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PLASTER CASTS OF ANCIENT SCULPTURES FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW. MARKINGS AND ORIGINS

ABSTRACT

Despite its short history, the royal-university collection grew significantly: from 542 casts purchased by Stanislaus Augustus to over 750 sculptures finally gathered at the University. For years, agents purchasing artwork for Stanislaus Augustus, university professors and museum directors tried to cooperate with numerous casting workshops throughout Europe which produced copies of prominent ancient works of art. Plaster casts were especially important to the University of Warsaw. For a long time, they functioned as *ars*, a priceless collec-

tion presented to the wider public at the Column Hall, as well as *educatio* when they were utilized as a basic educational tool for students of painting, sculpture or architecture. This paper is devoted to the markings used by casting workshops that manufactured some of the surviving casts. Such designations allow not only to track contacts with European workshops but also to determine the origins of particular works and the exact time of their creation or the name of the caster.

Keywords: plaster casts, gallery of plaster casts, collections, cast markings, University of Warsaw

The collection of plaster casts of ancient and modern sculptures founded by King Stanislaus Augustus has been the subject of numerous scholarly works.¹ The beginnings of the collection date back to the time of Stanislaus Augustus.² After the king's death, it was passed on to Prince Józef Poniatowski and his heirs, and was later bought by the Duchy of Warsaw's Chamber of Education in 1811 with the intention of making it a part of the newly-planned School of Fine Arts.³ Past studies have devoted a lot of consideration to the Faculty of Sciences and Fine Arts of the Royal University of Warsaw, which became the owner of Stanislaus Augustus's casts in 1817, as well as to the Gallery of Plaster Casts, one of the Faculty's cabinets.⁴ Scholars of the subject have often stressed the value of the royal-university collection that justified its establishment, continued expansion, and the efforts of

subsequent curators aimed at maintaining its safety. The casts were especially significant to the University of Warsaw as an educational tool. They also contributed, to a much broader extent, to the development of Polish artistic culture.⁵ However, although the issues related to the collection as a whole have been thoroughly investigated, many key facts concerning the individual works are still unknown. An analysis of the collection and its expansion undoubtedly provokes questions regarding the origins of individual pieces, the dates of their creation and arrival in Warsaw, as well as the possibility to attribute particular casts to individual artists or casting workshops.

To date, the markings found on the pedestals of sculptures as well as on reliefs, i.e. the designations that provide a link to the workshops in which they were made, have received very little attention. Nevertheless, the im-

¹ Mańkowski 1976; Korotaj, Mikocki 1989; Kowalski 2008, 13–44; Miziołek 2012, 13–75; Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, 13–88; Kowalski, Żelazowski 2019, 383–418.

² There are accounts stating that it was the king who began to purchase casts of ancient sculptures at the beginning of 1765; see Kowalski 2010, 37.

³ Korotaj, Mikocki 1989, 13.

⁴ Kowalski 2008, 16–17.

⁵ Kowalski 2012, 112–125.

portance of identifying casting signatures in the context of the discussed collection must be stressed since in many cases these can provide information not included in surviving lists or inventories. Studies on these so-called stamps should address their shape, size, and displayed texts. Emblems and the material used for making the signatures are other significant elements. As part of the present study, stamps found on surviving royal-university collection casts were gathered, compared, and described. Their identification was facilitated through the use of information contained within numerous publications devoted to the collection as well as archival documents and iconographic materials concerning the analysed objects.

In Poland, collecting ancient works of art reached its apogee during the reign of Stanislaus Augustus (1764–1795). In establishing his collections, the king was undoubtedly inspired by the resplendent private and public collections of antique sculptures that became popular in Italy as early as in the 16th century, as well as the collections of absolute rulers such as Catherine the Great or Augustus III whom he had met on several occasions prior to his election.⁶ Despite the financing of the establishment of a casting workshop in Warsaw and the employment of Italian sculptors, Davino Cristofani and Giuseppe Pellegrini,⁷ the majority of the plaster copies that make up the collection of Stanislaus Augustus were manufactured by foreign studios. According to literature, Italy, and Rome in particular, i.e. one of Europe's most significant markets for the export of antique works of art in the 18th century, played a crucial role in shaping the royal collection.⁸ In connection with a growing interest in the art of Antiquity and the need for its mass reproduction in the studios of well-known artists, such as Cavaceppi, Penna, Righetti or Albacini, other workshops specialising in copies of famous works were established.⁹ Insights into the process of gathering collections at the Polish court can be gained through offers and lists sent to the king from such workshops,¹⁰ as well as letters discussing purchases of artwork sent by such royal agents as Jan Christian Kamsetzer, Ignazio Brocchi, Marcello Bacciarelli¹¹ or August Moszyński himself, the first man “used by the King to initiate the gathering of his collection”,¹² worthy of mentioning here. Letters from the Italian Peninsula as well as a detailed inventory, most likely created by Bacciarelli,¹³ provide insight into the atmosphere accompanying the royal purchases and the

importance of the collection. The surviving letters, lists, and sketches of sculptures often allow to determine the creators of particular plaster copies of ancient works of art bought during this period.¹⁴

