

Large Print Labels

Rodin: The Human Experience
Selections from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor
Collections



PORTLAND **ART** MUSEUM

Location: Schnitzer Sculpture Court, Main Level

The Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

The Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation promotes and recognizes excellence in the arts and enhances cultural life internationally through its support for art exhibitions and scholarship and for the endowment of galleries and sculpture gardens at major museums.

Most unusual for a philanthropic foundation, the Cantor Foundation also owns this significant collection of Rodin sculpture. During the last four decades, it has loaned individual works and entire exhibitions to museums in more than 160 cities in Australia, Canada, Japan, Singapore, and the United States. More than ten million people have seen these shows.

The Foundation also actively supports healthcare, with a current emphasis on women's health. Indeed, through its support of the Iris Cantor-UCLA Women's

Health Center in Los Angeles and the Iris Cantor Women's Health Center at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York, the Foundation pioneered a new model for clinical care for women that provides "one-stop shopping," as Iris Cantor describes it.

The Cantor Foundation is chaired by its president, Iris Cantor. Its offices are in Los Angeles. More information about what the Foundation does and the achievements of its founders is available at cantorfoundation.org.

The Origin of the Cantor Collections

In 1945, just out of the Army, the young B. Gerald Cantor wandered into The Metropolitan Museum of Art and encountered Rodin's marble sculpture *The Hand of God*. He was captivated.

Eighteen months later, he bought his first Rodin, a bronze version of the marble he had fallen in love with at the Met. It cost him the equivalent of two months' rent for his modest apartment. Thus began what Bernie Cantor called his "magnificent obsession" with the sculpture of Rodin. It continued throughout his life.

Between 1945 and the early 1990s, Bernie Cantor (1916–1996) and his wife, Iris, created the world's largest and most comprehensive private collection of works by Rodin. Concentrating on quality and significance, they collected nearly 750 sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, and documents. This obsession was not only to own and understand the

work, but also to share it. Over the years more than 500 works of art from the Cantor Collection have been donated not only to the Cantor Foundation, but also to more than 100 museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the North Carolina Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University.

Bernie Cantor said he was obsessed by the feeling of strength, power, and sensuality he found in Rodin's work. Iris was his devoted partner. Because of their commitment to Rodin sculpture, today work by this artist enjoys wide public admiration and scholarly appreciation.

The Burghers of Calais

In 1347, during the Hundred Years' War, King Edward III of England laid siege to the French port of Calais. No food entered the city for 100 days. The king, camped outside the city with much of his court, offered to end the siege if the citizens of Calais would bring him the keys to the city gates—and sacrifice their lives. Six citizens, or “burghers,” volunteered.

In 1884, the city of Calais decided to commemorate this remarkable act of patriotism by commissioning a monument to the event. Immediately intrigued by its possibilities, Rodin submitted a proposal and it was chosen by the committee in charge. (More than one cynic has suggested that Rodin won because he proposed to depict all six burghers, although the commission had asked for only one.)

In Rodin's winning entry, the burghers, a bit larger than life size, are equal in importance. They mill in a

small group in the Calais town square as they begin their march to the English king's encampment and their death. Each is at a different stage of life and each feels a different emotion as he grapples with the realization of what he has volunteered to do.

Rodin made separate heads and figure studies, both clothed and unclothed, of each of the burghers; there were also enlargements and reductions. Strictly speaking, these are not portraits. Rodin used contemporary models for the heads and bodies of the fourteenth-century citizens. This exhibition includes *Jean d'Aire (Second Maquette)*, *The Monumental Head of Jean d'Aire*, *Final Head of Eustache de St. Pierre*, and *Jean de Fiennes, Clothed*.

The idea that art could commemorate—even celebrate—heroism in defeat was new at this time. Perhaps it was a result of France's need to minimize its loss in the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian War—to say that something good happened despite the defeat –

and to rally the country for future retaliation. Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* conveyed this patriotic heroism by referring to individual sacrifice while simultaneously expressing civic pride in such sacrifice. The piece was commissioned for the site where the fourteenth-century event actually occurred, so the sculpture was to be a daily reminder to the people of Calais of not only the event, but also the civic duty of citizens.

Jean de Fiennes, Clothed

Modeled 1885–86; Musée Rodin cast 2/8 in 1981

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Here Rodin depicts Jean de Fiennes, the youngest subject in the *Burghers of Calais*. North Carolina Museum of Art Curator David Steel explains, “Jean’s expression, hesitant pose, and awkward, open-handed gesture express the inner conflict the artist sought to portray. Jean has committed himself to the step he takes with his right foot, but his face betrays raw pain as he begins to turn and look back to the town, friends, and family members he may never see again.... His feet push him onward, but he is not yet reconciled to the consequences of his decision. While his five comrades have at least acknowledged their fate, Jean has yet to come to terms with his.” Poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who was Rodin’s secretary, said, “This figure, if placed by itself in a ... garden, would be a monument for all who have died young.”

Jean D'Aire, Second Maquette

Modeled 1885–86; Musée Rodin cast 1/12 in 1970

Bronze; Susse Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

This version of *Jean d'Aire* exists because of Rodin's working method: the sculptor first modeled the figure nude so he could be sure the entire body expressed the sought-after emotion. Only then would he cover the figure with clothing.

This nude *Jean d'Aire*, one of the *Burghers of Calais*, is emaciated, and thus conveys the deprivation of his starving city. He is also stolid and determined, expressing courage and resolve in the face of death. He holds a cushion on which lie the keys to the city, their surrender being one of the demands of the English king.

Fallen Caryatid with Urn

Modeled 1883, enlarged 1911–17; Musée Rodin cast
4 in 1982

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

We are reminded of the timelessness of Rodin's work when one of the characters in Robert Heinlein's influential 1961 science fiction novel, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, says:

This poor little caryatid has fallen under the load. She's a good girl—look at her face. Serious, unhappy at her failure, not blaming anyone, not even the gods...and still trying to shoulder her load.... She's a symbol for every woman who ever shouldered a load too heavy. But not alone women—this symbol means every man and woman who ever sweated out life in uncomplaining fortitude until they crumpled under their loads. It's courage...and victory... She's a father working while cancer eats away his insides, to bring

home one more pay check. She's a twelve-year-old trying to mother her brothers and sisters because mama had to go to Heaven...She's all the unsung heroes who couldn't make it but never quit.

Fallen Caryatid with Stone

Modeled 1880–81, enlarged 1911–17; Musée Rodin
cast 2/8 in 1982

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

In 1897 Rodin himself wrote of his *Caryatids*:

On each part of this body, the entire rock rests like a will that was greater, more ancient and more powerful, and yet its destiny, which was to carry, has not stopped. It carries, as one carries the impossible in a dream, and cannot find a way out. And despite its collapse, its weakness, the act of carrying continues, and when exhaustion strikes again, forcing this body to recline, even when reclining, it will still carry, will go on carrying forever.

