



LOW COUNTRIES SCULPTURE

A brief history of the sculpture in the present-day Netherlands and Belgium

This survey will function as a general text in English available to all visitors to our internet site. Similar texts in other languages will be published in due course. (Please note that this is not a history of sculpture from the Low Countries, as it does not include French Flanders, nor much of the Rhineland)

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Early 14th-century sculpture in the Low Countries developed from many regional traditions, of which the two around the Scheldt and Meuse Rivers were the most prominent. Meuse Valley sculpture was then under the influence of the French courtly style, with graceful, elongated figures and flowing draperies. This style found its prime expression in freestanding Madonnas; the white marble *Virgin and Child* (ca. 1330-50) by the Master of the Marble Madonnas in Antwerp Cathedral is a characteristic example, with its somewhat artificial drapery and Mannerist pose. The decorative S shape of her body and the dreamy face she presents the Infant Christ, who meekly touches her cheek, stresses the figure's motherly attitude. Sculptors also used white marble for important tomb monuments, such as the two in the cathedral of Cologne by Gilles de Liège to Walram von Jülich (d. 1349) and Wilhelm von Gennep (d. 1362). These tombs are stylistically comparable to the south portal (ca. 1330-40) of the church of Notre-Dame, Dinant, which reinterprets the exterior reliefs of the chevet chapels (ca. 1320) of the cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris.

Jean Pépin de Huy (active 1311-29) sculpted the recumbent statue of *Robert d'Artois* (1317-20), now at Saint-Denis, near Paris. The figure was originally polychromed by Pierre de Bruxelles, and the highly refined carving of the marble enhances its composition. Robert's mother, Mahaud d'Artois, commissioned the few other remaining works by this assumed Meuse-region artist, such as his 1329 *Madonna* at Gosnay, Pas-de-Calais.

In the Scheldt region, the *Virgin and Child* (ca. 1310-20) of the west facade of Tournai Cathedral opened the century with a statue much imitated throughout the region. Tournai became known for its remarkable sculpture in blue-gray limestone. The statues (1350-75) by Wouter Pans for the choir of the cathedral of Mechelen, showing the influence of the school of Reims, and the porch statue of the *Madonna* on the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-ten-Poel, Tienen, also belong within this French stylistic context. Jacques de Baerze from Dendermonde (active 1384-99) similarly favored this courtly style when he carved the figures for his impressive altarpieces of the *Saints* and the *Passion* for Philip the Bold (Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts).

From the middle of the 14th century, increased realism and a sense of movement began to challenge the previous stylistic interests. The monumental alabaster statue of *St. Catherine* (1372-73) in the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe, Kortrijk, attributed to André Beauneveu (active c.1360-1400) and most likely commissioned by Louis de Male, is one of the most distinguished productions of its time, blending new conceptions of realistic expression and plasticity with the more traditional effect of verticality and slender proportions. His influence became widespread in the 14th century, from Bruges to the Meuse region. In the latter region, the *Coronation of the Virgin* (ca. 1380-90), in the church of St. Jacques, Liège, constitutes a remarkable example in this new style, combining ample and soft draperies with a greater naturalistic rendition of the human body. Although now essentially known as a sculptor of tomb



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monuments for French high society in Paris, Jean (Hennequin) de Liège (active ca. 1360-81), a talented artist, also produced alabaster statuettes and altars.

By the 14th century, the growing urban centers created much demand for large-scale secular sculpture and city authorities commissioned monumental secular sculpture for such buildings as city halls with belfries and aldermen's halls. The former abbey church of Sint-Bavo, Ghent, preserves one of the four guards in armor that were placed in 1338 on the corners of the belfry. Jean de Valenciennes and collaborators provided the Bruges aldermen's hall in 1376-79 with numerous statues, niches, and consoles (largely destroyed in 1792). In Brabant in particular, small architectural sculpture such as keystones, bosses, and gargoyles received much freer treatments in the new realistic mode.

In the 15th century, Brussels gradually rose in status in political, economic, and artistic matters. It was the city of Claus Sluter (who originally came from Haarlem), one of the most prominent sculptors in the Low Countries. The duke of Burgundy recruited him for his numerous sculptural projects at and near Dijon, his main seat. There, Sluter introduced a new direction away from the international mannerist mode and toward a reinvigorating and original naturalism. He had widespread influence, although paradoxically rather little in the duchies of Flanders and Brabant. The eight figures of prophets together with five consoles, all that remain from the facade decoration of the Brussels Town Hall (ca. 1404-5), and strongly reminiscent of the Champmol sculptures by Sluter, have recently been attributed to the Master of Hakendover. This master is named after his wooden carved altarpiece at the church of the Goddelijke Zaligmaker, Hakendover, which displays his talent for narrative description, just as in the stone sacraments tabernacle and the apostle statues at the church of Sint-Martinus, Halle, usually attributed to the same hand. Much of the sculpture from this period in the northern Netherlands perished under the iconoclasts' hands. The extant early 15th-century architectural sculpture worth mentioning includes the historiated bosses (ca. 1412-20), probably by Jorijs de Beeldsnijder, in the choir of the Pieters church, Leiden.

Collaboration between painters and sculptors was frequent during this period because most sculptures were polychromed. Even such a prominent sculptor as Jan van Eyck is documented as having painted statues for the Bruges town hall. Jean Delemer's stout figures and deeply carved drapery in his *Annunciation* statues (1426-28), now in the cathedral of Tournai, accord to the style that Robert Campin used in his panel painting. This is not surprising considering that the former polychromy of the statues is the only documented work by Campin. Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden similarly impressed their different stylistic preferences on contemporary sculptors, although painters were not systematically at the forefront of stylistic developments; destruction and lack of study of the sculpture make it difficult for firm conclusions to be drawn. Links on a functional level also frequently existed between painted and sculpted devotional objects. Such close interaction between painting and sculpture accounts for this high point in artistic endeavors in the Low Countries.

Painters occasionally also provided sculptors with designs for sculpture. The history of the Leuven town hall, preserved in great detail, is explicit in this respect. Jacob Schelewaerts, doctor in theology, and Jan van den Phalisen, priest of the church of Sint-Pieter, devised the iconography of the facade decoration. The painter Hubrecht Steurbout provided the designs, which were translated into the third dimension by the master mason Mathijs de Layens in 1447-48.