The establishment of the royal collection of artwork was meant to go hand in hand with the funding of the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw. The first plans for this institution, intended for the education of artists, were developed as early as in 1766 by Marcello Bacciarelli, previously connected with the Fine Arts Academy of Dresden.¹⁵ Clearly, inspiration for the planned Academy was drawn from the illustrious schools established in Italy – the Florentine ‘Accademia del Disegno’, Rome’s ‘Accademia di San Luca’, Milan’s ‘Accademia Ambrosiana’ or Louis XIV’s French Academy in Rome, where collections of plaster cast copies of famous works of ancient art were made for educational purposes.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the dream of Stanislaus Augustus involving the creation of such a centre for the education of artists never came to pass. This did not, however, put a halt to the King’s ambitious plans. The bulk of art-related education was moved to the royal court in Warsaw, with the foundations laid by the establishment of the *Malarnia* and *Skulptornia* (Painting and Sculpting Workshops) – a school of painting and sculpture at the Royal Castle under the supervision of Bacciarelli.¹⁷ The plaster copies mentioned above that fulfilled the intentions of the Academy’s founder became the main educational instrument for young art students.

At the end of the reign of the last king of Poland, the collection of plasters consisted of “542 pieces whose value was estimated at 1,800 red złote (Polish ducats) and contained, among others, exact full-sized copies of famous statues: Apollo Belvedere, the Laocoön Group, Venus de’ Medici, the Dying Gladiator, Castor and Pollux, Silenus and Bacchus, Ceres, and others”.¹⁸ Detailed information regarding the shape of the collection as well as the gathered casts can be found in the aforementioned inventory prepared by Bacciarelli. Apart from copies of the most important sculptures of Antiquity, the collection reportedly also contained busts of outstanding personages of Polish (a set of eighteen works) and world renown, as well as fragments of sculptures and casts of body parts. In 1817, a year after the establishment of the Royal University of Warsaw and in accordance with the ideas put forth by Moszyński and Bacciarelli, the Faculty of Sciences and

⁶ Haskell, Penny 1981, 7–15; Godziejewska 1991, 80; Mańkowski 1976, 23.

⁷ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, 17.

⁸ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, 13–17.

⁹ Małcużyńska 1974, 8–9.

¹⁰ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, 32–47; Małcużyńska 1974, 8–9.

¹¹ Małcużyńska 1974, 8–9.

¹² Mańkowski 1976, 23–24.

¹³ AGAD, the ‘Zbiór Popielów’ collection, manuscript 220.

¹⁴ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, 32–46.

¹⁵ Kowalski, Żelazowski 2019, 384–385.

¹⁶ Haskell, Penny 1981, 17; Jones 1997, 115, 126.

¹⁷ Godziejewska 1991, 81–82.

¹⁸ Sobieszczański 1849, 267.

Fine Arts, partially staffed by the graduates of the castle's *Malarnia* and *Skulptornia*, was inaugurated.¹⁹ The collection of plasters was moved from the *Malarnia* and *Skulptornia* to the Kazimierz Palace and then to its permanent location at the Column Hall (currently the seat of the University of Warsaw's Faculty of History).²⁰ For years, subsequent curators of the University's Gallery of Plaster Casts continued the royal tradition of importing casts made in the best workshops of Europe.

An analysis of the royal-university collection of plaster casts suggests that the copies of sculptures purchased by Stanislaus Augustus probably did not bear any workshop markings. It is known that along with a growing interest in copies of ancient works of art, unauthorised workshops started to crop up in many European cities, taking advantage of the reputation of famous studios and encroaching on their renown. In 1854, however, an obligation was introduced to stamp all copies created in recognised ateliers in order to prevent the practice of forging plasters²¹ and this precaution spread throughout all of Europe. The most important studios associated with royal museums had their own designations and, with time, private workshops also adopted this principle by 'signing' their casts with their own unique stamps or seals.²² It is worthy of a mention that the design of these markings often evolved and changed over time or in accordance with a given political situation. For this reason, the present analysis considers only casts obtained to fill the needs of the newly-formed Warsaw collection of plaster casts (1816–1939).

The first stamp-bearing plasters appeared in the royal-university collection together with the sculptures purchased in Paris in 1820 and 1830 for the newly-established Faculty of Sciences and Fine Arts. The reason behind the decision to buy casts in the French capital has not been given much consideration. It was most likely due to the fact that during the 19th century, Paris was one of the prominent markets that dealt in copies of ancient sculpture whose operation was in large part connected to that of *Le musée royal du Louvre*.

The official beginnings of the public museum at the Louvre can be traced back to the time of the French Revolution (1789–1799), a turbulent period of radical socio-political and cultural changes. The New Republic

demanding wider access to the arts, especially to antiques which the old regime reserved for its sovereigns.²³ On 10 August 1793, the *Muséum central des arts de la République* was inaugurated.²⁴ Interestingly, the French Revolution was associated with a conviction that the tradition of Antiquity best reflected the ethos – freedom, heroism, republican patriotism – of the New Republic, thus the language and culture of the revolution was steeped in ancient phraseology²⁵ and the museum was filled with Greek and Roman works of art. On 14 December 1794, a year after the opening of this temple to art, the arts commission ordered plaster copies of forty of the most beautiful ancient sculptures then held at the museum. The task was accepted by two Tuscan *formatori*: Jean-André Getti and Étienne Micheli.²⁶ The event was associated with the establishment of a famous plaster casting studio and the beginnings of the first public collection of plaster copies in Paris.

