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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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FOURTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 511

ADVANCE FACT SHEET

Exhibition: Rodin Rediscovered

Dates: June 28, 1981 through January 31, 1982

Scope: With more than 350 examples of sculpture in bronze, plaster, marble, terracotta and wax and other media and drawings by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), this exhibition will be the largest ever devoted to this great French sculptor. As part of the reevaluation of Rodin's work, the exhibition will show the late 19th-century sculptural tradition he came from as well as his role as generator of modern sculpture. The installation, extending throughout a large part of the Gallery's East Building, is divided into nine sections: Salon of the 1870s; In Rodin's Studio; Creators and Creation; The Marbles; Photography; The Gates of Hell; The Partial Figure and Late Drawings; Figures in Motion; and The Beginnings of Modern Sculpture. Two French salons from the beginning (1870s) and end (1917) of Rodin's career will be recreated to show the context and evolution of his work, and from the Musée Rodin in Paris will be shown 50 photographs, 50 drawings and 40 plasters never previously exhibited or reproduced. In addition, a bronze cast of the monumental The Gates of Hell will be shown. This is the first time The Gates of Hell has been an integral part of an exhibition since Rodin's own showing of it in plaster at the Universal Exposition in the spring of 1900. Loans to the exhibition come from over forty European and American public and private collections, with 186 objects from the Musée Rodin. Other lenders to the exhibition include the Petit Palais and the Louvre in Paris, the Musée Rodin in Meudon, B. Gerald Cantor, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Stanford University Museum, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Installation: For the first time since the opening of the East Building in 1978, a special exhibition will be installed on every level of the building. The exhibition will begin on the upper level in the East Tower, and proceed downwards on the mezzanine, ground and concourse floors. The concourse level will be used for the first time taking advantage of a unique feature designed to make it possible to create a balcony on the ground floor with access down to the concourse level. The installation has been designed by Gaillard F. Ravenel and Mark Leithauser of the Gallery's installation and design department, with Albert Elsen, Kirk Varnedoe and Ruth Butler.

Credits: A team of Rodin scholars selecting the exhibition and working out its themes has included Monique Laurent, curator of the Musée Rodin, Paris, and has been led by Albert Elsen, Walter A. Haas Professor of Art History at Stanford University, a noted authority on Rodin and modern sculpture.

Funding: The exhibition has been made possible by generous support from the IBM Corporation.

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Catalogue: Accompanying the exhibition will be a major scholarly catalogue re-examining various aspects of Rodin's career and production. The twelve contributors are: Albert Elsen (The Gates of Hell: What They Are About and Something of Their History), (When the Sculptures Were White: Rodin's Work in Plaster), and (Rodin's Perfect Collaborator: Henri Lebossé); Kirk Varnedoe, Professor of Art History at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (Rodin/Drawings and Rodin/Photography); Ruth Butler, University of Massachusetts (Rodin and the Paris Salon); Albert Alhadeff, Department of Fine Arts, University of Colorado (An Infinity of Grotesque Heads: Rodin, Legrain and a Problem of Attribution); Rosalyn Jamison, Department of Art History, Stanford University (Rodin's Humanization of the Muse); Dan Rosenfeld, Department of Art, University of Chicago (Rodin's Marble Sculpture); JoAnne Culler Paradise, Stanford University (The Sculptor and the Critic: Rodin and Geffroy); Sidney Geist (Rodin and Brancusi); Claudie Judrin, Curator of Drawings, Musée Rodin (Rodin's Drawings of Ugolino); Jean Chatelain, Professor at the University of Paris (An Original in Sculpture); Monique Laurent (Rodin and the Foundries); and Anne Pinget, Musée d'Orsay, contributing the entries on the Salon pieces.

History of the Exhibition: In 1916, Rodin willed all of his art and reproduction rights to the French government. He had kept some of his drawings, photographs, some plasters and marbles, as well as several bronze casts. His art and archival material were housed in the Musée Rodin. The Musée Rodin archives have only recently been made available to Rodin scholars, with the result that new works have been found and new documentation has led to a new understanding of some old problems.

Themes (by installation): Salon of the 1870s. Although access to the exhibition can begin at any point throughout, it is suggested that visitors start on the upper level with the evocation of a sculpture salon of the 1870s creating the ambience in which Rodin first presented his art. This will place Rodin in the context of his contemporaries of the early Third Republic, a time when the sculpture salons were considered the strongest of the 19th century. Serious moral tone, patriotism, and naturalism characterized Rodin's and his fellow sculptors' work at a time when the sculptor's role was one of public educator, philosopher, psychologist, thinker, and spokesman for the people. Works actually shown with Rodin's pieces by such major 19th-century artists as Carrier-Belleuse (Psyche Abandoned), Dubois (Eve), Mercié (The Glory of Victus), Falguière (Eve), Preault (Ophelia) and Croisy (Paolo and Francesca) will be on view in the exhibition as well as Rodin's St. John the Baptist, Age of Bronze, La Défense, Bust of M. Garnier and two versions of Man with Broken Nose.

