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CONSTANTIN MEUNIER AND LEUVEN (1887-1897)

A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP¹

MARJAN STERCKX

I don't know whether Leuven will remember much about the great soul who lived among its ancient buildings, but what I do know is that Meunier always spoke with tenderness of the ancient city where his work reached unprecedented heights.²

A hundred years after his death Leuven is actively remembering the time when Constantin Meunier (1831-1905) lived in its ancient buildings. Undoubtedly the best known 19th century sculptor of which Belgium can boast, he began and ended his career in Brussels.³ The fact that his studio home in Ixelles, the district in Brussels where he spent the last five years of his life, has been set up as the Constantin Meunier Museum links the artist all the more with the city of his birth. Yet, at the height of his career Meunier also lived for eight years in Leuven and taught there for almost ten years.

There are usually explicit, but summary, references in biographies to this 'Leuven period' (the dates of which seem to vary) as nevertheless being his most fertile period artistically. In fact several chapters, sub-sections and even short articles have been devoted to this.⁴ This essay highlights the details of that episode in Leuven from the point of view of history rather than art history. It examines the nature of Meunier's relationship with the city and how it regarded him, what brought him to Leuven and drove him away again and the role his time in Leuven played in his artistic career. To what extent was this a love-hate relationship?

1. DOES LEUVEN WANT MEUNIER?

Not particularly wanted as a teacher

With the support of the government, Leuven first called on the services of Constantin Meunier around 1874 for the decoration of the newly built neo-Gothic church of St. Joseph's.⁵ He completed three or four massive religious paintings (fig. 8) there and, according to his biographer André Fontaine, did this 'with love'.⁶ Nonetheless, Meunier had been applying in vain since 1876 for a job as a teacher at the Leuven Academy of Fine Arts. In 1883, while Meunier was living in Seville for six months, his wife, a pianist originally from Paris, discussed with the director of the Leuven academy, the painter Louis de Taeye (1822-1891), a potential job as teacher of painting for her husband at the academy. From Seville Meunier told her on 1 February 1883 what he had written to the director.⁷ He informed De Taeye that he was very keen on the prospect, but that he would stand formally as a candidate only once he had been assured in advance of winning. For, after defeats in former applications to the academies of Brussels (as long ago as 1863), Liège

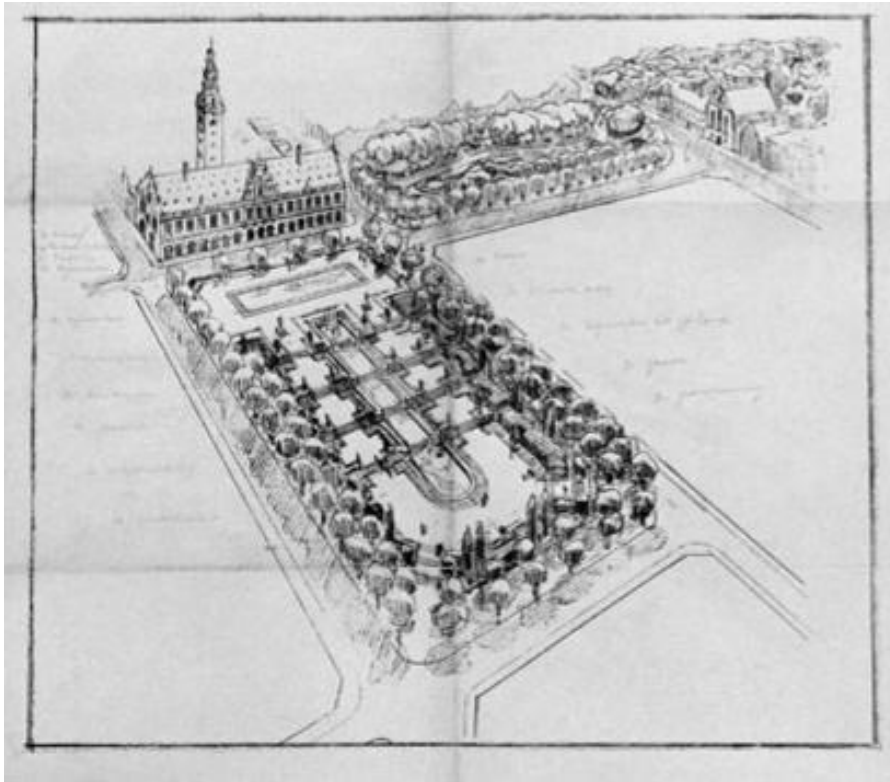


FIG 7
DESIGN FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE "VOLKSPLEIN" (THE CURRENT MGR. LADEUZESQUARE) AND THE "GRAANMARKT" (CURRENT HERBERT HOOVERSQUARE) TO A MUSEUM OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER BY HENRI LACOSTE. NEXT TO THE DRAWING, THE TITLES OF MEUNIERS SCULPTURES ARE WRITTEN AS THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN PLACED. (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES, MA 14.442, NOT DATED [1937-1938]).
(PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)

and Mons, he did not want to be rejected again. He probably never wrote an official application because it was impossible to guarantee him the job. This uncertainty is also evident in a letter dated April 1883 from Seville to his friend, the Naturalist writer Camille Lemonnier (1844-1913), who had married Constantin Meunier's niece Valentine a few months earlier: 'We too might well be going to Leuven, but we can't be sure yet. If this were to happen, which would be really nice, it would be good to meet.'⁸

Yet three years later Meunier put in for another job at the academy in Leuven, this time for the post of director which had become vacant owing to the resignation of Louis de Taeye. Meunier, who was at his wits' end with serious financial problems, was really hopeful of the job in Leuven, even though he associated it with a certain 'academic dullness': '[...] I am resting my last and only hope on the position of director in Leuven, which would at least put bread on the table, which I shall soon have to go without in this beautiful country. [...] In short, I'm at my wits' end and I hope just a little bit, or rather, a lot, that Leuven will want me, unless my art is regarded as a crime there too and I do not possess the necessary academic dullness for such a post.'⁹

Not without a certain irony, disappointment and perhaps even bitterness, Meunier complained to his friend Edmond Picard (1836-1924), who, as well as being a lawyer, was an art critic and co-editor of the magazine *L'Art Moderne* together with Octave Maus and Emile Verhaeren, about the political wrangling that was always associated with the appointments. He gave Picard an account numbering four pages after a visit to Leuven, where he had met a few of the protagonists in the appointments game. He called mayor Vander Kelen and alderman Marguery, both of whom promised him their support, charming gentlemen, but their comments made him suspicious.¹⁰ Meunier feared that he would be kept in suspense, as there now at the last minute turned out to be another candidate who had already been teaching at the academy 'for at least fifteen years'. So Meunier was afraid – rightly as it turned out – that he would meet with the preference of the 'middle class head of the local administration' and he himself would be depicted as an artist with a certain merit, who would not, however, make a good director, which in Meunier's opinion boiled down to a man without any talent other than for writing reports.

Meunier even expressly asked Picard for support via his magazine. In September 1886 he wrote: 'It may well be, my dear Picard, that one of these days, when these much vaunted nominations officially appear, I shall ask for your cooperation in securing my success.'¹¹ After his unpleasant experience in Leuven this plea was all the more forceful and desperate: 'If you think there is anything else you can do, please do it. But I have no idea what else you can do. – I can assure you that on my part, as you can see, I am not sitting around doing nothing either. I am doing my very best, but unfortunately without very much hope.'¹² Picard was prepared to defend his friend, in whom he steadfastly believed. He therefore asked the artist to keep him informed about the situation in Leuven, so that he could support him.¹³ But his support was (still) of no avail, as once again Meunier's fears were proved right and his attempt was unsuccessful. It was the 'phantom candidate' Gerard Vander Linden (1830-1911), a sculptor who had been a teacher at the Leuven academy since 1865, who in January 1887 walked off with the title of director.¹⁴

The frustrated Meunier, now suffering from a serious lack of money, via Edmond Picard thus had a hand in the reports supporting his own cause in *L'Art Moderne*. In some articles Leuven came in for some extremely sharp criticism on this matter.¹⁵ In particular a 'certain Leuven

committee' got it in the neck: it was accused of having given the district council a list of three candidates, on which Meunier's name did not even appear!¹⁶ Only mayor Vander Kelen, who openly expressed his preference for Meunier, was spared from criticism and was even complimented. However, *L'Art Moderne's* revulsion for the narrow-mindedness and 'backwardness' of Leuven, also at an artistic level, was clear from its acerbic comments: 'Truly, we can now say goodbye to any hope we continued to nurture that there was still a province to be found in Belgium, which has remained spared from the most ridiculous routine prejudices. There are ineradicable hardcores of stupidity. You still come across people there who believe in history painting and thoroughly look into whether the candidates have any debts. What they want most is a good family man, a good husband and an impeccable civic guard. As if art wouldn't work without keeping one's house in good order. What's more, they still believe in the *Prix de Rome*, in the good students of the academy and the *protégés* of Mr Gallait. They have no idea that all this is ancient history, an art of painting which has now been buried with all due ceremony and about which no one speaks any longer, unless it's to say that it is dead, in no way capable of being resurrected and incomprehensible to future generations [...].'¹⁷

As an endorsement of these accusations, the magazine did not applaud the visit by the members of the committee to the studios of all the candidates, but in fact dismissed it as a low trick, in which the committee's main concern had been to check out the tidiness of the candidates, as though a disorderly studio indicated a similar policy as director. Taking Brussels as the criterion for artistic innovation, the magazine emphasised how much Leuven was the opposite pole to this and how far away from it it was, 'not five paces away, but a hundred or even two hundred paces, no even as far away as the Congo!' They even poked fun at the fact that, even though it had definitely decided to put a painter and not a sculptor at the head of the academy, Leuven had ultimately chosen a sculptor anyway.¹⁸ The columnists believed that Leuven could be saved from wasting away artistically only by attracting a nationally and internationally respected artist from the capital and pressed Meunier's case. So the weekly periodical zealously advocated the award of the post of teacher of painting, meanwhile also made vacant by the retirement of the painter Louis Daels (1826-1893), to Meunier.¹⁹

Even though letters of application had been coming in since the beginning of November 1886 following this retirement, Meunier did not write his official version to the Leuven college of mayor and aldermen until 29 March 1887.²⁰ But this was preceded by a great deal of political manoeuvring. On 12 March 1887, just over a week after the terrible gas explosion at the Quaregnon mine, which claimed the lives of 113 mine-workers and left a deep impression on Meunier and his work (see in particular *The Firedamp* (fig. 9)), he wrote to mayor Leopold Vander Kelen. In this letter he asked his supporter if he could at last give him a decisive answer about his appointment, which they had previously discussed together in his studio in Brussels.²¹ Meunier repeated that he was prepared to come and live in Leuven and make his contribution to the teaching of art. The rental contract on his house in Brussels was coming to an end anyway and he now wanted finally to have some security. It appeared now to be just a matter of formal authorisation, as can also be seen from a long digression by Meunier on obtaining a suitable room for his lessons.

However, in his detailed reply of 16 March 1887 the mayor made it clear that he had already been doing all he could for some time to press Meunier's case at the college of aldermen and to get the appointment off the ground, but that Meunier would still have to be patient for a while. Anyway, the mayor could not guarantee anything because the decision was out of his hands, but would be placed before the college of aldermen again the following week and they would then have to reach a definitive solution.²² He reassured Meunier by saying that he stood the greatest chance this time, on the explicit condition that he would move with his family and studio to Leuven. The mayor also hoped that the vacancy would not be advertised, which would only delay the procedure even further. That was exactly what happened, though, because at the last minute advertisements appeared the same month in the local *Journal des Petites Affiches*, in the liberal daily and weekly papers *L'étoile belge* and *Le Libéral*, and in *Le Précurseur*.²³ The advertisement went as follows: 'Academy of Fine Arts. The position of professor of painting is to be awarded. The incumbent will have to live in Leuven and open a studio there. Minimum salary: 3000 fr. Maximum salary: 4000 fr. Applications must be submitted to the secretary of the municipal council at the latest by next Monday 4 April.'²⁴ A few other artists replied to this, but one wonders whether this campaign was not done mainly *pro forma*, as the letters had to arrive at the latest by 4 April and the appointment was made the following day.²⁵

At the meeting of the municipal council on 5 April 1887, from which the mayor was absent, Constantin Meunier, who was by then already 56 years old, was finally almost unanimously chosen from seven candidates as teacher of painting at the Leuven academy.²⁶ This may have been partly under pressure from the capital by way of the weekly *L'Art Moderne*, which gave its compliments, even before Meunier had been officially informed of the decision by letter (on 14 April), both to the artist and to the city, in its edition of 10 April.²⁷

Networking, lobbying and political manoeuvres behind the scenes therefore played a not unappreciable role in Meunier's ultimate appointment. The official story, though, was that Meunier owed his appointment to the numerous successes he had already clocked up, more than his competitors at any rate. This was of course by no means unjustified anyway. Constantin Meunier, who began his career as a sculptor in the studio of the sculptor Charles-Auguste Fraikin (1817-1893), but very soon chose painting, with François-Joseph Navez (1787-1869), had been exhibiting at the Triennial Salons in Belgium since he was twenty years old and since 1861 also regularly in Paris. For more than thirty years he had shown almost exclusively paintings, but in 1885 he exhibited, for the first time since 1851, sculptural works again in Brussels at *Les XX* and at the Antwerp Salon. These were wax sculptures, including a *Puddler* (fig. 10) and *Docker*, two of his best known sculptures which even at that time were already being greeted with praise by the contemporary press. In 1886 his *Hammersmith* received an honourable mention at the Paris Salon and Meunier did not miss the opportunity to allude to this in his official letter of application to Leuven city council: 'I have already informed the council of the titles I can call on to support my petition: a long, and I may say, well-filled artistic career, with my artworks in the foremost museums in the country, and, furthermore, mentioned as a sculptor at the Paris Salon in 1886, etc., etc.'²⁸ In the spring of the following year, the time of his appointment in Leuven, his *Puddler* was being shown in the Salons of Brussels and Paris.

In the Salon catalogues his address in Brussels was still given, but in the Paris Salon catalogue of 1888 it changed to '*Rue des Récollets, 55*' (*Minderbroedersstraat*) in Leuven. After 1891 the address in Leuven was to change again to *Statiestraat* (in 1918 renamed *Bondgenotenlaan* [Allies Avenue] in remembrance of the allies), which was in a higher location.²⁹ The reason for this was the great flood which swept the city on 25 January of that year, damaging Meunier's house and possibly also his studio and various artworks.³⁰ He wrote about this in, among others, a letter dated 9 February 1891: '[...] this circular reached me in Leuven, at about the same time as the floods which destroyed my home.'³¹

A mind of his own

As the formal reply to the notification of his official appointment, in April 1887 Constantin Meunier let it be known by return that he was very grateful: 'I wish to express my great appreciation and thank you for the confidence you have shown in me by entrusting me with these important duties. Believe me, gentlemen, I shall make every effort to earn that confidence.'³² Amazingly, after all the bickering Meunier still did not immediately set about gaining the confidence of the city council and the academy. Even though his teaching mandate was supposed to start on 29 April 1887, after the Easter holidays, and half way through April he had been asked to get in touch with the new director of the academy to organise it, the college of mayor and aldermen sent him a warning letter as late as on 13 June 1887. From this it appears that Meunier had still not done anything about installing himself in the city and starting his lessons there: 'Our college understands that you have still made no moves towards taking up your duties. However, in the opinion of the director of the school, it is of great importance that your lessons in painting are organised immediately.'³³ Pointing out that, according to the contract and administrative tradition, payment should not start until Meunier actively set to work, they expressly encouraged him finally to get in touch with the administrative offices and the director Vander Linden, to arrange when he was to come to Leuven.³⁴ Clearly shocked by this letter, Meunier responded immediately, for two days later he started his lessons and took them regularly from that day onwards.³⁵

In the same warning letter from the city council Meunier was asked about his promise to set up his own studio in the city, to which he was obliged by his appointment contract. Although Meunier was initially given three months deferment to look for suitable accommodation in Leuven, half way through June – perhaps because they could not see it being done – the city made him a generous proposal: a studio was made available for him. The neglected octagonal university anatomy amphitheatre with tall windows, on the corner of the actual *Kapucijnenvoer* and *Minderbroedersstraat*, the street where long ago Dirk Bouts (circa 1410-1475) had lived, would be equipped as a private studio for him (fig. 11).³⁶ As a threat it was also added at the same time that this allowance could be withdrawn at any time. In return for the concession, the advance costs for the necessary basic repair work and initial equipping, it was proposed that he should augment the artistic collections of Leuven museum, under the supervisory eye of the art-connoisseur mayor.³⁷ The college of aldermen had already decided on this by 31 May 1887: '[...] In exchange for this benefit the artist shall give to the municipal museum one or two

paintings, the subjects of which are to be advised by the mayor, who will also supervise receipt of them.³⁸

Meunier responded enthusiastically to this proposal, declared himself in agreement with the conditions and at the end of the summer of 1887 installed his family in a house opposite the studio.³⁹ On 10 September 1887 Meunier wrote to Picard from Leuven, obviously delighted with his almost completed studio: 'I am waiting with great impatience for my studio here to be completed, so that I can concentrate my efforts on a great work. This studio, my dear friend, will be simply fantastic.'⁴⁰ However, this reasonable proposal for repayment in kind was later to lead to conflicts between the city and Meunier, who did not comply with this agreement of his own accord.

