Plaster Casts in the Life and Art of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painters

Isabella Lores-Chavez

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Abstract

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In the early modern Dutch Republic, plaster casts offered artists a way to overcome limitations of space and time, to reach places distant and ancient, and to present themselves anew. This dissertation constitutes the first comprehensive account of the impact plaster casts had on the artistic practice, intellectual endeavors, and social status of seventeenth-century Dutch artists. Though plaster casts appear in archival documents, in theoretical texts, and most of all in paintings across genres, they have been marginalized in the history of Dutch art, too often explained away as mere studio props or didactic tools. I inquire, instead, into the consequences of Dutch painters’ conscious choice to depict plaster casts after ancient and modern sculpture, at the same time they staked their claims as practitioners of a noble art. Plaster casts linked Dutch painters to antiquity, to the Renaissance, to discerning contemporary collectors, and to one another. These modest objects, full of semantic potential, were incorporated into myriad compositions in which they became signifiers of an artist’s ambitions, humanistic aspirations, and technical virtuosity. Through novel interpretations of paintings in which plaster casts have been taken for granted, I argue that plaster casts lie at the heart of the self-awareness and artistic self-promotion manifested in the seemingly quotidian paintings of the new seventeenth-century genres. This dissertation also sets out to recognize the variety of laborers involved in the production and circulation of the actual plaster casts, though their specific identities remain largely obscured or lost in the historical record. Their absence from the corpus of images of trades and professions emerges in stark contrast to the privileged self-fashioning of Dutch
painters, for whom plaster casts functioned as a means to distinguish themselves from other artisans. I take the pictorialized encounter between plaster casts and artists as an opportunity to discern the particularities of that interaction and to explore the liveliness that plaster casts introduced into both the experience of studying casts and the compositions artists populated with them. With an invigorated focus on plaster itself as a material with a protean character and multi-purpose applications, this dissertation contributes to the discourse on Dutch painters’ *naer het leven* practice through an overdue analysis of the sculptural copies and other bodies in plaster that kept them company.
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Figure 4.42. Joseph Wright of Derby. *The Corinthian Maid*. 1782-1784. Oil on canvas. 106.3 x 130.8 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1983.1.46.

Figure 4.43. Jean-Simeon Chardin. *Young Student Drawing*. ca. 1738. Oil on panel. 21 x 17.1 cm. Framed: 38.7 x 35.2 x 7.6 cm. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, AP 1982.07.

Figure 4.44. Johannes Lingelbach. *Draftsman Studying Classical Works in the Park*. 1671. Oil on canvas. 99.8 x 137 cm. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Gm 440. Photograph by Isabella Lores-Chavez.
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Dedication

Para la mami, la abue y el neno.
Introduction

In the magnum opus of the Flemish humanist and naturalist Anselm de Boodt, the *Gemmarum et Lapidum Historia* on the subject of mineralogy, a short chapter on plaster appears ensconced between De Boodt’s discussions of the gypsum mineral selenite and the volcanic rock known as pumice. The description, less than two pages long, includes remarks on plaster’s divergent and curious uses:

“Plaster is astringent, adhesive, and causes obstructions. It is appropriate for applying to eruptions of blood. For when it is moistened, it hardens quickly into stone: and for this reason, when it is taken as a beverage, it strangles and suffocates… It is very useful for making tall statues, and for making them light: for one covers these statues partially formed in wool, or clumps of linen, hemp, or hay with moistened, soft plaster: so that a thin crust dries all around, which afterwards one polishes and thereby renders the features and the work more delicate. These statues, formed beneath this grand mass and attached to a wall, capture the admiration of their beholders.”¹

Whether applied to a bleeding wound or to the soft armature of a sculpture, the advantage of plaster is that it is pliable yet “hardens quickly into stone.” The material’s strange behavior makes it possible to fabricate large statues whose lightweight interiors are masked by a convincingly stone-like exterior. De Boodt also notes that, once it dries, plaster can be made more beautiful through additional surface treatments, which results in sculptures worthy of admiration. The passage details De Boodt’s familiarity with the conveniences as well as the deceptive potential of plaster. He subsequently describes how it can be mixed with powders

made from other stones and even pigments to change it into “real” stone or to closely imitate marble’s weight, color, and luminosity. Though De Boodt calls plaster a type of stone itself (“la pierre Plastre”), he is primarily preoccupied with its approximation of others.

These observations are also a markedly individualized view of the exceptionally variable material referred to as “plaster.” De Boodt recommends and simultaneously warns against plaster’s malleability. The qualities that make it so suitable to stemming the flow of blood—it sticks well and solidifies swiftly—also make it a dangerous substance that, though it appears liquid, forms a suffocating blockage in the throat if ingested. Meanwhile, aside from his highly specific instructions for making large sculptures with plaster, De Boodt has little to say about plaster’s further relevance to the art of sculpture as an independent medium. Within the pages of his history of minerals, De Boodt underscores its peculiar physical properties. Investigative as his text purports to be, it is limited to only a few of the abundant ways plaster existed in the early modern Netherlands. From the perspective of another, plaster could provide a means to make a living, to adorn a home, and especially to make all manner of sculpture.

This dissertation presents the first comprehensive study of plaster casts in the Dutch Republic from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century. Through the interpretation of painted depictions of plaster casts and their traces in the historical record, each chapter proposes that plaster casts occupy a distinct place in the history of Dutch art and that they reveal facets of artistic identity and social self-fashioning that have not been adequately recognized in existing scholarship. Moreover, the dissertation emphasizes the bountiful information about and evocation of the early modern Netherlands that arises from inquiries into seemingly simple

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2 “Estant incorporé & meslé avec la poudre substile & desliée des pierres les plus dures, auec de poudre de plomb, & de laïct, il se change en veritables pierres: & si on y adiouste des couleurs, il imite de bien pres les marbre par son poids, esclat, & couleur.” De Boodt, 513.
subjects in plain sight. In this study, plaster casts appear as the protagonists, not relegated to the margins of art historical attention or presumed to be mere staffage, but rather interrogated as adaptable repositories of meaning. This involves the conscious decision to recall that plaster casts did not materialize—in the actual or virtual, painted spaces of the Dutch Republic—without the efforts of a constellation of actors who produced the raw materials and manipulated them into free-standing sculpture; others who circulated the casts through personal and financial transactions; and still others who chose to render them as two-dimensional images.

I refer to these objects primarily as casts in recognition of the mechanics of their creation. That is, the mostly small-scale sculpture in plaster that appears in the texts and images in this dissertation was made by means of casting, which required the manipulation of molds into which plaster was poured. This procedure alone, in my view, permits their classification as casts. Importantly, this does not mean that the objects I call casts were directly based on the sculptures they reproduce. In fact, the Dutch Republic was populated by casts at several removes from the originals. The majority, as far as I have determined, must have been cast in molds that recapitulated the prototype but were not taken from direct contact with it. Instead, the molds had to be generated from models that replicated the desired sculpture. This method of reproduction enabled casters to make reduced or enlarged versions of famous and sought-after small bronzes, colossi in marble, bas-reliefs, and everything in between. The bottom line is that, regardless of their degree of separation from the prototype, each resulting plaster object was, in the end, a cast.

This designation inevitably invokes the fraught connotations of the concept of the copy. It is not my prime objective here to disentangle the conflicting threads of the scholarly debates about what a copy is or is not, for I do not believe it is necessary, or even productive, to arrive at
an unimpeachable definition of that term. Still, this dissertation does historicize the appeal of copies and multiples on the basis of their recurrence in the possessions and the visual imagination of the Dutch in the early modern period. As with the term “cast,” I occasionally employ “copy” to indicate that, on a basic level, plaster casts were unmistakable duplicates of sculpture whose whereabouts and ownership were well known to admirers and art lovers. For the purposes of this dissertation, the crucial point is that this condition—of the object as an evident copy—did not entirely detract from the appeal of plaster casts. Consequently, I have also elected to call these objects “sculpture,” to uphold that they belong to that category of artwork in defiance of what is sometimes perceived as a lack of originality or a deficient medium. This converges with my aims to expand the field’s determinations about what counts as a work of art in the early modern period and to ascribe an authorial role to the makers of plaster casts, whether or not we can know their names.

It was, after all, the abilities of these largely unknown artisans that made plaster casts available to Dutch painters, for whom the casts proved so full of practical and conceptual potential. However, the labor of these artisans was not visualized in the seventeenth-century Netherlands the way that the trades and professions of many others were. Instead, Dutch painters exerted their own authorial force on the plaster casts that they embedded into displays of their specialized work. In his Portrait of an Artist in His Studio, for instance, Godfried Schalcken plays with the idea of the painter’s creative act through the position of a plaster cast in front of a blank panel (Fig. 0.1). Though within the fiction of the picture the artist is not at work, the plaster cast has already been painted onto the panel, remade into a painted image by the picture’s

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3 For a more capacious and stimulating understanding of copies in early modern Europe that finds potential for insights through a polyvocal approach to the issue, see Maddalena Bellavitis, ed., Making Copies in European Art, 1400-1600: Shifting Tastes, Modes of Transmission, and Changing Contexts (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
actual maker, Schalcken. The plaster cast becomes a piece of sculpture wrought by a painter, enlisted to serve his craft and to proclaim him victorious in the paragone competition between painting and sculpture. Dutch painters did not link plaster casts to the artisans who made them but rather to the individuals who acquired them as objects of aesthetic and intellectual value.

Plaster was, in the seventeenth century, a material employed to artistic ends, but it also carried associations with the physical and visual properties of admixtures, also called plasters, that served a medical purpose, including of the sort that De Boodt mentions. The common designation seems related to the consistency of the substance: liquid enough to be spreadable but expected to harden soon after it is applied. Beginning in the Middle Ages, the word “plaster” often referred to a salve, sometimes spread on a dressing, used to treat skin ailments. The popular remedy book published by the Englishman Richard Dawes in 1634, full of instructions for homemade remedies, was called The Poore-man’s Plaster Box. Dutch authors also employed the term in this way. The Pharmacopaea Amstelredamensis, of d’Amsterdammer apotheek, published anonymously in 1682, lists recipes for “pleisters” that can treat pain, cure gout, heal broken limbs, and help with scarring. The author repeatedly instructs the reader to mix or cook a medicament “to the thickness of a plaster” (“tot een pleisters dikte,” “tot de dikte van een pleister”). The word is used in the same sense in medical volumes by the physician Steven Blankaart that appeared in the 1680s. Blankaart also published an herbarium, Den Nederlandschen herbarius ofte kruid-boek der voornaamste kruiden (1698), in which “pleister” describes healing herbal mixtures. In the entry for betony, for example, Blankaart says the herb


5 Pharmacopaea Amstelredamensis, of d’Amsterdammer apotheek, in welke allerlei medicamenten, zijnde tot Amsterdam in ’t gebruik, konstiglijk bereid worden (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1686), 191, 195, 196, 198, 200.
can be combined into a plaster ("tot een pleister gemaakt") with substances like wax or resin to treat head wounds. Blankaart recognizes that a plaster can act as a hard coating in a passage where he recommends cooking turpentine with red bole “tot een pleister” to cover swollen hands and feet to protect from cold and prevent cracking. Material analogies were also made in the other direction: actual plaster is evoked in an English text that cautions that, in the process of treating gout, “if the Skin be opened, out there runneth a matter, sometimes fluid and white, and sometimes like unto Plaster or white Lime.”

Dutch plays and newspapers from the period confirm that remedy sellers and apothecaries peddled the curative type of plaster. In the play De kwakzalver (1692) by Thomas Asselijn, Geertrui, the daughter of a quack doctor, talks of going to peasant fairs to buy plasters to soothe tooth pain and discomfort caused by foot corns. In October 1669, the Oprechte Haerlemsche courant advertised a “very lovely apothecary’s shop” for sale in Zeeland equipped with a number of “curious” cabinets, including a “plaster chest” ("Plaester-Kas") made of ebony. A similar announcement in the Amsterdamse courante from 1692 describes an

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6 Steven Blankaart, Den Neder-landschen herbarius ofte kruid-boek der voornaamste kruiden (Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1698), 121.

7 “Wanneer de handen ofte voeten door de koude des winters geswollen zyn, bestrykt men die met dese olie… Van den Terpentyn zelfs gekookt met roode Bolus tot een pleister, en dese geswollen deelen daar mede bedekt, verhoed die van niet open te gaan, en beschut die voor de koude.” Blankaart, 10.


9 “Ik wou zo wat de Boere Kermissen gaan bezoeken,/daarze me wel het minste kenden,/En verkoopen daar zo wat pleisters voor de/lidkoorens, en de tantpyn.” Thomas Asselijn, De kwakzalver (Amsterdam: A. J. E. Harmsen, 1692), 6.

apothecary shop for sale on the Haarlemmerdijk, complete with essential furniture including a
“plaster chest” (“pleyster-kas”). Remedies called plasters could be bought from these types of
establishments: a 1693 newspaper advertisement publicizes the goods peddled by Jan van Waert,
a distiller on the Leidsestraat in Amsterdam, who had a plaster against a type of foot gout
(“podegra”) that could ease pain when applied to the ailing spot. In Het groot schilderboek,
Gerard de Lairesse invokes this kind of bandage in a chapter about the potential problems posed
by flaws in the face and the limbs when painting a likeness. First, De Lairesse proposes a plaster
as a convenient way to cover a sitter’s blemishes: “If we have some redness or pimples on a
cheek, we must put some plaster there, or paint the other side in the same way.” To clarify that,
however handy, this is not to be reproduced in a portrait, he adds, “Has one ever asked a person
who laid a plaster on his whole eye, if he would want to be painted from this side? I believe
not.”

In Dutch historical records, the material that served as the medium for plaster casts is
most commonly also called “pleister,” though it is sometimes referred to as “gips,” and
combined with the terms “beeld” or “afgietsel” to refer to the cast. This conspicuous
vocabulary makes it possible to locate plaster casts in archival sources with relative certainty.

11 “t’ Amsterdam is een welgeconditioneerde Apothecars Winkel, Vorsien met een Noteborne Kryd-kas, Pleyster-
kas, Oly-kas, Kapel en Toon-bank te koop… staende op de Haerlemmerdyk.” Amsterdamse courant, January 17,

12 “Wert bekent gemaeckt, dat tot Amsterdam by Jan van Waert, Distilateur in de Leydse Straet in de Salamander, te
bekomen is een heerlijck Poeyer tegen de Podegra… als mede een Plaester tegen deselve Quael, dewelcke, gelegt op
de lijdende Partyen, aestonts de Pijn stilt.” Oprechte Haelmesche courant, February 26, 1693, p. 2, accessed on

13 “Hebben wy eenige roodheid of puisten aan een wang, wy leggen ’er een pleister op, of schilderen de andere zyde
desgelyks… Men vraage eens aan een person, die op zyn holle oog een pleister heeft leggen, of hy van die zyde wel
(Amsterdam: Desbordes 1712), 14.

14 The spelling variations of “pleister” that also recur in the historical record are “plaister,” “pleijster,” “pleyster,”
and, less frequently, “plaester” and “pleester.”
Determining whether sculptures in paintings could be plaster casts is undoubtedly a more subjective matter. Color is, of course, one indicator, though, as I will show, period descriptions suggest that sculpture made in plaster was not always left white and unadorned. My identification of a plaster cast in a painting is also sometimes supported by a concurrence between the objects depicted and the plaster casts listed in Dutch inventories. Moreover, I have taken into consideration the strong likelihood that reproductions of famous sculptures—especially at a reduced scale, such as the little Medici Venus in Schalcken’s *Portrait of an Artist*—were made in plaster, not least because multiples could be cast from a single mold. This dissertation represents the fullest attempt, to date, to bring together this primary source material and visual evidence of the plaster casts that moved through the Dutch Republic and impacted its intellectual and artistic culture.

Scholarship on plaster casts, especially as pertains to the Dutch Republic, remains relatively scarce. Eckart Marchand has been a leading figure in advancing the study of plaster casts in early modern Europe with articles that survey the documented presence of plaster casts in Renaissance workshops as early as the fifteenth century. Marchand, along with Rune Frederiksen, edited the collection *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting, and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present* (2010), which includes substantive case studies about plaster casts in Europe prior to the Industrial Revolution. The single essay therein on plaster casts in the Netherlands, by Léon Lock, scrutinizes images of Flemish artists’ studios only to point out that they are to some extent invented scenes rather than direct transcription of workspaces. He thereby rehearses a well-worn admonition about seventeenth-century Netherlandish art: that it

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must not be taken entirely at face value as evidence of actual circumstances. Lock’s comparison of archival documents with paintings and drawings of studios does not offer critical insights into the types of plaster casts that Netherlandish artists chose to depict, whether they owned those exact objects or not.

Plaster casts appear in the literature on Northern Europe most often in accounts of the reception of antiquity among elites and artists, with scant sustained inquiry into the acquisition of casts after sixteenth-century sculpture. One notable exception is Lara Yeager-Crasselt’s 2011 article “Michael Sweerts/François Duquesnoy: A Flemish Paragone in Seventeenth-Century Rome,” in which she foregrounds the painter Sweerts’ preoccupation with the sculpture of Du Quesnoy and the classical idioms that both artists engaged. Yeager-Crasselt also recognizes the significance of Sweerts’ decision to represent Du Quesnoy’s Apollo and Cupid: “He transforms the original bronze group into a remnant of the classical, sculptural form that Du Quesnoy has emulated,” thereby “elevating his sculpture to the level of the antique, and in doing so draws attention to his own classicist ideals.” That artists painted famous sculptures not in their original medium and size but as plaster versions has not been sufficiently registered as a choice with expressive ends. The assumption remains that painters simply reproduced the plaster objects available to them, which undermines the critical position scholars have taken elsewhere to deconstruct the notion that these paintings are unmediated mirrors of Dutch life. Like Yeager-Crasselt, I set out not merely to identify a well-known sculpture included in a Dutch painting but also to ask what it accomplishes there and why its depiction in plaster matters.

Yeager-Crasselt’s 2015 book Michael Sweerts (1618-1664): Shaping the Artist and the Academy in Rome and Brussels, along with the catalogue for the 2002 Sweerts exhibition at the

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Rijksmuseum, the Wadsworth Athenaeum, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, related plaster casts in Sweerts’ paintings to facets of his work and biography. Jonathan Bikker, for example, points out that Sweerts included three casts in his 1652 In the Studio that also appear in a portrait of Niccolò Simonelli, who had been the keeper of Camillo Pamphilj’s collection in Rome when Sweerts resided there.\(^{17}\) However, these paramount contributions to the literature on Sweerts, because they revolve around a single individual and the milieus in which he came across plaster casts, cannot function as an extensive consideration of the broader phenomenon of artists’ interactions with this type of object in the Netherlands. The essays in the exhibition catalogue treat plaster casts as hints regarding Sweerts’s artistic interests and practices as well as his social network. Presented as straightforward signifiers, the casts do not factor decisively into the authors’ interpretations of Sweerts’s paintings. Moreover, though Sweerts tended to show more casts in any single painting than his contemporaries, his work can by no means stand in for the range of uses artists found for plaster casts in the Netherlands. This dissertation pivots to depictions of plaster casts by artists not as directly associated with casts, or with a practice informed by the Italian tradition, whose work showcases the many ideas in dialogue with and expounded by plaster casts across the characteristic genres of seventeenth-century painting.

Art historians’ approach to plaster casts in Netherlandish art has largely been limited to identifying the sculptures they reproduce and ascertaining their place in traditional artistic training, but a handful of scholars have inquired into the actual production and circulation of plaster objects in the region. In an edited volume on stucco, published in 2010 in Dutch, the

\(^{17}\) Jonathan Bikker, “Sweerts’s Life and Career–A Documentary View,” in Guido Jansen and Peter C. Sutton, Michael Sweerts: 1618-1664, ed. Duncan Bull (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2002), 29-30. The In the Studio by Sweerts is in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts. The Portrait of Niccolò Simonelli, attributed to Giovanni Maria Morandi, is in a private collection in Rome. The casts in both paintings are a putto’s head, a foot, and the head of a Niobe.
architecture historian Ben Olde Meierink discusses the types of plasterwork employed in Dutch building projects in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with an emphasis on relatively recent finds, such as the fragments of decorative stucco discovered during the restoration of the estate Dekemastate in the Frisian town of Jelsum in 1997 and 1998. Though his principal aim is to provide evidence for the casting of plaster building ornaments prior to the nineteenth century, Meierink features the plaster foundry in Leiden run by the Van der Mey family, which seems to have produced plaster casts in addition to pieces like the regency room’s fireplace in the Hofje of Eva van Hoogeveen. Another family business, the workshop of the Larson family in The Hague, was brought to light in revelatory detail by Frits Scholten in articles for Simiolus (2004-2005) and Studies in the History of Art (2008). Scholten’s analysis of the surviving inventory of the Larson estate concludes that the family ran a large workshop that could supply inexpensive plaster casts to a large customer base. Among the casts Scholten identified in the estate inventory were versions of putti by Du Quesnoy, which, like Yeager-Crasselt’s work, points to the importance of reproductions of modern sculpture in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Scholten has elsewhere also discerned the popularity of plaster casts based on marble busts by Artus Quellinus even among patrician families. This, too, serves as a reminder that plaster casts in the early modern Dutch Republic were by no means strictly related to the dissemination of information about the ancient world.


19 Meierink, 231-232.


One of the salient findings of this dissertation is that many Dutch artists painted sculpture made in the recent past as much as the most famous antiquities, with particular attention to the work of Netherlandish sculptors. These preferences are confirmed in the historical record by inventories which list plaster casts of Michelangelo’s nudes, Quellinus’s portrait busts, and Giambologna’s serpentine groups. The pictures themselves are even more compelling testimony, in which plaster versions of modern sculpture convey the subtle bonds Dutch painters claimed with other artists across geographical boundaries. My investigation of the archival and pictorial traces of plaster casts in the Dutch Republic reveals the ubiquity of this type of object and the various conditions in which it was seen, whether in a fashionable home, a modest studio, or a painting with a purposeful message. At the same time, my understanding of plaster casts in Dutch society relies on my conviction to take seriously the material itself, though I have anchored my study in representations of it, in part because there are scarce examples of extant casts from the period. This dissertation posits the early modern Dutch Republic as another key locus of appreciation for plaster and its applications, and thereby responds to existing scholarship that documents the functions of plaster elsewhere in Europe, especially in Italy.

Historians of eighteenth-century art have contributed to the increased interest in plaster as a medium of sculpture, a cultural phenomenon, and a modern commodity. In particular, the plaster cast of the écorché known as the Smugglerius, made around 1834 from an original from 1776, has attracted the attention of scholars like Meredith Gamer. Her 2019 article in Sculpture Journal examines the peculiar pose of the Smugglerius, a life cast taken from the body of a hanged criminal, as both an artistic product and an index of the modern social practice of capital punishment. Charlotte Schreiter has shed light on the competitive market for plaster casts in

eighteenth-century Germany, initially dominated by itinerant Italian plaster artisans and, by the
1770s, further stimulated by workshops established by German craftsmen and dealers. Case
studies such as these identify plaster casts as multi-purpose commodities that must be considered
more than mere props or tools in the artistic and social contexts in which they were made and
exchanged. In these examples, as in this dissertation, plaster casts invite interpretations that
integrate not only their subject matter but also the medium itself, which made them more widely
available than many other forms of sculpture. As I argue throughout this text, painters recognized
plaster as the medium that provided them with sculptural models so compelling that they could
stand in for the living figure. That such a figure was also sometimes an ideal of beauty
transported from the ancient world is only one part of the story.

The foundational art historical volume about the early modern fascination with antiquity,
*Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900* (1981), briefly lays out the
place of plaster casts in the visual culture of Europe, especially after 1700. Francis Haskell and
Nicholas Penny recount the processes that highly educated elites embarked on to build galleries
of plaster casts in sumptuous homes and at the early academies of art in England, France,
Germany, Italy, and Russia. Their interests lie primarily in the systematic acquisition and display
of casts after ancient sculpture when the production of these objects had become more
widespread. Early in their study, they maintain that “the taking of plaster casts from an original
was an essential step in spreading world-wide appreciation of the most esteemed antique
statues,” but that it remained a prohibitively expensive endeavor in the sixteenth century, during

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23 Charlotte Schreiter, “‘Moulded from the best originals of Rome’—Eighteenth-Century Production and Trade of
Plaster Casts after Antique Sculpture in Germany,” in Frederiksen and Marchand, *Plaster Casts*, 121-142.
the period when major ancient statues were retrieved. They therefore highlight the salient cases of plaster casts made by well-connected sculptors such as Primaticcio and Leone Leoni, through access to ancient originals, for aristocratic patrons. What remains unaddressed in their seminal overview is the circulation and enjoyment of plaster casts, especially those based on but not taken from real ancient examples, among individuals of lesser means. The Dutch Republic, moreover, is not among the places they consider as a site of reception of classical sculpture. This dissertation shifts attention to more modest instances of contact—in a society preoccupied with its own region’s claims to an ancient past—made possible by inexpensive, three-dimensional versions of sculpture otherwise only visible in intaglio prints.

Art historians have increasingly recognized the fallacy of the notion that Dutch art, in its commitment to realism, remained at a distance from classical idioms. The exhibition *Gods, Saints, & Heroes: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt* (1980) set a significant precedent for investigations into how the Dutch responded to classicism through visual media, with a heavy focus on history painting. Twenty years later, the Rijksmuseum’s *Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting* revisited Dutch painters’ emulation of Italian subject matter and style, informed by knowledge of ancient art. The organizers showcased artists who had been largely excluded from twentieth-century narratives of the Dutch Golden Age, despite their demonstrable success and esteem among their contemporaries. History painting emerged once

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again as the principal expression of Dutch painters’ engagement with classicism, which obfuscates the curiosity about antiquity among painters who specialized in other genres.\textsuperscript{26}

Studies on the impact of ancient sculpture on Netherlandish artists have highlighted the experience of privileged artists who visited and lived in Italy, or who had direct personal ties to such artists. The Flemish painter Jan Gossart is a case in point: he had the chance to travel to Rome, tasked with making drawings after antiquities, as part of a diplomatic mission with Philip of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{27} The literature on Gossart describes the development of his idiosyncratic style in part as a response to his close observation of ancient sculpture in situ. The sketchbook of Maarten van Heemskerck has also been widely studied as an early critical example of Northern artists’ encounter with the remnants of the ancient world that could be found in Italy. The exceptional drawings, made between 1532 and 1536, have been recognized as a kind of antiquarian record of objects on public view in Rome.\textsuperscript{28} To understand how Netherlandish artists absorbed the classical canon that began to take shape in the sixteenth century, art historians have similarly looked to the drawings Hendrick Goltzius made of the most famous sculpture in Rome from direct observation in 1590 and 1591.\textsuperscript{29} Scholarship on subsequent generations of artists

\textsuperscript{26} See Albert Blankert et al., \textit{Gods, Saints, & Heroes: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt} (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1980) and Blankert et al., \textit{Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting} (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1999).

\textsuperscript{27} Maryan W. Ainsworth, Stijn Alsteens, and Nadine M. Orenstein, \textit{Man, Myth, and Sensual Pleasures: Jan Gossart’s Renaissance}, ed. Maryan W. Ainsworth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 383. Though Jan Gossart was the most prominent artist from the Low Countries to visit Rome in the early sixteenth century, Albrecht Dürer is widely considered to be the first artist from Northern Europe who went to Italy with the express purpose of improving his art; see Erwin Panofsky, \textit{Albrecht Dürer} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943).


\textsuperscript{29} See, for example, Glenn Harcourt, ed., \textit{Goltzius and the Classical Tradition} (Los Angeles: Fisher Gallery, 1992) and Huigen Leeflang, Ger Luijten, Lawrence W. Nichols et al., \textit{Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617): Drawings, Prints, and Paintings} (Zwolle: Waanders, 2003).
interested in antiquity also deals mainly with individuals who managed to make the journey south. The exhibition *Drawn to Warmth* at the Rijksmuseum in 2001, for example, demonstrated the variety of responses to Italian imagery, especially ancient ruins, that Dutch landscape painters registered on paper during their sojourns throughout the seventeenth century.

The reception of antiquity in Northern Europe is generally approached from the perspective of well-connected humanists such as Franciscus Junius and figures with international careers, particularly Peter Paul Rubens. As concerns visual media, knowledge of the art of the ancient world in the seventeenth-century Netherlands is consistently associated with prints, such as the engravings published in 1553 by Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert after some of Heemskerck’s drawings, or the four engravings Goltzius executed based on his own sketches, which were printed after his death around 1617. The artistic adoption of classical models in the Dutch Republic has also been studied in the realm of architecture, namely the designs of Jacob van Campen and Hendrick de Keyser. Inquiries into the impact of antiquity on sculptural production in the early modern Netherlands have focused on works cast in metal, namely bronze, which was understood as an ennobled material not least because it was associated with renown works from the ancient world. Given their decision to work largely in bronze to produce free-standing idealized nudes, sculptors such as Adriaen de Vries and Willem van Tetrode have been

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recognized as eminent inheritors of the classical tradition in the Netherlands. Among the aims of this dissertation is to survey how the reception of antiquity may be understood differently in the hands of artists who worked regularly from classical models even as they produced paintings that seem to diverge entirely from those models.

The subject of plaster casts in Europe prior to the Industrial Revolution has appeared in scholarship on the development of systematic training programs for artists, notably in the exhibition catalogue *Children of Mercury* (1984), a comprehensive overview of artistic training prior to the eighteenth-century boom of formal academies. Peter Lukehart’s research on the Accademia di San Lucca, which is ongoing, has demonstrated that plaster casts, many of which were donated by the Accademia’s patrons and benefactors, were integral to learning processes in an institution that became a chief model for subsequent art academies. The question of how artists learned their craft in the Northern Netherlands has most often been addressed on a case-by-case basis, especially in monographic studies of individual artists. Among the wider ranging accounts is the succinct but effective essay by John Walsh on Jan Steen’s *Drawing Lesson* (Fig. 4.20) at the J. Paul Getty Museum, which discusses the basic components of an apprentice’s training with an experienced master. More recently, Victoria Sancho Lobis oversaw, at the Art Institute of Chicago, a thematic introduction to the ways artists trained in the Netherlands from the late sixteenth into the early eighteenth century, chiefly through the lens of drawing as a

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34 *Children of Mercury: The Education of Artists in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Providence, RI: Department of Art, Brown University, 1984).


critical set of skills that artists cultivated from the outset and honed over time, though the project upheld a persistent inclination towards prolific artists of great repute.\textsuperscript{37} I recognize that the plaster casts in the paintings at the heart of this dissertation do, in many cases, represent pedagogical tools and aids in the acquisition of technical skills. But, crucially, I prioritize questions about the sustained interactions that artists could have with these objects. This dissertation does not elaborate on previous literature about the elements of an artistic education so much as it explores the relationship that abided between a seemingly pedantic object and the person who possessed it.

The pedagogical virtues of plaster casts that were codified in the first formal art academies extended, in the nineteenth century, into universities where arts curricula began to be taught in earnest and into the halls of the modern museum. Plaster casts became foundational components of early museum collections in Europe and the United States. Though the favor these objects were shown was relatively short-lived, they were integral to the objectives of museum stewards who envisioned their institutions as sites for public education. By the turn of the twentieth century, large collections of plaster casts were held by the Berlin Museum of Casts, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, to name a few.\textsuperscript{38} Museums purchased and displayed plaster casts of sculpture primarily to introduce their publics to the visual culture and history of the ancient world and the Renaissance by means of relatively affordable copies. That same practicality, however, eventually became a disadvantage: by the first decade of the twentieth

\textsuperscript{37} Victoria Sancho Lobis, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Drawing in the Golden Age (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2019).

\textsuperscript{38} Diane Bilbey and Marjorie Trusted, “‘The Question of Casts’—Collecting and Later Reassessment of the Cast Collections at South Kensington” in Frederiksen and Marchand, Plaster Casts, 465-483; and Stephen L. Dyson, “Cast Collecting in the United States” in Frederiksen and Marchand, Plaster Casts, 564-567.
century, curators and directors had begun to lament the increasing amount of exhibition space given over to objects that were not original works of art. In the intervening years, in the United States, the business of making plaster casts took off as demand for them increased, which in turn made it possible for other institutions, from schools to concert halls, to purchase plaster casts for educational or decorative purposes.

After nearly a century during which plaster casts were demoted from their station among works of art, deemed disposable, and otherwise neglected, scholars and especially conservators have begun to reevaluate plaster casts and their centrality to both the history and conception of art museums. Institutions that still retain casts made in the late nineteenth century or earlier are in a prime position to introduce modern audiences to the potential of plaster copies of sculpture across regions and eras. The Kunstakademiets Billedkunstkoler in Copenhagen organized a catalogue of its collection on the occasion of an exhibition in 2004. From 2019 to 2020, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin held an exhibition about life casts from the ancient world to the twentieth century, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Gipsformerei (Replica Workshop), which is currently the largest of its kind still in operation. Meanwhile, Mari Lending’s *Plaster Monuments: Architecture and the Power of Reproduction* (2017) has provided the first thorough account of the production, circulation, and display of large, full-scale plaster casts of

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39 Dyson, 573. At the Victoria and Albert Museum in particular, the space given over to plaster casts became a contentious issue, as the formation of a separate national museum for casts was debated in the 1920s and 30s; see Bilbey and Trusted, 475-479. For a brief chronicle of major debates over the display of plaster casts at American institutions, see Pamela Born, “The Canon is Cast: Plaster Casts in American Museum and University Collections,” *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 21, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 8-13.

40 Dyson, 571.


architectural fragments and features. She shows that, at the turn of the twentieth century, these plaster copies were enthusiastically added to museum collections in a milieu in which “a perfect cast was considered more valuable than an inferior original.”\textsuperscript{43} Lending recognizes the contributions that monumental casts made to the discipline of architectural history and to collective experiences of cultural heritage, which makes clear the constructed and contingent nature of the modern aversion to reproductions and copies. Though this dissertation discusses plaster casts that were for the most part not housed in public settings comparable to the modern museum, it presents early moments of plaster casts’ long history as artful objects whose pedagogical and edifying value was not undermined but rather enabled by their status as copies.

The dissertation is grounded in the consultation of primary sources, the interpretation of pictorial choices and priorities within individual or groups of paintings, and the preliminary attempt to catalogue paintings in which plaster casts appear, complete with, whenever possible, identification of the original sculptures depicted in each painting as plaster casts (see Appendix B). Each approach has been an opportunity either to read closely an underutilized source or to revisit pronouncements made about better-known materials. Inventories and treatises on the arts of painting and drawing contain references to plaster casts that, with proper analysis, reveal nuanced characterizations of plaster casts and their merits in the Dutch Republic. My consultation of archival records has also introduced me to the limits of what it may be possible to retrieve about the individuals whose labor determined the casts’ existence. Though my research constitutes an initial rather than an exhaustive undertaking, I have asked the modest records I have encountered to speak, at least faintly, for voices otherwise lost. Given the relative scarcity of extant casts made in the seventeenth century, I treat paintings, too, as sources in need of

scrutiny, in order to foreground objects that have remained marginal in readings of these paintings, despite their potential to communicate the sophisticated aims of their makers. Additionally, a patient and unassuming eye is required to avoid hasty identifications of the sculptures in question. The catalogue at times identifies casts that have not previously been recognized and compiles previous observations about the depicted casts to provide a working corpus of sculpture rendered canonical through its reproduction in plaster. Given the volume of Dutch paintings that belong to this version of the catalogue alone, along with the strong archival evidence for the display of plaster casts in interiors, I have not included garden statuary in this study, though some of it was also executed in plaster.

At the same time, I have endeavored to give due weight to the actual physical matter of plaster even as my arguments have centered on painted versions of it. This has been supported by my personal experience with reproducing a small sculpture in plaster. On June 4, 2021, I spent the better part of a day in a chemistry laboratory at Columbia University’s Morningside Heights campus creating a two-piece plaster mold to cast a small statuette in plaster, with the assistance and supervision of Pamela H. Smith. My reconstruction of the process was primarily an exercise in handling the material myself—not a rigorous emulation of early modern casting methods with historically accurate tools, but a proper amateur’s trial entirely open to reconfiguration and spontaneous problem-solving. Though I took guidance from YouTube artisans rather than early modern practitioners, the spirit of the endeavor was to seek a fundamental and productive

44 In the notable case of a plaster cast based on a bronze after Giambologna, discussed in Chapter 3, I correct previous misidentifications of it that have elided notable differences between the cast (which appears in multiple paintings) and the purported model, Pietro Tacca’s own Hercules and Cacus.

45 Engravings that illustrated processes of casting in plaster and associated tools in premodern workshops were published in 1765 to accompany Volume 8 of Denis Diderot’s Encyclopédie: ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (1751-1765). For a modern survey of casting techniques and their respective demands, challenges, and advantages, see Marie-Thérèse Baudry and Dominique Bozo, La sculpture: méthode et vocabulaire (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1978), namely Chapter 3 (“Le moulage”).
insight: a firsthand sense of how the material feels and changes, and the handling maneuvers it solicits, as it moves from a powder form to a viscous and pourable liquid and, finally, to a rock-like solid. These physical characteristics transcend historical eras. Plaster is, in many ways, timeless and predictable, but it is by no means straightforward and stable. It can be easy to use—still one of the more popular materials deployed in craft activities for school-age children—and, at the same time, it is fickle and readily mishandled. The two molds were simple to form but removing the final cast from the mold proved nearly impossible. I had misjudged the simplicity of the model, whose slightly protruding bottom half required a multi-piece mold to ensure that the cast could be neatly dislodged, and as a result, the plaster mold and cast alike became obstinate and unyielding (Fig. 0.2). What had begun with a satisfyingly pourable substance, which flowed, acquiescing, into every empty space provided for it, ended in a prolonged process of prying, carving, and cutting the firmly wedged cast out of the mold. Above all, the experience demonstrated to me the paradoxes of plaster: that it is workable as well as obdurate, that inexperienced hands can give it form but only experienced hands can give that form complexity, and that it coheres into a weighty three-dimensional object only by passing through multiple states of matter.

With each step in making a plaster cast, I gained a stronger sense of the peculiarities of plaster through which I might begin to theorize the material even as I investigated it in a specific historical context. One of the themes that runs through the dissertation, which initially emerged on the basis of both visual and textual passages, is the idea that plaster casts evince a form of liveliness in seventeenth-century Dutch images. Working with actual plaster brought me an unexpected perspective on its potential to evoke and resemble life. As plaster transforms from a batter-like liquid into a solid that approaches the appearance of real rock, it undergoes an
exothermic chemical reaction during which the plaster can reach temperatures of over 60 ºC. When I held my hand just above the surface of the setting plaster, I could feel the warmth it exuded, though visually the process seems more akin to water freezing to ice. There is a quickness to the material before it settles into the shape it is coaxed to take—which, in the case of the majority of the plaster casts in this dissertation, is a human figure. As it becomes the face or body of a man, woman, or child, the plaster from which these casts were made grows warm to the touch, as if warm-blooded in the very moments it shifts from shapeless substance to human likeness. I keep in mind this unique aspect of the material’s behavior as I argue for the plaster’s dynamism, in deliberate contrast to its prevailing associations with death and inertia. In this, I align myself not with the frameworks of agency central to the discourse of new materialisms—I have deliberately opted for more substantive descriptors than the overused “materiality”—but with Kaira Cabaña’s elucidation of non-binary entanglements between human actors and protean materials in modern artistic practices throughout Latin America.

The case for what I call the liveliness of plaster casts is also necessarily built upon Dutch painters’ attitudes towards the casts, which I believe are recuperable both through their pictorial choices and the texts written by theorists who were often preoccupied with how to capture life in inert images. I investigate these traces of the distinctive relationships artists and collectors had with plaster casts throughout the four chapters of this dissertation. At the outset, however, I want to point out that there is a disturbing side to the enlivening of plaster objects, which occurred simultaneously alongside the dehumanization of select groups of people in the early modern

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46 The popular phenomenon of death masks in the nineteenth century in particular has augmented the impression that plaster is a material entwined with death and with an ossification of the lively. For the material specificities of plaster as a medium for preserving the face and body of the deceased, see Marcia Pointon, “Casts, Imprints, and the Deathliness of Things: Artifacts at the Edge,” The Art Bulletin 96, no. 2 (June 2014): 170-195.

Dutch world. At the same time that painters like Rembrandt and theorists like Karel van Mander treated plaster casts as adequate, if not ideal, human models, scores of enslaved individuals in multiple continents were trafficked and subjugated by Dutch troops, traders, and merchants in the service of economic prosperity and territorial expansion. Even within the Dutch Republic, not every inhabitant was granted their full humanity in the social, political, and legal practices of the purportedly tolerant state. The potential of plaster casts to live and interact with Dutch painters and art lovers in the long seventeenth century coexists with a sustained colonial project whereby members of a designated race, ethnicity, gender, or religion could be treated as objects of property or as undesirables not to be engaged. This is, unfortunately, not a socio-political condition limited to the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, but it does introduce a darkly ironic dimension to the relationships with plaster casts that are set out in this dissertation. What is more specific to this historical context is the fact that Dutch men and women could collect plaster casts as part of an effort to emulate the tastes of the wealthiest, most erudite elites in Europe, precisely at the same time the Dutch embarked on a colonial project that enriched their homeland and bolstered their geopolitical position among powerful states vying for economic dominance.

This dissertation unfolds in a series of movements, from the panorama of urban landscapes to the intimacy of a one-on-one communion. The first chapter opens the dissertation with a brief social history of plaster casts in the Dutch Republic and addresses a range of encounters with these objects. First, the chapter provides an account of the wide-ranging labor required to generate plaster and sculpture made from it, asking how plaster casts came into being. An analysis of seventeenth-century inventories follows, to elaborate on the types of plaster casts owned by Dutch citizens across social strata. To begin to understand how artists used plaster casts, the chapter provides close readings of the references to the latter in the art
treatises written by the most prominent theorists. Finally, plaster casts appear as the career-long companions of seminal artists in the Dutch Republic, from Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, one of the first painters to amass a documented collection of casts in the Northern Netherlands, to Rembrandt, who not only owned casts but actually depicted them on a number of occasions.

The second chapter argues that plaster casts are instrumental in articulating the aims and ambitions of still life painters who were intent on making claims to their technical as well as intellectual abilities. Still life paintings emerge as an especially revelatory site for the discursive significance of plaster casts, which resist and subvert the expectation of a composition defined by inanimate objects. The first section is devoted to an extended study of an unusual plaster cast in a still life by Pieter Claesz to delineate how a single plaster cast invigorates the form and content of an otherwise conventional vanitas. The subsequent examples demonstrate that still life painters often paired the vanitas message of death with plaster casts as markers of industrious activity and individuality. The chapter thus makes the case that vanitas paintings with plaster casts in them are a category unto themselves, a particular mode of image-making for artists who grappled with the transcendence of their work in the face of their own mortality. Within these paintings, plaster casts play a crucial and hitherto unexamined role in the drama of man’s longevity. As surrogates for the human body, plaster casts in images otherwise filled with lifeless objects afforded still life specialists the opportunity to boast their abilities as figure painters as well.

The third chapter demonstrates how, over the course of the seventeenth century, the plaster cast became an indispensable attribute of Dutch painters who staked their claim as distinguished practitioners of a noble art. In self-referential depictions of studios, plaster casts accrued meanings beyond the subjects they showed, creating opportunities for painters to assert
or imagine their personal and aspirational ties to their predecessors. This chapter traces the development of this motif and considers the consequences of including plaster casts in the descriptions of workspaces carefully constructed by Dutch painters. Casts allow the painter to introduce subject matter that magnifies and comments on the social and moral stakes of his professional activities, in particular the performance of erudition in the company of patrons and art-lovers. When plaster casts appear in images of the painter alone in his studio, they mimic and redirect attention to the painter’s body, disposition, and character. This chapter also argues that plaster casts endow the studio with a type of intimacy by facilitating and commemorating relationships between painters and across generations. Though their colleagues in Italy had used plaster casts for centuries, Dutch painters more consistently chose to represent themselves alongside casts, including copies of famous works by Netherlandish sculptors, through which they could celebrate their countrymen.

The fourth and final chapter turns to the intersection of plaster casts and drawing practices in the Dutch Republic. Though relatively few drawings from plaster casts from the period survive, Dutch artists generated a discrete corpus of paintings that depict solitary young men and women with their attention fixed on plaster models. The creators of these paintings return the viewer to moments to which most artists devoted significant time: drawing regularly and “from life,” or naer het leven. This chapter demonstrates that Dutch painters chose to pictorialize, and thereby recognize, the act of drawing as a fundamental component of artistic education. Images of young people studying and drawing from plaster casts emerged at the same time that drawing was widely promoted through books and manuals that appeared throughout the seventeenth century and through formalized drawing schools established in the early eighteenth century. This increased interest in drawing as a polite activity or pastime also coincided with the
increased presence of women as enterprising practitioners. Taking a cue from Dutch painters’ efforts to engage the subject of the young student learning to draw, the chapter culminates in an exploratory analysis of several early modern drawings made from casts, in an aim to recapture in part the experience of the amateur draftsman, giving weight to the multiple temporalities immanent in these drawings.

With this study, I embrace the persistent indeterminacy of plaster casts in the life and art of seventeenth-century Dutch men and women, painters foremost among them. To begin to integrate these humble and largely lost objects into the history of early modern Dutch art, I profoundly regard them, in every sense of that verb. Each painting in this dissertation is an invitation for a prolonged and fresh look at a plaster cast that was purposefully selected, handled, and depicted by an individual with a point of view. Each cast has earned my esteem as I have returned to it its affective powers. Each act of interpretation has revealed plaster casts to be complex and versatile entities whose admirable existence consists of much more than a flimsy vessel with a delicate layer hardened at the surface.
Chapter 1: Encounters with Plaster in the Dutch Republic

On January 20, 1612, the Amsterdam city architect and sculptor Hendrick de Keyser was awarded a patent by the States General for an impressive artificial stone, “an art and invention that has not been seen nor used in this land.”¹ De Keyser had devised a technique that gave stucco the appearance of marble and sought proprietary use of it around the same time he had come to be known as Amsterdam’s “master of antique works” (“stads antyc meester”).² His incorporation of the classical tradition, both in sculpture and architecture, was in no conflict with his novel experiments with imitation marble made from a kind of plaster. The material was an opportunity to deploy his artistry at the level of form and surface and to stage creations that resembled classical prototypes in a land where marble was not abundant. Plaster was at once convenient and inspiring: it could be had easily—locally, inexpensively—and it could be manipulated to achieve the visual effect of a stone strongly associated with ancient art. De Keyser and his contemporaries saw and interacted with plaster in myriad forms in their homeland precisely because it was ordinary and versatile.

Plaster sculpture entered the public and private spaces of Dutch citizens from the earliest moments of the fledgling Republic’s history, yet its vexed status—as anything from ephemera to a minor art—has precluded serious consideration of its significance to the people who owned it. Plaster casts are often treated as incidental or marginal occurrences in histories of Dutch painting, despite the fact that these depictions are among the few traces left of plaster sculpture

¹ “Welcke konste ende inventie hier te lande voor desen nyet en is gesien noch gebruyckt geweeest.” Quoted in Gerard Doorman, Octrooien voor uitvindingen in de Nederlanden uit de 16de tot de 18de eeuw (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1940), 116. The translation is mine.

from the period, most of which is no longer extant. Scholars have for the most part simply accepted that plaster casts were there, in Dutch homes and painters’ studios, without asking how they came into being. Behind drawn and painted images of sculpture in plaster lies the labor of local artisans whose abilities were rarely acknowledged even by their contemporaries. The plaster casts owned by Dutch men and women also reveal their favorable attitudes towards the modest forms of art they used to decorate their homes and to commemorate facets of their identity. This chapter expands current scholarly understanding of why plaster casts mattered, and how they fit into the market, in a region that has largely been left out of studies on the rise of plaster casts among European artists and connoisseurs.3

One of the most important roles for plaster casts in the seventeenth-century Netherlands was to give all sorts of individuals a way to see remnants of antiquity when most originals were remotely located or inaccessible. Throughout the early modern period, plaster casts were “an essential step in spreading world-wide appreciation of the most esteemed antique statues,” though full-size casts were initially extremely expensive to take and transport from Italy.4 The dissemination of ancient sculpture beyond Italy began in earnest with a project undertaken by the sculptor Primaticcio. In the 1540s, Primaticcio went to Rome on behalf of François I to make molds of the most famous ancient sculptures and send them to his palace in Fontainebleau; full-scale bronzes were cast from the plaster molds, which, after François I’s death, were bought by

3 For this historiography, see Introduction. The recent, and comprehensive, collection of essays on plaster casts, in Frederiksen and Marchand, Plaster Casts, includes a single essay on plaster casts in the early modern Netherlands, specifically in Flanders. Scholarship on the presence of casts in the development of academies in the eighteenth century focuses mostly on France, England, and Italy; see, for example, Nikolaus Pevsner, Academies of Art, Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940) and Anton W. A. Boschloo, ed., Academies of Art Between Renaissance and Romanticism (’s-Gravenhage: SDU, 1989).

4 Haskell and Penny, 3.
Leone Leoni for his patron Mary, Queen of Hungary and Governor of Flanders. These Herculean efforts to bring copies of already canonical works into Northern Europe were limited to astoundingly wealthy patrons who could finance the undertaking. In the cities of the Dutch Republic, collecting plaster casts of ancient sculpture was not the exclusive purview of elites, however; inexpensive small-scale copies (not taken from monumental originals) were produced and regularly purchased there. Opportunities to make and buy plaster objects existed in numerous places, from artists’ workshops to specialized foundries. These sites facilitated the entrance of non-elites into the world of collecting ancient as well as modern sculpture, which was also regularly replicated in plaster.

This chapter demonstrates that plaster and plaster sculpture were ubiquitous in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic and proposes that all sorts of individuals—not only painters and sculptors—engaged with these materials. The range of encounters with and attitudes towards plaster casts in the cities of the Dutch Republic has, until now, never been adequately considered. This chapter explores how the ordinariness of plaster and the things made from it supported artistic creativity as well as aesthetic and intellectual pleasure across social strata. Though they were cheap and even pedestrian objects, plaster casts also elicited sophisticated conceptual engagement. The study of seventeenth-century Dutch art has frequently focused on the luxurious and the remarkable; when studies turn to the quotidian, it is often in search of stable symbolism derived from vernacular culture and moralizing literature. This can make it difficult to discern and recall that the humble yet artful objects that populated the lives of the people we allegedly seek to understand did not always have a singular or consistent function. This overview of the

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5 Haskell and Penny, 2-6. Primaticcio’s molds comprised twelve major works from the Pope’s collection held in the Belvedere sculpture court in Rome.
place of plaster in those lives serves as a starting point for the subsequent chapters’ insights into the meanings that plaster casts carried into painted images.

**Labor Around Plaster**

Plaster is the result of a series of physical and chemical transformations that breaks down and then recapitulates stone. The sequence begins with limestone, which is roasted at temperatures of about 900 ºC to yield quicklime, a caustic powder that is subsequently slaked, or soaked, to reduce its corrosive qualities. The resulting powder can be readily handled and exchanged as the raw material for plaster.\(^6\) A liquid paste forms when the powder is added to water, which, when left exposed to air, sets relatively quickly, through an exothermic chemical reaction. Heat, in this part of the process, returns the plaster to a solid state. When hardened, plaster visually and physically resembles stone once again. The paradox of plaster—it presents as natural stone, but it is deliberately manufactured—is central to its utility to so many ends. Plaster is modified into sculpture through techniques different than those applied to stones like marble, yet it can result in satisfying stand-ins for objects actually made of stone. To work in plaster is, to some extent, to generate a pliable, artificial stone without the arduous demands on the stone sculptor’s body. The most strenuous physical exertion that goes into making plaster occurs at the first stages of the process, when the original stone or mineral is pulverized.

Seventeenth-century Dutch books about trades did not feature the laborers involved in the fabrication of lime, the most common basic ingredient in plaster, but the widespread and variable use of plaster attests to the existence of an industry to satisfy the market. A small number of Dutch landscapes show active limekilns where limestone was burned to generate lime (Fig. 1.1). On the banks of a river or in the countryside around Haarlem and Leiden, men carry bulky

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packages on their shoulders as they climb wooden ramps that lead to the limekilns, which release plumes of smoke caused by the fires tended inside the brick structure (Fig. 1.2, Fig. 1.3). In one landscape by Jan van Goyen, a man is in the middle of shoveling limestone from a pile on the ground into the basket beside him, to prepare it for his colleague to lug over to the kiln (Fig. 1.4). These are glimpses of the logistics and labor that the production of lime required, not only at the limekilns but also on the waterways that facilitated the transportation of limestone imported from the Continental hinterland. The heavy manual labor at the limekilns took place away from city centers. A 1547 charter issued by Charles V (“keizer Kaerle”) dictated that limekilns could not be built within 1000 roeden (about 3.68 km) of the city of Leiden; a second royal charter in 1553 conferred upon one Dirk Jacobsz. van Montfort the right to build a stone kiln, but not within 400 roeden (about 1.47 km) of Leiden, and only on the condition that he would dismantle two existing limekilns. The careful regulation of where limekilns could be operated suggests the relative separation of this industry from the lives of urban citizens. A curious exception appears in the Opregte Leydse courant from January 10, 1698, which advertised the public rental of a “fine, pleasant, and business-rich limekiln” complete with a peat barn and living quarters.

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8 For the approximate length of the unit roede, see François Cardarelli, *Scientific Unit Conversion: A Practical Guide to Metrciation*, trans. M. J. Shields (London: Springer, 1997), 74, table 3.5.2.6.1. In 1551, one Dirk Cobel van der Loo was arrested for building a limekiln en route to The Hague within the limit stipulated for the burning of lime in a kiln; Inventaris van het Archief der Secretarie van de Stad Leiden, access number NL-LdmRAL-0501, inventory number 431, Erfgoed Leiden. According to Davids, “lime kilns could be found near the seacoast of Holland as early as ca. 1340 and later spread to many areas along the coasts of the Zuiderzee and in the northern provinces of the Dutch Republic,” and there were “perhaps some 100 kilns in the vicinity of Leiden alone” in the sixteenth century; Davids, 122.

