



Reportaje Fotográfico / Photo Report

THE MUSEUM OF COPIES^{*}

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As a pedagogical tool aimed at the intellect, the copying of preexisting models – or references – was a common practice in the nineteenth century. Given the collection of reproductions accumulated prior to the creation of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Chile, this exhibition reassess the role of these replicas at a time when notions such as creativity or originality are being questioned.

Palabras clave

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Keywords

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*“The Museum of Copies” was part of the exhibition *Tránsitos [transits]* shown at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Chile from July 14 to December 31, 2016.*

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Manufactura de Signa.
Cabeza de David, c. 1900.
Terracota, 110 × 67 × 60 cm. Reproducción (fragmento) del original de Miguel Ángel (1475-1564) entre 1501 y 1504. Actualmente es expuesta en la Galería de la Academia de Florencia. Atrás se pueden apreciar: Henriette Petit, Juventud, Goya, Bacante con Rosas, Ippolita María Sforza, Marietta Strozzi, Nefertiti, Matilde Sotomayor y Venus de Arles, entre otros. / *Signa manufacture. David's head, c. 1900. Terracotta, 110 × 67 × 60 cm. Reproduction (fragment) of Michelangelo's original (1475-1564) developed between 1501 and 1504. Currently exhibited at the Gallery of the Academy of Florence. In the back: Henriette Petit, Juventud, Goya, Bacchante with Roses, Ippolita Maria Sforza, Marietta Strozzi, Nefertiti, Matilde Sotomayor and Venus of Arles, among others.*
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2 N/A. Lorenzo de Médici (según Miguel Ángel), c. 1900. Vaciado en yeso, 182 × 75 × 90 cm. Reproducción de la obra original de Miguel Ángel (1475-1564) realizada entre 1520-1534 y localizada en la capilla de los Médici en la Sacristía Nueva de San Lorenzo en Florencia. / *Lorenzo de Médici (according to Michelangelo), c. 1900. Plaster casting, 182 × 75 × 90 cm. Reproduction of Michelangelo's original work (1475-1564) developed between 1520-1534 and located at the Medici Chapel in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo, Florence.*
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The project for Alberto Mackenna's Museum of Copies appears for the first time in 1899. Based on the imitative art that reproduced the great works of classical antiquity, the Renaissance, and even the nineteenth-century artists, it assembled the taste of the period. The purpose of these sculptures – travelling from the most important casting workshops in Europe or from museums such as the Louvre – was to complete and expand both the education and the aesthetic sense of Chilean artists in the Painting Academy and the Sculpture Course, according to the modernizing program of the time.



3 N/A. San Jorge (según Donatello), c. 1900. Vaciado en yeso, 227 × 76 × 50 cm. Reproducción de la obra original de Donatello (c. 1386-1466) de los años 1416-1417. En la actualidad se conserva en el Museo Nacional de Bargello en Italia. / *St. George (according to Donatello), c. 1900. Plaster casting, 227 × 76 × 50 cm. Reproduction of Donatello's original work (c. 1386-1466) dated 1416-1417. Currently kept at the Bargello National Museum, Italy.*

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The practice of copying was intended for the artist's intellect rather than his/her sensitivity, since it sought to promote the careful study of the forms and techniques of classical sculpture – with a prevailing interest in erudition instead of creativity.

Thus, through these sculptures that narrated the history and evolution of Western Art styles – from antiquity to modern times – the academies encouraged copying those classical bodies, their anatomy and volume, which in turn were associated with values and ideals that republican society posed as moralizing. The



4 N/A. El niño de la espina, s XIX. Vaciado en bronce y patinado, 76 x 50 x 58 cm. Reproducción del original griego de la época helenística (330 a. C. - 30 a. C.) y que se conserva en los Museos Capitolinos de Roma. / *Boy with thorn, nineteenth century. Bronze casting, 76 x 50 x 58 cm. Reproduction of the Greco-Roman original belonging the Hellenistic period (330 BC - 30 BC) and preserved at the Capitoline Museums in Rome.*

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5 Taller de moldeado de Louvre. Niké desatándose la sandalia, c. 1900. Vaciado en yeso, 96,5 x 55 x 16 cm. Reproducción del original Niké – representada como Victoria – desatándose la sandalia (427 a. C.), atribuida al taller de Fidias. Se encuentra en el Museo de la Acrópolis de Atenas. Originalmente se localizaba en la balaustrada del Templo de Atenea-Niké. / *Louvre molding workshop. Nike adjusting her sandal, c. 1900. Plaster casting, 96.5 x 55 x 16 cm. Reproduction of the original Nike – represented as Victoria – adjusting her sandal (427 BC), attributed to Phidias workshop. Located at the Acropolis Museum, Athens. Originally located at the parapet of the Temple of Athena-Nike.*

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6 Ernesto GAZZERI. Venus arrodillada, c. 1900. Labrado en mármol, 88 x 44 x 50 cm. Reproducción de la obra original griega del s III a. C. En la actualidad se conserva una copia romana en el Museo del Vaticano. / Ernesto GAZZERI. Venus kneeling, c. 1900. Bonded marble, 88 x 44 x 50 cm. Reproduction of the Greek original s III BC. A Roman copy is currently kept at the Vatican Museum.

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intention was to didactically educate the masses on the Humanist culture – although restricted to the Western European world – as a discursive strategy of the elite.

Of the more than 550 pieces that constituted the Museum of Copies – commissioned by the government to Alberto Mackenna in 1901 and occupying the entire hall of the Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago – today only about 40 remain. Decorations, paintings, lithographs, prints and drawings – donated, acquired or originated in the former Academy – have been added to the sculptures, complementing this aesthetic view of art.

Until the twentieth century the copy circulated without distinction, increasing collections and composing a cartography of images which redefined Chilean public and private spaces, especially among a bourgeois society that sought in these works a way to cultivate the taste for beauty.

Hence, the copy transcends, pushing the boundaries between veracity, the original and its multiple reproductions as well as the function in the process of apprehending the artwork and the collective images. How did these works influence the education and visual construction of Chilean artists, what iconographic transfers operated in the artists' studios, and how does this influence the creation of a museum repertoire led by the same agents and intermediaries that enabled the acquisitions of these works, are some of the questions that arise after the first stage of research on the collection. **ARQ**



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7 N/A. San Jorge (según Donatello), c. 1900. Vaciado en yeso, 227 × 76 × 50 cm. Reproducción de la obra original de Donatello (c. 1386-1466) de los años 1416-1417. / *St. George (according to Donatello), c. 1900. Plaster casting, 227 × 76 × 50 cm. Reproduction of Donatello's original work (c. 1386-1466) dated 1416-1417.* © Cristian Valenzuela Pinto

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