

LIVING MARBLE
BELGIAN SCULPTORS - 1800-1930



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PAUL VERBRAEKEN

ARTIMO
BRUSSELS



In appreciation of my parents Simona and Marcel Van Cauwenbergh, who showed me the way

ARTIMO

The letterhead of my art business ARTIMO depicts a gracious bust on the left, the right hand side is adorned with a precious time piece. In the past my activities were mainly concentrated on the knowledge of everything that had to do with the measurement of time, including jetlag.

Now with the opening of my new gallery at the heart of Europe the sculptural element steps into the spotlight. The manner in which it does so, I believe I may call unique, both in terms of the location and the sculptures themselves. Two long-standing passions are at its origin: for decades I have bought sculptures that I traded, or kept, if they truly fascinated me. In this way a selection came about that then grew into a collection and a second passion, alongside the precious ticking clocks. With the restoration of the Art Nouveau building in Lebeau Street in Brussels, under the guidance of Monumentenzorg, the Belgian organization for the protection of monuments, the ideal platform for the presentation of the collection had arrived.

This inauguration and exhibition *LIVING MARBLE* presents exclusive work by Belgian sculptors from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Never before has it been possible in this country to see such a museum-standard collection, accompanied by a publication that contains both annotations and unique illustrations.

I hope this ARTIMO initiative will contribute to a revaluation of sculptural art in general, and of Belgian sculpture from the period in particular. The extraordinary splendour with which ‘our’ sculptors managed to invest in their marbles has been the inspiration behind this catalogue and the exhibition.

Artimo’s future and dedication to sculpture is already guaranteed by a third generation being active in the family business through my son Georges.

Luc Van Cauwenbergh



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I saw the angel in the block of marble and carved until I set him free
Michelangelo (Caprese 1475-Rome 1564)

Marble

Marble is such a delightful material. It only reveals its true nature when handled with respect. Once pried from the skillfully assaulted mountains it has given humanity timeless masterpieces. This light-reflecting material chose and has for centuries singled out the best sculptors in order to submit itself to them in blind surrender. It gladly undergoes all manner of treatments with an obstinacy that elicits deep respect. Chisels and files nurture and release the promise contained in every block of this precious stone, waiting calmly for what it will be prepared to expose.

Every blow it endures is part of a mutual struggle, a matter of ‘less is more’ on the restless path to the realization of a dream. Hardness meets hardness in a battle to liberate that which only rests within the mind of the artist. The world can thank it for so much beauty. Can anyone imagine a world without the vibrancy of CARRARA and the beauty of, *LIVING MARBLE*?

Has it not taught us to appreciate both power and grace, the surprising fruits of the artists courage and daring? Once they come to life, these sculptures capture forever the triumph of their creators, and remain eternally fresh. Each sculpture has the capacity to enlighten the soul, just as music can lift the spirits.

Paul Verbraeken

The author

Paul Verbraeken is a passionate art historian (Ghent University, 1977); he graduated with the thesis Flemish marine painters of the 17th century. He enjoyed a professional career in Antwerp’s city museums, curating numerous exhibitions, as far afield as China. Verbraeken has published articles and essays about the graphic arts, Belgian sculpture of the 19th century, but especially Netherlandish painting of the 16th and 17th century.

His reputation as an expert remains connected to the Flemish painter Joachim Beuckelaer (ca.1525-ca.1575) thanks to the exhibition he organized at the Museum of Fine Arts of Ghent (1986-1987).

By nature, this indefatigable documentarist likes both to encourage and collaborate on challenging projects. He is suspicious of contemporary art.



Marble: a gift to be accomplished

The story of the role that marble has played in the history of sculpture is yet to be written. The Greeks and Romans produced masterpieces in this type of stone, and also later, white marble in particular remained highly prized as it served all manner of sculptural aims: busts, decorations and groups of sculptures of different sizes. Museums, parks and even cemeteries owe their reputations to works in marble. All great artists, famous or unknown, demonstrated their inspiration and abilities in the noble white material from Carrara.

This ‘pars pro toto’ counted as a golden standard that stands to this day, even if non-Italian quarries also fed its supply. Specialists recognize various kinds, and even a layperson is capable of discerning variations in degrees of clarity, colour tone, structure and sparkle. In art circles this is not always dwelled upon too deeply and white marble simply bears the name ‘Carrara’. In many museum catalogues (and naturally also those of auctions) white marble is generally also indicated as just ‘marble’.

Other issues await clarification, too, including the quite complicated demands of transportation, on both material and organizational levels. Who took care of what, or, in other words, how did the suitable block of marble finally reach the right sculptor? That practical point definitely deserves further research, especially regarding the use of marble in the Netherlands. After all, ‘Carrara’ has been used for artistic purposes in the Low Countries since the Middle Ages. Until the present millennium an increasing number of artists would continue this practise. It is a significant feat of the imagination to envision the entire trajectory such a block had to take in Rubens’ time and also later. At the latest in the nineteenth century specialist companies must have come into existence that, in competition, took upon themselves all aspects from the first order to the final delivery. But, strangely enough, no firms or archives are known. Again, this is an area that awaits further research. Certainly, from the creation of an independent Belgium in 1830 onwards, there must have been administrative companies and specialized firms in the proximity of harbours and ports to handle the stream of orders. Never before were so many sculptors called upon at the same time to execute the marble commissions for the government alone. Commissions from the church must also have created countless orders in Carrara. The innumerable busts and decorations of private funerary monuments, façades and gardens demanded continuous supplies, which also had to answer to all manner of quality standards. It is moreover thanks to the Belgian engineer Paulin Gay, who perfected a sawing system in 1880, that the large-scale exploitation of the hard ‘white gold’ suddenly became quicker and more efficient.

The sculptors discussed in this publication – arranged in alphabetical order for ease of consultation – is but a selection of the much larger number of Belgian master sculptors who were able, thanks to their sound training, to work the precious marble with great virtuosity and creativity.

In the collections of the most important museums of the country – Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, Ghent – extraordinary examples of their abilities are preserved, but they are rarely sufficiently put on exhibition. Belgium does not have its Musée d’Orsay. This is why this initiative by gallery Artimo deserves to receive every attention. It provides an opportunity to acquaint oneself with the standard at which Belgian sculptors were working, and to compare it with what was happening in surrounding countries at the time.

The survey of artists and sculptures that are here assembled demonstrates the remarkable freedom of expression developed by the masters working throughout this period. Across the generations, a veritable wave of new styles was to influence the world of fine arts to the delight of an increasing audience. Not even a world war was capable of stopping the advance.



Carrara

CARRARA is a provincial city in Italy (Tuscany) on the Carrione, not far from the sea in a deep valley; it is particularly renowned for the marble quarries in its proximity. Nearly the whole population is occupied with the exploitation, treatment and transportation of Carrara marble, which is supplied by four hundred quarries.

It has been known for twenty centuries, and is now exported to all destinations in Europe and even Asia, Africa and America.

Carrara has wonderful white marble for statues, as well as green, black, yellow and veined varieties. The blocks destined for export are brought to the neighbouring port of Avenza.

(from *De Stad Antwerpen* 25 May, 1934)

Guide to the catalogue

Artists are alphabetically classified
All dimensions are in centimeter: height, width, depth
Where mentioned right, left: from the point of view of the sculpture
Some photographs have been retouched for aesthetical reasons

Antonio AMORGASTI
(Pisa 1880-Antwerp 1942)

Antonio Amorgasti was a naturalized Belgian of Italian origin. There is barely any biographical information available about his life. Together with his brother August (Pisa, c. 1870) he trained in Italy as an ornamentalist. Both brothers became consummate itinerant moulders/casters, specialized in stucco decorations for all manner of buildings. The Amorgastis’ skills were presumably called upon for the construction of the so-called “Old Belgium neighbourhood” (Stadswijk Oud België) for the World Fair in Antwerp in 1930. After all, copying the façades of houses in plaster and cardboard was no easy feat. The Amorgastis achieved the impossible and did not return to their homeland once their work had been completed. Both stayed on to carry out all kinds of commissions in the city along the Scheldt. Antonio was regularly called upon to work as a moulder/caster, for important sculptors such as Edward Deckers (1873-1956), and the somewhat older Josuë Dupon (1864-1935). It was with the latter, specialist in sculpting animals both wild and tame, that the skilful Italian became adept at all the tricks of the trade and earned quite a bit on the side by producing animal sculptures of his own in bronze, marble and plaster. His brother Augusto also sculpted a fair number of exotic animals, but Antonio’s son Marcel Amorgasti appears to have worked solely as a stucco craftsman and as a practitioner, producing other artist’s models. This fact undoubtedly clarifies that the initial “M” that precedes the name of Ant. Amorgasti refers to the sculptor’s son Marcel, who in 1937 executed this condor preparing for flight in brilliant white marble, after his father’s design. Worthy of note is the striking similarity with a larger version in bronze, which bears the signature of the famous animalist Josuë Dupon. That sculpture can be admired in Antwerp at the Middelheim Open Air Sculpture Museum.

Condor

47,5 x 41 x 24,5
signed and dated M. EN ANT. AMORGASTI 1937

The feathers that appear somewhat hard and tight, in small and large sizes and are wholly symmetrical will appear unusual to viewers who are not familiar with this type of animal. The sculpture is a result of the bravura only reserved for the exceptionally experienced craftsman. Striking here is the chance that is given to the light, which shines through the openings beneath the wings, to accentuate the marble’s white, glistening clarity.



Valentine BENDER

(Brussels 1884-Uccle 1947)

Valentine Bender was a talented sculptress who lived in the shadow of her teacher and eventually her husband Egide Rombaux (1865-1942), but she still managed to build up a remarkable oeuvre of her own. She produced life-size sculptures in bronze, terracotta, wood and marble, dedicated exclusively to the human figure. With the exception of classical busts, it is especially her figures of saints, children and full-length nudes that deserve attention. They are of a lively expression and take on a supple position as if they were caught mid-movement. The artist exhibited regularly, starting in 1910. It is unknown whether her work was seen outside Belgium, but the inhabitants of the cities of Liège, Antwerp, Ghent and especially Brussels were given ample opportunity to view Valentine Bender's works. Some titles have been preserved: *Première confidence*, *Première rencontre*, *Groupe d'Enfants*, *Dans la vague*, *Suzanne surprise*, *Saint-Roch*, *Saint Jean-Baptiste*, but no indications remain about the materials used. Could the exquisite marble group scene *Naked mother with child* be identified as the above-mentioned *Première confidence* (*First Confidence*)? In that case this would be the signed artwork that the sculptress exhibited at the triennial *Salon de Liège* in 1924. If this is, however, her *Première rencontre* (*First Encounter*), then this sculpture is Bender's entry to the World Fair of 1930 in Antwerp.

Mother and child

49,5 x 47 x 28
signed VBENDER

This sculpture's highly sensitive design creates the illusion this marble was modelled by warm hands. The soft volumes of the bodies contrast with the rock upon which the sitting mother dips her foot in the water. A tree trunk supports her right arm, as she holds a towel in her left hand. She is whispering to the small child at her side.



Pieter BRAECKE
(Nieuwpoort 1858-1938)

After his secondary studies the precocious Pieter Braecke became an apprentice with the Bruges sculptor Hendrick Pickery (1828-1894) where he learned how to work with wood and stone, while pursuing his education in the evenings at the Academy for Fine Arts of Bruges and later, from 1878 to 1881, at the Academy of Leuven. In that final year he obtained the Second Prize of Rome. For four years, starting in 1885, he worked in Brussels with the influential sculptor Paul de Vigne (1843-1901). His own production and career in the meantime had slowly taken off and he participated with great success in many exhibitions, both in Belgium and internationally, and he was awarded many distinctions. Even before his marriage in 1903 to Italian Elodea Romeo (1875-1971), seventeen years his junior, in 1901 the sculptor was able to have a home with a studio built for him by his friend Victor Horta (1861-1947) whose own home Braecke had decorated with a number of wall reliefs. The Second World War had an impact on Braecke’s productivity, but after the war he was able to carry out a number of major commissions: monuments of war, statues, and reliefs for churches. As a co-founder of the artist circle “Pour l’Art”, and as a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Literature, his significance for artistic life at the time cannot be overestimated. During his lifetime Braecke donated numerous models and designs to the city of his birth, Nieuwpoort, with which a museum was established. The artist died days before the unveiling of his final war monument. His widow survived him by 33 years.

Standing Nude

88,5 x 37 x 40,5
signed P. Braecke

The representation of the skin in this sculpture is the stuff of fairy tales: it would seem that marble here has turned into flesh. It is not clear what this dancing nude is holding up high, in her right hand: flowers? grapes? A wave laps against her calves. The sculptor took a tremendous risk by sculpting the held out hand in this precious marble... The gracious pose of this large sculpture is reminiscent of Braecke’s ivory sculpture *Naar het Oneindige (Towards the infinite)* (1897). The allegorical meaning of this sculpture is not known, since it carries no title. In the annals of this artist’s rich oeuvre several titles appear which could possibly relate to this sculpture: *Océanide* (1911), or *Folle Jeunesse (Youthful Folly)*. In 1888 Braecke presented a plaster *Femme aux Raisins (Woman with Raisins)*, but that was a relief.



Alfred COURTENS

(Saint Josse ten Noode 1889-1967)

Alfred Courtens is a realist sculptor who left behind an extensive and multifaceted oeuvre. He was the son of Franz baron Courtens (1854-1943) and the brother of Herman Courtens (1884-1956), both reputed painters with contacts in the best circles. At the Brussels Academy, his most important teacher was Charles Van Der Stappen (1843-1910), and at the Higher Institute in Antwerp Thomas Vinçotte (1850-1925) became his mentor. The results soon followed, and in 1913 Alfred Courtens won the coveted Godecharle prize, which allowed him to visit Italy and develop himself further as a leading artistic personality. His appointment as a teacher at the Academy of Dendermonde was one of the consequences.

Courtens also built a solid reputation as the author of monumental sculptures, portraits and medals, which could be admired at countless salons. He also regularly exhibited allegorical works and mythological sculptures in marble and bronze. His close contacts with the Belgian Royal Household led to significant commissions (monuments of homage and equestrian statues) and purchases. Several Belgian museums have sculptures by Courtens in their holdings. The self-evident qualities of his work were also internationally recognized: he had already been awarded a gold medal in Barcelona in 1911.

Bust of a young woman looking to the right

72 x 52 x 35,5

signed Alfred Courtens

There is a fine contrast between the supple physical forms and the roughly hewn lower zone from which this woman appears to rise. The sculptor ably managed to lend a subtle dynamic to this static sculpture: the mass of hair of the model arouses the impression that it follows the movement of her head. The right shoulder is somewhat raised as a result of a sudden movement. When this sculpture was offered for sale in Antwerp at auction (Van Herck) on March 19th 1991, the original wooden plinth was part of the lot (nr. 541). The inscription 'Au/Président W. Mestdag/ Chambre de Commerce de Tournai/1937-1945' can be accepted as after the fact dating. This *Buste dénudé* was part of the exhibition 'Les Courtens' at the Museum of Fine Arts of the city of Mouscron (15 October-17 December 1999). Illustrated in the catalogue page 140.



Bust of a young woman looking to the left

54,5 x 47,5 x 38
signed and dated Alfred Courtens 1907

The massive block of pure Carrara marble appears to lose its weight and hardness for anyone falling for the kind smile of this young woman adorned with flowers. The sculptor, whose psychological capacity for empathy equaled his artisanal mastery, managed to transform his efforts into one of the most atmospheric sculptures to be produced in Belgian sculpture during those years. Just as clearly as the ivory-coloured material from which Courtens made this imposing yet light-footed sculpture arise, the temperament and zest for life of his model has also been brought to expression.