The official letter confirming Meunier's appointment and annual salary of 4,000 francs, also contained packages of subjects in which he was expected to lecture: (1) historical composition, (2) painting from nature, (3) decorative painting, (4) history of art and the archaeology of art, (5) picturesque and aerial perspective and finally (6) painting for girls.⁴¹ This last subject was supposed to form part of a course for girls, introduced for the first time in the academic year 1887-1888.⁴² This meant that Leuven was offering one of the first public art courses for girls in Belgium, as the doors of the Academies of Fine Arts in Antwerp and Brussels did not open officially to female students until 1889, after a great many petitions, and in Ghent until 1900.⁴³ It was the following academic year when Meunier ultimately first taught one of the four subjects offered to girls, to be precise 'Painting from nature, flowers, accessories, etc', which in fact only one student attended, although there were at least ten girl students.⁴⁴ Although Meunier was therefore not yet teaching this last subject in 1887-'88 he was employed at the time for seven subjects instead of six, as appears from the municipal council's printed administrative reports.⁴⁵

However, a note after the subject 'picturesque perspective' states that this was not given. This short message managed to produce an extensive exchange of letters between Meunier and the disgruntled mayor and his college of aldermen. Meunier was accused of having reneged on teaching this subject: '[...] In spite of repeated communications you have to date neglected to perform that part of your duties. The college of mayor and aldermen is sorry to have to express to you its dissatisfaction about this. This situation, about which we are justifiably making a complaint, cannot possibly be repeated in the next academic year, and therefore strict measures will have to be taken [...].'⁴⁶ When there was still no response from Meunier, three months later, at the start of the new academic year, he was sent a reminder, with the additional threat that his salary would be reduced if a colleague had to take his place.⁴⁷

Once again an agitated, but clearly piqued, Meunier responded quickly, with a four-page argument, to prevent his salary being cut. He defended himself by stating that the city council had been wrongly informed, because he had indeed taken the subject 'aerial and picturesque perspective', but as he saw it: as a practising artist and not as a theorising mathematician.⁴⁸ Moreover, he thought that if they chose to employ a painter of no small reputation he should no longer be made responsible for teaching the basic principles of perspective. In his opinion such an artist could certainly perfect the students' application of perspective while they were painting. Nevertheless, after this incident Meunier's package of subjects was rearranged to some

extent and Louis Boschmans, who had applied for the job of teacher of painting at the same time as Meunier, from now on taught the subject 'picturesque perspective', but without any loss of salary for Meunier.⁴⁹ Just over a year later director Vander Linden let the mayor know that Meunier, like all the other teachers, had been giving his lessons regularly since the beginning of the new academic year.⁵⁰

At the beginning of January 1891 mayor Vander Kelen once again had to remind Meunier that he had promised to give two paintings to the museum in exchange for his studio and that it had already been agreed that he would hand over two of the three recently exhibited large paintings for the town hall: *The descent into the coalmine* and *Departure from the coalmine*.⁵¹ So he asked Meunier to have them delivered. This prompted the agitated artist to immediately take up his pen to – in his view – put a few things straight.⁵² According to him, it was not two paintings, but only one. Furthermore, he wished to delicately remind the mayor that he had invited him to his studio before the exhibition to choose one and that at that time the mayor had shown a preference for the large *Borinage Landscape*. Meanwhile, without having thought he had further committed himself in the presence of the mayor, he had sold the two paintings he was now describing. He therefore had only two paintings left of like importance: the large *Borinage Landscape* and *Women Mineworkers*, one of which the mayor could come and choose. If he did not care for the subjects, Meunier was willing to make another work, but in that case for a later date.

After a visit to Meunier's studio around 22 January 1891 it was agreed that Meunier would donate *Women Mineworkers* to the city and that the painting would be collected as soon as possible.⁵³ This was done at the beginning of February, therefore after the great flood of 25 January, which evidently did not damage the work. In his letter of 17 February the director of works confirmed that *Women mineworkers* had been moved to the hall of the college of aldermen.⁵⁴ However, he took advantage of the opportunity to remind them of Meunier's proposal to make a new painting, which seemed to him a better idea, in spite of the outstanding quality of the artwork he had received, since it would be possible to choose a subject that had some association with the city of Leuven. He specifically suggested taking the floods of 25 January as his subject, as this had the advantage that an important event in the history of the city would be recorded.⁵⁵

Less than a week later and, with increasing displeasure, two and three months later the mayor put this proposal to Meunier,⁵⁶ who was obviously less enthusiastic about it – after all, they already had his *Women Mineworkers* and he had been obliged to move because of the flood – since he did not reply until 26 May.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly with reason, but perhaps also with a sly dig, he explained his late response by the large amount of work for his exhibits for the Salons in Paris and Berlin. He agreed to perpetuate the floods of 1891 and to present the mayor with a sketch before long. In no uncertain terms the mayor made it plain that the promise had been noted and that he expected the sketch soon, probably fearful that it would again take some time.⁵⁸ Which is what happened, as only after repeated urging did Meunier deliver his sketch to the town hall on 12 March 1892.⁵⁹ In order to set things in motion at last, Meunier was invited to the next meeting of the college of aldermen on 21 March to discuss the execution of his sketch. The mayor must have been quite exasperated with the artist whose candidature he had once

defended, for once again he had to send several reminders before Meunier got in touch again at the beginning of March 1894: the painting would be ready by September...⁶⁰ He finally made his gift of *Floods in Leuven* (fig. 12) in 1900!⁶¹

In spite of all these difficulties, the Leuven Catholic Circle still chose Constantin Meunier in 1893 for the commission for a public monument in honour of Father Damian or Jozef De Veuster (1840-1889) (fig. 2).⁶² Not entirely in line with the true build of the missionary, the tall, slim Armand Thiéry (1868-1955) acted as model for the figure of Father Damian.⁶³ Considering the style and iconography of his other sculptural works it is no surprise that Meunier had difficulty reproducing the typical long, enveloping habit, but he found a way out by allowing a leprosy-sufferer, reminiscent of the suffering Christ, to shelter underneath it.

Even though Meunier also obtained an important commission from Brussels in 1893 for sculptures for the façade of Notre-Dame de la Chapelle and he was at that time fully employed by commission of the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts jointly with the sculptor Charles Van der Stappen (1843-1910), on the large-scale decoration project for the Botanical Gardens in Brussels, completing his *Souer* (fig. 13) for this in 1893, the bronze Damian was already finished by the beginning of 1894.⁶⁴ In any case Meunier exhibited the group at the Triennial Salon in Antwerp, next to his *Puddler* and *The Firedamp*, both already the property of the Belgian state. In the Salon catalogue it was stated below the title of the Damian statue that it was intended for the city of Leuven. The following year the plaster model (fig. 14) was shown at the Salon of Ghent and a bronze reduction in Brussels at *La Libre Esthétique* and in Paris. Visitors to the Paris Salon were able to read at that time in the accompanying catalogue that the Damian memorial had been erected in Leuven city park.

This was done with all due ceremony on 16 December 1894 by local and foreign dignitaries. This made it one of the first free-standing public sculptures in Leuven, since before the First World War you could count them on one hand.⁶⁵ The statue was financed by a committee of prominent figures in Leuven, with the support of the Queen of Belgium. The bronze cast was made in Leuven at Van Aerschodt, an ancient dynasty of bell-founders and bronze-casters, who had had premises in Leuven since the 18th century.⁶⁶ Their offices and foundry were in *Leopoldstraat* and *Statiestraat*, at that time also Meunier's address.⁶⁷ Around 1894 the brothers Alphonse and Félix Van Aerschodt also opened a shop in Brussels.

There was some heavy debate about the placing of the monument in St Donatus park and letters flew forwards and backwards between the organising committee and the city council.⁶⁸ In November 1893 the private – Catholic – organisation, which collected money independently and so was not (financially) dependent on the city, asked the city council if it could erect the statue, after it had been donated, on a suitable site. The first choice of the committee and Meunier was the University Square (*Hogeschoolplein*), because it had the right proportions in harmony with the statue and good accessibility and visibility for 'the numerous foreign visitors!'⁶⁹ However, the – liberal – city council refused this proposal. The plans for dedication in the spring of 1894 were therefore postponed, since Meunier could not order a plinth until the site had been decided. Out of the alternatives suggested by the city council, the city park, but chiefly the *Graanmarkt* [Grain Market] (today Herbert Hoover Square) where the statue 'would not even disturb the

market', still seemed to Meunier and Baron Descamps to be the best.⁷⁰ Ultimately, at its meeting on 16 February the city council itself decided on the city park and proposed erecting the statue or the scale-model of it in the park for a few days, so that the population could also have a say in deciding the best position for it.

Whether this actually happened is not known, but in any case from 1900 onwards the college of mayor and aldermen received letters and a petition from the church wardens of St Jacob's and the neighbouring residents asking to have the statue moved to the grass verge by St Jacob's church. The city council deemed this site more suitable than a public park and in 1907 the statue was moved.⁷¹ But on the occasion of the transfer of Father Damian's mortal remains to Leuven in 1936 the city council once again received various well-argued letters in the following years asking to have the memorial moved, this time to the newly named Father Damian Square. This time, however, the city council dug in its heels.

Around the time of the dedication of the Damian statue, at the end of 1894, the Meunier family left Leuven.⁷² The constant requests from the city council, however justified, doubtless rankled Meunier, but it was mainly personal reasons that led to this move. Both of Constantin's sons had died in 1894: the younger, George, a 24-year old sailor, died of yellow fever in the winter in Rio de Janeiro and the elder son Karl, a talented engraver, died on 20 March in Leuven from influenza, according to some people as an after-effect of the floods. The remaining members of the family, who felt the absence of the two boys keenly in the house in Leuven, decided to close the chapter in Leuven and to return to the city of their birth and to family and friends.

Nevertheless, Meunier still continued to give lessons in Leuven for more than two years, in spite of the exhausting commuter journeys (he left in the morning and returned in the afternoon) and the less than brilliant students he had so far produced. Alfred Delaunois (1875-1941) definitely deserves mention as an exception, but perhaps Adrien Henri Van Emelen (1868-1943), who, as the son of the Leuven sculptor Léon Van Emelen (1829-1900), made four façade sculptures for Leuven town hall, should also be counted. Anyway, in 1892 Meunier wrote to his friend, the nine years younger, but already celebrated French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1914), to say he was sending him this young student sculptor from Leuven.⁷³

At the end of April 1897, when Meunier was at last finally free from financial worries, but his health was declining, he officially gave his notice.⁷⁴ At any rate, by 30 April director Vander Linden had already passed on his suggestion for replacing Meunier: drawing teacher Louis Boschmans was to take over most of Meunier's subjects and he would himself take on Boschman's initiation in the subjects 'decorative painting' and 'history of art'.⁷⁵ When Meunier announced on 3 May that from that day he would no longer appear at the academy the accounts department was immediately notified to stop payment of Meunier's salary starting from 1 May 1897 and several meetings were convened immediately.⁷⁶ Not entirely unexpectedly, Meunier's official letter of resignation did not follow until some time later.⁷⁷ While the city council showed not the least sign of emotion in accepting Meunier's resignation, he most certainly did.⁷⁸ Remaining rather vague about his reasons, Meunier certainly closed the chapter on Leuven elegantly – or was there just the hint of irony in his choice of words?: 'Important reasons and my health oblige me to do this. I shall always remember the wonderful years I spent in the calm and peace of your very picturesque and very artistic Flemish city with pleasure and emotion.'⁷⁹

A posthumous favour to Meunier

At the time of his death in Ixelles on 4 April 1905 Constantin Meunier was both nationally and internationally regarded as one of the important artists of the 19th century. Did this fame have any impact on the attitude of the city of Leuven to the artist it once rejected several times as a teacher, but on the other hand offered a studio and commissions? How was it to deal with the fact that this now internationally renowned artist, who constantly deferred giving his promised artworks to the city, spent part of his life in Leuven? Could Leuven see an opportunity for *city-marketing*?

Immediately after Meunier's death the Leuven city council offered its condolences to his widow Léocadie Gorneaux and had flowers sent.⁸⁰ The city decided, probably between 1905 and 1909, to put up a memorial plaque on the front of Meunier's former studio, but the exact date of erection still needs to be investigated.⁸¹ The bilingual inscription, referring to his Leuven period, reads as follows: 'Dans cet édifice élevé en 1744 par le savant docteur Rega a travaillé de 1887 à 1895 le grand sculpteur Constantin Meunier. / In dit gebouw opgericht in 1744 door den geleerden dokter Rega heeft de groote beeldhouwer Constantin Meunier gewerkt van 1887 tot 1895' (In this building erected in 1744 by the scientist Dr Rega the great sculptor Constantin Meunier worked from 1887 to 1895) (fig. 15). Strangely enough, Meunier is remembered as a great sculptor, whereas in Leuven he in fact taught for ten years as a teacher of painting. Also remarkable is the final year of 1895, since Meunier had already moved to Brussels the year before. However, since he still gave lessons in Leuven until 1897, it is not so surprising that he may still have used the studio for another year, as it was probably not immediately cleared, which is an enormous upheaval in the case of a studio.

Better known by the people of Leuven than this plaque, which is difficult to see and read, is undoubtedly *Constantin Meunierstraat*. Whereas in Forest (Brussels) a square was given Meunier's name, the Leuven college of aldermen decided on 20 March 1933 to name the new street between *Vesaliusstraat* and *Naamsevest* after Constantin Meunier.⁸² Whether Meunier's time in Leuven played a part in this decision seems likely, but cannot currently be confirmed. Anyway, it is impossible to deduce his period in Leuven from the present street sign, which gives only the dates of Meunier's birth and death and the general label 'sculptor and painter' (in that order).

Four years after Meunier's death grand celebrations took place in Leuven on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the restoration of the university. An exhibition of Brabant sculpture had also been planned, on the initiative of the Leuven sculptor Frantz Vermeylen (1857-1922), whose father Jean-François (1824-1888) had for a long time been a teacher of sculpture at Leuven academy.⁸³ This idea, for which special stationery had already been printed, was, however, cancelled at the beginning of 1909. But in February of that year it had already been replaced by the ambitious plan for an unprecedentedly extensive retrospective solo exhibition with almost the complete sculptural works of Constantin Meunier and, for the first time, an execution in actual size of a version of his *Monument to Labour* (fig. 5).⁸⁴ The pioneers were Canon Armand Thiéry, defender, biographer and former friend of Meunier; Frantz Vermeylen, whose studio was

only a stone's throw from Meunier's and who himself also owned a few of the master's artworks (including the paintings *A ship's boy* and *The Brickmakers*); sculptor Benoît Van Uytvanck (1857-1927) and the painters Omer Dierickx (1863-1939) and Alfred Delaunois (1876-1941). Vermeylen took on the role of chairman of the exhibition organisation and Thiéry that of secretary.⁸⁵ Mayor Léon Colins accepted the honorary chairmanship of the exhibition.

In barely three months, workers, subsidies (to the value of 18,000 francs) and artworks had been sought out and found, a poster designed (by Omer Dierickx) (fig. 6), invitations and a catalogue printed. The *catalogue raisonné* and bibliography it contains now perhaps still offer the most complete survey of Meunier's work and what was published on it before May 1909. The substantial booklet was assembled by professor and canon Armand Thiéry, his (first-year) student Emiel Van Dievoet (who lived in *Kapucijnenvoer*, near Meunier's studio) and Alfred Delaunois. But most importantly, in that short time span an impressive exhibition was set up, with 254 sculptures, 236 paintings, 46 water-colours, pastels and drawings.

Amidst great interest, on 9 May 1909 at 11 o'clock the retrospective opened its doors, or more precisely those of the brand-new Arenberg Institute in *Naamsestraat*.⁸⁶ The sculptures were shown on the ground floor, paintings and drawings on the first floor and the monument in the garden. Both Frantz Vermeylen's opening address and Omer Dierickx' article in *Louvain Journal* of that day were prime examples of the chauvinistic restitution of the dead artist by the city of Leuven, although not without criticism. Both also bore in mind the divided, less positive or indifferent memories of and attitudes towards Meunier of the people of Leuven. Vermeylen spoke of both pride and debt: 'Belgium possessed a great artist and for eight years Leuven had the honour of counting Constantin Meunier among its residents. It is here that he created the majority of his best works. Leuven retains its memory of this with a legitimate pride and is delighted to have the opportunity today to acknowledge its debt.'⁸⁷ Dierickx was convinced that the Belgian people had the strange habit of appreciating something only once it had been approved abroad.⁸⁸ He believed it was the same with Meunier and Leuven: Meunier lived there without being noticed until France imposed on them admiration for his work and they taught themselves to regard him as a great master.