In 1816, after the end of the revolution, Louis XVIII transformed the *Muséum central des arts de la République* into *Le musée royal du Louvre*. Two years later, the position of the royal *formatore* was bestowed on François-Henry Jacquet, one of the most famous and respected French plaster makers. Jacquet rapidly monopolised the market and gained exclusive rights to create forms for casting marbles contained at the Louvre.²⁷ His list of plasters, published in 1845 and offered for sale, and at the same time the first printed sales catalogue of Louvre's works, confirms the commercialisation of the royal workshop. Interestingly, this list relates both to the artist's private collection as well as that of the museum.²⁸ The French *formatore's* catalogue became well-known throughout Europe, making its way to England²⁹ and, in all likelihood, to Warsaw as well. According to the surviving inventories prepared by the curator of plaster casts and drawing instructor at the University of Warsaw's Faculty of Sciences and Fine Arts, Professor Antoni Blank,³⁰ it was Jacquet who authored ca. 123 plasters acquired in Paris for the Polish collection in 1820 and the seventeen pieces obtained ten years later.

With respect to the present deliberations, one anecdote is especially interesting: the inglorious purchase in 1820 when Louis Letronne, a French-born artist and owner of the first professional lithography studio in Poland,³¹

¹⁹ Wążyński 1992, 42.

²⁰ Wążyński 1992, 42.

²¹ Rionnet 1996, XVI.

²² Rionnet 1996, 40–42.

²³ Rionnet 1996, XVIII–XIX.

²⁴ Le Breton 2016, 32.

²⁵ Baszkiewicz 1978, 468.

²⁶ Rionnet 1996, XV.

²⁷ Rionnet 1996, 53.

²⁸ Rionnet 1996, XVI.

²⁹ *Report from the Select Committee on British Museum* 1836, 590–591.

³⁰ MNW, the 'Zbiory Ikonograficzne i Fotograficzne' collection, Manuscript 1224/1 MNW.

³¹ Ryszkiewicz 1993, 71–73.



Fig. 1. Bust of Paris, Old Orangery at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

became a mediator between *Komisja Rządowa Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego* (the Government Commission for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment) and the Louvre. The main task of Letronne was to supervise the purchase, and transport to Warsaw, of previously selected plaster casts. In order to settle accounts with Jacquet, Letronne was given the entire sum owed to the artist (7,928 zloty and 5 groszy), but the 'enterprising' lithographer paid the plaster maker only half of the agreed-upon sum, appropriating the rest of the money. After returning to Warsaw, Letronne declared his studio bankrupt and the government commission never received the appropriated money back, despite fighting the matter in court for 15 years.³² Unfortunately, the current state of research makes it impossible to determine why it was Letronne who was selected as mediator in these purchases.

In all probability, only seven plaster copies of ancient sculptures marked with the stamp used by Jacquet survived to the present. Four of these – the *Bust of Paris* (Fig. 1), *Bust of the goddess Roma*, the *San Ildefonso Group* (Fig. 2) and *Hermes fastening his sandal* – are currently at the Old Orangery of the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw, while *Faunus with a goat kid* is presented at the Museum of the University of Warsaw and the *Bust of Asclepius* at the Warsaw University of Technology. Only



Fig. 2. San Ildefonso Group, Orangery at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

one object, a cast of a free-standing sculpture depicting Demeter (mistakenly identified as Vestal Virgin)³³ (Fig. 3) is displayed at the Column Hall of the University of Warsaw – the place which has functioned as an exhibition hall since the beginning of the existence of the Plaster Cast Gallery. Comparison of data from documents with the surviving plaster copies allows to conclude that the characteristic stamp (Fig. 4) on the pedestals of Warsaw's plasters is a mark identifying copies made by the royal artists at the Louvre during the first half of the 19th century. The design of the stamp used by Jacquet to mark his copies is not accidental. Signatures used during this period are round with a diameter measuring ca. 2.5 cm, with the entire circumference marked by slight granulation. In the centre of the marking, there is a sign of the *Musée Royal* which confirms the institution where the cast was made. What is more, the sign also indicates the time of its creation – the name *Musée Royal* was used

³² Bieliński 1907, 598–599.

³³ Atalay 1989, 94–96.



Fig. 3. Demeter, Column Hall, Faculty of History of the University of Warsaw, photo by M. Dunajko.

during the reign of Louis XVIII (1814–1824). Such dating of the plaster is also confirmed by iconography or the three lilies (two above and one below), which explicitly refer to the coat of arms of the Bourbon dynasty from which the Paris museum's founder descended.³⁴ Interestingly, François-Henry Jacquet's stamp did not appear on all of Warsaw's plaster casts marked with the letter B, i.e. those purchased in Paris in 1820 and 1830 according to the surviving inventories from the Plaster Cast Gallery of the University of Warsaw. At the current state of knowledge, it is very difficult to determine why some of the plasters imported from France at the beginning of the 19th century do not have the *Musée Royal* marking. This might be associated with the fact that Jacquet made copies of both the pieces belonging to the museum's collection as well as sculptures from his own personal col-



Fig. 4. Musée Royal stamp, photo by M. Dunajko.

lection. The royal artist also used the museum's forms to make copies which contributed to his sizable profits, but this eventually led to his dismissal from the position in 1848.³⁵ It may, therefore, be assumed that only casts made from originals belonging to the Louvre for official orders bore the aforementioned markings. Is it possible that some of the items from the Warsaw collection were made and purchased under less official circumstances? Additionally, it is feasible that only selected copies were designated this way because the obligation to mark them with the above-mentioned stamps was not implemented for another twenty years.