Jean-Baptiste DE BAY
(Mechelen 1779-Paris 1863)

In his hometown of Mechelen Jean-Baptiste De Bay was the pupil of Willem Van Buscom-I (1758-1830). At the young age of nineteen he was able to depart for Paris and follow lessons at the Academy under Antoine-Denis Chaudet (1763- 1810). In 1801 he settled in Nantes. He founded his own school of drawing there in 1815 and sculpted several statues for the façades of the city hall (1808) and the stock exchange (1812). From 1817 onwards De Bay was again active in Paris. He was appointed head of the Louvre’s restoration atelier for sculpture (1846). He exhibited early work in the Parisian salons where he was soon awarded honourable distinctions (among others, the medal in 1817). In addition to portraits, De Bay realized both funerary monuments, and numerous sculptures and sculpture groups for the decoration of public buildings, parks and churches. His sculptures in marble and bronze, often inspired by subjects from classical antiquity, are ever elegant and impeccable in execution, but they do not always attest to excessive originality. Amongst the many busts that he made, both of his contemporaries and historical characters, are works that can be counted among the best of De Bay’s oeuvre. His marble portrayal in Versailles of *General Cambronne* (1816) emphasizes this with conviction. Representative works by this most prolific of artists are held in the museums of Mechelen, Brussels and Antwerp.

Rowing Cupid

101 x 48 x 85
signed JEAN DEBAY

This is a classical subject of a sailing Cupid who determines his own course and speed and does not allow himself to be led by the wind (he is sitting atop a sail). His anchor is within hand’s reach. The hair has been elaborated in detail just like the downy wings. The hands and feet are anatomically perfect. It is entertaining to see the eddy that suggests the paddle motion behind the large shell.



Jos DE DECKER

(Dendermonde 1912-2000)

For more than three decades this skilful sculptor and medal maker was a teacher (starting in 1947) and later the director (1970-1978) at the Academy of his city of birth. He had been taught there himself (1931-1933) by professor Alfred Courtens (1889-1967) before pursuing his training (1933-1938) in Brussels with the professors Egide Rombaux (1865-1942) and Victor Rousseau (1865-1954). His natural talent for drawing and painting had to make way for the career that De Decker would come to develop as a sculptor. A solid foundation for this had been laid by his being awarded numerous prizes (Prix Buls, 1934; 2nd prize of Rome, 1941). Multiple distinctions would follow, as well as a whole range of official commissions for monuments, fountains, portraits and both funerary and religious art works.

His most famous creation is without doubt *Ros Beiaard* (in stone) in Dendermonde. For smaller sculptures, the human form – in particular the female nude – and the animal kingdom – especially horses and foal – are his absolute favourite themes that he characterized in a thoughtful and skilful manner.

Seated Nude

36,5 x 45,5 x 18,5

signed and dated Jos De Decker 1955

The contrast between the sculpted and the non-worked zones stimulates the effect of the light and accentuates the tautly restrained play of lines in which this generic young woman reveals her nudity, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Apart from the summary way in which the hair and the nails on her feet and hands are represented, there is no question of detailing. The artist instead allows the masses to speak, which banishes the anecdotal. The true identity of this outstanding sculpture resides in the classical aura of peace it exudes, combined with its restrained aesthetics.



Guillaume DE GROOT
(Brussels 1839-Uccle 1922)

This realist sculptor obtained his thorough training from Louis Jéhotte (1803-1884) at the Academy of Brussels (1852-1861). He simultaneously received private instruction (1857-1859) from Auguste Fraikin (1817-1893), also in the Belgian capital. For a short period of time he was possibly also active in the studio of Egide Mélot (1816-1885). The greatest influence on his own work would however come from Constantin Meunier (1831-1905), who favoured the artists’ own observation rather than the dated rules of classical training that had grown rigid: the so-called academicism. Every sculpture that De Groot made seems to have been a rung on the ladder of his development, in which he avoided rigidity and repetition. With great craftsmanship and a decorative sensibility, De Groot was able to invest his bronzes and marbles with spirit, which came to expression in his busts as well as his bas-reliefs and monuments. He created a fair number of monumental sculptures according to the architectural context which they would appear in: the major allegorical representations of the Provinces *Namur* and *Luxemburg* were installed at the imposing palace of the mid- century celebration of the Belgian independence in Brussels; the sculptures *Labour* and *Abundance* were placed in front of the stock exchange in the same city; the group *Trade* and *Industry* took up position in front of the National Bank; the personification of *Le Labeur* in front of Tournai’s station hall, and so on. De Groot did not realize smaller sculptures very often, which goes some way to explain why only few museums can display his work in their halls.

Awakening

84,5 x 40 x 29
signed G. De Groot

This sculpture, of exceptional quality, is an ode to both feminine beauty and to the natural splendour of the marble. Only the highest degree of craftsmanship is capable of representing the texture of human skin and the hardness of stone. The fact that chisels and files can elaborate such loosely draped fabric and subsequently remain unscathed for over a century defies belief. There is an almost identical version of this successful sculpture in existence, which is kept in the Museum Léon De Smet in Deurle, close to Ghent.



Victor DE HAEN

(Schaarbeek 1866-Brussels 1934)

Few biographical details are available about both this sculptor and his father (1831-1900), who was also a sculptor and a medallion maker in particular. It is established that both men achieved a high degree of skill. The father who studied at the Brussels Academy, just like his son, was awarded the second Prix de Rome. In 1891 the son won the third Prix de Rome but in 1894 he was awarded the first. This was instantly the perfect start to an artistic career that would lead to praiseworthy results, but after the First World War he was not able to keep up with the many strands of artistic renewal that were then unfurling.

Victor De Haen faded: he left behind a multifaceted oeuvre evocative of the full-blooded Nineteenth century artist who attempted to renew classical concepts in an idiosyncratic way. This is best expressed in monumental works like *The Martyr (De Martelaar)* (1898, Botanique, Botanical Gardens, Brussels) and his statue of the painter *Antoine Wiertz* (1908 in Dinant).

He began to participate in exhibitions from 1888 onwards, but did not do this with regularity. He was not actively involved in the life of associations. He did, however, exhibit multiple times between 1893 and 1899 with the Brussels arts circle Le Sillon where in 1896 he presented an imposing bronze chandelier/candelabra with a parrot perched on it. Victor De Haen presented other decorative work to the Sillon public, such as an imposing chimney with the portrait of minister Frère-Orban, destined for the Town Hall of Brussels.

Today an important part of his oeuvre, consisting of the classical offering of busts, figures, allegories and decoration work, can no longer be traced, which makes a general appraisal problematic to achieve. From what is known, it transpires that Victor De Haen slowly tended towards the somewhat unusual subjects that appealed to the imagination at the turn of the century. Titles such as *The Tormented*, *The Possessed*, *Desolation*, speak for themselves in that respect, and cast an intriguing light on the artist’s imagination and sensibilities.

Nude on a sea turtle

58,5 x 44 x 28,5
signed and dated V. de Haen 1912
inscribed ex.UNI.

There is an explicitly sensual contrast between this ‘belle’ and the ‘bête’ of which she suspects no evil intent. With visible enjoyment she allows herself to be led along, tempting fate. The sculptor did have a predilection for somewhat peculiar scenes, which he could connect to his knowledge of human anatomy. The pose of this naked amazon who is looking over her shoulder and raises her elbows into open space also inspired his contemporary and peer Henri Bonquet (1868-1908) for his marble sculpture *Listlessness* in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels.



Albert DESENFANS
(Genappe 1845-Eigenbrakel 1938)

It was at the Brussels Academy, studying with professors Louis Jéhotte (1803-1884) and Eugène Simonis (1820-1882) that Albert Desenfans received the training that would enable him to build up a brilliant career as an independent sculptor. Starting in 1866 he exhibited regularly at countless Belgian and international salons, with religious, allegorical and mythological works – often based on designs by Xavier Mellery (1845-1921) – in addition to portraits. Major commissions came his way: large sculptures for public buildings (the City Hall, the King’s House or Broodhuis, the Palace of Justice in Brussels, the House of the Province of Liège). In his smaller sculptures, executed in a variety of materials (stone, marble, plaster and ivory), his expertise, stylistic feeling and respect for a realistic depiction led to a remarkable degree of verisimilitude, the foremost trademark of his art. The work that probably most accounts for Albert Desenfans’ fame is his bronze statue of the stately *General Chazal* with a watchful lion at his feet.

Ondine (Bather)

77,5 x 32 x 41 (with plinth)
signed A.DESENFANS

There is also a bronze version in existence of this sculpture, with the same measurements, just as fine, which equally bears witness to the phenomenal anatomical knowledge with which Albert Desenfans sculpted this nude bather. She represents the water nymph Ondine who became a human and therefore mortal. But how true to life and in what an original manner has reality been fused with imagination in marble here! The suppleness with which the body trustingly inclines towards the water, the facial expression and the manner by which hands, the knee and feet are involved in the action, lend this masterpiece a grace of particular serenity.



Pieter DE SOETE

(Sint-Jans-Molenbeek 1886-Brussels 1948)

This prolific sculptor – a true ‘Homo Faber’ – learned his skills from working in the bronze casting trade. During his time as an apprentice in the ateliers of the famous Compagnie des Bronzes in Brussels he met a great many artists: Jef Lambeaux (1852-1908), Constantin Meunier (1831-1905), Juliaan Dillens (1849-1904) among many others. Apart from some studies in drawing at the Academy of Molenbeek, Pieter De Soete was largely self-taught. He was able to rigorously develop his talents independently and to a high level of expertise. Around 1924 he successfully turned sculpture into his profession, with excellent results. He designed and realized anatomically accurate figures – preferably of athletes and sportsmen caught in mid-action – busts, reliefs and even monuments (Spa: *Marshal Foch*; Leuven: *Cardinal Mercier*; Dinant: *Civilian Victims of WWI*; Brussels: *To the victims of the air...*). One of his favourite themes was racing cars. He not only modelled and chiselled them, but also designed the figurines to mount on radiators, including various kinds of “Minerva” figures, for the world-renowned Belgian car manufacturer with that name. This led to the sculptor becoming internationally known, and also to his actual artistic creations ending up in many international museums, as far afield as Riga, New York and Budapest.

Seated nude (with drawn up knee)

61 x 82 x 30

signed P. de Soete

inscribed ‘à mon ami Georges/Sacré, bien amicalement’ (to my friend Georges/Sacré, most amicably)

It is difficult to say with accuracy which side is the front of this sculpture. Each angle reveals new qualities of this anatomical feast in marble. Can the inscription with its dedication be determinant here? The relaxed posture of the seated model with flawless hands and feet appears to be from a different place than the rocky elevation in which the hammer blows still resonate. The intended contradiction has an accentuating effect and illustrates the mastery with which the sculptor has managed to bring the recalcitrant marble to life.



Paul DUBOIS

(Aywalle 1859-Uccle 1938)

As multifaceted as he was productive, this artist-sculptor, medallist and designer should not be confused with his somewhat older French eponym (1829-1905) who was also extremely ambitious in an artistic sense and very prolific. Between 1877 and 1884 Paul Dubois studied with the professors Louis François Lefèbvre (1834-1903), Jean-Joseph Jaquet (1822-1898) and Eugène Simonis (1810-1882) at the Brussels Academy of Fine Arts. During the years 1883-1884 he was already at work in the private workshop of Charles Van der Stappen (1843-1910). The quality of his training already led to his being awarded the Godecharle prize, which gave the 25 year old sculptor the opportunity to travel. Whilst still studying, Dubois took part in exhibitions, and began to play a very active role in the artistic life of the Belgian capital. In this way he became a founding member of the innovative artist’s movement “Les XX” and participated in all the annual exhibitions of this circle. He would also participate in the Salon of the later association “L’Essonr” in which he exhibited until the very end. Starting in 1899, Dubois was also present in international exhibitions in Paris, Dresden, Munich, Berlin and Turin. At the same time his talent and working rigour were avidly called upon: four bronze statues for the Brussels King’s House (1889), and two reliefs for the then Palace of Fine Arts (1889). He delivered two large bronzes (1894, 1896) to the capital’s Botanical Gardens, and, together with his brother in law Henri Van de Velde, he installed the memorial to *Frédéric de Mérode* (Martelarenplein/Place des Martyrs, 1898) in Brussels. In the meantime his reputation as a portraitist and designer of all manner of ornamental and functional items, medals and jewels had even spread to international spheres. In the period that Victor Horta (1861-1947) was building his house, Paul Dubois became a teacher at the academies of Mons (1900-1928) and Brussels (1902-1929) where he took over when Charles Van der Stappen died in 1910. Of the monumental creations by Paul Dubois, works that definitely require mentioning are the statue of the sculptor *Jean Delcour* (1911) in Liège, the three allegorical groups before the town hall of St. Gilles, and the sculptures of *Fertility* and *Eloquence* in front of the arcade of the Jubilee Park in Brussels. A natural style and grace typify the work of this distinguished and balanced artist.

Portrait of a girl

43 x 23,5 x 21,5
signed Paul Du Bois

Sober and distinguished, this introspective portrait conveys the youthful model’s inner life. Eschewing anecdote, the sculptor has attempted to consolidate this emotional identity in a velvety marble on which gracious shadows emphasize his subtle mastery.



Josuë DUPON

(Ichtegem 1864-Berchem 1935)

As talented as he was productive, the sculptor Josuë Dupon’s multifaceted oeuvre – which also includes paintings and graphic work – deserves to be better known. Following lauded years at the Academies of Roeselaere and Antwerp (1887), he was awarded a first gold medal with *Samson killing the lion* in 1890. From that year onwards his work was regularly seen in exhibitions both in Belgium and further afield. Without acting like an innovator, he tackled all genres and excelled in handling techniques and materials. He was one of the first in Belgium to carve ivory (1893), notably an exceptionally refined *Diana* (1897) that was bought by the Royal Museum of Antwerp that would also purchase his spectacular *Vulture defending its prey* (1898). The career that this artist built up following those achievements led to the necessary commissions, of both façade figures and monuments, and numerous distinctions and a teaching assignment as a professor at the Academy of Antwerp. Dupon, without actively participating in the associations, still came to be an authority associated with notions of respectability and class.

The placement of his *Camel driver* (1901) and of the two bronze groups at the entrance to the Antwerp Zoo (1903) confirmed his reputation as a sculptor of animals. The thoroughness he showed from the very beginning in this specialized domain has remained unequalled by any other Belgian sculptor. There were very few animal types that did not inspire him, and of the remainder he was able to both thoroughly respect their anatomical attributes and their nature. This shows that Dupon was first and foremost a realist, in part thanks to his flair for drama, his sense of decorative complexity and a minor tendency for idealization, which is completely in line with 19th century approaches to art. To describe Dupon as a Belgian Frémiet (1834-1910) is in this sense illuminating, and it is denigrating for neither artist. As a gifted horse specialist – as if there could be a question of preferences for a true animalist painter? – he realized the remarkable equestrian statue of Father C. Lievens (1856-1893) in Moorslede (1930). Rather than attempting here to give an extensive overview of his works, exhibitions and distinctions, it seems better to recall the fact that Alberic Collin (1886-1962), Willy Kreitz (1903-1982) and Albert Poels (1903-1984) all benefited from Dupons tutelage at the Academy of Antwerp.

Tiger with snake

25 x 51 x 20 (without plinth)
signed J. Dupon

It is not known of this composition by Josuë Dupon whether he also carved it himself from the glistening marble. He excelled in modelling animals. This same representation of a murderous tiger is logically known in its execution in bronze: the lost-wax technique permitted a finer elaboration of detail than the stubborn Carrara stone. Still the author of this impressive sculpture has succeeded in bringing the ruthless drama of the occurrence to light with chisel and file with great naturalism. Both the writhing snake and the curled-up tail of the tiger – confident of its victory – are samples of a technical bravura that emphasizes the contrast with the unfinished base.



