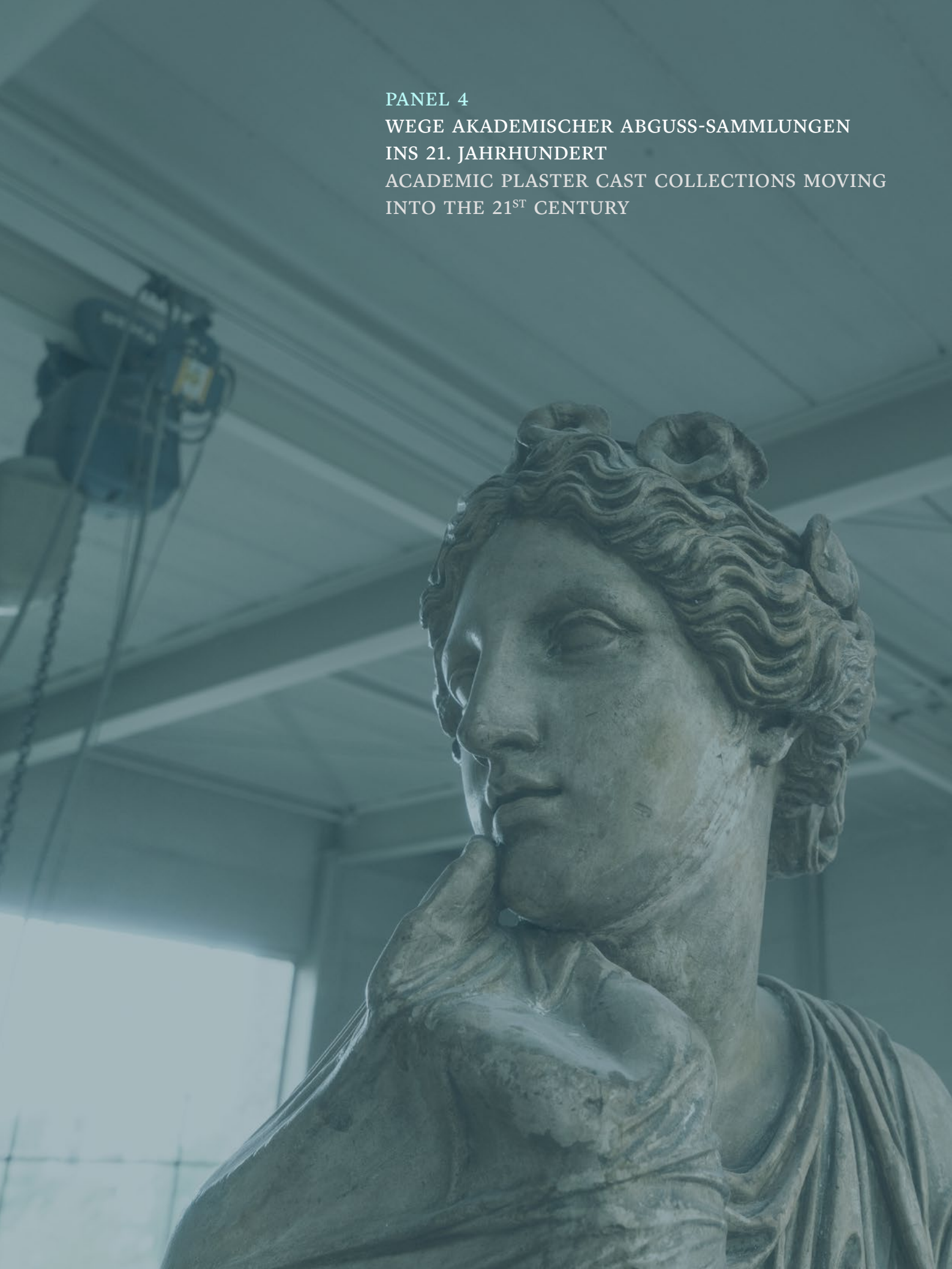


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WEGE AKADEMISCHER ABGUSS-SAMMLUNGEN
INS 21. JAHRHUNDERT
ACADEMIC PLASTER CAST COLLECTIONS MOVING
INTO THE 21ST CENTURY



→
Abstract
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NEW TASKS AND CHALLENGES

THE PLASTER CAST COLLECTIONS OF THE CROATIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS IN ZAGREB AND THEIR DIGITISATION

THE GLYPTOTHEQUE of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Gliptoteka HAZU) is a unique institution in the Republic of Croatia, combining as it does the most systematically assembled collection of plaster casts of ancient sculpture and of works from the Croatian monumental heritage, systematically cast in the first half of the 20th century. The collections' traditional presentation was based on the scholarly disciplines of history, archaeology and art history with a view to presenting the development of sculpture from antiquity to the Renaissance for educational purposes. This paper will present the collections and draw attention to the shift towards new forms of presentation and new questions that do not stem from just one scholarly discipline but instead transcend disciplinary boundaries and identify cross-sectoral aspects for an

interdisciplinary approach. Picking up on this aspiration, we have embarked on digitisation. The casts from the permanent displays are presented in the repository of the Digital Collection of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which has participated in the “European Cloud” or “eCloud” project since 2013.



