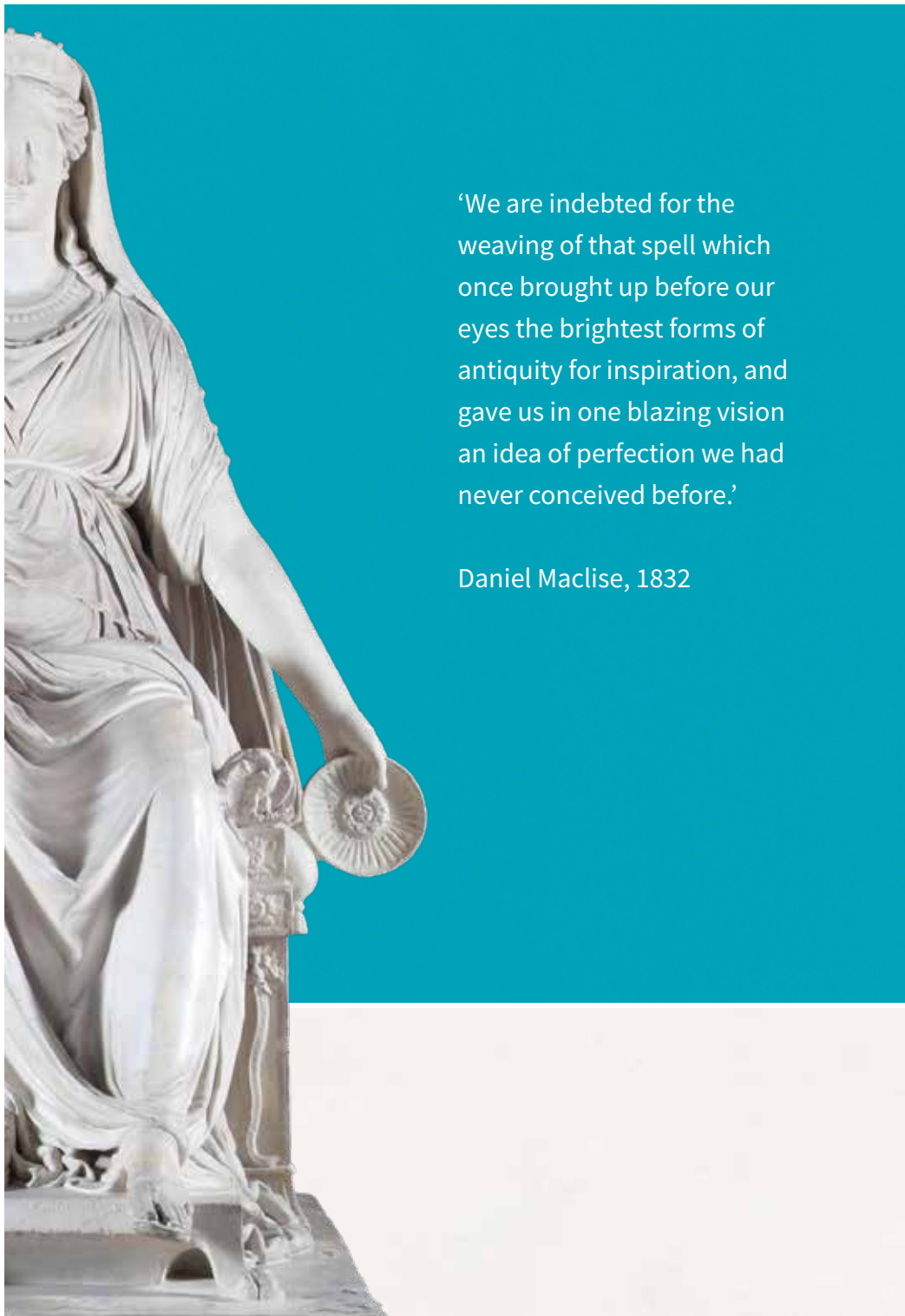


RECASTING

C A N O V A



‘We are indebted for the weaving of that spell which once brought up before our eyes the brightest forms of antiquity for inspiration, and gave us in one blazing vision an idea of perfection we had never conceived before.’

Daniel Maclise, 1832

RECASTING CANOVA

Before the advent of photography and digital reproduction, cast-making was a significant mode of sharing knowledge of three-dimensional art objects. In the last century, however, many plaster cast collections across the world which had been assembled with great enthusiasm were regrettably destroyed or dispersed. While much diminished in number, it is a privilege to present our remaining Canova Casts anew to mark their bicentenary in Ireland.