Auguste FRAIKIN
(Herentals 1817-Schaarbeek 1893)

This immensely talented solicitor’s son did take some lessons in drawing as a boy in Antwerp (1829) and in painting in Brussels (1832), but chose to become a pharmacist. He obtained that qualification, but after a year of practice he decided to discontinue that profession and pursue his desire to sculpt. The atelier of Pieter Puyenbroeck (1804-1884) gave him the opportunity. That was where, together with others, he learned his trade (1836). Even before registering as a student of the Academy of Brussels, where he enjoyed further training (1840-1842), the ambitious Fraikin already successfully exhibited a *Young Girl Picking Flowers* at the Salon of Brussels (1839). Three years on, he submitted two sculptures (1842), which again enjoyed a very positive reception. After three more years of hard work and study, he was awarded a gold medal at the Brussels Salon of 1845 for his sculpture *Captured Love* that was purchased shortly afterwards by the Brussels Royal Museum of Fine Arts in a life-sized marble version. A second version of this work is also in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg. Royal interest ensued, with, among others, portrait commissions as a result.

After a study visit to Italy (1846) Fraikin’s career came into full swing. He was then thirty years old. As he was participating regularly in the Belgian Salons, he was also entrusted with major commissions from the government for many years: he was commissioned to sculpt eleven statues in front of the Brussels Town Hall and a fountain commemorating the mayor Rouppe (1848). 1850 was the year that saw the production of his masterpiece: the marble funerary monument to *Queen Louise-Marie* in the St. Peter and Paul Church in Ostend. Subsequent highlights include the *Mérode* monument in the St. Gudule Church in Brussels (1857); the bronze *Freedom of Association* group at the Congress Column there (1859); the famous figures of the executed counts of *Egmond* and *Hoorne* (1864), the galvano- plastic *Father De Smet* statue in Dendermonde (1872) that now has rather ineptly been replaced by a polyester version. In the sumptuous garden of the Brussels Academies Palace in 1880 Fraikin’s marble sitting figure of the astronomer *Adolphe Quetelet* (1796-1874) was placed. The sculptor from Herentals exhibited internationally only later on. In 1878 he exhibited at the Paris World Fair, and the following year in London. Decked with every imaginable mark of honour and with knighthoods, he donated in 1888 a unique collection of 94 sculptures to the town of his birth, and even took care of their presentation. The museum that was opened to this end did not become what it was meant to be, and unfortunately has also not been adequately preserved.

The bumblebee (Innocence)

74 x 60 x 38
signed C.A. FRAIKIN

This sculpture marries romanticism with limitless mastery. Rarely in sculpture, especially when marble is involved, has such a degree of harmony been achieved between the psychological, the anecdotal and the technical elements that together lend a representation its lively verisimilitude. Here, however, there appears to be a real child in action, flushing with life and innocence. The refinement with which the hands and feet, the correct deportment and especially the facial expression are portrayed is astonishing and characteristic of the artist’s talent. No less admirable is the feat that the sculptor Fraikin has performed with the outspread – marble! – pinafore! All manner of finely executed details, the crawling bumblebee included, add to the charm of this 100-carat 19th century creation. Fraikin produced several marble versions for the foreign market: Philadelphia, Chicago, and London... The original plaster is in the Fraikin Museum in Herentals.



Barthélémy FRISON

(Tournai 1816-Paris 1877)

In Belgium this artist, who was originally a plaster caster, is less well known, because he became a naturalized Frenchman in the historical year of 1848. He enjoyed the foundation of his training in his hometown of Tournai – taking drawing lessons from P. Dumortier (1763-1838), among other classes – and in 1839 he was awarded the First Prize for sculpture. Lauded again for this same discipline in 1840 and 1841, he decided, thanks to a scholarship, to pursue his studies in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

In 1845 Frison exhibited two sculptures that garnered major interest: his sculpture that became famous, *John the Baptist* and an expressive bust. In that same year he exhibited several busts and a self-portrait. In Mons in 1846 four busts were on show at the Salon, and in Antwerp he showed a *Shepherd bitten by a snake*. A year later, Frison presented such a skilfully modelled *Boy playing with marbles* that people thought it was a cast. From then on, Frison continued to exhibit regularly, mostly in France. In addition to major distinctions and awards, he was also given numerous important commissions: mostly busts of all kinds of powerful men and authorities, but also of historical figures (*Molière* in 1873).

The Belgian Frenchman Frison remained connected to the city of his birth, where he produced funerary monuments, religious statues and even sculptures for the majestic Belfort (1860). Apart from many French museums and churches (Chartres, Compiègne, Paris, Châlons-sur-Marne) one can acquaint oneself with representative works by this dedicated and phenomenal craftsman in the Belgian museums of Brussels and Tournai.

Seated nude with mirror

74 x 32,5 x 35
signed and dated B^y. Frison 1862

This sensitive representation fully demonstrates the talent of the Belgian-turned Frenchman Bartélémy Frison. The fabulous contours of the body, presented in a light contraposto, contrasts with the somewhat dishevelled assemblage of pleats upon which the round mirror is lying. The slightly plump model's posture, with the left hand on the double strand of pearls and her satisfied look directed towards the mirror image lends this sculpture a high degree of veracity. The sculptor already successfully showed a plaster sculpture of *Jeune Fille à sa toilette (Young girl at her ablutions)* in 1857. Two years later followed a bronze version and later still a marble one. That was purchased by Princess Wilhelmin Bonaparte (1820-1904). The sculpture that is presented here bears the date 1862 and could thus plausibly be that same specimen from the Bonaparte collection.



Willem GEEFS
(Antwerp 1805-Schaarbeek 1883)

Undoubtedly the most famous of the 19th century Belgian sculptors, Willem Geefs was the eldest of seven brothers who all devoted themselves to sculpture and who left behind hundreds of artworks in churches and museums and on the façades of public buildings. Sobriety, elegance and technical ability typify all of their creations and that is certainly the case for the voluminous oeuvre of Willem Geefs. It includes classicist sculptures, statues, funerary monuments, religious sculptures and countless portraits. A complete inventory still does not exist. The oldest one was already made in 1895, but additions and corrections impose themselves. Between 1821 and 1829 Willem Geefs was an academy student in Antwerp and during that time he already exhibited (1824). A prize awarded in 1828 made it possible for him to continue studying for two years in Paris, with J.E. Ramey. Three years later he became a teacher at the Academy of Antwerp and he would continue to teach there until 1840. In the meantime he sojourned for some time in Italy (1834) and moved to Schaarbeek in order to work there on three commissions which were to bring him national fame: the statue of the French emissary in Brussels, *A.D. Belliard* (1796-1832), the monumental grave of *Frédéric de Mérode* (1792-1830) and the memorial sign for the fallen of the September days during the Belgian revolution (1830). Their solemn inaugurations took place respectively in 1836, 1837 and 1838. Later more crucial monuments followed: the painter *P. P. Rubens* (1577-1640) in Antwerp (1840), and the composer *A. Grétry* (1741-1813) in Liège (1842). Geefs’ final official memorial, the Tocamburo monument, was erected in the city of Oudenaarde (1867) in memory of the Belgian volunteers who fell during the Mexican field campaign (1864-1867), whose corps had been founded in Oudenaarde. Like many of Geefs’ colleagues – among them not least his brothers! – he was a gifted portraitist, a quality that had brought him the status of Royal Sculptor to the Court. This is how he obtained the most varied commissions, including foreign ones: a statue of the Prussian *King William I* for the chapel of the Castle of Teilingen (1847), and a statue of *Charles the Great* for the Sint Servaas Church in Maastricht (1845). During 1836 Willem Geefs successfully opened his studio to numbers of students who were interested in receiving practical, rather than theoretical, teaching. Geefs’ tremendous output covered just about every genre, from small to large. Marble was his favourite material, especially for busts and allegorical scenes. The well-organized Geefs studio did not eschew orders for wooden communion benches and pulpits, for example for the St John and Nicholas Church in Schaarbeek or in the Seminary Church of Sint-Truiden. The master even drew up a contract with a porcelain factory to reproduce busts and small sculptures of famous people in biscuit porcelain. The cornerstones of the Willem Geefs phenomenon were without a doubt his innate talent, his phenomenal work rigour, his practical flair, his business acumen, his sense of perfection and... his good health. The optimal relationship with all of his brothers and even his nephews was an added advantage.

Portrait of a standing gentleman

111 x 45 x 38,5
signed and dated G^{me} Geefs statuaire du Roi 1873

The fully self-possessed man posing frontally is not known by name. He has the air of one who has succeeded in life: he is calm, restrained, and satisfied. The sculptor could already prise that psychological dimension from the precious marble in part through the naturalism he lent to the position of the legs and feet. But what apparent self-evidence did Willem Geefs also invest in the clothing! The loosely draped mantle/coat is already an artwork in itself. The sleeves, trousers and vest/jacket appear to have nothing at all to do with marble. The square, solid plinth exceeds the round base and with regards to the man looking in our direction, he is somewhat turned to the left: this device tended to be used to avoid the work appearing too conventional.



Charles GEERTS
(Antwerp 1807-Leuven 1855)

This indefatigable artist followed sculpture lessons at the Antwerp Academy starting in 1824, receiving tuition from, among others, Jean-Baptiste Van Hool (1769-1837) and the Dutchman Johan Antonius Van der Ven (1799-1866). Directly after his studies the city council commissioned him to produce nine busts of famous composers and dramatists for the façade of the Royal Theatre in Antwerp (1835), now known as the Bourla Theatre. A short time afterwards, following his debut at the Salon of Antwerp with a bust and a gracious sculpture *The Dawn*, he became Professor of “Sculpture and Moulage” at the Academy of Leuven, where he continued to teach until his unexpected demise. He worked assiduously on an oeuvre that had a largely religious destination. In 1836 he still modelled a *Quentin Metsys* and a bust of *Raphael* but from that time onwards he exclusively fulfilled commissions for the church. Undoubtedly his most important project – which took him no less than ten years to complete (1841-1851) – was the enormous choir stalls for the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp. During that period Geerts incessantly received additional commissions from elsewhere (Leuven, Brussels, Beverlo, Ixelles, Namur, Paris and Coblenz). In order to manage this he founded a sort of school for religious sculpture in 1842, where students and handicraftsmen, specialized in woodcarving, achieved high levels of excellence. The accent lay on church furnishings in various neo-styles that the sculptor, after thorough studies, still managed to infuse with an authentic and deeply felt sentiment. A fine example of this can be found in the St Joseph Church of Brussels (1845). Thanks to his historical knowledge and the high level of his craftsmanship, Geerts was often called upon to carry out important restorations: in Liège (1841), in Bruges (the chimney of the Brugse Vrije, 1845), and in Lier (the chancel screen of the magnificent St. Gumarus Church, 1846-1850). On an art-historical level, Geerts’ significance resides mainly in the fact that he was one of the major proponents of the Neo Gothic style in Belgium. As such, Charles Geerts is internationally recognized, in particular in England.

Raphael

56 x 39 x 27
signed and dated Ch. Geerts 1845

The gothic font spelling out the name of a full-blooded Renaissance artist, represented here as a youth, is an amusing touch. In this bust the sculptor was able to avoid tedious stateliness. The various textures of skin, hair and textiles were impeccably rendered and the light that falls upon the work illuminates flickering accents. The face, which has not received any profound psychological treatment, is idealized and has watchful eyes; the supple hat, slightly askance, enlivens the portrait. The head itself is not frontal, but slightly turned to the right, thereby creating the suggestion of movement. The mighty locks tumbling down over the shoulder line further emphasize that impression. Some imperfections in what is shown of the sober clothing also add their bit to the sculpture’s vivacity. His *Raphael* was so successful that King Leopold I acquired an example at the Salon of Ghent in 1836.



Léandre GRANDMOULIN

(La Hulpe 1873- Uccle 1957)

This natural born talent studied at the Brussels Academy while he was still an artillery soldier (1892). He learned modelling under professor Van der Stappen (1843-1910). After graduating with shining colours (1899), in order to have an income but with enthusiasm, he went to help out as a practitioner in the ateliers of Victor Rousseau (1865-1954), Egide Rombaux (1865-1942) and the elderly Constantin Meunier (1831-1905). Undoubtedly influenced by the latter, the young Grandmoulin found inspiration in the subject of the working man. But rather than being inspired by the daily toil of miners and factory workers, he was fascinated by farmers and countryside life. Sculptures such as *The Sower*, *The Labourers of the Fields*, *The Stonemason*, *The Weeders* and *The Lady Making Hay*, testify to this. During the first years of his career he exhibited sculptures that were far less socially engaged, such as *Phaeton*, *Adam and Eve crying by the corpse of Abel* and *Andromeda's Abduction*. But already in 1898 at the first ever exhibition of “Labeur”, the Brussels artists’ association of which he was to remain a loyal member, it was clear he had a great talent for portraits. Throughout his life Grandmoulin continued to exhibit busts on a regular basis. As his models he often chose fellow artists: Frans Van Holder (1881-1919), Henri Thomas (1878-1972), Emile Thysebaert (1873-1963), Pieter Braecke (1858-1938), August Danse (1829-1929), Eugène Van Mierlo (1880-1972), Philibert Vervisch (...?) among others. In 1938 he also made a model of his own likeness and presented the ensuing plaster bust at the quadrennial Salon of that year in Antwerp. It is probable that *Isidoor Opsomer* (1878-1967), in 1951, is the last artist that he portrayed. To cite every exhibition in which Grandmoulin’s work was shown would be a tremendous task; exhibiting was a constant element in his prolific life. It is more important to note that his name and fame have been largely propelled by his grand *Baron Lambert* monument in Antwerp (1912). The complete oeuvre of this true, energetic artist is still awaiting thorough historical disclosure.

Bust of a boy

61,5 x 40,5 x 25
signed L Grandmoulin

This marble child seems to live beyond the boundaries of time, in simplicity itself. Nothing tempted the sculptor to distraction or to illustrate his virtuosic chiselling technique. It is precisely this absence that shows Grandmoulin’s intention to limit himself to the essence. This high degree of honest mastery is what determines the true value of this humane pearl. The terracotta model that preceded it also survived, although it is hardly capable of equaling the intimate sensitivity of this Carrara-version.



Lucienne-Antoinette HEUVELMANS

(Paris 1885-Saint-Cast-le-Guildo 1944)

The Belgian parents of this successful sculptress lived close to Brussels; they were artistically talented themselves. Lucienne was born on Christmas day in Brussels but her further life was to unfold mainly in the *Ville de lumières* before she finally settled in Saint-Cast-le-Guildo (1930), in Brittany. After having taken evening classes in sculpture she was taught at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (1904), where she became a pupil of Laurent Marqueste (1848- 1920) and Emmanuel Hannaux (1855-1934). The combination of that substantial training and her natural talent made Lucienne Heuvelmans the first woman ever to win the coveted Prix de Rome (July 1911) with a plaster relief: *Oreste Endormi (Orestes Sleeping)*. As the winner she was able to spend three years in Italy (January 1912-December 1914). But her career had already taken off previously: from 1907 she had regularly exhibited her work at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs Français in Paris, and she continued to do so until 1933. She was awarded numerous distinctions (among others, in 1907, 1911, 1926, 1933) and official commissions, and she was also appointed to the Légion d’Honneur (22.05.1926). A complete overview of her artistic production is not yet available; what is certain is that, in addition to reliefs and busts, she also made monuments and religious sculptures, and that she delivered work to the Manufacture de Sèvres.