In the second quarter of the 15th century, the International Gothic style largely made way for the Late Gothic realism that was favored particularly in Tournai funerary reliefs. These reliefs demonstrate a greater interest in a full rendition of space and plasticity of the figures. As the century drew to a close, they gradually became smaller in order to be included in the church's wall masonry, with a low relief



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often inspired on contemporary painting, particularly that of Rogier van der Weyden. Such a case is the funerary relief in Tournai's cathedral to Jean Lamelin (d. 1470), court chaplain to Philip the Good.

The center of production of freestanding tomb monuments gradually moved from Tournai to Ghent in the 15th century, although they were also produced elsewhere, as they were highly individualized projects. Avesne stone was more appropriate for the carving of the delicate figurative parts; Tournai blue stone was relegated to the structural parts. In more lavish monuments sculptors frequently imitated Sluter's weeping figures for his tomb of Philip the Bold.

At the top end of sculptural production, brass monuments with spectacular decoration and profuse use of black marble, such as in the tomb of Mary of Burgundy (*ca.* 1490-1502), church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe, Bruges, were complex collaborative projects between specialists of metal production (in this case, Renier van Thienen) who cast the monument with the wooden model carved by Jan Borman (active *ca.* 1479-1520). This tomb represents the summit of Gothic courtly naturalism, particularly in the facial expression of the *gisant*.

Rood lofts became particularly prominent church commissions by the late 15th century and achieved remarkable heights in a form that combines architecture and sculpture in an ornate way, with many statuettes decorating the architectural niches. Few survived the iconoclastic period, particularly what concerns their figurative sculptural content. A parallel production was that of "sacraments towers" and wall tabernacles. Generally near an altar, but separate from it, they contained the ingredients of the Holy Sacrament to be used by the priest during mass. The earliest surviving one is in the church of Sint-Pieter, Leuven (*ca.* 1450), although most of the surviving ones date from the 16th century.

In the second quarter of the 15th century, Utrecht developed into an important center for sculpture production, exemplified by the limestone figures of saints (*ca.* 1455) attributed to Jan Nude in Utrecht's Centraal Museum, originally in the cathedral. Other rare survivals from this period include figurative epitaphs and chimney pieces. Utrecht's leading position was intimately linked to the presence within its walls of Adriaen van Wesel (*ca.* 1417-*ca.* 1490). Although aware of developments in other centers such as Brussels, he elaborated a personal style full of courtly elegance and restrained pathos, well suited to small oak groups, such as the remaining fragments of the altarpiece from the cathedral, 's-Hertogenbosch (1475-77, now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam and the Staatliche Museen, Berlin).

Master Arnt van Swol (i.e. Zwolle) (active 1460-92) worked in the manner of Adriaen van Wesel, at first at Kalkar, where his major works remain in the church of St. Nikolai, then from 1484 at Zwolle. His inspiration was often drawn from Rogier van der Weyden's style and he was to form a prolific school. Also worth mentioning is the anonymous sculptor active in northern Brabant named after the altarpiece group of the *Meeting of Sts. Joachim and Anne* (*ca.* 1460-70) in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The 15th century as a whole in the Low Countries was characterized by a boom in sculptural production, not just in stone and bronze, but particularly in elaborately carved wooden altarpieces. These wooden altarpieces were produced in mass and sold throughout Europe. To achieve this level of production, workshops used a strategy of consistency, following virtually unchanged formulas for design and iconography, regardless of the place (e.g. Antwerp or Brussels) or time of production (in the 15th or early 16th century). Only small expansions and adaptations of the formulas, that did not change the basic concept, concerned the increasing narrative and anecdotal aspect of early 16th-century work, the increasing architectural complexity of the altarpieces and the adaptation from a late Gothic to a mannerist to a Renaissance stylistic idiom.

Built up from numerous individually fashioned compartments that are usually closed by painted shutters (during non-festive days), the altarpieces usually present a complex iconography narrating a logical series of biblical stories. On feast days, such as those of the patron saint of the church (for the



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high altar) or that of the relevant guild altar, the retable would be opened to display the sculptural parts. In these compartments, high-relief figures and some figures in the round, frequently polychromed, are positioned in perspectival space so as to suggest a realistic scene. A remarkable example is the Passion Altar from the church of Sint-Genoveva, Oplinter (now in the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels). The workshop of Pieter Coecke van Aelst painted its wings; its nine sculptural compartments show the main stations of the road to Calvary. The St. Leonard altarpiece by Arnold de Maeler, in the church of Sint-Leonard, Zoutleeuw, is also a fine example.

Jan Borman was the consummate wood-carver of the period. His St. George altar (1493, Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels) displays his masterly rendition of space and action. Other important masters from the early 16th century included the Master of Elsloo, active probably at Roermond (ca. 1500-1545), and Jan van Steffeswert (active in the early 16th century), who largely worked at Maastricht in an idiom that started to incorporate Renaissance details.

The Antwerp production of carved retables increased until the early 16th century, while that in Brussels--although not yet waning, as they both would later in the century--often concentrated on commissioned pieces, rather than works made for the open market. Besides altarpieces, Mechelen also specialized in Virgin and Child statuettes (so-called *poupées de Malines*) and enclosed-garden ensembles (*besloten hofjes*), echoing in their more folkloristic aestheticism the earlier Utrecht production of pipeclay (white terracotta) figurines. The bread and butter production of alabaster reliefs, set in *presmass* (a mixture of plaster, animal glue, and oil) frames, also provided an important source of income.

Church furniture gradually became increasingly sculptural in its decoration. Sculptors covered choir stalls with reliefs representing daily life and illustrating proverbs, although they continued to decorate the most prominent parts with proper religious iconography. The stalls in the cathedral of 's-Hertogenbosch (ca. 1430-60), rely directly on south Netherlandish stylistic precedent, although they also incorporate local interests, notably in the monumentality of bench-end reliefs. The sculptor Nicolaas de Bruyn and the joiner Geert Gorys produced the choir stalls at the church of Sint-Sulpitius, Diest, in the 1490s. Another example, the Late Gothic choir stalls at the church of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, Aarschot, date from the early 16th century.