There was an abundance of lime to be had in the Dutch Republic, made either from imported limestone or from shells taken from the coast of the North Sea, which were roasted in limekilns that relied on peat for fuel.\textsuperscript{10} Some of the lime sold throughout the Republic came from Friesland and was referred to as such: an attestation from 1658 declares that the lime- and stone-seller Gerrit Teunisz Heij in Delft sold and delivered at least 100 \textit{hoet} of Frisian lime (“\textit{Vriessche kalk}”) to the master-mason Isaak Krijnen Ketelaer in the years 1653, 1654, and 1655.\textsuperscript{11} A contract also from 1658 describes an agreement between a lime-buyer named Jacob Jansz Bosch and 4 sailors from Makkum and Workum in Friesland, in which the sailors agreed to deliver and sell as much Frisian lime as possible (“\textit{zoveel mogelijk vriesecalck}”) to Bosch for six years; Bosch promised them 15 guilders for every 100 tons of lime.\textsuperscript{12} An attestation from 1664 recounts that Gerrit Doedes, another sailor from Makkum, sold Frisian lime to several persons after it was rejected for sale in Amsterdam and that two other Frisian sailors, Aryen Yemans and Feytie Oedes, also had to sell their cargo of lime in Utrecht after its rejection in Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{13} Lime cargoes also arrived in Amsterdam from the Southern Netherlands, as evidenced in an article from 1692 in the \textit{Amsterdamse courant} that announced the arrival of ships bearing lime from Doornik (Tournai).\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{10} Davids, 122.

\textsuperscript{11} Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 632, act number 69, 2 April 1658, Stadsarchief Rotterdam. The \textit{hoet} was a measure used for dry goods. According to Charles T. Gehring, ed., \textit{Correspondence, 1647-1653} (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), Appendix B, one \textit{hoet} was the equivalent of 33.25 bushels of coal.

\textsuperscript{12} Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 318, act number 421, 3 November 1658.

\textsuperscript{13} Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 397, act number 199, 6 December 1664.

A small statuette of a peat carrier from the early eighteenth century, made from painted plaster, is a useful reminder of the physical labor required from many auxiliary workers to sustain the lime industry that made the production of plaster possible in the first place (Fig. 1.5). A request made to the mayors of Leiden in 1749 by two inspectors of lime and other raw materials explains the need to hire two additional skilled laborers to help the city’s lime-carriers (“kalkdraagers”), citing the death of one, the old age of another, and the fact that one of the remaining lime-carriers also worked as a peat-carrier.\textsuperscript{15} The trade in lime created jobs or additional economic incentives for people across the Republic. In 1632, for example, a group of carpenters in Utrecht built ferries for the transportation of lime, stone, peat, and other materials and received up to 24 stuivers per week for the rental of each ferry.\textsuperscript{16} A promissory note from Rotterdam, dated October 24, 1656, describes the 144 guilders that a mason named Leendert Pietersz. owed the heirs of Tettgen Andries in Oud-Beijerland, a lime-seller (“kalkverkoopster”) who sold lime to Pietersz. regularly (“Tettgen heeft tijdens haar leven kalk verkocht aan Leendert”).\textsuperscript{17} Tettgen’s profile suggests that there were even opportunities for women to make a living from the lime industry. For some lime-sellers, it also made sense to deal in related wares. According to an estate inventory from 1657, a man named Johannes Emertsz. inherited from his uncle a house in Amsterdam called “De Kalkton,” where he could establish himself as a merchant of tiles, stone, and lime, among others.\textsuperscript{18} Some distributors of lime and plaster within

\textsuperscript{15} Inventaris van het Stadsarchief van Leiden, access number NL-LdnRAL-0501A, 2 April 1749, inventory number 5047, Ergoed Leiden.

\textsuperscript{16} Notarissen in de stad Utrecht 1560-1905, access number 34-4, inventory number 206, act number 136, 6 September 1632, Het Utrechts Archief.

\textsuperscript{17} Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 508, act number 27, 24 October 1656.

\textsuperscript{18} Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 460, act number 24, 8 April 1657.
cities may also have been itinerant, such as the peddler that appears among Annibale Carracci’s drawings of tradesmen in Bologna around the turn of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{19}

In seventeenth-century Dutch cities, potential customers included construction professionals such as masons and the craftsmen who relied on plaster for intermediary steps in their work. The use of plaster for architectural purposes is mentioned only in passing in contemporary literature on construction and its related trades. As brick and tile became the preferred building materials in the Netherlands, plaster began to serve more ornamental purposes, in addition to its basic application to interior walls.\textsuperscript{20} In the notes for his treatise \textit{Huysbou} (ca. 1620), the engineer Simon Stevin mentions “plastered attics” (“\textit{geplyesterde solders}”), while the handbook \textit{d’Algemeene Bouwkunde Volgens d’Antyke en Hedendaagse Manier} (1681) by Willem Goeree has a section on modelling stucco.\textsuperscript{21} The latter evidences the possibility of specializing in decorative molding and casting in plaster, which, as discussed below, was undertaken by a few family foundries and businesses. The eighteenth-century architect Jacob Otten Husly, who was also a director of the Amsterdam Stadstekenacademie, started out as a stucco specialist working in the family workshop run by his uncles, Hans Jacob and Hendrik Husly, where they made decorative moldings and stucco ceilings for the homes of

\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Plaster and Sand Seller} by Annibale Carracci (pen and ink on paper, 27.4 x 18.4 cm), made in the late 1580s or early 1590s, is in the collection of the Cabinet des dessins, Musée du Louvre, Paris (INV 7293). For the impact of this idiosyncratic series on public beliefs and attitudes about manual workers in early modern Italy, see Sheila McTighe, “Perfect Deformity, Ideal Beauty, and the ‘Imaginaire’ of Work: The Reception of Annibale Carracci’s ‘\textit{Arti di Bologna}’ in 1646,” \textit{Oxford Art Journal} 16, no. 1 (1993): 75-91.

\textsuperscript{20} For the adoption of permanent, non-flammable building materials in early modern Dutch towns and cities, see Gerald L. Burke, \textit{The Making of Dutch Towns: A Study in Urban Development from the Tenth to the Seventeenth Centuries} (London: Cleaver-Hume Press, 1956), especially Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{21} Meierink, 231.
wealthy Amsterdam residents. The demand for this type of interior décor in the eighteenth century even attracted Italian plaster workers to the Republic: a man named Giuseppe Comado had a plaster workshop in Groningen whose contents, according to the inventory taken upon his death in 1738, included flat, round, and square molds most likely used for stucco ceilings.

Mortar, which was essential for binding and evenly spreading the weight of bricks, was also made from lime milled by wind or horse-powered structures and combined with a volcanic substance called trass beginning sometime in the sixteenth century. Documents in Dutch notarial archives attest to the recurring need for lime for construction and to finish walls. In a 1632 agreement, a merchant named Jan de Mey pledged to pay for the foundation of a wall built by two masons and to deliver lime to plaster the wall (“bepleisteren”). A 1658 document mentions that lime was used to build the mill and house of Pieter Jans Corneij outside the Delftse Poort in Rotterdam; in the same city, a few years later, the herb-seller Hendrick de Vijver bought lime, stone, and wood from a Dirck van Raye for the construction of his new house. The essential role of lime for mortar in Dutch building methods is evident even in the projects undertaken by the Dutch East India Company, domestically as well as in the colonies and ports.

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24 Trass was made by grinding tuff, a rock made from volcanic ash, and became a major export material along the Rhine, particularly in Dordrecht. Because trass improved the hydraulic properties of mortar, the mixture “may have found more and more application, as locks, sluices, quays and other hydraulic installations were increasingly made of brick and mortar, instead of timber.” Davids, 122-123.

25 Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 149, act number 345, 30 September 1632; and Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 369, act number 297, 8 August 1664.

26 Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 660, act number 133, 31 July 1658.
abroad. In 1671, two Rotterdam masons were accused of incorrectly preparing the lime necessary for the masonry in the construction of several warehouses for the East India Company.\textsuperscript{27} Throughout the 1670s and 1680s, meanwhile, the Dutch produced huge amounts of lime for export on the Madurai Coast, for the erection of fortifications throughout the region.\textsuperscript{28}

Though the bulk of the lime traded in the early modern Dutch Republic was put towards mixing mortar, some of it was turned into plaster. The individuals who worked in plaster by necessity encountered it in its various states and needed to understand the swift changes to its constitution in order to use it effectively. As a powder, plaster is light and dusty, like white flour in both appearance and texture. When it is mixed into water, it dissolves instantly at first, until enough has been added to form a liquid paste that can be easily stirred to disintegrate any lumps that may form. At this point, plaster is thick like a batter, but nevertheless pourable, runny enough to flow from the initial pouring point into concave space. Its characteristics as a paste invited the comparisons to bodily secretions and the medicinal unguents also referred to as plasters, as discussed in the Introduction. Yet this is only ever a temporary state. Its subsequent transformation is imminent: within minutes, the plaster begins to harden, which gives the plaster worker a short window during which to agitate the liquid plaster in order to draw air bubbles to the surface to prevent fissures or pits in the body of the finished cast. At every stage, plaster is both workable and fickle. Inexpert hands can quickly learn to mix it and pour it, but its fast setting time leaves little room for hesitation or adjustment. At the same time, the intricacy and potential pitfalls of the process mean that the production of plaster molds and casts required

\textsuperscript{27} Archieven van de Notarissen te Rotterdam, inventory number 546, act number 121, 10 January 1671.

\textsuperscript{28} Markus P. M. Vink,\textit{ Encounters on the Opposite Coast: The Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai in the Seventeenth Century} (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 296-297. A map of Batavia made a century later (Inventaris van de verzameling kaarten en tekening afkomstig van J. C. M. Radermacher, 4.VMF, 849.1, National Archives, The Hague) includes the location of limekilns at the colonial capital.
significant effort, if not extensive professionalization. Working in plaster involved a variability of expertise that contributed to the ubiquity of the plaster products central to this chapter.

By the 1630s, plaster was also incorporated into processes for making maiolica and faience in large ceramics operations: potters shaped the interiors of plates on modeled plaster surfaces and used multi-piece plaster molds for parts with irregular shapes. In the realm of the decorative arts, the market for small statuettes made of pipe clay (*pijpaarde*), beginning in the late Middle Ages, can be considered a precedent in the Netherlands for the production of and taste for plaster casts. Objects made of pipe clay, which turns white when fired, possess a textured surface that closely resembles plain plaster. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in several Dutch cities and most prolifically in Utrecht, free-standing devotional figures were made from pipe clay, taken from deposits found in the Meuse and Rhine rivers, by so-called “image pressers” (“beeldendruckers”) using two-piece clay or wood molds. There was therefore an artisanal understanding of how to use piece molds to create small, inexpensive sculpture already in place prior to the widespread adoption of similar methods to make plaster casts in later workshops and foundries. After 1600, pipe clay was mostly used to manufacture the tobacco pipes that smokers enjoy in contemporary paintings. Judging from probate inventories, plaster

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30 Sebastiaan Ostkamp, “Van Utrechtse bodem? Utrecht en de productie van pijpaarden devotionalia,” in *Middeleeuwse beelden uit Utrecht, 1430-1530*, ed. Micha Leeflang and Kees van Schooten (Antwerp: Ludion, 2012), 112-118. Molds, both whole and fragmentary, have been among the pieces found during the digs that have unearthed the pipe clay statuettes from the soil at the bottom of Dutch waterways. One extant example is the mold and cast of the Virgin and Child (ca. 1400-1425, pipe clay, mold: 10 x 5.6 x 2.4 cm, cast: 9 x 4 x 2.6 cm) in the collection of the Centraal Museum, Utrecht (1883).

31 According Willem Goeree, a draftsman could also roll pipe clay into a kind of crayon for white highlights: “Men ghebruyckt oock noch een tweede soorte van stoffe in ’t Teyckenen, namentlijck tot de Hooghsels soo wanneer men op Grondt-papier Teyckent, en daer toe ghebruyckt men in ’t gehemeen van de Kley daer men Toebacks-pippen afbackt, dese rolt men (weeck zijnde) in Pennekens een vingher lang, ende laetse van haer selves ofte in de warme lucht op-drooghen, en als dan soo zijne tot hun ghebruyckt bequaem.” Goeree, *Inleydinge tot de al-ghemeene
had become one of the most common materials for sculpture in seventeenth-century Dutch homes, along with wood and alabaster.

Among other applications of plaster was the replication of vessels normally fabricated in other media. The 1629 inventory of the Amsterdam goldsmith and jeweler Sijmen Sijmensz. lists a set of eight plaster reliefs decorated with the portraits of Roman emperors.32 Another Amsterdam goldsmith and jeweler, Lucas Perfreint, owned “a plaster basin by Vianen,” a copy of one of the magnificent silver basins designed by his fellow metalworker Adam van Vianen, as well as several other plaster pieces associated with Van Vianen.33 In Perfreint’s case, the plaster schaal was a convenient and affordable way to study the designs of a leading silversmith. Sometimes plaster was also a practical means of adding an ornamental figure to an object, such as the “plastered stag without horns” attached to a globe that belonged to the medical doctor and poet Nicolaes Wassenaer.34 The globes themselves were often also made of plaster, which could be covered with paper decorated with hand-colored engravings before the globe was set into a wooden frame (Fig. 1.6). Most importantly, plaster made possible the production and circulation of casts after existing sculpture and even the living body.

**Pleistergieters and Other Practitioners**

Though small plaster sculpture could be imported from Italy, especially by individual travelers and dealers, there were local plaster workers in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic

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32 “Acht bordekens van pleijster van de Keijsers van Romen,” The Frick Collection, “The Montias Database of 17th Century Dutch Art Inventories,” item 0027 in inventory #146 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 482B, fol. 657-674v), 2 February 1629.

33 “Een schael van pleijster van Vianen,” “Montias Database,” item 0007 in inventory #1223 (Nationaal Archief, 1856, fol. 63-73), 17 February 1648.

34 “Een globus met een gepleijstert hart sonder horen,” “Montias Database,” item 0015 in inventory #260 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 858), 8 January 1630.
who made plaster casts and architectural ornaments for new homes. By the late eighteenth century, the trade had spread widely enough to solicit the admiration of the Leiden professor Johannes van Berkey (1729-1812), who, in his *Natural History of Holland*, quipped that Dutch sculptors had long been capable of making plaster images to rival the work of Italian experts. Whether for personal use or for the benefit of painters and art lovers, sculptors were well placed to make plaster copies of the most sought-after ancient and modern works.

At one end of the industry, there were craftsmen whose primary occupation entailed working and casting in plaster, identified most clearly in the historical record as “pleistergieter.” In an Amsterdam registration act dated August 10, 1643, for example, a man named Willem Rutgers from Gorkum was called a “pleistergieter.” The terms “figuurgieter” and “beeldgieter” can also refer to those who produced casts in various materials including plaster, though specialists in metal casting are usually distinguished through more specific terms such as “tinnegieter,” “kopergieter,” or “geelgieter,” referring, respectively, to founders who specialized in tin, copper, and copper alloy or bronze. For the most part, a “figuurgieter” or “beeldgieter”

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35 “Men moet erkennen dat de Italianen nog meesters zijn in het werken met gips uit de hand ter versiering van plafonds en het opwerken van zolderstukken. Echter voor het maken van vormen voor beeldwerk hebben wij hen al lang overtroffen. Ik weet dat de meeste vormen van beelden waar de Italianen mee langs de straat lopen, van onze oude Hollandse beeldhouders afkomstig zijn.” Johannes le Francq van Berkhey, *Natuurlyke Historie van Holland* (Leiden, 1771), 756.

36 Inventaris van het Archief van de Burgemeesters: Poorterboeken, access number 5033, inventory number 2, 23 June 1645, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

was considered a kind of sculptor. In the 1631 charter of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke, among the artisans listed under “the pleasant arts” ("de gesellige konstenaren") were the “image carvers, sculptors, or casters.”

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the “pleistergieter” appears in a tableau that Gerard de Lairesse presents in Het groot schilderboek as an example of an everyday event with pictorial potential. De Lairesse narrates the scene of a painter who receives at his house a couple of plaster casts, sets them out of the way, pays the “Pleistergieter,” and bids him farewell. This brief mention reveals at least one manner in which a plaster caster conducted his business: his services might include delivering his wares directly to his customer’s home.

In Leiden, several generations of the Van der Mey family operated a plaster foundry ("pleistergieterij"), founded by brothers Jeroen and Jan around the middle of the seventeenth century. The business continued into the eighteenth century under the leadership of Jeroen’s son Filip, who was identified as a caster or founder ("beeldgieter") in the city’s Guild of St. Luke in 1702. The brothers Van der Mey were responsible for the plaster fireplace installed in the regent’s chambers at the Hofje of Eva van Hoogeveen in Leiden, a rare surviving example of seventeenth-century plasterwork in the Netherlands. A “Philip van der Mij” is also mentioned in the 1749 inventory of sculpture in Allard de la Court’s house on Leiden’s Rapenburg, which

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38 “Beeldsnyders, houwers, off Gieters.” Hessel Miedema, ed. De Archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukasgilde te Haarlem, 1497-1798, Vol. 1 (Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto, 1980), 94. The charter goes on to describe that “een Meester Beeldtsnijder, houwer, off gieter” must provide “eenigh gesneeden, off gehouwen off gegooten beeldt” to enter the guild; Miedema, Archiefbecheiden 97.

39 “Op zekere morgen kreeg deze Konstenaar een schoon Pleisterbeeld en twee Borststukken t’huys; zette die, by voorzorg, om uit de weeg te zyn, op een kas; betaalde den Pleistergieter, en liet hem gaan.” De Lairesse, Het groot schilderboek, Vol. 1, 184. The story goes on to describe how a young boy, age seven or eight, mistakes the casts for dolls and, in an attempt to get a closer look at them, lets one fall. The entire sequence of events, according to De Lairesse, imbues the scene with so much emotion and variation that it can be likened to a myth or fable (“zynde vol krachtige herstogten, cierlyk, en vol verandering; daar by zo ryk van zin, als of het een verdichtsel was”).

40 Meierink, 231-232.

41 Meierink, 231-232. The hofje was designed by Arent van 's-Gravensande.
describes how first a plaster form was made from a small clay model, which was then used to

cast a metal statuette of Hercules, apparently designed by Willem van Mieris. In Amsterdam, a

notarized bond dated May 6, 1718 describes a “small plaster foundry with equipment” (“kleine
pleistergieterij met gereedschap”) sold by Peter Lonk to Jan de Grijs for 416 guilders. The

document describes the expectation that Lonk would teach De Grijs, during his tenure as

proprietor of the foundry, how to fabricate plaster through high-temperature burning. De Grijs

simultaneously ran a gilding business with an assistant, Claes Jansz. Mostaert, who had served as

a witness to the accord with Lonk. In a 1724 revision to a contract first signed by De Grijs and

Mostaert in 1718, the two agreed to continue their gilding work and their sale of plaster for ten

more years. This suggests that De Grijs sold some of the plaster from the small foundry

alongside the gilding services available from his company with Mostaert.

The archival documents and visual material from the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries are most vocal about plaster casts in the round and in relief. These, especially

reproductions of famous pieces, were made in workshops that produced sculpture in several

formats. According to an entry from 1711 in the journal of the German traveler Zacharias von

42 “1 Herculesje door Willem van Mieris geboetseerd en door Philip van der Mij van metaal naar dat over ’t kley

geboetseersel 1 vorm van pleyster over was gemaakt in metaal gegooten.” Theodoor Herman Lunsingh Scheurleer et


43 Inventaris van het Archief van de Notarissen ter Standplaats, access number 5075, inventory number 8467, act

number 465967, Stadsarchief Amsterdam. “Mons Pieter Lonk woonende binnen deze Stad ter eerste my Nots

bekend… te hebben overgedaan aan monsier. Jan de Grijs… een klyne plyster gieterije met de gereedschappen

daartoe behorende… voor de somme van vier hondert & sestien guldens;” the document goes on to say that “zal
den eerste Compt. gehouden zyn niet alleen omme den gemaaken plyster die den tweede Compt. zal moeten stook

en van tyd to tyd te leveren… & zullen de penn[jingen] hem eerste Compt. voorgem[elde] geleveren de gemaaken

plyster toekomende door den eerste Compt. mede moeten voldaan & betaalt woorden uyt d’ingekoomende

penn[jingen] na aflevering vande gestookte plyster.”

44 Inventaris van het Archief van de Notarissen ter Standplaats, inventory number 8480, act number 472667. “Dat zy

Comparanten sig mits deesen verbinden omme hunne Comp[agni]e ofte gemeenschap in het vergulden van binnen

& buiten werken en het verkoopen van plyster te zullen Continueren voor hun by dergemeene reekening voor de tyd

van tien agter een volgende jaeren even wel onder die Conditie & op den navolgende voet.”
Uffenbach, there was a plaster caster on the Kalverstraat in Amsterdam, who had sold high-quality, small plaster statues and reliefs after François du Quesnoy’s sculpture to the collector Lambert ten Kate. Practitioners who specialized in other media also worked in plaster, as evidenced by the supplies recorded in probate inventories. The goods sold in Amsterdam in 1629 by the widow of the sculptor Cornelis van den Block included dozens of pieces of “plaster work” and eleven referred to simply as “pieces of plaster.” The sculptor Albert Vinckenbrinck, who primarily worked in boxwood, owned, at the time of his death in 1665, “twenty boxes with plasterwork,” probably referring to containers that stored plaster fragments or parts to be assembled, as opposed to the statuettes cast in plaster also listed in the inventory. The contents of the Amsterdam workshop of Bartholomeus Eggers offer a clearer picture of a sculptor’s dealings in plaster. The room identified as the shop contained individual casts of ancient subjects, presumably for sale, as well as a cabinet in which he kept unfired plaster. 29 plaster and clay heads were found in the casting room, while in the “best room” of the house, Eggers also kept a series of Roman emperors and three sculptures on the mantlepiece, all made of plaster.


46 The inventory lists, on several lines, “1 deel pleijsterwerck” and “stucx pleijster.” “Montias Database,” inventory #631 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, WK 5073/960), 5 December 1629. Only item #0268 is given a more specific designation, “1 Cupido pleijster.”

47 “Tweentwintich doosjens met playsterwerck.” “Montias Database,” inventory #287 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1970A), items #0109, #0110 (“eenige figuurtjens van plaster gegoten”).

Eggers had worked on the new Amsterdam Stadhuis in the 1650s and had joined the city’s Guild of St. Luke in 1663, at which point he began to operate his own business. Though he was a prominent sculptor whose most refined pieces were his marble portrait busts, he also made his own plaster casts as intermediary steps towards a finished sculpture and to sell in his shop, and he selected other casts to decorate his home. His ability to work well in plaster is evidenced by Pieter De Graeff’s request, in 1671, to have Eggers cast portrait medallions of his mother and father in plaster, after the death of the founder who had initially taken on the project.

In his analysis of the 1664 estate inventory of one family of statuary founders in The Hague, Frits Scholten observed that Johan Larson, the recently deceased head of the workshop, owned nearly 300 sculptures and models, most of them made of plaster. For their primary clientele, the stadholder and his court, the Larson family produced large-scale pieces, such as the lead sculptures cast from plaster molds for the garden of Constantijn Huygens. But, according to Scholten, the many plaster sculptures listed in the 1664 inventory indicate that “Larson’s activities also extended into the field of reproductive sculpture for the cheaper end of the market.” The Larsons were particularly well-placed to cast reproductions of ancient sculpture in the Netherlands: Scholten postulates that Johan’s uncle George, who worked in England, had


52 Scholten, “The Larson Family of Statuary Founders,” 79. Scholten believes that Johan’s father Guillaume may have moved to The Hague from London precisely “to find work at the Dutch court,” 55. Johan’s brother Willem sought his own fortune back in England, where he made plaster sculptures for patrons such as Samuel Pepys; see K. A. Esdaile, “Pepys’s plaisterer,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 October 1943, p. 480.
acquired life-size models through his collaboration with the sculptor Hubert Le Sueur, who in 1634 was making bronze copies of antiquities with the molds taken in Italy for King Charles I.\textsuperscript{53} Sculptors had the means to produce statuary in a variety of materials and sizes, as is clear in an advertisement from 1760 in the \textit{Leeuwaarder courant}, which indicates that Jan Vannys in Sneek could make sculptures and garden decorations in plaster, from two and a half to five \textit{voeten} tall, that were also available in clay and wood.\textsuperscript{54}

In the eighteenth century, a number of Italian craftsmen brought their expertise working with plaster to the Dutch Republic. The aforementioned Giuseppe Comado, who was active in Groningen at the time of his death in 1738, created stucco reliefs for ceiling decoration, a technique he had likely learned in Italy before traveling to the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{55} In 1753, also in Groningen, a man named Joseph Binda advertised in the city newspaper that he could make all sorts of plaster casts that could be placed in gardens and courtyards because they were hard as stone and durable enough to withstand water. The advertisement also indicates that Binda was itinerant, as it notes that he intended to remain in Groningen for two or three weeks, which suggests he offered his services in other cities as well.\textsuperscript{56} Several decades later, a Jan Solaro in Groningen was selling “fine plaster casts” and garden sculpture alongside barometers and

\textsuperscript{53} Scholten, “The Larson Family of Statuary Founders,” 87. Larson’s stock “consisted predominantly of casts after well-known classical statues, and only a fraction of the listed works seems to have been original inventions;” Scholten, “The Larson Workshop,” 292.


\textsuperscript{55} Meierink, 231.

thermometers. In Amsterdam, the Stadstekenacademie employed a plaster worker named Carlo (also referred to as Carel) Sartori for several purposes. On December 31, 1783, he was paid 200 guilders for mending and repairing plaster casts that had been gifted to the drawing school by its directors (heren). A separate ledger notes that the sculptures Sartori repaired had been sent for from Rome, which means that the heads of the academy bought for its collection, at greater expense, casts actually made in Rome, perhaps from molds made from original ancient sculpture, and subsequently relied on an Italian specialist to care for them, or to repair the damage they incurred during the journey to Amsterdam. It seems that Sartori had also already produced his own casts for the Stadstekenacademie; on September 26, 1770, he received 80 guilders for two “antique” sculptures (“twee Antique Beelden”), an Apollo and a Laocoön. Sartori also worked for the learned society Felix Meritis (1777-1885) in Amsterdam. In 1792, he was identified as “pleistergieter” in a receipt that confirms that he was paid 400 florins for repairing and assembling plaster casts ordered from the French Academy in Rome and transported to Amsterdam. The plaster workers Antonio Boggia and Antoni Zezzi also made plaster casts for Felix Meritis.


58 Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, access number 265, inventory number 61, Stadsarchief Amsterdam. Sartori is listed again in the Stadstekenacademie’s ledgers in 1790 and 1791 for sculpture repairs.

59 “Voor betaald aan Carel Sartori voor het verstellen, en in malkander zetten, en Repareeren van de Stukken en Brokken der Pleister Beelden door de Heeren Ter Steegh en Vorsteegh van Romo ontbooden, en Zodanig aan de Academie Present gedaan.” Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 62.

60 Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 62.

61 Inventaris van het Archief van de Maatschappij van Verdiensten onder de Zinspreuk Felix Meritis, access number 59, inventory number 305, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

62 F. T. J. Godin, “Antiquity in plaster: production, reception and destruction of plaster copies from the Athenian Agora to Felix Meritis in Amsterdam” (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2009), 129-130, 134.
The malleability of plaster also made it the ideal material for taking casts directly from the body, which sculptors could also make and sell to artists and drawing schools. These objects were compelling stand-ins for the body because they indexed physical contact with a living model. The concept was far from novel by the seventeenth century: life casts had been made abundantly in ancient Rome, and Renaissance theorists like Giorgio Vasari were quick to emphasize that auspicious historical background when they recounted their contemporaries’ renewed interest in taking life casts.63 As we will see, Dutch writers also cited the ancient origin of a technique still relevant to modern artists. However, they had frustratingly little to say about the many steps required to make a life cast. The most complete early modern account of the actual process consists of the detailed instructions set down by the Tuscan painter Cennino Cennini around the turn of the fifteenth century.

Cennini discusses the versatility of plaster in his treatise *Il libro dell’arte*, one of the earliest Renaissance manuscripts devoted to the activities and experiments that took place in the painter’s workshop. The chapters devoted to the preparation of supports alone underscore that painters were well-acquainted with gesso, as it was one of the necessary materials for their work. Gesso, made from gypsum and also known as plaster of Paris, was used to prime panels and to prepare walls for fresco.64 Cennini offers instructions for mixing different kinds of gesso, though he also points out that purified *gesso sottile* is “sold by the apothecaries to us painters.”65 After

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63 The taking of death masks, which became a widespread trend in the nineteenth century, was rarer in Northern Europe during the Renaissance, but a plaster cast of Albrecht Dürer’s face was allegedly made after his death by a group of artists who exhumed his cadaver for that purpose, in an effort to secure “for posterity one final and authentic effigy of a body that had, again and again, reduplicated itself in portraiture;” Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 249.


the chapters on painting, Cennini describes several methods for creating gesso reliefs to decorate panels, but he eventually comes to a section of the treatise in which he states, “I want to touch on another thing with you (which is very useful and, in drawing, brings you great credit for copying and making likenesses of things from life), which is called casting.”

What follows is one of the longest suites of related chapters in the *Libro dell’arte*, an expansive account of how to make a life mask with gesso prepared and handled by the painter doing the casting. The reader is presumed to be a relative amateur: Cennini provides the sorts of tips and commentary most useful to someone inexperienced in this work, such as “Keep warm water in a basin near you” to mix with the gesso, and “Do it quickly because it sets fast.” At the end of the passage, he notes “with this impression, once you have got the first one, you can have the mould cast” in various metals, but recommends that the painter “get masters who are up to the job, who understand founding and casting.” That is, Cennini believes the painter can work sufficiently well with plaster to create a life cast that can then be used as a mold, though casting in metal from it remains the purview of a professional founder. Experiments with plaster are the painter’s forays into three-dimensional work, and though Cennini underscores the limitations of what the painter can produce on his own, he also suggests that some progress can be made in this manageable art. The painter may move on to making life casts in the round (“if you want to pursue the method mentioned above to a finer mastery”), not only of the head but also of extremities (“you can always take one limb at a time”), and even attempt to cast his own body in plaster. Cennini’s exceptionally thorough account of these processes serves as a reminder that

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66 Cennini, 250.
67 Cennini, 252-253.
68 Cennini, 255.
69 Cennini, 256-268.
casting from life was an activity that painters could, and did, choose to undertake with relative independence using plaster or gesso.

Whether made in the workshop or purchased elsewhere, painters and sculptors alike kept life casts among their accoutrements. In the *Groot Schilderboek*, Gerard De Lairesse maintains that a judicious painter needs “plaster figures, bas reliefs, medals, busts, hands and feet, lions and lionesses, sphinxes, terms, and many other things that can be bought.”70 Among the “hands and feet” used for reference were casts of these body parts copied from existing sculpture as well as life casts in plaster taken from real models.71 De Lairesse mentions, for example, that “there are many who have casts of beautiful women’s hands, which they use constantly.”72 Though he does not list plaster as one of the five essential materials of statuary, his recommendation to own plaster casts was easily heeded by a sculptor who could make and sell them himself, including simple casts of extremities. These are the sorts of life casts in Johan Larson’s workshop inventory in The Hague, such as “a plaster foot.”73

Another example is to be found in the writings of Constantijn Huygens, who remarked on the “human limbs in plaster to be drawn from life and on a larger scale” in the workshop of his teacher.74 Life casts are also recorded in

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71 Casts of body parts based on popular statues were also made in sculptors’ studios and would serve painters and sculptors alike as a study collection. For this and further discussion regarding the production of models of individual body parts, see Titia de Haseth Möller, “Anatomical study models from the studio of Johan Gregor van der Schardt: practice material, alternative parts, collectors’ items,” *Simiolus* 41, no. 3 (2019): 153-176.


74 Walsh, 52.
inventories in the Southern Netherlands: the 1628 inventory of the Antwerp artist Steven Wils, for example, lists—among some 70 plasters items including numerous heads—casts of hands, feet, an arm and shoulder, and a pair of knees.\(^{75}\)

Artists’ inventories demonstrate that plaster was a handy material that Dutch painters and sculptors had in common. It was essential even for artists whose most coveted finished pieces were executed in more luxurious media. As related in the opening of this chapter, Hendrick De Keyser was among the eminent Dutch sculptors who worked with plaster in the seventeenth century, though he is largely known for his marbles and bronzes. The Amsterdam lead founder Hendrick Dronrijp is named in a letter written by Pieter de Graeff, the brother-in-law of the controversial pensionary and champion of regent government Johan de Witt, as the creator of a plaster cast of De Witt that De Graeff sent to his mother in 1673.\(^{76}\) Small-scale models in plaster could also serve sculptors as intermediary studies in preparation for large scale sculpture.\(^{77}\) Plaster was also employed in the creation of tomb monuments to civic elites and naval heroes. The back of the tomb of the admiral Michiel de Ruyter by Rombout Verhulst in Amsterdam’s Nieuwe Kerk, which faced the east end of the ambulatory, was executed in plain plaster, to give the partly visible back of the monument some degree of finish without further use of expensive


\(^{76}\) Scholten, “Quellinus’s Burgomasters,” 112. The letter is in the Inventaris van het Archief van de Familie De Graeff, inventory number 193. Scholten also provides evidence of at least 6 other plaster casts of the De Witt bust that De Graeff distributed to other relatives, friends, and associates in the years after De Witt’s murder in 1672. There seems to have been a market for plaster busts even outside the De Graeff family, considering their appearance in later inventories from Ilpenstein; Scholten, “Quellinus’s Burgomasters,” 113.

\(^{77}\) Scholten has posited that, though few have been preserved, Dutch and Flemish sculptors made large-scale plaster pointing models rather than working full-size sculptures up from small clay models. See Frits Scholten, *Sumptuous Memories: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Tomb Sculpture* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2003), 62-63. The white Atlas by Artus Quellinus now at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, which was thought to be a full-size plaster model for the bronze cast for the façade of the new Stadhuis in 1662, has recently been discovered to be made of stone. My thanks to Frits Scholten for conveying this information from research undertaken in 2021 that is still unpublished.
Verhulst, in standard practice for master sculptors, created valuable preparatory studies out of plaster; the plaster model he made for the tomb monument of Johan Polyander van Kerckhoven in Leiden was apparently still a source of reference for Verhulst ten years later when he worked on Adriaan Clant van Stedum’s tomb in Groningen. The historical record also bears witness to the activity of unnamed sculptors who made plaster copies of marketable works by the most successful sculptors. Quellinus’s marble portrait busts of Amsterdam burgomasters Andries de Graeff, Gerard Schaepp, and Nicolaes Tulp, for example, circulated as plaster copies bought by families sympathetic to or with direct ties to the statesmen. The collections of growing ranks of patrons and non-artists in the Dutch Republic attest to the existence of plaster sculptures that, unlike the preparatory models and life casts normally handled and repurposed in the workshop, were regarded as independent works of art.

**Plaster Casts in Dutch Homes**

Ordinary citizens of the Dutch Republic brought art objects into their homes in unprecedented ways in the seventeenth century. As the economy prospered and the art market expanded, even people of middling means could purchase items for pleasure. The acquisition of plaster casts in the Republic followed a trend that had begun in the wealthiest courts of Europe in the preceding century with the rediscovery of large-scale ancient sculpture. The great Renaissance art lovers and patrons who sought out antiquities, even in the form of copies and modified versions, set the tone for the casts that would enter Dutch homes.

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79 Scholten, *Sumptuous Memories*, 201-203.

80 Scholten, “Quellinus’s Burgomasters,” 115-116. For Quellinus’s career, see Frits Scholten, *Artus Quellinus, Sculptor of Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2010).
Already in the sixteenth century, rather convincing copies of ancient images could be had, such as the scale bronze copy of the ancient Spinario created around 1507 by Antonello Gagini for the top of a staircase at the Alcontres palace in Messina (Fig. 1.7).\textsuperscript{81} In Mantua, the sculptor Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi came to be known as Antico for his specialty producing small bronze versions of ancient sculptures for courtly patrons.\textsuperscript{82} According to Francis Ames-Lewis, this type of object was “never of course intended to be passed off as antique, but rather to provide the new type of turn-of-the-century collector with replicas that would show off their erudite tastes.”\textsuperscript{83} For early modern collectors, there existed at least a humanistic and social value to copies or adapted versions of an existing—and especially famous—object.

Dignitaries in other European courts also purchased sculpture in plaster, sometimes displayed alongside real antiquities, which legitimized the acquisition of plaster casts for persons of lesser means. Primaticcio’s project for Fontainebleau had garnered the admiration of Leone Leoni, who bought the former’s molds in Paris after persuading his patron, Mary of Hungary, that she ought to have her own collection of the copies, in addition to actual antique sculptures she already possessed.\textsuperscript{84} The plaster sculptures on display in Mary’s palace and gardens at Binche emulated the presentation of ancient works in the Belvedere in Rome, which served as the model for European elites compiling collections to rival the pope’s. Walter Cupperi has shown that affluent courtiers like Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle also participated in the


\textsuperscript{82} For the art of Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, see Eleonora Luciano, Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2011).


\textsuperscript{84} Haskell and Penny, 5.
collecting of plaster casts, which “created favourable conditions for the spread of plaster casts from the antique and a more intense exploitation of their moulds.”

For less wealthy individuals across the continent, the appeal of plaster casts was not that they could aesthetically rival the ancient original, but that they made possible the ownership of objects held in the highest regard by an international elite. Enterprising salesmen in the Dutch Republic capitalized on this desire at a range of price points: William Brereton, an English visitor shopping in Amsterdam in the summer of 1634, bought seven Roman emperors and three goddesses in plaster for the low price of two guilders, while in 1650 the dealer Jean Deutz sold a series of eleven plaster Roman emperors for fifteen guilders each.

Though sculpture played a minor role in the decoration of seventeenth-century Dutch homes, burghers in the Republic’s cities did own small-scale pieces made from materials such as alabaster, wood, wax, or plaster. According to the Amsterdam inventories surveyed by John Loughman and John Michael Montias, these figurines were a significantly less expensive alternative to paintings. Plaster casts belong to the more modest art market in the Dutch Republic that offered a larger portion of society a means to buy and display works of art. The generic labels most commonly applied to these casts—“3 white tronies from plaster,” “2 plaster casts,” “Two small plastered casts”—provide little information about them beyond allusions to

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85 Walter Cupperi, “‘Giving away the moulds will cause no damage to his Majesty’s casts’—New Documents on the Vienna Jüngling and the Sixteenth-Century Dissemination of Casts after the Antique in the Holy Roman Empire,” in Frederiksen and Marchand, Plaster Casts, 95-96.

86 Ben Broos, Roelof van Gelder, and Jaap van der Veen, Rembrandt’s Treasures, ed. Bob van den Boogert (Zwolle: Wanders, 1999), 51.

their small size or format, as in the case of the word “tronie,” which refers to a bust or head. Some records indicate the draw of special series made more affordable in plaster, particularly groups of ancient rulers such as the “twelve plaster kings” in the 1617 inventory of Lambert van der Burch in Utrecht or the set sold by the dealer Deutz in 1650.

Occasionally, inventory descriptions offer insights into the treatments sometimes applied to plain white plaster. The collection of Jan Arentsz. van Naerden, inventoried in 1637, included a gilded plaster figure of a man on a horse. The probate inventory of the Amsterdam merchant Emmanuel Baseroode, also taken in 1637, described two portraits of Prince Maurits and Prince Frederik Hendrik “gilded done in plaster.” In 1682, the De Graeff family had, in their home in Ilpenstein, “1 bust cast in plaster and silvered… on a wood pedestal” of Johan de Witt, apparently painted silver to enhance its visual impact, despite being made of plaster and placed on a cheap wood pedestal. These items speak to another aspect that could pique a buyer’s interest: plaster sculpture could be painted or gilded to make it imitate more luxurious materials, chiefly bronze and gold, but even marble, as in the case of De Keyser’s patented technique. Paint could also turn a plaster sculpture into an evocative collectible. The small polychromed plaster

88 “3 witte tronien van pleister,” The Getty Provenance Index®, J. Paul Getty Trust, item 0024 in inventory N-2123 (dated 1648); “2 pleijsterbeelden,” item 0105 in inventory N-2892 (dated 1637); and “Twee pleijsterde beeltiens,” item 0056 in inventory N-2291 (dated 1666).

89 “Twaelf keysers van plaetsereerde,” The Getty Provenance Index®, item 0023 in inventory N-3943. Another telling example is the aforementioned “acht bordeken van pleijster van de Keijsers van Romen” in the inventory of Sijmen Sijmensz.; see note 32.

90 “Een vergult pleijster mannetge met een pleijster paert,” Getty Provenance Index®, item 0005 in inventory N-2296..

91 “Prins Maurits en Prins Hendrick vergult op pleijster gedaen,” “Montias Database,” inventory #458 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 569, fol. 193-208), items #0005a-b. This inventory also includes “een gepleijsterde Erasmus,” item #0009.

92 “1 gegoten Pleijster Versilverd Borst Beeld… op een Houte Pedestal.” Inventaris van het Archief van de Familie De Graeff, inventory number 202. See also Scholten, “Quellinus’s Burgomasters,” 113.
self-portrait of Giambologna, created around 1600, shows the Flemish sculptor’s visage
enlivened, as in a painted likeness, but here in three dimensions (Fig. 1.8). A bronze version of
the same size also survives, which suggests that the plaster self-portrait could be sold as an
alternative and less expensive souvenir of Giambologna’s features.

Even the more affluent members of Dutch society apparently bought plaster casts to keep
in their well-decorated homes. The list of goods sold in 1625 at the request of Jan Gasenpoel, a
large-scale cloth merchant of presumably significant means, had nearly 40 plaster objects on
offer.93 The prominent art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh lived in one of the sumptuous homes on
Amsterdam’s Keizersgracht, where he kept not only his impressive array of paintings but also a
selection of plaster sculpture. According to the catalogue of his possessions taken in 1674, when
he ran into financial trouble, Uylenburgh had plasters in the entrance hall, a plaster statue on a
base in the courtyard, and “small plaster cupids and other figures” in the “best room of the
house.”94 Uylenburgh collected these casts in tandem with real ancient marbles, which Jan de
Bisschop consulted as an authoritative source for his Signorum veterum icones (1668).95 Though
distinctions were sometimes made between the materials, plaster casts were shown and discussed
in conjunction with marble sculpture, as similar if not equivalent examples of ancient art. The
1617 inventory of the estate of Jasper Quingets, a large-scale merchant in Amsterdam, records
“an antique made of plaster,” the designation of “an antique” freely given in spite of the plaster

93 “Montias Database,” inventory #616 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, WK 5073/958).
94 Friso Lammertse and Jaap van der Veen, Uylenburgh & Son: Art and Commerce from Rembrandt to De Lairesse, 1625-1675, trans. Yvette Rosenberg, Murray Pearson, and Lynne Richards (Zwolle: Waanders, 2006), 104. Uylenburgh also had a painting room in his house, where he had 16 full- and half-length plaster casts and heads; Lammertse and Van der Veen, 296.
95 Lammertse and Van der Veen, 232-237. For De Bisschop’s books on ancient sculpture, see Chapter 4.
medium. An article from 1673 in the *Oprechte Haerlemsche courant* announced the imminent sale, in Amsterdam, of:

“18 rare, large Italian Marbles and Metal Sculptures, such as Roman Emperors and famous Men, along with 24 pieces of rare Plaster-work, cast from the famous Column of Trajan in Rome, from there shipped to France for the Lord Duke of Caulnes, and, conquering the sea, brought by the Commission-Sailor Jan Sybrandtsz. Boonen.”

The plaster casts were on offer alongside Italian marble and, most likely, bronze statues. The notice declares that the casts were brought to the Netherlands through great effort because they were taken from the “famous” (“vermaerde”) Column of Trajan in Rome. Their provenance likened them all the more to the incontrovertibly rare marbles and bronzes.

Plaster casts can be seen in the background of paintings of the refined domestic interiors and private gardens of the Republic’s elites. In these depictions, plaster casts tend to play an auxiliary role as embellishments that signal sophistication and abundance in an elegant home. They might contribute to a moralizing message that is activated by multiple objects and does not depend solely on the cast; this is most frequently the case with plaster Cupids in paintings that suggest an amorous encounter (Fig. 1.9). In these images, plaster casts enliven the scene and corroborate the evidence of probate inventories that list them as more or less pedestrian interior decoration. This is in contrast to paintings in which plaster sculpture elaborates directly on the meaning of the main subject.

Embedded into portraits of Dutch men and women, plaster casts invoked learnedness, erudition, and even literacy itself. The *Woman Reading* attributed to Cornelis Bisschop looks in

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96 “Een antiquiteit van plaister gemaect,” “Montias Database,” inventory #545 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 199 film 110, fols. 330 and following).

on an unassuming old woman engrossed in the tome she holds open in the crook of her right arm (Fig. 1.10). The plaster bust in the stone niche signals that the woman has designated this room, or at least this corner of it, for her reading. A metonym for the architecture of a library or study, the plaster bust pairs with the books on the table to generate an atmosphere of learning. This composition calls upon the conventions of portraits of humanists, which were embellished with plaster casts to emphasize the sitters’ commitment to the pursuit of knowledge or espousal of a school of thought (Fig. 2.12). When placed near illegible pages of open books, plaster casts could also visualize the nature of the texts studied by Dutch elites. In Adriaen van Gaesbeek’s *Young Man in a Study*, a plaster head props up a large folio, in which the word “historiek” can be made out at the top of the verso (Fig. 1.11). The classicizing cast embodies the concept of history to which the volume atop it is devoted. Reinforced by the statuette of Venus on the table, most likely a piece of modern sculpture inspired by antique types, the importance of the study of antiquity to this young man is so effectively conveyed that he was previously identified as the humanist Hugo Grotius.98 In other cases, plaster casts, like sculpture in grander media and scale, communicated a sitters’ social or professional affiliations. In Jan de Bray’s portrait of the founder of the *Haerlemse Courant* Abraham Casteleyn and his wife, a bust, probably made of stone, presents the Haarlem native Laurens Jansz. Coster, regarded in the Low Countries as the inventor of the printing press, as a fitting partner to the newspaper printer (Fig. 1.12).99 In another group by De Bray, his portrait of the governors of the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke,

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99 For this painting, see Ronni Baer, *Class Distinctions: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2015), 150. The bust is based on the (now lost) portrait of Coster painted by Jacob van Campen, which was subsequently engraved by Jan van de Velde (II), with a Latin inscription by Peter Scriverius, between 1626 and 1628. For Coster, see Gottfried Zedler, *Von Coster zu Gutenberg: Der holländische Frühdruck und die Erfindung des Buchdrucks* (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1921).
there is a plaster cast on the table in front of one of the guild members (Fig. 1.13). Like the plaquette with the image of the patron saint held up by the colleague in the foreground, the bust of a man in contemporary dress alludes to the specializations of the guild members, foremost among them painters and sculptors who, to varying degrees, worked with plaster casts.100

“Playster-werck van goede Meesters”: Commentary on Casts

Lamentably, most written accounts by seventeenth-century Dutch artists that attest to their relationship to plaster casts, if such words were ever penned, have not survived. However, the major chroniclers of Dutch art and its creators each commented on the availability of plaster casts and made recommendations for their edifying use, from skill-building to the design of original composition. These texts affirm both the historical and practical bases for drawing from plaster casts. Karel van Mander, as is so often the case, set norms for his successors. Early on in Het Schilder-Boeck (1604), in the didactic poem on the art of painting (“Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const”), Van Mander muses on the merits of learning to draw with plaster casts. In the second chapter, called “Of Drawing, or the Art of Drawing” (“Van het teyckenen, oft Teycken-const”), Van Mander writes:

“And furthermore, to be fruitful in Art… Work from something fine cast in plaster, And mark how the day[light] does lie upon it: For the highlights say just as much.”101

100 For a proposed identification of the guild members and the painting’s status as a friendship portrait, see Jeroen Giltaij, “Het vriendschapsschilderij van Jan de Braij en drie andere schilders,” in Face Book: Studies on Dutch and Flemish Portraiture of the 16th-18th Centuries, ed. Charles Dumas (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2012), 431-442. As Giltaij and others have pointed out, the plaster bust bears a resemblance to Rembrandt, but the lack of a strong connection between the Amsterdam painter and the Haarlem guild makes that identification tenuous at best. Other scholars have speculated that the plaster cast is the one gifted to the guild by Floris van Dijck in 1637 (see below), yet the bust’s contemporary garb would suggest otherwise. Regardless, that the bust is included in this portrait suggests that a strong association existed in Haarlem in 1675 between the painter’s guild and the use of plaster casts.

101 “En ander, dus om zijn in Consten vruchtich/Begreffijt uwen gheest met sulcke loten./Of doet nae yet fraeys van plaister ghegoten./ En merckt op de daghen wel in het legghen:/Want de hooghsels vry al mede wat segghen.” Karel van Mander, Het Schilder-Boeck (Haarlem: P. van Wesbusch, 1604), fol. 9r. I have not been able to find an adequate translation or early modern term related to the conjugated verb “begreffijt” that Van Mander uses in this verse.
This passage makes several points about plaster casts. For one, Van Mander alludes to the good quality of certain casts, referring to something beautiful or fine cast in plaster. He also makes a distinction between what an artist can gain by drawing from casts, not from prints: plaster casts can give the studious draftsman a better sense of *basso relievo*. Illuminated by natural daylight, casts can help him see highlights (“de hooghsels”) and thereby understand how to create the illusion of relief in his drawing.

Elsewhere in the *Schilder-Boeck*, Van Mander reprises anecdotes and ideas about plaster casts derived, as elsewhere in the *Schilder-Boeck*, from Giorgio Vasari’s *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori* (1550). In his biographies of early Renaissance artists in Italy, Van Mander repeats Vasari’s points about Andrea Verrocchio’s ability to cast from life in plaster: “He first began to cast in plaster all things from the life.”

According to this passage, Verrocchio sourced a soft stone from Volterra, Siena, and many other places in Italy, burned it to break it up, and mixed it with warm water; the resulting plaster allowed him to make casts that hardened properly. Van Mander notes that Verrocchio practiced drawing from plaster casts of ancient sculpture as a student in the studio of Jacopo Squarcione, to properly advance his artistic learning. With the life of Verrocchio, Van Mander introduced as an example to Netherlandish

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102 “Hy begon eerst alle dinghen op het leven af te gieten met plaister.” Van Mander, fol. 107r.

103 “Een beslach ghemaect van eenen suchten steen en wort ghegraven by Volterra, Siena, en veel meer plaetsen in Italien, die ghebrant wesende, wort ghebroken, en dan ghetempert met warm water: Hier mede druckten yet af, en wort dan soo hardt, datmer heel figueren in gieten mach.” Van Mander, fol. 107r-107v. Here, Van Mander repeats Vasari’s description of Verrocchio’s method, but he omits Vasari’s assertion that Verrochio had rediscovered an ancient technique of casting from life in plaster. For Vasari’s claims that Verrocchio had pioneered the use of life casts, see Penny, 197. For the most recent study of Verrocchio’s work in various media, see *Verrocchio: Sculptor and Painter of Renaissance Florence*, ed. Andrew Butterfield (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2019).

104 “En dewijl den Meester hem selven den besten Schilder niet en vermat te wesen, liet hy Andreas hem oeffenen nae plaister van d’Antijcken afgegote, en nae doecken van ander fraey Meesters, soo dat hy door sulcke, en ander middelen ghenoech wel leerde.” Van Mander, fol. 107v. This detail about Andrea Mantegna’s training had already appeared in Vasari’s *Vite*. Though Francesco Squarcione was a mediocre master, he was able to attract talented students like Mantegna partly because his selection of casts made his studio in Padua a privileged place of study for apprentices; his workshop inventories reveal that he possessed a substantial collection of plaster casts, “outstanding
painters an Italian master who not only learned to draw from plaster casts, but also undertook to make them himself. Van Mander associates Verrocchio with plaster casts all the way through to the latter’s own role as a teacher: in Verrocchio’s studio, he says, the young Leonardo made terracotta busts of laughing women, in the manner of examples commonly found made of plaster, along with busts of children cast after works by master sculptors.\(^{105}\)

Samuel van Hoogstraten’s *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (1678) supplements accounts of the historical origins of plaster casting with commentary about its relevance for modern painters. In one of the book’s many chapters on painting, Van Hoogstraten seeks to elaborate upon the usefulness of casting in plaster (”*plaistergieten*”).\(^{106}\) He, unlike Van Mander, repeats Vasari’s attribution of the invention of plaster casting to Lysistratus, according to Pliny’s testimony, and he maintains that Verrocchio not only revived the technique but even renewed it around 1340, after it had been lost for a long time.\(^{107}\) For Van Hoogstraten, the specifics matter: he describes the steps taken by Lysistratus and Verrocchio to mix the plaster and make a cast, and recounts that Lysistratus formed “tronies” by using plaster to cast faces

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\(^{105}\) “Daer begaf hy hem in alles, wat de Teycken-const in haer bevangel mach, en maeckte (jongh wesende) van aerde eenighe lachende Vrouwen hoofden, die onder de Const in plaister ghemeen zijn: oock eenige Kinder hoofden, die van groote Meesters handen gheleken te wesen.” Van Mander, fol. 112r.

\(^{106}\) “Dewijl wy hier van stucco iets gerept hebben, zoo laet ons ook dit weynige van't plaistergieten zeggen, en schoon ’t minder aan de Schildery, als de stucco behoor, zoo heeft het nochtans meerder nuttichheid, als ik belust ben hier te verklaeren.” Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere wereld* (Rotterdam: F. van Hoogstraeten, 1678), 337.

\(^{107}\) “Het plaistergieten is, na Plinius getuigenis, eerst aangevangen van Lysistratus… Maer dezen braven vond, na datze lang verloren geweest was, is wederom in gebruik gebracht en vernieuwt van Andries Verochio, ontrent den jare 1340.” Van Hoogstraten, 33. According to Celeste Brusati, Van Hoogstraten most likely inferred this incorrect date based on the passage in Van Mander’s *Schilder-Boeck* (fol. 107v), in which the latter also gives an erroneous date, 1388, while Verrocchio lived from 1435 to 1488; see Celeste Brusati, ed., *Samuel van Hoogstraten’s Introduction to the Academy of Painting; or, The Visible World*, trans. Jaap Jacobs (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2021), 377 n. 6.
from life.\textsuperscript{108} At the end of this passage about its provenance, Van Hoogstraten endorses plaster casting not to sculptors but to painters: “For no painter will regret spending a few idle hours in casting some beautiful things.”\textsuperscript{109} With these remarks, Van Hoogstraten designates the making of plaster casts a worthwhile endeavor for painters. Elsewhere, Van Hoogstraten reiterates the by then well-known skill-building scheme of drawing from plaster casts after extensive practice copying prints and paintings, but in this passage, he validates the fruitful labor of the painter who makes his own casts.

