

RODIN 101:

A Docent Manual

Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession
Sculpture from the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

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Rodin 101: A Docent Manual

Dear Museum Volunteer,

Thank you for your participation in the exhibition *Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession, Sculpture from the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation*. This exhibition contains over 65 works by the great French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840 – 1917). Rodin was a man who was small in stature but larger than life in every other sense. More than eighty years after his death his sculpture continues to draw huge audiences who are captivated by the emotion and vitality of his work.

To assist your museum in preparing you to give tours of the exhibition, the Foundation has assembled this guide, especially for docents. Included here is information about individual works in the exhibition, sculptural reproduction, a glossary, a list of books for further reading, a list of Rodin related websites, and other items of interest. Although we have provided some information to contextualize Rodin's work within the history of art; we expect your museum educators will provide you with broader training about Rodin, his art, and his role in the development of modern sculpture.

Above all, we hope you have fun learning and talking about Rodin!

Thank you again for your participation!

The Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

B. Gerald Cantor's Magnificent Obsession

In 1945, just out of the Army, the young Brooklyn-born B. Gerald Cantor wandered into the Metropolitan Museum of Art and encountered Auguste Rodin's marble sculpture The Hand of God. He was captivated. Eighteen months later he bought his first Rodin, a bronze version of the sculptor's piece he had fallen in love with at the Met. It cost him \$95, the equivalent of two months rent for his modest apartment. Thus Mr. Cantor's *magnificent obsession* with the sculpture of Rodin began and it continued throughout his life. Mr. Cantor's delight in sharing the work of Auguste Rodin with the public continues through the commitment of Iris Cantor and the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, which they founded in 1978, just after they were married, and which today she chairs.

Between 1945 and the early 1990s, B. Gerald Cantor (1916-1996) created the world's largest and most comprehensive private collection of works by Auguste Rodin. Concentrating on quality and significance, he collected nearly 750 sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, and documents. And his obsession was not only to own and understand the work, but also to share it. More than 450 works of art from the Cantor Collection have been given to seventy museums, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University.

Mr. Cantor said he was obsessed by the feeling of strength, power, and sensuality he found in Rodin's work. What he called his *magnificent obsession* with Rodin is eagerly shared by Iris Cantor. Because of their commitment to making Rodin sculpture accessible, work by this artist today enjoys renewed public admiration and scholarly appreciation. The Cantors' commitment has provided motivation and funding to numerous museums and galleries, and it has occasioned important exhibitions all over the world.

The Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation promotes and recognizes excellence in the arts and enhances cultural life internationally through the support of art exhibitions and scholarship, and the endowment of galleries and sculpture gardens at major museums. Today, drawing from a collection of more than 300 works, the Foundation's staff of art historians and museum professionals organizes and circulates exhibitions of sculpture by Auguste Rodin. These shows have been seen at museums and galleries in more than 150 cities in Australia, Czechoslovakia, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Singapore, Sweden, the United States, and Venezuela.

The Foundation also actively supports biomedical research, with an emphasis on medical research and healthcare delivery systems for women. The Cantor Foundation is chaired by its president, Iris Cantor. Its offices are in Los Angeles, California. More information about what it does and the achievements of its founders is available on its website, www.cantorfoundation.org.

About the Exhibition

The first exhibition of B. Gerald Cantor's Rodin collection was held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1967. Nearly 40 years have passed since *Homage to Rodin* opened and the Cantor Collection continues to tour across the world. The content and titles of the exhibitions have changed slightly over the years, but the desire to bring Rodin's work to a large public audience has always remained the same.

Today, the Cantor Foundation typically circulates two exhibitions on Rodin. The smaller show of about 30 pieces is organized around a theme or an idea. Recently these themes have included *Hands* and *Rodin's Obsession: The Gates of Hell*. The Foundation's current small show is *Rodin: In His Own Words* and will visit 11 museums around the country. The Foundation's large survey exhibition *Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession* is a complete retrospective of the artist's career and includes more than 60 bronzes, from small studies to monumental works. The works were chosen according to major projects and themes of Rodin's career (such as The Gates of Hell, The Burghers of Calais, and partial figures). The exhibition spans the length of Rodin's career from his earliest bust of his father, Jean Baptiste Rodin, to his later studies of dancing figures. In addition to the bronzes, there are works on paper, photographs, portraits of the artist, and an educational model that demonstrates the complexities of the lost-wax casting process; Rodin's favored method of sculptural reproduction.

Why is Rodin important?

At the peak of his career Rodin was regarded as the greatest sculptor since Michelangelo. He challenged the established styles of his day and thereby revolutionized sculpture. Today his pioneering work is a crucial link between traditional and modern art.

The following two pages present the key points of this exhibition and will greatly assist you in preparing your tours. For detailed information about selected works in the show, please see the “tour” section that begins on page 18.

Rodin’s legacy includes:

1.) **His faithfulness to nature**

Rodin refused to idealize his subjects as was the tradition of Classical sculpture. He chose to show his subjects as they were, be they old and wrinkled or young and supple. He believed all in nature was beautiful and any artist who tried to improve upon nature by adding “green to the springtime, rose to the sunrise, carmine to the young lips...creates ugliness because he lies.” [Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell.]

Examples in the exhibition:

- Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose
- Saint John the Baptist Preaching
- Eve (Small Version)

2.) **Expressively modeled surfaces**

Rodin’s ability to represent the life and emotion of his subject was, in part, due to his rough, expressive, and light-catching modeling. He described this “science of modeling” as:

Instead of imagining the different parts of a body as surfaces more or less flat, I represented them as projectures of interior volumes. I forced myself to express in each swelling of the torso or of the limbs the efflorescence of a muscle or of a bone which lay deep beneath the skin. [Rodin on Art and Artists, Conversations with Paul Gsell.]

Examples in the exhibition:

- The Thinker
- Monumental Head of Pierre de Wiessant
- The Kiss

3.) **The development of monumental public sculpture**

As did many of his contemporaries, Rodin sought work and recognition by competing for public monuments. He received numerous commissions for monuments, such as The Burghers of Calais and the Monument to Balzac. He revolutionized the public monument by departing from the academic standards of his day. He did this by altering traditional poses, such as the Monument to Victor Hugo, and often opting for more symbolic themes.

Examples in the exhibition:

- Maquette and studies for The Burghers of Calais
- Studies for the Monument to Balzac
- The Call to Arms

4.) **Partial figures and fragments as complete works of art**

Rodin was one of the first artists to insist that a part of a figure, such as a torso or a hand, could by itself convey meaning and thus be a complete work of art. He found inspiration and new creative energy in the power and formal beauty he saw in the fragments. Rodin's partial figures greatly influenced modern sculpture at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when he was very active and revered. European artists like Maillol, Brancusi, Archipenko, and Matisse all learned from Rodin's achievements.

Examples in the exhibition:

- Narcisse
- The Prayer
- Large Clenched Left Hand

5.) **Recycling of figures: marcottage and assemblage**

Throughout his career Rodin recycled his own works. He would create new art works by reusing, in part or in whole, sculptures that he had already created (*marcottage*). He also pioneered the technique of repeating the same figure in one work to create a new composition (*assemblage*). Rodin used his figures as a type of artistic vocabulary, one which he could apply in a great variety of creative circumstances.

Examples in the exhibition:

- The Three Shades
- Dance Movement, Pas de Deux 'B'
- The Cathedral

Rodin in Context

Many museum visitors are more familiar with paintings than with sculpture. They are also often more acquainted with the history of painting than with the history of sculpture. Because of this, you might consider including in your docent tours/talks, references to the paintings being made during the time that Rodin formulated his philosophy of art and his style. As you probably expect, there are stylistic and philosophical relationships between Rodin's sculpture and the principal styles of painting being developed during the formative years of his career: Realism (as in Manet and Courbet) and Impressionism (as in Monet and Renoir).

Consider Realism in painting:

In reaction to the excesses and artifices of Rococo and Romanticism, the mid-nineteenth century French painters Manet and Courbet made paintings that depicted the lives of their contemporaries. They refused to idealize their figures and to paint what they could not see (for instance history or mythology). Additionally, the Realists believed the source of beauty was to be found in truth to nature, not in making nature more 'perfect' than it was.

Also, neither Manet nor Courbet used paint to create illusion. They disregarded the tradition of the picture frame as a window looking out on the real world. Instead they emphasized the physical paint on the surface of the canvas, thus drawing attention to the reality of the work of art as independent from that which it depicted.