Arnt van Tricht (active 1530s-70), possibly of Utrecht origin, spent most of his active life at Kalkar (near Kleve). At first a prolific wood-carver whose work frequently displayed innovative adaptations of late Gothic models, he switched to stone relief carving with the advent of the Reformation, specializing in memorial tablets and chimneypieces. His Holy Trinity altarpiece in the church St. Nikolai, Kalkar, is one of his most spectacular works.

In the first half of the 16th century, the Antwerp production of carved altarpieces gradually introduced Classical motifs amid its profusion of Gothicizing detail and Mannerist fanciful costumes and caricatured poses. The strong indigenous tradition of Gothic sculpture prevented a simple adoption of a foreign decorative vocabulary (whether classical or contemporary Italian or French); instead, the main sculptors' workshops produced often idiosyncratic and eclectic sculpture, which has unhappily been termed Flemish Renaissance or Mosan Renaissance for the distinct Liège-region sculpture, for want of a better name.

The court at Mechelen became the preeminent center for the adoption of a new stylistic mode. There, foreign artists worked in the idiom of the Renaissance, largely imported from Italy, although frequently via complex routes and media (particularly prints). Conrad Meit (1480-1551) executed the lavish tomb of Margaret of Austria (1526-32) in the church of Saint-Nicolas de Tolentin at Brou, as well as the marble bust of the *Virgin with the Christ Child*, now in Brussels' cathedral. Jan Mone (ca. 1480-ca. 1549) carved alabaster altarpieces for the church of Sint-Martinus, Halle (1533), and the chapel



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of the ducal palace in Brussels (1538-41, now in the cathedral, Brussels), as well as the tomb of Cardinal Guillaume de Croÿ (*ca.* 1528, now in the Capuchin church at Enghien).

In other circles, the Renaissance was also forcefully introduced via court circles. Lancelot Blondeel designed the spectacular mantelpiece executed by Guyot de Beaugrant in the aldermen's chamber of the Brugse Vrije (Bruges). The Grote Kerk at Breda contains some remarkable tomb monuments which also introduced the new Renaissance idiom, particularly the *ca.* 1526-38 tomb monument to Engelbert II van Nassau and his wife, until now unconvincingly attributed.

Jacques Dubroeucq (*ca.* 1500/10-1584), best known for his rood screen (now dismantled) at the church of Sainte-Waudru, Mons, and the master of Giambologna, replaced Mone as court sculptor near the end of Mone's active life. He was part of a new generation of sculptors, including the internationally known artists Willem van den Broeck, alias Paludanus (1530-79), and Jacques Jonghelinck (1530-1606), who interpreted the classical tradition from a novel and archaeologically more accurate perspective. As part of his classical interests, Jonghelinck was also a remarkable medalist.

Antwerp became the preeminent center of sculptural production in the Low Countries at the time of the architectural and sculptural activities of Cornelis Floris (1514-75) in the mid 16th century, remaining so until about the middle of the 18th century. Antwerp engaged in such export to other cities despite the guild system privileging artistic production within the city walls. The production of much sculpture in the southern Netherlands had become protoindustrial, aiming to satisfy the increasing demand emanating from a wide range of patrons, particularly from northern and central Europe. Other artists widely imitated Floris's workshop organization: many assistants worked under the guidance of a supervisor and to the designs of the master or some other artist's designs. Floris was not only responsible for the erection of the new town hall of Antwerp (1561-65) but also widely exported sculpture, particularly tomb monuments, of which those to the kings of Denmark were some of the most spectacular.

Although execution was generally (although not always) of decent quality, Floris's workshop system enabled the master to free himself from the hard manual work and to concentrate on designing. In addition, Pieter Coecke van Aalst, Hans Vredeman de Vries, and Floris published many of their designs in the form of illustrated treatises, pattern books, and loose prints, which display a repertory of motifs and ornaments for use in a variety of decorative schemes. Through these publications, the artists could significantly assert their reputation and social status. Such publications, together with the emigration of many sculptors during the religious wars of the late 16th century, helped widely disseminate the style of Flemish Renaissance sculpture throughout northern and central Europe.

In this context should be mentioned the De Nole dynasty of sculptors. They had moved from Cambrai to Utrecht (and later played an important role in the Baroque period in Antwerp) and had adopted the complex Renaissance decorative idiom in their many tomb monuments as well as in the well-known chimneypiece of the town hall at Kampen (1543-45).

Several prominent sculptors from what was effectively to become the separate northern Netherlands by the late 16th century spent a number of years in Italy, training in important workshops and acquiring skills as sculptors and as bronze casters. Because the Netherlands hardly had a market for such sculptors to make a living, most of them eventually emigrated. Willem Daniëlsz. van Tetrode (*ca.* 1525-80) spent 20 years in Italy before returning home, eventually leaving for Cologne (in 1574) during the iconoclastic outbreak. He produced a number of mythological bronze and alabaster groups that show his interest in the antique and in strong musculatures. The Nijmegen-born Johann Gregor van der Schardt (*ca.* 1530 - after 1581) spent many years in Italian cities before being employed by Maximilian II in Nuremberg in 1570. There, he modeled several polychrome terracotta busts, including a self-



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portrait (now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), that display a remarkable naturalism. Hubert Gerhard (ca. 1540/50-1621), similarly trained in Italy, was active mainly in Munich and Augsburg as a sculptor in bronze (known especially for his monumental fountains), terracotta and plaster. Adriaen de Vries (1546-1626), also of Dutch origin (The Hague), traveled to Italy early in life, working in Giambologna's and Pompeo Leoni's studios before building a career in Augsburg and Prague.

Hendrik I de Keyser (1565-1621) continued the tradition of the late 16th-century Dutch sculptors, producing important works in bronze. His masterpiece is no doubt the mausoleum to William the Silent (1614-22), which signaled a high point in Dutch sculpture not to be equaled for several decades. He also produced the over-life-size statue of *Erasmus* at Rotterdam (1622). De Keyser's talents were many, and he was the first to introduce white Carrara marble to the northern Netherlands, which he used to carve the bust of *Vincent Jacobsz. Coster* (1608).