In the \textit{Groot schilderboek}, Gerard De Lairesse also takes up the subject of making casts, for the purposes of having models tailored to one’s pictorial aims. The artist must first draw his own face (“in such a passion as he desires” and “imagining himself to be the figure he wants to represent”), and subsequently should “take a plaister-face, and make a mold of it of lead, or other hard matter, in order to make afterwards as many impressions of clay as he pleases.”\textsuperscript{110} That is, from the plaster cast, the artist can make a two-piece mold and press clay into it to yield a face that can then be modified to resemble the original conception in the drawing. This process allows “all sorts of passions to be moulded with little trouble,” with the resulting models enlisted “to serve instead of the life.”\textsuperscript{111} Drawing begets casting which in turn promotes more drawing. De Lairesse wishes to show “dedicated draftsmen” how to make models of all sorts of faces with

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{108}“Hy stampte de Gijps of plaister, en maekte die nat, vormende daer mede, met over ’taengezicht te gieten, de tronien.” Van Hoogstraten, 337.
\item \textsuperscript{109}Brusati, \textit{Introduction to the Academy of Painting}, 337: “Want ten zal een Schilder niet berouwen, dat hy eenige ledige uuren in eenige frajigheden af te gieten, de tronien.”
\item \textsuperscript{111}De Lairesse, \textit{The Art of Painting}, 36.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
relative ease, by means of the shortcut of making molds from the plaster casts an artist already has.\textsuperscript{112}

De Lairesse points out that plaster casts also come in handy when selecting and posing objects to populate a ceiling painting. He claims to draw “na ’t leven,” positioned on the ground with a mirror between his legs, from “all sorts of casts” to sketch, from below, busts, vases, urns, ornaments, capitals, flower festoons, and anything else that can be found in plaster or wax.\textsuperscript{113}

Throughout the \textit{Groot schilderboek}, De Lairesse refers to plaster casts in discussions of painters’ training and in the context of his own practical methods for drawing or developing a composition. In a chapter about clothing, he entreats: “Let us then seriously chuse, out of our collection, the materials which will serve our purpose, whether they be plaister-figures, prints, drawings, academy-figures or other models; rejecting every thing that is foreign to our study.”\textsuperscript{114}

In a chapter devoted to demonstrating how objects in a still life can meaningfully characterize particular persons, for a tableau relating to a lawyer De Lairesse proposes exhibiting “a plaister figure of Mercury winged at head and feet, standing on a square stone pedestal,” with a sphinx, also made of plaster, beside him.\textsuperscript{115} De Lairesse generally derided still life specialists because he believed even the best among them, namely Willem Kalf, “could give little reason for what he

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{112} He states at the top of the passage: “Om de oeffende konstenaars te gemoet te komen, dunkt my niet ondienstig, hen een middle om allerhande weezens door het Boetseeren uit te vinden, aan te toonen, op de allerzekerste en gemakkelykste wyze.” De Lairesse, \textit{Het groot schilderboek}, Vol. 1, 63.

\textsuperscript{113} “Het zelve middle gebruikte ik ook om allerhande boetseerseels na te tekenen, ten einde dezelve van onderen te gebruiken, als trooniën, vaazen, potten, ornamenten, capiteelen, festons met bloemen, ja alles wat’er van pleister of was te krygen is.” De Lairesse, \textit{Het groot schilderboek}, Vol. 2, 145.


\end{flushleft}
yet with this chapter in the *Groot schilderboek*, he offers examples of how even still life painters can achieve representations that satisfy the informed and inquiring mind. It is telling that plaster casts are among the objects he considered capable of elevating the conceptual substance of a still life: as will be argued in Chapter 2, still life painters used plaster casts to reintroduce the human form into compositions normally devoid of it and thereby complicate the painting’s meditations on man’s ephemeral existence.

With their emphasis on the efficacy of plaster casts for learning to draw and for studying the antique, seventeenth-century Dutch writers codified expectations about artistic development that had originated in Italian workshop customs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Their texts put Dutch artists forward as inheritors of a Netherlandish tradition that had for generations comprised both technical ingenuity and intellectual rigor. This notion had already been given visual form in one of the engravings from the *Nova Reperta* designed by Jan van der Straet and engraved by Jan Collaert around 1600, in which the workshop of Jan van Eyck is imagined as the site not only of the invention of oil painting, but also of pedagogical activity (Fig. 1.14). Students in the foreground learn to draw by copying existing images in two and three dimensions, exemplified by the young boy drawing a bust while other casts of classical types rest above the door in the background. Van der Straet linked the methodical process of learning fundamental skills not to Italian training but to the founding father of Netherlandish painting. By the second half of the seventeenth century, the authors of Dutch texts about art contended that drawing from plaster casts was a necessary step in the artist’s education and outlined what artists stood to gain from adhering to this sequence. At the same time, their commentary makes explicit warnings about the potential for slavish copying that was satirized in images such as David Teniers’s

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Monkey Painter (Fig. 1.15). Drawings and plaster statuettes on the table at far right, in this context, suggest that the monkey painter lacks intellectual ability because he has been trained only to reproduce others’ inventions. Plaster casts had to be more than mere templates in order to properly stimulate the artist’s mind.

In 1668, Willem Goeree published the instructional treatise *Inleydinge tot de Alghemeene Teycken-konst*, with the partial aim of improving drawing instruction in painters’ studios. Throughout the text, Goeree refers to plaster casts in his delineation of the precise steps required to advance in the art of drawing. In the first chapter, as expected, drawing from sculpture in the round or plaster objects (“Teyckenen na rondt Boetseer oft Playster-werck”) comes after initial practice with two-dimensional images. Goeree recommends working from casts after excellent masters as the essential third phase in the process of perfecting one’s art:

“Thus to proceed further and reach the third stage of Art, we must endeavor once again to learn something, of the sort that one cannot yet do, if we wish to reach full perfection in Art. And to that end we recommend to the utmost that you draw from objects in the round, whether they be reliefs or Plaster-work by good Masters, which these days we can obtain with ease and for low prices.”

Goeree remarks on the practical aspect of acquiring casts with more specificity than his predecessors: plaster casts, he says, are easy to come by these days, and can be obtained for low prices. This detail coincides with period inventories in suggesting that plaster casts were relatively cheap and that there was little impediment for aspiring artists to purchase these tools to aid in their study, or for instructors who sought to add to their teaching supplies. Shortly thereafter, Goeree again reassures his reader that casts of all sorts are affordable: he says there

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are countless ("ontallijcke") casts that can be bought for a minimal price and utilized for the significant benefit of students.\textsuperscript{119}

In these initial remarks, Goeree also posits that it would be helpful to offer an index ("register") of plaster casts, but in lieu of a full list, he opts to single out the most common and liveliest among them.\textsuperscript{120} The sculptures he identifies correspond to many of the casts that appear in Dutch paintings throughout the seventeenth century, a topic further elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3. As in contemporary depictions of plaster casts, Goeree’s list cites famous ancient sculptures alongside the work of modern masters inspired by antiquity. There are pieces whose renown make them clear choices for Goeree, namely the Laocoön and “de Worstelaers,” the Roman marble Wrestlers discovered in 1583 near Porta San Giovanni in Rome and transferred to the Tribuna of the Uffizi in Florence in 1688.\textsuperscript{121} Goeree also names the subjects of several well-known ancient sculptures: “the Greek Venus, Hercules, Hermes.”\textsuperscript{122} But the first objects he mentions belong to the recent past. He begins with “all things by Francisco”— the work of François du Quesnoy, notably his many putti and his Gladiator—followed by the Rape of the Sabines by Giambologna.\textsuperscript{123} His claim that there are countless affordable casts, “both Antique as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{119} “Wat zijnder noch ontallijcke, soo van Antique, als Moderne Tronyen, welcke alle voor een gheringhen penninck gekoof en met groote voordeel van de Leerlingen konnen ghebruyckt werden.” Goeree, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{120} “Daer van wy een Register souden konnen voorstellen indien sulckz noodigh waer, alleen sullen wy wel eenige vande gemeenste ende best bekomende noemen.” Goeree, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Haskell and Penny, 337-339.
\item \textsuperscript{122} “de Griecksehe Venus, den Herculus, den Hermes.” Goeree, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{123} “alle de dinghen van Francisco, die een menigthe van fraeye Kinderkens ghemaecth heeft, oock sijn Gladiator; dat een uytinemt schoon Beeldt is, de Roof van de Sabina, van I. de Bolonge.” Goeree, 15.
\end{itemize}
well as Modern Tronies,” emphasizes that the diligent draftsman ought to consider both ancient and modern masters as models from which to develop technical and intellectual skills.\textsuperscript{124}

Throughout the text, Goeree remarks on the practice of drawing after plaster casts as an approximation of and prologue to drawing from life, the next rung on the ladder of that art. In the third chapter, after he insists upon the affordability of casts, he tells the reader that practicing with casts after ancient and modern masters is particularly expedient for the draftsman who wants an introduction to drawing from life.\textsuperscript{125} Sometimes he treats drawing from plaster and from life almost interchangeably: in the fourteenth chapter, about reflections, he says that, whether drawing from plaster or from life, the draftsman should take care to show the reasoning for his representational choices—that is, the representation should make apparent the light source, or lack thereof, that creates reflections.\textsuperscript{126} The implication is that the overuse of reflections without justification would make the image less naturalistic and life-like. In the later editions of the Inleydinge (1670 and 1697), in the chapter on manipulating light sources, Goeree adds a caveat about selecting the proper kind of plaster cast to study light and shadow on a three-dimensional surface: one must not work with plaster sculptures that have a glossy or shiny surface.\textsuperscript{127} The implication is that this kind of glazed finish would produce excessive reflections and interfere with the usefully matte surface of a plaster cast, which more closely approximates

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{124}] Goeree, 15.
\item[\textsuperscript{125}] “Welcke oeffeninghe daerom te noodigher is, om dieswille dat het als een inleydinge is to thet leven.” Goeree, 15.
\item[\textsuperscript{126}] “Het zy dan dat men na Playster ofte het Leven Teyckent, soo hebt altijt daer op acht, dat de reden van u doen, daer in kan ghevonden werden: dat is, dat de oorsaekte van de meerder ofte minder Reflectie, of geen Reflectie volkomentlijck kan gesien woorden.” Goeree, 61.
\item[\textsuperscript{127}] Kwakkelstein, 108 n. 58. According to Goeree, if one nevertheless wants to paint these images, one should only use turpentine oil paint that dries dull.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the way light falls on skin. When he discusses anatomy in the sixth chapter, he states that he can offer a few general rules but that the draftsman must learn the rest with his own eyes, namely by drawing copiously from “anatomy men,” and that various sorts of these anatomical models are cast in plaster. Goeree’s recommendations thus extend from the study of copies of famous sculptures to the educational worth of plaster anatomical models or écorchés, which replicate human musculature well enough to teach the drawing student about the body. Only when Goeree focuses on the plethora of God’s creations that can be observed does he demur: nature and living creatures are so far above the previously discussed models that, in comparison, a plaster cast is a lifeless external form.

The appeal of plaster casts as ideal manifestations of the human face and body sometimes conferred upon them facets of lifelikeness. In the most significant passage on plaster casts in the *Groot schilderboek*, De Lairesse states that the painter looking for the “beauties” of ancient sculpture should study books on proportion and “keep the best plaster casts before his eyes.”

The ultimate goal for the painter, as far as De Lairesse is concerned, is to imbue his figures with gracefulness, which is to be found in perfect proportions. Plaster casts augment the knowledge to be derived from books and, moreover, serve to exercise the painter’s mind as he seeks to acquire good judgment. De Lairesse then acknowledges that some might say that plaster is nothing like

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129 “Van welck een Teyckeninghe, maer een simple Schets is, een Schildery, een gecoleurde Schaduwe, ende het geboetseerde Playster, een leven-loose Buyten-gedaente, waer uyt dan wel kan afgenomen werden, hoe verre desen Trap de andere te boven gaet.” Goeree, 16.

living flesh, but that it is more important for painters to use plaster casts to understand ideal form, as they may learn proper coloring easily enough from observation:

“I mean not, that the artist should paint flesh-colour after them, but get a perfect idea of their beauty, grace and agreeableness, both general and particular; whence perfection springs; for the colouring is evident, and easy enough to be found in the life, as I could prove in several instances of some ordinary painters who coloured well; who, before they had made much progress in the art, were cried up for great men, and yet, having any thing extraordinary to do, were not able to sketch well an head, hand or foot.”

The strength of the drawing matters much more to De Lairesse than the success of the coloring, and he recommends practicing with plaster casts because they teach the painter the components from which “perfection” derives, though they do not imitate real skin tones. Despite their notable lack of the color that, in a painting, would signal incarnation, plaster casts could be treated as stand-ins for the living because, in De Lairesse’s eyes, the more ideal the body, the more enlivened and charming the representation. De Lairesse and the authors of other major seventeenth-century Dutch art treatises pondered the paradox of plaster casts—that they were convincing examples of the living body and yet lifeless—as they articulated the benefits of turning to these objects for instruction and inspiration.

Van Mander’s biography of his friend and colleague Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem indicates some of the ways in which painters in their circle appraised the liveliness of ancient sculpture, which they examined through copies in plaster. Upon his arrival in Haarlem, Van

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131 De Lairesse, The Art of Painting, Vol. 1, 102. “Doch hier op zal men mogelyk zeggen, dat het maar pleister en geen vleesch is: ik beken het, en de meening is ook niet om vleeschkoleur daar na te schilderen; maar wel om een indruk in ons denkbeeld van haare schoonheid, gracelykheid en bevalligheid, zo in ’t generaal als in ’t byzonder, en waar uit die volmaaktheid spruit, te bekomen: zynde dit het geen ’t welk een doorluchtig Modernschilder behoeft. Want uit het leven kan men de Coloriet genoegsaam en gemakkylyk vinden; gelyk ik, daar van verscheidene voorbeelden in eenige slegte Schilders, die fraaye Colorieten gehad hebben, zou kunnen bybrengen: nochtans wanneer deze maar weinyg tydts by de Konst waren geweest, wierden cy door hunne begunstigers alreeds voor overvliegers uitgeschreuewd; en ondertusschen vonden sy zich, als ’er iet ongemeens voorviel, in geen staat van een hoofd, hand, of voet, ter deeg te kunnen tekenen.” De Lairesse, Het groot schilderboek, Vol. 1, 177-178.
Mander recounts, he was struck by the presence of painters like Cornelis who understood the importance of drawing as the foundation of ideal form in painting. Van Mander writes:

“Cornelis greatly assisted his ambitious nature through drawing an exceptional amount diligently from life—to which end he chose from the best and most beautiful living and breathing antique sculptures of which we have plenty in this country, for that is the surest and very best study that one can find, at least if one has perfect judgment in distinguishing the most beautiful from the beautiful.”

Cornelis’s dedication to drawing from life motivates his preference for ancient sculpture. Van Mander is eager to point out that Cornelis could rely on “the best and most beautiful living and breathing antique sculptures of which we have plenty in this country.” This passage not only points to the circulation of copies after the most admired ancient sculptures, but also suggests that Van Mander and Cornelis admired the casts they had. According to Van Mander, drawing “from life” includes in-person study of the lifelike—inanimate objects so naturalistic they seem to live and breathe. That ancient statues provide “the surest and very best study that one can find” even suggests their superiority over the living model, for those discerning enough. Van Mander poses Cornelis as an exemplar, a hard-working painter who knows how to select the finest ancient sculptures to learn from and to perfect his art.

Van Mander goes on to say that he “can therefore testify that art did not come to Cornelis in his sleep but that he obtained it and paid for it with much labour, and whoever thinks to come to it in such perfection in any other way shall find himself with empty hands and deceived, for in the end, at last he shall have nothing but the mere shadow of art,” fol. 292v. Translation in Miedema, Lives, 429.

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133 Van Mander goes on to say that he “can therefore testify that art did not come to Cornelis in his sleep but that he obtained it and paid for it with much labour, and whoever thinks to come to it in such perfection in any other way shall find himself with empty hands and deceived, for in the end, at last he shall have nothing but the mere shadow of art,” fol. 292v. Translation in Miedema, Lives, 429.
than sixty years before Goeree penned his *Inleydinge*, Van Mander could recommend casts of ancient sculpture to artists seeking to practice drawing the vivacious body.

The words of the major seventeenth-century art theorists on plaster casts further complicate the notion that when Dutch painters worked *naer het leven*, they turned their powers of observation to nature and its living creatures.134 The imperative to study a subject “from life” was extended to objects like plaster casts that stood in for the truly animate. In Van Hoogstraten’s opinion, if one was not able to draw a live nude, “it is better that you begin with plaster casts or stone models.”135 Plaster casts existed on a continuum of liveliness and stillness; they shifted in either direction depending on the circumstances of their presentation and the necessities of the beholder, in particular the painter. For all intents and purposes, plaster casts were stimulating figures from the real world, as if flesh-and-blood bodies ready to be roused from their stasis by the painter’s hand and eye.

**Artists’ Companions**

Dutch art theorists’ opinions on plaster casts and artists’ selection of them were mutually reinforcing. An early standard for collecting plaster casts to further one’s art was set by artists in Van Mander’s circle in Haarlem. Subsequent painters followed their example and bought up their own plaster casts, further compelled by the writings of Van Hoogstraten, Goeree, and De Lairesse, who were simultaneously responding to the circulation and value of these resources.

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135 Brusati, *Introduction to the Academy of Painting*, 119. “Is ’t dat gy u bequaem kent een beeld na’t leven te teykenen, want anders is beter dat gy u noch ontrent plaisteren of steenen oeffent, zoo zoek een leven, dat nateykenens waerdich is.” Van Hoogstraten, 64.
Plaster casts were never the reserve of artists in training, but rather companions throughout the career of even the most accomplished artists of the age.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, Haarlem was home to enterprising painters, including Van Mander, who adopted workshop practices that were well established in Italy and conveyed them to his fellow Netherlandish artists. Van Mander had traveled to Rome in the 1570s, and the impression it had made on him animates his writings; in the opening poem of the Schilder-boeck, Van Mander calls Rome “the city which, above all places, could make an artist’s journey fruitful, being the capital of the schools of Pictura.”

For most painters, a visit to Rome was not feasible, but in the 1580s, Haarlem boasted several masters with firsthand experience of the Eternal City. Around 1583, Van Mander, his dear friend Cornelis, and Hendrick Goltzius, all of whom had spent time in Rome, formed a group referred to as an “academy” in the anonymous biography of Van Mander added to the 1618 edition of the Schilder-boeck.

For Van Mander, Cornelis, and Goltzius, assimilation of the principles of Italian art required an emphasis on disegno and the masterful draftsmanship that had long been codified as the basis of artistic learning, chiefly by Cennini and Leonardo da Vinci. Their so-called academy in Haarlem prioritized drawing from life, most likely not from models but from sculptures and plaster casts. Documentary evidence shows that Cornelis and Goltzius both owned plaster casts that they could deploy for drawing practice, in lieu of access to actual

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137 “Eerstelijck tot Haerlem/ etc. gekomen zynde in ’t jaer 1583, maekten hy een deulvie van wit en swart/ daer nae eenighe hisorytjes in ronde forme/ die de Heer Rauwert gesien hebbende/ ghekocht heeft/ en quam korts daer nae aan kennis van Goltsius, en Mr. Kornelis, hielden en mackten onder haer dryen een Academie, om nae ’t leven te studeeren/ Karel wees haer de Italiensche maniere ghelijck ’t aan den Ovidius van Goltzius welt e sien en te mercken is.” Unknown author in Karel van Mander, Het Schilder-Boeck (Amsterdam: Jacob Pietersz. Wachter, 1618), unpaginated appendix.

138 Children of Mercury, 32.
ancient sculpture or live models. Upon his death, among the more than fifty statuettes Cornelis had, there were plaster casts, including the face of a Cupid, a bust of Seneca, and life casts of human body parts. Goltzius, meanwhile, owned plaster casts of sculpture made in the recent past, such as Michelangelo’s Aurora and Crepuscolo from the Florentine tomb of Lorenzo de Medici (Fig. 1.16). These had both made their way into the Utrecht studio of Abraham Bloemaert by October 1635, when the humanist Arnoldus Buchelius saw and identified them as the casts Goltzius had arranged to bring to Amsterdam. Van Mander’s sense that “the best and most beautiful living and breathing antique sculptures” were readily to be had in the Netherlands was based in part on his proximity to these artists’ personal supply of casts.

Even for artists who had actually been to Rome, a sustained exploration of the art they saw there was required to fully reap the benefits of the encounter. Cornelis and Goltzius procured casts as part of their establishment of rigorous standards for Northern painters in emulation of their Italian and ancient predecessors. After the dissolution of the academy, Cornelis gave some of his plaster casts and models in other media to the city’s Guild of Saint Luke. The casts that Goltzius had owned, meanwhile, were inherited by artists like Bloemaert also intent on making

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140 Van Thiel, “Cornelis as a Draughtsman,” 128.

141 Van Thiel, “Cornelis as a Draughtsman,” 128.

142 In Buchelius’s words, “Item duas statuas majores vivis jacentium viris ac mulieris nudorum elegantissimam Bonaroti, quas fecit ipse ad sepulcrum ducis Florentini; eas exprimi gypso curaverat Goltzius et deinde Amsterodammum adferri;” quoted in Reznicek, 449.

drawing foundational to artistic training in the North. The impact of these bequests was apparently felt for decades. In 1642, in his famous address to the Leiden Guild of Saint Luke, Philips Angel praised the gift Cornelis and Goltzius had offered subsequent generations of painters: “[they] have left you, in lieu of others, plaster casts of skinned figures, from which you can learn something useful about the nude.” Their successors continued to bring plaster casts to Haarlem. In 1637, Floris van Dijck gave the city’s Guild of Saint Luke a plaster head “taken from life” by Michelangelo, which Van Dijck had brought back from his trip to Italy. The fact that the cast was received as a gift intended to adorn and honor the guild (“tot Sierraedt van deesen kamer, ter kamere vereerdt”) reveals the esteem that could be conferred on a plaster sculpture, especially in the milieu cultivated by the legendary Cornelis and Goltzius.

Plaster casts could also present artists with examples of bodies and faces they might not otherwise come across. One salient example of this significant function of plaster casts is a drawing now in the Louvre, attributed to a draftsman working in the manner of Jacques de Gheyn (Fig. 1.17). Two head studies, in dark brown ink on a single sheet, depict plaster casts of a young Black man’s head, with his full lips sealed and his gaze directed upward. In the study on the left, a form that resembles the brim of a hat protrudes from the young man’s head and is truncated at the center of his forehead. This may be the result of a piece of excess plaster still

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144 Philips Angel, _Lof der schilderkonst_ (Leiden, 1642); quoted in translation in Taverne, 53.

145 Miedema, _ Archiefbescheiden_, 439. The fullest description of the cast appears in a 1637 record written by Pieter Saenredam, which reads: “Heeft den Heere Deecken Meester Florens van dijck uijtneemendt Schilder, tot een eerste gifte, aen den gemene Gilde, en tot Sierraedt van deesen kamer, ter kamere vereerdt, een principael Affgegooten Tronij op tleeven gedaen by den heerlijcken en alderberughsten Michael Angelo bonaroti. Sijnde de selve by den Heere Deecken van Dijck meede uijt Italien t’huijs gebracht, waer meede hebben vinderen genoomen haer vertreck ende Sijn gescheijden.” An inventory of the guild’s possessions from January 1642 calls it “De gegoten pleijster tronij van michiel Angel,” while the guild inventory from several years later, around 1647, simply identifies it as “eene troonij van pleijster vereert bij Floris van Dijck.” It is difficult to know from the language of these records if guild members believed the cast was merely done by Michelangelo or actually taken as a life cast of his face.
attached to the cast, not fully removed but partially broken. The second head, at right, seems to be the same cast, turned so the artist can practice drawing the face in direct light from a more foreshortened angle, this time with the excess piece of plaster omitted. The repetition of the same head reveals that the draftsman wanted to study closely the distinctive features of this young man, probably in preparation for incorporating him into a larger composition. The anonymous maker of this drawing could rely on the plaster cast in lieu of hiring a Black model to sit for him. The cast does not resemble any well-known sculpture commonly reproduced in this period, which further suggests that it was cast from life.146 There were Black men and women living in the seventeenth-century Netherlands whose visages were of special interest to history painters, who sometimes depicted Black characters in literary or biblical narratives.147 The plaster cast of this Black man served in some measure as a tronie, an exploration of a distinctive face for possible reuse elsewhere; as discussed above, casts in period inventories and catalogues of estate sales were indeed sometimes referred to as “tronies.”

In the documents and images associated with no lesser artist than Rembrandt, there is some evidence for the circulation of the type of plaster cast in the Louvre drawing. The inventory of Rembrandt’s possessions, taken on the occasion of his bankruptcy in 1656, includes “One head of a Moor cast from life,” which may have been the source for his portrayal of a Black

146 I am grateful to Frits Scholten for consulting with me, in an email on July 30, 2019, about the possibility that this cast was taken from a real person rather than from an existing sculpture; no matching prototype is known to him, though he suggested that the cast may have been drawn from depictions of Black men (referred to as “Moors”) occasionally found in Roman sculpture.

woman in an etching from around 1630 (Fig. 1.18). The 1656 inventory lists other casts that he had accumulated over the years, including eight large plaster casts taken from life and a death mask of Prince Maurits that he kept in the kunstkamer of his home on the Jodenbreestraat. About half of the sculptures in the inventory were made of plaster, from copies of antique sculpture, including a Laocoön, to casts of work by Rembrandt’s contemporaries, such as the “plaster Diana bathing by Adam van Viane” after a Diana by the goldsmith Adam van Vianen. Some casts were apparently of high quality: in 1658, he sold a group of plaster casts to the Elector Palatine Karl Ludwig. As a collector, Rembrandt cultivated close relationships with top dealers in Amsterdam, among them the brothers Jeronimus and Joseph Deutz, who were active in the market for plaster casts. Jonathan Bikker has speculated that the “child’s head by Michelangelo” purchased by the brothers in October 1650 could be the “child by Michaelangelo Buonarotti” listed in Rembrandt’s 1656 inventory, which may have been among the goods Rembrandt paid the Deutz brothers for in December 1650. Rembrandt surrounded himself with plaster casts and understood their potency, including as proxies for real antiquities; that intimacy is among the personal touches he endowed upon his 1654 painting Aristotle with the

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149 *“Acht Stucks pleijster werck op ’t leven afgegoten, groot,”* “De doode beeltenis van prins Maurits op sijn eijgen natuirljck weesen afgegoten,” Register of Inventories B, DBK 364, fol. 33-34. In the entrance hall (voorhuis), alongside paintings, Rembrandt displayed plaster sculpture: “een hoofd van pleijster,” “twee naeckste kindeckens van pleijser,” and “een slaepende kindeke van pleijser,” fol. 29.

150 Broos, Van Gelder, and Van der Veen, 45, 119. The inventory also mentions “A plaster basin with nude figures” attributed to Adam van Vianen.

151 Paul Crenshaw, *Rembrandt’s Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 100. Strauss and Van der Meulen have speculated that the 8 casts from life were among the objects in this sale.

Bust of Homer, in which the contemplative philosopher, with his hand atop a plaster bust, is nearly a self-portrait (Fig. 1.19). The documentary and visual evidence alike point to Rembrandt’s consistent use of plaster casts throughout his career, for his personal enjoyment, for his original compositions, and to train his students (Fig. 1.20). Among them was Govert Flinck, who also went on to collect “many fine casts of the most esteemed marble antiques,” according to Arnold Houbraken’s description of Flinck’s large painting gallery.153

Plaster casts are regular fixtures in the inventories of all manner of painters across the seventeenth-century Netherlands.154 As is the case with paintings listed in probate inventories, plaster objects are identified with varying degrees of specificity. Sometimes they are merely referred to as “pieces” (“stukjes”), but some subjects seem to merit more description. Figures from classical antiquity are, unsurprisingly, singled out: Venus, Mars, Mercury, and even lesser gods such as Neptune and Bacchus were well-known enough to be identified by the inventory taker. Orpheus was particularly popular: several painters’ inventories include plaster casts of the Greek hero and poet, one even appended with a note about the quality of the cast: “Orpheus, very beautifully done in plaster.”155 Among Biblical personages, plaster Samsons were most commonly found in artists’ personal collections. Given plaster casts’ utility for a painter’s activities, it is no surprise that they were frequently kept in the schilderkamer or studio. Among these were models such as Cornelis van der Voort’s “little plaster man” and the “Little plaster


154 The observations that follow result from my survey of the inventories of Netherlandish painters compiled in Bredius, Künstler-Inventare.

155 “Orpheus, seer aerdich gemaect van pleyster.” From the probate inventory of Claesz Lourisz van Egmond, 15 July 1639, Leiden; Bredius, 775.
man and woman” and “anatomy” owned by the painter Barent van Someren. But probate inventories also indicate that painters used plaster casts to decorate other parts of their homes, as in the case of Rembrandt’s bankruptcy inventory. Jan Bassé de Oude owned several dozen plaster sculptures that adorned the entrance hall (voorhuis), the family room (binnenkamer), and the drawing room (achterkamer), interspersed with statuettes identified solely as “little sculptures.” That plaster casts were purposefully intended for home décor is also evident from the bases sometimes added to them, such as the “plaster sculpture on a wood base” in the collection of Gerard Uylenburgh, son of the art dealer Hendrick Uylenburgh.

In these types of records and in sales catalogues, casts are at times recognized as copies of famous sculptures. The “plaster gladiator” in the 1664 inventory of the sculptor Johan Larson testifies to the popularity of the Borghese Gladiator. The notary also recorded “Two casts by Michelangelo;” the subject of each cast apparently served to identify the illustrious maker and did not merit further elaboration. The “worstelaers”—the Wrestlers unearthed in 1583—appear in the collections of Barent van Someren and Bartholomeus van der Helst, nearly 40 years apart, which is a testament to the lasting interest in it as a part of the canon of ancient sculpture that was already taking shape. The recurrence of Hercules in these inventories is reflected in the prevalence of several sculptures of the hero and his labors that appear in seventeenth-century

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156 “Mannitge van pleyster” from the sale of Cornelis van der Voort’s estate, 30 August 1625, Amsterdam; Bredius, 1182. “Pleystermannetje en vrougte” and “anatomye” from the sale of Barent van Someren’s collection, 23 February 1635, Amsterdam; Bredius, 797.

157 There were, for example, “twee pleyster tronitgens” in the binnenkamer; “drie playster tronien,” “een playster Peert,” and “een playster Mercurius” in the voorhuis; and “7 stuckx Playsterwerk,” “3 Playster beeldekens,” and “4 Playster grote tronien” in the achterkamer. In the achterkamer, Bassé also kept “een Playstere Orpheus.” From the inventory dated 6 January 1637, Amsterdam; Bredius, 129-146.

158 “Pleyster beelt op een houte voet.” From the 1674 inventory, Amsterdam; Bredius, 1664.

159 “Pleijster gladiateur” and “2 geboetseerde beelden van Michiel Angelo.” From the inventory dated 4 August 1664, The Hague; Bredius, 326.
Dutch paintings. Painters showed special favor to Hercules and at times actually paired him with an artist, as in the portrait of David Bailly by Thomas de Keyser (Fig. 1.21). Bailly is shown as a finely dressed gentleman beside a cast of *Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent*, illuminated against the bare wall. In Chapter 3, I elaborate upon the multifold implications of Dutch artists’ choice to add representations of Hercules to images of their studios. Here, Bailly, though not at work, has De Keyser allude to his profession through objects he might readily include in a still life or portrait by his own hand. The Hercules statuette doubles as a mark of Bailly’s good taste and as a tool that he, a painter, regularly uses.\(^{160}\)

The most evocative traces of Dutch artists’ familiarity with plaster casts sometimes exist in the more mundane images they left behind. As Peter Schatborn has put it, “If drawings from the inheritance of the family Ter Borch are representative for the seventeenth century, then drawings were indeed being made after ‘plaster.’”\(^{161}\) The most telling example is the drawing made by Gerard (I) ter Borch’s son Moses, which bears an inscription by the elder Ter Borch that reads, “On 8 September Moses ter Borch drew this from plaster” (“Den 8 September heeft Mosus ter Borch dit nae Pleijster geteijkent”) (Fig. 1.22). Moses, in his early teens, has rendered a plaster statuette after Michelangelo’s *Rebellious Slave* (1513), with a focus primarily on the basic forms of the twisting body.\(^{162}\) The statuette’s blank-eyed, generic head differs significantly from Michelangelo’s marble is now in the collection of the Musée du Louvre, Paris (N 15043).

\(^{160}\) For this painting, see Ann Jensen Adams, “Thomas de Keyser’s *Portrait of David Bailly*: The Artist as ‘honnête homme’ or ‘compleat gentleman’ in the Early Seventeenth Century,” in Dumas, *Face Book*, 151-160. Adams reiterates the observation first made by Joshua Bruyn in “David Bailly, ‘fort bon peintre en pourtraicts et en vie coye.’” *Oud Holland* 66, no. 1 (1951): 148-164, that the rolled-up paper and skull on the table repeat a 1624 drawing by Bailly in the *album amicorum* of Cornelis de Glarges from Leiden (Koninklijk Bibliotheek, The Hague), which suggests that De Keyser took input from Bailly for the portrait’s composition.

\(^{161}\) Peter Schatborn, *Dutch Figure Drawings from the Seventeenth Century* (The Hague: Govt. Pub. Office, 1981), 18. These types of drawings, which are rarely preserved, as well as the correspondence of the Ter Borch family suggest that they “adhered to the program for learning to draw recommended by Hoogstraten and others: to copy from prints, to draw from plaster, from life, and then sketch from the imagination,” Schatborn, *Dutch Figure Drawings*, 87.

\(^{162}\) Michelangelo’s marble is now in the collection of the Musée du Louvre, Paris (N 15043).
Michelangelo’s marble, perhaps an indication that this was a reproduction made to capture the distinctive pose and musculature of the original rather than replicating it exactly. It is also possible that Moses simply did not work out a nuanced description of the head, preoccupied instead with the challenge of depicting the unusual disposition of the body. In any case, Moses’s drawing is based on a plaster cast most suited to be a model for a disciplined student of art, who did not require a perfect copy of the Slave in order to learn from the Italian sculptor.

This effort by Moses, when he was between twelve and fourteen years old, also bears witness to the early phases of a painter’s training, when he did not yet fully attempt to transform the plaster model into a lifelike body. This is in distinct contrast to the activity of artists like Goltzius, who brought plaster casts with him to the Netherlands from Italy, namely the casts of Michelangelo’s sculptures from the tomb of Lorenzo de Medici. Goltzius worked from these casts later in his career, including through his participation in the so-called Haarlem Academy. Though Goltzius was a highly skilled, experienced draftsman by the time he returned to the Netherlands from Italy, he nevertheless continued to treat plaster casts as flexible models that inspired the creation of an enlivened figure. For Goltzius, a plaster cast did not pose the same possibilities as it did for the young Moses, but for both artists, it was a means to revisit Michelangelo’s authoritative works and, at the same time, to move ever closer towards their own distinct style.

The Multiplicity of Plaster Casts

163 The red-chalk drawing Aurora in the collection of the Morgan Library & Museum (1964.15) has previously been attributed to Goltzius and dated around 1600, though the attribution is not widely accepted. Reznicek considered it to be a study done from the cast of the Aurora in Goltzius’s possession, given the noticeable alterations to Michelangelo’s original—the extended left arm, the more frontal knee, the head lifted further from the right shoulder—which deviate from the meticulously faithful renderings Goltzius made of originals in situ; see Reznicek, 456-457, no. 442.
In a 1604 drawing, Jacob Matham set three plaster casts upon a writing desk in an arrangement that stages them as objects of study and also transforms them into a meditation on human life (Fig. 1.23). The plaster heads nestle against one another, surrounded by writing implements: a pen case, a quill, a knife for sharpening the nib. The casts intensify the studious atmosphere of the still life, but unlike casts in depictions of scholars or humble readers, the three heads have been purposefully positioned over the writing surface as the primary objects of study. The self-assured manipulation of these casts is the hallmark of an artist, someone accustomed to working with casts, observing them, and deriving from them an image with layers of meaning. Matham has chosen heads that represent three distinct phases of life, in chronological order: a child, a full-haired youth, and an older man. The casts conjure up the long-standing visual tradition of the ages of man, transposed into the privacy of the home. The versatility of these casts for an artist like Matham lay precisely in the fact that they were simultaneously markers of routine artistic activity and analogies of phenomena not easily visualized—in this case, aging and the passage of time. Matham, who worked in Haarlem and had been a pupil of Goltzius, knew that plaster casts invoked sophisticated and timeless themes even when set in modest contemporary spaces.

Regardless of their situation, plaster casts in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic made available a range of associations per the needs of the individuals who owned them. They could, sometimes literally, become most anything: a fragment of antiquity, an extension of the living body, an attractive piece of home décor, a token of admiration for a master artist of the recent past. So much depended on the circumstances in which they were seen or shown. The history of Dutch art has constantly returned to the question of how to make sense of the meaning

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invested in quotidian objects, which the study of plaster casts splinters in multiple directions. In the images made by seventeenth-century Dutch artists, plaster casts are appreciated as objects with a conspicuous physical profile, yet they solicit cognitive effort and prompt contemplation of several ideas or referents. That is, plaster casts signify in too many ways to be simply taken at face value. That complexity is nowhere so dynamically at work as it is in Matham’s drawing and other still life pictures, in which artists deploy plaster casts to deliberately contradictory ends.
Chapter 2: Plaster Casts and the Ambitions of Still Life

In the absence of life, objects remain. Sometimes disposable, often replaceable, the things we carry are at once more trivial and more meaningful than we imagine, and capable of outliving us by chance if not by design. When this occurs, we ask everything that remains to speak for the departed, to reconstruct actions and behaviors that were only ever transient and hopelessly immaterial. This is not only true for artefacts we unearth in the ground or find stored away in forgotten cupboards, but also for those that persist as images through the centuries. The type of painting to which we have given the designation “still life” contains multitudes, consisting of the objects themselves and the countless individuals we retrieve through them. Yet for a long time, the scholarly interpretation of still life painting was driven by efforts to resist the indeterminacy of the depicted objects and to assign narrowly defined meanings to each one.

In the foreword to his 1990 book Looking at the Overlooked, Norman Bryson laments: “Still life continues to struggle with the prejudice that while (of course) it would be a subject worth investigating, the real stakes lie elsewhere, in the higher genres where (of course) things have always been more interesting.”\(^1\) It was a self-fulfilling prophecy that still life, treated as if its meaning is mostly straightforward, continued to be found less in need of deep exploration. In the thirty years since Bryson bemoaned this lack of art historical novelty, the interpretation of Dutch still life paintings has in fact moved on from the model of iconology and iconography towards analyses that engage the multiple ideas communicated by a single object.\(^2\) The real stakes, it turns out, had been there along, silently waiting.

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And still, we overlook. Plaster casts, for one, have received undue neglect in the study of still life paintings. They have suffered the fate of other objects deemed minor players in the creation of a still life’s meaning: they are either identified as studio props or assigned a symbolic connotation that does not intrude upon conventional readings of the painting. But plaster casts carry associations that are far from clear-cut and unidimensional. They are more than mere set-pieces and point in too many directions to be reliable symbols for univalent meaning in a still life. The picturing of these objects must be integrated into the interpretation, and not merely the description, of the still life painting as a whole.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, plaster casts appear most frequently in a sub-category of still life painting known as a vanitas. These developed from an existing European tradition of memento mori motifs into a type of easel painting distinguished from other still lifes with designations such as “doodhooft” and “vanitas.” In the twentieth century, still lifes inspired debates about the possible hidden meanings and moralizing messages of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. The overt symbols of death in vanitas paintings, especially the ubiquitous skull, generated interpretive models that assume a primary, if not singular, goal for these images: to solicit observers’ meditation on mortality and the vanity of human endeavors. Celeste Brusati has expressed this particularly well: “The abiding concern of Dutch still life painters to validate

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the descriptive skill and illusionist artistry that are hallmarks of Netherlandish art has been largely eclipsed in interpretive discussions that view their works under the rubric of *vanitas*.”

Among still lifes, the *vanitas* has consistently been most at risk of reductive readings precisely because the objects in it are presumed to perform in the service of the *memento mori*. The role of plaster casts within this type of paintings is even less examined because they seem to cohere with other emblems for mortality and ephemerality. But not all meditations on mortality are created equal; inanimate objects prove themselves to be as eloquent about life as they are about death. In the past twenty years, some scholars of Dutch art have offered readings of *vanitas* paintings that reveal a rich array of ideas attached to the abiding symbols of death, especially in compositions that include objects of art and learning. Yet even these more nuanced analyses have little to say about the specific choices painters made when it came to plaster casts and do not fully recognize the ways plaster casts complicate notions of life and death alike.

Alongside attributes of the working painter, plaster casts in *vanitas* paintings proclaim the particular efficacy of painting as an art that triumphs over death long after the artist has succumbed. The plaster cast in the still life resists and subverts the expectation of a composition defined by inanimate objects. This chapter makes the case that *vanitas* paintings with plaster casts in them are a category unto themselves, a particular mode of image-making for artists who grappled with the transcendence of their work in the face of their own mortality. The chapter opens with an extensive study of an unusual plaster cast in a still life by Pieter Claesz, one of the

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genre’s most impactful practitioners, to delineate how a single plaster cast invigorates the form and content of an otherwise conventional *vanitas*. Like Claesz, the painters featured in the chapter’s subsequent sections used plaster casts to confront the *vanitas* message of death with markers of industrious activity and individuality. This chapter also considers the ways plaster casts in still lifes refer to the standards painters set for themselves. The analyses presented here show that plaster casts are instrumental in articulating the aims and ambitions of the living painter, who engages in manual and intellectual labors that the casts support.

As surrogates for the human body, plaster casts admit liveliness into images that are otherwise devoid of life. With these limbs and faces frozen in animation, still life painters ask what constitutes liveliness when the flesh-and-blood body is absent. The presence of plaster casts in still lifes serves as a reminder that the painted body, no matter how lifelike, is artificial—which also means it is not subject to the predations of time. In a *vanitas* painting, the plaster cast offers human likenesses as counterparts to the skull and simultaneously emphasizes that the only human body with any hope of eternal life is the one transformed into an image. The plaster cast has a crucial and hitherto underexamined role to play in the drama of man’s longevity that pervades the *vanitas* painting.

**Pieter Claesz and the Splintertrecker**

In 1628, Pieter Claesz painted a view of an artist’s studio, with the artist himself nowhere to be seen (Fig. 2.1). At the edge of a large table sits an open pocket watch, marking the inevitable passage of time. A skull rests nearby on crossed leg bones, a reminder of the death that awaits all men. Musical instruments on the floor, paired with unidentifiable books and a writing quill, stand in for human activity, which is ultimately temporary and fleeting. Although each object is meticulously and convincingly depicted, they are all unsurprising and typical
components of the *vanitas* still life, which Claesz had by then treated on several occasions. In the midst of such a generic array, the large white sculpture of a youth immediately demands recognition. Bent over to inspect the bottom of his left foot, which is propped onto his right knee, he is unmistakably the *Spinario*, the boy pulling a thorn out of his foot, cast in bronze by an unknown ancient sculptor around the first century BC (Fig. 2.2). Here, however, the sculpture appears duplicated in plaster. For his description of an artist’s studio, Claesz chooses one of the most famous and recognizable images from antiquity—yet his decision to paint the plaster substitute rather than the bronze original points to the mediating role that the painter knowingly plays between the renowned sculpture and the still life’s viewer. Rather than merely meditating on inescapable death, Claesz claims for himself a role in the continuing effort to assert painting as a liberal art and demonstrates how a still life specialist could participate in discourses about artistic processes and erudition.

The *Still Life with the Spinario* is by no means a transcription of Claesz’s own studio, but the prominence of the plaster cast in the composition is a response to the significance of this type of object for Claesz and his fellow artists. Sometime around 1617, Claesz arrived in Haarlem, the city where Karel van Mander, Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, and Hendrick Goltzius had come together to practice drawing from the plaster casts in the collections of Cornelisz. van Haarlem and Goltzius. The lasting impact of the “Haarlem academy”—or, at the very least, of its reputation—is evident throughout the seventeenth century. In 1631, the painters who undertook a reorganization of the city’s Guild of St. Luke clearly aimed to elevate the status of painters within the guild; their proposed reforms included “joint sessions in drawing, anatomy, and other

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skills and exercises,” which seem to echo in spirit the *raison d’être* of the earlier “academy.” In his 1648 description of the city, *Harlemias*, Theodorus Schrivelius maintains, “And this is still known to everybody: that the very best painters have been reared here for several hundred years, so that Haarlem was always best known as the academy of the painters.” Claesz made his career in a place that held up painting as a liberal art partly through its emulation of an Italian academic tradition, which makes his choice of the *Spinario* for his studio still life all the more significant. For a Haarlem audience, the *Spinario* indicated not only knowledge of classical antiquity, but also an awareness of the local appreciation for this type of artwork. Claesz puts forward his own talent as a draftsman through the *Spinario* and the sketchbook beneath it, but he also asserts a still life specialist’s participation in the proud history of honorable Haarlem painters.

The ancient Roman bronze commonly known as the *Spinario*, dated to sometime in the first century BC, remarkably never seems to have been lost or underground, and is recorded as early as the 1160s on view outside the Lateran Palace. Sometime after 1471, the *Spinario* formed part of a major project undertaken by Pope Sixtus IV to move antiquities from the Lateran to the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline, purportedly an effort to provide the people of Rome access to their own distinguished heritage. Once installed there, it quickly became the subject of numerous copies and versions produced throughout the sixteenth century. The lively drawing and close study of the *Spinario* made around 1509 by the Flemish painter Jan

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8 Taverne, 53.

9 Quoted in translation in Van Thiel, *Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem*, 63-64.

10 Haskell and Penny, 308. According to Haskell and Penny, some scholars have proposed that the Roman bronze combines the body of Hellenistic versions of the seated boy and the head of an earlier Greek sculpture, making it “a pastiche of the late Republican or early Imperial period.”

Gossart appears to be one of the earliest surviving depictions of the sculpture—and a testament to the thrall in which it held artists who could more readily visit it (Fig. 2.3). As part of a diplomatic mission with Philip of Burgundy, Gossart had gone to Rome to make drawings of antiquities there. Though only four survive, the Spinario drawing speaks volumes about what Gossart found in Rome, and what he could, in turn, bring back to his fellow artists in the Netherlands. The idiosyncratic pose of the boy removing a thorn from his foot presented a formal challenge to the draftsman, while the boy’s rather blank expression invited alterations that might enliven the face.

Since at least the mid-twelfth century, the Spinario had been singled out among the antique sculptures to behold in Rome. By the sixteenth century, the Spinario was well represented in popular media aimed at visitors to Rome. In 1549, Anton Francesco Doni listed it among the city’s main sights, along with six other ancient statues like the Laocoön and modern works like Raphael’s Stanze. The Spinario also appeared in several versions in the Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae, a collection of prints showing the art and architecture of Rome whose initial production was overseen by Antonio Lafreri and Antonio Salamanca. One engraving by Marco Dente shows the sculpture transformed into a man, in a more head-on view than Gossart’s that focuses the attention on his bent body and on the interaction between his hand and foot. The print made by the Dutch engraver Cornelis Cort around 1575, a copy of which also appeared in the Speculum, adheres more closely to the Gossart drawing and, notably, emphasizes the boy’s foot extending outward past its base—Cort’s own contribution to enlivening the figure (Fig. 2.4).

12 Ainsworth, Alsteens, and Orenstein, 383.
13 Ainsworth, Alsteens, and Orenstein, 45.
Cort, like Gossart, was a key mediator between Netherlandish artists and works of antiquity. Cort’s engraving for the *Speculum* remained a model for print versions of the bronze, faithfully reprised in publications such as François Perrier’s *Segmenta nobilium signorum e statuarum* (1638), among multiple views of Rome’s most famous ancient sculptures.

By the seventeenth century, it was only fitting that Peter Paul Rubens would visit the Spinario and undertake the challenge of the strange pose himself (Fig. 2.5). His red chalk drawing now in the British Museum studies not only the body and musculature of the boy, but also his attitude and demeanor. Around the abdomen, the back, and the foreshortened knee, Rubens used darker and thinner lines over lightly drawn passages to make judicious adjustments. The articulation of the body in this position demanded revisions to his initial spontaneous outline, precisely because it is atypical and complicated. For Rubens, the pose also presented rich narrative potential, an opportunity to stage a different moment, when the boy turns his face forward while drying his foot with a towel. Here he becomes much more expressive than the bronze original. Rubens saw in ancient sculptures an opportunity to study the human form and to draw inspiration for the dynamic figures that would go on to populate his large history paintings. Like Gossart, Rubens sought to transform the Spinario from a somewhat rigid sculpture into a vivacious boy, most likely by actually having a live model assume the peculiar pose for him to draw. Claesz’s depiction of the Spinario insists much more on its identification as a sculpture—and the fact that it is decidedly *not* made of bronze suggests that Claesz was responding not to the original, but to its variants produced in plaster.

Actual sculpted versions of the Spinario were produced throughout the sixteenth century, some of which made their way out of Rome. Soon after the sculpture had been moved to the Palazzo dei Conservatori, Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, also known as Antico, made a bronze
statuette after the *Spinario* for Isabella d’Este (Fig. 2.6). The copy of the coveted antique clearly satisfied the desires of its owner to put on display not only knowledge of antiquity but also the sense of belonging to an elite community of connoisseurs. In 1540, Cardinal Ippolito d’Este commissioned a bronze copy of the *Spinario* from a “Master Jacopo” in Rome, to present as a gift to the French king François I, who had repeatedly expressed interest in collecting the highest-rate antiquities comparable to those possessed by the pope.\(^\text{15}\) The antiquities collection of Mary of Hungary at her palace in Binche included a marble copy of the *Spinario*, later inherited by her nephew Philip IV; in the seventeenth century, the Spanish king acquired a second, bronze copy when he sent Diego Velazquez to Rome to purchase original Greek and Roman sculptures, as well as copies and molds.\(^\text{16}\) Thus two versions of the same ancient sculpture were perfectly permissible within a single collection, which suggests their importance lay less in their “authenticity” than in the associations their owner could establish through them.

In Padua, Marco Mantova Benavides amassed a large quantity of plaster casts, including recognizable copies of sculptures in others’ collections, in addition to *naturalia*, archaeological artefacts, and works of art.\(^\text{17}\) Plaster versions of famous sculptures thus occupied a place in their own right in collections with a humanistic orientation by the sixteenth century. No longer merely a step in the process of casting bronze copies, these objects produced from an inexpensive material became collectibles in and of themselves. In Claesz’s 1628 still life, the cast of the *Spinario* is, to the modern eye, a copy of the renowned ancient bronze, but for the seventeenth-

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\(^{16}\) Kelley Helmstutler Di Dio, “Sculpture in Spanish Collections from Philip II to Philip IV,” in Penny and Schmidt, *Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe*, 249, 254-255. The bronze *Spinario* is now in the collection of the Museo del Prado, Madrid (E000163).

\(^{17}\) Marchand, “Plaster and Plaster Casts in Renaissance Italy,” 76-77.
century connoisseur, it was also a coveted possession only available through copies. The plaster Spinario initiates the painter and his viewer into a culture of collecting that linked them, albeit distantly, to the most powerful and erudite patrons of early modern Europe.

Within the context of the painter’s studio, the Spinario clearly references the fundamental role that plaster casts played in the cultivation of essential artistic skills. The importance of drawing from casts as part of an artist’s training was a topos of biographies, notably in Vasari’s account of the life of Andrea Mantegna, and became a regular feature in seventeenth-century Dutch art treatises. Claesz sets up an explicit correspondence between plaster casts and a painter’s drawing practice: directly beneath the Spinario, a sketchbook rests conveniently open to a page that shows a standing female nude sketched in black chalk or graphite. The woman’s pose can be readily likened to several antique Venus prototypes, the ideal female nude that complements the Spinario as a study of the male nude. Claesz’s still life asserts that an artist’s studio is not complete without a plaster cast to draw from. At the same time, he cleverly offers his talents not only as a still life painter and master of depicting an array of reflective surfaces, but also as a figure painter. The combination of the Spinario and the sketchbook serve as reminders to the viewer that, although Claesz may not specialize in producing large, multi-figure history paintings, he nevertheless has mastered as a draftsman the skills necessary to convincingly represent the human form.

Less commonly reproduced than the favorite ancient sculpture, the Laocoön, or the beloved Apollo Belvedere, the Spinario is a notably specific choice for Claesz. The theme of concentration manifested by the boy hunched over to study intently the sole of his foot was certainly fitting for an artist’s studio. Claesz embeds the Spinario into a scene filled with accoutrements of the hardworking painter: the expected palette, brushes, and maulstick are here,
along with props such as the armor, the musical instruments, and the books that show the painter’s versatility. The still life’s description of the various kinds of work that take place in a painter’s studio is amplified by the Spinario’s pose of concentrated effort, absorbed in his own thorny task. Meanwhile, for a Haarlem audience, the Spinario indicated the scholarly effort to learn about classical antiquity, as well as an awareness of the local appreciation for this class of artwork.

At the same time, the persistent ambiguity of the figure’s identity makes it a particularly apt component of a still life painting. In the twelfth century, a Jewish visitor to Rome, Benjamin of Tudela, described the Spinario as the Old Testament Absalom, while in the manuscript De mirabilibus urbis Romae he was identified as the fertility god Priapus, a result of the author’s belief that the statue’s genitals were ludicrously oversized. The Spinario was also commonly understood as the Roman shepherd boy Martius, who, legend had it, delivered an important message to the Roman Senate with such urgency that he stopped to remove a thorn from his foot only after completing his mission. Andrea Palladio’s L’antichità di Roma from 1554 remarks that the young nude looks like a shepherd using a needle to dig a splinter out of his foot. Well into the seventeenth century, Joachim Sandrart included the Spinario in the Teutsche Academie, and called him “Coridon,” the name given to a shepherd by ancient writers like Virgil, and a character who reappeared in early modern theatrical productions like the tragicomedy Il Pastor Fido. The malleable nature of the figure’s identity made him especially compelling to painters who reacted to works of antiquity as aesthetic subject matter. A depiction of the Spinario serves

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18 Haskell and Penny, 1981, 308. De mirabilibus Urbis Romae was written in the mid-twelfth century by a Magister Gregorius of Oxford as a guide to the city of Rome.


20 Andrea Palladio, L’antichità di Roma (Roma: V. Lucrino, 1554), 17.
Claesz as an expression of technical skill and a study of beautiful form; the still life composition, divorced from a preset narrative, positions the Spinario first and foremost as the famous ancient sculpture. Although Claesz departs from Gossart’s example of breathing life into the boy, he cannot help but alter the sculpture: he gives the boy fuller cheeks and locks of hair that end in tight curls. This is his own version of the painter’s artful intervention, which motivates him to take an object from reality and change it in some manner as he renders it anew.

