

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



SOPHUS VERMEHREN

1866 Copenhagen - Frederiksberg 1950

Young Visitors at the Royal Cast Collection in the National Gallery, Copenhagen

Oil on canvas; signed and dated in the lower right margin: *S. Vermehren 1906-1909*.
65.0 x 72.0 cm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Denmark

LITERATURE: *Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon*, IX, p. 36, no. 2000

The Danish artist Sophus Vermehren was the son of the Golden Age painter Frederik Vermehren (1823-1910). Sophus's preferred subjects ranged from portraits and landscapes to scenes from family life. He also created altarpieces for churches in Herborg and Galten in Denmark. He participated in numerous exhibitions, where he often received awards for his paintings. Later, he worked as a drawing teacher at the Copenhagen Technical School.

Plaster casts of antique sculptures were a constant source of inspiration for artists through the Renaissance, Baroque and Neo-Classical periods into the early twentieth century. The reproductions were valued as highly as the originals. Most academies owned replicas of the most important antique pieces. In 1754, King Frederik V bequeathed the castle Charlottenborg in Copenhagen to the Royal Academy of Arts. The important collection of plaster casts was located in one of the main rooms of the castle. They were particularly formative for the painters of the Danish Golden Age. Drawing after casts was an essential requirement of artistic training. Young academy students were obliged to spend one or two years honing their skills in this method of working before they could take up drawing from life. From around 1820 to 1840, a number of young painters did views of the castle's Antique hall in its successive states. [Fig. 1 and 2]

Most of the casts had been moved several times. The Royal Collection of Plaster Casts is one of the three main collections belonging to the National Gallery of Denmark (Statens Museum for Kunst) in Copenhagen. A large proportion of the casts once belonged to the sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844) who returned to Denmark from Rome in 1838, bringing his extensive art collection with him. The Royal Cast Collection is now housed in the historic West Indian Warehouse in Copenhagen [Fig. 3], a few plaster casts are still in the Royal Academy at Charlottenborg.

Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon, a biographical dictionary of artists and architects, describes the present painting as follows: *Vermehren's painting is a typical and, in many ways, sympathetic depiction of the newly furnished National Gallery of Denmark, where a recently graduated student shows the collection of antiquities to a young girl (...). The lighting effects are skilfully done, the drawing of the figures confident and the anecdotal adequately discreet.*¹

The young visitors are depicted under a window that is framed by two statues. On the left we see the *Faun of Praxiteles* (after the marble at the Musei Capitolini, Rome), and – seen from behind – the *Apollo Sauroctonus* (after the marble in the Louvre, Paris). The painting of the *Antique Hall of Charlottenborg*, by the

¹ Philip Weilbach (1834 - 1900) was a Danish art historian and encyclopedist. He is remembered above all for his work on the first and second series of Denmark's biographical dictionary of artists and architects known as *Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon*.

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anonym artist [Fig. 2] depicts the same *Faun* in his former ambience at the Academy and this picture shows also a gard in a uniform that is nearly identical to the one of the museum gard in our painting, who is waiting or observing the young visitors in the National Gallery.



Fig. 1: H. D. C. Martens, *Artists Sketching in the Plaster Cast Collection at Charlottenborg Slot, Copenhagen, 1821*, oil on canvas, 50 x 66.5 cm.

Private collection



Fig. 2: Unknown Artist, *The Antique Hall at Charlottenborg, c.1835*, oil on canvas, 39 x 32,5 cm.

Private collection

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Fig. 3: Anonymous photographer, *View of the Royal Cast Collection at Westindian Warehouse, Copenhagen.*
Two of more than 2000 casts are visible in that window.