These artworks come with an important pedigree and connect Cork to a rich European tradition. As you will discover in this introductory guide, their unique history offers a fascinating insight into cultural exchange in a time of conflict and their generative role within the arts since 1818. Recasting Canova invites you to encounter these inspiring objects as they enter their third century.

Crawford Art Gallery is grateful to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for their significant funding and support, and to Pat McDonnell Paints and the Friends of the Crawford Art Gallery for their generous programme sponsorship and support.

Mary McCarthy
Director

Dr Michael Waldron
Assistant Curator of Collections & Special Projects





INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Reproducing some of the greatest works of Ancient Greek and Roman sculpture in the Vatican Museums and other institutions, the Canova Casts are a curious outcome of high stakes international politics in the Napoleonic era.

The **Canova Casts** were commissioned by Pope Pius VII (1742-1823) as a gift to the Prince Regent, later King George IV, in thanks for Britain's role in deposing Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo (1815). There is, however, a deeper context to this gift which can be traced back to hostilities between France and the Italian states at the end of the eighteenth century.

The **Treaty of Tolentino** was signed between the Papal States and France on 19 February 1797. One of the treaty's terms allowed for the French to confiscate artworks from the Papal States, including the famed ancient sculptures, *Apollo Belvedere* and *Laocoön and His Sons*.

Above: George Cruikshank, *Seizing the Italian Relics* (1814).
 © Musée de l'Armée / RMN-Grand Palais, Paris



Writer and archaeologist **Quatremère de Quincy** (1755-1849), who was a friend of sculptor Antonio Canova, petitioned against the removal of these works from Italy. As can be seen in the frieze of a Sèvres vase from 1813, however, these sculptures arrived in Paris to great fanfare and were subsequently installed in the Musée Napoléon (Musée du Louvre).

Pope Pius VII, whose papacy (1800-23) was largely defined by his dealings with Napoleon (1769-1821), signed two further agreements: Concordat of 1801 and Concordat of Fontainebleau (1813). The pope even attended Napoleon's coronation as emperor in 1804 but, five years later, was incarcerated by the French – a situation which lasted until 1814. After the fall of Napoleon, Pius VII tasked Canova with negotiating the repatriation of these works to Italy.

Above, left: David Wilkie, *Napoleon and Pope Pius VII at Fontainebleau in 1813* (1836). Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

Above, right: Antoine Béranger, *L'entrée à Paris des oeuvres destinées au Musée Napoléon* (1813). © Sèvres - Cité de la céramique / RMN-Grand Palais, Paris



Left: Sir Thomas Lawrence,
Pope Pius VII, detail (1819).
Royal Collections Trust
© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019

Right: James Barry, *The Prince of Wales
in the Guise of St George*, detail (c.1789)



FROM POPE TO PRINCE TO PORT OF CORK

Pope Pius VII's return to Rome in May 1814 was met with great celebration. It was followed by the return of antiquities from Paris under the supervision of Antonio Canova (1757-1822). Indeed, on 5 October 1815, the sculptor wrote that his 'mission has come to a successful conclusion,' adding that 'I am bound to leave many works of art there, based upon my own choice.' It is at this time that the pope commissioned Canova to oversee the creation of over 200 casts of sculptural works as a gift to the British. Molds were taken directly from works in marble which then allowed for the creation of reproductions in plaster.

Collecting high quality plaster casts was increasingly popular in this period. Diego Velázquez (1599-1600), Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779), Johann Wolfgang van Goethe (1749-1832), and Sir John Soane (1753-1837) all assembled great cast collections. Still being made by the likes of the Gipsformerei in Berlin today, casts became important modes of circulating knowledge of sculptural works at this time and supported the education of artists and the public alike.

Once completed, the Canova Casts were sent from Rome to London where, given their high number, they languished at the Custom House. Temporarily relocated to a garden pavilion at Carlton House – the Prince Regent's London residence – they were soon offered to the Royal Academy which, in turn, declined the gift as it lacked the necessary space. A porter, however, overheard that they 'could be had for the asking' and informed William Hare (1751-1837), Viscount Ennismore and Listowel, who was then president of the Cork Society for Promoting the Fine Arts.