The University of Warsaw and thus all of its Faculties, including that of Fine Arts, was shut down as a part of the repressions resulting from the November Uprising of 1831. Despite the initial plans to move all university property to Russia, the collection of plaster casts remained in Warsaw.³⁶ In 1844, the old campus became home to the School of Fine Arts which inherited the collection of plaster cast copies.³⁷ In 1862, pieces not directly used during lectures were entrusted to the newly-established Museum of Fine Arts in Warsaw for safekeeping. The list of transferred items was not limited to plaster casts of ancient sculptures but also included, among others, busts made on the order of Stanislaus Augustus, a model of a Copernicus monument designed by Thorvaldsen, and reliefs by Maliński.³⁸ Only a year after the museum's

³⁴ Jankowiak-Konik *et al.* 2011, 4.

³⁵ Rionnet 1996, 53.

³⁶ Skowronek 1981, 225.

³⁷ Szwarc 2016, 393–397.

³⁸ Lorentz 1962, 17.



Fig. 5. Second tablet of the western Parthenon frieze, Orangery at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

establishment, thanks to the initiative of its honorary director,³⁹ Justynian Karnicki, other stamp-bearing plaster casts – copies made in a private Parisian workshop run by Alexandre Desachy⁴⁰ – were brought to Warsaw. Probably only three casts of Parthenon frieze tablets survived to the current times (Fig. 5). These are currently stored at the Royal Łazienki Museum. According to the existing documents, fragments of the frieze were purchased with other reliefs of Pheidias and a number of other plaster copies of ancient and religious works of art (48 pieces in total).⁴¹ Each surviving work is marked with a 3.0 by 2.5 centimetre oval stamp used by the French caster to mark his works (Fig. 6). At first glance, the iconography placed in the centre of the designation – a coat of arms used by the British government – is both surprising and confusing. It is a shield divided into four fields with a crown at the top. The first and fourth field contain three lions (the coat of arms of England), the next field contains a rearing lion (the coat of arms of Scotland) and the third depicts a harp (the coat of arms of Ireland). The shield is encircled by a ribbon with the words *Honi soit qui mal y pense* (from French: ‘Shame to the person

who sees this as something indecent’) – the motto of the Order of the Garter, Britain’s highest honour. The coat of arms is held up by the English lion and the Scottish unicorn wearing a crown and a chain. Below the crest is the English royal motto: *Dieu et mon Droit* (French: ‘God and my right’).⁴² The presence of the English heraldic symbols in Desachy’s stamps should not be surprising. In 1856, the French *formatore* patented in England a type of fibrous plaster used to cast ornaments and architectural elements. This patent resulted in the establishment of a renowned casting studio⁴³ in the English capital and information about this fact was also included within the stamp, above the coat of arms. Numerous originals of works that were used as models to make moulds in his workshop can be found in English museums today. In all likelihood, Alexandre Desachy had subsidiary studios in various cities, as reflected by the names of cities surrounding the stamp’s iconographic symbols.

It may be assumed that in the same period that the copies of the Parthenon frieze were purchased, the University’s collection was also augmented with plaster casts signed by the Italian caster, Leopoldo Malpieri.⁴⁴

³⁹ In 1875, due to the lack of space, the Museum of Fine Arts returned the entire collection to the University where it remained until the start of World War II. It should be noted that this was merely a formality; the casts allotted to the museum remained *de facto* where they were, i.e. in the Column Hall, since the new institution did not possess an appropriate number of rooms to house so many objects; see Korotaj, Mikocki 1989, 16; Kowalski 2008, 23.

⁴⁰ After the dismissal of Jacquet from the position of the royal *formatore*, Alexandre Desachy proposed himself for the position

of Louvre’s caster, wanting to take over the monopoly on the museum’s moulds; the position, however, was given to Pierre-Laurent Micheli – the son of Étienne Micheli; see Rionnet 1996, 54–55.

⁴¹ Archives of the National Museum in Warsaw, file no. 4.

⁴² Boutell 1914, 259–273.

⁴³ Millar 1899, 343–380.

⁴⁴ These items were included in the collection between 1862 and 1884; see University of Warsaw Library, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 333.