Monumental Head of Jean d'Aire

Modeled about 1908–9, enlarged 1909–10; Musée

Rodin cast 5 in 1975

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

In the process of completing his *Monument to the Burghers of Calais*, Rodin made many studies of the models, both nude and clothed. He did the entire figures and parts of the figures, such as hands and heads. When the finished monument proved to be very popular, there was a market for these studies, not only to-size but also enlarged and reduced in size.

Final Head of Eustache de St. Pierre

Modeled about 1886; Musée Rodin cast II/IV in 1995

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Eustache de St. Pierre was one of the citizens commemorated in Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. The history of the 1347 siege of the city was part of the well-known *Chroniques* by Jean Froissart (about 1335–1400), who tells us that when the mayor of Calais reported to his people the English king's conditions for ending the siege:

They all began to cry and weep, so much and so bitterly that there is no heart in the world so hard that having heard and seen them would not have pitied them...

A moment later there arose the richest burgher, Sir Eustache de St. Pierre, who said: "Lords, it would be a great misfortune

to let such a people die here of famine when one can find another means. I have such hope of finding grace and pardon from Our Lord if I die in order to save these people, that I want to be the first: I will willingly strip to my shirt, bare my head, put the rope around my neck, at the mercy of the king of England.”

When inventing a head that would convey such character, Rodin may have used as a model his friend, the painter Jean-Charles Cazin, a descendant of Eustache de St. Pierre.

Location: Leaving Schnitzer Sculpture Court, Entering First Room in Collins Gallery, Main Level

Auguste Rodin, 1840–1917

At the peak of his career, Auguste Rodin was regarded as the greatest sculptor since Michelangelo. Leaving behind nineteenth-century academic traditions, Rodin focused on conveying the vitality of the human spirit. His vigorous modeling emphasized his personal response to the subject, and he captured movement and emotion by altering traditional poses and gestures. In so doing, he created his own form of artistic expression. Today we see Rodin's pioneering sculpture as a crucial link between traditional and modern art.

Born in 1840 to a modest French family, Rodin attended the government school for craft and design. There he learned in the traditional way: by drawing from plaster casts of ancient sculpture and by

modeling in clay, modeling being the basis of sculpture in his day. Although he sought admission to the prestigious École des Beaux Arts (the government school for fine art), he was rejected three times.

A struggle for recognition dominated Rodin's early career. For nearly a decade he earned his living as an anonymous member of the workshop of Henri Carrier-Belleuse, a successful decorative sculptor. Yearning to exhibit his work under his own name, in the 1860s he submitted his sculpture to the prestigious Paris Salon exhibitions, but was rejected each time.

By the time Rodin reached his early forties, however, his art began to gather support. His first public commission, received in 1880, was to create an entrance for a new museum of decorative arts in Paris. His design was a response to Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*. Rodin titled this work *The Gates of Hell*. When the commission was canceled because the museum was not built, Rodin liberated

many of the figurative high reliefs that detailed the door and used them as independent sculptures or as parts of new pieces. In the years that followed, Rodin created commissioned monuments and portraits of his famous contemporaries, and a great number of non-commissioned pieces as well.

By 1900, Rodin was Europe's most famous sculptor. Indeed, an entire pavilion at the Paris World Exposition was devoted to a retrospective exhibition of his work. In 1908 he moved his studio and gallery to the Hôtel Biron, a large Paris mansion where he worked until his death in 1917. A year before he died, the sculptor donated the contents of his studio there, and of his studio and home in the Paris suburb of Meudon, to the people of France in exchange for the nation's agreement to establish a Rodin museum. Today the Hôtel Biron and the structures and land in Meudon are the two sites of the Musée Rodin. The exhibition is being staged in Portland to

commemorate the 100th anniversary of the artist's death.

The Gates of Hell

The Gates of Hell was Rodin's first major commission. In 1880, the French government asked him to design entrance doors for a museum of decorative arts to be built in Paris. Rodin decided to depict *The Inferno* of Dante's epic, fourteenth-century poem *The Divine Comedy*. Rodin's work, its form based on that of typical cathedral doors, provides images of people condemned to Hell for eternity, the result of their earthly sins. The artist modeled more than 180 figures for this monumental sculpture, often in high relief.

The commission was canceled when the French government decided to use the designated site for a train station instead. (Ironically, the train station today is the Musée d'Orsay, whose collection includes a plaster cast of Rodin's *Gates*.) Afterward, Rodin removed many of the figures from the doors and used them as independent sculptures, giving them meanings separate from those they had in their

original location. Variations of some of these newly independent sculptures are in this exhibition, including *Fugitive Love*, *Fallen Caryatid*, *Meditation with Arms*, and *Head of a Shade*.

The Gates of Hell was never cast in bronze during Rodin's lifetime. When a bronze cast was finally made, after the artist's death, it was done not by "lost wax," his preferred method, but rather by a method known as "sandcasting." The first lost wax cast of the work was made in 1979; it was commissioned by Iris and B. Gerald Cantor and subsequently donated to the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for the Visual Arts at Stanford University. Today this massive piece (21 feet high by 12 feet wide) is the centerpiece of Stanford's B. Gerald Cantor Rodin Sculpture Garden.

The Gates of Hell, Third Maquette

Modeled 1880; Musée Rodin cast 1/8 in 1991

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Among Rodin's goals for *The Gates of Hell* was to combine sculpture and architecture so that neither would be of service to the other. A series of drawings and clay maquettes (sculpted sketches) made by Rodin in 1880 show how the artist came to his final design. This maquette is a pivotal piece in this transformation.

Rodin's early sketches followed the Renaissance style of dividing cathedral doors into panels separated by garlands or other decorative motifs. By the time he got to this maquette, Rodin had broken through the rigid division of the main sections of the doors and situated his figures within one space, often without regard to a common floor line or perspective. This maquette is also the first sculpted sketch showing *The*

Thinker and its location, and indicating the future presence of *The Three Shades* atop the doors. *Paolo and Francesca* and *Ugolino* are in their places, too. It also makes clear that Rodin has decided to include fewer figures. Finally, it is the first sculpted piece that gives us a sense of the deep recession back into space, and the pronounced procession forward into our space, of the final piece.

In Rodin's Studio

After 1880, Rodin's art was widely sought after and, as there was at the time no tradition of limiting the number of casts that could be made of a single work, he set up his studio to meet demand. He took full advantage of bronze casting's capacity to produce large editions in a variety of sizes. For instance, between 1898 and 1918, at least 319 casts of *The Kiss* were produced.

Rodin was trained as a *modeler*. In his day and before, the *master sculptor* created his work first in clay or wax. When the master was satisfied with what he created, craftsmen were assigned to create *replicas* of the master's model, first in clay or 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 sculptures. Instead he relied on his trusted and treasured craftspeople and on his

hired foundries to guarantee that the resultant carving or casting would be to his satisfaction.

Because the modeled clay or wax 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. *Saint John the Baptist Preaching*, in this exhibition, was available in two sizes, 19 inches and 32 inches. This was not work for the creative artist; such enlargements and reductions were done by studio assistants.

Casts were made off-site, in *foundries*; Rodin used many different ones, some of which made attractive business offers to induce him to use their facility.