Hare successfully asked the Prince Regent for the casts to be bestowed on Cork, then an important maritime city of the empire. This was, as the *Belfast Newsletter* reported, 'to enable the rising artists of the sister kingdom to establish an adequate school of study.' The casts were shipped from Deptford, near Greenwich, on 24 October 1818 and arrived in Ireland the following month.

'For here was the most palatable Irish holy alliance of Pope and Prince, of Church and State – what could withstand it?'

William Willes, 1845

‘It was situated in a principal street, Patrick Street, and the stage was screened off by a well-painted scene of the interior of a Greek Temple. The Pit was boarded over, the Gallery was partitioned off. The boxes remained nearly as they were, and the Statues were arranged around the Parterre with much taste and moveable pedestals under the Superintendence of a London gentleman who was sent over for the purpose.’

Daniel Maclise, 1846

John Hogan,
Life Size Figure of Minerva (1824)



SCHOOL OF ART

The arrival of the Canova Casts in late 1818 stimulated the founding of the Cork School of Art and its ‘saloon of sculpture’ (now CIT Crawford College of Art & Design and Crawford Art Gallery, respectively). They were installed in the suitably named former Apollo Society theatre on the city’s main thoroughfare, Patrick Street. Among the first students to enrol were John Hogan (1800-1858) and his brother Richard Hogan, Samuel Forde (1805-1828), and Daniel Maclise (1806-1870).

These students, some aged as young as thirteen, studied directly from the casts under the instruction of Mr Chalmers, a scene painter for the George’s Street Theatre in Cork. Certain students were also guests of Cork’s leading families, who had extensive art collections, while others took lessons at Dr John Woodroffe’s School of Anatomy, founded in 1811. Maclise’s younger brother, Joseph Maclise (1815-1880), was later noted for his illustrated surgical anatomy publications.

The Canova Casts, presented to the Cork Society for Promoting the Fine Arts in 1818, and art school subsequently came under the ownership of the Royal Cork Institution and moved to the old Custom House in 1832.

Daniel Maclise, *Harold and Duke William Meet*, detail (c.1847)



CASTING LEGACIES

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), author of *Vanity Fair* (1848), damningly described the poor state of the Canova Casts in *The Irish Sketch Book* (1842), noting 'the plasters are spoiled incurably for want of a penny feather-brush.' By the end of the decade, however, the institution was renamed the Cork School of Design under the direction of William Willes and, as with the Belfast School of Art, entered the South Kensington education system. At this time, the Royal Cork Institution transferred ownership of the casts to the school.

'There is an Institution, with a fair library of scientific works, a museum, and a drawing-school with a supply of casts.'

William Makepeace Thackeray, 1842

During the 1850s, the school had a succession of short-lived headmasters, including one who was dismissed for destroying a portion of the cast collection 'in a drunken fit.' The fortunes of the Canova Casts and school began to change, however, under the steady direction of James Brenan (1837-1907) from 1860 onwards. This culminated in the addition of purpose-built sculpture galleries, library, and education spaces in 1884 which were funded by a leading Cork merchant, William Horatio Crawford (1812-1888). Named for its benefactor, this new extension was formally opened by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) in April 1885.

The casts continued to be an educational tool of the new Crawford Municipal School of Art throughout the twentieth century. In 1979, the school and gallery ultimately became two separate entities. Since then, understanding and care of the Canova Casts has continued to strengthen. During the 1990s, Lionel Powell conducted restoration work on the casts. They have now been made ready for their bicentenary through further conservation treatment by Eoghan Daltun, which was funded by the Heritage Council.

Right: Sculpture Galleries of the Crawford Municipal School of Art (c.1920)





CANOVA CASTS

On 7 November 1818, former Cork newspaper *The Southern Reporter* noted the arrival of casts 'executed under the direction of the celebrated Canova in Rome.' Itemising some 219 whole figures, torsos, busts, reliefs, and fragments, they were 'found to exceed the utmost expectations' at the time.

In the intervening two centuries, the Canova Casts have functioned as important educational tools and continued to distinguish this institution. Plaster, however, is a fragile material and they have dwindled in number significantly since 1818. This is due to a combination of breakages or losses and sometimes damp or less than ideal storage conditions in the past. Over time, other casts were added to the collection, most significantly *Venus de Milo*, *The Lancellotti Discobolus*, *The Borghese Gladiator*, busts from *formatori* (cast-makers) such as Domenico Brucciani, and *Teucer* by Hamo Thornycroft in 1900.