The explicit consideration of the transience of human endeavors in Claesz’s composition is qualified to some extent by the inclusion of a renowned object. Claesz sets the cast of the Spinario next to the objects that most clearly refer to man’s mortal, temporary life, the skull and the pocket watch. He juxtaposes the skull and the plaster cast not merely through their proximity, but through their formal relationship. Rather than representing the skull on its own, as commonly occurs in other vanitas compositions, Claesz perches it atop two crossed legs bones. The shorter of the two, the tibia, comes to rest near one end of the longer femur, at just about the place where the knee is located. Together, they echo the distinctive pose of the Spinario. The skull even faces the same direction as the boy’s head, further echoing his position. Claesz seizes an opportunity to play with the levels of signification that the sculpture offers. As a representation, the Spinario is a boy, whose flesh-and-blood existence must eventually cease, at which point he becomes the bones that can only faintly resemble the living body. As a work of art, on the other hand, the Spinario he is materially and categorically unlike the skull and leg bones. Made of plaster, his coloring and the formal arrangement of his body duplicate those of the skull and bones, but they remain ontologically separate.

The Spinario, crucially, also represents the work of art, which cannot die; it is a product of artistic effort that had decidedly not been eroded with the passing of centuries. An open
pocket watch lies between the *Spinario* and the skull, facing the latter with its reminder of the incessant passage of time. Its lid touches the plaster cast’s base—for the sculpture, too, witnesses time passing, yet does not perish in the way that mortal man must. With this studio still life, Claesz indeed meditates on the vanity of the endeavor to create lasting objects, yet all the same he celebrates the persistence of art, and the painter’s ability to further immortalize the work of the ancients. The self-abnegation of the *vanitas* composition finds itself in productive tension with the appeal of the *Spinario*, here as a replica that could satisfy the tastes and desires of collectors who would never own the original.

Claesz’s depiction of the *Spinario* is a counterfeit in the early modern sense: a portrait of the Capitoline bronze, an image that could stand in for the thing itself.\(^21\) The still life invites the discerning viewer’s ability to identify the *Spinario* and to use it to converse knowledgeably about antiquity. The sculpture was apparently known to art collectors in the Netherlands around the time Claesz painted it, including through adaptations of the eccentric pose. The 1629 inventory of an Amsterdam wineseller lists a “splintertrecker,” or thorn-puller, made of plaster, which must have closely resembled Claesz’s, while several inventories from the 1640s through the 1660s record paintings of a man or boy pulling a thorn from his foot.\(^22\) Claesz’s still life is an early foray into this seventeenth-century market for images of one of Rome’s most famous antiquities.

It is also an entry in the oft-invoked *paragone* debate, as a painted image that convincingly represents painting’s chief rival art of sculpture. The *Spinario* recalls that the painter’s panel was always the site of the *paragone* contest, whereby he sets out to prove

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\(^{21}\) For the early modern concept of the counterfeit, see Peter Parshall, “Imago Contrafacta: Images and Facts in the Northern Renaissance,” *Art History* 12, no. 4 (1993): 554-579.

\(^{22}\) See Getty Provenance Index®, inventory N-2298, page 1, item 11; inventory N-51, page 1, item 12; inventory N-3562, item 4, fol. 93v; inventory N-177, fol. 62r.
painting’s superior evocative potential despite—or perhaps thanks to—its two-dimensional surface. The argument against painting invoked its illusionism as a flaw, as the sculptor Niccolò Tribolo conveyed in a letter to Benedetto Varchi on the occasion of the paragone question that the latter had posed in 1546: a blind man who encounters a sculpture would think it a living figure, Varchi maintained, but were he to come across a painting, “he would have encountered nothing at all... sculpture is the real thing, and painting is a lie.”²³ Peter Hecht has proposed that paintings that imagine the first scenario—a blind man whose encounter with a sculpture is more “real” because he can feel its contours with his hands—lodge a sardonic critique of Tribolo’s argument, because they make clear that the blind man will never see what the painter has manifested for the beholder.²⁴ From the perspective of its proponents, painting triumphs over sculpture because it creates three-dimensionality in defiance of its flat ground, without the aid of pre-existing conditions of volume. For a still life painter like Claesz, this claim bears particular weight, for it celebrates, by extension, the painter’s rendering of the other three-dimensional objects that populate his composition, each with a visual profile so distinct that sculpture in a single material or color could not capture it so faithfully.

The plaster copy of the Spinario allows Claesz to boast his power specifically to imitate in paint the three-dimensional work of the sculptor, which in this case is itself a faithful imitation of the ancient sculptor’s bronze. That is, Claesz, as a painter, has produced a plaster copy that

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rivals the actual plaster cast as well as the bronze original. The Spinario’s foot dangling off the edge of the table and casting a shadow onto the plaster base not only enlivens the boy but also heightens Claesz’s painted illusion. The noble art of painting, in the hands of an artist like Claesz, has the capacity not only to pay homage to the superlative work of the ancients, but also to fulfill the ambitious early modern artist’s goal: to surpass it. This, too, is a paragone, between antiquity and modernity, settled in Claesz’s favor.25

The Vanitas and the Plaster Bust

Claesz was an early interpreter of the vanitas subject in the 1620s, when he produced compositions that, unlike the Still Life with the Spinario, take up the themes of mortality and transience as their primary subjects. In the Still Life with a Skull and a Writing Quill at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, the skull sits directly next to an oil lamp whose wick seems only recently extinguished, inviting a more immediate understanding of each as a reference to ephemerality. Claesz leaves little room here for the articulation of the virtuous pursuits that might offer some transcendence in the face of death. With the Still Life with the Spinario, Claesz uses objects like the plaster cast to modify the emblematic subtext of the skull and snuffed-out lamp. The differences between these two still lifes make clear the rhetorical usefulness of vanitas objects for a painter commenting on the power of his own art. Reminders of death, paired with the accoutrements of the studio, can validate the labors of the educated painter and liken the fruits of that labor to human endeavors that have demonstrably withstood the test of time.

25 The competition between antiquity and modernity factored into early modern patrons’ enthusiasm for artists like Michelangelo, whose marble sculpture could be juxtaposed with the ancient statues of the likes of Praxiteles; see Elinor M. Richter, “Recasting the Role of the Italian Sculptor: Sculptors, Patrons, Materials, and Principles for the New Early Modern Age,” in A Companion to Renaissance and Baroque Art, ed. Babette Bohn and James M. Saslow (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 222.
The rich potential of vanitas still lifes as self-referential musings on artistic identity forms the foundation of a massive painting by one of Claesz’s most inventive predecessors, Jacques de Gheyn. The painting, now at the Yale University Art Gallery, is signed and dated 1621, and, measuring 117.5 by 165.4 cm, is notably larger than the vast majority of seventeenth-century still lifes (Fig. 2.7). The workspace of a well-read and diligent painter is displayed on a grand scale. Twenty-six books—in different formats, open and closed, on their sides and upright—dominate the surface of a large table, which is also strewn with a writing quill, a compass and burin, and brushes. A skull crowned with a wreath of laurel leaves sits on the central stack of three books. In the background, a long wooden shelf crosses the entire length of the composition. On the far right, the shelf holds three plaster casts of male heads; two of the men are young, while the other is much older, and all three gaze skyward. Centered at the bottom of the picture, a large piece of paper has been pinned to the green tablecloth; it is creased, as if previously folded, and inscribed with the Latin words, “SERVARE MODUM, FINEMQUE TUERI, NATURAMQUE SEQUI.”

Faintly visible beneath the inscription is another phrase, “Finis coronat opus,” executed in all’antica Roman capital letters.

De Gheyn is still credited with the creation of the first independent vanitas easel painting: his Vanitas Still Life, now at the Metropolitan, dated 1603. It predates the Yale painting by nearly two decades, and although the subject matter is related, the later painting approaches it from a completely different conceptual angle. The allegorical mode of the 1603 Vanitas Still Life

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26 “Practice moderation, remember your end, and follow nature.” For this translation and the identification of the passage in Lucanus’s Parsalia, see B. A. Heezen-Stoll, “A Vanitas Still Life of 1621 by Jacques de Gheyn: A Reflection of Neo-Stoic Ideas,” Oud Holland 93, no. 4 (1979), 249.

delineates clearly its message about mortality and the vanity of human affairs. The 1621 still life makes its own complex references to transience, but they are brought to bear upon a specific scenario, namely, the space of the artist’s studio. Like Claesz, De Gheyn combines indicators of life’s brevity with objects that stand in for the experience of the artist at work. In one of the earliest analyses of the Yale Vanitas Still Life, David Merrill argued unconvincingly that De Gheyn’s composition was indebted to themes inspired by Albrecht Dürer’s master engravings of 1513 and 1514. Nearly twenty years later, B.A. Heezen-Stoll provided a more plausible explanation for the peculiarities of De Gheyn’s still life, based on a reading of the inscription as “a summary of Stoic principles” that suggest that a virtuous life may be achieved through wisdom and self-improvement. De Gheyn had friends in humanistic circles who shared the renewed interest in Stoic philosophy that blossomed in the seventeenth century, grounded in the works of ancient philosophers and writers whose texts emphasized ethics and human will. Crucial to the Dutch understanding of Stoic principles was the publication of Justus Lipsius’s De Constantia in 1583, which found wide appeal in part due to Lipsius’s ability to address the devastation felt by his fellow men in the war-torn Netherlands through the wisdom of ancient philosophers like Seneca.

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29 This analysis focuses on the objects most pertinent to the evocation of the studio. Given this scope, I have set aside the enigmatic structure of the breastplate with gilded trumpets behind it, and the glowing medallion with cherubim faces that surmounts it; they refer to the Last Judgment and the heavenly realm in concert with the vanitas message more explicitly invoked by the skull and the inscriptions.


31 Heezen-Stoll, 246-250.

32 Heezen-Stoll, 246.

One of the three plaster casts in De Gheyn’s painting pointedly signals its Neo-Stoic dimension: the bust on the far right, which was, in the seventeenth century, widely believed to be a portrait of Seneca. As Neo-Stoicism gained popularity, humanists and other scholars endeavored to put a face to the foundational Stoic philosopher. In 1598, the celebrated antiquarian of the Roman Farnese family, Fulvio Orsini, had published an ancient bust in the Farnese collection as a portrait of Seneca in his illustrated *Illustrium imagines ex antiquis marmoribus*—possibly after consulting with Lipsius himself during the latter’s stay in Rome (Fig. 2.8). The bust’s immediate fame resulted in its reappearance in drawings, prints, and paintings throughout the seventeenth century, spurred by the avid adoption of Neo-Stoicism.

De Gheyn replicated the bust in a drawing now in the collection of the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (Fig. 2.9). For the drawing, De Gheyn took care to capture the particularities of the hair, wrinkles, and edges of the sculpture, and emphasized the philosopher’s upturned gaze. It is possible that De Gheyn acquired a cast of the bust that he then used for the 1621 *Vanitas Still Life*. The painted bust closely repeats the face in the drawing, down to the wrinkled brow, the bump on the nose, and the slightly parted lips.

De Gheyn’s versions of the Pseudo-Seneca deviate from the model of Theodor Galle’s engraving for Orsini’s *Imagines*; instead, they are closer to the bust as it appears in Rubens’s famous friendship portrait made between 1611 and 1612, *The Four Philosophers* (Fig. 2.10).

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35 It was not until 1765 that this identification came into question, when Johannes Winckelmann expressed incredulity about Seneca’s portrait being so widely produced during his lifetime; further doubt arose in 1813 when excavations at the Villa Mattei in Rome produced a double herm portraying Seneca and Socrates and bearing their names. See Bertil Strandman, “The Pseudo-Seneca Problem,” *Konsthistorik Tidskrift* 19, no. 3-4 (Nov. 1950), 67.

36 According to the preface to the 1615 edition of Lipsius’s *Seneca Opera*, Lipsius had been dissatisfied with Theodore Galle’s rendering of the philosopher’s visage; Rubens agreed to provide two new versions of the portrait for the 1615 edition, which were engraved by Cornelis Galle (I).
The presentation of the bust in Ruben’s painting, however, could not be more different. In *The Four Philosophers*, the bust is on prominent display, an antique piece worthy of the men gathered beneath it and seeming to constitute a fifth philosopher and participant in the erudite dialogue or lecture. This is only fitting given that the portrait shows a gathering of Neo-Stoic disciples: Rubens himself, his brother Philip, and their friend Johannes Woverius encircling Justus Lipsius, who had published his comprehensive edition of Seneca’s writings in 1605.\(^{37}\)

Rubens actually owned a replica of the famous bust described in Orsini’s *Imagines*. It is likely that Rubens saw the Farnese bust during one or both of his stays in Rome in 1601 and 1605, and by the time he left Italy in 1608, he had acquired a marble copy of it.\(^{38}\) In *The Four Philosophers*, the marble bust poses as an ancient sculpture, not only to reinforce Lipsius’s expertise in ancient philosophy but also to celebrate Rubens’s taste as an antiquarian and collector. Whether or not they were in fact ancient, these sculptures became essential additions to portraits of humanists and scholars, not only in Italy, where the ancient originals often remained, but also in the Netherlands. The bust taken to represent Seneca appears in portraits throughout the seventeenth century, even after Rubens’s marble replica was sold to England, possibly as early as 1625.\(^{39}\) In Anthony van Dyck’s portrait from the mid-1630s of the Brussels lawyer and syndic Justus van Meerstraeten, a variant of the Pseudo-Seneca bust affirms the intellectual qualities conferred to the sitter by the book he holds, a compilation of the late Roman legal texts of Emperor Justinian (Fig. 2.11). The 1660 portrait of Jacob Cats by Arnold van Ravesteyn

\(^{37}\) Morford, 3, 139. See in particular Chapter 5 for Morford’s account of Lipsius’s scholarship on the works of Seneca.

\(^{38}\) Prinz, 412.

\(^{39}\) Prinz, 423. Prinz suggests that a cast was made of Rubens’s bust before it was sold, allowing copies of it to proliferate among collectors such as Cornelis van der Geest, a friend of Rubens, and enabling its representation in later paintings.
shows the Dutch writer and politician accompanied by a plaster copy of the Pseudo-Seneca bust as a kind of hallmark of the library or study in which he sits (Fig. 2.12). Caspar Netcher’s portrait of Abraham van Lennep shows a modified plaster version of the bust, with the head turned upward, to characterize Van Lennep’s taste as a collector (Fig. 2.13).

The consequences of incorporating the Pseudo-Seneca bust into portraits of elite gentlemen are entirely different from its effect in De Gheyn’s 1621 Vanitas. The bust appears at the margins of the painting, visible enough to be recognizable but not at all given pride of place. It is one of three casts that as a group refer broadly to ancient sculpture, set before the eyes and hands of the capable painter who learns from them through the tools scattered in the foreground. The plaster casts are counterparts to the books on the table, which the painter also uses to learn from antiquity: on the stack topped by the skull, the middle book is labeled “Vitruvius” by a piece of paper protruding from it and the geometric shapes on the pages of the propped-open tome in the back may be intended to identify it as a volume by Euclid. Together, these tomes allude to De Gheyn’s expansive breadth of knowledge.

Although not generally characterized as an artist motivated by the study of antiquity, De Gheyn invigorates his unusually large still life—and one of the most ambitious paintings he ever undertook—with references to works from antiquity that had an enduring legacy. They deliver the promise of the second, fainter inscription: “Finis coronat opus,” or “the end crowns the work.” This aspiration is visualized by the skull crowned by a laurel wreath, which refers to the artist whose work bestows honor even after his death. But the presence of works from antiquity

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40 In this sense, the skull functions differently here than it does in the 1603 Vanitas, as a modified symbol of death more directly related to the possible achievements of art. This can be compared to the image of the skull engraved on the maulstick given to Daniel Seghers by Amalia van Solms, “a sign that art continues to live and flourish even after death;” see Chong, 15.
makes an even bigger claim about the longevity of mankind’s greatest products, which not only glorify their maker posthumously but can also survive for centuries. A still life from the same period shows a crowned skull flanked by the plaster cast of the son of Laocoön that appears in De Gheyn’s 1621 Vanitas and the plaster bust of a child, surmounting the inscription “NON OMNIS MORIAR” on a creased sheet of paper (Fig. 2.14).\footnote{41} This is in essence a small version of the 1621 painting, condensed to its basic components and fundamental point: the words “Not all of me will die” belong to the skull—the last trace of the artist, honored in death—as well as the works of art beside it, borne through time as plaster and painted copies.

De Gheyn, like Claesz, makes room for his identity as an artist in the 1621 Vanitas Still Life through references to his technical ability, intellectual pursuits, and defiance of death through his creations. The plaster casts are among the first to appear in a painted Dutch still life and they are linked both to the tools required to work as an artist and to the philosophical ideas that the painting poses. De Gheyn presents the still life painter as the artist ideally positioned to confront death, and in particular his own mortality, precisely by picturing the objects that help him transform his temporary existence into a monument for the ages.

**The Craft of Duplication**

No Dutch still life painted in the seventeenth century is more insistently self-referential than David Bailly’s Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait of the Painter (1651) (Fig. 2.15). Though he made his living primarily as a portraitist, Bailly built his most enduring work on foundations laid by De Gheyn and Claesz. Bailly’s meditation on his own craft revisits his predecessors’ preoccupation with the painter’s skillset in the context of his mortal existence, but he gives much...
more attention to the centrality of copying in the artistic quest for distinction. In Bailly’s take on the *vanitas*, the imitations of the visible world that the painter leaves behind depend substantially on copies that he encounters, collects, and even duplicates himself.

The *Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait of the Painter* has been the subject of copious art historical study, often motivated by Bailly’s puzzling inclusion of two self-portraits: he shows himself as a young man, holding an oval picture of himself as an older man closer to his age at the time he executed the painting. Although some scholars have argued that the man is likely a younger painter, chiefly Frans van Mieris, the more convincing interpretations point out that the temporal inversion by which the youthful painter presents an image of his older self is a common device in artists’ self-portraits intended to impress fellow artists and to emphasize the time-stilling power of painting. There is general agreement in the scholarship about Bailly’s central aims for this picture: to celebrate the art of painting through attributes of the studio and examples of painterly artifice, not least of which is the illusionistic piece of paper at lower right shown just as it falls off the edge of the table.

Efforts at making sense of how the objects in the still life relate to one another have failed to consider the implications of Bailly’s use of duplicates. In a 1973 article, Naomi Popper-Voskuil proposed several complicated explanations for the selection of objects in the painting. Popper-Voskuil groups the art objects into three categories of the visual arts—painting, drawing, and sculpture—and goes on to suggest that these function as attributes for the human figures,

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who represent different stages of life.\textsuperscript{43} This inspired an even more convoluted reading by Maarten Wurfbain about how the objects are paired across the composition to arrive at symbolic and “deliberately introduced submeanings.”\textsuperscript{44} Svetlana Alpers, on the other hand, saw in Bailly’s choice of objects not a symbolic agenda but a demonstration of how Dutch artists acquired knowledge of the world through their visual descriptions of it. She analyzed the painting as a meditation “on the relationship of craft and art, picture-making and deceit,” a work in which the artist celebrates his legacy and in which “the crafting of art and of self is presented as a seamless whole.”\textsuperscript{45} Julie Hochstrasser subsequently saw in Bailly’s double self-portrait a reference to the passage of time as it pertains specifically to the artist; she proposes that this is an individual take on the \textit{vanitas} theme and a reminder to the viewer of the artist’s involvement in the picture’s creation.\textsuperscript{46} Bailly’s choice to represent himself so prominently gives an explicit self-referential dimension to the \textit{vanitas} still life, and makes visible the painter’s self-consciousness as a being in time, not only as a craftsman.\textsuperscript{47}

For the most part, in analyses of the painting, the numerous portraits seem to be the primary sources of meaning that dictate the symbolic function of the objects around them. These interpretations prioritize the singularity, or the exceptionality, of both the art of painting and the

\textsuperscript{43} Naomi Popper-Voskuil, “Self-Portrait and Vanitas Still-Life Painting in 17th-Century Holland in reference to David Bailly’s Vanitas Oeuvre,” \textit{Pantheon} 31 (1973), 69-71. She argues that the portraits are part of the iconographic program that drives home the \textit{vanitas} message of the entire painting.

\textsuperscript{44} Wurfbain, “David Bailly’s \textit{Vanitas} of 1651,” 52-56.


\textsuperscript{46} Hochstrasser, “‘Goede Dingen Willen Tijd Hebben,’” 117-118.

painter himself, which perhaps explains why the sculptures in Bailly’s *Vanitas Still Life* have only ever received passing mention. Yet their presence points to one of the painting’s related, if seemingly contradictory, central concerns: the production of duplicates. Bailly’s most virtuosic still life is a culmination of Bailly’s decades-long pictorial engagement with copies, including plaster casts and other sculptural reproductions. To make fullest sense of his interest in duplicates, the 1651 *Vanitas Still Life* must be read in conjunction with earlier paintings in which Bailly pictured plaster casts among objects that claim duplication as an artful maneuver.

The still life is populated with duplicates not so much in the sense of pairings, as Popper-Voskuil and Wurfbain see it, but in the sense of reproductions. Some of the sources are the product of Bailly’s own hand. The oval likenesses of the aged Bailly was made in 1641 or earlier, and the second portrait may be of his wife, a pendant to Bailly’s self-portrait. They are crucial additions to the ensemble Bailly gathers here, for they put on display his abilities as a portraitist, his primary specialization. On the back wall above a clean palette hangs a drawing after Frans Hals’s *The Lute Player*, which Bailly had copied and signed in 1626. Even the rolled-up piece of parchment next to the skull amounts to a citation of his own work: it had functioned as a kind of personal device in his 1624 contribution to an *album amicorum* and in his pen and ink self-portrait from 1625. Its reappearance here further suggests Bailly’s orientation towards imagery he had previously produced. These references to himself are accompanied by other types of reproductions. A black-and-white sketch of a bearded man is most likely an

48 Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al, 189. Portraits such as these comprise the vast majority of Bailly’s surviving oeuvre.

49 Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al., 190.

50 Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al., 189. The drawing is in the *album amicorum* of Cornelis de Glarges, f. 161r (Koninklijk Bibliotheek, The Hague).
allusion to the work of his fellow Leiden painter Jan Lievens.\textsuperscript{51} The goblet holder, or \textit{bekerschroef}, at the far right reprises the stylistic characteristics of the \textit{kwab} objects developed by contemporary silversmiths in Amsterdam and Utrecht.\textsuperscript{52} Above all, the sculpted images of a man and woman, in dramatically different scales, appear as copies of existing sculpture duplicated by the painter. The stone bust is a variation on a bronze by the Flemish sculptor Lucas Faydherbe.\textsuperscript{53} The sculpture at far right has the creamy, yellow-tinged appearance of an ivory sculpture and represents the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. It does not precisely match any known sculpture from the period, though it resembles in many ways a small ivory Saint Sebastian from the circle of Artus Quellinus carved around the middle of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{54} These duplications, in paint, of sculpture from the recent past resonate with Bailly’s attention to sculptural copies in plaster decades before he painted the \textit{Vanitas Still Life with the Self-Portrait of the Painter}.

Bailly had a demonstrable interest in plaster casts. Several types appear in his still lifes, and the early development of this penchant is clear from the dates on two drawings he made after particularly famous busts. In 1624, he drew the bust of the Pseudo-Seneca placed on top of a volume whose pages are labeled “opera Senecae” (“works of Seneca”) (Fig. 2.16). The following

\textsuperscript{51} Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al., 190.

\textsuperscript{52} For a recent history of the auricular style, see Reinier Baarsen, \textit{Kwab: Ornament as Art in the Age of Rembrandt}, trans. Gerard Forde (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2018).

\textsuperscript{53} Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al, 190. An example of the Faydherbe bronze (sometimes identified as a Cupid) is in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (1942.9.114) and is dated to around 1640 or 1650.

\textsuperscript{54} The ivory \textit{Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian} (height: 42.5 cm), sold by Sotheby’s on 2 July 2013 in London (Sale number L13230, Lot 38), was described as “By an Italo-Flemish sculptor, working in the style of Algardi; circa 1650” in an exhibition catalogue from what is now the Victoria and Albert Museum; see John C. Robinson, ed., \textit{Catalogue of the special exhibition of works of art of the medieval, Renaissance, and more recent periods, on loan at the South Kensington Museum, June 1862} (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1863), 22, cat. no. 252. Unlike the extant ivory, Bailly’s version of the Saint Sebastian does not appear to include the figure of a putto at the saint’s feet.
year, he made a drawing of a female bust, the head of the Flora Farnese, resting on a pockmarked stone surface (Fig. 2.1).\textsuperscript{55} Both drawings are conspicuously signed and dated, which suggests that Bailly saw them as finished pieces, possibly to be shared or exchanged. Bailly presumably owned a plaster bust of the Pseudo-Seneca and had likely seen others like it reproduced in engravings, including in Orsini’s \textit{Illustrium imagines}. In fact, the weight and shape of Bailly’s lines, as well as the format of the signature, give the drawing the appearance of an engraving. The signature, which reads “D. Baillij fe,” extols the artist’s execution, which in this case is a celebration of Bailly’s drawing skills. The abbreviated Latin “fecit” resonates with the reference to the “opera” of Seneca and places Bailly on a creative continuum with the philosopher whose visage he depicts.

The marks that comprise each drawing are precise and attentive to the quirks of plaster’s physical properties. Bailly is at great pains to describe the texture of the Seneca bust through a combination of long curved lines, short dots, and selective cross-hatching to create subtle variations of light. He uses uninterrupted, gently undulating lines to show the locks of hair that frame Seneca’s severe expression. These are distinct from the shorter arcs that he relies on to convey the curvature of the old man’s cheekbones and the swells and dips of his shoulders and upper chest. That these are reserved for rendering anatomical volume is clearest in the shadows along Seneca’s left shoulder, created by cross-hatched bow-like marks. Alone, these features would just as soon serve to depict the head and shoulders of a living man, but throughout the drawing, Bailly peppers the bust with dots that refer to a rough or slightly worn surface. The dots also appear on the edges of the book’s cover, which further indicates that the bust is made of a material with a rough surface. More telling still is Bailly’s treatment of the bust’s bottom edge,

\textsuperscript{55} Bernd Ebert, \textit{Simon und Isaak Luttichuys} (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009), 358-359.
uneven with a few chinks and concavities along the proper right side. It does not exhibit the smooth or finished edges of a polished marble bust. Bailly retains visible signs of the material as plaster rather than reimagining the bust made out of more lustrous marble.

The drawing of the bust of Flora made a year later is less reminiscent of an engraving, composed of lighter and thinner lines and softened by the use of wash, particularly for shadows in her wavy hair and around her nose and lips. Like the Seneca bust, however, the Flora bust appears as a sculpture made of plaster, only one portion of the full-length sculpture in the Farnese collection. The edge of the bust is even more fissured and unfinished, with a prominent cleft front and center. Although Bailly simplifies the surface of the bust, characterized here almost entirely by longer rounded arcs embellished only infrequently by dot-like marks, the irregularities of the bottom edges identify the material as plaster, and perhaps even serve as a reminder that the head was not intended to be an independent bust.

Bailly’s careful observation of these plaster busts relates to, and surpasses, De Gheyn’s interest in the casts he included in his 1621 Vanitas. De Gheyn had purportedly inspired the young Bailly; according to the biographer Jan Orlers, Bailly decided to practice engraving after he had visited De Gheyn’s atelier, an impactful event that Houbraken continued to emphasize in his biography of Bailly over fifty years later. If Bailly admired De Gheyn as much as his biographers claim, the choice of the Pseudo-Seneca for his attentive study is a tribute of sorts to his esteemed predecessor—especially given Bailly’s efforts to liken the drawing to an engraving. Bailly’s exacting marks are a firm departure from De Gheyn’s own swift sketch of a plaster Pseudo-Seneca bust, which takes note of its uneven edges but enlivens the philosopher’s eyes

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with dark pupils. The blank stare of Bailly’s Pseudo-Seneca reinforces its status as an object, the few, slightly curved lines inside the eyes drawn only to indicate the curvature of the sculpture. While De Gheyn made the most of the scholastic references communicated by the casts in his *Vanitas*, Bailly’s primary interest is the copies themselves.

In Bailly’s still lifes, plaster casts occupy prominent positions. The Pseudo-Seneca reappears in a *vanitas* painting from the late 1620s attributed to Bailly, paired with none other than the head of one of Laocoön’s sons.\(^{57}\) The latter, a smaller cast, leans against the centrally placed Pseudo-Seneca. The pairing has been taken as a reference to Neo-Stoicism likely inspired by De Gheyn’s *Vanitas*.\(^{58}\) This implies that Bailly was more or less reprising De Gheyn’s composition directly, but objects that populate the rest of the still life suggest otherwise. The three plaster casts are displayed as a counterpoint to the engravings visible in the open books at the other end of the table. These types of objects provided painters two distinct avenues for the study of antiquity. Bailly’s signature rolled-up parchment leans against the books, as if to signal that this arrangement indeed belongs to the painter who makes equally fruitful use of two- and three-dimensional models.

The pairing of the Pseudo-Seneca and one of Laocoön’s sons points to at least partial inspiration from De Gheyn, but Bailly does not stop there. The third cast in the painting, a twisting Saint Sebastian, brings the Renaissance sculptor Alessandro Vittoria into the picture as

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\(^{57}\) This painting was formerly part of the F. C. Butôt Collection, but its current whereabouts are unknown. For a color reproduction and a partial exhibition history of the painting, see Laurens J. Bol, George S. Keyes, and F. C. Butôt, *Netherlandish Paintings and Drawings from the Collection of F. C. Butôt by Little-Known and Rare Masters of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981), 44-45.

well, with a work that ranked among his most successful creations. Saint Sebastian apparently held particular significance for Vittoria, whose portrait by Veronese from around 1580 features the artist embracing a model of the Saint Sebastian he had carved for the Church of San Francesco della Vigna between 1561 and 1562 (Fig. 2.18).\textsuperscript{59} The portrait exalts Vittoria’s invention. Veronese portrays him with a preparatory model, perhaps made of wax, in his hands, as if to suspend Vittoria in the act of composing and crafting his renowned masterpiece. It is precisely this sort of model that served as the basis for the casts in bronze that circulated as collectibles themselves, their profile augmented by the fame of the marble in San Francesco.\textsuperscript{60} The plaster statuette in Bailly’s still life is yet another variant on that sculpture.\textsuperscript{61} Meanwhile, the engraving in the foregrounded book in Bailly’s painting is an imitation of a classic Frans Hals type, a rommelpot player. Bailly’s references, then, encompass a wide range of artists working in diverse media, from sculpture by Vittoria to painting by Hals and De Gheyn.

Like Claesz, Bailly puts plaster casts to work within vanitas compositions, where they participate in the message about mortality while simultaneously granting that human life does endure in the form an image. In the still life now in the Bader Collection (1640s), Bailly juxtaposes the key symbol of death in a vanitas, the human skull, with a plaster head of a child, based on a bust of Cupid by François du Quesnoy (Fig. 2.19). With the hourglass and celestial

\textsuperscript{59} For Vittoria’s Saint Sebastian and the altar to which it belongs in San Francesco della Vigna, see, Lorenzo Finocchi Ghersi, Alessandro Vittoria: Architettura, scultura e decorazione nella Venezia del tardo Rinascimento (Udine: Forum, 1998), 133-141.

\textsuperscript{60} One of Vittoria’s wills, dated May 1584, refers to two castings of the Saint Sebastian statuette; see Giuseppe Gerola, “Nuovi documenti veneziani su Alessandro Vittoria,” Atti del Reale Instituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti 84 (1924-25), 339-59. One of the bronzes is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (40.24). An unfinished version is in a private collection. The version in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.51.12) seems to be an After cast; for this, see Scott Schaefer and Peter Fusco, European Painting and Sculpture in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1987), 170.

\textsuperscript{61} De Jongh, Van Leeuwen, Gasten, and Sayles, 189. According to De Jongh, the cast is based on a small bronze reduction made in 1566 of the Saint Sebastian in San Francesco della Vigna.
globe between them, they set up a continuum of time as the extreme poles of man’s earthly life: childhood and death. In Bailly’s *Vanitas* at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art (ca. 1650), a skull faces a putto statuette, made of plaster or terracotta, that has been painted to enhance the figure’s liveliness (Fig. 2.20). The skull, with an hourglass beside it, seems to stare down the ephemeral action of the putto. The putto’s raised arm, in conjunction with the bubbles floating above, becomes a three-dimensional representation of the *homo bulla*, an Erasmian proverb that served as a *memento mori* in early modern literature and visual culture, including a widely known 1594 engraving by Hendrick Goltzius in which the putto leans on a skull as he gestures towards the bubbles he has just blown (Fig. 2.21). Bailly’s painted putto, in an active pose, stands in for the futile striving that characterizes mortal existence, but it also appears in vivacious contrast to the skull, which has already lost all traces of its former sentience and flesh. The putto is, in this sense, more alive—in perpetuity—than the organic remnant of a human being. The enlivened sculpture confirms the potency of another image that immortalizes human life: the painted portrait roundel held up by a young Black man. There is a double standard in place here, for the only actual person in the painting is assimilated into the assemblage of objects that belong to the white man commemorated in the roundel. Bailly perpetuates the tendency, also operative in other genres of Dutch painting, to depict a Black servant as a possession; in still lifes, the Black servant is one of the commodities laid out in displays of luxury and mercantile abundance (Fig. 2.22). The disturbing irony of Bailly’s painting is that the human figures present as images are granted greater claims to liveliness than the living man beside them whose personhood has been purposefully denied to him.\(^62\) In both the Bader and the Johnson painting, plaster sculpture

\[^{62}\text{For the trend of turning Black boys and young men into symbols of affluence and servitude in seventeenth-century images made in Europe, see Elmer Kolfin, “Black Models in Dutch Art Between 1580 and 1800,” in *Black is Beautiful: Rubens to Dumas*, ed. Esther Schreuder and Elmer Kolfin (Zwolle: Waanders, 2008), 70-87.}\]
supplements the theme of impermanence, namely as the human figure that mirrors the obstinate skull. But it also confirms that man may yet be rendered permanent, by means of an image that retains its liveliness indefinitely.

In the 1651 *Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait of the Painter*, Bailly brings together elements of his earlier *vanitas* paintings into a complex and multilayered commentary on permanence and impermanence, both human and pictorial. Human actors appear in several forms, from the “actual” presence of the painter at left to the painted and sculpted representations beside him on the table. The skull, in this *vanitas*, has no fewer than eight counterparts who represent the living who must all succumb to death. Bailly makes the *memento mori* aims of the picture abundantly clear with the inscription on a curling piece of paper at the edge of the table, which reads, “Vanitas vani[ta]tum, omnia vanitas” ("Vanity of vanities, all is vanity") and bears the date and Bailly’s signature. Bailly deliberately makes available to the viewer an interpretation of the painting that revolves around the temporariness of human existence, which makes the juxtaposed notion—that art conquers death—all the more impactful. Whether the eight male and female faces represent the living, the dead, the mythical, or the imaginary, they are immortal only in pictorial form.

Bailly’s citations of not only himself but also other artists add yet another layer to his exploration of what constitutes transcendence through the visual arts. Frans Hals’s *The Lute Player* had clearly made an impression on Bailly, who modified it when he drew it in 1626 by adding a stack of books and a paper with his signature on a table in front of the lute player (Fig. 2.23). But the version that appears in the 1651 *Vanitas Still Life* is not that drawing: Bailly’s conspicuous modifications are here conspicuously absent. Bailly instead offers another

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63 It seems that Bailly made his drawing from what was in fact a copy of the Hals painting, now in the Rijksmuseum. See Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al., 191 n. 9.
reproduction of the Hals painting he had so admired decades before. Meanwhile, the drawing of an older man, in the style of Jan Lievens, is not merely a nod to painters’ use of drawings and prints, but also a reference to a Leiden contemporary whose work Bailly could see in reproductions such as this one, if not through personal visits to his studio. The sculptures, too, were most likely available to Bailly in the form of reproductions, which he apparently welcomed, if his earlier reception of plaster casts is an indication of his attitude towards copies.

The plaster casts in Bailly’s paintings are more important to a full understanding of his work than hitherto acknowledged. They signal to the viewer the stimulation that Bailly found in copies. By committing a careful selection of recognizable objects to paint, he implicates himself in the production of reproductions. The 1651 *Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait* is a result of Bailly replicating his own work (portraiture) and copying the work of others (the drawing after Hals, the stone bust after Faydherbe, the ivory in the style of Quellinus). The painting, without a doubt, praises what painting can accomplish, but it does so without foregrounding what a modern interpreter might call “originality.” Instead, painting is engendered by the hand of the artist who recognizes artfulness, learns from it, and realizes it anew.

**Artistic Lineages**

In theory—with notable exceptions like Bailly’s 1651 *Vanitas*—a still life fundamentally embraces the absence of human life. As an assembly of objects, the still life painting makes possible the fantasy of looking in on the inanimate without interrupting its serenity with a sentient presence. Certain Dutch still lifes, particularly the *ontbijtjes* and *banketjes* scattered with food and utensils, imply that human activity has recently visited the items haphazardly positioned on the table.64 In the case of still lifes featuring plaster casts, the human form reenters

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the space of the painting under uncanny conditions, inert, in coherence with the remaining objects, yet curiously lifelike. The examples of Claesz and De Gheyn make clear to what extent the plaster cast can stand in for the activity of the painter. For Simon Luttichuys, the plaster cast in the studio still life participates in a meditation on likenesses, in which the human face oscillates between an unspecific visage and a portrait. In his Allegory of the Arts of 1646, Luttichuys adds his own living image to the mix, creating an explicit connection between his identity as a painter and the myriad works of art that belong in the studio (Fig. 2.24). The painter’s face enters into a dialogue with the other visages he renders in his still life, including the plaster casts that signal Luttichuy’s artistic lineage and knowledge.

Luttichuys presents the objects in his studio still life close up, with no single object as the focus of the gaze or the dominant protagonist. The constructed nature of the arrangement is clear: these objects have been brought together here primarily for the artist to reproduce them in paint. A large map of the continent of Africa rests on the table, topped by a golden compass, two drawings or colored prints, and several books propped open against a celestial globe. At far left, a panel painting depicts a stormy seascape with a ship roiling in the agitated waves. Two drawings are tucked underneath it: one is a sketch, heightened with white chalk, of a young man lying face-down on the ground, while the other shows an old man, nearly in profile and bust-length, on blue-prepared paper also heightened with chalk. In the foreground, an engraved captioned portrait of a man is tilted towards the viewer by a leg bone that juts out past the table’s edge. A painter’s palette, marked with globs of color, appears next to the bone, accompanied by several brushes. Behind it, the table is given over to a familiar plaster cast of the Pseudo-Seneca, a little clay male head atop a small book or portfolio, and a plaster female head in the shadowy
background. These are set off against part of a mantlepiece, made of grey stone sculpted into a standing male figure. Above the table, a mirrored orb hangs from a thin string—attached to something beyond the picture’s top edge—and reflects the image of the painter at work at his easel near a window.

The femur on a table laden with objects that can be associated with the pursuit of knowledge and distinction initially elicited moralistic interpretations among twentieth-century scholars. Ingvar Bergström describes the thigh bone as a “much more discreet reminder than the skull” that man’s mortality makes his earthly endeavors fleeting. In combination with this single bone, he maintains, the remaining objects “preach that works of art are also perishable” so that “vanitas associations may be found” in each one. This reading of the painting depends largely on the assumption that a bone in a still life primarily refers to death, and the subsequent discernment of allusions to mortality is overdetermined. Ten years later, the state of analysis of still life paintings had already significantly changed when Alan Chong contended that not even a skull constitutes an indisputable vanitas symbol, pointing out that skulls and skeletons were collected as naturalia or as attributes of a scholar. At a more circumspect distance from classification as a vanitas, the full complexity of Luttichuys’s painting begins to emerge. In this vein, it has come to be understood as an allegory of the arts, among the earliest of this type, which insists on the power of the art of painting in particular and the cleverness of its practitioners. Brusati, for example, sees, in the variety of artistic products assembled, a

65 Bergström, Still Lifes of the Golden Age, 114.
66 Bergström, Still Lifes of the Golden Age, 114.
67 Chong, 13-14.
68 Chong, Kloek, Brusati et al., 187.
“celebration of the encyclopedic purview of the painter’s art.”

Beyond merely illustrating the forms that constitute the arts, the still life boasts the versatility of the painter, whose ability to convincingly depict the visible world is matched by his capacity for intellectual engagement.

The presence of Luttichuys himself, reflected in the orb hanging above the table, further suggests that Luttichuys’s principal subject is the experience of the educated painter. For Brusati, the choice to include a self-portrait “reinforces the painter’s controlling claim to the all-encompassing power of his art.” However, even these interpretations that emphasize the self-referential aspects of the still life overlook the role that the plaster casts play in foregrounding the painter’s ambitions. Plaster busts of ancient types—especially of well-known sculptures and historical personages—were already established attributes of scholarly spaces. In Luttichuys’s still life, the plaster casts are essential to the transformation of the painter’s studio into the scholar’s studiolo, a space even more sophisticated than Claesz’s studio graced with the coveted Spinario (Fig. 2.24). Yet the fact that Luttichuys actually shows himself at work ensures that the viewer can never disregard the painter’s profession. To this end, he also uses the plaster casts to construct his professional identity through an artistic lineage based neither on geographic location nor genre-specialization, but on erudition and eminence.

Luttichuys prominently features the Pseudo-Seneca as part of a collection of objects that characterize the learned painter. Like De Gheyn and Bailly, Luttichuys could have seen the bust in engravings that (we know now) erroneously identified it as Seneca, or he may have owned his own version. The inventory made of Luttichuys’s studio (schildercamer) in 1661, after his death,
lists among his possessions tronies, or heads, made of plaster.\textsuperscript{71} The brushes and palette with spots of paint, which rest against the bust, affirm how closely these artistic tools coexisted in Luttichuys’s studio. The bust is also displayed alongside the printed portrait of none other than Peter Paul Rubens, taken from Anthony van Dyck’s \textit{Iconografía} series. Luttichuys carefully facilitates this identification: the engraving’s inscription is reproduced clearly enough in the painting to make Rubens’s name legible. The image of one of the most successful artists of the time is a general avowal of the heights to which painters could aspire. But the addition of the Pseudo-Seneca bust strengthens, for the knowledgeable viewer, the reference to Rubens’s distinguished reputation, as a student of Neo-Stoicism and an antiquarian who owned the bust himself.

The second cast included in the \textit{Allegory of the Arts}, the Flora Farnese that Bailly had depicted in a drawing, may also have numbered among the “pleystertronies” in Luttichuys’s possession. Like Bailly, Luttichuys shows a plaster cast of only the head of the famous sculpture in Rome. The full-length Flora appeared in François Perrier’s \textit{Segmenta} in 1638, one of less than one hundred statues purported to constitute Rome’s finest ancient works. Perrier’s books became an indispensable source of information about ancient sculpture, as they were inexpensive and reprinted often.\textsuperscript{72} Labeled “Flora Romae” in the \textit{Segmenta}, the standing female beauty had by the seventeenth century garnered fame, alongside the extremely popular Farnese Hercules, as one of the statues found in the Baths of Caracalla.\textsuperscript{73} The drawing on blue paper that Hendrick Goltzius

\textsuperscript{71} “Eenige pleystertronies,” Bredius, Vol. 4, 1291.

\textsuperscript{72} Haskell and Penny, 21. Their affordability and availability seemingly made Perrier’s books more appealing than later publications of superior quality.

\textsuperscript{73} Haskell and Penny, 218. There is no evidence to corroborate the legend that the Flora was found in the Baths of Caracalla like the Farnese Hercules, though they seem to have been discovered at the same time.
made of the Flora in 1590 or 1591 during his sojourn in Rome gives some indication of the size of the sculpture, drawn from the ground and towering above the artist (Fig. 2.25). The head is almost an afterthought for Goltzius, who was most captivated by the flowing lines and deep cervices of the drapery. Perhaps Goltzius had also been made aware of the fact that the head of the Flora Farnese was a relatively recent restoration, undertaken by Gugliemo della Porta in or just after 1555 to compensate for the original statue’s missing head.74 The Dutch sculptor Willem van Tetrode, who worked in Della Porta’s workshop at the time, may have been involved in the restoration and, if he indeed carried it out, could have transported models of the head upon his return to the Netherlands.75

In any case, ironically, the plaster head that Luttichuys selected for his Allegory of the Arts—whether he based it on one he owned or one he had seen elsewhere—reproduces a Renaissance sculpture rather than an ancient one. Della Porta’s restoration, however, was already shown in 1566 in Giovanni Battista de Cavalleriis’s Antiquae Statuae Urbis Romae and again in Perrier’s Segmenta, extending to the supplemental head the antique status of the full-length sculpture. As far as Luttichuys was concerned, the plaster head represented Flora just as much as the male head represented Seneca, and both conveyed an active engagement with antiquity in his still life.

These readily identifiable plaster casts, as in Bailly’s Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait, participate in a network of references to other artists.76 The panel painting of a ship in stormy


75 My thanks to Frits Scholten for this suggestion.

76 Dagmar Hirschfelder has related Luttichuys’s use of quotations to the practice, in contemporary literature, of citing other authors in order to upgrade the status of the work and vouch for the author’s education. See Hirschfelder, “Naevolgen, Imitatie: Imitation und Zitat bei Simon Luttichuys,” in Ad Fontes! Niederländische Kunst
seas reprises the imagery readily found in marine paintings by Luttichuys’s contemporaries, such as Simon de Vlieger, who was also active in Amsterdam in the 1640s. The drawing edging out beneath the painting, which shows a young man lying facedown on the ground, is based on a painting by Bartholomeus Breenbergh, who had returned to Amsterdam from Rome in 1630. The printed portrait of Rubens is also a quotation of Van Dyck’s work. Even the fly that appears to have landed on top of the marine landscape is more than a trompe l’oeil flourish that touts the success of the painter’s naturalistic representations. Considered within this array of citations, the fly offers another distinct predecessor in the artistic lineage that Luttichuys claims: it recalls the story of Giotto, who, according to Vasari, painted a fly so lifelike on a face painted by his master Cimabue that the latter tried repeatedly to brush it away. Van Mander unsurprisingly incorporated the anecdote about “the trick of the fly” ("de clucht van de Vlieghe") into his own account of Giotto’s life, delighting in the fact that Giotto left behind many students who could speak to his mischievousness ("cluchtichheyt"). Van Mander’s retelling of the playful yet powerful anecdote about the student tricking his master was thus available to Dutch painters as

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77 Ebert, 358-359. For Breenbergh’s dates, see Peter Schatborn, Drawn to Warmth: 17th-Century Dutch Artists in Italy (Zwolle: Waanders, 2001).

78 This has, understandably, become a commonplace in commentaries on this painting, as it converges nicely with the painting’s overall theme of the triumph of the arts. The fly has also been interpreted as a component of an allegory of vanity; for this, see Claus Grimm, Stilleben: die niederländischen und deutschen Meister (Stuttgart: Belser Verlag, 1988).

79 Vasari’s story seems to have originated with Filarete, whose version implies that Giotto was in the habit of painting flies that deceived even the eyes of his master. See Norma Land, “Giotto’s Fly, Cimabue’s Gesture, and a ‘Madonna and Child’ by Carlo Crivelli,” Source: Notes in the History of Art 15, no. 4 (1996): 11-15.

80 Van Mander, fol. 97r. The passage reads: “Hy liet nae veel discipulen: en nae zijn doot veel van zijn cluchtichheyt te vertellen. Van hem is gecomen de clucht van de Vlieghe die dickwils wort verhaelt: want men seght, dat hy in zijn Jeught, op de neuse van een figure die Cimabue geschildert hadde een Vlieje maecke soo natuerlijk dat zijn Meester op t’werck comende om zijn werck te vorderen meer als eenmaal met de handt sloegh om wech te jaghen: maer bedrogen zijnde werdten ten lesten siende datse geschildert was.”
an example of the illusionistic standards to which they might hold themselves. Luttichuys here takes the place of Giotto as the artificer of the fly that fools even the discerning eyes of his mentors.

Finally, the plaster casts in the Allegory of the Arts also amplify the theme of likeness and liveliness that operates across the “encyclopedic” media selected by Luttichuys. The spectrum of faces ranges from the drawing of an old man at bottom left, to the plaster busts and the small clay-colored head, to the portrait of Rubens, to Luttichuys’s self-portrait in the glass orb. The drawing appears to be the type of study known as a tronie, which painters used to practice depicting idiosyncratic or distinctive faces, sometimes in anticipation of incorporating them into larger compositions. The clay or terracotta head of a bearded man wearing a turban-like headpiece may also be a version of the tronies of Middle Eastern men painted by Luttichuys’s contemporaries. They have individualized features, but neither represents real individuals. The bust of Flora is similarly generic, not only because her visage was the invention of a Renaissance sculptor attempting to replace a lost original, but also because she was taken to be an allegorical figure rather than a specific woman. Although her “identity” as a work of art was well-known, the bust of Flora is its own kind of tronie; in this sense, the aforementioned inventory of Luttichuys’s plaster casts was not so misguided in referring to them as “pleystertronies.” The Pseudo-Seneca bust, on the other hand, was widely accepted as a portrait of the Stoic philosopher, which relates it all the more to Van Dyck’s engraved portrait of Rubens and to Luttichuy’s self-portrait.

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81 For the most comprehensive study of tronies to date, see Dagmar Hirschfelder, Tronie und Porträt in der niederländischen Malerei des 17 Jahrhunderts (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2008).

82 Ebert, 359.
The painting is an exploration of multiple ways to capture life by means of inert matter. The conceit of the painter who can enliven the array of faces before him plays out on top of the European-made map of Africa, which is the lowest layer of the strata of objects in Luttichuys’s composition. For his fellow Dutchmen, the continent of Africa was a source of not only precious materials but also human labor necessary to extract, process, and transport those commodities back to Europe. Here, Africa is a largely cartographic and zoological image comprised of a fully mapped land mass and a large elephant with a litter on its back. The tiny, dark-skinned figures that ride in the litter are by far the most miniscule life forms in the painting. Their scale betrays the perspective of Luttichuys’s countrymen who trafficked, enslaved, and exploited African men, women, and children and, in so doing, robbed them of their humanity, actions which contributed to the prosperity of the Dutch Republic. For Luttichuys, Africa is a marker of one type of knowledge—intellectual, cosmopolitan—commanded by the painter, upon which he constructs his virtuosic artifice. Literally placed underneath the faces that Luttichuys imbues with life, the map of Africa serves as a reminder of the double standard that existed in the early modern world: artful objects were afforded a degree of dignity and vitality that was simultaneously denied to actual human beings in the far-flung territories where the Dutch exercised power.

In Luttichuys’s *Allegory of the Arts*, liveliness is up to the painter to confer; no material is too lifeless to be stirred by his brush. With each medium, he has the potential to render a facial expression so animated that it approaches the boundary between image and reality and strives towards the illusionism of the fly—alive though momentarily still—that seems to emerge from and escape the painted scheme. These faces are in various states of incarnation, whether it be the

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83 For a recent account of the magnitude of Dutch involvement in the trade in enslaved Africans, see Eveline Sint Nicolaas, Valika Smeulder, Maria Holtrop et al., *Slavernij: het verhaal van João, Wally, Oopjen, Paulus, Van Bengalen, Surapati, Sapali, Tula, Dirk, Lohkay* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2021).
naturalistic drawings or the miniature head animated by the red of the terracotta.\textsuperscript{84} The engraved portrait of Rubens refers to a man so famous in life that he is actively commemorated after his death. The plaster casts, nearly life-size, are livelier still. In the shadows, the Flora could be mistaken for the head of a real woman, while the Pseudo-Seneca is dramatically lit to emphasize the contours of every wrinkle and lock of hair. Luttichuys has even added pupils to his wide eyes, which further enliven him. Luttichuys sets his self-portrait against and above each of these representations that, though they effectively imitate life, remain artificial. Luttichuys authors the most faithful likeness of them all: a reflection that is also the product of the painter’s artifice. Luttichuys’s self-portrait materializes with an immediacy made possible precisely because it is set against a group of fabricated heads beneath it.

**The Painter-Collector**

The makers of the still lifes that have been the focus of this chapter apparently owned, or at least could own, the plaster casts they chose to feature in their compositions, yet their possessions alone do not generally afford them recognition as collectors. The plaster casts that belonged to Luttichuys, for example, were designated *tronies* in part because they were kept in his studio, for the purpose of practice and study, rather than in more public spaces in his home. Importantly, these painters chose to retain a modest setting for the plaster casts in their still lifes, rather than transposing them into opulent rooms or positioning them alongside an abundance of lavish objects. The prevailing sense of the individual behind these paintings is of an artist, technically gifted and intellectually engaged.

\textsuperscript{84} For the concept of color as a source of enlivenment in painting, see Walter S. Melion and Lee Palmer Wandel, eds., *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
This is not a mere side effect of the humble status of still life, ranked low in the hierarchy of painted genres. Already at the beginning of the seventeenth century, still life encompassed not only assemblages of seemingly random objects, but also arrangements of luxuries that delineated the many categories of objects conceivably included in an early modern collection. The intimate appreciation of plaster casts evidenced in the paintings discussed so far is not at odds with the interaction a collector might have with his magnificent possessions. But in each case, the relationship to other objects gives the plaster cast a significance beyond its appeal as a potential collectible.

Hendrik van der Borcht’s *Still Life with a Collection of Curiosities* provides a useful counterpoint to the way ancient sculpture (chiefly, its surrogates) appears in the work of Claesz, De Gheyn, Bailly, and Luttichuys (Fig. 2.2). The small roundel is filled with all manner of ancient treasures: coins, medals, cameos, ceramic wares, reliefs, and of course, heroically nude sculptures, both male and female. The dominant piece in the center is a white statuette of Venus keeping a quiver of arrows away from her son Cupid, who stands at her side. Presented in the context of other collectibles made of materials and in formats associated with antiquities, the statuette registers as a marble sculpture. Whether it is actually ancient or a fine Renaissance statuette based on a Greek or Roman prototype, it is at home within this arrangement of rare objects.

Van der Borcht works here in his capacity as an active collector and connoisseur of antiquities. Born in Brussels, Van der Borcht was raised in Frankfurt after his family fled the Spanish occupation of the Southern Netherlands in 1586, and upon completing his training as a

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85 Throughout the seventeenth century, art theorists continued to expound upon the variable nobility of different types of painting and placed history paintings above all others. See Chong, 11-13.
painter, his travels in Italy stimulated his interest in antiquity. Subsequently, Van der Borcht developed an expertise in, according to Houbraken, “rarities and ancient little medals, which made him particularly beloved to the Count of Arundel.” The latter was none other than the Englishman Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel, one of the most celebrated collectors and antiquarians of the early modern period. Van der Borcht’s impressive knowledge of antiquity, and its material culture in particular, earned him the reputation of being a “great connoisseur” capable of inspiring his interlocutors to “have the same desire” for antiquities. The Earl showed Van der Borcht such affection that he invited the painter’s son to train with his agents in Italy.