Now consider the Impressionism that arose from Realism:

Some art historians list the general tenets of Impressionism as:

1. An acknowledgement of light as that which makes all things visible. What Impressionists sought to paint was the reality of the light reflected from objects, not the objects themselves.
2. The use of local color (the color an object 'appears' to be as opposed to the color it 'is') and divided brushstroke to convey the light reflected from objects. This divided brushstroke was often laden with paint, conveying its reality by actual texture.

3. An interest in communicating the look of a single moment of time; therefore an acknowledgement of time and its cohorts--movement and change-- as conditions of seeing.
4. An affirmation of the everyday life and landscape of the rising French middle class, both in its daily environment and in its country idylls, as appropriate subject matter for art.
5. A delight in the exotic and unfamiliar, especially those found in the newly-imported-to-France Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints.

What does this have to do with Rodin?

Rodin developed his style at the same time the Realists and Impressionists were developing theirs. Although there is no evidence of any significant aesthetic discussions between the sculptor and the painters*, they were products of the same period in aesthetic time. Thus we can point to aspects of Rodin's work and note it has parallels (not sources) in Realism and Impressionism:

1. Rodin believed that truth to nature was the source of beauty.
2. Rodin exploited the capacity of textured bronze surfaces to reflect light. He knew that light bouncing off irregular surfaces could give the artwork the illusion of movement. The creation of the illusion of movement was one of Rodin's goals.
3. Rodin often used working class people as his models and depicted their individual characters. After the beginning of his career, he rarely idealized anyone.

What do we call Rodin's 'style'?

Art historians rarely put Rodin's work in a specific stylistic category. Although it includes many aspects of Realism and Impressionism, because it is sculpture, it is neither. It is best to think of Rodin as a crucial transition between the perceptual traditions of eighteenth and nineteenth century European academic art and the conceptual early modern movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rodin's acclaimed works combine what is visible about events and/or people with their inner, invisible, emotional, intellectual, and passionate responses to the situations in which they found themselves.

*We do know they were friends and supporters of each others' careers. Rodin and Monet even showed together in 1889.

Rodin and Michelangelo

Like Rodin, Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475—1564) was an enormous influence on the art of his own time as well as the subsequent history of art. At the height of his career Auguste Rodin was regarded as the greatest sculptor since Michelangelo. This would have been the ultimate compliment to Rodin who, like many of his contemporaries, revered the work of the great Italian master.

In the winter of 1876, not long after the celebration marking the 400th anniversary of Michelangelo's birth, Rodin traveled to Italy to study the artist's work. Rodin was one of the few sculptors of his day who was not under the tutelage of a "master". Instead, Rodin chose Michelangelo as his "master." He studied his work and made sketches of Michelangelo's figures to study their form. He confided to his longtime companion Rose Beuret: "the great magician is going to give me some of his secrets." One of the secrets he longed to know was how Michelangelo "breathed life" into his human figures. Rodin wanted to depart from the more classical formulaic traditions of his contemporaries and create sculpture that, like Michelangelo's, teemed with life.

In the years following Rodin's journey to Italy, the influence of Michelangelo became particularly evident. One of the lessons he took from the master was to give more careful attention to the contours of his models and his sculptures. This is evident in works such as The Age of Bronze (1876) and Saint John the Baptist Preaching (around 1880). These pieces, however, are not as Michelangelesque as are later examples, such as his figures of Adam and Eve, which display the exaggerated musculature and angular poses for which Michelangelo was known.

Throughout his life, Rodin remembered his trip to Italy as a pivotal time. He never forgot his debt to the master. Around 1905 he wrote to the sculptor Emile-Antoine Bourdelle, "Michelangelo called me to Italy and there I received precious insights which I took into my spirit and into my work before I even understood what it was about." To Bourdelle he also said, "It was Michelangelo who liberated me from academicism."

Auguste Rodin: A Brief Biography

Childhood

Born in Paris on November 12, 1840 to a family of modest means, François-Auguste-René Rodin was the second child of Jean-Baptiste Rodin and Marie Cheffer. Rodin was a typical child, although somewhat shy and very nearsighted. His nearsightedness proved a hindrance in his early academic work, but he took a serious interest in drawing and had his first drawing lesson when he was ten years old. His father tried to help him academically by sending him to boarding school when he was eleven. He remained there for three years, but still had difficulty reading and writing, and time was approaching for him to learn a trade.

Since he was already devoted to drawing, Rodin enrolled at the *École Impériale de Dessin*, a government school for craft and design (also called the “Petite École,” or “Small School,” to distinguish it from the more prestigious *École des Beaux-Arts*--“School of Fine Arts”). He kept himself very busy attending classes at La Petite École, visiting museums to study antique sculpture, and attending the Gobelins Tapestry Workshop, where he also studied drawing. During these years he also discovered clay and found himself to be a very capable and promising sculptor. Still, although he was awarded two prizes for drawing and modeling at the age of seventeen, Rodin was unable to gain admittance to the prestigious, and conservative, *École des Beaux-Arts*, which rejected him three times.

Early Struggles

In the late 1850s, Paris was in a time of transformation; statues and other ornamental sculptures were being erected in courtyards, squares, and in front of public buildings throughout the city. Workshops throughout Paris were hiring artists to work on these public projects. To help support his family Rodin began working commercially in the decorative arts. He endured several years of laboring for others by day and trying to fulfill his personal artistic aspirations by night.

Grief-stricken by the unexpected death of his sister in 1862, Rodin briefly joined a Catholic order. But the founder of the Order of the Holy Sacrament quickly detected that the monastic life was not Rodin’s true calling. He encouraged Rodin to draw and sculpt to revive himself from his saddened mental state. Rodin soon left the monastery to pursue his dream of being a sculptor.

Continuing to support himself by working for decorative sculptors, Rodin rented his first studio: a small, cold, drafty stable. Here, in the fall of 1863, he began working on a portrait bust that he intended to submit to the Paris Salon as his debut sculpture. (The Salon was an official annual exhibition where artists could display their work to the public. The atmosphere was very competitive, as each artist sought buyers, and official prizes influenced what was sold. The Salon could make or break an artist’s career.)

Now, for the first time, Rodin hired a model to sit for him. The model was not a professional but rather a neighborhood handyman named Bibi. Rodin was drawn to his features and wanted to depict him as he was—broken nose and all. The Man with the Broken Nose became The Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose when the cold conditions of Rodin's studio caused the back of the clay head to freeze and break off. Rodin, favoring the element of chance, wanted to exhibit the portrait as a mask. He continued to work on it for over a year and then submitted it to the Salon. Much to his disappointment, the Salon jury rejected the work in 1864 and again in 1865. Throughout his career, Rodin considered this portrait to be his earliest major work and described it as the first exceptional piece of modeling he ever did.

During this time Rodin also met Rose Beuret, his lifetime companion, while working on a decorative commission. She became his model and mistress and remained completely devoted to him throughout her life. In 1866 she gave birth to their son, although Rodin did not legally acknowledge paternity.

Inspiration and Controversy

In 1870 the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Thirty-year old Rodin was drafted into the National Guard, but was soon discharged due to his nearsightedness. Finding himself without work, he accepted a job with Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, a fashionable commercial sculptor whom Rodin had already worked with off-and-on for several years. Carrier-Belleuse had been commissioned to decorate the new stock exchange in Brussels. Rodin went to Belgium for six years; it was a creative and encouraging time for him. In Brussels Rodin held his first exhibition, marking his debut as an independent sculptor.

After an inspiring trip to Italy in 1875, Rodin began work on a large work intended for submission to the Paris Salon. Auguste Neyt, a Belgian soldier, was his model. Rodin's life-size male nude, first titled The Vanquished, showed influences of Classical sculpture but was modeled in a more naturalistic way, without the exaggerated musculature that Greek and Roman sculptors often used. He first presented The Vanquished in Brussels where critics were suspicious of the statue's realism and accused Rodin of making a cast from a live model, a technique that in Rodin's day a "true" sculptor would never use. Rodin defended himself against the accusations but to no avail. He returned to Paris, but the rumors followed him when he submitted the nude, now titled The Age of Bronze, to the Paris Salon of 1877. While the figure was praised for its beauty, Rodin was again forced to defend himself against allegations of casting from a live model.

Now living again in Paris, Rodin supplemented his income by working for the Sèvres porcelain factory, again with Carrier-Belleuse. His income was small so he accepted this additional work wherever he could find it. During this time Rodin created one of his most powerful figures, Saint John the Baptist Preaching. Partly to exonerate himself from the previous allegations, Rodin made this figure larger than life-size. He created a stir among critics anyway, this time for his uncommon portrayal of the Saint. Rodin's

figure did not include Saint John's common attributes—a hair shirt, leather belt, cross and scroll—but instead presented him as an unidealized nude figure. Many of his contemporaries found it improper, ugly, and shocking.