The revolts of the 1560s and 1570s and the consequent emigration of many sculptors led to a stagnation in the production of artistic goods (including its high-end, sculpture). Only under the archdukes Albert and Isabella (r. 1598-1621/1633), and especially during the Twelve Year Truce (1609-21), did a rebuilding and redecoration campaign of the mutilated or destroyed Catholic churches begin. This campaign continued for the rest of the 17th century and provided sculptors with many important commissions. The monumental and sumptuous sculpture ordered to fill the churches anew emphasized and justified the new liturgy of the Counter Reformation. The prosperity that one could achieve as a sculptor gradually raised the status of the profession. The move from the stonemasons' guild to the artists' (St. Luke) guild was conspicuous in many cities and was accompanied by frequent disputes between the guild members.

The truce also coincided with Peter Paul Rubens's return from Italy (1608), and because he is generally credited with the introduction of the Baroque style in Flemish sculpture, this date marks the beginning of Baroque conceptions in Low Countries sculpture. Naturalism was a key concept of the new style. Rubens's influence was not a simple matter: patrons frequently requested his opinion, if not actual designs by him. The Jesuit church of Antwerp (now the church of Sint-Carolus-Borromeus and once the most lavish church of the Low Countries), for example, was largely built following his ideas, as is attested by a series of designs he drew or painted.

Sculptors such as the De Nole family executed such sculptures, particularly the large-scale monumental projects, as did Hans van Mildert (1588-1638), a friend and frequent collaborator of Rubens. None of these sculptors, however, were of any consequence in terms of quality. Only with François Duquesnoy and Artus I Quellin of the subsequent generation did a high level of sculpture production make a new start in the Low Countries. François Duquesnoy, however, spent little time in his home country, going to Rome at age 21. His presence in the north is traceable only in terms of models traveling back with his brother Hieronymus II on François Duquesnoy's death in 1643, as well as casts, drawings, and prints after his statues. Artus I Quellin, on the other hand, kept his workshop running, led by his brother-in-law Pieter I Verbrugghen (1615-86), while he was in Amsterdam sculpting the extensive Carrara marble decoration of the town hall on the Dam (now a royal palace).

Construction of the Amsterdam town hall began in 1648, to coincide with the peace treaty of Münster that ratified the separation of the Northern Netherlands from the Southern. It aimed to be the eighth wonder of the world. Built in the Baroque fashion with an immensely complex iconography drawing on biblical and classical sources, it also emulated the Temple of Solomon. Its decoration therefore had to be durable and lavish. The court architect Jacob van Campen was responsible for the project, and the sculptural decoration was given to Artus I Quellin, who gathered a large workshop around him, including his nephew Artus II Quellin (1625-1700), Rombout Verhulst (1624-98), and



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probably Bartholomeus Eggers (ca. 1630-92). The building's decoration took more than 15 years to complete, of which the two pediments, the eight high-relief gods framing the main floor, and the three reliefs in the justice chamber are the most well known. Quellin's plastic style, combining northern naturalism with the High Baroque Classicism of Duquesnoy, was also used in the Dutch Palladian buildings of the 1630s to 1660s.

Artus I Quellin also restored the level of portrait sculpture to what it had been in the hands of a Van der Schardt or a Hendrik de Keyser. Among his series of busts made during his work on the town hall is that of the burgomaster *Andries de Graeff* (1665, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). This figure also blends a high degree of naturalism and rendition of texture with the dignity afforded by the classical idiom. Twenty years earlier François Dieussart (ca. 1600-61) had already introduced Roman Baroque Classicism in the numerous court portraits that he produced for the courts of northern Europe, including the court at The Hague.

Verhulst and Eggers later built their own careers in the Northern Netherlands (as well as in northern Germany), especially with a series of monumental tombs to national heroes. Jacob van Campen designed the tomb of admiral Maarten Tromp (1654-57, Oude Kerk, Delft), which was executed by Rombout Verhulst, apart from the low relief with the battle scene and the decorative sculpture created by Willem de Keyser (1603-after 1678), one of Hendrik's sons. Pieter Xavery (ca. 1647-after 1674) seems to have specialized in terracotta figures and groups, whereas Albert Jansz. Vinckenbrinck (ca. 1604-64/65) preferred boxwood. Vinckenbrinck also created the intricate but monumental pulpit (ca. 1646-49) in the Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam. Most sculptors of the 17th and 18th centuries, however, both north and south, carved in ivory. Unfortunately, these works are primarily known from contemporary biographers, and it is today difficult to establish clear authorship because few of these pieces are signed. One exception is the 17th-century artist Francis van Bossuit (ca. 1635-92), who specialized in ivory carving.

In Antwerp, together with Artus I Quellin, Peter I Verbrugghen trained a whole generation of sculptors in Antwerp, including Peter II Verbrugghen (ca. 1640-91) and Mattheus van Beveren (1630-90). They were all active in a number of projects, carving and sculpting altars, confessionals, pulpits, choir stalls, pier statues, communion rails, rood lofts, and so on for the wealthy religious orders. Their strong family businesses enabled them to engage in huge collaborative projects, such as the high altar of the church of Sint-Jacob in Antwerp. Similarly, collaboration with joiners and other sculptors facilitated the completion of large-scale paneling, incorporating fully three-dimensional sculptural confessionals. Dynasties of sculptors were common, and they vied for the same lucrative projects, thereby often creating controversies leading to court action. In this respect Lucas Faydherbe (1617-97) should be named, as he attracted an unrivalled number of lawsuits, mainly with his patrons. His association with Rubens nevertheless brought him much fame.

Faydherbe's training in Rubens's studio meant that it took him many years to free himself from the stylistic influence of Rubens, with his often heavy, genre-like figures, which are traditionally contrasted with the classicism that Hiëronymus II Duquesnoy derived from his brother François. Scholars traditionally contrast Faydherbe's tomb monument to the archbishop Andreas Cruesen (1659-66) in Mechelen's cathedral with Hiëronymus Duquesnoy's to the bishop Antonius Triest (1651-54) in Ghent's cathedral, although the wishes of their patrons and actual similarity are rarely noted. Faydherbe did have a relatively large following, with sculptors such as Frans Langhemans (1661-ca. 1720) and Jan-Frans Boeckstuyns (ca. 1650-1734), unlike his contemporaries and rivals Hiëronymus II Duquesnoy, Nicolaas van der Veken (1637-1709) and Jan van der Steen (1633-1725).