Fig. 6. Alexander Desachy studio stamp, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

Rome's Malpieri family was part of a well-known group of Italian *formatori* (casters) operating in the second half of the 19th century.⁴⁵ Giovanni, Giuseppe and Leopoldo Malpieri were listed as creators of plaster casts in the 1843 *Il Mercurio di Roma* – a list of addresses and information devoted to scientists, writers, traders, and people connected with art.⁴⁶ The document states that Leopoldo Malpieri held the position of *formatore* at the aforementioned French Academy in Rome, Giovanni worked at the Vatican Museums, while Giuseppe's atelier was at 54 via del Corso. In 1864, the author of *Roma Antica e Roma Moderna ovvero nuovissimo itinerario storico-popolare-economico*⁴⁷ mentions Alessandro and Mauro Malpieri from 51 via del Corso and, once more, Leopoldo from 54 via del Corso. This information is confirmed in *Italy: handbook for travellers* published in 1875.⁴⁸ Another member of this illustrious family was Vincenzo, listed in the will of Antonio Canova as his *formatore*.⁴⁹ The aforementioned Alessandro worked for Pope Pius IX and was responsible, among others, for the casting of Trajan's Column.⁵⁰ The works attributed to this famous family were well-known and appreciated also beyond the boundaries of the Old Continent, a fact that is reflected in references made in American art catalogues



Fig. 7. Leopoldo Malpieri studio stamp, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

dealing with plaster casts.⁵¹ *Formatore* Malpieri was likewise mentioned by the prominent British-American writer, critic and literary theorist, Henry James. It is, however, unclear which member of the family is being mentioned in his writings.⁵²

The Warsaw collection is connected with the aforementioned Leopoldo Malpieri. This artist's casts of sculptures, mainly from the Vatican Museums, Capitoline Museums, Villa Albani, Borghese and Ludovisi⁵³ were signed with a characteristic rectangular 6.0 by 1.5 cm stamp with a floral motif in its lower corners (Fig. 7). In the centre of the mark is the inscription *Leopoldo Malpieri Formatore Roma*, which, in contrast to the markings from Paris, provides information not only about the place and approximate time of creation but also the name of the caster. Two casts of ancient works made by Leopoldo Malpieri survived to the present: the statues of Demosthenes (Fig. 8) and Sophocles, both of which are currently kept at the Old Orangery of the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw. Unfortunately, the collected archival material does not allow to precisely determine the date when these copies were brought to Warsaw or whether they were the only casts ordered from the Roman atelier. No documents concerning purchases made from the workshop of Leopoldo Malpieri were available either. The only certainty is that contacts with the Roman studios were maintained for quite a while, as confirmed by a 1929 catalogue preserved in the archives of the National Museum in Warsaw, sent there by the heirs of the Leopoldo Malpieri studio, stating

⁴⁵ Malone 2016, 9.

⁴⁶ *Il Mercurio di Roma* 1843, 321.

⁴⁷ *Roma Antica e Roma Moderna ovvero nuovissimo itinerario storico-popolare-economico* 1864, 280.

⁴⁸ Baedeker 1875, 109.

⁴⁹ Honour 1972, 221.

⁵⁰ Bucolo 2019, 451–470.

⁵¹ Brigham 1874; *Tentative list of objects desirable for a collection of cast, sculptural and architectural, intended to illustrate the history of plastic art* 1891.

⁵² "May 8th [1849] I was successful in finding my old formatore Malpieri for whom I have now waited more than a week.

I found him in bed in a room without windows and containing three beds – hot, close, stifled enough, with his head bandaged and in a fever. To my surprise however, he offered to come tomorrow and cast my figure for me. Glad enough was I to find him, for the figure has now been finished more than a week, cracking and shrinking"; James 1903, 158–159.

⁵³ Information about the casts made in the studio established by Leopoldo Malpieri can be found in a list of plaster casts, *Catalogo dei gessi di proprietà di Cesare Malpieri di Leopoldo Malpieri formatore in gesso* from 1893; see Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, RP/1870/9549, vol. MA/4/7, 145.



Fig. 8. Demosthenes, Orangery at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

that “Virgilio Gherardi⁵⁴ fu Michele successore alle Dite Michele Gerardi e Leopoldo Malpieri”.⁵⁵

It might seem that the second half of the 19th century and the tense political situation were not conducive to the growth of the collection, however, the loss of autonomy by the Kingdom of Poland did not lead to the fall of the idea of the Gallery and did not cause a reduction of its holdings. Quite the contrary, along with the establish-

ment of the Imperial University of Warsaw the collection of plaster casts acquired several dozen new sculptures.⁵⁶ Nearly twenty years after the purchase of plasters made by Desachy and Malpieri, the Gallery of Plaster Casts gained additional copies signed by an atelier associated with the Louvre. According to the inventory kept by Zygmunt Batowski,⁵⁷ the collection was expanded in 1879 by at least two plaster casts made in Paris: metopes from Temple C at Selinus (Fig. 9). Both moulages were signed with an oval-shaped stamp with the inscription *MUSEES NATIONAUX MOULAGE* (Fig. 10). The stamp was used by the workshop at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Unfortunately, the documents do not allow to conclude who exactly made the mentioned plaster casts.⁵⁸

It can be assumed that other sculptures were purchased from a private studio during the same period. This time it was the atelier of brothers Claudio and Aurelio Micheli in Berlin which, next to the state-run Gipsformerei, was considered the most important German institution dealing with plaster casts.