Recent research has identified the following twelve works as Canova Casts. These remaining pieces are now beautifully conserved and presented in their best possible condition. The Recasting Canova project will continue to study and reveal their unique history, in addition to Crawford Art Gallery's wider cast collection.



THE GODDESS CONCORDIA

c.1816, plaster cast after the 1809 original by Antonio Canova,
185 x 115 x 81 cm

This powerful image by Canova of the goddess of harmony exists in a number of versions. At least one of these features the likeness of the Empress Marie Louise (1791-1847), daughter of the House of Habsburg and second wife of Napoleon. Our version, however, does not present the empress' distinctive face and is more closely aligned with his *Bust of Peace* (1814).

The original plaster model (1809-10) is in the Museo Canova, Possagno. A variant on this, *Ritratto di Maria Luigia d'Asburgo in veste di Concordia* (1811-14), is in the Galleria Nazionale di Parma.





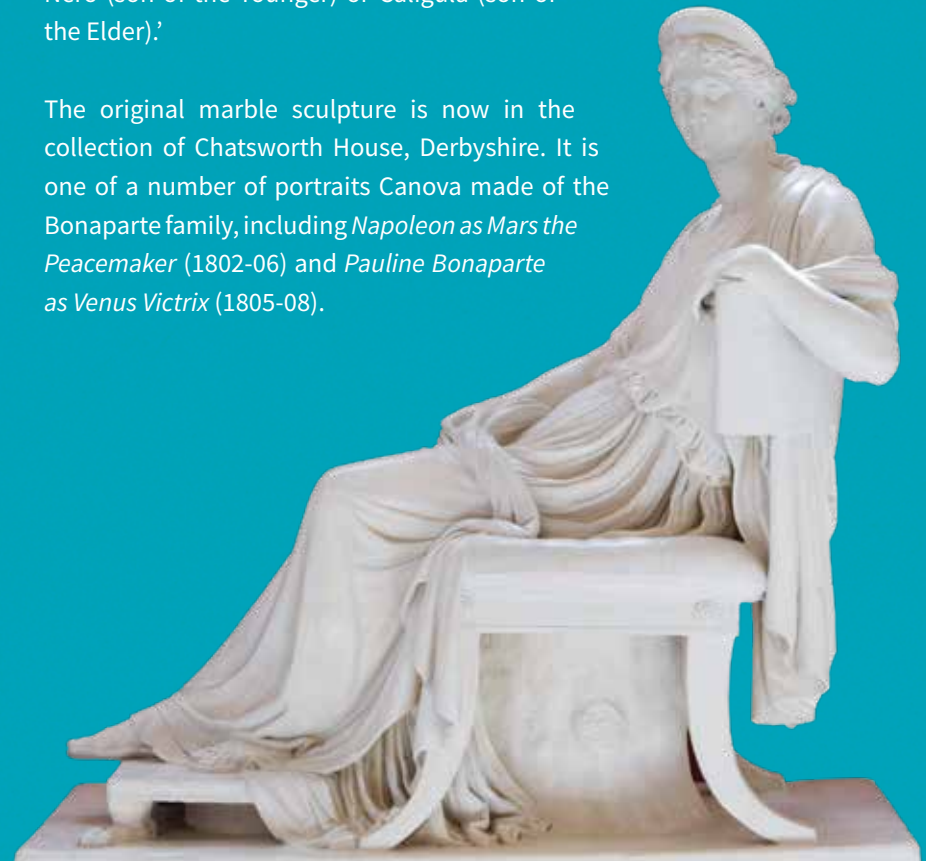
THE MOTHER OF NAPOLEON THE GREAT

c.1816, plaster cast after the 1807 original by Antonio Canova,
150 x 149 x 68 cm

Maria Letizia Ramolino Buonaparte (1750-1836), mother of Napoleon, was an Italian noblewoman from Corsica. Most of her adult children became monarchs during the Napoleonic period (1799-1815) and she was herself created *Madame Mère de l'Empereur* in 1804/05.

Canova based this portrait on the ancient seated figure of the *Capitoline Agrippina*. As there are two Agrippinas from this period of Roman history, however, classicist Mary Beard has questioned if we are therefore 'supposed to see Napoleon as Nero (son of the Younger) or Caligula (son of the Elder).'

The original marble sculpture is now in the collection of Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. It is one of a number of portraits Canova made of the Bonaparte family, including *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker* (1802-06) and *Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victrix* (1805-08).