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In the Mosan region, sculptors such as Lambert Duhontoir (1603-61) and Robert Henrard (1617-76) worked in an academic classicism akin to that prevalent at the French court. The more famous Jean Delcour adopted a fully fledged Baroque idiom, allegedly derived from Gianlorenzo Bernini during an assumed prolonged stay in Rome, although he seems to have had more contact with the work of Alessandro Algardi. His idiosyncratic understanding of the purpose, for instance, of a profusion of drapery, is most evident in works such as his *Dead Christ* (1696) in Liège's current cathedral.

The Late Baroque period in Antwerp, beginning about 1670, gradually increased the elegance and refinement of the previous Baroque vocabulary. One of the main exponents of the late Baroque, Artus Quellin brought Flemish sculpture to new heights. He in turn trained the next generation of sculptors, including Alexander van Papenhoven. Other important sculptors included Guillielmus Kerricx, Peter I Scheemakers (1652-1714), Michiel I van der Voort, and Jan Peter I van Bauscheit (1669-1728), and Henricus-Franciscus Verbrugghen (1654-1724) developed an idiosyncratic draftsmanship style that is perceptible in the realizations, both sculpted and architectural.

The end of the 17th century also marked the end of the prosperous business Flemish sculptors obtained from so many church authorities and related patrons. The restoration of the Catholic Church was nearing completion, and the fervor had evaporated. Moreover, the slackening economy of the Southern Netherlands meant that patronage became rarer. Increasing numbers of sculptors thus emigrated and contributed significantly to the field of European sculpture, including Martin van den Bogaert, alias Desjardins, Gerard van Opstal, Philippe de Buyster, Sébastien Slodtz and Jean Warin in Paris, Peter II Scheemakers and Michael Rysbrack in London, Gabriel Grupello in Düsseldorf, and Wilhelm de Groff and Aegid Verhelst in Munich. Others diversified their interests to include such activities as designing prints; an increasing number moved toward architecture. The export of garden sculpture, especially to England, remained an important source of revenue.

Classicizing tendencies or Rococo features in the early years of the 18th century were generally associated with new commissions for secular sculpture, while the few church commissions (notably from some wealthy abbeys that were being constructed) often maintained the traditional Baroque vocabulary so well adapted to the specificities of liturgical function and style of the Catholic Church. This tradition for church commissions continued into the 19th century with such sculptors as Jan Frans van Geel (1756-1830) who had the versatility to adapt their style to the particular commissions, reinterpreting Baroque vocabulary in such a way that their early 19th-century pieces have not infrequently been mistaken for late 17th-century ones.

Gradually the preeminence of Antwerp as the sculptural center of the Low Countries began to wane, as other regional centers took over, in particular Bruges, Ghent and Nivelles. Iconographic and stylistic renewal on a local basis encouraged dispersal of skill and enterprise toward these other cities. The court in Brussels continued to be an important source for commissions, which Laurent Delvaux (based in Nivelles) was largely able to tap as the officially appointed sculptor. His initial career in England and Rome largely determined his highly classical style, which he later infused with "northern" naturalism. The pulpit he carved for the cathedral of Ghent (1741-45), where for the first time he included large blocks of Carrara marble, demonstrates this blending of traditions.

In the Northern Netherlands, local sculptors, of whom many were émigrés from the south, increasingly fulfilled commissions. Jan-Baptist Xavery (1697-1742) is mainly remembered for his portrait sculpture, particularly his bronzed terracotta bust of the painter Balthasar Denner (Gemeentemuseum, The Hague), though he was a versatile sculptor in such other materials as ivory, boxwood and marble. He was court sculptor to stadholder Willem IV. His contemporaries were the productive sculptors Ignatius van Logteren (1685-1732) and his son Jan van Logteren (1709-45). Just



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before the French Revolution, sculptors, increasingly geared toward the decoration of secular projects, adopted the strict Neoclassical style, thereby largely eliminating figurative elements. Sculptors such as Willem Hendrik van der Wall (1716-90) and Anthonie Ziesenis (1731-1801) worked in the northern Netherlands, as well as, for a couple of years, the reknown French sculptor Etienne-Maurice Falconet.

The 1773 decision by Maria Theresa to abolish the Jesuit order in the Southern Netherlands marked the beginning of a dramatic period for sculptural production, not just for sculptors but also for past projects that had been destroyed. After the revolutionary wave, altars, pulpits, choir stalls, and many more church furnishings were slowly but gradually moved into the remaining parish churches. Overall, monastic buildings suffered most.

During the first half of the 19th century, Neoclassicism remained the dominant mode of expression in Netherlandish sculpture, varying from severe Greco-Roman interpretations of portraiture and mythological scenes to more sensuous and charming alternatives. Many sculptors perfected their training in Rome and Paris, and hence the dominant stylistic influence. Gilles-Lambert Godecharle (1750-1835) remains the best known of his generation. His remarkable models for the pediments of the Château de Laeken and the Palais de la Nation in Brussels (1781-84) survive, as does the plaster bust of his wife, *Jeanne Catherine Offbuys* (1807, all Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts).

Two other well-known Neoclassical sculptors spent most of their active life abroad. Mathieu Kessels (1784-1836) trained in St. Petersburg under Joseph Camberlain and in Rome under Bertel Thorvaldsen. On Kessels's death, the Belgian government bought up his complete studio contents to create a museum of sculpture. The contents included the full-size plaster model of his tomb of the Comtesse de Celles, the marble of which he erected in the Church of S. Giuliano dei Fiamminghi, Rome. His contemporary Henri-Joseph Rutxhiel (1775-1837) enjoyed much success in Paris throughout his career, after training under Jean-Antoine Houdon. Paul Joseph Gabriel (1784-1834) spent several years in Rome before and after training under Pierre Cartellier in Paris. He was subsequently appointed royal sculptor to Willem I of Holland and city sculptor of Amsterdam.