Monumental Projects and Growing Popularity

Despite the criticism and controversy of the early part of his career, Rodin was commissioned by the French Ministry of Fine Arts to create his first large-scale public project in 1880. The commission was for an entrance for a museum of decorative arts to be built in Paris. Rodin's main source of inspiration for the doorway was The Divine Comedy by fourteenth-century epic poet Dante Aligheri. The Inferno, one of three parts of The Divine Comedy, was a common theme in French art and literature during this time. An avid reader of Dante, Rodin borrowed imagery directly from the Inferno and created his own unique visual representations. He wanted to transform Dante's poem about his journey through the underworld into a single three-dimensional piece that would incorporate many of its characters and scenes. He called it The Gates of Hell. He also drew inspiration from Charles Baudelaire's 1857 controversial book of verse Le Fleurs du mal ("The Flowers of Evil").

Rodin's Gates of Hell was a complicated, highly sculpted bas relief, more than 21 feet tall and contained hundreds of figures. Several of Rodin's most famous sculptures, such as The Thinker, The Kiss and The Three Shades, started as small reliefs contained in The Gates of Hell. Beginning in the 1880s, Rodin exhibited many of these figures as independent freestanding sculptures. By the end of the 1880s it was clear that the museum of decorative arts would never be built, but Rodin continued to work on the The Gates for the duration of his life.

During this decade, Rodin was gaining popularity. His work was more and more sought after, especially by fashionable society. He modeled many portrait busts, often not as paid commissions but as gestures of thanks or friendship. As his reputation grew so did the activity in his studio. Rodin had many people assisting him, all with their own particular job. There were assistants who created plaster casts of the original clay models, "pointers" who would ready marble blocks to be carved and do preliminary carving, bronze casters, and patinaters who finished the outer surfaces of completed bronze sculptures.

During this period, while filling in for a friend who taught a sculpture class to young women, Rodin met nineteen-year-old Camille Claudel. Rodin was soon captivated by Camille, who had noticeable talent and intense desire to succeed as a sculptor. While Rodin always retained his feelings for Rose Beuret, he and Camille shared similar interests and passions. She became his student, model, collaborator, and mistress. The two had great admiration for each other and it was notably evident in their works. Rodin created many sculptures with Camille as his inspiration. He made many portraits of her and created numerous sculptures of couples in passionate embraces, such as one of his most famous works, The Kiss. Still, Rodin refused to leave Rose and he and Camille severed their ties by 1898.

In 1884 the mayor of Calais (France) sought to commission a monument in honor of a local hero, Eustache de Saint-Pierre. This hero was part of a dramatic event in 1347, during the Hundred Years War. Six leading citizens of Calais volunteered themselves as hostages to the English king, Edward III, in exchange for his lifting an eleven-month siege of their city. Eustache de Saint-Pierre was the first of six burghers to surrender. The King ordered them to relinquish the keys to the city and to prepare themselves for execution. The brave citizens walked towards the King's camp thinking they were taking their last steps, but in the end their lives were spared.

Rodin was greatly moved by the power of the story and offered to depict all six men for a modest sum. He began by studying the history surrounding the event as well as other artistic depictions of the burghers. He decided to show all six men taking their first steps toward the camp of Edward III. Rodin's originality won him the commission for the monument and by 1885 he was completing a second maquette for the final approval of the Municipal Council.

Unfortunately, before its completion, the committee that ordered the monument disbanded. Rodin, however, finished The Burghers of Calais in 1888 and exhibited it to the public in 1889 (at a joint exhibition in Paris with Impressionist painter Claude Monet). The monument was finally erected in Calais in 1895.

In the late 1880s Rodin continued to receive commissions for public monuments, including one to painter Claude Lorrain and another to novelist Victor Hugo. In 1891 Rodin was commissioned by the *Société des Gens de Lettres* (the Society of Men of Letters) to create a monument to its founder, French writer Honoré de Balzac. Since Balzac had been dead for forty years, Rodin faced the challenge of having to render his likeness from photographs. He researched the writer extensively, going so far as to order a suit from Balzac's tailor to visualize his size and girth.

Rodin worked on the Monument to Balzac for seven years. He completed at least fifty studies, some based on Balzac's actual appearance and others more subjective and abstract. Most of the studies were of Balzac's head, as Rodin felt it important to emphasize the heads of people of such high intellect. He finished the monument in 1898 and presented the nine-foot tall plaster model to the public. Because of its abstraction, it was met with outrage, disbelief, and ridicule, and as a result the literary society refused to accept it. Deeply hurt by the criticism, Rodin took the sculpture to his studio at Meudon (outside of Paris) and refused to allow it to be cast during his lifetime.

The Pinnacle of Success

By 1900 Rodin had achieved the pinnacle of success: European nobility paid him tribute and an entire pavilion was devoted to his work at the Universal Exposition in Paris. One hundred sixty-eight works in bronze, marble and plaster were displayed. Drawings and photos adorned the walls and lectures were given explaining Rodin's techniques. People came from all over the world to visit the Exposition, which made Rodin a

success on an international scale. His work was immensely popular and requests for exhibitions came from all over the world.

Rodin's broad popularity did not slow his production. He reworked earlier figures, modeled portrait busts of well-known people, and completed several long-term projects, such as the Monument to Victor Hugo and a large version of The Thinker. During these years he also took great interest in studying dancers as part of his desire to capture natural, spontaneous movement. With commissions flooding in, it has been speculated that Rodin had as many as fifty assistants working for him.

In 1908 Rodin moved to the Hôtel Biron. Built between 1728 and 1730, this large townhouse had once been a luxurious eighteenth century home, a nineteenth century boarding school, and later a home to a religious community. It had been abandoned for a few years before Rodin and other artists had the opportunity to take up residence there. The rent was low and Rodin occupied much of the ground floor. Several other famous or soon to be famous artists also lived at the Hôtel Biron at one time, such as writer Jean Cocteau, painter Henri Matisse, and dancer Isadora Duncan.

From 1911, Rodin was the only tenant of the Hôtel Biron. In 1912 he was faced with eviction when the state ordered the residence to be demolished. Rodin had another idea. He offered to bequeath all he owned, including the contents of his studio and his studio at Meudon in the French countryside, to the French government if he could remain at the Hôtel Biron for the remainder of his days. He stipulated that after his death the government must convert the Hôtel to a museum for his work. After much debate the government accepted the terms and he was allowed to live and work there for the remainder of his life.

On January 29, 1917, Rodin married Rose Beuret. She died three weeks later. Rodin died shortly after, on November 17, 1917. Friends and dignitaries came to Rodin's funeral, seeing him laid to rest beside Rose at Meudon, with The Thinker at the base of his tomb. Two years after his death, the Musée Rodin opened in the Hôtel Biron.

Timeline: Rodin and the World

Rodin

The World

1840–1850

▪ Auguste Rodin born November 12, 1840, in Paris to Jean-Baptiste Rodin and Marie Cheffer. ▪ 1850, first drawing lesson.

1840–1850

▪ Painter Claude Monet born in 1840. ▪ The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels is published in 1848. ▪ Revolution sweeps through Europe, 1848. ▪ Death of writer Honoré de Balzac, 1850.

1851–1860

▪ 1854, begins study at the Petite École but fails entrance exam for École des Beaux-Arts three times (1857). ▪ In 1858, begins to work commercially in the decorative arts.

1851–1860

▪ 1851, New York Times first published. ▪ Napoleon declares himself emperor, 1852. ▪ Charles Darwin publishes On the Origin of Species, 1859.

1861–1870

▪ 1862, Rodin's sister dies; while mourning he briefly joins a Catholic order. ▪ 1864-65, meets Rose Beuret. ▪ Creates Man with the Broken Nose and suffers the first of many rejections by the Paris Salon, 1864.

1861–1870

▪ U.S. Civil War, 1861-65. ▪ Victor Hugo writes Les Misérables, 1862. ▪ Napoleon III holds "Salon de Refuses" to exhibit works rejected by the official Salon, 1863. ▪ Suez Canal opens in 1869. ▪ Franco- Prussian War, 1870-71.

1871–1880

▪ 1871, Rodin is discharged from the National Guard for nearsightedness. ▪ Works in Belgium with Carrier-Belleuse in aftermath of Franco-Prussian War (returns to Paris, 1877.) ▪ 1876, studies Michelangelo's work in Florence. ▪ 1880, receives commission for The Gates of Hell.

