

LE CLAIRE KUNST SEIT 1982

CHRISTEN KØBKE
1810 - Copenhagen - 1848

Casts from the Royal Cast Collection at Charlottenborg Castle, Copenhagen

Pencil on paper.
Signed and dated lower right: *C. Købke den 28. Sept. 1831.*
300 x 200 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Copenhagen

Plaster casts of antique sculptures provided a source of artistic inspiration from the Renaissance into the early 20th century. The reproductions were as highly esteemed as the originals. The Copenhagen Royal Academy's plaster cast collection played a formative role in the Danish Golden Age. Before the young academy students were allowed to draw from life they were required to spend time learning to draw from plaster casts after antique sculptures. The collection was located in one of the main halls of Charlottenborg Castle, a well-lit space lined with a row of lateral windows [fig. 1]. In the period 1820-40, a number of young artists executed views of the castle's Antique Hall and compositions based on single sculptural arrangements [fig. 2].¹

The present drawing was executed in 1831 three years after rearrangement of the collection of casts.² The play of light on the surfaces of the figures has particularly attracted Købke's interest – an interest he shared with many fellow artists such as Runge, Carstens, Roerbye, Bendz and Baade. Jan Zahle has kindly identified the casts depicted in Købke's drawing. They are as follows (from left to right): *Kneeling Venus*,³ *Melpomene*, *Tragedia*,⁴ *Ceres Mattei*,⁵ *Nemesis*⁶ and in the foreground the *Discobolos* [athlete preparing for his throw].⁷

We would like to thank Jan Zahle and Eva Helsted for their help in cataloguing the present drawing. The drawing will be published in a forthcoming article by Jan Zahle.

¹ Jan Zahle, *Antiksalen – Figursalen – Museet*, in: *Spejlinger i gips*, exhib. cat., Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi, Copenhagen 2004, pp.78-295.

² Completion of the rearrangement of the collection was celebrated on 16 November 1828. The festivities are recorded in Eckersberg's diary: *We had a pleasant evening, the young friends had been invited to see the new Figure Hall, and see the statues by torchlight – the evening was then spent looking at drawings and so on, and with music, mostly singing and a little dancing*. In exhib. cat., *Danish Painting – The Golden Age*, London, National Gallery, 1984, p.190.

³ Now held at the Louvre, inv. no. Ma53.

⁴ Vatican Museums, inv. no. 262.

⁵ Vatican Museums, inv. no. 2826; further casts are held at The Royal Cast Collection, Copenhagen, inv. nos. KAS406 and 1607.

⁶ Vatican Museums, inv. no. 2779, a further cast is held at The Royal Cast Collection, Copenhagen, inv. no. KAS262.

⁷ Probably after Naukydes' *Discobolos*, Vatican Museums, inv. no. 2349.

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Fig. 1: Hans Ditliv Christian Martens,
Artists sketching in the Plaster Cast Collection at Charlottenborg Castle,
oil on canvas, 1821, 50,0 x 66,5 cm.
Private collection, New York



Fig. 2: Christen Købke,
Plaster Casts in the Antique Hall, Charlottenborg,
oil on canvas, 1830, 41,5 x 36 cm.
Den Hirschsprungske Samling, Copenhagen