In Germany – similarly to other countries of the Old Continent – fondness for classic culture, particularly strong during the enlightenment era, caused a rapid rise in demand for antique works of art as well as increased interest in the purchase of copies of ancient sculptures. Until that time, casts were mainly imported from Italy but this entailed high costs. In 1819, this situation led to the establishment of the royal studio of plaster figures, the *Königlich Preussische Gipsgussanstalt*, which in 1830 was incorporated into the Royal Museums – a precursor of the present-day Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.⁵⁹ In establishing its Gipsformerei, the Kingdom of Prussia hoped that the production of plaster casts of famous sculptures would provide it with both prestige and a new source of profits. The new institution was to be managed by a director experienced in sculpting techniques as well as in casting. The position was given to Christian Daniel Rauch, one of the most important Prussian sculptors of the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century.⁶⁰ The growth of the Gipsformerei's collections went hand in hand with the development of Berlin's museums, a fact that was documented in the continually updated and expanded catalogue. The 19th century was especially productive; during

⁵⁴ The Gherardi family, besides the Malpieri family, was one of the most significant families in relation to Italian casting. Their two workshops were combined in 1905.

⁵⁵ Based on these documents, it is not possible to conclude whether the University of Warsaw or the National Museum purchased any of the items from the list that was sent over; Archives of the National Museum in Warsaw, file no. 10b.

⁵⁶ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 332.

⁵⁷ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 331.

⁵⁸ During this period, the title of the chief *formatore* of the Louvre belonged to Louis Lubrat who held the office between 1860 and 1880. Unfortunately, it is not possible to verify if he was responsible for the metopes imported to Warsaw; see Rionnet 1996, 55.

⁵⁹ Schwan 2012, 113–116.

⁶⁰ Maierhofer 2000, 609–611; Fendt 2012, 70–71; Schelper 2013, 25.



Fig. 9. Metope from Temple C at Selinus, photo by the Royal Łazienki Museum.

this time, in cooperation with *Akademie der Künste* and Berlin's universities, and thanks to numerous research projects and expeditions of German archaeologists, the collection gained unique works of art. Furthermore, regular exchanges between museums and purchases from foreign workshops caused the Gipsformerei to acquire the reputation of one of the largest casting houses of Europe.⁶¹ The demand for copies of ancient works of art and the establishment of other collections also stimulated the emergence of private ateliers.

In Prussia, too, the popularity of collections of ancient works of art resulted in the establishment of private casting studios. Among the more prominent of those was the aforementioned workshop of brothers Claudio and Aurelio Micheli, established in 1824. This sculpting duo quickly took control over the German plaster market. The fact that the studio was represented by a branch office on one of the most representative streets of Berlin, Unter den Linden, testifies to its high importance. The Micheli brothers' sales catalogue included casts of reliefs

and sculptures from various eras and busts of contemporary and historic figures.⁶² Copies made at the workshop were designated with a stamp containing the inscription *Eigenth. D. Gebrüder Micheli Berlin*, with the seal pressed into the still-wet plaster (Fig. 11).

To meet the needs of the University of Warsaw's Gallery of Plaster Casts, seven tablets with Pergamon reliefs (Fig. 12), "four busts of famous physicists to adorn the auditorium – life-sized and on decorative plaster consoles",⁶³ and the bust of Hermes (from the statue of *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus*) were purchased from the atelier of the Micheli brothers. The first mention of the purchases from this private studio appears in an inventory started in 1884, but the author only lists the bust of Hermes⁶⁴ and five tablets with reliefs from the Pergamon Altar (the Zeus group, the Athena group, the Artemis group, the Demeter and Persephone group, and the Helios group). Interestingly, the margin of the document, next to the works from Pergamon, contains precise information about their purchase: "on the order of

⁶¹ Schelper 2013, 25–27.

⁶² Kammel 2001, 47–72.

⁶³ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 333.

⁶⁴ Information concerning the purchase of the copy of Hermes also appears in issue no. 313 (24 December 1881) of *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (The Illustrated Weekly), 1–2. The author of the article does not mention any other copies; University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 331.



Fig. 10. Stamp used by the Louvre Museum's atelier at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, photo by M. Dunajko.

authorities of 26 March 1894".⁶⁵ The discussed casts show up again in a list from 1917, however, Zygmunt Batowski, the then director of the Gallery, mentions as many as seven reconstructed parts of the altar.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, it is not known when the two relief sculptures supplementing the collection were bought. It can be assumed that the varying dates in which the individual tablets were purchased may be associated with the presence or absence of designations of the workshops in which they were made. Five complete casts reconstructing the altar's decorations and one damaged object survived to the present. All copies are kept at the Royal Łazienki Museum.