BATHING VENUS (VENUS ITALICA)

c.1816, plaster cast after the 1812 original by Antonio Canova,
185 x 54 x 56 cm

From prehistoric times, Venus (Aphrodite) has been portrayed nude in visual art, emphasising her position as goddess of love, beauty, sexuality, and fertility. Her cult celebrated the Veneralia (1 April), a festival in which her image was washed and garlanded.

An early label for this cast lists it as *Venus Leaving the Bath by the Marquis Canova, Pitti Palace, Florence*. The original marble sculpture was made as a replacement for the *Medici Venus* which had been seized by the French in 1803. Canova's *Bathing Venus* (1804-12) draws on this ancient model but offers a more slender form and contemporary appearance. At least one version of this remained in the sculptor's workshop until 1823. The plaster model for the sculpture is in the Museo Canova, Possagno.





ADONIS

c.1816, plaster cast, 182 x 67 x 42 cm

Adonis, who was renowned for his exceptional beauty, was the mortal lover of Aphrodite (Venus) and features in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. His fate seems to have been bound up with the gods: he was raised by Persephone, goddess and queen of the underworld; a dispute over his affections was settled by Zeus; and he died in the arms of Aphrodite following a hunting accident.

In seamlines visible on its torso, this graceful form shows evidence of the piece-mould process in which several moulds are used to cast the full figure. It is derived from the *Adonis of Centocelle*, found in Rome in 1785, which features in the French publication *Museum of France; A Collection of the Most Beautiful Paintings, Statues, and Bas-Reliefs That Were at the Louvre Before 1815* (1829).

In June 2019, plaster fig leaves attached to this cast, and those of *Apollo Belvedere*, *The Belvedere Torso*, and *Laocoön and His Sons*, were removed during conservation work. Research indicates that these 'modesty coverings' had been added to the Canova Casts after their arrival in Cork. As such, their removal by sculpture conservator Eoghan Daltun reverses nearly two centuries of censorship and returns the casts to their original condition. The plaster fig leaves have been retained as separate archival objects.

HEAD OF A LITTLE FAUN

c.1816, plaster cast, 50 x 25 x 25 cm

Although the source sculpture remains untraced, this cast has long been identified as a faun. It is one of several such themed works in the collection, including *The Piping Faun*, *The Clapping Faun*, John Hogan's *The Drunken Faun*, and Andrew O'Connor's *La Faunesse*. The features that distinguish this bust, however, are wing-like (not horn-like) forms emerging from his tightly curled hair. As such, further research may yet prove him to be the bust of *Little Mercury*, rather than *Little Faun*, in the original 1818 inventory of casts.