Also, certain foundries specialized in signature *patinas*. A *patina* is the surface *color* of a bronze; this exhibition includes work with different patinas. Rodin's studio assistants also supervised this work for the artist.

Rodin may have had as many as fifty assistants in his studio. Many of them went on to their own fame as artists: Antoine Bourdelle, Camille Claudel, Charles Despiau, Malvina Hoffmann. This traditional way of working—hands off after the initial modeling—meant Rodin generally gave little attention to the artworks after the clay or wax models passed from his hands to those of his studio assistants.

Rodin's genius lay in his ability to model sculpture that captured the figure in a moment of motion, that spoke of the sinew of a character, and that combined bodies in ways that expressed emotions and provoked responses. He left it to others to replicate his genius for the marketplace.

Original?

Just before he died in 1917, Rodin authorized the posthumous casting of his bronzes so that his legacy would be preserved. The Musée Rodin in Paris determines what is a true and original cast and rigorously exercises this authority. By law, all posthumous casts must be approved by the Musée. If approved, they are deemed “original.”

All of the Rodins in the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collection and Cantor Foundation Collection are original. Most of these artworks were commissioned directly from the Musée Rodin and were cast by its selected foundry, Coubertin.

The labels in this exhibition explain the origin of each work, including when Rodin originally modeled the work in clay or wax and, where appropriate, when it was first enlarged or reduced in size. The label also

tells you which foundry—Coubertin, Alexis Rudier, Godard, or another—cast the work.

The labels also include the cast number. At the time Rodin lived, artists did not number their casts and rarely limited the number of casts that could be made of a piece. Indeed, we know that Rodin was happiest when he was selling scores of casts of a single work. Nearly forty years after the artist's death, France enacted a law limiting the number of casts that could be made of a piece to twelve; each of these twelve is an authorized original. Another French law, passed in 1968, makes these multiples subject to a specific numbering system. Eight of the twelve casts are available to the public to purchase and are numbered 1 through 8. The other four, numbered I through IV, are reserved for cultural institutions.

Thus, when you read a label that says “Modeled 1883, Musée Rodin cast 1 in 1996,” it is telling you that Rodin created the clay model in 1883; this bronze

was cast, according to Rodin's wishes and authorization, by the Musée Rodin in 1996; and it is the first in a group of eight casts made for the public to purchase.

The Three Shades

Modeled 1880–1904; Musée Rodin cast 10 in 1981

Bronze

Lent by Iris Cantor

Monumental Head of the Shade

Modeled about 1880; Musée Rodin cast II/IV in 1995

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

There are many variations of the numerous figures that Rodin detached from *The Gates of Hell* when the commission for the mammoth piece was canceled. Removed from atop the gates were three muscular figures, turning to one another, pointing and looking downward into the morass of Hell, which they are about to enter and which they warn of: “Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.” These are *The Three Shades*; their poses, muscles, and expressions all speak to Rodin’s interest in Michelangelo.

As was typical of how Rodin worked, eventually the individual shades became fodder for the artist's imagination, fueling his creative use and reuse of parts. In separating the head of the shade from its body, Rodin can present it upright. Thus, *Monumental Head of a Shade* has a very different mood than did its source.

Ixelles Idyll

Modeled in plaster about 1876; cast in bronze first in 1885; Musée Rodin cast 4 in 1981

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Rodin lived in Brussels from 1871 until 1877. He was at the beginning of his career, and he went there to work on architectural sculpture for a number of buildings, including the Bourse (stock exchange), the music conservatory, and the Palais-Royal at the Palais des Académies. He and another sculptor established a partnership and studio in the village of Ixelles, a pleasant suburb of the city. The sculptures they made were for revival-style buildings and were largely rococo in inspiration and allegorical in meaning.

Ixelles Idyll, named to commemorate the location of its making, is composed of two chubby infants. The standing figure, a female, has wings, while the second

figure is male. The female is directly related to another figure, *Science*, which Rodin made for the Palais des Académies in 1874.

Saint John the Baptist Preaching

Modeled about 1880; Musée Rodin cast in 1925, cast number unknown

Bronze; Alexis Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

In 1913, Rodin spoke of what happened when an Italian peasant from the Abruzzi region came to his studio to offer himself as a model:

As soon as I saw him, I was filled with admiration; this rough, hairy man expressed his violence in his bearing, his features and his physical strength, yet also the mystical character of his race. I immediately thought of a Saint John the Baptist, in other words, a man of nature, a visionary, a believer, a precursor who came to announce one greater than himself. The peasant undressed, climbed onto the revolving stand as if he had never posed before; he planted

himself firmly on his feet, head up, torso straight, at the same time putting his weight on both legs, open like a compass. The movement was so right, so straightforward and so true that I cried: "But it's a man walking!" I immediately resolved to model what I had seen.... That's how I came to make *The Walking Man* and *Saint John the Baptist*, one after the other. All I did was copy the model that chance had sent me.

Saint John the Baptist was a popular subject at Rodin's time. But unlike other artists, who favored the biblical description of the man, Rodin portrayed the figure nude and without attributes, and with an ambiguous gesture.

***The American Athlete: Portrait of Samuel S. White
3rd***

Modeled 1901; no information available about this
cast

Bronze; foundry unknown

Lent by Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual
Arts at Stanford University

Gift of the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

While attending Cambridge University, the young American athlete Samuel Stockton White 3rd (1876–1952) won the Sandow Medal in 1899 for having the best “physical development” in the United Kingdom. As he recalled, “I paid a visit to Rodin [in 1901] who complimented me on my development and accepted me as a model ... It was a long time before he was satisfied with the pose. He had me walk around his studio and studied me from all angles. Finally, he asked me to assume a natural pose ... as Rodin worked and worked with his infinite sense of detail.”

Rodin and Modernism

One of the ways in which Rodin changed the way we think about sculpture was through his insistence 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 saw such meaning in the fragments of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture being unearthed in archaeological digs during the last half of the nineteenth century. In this exhibition, intentional partial figures like *Torso of the Walking Man* convey his response to these ancient unintentional partial figures.

Rodin found also that the fragments that resulted from his working method could carry meaning. Like all sculptors, he frequently destroyed works in progress. This left him with miscellaneous pieces: arms, legs, torsos. Also, the method used to cast sculpture in bronze entailed using plaster casts which, when used, were broken into fragments of the body. Throughout

his career, Rodin used such broken pieces in new sculpture. The process, called *marcottage*, may be seen as a precursor to today's art of *assemblage*. Sometimes in his *marcottages* Rodin used the fragments at their original size, and at other times he reduced or enlarged them.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Rodin's partial figures were greatly influencing other sculptors. Artists like Aristide Maillol, Constantin Brancusi, Alexander Archipenko, and Henri Matisse all learned from Rodin's achievements.

It was not just Rodin's use of fragments that created modern sculpture. His sculpture implied movement. Note, for example, the placement of the feet of *Saint John the Baptist*. The pose is impossible to hold: the figure must in the next moment fall into our space. The same is true of *Dance Movement D*. Rodin's interest in depicting movement predated that of the

Cubists and the Futurists, who also worked to make the invisible, visible.

