



Mastering the Copy

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- Reveals the hidden artistry behind copies and the exceptional skill required to create them
- Uncovers a forgotten foundation of 19th-century art education and museum practice
- Highlights rare, little-known works from the National Museum of Oslo's collections that still inspire today

A copy of a work of art is never “just” a copy. Behind each one lie skill, time, technical mastery, and often years of dedication. In the 19th century – the focus of **Mastering the Copy** – copying formed the core of every artist’s training. Museums depended on copies to share art history with audiences far beyond Europe’s major galleries, offering visual knowledge no book could match while keeping original masterpieces alive in public memory.

Copies also provided income for both amateurs and professionals, including the celebrated singer Emma Dahl. This publication reveals how such works shaped the National Museum’s early collections and continue to inspire today.

Text in English and Norwegian.

Mai Britt Guleng is senior curator of collections and exhibitions at the National Museum of Oslo. Her research has primarily focused on the history of art history as a discipline in Norway and on Norwegian nineteenth-century art.