1871–1880

▪ German Empire proclaimed by Otto von Bismark, 1871. ▪ Jules Verne publishes Around the World in Eighty Days, 1873. ▪ The term "impressionism" is coined, 1874. ▪ Sioux defeat Custer at Little Bighorn, 1876. ▪ 1879, Joseph Stalin is born.

Timeline: Rodin and the World (continued)

Rodin

The World

1881–1890

- Rodin meets Camille Claudel in 1883.
- Commission for The Burghers of Calais, 1884. (Definitive model shown in joint exhibition with Claude Monet in 1889.) ▪ Original plaster of The Kiss, 1886. French government purchases a marble version in 1888.
- Commission for the Monument to Victor Hugo, 1889.

1881–1890

- 1881, Freedom of the press established in France. ▪ 1881, Pablo Picasso born. ▪ Statue of Liberty completed, 1884. ▪ Death of writer Victor Hugo, 1885. ▪ Eiffel Tower built and unveiled for Paris World's Fair, 1889.
 - Death of Vincent Van Gogh, 1890.
 - Rapid expansion of railways in the Western United States.
-

1891–1900

- Rodin receives commission for Balzac monument, 1891. ▪ 1893, elected President of the sculpture section of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. ▪ Ends relationship with Camille Claudel, 1898. ▪ Rodin's marble sculpture in great demand; he creates The Hand of God in marble in 1898. ▪ Retrospective, Paris World Exposition, 1900.

1891–1900

- Paul Gauguin settles in Tahiti, 1891.
 - 1895, Art Nouveau style dominates.
 - Tate Gallery founded in London, 1897.
 - The Paris subway opens, 1898.
 - Freud publishes The Interpretation of Dreams, 1899. ▪ Nobel Prize instituted, 1900.
-

1901–1910

- 1902, Rodin first visited by photographer Edward Steichen. ▪ 1903, Rodin named President of the International Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers. ▪ 1906, The Thinker is installed in front of the Panthéon, Paris. ▪ 1908, Rodin visited by King Edward VII. ▪ 1908, moves to Hôtel Biron.

1901–1910

- Deaths of artists Toulouse-Lautrec (1901), James McNeill Whistler (1903), Paul Gauguin (1903). ▪ 1903, Ford Motor Company founded. ▪ Artist Henri Matisse coins the term "cubism," 1908. ▪ China abolishes slavery, 1910.
-

1911–1917

- Rodin's sculpture is shown throughout Europe.
- 1914, Rodin travels despite wartime difficulties.
- Bequeaths his estate to France in 1916.
- Marries Rose Beuret on January 29, 1917; she dies three weeks later. ▪ Rodin dies November 17, 1917, and is laid to rest at Meudon.

1911–1917

- World War I begins, 1914. ▪ Opening of Panama Canal, 1914. ▪ 1915, U.S. Coast Guard established by Congress.
- Albert Einstein publishes general theory of relativity, 1916. ▪ John F. Kennedy is born, 1917.

A "Tour" of the Exhibition: Selected Works

Each of our museum venues determines its own design and display plan for the exhibition. However, most venues display the sculptures around key groupings. Some of these groupings are: early work, studies for Rodin's major monuments (including The Gates of Hell, the Burghers of Calais and the Monument to Balzac), hands, portraiture, and partial figures. Following is a selection of works in the exhibition according to some of these major groupings. To see images of many of these works visit the Foundation website: www.cantorfoundation.org/Rodin/Gallery/rvg.html

1.) Early Work

Rodin was in his mid-30s before he began showing sculpture under his own name. Before this he worked for well-known sculptors as part of teams of craftspeople who produced mainly decorative – often architectural -- commissions.

Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose

Originally modeled in 1863–64, Musée Rodin cast 3/12 probably in the 1970s

Bronze

12 ½ x 7 ¼ x 6 inches

Rodin considered The Man with the Broken Nose to be his first major work. He began the portrait in 1863, intending to submit it to the Paris Salon as his debut sculpture. Rodin hired a neighborhood handyman, nicknamed Bibi, to model for him. He was drawn to Bibi's features and wanted to depict him as he was—broken nose and all. He also used characteristics of Greek sculpture: blank eyes and classically modeled hair. However, Rodin was innovative in his use of expressive naturalism as opposed to the idealism of Classical sculpture. The Man with the Broken Nose became The Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose when the cold conditions of Rodin's studio caused the back of the head to freeze and break off. Rodin, favoring the element of chance, wanted to exhibit the portrait bust as it was. He continued to work on it for over a year before submitting it to the Salon. Much to his disappointment, the Salon jury rejected the work twice (1864 and 1865). Nevertheless, Rodin continued to draw inspiration from The Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose. He created another version for The Gates of Hell and used it in other subsequent works.

The Age of Bronze (Reduction)

Originally modeled in 1876, reduction about 1903–04, date of cast unknown

Bronze

26 x 8 ½ x 7 inches

In 1875 Rodin began work on a life-size male nude, intending to submit it to the Salon jury. Originally titled The Vanquished, the figure was based on ancient Greek and Roman art. Rodin's figure was more natural, however, lacking the exaggerated muscles of Classical sculpture. Rodin exhibited The Vanquished first in Brussels. Here two critics were suspicious of his exquisite modeling and accused him of making it by putting clay over a live body. The rumors continued when Rodin submitted the nude, now titled The Age of Bronze,

to the Paris Salon of 1877. Although it was praised for its beauty, the work was rejected, and Rodin was forced to defend himself against the accusations.

The Call to Arms

Originally modeled in 1879, date of cast unknown

Bronze

44 ½ x 22 ½ x 15 inches

In 1879 Rodin entered a competition to design a monument to honor the brave citizens who participated in the defense of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). Rodin's submission portrayed a winged female figure rising above a wounded warrior who appears to be sinking to the ground. The impassioned female figure was to be seen as a symbol of liberty set against the pathos of the dying warrior. The movement, expression, and symbolism are clearly powerful; however, the conservative competition jury was looking for a more realistic portrayal, one that captured the sentiment of the event and did not show the warrior in a non-heroic pose. Although Rodin's innovative design was not chosen for the monument, The Call to Arms was eventually cast for a monument installed at Verdun in 1920, commemorating the French soldiers of World War I. Rodin returned to the winged female figure in a later work, The Spirit of War, which portrays the figure without the collapsing warrior.

Saint John the Baptist Preaching

Originally modeled about 1880, Musée Rodin cast in 1962

Bronze

19 ¾ x 11 x 9 ⅛ inches

Partly to exonerate himself from the allegations surrounding The Age of Bronze, Rodin made his next figure larger than life-size. His Saint John the Baptist Preaching did not include the Saint's more common attributes—a hair-shirt, leather belt, cross and scroll—but presented an unidealized and awkwardly posed figure. Contemporaries found Rodin's nude saint improper, ugly, and shocking. Today we find the image of physical and spiritual vigor appropriate for Saint John, an ascetic who preached in the wilderness.

2.) The Gates of Hell and Derivatives

The Gates of Hell (1880-about 1900) was Rodin's most ambitious work. Commissioned to be the entrance for a (never-built) museum of decorative arts in Paris, The Gates (about 21 feet or 640 centimeters tall) features hundreds of figures modeled in low to high relief and even in-the-round. The imagery in Rodin's Gates was inspired by Dante's Inferno (part of The Divine Comedy, written about 1308, an epic poem about the author's fictional journey through Hell and Purgatory to Paradise). With Dante as his inspiration, Rodin created an environment of tormented souls; it represented not only the underworld but also the suffering of humankind in general.

The form of Rodin's Gates was initially inspired by the long tradition of decorated compartmentalized church doors, specifically the doors to the Baptistery in Florence. These, called The Gates of Paradise, were designed between 1425 and 1452 by the Italian Renaissance artist Lorenzo Ghiberti. However, in his Gates of Hell, Rodin abandoned the

stacked-boxes-like structure of Ghiberti's traditionally-arranged doors, and created instead a free-form environment in which tormented souls float and weave in a surging arrangement.

From the beginning, Rodin made many of the figures modeled for The Gates of Hell into free-standing, independent sculptures, sometimes reduced and/or enlarged in size. These free-standing pieces, separated from the original Gates, were often given new meaning. Among the most well-known of these independent pieces are The Thinker, The Kiss and The Three Shades. This practice of using pieces from one project in other ways, and of producing them in various sizes, was part of Rodin's creative method from 1880 onward.

