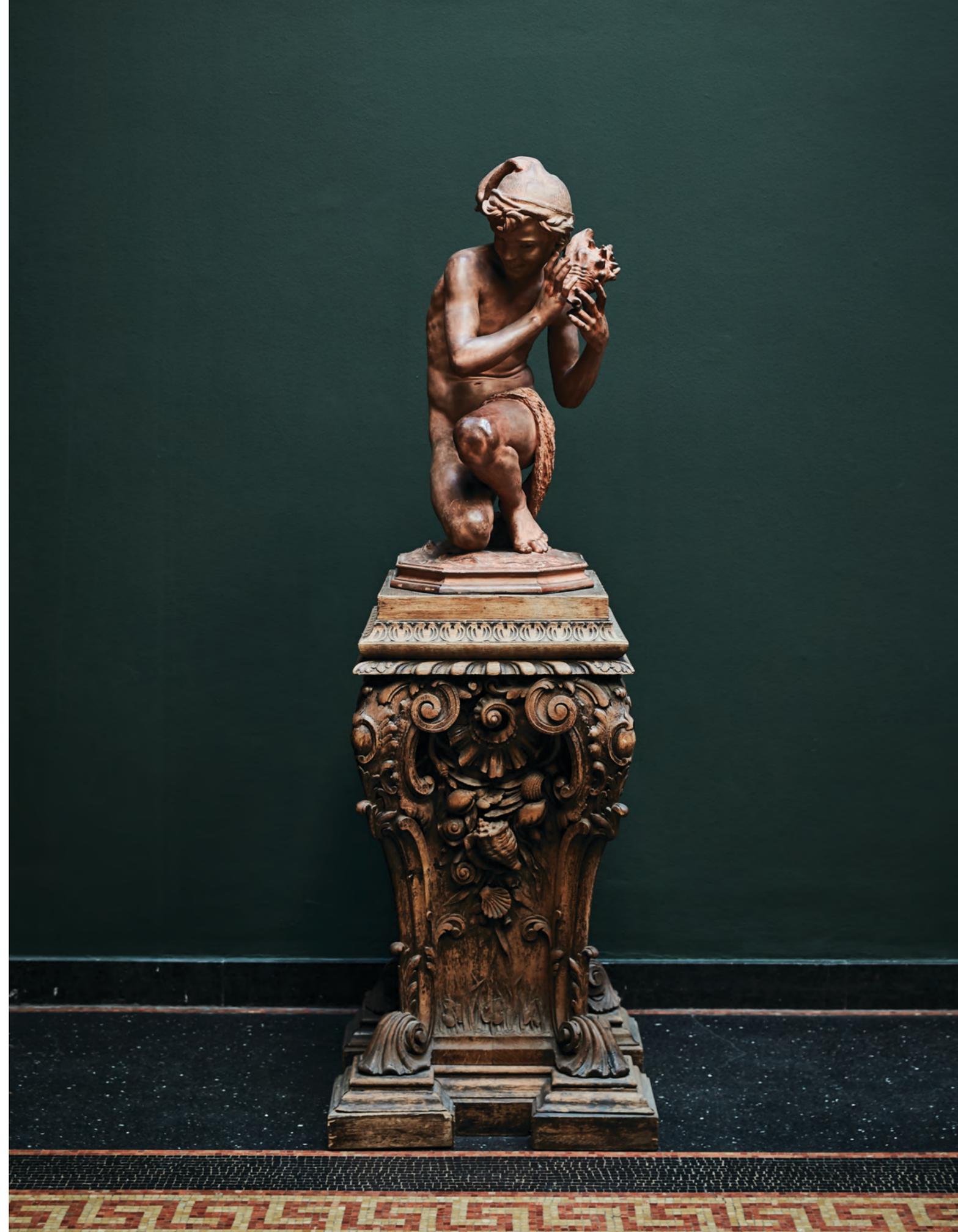




At Copenhagen's Glyptotek, one expects the collection of classical antiquities and French and Danish masters to come alive in the early hours—for the bust of Nero to leer after Degas' *Dancer*, or for Gauguin's *Tahitian Woman* to square off against van Gogh's *Landscape from Saint-Rémy*, as the two masters may once have done following a glass of pastis. The Glyptotek tells the tale of 10,000 different objects. Here, from sarcophagi to sculptures, the weight of history hangs at every turn. A statue of Pompey looks on with ill-disguised conceit, thrilled that his

rival Julius Caesar was stabbed to death at his feet; nearby, fellow Roman emperor Caligula still appears disheartened that his statue was thrown into the Tiber by his citizens; elsewhere, a hundred disembodied heads goggle like onlookers in Elysium. Visitors can, in fact, visit the museum after hours. "Slow Evenings" are held once per month, with interactive themes that have thus far covered time, power, boundaries, yearning, desire, madness, death and decay, through lectures, films, music, discussions and dinners.