Van der Borcht studied antiquities firsthand and collected them as objects to be evaluated not with a painter’s eye but above all with the discernment of a connoisseur. The antiquities in *Still Life with a Collection of Curiosities* are subject to what Elizabeth Honig has proposed as one predominant logic of still life painting: objects “cohere around the notion of a particular category of collection” and derive their meaning from “their relationships to one another in the present grouping.” Although Van der Borcht set an easel before some, if not all, of these objects, in the finished painting they do not exist in the space of his studio. Instead, they convey the taste for a specific kind of ancient artefact: small, easily handled, suitable for the semi-private

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86 Jacopo Lorenzelli and Eckard Lingenauber, eds., *The Lure of Still Life* (Bergamo: Galleria Lorenzelli, 1995), 68. Both Arnold Houbraken and Joachim von Sandrart claimed that Van der Borcht apprenticed in the workshop of Gillis van Valckenborch, but this has proven difficult for scholars to corroborate.

87 Houbraken, Vol. 1, 115: “Hy was ook een groot kenner van allerhande Rariteyt en Antieke Medaljes, dat hem inzonderheid by den Graaf van Arondel bemind maakte.”


89 Weststeijn, 105. Arundel later employed Van der Borcht’s son as co-curator of the Arundel collection alongside Franciscus Junius.

conditions of a cabinet or study. They are also coherent as a group, although composed of different materials, which makes their relationship to one another relatively straightforward. The context for appreciating a small fragment of antiquity differs significantly from the still lifes with plaster casts by Claesz, De Gheyn, Bailly, and Luttichuys. With his access to refined and coveted collectibles in materials such as marble and bronze, Van der Borcht had little reason to turn to plaster casts as a source of information about antiquity. Moreover, it seems that Van der Borcht was not compelled to picture antiquities, whether genuine or passing for originals, alongside signs of his labor as a painter. *Still Life with a Collection of Curiosities* showcases the painter as a collector, whose most creative affair is the process of selecting and amassing works of art of a high quality. Among the rewards for this effort is the chance to be recognized as a connoisseur, whose skills are markers not of artisanal success but of discernment and social status. What makes the still lifes of Claesz, De Gheyn, Bailly, and Luttichuys so distinctive is their simultaneous celebration of a specialized craft and of the intellect that these painters aspired to cultivate, even those that did not belong to the most privileged humanistic circles.

**Living Plaster**

For all the subtleties of meaning that plaster casts contribute to still life paintings, they consistently share a brazen commonality: they reintroduce the three-dimensional human body into a domain generally distinguished by its absence and playfully subvert the still life’s theme of the inanimate. Figures in plaster belong undoubtedly to the world of objects, yet they can nevertheless connote liveliness, whether through pose, in the case of the *Spinario*, or through contorted facial expressions, as with the cast of one of Laocoön’s sons.

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A pair of unusual paintings by the Alkmaar painter Caesar van Everdingen are, within the still life genre, most emblematic of the unexpected proximity between the plaster cast and the living body. The *Still Life with a Bust of Venus* (1665) and *Still Life with a Bust of Adonis* (1666), likely produced as pendants, each position plaster casts at the boundary between the fiction of the painting and the real space in front of it (Fig. 2.27, Fig. 2.28). The busts of Venus and Adonis turn towards one another, which creates a visual continuity across the two paintings that gets corroborated by the architectural features, including fluted columns, common to the background of both. Their pairing insists that the picture’s frame does not demarcate the boundaries of the depicted space, an effect enhanced by the placement of the plaster casts right on the edge of identical sills. Van Everdingen sets up a *trompe l’oeil* that solicits a visceral reaction from the beholder: a sense that the sculptures are just out of reach—or within reach, and truly present.

The surface of both busts is animated by cast shadows that highlight the contours, nooks, and crannies of their three-dimensional forms and reinforce the *trompe l’oeil*. Adonis is adorned with a bright golden-pink cloth, draped across his chest and knotted at the shoulder, and a laurel wreath upon his head, while a yellow hunting horn with a metal rim placed juts out past the edge of the sill beside him.92 Venus wears a pink textile, also tied behind one shoulder, marked with the noticeable creases of a garment that has been previously folded; her simple wreath of periwinkle leaves is repeated in the vine looped around her neck like an ersatz necklace.93

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93 The identification of the plant is in Blankert et al., *Dutch Classicism*, 218-219.
Accompanying Venus is a cast of a boy’s head, most plausibly meant to be her son Cupid, who gazes up at her as a real child might.

The sculptures are sometimes identified as marble busts, but it seems likely that Van Everdingen had more opportunities to see sculptures such as these in the form of plaster copies. The Venus bust is a variation on the ancient Venus that stood in the garden of the Villa Medici in Rome until 1677, and which is now believed to be a Roman copy of a late-Classical Greek bronze.94 The bust of Adonis, on the other hand, is based on various busts of Roman emperors rather than taken from a single source.95 Plaster busts (or heads) were much easier and inexpensive to produce and transport than casts of entire sculptures, and their recurrence in still life paintings suggests that this medium did make them more readily collectible. Albert Blankert maintains that Van Everdingen’s Venus and Adonis are made from a material that is “unmistakably the colour of plaster” and that Van Everdingen was not at great pains “to simulate the ‘genuine’ marble of the original sculptures.”96 Van Everdingen seems to have painted the pair for private use in his own home, most likely hung high up in a dark corridor to facilitate the momentary perception of three-dimensional sculpture of the type that actually adorned seventeenth-century Dutch homes.97

Van Everdingen painted the trompe l’oeil still lifes nearly two decades after his arrival in Haarlem, where his career prospered in the company of painters who, like Van Everdingen, were

94 Blankert et. al, Dutch Classicism, 218.
95 Van Suchtelen, 183.
96 Blankert et al., Dutch Classicism, 218.
97 Van Suchtelen, 183-184. The inventory drawn up of his estate after his death in 1678 lists “Twee stuks, Venus en Adonis graau” (“Two pieces, Venus and Adonis grey”), which may very well refer to these still lifes.
committed to developing Classicist idioms in Dutch painting. There, a new generation of painters continued to draw inspiration from Hendrick Goltzius and Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem, and the longtime presence of plaster casts in the city must have helped sustain the interest in antiquity. Curiously, the *Still Life with a Bust of Venus* combines two types of compositions that Van Everdingen specialized in during his Haarlem period: subjects from Classical mythology—frequently Venus and Cupid specifically—and half-length paintings of a single female figure. His plaster Venus is not so far removed from the images of “flesh-and-blood” women that populate his oeuvre and that can be counted among the most distinctive examples of Dutch classicism. The lifeliness of his *trompe l’oeil* still lifes depends on more than the illusion of three-dimensionality within the painting, contiguous with the real space of the beholder; it is also achieved through his suggestion that the plaster busts approximate living bodies. Dressed in actual rather than sculpted textiles and green plants, they exist on the boundary between life and death, as well as on the edge between reality and fiction.

Plaster casts in still lifes, especially when featured so prominently, tend to recall figures from antiquity, whether historical or mythological. But Van Everdingen’s *trompe l’oeil* paintings are an evocative reminder that plaster sculpture could also recall the real human body. In this sense, too, they point to the labor and the everyday experience of the painters who took an interest in them. Casts after antiquities were not the only type of plaster objects that populated a painter’s studio. Casts made from life—from real limbs, extremities, and heads—also informed the working processes and especially the training of Dutch artists in the seventeenth century.

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98 See Blankert et al., *Dutch Classicism*, 16-17, 32; and Christi Klinkert, “The Classicist from Alkmaar” in Klinkert and Bleyerveld, *Painting Beauty*, 23.

99 For these, see Klinkert, 25, 26.

100 Van Suchtelen suggests a different reference to death: the “deathliness” of the face of Adonis “appears to refer to the death of Adonis from a hunting accident mourned over by Venus.” Van Suchtelen, 183.
Plaster casts gave artists some of their most reliable human models, whether conjured from the past to complicate their meditations on death or taken in the present to paint inventions of life.
Chapter 3 : Beyond the Painter’s Studio

On the smooth surface of a reflective orb, an artist is at work, simultaneously in front of and among the subjects of his painting (Fig. 3.1). The still life he paints has already been completed but the reflective orb keeps him busily creating in perpetuity. The objects of the still life—a book about human anatomy, tronies both painted and etched, a celestial globe, a human skull—are inextricably related to the painter who depicts them. The reflective orb keeps them together in the space of the studio, no matter where the painting hangs. But the painter is not alone; his companions are not all inanimate. The reflection shows a second man beside him. Who could he be? Not as readily identifiable as the painter, with his palette and easel, the second figure looks on over the painter’s shoulder, mirroring the beholder’s own silent contemplation. As much as it is a place of communion between a painter and his things, the studio is a place of human interaction.

Around the time that Simon Luttichuys made this Vanitas Still Life, painters across the Dutch Republic depicted artists’ studios and their contents for the benefit of curious laymen and discerning elites.¹ Subjects in their own right, studios conveyed what it meant to be a practicing artist to individuals newly positioned to buy paintings and to wonder about the activity that their making entailed. As artists were driven to produce these visual descriptions of their workspaces, plaster casts increasingly found a place among the resourceful men and their companions who populated these genre pictures.

Dutch painters lived with plaster casts, perhaps more than anyone else in the prosperous Republic. When it came time to recreate in paint their experience of their craft, Dutch painters

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¹ The word “studio,” for the purposes of this chapter, refers to the place where an individual designs and creates works of art. For an overview of the various early modern terms used to refer to these rooms and buildings, particularly in Italy, see Linda Bauer, “From bottega to studio,” Renaissance Studies 22, no. 5 (2008): 642-649.
showed plaster casts as consistent sentinels of their practice. By the end of the seventeenth century, the plaster cast had become an established motif of the artist’s studio. This chapter examines the aesthetic, conceptual, decorative, and practical consequences of picturing plaster casts in the studio. The opening section looks at plaster casts as hallmarks of the knowledge shared by painters in dialogue with connoisseurs. These casts allow the painter to introduce subject matter that magnifies and comments on the social and moral stakes of his professional activities, in particular the performance of erudition. The middle sections of the chapter shift the focus to images of the studio as a solitary workspace, in which plaster casts mimic and redirect attention to the body, attitude, and character of the modern painter. The final section of the chapter addresses the incorporation of plaster casts into representations of the art of painting and expands the notion of the studio as a site of intimacy, in which plaster casts facilitate and commemorate relationships between painters.

In the seventeenth century, Dutch artists purposefully depicted plaster casts in their workspaces to convey what it meant to be a painter. As their social status improved, painters were caught in a bind: how could they celebrate their profession and stoke their patrons’ curiosity about it without revealing its challenges and drudgery? To produce images of the studio was to control the narrative of what occurred there. Plaster casts added complexity to naturalistic images that appeared to document directly the conditions of the working painter. Although the subject of the artist’s studio has been addressed by scholars across early modern fields, the specific choice of plaster casts within these Dutch genre pictures has rarely received sustained analysis. Moreover, the particular penchant of Dutch artists for showing these objects alongside

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2 The trajectory of images of the studio throughout Europe from the early Renaissance to the nineteenth appeared recently in a series of case studies in Michael Cole and Mary Pardo, eds., *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For an overview and critical evaluation of paintings specifically made in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century that depict the artist’s studio, see Katja
their self-portraits (or their anonymous surrogates) has gone unnoticed. Though their colleagues in Italy had used plaster casts since at least the end of the fifteenth century, Dutch painters more consistently chose to represent themselves in the company of casts. ³ Access to antiquities and monumental modern sculpture was limited for the vast majority of Dutch painters, especially those without the means or opportunity to travel to Italy. The plaster casts in their paintings attest to their ability to learn from these illustrious examples despite the physical and social distance between them. In addition, their pictures of casts of famous works by Netherlandish sculptors elevated them to the ranks of canonical figures like Lysippos and Michelangelo—and gave Dutch painters another means to celebrate their countrymen and, by extension, themselves. Unlike countless laborers around them—including the now mostly unknown craftsmen who made the plaster casts—painters exercised the uncommon privilege of representation through which they could demarcate their place and worth within Dutch society.

Conversant in Plaster Casts

The rooms in which early modern artists worked afforded them the sort of seclusion and privacy that the traditional guild and workshop had precluded. Nevertheless, with the “increasing visibility of the artist” that took off in earnest in the sixteenth century, artists discovered advantages to exposing their workspaces to semi-public scrutiny. ⁴ By the seventeenth century, Dutch artists had long welcomed apprentices into their homes and workplaces, not least because of the economic incentive of fees they could charge for training a young pupil. ⁵ But in the studio,


⁵ Walsh, 46-47.
painters also sometimes socialized with individuals of wealth and status much more elevated than their own. In this context, plaster casts were among the objects that could most readily solicit the knowledge common to artists and their visitors.

Potential patrons entered artists’ workspaces as part of the process of buying works of art. The appeal of studio visits included the chance to see firsthand an artist’s showpieces and works-in-progress in an intimate setting, and to speak a common language of discernment. Seventeenth-century images of connoisseurs in studios show them primarily preoccupied with the artist’s own paintings, but other works of art in the room also allude to the insights exchanged during these visits (Fig. 3.2). This type of image indicates how “knowledge passed between the artist and the art lover, gained through the direct familiarity with the artist’s working methods and practice, and through the contents of the studio itself.”6 The art lover stood to gain much from one-on-one contact with the painter. As the painter Pierre Le Brun instructed in 1635, “to know how to discourse on this profession, you must have frequented the studio and disputed with the masters, have seen the magic effects of the pencil and the unerring judgment with which the details are worked out.”7

The pictures of collectors’ cabinets in vogue in Antwerp at the turn of the seventeenth century exemplify the preoccupation among elites with the active examination of art as a way to distinguish themselves from their peers.8 This amounted to a fashionable form of socializing and

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6 Lara Yeager-Crasselt, “Knowledge and Practice Pictured in the Artist’s Studio: The ‘Art Lover’ in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 32, no. 2 (2016), 186.


8 The most comprehensive study of the role of paintings such as these in the advancement of social status for both artists and collectors in seventeenth-century Flanders is Zirka Zaremba Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp, 1550-1700* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). See also Matías Diaz Padrón and Mercedes Royo-Villanueva, eds., *David Teniers, Jan Brueghel y los Gabinetes de Pinturas* (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1992); Elizabeth Alice
even put on display the talents and virtues associated with elegant masculinity (Fig. 3.3). Lara Yeager-Crasselt has convincingly argued that seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings of the so-called liefhebber in the studio reworked this established iconography into an exploration of the connoisseur’s interest not in the social or economic value of art, but in the painter’s knowledge and skills. In these scenes, the painter and the art lover, despite their differences in wealth and status, share a certain understanding based what they inspect together. Here, plaster casts replace the statuettes and copies of ancient sculptures that spread across Flemish konstkamer paintings, staging—with a narrower focus—a similar opportunity for the application of humanistic knowledge.

In the Artist and Art Lover in Conversation now in the Fondation Custodia, attributed to Pieter Codde and dated to around 1630, two men focus on objects fundamental to the artist’s drawing practice, including several plaster casts (Fig. 3.2). In a plain room with unadorned walls, the men sit at the edge of a table and turn toward one another. On the table, there are four plaster casts: a standing male nude, a female nude on one knee twisting backwards, the headless torso and thighs of a muscular nude man, and a single foot, seen from below. Not far beneath them, on the floor, another cast shows two entwined male figures in combat. On both the table and the floor, rolled sheets of parchment and half-finished drawings accompany the casts. The art of drawing receives further acknowledgement in the bottom right foreground: more rolled sheets

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9 For constructions of masculinity in images from this distinct genre, see Lisa Rosenthal, “Art Lovers, Pictura, and Masculine Virtue in the Konstkamer,” in Midwestern Arcadia: Essays in honor of Alison Kettering, ed. Dawn Odell and Jessica Buskirk (Northfield: Carleton College, 2014), 100-111.

10 Yeager-Crasselt, “Knowledge and Practice Pictured in the Artist’s Studio,” 187, 194.
and loose drawings lie alongside a sheaf of papers gathered into a portfolio, which is topped by a box for chalk and pencils and a knife for sharpening these implements.

The painter’s panels, whether finished or in-progress, are almost an after-thought, left leaning against the wall by the door standing ajar. Within this unassuming space, the men’s attention is given over entirely to the objects the artist turns to for instruction and inspiration, which the connoisseur might recognize from his own studies. The main event here is not the painter’s efforts at his easel but his involvement in a learned conversation, which makes him momentarily his guest’s equal despite their different stations. Their costumes help distinguish them from one another: the painter wears the fur-lined gown called a *tabbaard* and the falling ruff typically used by painters, while the art lover is dressed in finer garments, including the broad-brimmed hat and the flatter, newer style of collar.¹¹ Yet the artist’s pose, leaning against the table expectantly watching his guest, suggests a power dynamic slightly in favor of the painter, positioned as if passing judgment on the pronouncements the connoisseur makes.

There is no simple way to determine the specific subject of their discussion, but the album of drawings that forms a bridge between their bodies seems central to it. One page of the album is visible: a drawing on blue paper of a standing man seen from behind, pulling on a boot. On the table, the statuette of a nude man, also seen from behind in a wide stance, is his three-dimensional counterpart, repeated from a different angle nearby in the headless cast of a nude male torso and thighs. The horizontal band that contains the art lover and the artist also connects the images of male bodies in two different media. The plaster casts and the drawings are related and relevant to one another, and the men’s conversation reinforces that affinity.

In the presence of the art lover, the artist becomes a fellow connoisseur, and the objects he owns elicit participation from his visitor.\textsuperscript{12} The room, though sparsely furnished, contains items for social entertainment and enlightenment. By the early seventeenth century, especially in the growing cities of the Dutch Republic, men turned to manuals about civility for practical instructions on refined conduct, and conversation emerged as an important component of self-presentation among elites.\textsuperscript{13} Absorbed in their dialogue, the artist and the connoisseur turn the studio into a site for the skillful “conferring, disputing, and discoursing” that, according to Stefano Guazzo’s \textit{Civil Conversation} (published in Dutch in 1603), created bonds among men, which had the potential to become “true and lasting friendships.”\textsuperscript{14} In the Fondation painting, the civility each man demonstrates stands in humorously stark contrast with the pugnacity of the cast group on the floor, in which one muscular man overpowers another through sheer physical strength.

Codde treated the subject of connoisseurs in the studio on another occasion (Fig. 3.4). The rapport between a painter and his prospective patrons, in this case, does depend on the latter’s engrossment in the panels available for inspection. Two men hold framed panels to study them up close and their companion gazes at the painting in progress on the easel, while the painter, in his humbler attire, looks on placidly as if patiently awaiting their verdict.\textsuperscript{15} Codde had

\textsuperscript{12} Even the lute and violin on the table may be intended to comment on their ability to speak with appropriately modulated voices “for the pleasure and contentment of their audience;” see Sheila D. Muller, “\textit{Young Scholar in his Study: Painters and Scholars Learning the Art of Conversation in Early Seventeenth-Century Leiden},” \textit{Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek} 59 (2009), 307.

\textsuperscript{13} Muller, “\textit{Young Scholar in his Study},” 298. Other notable manuals for art-lovers included Guilio Mancini’s \textit{Considerazioni sulla pittura} (1617-21), Abraham Bosse’s \textit{Sentiments sur la distinction des divers manières de peinture, dessein & graveure, & des originaux d’avec leurs copies} (1649), and Roger de Piles’s \textit{Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture} (1677).

\textsuperscript{14} Muller, “\textit{Young Scholar in his Study},” 298-99, 306.

\textsuperscript{15} For more on this painting, see Marieke de Winkel, “Costume in Rembrandt’s Self Portraits,” in White and Buvelot \textit{Rembrandt by Himself}, 66.
at least a passing interest in dialogues about art that transpired even in the relatively modest artist’s studio, a performance of connoisseurship which the artist himself could mediate and contribute to.\textsuperscript{16} In the Fondation painting, that performance is imagined as a conversation between the men about the casts that the painter has presumably already devoted time to studying. The presence of the art-lover transforms the casts from handy drawing aids into objects of art and discernment. Codde purportedly owned wooden articulated lay-figures, or manikins, most useful for studying drapery and the overall shape of a body in a particular pose.\textsuperscript{17} His interest in keeping three-dimensional models in the studio extended to plaster casts, which numbered among the items in Codde’s will inherited by his younger sister and her husband.\textsuperscript{18} Unlike wooden manikins, plaster casts offered more precise descriptions of musculature. With a connoisseur in the room, however, the casts assume the role of works of art that can instigate an educated conversation. At bottom right, the still life of papers, drawing tools, and a knife further signals that the drawing practice supported by the casts has taken a secondary role in response to the art-lover’s visit. The casts, dispersed across the room, are not exactly a gallery of sculpture for pure aesthetic enjoyment, but they are, for the duration of this visit, more than incidental studio tools.

Perhaps because Dutch images of connoisseurs in the studio are not nearly as numerous as their Flemish \textit{konstkamer} predecessors, they show up infrequently in the literature on Dutch

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\textsuperscript{16} Yeager-Crasselt, “Knowledge and Practice Pictured in the Artist’s Studio,” 194.


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art, and, when they do, they have been described as “very rare.”

But, as Yeager-Crasselt has observed, variations on this subject occur throughout the seventeenth-century Netherlands, creating an “ideal” in the “art lover who expresses a ‘love’ for art, an interest in the object, and a desired exchange with the artist.”

The Fondation painting stages precisely this ideal exchange, which is of an intellectual rather than economic nature. The focus is not on the presentation of the potential paintings for purchase, but on the artist and art lover’s discussion of the album of drawings, based on the knowledge they have in common, with plaster casts at the ready for comparison with the contents of the album. The vision of men in combat at their feet is everything this interaction is not. The conditions of the studio allow the art lover’s visit to instigate a cordial, gentlemanly communion propelled by shared interests.

Plaster casts introduced subject matter related to artists’ loftiest aspirations into scenes of colloquies with connoisseurs. The figure of Hercules and his legendary labors was a distinct favorite among Dutch artists who made these pictures. Part of the ongoing effort to claim painting as a liberal art involved making a case for the virtuousness of the enterprise.

Plaster casts provided a simple way for artists to showcase Hercules, the paragon of the virtue to which they aspired, within the space of the studio. As the rest of this section makes clear, plaster casts of Hercules presented him as an inspiring, righteous model and simultaneously attested to the painter’s laudable familiarity with both classical and early modern emblem literature.

Frans van Mieris, who hosted such distinguished guests as the young Cosimo III de’ Medici, devoted two important pictures to this subject, and included the same plaster cast in

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20 Yeager-Crasselt, “Knowledge and Practice Pictured in the Artist’s Studio,” 209.

21 See Brusati, “Pictura’s Excellent Trophies.”
both.

In *The Painter in His Studio* (ca. 1655-57), the visiting patron has taken a seat before a pastoral painting on an easel, but his body and gaze seem more oriented towards the plaster cast of *Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent* on a nearby table (Fig. 3.5). The plaster cast appears again, on a reduced scale, in a painting formerly in the Dresden Gemäldegalerie, this time featuring a painter working on the portrait of a wealthy woman who has come to the studio either to sit for the portrait or to inspect its progress (Fig. 3.6).

In the Dresden painting, a second cast, a plaster Cupid, is suspended from the rafters for the practical purpose of simulating a flying putto. Floating above the two figures, the Cupid cheekily suggests the love that the painter feels for his beautiful patron, a muse of sorts. The cast is at once symbolic and literal, both an emblem and a prop. It perfectly comments on the situation unfolding in the studio—the subject of the painting—though it is purportedly irrelevant to the portrait in progress (the painting within the painting). The dual nature of this cast is juxtaposed with the relatively fixed meaning of the cast behind it, the *Hercules* that shares a shelf with another cast, an *écorché* of an archer. Van Mieris probably owned a cast of *Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent*, after a statuette that entered the Uffizi in the late sixteenth century.

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24 See Buvelot, *Frans van Mieris*, 88; Laabs, *The Leiden fijnschilders from Dresden*, trans. Ruth Koenig (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 69; Naumann, *Frans van Mieris*, Vol. 2, 16; and C. Willemijn Fock, “Willem van Mieris als ontwerper en boeteerder van tuinvazen,” *Oud Holland* 87, no. 1 (1973), 46. The cast was apparently popular throughout the seventeenth century: it appears in, among others, the ca. 1625 *Portrait of David Bailly* by Thomas de Keyser (Fig. 1.21), in the ca. 1655 *Lute-Playing Painter in His Studio* by Johan van Swieten (Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden), and in the foreground of a 1665 drawing by Michiel van Musscher (Fig. 3.31).
He uses a cast he knew well to fill in his descriptions of a painter’s studio worthy of hosting distinguished guests. The Hercules does not explicitly relate to the content of either painting. Yet it is ultimately a fitting companion: the labors of Hercules evoke the choice of a virtuous life over one devoted to pleasure, and, as the emblem of heroic virtue, his image would come to resonate with painters.\footnote{In Cesare Ripa’s Iconologia, Hercules is the emblem for Virtu heroica. Ripa, Iconologia (Rome: Gli Heredi di Gio. Gigliotti, 1593), no. 317. Van Mander cited the infant Hercules to compel young artists to industriousness, diligence, and competition; see Van Mander, Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const in Het Schilder-Boeck, fol. 1v.}

If the plaster Cupid hanging above the painter and female patron in the Visitor to the Studio connotes the possibility of a sexual relationship, the Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent recalls that the painter may yet grapple with temptation and opt for moral behavior.\footnote{David R. Smith compares the plaster Cupid in Van Mieris’s painting to the one atop the wardrobe in Gabriel Metsu’s The Hunter’s Gift (Fig. 1.9). Despite making a case for some of the ambiguities of the interaction, Smith seems more convinced that “this couple is about to lapse into immorality;” see Smith, “Irony and Civility: Notes on the Convergence of Genre and Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting,” The Art Bulletin 69, no. 3 (Sep. 1987), 420.}

The casts in Codde’s Artist and Art Lover in Conversation represent two other labors of the ancient hero. The statuette on the table is a plaster cast of Willem van Tetrode’s Hercules Pomarius, an emulation of the famed ancient Farnese Hercules, shown holding the golden apples of the Hesperides behind his back (Fig. 3.7).\footnote{Scholten, Willem van Tetrode, 33-34. Scholten maintains that the Hercules Pomarius enjoyed widespread success, “as the number of extant examples, entries in inventories, and reworkings of it by various artists, amply demonstrates.”}

The cast group on the floor, meanwhile, comes from the episode in which Hercules vanquishes the monstrous giant Cacus, punishing him with death for stealing cattle from a herd in Hercules’s keeping. In the late sixteenth century, the story had been the subject of one of Baccio Bandinelli’s most famous colossal sculptures, the marble group commissioned by the Medici and installed in the Piazza della Segnoria in Florence in 1534 (Fig. 3.8).\footnote{For the compositional choices and political implications of Bandinelli’s Hercules and Cacus, see Michael D. Morford, “Bandinelli’s Hercules and Cacus: A Machiavellian Display for the Medici,” in Renaissance Studies: A} But the rearing body of Hercules in the Fondation painting’s most prominent
cast has little to do with Bandinelli’s choice of a triumphant, upright pose for his Hercules. Instead, the cast shows Hercules in violent action, every muscle in his back tense, applying pressure to Cacus’s head with his left arm as he lifts his right arm to deal a deadly blow with his club (which is completely missing, save the handle, in the cast). Even his legs are riddled with tension as he straddles his kneeling foe, his raised right foot a clear indication of his body’s momentum. The inspiration is not Bandinelli’s Hercules but one still embroiled in the struggle against his adversary, most closely resembling the composition of a bronze statuette now in the Walters Art Museum (Fig. 3.9). The cast in the Fondation painting must have derived from the same, or a very similar, source as the Walters bronze, whose design draws upon several prototypes of the laboring Hercules conceived by the Flemish sculptor Giambologna.

In his 1987 monograph, Charles Avery pointed out that Giambologna himself never undertook the subject of Hercules and Cacus, despite his demonstrable interest in the marble labors of Hercules, including a Hercules and Cacus, by Vincenzo de’ Rossi, whose earlier Hercules Slaying a Centaur was a clear model for Giambologna’s sculpture of the same subject. 29 Between 1576 and 1589, Giambologna designed his own series of the twelve labors in silver for Francesco Maria, Grand Duke of Urbino, all of which are now only known through bronzes produced around the same time and at least partially from the same molds as the silver statuettes. 30 Versions of these small-scale sculptures were also likely to circulate as models and casts; Giambologna’s own preservation of ephemeral material easily carried out of the workshop

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30 Avery, 141.
into collections may be among the reasons so many of his models have survived.\textsuperscript{31} The maker of the \textit{Hercules and Cacus} group in the Fondation painting could also have drawn inspiration from some of Giambologna’s earliest marble sculptures, namely the \textit{Samson Slaying a Philistine}, made between 1560 and 1562, and his \textit{Florence Triumphant over Pisa} from 1565 (Fig. 3.10).\textsuperscript{32} These foundational works in Giambologna’s oeuvre, especially the \textit{Samson}, were carefully chosen and orchestrated responses to one of Michelangelo’s renowned works, a \textit{Samson} that he only ever executed as models in ephemeral materials.\textsuperscript{33} Giambologna would have been familiar with Michelangelo’s idea for a monumental \textit{Samson} through bronze copies, of the sort that would subsequently propagate his own designs throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{34}

It is possible that the Walters bronze, and the cast in Codde’s painting, is meant to represent a \textit{Samson Slaying a Philistine}. There were, indeed, plaster casts of Samson listed in Dutch inventories throughout the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{35} However, it seems likelier that the story of Hercules and Cacus would appeal more to artists, particularly those who rarely engaged Biblical themes, given the specific resonances of the figure of Hercules among painters, to be

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{31} Michael Cole, \textit{Ambitious Form: Giambologna, Ammanati, and Danti in Florence} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 25, 63.
\item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{Florence Triumphant Over Pisa}, also made of marble, is 262 cm tall and now in the Museo Nazionale dell Bargello, Florence.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Cole, \textit{Ambitious Form}, 39. Cole observes that Giambologna may have identified in particular with Michelangelo’s \textit{Samson} as an invention that exemplified the sculptor’s work of modeling, pointing to the portrait drawing of Giambologna made by Federico Zuccaro (now in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh), in which the Fleming holds a \textit{Samson} likely intended to be understood as his own model after Michelangelo; Cole, 39. An example of the sorts of bronzes after Michelangelo’s \textit{Samson} that Giambologna might have seen is the statuette (dated ca. 1550) in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (64.101.1444).
\item \textsuperscript{35} See Chapter 1, 76. The cast may also portray Cain and Abel. The Dutch sculptor Adriaen de Vries made a bronze \textit{Cain and Abel} for Rudolf II in Prague in 1612 and subsequently recast the same design for Count Ernst von Holstein-Schaumburg at Bückeburg in 1622; see Scholten, \textit{Adriaen de Vries}, 190-194, 230-231. In either case, whether inspired by a Giambologna or De Vries model, the Walters bronze and the casts in the paintings discussed here would be based on a design by a Netherlandish sculptor working in elite circles abroad.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
discussed below. It may then also be the case that painters misread the sculpture as a battle between Hercules and Cacus rather than as an Old Testament group. Still, the identification of the sculpture as *Hercules and Cacus* is supported by the conventional iconography of Hercules, in which he is bearded and wields a club against his giant adversary. Period inventories also demonstrate a penchant for images of the mythological hero. Though it remains debatable, it is reasonable to believe that the cast in Codde’s painting depicts the struggle between Hercules and Cacus and that it enjoyed enough popularity in the Netherlands to merit its appearance in paintings by prominent masters throughout the seventeenth century. In one of the few extant still lifes by Jan van der Heyden, the *Hercules and Cacus* cast joins a dense array of imported goods and the accoutrements of a scholar in an elegant domestic space (Fig. 3.11). The combination of dignified architectural features, distinctive weapons from various parts of the world, and luxuries such as gilt cups amount to an art lover’s collection displayed inside a wealthy home.  

The *Hercules and Cacus* cast is one of the items that speaks to the collector’s appreciation for manmade *artificialia*, while also referencing his humanistic inclinations towards the study of classical subjects. Seen from the front, the cast is about the same size as the one in the painting attributed to Codde, here transferred into the much more sumptuous home of a collector. In Van der Heyden’s still life, the *Hercules and Cacus* elaborates on the collector’s wide-ranging taste, which includes but is not limited to works of art. The Fondation Custodia painting, by contrast, focuses on the measured attention that an amateur might give to the study of art, with several casts besides the *Hercules and Cacus* available for comparison.

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36 Some of the objects carry associations specific enough to characterize the painting as a “peculiarly autobiographical still life;” see Peter C. Sutton, *Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 182-183.
The most immediate source of inspiration for Van der Heyden’s *Hercules and Cacus* cast within the home of an erudite scholar is a 1647 painting by Gerrit Dou, whose still lifes were also an important precedent for the young Van der Heyden. Dou’s *Artist in His Studio* prominently features a significantly enlarged version of the *Hercules and Cacus* (Fig. 3.12). Illuminated by a soft light, the artist is flanked by the plaster *Hercules and Cacus* and a cast of a female head. These casts are in close proximity to two other items commonly found alongside the figure of a painter, a candle on the ledge next to the small plaster head and a blank palette hung on the wall behind the large *Hercules*.

Dou’s use of this cast alongside the solitary, studious painter reflects the pervasive impact of Karel van Mander’s interpretation of the Hercules and Cacus story from his 1604 *Schilder-Boeck*. Van Mander had expounded upon the moral significance of Hercules’s defeat of the fire-breathing giant, which he saw as the embodiment of virtue’s victory over vice and envy. As envy was considered “one of the greatest enemies of art,” the mythical hero’s triumph over this particular evil had special significance for a painter like Dou, who had by 1647 achieved wide acclaim and success. The contemporary celebration of Hercules as a paragon of virtue augmented his existing appeal as a character from the ancient world. Moreover, identifying the

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37 Trnek first proposed this connection, though no documentary evidence exists that Van der Heyden knew Dou’s work; Renate Trnek, *Die holländischen Gemälde des 17. Jahrhunderts: in der Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Wien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992), 191-192. See also Sutton, 182.


39 Ivan Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, His Patrons, and the Art of Painting,” *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 18. Gaskell’s further suggestion that Dou’s choice of the cast “may have been an indirect allusion to the role of [Swedish minister Peter] Spiering’s patronage in his artistic success during the 1640s” seems an overestimation.
story of Hercules’s confrontation with Cacus—a minor episode among labors more frequently discussed and represented—required a subtle knowledge of classical literature. The fact that the cast in Dou’s painting is so much larger than the casts depicted by Codde before him and Van der Heyden after him suggests that variations of the *Hercules and Cacus* were available in the major cities where these artists worked.

Other sculptures of Hercules overcoming Cacus were subsequently made in the Dutch Republic, which raises the tantalizing question of the precedent that the *Hercules and Cacus* after Giambologna also set for sculptors in the Netherlands. Jan Pieter van Baurscheit the Elder (1669-1728) carved a sandstone *Hercules and Cacus* around 1700, and likely made a similar statue for the prominent Rotterdam collector Adriaen Paets the Younger, in epistolary consultation with the painter Adriaen van der Werff (Fig. 3.13).40 Baurscheit’s *Hercules and Cacus*, despite some debts to Bandinelli’s ensemble, is ultimately closer to the source model of the cast in Dou’s painting: Hercules is shown still grappling with the struggling Cacus between his legs, pushing his foe’s head down with one hand. By the late seventeenth century, the struggle between Hercules and Cacus had been adopted as an analogy for the Stadholder Willem III’s troubles with the King of France.41 The association between the House of Orange and Hercules vanquishing evil was so strong that a Hercules and Cacus even appears in the background of Caspar Netscher’s portrait of Willem III’s wife, Mary Stuart.42 This new political


42 The portrait is now in the Hermitage. The figure of Hercules had already been used in the previous century to glorify European kings, particularly Charles V, and served as Orangeist propaganda in the seventeenth century,
dimension to the story gave sculptors another reason to focus on the full force of Hercules’s action, especially for garden statues that populated the estates of Dutch elites. In a 1746 drawing by Jan de Beijer (1703-1780), a *Hercules and Cacus* is visible in the centrally located fountain in the garden of Zijdebalen, an estate near Utrecht.\footnote{De Jong, “For Profit and Ornament,” 42. The drawing (pen, brush, and grey ink over graphite on paper, 24.4 x 34.7 cm) is in the collection of the Centraal Museum, Utrecht (22625).}

The labors of Hercules lent themselves to interpretation from a variety of groups and individuals in the early modern period, artists not least among them. In images of painters alongside the art lovers who patronized them, plaster casts like the *Hercules and Cacus* also created favorable conditions for men of differing means to recognize a shared body of knowledge. In these instances, plaster casts were self-referential not exclusively with respect to their practical use in the studio, but also as manifestations of painters’ social and professional aspirations.

**The Recurring Plaster Cast**

In Dou’s *Artist in the Studio*, the identity of the sitter shifts between painter and scholar, while the plaster casts around him uphold that ambiguity. The man is surrounded by myriad objects that signal his curiosity and perspicacity: a lute and a violin with sheet music, a terrestrial globe, a Japanese parasol, and a shimmering pink shell beside an iridescent flask on the shelf. These many trinkets worthy of his attention could belong in a collector’s cabinet much like the one by Van der Heyden that this painting inspired. They are also signs of his intangible possessions: his knowledge of natural science and of far-flung corners of the world. But the palette on the wall reaffirms the sitter’s profession and the two plaster casts relate it closely to

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the scholar’s pursuits. Shaped by his belongings and his activities, he is the learned painter, or *pictor doctus*, a testament to the commensurability of intellect and craft.⁴⁴ Among early modern humanists, the *pictor doctus* was a painter with a classical education who could properly understand the literature and customs from which subjects for history paintings derived.⁴⁵ In the Dresden picture, the plaster casts, particularly the *Hercules and Cacus*, emphasize the centrality of the classical tradition to this painter’s self-presentation. Like the *pictor doctus* himself, they perfectly embody the combination of scholarship and craftsmanship.

Dou likely had access to plaster casts early on in his career, as Rembrandt’s pupil in Leiden. After apprenticing briefly with his father, a glassworker, Dou entered Rembrandt’s studio on February 14, 1628, where he trained for three years.⁴⁶ Rembrandt would go on to amass a substantial collection of plaster casts, as evinced by entries in the 1656 inventory of his possessions taken upon his bankruptcy declaration.⁴⁷ No such account of his Leiden studio exists, but one of Rembrandt’s early etchings gives reason to believe that he had already begun collecting casts to draw from prior to his move to Amsterdam. In an etching made around 1630, Rembrandt rendered the distinctive features of a young woman who bears a strong resemblance to a cast in a later etching (Fig. 1.18, Fig. 3.14).⁴⁸ The similarities, in turn, between these figures and *tronies* made by Jan Lievens around the same time suggest that Rembrandt shared the cast

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⁴⁴ Muller, “Young Scholar in his Study,” 293, 296.
⁴⁷ For specific examples of the casts in Rembrandt’s home on the Jodenbreestraat, see Chapter 1.
⁴⁸ Gyllenhaal, 40-42. Gyllenhaal notes that the cast in the later etching is nearly identical to the head of the *Young Ethiopian* now in the Capitoline Museum, Rome.
with his fellow artist for practice sketching heads.\textsuperscript{49} Although Rembrandt was only seven years older than Dou, by the time the latter entered his studio, Rembrandt likely had at least a small selection of casts that would fittingly provide his pupils with study material from which to learn to draw.\textsuperscript{50} Rembrandt’s use of plaster casts for drawing practice and for figure types made a strong impression on Dou, who depicted casts across his painted oeuvre—notably unlike Rembrandt, who did so almost exclusively in prints.

The plaster head of a woman in the foreground of the Dresden \textit{Artist in His Studio} seems to have been a lifelong favorite of Dou’s. It shows up in the earliest known self-portrait by the artist, dated to around 1635 to 1638, when Dou was between twenty-two and twenty-five years old (Fig. 3.15).\textsuperscript{51} It appears again towards the end of his life, in the \textit{Self-Portrait} from around 1665 (Fig. 3.16). In the late portrait, the cast—seen more from below than in the Dresden picture, permitting a clear view of its unfinished edges and its concavity—is at his side once again. Dou presents himself with paint-stained palette and brushes in his left hand, his right hand resting on an open sketchbook, while his easel is barely discernible in the dark background. He shows himself first and foremost as an active painter, and the plaster female head as one of his principal tools.\textsuperscript{52} The Dresden \textit{Artist in His Studio}, by contrast, shows the artist immersed in his studies, his clean palette hung on the wall behind him. The open Japanese parasol is not in use in the manner most familiar to Dou: he allegedly used such a parasol to keep dust from falling onto

\setcounter{footnote}{49}
\footnote{Gyllenhaal, 45–46. Gyllenhaal connects heads and figures in early paintings by Rembrandt and Lievens to casts and other sculptures that they may have had access to; see Gyllenhaal, 51–79.}

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\footnote{Lobis, 50.}

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\footnote{Baer, Wheelock, and Boersma, 76. One of Dou’s earliest paintings shows a young artist also accompanied by the cast of a head—thought to be the Roman emperor Vitellius, one of the sculptures Gyllenhaal associates with Rembrandt’s use of casts in Leiden. See Baer, Wheelock, and Boersma, 64–65.}

\setcounter{footnote}{52}
\footnote{Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 122. Baer refers to this painting as “the culmination of Dou’s self-portraits.”}
his delicate paintings, a custom he even illustrated in the background of several self-portraits, including one in Salzburg, where he holds a palette smudged with paint as if he has taken a brief pause from his work (Fig. 3.17).\(^{53}\) In the *Artist in His Studio*, the plaster head, like the parasol, is more of a personal signifier than a demonstration of the sitter’s habits as a painter.

Nevertheless, just as the *Hercules and Cacus* cast partly refers to artistic virtue that triumphs over vice, the cast of the female head may also allude to the essentials of art. As a generic head rather than a citation of an existing sculpture, the mask-like cast takes up a theme that recurs across Dou’s oeuvre: the deceptive and imitative power of painting. In Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*, the personification of the art of painting wears a necklace with a mask hanging from it, a symbol that was regularly adopted after the emblem book’s publication in 1593.\(^{54}\)

For Dou, the association between the mask and painting’s singular capacity to fool the eye was eloquently conveyed in a different contemporary source, a marble relief by the Flemish sculptor François du Quesnoy often repeated in Dou’s paintings.\(^{55}\) The relief, which Du Quesnoy carved in 1626, shows putti playing with and taunting a goat that seems to be agitated by the seated putto in front of it holding up a large mask (Fig. 3.18).\(^{56}\) Copies of Du Quesnoy’s work proliferated in the seventeenth century; there are documented reproductions in plaster of one of


\(^{54}\) The Dutch translation of the *Iconologia* was published in 1644. I will return to the reception of Ripa’s imagery among Dutch painters below.

\(^{55}\) The earliest instance of the relief in Dou’s work is in *The Violinist* of 1653. See Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, cat. no. 20., for *The Violinist* and a list of paintings that include the Du Quesnoy relief.

\(^{56}\) For the marble presumed to be the original, now in the Galleria Doria-Pamphilj, see Italo Faldi, “Le ‘virtuose operationi’ di Francesco Duquesnoy sculitore incomparabile,” *Arte Antica e Moderna* 5 (1959): 52-62. The relief suffered some damage during the process of retrieving it from the exedra of a garden theater of the Villa Doria Pamphilj, where it was immured when Faldi located it.
the reliefs carved in tandem with the *Children with a Goat*, known as the *Sacred and Profane Love*.\(^{57}\) The biographer Giovanni Pietro Bellori, who wrote detailed descriptions of both reliefs, claimed that a copy of the *Children with a Goat* was made in porphyry by Tommaso Fedele for Cardinal Francesco Barberini as a gift for Philip IV, though Bellori seem to have mistakenly identified it, for only a porphyry *Sacred and Profane Love* based on one of the plaster models survives.\(^{58}\) Plaster versions of Du Quesnoy’s compositions were apparently immediately used to create other copies of the *all’antica* reliefs. The small marble version of the relief now at the Rijksmuseum likely served as one source for casts of the relief in plaster and bronze, as it corresponds to these in size.\(^{59}\) The English sculptor and grandson of Hendrick de Keyser, Nicholas Stone Junior, who visited Du Quesnoy in Rome in 1641, noted in his travel journal that he had purchased casts in wax and plaster from Du Quesnoy, among them “One Bassa-Relieua of Children Playing with a Goat.”\(^{60}\)

Du Quesnoy’s wide-ranging output appealed not only to antiquarians who collected his restorations and copies of ancient sculpture, but also to admiring artists. According to the biographer Giovanni Battista Passeri, “In the studios of many painters and sculptors in Rome can

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\(^{57}\) The most complete and recent discussion of the versions of the *Children with a Goat* relief appears in Marion Boudon-Machuel, *François du Quesnoy (1597-1643)* (Paris: Athena, 2005), 53-54, 277-278. For reproductions of the *Sacred and Profane Love*, see Estelle Lingo, *François Duquesnoy and the Greek Ideal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 49. The plaster versions of the *Sacred and Profane Love* are now in the Spada Gallery, Rome (inv. 318) and in the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon (inv. 546). The latter bears physical marks that suggest it was cast from a mold taken directly from Du Quesnoy’s clay model for the marble relief; see Boudon-Machuel, 290-292.

\(^{58}\) Lingo, 49. This porphyry version is now in the Museo del Prado.


be seen his statuettes in plaster, so novel and elegant in pose and execution that one recognizes in them a knowledge that is not ordinary.”

Passeri mused on the appeal of Du Quesnoy’s sculpture:

“Francesco became greatly imbued in that taste [for Titian’s putti], which bore fruit in his little models in bas-relief of several little putti playing among themselves in various bacchanalian actions, and today some plaster casts of these are around, as well as some not very big putti in the round made by him for diverse occasions, which are of great help and inspiration to artists.”

Already during Du Quesnoy’s lifetime, plaster casts popularized his compositions and augmented his reputation as a gifted artist who had learned from the best qualities of Greek and Roman statues and the inventions of his most respected predecessors. Du Quesnoy’s emulation of ancient sculpture was so successful that, within years, artists were compelled to compare the sculptor’s work to the greatest antiquities. In Michael Sweerts’s Artist’s Studio with a Woman Sewing, painted around 1648, the Children with a Goat appears in a pile of casts featuring famous ancient busts such as the Hellenistic head of an old woman in the foreground, and is prominently placed next to the head of Niobe (Fig. 3.19).

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63 Du Quesnoy’s debt to Titian was recognized by figures such as the sculptor and theorist Orfeo Boselli, who had also been Du Quesnoy’s pupil. See Maria Loh, “New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Baroque Practice and Theory,” The Art Bulletin 86, no. 3 (Sep. 2004), 479-480; and Anthony Colantuono, “The Poetry of Atomism: Duquesnoy, Poussin, and the Song of Silenus,” in Critical Perspectives on Roman Baroque Sculpture, ed. Anthony Colantuono and Steven F. Ostrow (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 88-89.

64 Yeager-Crasselt, “Michael Sweerts/François Duquesnoy,” 116. This painting also includes a fragment of the Cupid in Du Quesnoy’s bronze Apollo and Cupid (Liechtenstein Princely Collections, Vienna).
The casts of Du Quesnoy’s sculpture in Sweerts’s paintings are a testament both to the latter’s “admiration for a fellow Fleming” and “his own artistic ideals and classicist ambitions.”

Unlike Du Quesnoy, Sweerts eventually returned to the Netherlands in 1656 and soon thereafter founded a school of art in Brussels that “constituted an important moment in the development of an academic tradition in the Low Countries.” In several paintings, Sweerts envisioned the artist’s studio as a space brimming with plaster casts of all shapes and sizes, where students use them to learn to draw and visiting patrons compare them to live models (Fig. 3.20). Du Quesnoy’s work, whether or not Sweerts ever owned plaster versions of it, was a recent example of an oeuvre admired by painters and coveted by collectors. Sweerts introduced these images to the Netherlands before knowledge of Du Quesnoy’s sculptures was circulated through prints. He invoked Du Quesnoy again in a 1652 painting of a connoisseur inspecting plaster casts in an artist’s studio: the plaster Cupid in the art-lover’s right hand and the plaster torso beside him are both based on Du Quesnoy’s bronze Apollo and Cupid (Fig. 3.21).

The wider dissemination of Du Quesnoy’s designs in Northern Europe was also affected by the activities of his brother Jerôme, who had worked alongside the sculptor. According to Peter Hecht, after his brother’s death in 1643, Jerôme returned to Flanders and “brought with

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65 Yeager-Crasselt, “Michael Sweerts/François Duquesnoy,” 121-222. He likely encountered Du Quesnoy’s work while living and working in Rome under the patronage of Camillo Pamphilj, who owned the Children with a Goat.

66 Yeager-Crasselt, Michael Sweerts (1618-1664), 14-15. Prior to this, there had only been informal drawing academies in Haarlem and Utrecht (see Chapter 1). The first state-sponsored Netherlandish art academy was later founded in Antwerp, in 1663; see Yeager-Crasselt, Michael Sweerts, 21.

67 See especially catalogue no. 7, no. 12, and no. 15 in Jansen and Sutton.

68 Yeager-Crasselt, “Michael Sweerts/François Duquesnoy,” 112-113. Yeager-Crasselt points out that Sweerts displays his command of the Apollo’s contrapposto by showing the art-lover in the same pose. Thomas Döring first identified these as casts of Du Quesnoy’s bronze, prior to which they had been assumed to be based on ancient sculptures; see Döring, “Belebte Skulpturen bei Michael Sweerts: Zur Rezeptions-geschichte eines vergessenen pseudo-antiken Ausdruckskopfes,” Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch 55 (1994): 55-83.
him all the material his brother had already packed to be shipped to Paris, where he was about to enter the service of Louis XIII.”

69 Jerôme was the first of a few members of the family to manage and sell sculptures from Du Quesnoy’s estate, and his access to original works put him in an ideal situation to oversee the production of casts to sell as well.  

70 By the 1660s, there was evidently a lively market for copies of sculptures by the brothers Du Quesnoy. Frits Scholten, on the basis of the 1664 estate inventory of the Larson family of sculptors, has convincingly proposed that Du Quesnoy’s Cupid With a Bow was among the plaster casts made in the family’s busy workshop in The Hague.  

71 Guillaume Larson was in a prime position to use a mold or model after Du Quesnoy’s marble, which was bought in 1637 by the city of Amsterdam to offer as a gift to Amalia van Solms, the wife of the stadholder Frederik Hendrik who resided in The Hague.  

72 Scholten’s inquiry into the workshop’s stock suggests that the Larsons also had molds or models of the famous Manneken pis, the public statue that the elder Jerôme du Quesnoy, François’s father, made for Brussels in 1619, which was copied in other media soon after its installation.  

Dou, who had already made use of plaster casts since his earliest self-portraits, could have purchased—or at the very least seen and drawn—a cast of the Du Quesnoy Children with a Goat by mid-century. For decades, scholars of Dutch art have proposed symbolic interpretations


71 Scholten, “The Larson Family of Statuary Founders.” For Du Quesnoy’s Cupid With a Bow, see Lingo, 57-63.

72 Scholten, “The Larson Family of Statuary Founders,” 60-61. Prior to this purchase, the marble was in the collection of the Dutch banker Lucas van Uffelt in Venice.

of the relief in Dou’s paintings. Most compelling among these are the arguments for the relief’s significance as a meditation on illusionism and imitation, a demonstration of painting’s unsurpassed capacity to mirror nature. In an address to the painters’ community in Leiden on St. Luke’s Day in 1641, Philips Angel publicly lauded Dou as a virtuoso and an example to his fellows, as part of his argument for the supremacy of painting over sculpture. With his fine style of painting, Dou had proven his ability to render convincingly a huge range of objects and textures, but the argument for painting’s supremacy hinged on its comparison to naturalistic sculpture. Dou’s choice of the Du Quesnoy relief in the 1650s and 60s points to his own contribution to the theoretical debate of paragone, the legendary competition between painting and sculpture. Given that the source material for the relief was a plaster cast, Dou’s depictions of it are doubly performative: before boasting that paint can completely imitate stone, Dou uses paint to transform plaster into marble.


75 Sluijter, “In Praise of the Art of Painting,” 199. The praise for Dou’s skills continued for years, including in a laudatory poem by the poet Dirk Traudenius that referred to Dou as “the Dutch Parrhasius,” likening him to the ancient Greek painter whose painting of a curtain had deceived even the shrewd eye of his competitor Zeuxis; Sluijter, “In Praise of the Art of Painting,” 209. The anecdote of Zeuxis and Parrhasius is in Pliny the Elder, Natural History, XXXV.36.

76 Hecht especially has explored how Dou may have been primarily preoccupied with paragone in his choice of the Du Quesnoy relief and in the modifications he made to the composition; see Hecht, “Art Beats Nature.”
Through the repetition of this motif, Dou turned the citation of another artist’s acclaimed work into a personal trademark.\textsuperscript{77} He cultivated an association with the Du Quesnoy relief over the course of two decades that his successors understood well. In an \textit{Allegory of Painting} by Jacob Toorevliet, painted between 1675 and 1679, a truncated cast of the \textit{Children with a Goat} accompanies a personification of the art of painting (Fig. 3.22).\textsuperscript{78} Dou, who was Toorevliet’s uncle-in-law, had died in 1675, shortly before or around the time Toorevliet completed his image of the instruments and practices that distinguished their shared craft.\textsuperscript{79} Toorevliet’s choice of the Du Quesnoy cast pays homage to the recently departed Dou and his formidable legacy by explicitly linking the subject of the bacchanal to the feats and excellence of the art of painting, who is being crowned with the laurel wreath of poetry.