During Rodin's lifetime The Gates of Hell was neither shown in its entirety nor cast in bronze. According to his wishes, casts have been made since his death. One was commissioned by the Cantors; an award-winning video of the process, produced by Iris Cantor, accompanies this exhibition and will give you more information about this work.

Selected works from The Gates of Hell:

The Gates of Hell, Third Maquette

Originally modeled in 1880, Musée Rodin cast IV/IV in 1992

Bronze

43 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 29 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

Rodin completed many studies for The Gates of Hell. He made hundreds of drawings of individual characters and scenes as well as sketches of the architectural composition. He also produced several maquettes (small models used as sketches) to lay out the overall composition. The first maquette is only ten inches high and does not contain any figures, but rather has just a general outline thumbed into the clay. By the third and last maquette, the composition is still rough and simplified, however several figures are recognizably similar to ones that appear in the final work. (Some, such as The Thinker, are as evident as in the final composition. Upon close examination, Paolo and Francesca, the figures of The Kiss, are also visible on the lower left side.)

The Thinker

Originally modeled in 1880, reduced in 1903, date of cast unknown

Bronze

14 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches

Resting on the tympanum (the horizontal panel above the double doors), The Thinker is the focal point of The Gates and subsequently has become perhaps the most well-known sculpture of all time. The athletic-looking figure shows a man in somber meditation, yet whose muscles strain with effort—possibly to signify a powerful internal struggle. Rodin initially referred to the figure as Dante, but it has evolved into a more symbolic representation of creativity, intellect, and above all—thought.

The Kiss

Originally modeled about 1881-82, date of cast unknown

Bronze

34 x 17 x 22 inches

The Kiss is one of Rodin's most widely recognized works. It was originally conceived as part of The Gates of Hell, but was not incorporated into the final monument. The figures in The Kiss represent Paolo and Francesca, from the Second Circle of Hell in Dante's Inferno. Their story was a popular subject of painting and sculpture during the nineteenth century. While reading the tale of Lancelot and Guinevere, Paolo and Francesca exchange glances and realize their lust for one another. Just as the lovers in the tale, Paolo and Francesca give in to passion and embrace. The couple is then discovered and killed by Francesca's husband, who is also Paolo's brother.

Rodin captured the moment when the doomed pair realize their passion. His depiction defied tradition by showing the couple unclothed instead of in typical Florentine dress. First exhibited in 1887, this passionate depiction of romantic love shocked viewers, primarily because of Francesca's shameless awareness of her sexuality. By 1888, however, the sculpture was accepted and admired by the French, and the government commissioned a marble version, now in the Musée Rodin, Paris.

The Three Shades

Originally modeled in 1880-1904, Single figure conceived about 1880, group composition by 1904, Musée Rodin cast 10 in 1981

Bronze

38 ¼ x 37 ½ x 20 ½ inches

Standing at the very top of The Gates of Hell, the ghostly three shades (a shade is a ghost or phantom) gesture downward, heads lowered and arms extended, appearing despondent and weary. Each is the same figure positioned at a slightly different angle creating the composition. Rodin's peers believed that The Three Shades signified Dante's warning, "Abandon every hope, ye who enters here," the inscription above the Gate of Hell in the Inferno.

The Shade originated as a variation of Rodin's sculpture of Adam (not in this exhibition). After a visit to Italy in 1875, Rodin began work on a piece that was greatly influenced by Michelangelo's painting The Creation of Adam in the Sistine Chapel. Rodin altered the pose of Michelangelo's reclining figure, making his Adam upright with his hand gesturing downward instead of outward as in The Creation. The three figures placed together have lost their identities as Adam and become merely shadows of the living dead. Perhaps to symbolize their powerlessness, Rodin also deprived the shades of their right hands and represented their left hands as simply modeled fists. (The larger version of The Three Shades [not in this exhibition], however, does have the right hands intact and the left hands modeled in greater detail.)

Eve (small version)

Originally modeled in 1883, cast 7/12, date of cast unknown
Bronze
28 x 10 x 10 1/2 inches

This rendering of Eve is a smaller version of one that would have flanked Adam with The Gates (had the project been completed). As with many of his works, Rodin used a live model for Eve. This was very important to his working method. It is said that as Rodin worked on the life-size figure, he was astonished that every day he had to modify the belly of the figure. He soon learned the reason behind this: the model was pregnant. Rodin felt this gave the figure character. Soon the model became too uncomfortable to pose, so his life-size Eve remained unfinished.

He worked on the smaller version after setting the life-size version aside. This version exhibits a smoother, more sensual body. Both versions have their heads bowed and arms folded covering their breasts. The pose suggests a modesty or shame that could easily be associated with Eve.

3.) Studies for the Monument to the Burghers of Calais

The Burghers of Calais was commissioned by the French city of Calais and represents a dramatic and patriotic event that occurred there in 1347, during the Hundred Years War. Six leading citizens volunteered to be hostages to the English king, Edward III, in exchange for his lifting an eleven-month siege of their city. Rodin was asked to commemorate this event by designing a monument for the town square.

Rodin completed many studies before deciding on his final version. From 1886 to 1889 he modeled the figures nude before clothing them for the final monument. Fragments – hands and heads – and nude studies all captured aspects of what Rodin was striving to achieve. Later he continued to work with these figures, creating enlargements and reductions and incorporating partial figures into other compositions.

Rodin's final version of The Burghers of Calais defied French artistic traditions for portraying heroism. Instead of depicting these citizens as lofty and selfless, he showed each at the moment he realized the limits of his own resolve to sacrifice himself to save his fellow citizens. The figures are barefoot, wearing sackcloth, and their individual responses to their plight are evident in their various tormented or despondent poses and gestures. Rodin's shift in focus from triumphant glory to human suffering changed the form and meaning of the public monument as it was known at the time. It was, indeed, as revolutionary as Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been in our time.

The Burghers of Calais (First Maquette)

Originally modeled in 1884, Musée Rodin cast 7/8 in 1987
Bronze
23 3/4 x 14 1/4 x 12 5/8 inches

In this initial study Rodin depicted the men bound together with rope atop a high base, making their heroism appear all the more dramatic. Rodin decided to show all six men taking

their first steps toward the camp of Edward III, thereby making them a generalized symbol of selfless, patriotic heroism. His design defied nineteenth-century academic standards, which traditionally portrayed only a single heroic figure.

Jean de Fiennes (Vêtu)

Originally modeled in 1885-86, Musée Rodin cast 5/8 in 1983

Bronze

82 x 48 x 38 inches

Rodin assumed Jean de Fiennes to be the youngest of the six burghers and, as was his custom, modeled several versions of Jean de Fiennes before deciding on the final figure. The clothed figure (*vêtu* means “clothed” in French) retains the stance of earlier studies, however his hair is now fuller and his feet are visible as though stepping forward. The burgher’s expression is hesitant— as if he has not quite accepted his imminent fate.

Pierre de Wiessant (Reduction)

Originally modeled about 1886-87, reduction made in either 1895 or 1899, date of cast unknown

Bronze

18 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches

Rodin created many full-figure studies of Pierre de Wiessant. He experimented with various body types and poses. The figure in the final monument portrays Pierre de Wiessant looking over his shoulder, his hand extended as if in despair. His face shows great anguish, and his intense emotions make him appear withdrawn from the other figures. It differs greatly from the first maquette, which shows Pierre de Wiessant staring outward with his hand pointing to himself, perhaps questioning his impending fate. No longer questioning, the young burgher here seems to look inward, as if painfully beginning to accept the inevitable.

Monumental Head of Pierre de Wiessant (Enlargement)

Originally modeled about 1884-85, enlarged 1909, date of cast unknown

Bronze

32 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 inches

Rodin did many studies to explore the character and stance of each burgher before deciding on the figures for the final monument. Among these were head studies, focusing on the depth of emotion captured in their faces. The Monumental Head of Pierre de Wiessant is an enlarged version of the final head study of this burgher, one of the two youngest. Rodin was interested in the depiction of youth in the face of death.

4.) Studies for the Monument to Balzac

In 1891 Rodin was commissioned by the *Société des Gens de Lettres* (Society of Men of Letters) to create a monument to Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), one of France's most influential yet controversial writers. For the next seven years Rodin struggled to find an accurate physical portrayal of Balzac that would also symbolize the writer's creative genius.