Finally, Rodin made his personal passions the subtexts of his artworks. In the overt sexuality of works like *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, *Illusions Received by the Earth (The Fallen Angel)*, and *Ecclesiastes*, he demonstrated that art should be judged by how it looks, not by its title.

Study for Torso of the Walking Man

Modeled 1878–79; Musée Rodin cast 10 in 1979

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Once thought to be a preparatory study for *Saint John the Baptist Preaching*, seen nearby, this work is now believed to have been made from parts of the already-done *Saint John*, in preparation for another piece, *The Walking Man* (not in this exhibition), which was created about 1900. At about that time, Rodin used casts of the torso and upper thigh of one of *Saint John's* legs to make this study. Because the casts were first made in 1878–79, the *Study* bears that date although it was not fashioned from parts of this earlier sculpture until twenty years later.

Monumental Torso of the Walking Man

Modeled about 1905; Musée Rodin cast 1/8 in 1985

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

This larger-than-life-size torso of a walking man is a fine example of Rodin's modeling, which captured the sensuousness and texture of the body's flesh and musculature. The man's build suggests that the model was perhaps an athlete, allowing Rodin to conjure up the partial figures of ancient Roman athletes that he admired at the Musée du Louvre in Paris. The torso was conceived about 1900 to be a fragment of the finished *Walking Man*.

Narcisse

Modeled about 1882, enlarged and retitled 1890;

Musée Rodin cast 8/8 in 1985

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

This piece is a good example of the issues that complicate the study of Rodin sculpture. It was not included in *The Gates of Hell* when the gates were first shown, but it was included in a later version. Rodin also showed it independent of the gates, in versions both enlarged and reduced in size (sometimes it was 10 inches, sometimes 17). At times *Narcisse* was combined with other figures; at other times it had arms. Rodin even used a reduced version as the handle on a vase; it is easy to imagine the pleasure of holding the backward-leaning figure in one's hand.

When the figure was enlarged to this size (32 inches),

Rodin exhibited it as *Narcissus*, the Greek god who

fell in love with his own striking reflection in a pool.
Enchanted by his own good looks, he was unable to
leave and soon died.

Despairing Adolescent

Modeled 1882; Musée Rodin cast 3 in 1975

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

The sinuous lines of the arms stretching upward, the reverse S curve that starts at the youth's lower hand and works its way down the left side of his body, the head leaning backward so as not to interrupt the formal importance of those arms—all of these demonstrate Rodin's use of naturalism in service of expression.

Location: Second room in Collins gallery, Main Level:

Aphrodite

Modeled about 1888; Musée Rodin cast 9 in 1978

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Rodin fashioned *Aphrodite* at the request of the director of the Théâtre de la Renaissance in Paris, actress Cora Laparcerie; it was to be a prop on stage for her new play, *Aphrodite*. Said Laparcerie, “In a play in which the statue of Love had the leading role,” she wanted, “this statue to be executed by the greatest sculptor of the age.” She told Rodin that his works should be not only in museums and city squares, but also “down among the people...for all those who have memories of love.”

That the figure, enlarged to four times its initial size for use on stage (here it is twice its initial size), was meant to be seen from afar is indicated by the

summary treatment of the facial features and the emphasis on the planes of the body rather than on the details. This figure is especially engaging when viewed from the side, where the elegant pose seems to defy gravity.

Illusions Received by the Earth (The Fallen Angel)

Modeled 1895; Musée Rodin cast 1/8 in 1983

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Rodin's practice during the 1890s emphasized reusing figures and parts of figures he had made during the 1880s: he combined existing parts to create new wholes. *Illusions Received by the Earth* is a prime example of this working method. The crouching figure is the *Fallen Caryatid with Stone* (on view in this exhibition); the stretching figure is *Portrait of Adele* (not in this exhibition).

Because of how a bronze sculpture is cast, the reusing of elements from earlier pieces is technically easy. Rodin's studio was filled with white plaster figures, torsos, arms, legs, and hands, remnants of the process of casting earlier pieces. One visitor likened the studio to a cemetery of bones.

The making of new sculpture by combining elements from earlier pieces—called *marcottage*—is one of Rodin's innovations and attests to the restless creativity of his vision.

The Benedictions

Modeled 1894; Musée Rodin cast in 1955, cast number unknown

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

In 1894, Rodin was invited to design a monument to labor for the 1900 Exposition Universelle. The sculptor proposed a 100-foot-tall tower—reminiscent of Leonardo’s staircase at the Château de Blois—on a 24-foot-wide base. A center column was to be covered in bas reliefs depicting “respectable” laborers. At the base would be two figures: *Night*—a reduction of which is in this exhibition—and *Day*.

Atop the tower would be *The Benedictions*, described by Rodin as “two winged geniuses who descend from heaven, like a beneficent rain, to bless the work of men.” Rodin’s conception of these two creatures emphasizes their lavish wings, necessary to slow down their descent from heaven. They provide this

piece with an art nouveau sensibility. Although Rodin said he was not a fan of this highly decorative style, it is clear that he could not escape its influences on his work.

The *Tower to Labor* was never built.

The Metamorphoses of Ovid

Modeled about 1885–89; cast 10, perhaps 1897

Bronze; Perzinka Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Nineteenth-century Romantic artists explored many themes that had been previously taboo. One of these was lesbianism. Rodin, Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and others drew people to their work by using the theme's then-capacity to shock.

Rodin did a number of pieces with a lesbian theme in the mid-1880s. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* was exhibited often, but—so typical of Rodin—under a variety of titles, *The Satyresses* among them. The current title was not bestowed until 1899. It was a very popular work, both in its bronze and marble versions. As a 1914 gallery catalogue described it: “One, coiled up, hunches her body like a tight spring, her legs tense, her back rounded, while beneath her

reclines her conquest in the most passive
abandonment.”

Toilette of Venus and Andromede

Modeled after 1890; Musée Rodin cast 1/8 in 1987

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

In today's parlance we might call Rodin the super recycler. Throughout this exhibition are works created by his recycling of parts from earlier pieces, as well as works that would later become sources for parts in subsequent pieces. *Toilette of Venus and Andromede* is one of these. The bent-over figure of Andromede started as a marble, carved in 1885. This marble was later transformed into a bronze. The upright figure of Venus first appeared about five years later as a bronze *Toilette of Venus*. Then, sometime after 1890, Rodin recycled models for these two pieces, combining them into what you see here.

Rodin's inspiration for assembling these two figures probably lay more in the contrast they provided in ways of expressing human energy than in any literary

reason. Indeed, one can see them as two stages in a woman's awakening.