Dou’s penchant for plaster casts alongside the figure of the painter had its clearest impact on Frans van Mieris, who had been Dou’s pupil before he included the cast of \textit{Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent} in the aforementioned paintings of studio scenes (Fig. 3.5, Fig. 3.6). As we will see, like Toorevliet, Van Mieris would also come to characterize the plaster cast as a defining component of the painter’s art. His sons furthered the expectation that plaster casts were to be incorporated not only into the real studio but also into images of that workspace. Jan van Mieris’s 1688 \textit{Portrait of a Smoking Painter} shows a painter taking a pause from his work to

\textsuperscript{77} For an exploration into how purposeful repetition enabled painters like Dou to market their self-referential paintings to an exclusive circle of connoisseurs, see Angela Ho, \textit{Creating Distinctions in Dutch Genre Painting: Repetition and Invention} (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

\textsuperscript{78} Toorevliet chose not to adorn the female figure with the attributes associated with the personification of painting in Ripa’s \textit{Iconologia}. I will return to the subject of this allegorical type, and the incorporation of plaster casts into that iconography, below.

smoke a pipe, but his diligence is not to be called into question (Fig. 3.23). Behind him stands a plaster Apollo, an enlarged version of Du Quesnoy’s sinuous bronze, and, beside it, the plaster head of Cupid, the second figure in the group (Fig. 3.24). The Apollo and Cupid had been published in 1670 in Jan de Bisschop’s Signorum veterum icones, which may have precipitated the creation of plaster variations, including enlargements such as this one. The smoking painter has made the effort to procure casts of an idealized male nude to study and learn from. At the edge of his table, a drawing of a muscular torso on blue paper further confirms his commitment to mastering the contours of the body in charcoal and chalk first.

The plaster casts in the paintings of Dou and his contemporaries were often based on the creations of Netherlandish sculptors from the recent past. Rather than relying heavily on the ancients for their models, these Dutch painters expressed a favor for “modern” sculpture and, in so doing, propagated the fame of fellow Netherlanders. Among the sculptors was Willem van Tetrode of Delft, whose Écorché presented another type of lesson in anatomy and dynamic motion for painters. Van Tetrode modeled and cast the Écorché in bronze between 1562 and 1567 while working in Florence, the pose based at least in part on the ancient Dioscuri. Around 1635, Cornelis Saftleven included a plaster cast of the statuette in a musical scene set in the corner of a painter’s studio, judging by the stray rag, brush, and loose sheet in the foreground.

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80 Their warm reception of sixteenth-century Netherlandish sculptors is an inadvertent corrective to Van Mander’s decision to focus only on the lives of Netherlandish painters in the Schilder-Boeck, excluding such renown figures as Giambologna. For an overview of developments that contributed to sculptors’ absence from the period literature, see Arjan de Koomen, “‘Una cosa non meno maravigiosa che honorata’: The expansion of Netherlandish sculptors in sixteenth-century Europe,” Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 63 (2013): 82-109.

81 One of the extant versions of the bronze Écorché (height: 43 cm) is in the collection of the Hearn Family Trust, New York. See Scholten, Willem van Tetrode, 40-41, 125-126.

82 Scholten, Willem van Tetrode, 39, 42. For the interest in Van Tetrode’s early Écorché among Italian sculptors, see Louisa Bourla, “Cigoli’s écorché and Giambologna’s circle,” Sculpture Journal 24, no. 3 (2015): 317-332.
(Fig. 3.25). Saftleven lingers on the fragility of the plaster medium by showing one of the flayed figure’s broken arms on the ground, as if worn out by regular use and handling. Decades later, a plaster ecorché is also prominently placed in a nighttime picture of a young scholar reading by lamplight, this time directly related to diligent study (Fig. 3.26). Van Tetrode, who, like Sweerts, developed his stylistic vocabulary in Italy before returning to his homeland, “became a key figure in the artistic cross-fertilisation between the Netherlands and the south.”

The circulation of plaster versions of his Écorché prompted not only sculptors but also painters to incorporate his treatment of the male nude into an emerging canon of modern sculpture.

Many generalizations made about plaster casts in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings give the impression that ancient sculpture was, par excellence, the source material for these objects. The eminence and ubiquity of ancient statues, aided in no small part by publications that illustrated the most famous among them, is undeniable. But the plaster casts in these paintings indicate the equally abiding enthusiasm among Dutch painters for Netherlandish sculpture that was also admired by Italian custodians of antiquities. Though the originals remained outside the Netherlands, plaster casts made it possible for the Dutch to familiarize themselves with the greatest sixteenth-century sculptures and even capitalize on the opportunity to enlarge the small bronzes that entered courtly collections in Italy.

In Dou’s case, the recurrent plaster head and the Du Quesnoy relief are also references to himself, personal emblems that reveal aspects of his professional identity and his experience as a well-educated virtuoso. In the Dresden Artist in His Studio, Dou’s painter is in the company of

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83 Scholten, Willem van Tetrode, 76. Even Peter Paul Rubens was compelled to inspect the anatomy of the Écorché, in a pen and ink drawing from around 1600, now in a private collection.

84 The subject of the relationship between printed images of antiquities and their plaster versions will be addressed in Chapter 4. These publications also defy the assumed primacy of antiquity. As Jansen and Sutton have pointed out, artists who produced drawing model books, such as Domenico de’Rossi, Alessandro Maffei, and Jan de Bisschop, “freely combined ancient, renaissance, and modern examples;” Jansen and Sutton, 19.
casts that evoke classical literature, the modern copying of sculpture, and a drawing practice that occurs in the privacy of the studio. Over the course of his career, Dou repeatedly turned to casts to envision a promising social profile for the scholarly artist and to substantiate his claims for painting’s superior illusionism.

**At Home in the Studio**

In the growing market for images of contemporary private spaces in the Dutch Republic, dominated by portraits and related images of elites in their sumptuous homes, painters also portrayed themselves on canvas and panel. By the late seventeenth century, when writers took up their pens to describe the facets and contours of their countrymen’s art, the subject matter of what would eventually be called genre painting was under scrutiny.\textsuperscript{85} Gerard de Lairesse, despite championing history paintings as the loftiest genre, approved of painters who could observe and skillfully render the lives of ordinary citizens, and among the modern subject matter he found acceptable was the home of a painter.\textsuperscript{86} Even such modest subjects could be elevated if imbued with the grace of classical sculpture—an idea of beauty that “an illustrious modern Painter requires” and could attain through the study of plaster casts.\textsuperscript{87}

Michiel van Musscher’s 1679 *Self-Portrait* shows the artist accompanied by several such casts, in an interior that is both workspace and refined home (Fig. 3.27). Framed by an elaborate multi-colored curtain, he gestures towards the objects arranged behind his easel, presumably the subject of the canvas in front of him. The picture is at once personal and shrewdly promotional:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{85}The term “genre” was not used to refer to scenes of everyday life until 1792, by the theorist Antoine Quatremère de Quincy.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{86}De Lairesse, \textit{Het groot schilderboek}, Vol. 1, 184.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
staged to highlight his wealth and sophistication, it also affirms his identity as a painter. Van Musscher, holding his palette, brushes, and maulstick in his left hand, stands between the props for his work and the comforts of his well-appointed home. The plaster casts speak to both his professional and domestic life, with counterparts in the sculptures displayed as decorative objects in the high-ceiling room in the background. Posed as models for the painting in progress, the plaster casts connect the artist’s creation of artifice to the space in which he lives his everyday life. The stone ledge in the foreground encapsulates this deliberate juxtaposition: it is an invented addition to the architecture of the home, a device used to give the illusion that the painting extends into the space in front of it. The ledge is incongruous with the room behind it, a part of the fiction of the picture, yet items from inside that room extend onto it or rest upon it. Nearby, the plaster casts amplify how the objects that van Musscher regularly encounters serve to construct the inventions he generates—including this self-portrait.

The largest plaster cast on the table is the *Borghese Gladiator*, a Hellenistic statue that had belonged to the Borghese family in Rome since its discovery in 1611 among the ruins of the emperor Nero’s seaside palace in Anzio. The statue’s immediate popularity resulted in reproductions in various media, including bronze statuettes and casts that supplied it with a sword and shield, a result of the seventeenth-century consensus on the man’s identity. The

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89 Haskell and Penny, 221. The sculpture is a circa 100 BC marble copy, by Agasias of Epheseus, of a 3rd century BC original. It is now in the collection of the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

90 Haskell and Penny, 222.
Borghese Gladiator had been published four times in François Perrier’s Segmenta nobilium signorum et statuarum (1638), depicted from more angles than any other sculpture in the compendium (Fig. 3.28). In the Self-Portrait, Van Musscher selected a viewpoint that ensures that the sweep of the gladiator’s body echoes Van Musscher’s own elegant bend. Even the thin sword in the gladiator’s right hand finds a counterpoint in the maulstick nestled between the fingers of Van Musscher’s left hand. Van Musscher included the cast of the Borghese Gladiator again, seen from behind, in a studio scene with strong similarities to the 1679 Self-Portrait (Fig. 3.29). ⁹¹ A painting made a few years earlier by Ludolf de Jongh, which shows a life-size cast of the Borghese Gladiator in the garden of a fashionable country estate, gives some indication of the taste for this particular ancient figure among Dutch elites (Fig. 3.30). The sculpture’s multiple appearances in Van Musscher’s self-portraits suggest that he procured the cast for himself at some point.

According to a household inventory taken in July 1705, at the time of his death, Van Musscher had in his studio seven Cupid-like statues, most likely made of plaster, that could be hung up as well as two mannikins. ⁹² Van Musscher liked to include plaster casts in his depictions of the working painter, whether they were objects in his possession or adapted from encounters with them elsewhere. A 1665 drawing of a rustic artist’s studio shows plaster casts scattered throughout the room, from the ice-skating putto based on Du Quesnoy’s cherubic figures, on a shelf with Van Tetrode’s Écorché and the head of the Farnese Hercules, to a pile of casts in the

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⁹² “Seven vliegende beeltjes” and “twee leemannen.” Bredius, Vol. 3, 993. The inventory lists other objects in the 1679 Self-Portrait, including a globe, three carpets, and several instruments.
foreground, *Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent* among them (Fig. 3.31). In a youthful *Self-Portrait*, Van Musscher holds a plaster putto next to a painted still life of a bust on a base, reminiscent of Caesar van Everdingen’s 1665 trompe l’oeil *Still Life with a Bust of Venus* (Fig. 3.32). The pairing of “real” and painted sculpture emphasizes the young painter’s capable handling of his medium, which is grounded in his observation of three-dimensional objects. The sketch of a female nude on blue paper tucked underneath his palette and brushes confirms that the work of painting builds upon drawing *naer het leven*, through which the artist practices convincingly rendering volume.

In the 1679 *Self-Portrait*, Van Musscher includes a different plaster putto near an open pocket watch, from a viewing angle that makes the putto’s raised left arm a formal repetition of the pocket watch lid below it. The putto, in the familiar pose of a child blowing bubbles, invokes a *vanitas* message, as if to cite another convention of still life painting. Seen in the context of this *memento mori*, the three plaster casts on the table—a child, a youth, and an older man—in a pyramidal arrangement may refer to the stages of a man’s life. Van Musscher’s *Self-Portrait* uses plaster casts, in part, to revisit imagery familiar to Dutch painters and their patrons, but situated in a space that invites consideration of Van Musscher’s social standing as well.

In the Netherlands, the image of the artist working in his studio had its most significant precedents in the visual tradition of Saint Luke drawing the Virgin and Child, a subject imagined in exacting detail by foundational masters like Rogier van der Weyden (Fig. 3.33). These pictures, first and foremost devotional icons, also made claims for the nobility of the profession

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93 Scholten, “The Larson Family of Statuary Founders,” 80-81. The ice-skating putto is also in the painting of a portrait painter’s studio beside the *Borghese Gladiator*. Scholten enumerates other Dutch paintings that include the ice-skating putto, which was among the casts in the Larson family’s inventory.

94 This is also consistent with other references to mortality in Van Musscher’s paintings, chiefly in the 1685 *Self-Portrait* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).
and gave painters a means to relate to their patron saint through their shared craft. The wondrous notion of the honor given to Saint Luke, to capture the likeness of the Virgin and Child, doubled as a way to showcase the basic and typical tools of the trade (Fig. 3.34). That is, the instruments essential to the painter’s work entered the space of easel paintings before the contemporary painter himself. In the wake of Renaissance explorations of classical texts, the painter’s studio became visually associated with the legendary tale of another renowned predecessor: Apelles, court painter to Alexander the Great, tasked with making a portrait of his patron’s beloved Campaspe. This prototype for the virtuoso painter—who created a portrait so astonishing that Alexander offered him the real Campaspe in exchange for her image—fittingly appears in an Antwerp cabinet picture to invite a direct comparison with the active Flemish masters whose work lines the imaginary gallery’s walls (Fig. 3.35).

As Léon Lock has suggested, “during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a few painters in the Low Countries developed what might be termed a specific genre: the studio interior.” Van Musscher’s Self-Portrait of 1679, while in part indebted to these previous images of distinguished painters at work, belongs to a discrete group of pictures in which the painter is alone in his studio alongside plaster casts. Though artists across Europe learned to draw from plaster casts and kept them at hand for further study, Netherlandish artists, and Dutch painters in particular, consistently made visual references to the uses they had for plaster casts. A larger variety of casts had begun to appear by 1650, when evocations of the artist’s workspace

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96 Pliny, XXV.79-97.

97 Lock, 251. Lock’s essay focuses on images of sculptors’ studios to ask whether they have reliable “documentary value” given their contrast with abundant mentions of plaster casts in sculptors’ inventories. He does not further interrogate the consequences of picturing casts in these spaces, whether or not they were documented there.
went beyond the initial portrayals—namely by Rembrandt and Dou—of the solitary artist with only a few tools for company. Subsequent takes on the subject, including Dou’s *Artist in His Studio* in Dresden, introduced signs of the erudition and wealth which a painter might aspire to and even attain. In this expanded vocabulary of what the artist at work could look like, “the furnishings of the artist’s workshop are as much allegorical attributes of artistic meditation and invention, as they are real objects with practical uses” that “depict an inner world as much as an exterior habitat.”

The popularity of easel paintings showing an artist at work coincided with a general trend in the Dutch Republic of representing laboring individuals in paintings and especially in prints. Woodcuts and engravings that defined the trades of diverse craftspeople had begun to proliferate in the sixteenth century, updating medieval imagery that associated labor with calendrical cycles. These inspired the production of paintings that featured both the tools and the physical activity involved in a variety of occupations, especially in the Dutch Republic (Fig. 3.36). According to Alison Kettering, beginning in the 1640s and 50s, “Dutch artists produced—and Dutch buyers purchased—paintings of men engaged in all sorts of skilled labor,” “more images of labor than all the [other European societies] combined.”

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98 Chapman overstates the influence of Rembrandt’s 1628 *Artist in His Studio* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) on the “remarkable proliferation of genre-like studio scenes in seventeenth-century Holland.” More convincing is her proposition that “the studio picture flourished as never before at least in part because of the professionalization of painters in an increasingly competitive atmosphere.” Chapman, “The Imagined Studios,” 126–127.


100 For Labors of the Month in illuminated manuscripts such as books of hours, see Wilhelm Hansen, *Kalenderminiaturen der Stundenbücher, Mittelalterliches Leben im Jahreslauf* (Munich: Callwey, 1984). The most notable sixteenth-century example of a book of trades, with woodcuts by Jost Amman, is Hans Sach’s *Eygentliche Beschreibung Aller Stände auff Erden*, also known as the *Ständebuch* (Frankfurt, 1568).

101 Alison M. Kettering, “Men at Work in Dutch Art, or Keeping One’s Nose to the Grindstone,” *The Art Bulletin* 89, no. 4 (Dec. 2007), 694, 701. She goes on to call these as “a body of work nearly unique in all Europe,” also noting that “outside the Dutch borders, genre painting evolved fitfully, if at all, with images of working men thin on the ground,” 708.
painting was to situate him or her within the Dutch socio-economic order based on an exclusive set of skills and the expertise to wield specialized tools. It is worth noting, at the same time, that the laborers involved in the lime industry and the “pleistergieters” who made casts and architectural ornaments in plaster were not depicted with the same degree of attention to the details of their vocations, if at all. That is, despite an increased representation for some types of workers in the visual culture of the early modern period, there were others whose livelihoods were not recognized in this manner and who, as a result, remain much more obscure in art historical accounts of the Dutch Republic. These disparities are a reminder that to be the subject of a work of art, particularly a painting, was to enjoy a certain type of privilege not equally available even outside the wealthiest circles, among the middling strata of Dutch society.

The production of images that accounted for a wider range of labor made it all the more imperative for artists to differentiate themselves from professionals with similar attributes and work sites, especially scholars and alchemists. Plaster casts were among the most distinctive objects painters regularly used and thus a natural choice to fill out their pictorial studios, where they are more numerous than in scenes of bookish scholars. The laboratories of Thomas Wijck’s alchemists also resemble the painters’ studios portrayed by his countrymen in many respects (Fig. 3.37). But plaster casts are not among the abundance of tools at the alchemist’s disposal, particular as they are to a painter’s needs. Wijck acknowledged this in a drawing, inspired by similar compositions by his teacher Adriaen van Ostade, of a painter’s studio, where life casts and the body of a putto hang above other everyday studio objects, including a skull, an

102 See Elisabeth Berry Drago, Painted Alchemists: Early Modern Artistry and Experiment in the Work of Thomas Wijck (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019). Drago considers Wijck’s paintings central to the formation of his artistic identity, as a painter preoccupied with his own creative powers and investigating alchemists’ experiments to master nature. Drago sees Wijck’s paintings as “entries in a continuum of genre imagery relating to the practice of trades,” an “artisanal vision of alchemy” that “enters the discipline into dialogue with other commercial arts and trades,” 122.
hourglass, and panels leaning against the wall (Fig. 3.38). Wijck’s prominent roles in the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke would have informed his understanding of the role of casts in a painter’s practice, given the guild’s efforts to train local painters and its historic custody of plaster casts gifted by Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem.103

Life casts, as discussed in Chapter One, could be made by painters themselves or bought inexpensively from a sculptor’s workshop, which partly accounts for their appearance in rustic studios such as the one in Wijck’s sketch. Among the earliest images of a contemporary Netherlandish painter’s studio is a drawing by an unknown Flemish artist that shows life casts of a head and an arm hung on a wall in a utilitarian fashion.104 But the pairing of painter and plaster cast occurred in earnest only decades later, in pictures whose primary focus was the painter. Early in the seventeenth century, artists tended to show themselves in the studio with sitters modeling for group portraits or merry companies, or in conversation with connoisseurs (Fig. 3.39). By around 1640, in images increasingly focused on the solitary painter, plaster casts were well suited to exemplify the subtleties of a painter’s work. In the 1620s, still life painters had begun to recognize the discursive value of plaster casts and prompted the inclusion of casts in more elaborate displays of painters’ tools in the 1640s and 50s by the likes of Luttichuys and Bailly. Concurrently, painters began to include plaster sculpture in even the most modest workspaces.

Jan de Heem, in his early Interior of a Painter’s Studio, paired a ruminating painter, who sits in front of a composition sketched on a panel, with an unusually large plaster cast (Fig. 3.40). The male nude, hunched forward with his arms wrapped around his head, is an Atlas that

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103 Drago, 77, 91. For casts formerly owned by Cornelisz. van Haarlem, see Chapter 1.
104 This drawing on blue paper is currently in a private collection. For a color reproduction, see Yeager-Crasselt, “Knowledge and Practice Pictured in the Artist’s Studio,” 193.
resembles a number of Venetian bronzes from the preceding century. The plaster cast, an enlargement of a small prototype, is reminiscent of the Hercules and Cacus that Dou would go on to use in his 1647 Artist in His Studio. The absence of documents enumerating the contents of these painters’ homes makes it difficult to know whether they owned these notably large casts, but their recurrence suggests that in the Netherlands there was a trade in enlarging, in plaster, sculptures initially conceived as small bronzes. De Heem’s description of a painter’s studio—spare but equipped with essentials—reflects the preoccupation in Leiden with the specificities of an artist’s working conditions. In De Heem’s take on the subject, the cast, lifeless yet toiling, is the counterpart to the quiet flesh-and-blood painter. De Heem has the cast embody a different attitude than the painter to hint at the valences of the artist’s experience, from contemplation to struggle, not only prior to but also during the creation of a painting.

In subsequent decades, Dutch artists gradually altered the characterization of the studio from a simple working environment to a more comfortable and hospitable space. A self-portrait in the Detroit Institute of Arts now attributed to Cornelis Bisschop shows an elegantly dressed painter sitting in a room with cracked, mostly bare walls and a shabby window (Fig. 3.4). These drab features are tempered by the Turkish carpet that covers the table, a much finer textile than the simple blue cloth laid over the table in De Heem’s Interior of a Painter’s Studio. The table is topped with objects familiar from early still lifes of decently furnished artists’ studios: a celestial globe, a skull, and loose sheets of paper, including a drawing on blue paper. The setting is far from luxurious, but less stark than the images of the same subject produced in the 1630s and 40s.

105 Fred G. Meijer, “Interior of a Painter’s Studio (cat. no. 4),” in Salomon Lillian: Old Masters 2020, auction catalogue (Amsterdam: Salomon Lillian, 2020), 32. Meijer also compares the cast to drawings by Tintoretto of an Atlas that seems to have been inspired by Michelangelo’s Slave Atlas for the tomb of Julius II. Scholten has also observed that this Atlas was frequently copied by silversmiths in Augsburg; see Frits Scholten, De bacchant en andere late werken van Adriaen de Vries (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2017).

106 Meijer, 24-25.
The painter seems to be more well-off even as he continues to present himself with palette and brushes in hand. On the easel behind him, a canvas—likely a history painting, judging by the turbaned man addressing a woman wearing a feathered headpiece—is in progress, while before him, a sheet of paper bears the initial strokes of a drawing, a short stick of charcoal at rest on top of it. Whether painting or drawing, this young man is busy with his work, yet dressed in a shiny coat rather than the dark tabbaard. His outstretched arms draw attention to his drawing and painting implements while revealing the details of his silk costume. The artist’s self-portrait thus mixes the advantages of portraiture—to present an idealized sitter in stylish attire—with the vernacular image of the laboring man. In refashioning the archetypes of the trades and vocations, the artist’s self-portrait attempts social ascent in visual form. The fact that the artist shows himself at work does not preclude him from claiming an elevated social status.

The plaster cast in the self-portrait attributed to Bisschop reinforces his identification first and foremost as a painter. Like the large cast in De Heem’s Interior of an Artist’s Studio, the plaster putto in the Detroit painting reconfigures the body of the painter. He extends his left hand, turning the palm up, while the fingers of his right hand look like they curl around the handle of a maulstick. This impression is an optical illusion: the maulstick rests against the wall behind the putto, its wooden handle only seeming to disappear into the putto’s right hand. The playful conjunction makes the putto a triumphant painter in miniature, the maulstick a scepter-like attribute of his profession. The two objects also reinforce the complementary activities

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107 A 1662 sartorial regulation proposed by a lawyer in Amsterdam indicates some of the relative freedom that painters enjoyed to wear the finer clothing normally reserved for social elites; it appears that “in the seventeenth century talented painters could break through the social stratification, with the result that established clothing conventions were less applicable to them.” De Winkel, Fashion and Fancy, 147.

108 Consider Rembrandt’s similar deployment of the maulstick in his 1658 Self-Portrait (oil on canvas, 133.7 x 103.8 cm) in the Frick Collection, New York (1906.1.97).
represented by the painter’s charcoal sketch and his palette and brushes. The plaster cast is most useful as an aid to drawing, whether for practice or for developing a composition, while the maulstick is essential for the stable application of paint. Finally, by setting the plaster putto in the foreground, the painter engages the notion of the *paragone*. The cast is so lifelike—that is, it so strongly resembles an actual plaster statuette—that it reinforces the three-dimensional space that culminates in the fictive edge of the stone niche.

The room in the Detroit *Artist in His Studio* is a workplace without indications of its relation to the painter’s abode, despite the fact that these spaces were more often than not one and the same. In the work of Quiringh van Brekelenkam, one of the most prolific visual chroniclers of industrious Dutch men and women, humble, orderly homes are sites for several trades, invoking positive moral judgments about the industrious tailor or shoemaker and his family (Fig. 3.36). Dutch painters themselves experienced the rise of the studio as a space within the home as they saw the gradual dissolution of the traditional workshop (even though the guild system remained in place). In the case of Van Musscher, in the later seventeenth century, this convergence allowed the painter to show off his professional activity and, simultaneously, his domestic space. Van Musscher earned his living primarily by making portraits of the wealthiest members of Amsterdam society. In his self-portraits, he applied to his own image the

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110 With the establishment of the studio as a private place of invention and new individual activities, “the workshop no longer depended on any specific architecture;” Cole and Pardo, “Origins of the Studio,” 35. Cole and Pardo outline the changing distinctions between a room for study and one for artistic creation in early modern Europe.
“newly stylish van Dyckian mode” that he, among others, developed in Amsterdam, which “allowed sitters to claim an elevated social identity.”

The 1679 Self-Portrait shows Van Musscher wearing a silk robe known as a Japonse rok, also listed in his 1705 inventory, a type of Japanese kimono imported by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and popularly worn at home. Van Musscher made portraits of prominent men, such as the VOC director and Amsterdam burgomaster Johannes Hudde, wearing a similar Japanese-style gown (Fig. 3.42). By then, there was a vogue for having one’s portrait done “in this manner of ‘undress’ as a way of demonstrating one’s elite social status”; by depicting himself in his purple satin Japonse rok, Van Musscher benefitted from its association with an affluent urban class. The garment choice further establishes that Van Musscher is in the comfort of his own home, again interweaving the portrayal of the working painter with imagery of domestic leisure. The Japanese-style robe became a frequent choice for Amsterdam painters, a kind of “successor of the tabbaard” given the convenient freedom of movement it allowed.

Van Musscher’s Self-Portrait effectively eliminates the distinction between home and studio, in part by demonstrating how suitable the objects in an artist’s possession can be to both types of spaces. Musical instruments are used in still life arrangements that the painter studies


113 Corrigan, Van Campen, Diercks, and Blyberg, 195.

114 De Winkel, “Rollenspel,” 158. According to De Winkel, a Japonse rok appears in the inventories of 21 Amsterdam artists taken after 1650.

115 This, along with the choice of the elaborate curtain to frame the artist, attests to the impact on Van Musscher of Vermeer’s The Art of Painting (1666), which “conflates home and studio” in “a supreme demonstration of
naer het leven, but they also hang decoratively in the sitting room, ready to be played in a merry social gathering. The painting in progress on the easel is destined to become a sumptuous collector’s item like the amorous pastoral scene in an ornate frame in the background. The plaster casts are most adaptable of all. Within the same picture, they are studio props and art objects, embedded in the still life yet echoed by the statuettes that adorn the painter’s home. In a virtuoso Self-Portrait made six years earlier, Van Musscher, again wearing his Japonse rok, surrounded himself with some of the treasures he reused later, namely the Serlio treatise, the celestial globe, and the intricately woven curtain, but not the plaster casts (Fig. 3.43). For the background, he chose a bare room clearly reserved for the work of painting, with an easel set by a window bearing an unfinished painting. The plaster casts that Van Musscher reintroduced into his 1679 Self-Portrait coincided with his decision to connect his physical and intellectual work as a painter to his stewardship of an elegant home. At the height of his career, Van Musscher confirms that the casts belong as much to the laboring craftsman as to the gentleman of leisure.

Pictura Outfitted

Painters’ self-representations asked patrons to witness them at various stages of work, in a format that created the illusion of a window into studios that were neither entirely private nor public. The subject of painting, which in the recent past had still been considered a simple mechanical craft, inspired images that became collectors’ modern objects of devotion, as intimate as portable altarpieces had once been. Frans van Mieris’s Pictura, painstakingly painted on a small sheet of copper, is personal and exceptional, equally precious in size and subject perspective;” H. Perry Chapman, “Johannes Vermeer,” in The Ashgate Companion to Dutch Art of the Seventeenth Century, ed. Wayne Franits (New York: Routledge, 2017), 247.

116 Gerhardt, 12. According to Gerhardt, the globe was engraved by Pieter van den Keere, after a design by Petrus Plancius, around 1625.
matter (Fig. 3.4). Diminutive brushstrokes cover a surface that measures a mere 12.7 by 8.9 centimeters, resulting in an image whose jewel-like colors and smooth finish immediately garnered admiration from no less an authority than Gerard de Lairesse. Prior to losing his eyesight around 1690, De Lairesse gazed upon Van Mieris’s *Pictura*—perhaps handling it himself—and put into words his reaction to it: “I never saw the like done by any other modern master, how skilful soever.”

*Pictura* reprises the artist’s studio in an allegorical form that newly admits the plaster cast into the suite of the painter’s attributes. A rosy-cheeked young woman, dressed in a robe that shimmers in tones of blue and red, turns her head to gaze steadfastly at the viewer. In her left hand she holds a clump of brushes as her thumb hooks onto a painter’s palette daubed with paint. Her right hand reaches up to finger the gold chain of a heavy necklace with a pendant, a beige mask embellished with thin black eyebrows. Nestled in the crook of her left arm is a plaster statuette of a man whose own left arm curls around his torso while his right arm hangs down and holds a circular shield against his side. The fastidious application of paint, characteristic of Van Mieris, makes possible an exacting description of minutiae, from the tips of each brush to the woman’s delicate pinching of the gold chain.

Van Mieris, like his teacher Dou, equipped the painters in his studio scenes with plaster casts, notably the *Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent* that he perhaps owned. His *Pictura* attests to the centrality of those casts in his practice and his conception of the art of painting. The prominent inclusion of the plaster statuette in the arms of this allegorical figure was Van Mieris’s invention. The most immediate source for Van Mieris’s *Pictura* was the frontispiece of the

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118 Buvelot, 148.
1644 edition of Ripa’s *Iconologia* (Fig. 3.45). There, Pictura is a woman dressed in a flowing robe of changing colors, with brushes clasped in both hands, and a cloth wrapped around her face to cover her mouth, and a mask hanging from a necklace. Ripa calls Pictura “a beautiful Woman, her hair loose… a gold chain around her neck, on which hangs a stagemask… She holds a Brush in one hand and a palette in the other, and she wears a shining robe.”\(^{119}\) Van Mieris not only omitted the figure’s mouth covering, thereby affording her a more naturalistic presence, he also determined that Pictura required another attribute representative of the work of painting.

The plaster statuette in Pictura’s arms depicts a muscular bearded man holding a shield, which suggest he is either Mars or Hercules. Scholten has identified it as a design by Artus Quellinus from his Amsterdam period, partly on the basis of its strong resemblance to a terracotta herm Quellinus made for a garden vase for the De Neufville family.\(^{120}\) That a Mars or Hercules by Quellinus would have been reproduced in plaster for wider availability is conceivable given the documented circulation of plaster casts of sculpture, especially portrait busts, made by Quellinus. As discussed in Chapter One, the marble bust of the pensionary Johan de Witt commissioned from Quellinus in 1665 entered the collections of the De Graeff family and their close friends in the form of plaster casts, while Quellinus’s busts of Amsterdam burgomasters were also a popular choice for reproduction in plaster.\(^{121}\) The Flemish sculptor’s profile was significantly augmented by the likenesses he made of esteemed statesmen and it stands to reason that this generated a market for other sculpture from his oeuvre. The plaster

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\(^{120}\) Frits Scholten, “*Een ijvore Mars van Francis*, de beeldsnijder Van Bossuit en de familie De la Court,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 47, no. 1 (1999), 32, n. 29.

\(^{121}\) Scholten, “Quellinus’s Burgomasters,” 112-116.
statuette after Quellinus in Van Mieris’s *Pictura* thus continues the trend of centering the work of Netherlandish sculptors in Dutch painters’ depictions of the tools fundamental to their work.

Buvelot proposed that the plaster Hercules or Mars “alludes to the age-old competition between the arts of painting and sculpture” and is “intended to enhance the scene’s antique ambience,” an understanding seemingly based on De Lairesse’s pronouncement that the scene is “so very beautiful and purely antique.” The invocation of the *paragone* coheres with the mask hanging around Pictura’s neck, an emblem of imitation that Van Mieris would have known well, not least through Ripa as well as Dou’s use of the Du Quesnoy *Children with a Goat* relief. If Pictura’s mask promises that a painting can deceive the eye, the plaster statuette invites comparison with sculpture as the principal way to evaluate the success of a painted illusion. But Van Mieris’s choice to make a plaster cast one of Pictura’s attributes is also rooted in a literal exploration of the painter’s supplies. The brushes in Pictura’s hand are highly individualized, of varying size and thickness, derived from firsthand experience rather than the abstract and generalized mode of an emblem. The palette, too, is specific, with seven distinct colors evenly laid out along one edge. In his *Self-Portrait* of 1667, Van Mieris repeated this arrangement of colors from light to dark that reflects both a personal method and a seemingly uniform custom among seventeenth-century painters (Fig. 3.46). Even the figure of Pictura herself results from a *naer het leven* approach: Van Mieris had his wife, Cunera van der Cock, pose for the painting. Van Mieris paints the plaster statuette, too, as if closely observed, careful to render

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124 Buvelot, 148. Cunera posed subsequently for several other compositions.
visible the seams across the figure’s right forearm and wrist that confirm its assembly from multiple pieces.

Van Mieris’s *Pictura* is an original contribution to the small seventeenth-century catalogue of visual representations of this allegorical figure, which initially emerged in the first half of the sixteenth century as an addition to existing personifications of the Liberal Arts.\(^{125}\) The earliest examples, namely the *Allegory of Painting* fresco in Giorgio Vasari’s house in Arezzo, show a woman holding only a palette and brushes (Fig. 3.47). After the publication of Ripa’s *Iconologia*, artists tended to adhere to Pictura’s distinguishing features laid out in the emblem book: the disheveled hair that signified divine frenzy, the gold chain with a mask pendant, and the covered mouth that stood for painting as silent poetry, as in the fresco of Pictura awakened by Cosimo II de Medici by Fabrizio Boschi in the Casino Mediceo.\(^{126}\) Closer to home for Van Mieris, Gerrit van Honthorst staged Pictura as a contemporary Dutch woman painting his likeness, in an attempt to meld his self-image with the personification of the abstract essence of painting (Fig. 3.48).\(^{127}\) Van Mieris, instead, personalized his Pictura not only by giving her the features of his wife, but also by equipping her with objects directly related to his own painterly feats. The choice of a heroic male figure for the statuette is also inventive because it inverts the standard visualization of beauty as a woman observed and depicted by a man.\(^{128}\)

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\(^{127}\) Garrard points out that this posed a pictorial problem for male artists, who could not themselves embody the allegory of painting because of their gender; Garrard, 104.

Pictura, gendered female by convention, wields an example of an idealized male body, a three-dimensional stand-in for the elusive living model, to be studied and relied upon in the making of the most admirable paintings.

Van Mieris commanded a formidable legacy as the head of a family of painters spanning three generations. His grandson, Frans van Mieris the Younger, paid tribute to his father, Willem, and his illustrious grandfather in 1742 in a triple portrait, *The Three Generations of the Van Mieris Family* (Fig. 3.49). Van Mieris the Younger included his deceased namesake by displaying a framed drawing of Van Mieris the Elder alongside Arnold Houbraken’s *Groote schouburgh*, open to the page that featured his likeness in an engraving based on the drawing (Fig. 3.50). Willem turns his head in the direction of the portraits of his father, while Frans the Younger points emphatically at the engraving in Houbraken. The three painters are presented as a unit whose bonds depend not only on their familial identity but also on the materials, techniques, and profession they share. As the author of this picture, Frans the Younger holds the brushes and palette, which, dotted with globs of paint judiciously distributed to be handled with individual brushes, is characteristic of the meticulous method advocated by the eldest Van Mieris. Willem has a sheet of paper in his lap unrolled just enough to show a drawing of a raised hand and a head turned almost to full profile. Between father and son lie other sources of study and inspiration: a large landscape print, an album of drawings and prints, and the shining example of Frans van Mieris.

The living painters have come together in a room outfitted for the work of a painter, with an easel set next to a window to maximize the use of natural light and shelves bedecked with plaster casts. Willem, while training with his father, may have drawn from casts like the *Hercules Wrestling with the Serpent* and the plaster Hercules or Mars after Quellinus that seemed
to have at the very least passed through Van Mieris’s studio. In any case, Willem went on to be a
keen observer of sculpture and plaster casts as a master painter himself. In 1694, he, along with
Jacob Toorenvliet and Carel de Moor, founded a drawing academy in Leiden, for which they
amassed a collection of plaster casts of ancient statues and fragments thereof.129 Around the turn
of the eighteenth century, Willem turned his attention to contemporary sculpture: he made highly
finished and colored drawings of classicizing sculptures by the contemporary Flemish sculptor
Francis van Bossuit, whose excellent reputation in Amsterdam, beginning around 1680,
benefitted from his previous study of ancient sculpture in Rome.130 Some of Willem’s most
important patrons owned examples of Van Bossuit’s work, a number of which were casts; Pieter
and Allard de la Court alone had twelve plaster casts after van Bossuit originals in Leiden, and it
is possible that Willem used these for his drawings.131

Willem seemingly also kept plaster casts in his own studio, not only in the cabinets of the
Leiden drawing academy. The German art lover Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, who visited
Willem in 1711, noted in his travel book that the Leiden master must have had many in his
private possession.132 These were the most likely to end up in the studio of his son Frans van
Mieris the Younger, and in fact the casts in the background of The Three Generations suggest as

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129 Aono, “Ennobling Daily Life,” 244; Abraham Bredius and W. Martin, “Nieuwe bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van
het Leidsche St. Lucasgilde,” Oud Holland 22 (1904): 121-128, 177-194; P. J. Blok, “Ars Aemula Naturae,”
Willem van Mieris tot Cornet,” in Leids Kunstlegaat: kunst en historie rondom Ars Aemula Natura, ed. R. E. O.
Ekkart et al. (Leiden, 1974), 7-35; and Sluijter, Enklaar, and Nieuwenhuizen, 31-33.

130 Aono, “Ennobling Daily Life,” 244. For Willem’s drawings, see E. Elen-Clifford Kocq van Breugel, “Sculpturen
van Francis van Bossuit getekend door Willem van Mieris,” Delineavit et Sculpsit 8 (1992): 12-24, and A. J. Elen,
“Ongemeen uitvoerig op perkament mep sapverven behandeld’: de gekleurde tekeningen van Willem van Mieris uit

131 Aono, “Ennobling Daily Life, 244.” See also Allard de la Court’s 1749 inventory of sculptures, Inventaris van het
Familiearchief De la Court, access number NL-LdnRAL-0023, inventory number 118, Erfgoed Leiden.

132 Von Uffenbach, 423-424.
much. The room in which the triple portrait is set, in all likelihood, was the studio of the youngest Van Mieris, as the then 80-year-old Willem was no longer active by 1742. One of the plaster casts on the top shelf had served Willem as a model for the crouching dog in a number of his genre pictures (Fig. 3.51).\textsuperscript{133} Below it, a Cupid repeats the type of plaster cast that Van Mieris the Elder depicted hanging from the ceiling in his \textit{Artist’s Studio} (Fig. 3.6), while the cast beside it, a reduction of the famous Belvedere torso, signals the family’s knowledge of the most canonical works of antiquity. The kinds of fragments and casts of extremities that Willem drew from and used in the Leiden academy are also here, hanging on the adjacent wall: a cast of a head in profile and a small left arm, possibly cast from life and humorously repeating the pointing finger of Van Mieris the Younger in the foreground of the picture.

It is the plaster cast on the shelf partially hidden behind the green curtain that most amplifies the working process of the three Van Mieris painters. This one, too, recalls Willem’s past relationship with plaster casts. A standing female nude with a long cloth wrapped partially around her bent left leg and held in both hands, this cast resembles the \textit{Venus and Cupid} after Van Bossuit that Willem composed in black chalk (Fig. 3.52), which he used “to develop ideal forms for figures in his history paintings,” such as his \textit{Bathsheba} from 1708 (Fig. 3.53).\textsuperscript{134} In the triple portrait, Van Mieris the Younger has followed suit. The plaster cast of the standing female nude is the source for the painting set on the easel, which depicts Venus, accompanied by Cupid, in a similar stance, her left leg bent and a blue cloth decorously wrapped around her upper thigh. Through this painting, the plaster cast also relates to the drawing in Willem’s lap. The sheet shows the initial renderings of the head and hand of the Venus in the painting. It also completes

\textsuperscript{133} Aono, “Ennobling Daily Life,” 244 n. 32. Aono recognized this connection with the assistance of Peter Hecht.

\textsuperscript{134} Aono, “Ennobling Daily Life,” 245-246.
the truncated image of the plaster cast in the background, whose head is obscured by the curtain. Plaster cast, drawing, and painting are inextricably related variations on the same subject. This relationship across the triple portrait offers subtle insights into the steps taken by the painter—in this case, Van Mieris the Younger—to achieve a carefully planned, idealized classical subject. This type of painting is the product of a measured approach developed over the course of several generations.

*The Three Generations* enlists the studio and the tools therein to communicate the admiration the youngest Van Mieris felt for his father and grandfather and to express their affinity with one another. It is comparable to portraits of friendship that emerged in the later seventeenth century as visual declarations of mutual regard between like-minded men. The *Double Portrait* made collaboratively by the academicians Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne and Nicolas de Plattemontagne in 1654 is a case in point (Fig. 3.54). The artists depicted each other in a shared studio, where Champaigne is busy sketching while Plattemontagne has set down his brushes and loaded palette. On the shelf behind them, plaster casts, including the bust of the Pseudo-Seneca, hint at their education and cultivation of essential skills. The red chalk drawing on the table shows the bottom half of a standing, barefoot figure in a draped garment, with one foot at rest and the other lifted slightly as if poised to take a step. Its strong resemblance to the plaster statuette (also only half visible) next to the Pseudo-Seneca attests to the role of the cast in the artistic process. The statuette has been moved and observed from multiple angles to aid in the creation of a new image. Part of the intimacy of this painting comes from each artist’s decision to contribute a portrait a portrait of the other and to disguise the distinctions between their

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135 Hannah Williams explores the multiple narratives of creation made available in this double portrait, including the way Plattemontagne’s body, in front of the easel, takes the place of a canvas and becomes the work of art created by Champaigne. See Williams, *Académie Royale: A History in Portraits* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 218.

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individual hands. But the setting and the tools around them also bear witness to the training and the practices through which they so closely relate. Van Mieris’s *Three Generations* similarly invites the viewer to see the studio and its contents as physical reminders of the bonds between the three painters, determined as much by blood as by artistic inclination.

**The Distinguished Dutch Painter**

Seventeenth-century Dutch painters depicted the plaster casts they lived and worked with in images that encapsulated the skill-building and acquisition of knowledge that went on in the painter’s studio. Plaster casts added layers of meaning to paintings that could otherwise slip into banality, with their modest subjects rendered so naturalistically. Because plaster casts drew upon issues and ideas that enlivened discourses taking place outside the studio, they carried weightier associations than the tools exclusive to the painter. Plaster casts ushered into the studio the world beyond its walls. It is essential to note that the majority of the painters in question never left the Netherlands to visit Italy. The casts in their pictures were not evidence of a real journey to the south but rather confirmation that Dutch painters could learn from ancient and modern masters from home.

Dutch painters also uniquely used plaster casts to distinguish themselves. Though Italian painters also consistently worked with plaster casts, they seldom included them in their paintings. In fact, even the sight of the painter amid the contents of a studio was unusual. Michelangelo Cerquozzi’s sinister *Self-Portrait with Model in the Studio* (ca. 1640-1646) is among the rare examples, and it incidentally contrasts the model posing for the painter with a

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136 Williams compares this to Montaigne’s ideal of friendship, “a philosophical exercise constructed as a personal portrayal.” Williams, 215-217.

137 A notable exception is Lavinia Fontana’s 1579 *Self-Portrait in a Studio* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence).
plaster bust of a putto at Cerquozzi’s feet.\textsuperscript{138} Living models and ancient statues were more readily available to seventeenth-century Italian painters than they were to their Dutch fellows. There was, perhaps, little urgency to claim familiarity with these sources of inspiration precisely because they were more commonplace, especially in Rome. Images such as Pietro Francesco Alberti’s \textit{An Academy of Painters} (Fig. 3.55), set in a room that does house plaster casts, were primarily intended as didactic visualizations of the training available at art academies, a type of institution that only began to form in the Netherlands in the late seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{139} The labors of the greatest Italian painters were more often encapsulated by devotional and history paintings than by self-referential images of the processes through which these pictures came into being. Dutch painters, by contrast, put their studios on display in order to proclaim the range of skills they commanded and the efforts these required. Plaster casts were powerful indicators of the education and discipline of Dutch painters, the cornerstones of the success they enjoyed domestically and sometimes even internationally. Their study of antiquities was not a foregone conclusion, but one explicitly asserted through the casts in their paintings. Moreover, plaster casts boasted these painters’ knowledge of modern inventions by their countrymen and put Netherlandish ingenuity firmly at the heart of their everyday reality.

\textsuperscript{138} The painting (oil on canvas, 51 x 42.5 cm) is in the collection of the Uffizi, Florence (180 n. 10721). For an analysis of the relationship between painter and model in this painting, see Elizabeth Cropper, “Michelangelo Cerquozzi’s Self-Portrait: The Real Studio and the Suffering Model,” in \textit{Ars naturam adiuvans: Festschrift fur Matthias Winner zum 11. Marz 1996}, ed. Victoria V. Flemming and Sebastian Schutze (Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zabern, 1996), 401-412. Cropper points out that the putto may be a joking reference to a popular anecdote about the miserly Cerquozzi hiding money in the cavity of a plaster head.

Chapter 4:

To Touch and Turn: The Plaster Cast and the Draftsman’s Line

“Colour and light are objects of sight alone… Drawing… is an object of touch as well.”

- Roger de Piles

From ink and wash and white chalk highlights, bodies materialize. Abraham Bloemaert’s drawing, which would eventually become the design for the frontispiece of the *Tekenboek* published in 1650, is a tête-a-tête between a young man and the world of shapes—fragmentary and whole, obeying no consistent scale—that vie for a place among his sketches (Fig. 4.1). For Bloemaert’s draftsman, the human body contains multitudes, a wide array of forms to be closely observed and recapitulated in two dimensions by means of pen and ink. In the space of a single room, this draftsman has his pick of parts to study—a huge foot, a woman’s head, a left leg with its muscles articulated—but he has elected to set himself up in front of an oversized man, reclining and nude. This situation depends not on the presence of living models but on a collection of plaster casts, among them the large sculpture of the reclining man. Cast and draftsman face each other, ontologically different but visually reminiscent of one another. The young man, clothed and seated upright, extends his legs out on the floor in front of him, knees slightly bent, one leg crossed over the other at the ankles. The truncated legs of the older man are similarly bent as he leans backward. The draftsman gazes, absorbed, at the cast, which seems to offer itself to him, the older man’s body unfolded and suspended in an expressive pose. They interact and commune, though one of them is entirely inanimate.

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In reality, for the early modern draftsman, the plaster cast was rarely stationary. It was meant to be moved, to be touched and turned, repositioned and seen anew. Plaster casts were indeed stand-ins for sculptures considered to be among the great works of human creation, but they were also decidedly not those sculptures, to the benefit of the individuals who worked with them. Drawing from plaster casts invites the involvement of the hands—not merely in the metaphorical sense of style, and in the literal sense of the fingers that hold the crayon, but also in the haptic sense, in that the draftsman is free to manipulate the cast as he or she saw fit. The resulting sketches transport the plaster cast’s subject into the two-dimensional realm and, in so doing, connect the crafts of the sculptor and the painter. By the end of the seventeenth century, this singular mediation occurred through the activity of professional artists and their pupils as well as elite amateurs who availed themselves of increasing opportunities to learn to draw.

The marks made by the amateur are the essential precursors to the elaborate drawings that, to the modern art historian, constitute legitimate objects of study. The latter have never existed without the clumsiness of those initial lines. We recognize in finished drawings the tour-de-force of singular inspiration and style, yet the exploratory strokes set down on paper by the individual still learning to translate three dimensions into two are no less idiosyncratic or personal. The moment of the student sitting before the plaster cast, willing her hand to move her chalk over and over again, is one that we easily, even willfully, forget, or bypass with the simple acknowledgment that it may have occurred during the course of an artist’s training. What happens when we linger there? We have collectively opted not to because we silently agree that it is largely inconsequential, in light of what unfolds later—for the artists for whom there is a “later.” I attend to this phase of the draftsman’s development precisely with the intention of
foregoing a strict distinction between artists and amateurs who did not make their living through their art, given that they all had to endure comparable trials in order to improve and advance.

For early modern artists, mastery of the drawn line was epitomized in Pliny’s story of the ancient painter Apelles, who executed a line so precise and extremely delicate (\textit{linea summae tenuatis}) upon a blank panel that it served to identify him unmistakably to his fellow painter Protogenes.\textsuperscript{2} The relationship between drawing and supreme virtuosity has been duly delineated in art historical scholarship, particularly when it concerns artists who were prolific draftsmen. My inquiry here engages exactly the opposite: the absence of virtuosity, the drawn line that is \textit{not} astonishingly precise. Those imperfections confer individuality to the amateur’s line, conspicuous not for its achievement but for its expression of limited skill. It seems self-evident by now that the drawn line doubles as the artist’s autograph, as in the case of Apelles; as David Rosand put it, “His basic handwriting, his \textit{ductus}, became his signature in the most immediate way, a graphic declaration of the presence of a particular person.”\textsuperscript{3} Yet the work of the inexpert hand also declares the presence of an individual, with the same immediacy and indexicality we ascribe to the marks of an established master. Drawings after plaster casts reanimate the artists who aspired to create images that might represent them or, at the very least, the skills they cultivated.

Though relatively few drawings from plaster casts from the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic survive, paintings that depict a draftsman with his attention fixed on plaster casts suggests that Dutch painters recognized the significance and regularity of that encounter. As I argued in the previous chapter, Dutch painters distinctively chose to present themselves in their

\textsuperscript{2} Pliny, XXXV.81-83.

studios accompanied by plaster casts, to articulate aspects of their artistic personae, their
lineages, and their dispositions. This chapter turns to another set of images, in which plaster casts
are explicitly staged as interlocutors with a human actor. As early as the 1630s, Dutch painters
developed a type of image that evinced yet another facet of their generative relationship with
plaster casts: the scene of the solitary draftsman studying or drawing from plaster casts. These
paintings are a further demonstration of the processes associated with artistic creation in the
seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, with a specific focus on drawing as a fundamental skill.
The draftsman is shown in close proximity to casts, which become entities with the potential for
animation as the draftsman attempts to render a convincing human body on paper. The creators
of these paintings return the viewer to a moment that many of them experienced and a practice to
which most artists at some point devoted significant time. My focus on these depictions resists
previous assumptions, based on the dearth of extant drawings, that some Dutch painters did not
draw regularly. This position is still too common: in a recent catalogue of Dutch drawings, one
art historian remarked,

“Frans Hals, Jan Steen, Pieter de Hooch, Willem Heda, Pieter Claesz., Johannes
Verspronck, these are well-known names in most collections of seventeenth-
century Dutch paintings. They are, however, completely absent in collections of
drawings. Doubtless, many drawings have been lost through time, but it is highly
unlikely that the drawing oeuvres of these artists would have vanished without a
trace. Some artists simply did not make drawings.”

The choice to pictorialize the act of drawing conveys that Dutch painters were in fact deeply
invested in those skills as a foundation for artistic practice.

This chapter begins with a major phenomenon that forms a crucial context for the
relevance of plaster casts to those inclined towards the arts: the drawing books that appeared in

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the Dutch Republic throughout the seventeenth century. Plaster casts make only brief appearances in these texts, which further suggests that casts were intended for the advanced student of drawing, whose proficiency made the two-dimensional models in drawing books less and less instructive. To establish some of the ways in which plaster casts were handled by draftsmen of sufficient ability, I return briefly to art theorists who were widely read in the period and who offered recommendations for how to arrange casts for drawing practice. The often practical advice these texts volunteer further suggests a wider imagined audience for didactic drawing materials, inclusive of amateurs who were not training to be professional artists. The chapter then turns to paintings that show single individuals studying or drawing from plaster casts, to discern and interrogate the heightened intimacy these images convey. In conjunction with these, paintings of young students learning from a master painter reveal seventeenth-century perspectives on what an artistic education entailed in the Dutch Republic. Relatedly, I survey the presence of plaster casts in both informal and institutionalized drawing schools, where they served both as markers of the magnanimity of elite *liefhebbers* who gave them as charitable donations and also as models for drawing sessions, which were sometimes public. Additionally, this chapter explores how women feature among the enterprising practitioners in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century, in part due to the increasing promotion of drawing as a polite activity or pastime.

The chapter culminates in a close reading of several early modern drawings made from casts, in an aim to recapture in part the experience of the amateur draftsman. Given the paucity of surviving drawings from the period by the hand of full-fledged artists, it is not surprising that the sketches of non-artists—those who practiced drawing for edification and leisure—have also disappeared. Instead, I access the amateur’s acts of learning through drawings made by two
individuals who were each ensconced in the milieu of professional artists, at moments when they each were still acquiring foundational drawing skills. In their attempts to improve their rendering of volumetric forms, amateurs gradually and painstakingly stretch their abilities and thereby, I argue, envision a future version of themselves. I give weight to the multiple temporalities immanent in these drawings and recognize not only the arduous task of learning that is registered in the amateur’s line, but also the imperfect responses to sculpture from the distant past that the drawings make available to the modern beholder.

**Sculpture in Two Dimensions**

It is nearly inconceivable that drawings made by Dutch painters in the seventeenth century have survived in numbers that so radically diverge from indications to their abundance in the historical record. Marijn Schapelhouman, for example, has noted that, though the inventory of Jan van de Cappelle counted over 2,000 drawings at the time of his death in 1679, more than 700 of which were his own, only some twenty drawings today are attributed to him.⁵ Though there are many explanations that can be leveled at this sizable loss, a sparing or intermittent drawing practice among Dutch painters cannot be among them. Still, the relative scarcity of drawings extant today has prompted questions among modern scholars about whether drawing was as foundational to theory and practice in Northern Europe as it was in Italy. This uncertainty is exacerbated by the lack of formalized academies of art for most of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, where the few institutions of the sort that did exist were not as robustly organized as their counterparts in places like Rome and Florence.⁶ Though Dutch artists and

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⁵ Marijn Schapelhouman, “Gabriel Metsu’s Rare Drawings,” in Adriaan Waiboer et al., *Gabriel Metsu* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 181.