Many of her sculptures were reproduced in bronze (this was often carried out by Maison Lucien Sosson). There are also bronze versions of the marble sculpture *La Jeunesse et l’Amour (Youth and Love)* illustrated here, which often led to the incorrect naming of *Cupid and Venus* and *Cupid and Psyche*. It deserves to be mentioned that both in the village of Ath, where her father was born, and Leuze-en-Hainaut, there is a Lucienne Heuvelmans sculpture to be seen. The artist died at the age of 63 and was buried in the family tomb at the Parisian graveyard, Père Lachaise.



Two characters from the group *Les Illusions et le Regret (Illusions and Regret)*

69,5 x 51,5 x 27
signed L.HEUVELMANS
inscribed Grand prix de Rome ORIGINAL EN MARBRE

Research has brought to light that these two figures have everything to do with a large sculptural composition the sculptress realized by commission to the city of Paris for the high-profile ‘Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes’ (Universal Exhibition of Decorative and Industrial Arts) of 1925. In the spectacular group of six characters that represented *Les Illusions et le Regret (Illusions and Regret)* these two characters were positioned at the centre, looking down on a literally downcast, recumbent figure. The focused execution of all manner of details that typified the plaster version is markedly softened in the glistening marble, without affecting the typical Art Deco character of the piece.



Jean-Joseph JAQUET

(Antwerp 1822-Schaarbeek 1898)

The considerable output of this authoritative artist was in part due to Jean-Joseph Jaquet’s collaboration with his younger brother Jacques Jaquet (1830-1899). Nearly every genre appears in his practice, each one bearing witness to immaculate craftsmanship. Jean-Joseph first studied at the Academy of Antwerp with Willem Geefs (1805-1883). As a practitioner he worked for a fair period of time with that master. Jaquet exhibited the initial fruits of his own invention and abilities in Brussels in 1842: some busts and two biblically inspired compositions *The Rescue of Moses* and a *Meditating Saint Paul*. The success he earned continued until 1845 when he stepped into the limelight with no less than eleven sculptures. Among them was his design for a statue of the chronicler *Jean Froissard* (c. 1337- after 1404), a work that was solemnly unveiled in 1848 on the square that has carried the name of that world-renowned personality of the Middle Ages ever since. This immediately established Jaquet’s name as a sculptor and for thirty years all manner of official commissions would come his way. Without the help of his brother Jacques, Jean-Joseph would most likely not have managed. As if he had sensed the need for very good staff very early on, Jaquet founded an open studio of his own, where emerging talent could find a place for a while. And that talent was present: young arists such as Thomas Vinçotte (1850-1925), Paul Dubois (1859-1938), Guillaume Charlier (1854-1928), Egide Rombaux (1865-1942) and Jules Lagae (1862-1931) benefited from this workplace whilst providing their assistance. In 1852 the brothers Jaquet realized the monumental sculptures *Joseph* and *Mary* for the church of Sint-Jans-Molenbeek/ Molenbeek Saint-Jean. Shortly afterwards in 1854 an order of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (Brussels) led to the delivery of a large marble sculpture *De Gouden Tijd (The Golden Age)* (126,5 x 57 x 64,5 cm) which is considered to be Jean-Joseph’s masterpiece. Major commissions came from the Netherlands: in Amsterdam he was invited to produce the decoration for the Palace of Popular Diligence (Het Paleis voor Volksvlijt) (1864) and for The Hague nothing less than the *National Dutch Monument* (1869). In the meantime the busy sculptor had been appointed professor at the Brussels Academy, which led to further portrait commissions. Interesting to note is the bust of the world famous singer *La Malibran* (1808-1836) who died so tragically and the portrait of the painter *Pierre-Louis Kuhnen* (1812-1877) with whom the brothers Jaquet lived for a considerable time. For the city of Mons Jean-Joseph realized the equestrian statue of *Baldwin of Constantinople* (1869). After that, for many years, his time was occupied by his work on the Bourse building in Brussels. He sculpted the monumental fronton and chiselled the oversized stone lions that are posted before the main façade (starting in 1872). One of the highlights of Jaquet’s career is undoubtedly the memorial he sculpted in bronze for *Louise-Marie*, the first Belgian queen. The artwork still adorns the spot in Philippeville today where it was unveiled in 1879. With all those official commissions one could forget to pause before his own creations that Jean-Joseph exhibited at significant exhibitions. Extremely successful were the sculptures such as *Cain and Abel*, *The Deluge*, *Cupid disarmed*, *Devotion*, and *The Poachers*. The artist found inspiration in history, the bible, and in mythology. He was also able to handle the idiom of allegories: *Hospitality*, *Winter*, and others. The multi-faceted nature of this sculptor with tremendous drive stands in stark contrast to the very limited presence of his work in Belgian museum collections.

Mascarade

57 x 42,5 x 22,5
signed J.J.JAQUET.

The playful expression and finesse with which practically all elements of dress and headdress were elaborated eloquently illustrate both the sculptor’s talent and the satisfaction he must have felt as he eternalized his model. The same representation of this *Mascarade* was executed in bronze. This version (1857) was practically identical to the marble sculpture.



Emiel JESPERS

(Deurne 1862-Antwerp 1918)

This romantically inclined aesthete’s career lasted just under thirty years. His youth was short but well spent. He enjoyed his basic training at the Antwerp Academy, in lessons with Eduard Dujardin (1817-1889) and Jozef Geefs (1808-1885). As an adolescent he liked to spend time in the busy work places of the then renowned firm, De Boeck & Van Wintand. He learned quite a few tricks of the sculptor’s trade there. When his father, the police commissioner of Borgerhout, unexpectedly passed away, the 22 year-old Emiel had no problem making a living, by working as a practitioner for several sculptors, including Jean-François De Vriendt (1829-1919). He soon set up his own studio (1885) and that same year founded the art circle “Eigen Vorming” (which roughly translates as both “Own Shaping” or “Own Training”) that organized exhibitions in Borgerhout for many years. Around this time the energetic sculptor’s career took off and it thrived until the turn of the century. After that, health issues arose, which made it increasingly difficult for him to sculpt.

From 1888 onwards the artist engaged in a surprisingly active suite of exhibitions that ran in parallel to his creative urges. It is only when Jaspers got to know Paris, together with two friends, Leon Brunin (1861-1949) and Jos Ratinckx (1860-1937) that he began to send in entries to the Salons there. His elegant busts were much appreciated as was his technical mastery, but starting in 1894 he also was remarked as a refined carver of ivory. That year in Antwerp, during the second World Fair, he organized an exhibition of his own work. A year later he again showed an extensive range of sculptures, alongside paintings by the Dutchman Evert Pieters (1856-1932). The following years he participated in the exhibitions in the famous Glaspalast in Munich (1897, 1899, 1900, 1912, 1913) with, among others, bronze versions of plaster sculptures that had been shown previously. Apart from his works in ivory, Emiel Jaspers began to make less work, but a selection of prominent collectors and amateurs, and also the government and the museums, continued to actively follow his output and had a preference for commissioning marble busts, delicate genre pieces, and medals for the marking of specific occasions.

Jaspers only made a limited number of large sculptures, mostly for the decoration of buildings. A bronze sculpture *Electricity* still crowns a house in Antwerp’s Leysstraat and for the department store Innovation on the Meir he designed a sculpture called *Lightning*.

Emiel Jaspers exhibited his works for what was probably the final time, at the inauguration of the Antwerp Festival Hall (Stadsfeestzaal) in February 1908. The four sculptures that he submitted for this edifice bore titles that were characteristic for him: *Aurora*, *Madonna at the crib* (marble relief), *Tears* and *Mysterious Nature* (plaster).

Standing nude with a book, reading

86 x 23,5 x 22 (with plinth)
signed E. Jaspers

It is not known *what* this naked girl is reading but it is clear *that* she is reading: the angle of her head, with long locks of hair, and the position of her slightly downcast eyelids indicate her concentration on the book that she supports with her left hand. In the meantime the light delicately accentuates her gracious appearance. The sculptor has lent the clear marble, as if it were ivory, the appearance of youthful skin, and confronted it with the rough structure of a kind of trunk that the model is leaning against.



Frans JOCHEMS
(Antwerp 1880-Berchem 1949)

Frans Jochems’ reputation as an animal sculptor overshadowed the remainder of this artist’s rich oeuvre, who was as modest as he was prolific. During his studies at the Academy and the Higher Institute of Fine Arts, under the professors Frans Joris (1851-1914) and Thomas Vinçotte (1850-1925), Frans Jochems was awarded both the Van Leries prize and the De Keyser prize. This made it possible for him to study in Paris and London. He was also able to enhance his training through visits to Germany, Austria, and what was then Czechoslovakia. He was very much involved in the activities of local art circles, which he co-founded, or of which he was just a member, and he often exhibited with them. He not only sculpted animals, but also all manner of genres in a variety of materials, with a preference for *taille directe* and terracotta sculptures. After WWI Jochems created some ten war monuments, including in Kruibeke (1920), Verviers (1923), Deurne (1924), and Chaudfontaine (1926). His production of religious work, portraits, medals and animals ran concurrently and continually. Remarkable shifts in style did not present themselves in the oeuvre of this scrupulous craftsman who remained a realist in both the conception and execution of his works. All manner of commissions came his way. For the British pavilion at the Antwerp World Fair of 1930, Jochems realized two impressive lions. Regularly modelling in Antwerp’s Zoo, he in fact became the mentor of Karel Trompeneers (1891-1947) who was affiliated with that much-visited institution. Trompeneers gained a reputation as a sculptor of animals himself. Worthy of note is the fact that during WWII Jochems worked on the decoration of the Rubens house in Antwerp. He carved caryatids, a herm, and philosophers. A major retrospective was organized just one year after his unexpected demise by the authorities of the Antwerp Zoo (1950). Thirty years later, a similar event took place in Berchem... During that same year of 1980, during the celebration of Belgium’s 150 years of existence, Berchem’s town council placed Jochems’ life-size bronze Cameroon Antelope on a central lawn.

For over a quarter of a century the diligent Jochems exhibited in more than 40 exhibitions, which nearly all took place in Antwerp. In the months of May and June of 1941 it can also be noted that the sculptures of a *Crane* and *Pelicans* of Jochems’ making were shown in several German cities.

The power of Frans Jochems’ sculpting abilities can today best be estimated by looking at his grand war monument of Verviers. The fact that a beautiful selection of his animal sculptures can be admired in Antwerp’s Zoo needs no further elaboration.

Bust of a woman looking to the right

52 x 45,5 x 36
signed F. Jochems

The identity of this portrayed woman is not known, but her character and temperament can be easily recognized from looking at her face. She appears good-natured and friendly, empathetic and prepared to listen. She is not dominant, nor does she impose herself, but by nature appears to be inclined to show respect. Imagination is not her greatest asset, but she does still have an interest in the surprises that life still has in store for her. A sculptor can indeed do much more than chop and chisel. As soon as he transcends that level, he/she and his/her art become interesting. Breathing life into a rough block of marble and raising it to a reflection of life itself: the much-appreciated sculptor of animals Frans Jochems had no other aim.



Jef LAMBEAUX

(Antwerp 1852-St. Gilles, Brussels 1908)

Jef Lambeaux is without a doubt the most remarkable sculptural talent of the second half of the nineteenth century in Belgium. In the face of his opponents, this uncommonly energetic man built up an enormous oeuvre that continues to arouse admiration and amazement. Originality in the broadest sense of the word is the first feature of his practice. His lifestyle also assured him of a unique place in the artistic circles of the vibrant Belgium of the time.

The empathetic loner that he was, coupled with undiluted singularity and a generous imagination, clearly distinguish his works from that which his fellow sculptors were producing. With an enthusiasm reminiscent of Rubens, Jordaens and certainly also Antoine Wiertz (1806-1865) Jef Lambeaux, unintentionally produced countless monumental sculptures that provoked a wide range of reactions, on both an aesthetic and an ethical level. His excellent craftsmanship was never questioned. Bravura was never far off in his group scenes that were as dynamic as they were complex, and often larger than life: bronze battle scenes, wrestlers, boxers, heavy-set centaurs, abductions, and so forth. But there were also monumental marble sculptures with titles such as *The murderer*, *Love and drunkenness* and of course his magnum opus, an enormous white marble relief (8 x 12 meters!), worthy of Rodin, depicted an unprecedented dramatic spectrum of the *Human Passions*.

His energetic life that was so much more than just a successful career, not only led to the creation of titanic artworks, but also to multiple representations of light footed young women and expressive busts of characterful men, preferably artists (*Jacob Jordaens*, *Henri De Braekeleer*, *Frans Lamorinière*, *Hendrik Conscience*,...).

Lambeaux’ oeuvre, of which there is still no complete inventory, can be estimated to encompass more than 150 works.

In the Belgian museums – especially those in Brussels and Antwerp – stunning examples of his work can be seen. After his education at the academy and his initial participation in exhibitions the career of this unusually driven artist only reached full speed at the age of thirty, when his now famous sculpture *The Kiss* was purchased by the Antwerp Museum (1882). Jef Lambeaux was unstoppable in his modelling of sculptures, large and small, commissioned or not. All of his works bear his foremost trademark, that high degree of – often daring – originality. It procured both for his work and personality the unique reputation that came to be this artist’s lot – the stuff of novels! – even during his own lifetime. Little more was needed to ensure this than his spectacular *Brabo Fountain* (1887), right in front of the city hall of the town of his birth.

Bust of a girl

59 x 30,5 x 22,5

signed and dated Jef LAMBEAUX. 1891.

Jef Lambeaux placed his name and the year 1891 very visibly on the left hand side of this almost stately portrait of a girl. The name of the model is not known with certainty, but the sculptor did realize a marble bust of a girl named *Mieke* around that period. The great care with which the curly locks were sculpted enlivens the sober representation with no further indication of clothing or jewellery. Even earrings are not present. It is clear that the artist in the first place envisioned the depiction of a psychological type, which reveals the cleverness and character of this self-aware girl.





Recumbent nude

33 x 83 x 29,5
signed JEF LAMBEAUX.

Sculptures with the title *Femme couchée* recur several times in this very productive artist's oeuvre. It is not easy to determine precisely which sculptures are concerned, because in many cases the necessary illustrations are missing. An added difficulty is the fact that the same versions occur in marble and in bronze and that they were almost never dated. The sculptor sometimes varied his creations by merely adding the slightest changes, or by adding new elements to them. An almost identical version of this lovely sleeping woman was cast in bronze by the Brussels-based 'Compagnie des Bronzes' (nr 3241) with the title *Repos (Rest)*.



Recumbent nude, supporting the head

43 x 90,5 x 31 (with original pedestal 16,5 x 94,5 x 37)
signed Jef.Lambeaux

This full-length, recumbent nude facing sideways is no *Femme couchée*; the magnificent woman appears far too awake to qualify for the title of *Repos (Rest)*. She seems self-satisfied with her own beauty. In the treatment of the marble Lambeaux consciously wished to elaborate that effect: the sheet and the base beneath it are summarily conveyed in order to guarantee that all attention is focused upon the body. With the same aim in mind, the uncommonly fine right hand rests in a relaxed way on the hip and thereby accentuates the flowing silhouette. The right foot, hanging loosely in open space, heightens the overall impression of the candid carefree attitude. Of this refined composition, too, several variations and reductions are known to be in existence.

The snake charmer

105,5 x 34 x 35,5
signed Jef Lambeaux

Is this an unusual representation of Eve who is possibly holding the apple in her right hand, with the aid of the Paradisiacal snake at her feet? Jef Lambeaux called this new ode to the feminine nude *La Charmeuse de serpents* (*The snake charmer*). The daring writhing of the rising snake is no doubt a sculptural stunt, but the representation of the soft skin of this beautifully built woman equals this achievement.