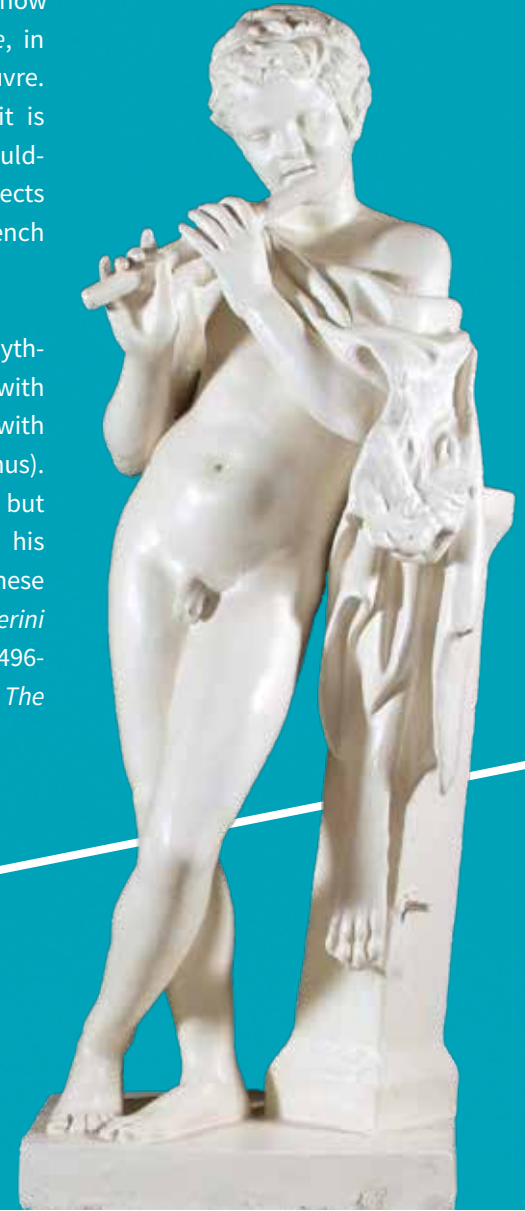


THE PIPING FAUN

c.1816, plaster cast of marble original in Musée du Louvre, 135 x 48 x 32 cm

This piece is cast from a sculpture, now known as *Satyr Playing the Flute*, in the collection of the Musée du Louvre. Given that it remains in Paris, it is possible that Canova oversaw mould-making of this and the other objects he had decided to leave in the French capital in October 1815.

Half-man, half-goat, a faun is a mythological creature often associated with fertility and foolishness, as well as with Satyrs, Pan, and Dionysus (Bacchus). In this cast, the faun lacks hoofs but is particularly distinguished by his large ears. Famous depictions of these creatures include the ancient *Barberini Faun*, Michelangelo's *Bacchus* (1496-97), and Mr Tumnus in C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*.





APOLLO BELVEDERE

c.1816, plaster cast after Roman copy of lost bronze original
by Leochares in Musei Vaticani, 243 x 120 x 78 cm

Named after the Belvedere Courtyard (*Cortile del Belvedere*) in which it once stood, this figure is one of the most celebrated of the ancient world.

It depicts the Greek god of music, arts, healing, and the sun in the pose of an archer and nude but for his sandals and *chlamys* (robe). Also known as the *Pythian Apollo*, his graceful movement is described in *contrapposto* (counterpoise). It expresses all the 'noble simplicity and quiet grandeur' so prized by the influential art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768).

In 1804, Canova was commissioned to create *Perseus Triumphant* (1804-06) as a replacement for *Apollo Belvedere*, which had been taken to Paris after the Treaty of Tolentino (1797). This cast was made following the return of antiquities to Rome in 1816. Now lacking a right arm and left hand, however, viewers can gain insights into how large casts are assembled from multiple parts and strengthened through the use of an armature (hidden framework) of wood, iron, or even bone.

The lower half of this cast appears in a drawing from our collection by William Willes (c.1775-1851), who was the first headmaster of the School of Design (previously Cork School of Art) when it reopened on 8 January 1850. This goes some way in exemplifying how central the Canova Casts have been to art education and appreciation in Cork since they arrived in 1818.



BUST OF DIONYSUS

c.1816, partial plaster cast after 2nd century marble original in Musée du Louvre, 75 x 44 x 40 cm

For many years this bust was labelled *Bust of a Female*, perhaps understandable given its androgynous appearance. Recent research has revealed, however, that it is a partial cast of a full-length figure of Dionysus in the Musée du Louvre.

The youngest of the Olympian gods, Dionysus is identified through his youthful appearance and the vine leaves in his hair. This alludes to his role as god of wine and the grape-harvest, although he is also associated with fertility and theatre. Appropriately, festivals in his honour were known as Dionysia, while Bacchanalia were held in the name of Bacchus, his equivalent in the Roman tradition.



THE JOVE OF OTRICOLI

(THE COLOSSAL HEAD OF JUPITER OLYMPUS)

c.1816, plaster cast after marble bust in Musei Vaticani, 87 x 55 x 26 cm

By Jove! This traditional exclamation derives from an alternative name for Jupiter, the Roman god of the sky and thunder. His equivalent in the Greek tradition is Zeus, leader of the Olympian gods. This cast is taken from a Roman bust discovered in 1775 at Otricoli, Italy during excavations funded by Pope Pius VI (1717-1799). It is under this pontiff and Napoleon that the Treaty of Tolentino was signed in 1797.

BUST OF SOCRATES

c.1816, plaster cast, 60 x 31 x 24 cm

‘Wisdom begins in wonder.’ One of the founders of Western philosophy, Socrates (c.470-399 BCE) was an Athenian and teacher of Plato and Xenophon. It is from his students that we chiefly know of his thinking as he made no writings of his own. Having lived through the Peloponnesian War, he was executed for impiety and moral corruption.