⁶ For the issue of the academic tradition in the Low Countries, see Yeager-Crasselt, *Michael Sweerts.*
theorists did not produce extensive literature to rival the discourse on *disegno* in early modern Italy, drawing was demonstrably essential to their conception of artistic development.\(^7\) Samuel van Hoogstraten, for one, unequivocally declared drawing to be indispensable to any artist who seeks distinction: “Anyone who wants to master the art of painting must proceed through the art of drawing, and must do so all the more carefully as it is an old and general opinion that there are more painters who are deficient in drawing than in applying colors.”\(^8\) The pages that follow complement the scholarship that has taken seriously the efforts Dutch and Flemish painters dedicated to drawing as an essential component of their process.\(^9\) The essays in the recent catalogue for the exhibition *Rubens, Rembrandt, and Drawing in the Golden Age*, organized by Victoria Sancho Lobis, have been an indispensable entry into this scholarship, but even therein, drawing practice is related largely to artists with extensive painted oeuvres or ties to Italy.\(^10\) My focus, instead, is on the occurrence of more mundane and routine drawing acts, the ones that resulted in the run-of-the-mill sketches that have mostly not come down to us, undertaken by practitioners mostly at initial stages of the learning process with plaster casts for instruction.

Dutch artists’ intentional recognition of plaster casts as objects worth making into an image constitutes an essential piece of the history of drawing in the Netherlands. Plaster casts

\(^{7}\) Even in the context of early modern Italy, where *disegno* as a discourse can be matched to a substantial corpus of drawings that affirm it, scholars have sometimes struggled to understand how drawing fit into a painter’s practice. For a critical example of an intervention into this historiography, see David Rosand, “The Crisis of the Venetian Tradition,” *L’arte* 3, no. 11 (1970): 5-53.

\(^{8}\) Brusati, *Introduction to the Academy of Painting*, 80. Van Hoogstraten, 26: “Die tot de Schilderkonst wil geraken, door de Teykenkonst moet opklimmen, en dies te omzichtiger, vermits het oud en algemeen gevoelen is, datter meer Schilders zijn, die ‘t aan ‘t wel teykenen, als aen ‘t wel koloreeren gebreekt.”

\(^{9}\) For the importance of preparatory drawings and preliminary studies for Dutch painters, see Ger Luijten, Peter Schatborn, Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. et al., *Drawings for Paintings in the Age of Rembrandt* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2016).

\(^{10}\) See, for example, “The Imperative of Italy,” in Lobis, 82-109.
provided one means to practice drawing at an advanced level, after initial exercises that involved copying compositions from paintings and prints. Italian art academies were equipped with these models for apprentices to study, and, though formal schools such as these did not exist in most Dutch cities until the eighteenth century, individuals in the Republic relied on similar procedures to progress in the art of drawing. Practitioners, from artists-in-training to amateurs, had ample two-dimensional material to work from as beginners before they moved on to the new challenges posed by three-dimensional models such as plaster casts.

The preoccupation with the cultivation of drawing abilities finds one expression in the proliferation of drawing books in the seventeenth century, which made available basic models and instructions for artists and art-lovers alike. One of the earliest drawing manuals produced in the Dutch Republic was published by Johannes Janssonius in Amsterdam in 1636, a short treatise addressed to beginners and amateurs written by a poet named Cornelis Pietersz. Biens.11 Already in the 1630s, humanists in the Republic recognized a potential audience of hopeful practitioners of the art of drawing. Though he showed little interest in ancient sculpture as models from which to learn, Biens focused on recommendations that reveal a fascination, on the part of a man of letters, with practical concerns for drawing students. In one section of the treatise, he provides instructions for building one’s own wooden mannequin to draw from, a further indication that his treatise was meant to be a useful resource, if not a complete substitute for instruction from a master painter.12 The emergence of drawing manuals for a broader audience can be understood


12 De Klerck, 32-33.
as a means for individuals of all sorts to foster moral behavior and to regulate the self through a set of diligent exercises.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1643 and 1644, the engraver Crispijn van de Passe published \textit{Van ’t Licht der Teken en Schilderkonst}, an illustrated book that featured drawing examples alongside short explanatory texts. Jaap Bolten has called it “both the most ambitiously conceived and also the most complete of the Dutch and Flemish drawing books,” comprised of “the old-fashioned, scientifically oriented style of instruction with the more modern academic tradition originating in Italy.”\textsuperscript{14} Van de Passe combined information and illustrations from multiple sources with established structures from sixteenth-century art manuals to create a substantial volume with a wide array of images for his reader to study, learn from, and copy.\textsuperscript{15} This expansiveness suggests a diverse intended audience: in the preface, presented in four languages, Van de Passe advocates for the usefulness of drawing in all manner of endeavors, not only among professional artists.\textsuperscript{16} Van de Passe conceived of the book as a resource to nourish the aspiring draftsman, including those who cannot afford official training: “a work with which common people, who do not have the power to let their children enjoy an education with a master for long, can help themselves without expense, and from which you can derive pleasant nourishment.”\textsuperscript{17} His readers followed his


\textsuperscript{14} Jaap Bolten, \textit{Method and Practice: Dutch and Flemish Drawing Books, 1600-1750} (Landau: PVA, 1985), 47.

\textsuperscript{15} For an overview of the manuals that served as precedents and sources for Van de Passe, see Jaya Remond, “Artful Instruction: Pictorializing and Printing Artistic Knowledge in Early Modern Germany,” \textit{Word & Image} 36 no. 2 (2020): 101-134.

\textsuperscript{16} Crispijn van de Passe, \textit{Van ’t Licht der Teken en Schilderkonst} (Amsterdam, 1643-1644), unpaginated introduction. Remond observes that Van de Passe even suggests that knowing how to draw well can serve one’s military exploits; see Remond, “Artful Instruction,” 120.

\textsuperscript{17} “Een werck daar mee de gemeene lieden, die de macht niet hebben om hun kinderen lang het onderwijs van een Meester te laten genieten, de zelve zonder onkosten kunnen voorthelpen, en daar yder een zeer aengenaam voedzel kan uit zuygen.” Van de Passe, unpaginated introduction.
prompts and availed themselves of the models he presented, as the evidence of pricking in surviving copies of the book can attest to.\textsuperscript{18}

The frontispiece of Van de Passe’s book shows plaster casts arranged on a shelf in the background, behind the armored figure of Minerva (Fig. 4.2). The open book on her lap bears Pliny’s oft-cited dictum: \textit{nulle dies sine linea}.\textsuperscript{19} The casts, lit dramatically by her torch, promote and serve the aspiration to never go a day without drawing. Though the text of the drawing manual does not explicitly address the draftsman’s use of plaster casts, the plates give good reason to believe that Van de Passe worked from plaster casts for at least some of the illustrations.\textsuperscript{20} One of the casts that appears on the frontispiece, a statuette of a rearing horse, corresponds to a plate in the fifth part of the manual, on drawing animals, which shows a similar horse, in naturalistic detail that gives the impression of a study from life (Fig. 4.3). Van de Passe also reproduces, in Part Two, the \textit{Écorché} by Willem van Tetrode, which he most likely saw as a plaster cast, given its appearance as such in contemporaneous paintings (Fig. 4.4).\textsuperscript{21} The figure’s blank eyes further suggest that the main source for the image was a plaster version of the well-known anatomical model. According to the introduction to the book, Van de Passe had trained “in a famous drawing school which was, at that time, overseen by the most eminent masters,” which refers to the informal academy founded in Utrecht by Abraham Bloemaert and Paulus


\textsuperscript{19} For this topos in textual accounts of artistic practice, see Deanna Petherbridge, \textit{The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 212.

\textsuperscript{20} Van de Passe does include a brief section, in Part Four, on a different sort of model: the wooden mannequin (\textit{leeman}). He cites its usefulness for drawing clothing, which he says is more easily done with a mannequin than with a live model, who cannot hold a pose for too long and therefore moves too much for the purposes of studying the fall of drapery. The text is accompanied by three plates that show a clothed mannequin, seated and standing.

\textsuperscript{21} For a selection of these, see Chapter 3. See also the catalogue in Appendix B.
Moreelse.\textsuperscript{22} This means there is a strong likelihood that Van de Passe learned to draw partly with plaster casts, considering the endorsement of their use in the compositions Bloemaert prepared for what would become a drawing book.

The \textit{Tekenboek} published by Frederik Bloemaert around 1650 in Utrecht translated his father Abraham’s preparatory drawings into copperplate engravings, assembled as a set of examples through which an apprentice could learn to draw the human body as well as an assortment of animals.\textsuperscript{23} Abraham Bloemaert is an exceptional figure in the history of early modern Dutch art in that his drawing oeuvre is better preserved than that of most of his contemporaries, which affords historians the chance to chart the development of his style inclusive of his faults and shortcomings.\textsuperscript{24} It is fitting that within this corpus lie drawings Bloemaert envisioned as pedagogical, an invitation for young students to do as he himself did—draw prodigiously and regularly—throughout his life. His own progression as a draftsman had occurred partly through the study of other artists’ compositions.\textsuperscript{25} The drawings he prepared for the \textit{Tekenboek} represent a panoply of subjects, from full figures to studies of discrete limbs or extremities, each of which manifests Bloemaert’s individual representational strategies. Most of the contents of the \textit{Tekenboek} seem to be the result of Bloemaert’s firsthand observations, based on living models rather than plaster casts. Yet he included among them two images of a young man drawing from casts, which each became frontispieces in editions of the \textit{Tekenboek}. The

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\textsuperscript{22} “Ik… in een vermaarde Teekenschool die op dien tijt van de voornaemste meesters wiert gehouden heb gegaan.” Van de Passe, unpaginated introduction. For the Utrecht academy, see Marcel G. Roethlisberger and Maerten Jan Bok, \textit{Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints} (Doornspijk: Duvaco, 1993).
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\textsuperscript{23} Bolten, \textit{Method and Practice}, 67.
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\textsuperscript{25} Bolten, \textit{Abraham Bloemaert}, 8.
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graphite, ink, and wash drawing with which this chapter opens served as the title page of the book’s first edition in 1650 and again in subsequent editions (Fig. 4.5). The second drawing of a draftsman in front of several casts appeared as the frontispiece of the book’s eighth part in the edition published around 1685, and as the frontispiece of the fourth part in 1723 (Fig. 4.6). The draftsman in each image has, in theory, advanced from copying the very images arrayed in Bloemaert’s book to working from three-dimensional models. The two depictions of a pupil at this stage in his training are unique in the Tekenboek. They suggest to the reader a goal to aspire to and an appealing consequence of the attention and hard work which the Tekenboek is intended to direct.

Other texts from the period center on sculpture as the primary model for the draftsman and provide additional context for the position of plaster casts in the recommended sequence for learning to draw. In 1669 and 1671, the lawyer-turned-artist Jan de Bisschop published two pedagogical volumes, the Signorum veterum icones and Paradigmata graphics variorum arificium, respectively, that presented etchings after famous works of art. The Icones assembles mainly ancient sculpture as ideal models for drawing students, while the Paradigmata brings together mostly reproductions of compositions by Italian and Netherlandish masters for artists and collectors to study and enjoy. De Bisschop must have known the compendium of ancient sculpture first published in 1638 by François Perrier, the Segmenta nobelium signorum et statuarum, and seemed intent to improve upon it in the Icones. The result was a compilation of

26 Bolten, Method and Practice, 72.


28 Van Gelder and Jost, 52.
etchings done from drawings by other artists that documented famous sculptures “in their actual states” from direct observation. De Bisschop, like Perrier, presented multiple views of many of the sculptures in the Icones, a choice that reinforces the notion that sculpture ought to be studied and drawn from more than one angle. The Icones was thus both a catalogue of information about ancient sculpture and a model book for amateurs. With its publication, De Bisschop, himself a dilettante, helped promote drawing in humanistic circles.

On an entirely different end of the spectrum, Willem Goeree’s *Inleydinge tot de Algemeene Teycken-konst* (1668) provided instruction in the art of drawing through a detailed textual overview rather than through didactic images. According to Michael Kwakkelstein, Goeree found existing drawing books lacking, especially Van de Passe’s, and believed that they proposed a sort of slavish imitation that could not benefit drawing students. In response, Goeree explains in great detail the correct steps necessary to learn to draw, with the aim to reach, eventually, the stage at which the student can draw from the live model. Goeree included a visual summary of this well-established sequence on the title page of the 1705 edition of the Inleyding tot de algemeene teycken-konst (Fig. 4.7). The composition clearly separates the plaster body parts, hung on the wall behind the easel that bears the book’s title, from the live model, who poses in a room visible through an archway. Jacobus Baptist’s frontispiece, after a design by Goeree, illustrates the order of operations that Goeree advocates, from the young boys who study the proportions of the head from a print to the older student with a drawing board who has to practice from casts before he can be invited to the life drawing session.

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29 Van Gelder and Jost, 57.
30 Kwakkelstein, 29.
31 At both stages—copying from two-dimensional images and from plaster casts—students of drawing practiced rendering individual body parts. For the popularity of models of discrete body parts, including outside the context of artistic training, see Möller, 157-167.
As Goeree takes the reader on a comprehensive journey through the process of learning to draw, he considers in detail the reasons for and benefits of working with plaster casts. Goeree explains why plaster casts build upon the skills practiced in the first and second step of the learning process. He calls drawing from plaster casts more challenging ("swaerder") than drawing from paintings, because volume, light, and shadow are not already clearly delineated on a plaster cast as they are in a painting. That is, the draftsman must observe and replicate for himself the contours of three-dimensional shapes, rather than copy a volumetric shape already translated into two dimensions. To this end, Goeree offers a few helpful tricks, such as hanging a small lead weight in front of a plaster cast to see its shapes more easily and to map them onto a drawing sheet also marked with a vertical line (to be erased later). In the fifth chapter, he emphasizes that to draw from a three-dimensional object, the draftsman must sit at an appropriate distance—not too close, about three times further than the size of the model, if it is large—and choose the proper lighting, and even temper it to construct different kinds of shadows. His objective is again to compel the draftsman to understand that contours and shadows will be more or less sharply defined depending on the viewing conditions, effects best observed directly through use of plaster casts and other models in the round. Daylight, the preferable type of lighting, must be softened if it enters the room from the south, through the use of an oiled paper or linen sheet laid upon the window, which has the added advantage of casting a more uniform light. Goeree remarks that some prefer to draw at night by the light of a candle or

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32 “Soo is oock het Teyckenen na Playster, swaerder als na de Schilderye, om dat men in het Playster de wissigheydt van de om-trecken, noch de bepalinge van licht en schaduwe daer in niet en siet soodanigh aangewesen, als men wel in een Schildery ofte Teyckeninge doet.” Goeree, 15-16.

33 Schatborn, *Dutch Figure Drawings*, 20.

34 “Dan soo verkiest u eene bequame Distantie, voor al niet te dicht, set u in ’t gemeen dry-mael so over van ’t geen ghy na volghen wilt, als het groot is.” Goeree, 26.
an oil lamp, but warns that these lighting conditions yield hard, sharp shadows, though these can also be softened by placing an oiled paper between the light and the model.\textsuperscript{35}

Theorists like Gerard de Lairesse and Samuel van Hoogstraten, who devoted the bulk of their treatises to the art of painting, nevertheless felt compelled to dispense instructions for proper approaches to drawing. Their advice often concerns practical considerations about what to draw and how to execute it, with an emphasis on the skills that may be acquired. De Lairesse mentions working from a plaster bust in the light of a candle or lamp in a discussion about the importance of consistent illumination in creating a portrait: “To hit upon the likeness well… there is no better means as the following: namely, to take a fine plaster face, either of a man or a woman… and make use [of it]… with the kind of light necessary for the whole concept, whether right or left, in front of or behind, candle or lamp.”\textsuperscript{36}

In his \textit{Inleyding tot de hooghe school der schilderkonst}, Van Hoogstraten recommended, “Sit straight and upright and also hold your paper or sketchbook with your left hand at an angle so that you do not have to raise your eye and head much when looking up.”\textsuperscript{37} He goes on to emphasize the methodical and time-intensive nature of this skill-building: “Be careful and not

\textsuperscript{35} “Maer by aldien de gelegenheit van u Kamer sijn licht uyt het Zuyden schept, soo moet ghy Ramen met geolyt Papier ofte dun Lijnwaet in uwe Venster setten, om door dat middel het licht van de Sonne (dat daer een groot deel van den dagh, sal zijn) te versachten, ende eenparigh over uwe Kamer te doen schijnen… Men kan oock bequamelijck des avonds, het Keers-licht gebruycken, ’t welcke sommige prijsen boven den dagh… Maer gemerckt dat het Teyckenen by ’t Nacht-licht, dit onderworpen is, dat se seer harde, ende af-gesnedene, Schaduwen voort-brenght…soo sal men om dit te verhoeden, tusschen het licht, en het Model een raem van fijn en dun geolyt Papier setten, ende alsdan soo sullen de Schaduwen, sacht en vlack wes.” Goeree, 25-26. Kwakkelstein compares these passages to similar recommendations made by Leonardo and to De Lairesse’s close reworking of the same tips.

\textsuperscript{36} “Om [de gelykenisse] dan wel te treffen, en de gemelde misgreepen voor te komen, is er geen beter middel als dit naarvolgende: namentlyk een schooner plystetroonie, ’t zy van man of vrouw, te neemen… deze troonie zal men van het begin tot het einde des werks, daar dezelve waarnemingen vertoond moeten werden, van voor of op zy, daar toe gebruiken, en met zodanig een licht als to the concept nodig is, links, regts, van voor en van achter, kaars- of fakkellicht, alles zonder de minste verandering, dan alleen iets of wat de frisheid en vleezigheid betreffende.” De Lairesse, \textit{Het groot schilderboek}, Vol. 1, 162.

\textsuperscript{37} Brusati, \textit{Introduction to the Academy of Painting}, 80.
too hasty. For to learn the art of drawing, one must start with small steps and not move on from something before one has properly grasped it.”\textsuperscript{38} As explored in Chapter One, Dutch art theorists sometimes addressed drawing from sculpture and from the live model in nearly interchangeable terms, Van Hoogstraten among them. In a chapter about the materials necessary for drawing, he encourages the young painter to “draw your nudes or full-length statues life-sized and from life [on prepared paper], and the judgment in your eye as well as the boldness in your hand will grow.”\textsuperscript{39} For most artists in the Dutch Republic, the statues that could satisfy what Van Hoogstraten had in mind would have been made of plaster. Gerard van Honthorst’s \textit{Portrait of an Artist} shows a man who seems to have subscribed to these ideas about training with plaster casts, which appear in the background; he likely learned to draw plaster casts on the same type of blue paper he holds in his left hand, on which he has executed a highly finished portrait (Fig. 4.8). The larger cast is Van Tetrode’s \textit{Écorché}, a three-dimensional version of the one in Van de Passe’s \textit{Van ’t Licht der teken en schilder konst} (Fig. 4.4), which serves as a reminder that the move from copying prints to drawing sculpture in the round sometimes involved the same figure to present new technical challenges. As we will see, paintings that show young draftsmen at work reinforce the importance of this step in one’s practices—including the use of prepared paper to sketch sculpture \textit{naer het leven}—as expressed in Van Hoogstraten’s text.

\textbf{The Tête-a-Tête}

With images of the solitary draftsman studying plaster casts, Dutch painters engendered a novel genre that elevates the early phases of artistic development into an independent pictorial subject. This small but distinct corpus has been previously recognized—notably, by Adriano

\textsuperscript{38} Brusati, \textit{Introduction to the Academy of Painting}, 82.

\textsuperscript{39} Brusati, \textit{Introduction to the Academy of Painting}, 84.
Aymonino and John Walsh—but without sufficient consideration of its conceptual depth.  

Aymonino described them as “‘low’ genre paintings that celebrate the didactic role of the Antique” and “indirectly attest to the ubiquitous penetration of classical models in all 17th-century artistic practice.” These scenes, I argue, are not limited to meditations on ancient sculpture as the supreme example for modern artists, but point instead to the phenomenological sweep of the act of drawing. In them, plaster casts become participants in a stimulating exchange, in which the draftsmen are compelled to treat them as entities with the potential for animation. In this sense, the image of the solitary draftsman with the plaster casts manifests the liveliness that plaster casts could assume as objects of pictorial interest for Dutch painters.

The subject of young boys drawing from plaster cast has its most significant precedent in an etching in Odoardo Fialetti’s *Il vero modo et ordine per disegnar tutte le parti et membra del corpo humano*, published in Venice in 1608 as the first instructional drawing book for a broad audience of students, amateurs, art lovers, and collectors. Fialetti’s etching puts the group of three boys actively drawing from plaster casts in the foreground, seated on the ground or on very low benches (Fig. 4.9). The similarity between the etching and paintings such as Jacob van Oost the Elder’s *The Artist Studio* is unmistakable, down to the tender age of the three boys and the prominent cast of an antique head (Fig. 4.10). Fialetti’s model was clearly also on Michael Sweerts’s mind when he painted his *Painter’s Studio*, in which plaster casts also dominate the

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40 Walsh noted their personal connection to the painter: “Small boys hard at work at their great task, solitary, sometimes dwarfed by the adult scale of the works they aspire to rival, are one of the most sympathetic subjects in all Dutch art, no doubt because they were grounded in the painters’ own experience;” Walsh, 53, 55.

41 Aymonino, 41.

42 Anne Varick Lauder, “Odoardo Fialetti, *Artist’s Studio*” in Aymonino and Lauder, *Drawn from the Antique*, 126-128. Aymonino maintains that Dutch drawings books from the seventeenth century, such as those discussed in this chapter, were largely based on Fialetti’s 1608 manual and Giacomo Franco’s *De excellencia et nobilitated delineationis* (1611), and that they even reprinted parts of the Italian books; Aymonino, 39.
foreground where a seated student is drawing (Fig. 3.2). Sweerts picked up on Fialetti’s
decision to show the boys drawing from plaster casts against the backdrop of other young men
busy with additional tasks associated with the painter’s studio.\textsuperscript{43} This arrangement likens both
Fialetti’s etching and Sweerts’s painting to the engraving from Stradanus’s \textit{Nova Reperta}, in
which Jan van Eyck’s studio doubles as the site for multiple stages of artistic training (Fig. 1.14).
Van Oost, on the other hand, centers exclusively on the boys working from plaster casts and a
full-length female figure in red wax or terracotta. In fact, in a notable departure from Fialetti’s
etching, the foremost boy in Van Oost’s painting turns to the beholder as he displays his highly
finished red-chalk drawing of the Apollo Belvedere head. The painting is less about the place of
drawing from casts within an artist’s studio and more about the actual act of making that
drawing—and about the boy’s awareness of his practice.

The images made by seventeenth-century Dutch painters of boys studying and drawing
from casts are not merely repetitions in paint of an idea set forth in Fialetti’s etching. They
represent an innovative interest in the protracted contact between a draftsman and the cast he
endeavors to comprehend so thoroughly that he can reproduce it on a sheet of paper. Sweerts
made his own contribution to the genre with a painting that is worlds apart from his \textit{Painter’s
Studio} (Fig. 4.11). Here, Sweerts brings the beholder close to a boy drawing from a cast of the
head of a Roman emperor, so actively at work that he makes a few marks with his black chalk
while, in his left hand, he keeps his white chalk at the ready. This is a sensitive portrait of a boy’s
concentration that differs significantly from Fialetti’s busy scene with multiple protagonists.
Several Dutch painters, around the same time as Sweerts, focused on the solitary draftsman in
pictures that allowed them to explore individual facets of a practice intimately familiar to them.

\textsuperscript{43} Yeager-Crasselt, \textit{Michael Sweerts}, 61.
In these images, plaster casts are both foils and mirrors for the young draftsman. They suggestively comment upon his age or temperament in playful and poignant ways. In one example by Wallerant Vaillant, a boy draws from a plaster Du Quesnoy putto and a large cast of the Farnese Flora’s head (Fig. 4.12). The Flora is oriented away from the boy, which transforms his gaze into a solicitous plea, as if he were entreating her to direct her own gaze towards him. Dutch painters turned the specific arrangement of a student working from plaster casts into explorations of artistic development and the affective potential of the inanimate model.

A pair of paintings by Jan Lievens and Vaillant, taken together, visualize the passage of time implicated in the process of learning to draw from casts (Fig. 4.13, Fig. 4.14). The protagonist of the painting by Lievens is a young boy seated in a simple wooden chair with a wicker seat, barely off the ground, with his feet planted and an album of drawings open in his lap. He cradles it between his arms and, with his left hand, grips the top of the album. His face, in profile, shows a solemn expression as he stares at the blue paper, his head slightly bowed. Lievens imagines the situation of a student engrossed in his study of pedagogical drawings, set in a room where he can compare the two-dimensional images in the album to the plaster sculpture that surrounds him. The largest, a cast of the Christ Child from Michelangelo’s Bruges Madonna (1501-1504), seems to gaze sympathetically down at the boy and the albums. Lievens’s choice of the singular example of a Michelangelo sculpture in the Low Countries is another manifestation of Dutch painters’ preference for casts of modern sculpture with a Netherlandish association. For my discussion of this discernment among Dutch painters, see Chapter 3. For the Bruges Madonna, see Harold R. Mancusi-Ungaro, *Michelangelo: the Bruges Madonna and the Piccolomini Altar* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).
inquisitive. But the cast remains disengaged, at this point, from the boy, who has not yet advanced to the stage where he can try to draw the object before him.

That interaction is left to the young draftsman in Vaillant’s painting, who is a longer-haired, older version of Lievens’s boy. Vaillant recapitulates the pose and even the absorption of the earlier boy, though this time he actually executes a drawing. On the floor beside him, a tin full of chalks in various colors attests to his knowledge of this medium, sophisticated enough to warrant a selection of implements. It is the same type of container that sits on the platform in front of the Lievens boy, here moved closer to the draftsman now that he is a more capable student. In the time that has elapsed, the young draftsman has taken this seat over and over again, each session moving him away from the drawn models he began with and closer to a confident rendering of his own. Leiden and Vaillant both recognize and pictorialize the significance of these early stages in the formation of a capable artist. In the space between the two paintings lies the emergence of the draftsman’s personal practice, through which he imitates the marks he so carefully studied and, at the same time, discovers a line particular to him. The plaster casts are instrumental in that development. In Vaillant’s painting, the cast most aptly positioned to be the draftsman’s model is itself a young man, one of Lacoön’s sons. Vaillant provides his protagonist with a plaster cast that reflects his age and, perhaps, the greater struggle of active drawing, as opposed to the passive study undertaken by his younger self.

In his own meditation on the particularities of drawing exercises, Jan Steen focused on the same boy in two paintings from the 1660s (Fig. 4.15, Fig. 4.16). As a pair, these similarly evince the passage of time as a fundamental aspect of learning to draw. The Lakenhal painting shows the curly-haired boy alone with a plaster bust, well into his translation of the bust’s forms onto blue prepared paper. A single candle illuminates the bust from the boy’s left, to throw a
dramatic contrast of light and dark upon the cast. The hard-edged shadows are ideal for the amateur draftsman, as they helpfully define the contours of the cast’s forms clearly, though Van Hoogstraten urged the draftsman to set down softer shadows by means of smudging with a finger.45 Steen’s boy has executed much of his drawing already. The blue paper he has selected relieves him of the unmodulated white expanse of an untreated sheet and provides, instead, a supple tone upon which he can build gradations of light and dark. On the sheet, the boy has rendered diffuse shadows, particularly at the edges of the bust, in black chalk. The left side of the bust, meanwhile, bears traces of the white chalk used to brighten the places where the light from the candle’s flame illuminates the cast’s surface. The combination of black and white chalk shows that the boy understands how to make full use of the prepared paper’s helpful middle tone. As Van Hoogstraten indicated in his chapter on drawing materials, “You must get used to a reasonably thick or not-too-thin pen… Black chalk is used in the same way, though more often on blue or prepared paper, but then one also needs white chalk or dried pipe clay to heighten the lights that are lighter than the ground of your paper.”46 The boy has already laid aside both black and white chalk, as he now evens out shadows with a thin brush wet with the water in the bowl beside him. This is akin to one of the methods Van Hoogstraten suggests for making a rough sketch: “The shadows can be loosely added with a brush using the same liquid [ink] mixed with some water, so as to see a rough version of the complete image you intend to make.”47

The visible sketch confirms the frontality of the encounter between the boy and the cast. This is a literal tête-a-tête, in which the boy inclines his head towards the bust, which itself also

45 “I want you to soften your shadows when they are too hard (if necessary, with white chalk) and to reduce the strong lights with a smudged finger. You must bring truth into your work, even if you have to undo the whole thing with your finger and thumb.” Brusati, Introduction to the Academy of Painting, 84.

46 Brusati, Introduction to the Academy of Painting, 84.

47 Brusati, Introduction to the Academy of Painting, 84.
seems to represent a child with his head slightly tipped forward. The young draftsman directs his gaze at the cast as he prepares to make a new mark. Together, the three heads instantiate the quiet intimacy of the scene, as the boy relies on the cast to model for him and to test his pre-existing abilities. A dialogue of sorts takes place: the cast poses a particular set of forms and draftsman responds to them with his tools, before he returns to the cast, which dictates his next move. A pedagogical session of an entirely different sort takes place in Steen’s painting from the Van Otterloo collection. The boy’s flesh-and-blood teacher leans over his shoulder to manually correct a drawing on blue paper that the boy has either brought to him or executed in his studio. The boy’s candlelight practice gives way to daytime instruction from an experienced master who identifies issues with the boy’s rendering. Here, the plaster casts have been set aside: a statuette of one of Michelangelo’s Slave marbles sits beside the window, a small bust rests on a shelf in the background, and two casts of faces and one foot hang from nails nearby. The boy’s attention is fixed on the blue paper and his teacher’s corrections. Steen thus depicts two precise components of the boy’s training, each with its own character: the disciplined evening toiling of the student entails a sustained encounter with a plaster cast, while during the lesson with the painter, the student must be receptive to his teacher’s expertise.

The nighttime setting in Steen’s Lakenhal picture reinforces the prevalent seventeenth-century idea, based on Aristotle’s texts, that training in the art of drawing and painting required substantial practice (exercitatio); that is, it did not suffice to have inclination or natural ability (natura), even when it was enhanced through teaching (ars).

Dutch painters regularly showed drawing as an activity by lamplight to indicate the inexhaustible dedication that the true draftsman needed to demonstrate. In Gerrit Dou’s Artist Drawing (Fig. 4.17), inky darkness

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surrounds the artist and the cast of a putto barely illuminated by an oil lamp, as if to suggest that the world beyond this act of tireless concentration has ceased to exist. Nothing matters beyond the forms thrown into sharp relief by the flame and the humble lines the artist sets into his sketchbook. In these scenes, too, the intimacy between the living figure and the plaster person in miniature is palpable. Jan ter Borch’s draftsman, in a painting in a private collection, fixes his gaze upon a plaster cast of Alessandro Vittoria’s *Saint Sebastian*, utterly enraptured (Fig. 4.18). The interaction borders on the erotic, as the statuette seems to turn towards the draftsman while the candlelight falls upon his muscular nude body.

Indeed, there is a sensuality to each nocturnal rendezvous, as in Godfried Schalcken’s *Young Man and Woman Studying a Statue of Venus by Lamplight* (Fig. 4.19). The cast of a crouching Venus here provides not only the object of study for a young man and woman, but also the blatant symbol of an amorous situation. The couple are notionally occupied with an exercise in close looking that also involves comparing the statuette to a drawing of it in the young man’s hand—perhaps recently finished. But the dimly-lit room and the need to huddle together, and to close the distance between the observer and the statuette, has created a flirtatious atmosphere. The interaction between the solitary draftsman and the plaster cast is not as explicitly coded as the couple’s rapport in Schalcken’s picture, but it nevertheless retains an air of pleasurable attraction. Dutch paintings of young draftsmen drawing casts by lamp or candlelight capture the effect of losing oneself in the strangely seductive task of remaking on the page the beguiling object set before one’s eyes.

In the absence of the personal writings of early modern Dutch painters, it is impossible to know to what extent they reflected on their attachment to plaster casts. My point is that the paintings they made—in this case, of individuals attentively at work with plaster casts—proclaim
their desire to memorialize this particular rite of passage, so thoroughly familiar to most painters of the period. On one level, through these pictures, Dutch painters could substantiate their commitment to a course of learning to draw that strengthened their ties to cultures of professional artists across the continent. In addition, these pictures register a specific response to plaster casts, latent in the paintings and worthy of recognition.

“De Pleyster Tekenaars”

Dutch painters also produced images of young people drawing under the supervision of masters who took them on as students and apprentices. These types of scenes are elaborations on the theme of methodical training in drawing as well as opportunities to further describe the myriad activities of a Dutch painter. Drawing lessons sometimes took place in the studio, where students could avail themselves of the materials and tools that the professional painter wielded, including plaster casts. During these sessions, inexperienced draftsmen looked at plaster casts with their teachers, whose guidance and knowledge derived in part from their own practice of drawing from these objects. These paintings further attest to the centrality of drawing in the training of Dutch artists and the expectation that students would invest significant time in it.

Jan Steen’s *Drawing Lesson* is a visual inventory of the contents of the studio as well as an overview of the components of an artistic education (Fig. 4.20).49 The master owns an array of familiar casts: a plaster version of Vittoria’s *Saint Sebastian*, a putto suspended from the ceiling by a red string to model a flying *amorino*, a life cast of a head and foot also on strings hung from nails. On a shelf above them, a plaster bull doubles as a reference to the ox that accompanies Saint Luke, patron saint of painters.50 As in contemporary scenes of painters alone

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49 For an extensive reading of this painting with ample contextual information, see Walsh.

50 Walsh, 68. Walsh proposed that the cast might be a variation on a well-known terracotta cow made by Adriaen van de Velde in 1659 (now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris).
in their studios, plaster casts are at once emblems of the painter and signs of the variety of subjects in his repertoire. The fact that only one of the students is a boy recalls that women could also learn from a professional painter, though, as was frequently the case with male students, these activities were available only to women from families of some means who could pay for the lessons. The young woman, in this case, seems to be the more advanced student; she leans forward to watch attentively as her teacher corrects her drawing on blue paper. At the same time, she sharpens her stick of graphite with the small knife held at her side. Her multi-tasking reveals her fluency in this routine and her readiness to return to her drawing when her teacher has finished this evaluation. The act of sharpening is also related to the idea that natural ability alone could not lead to mastery of an art; it needed to be supplemented with training and practice.

J. A. Emmens has argued that, in a now lost triptych by Dou, each wing represented natura (nature), disciplina (training), and exercitatio (practice), the latter in the guise of a man cutting a quill pen by the light of a candle.

In Steen’s Drawing Lesson, training—the technical guidance provided by the master—is in productive symbiosis with the sharpening of the pencil, which occurs simultaneously, in anticipation of further practice.

As discussed above, Steen treated the subject of the drawing lesson with an experienced instructor on at least one other occasion (Fig. 4.16). Here, too, the master has a number of casts for his student to use. Near the drawing on blue paper lie several sticks of black chalk and one of white chalk, as well as two feathered quill pens and a knife used to sharpen them. These

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51 Walsh, 58-59. Walsh discusses the costs associated with apprenticing a child to a professional painter on 47-48.

52 Walsh, 73-74.

paintings also recall that, as much as painters could put plaster casts to good use for their own work, the casts had additional economic value as pedagogical tools that could earn the painter the supplementary salary that came with taking on a pupil. They formed the basis for lessons with those who had advanced past the point of copying two-dimensional images and required their teacher’s active involvement. In a painting from the later seventeenth century attributed to Cornelis de Man, the painter and his student together are examining a plaster *Farnese Hercules* illuminated by an oil lamp (Fig. 4.21). The master points with his right index finger to direct the boy’s attention while the latter is making a drawing. Beside them, the boy’s caretaker passes the time with a book, a sign that the lesson will last a while. The discipline of the student in Jan ter Borch’s *Drawing Lesson* is similarly implied by the candle, which, though obscured from view by a plaster cast, asserts its presence through the warm light it casts upon the scene (Fig. 4.22). While the student looks and points at his open book, his pen momentarily at rest in his right hand, his teacher peers at the cast of the *Spinario*, which exhibits the greatest contrast of light and shadow. Student and teacher appear deep in a conversation spurred by the casts and the ways the light falls upon them, committed to a task that keeps them at work into the night.

Drawing lessons could also take place in groups, as in the well-known case of Rembrandt’s studio, where his many pupils worked together from the models selected by their master. A drawing by one of them, Constantijn Daniel van Renesse, captures the attentiveness

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54 Walsh, 46-47.

55 Some of the casts have been previously identified, as the ancient bronze *Spinario, Architecture* after Giambologna, the ancient *Heliogabalus*, and an écorché of an archer; for these identifications, see Jonathan Bikker, ed., *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam*, Vol. 1, trans. Michael Hoyle (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2007), 77, cat. no. 26. The head of a woman is the Flora Farnese and the child’s head, of a type that appears in other Dutch paintings, seems to me to be based on busts of children by the French sculptor Germain Pilon; see Appendix B.

56 For drawing lessons and training in Rembrandt’s studio, see Holm Bevers et al., *Drawings by Rembrandt and his Pupils: Telling the Difference* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009).
of apprentices in Rembrandt’s studio as they draw a nude female model; above her, three plaster busts on a shelf recall the earlier stage of training from which these draftsmen have advanced (Fig. 1.20). But more informal arrangements were not out of the question. Goeree, for one, was aware that not all aspiring practitioners of the art of drawing could learn from an experienced master. In the seventh chapter of the *Inleyding*, he suggests as an alternative the formation of a company of draftsmen who learn from and politely correct one another. He recommends that such a group of studious and industrious youths reserve at least one day a week, if not two, to draw from the nude, which he calls useful, laudable, and beneficial to the firmness of one’s study, whether done with the supervision of a master or in a gathering of eight to ten.\(^{57}\) Goeree reminds his reader that, once he has organized a company of draftsmen (“*geselschap*”) to the best of his abilities, they must agree upon an appropriate place to draw where the ideal lighting can be set up in the manner Goeree prescribed for drawing from plaster casts.\(^{58}\) Van Hoogstraten also did not see the limited institutional options for drawing from the nude as an obstacle to the student: “Even though schools with nude sessions are not always available, there is no lack of subject matter. For almost any part of nature is useful in fostering this attention and whetting the sharpness of the eye.”\(^{59}\)

In the later seventeenth century, independent drawing schools began to formalize the training that had already existed in the workshops of individual painters and supplied students

\(^{57}\) “Maeckt met eenige Leer-gierighe ende neerstige Borsten, een Geselschap uyt, en stelt een dagh ofte twee, ten minstien een ter weck vast, om na het naeckt te Teyckenen, want di teen nuttigh ende loffelijck gebruyck heeft, en seer voordeligh, tot de vastigheydt van uwe Study, het zy dan dat ghy dat doet, onder het opsicht en onderwijs van eenen goeden Meester, ofte in Collegie onder u acht of thienen.” Goeree, 31-32.

\(^{58}\) “U dan na vermoghen een Geselschap dat met stemmen uwe omme-ganck accordeert, uyt-ghepickt hebbende, soo tracht dan oock met eenparigheydt der stemmen eerst na een bewaem plaets, ende daer by een soodanighen licht, als wy vooren in het Teyckenen na Playster-werck hebben geleert.” Goeree, 32.

\(^{59}\) Brusati, *Introduction to the Academy of Painting*, 87.
with plaster casts as well as live models. The Stadstekenacademie in Amsterdam, which was established in 1718, provided opportunities for art-lovers to learn to draw, particularly after its reorganization in 1750.60 In the minutes from the meeting of the institution’s directors on September 25, 1773, the beadle Jan Meijer accepted the task of operating a small adjoining school (“leerschool”), for which he would receive 15 guilders per pupil. The resolution indicates that Meijer would be expected to arrive before 5 pm to light the candles and the fireplace in preparation for the drawing session, and to put them out after 7 pm.61 There were discussions among the institution’s leaders about the procedures and standards they would uphold to train draftsmen affiliated with the Academy. The minutes from the meeting on August 30, 1774 outline a debate among the directors about whether to keep “models” bought for the Academy by a dealer named Hendrick de Winter on orders from Husly, one of the directors. These were likely copies in plaster of sculptures known to the directors, given their designation as “beelden” that were not original (“geen Origineel”). Opinions varied: while Buijs believed that these models were only useful to sculptors, not draftsmen, Ploos van Amstel opined that, though they were not originals, the sculptures were nonetheless useful for the Academy to have in its possession.62


61 “De Pedel Jan Meijer gevraagden of hij bij het Leerschool wil benieden voor de nieuw jaars gifte van de Leerlingen, bestaande in 15 gulden voor ieder, en heeft zulks aangenomen voor dat geld te doen… Hiervoor moet hij voor 5 uuren komen om de kaarsen op te steeken vuur aenzalegen en alles gereed te zetten en na 7 uuren het vuur bergen kaarsen uit doen en alles weder in order brengen.” Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 5. For a brief account of the fate of this drawing school at the Stadstekenacademie, see Paul Knolle, “De Amsterdam stadstekenacademie, een 18de-eeuwse ‘oefenschool’ voor modeltekenaars,” Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 30 (1978), 10-11.

62 “Voorgestelt of men de modellen die de Makelaar H[endric]k de Winter op order van Husly gekogt heeft voor de Academie zoude houden… De Heer Buijs geloof dat sy mogelyk nuttig zyn voor Beeldhouters maar oordeelt ze niet nuttig voor tekenaars… De Heer Ploos heeft dus geoordeelt dat dezen Beelden voor geen Origineel nog van eenig nut voor het Teken Academie houden.” Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 5.
Throughout the eighteenth century, the Stadstekenacademie amassed plaster casts that were put on display, namely in support of drawing practice and training. The minutes from the directors’ meeting in March 1770, for example, stipulate that the first Wednesday in May, drawing from plaster casts would take place in the art hall (“kunstzaal”). The minutes from a subsequent meeting in April indicate that in preparation for this drawing session, the casts were moved into position at suitable locations in the hall to make it easiest to draw from them. The directors of the Stadstekenacademie made drawing from plaster casts a regular feature of the institution’s activities; minutes from meetings in the 1770s indicate that these sessions often began in the spring and continued throughout the summer months. One of the directors was designated to oversee the draftsmen, who paid a fee for the access to the plaster casts and the lessons. In May 1770, for example, Vinkeles gave the Academy’s secretariat thirty-three guilders received from each person in a group referred to as “de Plyster tekenaars,” or plaster draftsmen. The same document proposes a resolution that would allow a person who has attended a session to draw from plaster casts to become a member of the Academy either directly after attending the session or even a few years later, by paying an entrance fee of 13 guilders, which gives some indication of the flexible nature of becoming one of the “Plyster tekenaars.”

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63 “Ook geresolveerd dat er op den eersten woensdag in Meij op de Kunstzaal naa Plyster zal getekend worden.” Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 5 (dated 27 March 1770).

64 “De Pleisterbeelden op de Kunstkamer, voor woensdag den 2den Meij op de behoorlijke Plaatsen, bekwaam om naar te teekenen, te stellen.” Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 5 (dated 24 April 1770).

65 “Geresolveert om op Dinsdag den 12 Meij 1772 de Prijzen uit te delen en den 13 ditto te beginnen met het Tekenen naa Plyster” (dated 12 May 1772); “Geresolveert… den 11e Maij beginnen naer pleister te Teeken” (dated 13 April 1774). Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 5.


67 “Door de Heer Buyss voorgesteld een person reeds naar het Plyster getekend hebbende… dien tyd geen lid geworden zynde en zig na t verloop van een of meer jaaren daar te aanbiedende verplicht zij te 13– intree geld te
Drawing was also undertaken as an edifying activity among members of learned societies in the eighteenth century. The society called Felix Meritis, founded in 1777 in Amsterdam and mainly composed of well-educated middle-class burghers, collected plaster casts specifically for this purpose and displayed them in a hall where members held debates on art. The society’s division in charge of their drawing enterprises was called the “tekenkunde” department, which indicates their perception of drawing as an essential branch of knowledge unto itself. The stewards of Felix Meritis maintained a restrictive membership: initially only Christians were permitted to join, and women were excluded until 1859. However, though women were not officially invited to learn drawing within such rarefied social clubs, they trained in this art in other capacities and their participation did not go unnoticed.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, women began to appear in Dutch paintings as independent practitioners. Steen’s Drawing Lesson showcases a dedicated young woman learning to draw under the auspices of a professional painter. But in other instances, Dutch painters took as their primary subject women committed to an individual, solitary practice of drawing. A painting recently attributed to Joost van Geel, a pupil of Gabriel Metsu, depicts a woman in modest dress who sharpens her pencil with a knife in preparation for a drawing session (Fig. 4.23). On the table before her, a plaster head of a woman, still partially encased in the mold in which it was cast, awaits the attention of the living woman. She is equipped with materials similar to those in scenes of boys drawing from casts: a sheet of blue prepared paper lies on a wooden board, which she can hold at an angle in her lap as she observes and sketches her model.

 betaalen aan of hy die kosten zal gelijk zoo een die zig naar dat hij na Plyster getekend heeft direct het lid aanbied.” Archief van het Bestuur der Stadstekenacademie, inventory number 5.


69 Godin, 125.
The action of sharpening the pencil, as in Steen’s painting, announces a certain degree of expertise with the process and confirms that she is not a complete novice. It also refers to the aforementioned principle of exercitatio, the practice that, in conjunction with natural talent and training, leads to mastery. The blue paper bears a few marks already, as if to indicate that the woman’s activity has been prolonged enough that she needs to freshen her drawing implement.

Metsu also took an interest in women who took up in the art of drawing. The fact that in 1658 he married Isabella de Wolff, a descendant of the De Grebber family of Haarlem painters, surely informed his admiration for a woman’s artistic inclinations. She is probably the female painter who appears in a portrait by Metsu made between 1661 and 1664 (Fig. 4.24). Metsu shows her in a room that, as in many of the studio pictures discussed in Chapter 3, doubles as a space of artistic work—signaled by the painting on an easel—and intellectual pursuits, of the sort aided by the books and globe in the background. De Wolff holds at an angle against her lap a wooden board with prepared blue paper on it, with an ease that suggests her familiarity with these essential drawing materials. Next to her, a plaster putto on a square base appears to be the most immediate model for the draftswoman. The portrait is a picture of spontaneity, as if Isabella has only just paused her work to gaze fondly at Metsu and has put down her chalk—set into a luxurious silver holder—in order to pet a small solicitous dog. Metsu portrays her as an artist through an emphasis on her drawing practice, which in turn is characterized by her chalk, prepared paper, and plaster cast.

In an earlier painting, from the late 1650s, Metsu also captures the deliberations of a woman in the middle of a drawing exercise centered on plaster casts (Fig. 4.25). The woman wears a red coat lined with white fur and an orange skirt with gold trim, clothing almost identical

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to De Wolff’s in the later portrait, which helps identify her as a relatively well-to-do lady. Also like De Wolff, she holds a wooden board in her lap, propped up against the edge of a table as a makeshift surface for a sheet of blue paper. The thin, short stick of black graphite in her right hand hovers over the paper as she contemplates her next mark, her downward gaze and slightly open mouth resolved into an expression of easy concentration. Metsu shows her in the process of drawing a small plaster bust on a circular base, which has been tipped backwards onto another statuette on its side. This set-up reveals that the latter has a pronged metal spike protruding from it, which indicates that this fragment can be attached to another. Metsu has noted a particularly utilitarian aspect of the cast that points to his own understanding of the various uses to which an object like this one could be put. The casual presentation of the casts reinforces the connotation of a private situation: the young woman has retreated to a room where she can practice drawing in solitude and where she arranges her models to her liking. With the books and globe in the background and the painting on the easel, the space is essentially the studio in which Metsu pictured his wife a few years later. The two paintings attest to women’s participation in the artistic culture of the Dutch Republic. The Portrait of Isabella de Wolff has the female painter engage directly with the viewer to display the accoutrements of her practice, while the Young Woman Seated Drawing reveals an entirely different state, a woman absorbed only in her work, focused on the cultivation of her drawing abilities. In both paintings, the women wear refined garments that speak to their elevated social position, which allows them to devote time to this demanding activity. Eglon van der Neer, around the same time, also depicted a similarly well-dressed woman studying two plaster casts as she moves her graphite pencil over a sheet of blue paper (Fig. 4.26).
Though they remained the minority among the ranks of painters, women in the early modern Dutch Republic participated in the promotion of drawing as a respectable skill and they appeared in the visual culture that celebrated this art. By the early eighteenth century, the young woman in Pieter van der Werff’s *A Girl Drawing and a Boy Near a Statue of Venus* was by no means a strange sight (Fig. 4.27). With a stick of black chalk and a red one in a chalk holder laid upon a blank sheet of paper, she pauses to observe her model—the Medici Venus—before she begins. The boy that approaches her cradles a female head in both hands, which suggests they are working from plaster casts, objects meant to be handled as part of their training. Van der Werff’s protagonists each stand in for two vital ways that the avid draftsman relates to the plaster cast: through sight as well as touch.

**Plaster Turned to Line**

The Dutch paintings that feature in this chapter conjure views into private rooms where specific acts of drawing take place, though for the most part the resulting sketches are difficult to make out. These modest marks on paper, however, register the entanglement of the senses of sight and touch at the heart of the actual experience of drawing from plaster casts. Drawings made from casts further elucidate the perceptual phenomena that affect the draftsman and the plaster cast alike to create situations in which the former enlivens the latter. This can occur at the level of the representation itself. Adriaen van der Werff’s red-chalk *Reclining Putto* reworks a plaster putto into an independent figure with shadows in the place where its cast base should be (Fig. 4.28). The drawing, which is highly finished and signed, was likely intended as a stand-alone work rather than a study for a larger composition.71 It could be a showpiece of sorts:

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according to Arnold Houbraken, Van der Werff showed his increasingly excellent eye and taste in his depictions of nudes based on excellent plaster casts of antiquities. His *Reclining Putto* seems more a Du Quesnoy type than an ancient sculpture, but Houbraken’s point stands: Van der Werff presents the putto as if a live nude boy had posed for him in the studio. The more functional versions of drawings from a plaster cast—studies, exercises, personal records not destined for circulation—reveal how the draftsman relates to the cast through touch and sight and gives to it a quality of attention that turns it into a fellow being with a substantial presence.

In the visual tradition of the five senses in early modern Europe, the sense of touch is sometimes represented by the figure of the blind man who uses his fingers to feel, and thereby see, works of sculpture (Fig. 4.29). This is a productive analogy for the circumstances of the draftsman whose haptic engagement with plaster casts involves sight as well as touch. Part of the point of drawing from casts is for the artist to train his eye to situate forms in space, to develop the compass in his eye, as Van Hoogstraten described it. The more the artist draws from direct observation, the more he can rely on his mental faculties to retrieve imagery from the visible

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73 Peter Hecht has proposed that stand-alone paintings of a blind man feeling a piece of sculpture with his hands were part of the *paragone* debate about the merits of sculpture over painting; see Chapter 2 and Hecht, “The Paragone Debate.”

74 “Thus the eye will in time serve you as a pair of compasses. For I am of the opinion that… [an ingenious art lover], being unpracticed, will make grave errors and be surpassed by a less learned person who through much practice has turned his eye into a compass. The habit of paying close attention will be of great benefit to the eye and hand for a young pupil. He who industriously gets into the habit of drawing much after life with proper attention will often put a great master to shame and get closer to the natural properties of things than his mind will be able to understand for a long time to come… the eye strengthened by practice supplies its own compass.” Brusati, *Introduction to the Academy of Painting*, 87.
world.75 But the plaster cast also solicits the draftsman’s touch, as the object of study that he himself must move into a chosen position. Through contact with the cast, the draftsman enjoys what Jodi Cranston, in her reading of an early seventeenth-century drawing of a blind man touching a sculptural bust, described as “an unmediated sensual access to, and desirous interaction with, the depicted.”76 The eventual drawing is based on the knowledge of the cast that the practitioner has gained from handling it—what she has “seen” with her body—as well as what she perceives when she observes the cast at a controlled distance. The experience of drawing from a cast brings together the haptic and the optic, which coexist even when the draftsman is not in direct contact with the cast.77 In the end, the drawing is not only a mimetic image, but also a preservation of the draftsman’s embodied experience of the cast and its affective qualities.

Haptic engagement is enacted in a painting by Caspar Netscher, of two boys gathered to draw around an oil lamp with a number of plaster casts to choose from (Fig. 4.30). The older boy, whose smiling face turns towards the viewer, holds one of the statuettes in his left hand, literally apprehending it through his grip before he sets it before him. The painting registers a crucial aspect of the interaction with a cast that is already in the past in images of boys observing their models from a distance: the draftsman can hold the cast and bring it closer to his body to

75 As Fowler has observed, the Aristotelian “concept that impressions formed through the interactions between the inner and outer sensory faculties” permeated theories of memory and the effectiveness of images in the early modern period, epitomized in the writings of Franciscus Junius; Fowler, Drawing and the Senses, 88.


77 As Deleuze and Guattari have theorized it, “‘Haptic’ is a better word than ‘tactile’ since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill this nonoptical function.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (London: Athlone, 1988), 492.
inspect it before he draws it. Drawing from a plaster cast involves first recognizing its physical reality, its concrete matter that somehow needs to remain palpable when the artist remakes it as a flat image. Touch here serves the draftsman’s practical ends, but it also establishes a reciprocity with the cast, which touches him back. This impression is all the more vivid when the cast represents a human figure. Especially in these cases, “the perceived physicality of the sculpture piece is simultaneously an affirmation of the fleshiness of the body, and of the beholder’s viscerality.” The unlikely and even personal bond that develops between an individual and a plaster cast, over the course of one or more prolonged drawing sessions, is immanent in the images made in the process.

A drawing made by Moses ter Borch when he was between 12 and 14 years old chronicles the deliberations and choices inspired by his handling of a plaster statuette after Michelangelo’s Rebellious Slave (Fig. 1.2). Moses, the younger brother of the more famous Gerard ter Borch, was raised in a family of painters; his father furnished his three children with rigorous training in the arts. The plaster statuette after Michelangelo offered many compelling viewpoints for Moses to choose from, given how the body twists at the waist, with both arms fully wrapped around the figure’s back. Moses selected the position in which both the face and the left shoulder would be oriented frontally, which challenged him to understand the contrasts between the illuminations on the face and the shadows in the neck, and to contend with the foreshortened shoulder. The young draftsman is overly eager to create the perception of the neck further back in space than the tilted head: he renders the neck mostly in a shadow that


80 Schatborn, Dutch Figure Drawings, 18.
recapitulates the shape of the head and ends abruptly at the collarbone (Fig. 4.31). Moses intently describes the shadows he saw clearly defined on the statuette, lit from above, but he has not yet learned to temper his emphatic shading. The same is true for the shadows cast by the protruding shoulder. The dark area on the figure’s pectorals and abdomen directly below the shoulder is sharply outlined to accentuate a contrast with the areas beyond the shoulder’s shadow. Moses already had a strong sense of how to achieve gradations in chiaroscuro, as is clearest in the modeling of the figure’s thighs and calves, or in the right half of the face. The most stark and dramatic shadows are the places where he most overcompensates for his inexperience.