Nevertheless, the strong hold of Baroque conceptions, in all its forms from Mannerism to Rococo, continued to enjoy patronage, particularly for religious commissions. Noteworthy examples are the naturalistic oak pulpits, of which Flemish sculptors made a specialty. The 1821 pulpit in the church of SintAndries, Antwerp, by Jan-Baptist van Hool (1769-1857) and Jan-Lodewijk van Geel (1787-1852), takes the possibilities offered by a naturalistic life-size three-dimensional representation of a scene from the Gospel to its extreme.

Technically, the production of sculpture in the 19th century had not inherently changed since the 18th century. The academies continued to be the main outlets for sales during regular exhibitions for much of the century. The Geefs family rose to prominence in the 1830s; one of its many exponents, Guillaume Geefs (1805-83), was responsible for the 1833 tomb monument in Brussels' cathedral of Frédéric comte de Merode, which is noted for its naturalness and lack of idealization. Although creative originality still had to grow from an increasingly outdated Neoclassicism imported from France and Italy, signs of renewal, particularly the introduction of Romantic traits, began slowly to appear.

Belgium's independence in 1830 signaled the beginning of a gradual increase in interest by the state to promote sculpture, which took on many forms, including the erection of overtly propagandistic monuments to stress the historical continuity of the southern Low Countries in the new independent state. The over-life-size statue of *Général Augustin-Daniel Belliard* by Guillaume Geefs (1836, rue Royale, Brussels) began a long tradition reaching into the 20th century. Attention to historical accuracy and Romantic traits characterize even more Eugène Simonis's (1810-82) equestrian monument to *Godefroid de Bouillon* (1848, place Royale, Brussels). This mid 19th-century phenomenon has frequently been



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described as statuomania. National history of the Middle Ages and Renaissance in particular was beloved subject matter to all those involved in the sculpting of religiously inspired, devout Neo-Gothic or “troubadour”-style statues. Literary sources became highly fashionable.

The *Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture* (as the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium were called in the 19th century) received much attention, becoming the main national organ to promote the contemporary fine arts. Throughout the 19th century, its collections grew with works often purchased directly from the artists or at salons, and not infrequently complete studio contents, such as that of Kessels already mentioned.

The bourgeoisie followed state patronage as their income rose rapidly with industrialization. They avidly consumed, among others, domestic mythological and allegorical nudes. Charles-Auguste Fraikin (1817-93) became famous for his nudes, such as *L'Amour captif* [Captive Love] (1845, Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels and Hermitage, St Petersburg).

The increasingly widespread use of bronze, a material that faithfully reproduces malleable wax, allowed sculptors to move away from strict Neoclassical forms and to indulge in more mobile shapes and tactile surfaces. The reproducibility of the medium suited a bourgeois market well at a time that coincided with the internationalization that salons and world exhibitions encouraged.

The present-day Netherlands, the territory that was left after the separation of independent Belgium in 1830, continued to rely on the sculptors established in such cities as Antwerp and Brussels. Foreign training of Dutch sculptors was only one feature of sculptural production, which was dominated, as in Belgium, by the academies. Academies here, however, were mainly run by foreigners. Mechelen-born Louis Royer (1793-1868), for instance, became director of sculpture at the Amsterdam academy in 1837. He monopolized much of the market for historic pieces, arising from the increasing awareness of national identity after the collapse of the French regime in 1815. Romantic inspiration, for those who used that style, typically drew from Belgian precedent.

In the third quarter of the 19th century, the dominant academic style kept its momentum. Iconographies that did not fit into this model were often the only way for sculptors to produce entirely new works. Examples include images of Neapolitan youths introduced by François Rude (1784-1855) after his years of exile in Brussels. In the works on this subject by Belgian sculptors, such as Antoine Sopers's (1823-82) *Jeune Napolitain jouant à la roglia* (1859) or Adolphe Fassin's (1828-1900) *Acquainuolo napolitain* (1863, both Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels), close study from life replaced traditional models. The result was a fine realism and elegance of line. At its opposite lay the crowning of Belgian Romantic sculpture: Antoine Wiertz's (1806-65) series *Les quatre âges de l'humanité* (1860-62, Musée Wiertz, Brussels), which is heavily indebted to Rubens. Rodin spent most of his time between 1870 and 1877 in Brussels, executing public monuments, but also portrait busts, as for instance of the sculptor Paul de Vigne (1876, Musée Rodin, Paris).

Beginning in the 1870s sculptors often combined study from life with a renewed interest in the use of terracotta and the lost-wax casting technique of bronze. The Compagnie des Bronzes in Brussels, a company much favored by prominent artists, revived the bronze casting technique. The Italian Renaissance became a frequent source of inspiration, notably for Julien Dillens (1849-1904) and Paul De Vigne (1843-1901). Charles Van der Stappen's (1843-1910) early work *David* (1878, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen) and Thomas Vinçotte's (1850-1925) *Giotto* (1874, Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels) also belong to this circle.

The architect Pierre Joseph Hubertus Cuypers (1827-1921) introduced the Gothic Revival in Dutch sculpture from about 1850. This style particularly suited the decoration of his Catholic churches, whereas his secular public buildings generally received decoration inspired by 17th-century precedent,



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especially Artus I Quellin. In purely sculptural terms, the results were not always laudable. The Gothic Revival style in Belgian sculpture was virtually exclusively linked to church commissions, often intended to return to “indigenous” art and thereby eliminating Baroque church furnishings. However, some Neo-Gothic country houses also included sculpture among the decoration.

Despite the frequent re-Gothicization of churches, church furniture, including monumental altarpieces, represented such enormous investments that trade in existing 17th- and 18th-century structures frequently implied adaptations and additions that required the work of the sculptor to be blended in neatly. Sculptors such as the Antwerp-based De Cuyper brothers (unrelated to the Dutch Cuypers), who achieved high standards in 17th- and 18th-century terms (for instance, the 1845 antependium of the high altar of church of Sint-Paulus, Antwerp), filled an important market. These sculptors are just one name among creators of an enormous continuous production of devotional Neo-Baroque sculpture from the 17th century to at least World War I and that is therefore often deceptively difficult to date.