Since Balzac had been dead for forty years, Rodin also faced the challenge of rendering a likeness of a man he had never seen. He consulted photographs, a medium in its infancy in

Balzac's time, and did other research. For instance, he ordered a suit from Balzac's tailor (in the writer's measurements) in order to visualize his considerable size and girth. During Rodin's struggle to find a compelling likeness of Balzac, he completed at least fifty studies; some convey Balzac's actual appearance and others are more subjective and abstract.

In 1898 Rodin presented the final model for the Balzac monument to the public. The nine-foot plaster, highly modern in its abstraction, was met with outrage, disbelief, and ridicule, and as a result the Literary Society would not accept it. Deeply hurt by the criticism, Rodin refused to allow the sculpture to be cast in bronze during his lifetime.

Balzac in Dominican Robe

Originally modeled in 1891-92, Musée Rodin cast 9 in 1981

Bronze

41 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 20 inches

Balzac's hefty build, with a large potbelly and short legs, offered Rodin a challenge. He experimented with different ways to depict Balzac's great physique. The solution was to clothe Balzac in a robe that would conceal his hefty shape, thus directing the viewer's attention to Balzac's head. (Conveniently, Balzac was known to wear a loose-fitting robe while working at night.)

One of several robed studies, Balzac in Dominican Robe portrays the author surrounded by his main attributes—books and manuscripts. Portraying a figure with identifying attributes was an ancient convention, perhaps adding a more timeless appeal to the work. Rodin continued to experiment with Balzac's pose and dress. The robe used in this early study is similar to the garment of the final model.

Nude Study of Balzac as an Athlete (Type 'F')

Originally modeled about 1896, Musée Rodin cast 5 in 1974

Bronze

35 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches

Rodin's most symbolic study of Balzac, Nude Study of Balzac as an Athlete (Type 'F'), depicts the author with the exaggerated musculature of a younger, more virile body, instead of the rotund, aging man of earlier versions. In this controversial image Rodin associated intellectual and artistic creativity with sexual prowess, attributes for which Balzac was equally well-known.

Monumental Head of Balzac (Enlargement)

Originally modeled in 1897, Musée Rodin cast 9/12 in 1980

Bronze

20 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches

Many of the studies for the Monument to Balzac were only of Balzac's head, as Rodin felt it important to emphasize the heads of people of high intellect. The Monumental Head of Balzac is an enlargement of the life-sized final head study for the Monument. In this version, Balzac's exaggerated features reveal distinct expressions when viewed in varying conditions of light and perspective.

5.) Partial Figures

Rodin insisted that a part of a figure, such as a torso or a hand, could by itself convey meaning and thus be a complete work of art. He found inspiration and new creative energy in the power and formal beauty he saw in the fragments.

Rodin's early studios were primitive and plagued by extremely cold temperatures in winter, temperatures that sometimes caused his clay sculpture to freeze and break into parts. And like all sculptors he frequently destroyed works in progress, which left him with miscellaneous pieces. In addition, the method he used to cast his sculpture in bronze included using plaster casts. These all became sources for fragments.

Rodin believed the fragments—like torsos or hands—that resulted from these accidental and purposeful acts, were not dependent on their original contexts for their meanings. Thus throughout his career he preserved broken pieces with the thought of using them later in new sculpture, sometimes at their original size and at other times, reduced or enlarged.

Rodin's partial figures greatly influenced the course of modern sculpture at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when he was very much active and revered. European artists like Maillol, Brancusi, Archipenko, and Matisse all learned from Rodin's achievements.

Monumental Torso of the Walking Man

Originally modeled about 1905, Musée Rodin cast 4/8 in 1985

Bronze

43 $\frac{1}{3}$ x 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 inches

Rodin's early training as a sculptor involved using pieces of ancient sculptures as models for his own works. One of his earliest partial figures, the Torso of the Walking Man, looks mutilated and worn—similar to fragments of many Classical sculptures.

The Prayer

Originally modeled in 1910, Musée Rodin cast 5 in 1979

Bronze

49 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches

The public at large did not often agree that Rodin's partial figures were acceptable works of art. Many felt that if the human figure was not depicted complete it was a "violation" of the human form. Many critics also used Rodin's partial figures as avenues for criticism of his other work, citing them as evidence of a difficulty in completing projects (such as the failed Monument to Balzac). As with many of his other partial figures, The Prayer is reminiscent of ancient Greek figures, showing the smooth surface of the Classical ideal female body.

6.) Hands

Rodin was particularly fascinated by the human hand. He modeled thousands of hands; they ranged from naturalistic studies to powerful symbolic compositions. Many were rapid clay

“sketches” and captured the fluid and expressive nature of the hand. At times they conveyed spiritual or symbolic content. In his complete figures the hand is often a defining element that greatly extends the meaning of the work.

The Cathedral

Original stone version made in 1908, Musée Rodin cast in 1955

Bronze

25 ¼ x 12 ¾ x 13 ½ inches

The Cathedral is composed of two larger-than-life size casts of the same right hand in a prayer-like gesture. As suggested by its title, the shape and gesture of the hands are reminiscent of the vertical reach of a medieval cathedral, perhaps referring to Rodin’s passion for Gothic architecture. Rodin developed a keen interest in French cathedrals while on a journey in 1875. Taking a train from Brussels, where he was living and working at the time, one of his first stops was in the northeastern French city of Reims. Rodin was struck by Reims’ Cathedral of Notre Dame, considered one of the best examples of Gothic architecture in France. He retained his passion for Gothic architecture throughout his life and even documented it in his 1914 publication The Cathedrals of France.

Clenched Left Hand

Originally modeled in 1906 or 1907, Musée Rodin cast 1/12 in 1970

Bronze

17 ½ x 11 ½ x 10 3/8 inches

Large Clenched Left with Figure Hand

Originally modeled about 1885, Musée

Rodin cast 3/12 in 1966

Bronze

18 ¼ 10 3/8 x 7 5/8 inches

The Large Clenched Left Hand is an example of Rodin’s interest in hands afflicted with paralyzing diseases (such as arthritis or “claw hand”), which often have a theatrical look, expressing pain or anger. Working with a series of enlargements, Rodin intensified the emotion of the hand by placing it upright in a threatening pose, like an angry cobra ready to strike. Clenched Left Hand with Figure portrays such an afflicted hand in the same threatening pose; however here Rodin added a symbolic element that altered the interpretation. The contorted hand towers over a small figure, suggesting a powerful force or dominance.

7.) Portraiture

Rodin modeled more than one hundred portraits during his lifetime; often they honored benefactors and friends. As he matured as an artist these portraits came to convey more the essence of the sitters’ personalities than exactly how they appeared.

After the 1900 Paris World Exposition retrospective, Rodin’s popularity soared, and he received numerous commissions to create portraits of poets, musicians, dignitaries, and other luminaries.

Portraits in the Exhibition:

- Bust of Jean Baptiste Rodin
- Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose
- Mask of Hanako, Type D
- Gustav Mahler

8.) Monuments and Maquettes

Like many of his contemporaries, Rodin sought work and recognition by competing for commissions for public monuments. He produced numerous maquettes -- small models made of clay or wax -- to submit as competition entries for public commissions.

There are many maquettes in this exhibition because Rodin used these clay 'sketches' not only as submission pieces, but also to work out his ideas. Before he died he gave these maquettes to the French government for the intended Musée Rodin, with the instructions that the works be cast in bronze, as many had been during his lifetime.

Maquettes/Studies for Monuments in the Exhibition:

- Maquette of General Lynch
- The Call to Arms
- Study for the Monument to Claude Lorrain
- Study for the Monument to Whistler
- The Burghers of Calais, First Maquette
- The Gates of Hell, Third Maquette

9.) Miscellaneous Works

Tragic Muse

Originally modeled in 1894-96, Musée Rodin cast 3/8 in 1986
Bronze
13 x 25 ½ x 15 ¼ inches

In an 1890 maquette for the Monument to Victor Hugo, Rodin included a figure called the Tragic Muse, first known as Justice Vengeresse ("Avenging Justice"), the vehement muse from Hugo's poem *Le Châtiments* ("Castigations"). The figure evolved over time, and in the Salon version of the Monument to Victor Hugo she was shown crouching in a more dynamic pose as she whispers into the ear of the listening poet, inspiring him with her passionate words. The Tragic Muse was first exhibited as an independent sculpture in 1897, when Rodin sent a life-size bronze to the city of Geneva as a gift.