Night

128,5 x 47,5 x 36,5
signed Jef Lambeaux

Of this ever-inventive master, several versions of works are known that bear the title *L'Aurore (Dawn)*. It has not been determined what exactly is being depicted in this large and complicated sculpture, but a useful name could be *La Nuit*. The sphere that serves as a base to the all but hovering figure could be the earth that is covered in part by the same sheet in which the child also feels harboured. This elegant lady of the night takes possession of the space around her and seems to identify with the task that she fulfils with eagerness.





Leda

58 x 57 x 27
signed Jef Lambeaux

The mythological origin of *Leda and the Swan* was of less importance to this artist. Rather he found his challenge in rendering the physical reactions the goddess showed when she was overwhelmed by the conquest. On several occasions, so it seems, Lambeaux reprised the ancient theme in order to visualize lust and ecstasy as viscerally as possible. He excels in avoiding the trap of falling into prosaic explicitness. Serene, but to nineteenth century standards very daring, this creation bears witness to Jef Lambeaux' urge to innovate, that is present as a trademark throughout his oeuvre. Four versions in bronze of this composition are also known to be in existence.



Leda

56 x 44,5 x 47,5
signed JEF LAMBEAUX

The slightly less ecstatic representation of Lambeaux's Leda-type, with the sculpture limited to the goddess's upper body, and with her eyes closed, the attentions of the swan remain out of sight. The downy presence of the disguised god Jupiter has been used by the sculptor to finely establish the presence of this highly original sculpture and to shield it from any anecdotal tarnishing.

Edmond LEFEVER

(Ypres 1830-Brussels 1911)

Edmond Lefever was a very talented sculptor who practised nearly all genres, in just about every available material. His career started somewhat late, after receiving the necessary training – and distinctions – in Ypres and in Brussels.

Together with his friend Polydoor Comein (1848-1907), who was also heading for success, and also from Ypres, Lefever undertook a study trip to Italy. Once he had married, he settled down in Schaarbeek, Brussels. From 1874 onwards Edmond Lefever exhibited with great regularity in nearly all of the national Salons; sculptures such as *First Mourning* (1878), *Cinderella* (1881) and *Saint Cecilia* (1893) brought him acclaim.

His entries earned him countless distinctions in London (1878), Adelaide and Caracas (1888). In 1896 the artist was made a Knight in the Order of Bolivar and of the Belgian Leopold Order. Lefever realized quite a few busts in bronze and marble. With the likenesses of elegant women such as *Risette*, shown here, the sculptor was clearly responding to the international zeitgeist of the Fin de Siècle.

Among official commissions that came to Edmond Lefever, worthy of mention are the façade sculptures for the Lakenhalle (Cloth Hall) of Ypres (1875), and the sculptures that he realized for the Town Hall (1878) and the decoration of the Petit Sablon (1893) in Brussels.

Bust of a girl – Risette

50,5 x 25,5 x 18,5
signed Ed. Lefever

The base and the girl’s likeness flow into each other in accordance with the spirit of the Art Nouveau. The model’s dress also corresponds perfectly to this stylistic period. The ‘sweet smile’ that belongs to this *Risette* is a success, because the frank face of this uncomplicated girl betrays no further reservations. A sober elegance executed in a naturalistic way seems to have been the task the sculptor had set himself. After more than a century the sculpture has lost nothing of its original aura and freshness.



Pieter PUYENBROECK
(Leuven 1804-Schaarbeek 1884)

Pieter Puyenbroeck was a competent sculptor with a didactic inclination. After his own training with the old G.L. Godecharle (1750-1835), whom Puyenbroeck very much admired, the artist opened a large studio of his own in 1840, where he instructed young artists in a practice-based manner. His influence on Auguste Fraikin (1817-1893) was of essential importance.

In 1832 and 1835 Puyenbroeck had unsuccessfully applied for a position as a teacher of sculpture at the Brussels Academy, and years later (1845) he again did not succeed, even though he was prepared to do it for free. In 1830, the then 26 year-old sculptor successfully exhibited his sculpture *Summer* at the Salon of Brussels; it was immediately bought by the Royal Park. Three years later he exhibited the sculptures *Ceres* and *Flora* in Antwerp (1834). For a long time he worked together with the somewhat younger Willem Geefs (1808-1885), whose career would be less oriented towards religious sculpture. Pieter Puyenbroeck also produced some monuments and countless busts, including, among others, *G.L. Godecharle* (1837), *Anne Boleyn* (1839), *Jozef Paelinck* (1844), and *Alexandre Gendebien* (1860). But the centre of gravity of his oeuvre can be found in and on religious buildings: reliefs and sculptures of saints, in the Church of Kapelle, the Church of the Beguinage, the Jesuit Church in Brussels, and in Tournai in the Carmelite Chapel. Unanimously seen as his best work are the stations of the cross in the Saint Gudule Cathedral. For the façade of that same gothic monument, Puyenbroeck made the sculptures of the Three Kings. He adorned the classicist façade of the Saint Jacob on the Koudenberg Church with the sculptures *Saint Augustine* and *Johannes Nepomuk*. The sculptures with which he made his appearance at the Salons were smaller in scale: *Moses placed in a basket by his mother* (1845), *The good and the bad mother* (1857). The profane and historicising sculptures that he delivered to the Town Halls of Leuven and Brussels can still be seen there, but over sixty façade sculptures that Puyenbroeck carved with Edouard Fiers (1822-1894) for the world famous Lakenhalle (Cloth Hall) of Ypres, were unfortunately lost during the war.

Cupid as a fisherman

84 x 50 x 36
signed P. Puyenbroeck

That which astounding craftsmanship sets out to do with a large block of costly marble is demonstrated in this highly original *Cupid*. He does not hunt for willing victims with a bow and arrow, but as a fisherman, is ready to cast his net. Flowers spill seductively from his knapsack and, the sweet-looking boy that he is, Cupid is perfectly capable of eliciting interest himself. Furthermore our attention is also immediately drawn to the rendition of the fishing net that is hanging down. Such a tour de force demands the height of a sculptor’s technical abilities, not only concerning the fine detailing but also the suggestion of volume and weight. But Pieter Puyenbroeck did not leave it at that: through the net he has managed to vaguely show the fingers that are stretching the meshes. The pinnacle of realism and daring! One might forget the remaining qualities of this sculpture at this sight: not only the outstretched left arm, but the excellently depicted anatomy as a whole, the calm dynamics, the overall posture of this winged child also connect apparent simplicity with utmost refinement.



Egide ROMBAUX
(Schaarbeek 1865-Uccle 1942)

This sculptor had a preference for carving marble; he began his career without any artistic ambition. His father, the sculptor Felix Rombaux (1838), about whom little is known, provided his eldest son with the necessary basic training and sent him as an apprentice to Guillaume De Groot (1839-1922) and then to the studio of Albert Desenfans (1845- 1938). Evening classes with Charles Van der Stappen were also on the menu, and that continued until 1887. Rombaux in other words received a thorough professional training and the energetic Jef Lambeaux (1852-1908) was able to put it to good use. For two years, Egide Rombaux was able to work for him to help make the Brabo fountain in Antwerp. This connection with the “Belgian Rodin” would turn the young practitioner into a fully-fledged artist. Winning the Godecharle prize (1887) made it possible for Egide Rombaux to live in Italy for three years, mainly in Florence. There he made his famous sculpture *The Scarecrow*, which he however later destroyed, because he was unsatisfied with it. Luckily reduced versions were preserved of that sculpture that had been intended to be the crest of a fountain; it clearly shows Lambeaux’s influence. After his return, via Paris, he married and success came his way: this time he won the Prix de Rome and was again able to go to Italy, where he installed himself until 1894. There he carved his *Mount Venus* which brought him success at the Salon of Paris. His artistic career then shifted to full speed. By 1896 he had his own workshop in Schaarbeek, where he was to make his best-known sculptures. His monument *Henri Vieuxtemps* (1820- 1881) was already inaugurated in Verviers the following year.

Between 1900 and 1903 he began carving what is most likely his best known sculpture, *Daughters of Satan*, from a block of marble weighing 4000 kg. It became the absolute attraction at the Antwerp Salon of 1904, and was promptly purchased by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. Smaller versions can now be found in museums such as those of Ghent, Budapest and Barcelona.

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Bust of his sister Adèle

58 x 23 x 20,5
signed E. ROMBAUX

Every light setting is enthralled by what the sculptor has done with this marble sculpture. It is difficult to work with more sensitivity, in terms of form and content, whatever the material. This achievement by Egide Rombaux is without reservation among the highlights of his oeuvre and at the same time one of the icons of Belgian Art Nouveau. Everything about this sculpture is infused with spirit and an ode to what those aiming for the purest refinement can only dream of. One may speak here of marble that has been ennobled. Rarely was the essence of a zeitgeist formulated so perfectly and purely, without sounds or words. Versions in bronze, however magnificent, do not match the ethereal charm of this silent canticle. All the abilities upon which the oeuvre of Egide Rombaux is based also bring this marble child to a beguiling degree of life. It is clear that considerations of style were wholly secondary to the artist who wished to enter into contact with life itself. As if it had congealed in the whitest Carrara marble, this disarming sculpture greets us as a symbol of the earliest delights of life. Two similar but less elaborated busts are in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels.



As an active participant in the artistic life of those days in Antwerp in 1905 Rombaux became a member of the dynamic art circle “Kunst van Heden” (Art of Today), where he encountered colleagues such as Frans Huygelen (1878- 1940), Jules Lagae (1862-1931), Victor Rousseau (1865-1954), Adolphe Wansart (1873-1954) and Oscar Jespers (1887- 1970). During that period he had a house built in Uccle that would stay his definitive residence and his place of work: it was to stimulate both the amplitude and the multifaceted nature of his production. Thanks to an exceptional technique he was able to achieve the most refined nuances. In portraits, religious or allegorical work, his figures appear to emerge from the marble as if they were emerging from a mist. After the turn of the century, Rombaux began to sculpt regularly in ivory and his predilection for the beauty of the naked figure and supple movement came to an even more eloquent expression. During the First World War the sculptor’s work was increasingly being described with the term symbolist.

He took refuge in London where he exhibited *First Morning* at the Tate Gallery and in Venice. Following the calamities of war, Egide Rombaux taught for a decade (1921-1932) both in Antwerp and in Brussels. Several monuments of his making became part of the capital’s aspect: *Paul Janson* (1928), *Ernest Solvay* (1933) and the bronze *Cardinal Mercier*, which was only installed in 1954 even if he had conceived it more than ten years previously. The statues of the courageous *Gabriel Petit* (1893-1916) and of the famous English nurse *Edith Cavell* (1923) also bear the Rombaux signature.

Flower Child

77 x 31 x 20,5
signed E. ROMBAUX

Could it be possible for marble to appear softer, and life itself more spontaneous than this bundle of adorableness and innocence? The high degree of naturalism that Egide Rombaux aspired to in all his sculptures, achieves a level in this blushing flower child that irresistibly evokes the story of Pygmalion. The completely unfettered child’s soul forms the adorned centre of attention. Without the talent and the sensitivity of an exceptional artist this sculpture would probably have simply fallen into anecdotalism.



Victor ROUSSEAU

(Feluy 1865-Forest 1954)

Victor Rousseau is an artist whose working life can be described as linear. No shocking events, fatal misfortunes or health problems diverted this optimistic human being from his course. This unusually energetic man applied his natural abilities to the celebration of life itself. His life turned out to be a long one, and it ended completely differently from how it started. He had seemed destined, from his home environment, to become a professional stone mason. His future seemed to lie at the local stone quarries and any additional teaching, such as drawing lessons, would have seemed useless. He took evening classes with the decorator Georges Houtstont, who would subsequently employ Rousseau for several years. This made it possible for him to register at the Brussels Academy to study sculpture: Charles Van der Stappen became his inspiring mentor (1887-1889). During those promising years Rousseau travelled to Paris with the painter Jean Delville (1867-1953). He would later visit that city at least 20 times, often stopping there on his way to the South, where Italy became his second homeland. The year 1890 signified an important turning point for the 25 year old Rousseau: he married, and with his plaster sculpture *Le tourment de la pensée* (The Torment of Thought) he won the Godecharle Prize. This allowed him to have a prolonged stay in Italy. Upon his return to Belgium he began to actively and self-consciously lead an artistic life. The recipe was simple: work a lot and hard, exhibit widely, and make connections. Rousseau’s love of music, dance and literature broadened his circle of friends far beyond Belgium’s borders, and he let no opportunity go by for him to affirm his loyalty.

When in 1892 in Brussels the avant-garde art circle “Pour l’Art” came into being, Victor Rousseau was one of its many founders. In that inspiring milieu his artistic personality matured. In 1893 his first official commission came through: two artistic lamp posts for the prestigious Botanical Gardens in Brussels. Winner of the second prize at the Prix de Rome, that year Rousseau was again able to stay for several months in Italy. Upon his return to Belgium he initiated the project of building a house with a studio in Forest that would not be completed until 1902. In the meantime the life of sculpting, travelling and exhibiting continued unhindered. The commissions for monumental work came streaming in, statues, funerary monuments, façade sculptures, reliefs and medallions. Museums in Belgium and abroad – including Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Liège, Berlin, Copenhagen, Florence, Venice, Glasgow, Budapest, Riga... – all acquired his work.

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Bust of a boy looking to the right

43,5 x 37 x 22
signed and dated Victor Rousseau 1929

This somewhat introverted little boy, rising out of the sturdy mass in which it awaited daylight for centuries, could well be the counterpart to the remarkable girl represented on the next page. Whether both sculptures are pendants is not known. They do appear to be portraits. The girl is said to be Rousseau’s own grandchild. It is astonishing how lively and fresh Carrara marble can become when it is entrusted to the right eyes and hands. The boy shows the son of Mr. Demets, governor of the province of Brabant. It was shown at the retrospective exhibition Grande Retrospective Victor Rousseau in the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1933.



After the installation of his monument marking the farewell to the mayor *Charles Buls* (1837-1914) in Brussels, Rousseau became a teacher and later the director of the Brussels Academy. Throughout the years he realized some 70 busts in a penetrating and subtle way, and an oeuvre that is estimated to include 600 sculptures. During the First World War he lived in England, and one of the sculptures he modelled there was a large memorial piece *La Reconnaissance Belge à l'Angleterre (Belgium's Homage to England)*, which was solemnly unveiled on October 21, 1920. His working rigour was praised in publications and retrospective exhibitions. In 1933, in the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels, 286 sculptures of his were on view, alongside 169 drawings and pastels. In 1947 – the artist was then already 82 years old – he showed 74 sculptures and 110 drawings. He even had an avenue named after him. When advanced age prevented him from the heavy work of chiselling and sanding, he opted to carve ivory and to write about the memories from his youth. His final sculpture, *Femme à l'Enfant (Woman with Child)* was never completed.

Denise

35 x 30 x 20,5 (without wooden plinth)
signed Victor Rousseau

Denise is the portrait of Rousseau's grandchild and author of the book on Rousseau's life and work.
See *Victor Rousseau 1865-1954* by Denise Vanden Eeckhoudt, Brussels, 2003, illustrated p. 175, where dated 1923



Buste Fillette

47 x 30,5 x 15

signed Victor Rousseau

In this sparkling sculpture, marble – effervescent as life itself – is adorned with amazement and innocence. Whether it is a portrait or not, the sculptor has presented this young girl as an allegory of early youth. As uninhibited and amiable as a doe in the forest, we are moved by the fragile beauty with which Victor Rousseau endowed this white marble. The frank face tempers the contrast between the frail flesh and the lavish locks.

The plaster has been shown at the Exposition Internationale de Venise (1912), cat. 183. The plaster was also exhibited at the Grande Retrospective L'oeuvre de Victor Rousseau in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1933 as *Buste de Cécile*, plâtre, 1912.