Cuypers’s need for skilled masons and cabinetmakers to fulfill his numerous commissions led him to create workshops in Roermond (1853) and later in Amsterdam for the decoration of the new Rijksmuseum building (1876-85) and the Centraal Station (1882-9). With this, Cuypers intended also to revive the sculpture-as-craft tradition within the professions of stonemasonry and wood carving. The emphasis on modeling in clay and wax in the academies prevented them from being able to teach these more practical aspects of the sculpture trade. The outcome was overwhelming, and the Rijksmuseum buildingshed workshops were transferred to rooms in the Quellinus School, an arts-and-crafts school. The design of the sculptural elements, however, was generally done outside the Quellinus School by such artists as the Leuven professor François Vermeyleen (1824-88) and the Moravian Ludwig Jünger (b. 1856). All of the sculptors involved in this project, including the only Dutch sculptor, Bartholomeus Johannes van Hove (1790-1880), were typical exponents of the academic style.

By the 1890s Cuypers’s efforts at the Quellinus School paid off significantly. Some of the more famous sculptors of the time had enjoyed their training in that workshop. Sculptors such as Joseph Mendes da Costa (1863-1939) and Lambertus Zijl (1866-1947) built their reputation on decorative sculpture in the Nieuwe Kunst style, the Dutch interpretation of Art Nouveau. Mendes da Costa found inspiration in orientalism, whereas Zijl favored an abstracted medieval style that fitted into the architecture of Hendrik Petrus Berlage (1856-1934), with whom he often collaborated. The Amsterdam exchange (*ca.* 1898-1903) is probably the most famous of Berlage’s projects. Zijl’s independent sculpture often resembles George Minne’s work in its angular and broadly modeled forms.

Just as the other branches of the arts and humanities, sculpture thrived in the last 20 years of the 19th century. Brussels became a major center of production, promoted by periodicals such as *L’Art moderne* and artists’ groups such as *Les XX*. Constantin Meunier (1831-1905) and Jef Lambeaux (1852-1908) achieved particular prominence, each with his own distinctive style. Meunier’s *Grisou* (1889, Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels) is his most famous of a whole series of statuettes and groups devoted to working-class iconography. Meunier later worked on a gigantic *Monument au Travail* [Monument to Work] (posthumously erected, now on the bassin Vergote, Laken, Brussels), with four large reliefs and colossal figures.

Lambeaux’s endeavors often returned to Giambologna’s interest in the human figure in motion: the Brabo fountain (1887) on the Grote Markt, Antwerp, is a prime example. A representation of movement is also the main motif of a monumental relief by Lambeaux, housed in a special building, erected by Victor Horta in the Cinquantenaire park. Called *Les Passions humaines* [Human Passions] (1889-99), it displays a complex iconography, including the ages of man, mostly as heroic nudes.



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During the years that Art Nouveau flourished, George Minne (1866-1941) developed an idiosyncratic style akin to contemporary Symbolist moods, with simple, fluid masses but with angular lines stressing the generally sorrowful circumstances of the iconography. His *Mère pleurant son enfant mort* [Mother Weeping her Dead Child] (1886, Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels) and his most popular work, the *Fontaine des agenouillés* [Fountain of the Kneeling Youths] (1899), demonstrate this style. Among his circle of Symbolists friends were the painter Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921) and for some time the sculptor Victor Rousseau (1865-1954).

During the height of Art Nouveau, sculptors too became increasingly interested in the decorative aspect of their work. The state encouraged polychromy and combinations of precious materials. Sculptors often integrated natural products from the Belgian colony (Congo), such as ivory, into their works to achieve unusual effects. The main exponent of this type of sculpture was Philippe Wolfers (1858-1929), a jeweler by training.

Auguste Rodin's loose modeling technique became the foremost source of inspiration for young Belgian sculptors of the early 20th century. Rik Wouters followed Rodin in favoring nervously modeled surfaces that allow complex playing with light. His stirring personal style has sometimes been labeled Fauvist, particularly works such as his *Torse de jeune femme* [Torso of a Young Lady] (1909) and his portrait of *Edgar Tytgat* (1910, both Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels). His most daring composition, *Het zotte geweld* [Crazy Violence] (1912, Middelheim, Antwerp), is based on the dancer Isadora Duncan, although he based most of his other work, such as *Huiselijke zorgen* [Domestic Worries] (1913-14), on a synthetic view of his wife's image, rather than harking back to historic precedent. The latter was a preference of Antoine Bourdelle that a sculptor like Ernest Wijnants (1878-1964) followed in looking for inspiration in Greek, Egyptian, and Assyrian art. With the advent of abstraction, Wijnants nevertheless remained faithful to his figurative art.

In Dutch sculpture the architects J.L.M. Lauweriks and K.P.C. de Bazel began an antinaturalistic style. Their interest lay in Near Eastern, Indian, and Chinese aesthetic sculptural principles, which they combined with occult and masonic principles; theosophy was also an important source. Truthfulness to materials was essential. In sculpture, Johan Altorf (1876-1955) represented this strand. Later, Mendes da Costa and Zijl collaborated with the school of Amsterdam architects. They adapted the form of their sculptures to the architects' requirements in order to use rough materials they had not used before, such as hard stones and tropical woods. Ancient Egyptian and Assyrian works, with their compressed forms, proved to be the only viable models. They also used granite and basalt for independent sculpture. Concrete, too, was introduced in the 1920s, although the most influential technical change was the introduction of direct carving, following Adolf von Hildebrand's precepts, which Dutch sculptors started to practice after frequent periods in German workshops, where potential employment had attracted them during the economic crisis at home. Among the sculptors associated with the Amsterdam school were Hendrik van den Eynde (1869-1939), Hildo Krop (1884-1970) and John Raedecker (1885-1956).

Georges Vantongerloo (1886-1965) was among the first to move toward abstract sculpture, beginning about 1917. He was briefly associated with De Stijl, but he is chiefly remembered for raising abstract experimental sculpture on an international footing and becoming a pioneer of modern sculpture. Abstract sculpture in Belgium was hardly understood at the time, despite the great effort on the part of exhibition and conference organizers and art critics. Later, in France, where he spent the rest of his life, Van Tongerloo's interests changed, and he concentrated instead on open, dynamic works.