In exchange for its subsidy of 3,000 francs Leuven city council asked that admission prices should be as low as possible (10 or 15 centimes), especially on Sundays, 'for the benefit of working people'.⁸⁹ A subtle homage to Meunier, but controversial. The exhibition committee was, after all, dependent on admission fees to iron out the expected deficit.⁹⁰ Moreover, it declared that it was worried about the large number of small statues which might not be adequately protected if masses of people attended. After heated discussions about this in the college of aldermen and in letters to the organisers, these ultimately agreed to reduce the normal admission price of 1 franc to 25 centimes on the last three Sundays and Mondays of June. However, the city council, not satisfied with this, intentionally circulated in a press release that the admission price on those days was only 20 centimes! The committee, who felt it had been bypassed, responded fiercely that the city must then come up with their promised subsidies, since a large number of accounts had to be settled and the deficit was greater than planned.⁹¹

The number of visitors is not known, but judging by the proceeds from admission fees it must have been somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000.⁹² This also included foreigners. This was obviously the intention, as can be seen, for example, from the poster (fig. 6) where the location was

stated as 'Louvain-Belgique'. According to engineer Charles Jacques, the most important lender to the exhibition by virtue of his marriage to Constantin's daughter Charlotte, most foreigners did not arrive in Belgium until towards the end of the exhibition.⁹³ So immediately afterwards he was also asked to lend his collection for exhibitions in other interested countries.

From 8 to 23 September 1930, the year in which Meunier's *Monument to Labour* was finally erected in Brussels, a new retrospective of Constantin Meunier took place in Leuven as part of the celebrations on the occasion of Belgium's centenary. This was supplemented by artworks from (Leuven) contemporaries, the teaching staff, (former) students of the academy and people invited by the 'Friends of the Museum'.⁹⁴ Initiator and chairman Alfred Delaunois had been Meunier's favourite student in Leuven and was now director of the municipal academy. There were 147 of Meunier's artworks on show at this location: sculptures, paintings, water-colours, pastels, and in particular drawings and sketches and plans and scale-models by architects Mario Knauer and Emile Poly and Robert Puttemans for the *Monument to Labour*. The paintings shown *The Floods (Heverlee)* and *The Supply Sloop (Floods in Leuven)* are less well known, but interesting in the context of Leuven. Works by Constantin's son Karl included a painting and an etching of the Leuven beguinage and an etching after his father's *The Firedamp*. Many of the works shown had a Leuven building, townscape or person as subject.

This catalogue is useful in that it also states the material of the sculptural works (there was, for instance, a wooden *Pietà* by Meunier and a small tin statue of his grandchildren) and, in particular, names the owners of all the works. It thus appears that the Leuveners Leopold Vander Kelen and Canon Thiéry, who supported Meunier on behalf of the city, also bought work by him in their own right. Thiéry, for instance, owned the *Horse at the Drinking Place*, of which a drawing was also shown. Many residents of Leuven were possibly seeing this impressive statue for the first time, since even though the first sketches for this horse had been made in the old armoury of Leuven, this was actually the only statue missing at the exhibition of 1909.⁹⁵ Leopold Vander Kelen, who lent two paintings of a woman mineworker, also owned the small statue *Woman Mineworker* (fig. 16) and the painting *Steel Casting in the Factories of Seraing*.⁹⁶ Just as at the previous retrospective, almost all the works were loaned from Meunier's legacy which was managed by Mr and Mrs Jacques-Meunier. Only the shown plaster copy of *The Firedamp* (fig. 9) and the painting *Floods in Leuven* (fig. 12) were items in the possession of the city of Leuven.⁹⁷

Not a single artwork by Meunier had been bought for Leuven's public collection. Whereas various Belgian and foreign museums had been buying artworks by Meunier since 1880 and are still doing so today, the city of Leuven and its museum did not pursue any conscious policy of forming a collection relating to Meunier.⁹⁸ They did, though, receive several gifts between 1900 and 1948.⁹⁹ The Jacques-Meunier family made a substantial donation in 1936 of three plaster sculptural works, *The Sower* (fig. 13), *The Prodigal Son* (fig. 17) and *Maternity* (fig. 18). They approached Alfred Delaunois and asked him to exhibit the sculptures as advantageously as possible, either in the town hall, the museum or the academy. In the donation letter they explicitly referred to the time Meunier spent in the city: 'It is a gift, a reminder that we are giving to

the city of Leuven of the time C. Meunier spent in the place where he made the most important of his works. It also serves as a reminder of his favourite student, Mr Alfred Delaunois.¹⁰⁰

The month after that the city council gave the order to have the items collected from Brussels with 'a lorry and two agile workers' and brought undamaged to the town hall.¹⁰¹ More than a month later, Delaunois reported to the college of aldermen that he was in possession of the three 'most magnificent' artworks, given by Mr and Mrs Jacques-Meunier and asked if he could place them in the vestibule of the town hall. To persuade them, he stressed the beneficial effect of this move for both the people of Leuven and tourists: 'with the aim of in this way uniting the most characteristic works of the ingenious master for the further encouragement and enjoyment of art by our fellow citizens and strangers.'¹⁰² A few days later letters of thanks were sent by the city council to the donors and intermediary Delaunois.¹⁰³ He was also asked to give the plaster models a bronze-coloured patina at the city's expense.¹⁰⁴

So, although the existing Meunier collection is not the result of deliberate acquisition strategies, there were nevertheless some plans in existence to link Meunier permanently and visibly to the city of Leuven and to reap some benefit from this itself. Following the retrospective exhibition in 1909, the first rumours of the erection of an actual Meunier museum in Leuven began to circulate. At the time Constantin's son-in-law Charles Jacques already offered his cautious cooperation in this: 'I know there is talk of a Meunier museum in Leuven, but these ideas are still being mooted and there is certainly no museum yet. When this museum actually exists, there will still be time enough to look at what will be put in it and under what conditions I will agree to give my cooperation.'¹⁰⁵ Ultimately there was never a Constantin Meunier museum in Leuven, but there was one in Ixelles. The studio-house that Meunier had built there at the end of his life was opened to the public as the Constantin Meunier museum for the first time in 1939. The collection was almost entirely formed by the Constantin Meunier legacy administered by Charles Jacques.

Also in 1909, Canon Thiéry expressed the desire that the *Monument to Labour* should sometime be given a place in Leuven, even though Meunier himself really wanted it to be erected in Brussels¹⁰⁶: 'May the Monument to Labour, the main work that the master conceived in Leuven, one day be erected in that same city and keep alive there the memory of the great creator of art who brings such honour to the city.'¹⁰⁷

Wanted by some: an open-air Meunier museum

Even before the opening of the Meunier museum in Brussels, in 1936 Edmond Doms, socialist alderman and acting mayor of Leuven – therefore representative of the city - who originated from Brussels, and rector Paulin Ladeuze – representative of the university – dreamed aloud of this idea. They conceived the grand, but never executed plan of redesigning the *Volksplein* [People's Square] (at the beginning of the 19th century briefly called *Place Napoléon* and in 1940 renamed *Monseigneur Ladeuzeplein*) into a truly public Constantin Meunier museum in the open-air (fig. 19).¹⁰⁸ These two gentlemen took Canon Thiéry and Alfred Delaunois, among others, to one side and asked the Brussels architect Henry Lacoste (1885-1968) to work out a design and a scale-model (fig. 20).¹⁰⁹ As the successor of Victor Horta at the Brussels academy,

he had drawn the plans for, among other things, the *Kunstberg* in Brussels. His first preliminary sketch was complete by the beginning of 1937. It was gradually extended to the *Graanmarkt* (called Herbert Hooversquare since 1938) and the city park, with a total of almost thirty sculptures by Meunier. From the start the organisers made it clear, however, that they could not promise that it would be carried out. Lacoste noted this, but nevertheless hoped, like the mayor, that the project would one day be implemented.¹¹⁰

A letter dated June 1938 from Lacoste to the mayor contains a detailed description of his masterplan for the three public spaces, which were closely linked to one another. The site was built up from its lowest to its highest point according to a rising line ending in a climax, part of the *Monument to Labour*: 'Departing from the lowest point of the *Volksplein*, bottom level and departure point of the composition, you would go upwards via the French garden, with terraces laid out on that square, and come out in the English garden, which would occupy the whole of the *Graanmarkt*, and finally end up in St Donatus park. All this would form the *Triumphant Path of Labour*, ringed by artworks by the master Constantin Meunier. The culmination point of the composition at the top of St Donatus park would be the construction, bearing Meunier's bas-reliefs on its four sides' (fig. 21).¹¹¹ This attractively composed route past Meunier's statues was preferably also to be followed in that order by visitors as an educational and edifying circular route. A statue route in glorification of labour seemed an excellent idea for fostering the work ethos and an ideal educational instrument.

The at that time still unpaved *Volksplein*, lined with chestnut trees, with a natural slope of three metres, would then be arranged on the geometric French model with an elongated water basin with a fountain at the top, on the vertical axis four terraces with an equal number of water basins (covered in blue ceramic) and three little waterfalls as crossing points, and also stairs, stiff box hedges, 'neatly arranged plantings' with flowers, poplars and benches, and round the square no less than fifteen sculptures, on natural stone plinths and slightly screened by shaped spinneys, with centrally among them *The Firedamp*.¹¹² The statue of the Belgian diplomat Sylvain van de Weyer by Charles Geefs, which earlier in 1923 had been transferred from the station to the *Volksplein* to make room for Wolfers' war memorial, would have to give way to these plans.¹¹³ The *Graanmarkt* and *St Donatus park* were to be restyled according to the more open type of English landscape garden with meandering water features and rocks (fig. 21). The avenue from the city park, to be called the *Sacred Path of Labour* was to be bordered with sculptures on plinths, which, continuing in a spiral, even through a lake, led to a kind of rotunda with four large reliefs of the *Monument to Labour* as its apotheosis (fig. 22). At the *Graanmarkt* firstly the statue to Edouard Rémy dating from 1899 would be removed (fig. 23). The plinth was the work of the architect Victor Horta and the sculptures by sculptor Pieter-Jan Braecke (1858-1938), who took lessons at the Leuven academy before Meunier arrived there, but was certainly influenced by him, as can be seen from the Rémy monument.¹¹⁴ In its place there were to be three statues by Meunier: in the centre *The Horse at the Drinking Place* (fig. 24) and at the two ends *Resting Mower* (or *June*) and *Mower at Work*.

They started with these last three statues that Lacoste had originally provided for the *Volksplein*. Bronze-caster Verbeyst had already agreed in the spring of 1937 to cast them in bronze and to deliver them to the site for the sum of 67,000 francs for the horse and rider and 35,000 francs for the two *Mowers*.¹¹⁵ Verbeyst added that this was a special price because he

wanted to give his workers, who were under threat of unemployment, something to do. In his request to Julius Hoste, minister of Education, in May 1937 to be allowed to make moulds of the two *Mowers* in the possession of the Belgian state, Doms specifically used Meunier's time in Leuven as his argument and received a favourable answer.¹¹⁶ However, things did not go quite so smoothly for *The Horse at the Drinking Place* in February 1937. Leuven even had a plaster model, but because there was already a bronze copy in Ambiorix Square in Brussels and Brussels council had previously refused a request from Copenhagen to put up a replica, Leuven received the same negative reply, even after lobbying at the highest level. In September 1937 Lacoste nevertheless had the detailed drawings for his idea for the *Graanmarkt* sent to the town hall, so that the parks and gardens services could set to work, since the autumn was the ideal time for this.

It was not until the following autumn, on 7 September 1938, in the run-up to the municipal council elections in October 1938, that the city council organised a public showing of the plans in the town hall. Bilingual invitations were sent to 239 people. At a table on which the four-part mahogany scale-model measuring 6 by 2.20 metres with foam-rubber trees was on view, the architect who '[was] warmly congratulated on his design' gave an, according to the press, 'first-rate account'.¹¹⁷ According to the journalists present and to the great delight of the organisers the evening was very well attended, principally by politicians and 'professors, intellectuals, lawyers, doctors of medicine, engineers, monks, teachers, etc.', in other words the upper classes.

Irrespective of the iconography of the planned programme, Labour, which suited the socialists down to the ground, it is actually rather strange, as the right-wing Rexists also thought, that the most important initiator and convinced supporter of this project was a socialist. After all, the prestigious project promised to be very expensive and, with its stiff hedges, was more likely to benefit the strolling bourgeoisie than the needy working class. The *Volksplein* was in fact constantly used for all kinds of popular entertainment and activities, such as the weekly market, circuses, fast-food stands, bowls games (such as the popular sport of *grosse balle* or *pelote*) and the fair as the highlight. Paradoxically, clearing this site for 'popular' activities to make way for a park with statues of common workers was a thorny point of discussion on the political agenda.

It was in fact the socialists who were accused, in full election combat, by their conservative opponents, of paying too much attention to superficial embellishment of the city, aesthetics and useless luxury works instead of concentrating on genuine urban programmes and problems, such as slum development.¹¹⁸ Rex, the Belgian political party set up in 1935 by Léon Degrelle, on fascist, totalitarian and authoritarian principles, with a populist campaign expressly opposed the initiative and made it one of its election points. On 14 September 1938 their leader Paul Ouwerx published an open letter to mayor Doms, in which he sharply criticised the project. Ouwerx pointed out that a socialist would be better off worrying about the many impoverished backstreet areas or 'passageways' of the city, on which, furthermore, Rex organised a photographic exhibition. Not without irony Ouwerx invited the mayor to this as a return favour for his invitation to Lacoste's lecture at the town hall. In a special edition of Rex's election paper this subject was extensively reviewed and even provided with photographs of Doms' modern-style house in Brussels next to those of Leuven's slum districts.¹¹⁹ They believed that it was showing lack of respect to confront the mothers from Leuven's slum districts, who were fighting a daily battle

to keep their children alive, with Meunier's bronze mother with her dead son (*The Firedamp*), which had cost so much money, in an immaculate park.

De Volkswil [The Will of the People], the weekly newspaper of the Belgian Workers' Party, took up the cudgel with a certain amount of difficulty against its right-wing opponent: 'The fact that we have actually heard out of the mouth of a Rexist the foolish, childish comment: "Hands off the fair and don't touch the chip stand!" is enough to make any serious person roar with laughter. Especially if you know, as the chairman remarked, that architect Lacoste's project can be subjected to any desired changes and that every step will be taken to hold the fair in the centre of the city. There is no question of abolishing the fair or moving it to the ramparts. That is quite clear and obvious. When the chairman made this statement, adding: let us not confuse art with chip stands, he was applauded. [...] However much the Rexists niggle and whine.¹²⁰ Apparently there had already been some commotion among the people over the possible disappearance of the land for the fair and the market and Rex chose to take their side, a strategic move in the light of electoral considerations. *De Volkswil* had even need to defend itself in bold letters among its supporters in the above quotation by emphatically stating that the fair would not be abolished.

The socialist weekly rallied its own ranks behind the mayor's proposal and cited the importance of it for the city on the level of *city-marketing avant-la-lettre*: "This was a large-scale idea which is of great value for the future of our city. Either Leuven goes along with the great course of art or our city will drop to a lower rank. [...] Let us hope that the attempt to create calm and beauty around the library is successful. It would mean prosperity and fame for Leuven.¹²¹ *De Volkswil* also pointed to the 'ethical' importance of worthy surroundings for the university library: 'From the moment when Leuven jubilantly agreed to have the library built where it now stands, whatever city council was in power took on the moral responsibility to make the environment worthy of the building.¹²²

The creation of a suitable, worthy and calm environment for the new university library (1921-'28, the former one burned down in 1914) was the main reason for the Catholic university to rally behind the plan. Rector Ladeuze preferred not to have the noisy popular events in front of his library, which, on the contrary, needed the befitting silence, serenity, academic *sérieux* and atmosphere. Providing the library, which had been donated by the United States, with a more prestigious setting was also the argumentation Leuven had used to get the American financiers to cross the Atlantic to finance the surrounding area as well. The new library, full of symbols of American friendship, such as the memorial stones, the American eagle and 48 gilded stars in the clock towers (indicating the United States of America as they were then), was, after all, visited in the 1930s by thousands of tourists and delegates from all corners of the world.