Figure 1 Glyptotheque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb—view of the building, Medvedgradska street 2, 1940

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THE MUSEUM'S HISTORY

The intention that underpins the Croatian Academy's Glyptotheque makes it a particularly important body in the Republic of Croatia—the only one of its kind to collect, present and communicate the country's sculptural heritage. It was founded in 1937¹, originally going by the name “Gypsotheque,” with the aim of

presenting the Croatian national sculptural heritage, through plaster casts of the immovable monuments that form part of this heritage, in the context of the most important monuments of history and art worldwide.² Over the course of time, the museum holdings have been enriched with numerous important works of Croatian sculpture and sculptural heritage from the 19th to the 21st century. In 1950, the Gypsotheque became a constituent part of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and was renamed Glyptotheque. Since 1940, the museum has been housed in a former tannery and leather industry facility, the first sections of which were built in 1864, and which gradually expanded to become the largest industrial plant in Zagreb and indeed in Croatia **Figure 1**.³ A fire in 1926 destroyed most of the factory, and the leatherworks went out of business in 1938. Its 1940 adaptation for a new utilization is a prime example in Croatia of such a conversion of an early industrial factory complex.

Today the Glyptotheque stands out as a museum that holds and exhibits the largest collection of sculptures in



Figure 2

View of the permanent display of the 19th to 21st-century Croatian Sculpture Casts Collection at the Glyptothek of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb, 2004

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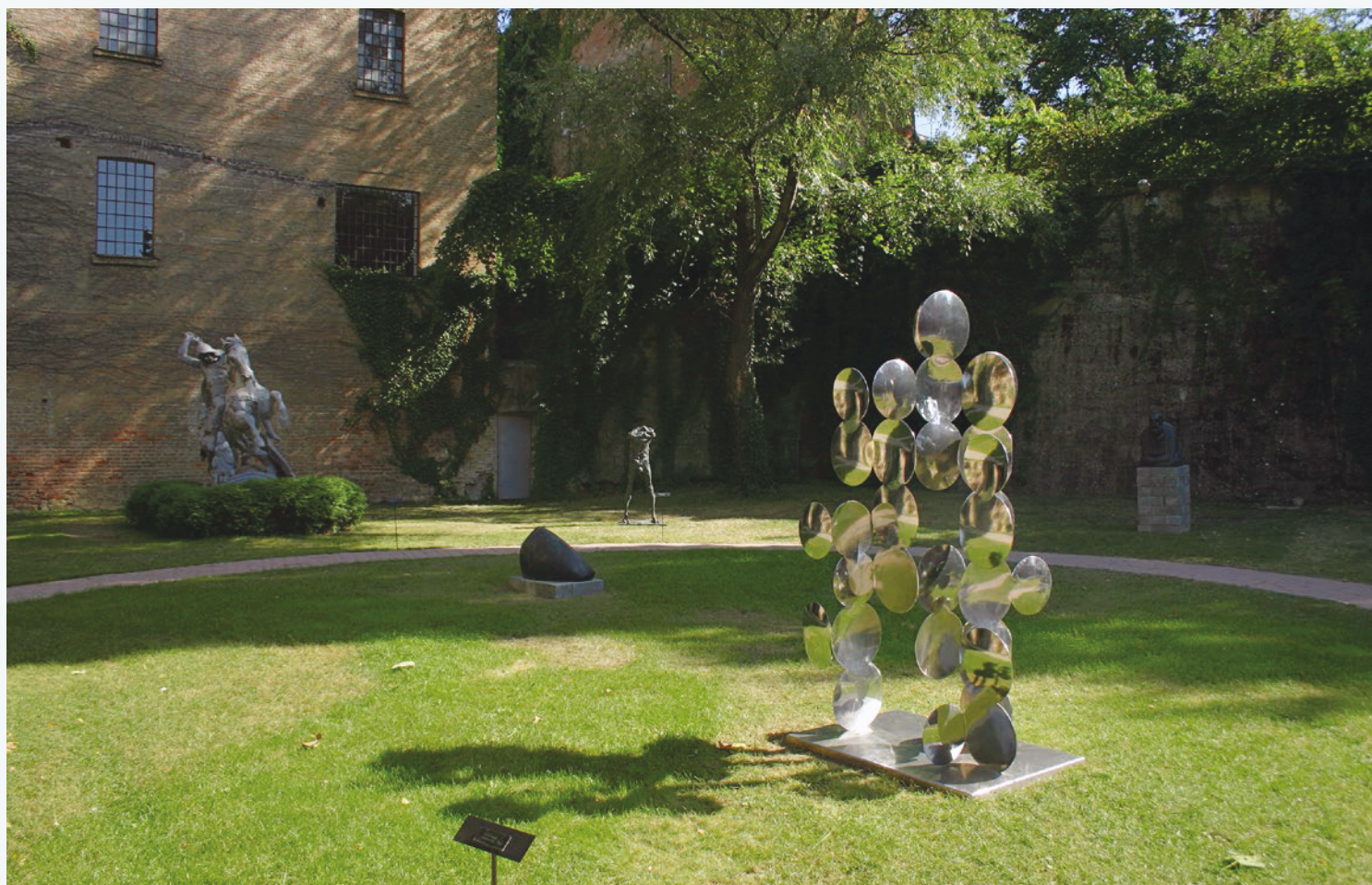


