatomy lessons on the Master Scientific Illustration course. For this course, some new items have even been acquired, such as the casts of human and animal muscles shown here.

As part of the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of the art academy, in 2023, a large part of the collection is being exhibited in the Bonnefanten. The copy of the Heimo capital from the Basilica of Our Lady will be restored in the room of the Stichting Restauratie Atelier Limburg, which is open to the public.



*Heimo capital*, 1823-1965. Photo: Jonathan Vos  
commissioned by Zuyd Hogeschool.

Volgende pagina: *Cellebroedersstraat*, Maastricht, 1968.  
Photographer unknown. © Zuyd Hogeschool





# **Between Art and Copy: Arrangement of plaster sculptures from the collection of Maastricht Institute of Arts**

11.02.2023 – 25.02.2024

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Stijn Huijts

A collaboration between Maastricht  
Institute of Arts and Bonnefanten.

## **Guest curator**

Niek Hendrix

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## **Texts**

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Cover image: *Storage*  
*Cellebroederstraat*, Maastricht,  
1968. Photographer unknown.  
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