

## Hans Arp's *Scrutant l'horizon* in the Kunstmuseum Den Haag

Plaster played an essential role in the practice of the French-German artist Hans Arp (1886-1966). The malleable material allowed Arp to translate his characteristic fluid and organic forms into space. The plaster forms served as working models in the studio, and Arp worked innovatively with the material in a tactile and cyclical form-finding process. As a precept, Arp – or one of the assistants or artisans he worked with – created at least two plasters of the same form so they could be reappropriated and reused in new work.

In 1963, Arp was approached by Director Louis J. F. Wijsenbeek from the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag (Today: Kunstmuseum Den Haag) to create a monumental sculpture for the Bezuidenhoutseweg in The Hague. In 1964, Arp made a maquette in plaster for the larger public sculpture. The plaster was made to match the surrounding area, and consists of three existing forms, reappropriated and adapted from earlier works, and one new form stacked provisionally atop one another. It was among the first of Arp's plasters to enter a museum collection. It has long been discussed if the plasters from Arp's studio can be considered originals. Still, the only object that merits this status with absolute certainty is the *Scrutant l'horizon* plaster.

In 1965, the form was enlarged and hewn in stone, and a year later, it was installed in the Mariahoeve area, where it still adorns today. In 1970, the plaster was used as a casting model for posthumous bronzes at the Dutch foundry A Cire Perdue in Velp. Last year, one of these bronzes was donated to the Kunstmuseum Den Haag. All publicly accessible *Scrutant l'horizons* – plaster, bronze, and stone – are now in The Hague.

In 2022, I researched the biography and provenance of the plaster; it was restored by conservator Janneke Escher and x-rayed and analyzed by Dr. Ineke Joosten at the Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed. The research was carried out in the realm of the three-year research project into Hans Arp's studio practice, conducted as a collaboration between the Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp and the Gerhard-Marcks-Haus. At the conference and in the essay, I would appreciate the opportunity to present and discuss this important object and the artists' innovative studio and working process.

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