The Benedictions

Originally modeled in 1894, Musée Rodin cast in 1955

Bronze

35 ½ x 24 x 19 inches

In 1894 Armand Dayot, French Inspector General of Fine Arts, proposed a monument to honor labor. There were others collaborating on the project, but Rodin was placed in charge of the overall theme and composition. Combining architectural and sculptural elements, Rodin proposed a tall column, covered with bas-reliefs that ascended from a crypt below the ground. The very top of the tower was to be crowned by two winged figures known as The Benedictions. The monument was never realized and The Benedictions was exhibited as an independent work.

Dance Movement, Pas de Deux 'B'

Originally modeled about 1910-11, Musée Rodin cast in 1965

Bronze

13 x 7 ⅛ x 5 inches

Late in life Rodin took great interest in dancers, as he continued to want to capture spontaneous, natural movement. He asked dancers to perform in his studio while he rapidly modeled clay in an attempt to achieve animation in static sculptures. Rodin believed that if two positions were sufficiently close in time for the last to follow the first, depicting them together in the same work would give the illusion of movement. Rodin's Dance Movements were attempts to put this theory into practice. Dance Movement 'B' is from this series. This piece also shows Rodin's interest in repeating figures within a single work (as in The Three Shades).

Sculptural Reproduction

Cire Perdue: The Lost-Wax Casting Process

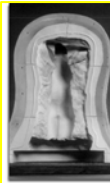
The process of lost-wax casting (*cire perdue*) has been used to reproduce sculpture in bronze for at least 5,000 years. Although some of the techniques and materials have changed, much of the process remains as it was in ancient times. The popularity of this process is due to its extreme accuracy in creating detail and because of the durability of the objects it creates. The process is very arduous and time-consuming. Most sculptors depend on independent foundries to cast their works. Foundry artisans must be very skilled and precise to complete the casting successfully.

The exhibition contains an educational display that demonstrates the ten-step lost-wax casting process. It is centered on Rodin's work Sorrow. Most venues exhibit the finished cast of Sorrow with the display, which is why there are 11 "steps" in the written process that follows. To view larger photographs of each step go to <http://www.cantorfoundation.org/Rodin/Bronze/casting1.html>

The Process



1. The artist creates a sculptural model, which is generally made of plaster, clay, marble, stone, or wood.



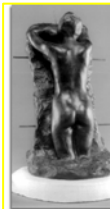
2. The surface of the model is coated with a substance to protect it. Then the model is put in a bed of very fine elastic material that is held in place by a rigid outer mold. An impression of the model results.



3. Fireproof clay is carefully put into the impression, making a sharply defined duplicate of the artist's original model.



4. The surface of the clay model is slightly scraped away. Thus when the clay model is returned to the "bed," there is a gap between the model and the mold. This gap is where the wax will be poured. The final bronze will be of the same thickness as the gap that is created by the scraping.



5. After closing the mold around the clay model, hot wax is poured into the gap between the model and the mold. This stage is crucial in producing a perfect reproduction of the initial sculpture. The result is a clay model covered with wax, which is then hand-finished to fidelity, incorporating the artist's signature, a cast number, and a foundry seal.



6. A network of wax pipes, called sprues and gates, is attached to the wax model. These pipes will allow the wax to escape as it melts. The pipes will also spread the molten metal evenly throughout the mold and will let air escape as the metal is poured in.



7. A finely granulated refractory material (a material with a high melting point) is applied to the outer surface of the wax model and its sprues and gates, until the piece becomes thick and rigid. The end result, called an "investment mold" or "casting mold," is then dried and heated. When it is heated, the wax melts and flows out from the sprues and gates. This leaves a space between the fire-resistant clay model (step 3) and the investment mold. This is why this method is called the "lost wax method."



8. The investment mold is then heated to a very high temperature (over 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit). Except for a place to pour the liquid bronze in at the top, the mold is covered with a layer of cladding (a protective metal coating), which must be completely dry before bronze pouring begins.



9. Molten bronze (over 2,000 degree Fahrenheit) is then poured into the cavity of the investment mold, filling the space left by the "lost" wax. When all is cool, the cladding and investment mold are broken and the metal appears: the bronze sculpture and its sprues and gates are an exact reproduction of the wax in step six.



10. The network of sprues and gates is then removed and the surface of the bronze is chiseled and filed so that no trace of them can be seen. This process of hand-finishing the bronze to perfection is called "chasing." Any remains of the fireproof clay model left inside the bronze are also removed now.



11. When the chasing is finished, hot or cold oxides are applied to the surface of the bronze, creating a thin layer of corrosion. This layer— usually brown, green, or blue in color— is called the "patina."

In Rodin's Studio

If you had walked into Rodin's studio at the Hôtel Biron in Paris or at his country estate in Meudon, you most likely would not have known if the date was 1897 or 1597. For although he was untraditional in many ways, Rodin produced his sculpture following very traditional studio practices, practices virtually unchanged from those of the great sculptors of the Renaissance and later periods.

Sculpture was very popular in Rodin's day. It was an age of insatiable markets and government commissions and Rodin was the most modern and most admired sculptor around. His art was in great demand. For instance, between 1898 and 1918, the Barbedienne Foundry produced 231 bronzes of The Eternal Spring and 319 of The Kiss. These were among his most popular pieces and each was available in four sizes. Rodin had to maintain a large and skilled workshop to keep up with demand like this.

Rodin was trained as a *modeler*. In his day and before, the *master sculptor* created his work first in clay. When the master was satisfied with what he created, craftsmen were assigned to create *replicas* of the master's model, first in clay, then in plaster, and from these, in stone (*carvings*) or in metal (usually bronze, thus *castings*). Although the master would supervise, he rarely participated in the creation of these stone or metal originals. Instead, he relied on his trusted and treasured craftspeople, and his foundries, to guarantee that the resultant carving or casting would be to his satisfaction.

Because the modeled original was replicated in another material, it was possible to make the replica larger or smaller, depending on the desire of the master or the patron. There were machines and procedures devised to do this transformation in size, and Rodin took full advantage of them. For instance, in 1880 the first Thinker was 28 inches (71 centimeters) high. In 1898 it was reduced to 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (38 centimeters), and in 1903-4 it was enlarged to a monumental 79 inches (201 centimeters).

Bronze casts were made off site, in *foundries*; Rodin used many different foundries. Often they specialized in signature *patinas*; whether Rodin's decision about which

foundry would do which piece was based on this, we do not know. A *patina* is the surface *color* of a bronze; this exhibition includes work from different foundries and with different patinas.

In order to accomplish all this, after 1900 Rodin might have had as many as fifty assistants at work in his studio. Many of these went on to achieve their own fame as artists: Antoine Bourdelle, Camille Claudel, Charles Despiau, Malvina Hoffmann.

Reductions and Enlargements

Invented in 1836 by a French engineer named Achille Collas, the Collas machine is used to make proportionately larger or smaller duplications of a sculpture. The concept can be traced to ancient Greek and Roman artists, who wanted to reproduce the perfect proportions of the human figure in their sculpture. Their method was called pointing, which meant that measurements of the desired figure were taken, then proportionally increased or decreased. This process was mechanized by Collas' machine.

On one turntable sits the plaster model. On a second turntable, connected to the first, sits a clay or plaster "blank" that has been roughly shaped to resemble the model but on a larger or smaller scale. The Collas machine keeps the model and the blank in the same orientation. A technician uses a tracing needle linked to a sharp cutting instrument (or stylus) to transfer a succession of profiles from the model onto the blank. Gradually the blank is worked so that it becomes a larger or smaller duplicate of the model. To see a photograph of the Collas machine at work, see the Cantor Foundation website: <http://www.cantorfoundation.org/Rodin/bronze/casting2.html>

Rodin and his skilled associate Henri Lebossé collaborated closely on reductions and enlargements; if they were not executed perfectly Rodin rejected them. Some sculptures that Rodin enlarged are The Walking Man, The Three Shades, and Monument to Balzac. Reductions include The Age of Bronze, Pierre de Wiessant (from The Burghers of Calais) and The Kiss.

The Laws that Govern the Casting of Rodin's Sculpture

In 1916 Rodin willed his entire estate (which included all his sculpture, drawings, letters, photographs, his library of books, and antiques) to France. He also gave France the right to continue to cast his works posthumously. Since his death in 1917 the Musée Rodin in Paris has followed his directions, casting sculptures either from his molds or from molds newly taken from his plasters. The Cantor Foundation and most of its art world colleagues are confident that Rodin fully understood both the process and the result of posthumous casting, and trusted his executors and the Musée Rodin when he authorized them to cast bronzes from his original molds and models.