Meditation (with Arms)

Modeled about 1880, enlarged about 1896; Musée

Rodin cast 8 in 1979

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

This figure, which displays Michelangelo's tendency to combine the masculine and the feminine, is also an amalgam of Rodin and art nouveau, the premiere avant-garde style in decorative and graphics arts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One need only look at paintings and drawings by Gustav Klimt and Alphonse Mucha to see the similarities. In this sculpture we find the whiplash curve and the pose so characteristic of art nouveau—essentially a reverse S-curve that starts at the top of the head and descends through the shoulder, to the left torso, then the hip, the knee, and finally the heel. Even though Rodin declared himself to be independent of the styles of his day, he is sometimes betrayed by his work: here are art nouveau

tendencies; other works are infused with the rococo revival (see *Ixelles Idyll*).

Ecclesiastes

Modeled 1898; Musée Rodin cast II/IV in 1995

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

It is thought that Rodin first created this assemblage before 1899. In 1900, it was called *Woman with a Book*. In 1903, poet and art collector Robert de Montesquiou described the figure differently, seeing her as “crushing and shattering a book of science with her nudity.” In 1904, the piece was exhibited with the title *Ecclesiastes*; critic Georges Grappe explained this as an allusion to the *vanitas vanitatum* cited in the scriptures (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12:8): “All is vanity.”

Woman with a Book is certainly the most literal of the titles assigned to this small, disarming piece, and it probably explains the process of the work’s creation. No doubt Rodin, a champion of the value of chance, modeled the small figure and then looked around for something to hold it up. Thus, the book was first used

as a pedestal; next, it was transformed into an element that added meaning to the piece; and, finally, it was cast in bronze along with the figure.

Three Faunesses

Modeled before 1896; Musée Rodin cast in 1959, cast number unknown

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

What appears to be three mythological creatures joined in a circle is actually a single figure cast three times and then brazed together. A similar replication process was used in *The Night*, a double figure, displayed nearby.

This work has long been identified by this or similar titles, but nothing about these women identifies them as faunesses, mythological creatures usually depicted as half-goat. In his choice of title, Rodin perhaps sought to emphasize the pagan instinctual nature of the women who dance together, forgetting all else.

Damned Women

Modeled about 1885; Musée Rodin cast 2/12 in 1978

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Rodin did a number of pieces with lesbian themes in the mid-1880s. Among them were *Damned Women* and *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, also in this exhibition. *Damned Women* was never shown during Rodin's lifetime. Scholar Antoinette Romain notes that this was "due to the blatant eroticism that makes the group one of the sculptor's boldest works. [In 1893 Proust] ...suggested that a woman predisposed to Sapphic love might be encouraged by the sight of 'some of Rodin's statues,' since they would help her to '[overcome]—artistically—her reluctance.'"

Standing Female Combing Her Hair

Modeled after 1898; Musée Rodin cast 5 in 1973

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

The Night (Double Figure)

Modeled after 1898; Musée Rodin cast I/IV in 1983

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

At first glance, these two sculptures appear to be identical except that one of them consists of two figures. If you look closely, however, you will find there is another difference: the placement of the arms.

In *Standing Female Combing Her Hair*—the single figure—the arms are raised above her head. After finishing it, Rodin worked on another piece, *The Tower of Labor* (never completed). He decided he wanted two figures to be placed in front of the door of

the tower. He used the existing *Standing Female Combing Her Hair* as the basis for one of these. For the other, he moved the arms of the original figure, placing them in front of her face, and then used two casts of her to make the new piece, *The Night*.

Fugitive Love

Modeled before 1887; cast number and date unknown

Bronze; foundry unknown

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Admired by the public, critics, patrons, and Rodin himself, this piece began its life on *The Gates of Hell*. Rodin gave casts of *Fugitive Love* to a number of people important to him and his career. Among these fortunate individuals were Gustave Larroumet, director of the Ministry of Fine Arts (1895), who had just commissioned *The Monument to Victor Hugo*; Jean Aicard, who supported Rodin in the *Balzac* controversy; and Etienne Clémentel, who encouraged Rodin in the creation of his museum.

When it was part of *The Gates of Hell*, this piece spoke of unrequited love. But when it was separated from *The Gates*, the understanding of its meaning changed somewhat. Now it favored a more Symbolist interpretation of woman as temptress, as the source

of evil, as the cause of men's misfortune (as in Charles Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* and in Edvard Munch's paintings and prints from the same period).

Dance Movement D

Modeled about 1910–11; cast 1, date unknown

Bronze; Alexis Rudier Foundry?

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Whereas his contemporary Edgar Degas was interested in dancers as subjects, Rodin was interested in dancers for what they taught him about how the body worked and moved. Rodin knew and admired the Royal Cambodian dancers who toured Europe as well as the modern dancers and choreographers of his time, people like Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, and Vaslav Nijinsky.

Late in his career, Rodin created nine different pieces based on the positions he saw in contemporary, ethnic, and popular dance styles. In these nine pieces, all called *Dance Movement* and designated by consecutive letters A through I, we can see also the influence of the can-can. Rodin actually sought out a

particular dancer at the Opéra Comique and waited to model this series until she was available.

Dance Movement D is really a sculpted sketch; note the lack of definition of knees, hips, elbows, and wrists. This is a clue that it was not how the dancer's body *looked* that Rodin sought to portray, but the *movement* made by the body. Indeed, these are sketches of the human experience of movement. They were made late in Rodin's life (around 1911) when, because of the physical issues of age, he rarely attempted large and more complex pieces.

These *Dance Movements* were never exhibited by Rodin, nor were they cast in bronze while he was alive. Rodin explained the reason why to a friend: "There are some people who would find ... [the pose] obscene, and yet it's almost pure mathematics. It's not passionate."

Large Clenched Left Hand

Modeled about 1885; Musée Rodin cast 3 in 1966

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Rodin was fascinated by the expressive capabilities of hands. He modeled hundreds of them, using them both as independent sculptures and as parts of more complex pieces. By carefully modeling their musculature, proportion, texture, and balance, he demonstrated that hands could convey profound emotion, from anger and despair to compassion and tenderness.

When Rodin composed a new figure, he often experimented by attaching to it hands made for earlier pieces in order to explore the possibilities the new combinations might reveal. This working method also encouraged Rodin's interest in the fragment, and inspired his exploration of the notion that figurative

sculpture did not depend on a whole figure to communicate meaning.

Large Clenched Left Hand has long fascinated hand surgeons. In 2014, The Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University collaborated with a hand surgeon at Stanford Medical School to examine what could be diagnosed from Rodin's hands.

Iris, Messenger of the Gods

Modeled 1891; cast number and date unknown

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

That freedom of expression was paramount in Rodin's work can be seen in this piece, with its extraordinary leaping pose, revealed female genitalia, and obvious joy in movement. Probably modeled from the poses of a can-can dancer, Rodin's bronze is a testament not only to his interest in big gestures, but also to the world of *demimonde* pleasures that surrounded him and his circle in the late nineteenth century.

Sculptor Aristide Maillol called this the finest piece Rodin ever did. Part of its capacity to astonish comes from its upright position. Were *Iris, Messenger of the Gods* lying on its back, the viewer would be a voyeur; instead, the viewer is a participant in its dynamic and powerful motion.