Paul Joostens (1889-1960) similarly started to produce abstract works from 1917, including collages and reliefs in Cubist and Dada stylistic modes. Oscar Jespers (1887-1970) was probably the most



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influential of this group of abstract sculptors during the 1920s. For a while influenced by Archipenko and other Cubists, although also inspired by Flemish Expressionism and Egyptian art, he nevertheless fused these sources into personal wholes as a result of his sense for plasticity.

Jozef Cantré (1890-1957) had knowledge of Ossip Zadkine's work in the Netherlands (where he stayed during World War I), with his preferences for a closeness to the human form. He shared Henri Puvrez's (1893-1971) interest in stylized shapes. Cantré and Puvrez also followed Jespers in generally choosing the technique of direct carving, in wood or stone.

Another contemporary strand was that of the Animists Charles Leplae (1903-61) and Georges Gard (1901-84) based on more classical premises. In their move away from the fragmentation that Expressionism implied, they followed French precedent in the work of Aristide Maillol and Charles Despiau. Leplae certainly was in contact with Despiau during a stay in Paris.

The great Flemish Expressionist painter Constant Permeke (1886-1952) also tried his hand at sculpture beginning about 1935. His sculptures directly reflect the power and monumentality of his painting.

Surrealism also appeared in sculpture, with Marcel Mariën (1920-93) exhibiting in 1937 *Surrealist Objects and Poems*. The fantastic was a beloved subject in Belgian sculpture; adherents to its theories included Pierre Caille (1912-96), Octave Landuyt (b. 1922) and Carmen Dionyse (b.1921).

Such avant-garde strands were inappropriate for the numerous war memorials that World War I inspired; sculptors instead used the traditional prewar idioms of monumental sculpture to fill the cities of Belgium with memorials to war heroes. Conceived within the parameters of an architectural, site-specific, and historical framework, the works permitted little innovation, although the eventual outcome is still one of enormous diversity, mainly due to the large number of sculptors involved in these projects.

In the Netherlands of the 1920s, German Expressionism and Die Brücke influenced such groups as De Ploeg in Groningen and the work of the Rotterdam-based artist Hendrik Chabot (1894-1949). Abstraction, whether in Cubist or Constructivist forms, remained secondary, and by the 1930s, the classical strand of such artists as Maillol and a type of expressive realism became prevalent. Numerous memorials to World War II also used these styles. The focus on the anatomy of the human body became an important element of the memorials, which continued to be erected for several decades after the war by such artists as Mari Andriessen (1897-1979).

After World War II, Dutch sculptors who achieved prominence had generally at least partly trained abroad. Ossip Zadkine and to a lesser extent Jacques Lipchitz became influential sources for a sculptor such as Wessel Couzijn (1912-84), who together designed the landmark Rotterdam war memorial to the merchant navy of 1951. Shinkichi Tajiri (b. 1923) rose to prominence with his 1949 entry to the Cobra exhibition, and his *Junk* sculptures (1950-51), which used recycled materials, focussed on material culture. Other Cobra artists included Karel Appel (b. 1921) and Lotti van der Gaag (b. 1923).

The internationalism of the Exposition Universelle in Brussels in 1958 prompted many sculptors to discard traditional styles and to follow (if not lead) the international trends. Assemblages made conspicuous advancements in the 1960s. The Antwerp-based G58-Hessenhuis group (which included Paul Van Hoeydonck (b. 1925) and Vic Gentils (1919-97)) advocated an antipainting style with reject objects. Van Hoeydonck increasingly made fully three-dimensional figurative assemblages that included mechanical parts. Gentils's experiments with pieces of burned wood may be compared to Nouveau Réalisme; he expanded these a few years later into large-size compositions, such as those made from piano parts. His *Chess Set* (1966-67, Middelheim, Antwerp) is an example. Pol Bury (b. 1922) added movement to his wooden and steel works, with a weird and estranging effect.



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In the north, Joost Baljeu (1925-91), André Volten (b. 1925), and Carel Visser (b. 1928) produced three-dimensional abstract geometrical works inspired by De Stijl. A knowledge of Brancusi's work is discernible in their works as well. The scheme of setting aside a percentage of the cost of a building for art when constructing public edifices led some artists such as Peter Struycken (b. 1939) to engage in sculptural projects. In Belgium, monumental sculpture is particularly well represented by Olivier Strebelle (b. 1927) who made a specialty out of fluid bronze compositions.

During the 1960s ecology became one of the main themes permeating Happenings and other events of conceptualist artists such as Panamarenko (b. 1940) and groups such as Mass Moving. Panamarenko continued with his interest in technology, producing hot-air balloons, utopian airplanes, and racing cars. Marcel Broodthaers (1924-76) adapted forms of Nouveau Réalisme, Pop art, conceptual art, and performance art to convey his criticism of the Belgian artistic scene. He also rejected American Pop and satirized it in works such as *Casserole and Closed Mussels* (1965), contrasting his humble possessions such as household goods and mussel shells with mass production and big business. Both Panamarenko and Broodthaers cultivated a mythology of the individual whose influence continued into the 1970s.

Environment-conscious artists such as Bernd Lohaus (b. 1940) tried to achieve a different spatial and territorial experience with wooden beams and blocks of stone. The heterogeneity of installations by Leo Copers (b. 1947) addressed contrasts between art and reality. Artists often intended a combination of materials to reflect the concept of an action or even the object itself. Richard Long thus became a model for such artists as Carel Visser.

Since the 1980s artists have diversified materials and concepts and have thus distanced themselves from reality. Intuition and unexpected associations create sculptural expressions that could convey powerful inner feelings, in a world between abstraction and new figuration. On a monumental scale, Guillaume Bijl (b. 1946) displayed life-size interiors of spaces in daily life. With these avant-garde interpretations of the sculptural medium, more traditional and classical trends coexisted, such as the late portrait busts by Charlotte van Pallandt (1898-1997), although they generally relied on an older generation of sculptors because some academies (particularly at Arnhem and The Hague) had stopped teaching traditional sculptural techniques during the 1960s.

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