Two weeks after the official presentation a further appeal was made during a visit to Leuven by American representatives from the Hoover Foundation to look at the scale-model. The price ticket was enormous, though. Lacoste estimated the grand plan at 454,900 francs, and this was without the plantings and, most importantly, the sculptures, the greatest expense of all! Rex intentionally brought this up during the election battle and prophesied a perhaps more realistic cost outline of 3 million francs.¹²³ It was evident, therefore, that America would most certainly at the very least subject this to some scrutiny and it might then come as a surprise that Leuven was counting so much on America's financial support, without apparently providing any viable

alternative. *La Dernière Heure* rightly commented that nothing had been said about this during the speech on 7 September 1938.¹²⁴ *De Volkswil* was obviously aware that the plans would stand or fall by the grace of these major financiers: 'The realisation of the entire plan actually depends on the financial support which may come from America or elsewhere.¹²⁵

The socialists' intuition that the initiative would bring fame for Leuven in the long term was right, for even the foreign press reacted enthusiastically once – slightly late – they got wind of the project. The national press agency in Paris showed its interest in June 1939 and asked the mayor about illustrations and the reproduction rights, so as to provide the French press with documentation on the project.¹²⁶ The mayor had to reply diplomatically to this, however, that it was only a draft, that nothing had been decided yet and that it was therefore premature to give it publicity. Six months previously the mayor, himself disappointed, had also had to disappoint the bronze-caster Verbeyst. In the run-up to the inauguration of the new municipal council the college of aldermen decided on 28 November 1938 that they would order, before it was too late, from Verbeyst Meunier's two *Mowers* for the *Graanmarkt*. But just a few days after he had been telephoned with this good news the mayor had to tell him that the order could not yet be confirmed in writing because the municipal council still had to give its final approval and with the new Catholic-Rexist majority this proposal naturally no longer stood the ghost of a chance.¹²⁷

The project was therefore stopped at this political level in 1938-'39. After the elections of October 1938 the purple liberal-socialist coalition broke up anyway, the Catholics came into power again and the Rexists gained themselves an alderman's seat, this latter perhaps even partly due to their standpoint in the affair concerning the open-air Meunier museum. However, as well as this political change of power, the approaching war also played a part and, of course, the terrible lack of financial resources. In this connection it speaks volumes that the city did not pay Lacoste until January 1949, after various demands.¹²⁸ Even without counting honorary payment or hours worked, he had incurred expenses for the plans, scale-model, relocations, etc., amounting to 25,000 francs. In view of the many efforts he had made for the Leuven city council voluntarily and without any assurance of a commission, it is embarrassing to see how much delay there was in payment, while the man on several occasions referred to being short of money and begged to receive at least a partial remuneration. The main reasons for this were the war and the death in 1940 of the two protagonists, Edmond Doms and Paulin Ladeuze. Lacoste's scale-model and drawings, which he asked to have back in 1948, did not survive the war either, apart from a fragment.

The statue for Edouard Remy by Pieter Braecke did survive, though, and still stands in Hoover Square, where the spot intended for Meunier's *Mower* or *Horse Drinking* has since been claimed by a debatable ten metre tall, copper manned air balloon. Only very recently, in 2004, there have been monumental sculptural additions to the city park and Ladeuze Square, by the Frenchman Daniel Buren (*Le Jardin Imaginaire*) and the Belgian artist Jan Fabre (*Totem*) respectively.

2. DID MEUNIER WANT LEUVEN?

A lot of reasons of greater or lesser importance keep me in this good city of
Leuven, for which I have, though, nothing but praise.¹²⁹

Leuven's attitude towards Meunier was obviously not unambiguous. But neither was that of Meunier towards Leuven and its institutions and inhabitants. On the one hand Meunier's perspective of the city was sometimes negative and belittling, especially when speaking to his foreign and worldly Brussels contacts. He would then accuse it of provincialism, small-mindedness and indifference to him and his artistry. His appointment in Leuven did not in fact go entirely smoothly and Leuven was on all kinds of levels smaller than Brussels. Besides, the city had no really strong tradition in the field of art (including sculpture), let alone of innovative art. Despite several interesting, but not very well known sculptors and painters working in Leuven, it was not the most stimulating environment. Furthermore, several tragic personal events thwarted Meunier's Leuven period, including the flood in 1891 and the death of his two sons three years later.

On the other hand, Meunier specifically acknowledged in other documents the beneficial impact of his time in Leuven. After all, he enjoyed several positive circumstances there which were essential for his work and his private life, including material security, a spacious, light studio and peace and quiet. These things enabled him to devote himself freely to the expensive discipline of sculpture and to produce a very extensive body of work. Probably it is not putting it too strongly to say that Meunier owes his fame to a great extent to his appointment in Leuven and the good treatment and the solitude he found there.

With reluctance

Financial necessity was the main reason for Meunier to apply to the Leuven academy. As head of a family of four children he needed a regular income, and as André Fontaine said in 1923, he was too good a father not to take his responsibilities seriously.¹³⁰ That this financial necessity was still a reality in the year of his appointment is illustrated by a letter to Octave Maus, the chief defender of the avant-garde and 'pope' of art in Brussels. In this letter Meunier asks about the payment for his small bronze *Woman Mineworker* pushing a cart, which the painter Anna Boch (1848-1936), one of the first admirers of his industrial works, bought at the exhibition of *Les XX* in 1887: '[...] could you tell me when I shall receive the money for my *Woman Mineworker*? Unfortunately I am by no means rich and at the moment I am looking out on several starving crocodiles who are waiting for their prey with their mouths open... I am very sorry, my dear friend, to have to trouble you with this, since there is nothing in the world I abhor so much as talking about money!!! But, alas, a great deal of it is needed to be able to make works of sculpture and ... to eat!¹³¹

The monthly salary of round about 300 francs that Meunier had enjoyed in Leuven since 1887, approximately the same amount as that of the director, was apparently just sufficient to

live decently and not to have to incur any new debts, as, according to Meunier, that would be fatal at his time of life.¹³² Anyway, only half of Meunier's salary would have gone to his wife for the house-keeping, the other half to his art.¹³³ His wife may also have been involved in selling his artworks for extra income. For, in 1888 she visited the warehouses of the Brussels bronze foundry *Compagnie des Bronzes* to make arrangements for the reproduction (by the lost wax technique) and sale of her husband's statuettes *Woman Mineworker* and *Blacksmith* in the *Compagnie's* shops: Meunier was to receive 20% of the sale price as royalty, possibly increased by 10 francs in each case if he would himself be responsible for retouching the cast statues.¹³⁴ So the family was still not particularly well off, since in the 1890s Meunier was still complaining in his letters to Edmond Picard about continuing financial constraint.¹³⁵ He wrote to Auguste Rodin in 1892 that he could not yet give up the job, owing to financial insecurity.¹³⁶ In spite of his (inter)national successes from the mid 1880s, though not directly with dealers and the public owing to the subject matter, the family probably did not experience real financial security until 1897, the time at which Meunier gave his notice to the Leuven academy. The fact that he had already exchanged Leuven for Brussels at the end of 1894 and yet still commuted to take his lessons until 1897, suggests that they still needed the income until then. Meanwhile they did buy a plot of land in *Abdijstraat* in Ixelles, and in 1900 they moved into their house-cum-studio there.

His regular income in Leuven at any rate enabled Meunier to devote himself freely to the expensive art of sculpture. He could even permit himself to refuse overly commercial offers. There is an anecdote according to which a wealthy Paris bronze-caster proposed giving Meunier a substantial sum to reproduce his statuettes by the hundred for sale, often disastrous for the career of an artist.¹³⁷ Very surprised that the artist refused his offer, the Parisian suggested Meunier must then be very rich. He is supposed to have answered that the opposite was true, but thanks to his position at the Leuven academy he could get by. For, he said, he attached a great deal of importance to following up every copy he had cast, and this was maximum seven or eight of each statue, closely and 'with love', so that each one of them would be perfect. Having hundreds of them cast without being able to closely supervise the bronze casting seemed to him a nightmare.

Nevertheless Meunier found the move to Leuven mentally very difficult. He wrote frankly to Rodin saying he had been close to deep depression, but fortunately had been able to overcome it thanks to his family and friends and his work. After having made it clear to Rodin that he had been forced to make this decision purely for materialistic reasons and calling Leuven a stupid provincial backwater, he then nevertheless invited his friend to come to the city: 'An awful lot has happened since we last saw each other. I am now living in Leuven, where out of necessity I have had to take a position as professor at the local academy; this transplantation to a foolish provincial environment is having a deplorable effect on me and for a moment I thought that it would be the death of me. I was overwhelmed by such despondency that all my friends and loved ones were alarmed. I cannot look back on this sinister period without shuddering... I have now at last got over my pain and have started work again. Now that I am cured, I hope next year you will see in Paris a few of my 'machines' that you will like... But why don't you come to Belgium? I would be so pleased to receive you in my little retreat and let you make a choice there from the drawings, something you would like.'¹³⁸

Meunier repeated his wish that Rodin would come and visit him in Leuven many times in his letters.¹³⁹ Whether he ever actually did is not currently known. Several renowned foreign artists apparently did find their way to his studio in Leuven, though: 'His fame has spread meanwhile; artists coming from abroad have found their way to the sculptor's studio, tucked away under the dome of the old amphitheatre.'¹⁴⁰ Among Meunier's French friends the ones he liked most were the writer Octave Mirbeau and the sculptors Auguste Rodin, Jules Desbois (1851-1935), Jules Dalou (1838-1902) and Camille Claudel (1864-1943).¹⁴¹

Not only to his foreign contacts, but also to those in Brussels Meunier several times let slip that he disliked the provincialism, the lack of dynamism and the boredom of the small university city, while enthusing about Brussels and Paris as vital metropolises of art. He wrote, for instance, to Octave Maus in 1891 that he was delighted to accept the invitation to exhibit at *Les XX*, because there at least there was some artistic vitality, which you could look for in vain at the official Salons.¹⁴² Moreover, he believed it would rejuvenate him and shake him out of the torpor which overwhelmed even the most alert people in the province, where he was left entirely alone and to his own devices. He also assured Maus that he was doing his level best to return to Brussels as soon as possible.

The fact that the avant-garde artists did indeed regard the people of Leuven pejoratively as 'provincials' is illustrated by a letter from the Dutchman Jan Toorop (1858-1928) to Octave Maus dated 1889. In this he writes of a public presentation in Leuven of a sculpture group by Meunier, at which Edmond Picard gave a speech: 'I was in Leuven yesterday to see Meunier and to listen to Picard. Meunier's group was superb and simple, grand and full of feelings. I enjoyed myself and Picard's lecture was extremely interesting. He has been very successful with these provincials.'¹⁴³ Toorop was undoubtedly speaking here of *The Firedamp* (fig. 9), a mother grieving, bending over her dead son, like a modern *pietà* or *stabat mater*. Possibly Meunier wanted to show the plaster group, which is in Leuven's possession and can now be seen in Leuven town hall, first to a small public in Leuven, before it left for the Paris World Exhibition of 1889. There Meunier won a medal of honour and unanimous admiration with this sculpture. Alfred Delaunois recounted how very impressed Rodin was and with him the French president: '[...] when this same plaster sculpture featured at the Paris Salon, the great sculptor Rodin, accompanied by the President of the French Republic, stopped by it and praised Meunier universally with the immortal words: 'President, take off your hat, we are standing before a genius.'¹⁴⁴ Neither did this accolade escape the Belgian state, for they ordered and bought a bronze version (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium), which was shown the following year at the Brussels Salon.

Meunier willing

Whenever Meunier's Leuven period is discussed, the modernist concept that most frequently raises its head, both in contemporary and more recent literature and even in his own letters from Leuven, is that of the 'artiste maudit', the artist as an ignored, misunderstood genius. Invariably an image is invoked of the isolated Constantin Meunier, in solitary retreat, not in an attic room or an ivory tower, but in his Leuven amphitheatre, ceaselessly and fanatically creating. Once he had started work, he did not welcome intruders, as he did not want to be disturbed. You

practically needed a reference to be received by the master, who did not have any *practiciens* or students there.¹⁴⁵ In his article about Meunier Poinsoot gave the section on Leuven the title 'The loner of Leuven'.¹⁴⁶

By extension even the street, district and the entire city came to be imputed with the adjectives monotonous, deserted and isolated, with their rather negative connotations. In his address on the occasion of Meunier's exhibition in 1909 Baron Descamps said: 'He retreated into a deserted and remote street. [...] Once he had given his lessons, he shut himself away in that laboratory.'¹⁴⁷ And in a French periodical could be read, for example: '[...] that solitary and sober life of a good craftsman in the midst of the monotony and the silence of provincial life, passing by quietly, with his apostle's beard, attentive to all kinds of work, to all aspects of everyday life.'¹⁴⁸ His friend Lemonnier tried to depict the monotony and isolation of the provincial city with even more words, and the silence of the street in a remote district of mainly churches and seminaries, which were fatal for any kind of social commerce and circulation. He also linked to this Meunier's fertile night-time working sessions 'while the city was asleep in the great silence of the night'.¹⁴⁹ In this portrait Leuven and its politicians and inhabitants were identified with the indifferent, non-understanding and 'backward' environment of the genius.

Others have given a more positive interpretation to this tranquillity and Meunier's attitude to it. According to Alfred Delaunois, Meunier deliberately sought solitude and therefore ultimately liked Leuven more than Brussels (fig. 25).¹⁵⁰ He maintains that long after he had left Meunier still spoke with satisfaction of the city and the Leuven beguinnage to which he was very attached. Armand Thiéry also believed that Meunier benefited greatly from the silence in his studio in the remote Minderbroedersstraat.¹⁵¹ And on the occasion of Meunier's subsequent retrospective in Leuven, someone wrote: 'The peaceful provincial street was extremely suitable for promoting inspiration. The studio was, as it were, predestined to facilitate the master's ingenious work. [...] He left only good memories behind there.'¹⁵²

As loudly as Meunier initially protested about the boredom in the provincial city, he did increasingly acknowledge his *quasi* hermit's existence in Leuven as a trump card, even an ideal state for being able to continue working with concentration and drive, without being distracted by all kinds of annoying mundane factors. In July 1892 his renewed invitation to Rodin to look him up in Leuven did anyway sound a lot more attractive than shortly after he had moved there: 'I am very happy in this little corner of the country where no one is bothered about me, where I am enjoying monastic peace and quiet – isn't this the ideal situation for an artist? If we two could be together, though, that would be perfect. For it seems to me, dear friend, that you, even you, would also like it here. So do try to come and surprise me here. The weather here is fine and the woods are cool. It would give us a slight respite. I am certain that our guest quarters would be to your liking. We would live the good Flemish life together while talking about art. Go on, do make the effort, it is so close to Paris, where it must be sweltering hot at the moment.'¹⁵³

Meunier sent a similar account of Leuven five years later to the German Georg Treu, who had dedicated a monograph to the sculptor.¹⁵⁴ He described it as an exile out of pure necessity, which had at any rate put bread on the table, but had also filled him with deep melancholy and dejection. But once he had got over this he had thrown himself completely into his work and in

that period had produced all the works Treu knew, which, if he himself stopped to think about it, was an enormous body of work. From that moment onwards he also noticed that he was being taken seriously as a sculptor and that Paris, Dresden and now also Berlin were paying back all that work and that solitude a hundredfold.

But it was to the art critic Léon Tombu that Meunier gave perhaps the nicest summary of his ambivalent attitude to Leuven, even calling those years without doubt the best in his life: 'Oh yes! I had a good time there! I lived in peace, practically ignored. Apart from a few friends from the art world – of Brussels – who came to visit me there from time to time, no one took any notice of me or what I was doing. And yet it was there that the most important evolution my talent had ever experienced manifested itself. The initial ideas which were to lead to my *Monument to Labour* germinated and developed there, and indisputably I spent the happiest years of my life in Leuven. Now that I want for nothing, apart from my health, I am really beginning to miss it. And yet it was also there that I suffered the most terribly, since, as you may remember, I suddenly lost both my sons there, one after the other.'¹⁵⁵

Although the death of his two sons was one of the reasons for leaving Leuven, Meunier also later regarded his Leuven period as happy, because, in spite of his toils, his two sons were at least still alive there.¹⁵⁶ Once again Meunier ventured to express his deep sorrow over this to his friend Rodin, although with some hesitation: 'My dear Rodin, I had a son, a sailor, our joy, our pride. We have just had news of his death in Rio, brought down by yellow fever. On the basis of the old and dear affection which binds us in the spiritual relationship of art... I hope I have done right in telling you of my deep sorrow and my tears, have I? Previously I thought I often had cause to complain about life, but in the light of this death these things seem to be mere trivialities. [...] If you see Mirbeau, please will you tell him?'¹⁵⁷

By contrast with what is sometimes maintained, this sad event did not have any direct effect on the power of sculptures like *The Prodigal Son* (fig. 17) or *Ecce homo*, since Meunier had already exhibited these sculptures earlier. It is possible that the realisation of *The Prodigal Son* in 1892 did have some link with the departure of his younger son on a long voyage, and maybe the sculpture did contain the father's fear that his son would perhaps never return? It might also be worth investigating whether the bronze version which Meunier had done after the death of his sons and sold to a certain Mr. Coquelin perhaps shows slight differences. Meunier did at any rate send his apologies on mourning stationery to the buyer from the home of his daughter Charlotte and son-in-law Charles Jacques for the delay in delivery because of this.¹⁵⁸

Constantin Meunier did in fact make most of his works and many of the best ones in Leuven, especially as regards his body of work as a sculptor. It was a period of great productivity, which drew from André Fontaine the hypothetical comment that had Meunier died immediately after his Leuven period the world would still have seen all aspects of his genius.¹⁵⁹ To name but a few, among the masterpieces he created in Leuven are the paintings *Mineworkers of the Borinage* and *The Black Country* and the sculptures *Puddler*, *The Firedamp Explosion*, *Man Drinking*, *The Horse at the Drinking Place*, *Glass-blower*, *Fisberman*, *The Prodigal Son*, *Ecce homo*, *Old Mine-Horse* and *Working-class Woman*. The idea for his *Monument to Labour* and the execution of

various parts for it, fully moulded sculptures and reliefs, were also given shape in Leuven, for in April 1894 he presented the final design in Paris.