Figure 3

View of the Glyptothek's sculpture park, 2004

© Fedor Vučemilović



Figure 4 View of the permanent display of the Ancient Sculptures Casts Collection at the Glyptothek of the Croatian Academy, 2007

© Glyptothek, Zagreb, Photo Archive

Croatia, including plaster casts and original works of Croatian sculpture from the 19th to the 21st century, and provides an opportunity to view sculpture from antiquity to the present day [Figure 2](#) . To complement the ongoing exhibition activity based on these holdings, the Croatian Sculpture Triennial was founded in 1982. Thanks to this event, coupled with the inauguration of four gallery spaces for contemporary art exhibitions, the Glyptothek has become a platform to showcase contemporary art, taking its place at the very pinnacle of the country's artistic life.

In 2000 the Sculpture Park was created [Figure 3](#) . The Glyptothek's permanent display was modernised in 2005 and an exhibit with a selection of plaster casts of important sculptures from ancient Greece was developed

[Figure 4](#) .

THE CAST COLLECTIONS OF THE GLYPTOTHEQUE OF THE CROATIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS

The Glyptotheque owns four collections of casts that present major works from a range of eras extending from antiquity to the Renaissance, divided according to periods or themes. The oldest collection comprises the casts of ancient sculpture that Isidor Kršnjavi⁴, Head of the Croatian Land Government's Department of Theology and Education, i.e. Minister of Education and Religion, began to collect in 1892, when he acquired the first plaster casts of the Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon from Domenico Brucciani.⁵

The collection was set up almost a century later than comparable collections elsewhere in Europe. This is because Croatia played a minor political role within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁶ Nevertheless, a systematic collection of casts in chronological order was established, presenting Greek art from the Archaic age to the Roman period.⁷ Today, however, the collection is considerably reduced as a result of being scattered between various locations throughout its history. This came about as there was no clear allocation of responsibilities but, on the contrary, scant capacity for supervision of the collection after Kršnjavi left his position as Minister of Education and Religion in 1896; this situation persisted until the first decades of the 20th century. The collection was consequently dispersed between numerous schools and institutions. Multiple relocations meant that the collection suffered considerable damage and was to a large extent destroyed.⁸

In 1940, it was however reassembled on the initiative of Antun Bauer, the founder of the Gypsotheque, who brought together the bulk of the surviving casts in the Glyptotheque.

After the Second World War, the collection was expanded,⁹ with new acquisitions of plaster casts of antiquities taken from monumental Roman sculpture in the field during excavations in Solin, Split, Nin and other localities and systematically cast in the archaeological museums of Zagreb, Split, Zadar and Pula in the 1950s. Thanks to this

expansion, the Ancient Sculpture Cast Collection contains casts of the best-known works of Greek art as well as casts taken from antiquities found throughout Croatia.

A further group of antique casts that were not incorporated into the Glyptotheque has been housed since 1961 in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, formally owned by the archaeology department. A reflection of the collection's arbitrary division is still manifested at these two sites.