Provenance: family Krein (ambassador of Belgium in Persia) who purchased it from the artist. The Kreins received regularly a group of artists-friends such as F. Toussaint, R. Dumoulin, Victor Rousseau and others.

Purchased from Kreins daughter-in-law in 1996.



Louis SAMAIN

(Nivelles 1834-Ixelles 1901)

Louis Samain was a classical sculptor whose education (1859-1864) took place under the tutelage of Eugène Simonis (1810-1882). Even during those studies, which began in 1860, he submitted sculptures for participation in the art salons of the capital.

With a third Prix de Rome Louis Samain concluded his period of study in 1864 and left for Italy where he lived in Rome for a number of years. There he not only realized countless portraits, but also the monumental sculpture (1869) that would later (1895) be placed in its marble version along the Brussels Avenue Louise as *Escaped Negro Slaves Hunted Down by Dogs*. Also less spectacular scenes such as *Roman Shepherds*, *A Neapolitan Charmer*, *Roman Farmer's wife* were produced in Rome.

Back in Belgium, Samain's career took off to an excellent future. He exhibited regularly in the salons of Ghent (from 1871) and Antwerp (starting in 1876).

For four years he worked on the decoration of the Brussels Midi Station (South Station), which he adorned with a spectacular façade decoration representing *Les Progrès des Chemins de Fer (The Progress of the Railways)*.

In the city of his birth he erected a fabulous statue of the late-Medieval musician *Tintoris* (1875) which was unfortunately completely destroyed during World War II. He obtained a steady reputation as a portraitist and the Museum of Antwerp and Brussels purchased his work.

In 1882 he was awarded a first commission to decorate the Museum of Brussels with an allegorical representation of *Architecture*. Eight years later two more monumental sculptures were added to it: *Italian Art* and *Spanish Art*. The designs for these were care of Xavier Mellery (1845-1921).

There are few known facts about Samain's personality and private life. They can be partly surmised from the biographical overview above. Self-confidence appears to have been his primary trait: already one year (1860) after his late registration at the academy (in 1859 he was already 25) he presented his own work at the salon and continued to do so. Little is known about his 'Roman' period. When did it begin and when – and why – did it end? He must have worked and studied there seriously, because both in quantity and quality his artistic production continued to be remarkable. It is likely that the respectful portrait on which he is depicted wearing oriental clothing and standing beside his modelling stool dates from that period. It was painted by a slightly younger colleague from his own region, André Hennebicq (Tournai 1836-Sint Gilles 1904), who was also based in the Italian capital at the time. Louis Samain appears self- confident and assured of his own abilities.

The outstanding craftsmanship and the prestigious commissions – Midi! – which he did not eschew emphasize this psychological strength.

Bust of an Italian Lady

82,5 x 53,5 x 30,5

signed and dated L. SAMAIN. F. ROMA. 1867

Exactly halfway through his productive life that was wholly dedicated to the development of his artistic talents, Louis Samain was able to capture the dignity of this classical Roman lady. Thanks to the masterful treatment of the marble her balanced personality and nature, inclined towards slight introspection, rose to the surface. The alluring folds and a pearl necklace that combines both repose and capriciousness protect this life size portrait from appearing outlandish and stilted.



Charles SAMUEL

(Brussels 1862-Cannes 1938)

This very competent sculptor was able to begin his fruitful career immediately following his training thanks to an early masterpiece he created. Encouraging awards of distinction, after having suffered disappointments regarding the Prix de Rome (1885, 1888, 1891), allowed the young artist to undertake a brief study visit to Italy (1889). There he conceived his plan to create a monument in honour of the famous author who died in poverty, *Charles De Coster* (1827-1879). This project was to be a great success. The memorial was not only lauded during the World Fair of Antwerp in 1894, but it also received gold medals in Paris, Dresden, Munich and Brussels. It was installed at the Lakes of Ixelles, and specifically at the spot of the bench on which the spiritual father of *Tijl* and *Nele* had always sat. To this day the monument is still considered as one of the most beautiful in Belgium.

In a fair number of façade sculptures and memorials that were executed later, Samuel’s talent for monumental sculpture is clearly visible. But, with a surprising sense of refinement, in the most costly materials (he had worked as an apprentice for a while at the firm Wolfers), he also executed precious miniature sculptures, jewels, and fabulous medallions.

Samuel’s oeuvre can be traced in the lists of the many exhibitions to which he submitted work. It is suspected that he was already exhibiting successfully during his time at the Academy (1878-1888) in Antwerp in 1880, and three years later in Ghent. From 1885 to the outbreak of the First World War, he participated annually in events both in Belgium and abroad. After the Great War his work, consisting mainly of portraits and less of allegories, was exhibited regularly. In 1934 Samuel organized a farewell exhibition of sorts, before moving South for health reasons. After his death in Cannes his house in Brussels was bought by the painter Franz Courtenis (1854-1943).

Samuel’s artistic production can be described as abundant, and it is richly varied. A complete inventory would underscore typical aspects of his work: exceptional craftsmanship, a perfect command of materials, an atmospheric love of realism, a sense of harmony and a classical restfulness, all with the avoidance of any flashiness. Several monuments in Brussels (including *La Brabançonne*, 1930) and the memorials *1914-1918* in Edingen (1920), Jemappes (1922), and Ixelles (1926), consolidate Samuel’s fame, which is incidentally further emphasized by his many vibrant portraits, the marble busts and heads that he made of artist friends and all manner of dignitaries.

Seated nude with shoe

68,5 x 55 x 29,5
signed and dated Ch Samuel 1925

As transpires in this exhibition, many artists during the glory days of 19th century Belgian sculpture indulged in depicting the female nude, whatever the pose. The theme often led to sculptures that were as controversial as the extent to which they demonstrated the sculptor’s abilities, as well as putting the model’s physical splendour on display. In this creation by Charles Samuel a nude is curiously depicted in a wholly relaxed state, as if the seated woman was not aware that she was posing. The simple footwear on her left foot distracts her and thus strengthens the impression of not realizing that her nakedness is being captured. Grace or coqueties are clearly not Samuel’s first aim, quite contrary: it is in fact the intimate beauty of an unguarded moment. His gratitude in being able to consolidate that, undisturbed, in marble, is the true reason for this artwork’s existence. It does not sing, it is humming.



Leon SARTEEL

(Ghent 1882-1942)

This artist was born and grew up in Ghent; his sculptural career, after local training and evening classes, first came into gear in 1908, when he won the Sculpture Prize, awarded once every six years, at the Academy of the city of his birth. The stipend that came with it made it possible for him to concentrate exclusively on his work for a period of three years. The young Sarteel instantly stepped into the foreground thanks to the successes generated by his sculpture *The Orator* at the tri-annual Salon of Ghent. For five years he occupied an atelier outside the city (Sint-Denijs-Westrem) until the vicissitudes of war drove him back to his parental home. Thanks to a fortunate lottery the young sculptor evaded military service and he was able to pursue his artistic calling. For thirty years he actively participated in many official exhibitions, as well as organizing a fair number of them himself: it was a demanding aspect of his hardworking life. The appreciation for his work continued: in 1919 the Museum of Fine Arts of Ghent purchased Sarteels’ bronze bust of the painter *Charles-René Callewaert* (1893-1936), and two years later the University of Ghent ordered a posthumous bust, a medallion and a bronze wall relief, in memory of the famous engineer and professor *Jules Boulvin* (1855-1920). More important to Sarteels’ further development was his marriage, aged forty, to Anne Pirsens, ten years his junior, with whom he had three children. In the meantime his work gradually evolved from romantic realism into an intimate symbolism that was entirely his own. The influence that Sarteel initially gleaned from Constantin Meunier (1831-1905) gradually made way for the symbolist atmosphere exuded by the work of the far younger George Minne (1866-1941). That style shift was evident in the 3,2 metre high *Monument of the Cooperation* that he realized for an exhibition in Ghent in 1924. Following the birth of his son Leon (1925-1949) he undertook a study trip in France and several years later (1929-1930) Sarteel was able to have a house built of his own that included a studio. Despite his relentless participation in exhibitions he continued to execute commissions (portraits, garden and funerary sculptures, medallions) in the most diverse materials of wood, marble, granite and bronze. In 1935 he created a life-sized *Woman of This Time* as an eye catcher in the rose garden of the Brussels World Fair. He was never entrusted with a teaching position, but he was regularly called upon to sit on the jury of major sculpture competitions (including the Prix de Rome, the Godecharle Prize, the Devigne Prize...). The sculptural output of this kind-hearted artist, whose work is well represented in public auctions, is considerable, and always infused with a wholly singular approach to reality. The human form, often of (young) women and mothers, tended to lead to a placid stylization rather than evoking a deep emotional impact. Quite a few works received a symbolic title: *Spring, The Morning, The Summer, Youth, Maturity, Luck, Higher Up*, etc. The Sarteel biography is extensive, and the list of his exhibitions was drawn up after the retrospective exhibition of his work that was held in Sint-Denijs-Westrem in 1982. Conspicuously absent from that overview is Sarteel’s participation, with no less than 5 bronzes, in the event Flämische Kunst der Gegenwart (Flemish Contemporary Art) that took place from 17 May until 11 June in Berlin in 1941, the year in which the artist became a member of the board of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent. In 1942 he made *Gemoedsadel (Nobility of Mind)*, which was probably Sarteel’s final work.

Standing nude with a bath towel

65 x 28,5 x 22,5
signed and dated L. Sarteel 1926

One year after Charles Samuel, twenty years Sarteel’s senior, completed his seated nude with a shoe (1925 see p. 83) the Ghent- based Sarteel realized this standing nude with a bath towel. The contrast in style is apparent, and can be read both from the urge towards an overall stylization and the smoothing away of various textures. In part due to the geometrical composition of the pedestal and the linear suggestion of gently rippling water a representation is created that moves away from solid reality and an almost spiritual interpretation of the subject results. The understated design blends all the separate elements into a formal composition, which, apart from the water, is not cluttered by any detailing whatsoever. The even balance the sculptor has been able to introduce between the head and the torso is quite remarkable.



Jan SCHOOLMEESTERS

There is barely any biographical data available for this under-documented sculptor. It is likely that he was born in Berchem (near Antwerp) in around 1880. Between 1904 and 1913 he followed his first classes at the Academy of Antwerp (his teachers included Josuë Dupon, Frans Deckers, Emiel Jaspers) and later at the Academy of Brussels.

After the First World War, he is said to have worked in the ateliers of Victor Rousseau (1865-1954), and later with Isidoor De Rudder (1855-1943).

It has been documented that Jan Schoolmeesters, who signed his sculptures with the shortened version of his name “(J) Scholmester” called upon the services of the Fonderie Nationale des Bronzes in Brussels for some of his sculptures (including *Twist, The Wind*) in 1956. As an exhibitor with two sculptures, *Surprise* and *Child with Dolphin* the artist was involved in the exhibition La Sculpture en Plein Air (Open Air Sculpture) in Forest. During that period the sculptor was registered as living in Brussels (rue M. Maubel, 67).

Singing nude with a book of scores (reading aloud with book)

68 x 21,5 x 20,5 (with plinth)
signed J. Scholmeester

Wholly in line with its time, the (as yet) too little known artist realized all manner of sculptures (busts, genre pieces, reliefs, allegories) that demonstrate the quality of the training he received in Antwerp and Brussels respectively. The comparison of this *Singer* (?) with the *Reading Nude* by his Antwerp based teacher Emiel Jaspers (see p. 53) is obvious, and even advisable, in order to better acquaint oneself with the temperament and artistic preoccupations of both masters. Less aesthetizing and more geared towards an inner energy, sometimes to the point of torment, give Schoolmeester’s sculptures a greater sense of emotional import and more immediate charm through the spontaneity they display.



Bust of a boy with a crucifix on his chest

45 x 27,5 x 19,5

signed J. Scholmeester

In this sensitive portrait of a daydreaming child, all of its ingredients also indicate a high level of craftsmanship that allows the glistening marble to convey on the tender representation. This is completely in keeping with the atmosphere that emanates from the model that has been slightly idealized.



Karel SCHUERMANS

(Antwerp 1869-1962)

This son of a tailor lived to a grand old age. Largely self-taught, he began stone masonry very early on, but after some extra training he laid the foundations for a fruitful career as a sculptor. His earliest participation in exhibitions – starting in 1905 – was in his capacity as a member of local arts organizations such as “Ken U Zelf ” (Know Thyself) and “Wij” (We). From the very beginning this hard worker presented mainly portraits, busts, and character types, often of an allegorical nature (*Sadness, Dreamlike, Flora, Grief*).

A perfect command of materials – wood (oak) and marble – quickly emerged as his trademark. Later, around 1920, Karel Schuermans also increasingly exhibited bronze sculptures. Various funerary and war monuments are the lasting witnesses to this (Mortsel, Antwerp, Hamme, Sinaai,...) All of them bear the characteristic “K. Schuermans” signature, and carry the reference to the Brussels bronze foundry Verbeyst.

Two “disappearances” clouded Schuermans’ life: the area surrounding the Appelstraat in Antwerp’s Seaman’s Quarter, in which he had spent his youth, was ruthlessly sacrificed to the project of straightening the River Scheldt, designed to improve its use. The artist had to deal with an even greater loss during WWII. His hometown of Mortsel was struck by a US air raid on April 3rd, 1943. Schuermans’ home and studio, as well as his archive, so essential to understanding his career and biography, were completely destroyed. The sculptor stayed active and exhibited mainly portraits of cultural personalities in his hometown, including that of the composer *Peter Benoît*, and one of the painter *Alois De Laet* (1857- 1944). Schuermans’ empathy can best be sensed in the accurately characterized and sensitive bust of the composer from the Waasland area, *Edgar Tinel* (1854-1912). Destined for the sumptuous grave of this composer, it was first on view in 1931 in the Salon of the Circle of the Antwerp Sculptors. Just before the outbreak of WWII a bronze version was acquired by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp (1940).

Eva

63 x 24 x 32
signed K. Schuermans

Thanks to the unusual but no less expressive pose, this sculpture appears to be an emotive lesson in anatomy. The psychological state of the model, who appears to have been driven to despair, is expressed in the overall pose and the anatomically correct executed parts of the body.



G.H. STRACKÉ

The Stracké family name was borne by several sculptors in various countries, which can lead to confusion. To give a brief chronological overview: Ignatius-Johannes Stracké was born in the year 1790 in Germany and died in Den Bosch as the director of the Academy there. His eldest son, Jean-Théodore (1817-1891) was born in the German town of Dorsten, and died in Cologne after an active life (Brussels, Rotterdam, Den Bosch, Munster, Amsterdam, Trier). He excelled in making distinctive portraits. The second son, Frans (1820-1898) was also born in Dorsten, but died in the Dutch city of Baarn. He was also a productive sculptor of whom a lot of work remains in Dutch museum collections. The first- mentioned had one son, Johannes-Paulus Léo (Rotterdam 1851-The Hague 1923). He was a sculptor too, and fathered two sons: Johannes Theodorus (Rotterdam 1889-Haarlem 1960) who was both a sculptor and a painter, and Leo Wilhelmus (Rotterdam 1851-The Hague 1963) as a draughtsman and a painter who was known as far away as England, and who was fond of travelling.

Frans Stracké fathered a son called Lodovikus-Ignatius (Arnhem 1856-Baarn 1934) who was a graphic artist and a painter: this “Louis” lived and worked in places such as Amsterdam, Antwerp, Paris and Soest. One can therefore speak of a Stracké dynasty, but it is difficult to indicate with precision who the author is of this serene, gently orientalist female bust because of the initials “GH” which legibly precede the Stracké signature. All members of the dynasty exhibited regularly in Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany, and yet any indication regarding this masterpiece and the probable date of its creation is yet to be discovered.

Neapolitan lady

75,5 x 44 x 35,5
signed GT. Stracke.

