Text: Gido Boere and Evert van Zoeren
Photography: Joris Hilterman

# **Hidden gems: the (bike) cellar at FASoS**

**Maastricht University takes care of many distinctive buildings and art works that we all know. By giving them a new purpose, we preserve these icons and give them a new meaning, making them the vibrant heart of a bustling city.**

**Did you know that these buildings and art works also provide access to various special places and stories? Let yourself be surprised and join us in this series exploring the hidden gems of the university and the city of Maastricht.**

The Grote Gracht is richly lined with historical buildings that conceal remarkable stories. Once again, our “hidden gem” is located on this street in Maastricht, this time at number 76.

The building at Grote Gracht 76 dates from 1928 and was originally a school, built in an expressionist style. The Jeanne d’Arc Lyceum provided Catholic schooling for girls. From 1970 onwards, boys were welcomed too. Many a Maastricht resident enjoyed their schooling here and, seeing as the school stood right in the city centre, the pupils will certainly have had dozens of stories to tell about the cafés on the Vrijthof square, which were well visited by pupils playing truant or on Friday afternoons (who would dare?!).

On 11 September 1944, during the Second World War and before the liberation of Maastricht on 13 and 14 September 1944, the Netherlands Red Cross set up a medical post/maternity ward in the cellar of the Jeanne d’Arc Lyceum. Under the skilled leadership of the famous Maastricht GP, Dr Leith, 17 young Maastricht residents were born here. Eighteen years later, one of them even obtained their secondary school diploma in the arts (HBS-A) at the Jeanne d’Arc Lyceum.

Since then, Grote Gracht 76 has become one of the buildings of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS). In the cellar, which now functions as a bike cellar, we can find an old acquaintance from one of the previous stories in the “Hidden Gems” series, namely the artist Charles Vos. When Maastricht University acquired the building, it found a wooden casing in the cellar concealing a relief by Charles Vos behind it. The university has since replaced the casing with plexiglass, so that Vos’ relief can be seen. The relief reminds us of the period when the cellar was set up as a maternity ward.