Figure 5

View of the permanent display of the Immovable Croatian Cultural Heritage Casts Collection at the Glyptotheque of the Croatian Academy

© Glyptotheque, Zagreb, Photo Archive

The largest collection comprises plaster casts of fragments of immovable monuments of Croatian cultural heritage, from the pre-Romanesque era to the Renaissance, containing major works from various sites across Croatia [Figure 5](#). The collection was created with the original donation of casts collected by Dr Bauer, and was extended in 1939 with a donation of about 200 casts. Immediately after the museum was founded, a systematic plan was devised to collect and cast examples of the 9th to 15th-century monumental heritage throughout Croatia. For this purpose, the museum established its own in-house casting shop,

Although its scope is now somewhat smaller than earlier in its history, its value has not diminished, but rather increased: it is part of the European cultural heritage.

working together with experts who for many years travelled around in order to take moulds of the monuments or of parts of them which were to be cast. Much of the collection was cast on the occasion of the major exhibition 'Medieval Art of the Peoples of Yugoslavia', held in 1950 in Paris,¹⁰ for which numerous *stechaks* were cast.¹¹ One particularly challenging case was the casting of the Romanesque portal of the cathedral in Trogir that started in 1940. Casting in the field was stepped up from 1947 in Šibenik, Dubrovnik, Zadar and Trogir, and was continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The permanent display has always been arranged chronologically, and this is still the case today. The full complexity and richness of the Croatian heritage is presented by a selection of sculptural works from characteristic and representative historical monuments.

A separate unit is devoted to the collection of casts of George of Dalmatia, whose name is connected with the emergence of the Early Renaissance in Croatia. It encompasses the oeuvre of the most important 15th-century builder and sculptor in Croatia with casts from Split, Ancona, Pag and Dubrovnik, as well as from the Cathedral of St James in Šibenik, which figures on the UNESCO World Heritage List [Figure 6](#).

The unique plaster cast collections of the Glyptothèque of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts bring together casts of some of the most important works of sculpture worldwide and replicas of the most important works of Croatian national heritage in a single location. These are representative witnesses that create the foundation of our cultural memory and build national identity. They can stand shoulder to shoulder with similar collections of casts of historical monuments Europe-wide.

It should be noted that the ancient sculpture collection, which has existed for over 120 years, is the only one of its kind in Croatia, and although its scope is now somewhat smaller than earlier in its history, its value has not diminished, but rather increased: it is part of the European cultural heritage.



Figure 6 View of the permanent display of the collection of plaster casts of works by Juraj Matejev Dalmatinac, 2004

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NEW TASKS AND CHALLENGES

For more than seventy years, the ancient collections of plaster casts have been in the care of the Glyptothek where they are professionally processed, presented and communicated through numerous events, including workshops, launches, presentations, thematic exhibitions, lectures, and so on. They are considered essential in teaching and for outreach to a wider public. Redefining its mission, the museum has now set itself new tasks focusing on the needs of society and communication with the audience. The interdisciplinary approach is crucial for accomplishing this task, and that is why we have turned to digitisation. Through a pilot 3D digitisation project implemented in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' Department of Information and Communication

Sciences in 2012, we have become increasingly aware that in the future developing virtual tools and applications will be vital to satisfy all our users' requirements.

The collection has also been digitised and placed in the repository as part of the Digital Collection of the Academy and included in the “European Cloud” project.¹² All these activities are indicators of how the role of the collection within the museum has changed; the casts are no longer viewed exclusively as an educational tool, but are deployed to reach out to the broader public, to be developed using digital technology. Since the collection is divided into two parts, and new forms of communication involve two sites, each of which has different functions—one a museum, the other a university—we can also compare the dual use of the casts. The casts in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' collection are used as didactic tools in archaeology and art history courses. The archaeology department's main concern today is to preserve and restore the casts by drawing on the relevant research, while other departments, such as the Chair of Museology and Heritage Management, are more interested in exhibition projects with the plaster cast collection. Virtual tools and applications are used within the curriculum, in particular for striking reconstructions of an object's primary context in augmented reality. Users' requirements mean we must draw on contemporary interdisciplinary presentation methods, making use of their potential, and this is why we have digitised our exhibits, which are rapidly accessible in the repository, accompanied by reliable and transparent information. In the permanent exhibition of the Ancient Sculpture Cast Collection, QR codes have been placed next to the objects, linking to the pages of the repository to provide more detailed information about each exhibit and serving as a guide to the collection.

DIGITISATION AND THE EUROPEAN CLOUD

In keeping with the needs of contemporary society, new forms of communication must be developed to respond to the expectations of museum visitors and users, who want rapid access to relevant textual and visual information. As well as the aforementioned need for contemporary

Through this digital interface, the material can fulfil several museological functions simultaneously: protection, research and communication.

interdisciplinary methods of presentation, the Glyptothèque has begun its project to digitise the material in the permanent displays and in 2011 became involved in the Academy's digital repository. This is where the Academy's scientific research, museum gallery and library units are presented in one place, with free online access in conjunction with contemporary, standardized technical support.