The plaster cast has been transported from a tabletop into a blank space where the figure’s left foot touches a still-formless ground. Moses has taken care to include the shadow that the figure casts, which articulates that horizontal plane. But he still had to determine what to do with the nondescript block upon which the figure’s right toes rest; the cast next to the window in Steen’s *A Master Correcting a Pupil’s Drawing* (Fig. 4.16) gives a helpful idea of how this portion of Moses’s cast looked. To enlist the block into the fiction of the picture, which has only just begun, Moses extends it all the way to the left edge of the sheet, to transform it into a kind of set piece or architectural element and provide some logic for the mismatched levels of the figure’s feet. This extension into the space beyond the image’s border announces Moses’s understanding of what has occurred to the plaster cast now that it inhabits the two-dimensional space of his drawing: it has been recruited to remake the three-dimensional world on the sheet and it requires the objects rendered around it to support that illusion. Here, Moses practices not only the translation of forms in space into light and shadow but also the invention of an image on the sheet that is not already modeled in front of him.
Among the drawings that attest to Moses’s early skill-building is a study of a cast of a nude boy seated beside a skull (Fig. 4.32). It exhibits passages of awkward shading with black chalk and wash similar to those in the drawing after Michelangelo’s Slave, as Moses again attempts to describe the fall of light on the neck in relation to the boy’s upturned head. This study also bears witness to the self-correction that Moses learned in the process of observing and drawing from a plaster cast. The boy’s extended left arm, which ends in a fist, presents a particular problem for Moses, as the arm floats in indeterminate space without objects directly around it to help Moses fix its position. Faint traces of his initial attempt are still visible, a ghostly hand that is rendered larger, extended further from the body, and more frontal than the fist Moses eventually settled upon (Fig. 4.33). The resulting left arm is, in the end, still a bit too short compared to the more straightforward right arm, but in the course of drawing, Moses responded to the problem of how to convey the arm’s location, outstretched and drawn slightly back from the boy’s body. These careful considerations and revisions are visual echoes of Van Hoogstraten’s exhortations in the Inleyding:

“Correct your mistakes immediately and without delay, so as not to slide into the error of tolerating faults… So wondrously powerful are the sketches of great masters, and so all the more necessary it is to foster good sketching. Do not fail in attention in this regard, especially in estimating the position of things, for this will guarantee your progress.”

As in his treatment of the Michelangelo cast, Moses embeds the physical indicators of the cast’s material into the graphic reality he constructs, this time with only vague outlines of the plaster base that can be read as a softer, more organic ground for the figure. These initial forays into the art of drawing by Moses ter Borch allow the modern viewer to consider the impact of a young seventeenth-century artist’s contact with plaster casts, which often provided him the very first

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81 Brusati, Introduction to the Academy of Painting, 81.
opportunity to confront his strengths and weaknesses when it came to representing three-dimensional objects on the sheet.

Plaster casts made these challenging exercises in figuration possible for young women as well. In the care of the Amsterdam Museum, an album of more than 200 mounted drawings preserves the studies and compositions made by the painter Catharina Backer (1689-1766) in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. Catharina, like many women in the early modern period, specialized in genre pictures and fruit and flower paintings, but the Amsterdam album records her versatile drawing abilities and interests in a way that her corpus of paintings alone cannot. Catharina was married to Allard de la Court, a wealthy Leiden cloth merchant whose extensive art collection included plaster casts.  

She also enjoyed the support of her father, who encouraged her artistic proclivities and may have arranged for her to learn from a professional painter.  

The Amsterdam album seems to document that Catharina was cognizant of the learning process outlined by practitioners like Goeree. Several drawings are exacting copies of famous statues in Perrier’s *Segmenta*, such as the *Borghese Gladiator* and the *Medici Venus*. In the case of these drawings, the prints that served as her models presented an opportunity to make studies of nudes without the significant difficulty of contending with volumetric forms in space.

But the album also elucidates how Catharina met that task. A series of three related drawings illustrates the progression of her observations and depiction of a single piece of plaster sculpture, a cast of a relief by Francis van Bossuit that her father owned, according to the

82 See inventory of the sculptures Allard owned: Inventaris van het Familiearchief De la Court, December 1749, inventory number 118, Erfgoed Leiden. See also Lunsingh Scheurleer et al., Vol. 2, 461-65. For more on the De la Court family’s sculpture collection, see Scholten, “Een ijvore Mars.”

catalogue of his estate’s sale (Fig. 4.3). A simple sketch in graphite records one approach, in which Catharina sets down the outlines of a nude Cleopatra with an asp that snakes through her fingers and bites her breast (Fig. 4.35). Catharina focuses here only on the essential information required to copy the cast of the relief, with little shading to differentiate the contours of the body and the textures of the hair or the cloth that wraps around Cleopatra. Her facial features are provisional, enough to indicate her general appearance. On a different sheet, this time on blue paper, Catharina endeavors to determine how light and shadow will transform the Cleopatra from her outline drawing into a fleshier figure (Fig. 4.36). She uses white chalk for highlights and a combination of smudged and hatched shading in black crayon to model Cleopatra’s hands, arms, and breasts, to articulate the folds of her wrap, and to excavate the bumps of her styled locks from the flatter expanse of the rest of her hair. The head of the asp, too, is punctuated by a delicate line of white chalk and shadows in black chalk that set it off from Cleopatra’s body. The blue paper, which provides a diffuse intermediary hue, is a helpful ground for Catharina to test out variations in chiaroscuro. In this study, the plastic elaboration of the body is her priority; she adds details to Cleopatra’s visage but it is largely descriptive, not expressive. In a third drawing, she fills in the image with greater confidence, down to the less ambiguous expression of pain on Cleopatra’s face (Fig. 4.37). Catharina knows where the lights and darks will lend solidity to the figure which, ironically, also reinvokes the plaster cast she works from. The front of the body is convincingly volumetric, yet the drawing falters at the edges and cannot fully simulate a figure in the round. Catharina is mindful of the shadows cast by the sculpture, which help her practice rendering three-dimensional forms in two dimensions and attest to her ability to commit what she

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84 Allard de la Court also owned plaster casts of Van Bossuit sculpture, such as “1 Judickje affgietsel over ’t origineel van yvoor door Francies gemaakt, sijnde maar 3 affgietsels in de wereld in 1 swart ebbenhout leysje;” Lunsingh Scheurleer et al., 463.
observes—the plaster relief, lit from the left—to paper. The three studies combine into a kind of
timelapse of Catharina’s entanglement with one particular plaster cast. She returned to it on
several occasions with different tools and techniques at her disposal. Each individual drawing
bears witness to the sustained attention Catharina granted to the cast; as a group, they
commemorate her relationship to a single object that unfolded over at least three sittings and in
the space between those sessions.

The Backer album also reveals how plaster casts could act as handy sources for a range of
subjects for a draftsman like Catharina. Three sheets, two of which are inscribed with the
phrase “naar plyster gedaan,” mounted onto two pages of the album, depict the same horse
statuette from four different angles (Fig. 4.38). The horse is shown with its head bowed and tilted
slightly towards its proper right, as it raises its back left and front right hooves. Catharina turned
the statuette, which already presents the horse in an energetic position, into a way to obtain a
three-hundred-and-sixty degree view of the horse’s body. The multiple orientations make clear
how much she stood to gain from moving and turning the statuette: each viewpoint posed its own
particular set of demands and perceptual oddities. The cast is based on a pacing stallion designed
by Giambologna that his assistant Antonio Susini produced in bronze in large numbers (Fig.
4.39). In Florence, Giambologna had received a commission from Ferdinando I de’ Medici to
design an equestrian monument in honor of his father Cosimo I (1519-1574), which was
completed between 1587 and 1593. Even before the monument was erected, bronze statuettes

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85 Avery, 268, cat. no. 132.

86 Avery, 157-158. Full-scale models had been prepared by 1591; the horse was cast in a single pouring in 1592; the
rider was cast in 1593; and the date “1594” was added twice to the monument’s inscriptions ahead of its unveiling in
May 1594; see Avery, 164.
of horses were cast from models by Giambologna in Florence.87 This was only the beginning of the circulation of horse statuettes after Giambologna. A plaster cast of another horse, this one rearing up on its hind legs, appears among others arranged on a shelf behind Minerva on the title page of Van de Passe’s *Van ’t Licht der teken en schilder konst* (Fig. 4.2). The rearing horse in Van de Passe’s frontispiece, with its front legs in the air, resembles a different bronze based on a design by Giambologna and cast by Pietro Tacca, one of which is in the Royal Collection.88 Van de Passe included three views of a similar horse, endowed with naturalistic features, within the pages of his drawing book (Fig. 4.3). A comparable statuette also shows up in a late-seventeenth-century painting by Jan van Pee, in which a boy is shown as if preparing to begin a drawing session, with blue paper before him and other plaster casts in the background (Fig. 4.4). Casts like these were especially useful for practice drawing an animal in motion, which would have been difficult for an inexperienced draftsman to study from life.

In the drawings of both Moses ter Borch and Catharina Backer, inscriptions acknowledge the plaster cast models with the phrases “nae Pleijster geteijckent” and “naar plyster gedaan,” respectively. The inscriptions explicitly call attention to the young artists’ engagement with plaster casts, arguably analogous to the recurring descriptions, throughout the period, of images made *naer het leven*. Claudia Swan has proposed that *naer het leven* claims can “affirm the drawings’ status as documents.”89 This choice—to confirm in words the circumstances of an

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87 As Avery recounts, the Salviati family had a bronze ‘*cavallino*’ cast from a Giambologna model between 1574 and 1579, which “is probably the fine one now on a cabinet in the Colonna Gallery in Rome: if so, it establishes the date by which Giambologna’s standard model of horse had been produced;” Avery, 161.

88 Tacca made several such small bronzes that traveled outside of Italy: one of the extant examples of the pacing stallion after Giambologna is in the Royal Collection, cast by Tacca and presented as a gift to Henry, Prince of Wales by the Grand Duke Ferdinand I of Tuscany. See Katharine Watson and Charles Avery, “Medici and Stuart: A Grand Ducal Gift of ‘Giovanni Bologna’ bronzes for Henry Prince of Wales (1612),” *The Burlington Magazine* 115, no. 845 (1973): 493-507.

89 Swan, 357.
image’s creation—reflects the artist’s preoccupation with accuracy: the inscription assures the viewer that artist has recorded, truthfully and skillfully, whatever appeared before her eyes. “Nae Pleijster geteijckent” and “naar plyster gedaan” provide a similar attestation that Moses and Catharina dutifully worked from direct observation. Drawing from plaster casts is another mode of working naer het leven. In this capacity, Moses and Catharina relate to their plaster casts with the naer het leven approach described by Karel van Mander in the Schilder-boeck. As discussed in Chapter One, Van Mander praised his friend Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem for “drawing an exceptional amount diligently from the life,” with ancient sculpture (much of it in the form of plaster casts) as his models.90

The conditions recorded in such inscriptions—that the draftsman was in the presence of his model when he executed the drawing—express a relational distinction between drawing from a three-dimensional object and copying two-dimensional images. As Caroline Fowler has argued, working naer het leven “offered a quality that could be gained only from the study of objects in the round” and “went beyond the sense of sight to include the multi-sensory experience of being present (sharing space) with another extended body.”91 The arrangement appeals to the draftsman’s haptic perception, whereby he treats the model as an independent entity both purposefully and reflexively.

The artist’s literal touch, the hands that turned a cast in order to scrutinize it from multiple angles, live on in drawings such as the Seated Venus, after a Giambologna model, by Nicolaas Verkolje.92 According to the 1746 sales catalogue of his estate, Verkolje owned 30


92 This drawing (brush and reddish-brown wash over graphite, with some contours laid in black chalk, 30.3 x 15.7 cm) is currently in the collection of the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden (PTI-0181). For a color reproduction, see Paul
plaster casts, among them a Venus that likely served as the basis for the graphite, chalk, and wash drawing. Verkolje has turned his Venus to observe her from the back, a voyeuristic perspective that playfully contradicts the manipulation required for this set-up. The study of the female nude doubles as a fantasy of spontaneity and recognizes the dynamism already present in the plaster Venus. From this angle, which eschews the frozen expression on the sculpture’s face, Verkolje can treat his Venus as a conveniently vivacious model. Completed around 1710, when Verkolje was thirty-seven years old, this drawing was by no means an example of an early training exercise, but rather a foray into mastering a technique new to him, namely the use of brush and wash. Verkolje understood that, when he found himself back in the position of a novice with respect to a new technique, it was crucial to practice with the plaster casts in his possession, to return to the situation of the student who must commit himself to incremental progress.

Two studies by Verkolje of two children playing with a dog further demonstrate his physical engagement with sculpture in the service of his drawing practice (Fig. 4.4). The model for these drawings was most likely a terracotta, which Verkolje also collected alongside plaster casts; the sales catalogue of Verkolje’s estate lists two groups of children with a small dog, one of which is attributed to Quellinus. Verkolje drew the sculpture from two vantage points to change the play of light on the surface of the figures. The drawing in London juxtaposes the shadows that fall across the face of the child on the left with the other child’s face, partly

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93 Knolle and Korthals Altes, 143.

94 Knolle and Korthals Altes, 143.

95 Knolle and Korthals Altes, 143.
obscured by the puppy. With the angle chosen for the Paris drawing, the former’s face disappears while the latter’s is fully illuminated and juxtaposed with the dog’s agitated expression. The drawings attest to the fact that Verkolje moved and turned his models, in plaster and terracotta, to invigorate and extend his drawing practice.

Dutch artists deftly collapsed these accumulated efforts—the many minutes and hours given over to drawing from casts—into seemingly simple scenes of draftsmen at work, which encompass temporal layers that contradict the impression of a singular moment arrested in paint. For one, each scene represents an activity unfolding over the course of long periods of time. This, from the perspective of the draftsman within the painting, is the present, the critical point where the draftsman and plaster cast intersect. The cast, however, brings the past into play in two iterations: it refers to the distant past, when the prototype initially came into being, and the relatively recent past when the cast inspired by that prototype was made. The Christ Child from Michelangelo’s *Bruges Madonna* in Lievens’s painting (Fig. 4.13) is an object from Lievens’s time, a copy made in the seventeenth century, as well as an object from the previous century, in that its existence depends on a monumental sculpture made between 1501 and 1504.

Furthermore, the present-tense toiling of the young draftsman who improves his technique line by line, day by day, contains within it the expectation of the future extension of his work. The seventeenth-century practice of drawing from casts to a certain extent assumes the continuation of a draftsman’s training, to propel him towards the moment when he is proficient enough to draw from the live nude. For the apprentice who seeks eventually to be an independent master, drawing from plaster casts held the promise of more to come. Van Hoogstraten, in his chapter on “the benefit of habitual drawing with attention,” recognizes that potential future as a powerful motivator for the amateur:
“Those who regularly require ruler and compass walk slowly on crutches, whereas the eye strengthened by practice supplies its own compass. But base inertia keeps many from hunting this quarry, which cannot be gained but through continuous practice, strengthened by an ardent hope (*een vierige hoop*) to someday enjoy the fruit of this honourable work and attain the honor that even great masters have had to do without at times.”

Multiple temporalities are even more tangible in drawings made from plaster casts. In these, the draftsman’s marks pull the plaster cast, and its older referent, into the present by turning it into an image whose very construction manifests the passage of time. As Norman Bryson has put it, “The drawn line in a sense always exists in the present tense, in the time of its own unfolding… Line gives you the image *together with* the whole history of its becoming-image.” In Moses ter Borch’s *Study of a Cast of a Nude Boy* (Fig. 4.32), the ghostly line of the first hand Moses drew is a layer of the drawing’s “becoming-image”: it is a testament to Moses’s uncertainty and his subsequent decisions to revise, each a piece in a chain of reactions without which the drawing would never materialize. The primary subject of the drawing is the plaster cast, but it is also a study of Moses’s learning process. In the *Bound, Nude Slave after Michelangelo*, the block that extends to the edge of the sheet makes visible Moses’s cognitive efforts while drawing, one of his responses to the question of how to transform graphic marks into representational fictions. These sketches contain the time that has elapsed as Moses develops a sense of his own artistry, in tandem with his physical and emotional growth. Deanna Petherbridge has characterized “every invention of new forms or means of expression through

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drawing” as “an act of self-learning,” an apt description of the small but essential steps that individuals like Moses ter Borch and Catharina Backer took through drawing from plaster casts.

These studies, like so many made in the early modern Netherlands, were not intended to circulate widely. They were destined for temporary and private use, kept in albums like Catharina’s or, more likely, discarded after the draftsman had reached a certain level of proficiency. Their existence is aggressively ordinary; in his chapter on drawing materials, Van Hoogstraten betrays a degree of annoyance with “so many useless drawings as there are now floating about on paper.” Drawings from plaster casts do not contain the revelations that art historians normally seek from works on paper, because they lack the marks of genius we so relentlessly pursue to prop up our belief in the exceptionality of canonical artists. These drawings are about a different sort of disegno—about the fickle task of undertaking drawing in the first place and about how tediously slow the learning process can be. They also express the striving spirit of their makers. In Catharina’s case, drawings from plaster casts recover her dedication to the cultivation of artistic skills despite the likelihood that she would spend most of her life preoccupied with elite social expectations. In Moses’s case, drawings from the casts that he shared as training tools with his brother and sister are a poignant reminder of the high hopes he had to be a professional painter, which were dashed by his untimely death at the age of twenty-two while on an expedition against the British during the second Anglo-Dutch War. That these drawings have communicated their multiple temporalities for several centuries is an unlikely


99 Brusati, Introduction to the Academy of Painting, 83.

100 Schatborn, Dutch Figure Drawings, 87.
outcome. Yet here they are: preserved beyond the bounds of their purpose, these drawings transport the plaster casts they represent even further in time than their makers could foresee.

**Attention and Devotion**

Even more than glimpses into the painters’ studio, Dutch pictures of young men and women in studious rapture before plaster casts are immersive explorations of the process of making a work of art. These images are about the mundane, repetitive actions without which virtuosic performances cannot exist. Dutch artists committed this subject to easel paintings in part as assertions about their own capacity for manual and intellectual discipline, a visual confirmation of the practices that formed the basis of their professional success. But the validation of such tender moments is nevertheless unusual. The act of learning, according to Dutch painters, is worthy of admiration and can claim a place among the everyday themes that abounded in genre paintings. In response to this proposal, I have, in this chapter, revisited the amateur’s trials and efforts through imperfect drawings from casts that are rarely the main subject of an art historical study. These sketches preserve the experience of extended observation of a plaster cast and the close contact with it that the draftsman needs in order to understand how to render volume convincingly. Drawings from plaster casts also substantiate the phenomenon evoked in the paintings of solitary draftsmen: the plaster cast transforms from a static object into a series of dynamic forms in space, a figure that the draftsman takes seriously as a model to be depicted *naer het leven*. The rapt attention of the draftsman, I have argued, prompts him to engage with the plaster cast with psychological and emotional investment. As the poet Mary Oliver has put it, “Attention is the beginning of devotion.”  

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profound attachment to the model: a Corinthian woman named Dibutades traced the outline of her lover’s shadow on a wall and thereby created an image of him to keep close even when he was away (Fig. 4.4). 102

Dutch paintings of intense moments of concentration while drawing from plaster casts occupy a singular place in the corpus of seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, distinct from scenes of artisans at work. These images also established a genre unto itself that was picked up in France and England in the eighteenth century (Fig 4.43). 103 Throughout the Age of Enlightenment, artists across Europe returned to Dutch painters’ idiosyncratic treatment of students of art dedicated to learning. Paintings of this sort celebrate modest educational settings that emulate, even as they contrast with, the privileges enjoyed by European elites who embarked on the Grand Tour in the eighteenth century. Young men of means could study antiquities firsthand as they traveled through Italy, in a methodical version of the journeys that a small number of artists had made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. 104 As in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, individuals of lesser means in eighteenth-century Europe had to content themselves with a virtual enjoyment of ancient sculpture, most evocatively as plaster casts. In the Dutch pictures and the eighteenth-century variations they inspired, learning from canonical sculpture takes place in interiors where young students adopt the pose of travelers in the Italian

102 Pliny, XXV.151.

103 I am grateful to Charles Kang for this observation made on the basis of the selection of Dutch paintings I have presented here. Walsh noted more mildly, in his study on Steen’s Drawing Lesson, that “the subject continued to appeal to painters in the next century, most notably in the work of Chardin;” Walsh, 55.

gardens and ruins where the originals stood (Fig. 4.4). The encounter did not constitute an event of grand proportions, but it is precisely their seeming modesty that gives these images their layers of complexity.

An intimate relationship between a person and a plaster cast endures in the paintings at the center of this chapter. They reify how Dutch artists found a liveliness in plaster casts that contradicts prevailing modern associations of plaster with death—with the taking of death masks, the petrification of the body, even the degradation of a marble original’s aura. Dutch depictions of plaster casts seem to pose the question of whether there is liveliness in presence alone. Plaster casts, though inanimate, beckon the living, both the individuals within the painting who interact with them as well as the painting’s beholders. They command awareness and stimulate the senses in ways that elicit reactions normally reserved for living creatures. In the seventeenth century, Dutch painters were the most prolific creators of the genre of still life, an image type largely defined by paradoxes of absence and presence, in which the visible world pulsates with energy and potential though nothing in sight is alive. This condition of still life also describes the eccentricity of plaster casts. They are objects that have taken the shape of living beings, not through subtractive or additive processes, but by means of a material that moves and flows and shifts as it settles into a recognizable form. As the plaster’s fluidity decreases, the cast becomes an artificial body, with its own language of vigor and vitality that communicates with the captive observer. In the interactions with plaster casts captured in Dutch drawings and paintings, the still is improbably treated as life—the object bestowed with a moving presence.
Conclusion: Absence and Restoration

Even at the moment of closeness, when a single individual and a plaster cast seem to meet most intimately, there are only specters. The proximity to plaster casts that is instantiated in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings is, after all, a virtual closeness, one that inevitably marks the distance between the modern beholder and the casts that have not survived. The casts in the paintings are ghostly images not because so many of them are based on an absent prototype, but because they are among the last traces of objects that once existed, that once were cherished, that once stood near the living.

And still, plaster casts open up more avenues towards life than death. The entirety of this dissertation, centered on Dutch paintings, inhabits the tension between writing about what is there and about what is not. This uneasy bind is part and parcel with the task of the art historian: to see clearly, and rely on what can be seen, to account for and perhaps even discover what is missing. The discipline is motivated by the desire to scrutinize the work of art in all its material and conceptual specificities, to know its every tangible detail even as the circumstances of its creation and reception recede into the past and, sometimes, into oblivion. Therein lies the work of art’s inherent contradiction: it offers an abundance to behold and untold losses to mourn. Its interpreters react in kind. As Michael Ann Holly has articulated, “Fear of losing that which is already gone leads to a celebration of what remains.”\(^1\) My orientation towards plaster casts began with the observation of what remains, plaster casts that have been hiding in plain sight in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. They are patently visible but have not been properly seen. They are, thanks to the artifice of painting, still there, though in truth they are also gone.

Absence, then, comprises only one part of this dissertation. Woven with it is a process of restoration. Though I cannot, alas, recover actual pieces of sculpture made in plaster in the seventeenth century, I can in some measure help reinscribe them into the history of Dutch art. Restoration in this dissertation involves a critical perspective on the plaster casts that populate not only dozens of paintings across genres but also a smaller corpus of drawings that must stand in for more of their kind lost in time. Moreover, this maneuver affects the extant images themselves: I maintain that to look more closely at the plaster casts is to approach a much fuller understanding of each image. In this sense, plaster casts fulfill a purpose that they are regularly put to in the field of art conservation. Plaster casts can be essential in bids to restore broken or damaged works of art, to make them whole again. This practice is at its most effective when a plaster workshop retains molds taken from an original piece. The Atelier de Moulage at the Musée Art & Histoire in Brussels, for example, stewards a collection of molds—some of them dating to the nineteenth century—that continue to be used to cast plaster reproductions of sculpture in other media. Still in operation, the Atelier receives requests from cultural institutions to produce plaster replacements for portions of sculptures that have sustained damage sometime after the Atelier took molds from them.\(^2\) Plaster casts made from these historical molds can also aid conservators in projects to correct previous restorations, in cases when they preserve the state of a work of sculpture prior to flawed modern interventions.\(^3\)

One of the qualities that makes plaster a powerful restoration tool is the fact that it can be modified to imitate the appearance of other materials. Its mimetic possibilities are most

\(^2\) I am grateful to Nele Strobbe from Collections Management at the Atelier de Moulage, for these insights offered in conversation during my visit to the Atelier on August 18, 2021. My thanks also to Frits Scholten for recommending the site to me as part of my research travels.

dramatically on display today at the Cast Courts of the Victoria and Albert Museum, where scale and patina combine to transform plaster casts into astonishing doubles of notable sculptures and structures made in Europe from the Middle Ages onward. The first chapter of this dissertation briefly addresses archival evidence that indicates that opportunities for imitation were already seized upon in the seventeenth century. Some plaster sculpture that decorated domestic interiors was painted or gilded to disguise the inexpensive material and give the impression of an entirely different medium, a phenomenon that the art historian Marjolijn Bol has called material mimesis. The few instances presented in this dissertation suggest the potential for further research into the artful modifications that plaster underwent as it entered the market for decorative goods. The techniques early modern artisans employed to alter plaster’s visual profile belong among better known ingenious practices in the early modern Netherlands that similarly engineered a persuasive resemblance to a more rarefied material: Delftware that imitated Chinese porcelain, whose constitution remained mysterious to seventeenth-century Europeans; veneers that gave frames and furniture the appearance of ebony or tortoiseshell; paint and varnish on wood that vied for equivalence with Japanese lacquer. The recuperation of plaster’s applications in the Dutch Republic that this dissertation performs is by no means complete, bounded as it is


by a focus on depictions of plaster casts and by pandemic-era limitations on access to archives. Instead, I hope this study invites and inspires more investigations into plaster and plaster sculpture itself.

In the end, so many absences clamor for restoration. I began my research with questions about the presence of a single figure—the plaster Spinario—in a painting from 1628. As my work has unfolded, my questions have increasingly concerned flesh-and-blood persons whom I cannot see so clearly. Plaster casts have beckoned me towards the living, most of whom must be represented by the things they left behind. My research to date has demonstrated the relative absence of particular types of laborers in the textual and visual record of life and art in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. In a dissertation characterized by images that reflect the ways people occupied their time and made a living, I cannot completely account for the individuals whose work resulted in the plaster casts that have survived in paintings and drawings. It is, in other words, no coincidence that the information I can provide about plaster casts comes from those who used them, not those who made them. This inversion of the conventional art historical terms of engagement arises because the latter are literally underrepresented. In the context of the trades and professions that actually were pictorialized, it is tempting to posit that the laborers who generated plaster and specialized in plaster casts were, in today’s parlance, “unskilled.” But that supposition is entirely unjustifiable, whether we consider the demanding conditions of work at a limekiln or the precision required to create multi-piece molds, let alone to make high-quality casts with them. Moreover, the fallacy of value distinctions between forms of labor has never been clearer than in the midst of a global public health crisis, when we have confronted the realities of what it means for a worker to be deemed “essential.” Even this revelation has only occurred for the workforces most visible in modern American towns and
cities. The tangle of supply chains that span continents obscures on a daily basis the laborers whose toiling yields items that circulate widely and at nearly every rung of the socio-economic ladder. In the United States, as in many of the world’s other wealthiest countries, our blindness to the workers who make what we use, and to the conditions in which they do so, is a fundamental component of twenty-first-century lifestyles. It is by no means a natural circumstance, but it is too easily assimilated into our scholarship on historical eras, not least because we contend with a dearth of recorded information that seems to keep those supply chains entirely opaque.

In the course of writing this dissertation, I worked from objects that have always been there and yet have received comparatively little attention, and in the process, I have come to realize that they can gesture towards individuals similarly omitted in existing scholarship. Though I can only adumbrate minor points about the efforts of people who did not enjoy the privilege of social recognition, the challenge alone illuminates the potential for art history to compensate for gaps in representation in ways that traditional archives sometimes cannot. An art history that looks again, with a willingness to ask more from what seems self-evident, is a discipline that can invest in the absences it has not yet noticed or addressed. This type of inquisitive openness has already impacted the subjects incorporated into the field of Netherlandish art. Long overdue projects on race and ethnicity have materialized through scholars’ realization that the presence of Black men, women, and children in the literature has not been commensurate with their recurrence in early modern images. The study of female artists, too, required specialists to revisit oeuvres that had previously been ignored, dismissed, or only summarily treated. Though I have identified only a few laborers by name and simply acknowledged the unrecorded work of others who remain unknown, I present this dissertation as
an invitation for art history to continue to restore the experiences of overlooked individuals through their connections to works of art. Grounded in visual media that can be read as closely as any text, art history is in an ideal position to discover alternative forms of representation that might to some degree compensate for absences in the written record.

A broader conception of lives that matter in our accounts of the past also compels the discipline of art history to destabilize its concerns about how to ascribe a work of art to a primary author. Especially in the face of fragmentary archives, to take an image from the past as a point where multiple contributors intersect is to complicate the image to its benefit, to enhance not only our understanding of it, but also its power to make the past present. To be sure, there is much to be gained from an attribution to a principal maker, a process that itself requires attention to minutiae and to the larger narrative into which a single work becomes embedded. My point is that art history already boasts plenty of methodologies centered on a connoisseurship that holds dear the concept of recognizing one or two authors through the physical marks they made. Through a series of theoretical “turns,” the discipline has demonstrably accepted approaches beyond that of the connoisseur, but scholarship on early modern European art remains in the thrall of singular genius, whether through persistent debates about the extent of the involvement of a canonical master’s workshop or through monographic studies that seek to shed light on every aspect of an artist’s career, often to reify his (for it is most often a male artist in question) exceptionality. These methods continue to be indispensable foundations for our fields of expertise, not least when they can help transform the scholarly landscape by, for example, establishing a corpus for an understudied figure or by rescuing a lesser-known artist from the shadow of a legendary one through reattribution. Yet the social worlds of any of these artists

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were so much more capacious than even their biographies, styles, and patrons can account for. The considerations that I have attempted to bring to bear on the paintings and drawings in this dissertation belong to a reinvigorated mode of the period eye concept first proposed by Michael Baxandall in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy.* It has become clear to me that the social history of a work of art is incomplete without inquiries into the industries and labor that supported its creation. We can aim not only to reconstruct the belief systems and cultural knowledge that affected how a work of art was made and received, but also to restore to that confluence of factors the contributions of individuals not conventionally linked to artistic or intellectual preoccupations. Though revelations about these persons’ lives may prove modest in number or depth, the scholarly action involved can fundamentally alter the ways modern art historians, unwittingly or not, grant the advantages of recognition to select historical actors.

I am not the first—nor the last, if we are to judge by current projects in development and dissertations in progress—to propose that we bring our concerted attention and efforts to depictions in works of art that point towards stories as yet unwritten. Instead, I join my voice to a growing chorus, one which increasingly seeks for scholarly work, a labor unto itself, to reflect the intertwined forms of labor it illuminates. After all, the conception of a work of art as the product of (sometimes many) multiple hands also opens the door to a collaborative practice.

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8 I have in mind projects such as Christopher J. Nygren’s forthcoming book (provisionally titled *Sedimentary Aesthetics: Painting on Stone and the Ecology of Early Modern Art*) in which he foregrounds information about stone cutters and other laborers who provided stone substrates to painters and their patrons, and Cleo Nisse’s PhD dissertation (Columbia University) about the emergence of canvas as a support for European paintings, which distinguishes the weavers, spinners, and cloth merchants, among others, involved in the industry that furnished painters with different types of canvas. Outside of the fields of early modern art, scholars have sought to revive figures relatively absent from traditional archives, including low-wage laborers, by invoking their subjectivity; see, for example, Joseph H. Larnerd, “The Worker in the Window: Class, Cut Glass, and the Spectacle of Work, 1910,” *The Journal of Modern Craft* 0, no. 0 (2020): 1-17, and Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).
among scholars, through which a range of specializations and skillsets can come together to produce much more expansive histories than a single individual could ever hope to achieve. Though the text of this dissertation indeed stems from one author, it depends significantly on the efforts of many others, only some of whom can be accounted for in footnotes. Its limits lie precisely where the expertise of collaborators could radically lengthen its reach. I propose we create an art history that emulates the intermingled creativities of a painting like Jan ter Borch’s Drawing Lesson, with plaster casts at its center, restored to its full complexity (Fig. 4.22). At first, we see Jan ter Borch’s activity, the brushstrokes that have rendered the scene before us. But here we also find the contributions of the vendors who sold Ter Borch his pigments, and perhaps the apprentices under his supervision who ground the pigments and mixed them with oil to prepare his paints. There is the canvas weaver, whose handiwork generated the ground for Ter Borch to paint upon. Sculptors are here too—the ancient Roman who cast the Spinario in bronze in the first century AD, alongside Giambologna, who envisioned a nude woman in marble to personify Architecture for an Italian garden in the sixteenth century. They, of course, are here thanks to another set of sculptors, seventeenth-century artisans whose names we do not know, who remade these auspicious prototypes in plaster and as a result entered Ter Borch’s painting, and there waited to be seen anew.
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Photograph by Isabella Lores-Chavez.
Appendix B : Catalogue
Plaster Casts in Dutch Paintings and Drawings, 1600-1750

## Paintings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maker</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Plaster Cast(s)</th>
<th>Medium &amp; size</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacques de Gheyn</td>
<td>Non Omnis Moriar</td>
<td>ca. 1620-1629</td>
<td>Head of Laocoön's son and head of a child after Germain Pilon</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 42 x 56 cm</td>
<td>Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacques de Gheyn</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life</td>
<td>1621</td>
<td>Pseudo-Seneca, Laocoön's sons</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 117.5 x 165.4 cm</td>
<td>Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas de Keyser</td>
<td>Portrait of David Bailly</td>
<td>ca. 1625-1630</td>
<td>Hercules Wrestling Snakes</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 73.7 x 53.7 cm</td>
<td>Whereabouts unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Lievens</td>
<td>Book Still Life</td>
<td>ca. 1628</td>
<td>Head of a child after Germain Pilon, Dawn after Michelangelo</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 61 x 97 cm</td>
<td>Alte Pinakothek, Munich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pieter Claesz</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life with the Spinario</td>
<td>1628</td>
<td>Spinario</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 70.5 x 80.5 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simon Luttichuys</td>
<td>Allegory of the Arts</td>
<td>1646</td>
<td>Flora Farnese, Pseudo-Seneca</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 46 x 64.7 cm</td>
<td>Heinz Collection, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Artist Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Bailly</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life with a Bust of Seneca</td>
<td>ca. 1625-1630</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oil on panel, 42 x 68 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isack Elyas</td>
<td>Merry Company</td>
<td>1629</td>
<td>Archer</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 47.1 x 63.2 cm</td>
<td>Rijksdienst Bildende Kunst</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Davidsz. de Heem</td>
<td>Interior with an Old Scholar</td>
<td>1629</td>
<td>Saint Sebastian by Alessandro Vittoria</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 48.5 x 65 cm</td>
<td>Private collection, The Netherlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Pieter Codde</td>
<td>Two Men Beside a Display of Musical Instruments</td>
<td>ca. 1630</td>
<td>Venus, cast of a leg</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 76 x 122 cm</td>
<td>Museum Briner und Kern, Winterthur</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pieter Codde</td>
<td>Artist in the Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1630</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TEFAF 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Pieter Codde</td>
<td>The Young Draftsman</td>
<td>ca. 1630</td>
<td>Hercules and Cacus after Giambologna, Venus, Mercury</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 28 x 36.5 cm</td>
<td>Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels</td>
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<td>Jan Davidsz. de Heem</td>
<td>Interior of a Painter's Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1630</td>
<td>Atlas</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 58 x 81 cm</td>
<td>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</td>
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<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td>Artist in His Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1630-1632</td>
<td>Head of a woman (after Antonio Lombardo?)</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 59 x 43.5 cm</td>
<td>P&amp;D Colnaghi and Co., London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pieter Codde</td>
<td>Artist and Art Lover in Conversation</td>
<td>ca. 1630-1633</td>
<td>Hercules and Cactus after Giambologna, Hercules Pomarius by Willem van Tetrode, female nude</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 41.7 x 55.1 cm</td>
<td>Fondation Custodia, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Lievens</td>
<td>The Young Draftsman</td>
<td>ca. 1630-1635</td>
<td>Bruges Madonna by Michelangelo, busts of men (Roman emperors?)</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 129 x 100 cm</td>
<td>Louvre, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adriaen van Gaesbeeck</td>
<td>Still Life with Books and a Globe in an Interior</td>
<td>1630s</td>
<td>Head of a child after Lucas Faydherbe</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 41.2 x 52 cm</td>
<td>Private collection, Germany</td>
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<td>Anthony Palamedesz.</td>
<td>A Merry Company</td>
<td>1633</td>
<td>Rearing horse and rider</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 89 x 61 cm</td>
<td>Hallwyl Museum, Stockholm</td>
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<td>Jan ter Borch</td>
<td>The Drawing Lesson</td>
<td>1634</td>
<td>Spinario, Architecture after Giambologna, Flora Farnese, Heliogabalus, child's head, ecorget of an archer</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 120 x 159 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Cornelis Saftleven</td>
<td>The Duet</td>
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<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
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<td>ca. 1635-1638</td>
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<td>David Bailly</td>
<td>An Artist's Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1640</td>
<td>Private collection, France</td>
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- **Spinario, Architecture after Giambologna, Flora Farnese, Heliogabalus, child's head, ecorché of an archer**
- **Saint Sebastian by Alessandro Vittoria, head of Laocoön's son**
- **Ecorché by Willem van Tetrode**
- **Head of a woman (after Antonio Lombardo?)**
- **Rearing horse and rider**
- **Saint Sebastian by Alessandro Vittoria**
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<td>1641</td>
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<td>1647</td>
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<td>1651</td>
<td>Saint Sebastian (after Quellinus?)</td>
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<td>Male bust</td>
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<td>Bacchus of Versailles, head of a son of Laocoön</td>
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<td>Jan van Dalen II</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life with Regalia and a Plaster Bust</td>
<td>ca. 1650</td>
<td>Bust of a Roman emperor</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 107.5 x 137 cm</td>
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<td>Nicolaes Maes</td>
<td>An Old Woman Praying</td>
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<td>Worcester Art Museum, Salem</td>
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<td>Johan van Swieten</td>
<td>Lute-Playing Painter in His Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1655</td>
<td>Hercules Wrestling Snakes</td>
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<td>Gabriel Metsu</td>
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<td>Wallerant Vaillant</td>
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<td>1656</td>
<td>Head of Cesi Juno, putto by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>National Trust for Scotland, Brodie Castle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gabriel Metsu</td>
<td>The Hunter's Gift</td>
<td>ca. 1658-1661</td>
<td>Cupid from Apollo group by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 51 x 48 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copy after Gabriel Metsu</td>
<td>Self-Portrait in the Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1658</td>
<td>Saint Susanna by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Support unknown, 41.9 x 31.1 cm</td>
<td>Whereabouts unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arnold van Ravesteyn</td>
<td>Portrait of Jacob Cats</td>
<td>1660</td>
<td>Pseudo-Seneca</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 128.5 x 105 cm</td>
<td>Dienst voor Rijks Verspreide Kunstvoorwerpen, The Hague</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adriaen Valck</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait</td>
<td>ca. 1660</td>
<td>Heads of women</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 119 x 95 cm</td>
<td>Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Cornelis Bisschop</td>
<td>Woman Reading</td>
<td>ca. 1660-1670</td>
<td>Bust of a woman by Antonio Lombardo</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 51 cm</td>
<td>Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wallerant Vaillant</td>
<td>The Young Draftsman</td>
<td>ca. 1650-1675</td>
<td>Head of Laocoön's son</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 119 x 90 cm</td>
<td>Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Karel du Jardin</td>
<td>Studio Interior</td>
<td></td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 51 x 61 cm</td>
<td>Whereabouts unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallerant Vaillant</td>
<td>The Young Draftsman</td>
<td>ca. 1660</td>
<td>Mercury by Duquesnoy, head of a woman</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 117 x 89.5 cm</td>
<td>Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, Lille</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frans van Mieris</td>
<td>Pictura</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>Hercules or Mars</td>
<td>Oil on copper, 12.7 x 8.9 cm</td>
<td>J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>Gabriel Metsu</td>
<td>Portrait of a Woman Artist (Isabella de Wolff?)</td>
<td>1661-1664</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 28.6 x 24.1 cm</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constantijn Verhout</td>
<td>Draftsman with a Plaster Model</td>
<td>1663</td>
<td>Ice-skating putto</td>
<td>Whereabouts unknown</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adriaen van Ostade</td>
<td>Painter in His Studio</td>
<td>1663</td>
<td>Heads of women</td>
<td>Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pieter de Hooch</td>
<td>Interior with Women beside a Linen Cupboard</td>
<td>1663</td>
<td>Perseus</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Steen</td>
<td>Fantasy Interior with Jan Steen and the Family of Gerrit Schouten</td>
<td>ca. 1663</td>
<td>Cupid with a Bow by Duquesnoy, Venus and Cupid, bacchanalian putto</td>
<td>Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Steen</td>
<td>The Drawing Lesson</td>
<td>ca. 1665</td>
<td>Saint Sebastian by Alessandro Vittoria, ox statuette, life casts</td>
<td>J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Steen</td>
<td>Young Draftsman by Candlelight</td>
<td>ca. 1650-1655</td>
<td>Head of a child</td>
<td>Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden</td>
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<td>Artist/Attribution</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Steen</td>
<td>A Master Correcting a Pupil's Drawing</td>
<td>ca. 1665-1666</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oil on panel, 23.8 x 20.3 cm</td>
<td>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>ca. 1665</td>
<td>Head of head of a woman (after Antonio Lombardo?), écorché of an archer</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 58.1 x 43.2 cm</td>
<td>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eglon van der Neer</td>
<td>A Lady Drawing</td>
<td>ca. 1665</td>
<td>Borghese Gladiator, bust of a woman</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 30.3 x 25.6 cm</td>
<td>Wallace Collection, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Dutch artist</td>
<td>Artist with a Female Student</td>
<td>ca. 1665</td>
<td>Putto by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 59 cm</td>
<td>Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Cornelis Bisschop</td>
<td>The Artist in His Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1665-1670</td>
<td>Putto by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 90.8 x 76.8 cm</td>
<td>Detroit Institute of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caesar van Everdingen</td>
<td>Still Life with a Bust of Venus</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>Venus Medici</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 74 x 60.8 cm</td>
<td>Mauritshuis, The Hague</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caesar van Everdingen</td>
<td>Still Life with a Bust of Adonis</td>
<td>1666</td>
<td>Adonis</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 60 cm</td>
<td>Michaelis Collection, South African National Art Gallery, Cape Town</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caspar Netscher</td>
<td>The Young Artists</td>
<td>1666</td>
<td>Ice-skating putto, bust of a woman, seated putto</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 21.6 x 16.5 cm</td>
<td>Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist Name</td>
<td>Painting Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Artwork Title</td>
<td>Medium and Dimensions</td>
<td>Museum/Collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johannes Vermeer</td>
<td>The Art of Painting</td>
<td>ca. 1666- 1668</td>
<td>Head of a woman</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm</td>
<td>Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan Steen</td>
<td>Ascagnes and Lucelle (The Music Lesson)</td>
<td>1667</td>
<td>Cupid Victorious</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 63 x 53.7 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Art, Washington DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johannes van Wijckersloo t</td>
<td>Allegorical Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1669</td>
<td>Borghese Gladiator</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 114 x 91 cm</td>
<td>Museum der bildenden Kunste, Leipzig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abraham Susenier</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life with a Portrait of Rembrandt</td>
<td>1669/167 2</td>
<td>Male nude (Zeus?)</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 59.7 x 73.7 cm</td>
<td>Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Michiel van Musscher</td>
<td>Self-Portrait of the Artist in His Studio</td>
<td>1660s</td>
<td>Putto</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 58.4 x 48.9 cm</td>
<td>Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michiel van Musscher</td>
<td>Portrait of an Artist in His Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1670</td>
<td>Farnese Hercules</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 47.6 x 36.8 cm</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michiel van Musscher</td>
<td>The Artist in His Studio</td>
<td>1670</td>
<td>Borghese Gladiator, putto</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 74.3 x 63.3 cm</td>
<td>Christie's London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Toorenvliet</td>
<td>An Allegory of the Arts (Painting Being Crowned by Poetry)</td>
<td>1670s</td>
<td>Ecorché by Willem van Tetrode</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 39.2 x 29 cm</td>
<td>Sphinx Fine Art, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joost van Geel</td>
<td>A Woman in an Interior, Drawing from a Bust</td>
<td>ca. 1670</td>
<td>Bust of a woman</td>
<td></td>
<td>TEFAF, Maastricht (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist/Maker</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date/Period</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornelis de Man</td>
<td>Geographers at Work</td>
<td>ca. 1670</td>
<td>Bust of a woman</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>Kunsthalle, Hamburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan van der Heyden</td>
<td>Still Life with Globe, Books, Sculpture, and Other Objects</td>
<td>1670</td>
<td>Hercules and Cacus after Giambologna</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 62 x 49.5 cm</td>
<td>Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Godfried Schalcken</td>
<td>Portrait of an Artist in His Studio</td>
<td>ca. 1670-1675</td>
<td>Venus Medici</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 24.1 x 19.3 cm</td>
<td>Städel Museum, Frankfurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>After Godfried Schalcken</td>
<td>Man with a Bust of a Woman by Candlelight</td>
<td>after 1670</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Oil on paint, 44 x 37 cm</td>
<td>Uffizi, Florence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornelis de Man</td>
<td>The Artist's Lesson</td>
<td>ca. 1670-1706</td>
<td>Farnese Hercules</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>Art dealer Leslie Hand, 1953</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frans van Mieris</td>
<td>Gyges Spying on the Wife of Candaules</td>
<td>ca. 1670</td>
<td>Apollo by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 26.1 x 29.3 cm</td>
<td>Staatliches Museum, Schwerin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Ludolf de Jongh</td>
<td>Student Drawing after Plaster</td>
<td>ca. 1670</td>
<td>Flora Farnese, Apollo by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 17 x 12.5 cm</td>
<td>Previously in the collection of Jonkheer B. W. F. van Riemsdijk, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriaen van der Werff</td>
<td>A Young Painter</td>
<td>1670-1690</td>
<td>Saint Susanna by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 36 x 30.7 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Berckheyde</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>Bust of a man</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 36 x 30.7 cm</td>
<td>Uffizi, Florence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Material/Dimensions</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan de Bray</td>
<td>The Governors of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>Bust of a man</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 130 x 184 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frans van Mieris</td>
<td>Figures in an Interior (&quot;The Family Concert&quot;)</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>Cupid</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 52 x 40 cm</td>
<td>Uffizi, Florence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacob Toorenvliet</td>
<td>Allegory of Painting</td>
<td>ca. 1675-1679</td>
<td>Bacchanal relief by Duquesnoy, head of Ludovisi Juno</td>
<td>Oil on copper, 24.6 x 31 cm</td>
<td>The Leiden Collection, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eglon van der Neer</td>
<td>Elegant Couple in an Interior</td>
<td>1678</td>
<td>Putto holding a bird</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 85.5 x 70.1 cm</td>
<td>Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michiel van Musscher</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1679</td>
<td>Borghese Gladiator, bust of an emperor</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 57 x 46.5 cm</td>
<td>Museum Rotterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adriaen van der Werff</td>
<td>The Sculptor's Studio (Allegory on Teaching Painting and the Arts)</td>
<td>ca. 1680</td>
<td>Borghese Gladiator, head of a woman, a muse</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 23 x 16.5 cm</td>
<td>Louvre, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornelis van der Meulen</td>
<td>Vanitas Still Life with Skull, a Guttering Candle, a Tortoiseshell Mirror, a Statuette of Saint Susanna, and a Pack of Cards</td>
<td>1688</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 58 x 47.4 cm</td>
<td>Sold by Sotheby's, (May 2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan van Mieris</td>
<td>Portrait of a Smoking Painter</td>
<td>1688</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 17.7 x 14.3 cm</td>
<td>Kunsthalle, Hamburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Godfried Schalcken</td>
<td>Young Man and Woman Studying a Statue of Venus by Lamplight</td>
<td>ca. 1688-1692</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 43.8 x 34.9 cm</td>
<td>The Leiden Collection, New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Godfried Schalcken</td>
<td>Boy Drawing a Sculpture by Candlelight</td>
<td>ca. 1690-1700</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 cm</td>
<td>Formerly private collection, Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>After Godfried Schalcken</td>
<td>Boy Drawing a Sculpture by Candlelight</td>
<td>late 1600s</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 19.7 x 26 cm</td>
<td>Sotheby's New York (January 1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christoffel Pierson</td>
<td>A Trompe l'Oeil of Hunting Equipment</td>
<td>late 1600s</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 103.8 x 84.7 cm</td>
<td>Rafael Valls 2021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date/Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attr. Johannes Voorhout</td>
<td>A Young Scholar Reading by Lamplight</td>
<td>late 1600s</td>
<td>Ecorché by Willem van Tetrode</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 67.9 x 58.7 cm</td>
<td>Sold by Sotheby's New York, January 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan van Pee</td>
<td>Boy with Drawing Materials</td>
<td>ca. 1695</td>
<td>Horse statuette, various casts</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 87.5 x 127.5 cm</td>
<td>Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tourcoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Verkolje</td>
<td>Boy Drawing a Bust of the Venus Medici</td>
<td></td>
<td>Venus Medici</td>
<td></td>
<td>P. de Boer Gallery, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pieter Veen</td>
<td>Allegory of Painting</td>
<td>ca. 1710</td>
<td>Head of a woman, foot, male statuette</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 43 x 36 cm</td>
<td>Landesmuseum, Darmstadt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan de Lairesse</td>
<td>Allegory of Drawing</td>
<td>1710-1715</td>
<td>Bust of a bearded man</td>
<td>Oil on canvas, 82 x 94.5 cm</td>
<td>Musée des Beaux-Art, Rouen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pieter van der Werff</td>
<td>A Girl Drawing and a Boy near a Statue of Venus</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>Venus Medici, head of a woman</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 38.5 x 29 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornelis Troost</td>
<td>Portrait of Jeronimus Tonneman and his Son Jeronimus (&quot;The Dilettanti&quot;)</td>
<td>1736</td>
<td>Saint Susanna by Duquesnoy, Time Revealing Truth, Mercury Killing Argo</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 68 x 58 cm</td>
<td>National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frans van Mieris the Younger</td>
<td>The Three Generations of the Van Mieris Family</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>Cupid, Belvedere torso, Venus, cast of a dog</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 34 x 30.4 cm</td>
<td>Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td>Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frans van Mieris the Younger</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1747</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Oil on panel, 28.7 x 24.5 cm</td>
<td>Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plaster Casts in Dutch Paintings and Drawings, 1600-1750

Drawings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maker</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Plaster Cast(s)</th>
<th>Medium &amp; size</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Matham</td>
<td>Plaster Casts on a Table</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Pen and ink on paper, 35.1 x 46.3 cm</td>
<td>Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner of Jacques de Gheyn</td>
<td>Sheet with Studies of Two Plaster Heads of Black Men</td>
<td>early 1600s</td>
<td>Head of a man</td>
<td>Pen and brown ink, 21.3 x 28.3 cm</td>
<td>Louvre, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Bailly</td>
<td>Bust of Seneca</td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>Pseudo-Seneca</td>
<td>Brown ink on paper, 17.7 x 14.3 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Bailly</td>
<td>Bust of Flora Farnese</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>Flora Farnese</td>
<td>Brown ink on paper, 17.6 x 14.3 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abraham Bloemaert</td>
<td>An Artist Sketching from a Plaster Cast</td>
<td>before 1650</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Pen and black ink, light brown wash, over graphite, on laid paper, 28 x 22.3 cm</td>
<td>Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Constantijn Daniel van Renesse</strong></td>
<td>Rembrandt and his Pupils Drawing from a Nude Model</td>
<td>ca. 1650</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Black chalk, brush, and brown wash, heightened with white, 18 x 26.6 cm</td>
<td>Landesmuseum, Darmstadt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leendert van der Cooghenc</strong></td>
<td>Study of a Plaster Cast of the Head of a Crying Child</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>Head of a child</td>
<td>Black chalk, pen, and black ink on paper, 20.3 x 19.3 cm</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moses ter Borch</strong></td>
<td>Bound, Nude Slave after Michelangelo</td>
<td>1657-1659</td>
<td>Rebellious Slave by Michelangelo</td>
<td>Black chalk on paper, 32.7 x 20.8 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moses ter Borch</strong></td>
<td>Study of a Cast of a Nude Boy</td>
<td>ca. 1657-1658</td>
<td>Putto with skull (possibly based on ancient Seated Boy with Fox-Goose)</td>
<td>Black chalk, ink, and gouache on paper, 27.4 x 12 cm</td>
<td>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thomas Wijck</strong></td>
<td>A Painter at Work in His Studio</td>
<td>1663-1677</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Pen and brown ink, brown wash, white gouache, over black and red chalk, on blue paper, 40 x 49.6 cm</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist/Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Date/Period</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td>Museum/Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michiel van Musscher</td>
<td>A Painter in His Studio</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>Various casts</td>
<td>Brown ink and grey wash on paper, 23.2 x 25.5 cm</td>
<td>Teylers Museum, Haarlem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriaen van der Werff</td>
<td>A Reclining Putto</td>
<td>late 1600s</td>
<td>Putto by Duquesnoy</td>
<td>Red chalk and graphite, 22.9 x 34.4 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan de Bisschop</td>
<td>Two Draftsmen Seen From Behind</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bust</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catharina Backer</td>
<td>Cleopatra relief by Francis van Bossuit</td>
<td>1706-1722</td>
<td>Graphite on paper, album page 36.9 x 47.5 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam Museum, on loan from Backer Foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Catharina Backer</td>
<td>Cleopatra relief by Francis van Bossuit</td>
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<td>Black chalk and white chalk on blue paper, album page 36.9 x 47.5 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam Museum, on loan from Backer Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catharina Backer</td>
<td>Drawings of a horse statuette</td>
<td>1706-1722</td>
<td>Pacing stallion by Pietro Tacca after Giambologna. Black ink and wash on paper, album page 36.9 x 47.5 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam Museum, on loan from Backer Foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolaas Verkolje</td>
<td>Seated Venus</td>
<td>ca. 1710</td>
<td>Venus. Brush and reddish-brown wash over graphite, 30.3 x 15.7 cm</td>
<td>Fries Museum, Leeuwarden</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frans van Mieris the Younger</td>
<td>Preliminary Study for The Three Generations</td>
<td>ca. 1742</td>
<td>Bust. Black chalk on paper, 17.2 x 15.9 cm</td>
<td>Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>