Meunier's Leuven period also coincided approximately with his international breakthrough. At the beginning of this episode he recorded his first successes at the Paris Salon and towards the end of it his international triumph really took off, with state commissions and large exhibitions in Paris (at Samuel Bing in 1896), Dresden, Berlin, Munich, Vienna and London. The foreign press could no longer ignore him and was almost unanimously full of praise. For instance, Meunier was given a great deal of attention in *L'Art Français* in the article about the Paris Salon of 1893: 'Mr Constantin Meunier was obviously inspired by a well-known page from Mr Zola when he modelled that old mine-horse, which no single human being will be able to look at without feeling gripped by sudden deep compassion, as deep as the pits where that miserable horse suffered, is still suffering and will suffer until its death. Oh! Those eyes which have lost all impression of light. How well he has seen them, this Belgian sculptor! What sympathy he evokes in us, also with his *Working-class Woman* and his *Mineworkers at the Exit to the Pit* and his *Puddlers*!¹⁶⁰

It was also a sign of the absolute recognition of his talent abroad that Meunier was asked to be among the judges of his fellow-sculptors by sitting on the jury for sculpture of the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* (SNBA), founded in 1890. It was Dalou who personally invited Meunier to do this, probably on the suggestion of Rodin, vice-president of the sculpture jury that year, whom Meunier consulted to find out more about it: 'Please be so kind, you who are familiar with this terrain, as to tell me more about this newcomer, which has set itself up in Paris under the name of *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts*. I have received a personal letter about this from someone called Mr Dalou, the well-known sculptor, I assume...'¹⁶¹ Meunier finally exhibited a series of small bronzes at the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* exhibition in 1890 and was a member of the jury, with, among others, the sculptors Dalou, Rodin, Injalbert and Bartholomé, in 1890, 1891, 1893 and 1895.

In 1893 he wrote to Rodin, for whom he had the greatest admiration and affection and whom he always tried to visit when he was in Paris, that he had accepted to be part of the jury again in order to be able to spend a few days with Rodin again.¹⁶² Rodin's well-known charisma obviously did not just affect women. Although Meunier had great admiration for him, he nevertheless estimated his own work as not being far behind, for in 1890, maybe to thank him for the possibility to take part in the *Société Nationale* that year, he exchanged his small bronze *Glassblower* (1889), now in the Musée Rodin, for a small sculpture group by Rodin, *Embracing Women*.¹⁶³ Happy that he now had a work by Rodin that he could show his friends, he gave the statuette a place of honour at his place.¹⁶⁴

Meunier was – rightly – convinced that Rodin had played a crucial role in promoting his international career, at least to start with in France, and so expressed his gratitude to Rodin for this. In February 1890 he wrote from Leuven: 'I believe I largely, if not entirely, have you to thank for all those expressions of honour with which I have been overloaded!! in your beautiful fatherland, and I assure you that I could not believe my eyes.'¹⁶⁵ In the same year the French state bought two of his sculptures, *Blacksmith* and a 2.2 metre tall *Docker*, for its collection in the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris. This happened at the same time as the Belgian State was just buying

its first sculpture (*The Firedamp*) by him. This made Meunier possibly the first Belgian sculptor whose work France had bought. Meunier immediately again thought of Rodin as adviser and also commented on how unusual it was for the French state to buy work by a foreign sculptor: 'I am extremely happy. I have just received a letter from your Director of Fine Arts who notifies me that he is offering to buy two of my bronzes, my *Blacksmith* and my *Docker*. I never expected such an honour, you understand, and I do not know how to thank everyone who advised this purchase, which I am sure includes you, dear friend. So tell me how these things are done, in the world of art. By the way: it cannot have been easy with a foreigner.'¹⁶⁶ But that was not the end of it. Two years later the French State also bought, among other works, Meunier's relief *The glebe* (Musée d'Orsay) and in 1893 *Puddlers at the Furnace*.¹⁶⁷ More commissions followed, such as that by the League of Human Rights for the monument in honour of Emile Zola for Paris.¹⁶⁸ On the eve of his departure from Leuven both Meunier's national and his international career had thus been firmly set in motion.

In spite of the ambivalent attitude of sometimes wanting each other and sometimes not, which both Leuven and Constantin Meunier adopted towards each other, they each had something to offer the other. Leuven did not ultimately get its large open-air Meunier museum, but the city still houses many subtle visual, textual and archival traces of Meunier's time in the city, so, if it wants to, Leuven will still for a long time 'have many memories of the great soul who lived among its ancient buildings'.

- 1 With special thanks to Jan Baetens (masters student in Art History, University of Leuven), Laure de Margerie and Anne Pinget (Paris, Musée d'Orsay, documentalist and chief curator of sculpture), Allan Sekula, Hilde Van Gelder and Piet Veldeman (archivist of Leuven city archives).
- 2 'Je ne sais si Louvain se souviendra beaucoup de la grande âme qui habita ses vieux logis, mais je sais que Meunier parlait toujours avec tendresse de la vieille ville où son labeur avait connu des instants d'infinie plénitude.' THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 8. DELLAWÉ 1905: 144. All translations of citations by Suzanne Walters.
- 3 Although there is currently no recent standard work on Meunier, he is given a fair amount of attention in almost all national and international publications about 19th century art (and sculpture). As far as reputation is concerned, Georges Minne comes a close second. For an extensive contemporary bibliography of Meunier, see THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 49-57.
- 4 THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 38, for example, summarise the period under the heading *Le Progrès à Louvain: Le grand Travail. Les grandes douleurs. La Religion*.
- 5 St. Joseph's church was built between 1860 and 1871 (architect E. Lavergne) and in 1970 had to make way for the building of the faculty of Arts of Leuven University. See HOUBEN and VLAEMINCK 2001.
- 6 It is unclear whether these are wall paintings and/or paintings on canvas. At the Brussels Salon in 1875 Meunier exhibited the cartoon for a wall painting *Apparition du Sacré-cœur de Jésus à la bienheureuse Marie Alacoque* for St. Joseph's church in Leuven. FONTAINE 1923: 92, 151 According to THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 128 there were four murals: *The cult of Mary, The comforting Christ, Chris at the tomb and The apparition of the Holy Heart to Saint Marguerite Alacoque*. According to VAN EVEN 1895: 424 and UYTTERHOEVEN 1999: 18 there were three paintings: *The four ages bring homage to the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Maiden Mary, The Holy Maiden pleads for Divine mercy for the sinners and The apparition of the Holy Heart to Saint Marguerite Alacoque*. Records no. 1890 and 1990 at the Vander Kelen-Mertens museum contain further details on the artworks that came from St. Joseph's church which were loaned to the museum and also indicate that there were originally three paintings. On an undated (around 1970?) plan of the church and accompanying legend three paintings by Meunier, not specified in any greater detail, are mentioned. The *Inventory of sculptural figures and paintings received on loan by the Municipal Museum from St. Joseph's church in Leuven* (26 October 1970) mentions one painting by Meunier which came from the side altar on the right: *Holy Family* (inv. no. O/S/1). In his letter dated 12 March 1971 alderman for culture Sylvain Libert speaks of two paintings by Meunier which were still in the church. An article in *Het Volk* of 23 March 1971, resulting from the threat of demolition of the church, indicates the same scenario: one painting by Meunier was received at the municipal museum and two still had to be removed from the church. Meunier's *The Holy Heart appears to the blessed Margareta-Maria*

- Alacoque* (fig.: KIK 244231 M) was taken in 1971 to the Beguinage church, from where in 1978, during renovations to the church, it was transferred with three other paintings to Naamsestraat, to the office of the Art Patrimonium of Leuven Catholic University. At the end of October 1991 the paintings were collected from there after it had been decided to loan them to the municipal museum. Currently only Meunier's *Immaculate conception of Our Lady* (inv. no. S/A7/M) from St. Joseph's church is in the collection of the Vander Kelen-Mertens municipal museum. For an illustration, see fig. 8.
- 7 'Hier j'ai envoyé une lettre à Detaye [sic]. Tout est donc en règle de ce côté. Je lui fais part de la conversation qu'il a eue avec toi et lui dis combien je suis content de cette perspective, mais je lui dis aussi qu'ayant échoué par deux fois: à Mons et à Liège, je ne veux absolument plus courir les chances d'un résultat semblable, et que je ne ferai de demande qu'étant désigné à l'avance et sûr d'une réussite. Je fais appel à sa franchise, en lui disant qu'il peut sans crainte être franc, n'ayant plus aucune illusion sur la matière, et qu'après tout, m'en étant tiré jusqu'à présent, j'ai encore du courage de reste pour lutter, sans me courber devant des conseillers communaux dont il faut mendier la voix. Je le mets donc à son aise, et j'espère que je saurai la vraie vérité': BEHETS 1942: 74-75 (The origin of this source is not mentioned.). From April 1882 until April 1883 Meunier went with his son Karl to Spain for six months with a bursary from the Belgian State to copy at their request a painting by Pieter De Kempeneer (Pedro Campaña) in Seville.
 - 8 'Peut-être aussi irons-nous à Louvain, mais l'on ne peut compter sur cette chose. Et si ça était, ce qui serait la véritable paix, nous trouverions bien à nous arranger': BEHETS 1942: 82.
 - 9 'Je mets ma dernière et ma seule espérance dans cette position de directeur à Louvain, qui me donnerait au moins du pain, dont bientôt je vais manquer dans notre beau pays. [...] Enfin c'est fatal, et j'espère bien encore un peu plus, beaucoup cependant, que Louvain me voudrait, à moins que là encore mon art soit un crime et que je n'aie pas la nullité académique nécessaire pour occuper un tel poste': Brussels, Archives de l'État en Belgique, Archives de l'Art Belge, Papiers Edmond Picard (hereafter abbreviated to AR, AAB, PEP): Letter (no. 81) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, September 1886.
 - 10 AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 82) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, 2 October 1886. Cf. the contribution of Hilde Van Gelder on p. 71 of this catalogue for Picard's reading of Meunier's work as 'socialist art'.
 - 11 'Il se peut donc, mon cher Picard, que ces jours-ci, si ces fameuses nominations paraissent à l'officiel, que j'ai à vous demander votre concours pour décrocher cette timbale': AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 81) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, September 1886.
 - 12 'Si vous croyez pouvoir encore faire quelque chose, faites-le. Mais je ne sais ce que [vous] pourriez encore faire. – Mais soyez sur [sic] que de mon côté comme vous le voyez, je ne m'endors pas. Je me remue ferme aussi, mais franchement sans beaucoup d'espoir': AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 82) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, 2 October 1886.
 - 13 AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 83) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, 9 October 1886.
 - 14 In 1867 Gérard Vander Linden was entrusted with the decoration of the Leuven city theatre. There are also several sculptures on the outside of the townhall by him in Leuven and inside the sculpture *Callista hesitating between Christianity and Heatenism*, which brought him a gold medal at the Triennial Salon in Ghent in 1880 and 12 years later was bought by the city. See BEHETS 1942: 74-75; X 1991: 372; GILLEIR, HUYBENS and REEKMANS 1999: 195-201; UYTTERHOEVEN 1999: 19; ENGELÉN and MARX 2002: 1596-97.
 - 15 X 1887-B: 12; LEMONNIER 1887: 19-20; X 1887-D: 47.
 - 16 X 1887-C: 19-20.
 - 17 'Décidément, l'espoir qu'on pouvait nourrir de trouver en Belgique une province dégagée des plus pats préjugés de la routine est vain. Il y a là des foyers inextinguibles d'imbécillité. On y rencontre encore des gens qui croient à la peinture d'histoire et qui s'informent gravement si les postulants n'ont pas de dettes. Il leur faut un bon père, un bon époux, un garde civique irréprochable. Sans l'ordre et l'économie dans le ménage, l'art ne saurait marcher. Ils ont aussi foi dans les prix de Rome, dans les bons élèves d'Académie, dans les gens protégés par M. Gallait. Ils ne se doutent pas que tout cela, c'est de l'histoire ancienne, de la peinture enterrée avec tous les sacrements, dont plus personne ne parle si ce n'est comme d'une chose morte, irrésuscitable, incompréhensible pour les générations nouvelles [...]': X 1887-C: 20.
 - 18 'La commission louvaniste, officiellement consultée par le collège échevinal sur le point de savoir s'il fallait un sculpteur ou un peintre à la tête de l'Académie, a répondu: UN PEINTRE. C'est pourquoi on préférerait un sculpteur. O Beaumarchais!': X 1887-B: 12.
 - 19 X 1887-D: 47.
 - 20 Stadsarchief (City Archives) Leuven, Modern Archief Leuven (1830-1976) (hereafter abbreviated to SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976)), 1298 II: Letters of application from Frans van Leemputten (arrived on 7 November 1886); Louis Boschmans (letter of recommendation 13 December 1886, 27 December 1886, 5 January 1887); Henri Otto (21 March 1887); Constantin Meunier (29 March 1887).
 - 21 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II, no. 46324: Letter from C. Meunier to L. Vander Kelen, Brussels, 12 March 1887.
 - 22 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from L. Vander Kelen to C. Meunier, Leuven, 16 March 1887.
 - 23 This is apparent from a short note dated 24/26 March 1887 giving the text to be published and the names of the journals in which it was to appear: *Petites Affiches, Libéral, L'Étoile Belge, Précurseur* (SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II) In his letter of application of 30 March 1887 Lucien Gérarde refers to the announcement that day in *L'Étoile Belge*. (SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II).
 - 24 'Académie des Beaux-Arts. La place de professeur de peinture est à conférer. Le titulaire devra résider à Louvain et y ouvrir un atelier. Traitement minimum: 3000 frs. Traitement maximum: 4000 frs. Les demandes devront être remises au secrétaire