This piece was very popular during Rodin's life and immediately after his death. Many casts were commissioned and sold for among the highest prices paid for bronzes of this size.

Large Hand of a Pianist

Modeled 1885; Musée Rodin cast 9 in 1969

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

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sculpture did not depend on a whole figure to communicate meaning.

One of the markers of modern art is that it makes visible things that are intangible, like energy, sound, and rhythm—all of which are implied by Rodin in his *Hand of a Pianist*.

Study for the Monument to Whistler

Modeled 1905–6; Musée Rodin cast 3/8 in 1983

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

In December 1903, Rodin was elected president of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers, succeeding James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Soon afterward the Society asked Rodin to create a monument in Whistler's honor. Rather than including a portrait of the person being honored, as was customary, Rodin created an image of Whistler's muse. The model was the Welsh painter Gwen John (1876-1939), who had studied with Whistler and was Rodin's lover in this period.

Critics argued about its merit. One wrote, "Imagine a woman, a sort of woman, standing, the left leg raised, leaning on some rock; and this woman looks at her left foot; she would look at it at least, if she had eyes. Why she shows interest in this inferior member [her

foot] one doesn't know... The neck is an absurd cylinder. The head is that of a brute...Rodin never ends by completing an ensemble.”

A fervent Rodin supporter defended the work: “The result here is equal to the works of Greece; there is the same plenitude, the same vital force of the modeling. I understand how people might regret the lack of arms. It is understandable and I would like to regret them also. But before regretting what isn't there, permit us to admire what is there: a masterpiece, a great masterpiece.”

Tragic Muse

Modeled 1894–96; Musée Rodin cast 3/8 in 1986

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Tragic Muse was originally created for Rodin's *Monument to Victor Hugo*, where she was placed above and behind the writer, on his right, leaning toward him to inspire. By his third maquette for this monument, however, Rodin had eliminated this figure. In 1895 the by-then independent figure was enlarged and shown for the first time, in Geneva. The museum there commissioned its own cast of the muse, now called *Crouching Woman*; it was likely this cast that occasioned one P. Seippel to write an impassioned defense of the piece, whose nudity scandalized Geneva's conservative audiences.

Rodin reintroduced *Tragic Muse* in his fourth version of *Monument to Victor Hugo*. Finally, in 1905, he stopped including it entirely.

Location: Third room in Collins gallery, Main Level:

Claude Lorrain

Modeled 1889; Musée Rodin cast 5/8 in 1992

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

French-born Claude Gellée, known as Claude Lorrain, was a renowned seventeenth-century landscape painter. Two hundred years after his death, Rodin was invited to participate in a competition for a monument to him organized by Claude's native city of Nancy. For inspiration, Rodin went straight to what he perceived to be artist's greatest interest: the landscape of light.

The figure was meant to be seen high atop a pedestal enlivened unconventionally at its base by the figure of Apollo, the sun god, driving his chariot across the sky each day, creating the passage from dawn to sunset. The figure of Claude is caught in mid-step, rotating his

body to glimpse the rising sun, the source of his delight in nature. A viewer standing below would see Claude twisting and turning, his face in awe at the sight. In this illusion of movement, the serpentine figure would capture light and thus emulate the intentions of the painter.

Rodin and Portraiture

Rodin was the crucial bridge between traditional and modern sculpture. We can see this in his monuments, in his pieces that derive from literary themes, and in his figures that explore movement. It is also present in his portraits.

The earliest Rodins we know are portraits, as are his final pieces. Examples of each of these are on view in this exhibition. In the 1860s, when Rodin began to find his way as an artist, sitters were easy to find: family and acquaintances would model for him.

Twenty years later, during the 1880s, his sitters were from the "patron class" of society. They were aristocrats, the wealthy, politicians, diplomats, and artists. And, of course, he was interested in sculpting beautiful women. These all contributed to his reputation as a great artist.

Portraiture was also a way for Rodin to thank a good friend, a patron, or a supportive critic. And if the subject was a person with devoted friends and admirers, the artist could count on selling additional casts of the piece. Such sales made Rodin financially independent for the first time in his life.

Rodin's portraits told the viewer not only what the sitter looked like, but also conveyed the inner life of the person, the part that he or she preferred to keep private. Rodin was extraordinarily sensitive to the intimations of a face, an expression, a pose. The reality of how his sitter looked is joined or surpassed by the reality of how his sitter thought and what he or she felt, and even how Rodin felt about the sitter.

Thus, Rodin's portraits changed expectations about the nature of portraiture. Each one revealed the invisible truths of a person. And each also revealed the artist's response to that invisible truth.

Monument to Balzac [illustrated with image on canvas banner]

In 1891, the Société des Gens de Lettres de France (Society of Men of Letters of France) commissioned Rodin to create a monument to Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850). A celebrated writer, Balzac was greatly admired for his books and plays about French society of his time. It was the power of Balzac's writing, not his physical stature, that led Rodin to conceive of the *Monument to Balzac*. Rodin said: "I want him immense, a dominator, a creator of the world."

Rodin's working method was to do many studies of the people in his portraits in order to understand not only how they looked, but also what "made them tick." During the next seven years, the artist made more than fifty studies of the writer (who had died forty years earlier), gleaning information from photographs and other portraits and even a suit of his clothes. This exhibition includes just a few of these preliminary

studies: *Nude Study of Balzac*, *Monumental Head of Balzac*, *Bust of Young Balzac*, *Study for Balzac (Type B)*, and *Balzac in Dominican Robe*.

In 1898, a plaster of the finished *Monument* was exhibited at the Salon of the National Fine Arts Society. The piece immediately sparked public controversy for its abstract modernity, which was not widely understood. The debate proved to be emotionally draining for Rodin, and he never again took on such a monumental project. Later the sculptor was to say, “Never has a statue caused me more worry, put my patience more to the test.”

This photograph shows the 1968 cast of the *Monument* (117 inches high by 47 wide by 47 deep). The sculpture was donated by Iris and B. Gerald Cantor to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1986. It marks the main entrance to the museum.

Balzac/Jean d'Aire (or Nude Study B with the Head of Jean d'Aire)

Modeled 1896; Musée Rodin cast 8 in 1963

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Nude Study of Balzac (Type C)

Modeled about 1892; Musée Rodin cast 12 in 1976

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Balzac in Dominican Robe

Modeled 1893; Musée Rodin cast 9 in 1981

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

In 1891, the Society of Men of Letters of France, by a vote of twelve to eight, commissioned Rodin to create a monument to Honoré de Balzac, France's enormously popular writer of nineteenth-century life.

Bust of Young Balzac

Modeled 1893; Musée Rodin cast 1/8 in 1983

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Monumental Head of Balzac

Modeled 1898; Musée Rodin cast 9 in 1980

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

When Rodin received a major commission, his working method was to create multiple studies, typically of parts of the body, like the hands or the heads, or of the entire figure, unclothed or clothed. If they led to works that were popular with critics and the public, the studies were cast and made available for sale, usually in various sizes.