Left: The god Apollo, c. A.D. 150, is shown with a lyre and the sacred snake, Python.

Right: Relief sculptures from the Greek and Roman Sculpture exhibition.



For instance, the recent death-themed event included a burial ritual by Taiwanese performer Ying-Hsueh Chen, a talk about ghost research by Swedish composer Carl Michael von Hausswolff and a communal dinner of veal fricassee served in its own grave.

Perhaps the first story that needs to be told is that of the museum's creator, Carl Jacobsen—the Danish classicist who paired a passion for ancient art with extraordinarily deep pockets (his father founded the Carlsberg brewing empire). After acquiring his first Greek sculpture, the *Rayet Head*, Jacobsen continued to purchase mummies, tablets, jugs and mugs until, by 1882, his winter garden contained more sculptures than plants. The Danish public was invited to peek inside and a de facto museum was born.

By 1887, however, more viewing galleries had been added by Vilhelm Dahlerup, the Haussmann-meets-Hadid of his day, to house the Glyptotek's French and Danish art collections. A few years later, Jacobsen asked Danish architect Hack Kampmann to create another space for his classical antiquities: a four-winged neoclassical palace sharing artworks from Pompeii to Palmyra in a series of grand galleries.

A century later and the Glyptotek has acquired its own legends. "A visit to the chamber with our Egyptian mummies is spooky," says Flemming Friberg, the museum's director. "The long descent into this room has a dramatic effect, like entering a real tomb. We've had visitors fainting—especially when they discover one of the mummies' fingers sneaking out of the linen bandages."

The Egyptian area of the Kampmann Wing hosts the museum's oldest works. There's Ramses II holding hands with creator god Ptah, proving to all Egypt that king and god are one and the same. The magic eyes daubed on the tomb of Nekhet-Kawi allowed the late Egyptian to see into the land of the living. Her gaze now follows you around the room.

The artistic timeline from Egypt flows into Ancient Greece. An Etruscan urn is adorned with a sphinx. There are artifacts from Italian tombs, where chariots, shields, weapons and incense were buried along with the dead. Just as Greece copied the culture of Egypt, Rome then mimicked Greece. Portrait statues of prominent Romans are clad in Greek togas to hint at old money sophistication. Note the sculpture of Anatolian earth mother Cybele, who was later adopted by the Roman state as part of its own hegemonic cult.

Respite is offered at the café in the Winter Garden between the two wings. A soaring dome shelters palm trees, ferns and creepers. Fountains pouring over sculptures are reminiscent of Tivoli Gardens or Versailles.





“Darker salons host the gaunt, twisted, tied and frigid figures that hail from the colder north. Theirs is a tale of mythology and morality, of dark nights and frozen dawns.”

According to Danish architect Louis Becker, who helped design the area, the inspiration was drawn directly from the museum's collection. “Our painters from icy Scandinavia crossed the Alps into Italy to be overwhelmed with wine and beautiful women,” says Becker. “So our staircase that leads to the new extension walks visitors up into the light like the ascent to Italy's mountains, warmth and sunshine.”

Visitors are guided to these stairs, which lead around the museum to the roof terrace. Now, it's de rigueur for all new Glyptotek employees to stroll up the staircase and kiss the statue of a goddess at the top.

Through neoclassical granite columns and past Renaissance salons, the Dahlerup Wing, the oldest section of the Glyptotek, is dedicated to French and Danish art. The poised poses of Degas invite study, the lusty curves of Rodin suggest laughter and love. Jacobsen became bewitched by Rodin at a French exhibition in Copenhagen in 1888 and ended up buying 24 sculptures directly from the artist. The Glyptotek's current collection of 43 pieces is unique outside of France.

The Danish sculptures are more Nordic. Darker salons host the gaunt, twisted, tied and frigid figures that hail from the colder north. Theirs is a tale of mythology and morality, of dark nights and frozen dawns, not the playful sensuality of the Canova sculptures that soak up the sun in the neighboring salons.

Refreshingly, the Danish Golden Age completes the artistic timeline with a return trip to Rome. Eckersberg, Købke, Hansen and Bendz colored their canvases with inspiration from trips to Italy: Capri, Venice, Naples, Pompeii. In *View of the Via Sacra*, Eckersberg encapsulates the *bel paese en plein air*. Hansen's *Resting Model*, lounging on a divan, was modeled not in Copenhagen but in the sultry half-light of Rome.

A last tour by the security guards and the Glyptotek closes for another day. All the exhibits can now come out to play.



Left: The museum's French and Danish sculpture wing is an exploration of the human body.

Right: 'Winged Female Demon', 6th century B.C., from the Greek and Roman Sculpture exhibition.



Below: The head of Zeus from the late 2nd century.