- communal au plus tard le lundi 4 avril prochain': X 1887-A: 232. The sums apply to annual salaries.
- 25 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letters of application from C.J. Van Landuyt (29 March 1887), Lucien Gérarde (30 March 1887) and Charles Dielman (3 April 1887).
- 26 In a letter dated 5 April 1887 mayor Vander Kelen apologised for his absence (for which he gave no reason) at that day's meeting. In this he said that if he had been able to be present he would have pressed for the appointment of a professor of painting, which in his opinion should not be put off for a single day longer. He did not name any names, though, but the council of aldermen already undoubtedly knew his preference. See SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from L. Vander Kelen to the council of aldermen. There were two votes against Meunier. Destrée (1895: 71) wrongly states that Meunier became director of the Leuven academy, confusing this with his appointment as professor, for Gerard Vander Linden was director of the Leuven academy from 1887 to 1907. See ENGELLEN and MARX 2002: 1596.
- 27 *L'Art Moderne* (10 April 1887): 119.
- 28 '[...] J'ai déjà fait connaître au conseil les titres que je pourrais invoquer à l'appui de ma requête; une longue carrière artistique, et je puis le dire, bien remplie, mes oeuvres dans les principaux musées du pays, de plus, remarqué comme statuaire au Salon de Paris 1886, etc. etc.': SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter of application from C. Meunier, 29 March 1887.
- 29 In the salon catalogues, several letters and a visiting card of Meunier's (Archief voor Hedendaagse Kunst van België (hereafter abbreviated to AHKB), file Meunier 67 is repeatedly given as the house number, whereas THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 8, probably erroneously, mention number 79.
- 30 At least 2300 homes in the Voer district were affected by the floods in January 1891. See PEETERS 1992.
- 31 '[...] cette circulaire m'est arrivée à Louvain à peu près en même temps que l'inondation, qui a ravagé ma demeure.': Antwerp, AMVC-Letterenhuis, H517, no.163874: Letter from C. Meunier to Frans Hens, secretary and co-founder of the Antwerp *Cercle des XIII*, 9 February 1891 (from Statiestraat 67).
- 32 'Je viens vous exprimer toute ma reconnaissance et vous remercier de la confiance que vous avez mise en moi, en me confiant ces importantes fonctions. Croyez-bien, Messieurs, que je m'efforcerais de mériter cette confiance.': SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to the college of mayor and aldermen, 18 April 1887.
- 33 'Notre collège apprend que vous n'avez encore fait aucune diligence pour être installé dans vos fonctions. Il importerait cependant, de l'avis de M. le Directeur de l'école, que vos cours de peinture furent immédiatement organisés.': SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 13 June 1887.
- 34 This is apparent from the letter from Vander Linden dated 15 June 1887. For more on Gerard Vander Linden, see ENGELLEN and MARX 2002: 1596-97.
- 35 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from Gérard Vander Linden to the mayor and aldermen of Leuven, 15 June 1887; Letter from C. Meunier to the college of mayor and aldermen, 16 June 1887.
- 36 The amphitheatre was built in 1743-44 by architect J.A. Hustin on commission of professor H.J. Rega to serve as a dissecting chamber where he also gave anatomy lessons.
- 37 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 13 June 1887. The repair work to the old amphitheatre is recorded in the *Rapports administratifs* of 1887 as follows: 'Ancien amphithéâtre anatomique: Réparations importantes à la toiture et transformation complète du local en atelier de peinture.' (Leuven, Stadsarchief, *Rapports administratifs*, 1887: 132.) In the Leuven city archives there is an entire file (MA Leuven 1830-1976, 1948) with documents on the conversion from the former amphitheatre to a studio for Meunier. A public tender for the works was issued on 30 June 1887. The conversion costs amounted to 3,303.22 francs, paid from the budget for purchasing artworks.
- 38 '[...] En échange de cet avantage l'artiste fournira pour le musée communal, un ou plusieurs tableaux dont M. le Bourgmestre indiquera les sujets et se réservera la réception.': Leuven, Stadsarchief, *Collegenotulen* (book of 25 April to 18 October 1887), 31 May 1887, agenda point 16.
- 39 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to the college of mayor and aldermen, 16 June 1887; LEMONNIER 1904: 40 (He suggests, which is quite possible but should still be verified, that the Meunier family first chose the house and the city made available the building opposite only afterwards). The family probably rented the house. See RAYMAEKERS 1930: 121. Correspondence in the Leuven city archives (MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II) refutes the obstinate statement in various sources as though Meunier had already moved to Leuven and taken up his post there in 1886.
- 40 'J'attends avec impatience que mon atelier soit prêt ici pour me mettre à quelque grand travail. Cet atelier, mon cher ami, sera tout bonnement superbe': AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 84) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, 10 September 1887. The conversion was finally finished in November 1887, with the placing of a mantelpiece by Henri Wuyckens for 30 francs.
- 41 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Draft version of a letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 14 April 1887. The original French designations are as follows: (1) 'composition historique', (2) 'peinture d'après nature', (3) 'peinture décorative', (4) 'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie artistique', (5) 'perspective pittoresque ou aérienne' and (6) 'peinture pour demoiselles'.
- 42 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Draft version of a letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 14 April 1887.
- 43 See in connection with this STERCKX 2001: 186-188; GREUSEN 2003, part I: 47-55.
- 44 The year after there were two of them. In 1887-88 girls were still offered only two subjects, both of which were taught by Prof. M. Schmidt: *Rapport sur l'administration et la situation des affaires de la Ville de Louvain, fait au conseil communal, par le collège des bourgmestre et échevins*, Leuven, 1888: 73; 1889: 73; 1890: 72.
- 45 He then taught the following subjects: as part of 'Enseignement moyen': 'Arts relevant de la peinture' (in conjunction with Prof.

- Vander Linden, taken by 5 students) and as part of 'Enseignement supérieur': 'Peinture d'après nature' (5 students), 'Arts relevant de la peinture' (in conjunction with Prof. Vander Linden, 0 students), 'Composition' (in conjunction with Prof. Vander Linden, 11 students), 'Types historiques, études du caractère' (in conjunction with Prof. Vander Linden, 11 students), 'Perspective pittoresque' (with the note: *le cours n'a pas été donné*), 'Esthétique et histoire de l'art' (11 students): *Rapport sur l'administration et la situation des affaires de la Ville de Louvain, fait au conseil communal, le 1 octobre 1888 par le collège des bourgmestre et échevins*, Leuven, 1888: 71-73.
- 46 'Vous avez négligé jusqu'ici, malgré des observations réitérées, de vous acquitter de cette partie de vos fonctions. Le Collège des Bourgmestre et échevins regrette de devoir vous en exprimer son mécontentement. Il n'est pas possible que la situation qui provoque nos justes plaintes se reproduise au cours de la prochaine année scolaire, et des mesures rigoureuses devront être prises [...]': SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 12 July 1888.
- 47 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 4/6 October 1888.
- 48 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to the city council, 17 October 1888.
- 49 *Rapport sur l'administration et la situation des affaires de la Ville de Louvain, fait au conseil communal, le 7 octobre 1889 par le collège des bourgmestre et échevins*, Leuven, 1889: 72; 1890: 72.
- 50 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from G. Vander Linden to L. Vander Kelen, 9 November 1889.
- 51 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from L. Vander Kelen to C. Meunier, 8 January 1891. This is possibly about his solo exhibition at the Galerie Saint-Cyr in Brussels. About this exhibition, cf. the contribution by Hilde Van Gelder on p. 71 of this catalogue.
- 52 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to L. Vander Kelen, [18 January 1891].
- 53 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: internal notes of the Leuven city council, 22 January 1891, 5 February 1891, 6 February 1891.
- 54 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the director of Public Works at the college of mayor and aldermen, 17 February 1891.
- 55 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the director of Public Works at the college of mayor and aldermen, 17 February 1891.
- 56 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from L. Vander Kelen to C. Meunier, 23 February 1891, and reminders dated: 23 April 1891, 21/22 May 1891.
- 57 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to L. Vander Kelen, 26 May 1891.
- 58 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from L. Vander Kelen to C. Meunier, 28/30 May 1891.
- 59 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from L. Vander Kelen to C. Meunier, 25 February 1892; Written on visiting card from C. Meunier to L. Vander Kelen, 12 March 1892; 17/19 March 1892.
- 60 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letters from L. Vander Kelen to C. Meunier, 3/4 November 1893, 8 February 1894; Letter from C. Meunier to L. Vander Kelen, 3 March 1894 (from Leuven).
- 61 Leuven, stedelijk museum Vander Kelen-Mertens (hereafter abbreviated to SMVKM), record of artwork (inv. no. S/46/M). In that record and in the photograph in the L'Institut royal du Patrimoine artistique (KIK) it is stated that it was about the floods of 1897, but there were no major floods in Leuven that year and Meunier was by then living in Brussels.
- 62 See the file on the (re)locating of the statue in the city archives in Leuven: MA Leuven 1830-1976, 8223; VAN EVEN 1895: 676 (including the names of the members of the organising committee and the most important people present at the dedication); HYMANS 1905 ('Diese Schöpfung schönsten Stiles, die zu wenig bekannt ist, ruft die Erinnerung an die Zeit wach, die man die münchische in der Laufbahn des Künstlers nennen könnte. Als Meunier dieses Werk schuf, leuchtete über ihm erst die Morgenröte seines Ruhmes.'): THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 105; FONTAINE 1923: 112 (dates the statue to 1890-91), 158-59; REMS and VAN BUYTEN 1983: 10,12; STAES 1997: 13-14; UYTTERHOEVEN 1999: 20-21.
- 63 For more on Canon Armand Thiéry, see SMEYERS 1992.
- 64 For more on the project for the Botanical Garden, see VAN LENNEP 2000: 89-98, et al. Meunier and Van der Stappen each received 20,800 francs (now the equivalent of about 100,000 euros) for supplying the scale models.
- 65 For more on the public sculptures in Leuven, see RUTS 2002; and for the war memorials: VELDEMAN 2004: 257-303 and CEUNEN 2004: 305-327.
- 66 C. Meunier worked initially with the great Brussels *Compagnie des Bronzes* (cf. infra), but in 1890 he terminated the contract and demanded the return of the statues for which this firm had until then had exclusive sales rights. ('Monsieur, ayant une autre combinaison pour la vent[e] des deux petits bronzes que vous avez édités, le *Martéleur* et la *Hiercheuse*, et desirant [sic] rester propriétaire de mes modèles à l'avenir, je viens vous prier de rompre la convention par laquelle vous aviez seul le droit de vente. [...]': AR, 1002: *Compagnie des Bronzes*. Dossier concernant C. Meunier, sculpteur à Louvain: Letter from C. Meunier to the Compagnie des Bronzes from Leuven, 20 May 1890.) After that he mainly called on Verbeest for his bronzes (for example also a reduction of his Damian statue), but also Petermann and Van Aerschodt. For example, Meunier had the bas-relief *The Puddlers* in the Musée d'Orsay cast by the latter, as can be deduced from the inscription: 'Van Aerschodt, fondeur, Louvain. See AR, AAB, PEP, 85: Letter from C. Meunier to Picard from Leuven, [10/20] July 1888, in which he complains about Petermann; URBAN 1998: 40; ENGELLEN and MARX 2002: 1154; LEMAIRE 2003: 108-111.
- 67 Brussels, City Archives, *Almanach du commerce et de l'industrie. Bruxelles et ses faubourgs*, 1898 (publicity); LEMAIRE 2003: 111.
- 68 See the file in the Leuven city archives: MA Leuven (1830-1976), 8223. The council meetings of 19 December 1893 and 16 February

- 1894 were crucial in the decision about the site.
- 69 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 8223: Letter from Edouard Descamps and C. Meunier to the city council, 8 November 1893.
- 70 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 8223: C. Meunier to alderman Decoster, 1 January 1894.
- 71 See the file SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 8223.
- 72 This is attested by various letters (SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II) and the address in Schaarbeek given in the Salon catalogue of 1895. This in contrast to various authors who say that Meunier did not return to Brussels until 1895 or 1896.
- 73 Paris, Archives Musée Rodin (hereafter abbreviated to: AMR; via transcriptions by Anne Pingoot at the Musée d'Orsay, with many thanks to Laure de Margerie): Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 21 March 1892; ENGELIN and MARX 2002: 1630-1633. Meunier possibly already met Rodin during his stay in Brussels in the 1870s, more specifically from his work on the reliefs for the Brussels Stock Exchange building (according to THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 19; BERNARD 1927: 1), if not, it was in 1886 when Meunier exhibited his *Marteleur* at the Paris Salon and Octave Mirbeau demanded the medal of honour for it. Rodin wrote in the book of tribute *Constantin Meunier et son oeuvre* (BAZALGETTE, 1905: 77), composed by 28 of his writer and artist friends, full of praise for Meunier: 'Constantin Meunier est un homme admirable. Il a la grandeur de Millet. C'est un des plus grands artistes du siècle.'
- 74 This in contrast to various authors (including FONTAINE 1923: 118; BAUDSON 1979: 16) who say that Meunier continued to teach in Leuven until 1896.
- 75 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from G. Vander Linden to V. Decoster, alderman and chairman of the administrative committee of the academy of Fine Arts, 30 April 1897. At that time the following subjects were still involved: 'peinture pour jeunes gens', 'peinture pour demoiselles', 'peinture décorative' and 'histoire de l'art'.
- 76 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Report by the office of aldermen for Public Instruction and Fine Arts at the Audit, 3 May 1897; Report of [mayor and aldermen to E. Van Even?], 10 May 1897.
- 77 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to the mayor, which arrived on 2 June 1897.
- 78 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the city council to C. Meunier, 28/29 June 1897. Acceptance of Meunier's resignation was announced at the district council meeting of 21 June.
- 79 'Des raisons majeures et ma santé m'y obligent. Je me souviendrai toujours avec plaisir et émotion des belles années passées dans le calme et la paix de votre si pittoresque et si artistique cité Flamande.': SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from C. Meunier to the mayor, received on 2 June 1897.
- 80 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Letter from the Leuven city council to Léocadie Meunier-Gorneaux, 6 April 1905; Letter from alderman Marguery to L. Meunier-Gorneaux, undated.
- 81 The decision on it was reported by THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 8 in the past tense: 'Louvain se souviendra-t-elle de Meunier? L'exposition actuelle résout cette question. Le conseil communal de Louvain y a répondu en décidant l'aposition d'une plaque commémorative à la façade de l'amphithéâtre qui servit d'atelier de sculpture à l'artiste [...]'. Notable is the description of it as a sculptor's studio, whereas during the conversions it was always spoken of as a painter's studio.
- 82 Leuven, Stadsarchief: *Schepencollege, Beraadslagingen van 13 september 1932 tot 19 maart 1934*: Sitting of 20 March 1933, agenda point 1 (Roads, Naming of Streets, 90993). The motivation and any initiators are not mentioned in this. On the significance of the street name as 'lieu de mémoire' (Pierre Nora), see: ART 2003: 13-23.
- 83 On this see the file: SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Dossier Fêtes et cérémonies publiques, 75^e anniversaire de la restauration de l'Université Catholique, 1909, Exposition des oeuvres de Constantin Meunier. Vermeylen senior died the year after Meunier's arrival in the city. He made no less than 31 statues for the niches of Leuven townhall and Vermeylen jr. 6 statues (in collaboration with Van Uytvaank, 1903). They also worked together on the sculptural decoration of Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum (1877-1885) and station. See GILLEIR, HUYBENS and REBKEMANS 1999: 195-201; ENGELIN and MARX 2002: 1750.
- 84 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Letter from Frantz Vermeylen to the college of mayor and aldermen, 5 February 1909. In the letterhead it said: *75^e anniversaire de la restauration de l'Université. Exposition de Sculpture Brabançonne. Mai - août - Louvain*. On the *Monument to Labour*, cf. the contribution by Sura Levine on p. 11 of this catalogue.
- 85 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Letter (10) from A. Thiéry and F. Vermeylen to the mayor of Leuven, received on 18 March 1909. Frantz Vermeylen took over the workshop in Minderbroedersstraat, built in 1877 and just a few metres away from Meunier's studio, from his father. The dilapidated complex bears a memorial plaque in memory of Vermeylen senior.
- 86 Intended as the Institute of Chemistry of the Catholic University of Leuven, it now houses STUK art centre. The exhibition ran, with a month's extension, until the end of July. (Front page) articles appeared on the occasion of the opening of both building and exhibition, including in *Louvain-Journal* (9 May 1909, by Omer Dierickx), *Journal de Bruxelles* (X 1909-B), *Le XX^e siècle* (X 1909-A) and *L'Art Moderne* (by Xavier Mellery.)
- 87 'La Belgique a possédé un grand artiste; et, durant huit ans, Louvain eut l'honneur de compter Constantin Meunier parmi ses habitants; c'est ici qu'il enfanta la plupart de ses chefs d'oeuvre; Louvain en garde le souvenir avec une légitime fierté et saisit avec bonheur l'occasion de reconnaître aujourd'hui sa dette': THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 147. The opening addresses by Vermeylen and Baron Descamps, minister of Arts, Sciences and Literature, were printed in the exhibition catalogue.
- 88 'Nous sommes un peuple d'une étrange mentalité. Il nous est imposé, semble-t-il, de ne rien admettre qui n'ait été préalablement consacré par l'étranger. [...] Constantin Meunier végétait chez nous, et, brusquement, la France l'imposa à notre admiration. Car il faut bien le dire, nous nous sommes habitués à admirer Meunier comme on s'habitue à un ratelier ou à un col trop haut,
- [...] Il le faut, voilà tout, et quoi qu'il en soit, il est admis, "Urbi et Orbi", que Meunier est un maître.': DIERICKX 1909: 1.
- 89 For the detailed correspondence about admission prices conducted between the exhibition organisers and the city council, see SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: file 'Exposition des oeuvres de Constantin Meunier', 1909. The normal admission price of 1 franc can be seen on the poster by Omer Dierickx.
- 90 The total estimate of the cost was 20,000 francs. The Belgian government was prepared to come up with the half. The Catholic University, which first promised 3,000, ultimately offered 5,000 francs and the city 3,000. The remaining sum had to be recovered from income. See SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: note from alderman Vander Kelen, 23 March 1909.
- 91 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Letter from F. Vermeylen to the college of mayor and aldermen, 12 June 1909. The figures that the treasurer of the organisation, J. De Clerck, presented on 7 July 1909, after payment of the first tranche of 2000 francs by the city, nevertheless shows an extremely healthy situation: 10,972.54 francs from income and 10,979.69 in outgoings. (SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Summary of expenses on 30 June 1909 in a letter of 7 July 1909) Whereas the current end balance on 1 November 1909 did indeed show a problematic picture, with a deficit of 9418.14 francs, the official damage at the end of the run was still only a hundredth of this: 95.23 francs. Income/revenue amounting to 24,234.84 francs was obtained from subsidies (17,000 francs; 1,000 francs (2nd tranche) still to be paid by the city of Leuven), admission money (5,633.80 francs), sale of catalogues (1,221 francs), cloakroom services (328.25 francs) and sundries (51.79 francs). Outgoings came to 25,330.07 francs, of which the major part went to installation and decoration (9550.07 francs), followed by the *Monument to Labour* (6,931.60 francs), transport and insurance (4,654.54 francs), surveillance (3910.18 francs) and travel expenses (283.68 francs). After the city had paid the remaining tranche of 1,000 francs on 16 December 1909 the deficit of 1,095.23 francs was virtually cancelled. See SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Summary of expenses, 1 November 1909; detailed accountant's final balance drawn up by treasurer J. De Clerck, 3 December 1909.
- 92 By comparison: Leuven already had more than 40,000 inhabitants in 1890.
- 93 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Letter from Ch. Jacques (-Meunier) to F. Vermeylen, 30 July 1909.
- 94 See on this the exhibition catalogue with text, illustrations and list of the works exhibited: DELAUNOIS 1930. Some of the names of the 62 other exhibitors which are relevant within the remit of this article are: Louis Boschmans, Louis Daels, Pierre Puyenbroeck, Gerard Vander Linden, Jean-François and Frantz Vermeylen, Pierre Braecke, Alfred Delaunois, Paul de Vigne, Gustave Vande Weostyne and Omer Dierickx.
- 95 FONTAINE 1923: 105.
- 96 THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 129, 130.
- 97 By *The fire-damp* is an annotation that the sculpture had to be restored after the German occupation and that it was in such precarious condition that further plans to exhibit it in the vestibule of the townhall had to be abandoned. A drawing for or after this statue was also shown.
- 98 Only very recently the Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Ghent bought a bronze copy of *The fire-damp*: DE STANDAARD 2005.
- 99 The gifts came from: Constantin Meunier himself in 1900 (cf. above, *Floods in Leuven*, inv. no. S/46/M), Canon Thiéry in 1926 (*Puddler*, inv. no. C/255), Augustin Van Ermen in 1930 (*Woman working in a mine*, inv. no. C/256, as part of legacy), Charles Jacques-Meunier in 1936 (*The prodigal son*, inv. no. C/253; *The Sower*, inv. no. C/254; *Maternity*, inv. no. C/257), Dr. Meulemans in 1948 (*Figure of a woman*, inv. no. S/40/M; *Young woman*, inv. no. S/41/M; *Figure of a man*, inv. no. S/42/M; *Old Man*, inv. no. S/43/M; *Figure of a man*, inv. no. S/45/M; *Head of a man*, inv. no. S/48/M; *Man's head*, inv. no. 49/M; *Figure of a man*, inv. no. S/50/M) and a loan from the Belgian State in 1933 (*Portrait of Mrs Thiberghien*, inv. no. S/44/M). On the legacy of A. Van Ermen, see SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 12029.
- 100 'C'est un don, un souvenir, que nous faisons à la ville de Louvain, du séjour que C. Meunier y fit et pendant lequel il fit les principales de ses oeuvres. C'est aussi en souvenir de son élève préféré, Mr Alfred Delaunois': Leuven, SMVKM, 97038, File Gift of artworks by C. Meunier: Letter from Ch. Jacques to A. Delaunois, Brussels, 16 April 1936. In the letter it is also mentioned that the donated plaster version of *The Sower* acted as a model for the bronze cast in the Botanical Garden in Brussels.
- 101 Leuven, SMVKM, inv. no. 97038, File city council of Leuven, Gift of artworks by C. Meunier: Letter from E. Doms to Mr Bergmans, Leuven, 25 May 1936.
- 102 Leuven, SMVKM, inv. no. 97038, File city council of Leuven, Gift of artworks by C. Meunier: Letter from A. Delaunois to the college of mayor and aldermen, Leuven, 9 July 1936.
- 103 Leuven, SMVKM, inv. no. 97038, File city council of Leuven, Gift of artworks by C. Meunier: Letter from E. Doms to Mr and Mrs. Jacques-Meunier, Leuven, 25 July 1936.
- 104 Leuven, SMVKM, inv. no. 97038, File city council of Leuven, Gift of artworks by C. Meunier: Offer from Maison Delaunois Frères (Peintures, Ensembles Décoratifs, 63, rue des Bogards) to the value of 450 francs to the college of mayor and aldermen, Leuven, 19 September 1936.
- 105 'Je sais qu'on parle d'un Musée Meunier à Louvain, mais il n'y a encore là que des propositions en l'air et surtout pas de Musée. Quand ce Musée existera il sera encore temps alors de voir ce qu'on y mettra et sous quelles conditions j'accepterai d'y donner ma participation': SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 4773: Letter from Ch. Jacques to F. Vermeylen, 30 July 1909.
- 106 '[...] La Moisson, que je viens de terminer faisant suite à mon projet de monument au Travail, dont je caresse l'idée depuis des années, mais dont la réalisation doit se faire naturellement avec le concours de l'Etat et de la Ville de Bruxelles. [...] Je voudrais que la presse s'en occupe un peu': Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, KB II.7683/19b: Letter from C. Meunier to Max Sulzberger, July 1898. (Max Sulzberger, among others, wrote about Meunier in his article on the Salon of *Les XX in L'Étoile Belge*