Here we can observe a self-consciously restrained temperament, hidden behind an unmoving and balanced face, graced with porcelain smoothness. As if caught in a lavish shrine of luxuriant locks and pleats, the model exudes a Mediterranean pride. With just as much mastery as patience the sculptor was able to conjure his marble into gossamer- thin lace work, the pair of intelligent-looking eyes and a mass of wild hair into which the wind has been chasing the desire for profligacy for centuries.



Baudouin TUERLINCKX

(Mechelen 1873-1945)

Only fragments remain of the biography of this Mechelen-based artist, and some of those were also published with a certain degree of inaccuracy. Various lexicons mention that he was the son of the more famous sculptor Joseph Tuerlinckx (1809-1873), but it is easy to question that likelihood, given their respective ages. A more likely candidate for paternity would be the painter Louis Tuerlinckx (1820-1894) – he was the half-brother of the above-mentioned Joseph – as he was a fair bit younger and also lived two decades longer than his brother.

Baudouin’s early years of training took place at the Academy of Mechelen – starting in 1855 – dedicated mostly to drawing and painting with professors Victor Van Dyck (1862) and Jan-Willem Rosier (1858-1931). Immediately after that the focus shifted to sculpture, under the stimulating guidance of Professor Charles Van der Stappen (1843-1910) in Brussels. At the tender age of 26 Tuerlinckx became a teacher himself at the Academy of Mechelen (1899-1935), which was the epicentre of furniture manufacturing at the time. It is no coincidence that wood carving executed to a standard of excellence forms a major part of Tuerlinckx’ oeuvre that also includes bronzes, marble and sandstone sculptures, and for which the sensitive handling of realism is the distinctive starting point. A student and later assistant, Bernard Van Humbeek (1888-1965), learned how to model and execute all kinds of animals under Tuerlinckx’ tutelage.

Baudouin Tuerlinckx’ artworks were shown at numerous exhibitions – also in The Netherlands. His participation in such manifestations in Antwerp (1904, 1906, 1908, 1930, 1934, 1938), Brussels (1903, 1917, 1920, 1922), Ghent (1902, 1909, 1929), Leuven (1909) and Mechelen (1939) was documented and consisted mainly of (easily transported) sculptures that were cut from hard and/or exotic types of wood: he made characteristic heads, busts, folkloric types, labourers, mothers, nudes and elderly figures, often executed at full-length. Tuerlinckx rarely dated his works, which impedes the study of the development of his style. The year 1929 remains a point of reference, because that was when his war monument *Dulce Pro Patria Mori* was unveiled in the churchyard of the city of his birth: it is a monument as original as it is serene, that will not only prevent the fallen from being forgotten, but also preserve the memory of the sculptor himself. In support of this memory there is also the sandstone relief, going by the same title that was signed by the artist and had been applied to the wall of that same graveyard, eight years previously in 1921.

Defensive swan

80 x 53 x 29,5
signed B.T.

The explosive posture of this life-sized defensive swan in precious white marble raises the suspicion this was not the sculptor’s first challenge. Just as daring as it is grandiose, this creation demands respect due to the surprising originality with which this momentary occurrence has been frozen in time thanks to the artist’s considerable dexterity and a chisel. Within the genre of animal sculptures, this brilliant masterpiece can be considered unique. In the medium of painting only an old master like Jan Asselijn (1610-1653) with his *Threatened Swan* (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam) was capable of creating a comparable excitement. The magisterial featherwork of the animal’s wings and breast are of outstanding quality and the colouration of the beak and webbed feet witnesses originality.



Young bather

70,5 x 24,5 x 26

signed and dated B.TUERLINCKX 1912

The water temperature is clearly no surprise to this young female bather. The polished realism with which this svelte body has been rendered is formally emphasized by the rough rock that calmly gives the young woman something to hold onto.



Alfons VAN BEURDEN

(Antwerp 1854-1938)

It was already clear to the twelve-year-old boy Alfons Van Beurden that sculpture was his destination. Even before his training at the Antwerp Academy began (1868) he had been learning woodwork for two years at the Goemans firm, where his father had good connections. Dedication and diligence guaranteed a quick development which had already earned Van Beurden the first prize in sculpture in 1874. There would be others, including awards for drawing. His military service that lasted for three years could fortunately be combined with continued studies in Antwerp. During that period the aspiring artist practiced the art of portraiture, to the satisfaction of his military superiors, including Lieutenant Allewijk, who would later become the Belgian consul in the United States. Once he had cast off his military uniform the world of an independent existence beckoned. Van Beurden fathered a son who was also named Alfons, and later made a name as a painter. It is likely that the 25 year-old sculptor participated in his first exhibition in 1879: he presented three plaster sculptures at the Triannual Salon of Antwerp. Their titles *La toilette (the ablution)*, *Pas d'accord (not agreed)*, *Portret van Mme C.B. (Portrait of Mrs C.B.)* turned out to herald the entire oeuvre Alfons Van Beurden would produce during his career of more than sixty years.

Plaster as a material was soon replaced by terracotta (1891) and marble (1882). It was only in 1885 that he exhibited his first bronze sculptures, with the kind of titles that are typically associated with the artist, such as *Eveillée trop tôt (Awoken too soon)* and *La leçon (The Lesson)*. Another five years later, Van Beurden would also establish himself as a carver of ivory with sculptures like *Fantasy*, *Cupid*, *Bacchante* and many similar themes he would continue to produce until his death. He came to fame because of two projects for which he wasn't commissioned but his slightly older fellow citizen Frans Joris (1851-1914) was: a statue of the elderly Hendrik Conscience (1812-1883) and, a bit later, the sumptuous grave of that same author. Van Beurden's design for a monument in honour of Jan Breydel and Pieter de Coninck in Bruges was never realized. In later years he did receive some major commissions: both inside and on the brand new Antwerp Museum magnificent monumental work of his can still be admired today. The Town Hall also contains striking bronzes bearing his signature.

> continued >

Shy girl (Standing nude)

68 x 20 x 14,5
signed ALPH. VAN BEURDEN

Does this little girl suspect the water will be cold, or that there are unknown fish in it? The sculptor who was able to so aptly connect psychology and anatomy was one of the best Belgian interpreters ever of the eternal innocence of youth. Without the highest degree of technical ability such a level of naturalism remains an unattainable dream. But it is precisely in this domain that Alfons Van Beurden justifiably felt like a fish in clear water...



But the absolute central theme of his art is situated in the domain of the so-called bourgeois art of the salon. In the perfect representation of naked youths, women and especially small children, Alfons Van Beurden excelled like no other. His handling of material, his technical abilities and his anatomical knowledge generate amazement and respect to this day, even if those qualities sometimes lead to a slight excess of sentimentality in the design of his ever supple and gracious figures. Van Beurden clearly preferred charm to drama, and loved the mischief and the unexpected reactions of his models that he was able to convey in terracotta, marble or bronze, always with a high degree of verisimilitude. Never one to avoid the anecdotal, he nevertheless avoided crossing the barrier into caricature. Van Beurden's qualities were not only appreciated in his home country of Belgium: he was recognized with countless foreign awards, as far afield as Australia. Collectors from Liverpool and London followed him after the artist had celebrated exhibitions in these cities.

In his own country the sculptor was also very much appreciated as a portraitist. Preferring to work in marble, he realized countless sober, realistic busts. When in 1884 Van Beurden became a member of the Antwerp art circle referred to as Als Ick Kan (If I Can) (but officially known as Union Artistique des Jeunes) he portrayed all of its members. The president Jan-Willem Rosier (1858-1931) made a painting of the artist himself at work in his studio. He also posed for the younger painter Julien Creytens (1897-1972).

There were no major shifts in style in his work. Thematically speaking there were also no significant changes. His painstaking realism didn't lead to stylization and his phenomenal craftsmanship ensured exceptional detailing. Van Beurden's artistic output is impressive, but it has yet to be catalogued comprehensively. From the long list of exhibitions in which he participated and the even longer list of auctions – even today – in which works he made were offered for sale, it can be deduced that a productive life in the extreme typified and graced this affable artist's life.

Diana

61,5 x 32,5 x 21
signed ALPH. VAN BEURDEN

Whether the artist Alfons Van Beurden was moved by an extensive knowledge of mythology to identify this fine bust of a woman with the goddess *Diana* is unclear, and quite possibly irrelevant: her proud femininity suffices! The fact however that her marble counterpart is typified as David raises the suspicion that they are connected by fatality: as the goddess of hunting, she killed with a spear; David killed with catapulted stones and twice escaped spears aimed at him. Maybe in the velvety marble we can interpret a reference to the pure white woollen fur, with which the god Pan had been able to seduce this goddess of the moon?



David

60,5 x 28,5 x 21
signed ALPH. VAN BEURDEN

The head of this strong-willed young man who, as *David*, transpires to be the pendant of *Diana*, therefore represents a fusion of sorts, of biblical allusion and mythology. The calculating look he casts sideways seems to be estimating the strengths of his historical opponent Goliath. Also, without that dimension of subject matter, both busts can be enjoyed both together and apart, as aesthetically characteristic creations by Van Beurden: he was one of the few artists who understood how to suggest that which stirs his models with a visceral, visual idiom that very closely approximates life itself.



Standing nest robber

68 x 20 x 15,5
signed ALF. VAN BEURDEN

The quasi-identical bronze version of this typical Van Beurden-composition, which has been kept in Antwerp's Museum of Fine Arts for an indeterminate period of time, is about twice as large. The differences that nevertheless do exist do have a certain significance: here there is a square pedestal, there a round one; here is a tree trunk behind the left calf, there a long-leafed plant; here we have a loose-hanging belt, there... nothing, just the warmth of nudity. Small details, such as locks of hair, toenails and fingernails, are shown with greater detail in the larger edition. The chance is very real for this reduced version of the *Nest robber* that the sculptor called upon the aid of a practitioner.



Awake too soon

77 x 24,5 x 24,5

signed ALF. VAN BEURDEN

Of the two possible titles that are eligible for this ultra-white scene, *Awake too soon* and *To the bath*, the first appears to be the best contender. The baby's disturbed facial expression, the motherly handling of the child and certainly the sleeping blanket, that was probably inadvertently taken up with the child, do point in that direction. Both names recur repeatedly in old catalogues, without there being any illustrations to offer clarification. Much more important than this typological matter is of course the sculptor's arresting mastery: there is the astute psychological characterization, the eloquent quality with which *all* of the textures have been rendered, and, most of all, the subtlety with which he succeeds in expressively applying his astonishing anatomical understanding to the depiction of this momentary occurrence.



Domien VAN DEN BOSSCHE

(Ghent 1854-1906)

Relative to the quantity of works by this artist that are in circulation in the art market, there is relatively little information available about the man himself. The likenesses of smiling young women wearing a straw hat or a lace bonnet executed in terracotta are legion, both in museums and in the art trade but this gifted artist from Ghent, an accomplished craftsman, realized a whole lot more and quite differently than one would initially believe.

It arouses astonishment that art historians were only able to answer the man who had a determinant impact on official buildings, bridges and cemeteries of his hometown with oblivion. In the catalogue of the exhibition “Gent. Duizend jaar kunst en cultuur” (1975) (Ghent. One thousand years of art and culture), which is nonetheless extensive, his name is not even mentioned.

Domien Van Den Bossche nevertheless realized outstanding classical sculptures, both for interior and exterior use for the main buildings of the University of Ghent: the fronton of the façade, allegorical figures for niches, as well as all manner of decorative ornaments of his own invention. The large bronze groups that adorn the abattoir of Lille are of his hand. Funerary sculptures by Van Den Bossche in East Flanders are undoubtedly prime examples of his better work. The fact that this sculptor participated regularly in art exhibitions in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent with mainly marble entries, including portraits that were redolent of character and often prestigious, only serves to underscore the disappointment at the lack of any substantial research devoted to this artist.

For this reason alone, it is difficult to imagine a better means to familiarize oneself with the talent and inspiration of this artist in the shadows, than the finely executed masterpiece presented here. The aesthete Van Den Bossche seems to have given himself the aim of entrusting marble to life itself.

Spring

66 x 32,5 x 24,5
signed and dated DOM.VAN DEN BOSSCHE 1892

In the two sculptures by this Ghent-based artist, a self-evident talent led to a virtuosic design that, in terms of style and subject matter, is perfectly at home in the Fin de siècle period. The laughing girl with beautiful hair, and the young sparrow on her right-hand shoulder could be the sculpture Van Den Bossche exhibited as *Le Printemps (Spring)* in 1892 in Ghent, but as yet this is not certain. It is delightful to observe the care the sculptor devoted to the representation of the fine ribbon, tied in a bow that falls down upon the left shoulder.



Salomé

57,5 x 27 x 22

This *Salomé* expresses precisely that which the tradition has attributed to her: she appears as beautiful and impulsive, sensual yet heartless, and cunning and incalculable. The fiery gaze and the unruly hair underscore the temperamental character that would finally cost John the Baptist his life. Particular attention is paid to the gossamer-like execution of all manner of details: the original necklace with half moons, strung onto a string with a button at the back; a fine hairnet can be discerned and even a small hole in each earlobe. The absence of jewellery and her expression, which does not seem to be one of seduction, could be showing a Salomé who, following her lascivious intrigues, has had a change of heart.



Augustin VAN DEN KERCKHOVE
(Antwerp 1825-Brussels 1895)

Van den Kerckhove was an energetic artist who, after his training at the Academy of Antwerp, made his name mainly in Brussels (and Paris). He came from an artistic family that counted no fewer than nine sculptors. Starting in 1859 he exhibited in Brussels, but he also participated regularly in Salons abroad (including London) with sculptures made in bronze, plaster and marble. Besides allegorical (*Medicine*) and mythological sculptures (*Leda and the Swan*), the artist known as “Saïbas” – no one can quite place that pseudonym’s origin – mostly made statues and characteristic portraits in marble (*Queen Louise-Marie*, *Alphonse de Chimay*, *Etienne de Gerlache*). Augustin Van den Kerckhove was particularly appreciated as a refined decorator of outstanding interiors and of theatre halls (including Antwerp’s Royal Concert Hall). Already early on, this prolific artist was able to lend a high degree of realism to gracious busts of smiling girls, often with flowers and jewels in their hair and executed in bronze or marble, and to busts of successful businessmen. It is no surprise that Saïbas received many commissions in the worldly circles of the time.

Bust of a woman looking to the right

58,5 x 36,5 x 28,5
signed and dated Aug. VAN DEN KERCKHOVE 1862

This sculpture is surprisingly kindred in spirit and form to the sculpture *Mascarade* that his peer Jean-Joseph Jaquet made several years earlier (see p. 51). Saïbas, as this sculptor called himself, just like his colleague, did not let a single detail escape the phenomenal dexterity with which he was able to create the appearance of the most diverse textures upon the marble, without losing sight of its psychological aspect in the process. The amiable smile and the sensual attitude of this woman, who appears to have been destined for a life of enjoyment, generously demonstrate the mastery upon which the successful career of this sculptor was based.



Gustaaf VAN DEN MEERSCHE

(Ghent 1891-1970)

With teachers such as Jean Delvin (1853-1922) and Jules Van Biesbroeck (1848-1920) at the Ghent Academy and with Geo Verbanck (1881-1961) as his uncle, no better foundation was imaginable for the sculptor's career of this talented son of an ornamental metalworker. Excellent skills and a thorough knowledge of materials already led to him being awarded a first prize in 1910 and this was repeated during the three following years, for industrial arts of the Province. Among other things, the young Gustaaf successfully designed, a postbox, a drinking fountain, and a (first!) funerary monument.