When discussing plaster copies bought in Berlin, it is worth remembering that the professors from Warsaw did not limit themselves only to the atelier of the Micheli brothers. Proof of contacts between the University of Warsaw and the aforementioned famous Gipsformerei consists of catalogues with proffered works specified in inventories,⁶⁷ as well as signatures found on two surviving casts: *Harmodius and Aristogeiton* (Fig. 13) and

a relief sculpture presenting *Nike adjusting her sandal* (Fig. 14). According to an inventory started in 1884, the pieces made their way to Warsaw in 1901 along with several other works (including, among others, Nike of Paionius, the funerary stele of the ancient warrior Aristion, a relief sculpture of a young Antinous, as well as a double herm of Herodotus and Thucydides).⁶⁸ Markings found on both copies are characteristic of the first few years of existence of the Gipsformerei (Fig. 15): the plate is made from brass foil, has a diameter of 2.5 cm and bears the crest of the Kingdom of Prussia in its centre – a Prussian eagle with a royal sceptre and an orb surrounded by the inscription *Gipsformerei der Königliche Museen Berlin*. A stamp with this design was used between 1819 and 1918.⁶⁹

Just like the Parisian designations, the signature of the Berlin studio also underwent changes. The iconography on Gipsformerei's stamp reflected the country's political situation, as confirmed by the appearance of the crest – the eagle in its centre changed from the eagle of the Kingdom of Prussia to that of the Free State of Prussia, then to that of the Weimar Republic, and finally to the one used by the Third Reich.⁷⁰ Since 1962, plasters have been marked using the official brass-foil stamp of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation designed by the sculptor Karl Roth.⁷¹ Its markings and iconography refer directly to the eagle of the Free State of Prussia.⁷²

Unfortunately, the subsequent years and the aggravating situation in Poland unfavourably impacted the collection's later fate. War-related activities caused a cessation of contacts with foreign ateliers and a reduction of the impressive collection of plasters. Faced with the German army approaching Warsaw and the need to evacuate the University to Rostov-on-Don, the then Rector, Professor Siergiej I. Wiechow, decided to move the University's property to Russia. As is known, during the hasty evacuation the items from laboratories and

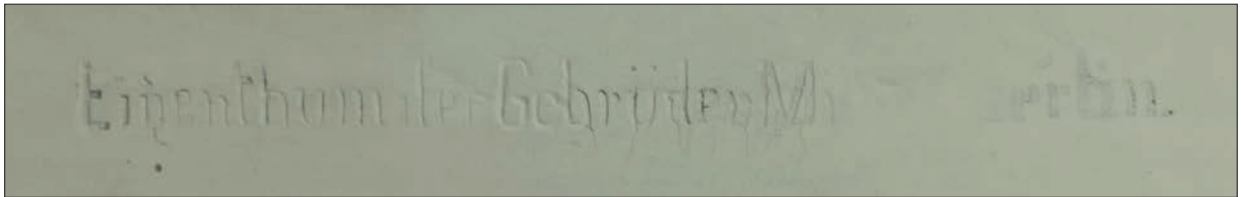


Fig. 11. Stamp used by the studio of the brothers Claudio and Aurelio Micheli, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

⁶⁵ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 332.

⁶⁶ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 333.

⁶⁷ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 332.

⁶⁸ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Department, manuscript inv. no. 332.

⁶⁹ Schwan 2012, 114–115.

⁷⁰ Schwan 2012, 114–116.

⁷¹ Fuhr 2011, 24.

⁷² Schwan 2012, 113–116.



Fig. 12. Fragment of the Pergamon Altar frieze (Enyo, Ptolemaios, Nyx, Erinyes), Orangery at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by Ł. Kamiński.



Fig. 13. Tyrannicides Group, Orangery at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by Ł. Kamiński.



Fig. 14. Nike adjusting her sandal, Orangerie at the Royal Łazienki Museum, photo by M. Dunajko.



Fig. 15. Gipsformerei stamp used between 1819 and 1918, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

scientific workshops, a portion of the library resources, university documents, and the private belongings of professors were moved.⁷³ Research to date has not provided an unequivocal answer to whether the collection of plaster casts stayed untouched. It is possible that a few objects were taken to Russia, never to return.⁷⁴ After World War I, 655 plaster casts remained in the collection.⁷⁵ The next war resulted in the complete scattering of the Gallery. At the beginning of 1940, the copies destroyed by the occupier and their fragments were transported as a university deposit to the National Museum, where they stayed until the war was over. In 1946, the collection was moved to museum warehouses in Wilanów⁷⁶ and then distributed to various institutions. Unfortunately, the casts have never returned to the University of Warsaw.

⁷³ After the end of the Polish-Soviet war, in accordance with a treaty signed in Riga, the Soviet authorities obligated themselves to return the confiscated property. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reclaim all of the stolen works; see Schiller 2010, 197–208.

⁷⁴ In a publication devoted to sculptures inherited from Stanislaus August, Zygmunt Batowski, the Curator of the Gallery of Plaster Casts from 1917 to 1919, reminisces: "(...) King Stanislaus Augustus' plaster glyptothèque survived in this place owing its fate both to being appraised as not valuable as well as being of a material that is thankless in moving – having the properties of antiques – heavy and fragile. It was diminished and strained only by the trials of time. Having established at the beginning of the 19th century a core of the gallery of plaster casts of the University of Warsaw, it remains as one of the

greater tokens for the memory of Stanislaus Augustus (...)" It is worth pointing out that Batowski mentions only pieces from the royal collection. The inventory that he kept includes a life-sized plaster bust of Emperor Alexander I in Roman garb which came from Rostov-on-Don in 1925. The date of receipt of this cast suggests that it was reclaimed as part of the Riga Treaty; see Z. Batowski, *Rzeźby artystów Stanisława Augusta w zbiorze odlewów*, Warszawa 1922, 3; *Uniwersytet Warszawski. Inwentarz. Zakład Historii Sztuki 1917*, University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Division, manuscript inv. no. 331.