- of 6 February 1885.)
- 107 'Puisse le Monument du Travail, l'oeuvre capitale que le maître conçut à Louvain, s'édifier un jour dans cette même ville, et y perpétuer le souvenir du grand créateur d'art qui glorifie la cité!': THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 8.
- 108 'By agreement with Monseigneur Ladeuze, rector of the University, we are making a great effort to embellish the immediate surroundings of the University Library. We are therefore intending to recreate the Volksplaats, situated in front of the before mentioned building into a public park.' ('In overeenkomst met Monseigneur Ladeuze, rector der Hoogeschool, doen wij een groote poging om de onmiddellijke omgeving der Hoogeschoolboekerij te verfraaien. Zoo zijn wij zinnens, de Volksplaats, gelegen vóór voornoemd gebouw, te herscheppen in openbaar park.'): SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letter from the mayor to the minister of Public Education J. Hoste, 4 May 1937. See on this entire question: SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: File Public Works, Reconstruction of the city park, the Ladeuze and Hoover Squares. Project by Henri Lacoste (not executed), 1937-1948. I came across these plans thanks to their mention, without precise mention of the source, by STAES 1997: 12-30 and further enquiry of the archivist Piet Veldeman. From this it appeared that Mark Derez (archivist of the university archives in Leuven) had already published a voluminous article on the history of Ladeuze Square and the Lacoste project in 1988, to which I am happy to refer for more details regarding the historical and spatial context: DEREZ 1988: 10-47. Seen from an international point of view, there are plenty of acknowledged examples of open-air museums of this kind dedicated to a single sculptor. It is interesting that the Swedish figurative sculptor Carl Milles (1875-1955), who knew Rodin and became acquainted with Meunier's sculptural works in 1903 during a journey across Belgium, made his own sculpture park or *Millesgården* on his own initiative and in the same year of 1936 gave it to the Swedish people. With thanks to Allan Sekula.
- 109 The Leuven city archives retains the table-size plans, a photograph of the scale model and smaller preparatory studies (SAL, box of Reforms of Ladeuze and Hoover Squares). There are also a few documents in the University archives. See DEREZ 1988: 21-22 for more on H. Lacoste and his political nature.
- 110 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letter from H. Lacoste to mayor E. Doms, 19 July 1938.
- 111 'En partant du point bas de la place du Peuple, niveau bas et origine de la composition, on remonterait le jardin français en terrasses établi sur cette place, pour arriver au jardin anglais qui occuperait le Marché au Grains, et enfin au Parc St-Donat, le tout formerait la Voie Triomphale du Travail, jalonnée par les oeuvres du Maître Constantin Meunier. Le point culminant de la composition au sommet du Parc St-Donat serait le cube dont les faces porteraient les bas-reliefs de Meunier.' SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letter from H. Lacoste to E. Doms, 22 June 1938.
- 112 On an early draft for the redesigning of the Volksplein and the Graanmarkt the titles of the sculptures are noted in pencil. *The Philosopher, Worker at rest, The Puddler and The Mine-worker* were to be placed in front of the library. On opposite sides of the square, from top to bottom: *Woman mine-worker, The Hammerer, The Stone-capper, The Mower, The Shipwreck, Maternity, The Docker, Man Drinking, The Mineworker with his Lamp, The Sower, The firedamp*.
- 113 DEREZ 1988: 14; CEUNEN 2004: 305-306 (illustration). Ultimately the statue remained there until 1988 when an underground carpark was built.
- 114 In Leuven Braecke was a student of Louis De Taeye and Gérard Vander Linden. His marble sculpture *Fatigue/weariness* (1881) is in the Vander Kelen-Mertens museum. In 1893 Meunier and Braecke exhibited together at the Paris Salon, but Meunier enjoyed a better reception. Braecke, as had Meunier, made a bust of their friend Camille Lemonnier (KMSKB), for whom Braecke also made the monument in Brussels (1899). FONTAINE 1923: 140 gives a comparison of several of Meunier's works with those of Braecke, who, according to the author owed tribute to Meunier. Braecke's allegorical figure *Winter* (or *Woodcutter*) in the Botanical Garden in Brussels goes back to a drawing by Meunier and Meunier himself also made a statue after it (Brussels, Constantin Meunier Museum). Braecke's *Forgiveness* (1893-'95, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique) could be seen, as it were, as a transition between Meunier's *The prodigal son* (1892) and George Minnes kneeling youths (for example *Little relic-bearer*, 1897).
- 115 The first sum was later increased by 5% to 70,350 francs owing to the inflation of the salaries. SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letters from Verbeyst to E. Doms, 18 May 1937 and 23 November 1938.
- 116 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letter from E. Doms to J. Hoste, 4 May 1937; Letter from E. Glesener, director general of Fine Arts, to E. Doms, 25 October 1937. See also DEREZ 1988: 22-24.
- 117 Articles about the event appeared in *La Dernière Heure* (X 1938-C), *De Vrijheid-Le Libéral* (X 1938-B) and *De Volkswil* (X 1938-A and X 1938-D), et al.
- 118 DEREZ 1988: 18, 33.
- 119 *Open brief aan den Heer d.d. burgemeester Doms*, 14 September 1938; *Rex*, 6 (6 December 1938); DEREZ 1988, 33-34.
- 120 X 1938-D: 1-2 (text printed in bold as in original document.)
- 121 X 1938-D: 1.
- 122 X 1938-D: 1-2. Also quoted in DEREZ 1988: 11.
- 123 *Rex*, 5 (24 September 1938); DEREZ 1988: 33.
- 124 'La seule chose dont il ne fut pas question au cours de la conférence, ce sont les moyens financiers nécessaires à la réalisation du projet.' X 1938-C.
- 125 X 1938-D.
- 126 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Report by the *Agence Nationale d'illustrations et de Presse* (Paris, *rue Lincoln*) to the mayor of Leuven, 22 June 1939.
- 127 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letter from E. Doms to Verbeyst, 9 December 1938; DEREZ 1988: 35.
- 128 SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 14.442: Letters from H. Lacoste to the city council in connection with the repayment, 22 June 1938; 9 March 1939; 24 February 1948; 26 April 1948; 6 October 1948; 29 October 1948; 6 December 1948; etc. In 1948 Lacoste was prepared, as a contribution to the damage suffered by the townhall because of the war, to receive only repayment of his expenses (because of inflation increased to 26,000 francs), without honorary payment, but on three conditions. He asked the city to mention his name in the event of any later partial execution of the plans and in the event of any restitution owing to war damage to remember that it was Lacoste and not the city who had lost his plans and had been paid only for the cost price of their materials. The council of aldermen decided on 15 November 1948 on the repayment of 26,000 francs, but agreed to only the first of Lacoste's conditions.
- 129 'Un tas de raisons plus ou moins majeures me retiennent dans cette bonne ville de Louvain, dont je n'ai du reste qu'à me louer!': AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 84) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, 10 September 1887.
- 130 FONTAINE 1923: 86.
- 131 '[...] pourrais-tu me dire quand je pourrai toucher le prix de ma Hiercheuse? Je ne suis malheureusement pas cher du tout en ce moment et j'ai à l'horizon quelques crocodiles affamés qui, gueule ouverte, attendent leur proie... Pardon, mon cher ami, de t'importuner, car il n'y a rien au monde qui me répugne davantage que parler argent!!! Mais il en faut malheureusement beaucoup pour faire des statues et pour... manger!': Brussels, AHKB, Octave Maus Foundation, inv. no. 4796; BAUDSON 1979: 11-12; MAUS 1980: 55; LEVINE 1997: 106.
- 132 'Mes appointements à peu près 300 francs par mois me donnent ici la vie et je vivrai de façon à m'en tenir, car il ne faudrait pas faire de dettes à Louvain, à mon âge ces arriérés sont mortels.' AR, AAB, PEP: Letter (no. 97) from C. Meunier to E. Picard, undated. See also: SAL, MA Leuven (1830-1976), 1298 II: Draft for a letter to C. Meunier, 14 April 1887. In comparison: in 1897, when he was already successful, Meunier accepted the sum of 4,500 francs for his *Christ on the Cross*, on condition that it would be kept at the Museum in Brussels: AHKB, Letter from C. Meunier to an unknown person, Brussels, 11 October 1897. This was probably the small wooden sculpture (h.: 60 cm) dated to 1896.
- 133 RAYMAEKERS 1930: 121. According to THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 41, during his Leuven period Meunier kept a studio in Molenstraat, as a *piéd-à-terre* in Brussels, where, for example, he is said to have made his statuette of Edmond Picard. Can this fact, about which nothing further has been discovered, be reconciled with his disastrous financial situation?
- 134 'Monsieur, Comme suite à la visite que Madame Meunier a faite à la Directrice de nos magasins, nous avons l'honneur de vous informer que nous sommes disposés à reproduire en bronze — cire-perdue — les deux statuettes dont les modèles sont à notre usage. Nous les mettrons en vente dans nos magasins et nous vous paierons 20% du prix comme droits d'auteur. [...]': Brussels, Archives de l'État en Belgique, 1002 (Compagnie des Bronzes. Dossier concernant C. Meunier, sculpteur à Louvain): Letter from the accounts department of the Compagnie des Bronzes to C. Meunier, 11 June 1888; and Meunier's confirmation of this: Letter from C. Meunier to the Compagnie des Bronzes from Leuven, 3 August 1888.
- 135 AR, AAB, PEP: Letters from C. Meunier to E. Picard, inv.78 (18/05/1881), inv. 81 (September 1886), inv. 85 (20/07/1888), inv. 87 (22/12/1891). See in this connection also LEVINE 1997: 106, footnote 39.
- 136 '[...] reprendre mon boulot ici à Louvain. Ce boulot est une figure, car il est bien léger. Mais je ne suis pas encore assez sur [sic] de l'existence pour le lâcher.' AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin, 21 March 1892.
- 137 THIEBAUT-SISSON 1899. As adopted in: *Catalogue des Galeries Grafton* (May-July 1899): 74; THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 46.
- 138 'Maintenant bien des choses se sont passées depuis que nous nous sommes vus, j'habite Louvain où les choses de la vie m'ont forcé d'accepter une place de professeur de peinture à l'Académie de l'endroit; cette transplantation dans un milieu bête de province a sur moi une déplorable action et j'ai cru un moment que j'y laisserais ma peau, un découragement m'avait envahi tel que tous mes amis, les miens en étaient alarmés: je ne puis sans frémir penser à cette période sinistre... enfin maintenant j'ai surmonté mon mal et me suis remis au travail: guéri, j'espère que l'année prochaine à Paris vous verriez quelques machines de moi qui vous plairaient... Ne venez vous pas en Belgique? Je voudrais tant vous avoir dans ma petite retraite et là vous laisser le choix de quelque dessin qui vous plairait.' AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin, undated. [1887].
- 139 AMR: Letters from C. Meunier to A. Rodin, 11 June 1890; 5 July 1890 ('Travaillez-vous: j'en suis sûr. Quand [sic] à moi, je suis très au travail. C'est si bon. Lemonnier m'a dit que vous veniez en Belgique; Voilà qui est bien: vous viendrez à Louvain, et nous tâcherons de vous faire passer le temps agréablement; Nous vous ferons fête. [...] Très bonnes amitiés à Desbois. Tachez qu'il vous accompagne.'); s.d. (Meunier once again invites him to Leuven, where he will be received with open arms); 21 March 1892; 16 July 1892. Rodin painted several Brabant landscapes during his period in Belgium (1871-1877), but it is not sure whether he visited Leuven at that time; JUDRIN 1997: 81-111.
- 140 'Cependant sa renommée s'étendait; des artistes venus de l'étranger avaient appris le chemin de l'atelier du sculpteur enfermé sous la coupole du vieil amphithéâtre.' *Journal de Bruxelles* (10 May 1909): 2.
- 141 Musée Rodin, 1957: nos. 83-85. In a letter dated June 1893 to Rodin, who was that year chairman of the jury on sculpture at the SNBA, Meunier said he was surprised that Camille Claudel was not to be found on the list of *sociétaires*: 'Je reçois ce matin la liste des propositions au titre de sociétaire et d'associé de la SNBA. [...] J'ai été bien étonné, cher ami, de ne pas voir le nom de Mlle Camille Claudel sur la liste des sociétaires, qui veut dire?' (AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, June 1893.) Around 1892 there was a break in the love affair between Rodin and Camille Claudel. In the same letter Meunier asked for