The repository is an example of cooperation and data processing in a single interface for very different digital materials, from archives, museums, and libraries. By 2015, a total of 11 units of the Academy had joined the project.¹³ In the repository, the Glyptothèque presents the permanent display materials, organised as a function of the Glyptothèque collections in seven units, including sculptures, plaster casts, and copies of frescoes. Thanks to inclusion in the repository, the Glyptothèque's digital material now enjoys high-quality technical support and became accessible to users on-line, through a simple, reliable and rapid data search function.

Through this digital interface, the material can fulfil several museological functions simultaneously: protection, research and communication.

The Academy and the Glyptothèque digital collections were also involved in the "eCloud" project, launched in 2013. The project's objective is to build a system using cloud technology for the purposes of research in the human and social sciences. In all, 11,601 objects have been aggregated from the Academy's digital collection and 6,405 objects were published in the Europeana during 2014, along with a virtual Pablo Picasso exhibition.

CONCLUSION

There is an ever increasing need for contemporary interdisciplinary methods of presentation as well as for digitisation which enables more rapid accessibility of information about the major works of our cultural heritage. Substantial evidence has been collected to show that these means open up new perspectives for plaster cast collections in both museums and universities—for research as well as for broader audiences.

1. On October 23, 1937, Dr Antun Bauer gave his collection of casts and models of Croatian sculptors to the city of Zagreb, thus founding the Gypsotheque Museum of the City of Zagreb. Bauer was a leading archaeologist, museologist and collector, as well as initiating, founding and making donations to numerous museums in Croatia; he founded the Museum Documentation Centre in Zagreb, and was the intellectual originator and visionary initiator of numerous projects in the domain of museums and culture.
2. *Antun Bauer, Gipsoteka 1937-1947*, unpublished manuscript, Zagreb, 1948, p. 6.
3. The factory was the largest exporter of military boots in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since 1st April 1940, the newly re-founded Zagreb Gypsotheque has occupied part of the factory complex.
4. Isidor Iso Kršnjavi (Našice, 1845–Zagreb, 1927) was a key figure of Croatian history and culture from the late 19th century, the so-called Foundation Period, an intellectual on a European scale, scholar, artist, critic and politician. He acquired the antique casts in 1892 when he took up the post of Head of the Croatian Land Government's Department of Theology and Education.
5. Figures from the eastern and western pediments of the Parthenon were acquired: a frieze and 15 metopes with a depiction of the Centauro-machy, see: 'Muzej sadrenih otisaka u Zagrebu', *Viestnik Hrvatskoga arheološkoga društva*, n.s. I (1895), Zagreb, 1895-1896, p. 214.
6. The Austro-Hungarian Empire or Monarchy (which encompassed the then state of Croatia) was the name for the dual Habsburg monarchy in the period from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 until its collapse in 1918.
7. In 1894 and 1895, plaster casts of the most important works of sculpture from ancient Greece and Rome were systemically collected from museums in London, Paris, Berlin, Cologne, Munich, Vienna and Rome. Some of the casts came from the replica workshop of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.
8. The collection was systematically collected, but is much reduced today. A large number of very valuable examples of sculpture are missing, such as the Moschophoros, the Victory of Samothrace, Myron's Marsyas, Diadumenos, Sleeping Ariadne from the Vatican, the Barberini Faun, the Boy with a Goose, Paionios' Victory, Venus Genetrix, Apollo Citharoedus, casts from the pediment of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, the Aeginitans from the pediment of the Temple of Aphaia in Aegina, the Niobids and many others. Cf. Tomislav Bilić, 'Zagrebačka zbirka sadrenih odljeva antičke skulpture', *Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*, III, 41(2008), pp. 443-445.
9. After World War II, the following casts were obtained: the Medici Venus from the Uffizi, the Apoxyomenos from the Vatican, Theseus from the eastern pediment of the Parthenon from the British Museum, and Hermes Binding his Sandal from the Louvre.
10. *L'Art Medieval Yougoslave*, Palais de Chaillot, Paris, 9th March – 22nd May, 1950.
11. For this exhibition, the greater part of the plaster casts of 13th to 16th-century *stechaks* were cast, those distinctive and unique funerary monuments of a monolithic character of the Middle Ages from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.
12. The digital collection of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts is accessible at URL: <http://dizbi.hazu.hr/> last accessed 26/02/2016
13. Up to 2015, 22,894 books, articles and individual objects have been digitised and published in the repository (artistic paintings, photographs, microfilms, playbills, manuscripts, etc.) and 442,897 files.