On view here are two of Rodin's many heads of Balzac, the acclaimed nineteenth-century French writer. All were modeled in preparation for Rodin's *Monument to Honoré de Balzac*, a commission he received in 1891 and completed in 1898. Balzac had died forty years earlier and, although a few very early photographs of him existed along with some written descriptions, portrait drawings, and paintings, Rodin

wanted a better understanding of his physical appearance. So he went to Balzac's hometown and found someone there who matched the Balzac of the existing evidence, and used this man to model for the portrait heads.

How Did Rodin Make a Portrait?

“He rapidly modeled the whole in the rough, as he does all his busts. His keen eye and his experienced thumb enable him to establish the exact dimensions at the first sitting. Then the work of detailed modeling begins. The sculptor is not satisfied to mold the mass in its apparent outlines only. With absolute accuracy he slices off some clay, cuts off the head of the bust, and lays it upside down on a cushion. He then makes his model lie on a couch. Bent like a vivisector over his subject, he studies the structure of the skull seen from above, the jaws viewed from below, and the lines which join the head to the throat, and the nape of the neck to the spine. Then he chisels the features with the point of a pen-knife, bringing out the recesses of the eyelids, the nostrils, the curves of the mouth.”

— Rodin biographer Judith Cladel

Rodin had more than one approach to making portraits. He usually hoped for at least a dozen sittings with the subject. At the early sittings he would take measurements, as described by Cladel above. He believed that knowing the measurements and the *profiles* (outlines) of the head would add to the power of his work. Sometimes at the sittings he made drawings of the person; later he could use these drawings and photographs to make the finished portraits.

His typical method was to begin with a block of clay. Sometimes he worked by subtracting clay from the block, as he did on the bust described above; other times he used his thumb to apply small balls of clay to the initial block, as if magically adding the portrait to the block.

When the clay portrait was finished to his satisfaction, it was transferred to a more permanent material.

Rodin typically allowed the person who commissioned

it to select the material: marble, bronze, even silver. The commissioned piece would go to the patron (often the sitter) and Rodin would be free to sell other casts of it.

The piece could be a *head*, fully in the round and sometimes including a neck. It could be a *mask*, just the face and sometimes including the neck. Or it could be a *bust*, which along with the head or the mask included a neck and shoulders and perhaps arms, sometimes extending to the elbows. In each of these forms, the placement of the head on the neck, how the neck sat on the shoulders, the position of the collar or lapel (if present), and the relationship of the portrait to any supporting elements were important to Rodin because they allowed the sitter's personality to emerge.

Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose

Modeled 1863–64; Musée Rodin cast 12 in 1979

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

During the winter of 1863–64, Rodin was working on a fully-in-the-round clay head of a local handyman, Bibi. One night the temperature in the artist's meager studio plummeted and the wet clay froze, causing the back of the head to crack and break off. Thus, the head was transformed into a mask.

Always receptive to the serendipity of accident and interested in the notion that part of a figure could have full expressive capabilities, Rodin considered the mask to be exhibition-worthy. In 1865 he submitted it to the Paris Salon. The partial head and the ugliness of the face—especially its battered nose—made the mask anathema to the jury's notion of aesthetic "beauty" and it was rejected. (Ten years later, Rodin submitted a marble version of the head—not mask—

and it was accepted, the first work by the sculptor to be admitted to this conservative and very important annual Parisian art exhibition.)

Bust of Jean Baptiste Rodin

Modeled 1860; Musée Rodin cast 2 in 1980

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

In 1860, Rodin made two portraits of his father, Jean Baptiste (1803–1883): one a painting, the other, this bust. The painting shows the older man in profile as he looked, with a bushy beard and moustache, and receding black hair on the back of his head. In comparison, the sculpture conveys little of his real appearance. What it presents instead is Rodin's response to his father's long-standing support of his aspirations as an artist. Here Jean Baptiste has the features and resolve of a Roman emperor.

This bust is one of Rodin's earliest pieces; he made it when he was twenty years old. That it is based on ancient Roman sculpture he would have seen at the Louvre speaks to his interest at this stage of his career in following tradition, in building a "solid,

“durable foundation” for his art, as his father had encouraged him to do. And that it conveys with such conviction his father’s personality more than his appearance foretells the artist’s future achievements.

Mask of Hanako (Type D)

Modeled 1908; Musée Rodin cast 8 in 1979

Bronze; Godard Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Whereas his contemporary Edgar Degas was interested in dancers as subjects, Rodin was interested in dancers for what they taught him about how the body worked and moved. In 1906, while in Marseilles to study the Royal Cambodian dancers, he met Japanese dancer and actress Ohta Hisa (1868–1945), who had been nicknamed Hanako (“Little Flower”) by another dancer, the American Loïe Fuller. Hanako was renowned for her astounding coordination and her ability to hold difficult positions. Beginning in February 1907 she posed for Rodin; he made at least fifty-three heads as well as several drawings of her.

First titled *Mask of the Anguish of Death*, this piece may have been inspired by a death scene the sculptor saw Hanako perform.

Gustav Mahler (Type A)

Modeled 1909; cast before 1952, cast number unknown

Bronze; Alexis Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Austrian composer and conductor Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) was one of the most famous cultural figures of his day. A prolific composer, he also conducted orchestras all over Europe and in New York, but his home was Vienna. Rodin, also famous throughout Europe and the United States, felt especially appreciated by the Viennese. He and Mahler had many mutual acquaintances in Vienna but did not meet until 1910, when friends tricked Mahler into sitting for Rodin.

Rodin's working method can be seen if you look carefully at the face. Beginning with a rough block of clay, he applied small bits of it to create the face.

Unlike most artists of his time, Rodin worked by

adding to an original block, rather than subtracting from it. Look at the forehead and around the eyes: some of these added bits are still discernable.

Head of Pope Benedict XV

Modeled 1915; Musée Rodin cast 10 in 1978

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

The papacy of Giacomo della Chiesa (1854–1922) began in 1914, coinciding with World War I, which he called the “suicide of civilized Europe.” The war and its consequences were his main focus. He attempted to mediate peace in 1916 and 1917 but both sides rejected his initiatives. Having failed with diplomatic initiatives, Benedict XV sought instead to lessen the impact of the war by focusing on humanitarian efforts.

Both Rodin and the Pope were ailing by the time Benedict agreed to sit for the sculptor in 1915. Rodin went to Rome, expecting his usual minimum of twelve sessions with his subject, but the Pope gave him only four. Rodin carried the unfinished clay head back to Paris and completed it in six full days. Some have suggested that the directness of the head, its

depiction of the man rather than the pontiff, is because the number of sittings were so reduced that Rodin was not required to produce an “official portrait.” Rodin seems to have conveyed his subject’s vulnerability, not his venerability.

Bust of Mrs. Russell

Modeled 1888; Musée Rodin cast 11 in 1993

Bronze; Georges Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Anna Maria Antonietta Mattiocco della Torre (1865–1908) was the wife of Australian painter John Peter Russell. An Italian model, she had the classical features that Rodin preferred in women, and after he modeled her bust in 1888 he continued to use her face in other pieces for the next twenty years, most notably in his various figures of *Minerva* (not in this exhibition).