Still during his studies at the Academy he was able to perfect his skills with his uncle. Geo Verbanck let him be one of the modelers on the grand monument *Gebroeders Van Eyck (The Van Eyck Brothers)* that needed to be finished in 1913. In that same year, Gustaaf participated in the Godecharle-prize and was awarded second place! Around 1915 the young man found the artistic path that would assure him a place within Belgian sculpture. In wood, stone, marble and ivory he realized compelling and often symbolically charged heads and figures such as *De Blinde (The Blind Man)* and *Vlaamse Boer (Flemish Farmer)*. The human form was moreover to remain the quintessence of his entire oeuvre. In 1916 he made a humorous *Satyr*, and in 1917 and 1918 he executed statues of shepherds and builders in several variations.

Later Gustaaf produced a stream of sculptures that chronologically permits the following selection: *De Jongeling (The Youth)* (1920), *Ouderdom (Old Age)* (1921), *Bader en Baadster (Male and female bather)* (1921), *Lachende Vrouw (Laughing woman)* (1922), *Kracht (Strength)* (1923), *Laatste Dagen (Final Days)* (1924), *Overvloed (Abundance)*, *Ontwaking (Awakening)* (1924), *Groet aan de Dageraad (Greeting of the Dawn)* (1925) and so forth.

From 1922, until well after the Second World War, Van Den Meersche exhibited such sculptures in Belgium and abroad: in Ghent (among others in 1922, 1925, 1929, 1930, 1933), in Antwerp (among others 1938, 1947,1951), in Brussels (among others 1939, 1948). In 1941 two bronze sculptures by him were exhibited (*Aufbau* (Construction) en *Badende (Bather)*). But also in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Italy the public was able to acquaint itself with his work. Throughout his active years a stylistic development gradually occurred in the direction of what might rationally be described as modernism. The naturalist design of his earliest works made way for an increasing stylization. Themes such as *Spring*, *Mother and Child*, *Prayer* and various *Monks* illustrate Van Den Meersche's move towards a sober attitude and introspection. Details make way for a stricter sense of line and a reduction of form into closed volumes. Gustaaf Van Den Meersche applied himself less to the art of portraiture than many of his contemporaries. Only some busts, medals and reliefs (including, among others *Doctor Frans Daels*, *Jan Palfijn*, *Prince Baldwin*, *Queen Juliana*, *Leopold II*) and also funerary monuments with portrait medallions (including some in Eeklo, Sint Amandsberg, Gent) bear his signature. Of his official monumental work the Ghent memorial to *Oswald de Kerckhove de Denterghem* is without doubt the best known. Among the war monuments the work he made for the city of Veurne certainly deserves a mention. Gustaaf Van Den Meersche appears to have travelled little. Following his marriage and winning the Paul De Vigne-prize the artist settled in Aalst where he would become a teacher (1925) and later the director (1932-1956) of the City's Academy. Shortly after his death in Aalst a major retrospective was held in his honour (1971).

Standing nude

55,5 x 24 x 25,5 (sculpture) 15 x 24,5 x 29 (plinth)
signed and dated GVD MEERSCHE 1919

The difference in colour between the glistening white sculpture and the veined yellow of the original pedestal is remarkable. The elder sculptor Philippe Wolfers (1858-1923) also appreciated such contrasts. In style and atmosphere this extremely refined sculpture, which brings to the fore all of the qualities and difficulties of Carrara marble, also appears to show an affinity with the art of that master.



Georges VAN DER STRAETEN

(Ghent 1856-Paris 1928)

Charmeuse, Fleurette, Coquette, La Pierrette, En Soirée, Gaité, Merveilleuse, Malicieuse, Les Cérises, Miss Lili, Sortie de Bal, Chaperon Rouge, (Charmeuse, Fleurette, Coquette, La Pierrette, In the Evening, Joy, Marvelous one, Malicious one, The Cherries, Miss Lili, Outing to the Ball, Little Red Riding Hood)... it could seem as if marble and ivory had been invented to graciously bear such titles.

Very few artists succeeded in developing a visual style of their own to give form to such notions as lovability, alertness, titillation and zest for life in countless elegant and ever-refreshing ways. For a sculptor that challenge seems to be even greater than for a painter or a writer. The sculptor has only a chisel and sand paper at his disposal... and a material, stone, which needs to be conquered.

Georges Van Der Straeten was that conqueror; he made his name as no other did, with finely elaborated and finished female busts that are especially admired today as gracious documents of the period.

Van Der Straeten was a lawyer by training and never attended classes at the Academy. He soon accepted his artistic leaning and in 1882 he quit the lawyer's practice for which he had been destined.

In Paris he began a new life in the company of some compatriots. The most famous of these was undoubtedly the Antwerp painter Jan Van Beers (1852-1927), who had succumbed to the attraction of the City of Lights four years previously, and had even worked there in the studio of the Belgian society painter Alfred Stevens (1823-1906), who had been working there successfully himself for twenty years.

The dilettante Van Der Straeten was, as it were, their modelling counterpart, and the interpreter *par excellence* of the frivolous smile and the light-footedness that were part of the life style in the metropolises of the day.

Van Der Straeten, about whose life very little is known, appears, as a 'connoisseur of women', to have nonetheless excelled in being a sensitive craftsman, able to typify what his models exuded in a precise and psychologically incisive manner.

He was able to enliven the rare harmony between these two talents by humorously and stylishly adding all kinds of fashionable details to the clothing and headdresses worn by his models.

Georges Van Der Straeten, like his above-mentioned peers, perfectly sensed the zeitgeist; he was able to cleverly respond to it from a commercial point of view. He allowed many of his treasured creations to be executed in various sizes, from life-size to very small, but also in a variety of materials. In whichever form, his sculptures sparkle with the charmed life that became the trademark of this nonetheless subtle artist.

Bust of a girl with a pointed hat

54 x 23,5 x 21

signed Vanderstraeten

inscribed Bruxelles

This Jules Chéret (1836-1932) of the marble arts enjoyed a longstanding international success. With sculptures like this 'Coquette', that could be ordered in various sizes (=reductions) and materials (porcelain, bronze, ivory), this Parisian artist from Ghent was among one of the most representative proponents of Art Nouveau. In that sense his oeuvre now belongs to the collective cultural heritage, whereas it could only please an elite audience when it was first created.



Charles VAN DE WAELE

(Ghent ?-19th-20th c.)

Very few biographical details remain regarding this Belgian sculptor, who was nevertheless productive. He appears to have received a sound training (Ghent’s Academy?). This can be deduced from the nature of the oeuvre itself. It shows two very clear attributes: an absolute preference for portraits and for execution in marble. At his home and studio at nr. 2, Lindelei in Ghent, the address that he maintained for many years, he made the sculptures that he exhibited in Antwerp (1903, 1904, 1906, 1911), Brussels (1903), and Ghent (1906, 1909). In all likelihood his son Raymond (1894) grew up there: he would later achieve a degree of notoriety as a romantic painter of landscapes and seascapes.

Bust of a smiling girl

56 x 35,5 x 25
signed Ch. Van de Waele

It is a delight to see how this lesser-known sculptor succeeded in lending such a warm aura to Carrara marble, which is so cold in its essence. In the smile he conjured we can see the smile of life itself. The natural charms of his model did not need accentuating with costly jewels. The girl could have picked the flowers in her neckline herself, or received them as a gift.



Bernard VAN HUMBEECK
(Mechelen 1888-Oudenburg, Ostend 1965)

For the most part this figurative sculptor’s training and career evolved in his hometown. Even before he settled in West-Flanders (Oudenburg) when he was older, and became a teacher at the academy of Ostend, he had built up a firm reputation as a skilful craftsman capable of expertly depicting both animal and human subjects. Van Humbeeck executed portraits, nudes, fishermen, and also religious work, just like his mentor Baudouin Tuerlinckx (1873-1945), in diverse materials. For years he was a wood carver and a respected force in the famous ateliers of Mechelen where the production of historicising furniture attained high levels of excellence. The nature of that work implied anonymity. For similar reasons it is also not possible to ascertain to what extent Van Humbeeck was involved with the sculptural decoration of the Centenary Celebration Palaces in Brussels. The appearance of those signatures he did apply to his free work affirms the suspicion that this artist had a quiet and humble awareness of his own artistic identity.

Turkey

36 x 24 x 27,5
signed B. Vanhumbeeck

Together with the Antwerp-based animal-sculptor Georges Collard (1881-1961), who only made bronze sculptures of animals, and Philippe Wolfers (1858-1929), Van Humbeeck is one of the very rare sculptors to choose as a subject a turkey (meleagris gallopavo) in all its natural dignity. Their remote predecessor the Flemish Giambologna (1529-1608) realized a bronze turkey which for the universal history of sculpture attained an iconic significance. Rendered life-size in marble, its appearance is somewhat estranging, and the artist has attempted to make the massive volume lighter by freeing up the feet and the caruncle on the upper beak. What is remarkable is the effect of the individually rendered feathers that seem to cover the entire body like scales.



Gustaaf VAN VAERENBERGH
(Brussels 1873-1927)

Van Vaerenbergh was a productive artist whose gracious oeuvre is entirely infused with the style and spirit of the fin-de-siècle, when Art Nouveau was the all-encompassing movement.

The predilection for precious materials – marble, alabaster, silver, ivory – and their combination, in addition to his refined modelling technique, constitute the charm of Van Vaerenbergh’s sculptures, which were for the most part greeted with success in France. The artist often entrusted the technically perfect execution to the Brussels-based firm Carli, which specialized in combining different kinds of marble, and the execution of polychrome effects, the highly appreciated chryselephantine sculpture, executed in the spirit of the period leading up to the turn of the century (1900...). An attention to precious detail typifies Van Vaerenbergh’s art, in which the life-affirming gazes of young women are a characteristic element.

Bust of a laurelled girl

57,5 x 36 x 23
signed G.V.Vaerenberghe (sic)

The signatures on these two practically identical busts are very different. The specimen with a gilded bronze mounting reveals the original writing; on the bust made from various stone varieties, the name of the sculptor was most likely applied by a practitioner. Gustaaf Van Vaerenbergh regularly produced variations of his creations and had them produced in specialized workshops. He both liked polychromous varieties of stone (types of marble, alabaster, onyx), and combinations with silver, bronze and even glass, enabling him to offer the same design for purchase multiple times, presumably also at variable prices.

Bust of a laurelled girl (with gilded bronze)

54,5 x 36 x 22,5
signed G.V.Vaerenbergh



Thomas VINÇOTTE
(Borgerhout 1850-Schaarbeek 1925)

Thomas Vinçotte was a multifaceted sculptor who worked in all possible genres and sizes. Leading artists of the day such as Willem Geefs and Eugène Simonis laid the foundations for the craftsmanship that made Vinçotte’s career so successful. After the Academy in Brussels the artist came into contact with many fellow artists in Paris and later in Florence. He gained significant notoriety with the marble sculpture *Giotto* which both from a psychological and an anatomical point of view is close to perfection. (This life-sized sculpture is included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent). After countless distinctions and important commissions Thomas Vinçotte was appointed as official sculptor to the Belgian King Leopold II. Countless busts, mainly in marble and even in ivory, emphasized the level of his talents, which also supported him very well as he executed larger projects such as façades and public monuments. Vinçotte was admired and praised for his rendition of horses. Beautiful life-size examples of this crown the façades of museums in Antwerp and Brussels where, near the former Abbey of La Cambre, his *Horse tamer* continues to provoke admiration.

Of the marble statue *The Prisoner* there is a quasi-identical copy in existence that was produced in silver-plated copper by the famous Compagnie des Bronzes in Brussels. That sculpture was purchased by the Royal Museum of Antwerp in 1941.

Andromeda (The Prisoner)

72 x 47,5 x 27,5
signed Thomas Vinçotte

It is hard to imagine greater mastery. Nothing prevents the viewer from seeing in this chained nude the king’s daughter Andromeda, desperately awaiting the arrival of a sea monster. A constellation would be named after her. The marble, the sculpture and the representation meet in complete harmony; the extraordinary perfection of this artwork makes admiration inevitable.



Philippe WOLFERS

(Brussels 1858-1929)

Sometimes referred to as the Belgian René Lalique (1860-1945), Philippe Wolfers is considered as one of the main proponents of the Art Nouveau style. He was the son of the goldsmith Louis Wolfers (1820-1892), originally from Germany who had established himself in Brussels. As a youth, Philippe worked in his father’s reputed workshop soon followed by his training at the Academy of Brussels (1873-1877). Fellow students who were later to make a name for themselves include Paul Hankar (1859-1901), Paul Du Bois (1859-1938), James Ensor (1860-1949) and Isidoor De Rudder (1855-1943). Philippe remained active in the family business until 1890, and he was its director for a short time. His artistic development shifted into a higher gear when, at the World Fair in Vienna of 1873, he encountered the arts of the Far East, and became particularly fascinated by its imaginative floral decorations. His later discovery of the Japanese lacquer arts would also have a major impact on his work.

Wolfers began showing his artistic output at exhibitions quite late. At the famous world fair of 1894 in Antwerp Wolfers was one of the first artists to exhibit Art Nouveau objects of Congolese ivory. Three years later, at the World Fair in Brussels, his refined jewels, decorative items and small sculptures were also greeted with success. He showed a first bronze sculpture *Streling (Caress)* of a swan that is adorned with the un-altered tusk of an elephant. In 1898 the artist realized another large bronze sculpture, Swansong, purchased by the Museum of Richmond (Virginia, USA).

Wolfers acquired increasing visibility as a bona fide sculptor and he concentrated less on the design and production of what had become his world famous jewelry, executed in the most costly and precious materials and the finest gemstones. More than 135 unique items have been catalogued, in which all manner of plant, insect and floral motifs are intertwined with female nudes. The more monumental sculptural work that Wolfers would realize from c.1904 until his death also featured the female body, which remained a primordial source of inspiration. But the animal kingdom would also play a considerable role in his oeuvre. Besides the aforementioned swans, he also sculpted snakes and turkeys.

In the talented and tasteful creator that this artist was in many domains – he designed anything from electric lighting to full interiors – the inventive goldsmith never seems to have been suppressed by the somewhat headstrong sculptor, and vice versa. To that enduring duality we owe so many artful marvels that have for decades been stored in the collective subconscious as representative of the ‘Wolfers’ name. That he also played a prominent role in the Brussels art scene can be taken as a self-evident fact.

Bacchantes

50,5 x 19 x 28

Ingredients of an unfettered zest for life are certainly present in this work – music, nudity, and a wine fest – and they convey the triumph of drunkenness and even fertility. Wolfers did not bestow upon the two women the attributes, such as untied hair, a staff with vines, dresses, a drinking cup, but a lyre-like string instrument and masses of grapes are dealt with wastefully in the scene. In fact, all of this is secondary, and the scintillating life force that has been captured in this Carrara whiteness stands as a sovereign sample of the unconventional imaginative world to which especially the smaller Wolfers sculptures thank their idiosyncratic identities. Of this representation,we know of the existence of three specimens in bronze and a second one in marble, dated 1912. See Dr. Werner Adriaenssens *La Dynastie Wolfers*, Pandora 2006, p. 398, cat. n° 242 (illustrated). From the personal collection of the sculptor.



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*Figures in **bold** = illustration*

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COLOPHON

Publisher: Impact nv Antwerp for ARTIMO nv/sa Brussels
Printed in the European Community
Text: Paul Verbraeken
Translation: Kate Mayne
Photography: Reporters Agency, Thomas Leonard, Brussels
Lay-out: Louis Louis, Antwerp
Editing: André Bollen

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ISBN 97890-7865-6036
W.D. 2017/60689/1

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Endpapers:
1/2 *Il marmo ieri e oggi*, Carrara, 1996
3/4 Tracings by the author of various signatures

LIVING MARBLE has been published in a limited edition of 400 copies
all numbered, 1/400

This is the numbered copy