Efforts have been made in France by the Musée Rodin and in the United States by the College Art Association to ensure the quality and authenticity of posthumous casts. In 1956 the casting of each of Rodin's works was limited by French law to twelve examples of each model. In 1968 French legislation passed a law requiring that the date of the cast be inscribed on each sculpture. A system of numbering was established by French legislation in 1981 whereby the first eight of the twelve casts, numbered 1/8–8/8, are made available for public purchase; the last four, numbered I/IV–IV/IV, are reserved for cultural institutions. (Despite these efforts, variations in the numbering system are occasionally found on authorized casts.)

To his great disappointment, three of Rodin's most important commissions— The Gates of Hell, Monument to Balzac, and Monument to Victor Hugo— were never cast during his lifetime. However, the permission in his will for posthumous casting by the Musée Rodin, as an agent for the government of France, has made it possible for these works to be realized in bronze. Thus twentieth and twenty-first-century audiences have been able to see them as the artist intended.

How Is Sculpture Authenticated in America Today?

Sculpture that is reproduced in editions (multiples) and in numerous mediums and sizes raises questions about originality, dating, and ethics. Such problems are complicated by the failure of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century artists and foundries to maintain records, as well as by the absence of foundry marks, cast numbers, and even signatures. This has been the case particularly with Rodin's sculpture. In 1974, when Rodin scholar Albert E. Elsen was elected President of the College Art Association, he confronted the problem by bringing together sculptors, art historians, lawyers, curators, museum directors, and art dealers to draft the "Statement on the Standards for Sculptural Reproduction and Preventative Measures to Combat Unethical Casting in Bronze." This statement serves as the basis for authentication today and also sets standards for the production of contemporary editions of sculpture. You can read the statement online at <http://www.collegeart.org/caa/ethics/sculpture.html>

Glossary of Terms

bronze	A metal alloy composed of copper and tin that is ideally suited for casting sculptures.
cast	A sculpture produced from a mold.
casting	The process of making sculpture by pouring a liquid material into a mold.
enlargement	A sculpture that has been made in a larger size than the original.
foundry	A workshop where sculptures are cast.
freestanding	Sculpture that is not attached to a background plane and is therefore completely three-dimensional (the opposite of “relief”).
lost-wax casting	A process of creating a cast by replacing a wax model within a mold with bronze. The wax is heated and “lost,” leaving the cavity free for the molten bronze.
maquette	A small model made by a sculptor as a preparation for a larger finished work. A sculpted sketch.
modeling	Making form out of a soft, flexible substance such as clay or wax.
mold	A hollow form that envelops the shape of the sculpture being cast.
patina	Originally, a greenish film caused by oxidation on the surface of old bronze. Today, the term is also used to describe the result of a chemical substance added to a sculpture’s surface for color, in order to achieve an intentional aesthetic effect.
reduction	A sculpture that has been made on a smaller scale than the original.
relief	A type of sculpture in which the subject is carved or modeled from a flat background plane. It is thus not completely three-dimensional and often characterized by the projection of the relief— <i>bas</i> , <i>mezzo</i> and <i>alto</i> (low, medium, and high).
Salon	The exhibitions of painting and sculpture held yearly in Paris under the aegis of the French Royal Academy. The Salon’s origins date back to 1667, but it reached its greatest power during the eighteenth-century.



Frequently Asked Questions

Following is a list of questions, and answers, that docents are sometimes asked while giving tours of the Rodin exhibition.

- **Is there more “value” ascribed to works made by one foundry than by another?**

In terms of monetary “value” and interest to a collector or institution, there is often a higher “value” put on works produced during Rodin’s lifetime. All authorized casts made by any foundry are considered “originals.” However, casts that were made before Rodin’s death in 1917 are often appraised for higher amounts and fetch larger sums at auction.

- **Which is considered the “original” work, the bronze or the clay model?**

This issue can be complicated as people have differed over time about what constitutes an original. In painting, there is typically one work and therefore one “original.” In sculpture, as in other mediums such as photography and printmaking, there are often multiple examples or “originals” of the same work. In terms of Rodin’s work, all bronze casts authorized by the artist and by his heir, the French government, are “original.” The initial plaster or clay model can be thought of as a stage in a process; the result being the final finished bronze cast. All are equally important. Since about 1940, some purists have argued that works are original only if they are cast under the strict supervision of the artist. However, in Rodin’s day and in his studio, this standard did not apply; Rodin himself did not supervise the casting of his works and reportedly did not even step foot in the foundries he patronized.

- **How much polishing or finishing is done by the foundry?**

Typically, after a bronze sculpture is cast it is hand-finished to remove any imperfections left by the casting process. This procedure is called “chasing.” After the chasing has been completed, hot or cold oxides are applied to the surface of the bronze; these create a thin layer of corrosion. Depending on which oxides are used by the foundry, this thin layer usually has a brown, black, green, blue, or red color. This colored layer is called the “patina.” Rodin was often very demanding when it came to the patina of his bronzes. He was known to have works redone until the patina was to his satisfaction. (See pages 30-31 for more details on the lost wax casting process.)

- **What are the protrusions that appear on some of the bronzes—such as the bump on the lower back of the top figure in Ovid’s Metamorphoses or the cast lines on works such as Monumental Torso of the Walking Man?**

When using the lost wax method, there are conduits, called “sprues” and “gates,” attached to the core model. These conduits are channels through which the heated wax escapes from the mold. The sprues and gates are removed during the chasing process. However, there are often also raised marks left by leaking bronze. Most artists of Rodin’s day would have these “flaws” removed and have the surface of the

F.A.Q.s (continued)

bronze chased to perfection. Rodin however often preferred to leave evidence of the casting process, to reveal what he believed to be a more dynamic surface.

- **Is the Foundation continuing to make acquisitions?**

No, the Foundation currently is not actively collecting. The Foundation does, however, monitor the sales at major auction houses in case there are any Rodin works that might be of particular interest.

Just the F.A.Q.s

Attention Docents! I would like to hear from you! What do your visitors want to know? With your help, I will add to the list of frequently asked questions to assist future docents in preparing tours of the Rodin exhibition.

Please send your F.A. Q.s to me. You can email them- jsobol@ibgcf.org or snail mail them to:

Judith Sobol
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1180 S. Beverly Drive, Suite 321
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Thank you for your valuable input!

Books for Further Reading

- Butler, Ruth. **Rodin: The Shape of Genius**. Yale University Press, 1996.
- Elsen, Albert E. with Rosalyn Frankel Jamison. **Rodin's Art: The Rodin Collection, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University**. New York: Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University with Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Herpin, Hugues et al. **The Little Book of Rodin**. Paris: Flammarion, 2002.
- Jarrasse, Dominique. **Rodin: A Passion for Movement**. Terrail, 1995.
- Lampert, Catherine. **Rodin: Sculpture & Drawings**. Yale University Press, 1987.
- Parsons, Tom. **Auguste Rodin**. Parkstone Press, 1999.
- Pinet, Helene. **Rodin: The Hands of Genius**. Harry N. Abrams Incorporated, 1992.
- Musée Rodin. **Rodin at the Musée Rodin**. Scala Books, 1997.
- Rodin, Auguste and Paul Gsell. **Rodin on Art and Artists**. Dover Publications Incorporated, 1983.
- Romain, Antoinette and others. **Rodin: A Magnificent Obsession**. Merrell Publishers, 2001.

Websites of Interest

Rodin on the Web

The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

www.cantorfoundation.org

The home page of the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation contains information on Rodin, his work, the sculptural process, and more.

Musée Rodin, Paris, France

www.musee-rodin.fr/

Located at the Hôtel Biron (Rodin's previous residence). This website contains a variety of historical information on the collection, building, and gardens.

Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, California

www.stanford.edu/dept/ccva/

The Cantor Center is home to the largest Rodin collection in this country. Its website has a great "virtual tour" of the Cantor Sculpture Garden.

Rodin Museum of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

www.rodinmuseum.org

Administered by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Rodin Museum holds over 120 works, including the monumental [The Gates of Hell](#), [The Burghers of Calais](#), and [The Thinker](#). The website contains a Quick Time virtual reality tour of its galleries.

The Legion of Honor, San Francisco, California

www.thinker.org

Part of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, The Legion of Honor is home to many important Rodin works, such as [The Three Shades](#), [The Thinker](#), and [The Call to Arms](#). Its website has a searchable catalogue of the collection that includes over 70 images of Rodin's work.

National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

www.nga.gov

The National Gallery's collection contains sculptures, drawings, and prints by Rodin. The website has a searchable database of the collection. Not all listings have corresponding images; however, each entry lists the location in the museum, its exhibition history, literature about the piece, and its provenance.