Unlike his male portraits, Rodin's female portraits attest to the sculptor's interest in traditional beauty rather than in character. This piece also points out Rodin's working methods. He always used a real person to model for his figures—he never conjured a face or a figure from thin air, even if the piece wasn't

a portrait (thus, in this sense, all of his works are portraits, for they are images of real people).

Bust of Victor Hugo

Modeled 1883; cast number and date unknown

Bronze; foundry unknown

Lent by Iris Cantor

Heroic Bust of Victor Hugo

Modeled 1890–97 or 1901–2; Musée Rodin cast 7 in 1981

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

Victor Hugo was a national hero in nineteenth-century France, renowned for his poetry, plays, and novels.

The smaller of these two busts is the earlier one. It is closer to a direct description of how the subject looked—much like we see in the *Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose* from twenty years earlier—than it is to the larger, more expressive image of Hugo.

This is one of the difficult issues when one tries to assign dates to undated Rodins: throughout his

career he returned to earlier styles, or later would combine earlier pieces into new pieces.

The larger, later bust shows a more mature Rodin, further from the experience of drawing Hugo from life, focusing more on the emotions and creativity of the man he called a “Hercules...[who] belonged to a great race. Something of a tiger, or an old lion. He had an immense animal nature. His eyes were especially beautiful...” Rodin alludes to the god-like Hugo by presenting him naked.

The Creator

Modeled about 1900; Musée Rodin cast II/IV in 1984

Bronze; Coubertin Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

In a sense, every work an artist does is a self-portrait. Some tell how the artist looks, others tell how the artist feels, and some relate the artist's aspirations or interests. Some of these self-portraits are literal; others are figurative.

The Creator was made by Rodin for the inside of the jamb of *The Gates of Hell*. It shows a small female figure whispering inspiration into the ear of an elderly bearded man. Rodin used this personification of inspiration a number of times in his work.

Rodin often spoke and wrote about the creative act. In making art, he said, the artist performs a God-like activity. He related the artist's creation of his own artwork to God's creation of the world. And Rodin

makes this personal: in this bas relief, the Creator is an old man who has Rodin's famous beard.

Hand of God

Modeled 1898; cast number and date unknown

Bronze; Alexis Rudier Foundry

Lent by Iris Cantor

The Hand of God was born of inspiration. As Stanford University Professor and Cantor advisor Al Elsen wrote:

“When God created the world,” Rodin once remarked, “it is of modeling He must have thought first of all.” This idea, first documented in an article in the May 1898 issue of the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, was given tangible form in *Hand of God*, also known as *Creation*. Here, Rodin likens the sculptor’s talent to God’s life-giving touch. The large hand holds a rugged, amorphous mass from which the smooth forms of a man and woman materialize. Rodin’s use of the Michelangesque *non finito*, so prevalent in

his marble sculptures, ... [is utilized in this piece in [an equally] meaningful way]. The [representation of] roughly hewn [material] symbolizes the sculptor's medium as well as primal matter.

Non finito is a sculpting technique in which the artist “finishes” only part of the sculpted material, leaving the figures to appear to emerge from the unrefined block of material.

In 1974, the Musée Rodin presented Bernie Cantor with an original plaster of *Hand of God*. The choice was perfect, for a marble version first inspired Cantor's “magnificent obsession” with Rodin, and a bronze version was Cantor's first Rodin purchase.

After George Bernard Shaw sat for Rodin, he told this story:

“While he worked, he achieved a number of miracles.

At the end of the first fifteen minutes, after having given a simple idea of the human form to the block of clay, he produced by the action of his thumb a bust so living that I would have taken it away with me to relieve the sculptor of any further work.... The hand of Rodin worked not as the hand of a sculptor works, but as the work of elan vital. The Hand of God is his own hand.”

EDWARD STEICHEN

American, 1879–1973

Portrait of Rodin

1910

Photogravure

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Rodin worked for many years with photographers and used their pictures as a means to consider his work from a physical and psychological distance. The archives of the Musée Rodin are filled with such photographs, often amended by Rodin with penciled indications of changes to make in the sculpture.

Edward Steichen, a young American photographer, greatly admired Rodin. In the years 1900–1902 he visited the French sculptor and made a number of manipulated photographs that are memorable for their atmospheric effects and their relation to Symbolist painting. This portrait of Rodin is as much a picture of how the artist looked as it is of the artist's mind deeply

in thought. Steichen exhibited his photographs at his friend Alfred Stieglitz's pioneering gallery, 291, in New York. He and Stieglitz were determined that 291 would show Rodin's work: the first show there of art other than photographs featured fifty-eight of Rodin's drawings of female nudes.

PAUL PAULIN

French, 1852–1937

Bust of Auguste Rodin

Modeled and cast in 1917

Bronze; Valsuani Foundry

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Paul Paulin trained as a dentist but wanted instead to be a sculptor. When he was in his thirties he became a part of the avant-garde art world in Paris. First a friend of Edgar Degas, he went on to know many artists and do portrait busts of Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, Jean-François Raffaelli, Claude Monet, and others. He exhibited at the Salons des Beaux Arts from 1882 to 1889 and again in 1901.

His 1917 bust of Rodin may have been done in commemoration of the death of the great sculptor. It shows an aged and genial Rodin, and is perhaps more in the slightly decorative style of Rodin's pupil Bourdelle than in that of Rodin himself.

JOHN TWEED

British, 1869–1933

Portrait of Rodin

Modeled about 1895; cast number and date unknown

Bronze; foundry unknown

Lent by Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

Scottish sculptor John Tweed was a successful sculptor at the center of the London art world.

Notwithstanding their differences in age, nationality, and experience, he and Rodin became close and enduring friends. In London, Tweed introduced the visiting French sculptor to Britishers who would become patrons and sitters. His promotion of Rodin's work led directly to Rodin's important gift of eighteen artworks to London's Victoria and Albert Museum in 1914. When Rodin died in 1917, Tweed organized a memorial service in London for those who could not travel to Meudon for the funeral because of World War I.

Rodin's Funeral in Meudon, November 24, 1917

After living in apartments his entire adult life, in 1895 Rodin purchased a modest, nineteenth-century brick house in Meudon for himself and Rose Beuret, his longtime partner. The village, located just south of Paris, was within easy reach of the city by carriage, train, boat, and—eventually—automobile.

Rodin and Beuret moved into the house, dubbed the Villa des Brilliants, in 1896. In 1901, Rodin moved the Pavilion de l'Alma to Meudon. First erected in the Place d'Alma in Paris for a large retrospective of Rodin's work, in Meudon it became the artist's studio and exhibition hall.

When Rodin died on November 17, 1917, although he was acknowledged as the greatest sculptor of his time, no state funeral was planned, perhaps owing to political events marking the coming end of World War I. Instead, a formal funeral was held in Meudon. Rodin

was buried in a grave marked by a cast of *The Thinker* and alongside Beuret, whom he had married eight months earlier, just three weeks before her death.