LAOCOÖN AND HIS SONS

c.1816, plaster cast of Roman copy in Musei Vaticani, 240 x 141 x 83 cm

Those familiar with the proverb 'beware of Greeks bearing gifts' may not realise that it is associated with the central figure of this work. Laocoön, a priest of Poseidon (or Apollo), utters a version of these words in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

Laocoön was duly punished by Athena (Minerva), goddess of wisdom and warfare, for warning his fellow Trojans of the fabled wooden horse. First, he was blinded, and then he and his sons, Antiphantes and Thymbraeus, were attacked by sea serpents.

The agony and restlessness of their struggle is described in this Hellenistic work, the original of which was made by three sculptors from Rhodes: Agesander, Athenodorus, and Polydorus. Located at one time in the palace of the Emperor Titus, it achieved fame in the ancient world. Indeed, Roman writer and naval commander Pliny the Elder (23-79) singled it out as being 'preferable to any other production of the art of painting or of statuary' in his *Naturalis Historia*.

Lost from all but written sources for centuries, it was unearthed in Rome in early 1506 to instant acclaim. Artists such as Michelangelo immediately visited the site of its discovery and, soon afterwards, it was acquired by Pope Julius II.

It remained in the Vatican collection from then until July 1798 when it was removed to Paris, only to be returned in January 1816. Our cast was made in that same year and now preserves incorrect restorations, including Laocoön's right arm, which were subsequently reversed in the twentieth century.





THE BELVEDERE TORSO

c.1816, plaster cast after Roman copy in Musei Vaticani,
119 x 85 x 84 cm

This fragment of a muscular male nude seated on an animal hide is thought to be of an ancient Greek hero, possibly Heracles (Hercules) or Ajax. Inscribed by the artist – ‘Apollonius, son of Nestor, Athenian’ – the marble sculpture this piece is cast from is itself believed to be a Roman copy of an earlier Greek statue from the early 2nd century BCE.

Michelangelo (1475-1564) reputedly declined Pope Julius II’s request to restore the torso on the grounds of its imperfect beauty. It evidently captured the Renaissance artist’s imagination as its form can be traced to a number of figures in his Sistine Chapel frescoes, including the ceiling’s Prophets and Sibyls, and St Bartholomew in *The Last Judgment* (1538-41). One of the first artists of the Cork School of Art, Samuel Forde (1805-1828) also drew from the mysterious torso in his *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*.

TIMELINE

- **1489** *Apollo Belvedere* found near Rome
- **1506** *Laocoön and His Sons* found in Rome
- **1757** Antonio Canova born in Possagno
- **1797** Treaty of Tolentino signed
- **1809** Pope Pius VII incarcerated by the French
- **1811** School of Anatomy opens in Cork
- **1814** Pope Pius VII returns to Rome
- **1815** The First Munster Exhibition opens in Cork
Napoleon defeated at Battle of Waterloo
- **1816** **Canova Casts created in Rome and sent to London**
- **1818** Prince Regent (George IV) presents Canova Casts to Cork
- **1819** Cork School of Art welcomes first students
- **1822** Antonio Canova dies in Venice
- **1825** **Royal Cork Institution takes ownership of Canova Casts**
- **1832** **Canova Casts move to former Custom House at Emmet Place**
- **1849** Royal Cork Institution transfers ownership of Canova Casts
Cork School of Art becomes Cork School of Design
- **1884** Cork School of Design renamed Crawford Municipal School of Art
- **1885** New extension opened by Prince of Wales (Edward VII)
- **1919** Gibson Bequest gifted to Crawford Municipal School of Art
- **1979** Crawford College of Art & Design relocates
- **2006** Crawford Art Gallery becomes National Cultural Institution
- **2017** Conservation work commences on Canova Casts
- **2019** **Sculpture Galleries reopen with Recasting Canova**



RECASTING CANOVA

Published in 2019 by Crawford Art Gallery, Cork
Second Revised Edition

Edited by Dr Michael Waldron

Designed by Stuart Coughlan, edit+

Printed by Watermans Printers Ltd.

Collection photography by Dara McGrath
Additional photography used under licence

Special thanks to Crawford Art Gallery board and staff
and our sponsors

www.crawfordartgallery.ie

Text © 2019 All rights reserved
© All images in this publication are subject to copyright

ISBN: 978-1-874756-30-9



RECASTING
CANOVA



Crawford Art Gallery

with support from


Pat McDonnell Paints
IRELAND'S BRIGHTEST PAINT STORES



An Roinn Cultúir,
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
Department of Culture,
Heritage and the Gaeltacht