- a retrieve for his compatriot and, since the commission from the Ministry for the Herb Garden, close colleague Charles Vander Stappen.
- 142 'Mon cher Maus, j'accepte avec le plus grand plaisir d'envoyer aux XX. Là, au moins, il y a une vitalité artistique que l'on cherche vainement dans nos salons officiels, puis cela me rajeunit, ça me secoue un peu de la torpeur qui s'empare quelquefois des plus vaillants en province, où l'on me laisse bien seul!!! je t'assure. Je t'assure aussi que je ferai tous mes efforts pour revenir à Bruxelles quand faire se pourra!!!...': MAUS 1980: 139; Letter from C. Meunier to O. Maus from Leuven, 4 October 1891.
- 143 'J'ai été hier à Louvain pour voir Meunier et entendre Picard. Le groupe de Meunier était superbe et simple, grand et plein de sentiments. Je m'ai bien amusé et la conférence de Picard a été énormément intéressante. Il a eu beaucoup de succès chez ces provinciaux.': AHKB, Fonds XX, Collection 1889, Inv. 5245; Letter from J. Toorop to O. Maus, Brussels, before 5 March 1889; published in MERTENS 1969: 174-175.
- 144 '[...] quand ce même plâtre figura au Salon de Paris, le grand sculpteur Rodin, accompagnant le Président de la République française, s'arrêta et glorifia Meunier universellement par ce mot qu'on ne peut oublier: "Président, découvrez-vous, nous sommes devant un génie!": DELAUNOIS 1930: s.p. [4].
- 145 Alfred Delaunoy in THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: s.p.
- 146 POINSOT 1910: 48-52: *Le colporteur de Louvain*.
- 147 'Il s'y confina dans une rue solitaire et écartée. [...] Ces cours une fois donnés, il s'enfermait dans ce laboratoire.': THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 153. On other pages too the word *enfermé* often recurs.
- 148 '[...] cette vie austère et simple du bon ouvrier au milieu de la monotonie et du silence de la vie provinciale, passant, très doux, avec sa grande barbe d'apôtre, attentif à toutes les formes du travail, à tous les aspects de la vie quotidienne.': VITRY 1904: 27.
- 149 LEMONNIER 1904: 42.
- 150 Alfred Delaunoy in THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: s.p.
- 151 THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 38.
- 152 'La rue tranquille et provinciale était bien faite pour favoriser l'inspiration; l'atelier était comme prédestiné à faciliter le travail génial d'un maître. [...] Il n'y laissa que de bons souvenirs.': RAYMAEKERS 1930: 121.
- 153 'Je suis très heureux dans ce petit coin de pays où personne ne s'inquiète de moi – où j'ai le calme monastique – est-ce peut-être l'idéal pour l'artiste? Si nous pouvions y être deux cependant ce serait parfait. Car il me semble, cher ami, que vous aimeriez cela aussi, vous. Tâchez donc de venir me surprendre, ici il fait beau, les bois sont frais. Cela nous ferait une petite détente. Vous trouverez le gîte à votre goût, j'en suis sûr. Nous vivions de la bonne vie flamande en parlant art. Un effort, allons, c'est si près de Paris où il doit cuire maintenant!': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 16 July 1892.
- 154 TREBU 1898: 24.
- 155 TOMBU 1907: 23. Also adopted in LEVINE 1997: 132, footnote 98.
- 156 'Que ne sommes-nous à Louvain, disait-il au soir de sa vie; on piochait ferme, on tripotait pour le pain de chaque jour, mais au moins mes fils vivaient!': THIÉRY and VAN DIEVOET 1909: 7.
- 157 'Mon cher Rodin, j'avais un fils, marin, notre joie, notre orgueil, nous venons d'apprendre sa mort à Rio, tué par la fièvre jaune. Par là déjà vieille et bonne affection qui nous lie dans la même communion d'art... j'ai bien fait, n'est-ce pas, de vous dire mon chagrin et mes larmes? Je croyais avoir eu à me plaindre de la vie souvent; quelles puérilités devant cette mort. [...] Si vous voyez Mirbeau dites lui n'est-ce pas?': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin, undated. [1894/95].
- 158 'Enfin je puis vous expédier mon *enfant prodigue* en bon état. Veuillez encore m'excuser auprès de Mr Coquelin mais comme je vous l'ai écrit dernièrement un concours de circonstances m'ont fait forcément retarder cet envoi. Je vous demanderai naturellement de m'accuser réception de ce bronze qu'il est bien convenu que Monsieur Coquelin m'achète 700 francs. Je suis en ce moment hors Bruxelles – dans ma famille – à Couillet près Charleroi chez Mr Ch. Jacques ingénieur': Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique (KBR), IL7207/35; Letter (on mourning stationery) from C. Meunier to an unknown person, undated [end 1894?].
- 159 FONTAINE 1923: 116.
- 160 'M. Constantin Meunier s'est sans doute inspiré d'un page celtique de M. Zola, lorsqu'il a modelé ce vieux cheval de mine, que nul être humain ne regardera sans se sentir pris d'une compassion subite et profonde comme les puits où ce malheureux cheval a souffert, souffre et souffrira jusqu'à la mort. Oh! Ces yeux qui ont perdu le sentiment de la lumière, comme il les a bien vus, lui, le maître statuaire belge! Quelle pitié il nous arrache, aussi, avec sa Femme du peuple et ses Mineurs à la sortie du puits et ses Pudeurs!': JAVEL 1893. Similar praise is found, for example, in SAUNIER 1893: 278. For more references to discussion of Meunier's work in the French press, see HANOTELLE 1997: 189. Paul Gauguin also wrote about Meunier in 1894, for example.
- 161 'Faites-moi donc l'amitié, vous qui êtes sur le terrain, ce que c'est que cette nouvelle qui sous le nom de Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts se fonde à Paris; j'ai reçu à cet effet une lettre personnelle d'un M. Dalou, le sculpteur bien connu je suppose...': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 2 February 1890.
- 162 'J'ai accepté d'être du jury pour être quelques jours avec vous là-bas!': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 4 April 1893.
- 163 The *Glassblower* (h.: 54.5 cm) in the Musée Rodin (inv.nr. S.3071) was founded in Brussels, at J. Petermann. The Musée Rodin also possesses Meunier's oil painting *Miner in front of the mine (Mineur devant la mine)* (inv.nr. P.7327). The *Embracing women (Petites Femmes Enlacées)* are not localised. Rodin also gave Meunier a small plaster version of *The Kiss*. BUSINE and

LE NORMAND-ROMAIN 1997: 309; LESEUR 2000: 114, 116-117.

- 164 'Il est toujours convenu que vous prenez le bronze du souffleur en échange de votre petit groupe. Je serai si heureux de faire admirer votre art par mes amis chez moi!': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 5 July 1890; Cat. Musée Rodin, 1957: n°83.
- 165 'Je pense que tous ces honneurs dont j'ai été comblé [sic]!! dans votre belle patrie, je vous dois une grosse part, si pas toute entière et je vous assure que je n'en pouvais croire mes yeux.': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 2 February 1890.
- 166 'Je suis tout heureux. Je viens de recevoir une lettre de votre Directeur des Beaux-Arts qui m'annonce qu'il m'offre de m'acheter deux de mes bronzes, le Marteleur et le Débardeur. J'étais loin de m'attendre à pareil honneur, vous le comprenez, et je ne sais comment remercier ceux qui ont conseillé cette acquisition et dont vous êtes certainement, cher ami. Dites-moi donc comment cette affaire s'est faite, question d'art. A part: ça ne doit pas être facile envers un étranger!': AMR: Letter from C. Meunier to A. Rodin from Leuven, 5 July 1890.
- 167 Paris, Archives Nationales, F/21/*7661: Photograph of Meunier's *Pudlers at the furnace* in *Album de photographies des oeuvres exposées au salon parisien de 1893 et achetées par l'Etat*, 1893.
- 168 For details on this see the CD-ROM edition of the Fonds Debuissin (Musée d'Orsay, INHA, collection Debuissin, 2004); BRESC and PINGEOT 1986: no. 12, no. 283. Octave Mirbeau preferred Aristide Maillol for this commission, but Meunier was chosen in 1902. In view of his age he accepted only after repeated urging. The scale-models are in the Meunier Museum in Ixelles. After his death sculptor Alexandre Charpentier was given the task of finishing the statue, which was ultimately dedicated on 15 June 1924 in Emile-Zola Square, only to be melted down again in 1942-'44 under the Vichy regime.



FIG. 8.
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY*, OIL ON CANVAS, 345 X 228 CM, YEARS 1880, LEUVEN. (CITY MUSEUM VANDER KELEN-MERTENS, LEUVEN, INV.NR. S/47/M). (PHOTO: ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 9.
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *THE FIREDAMP*, BRONZED PLASTER, 145 X 215 X 108,5 CM, SIGNATURE ON THE PLINTH, 1887-1889. (CITY HALL, LEUVEN, INV. NR. C/252). (PHOTO: ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 10
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *THE PUDDLER*, PLASTER (BRONZED IN 1936), 228 X 100 CM, SIGNATURE ON THE PLINTH, 1893. (CITY MUSEUM VANDER KELEN-MERTENS, LEUVEN, INV. NR. C/253). (PHOTO: PAUL LAES)



FIG. 11
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER'S STUDIO IN THE *MINDERBROEDERSTAAT / RUE DES RÉCOLLETS* IN LEUVEN, THE FORMER AMPHITHEATRE ON A POSTCARD FROM BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR. (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES)



FIG. 12
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *FLOODS IN LEUVEN IN 1891*, OIL ON CANVAS, 57 X 110 CM, 1894-1900. (CITY HALL, LEUVEN, INV. NR. S/46/M). (PHOTO: ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 13
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *THE SOWER*, PLASTER (BRONZED IN 1936), 228 X 100 CM, SIGNATURE ON THE PLINTH, 1893. (CITY HALL, LEUVEN, INV. NR. C/254). (PHOTO: ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 14
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *FATHER DAMIAN*, FIRST DRAFT,
PLASTER, APPROXIMATELY 1890-1891, BRUSSELS,
MUSEUM OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER. (COPYRIGHT
L'INSTITUT ROYAL DU PATRIMOINE ARTISTIQUE)



FIG. 15
MEMORIAL FOR CONSTANTIN MEUNIER OUTSIDE HIS
FORMER STUDIO IN THE *MINDERBROEDERSTRAAT / RUE
DES RÉCOLLETS*. (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 16
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *WOMAN MINERWORKER*, BRONZE,
37 CM, SIGNATURE ON THE PLINTH, 1888. (CITY
MUSEUM VANDER KELEN-MERTENS, LEUVEN, INV. NR.
C/256). (PHOTO: UNKNOWN)



FIG. 17
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *THE PRODIGAL SON*, PATINED
PLASTER, 89 X 38 CM, 1892-1895. (CITY HALL,
LEUVEN, INV. NR. C/253). (PHOTO: ERIC DE
WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 18
CONSTANTIN MEUNIER, *MATERNITY*, PLASTER (BRONZED
IN 1936), 129 X 107 CM, SIGNATURE ON THE PLINTH,
1905. (CITY HALL, LEUVEN, INV. NR. C/257).
(PHOTO: ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)

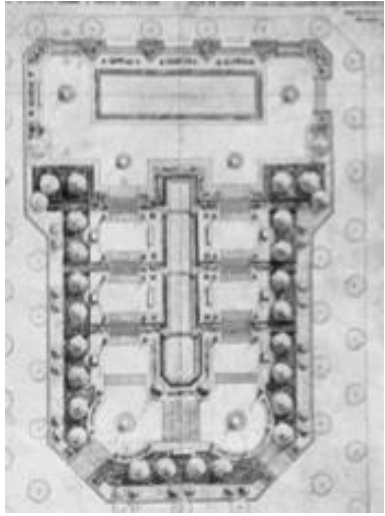


FIG. 19
COLOURED DESIGN FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE "VOLKSPLEIN" (THE CURRENT MGR. LADEUZESQUARE) AND THE "GRAANMARKT" (CURRENT HERBERT HOOVERSQUARE) TO A MUSEUM OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER BY HENRI LACOSTE. (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES, MA 14.442, NOT DATED [1937-1938]). (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 20
CONTEMPORARY PICTURE OF A PART OF THE DISAPPEARED MAQUETTE, MADE BY HENRI LACOSTE FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE "VOLKSPLEIN" (THE CURRENT MGR. LADEUZESQUARE) AND THE LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE "GRAANMARKT" (CURRENT HERBERT HOOVERSQUARE) TO AN OPEN-AIR SCULPTURE PARC OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES, MA 14.442). (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 21
COLOURED OVERVIEW, DRAWN IN 1933 BY HENRI LACOSTE FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE "VOLKSPLEIN" (THE CURRENT MGR. LADEUZESQUARE), THE "GRAANMARKT" (CURRENT HERBERT HOOVERSQUARE) AND THE SINT-DONATUSPARC TO A MUSEUM OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES, MA 14.442). (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)

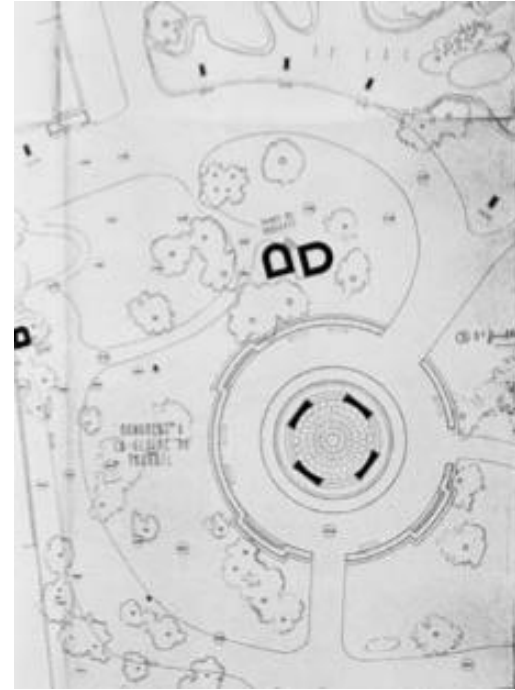


FIG. 22
DETAILED DESIGN (1938) BY HENRI LACOSTE FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CITYPARK INTO A PART OF THE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER CULMINATING IN THE *MONUMENT TO LABOUR* (DETAIL); THE BLACK SQUARES ON THE DESIGN STAND FOR SOCLELS WHERE MEUNIER'S STATUES WOULD HAVE COME. (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES, MA 14.442). (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 23
PIETER-JAN BRAECKE, *MONUMENT TO EDOUARD REMY*, 1899 – LEUVEN, HERBERT HOOVERSQUARE (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 24
DRAWING OF CONSTANTIN MEUNIER'S STATUE *HORSE AT THE DRINKING PLACE*, EMBEDDED IN THE PLANNED SETTING ON THE "GRAANMARKT (CURRENT HERBERT HOOVERSQUARE), AT THE BACKGROUND OF THE SIDE-FACADE OF THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN LEUVEN, 1938. (LEUVEN CITY ARCHIVES, MA 14.442). (PHOTO : ERIC DE WAERSEGGER)



FIG. 25
DRAWING BY ALFRED DELAUNOIS OF MEUNIER'S STUDIO IN THE *MINDERBROEDERSSTRAAT / RUE DES RÉCOLLETS*, AS SHOWN IN THE BEGINNING OF THE EXHIBITION CATALOGUE (BY ARMAND THIÉRY AND EMILE VAN DIEVOET) OF THE GRAND MEUNIER-RETROSPECTIVE IN LEUVEN IN 1909.

L'ATELIER DE MEUNIER A LOUVAIN
D'APRÈS UN FUSAIN D'A. DELAUNOY.