⁷⁵ University Library in Warsaw, Manuscript Division, manuscript inv. no. 333.

⁷⁶ Bernhard 1947, 289–290; Korotaj, Mikocki 1989, 16; Kowalski 2008, 31.



Fig. 16. Gipsformerei stamp since 1961, photo by Ł. Kamiński.

The idea of recreating a coherent collection was revived in the 1960s. The curator of the Royal Łazienki Museum at the time, Prof. Marek Kwiatkowski, made efforts to obtain permission to transport most of the surviving plaster casts to the Old Orangery. His intention was to open a new sculpture gallery. The destroyed casts were subjected to restoration works carried out by sculptors: Jan Cykowski, Józef Gazy and Stanisław Lipski. After restoration, selected copies were placed in the renovated gallery on the ground floor.⁷⁷ Moreover, the Royal Łazienki Museum continues the practice of importing plasters from the Gipsformerei. In 2015, the institution got three casts from Berlin (Apollo Belvedere, Meleager, and the Laocoön Group) signed with stamps used since 1961 (Fig. 16).⁷⁸ The purchase of copies which were once part of Warsaw's collection⁷⁹ was associated with the 2012–2015 renovation of the Old Orangery. Interestingly, traces of 18th-century paintings⁸⁰ made according to the design of Johann Christian Kammsetzer

and ordered by Stanislaus Augustus⁸¹ were discovered under the wall plasters during conservation work at the sculpture gallery.

Despite its short history, the royal-university collection has grown significantly: from five hundred and forty-two items purchased by Stanislaus Augustus to over seven hundred and fifty works gathered at the University. For years, agents of Stanislaus Augustus, art professors and museum directors tried to establish a cooperation with numerous studios throughout Europe which made copies of Antiquity's most outstanding works of art.

In analysing this Warsaw collection, one must bear in mind that the place where a particular work that served as a model for the casting form was kept does not have to match the place where the copy was made. Quite the contrary: casts of the same sculpture could be ordered in different European cities since several moulds could be made from one original. It was very rare for artists to gain exclusive rights to cast particular items. Throughout the entire history of the considered collection, as well as in the relevant documents, there is not a single mention of purchasing casts from the British Museum or other English institutions. However, the collection includes plaster copies of works from English museums.⁸² Precise information regarding the origins and creation of a given copy can be provided by the surviving documents, iconographic materials and, above all, each studio's signature. These make it possible not only to determine the provenance and exact time of manufacture but, in many cases, to establish the name of the creator as well. What is more, the designations also act as a certificate of quality for a given copy, an attest of its authenticity, a maker's mark, and protect against forgery.⁸³ In the case of the royal-university collection, the stamps along with the surviving documentation can, to a significant degree, facilitate attempts at its reconstruction.

The aforementioned studios are, of course, not the only workshops whose services were used by the cura-

⁷⁷ Kwiatkowski 2007, 26–37.

⁷⁸ Schwan 2012, 115–116.

⁷⁹ Based on an inventory written by Zygmunt Batowski and iconography, it can be concluded that Meleager modelled on the statue from the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and purchased in 2015 by the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw is not the same as the cast which was part of the collection prior to 1939. The non-surviving copy was made on the basis of the statue from the Vatican Museums. The 2015 purchase resulted from a possibility of obtaining only this version of the sculpture; see Spinola 1996, 137; Fendt 2012, 388–399.

⁸⁰ Zychowicz 2015, 6.

⁸¹ During the first years of its existence, the Gallery was located at the Castle and later moved to the Royal Łazienki. The palace-

garden complex established by the king and reflecting the essence of his love of Antiquity was the perfect place to create a plaster cast gallery of ancient works of art. During the reign of Stanislaus Augustus, the garden decorated with sculptures relating to Antiquity was to be a prelude to another planned garden with statues from the exhibition in the Orangery. The planned arrangement of the unaccomplished gallery can be found in the designs of wall decorations carried out as an Italian landscape and in the layout of statues made by Johann Christian Kammsetzer; see Mikocka-Rachubowa 1989, 7; Kowalski 2008, 15; Kwiatkowska 2013, 311–325.

⁸² Małcużyńska 1974, 5.

⁸³ Schwan 2012, 113–115.

tors of the Gallery of Plaster Casts. They are, however, a model example of the broad cooperation with famous ateliers and European casters. The surviving inventories and documents from the 19th and 20th centuries show that the university collection also contained plasters that bore stamps of a studio from Nuremberg or products of the *Pamiątka Polska* (Polish Souvenir) company from Warsaw. Numerous other European ateliers where pieces for the collection were purchased did not have their own characteristic markings. The collection of plaster casts,

therefore, requires further study and expanded exploration encompassing different European studios.

Both the dynamic growth of the collection and the selection of individual objects are also interesting. The gathering of a collection that constituted a review of the most important Greek and Roman works most probably stemmed from a vital need of the University of Warsaw's professors and students. Therefore, the choice of ateliers was not necessarily dictated by the prestige or respect they enjoyed, but rather by the selection of copies which they had on offer.

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