In Rodin's Studio. This section, on the mezzanine level, will introduce the visitor to Rodin with an illustrated biography and his working process. On view will be more than 40 previously unknown and unstudied plasters lent from the Musée Rodin. This didactic section will include examples of states of a work, such as small working plasters and reduced and enlarged pieces. Also appearing will be a selection of photographs, taken under Rodin's direction by such photographers as Bodmer, Michelez and Pannelier, documenting the preliminary stages of his work. In these rare images, familiar sculpture such as The Thinker and The Burghers of Calais can be seen still unfinished in the studio; and the visitor will be able to judge how Rodin used photographs (sometimes by drawing directly on the image) to help him in his work of refining and correcting his figures. In

addition, this section will present the actual stages in the casting of a Rodin bronze, starting with the making of a wax model and ending with the finished bronze.

Creators and Creation. This iconographically unified section of plasters and bronze casts, to be installed on the mezzanine level balcony, portrays Rodin's fascination with genius and the importance of the muse as a source of inspiration. This theme in Rodin's work has never been written about or exhibited before. His portraits of Balzac, Baudelaire, Puvis de Chavannes and monuments to Bastien-Lepage and Claude Lorrain are evidence of his concept of the fraternity of creators of literature and the visual arts. In addition to these portraits, Rodin developed a variety of themes that embodied his views of creativity, seen in such works in the exhibition as Hand of God, Orpheus, The Sculptor and His Muse, Rodin's Hand Holding a Torso, The Creation, Vulcan Creating Pandora, Christ and Mary Magdalene and Head of a Tragic Muse.

Marbles. During Rodin's lifetime, his sculpture in marble was more popular than his works in bronze, yet in the period after his death critical priorities shifted. In the spirit of rediscovery, a selection of 17 of the best marbles will be installed in the open space on the ground floor of the East Building. This will be the largest American showing of the marbles. Among those on view will be Amour Qui Passe, Toilette de Venus, Beside the Sea, Orpheus and Eurydice, Madame X, Romeo and Juliet, Eve, Bellona, and several portraits.

Photographs. Rodin used photography throughout his career, both as a private working aid (see In Rodin's Studio, above) and as a way of shaping the public image of his work. The photographs chosen for this part of the exhibition from the Musée Rodin archives allow us to see Rodin's work from the points of view, and in the lighting conditions, that he himself selected. Through the collaborations that he undertook with a sequence of different photographers, his changing vision of his sculpture is documented. Among the photographs displayed here for the first time since Rodin's death, there are several by Druet that bear Rodin's signature in the negative, and several that he included in exhibitions such as his one-man show of 1900. Druet's photographs of the Balzac, taken just at the moment of its completion, are particularly striking. Of special interest, too, are the previously unexhibited photographs by Edward Steichen, in addition to the famous series of the Balzac taken outdoors by moonlight in 1908. The Balzac series is shown here for the first time in the unique hand-manipulated gum-bichromate prints given by Steichen to Rodin. This section also includes a splendid series of portraits of Rodin by Steichen and Gertrude Käsebier, from the sculptor's own collection and previously unseen.

The Gates of Hell. Rodin's great project for a monumental bronze portal, The Gates of Hell, began in 1880. But to this first major project he brought studies amassed in more than 20 years of near-anonymous apprenticeship. A selection of virtually unknown drawings from the Musée Rodin and other collections will document these early studies, and especially the important journey to Italy Rodin undertook in 1875. Drawings after Michelangelo, Donatello, and Raphael can be seen in fragments of the sketch book Rodin carried. An unprecedented number of the artist's so-called "black" drawings, many never before exhibited, will also be on view. These powerful, often violent drawings from imagination reveal the dark visions of Dante and mythology that guided the initial conception of the Gates. They will be

seen in conjunction with drawings for the architectural ensemble of the Gates, and with a preliminary sketch of the portal.

Installed on the concourse level with a 30-foot ceiling will be this major work which can be viewed as Rodin intended: from all sides including above the ground. Considered one of the major imaginative works of art in history, The Gates of Hell depicts Rodin's view of humanity's fate--a compassionate view of the moral cost to society of materialistic values placed over orthodox religion. Subjects and themes from the past and present all share the suffering of unsatisfied passions. Rodin worked on The Gates of Hell from 1880 to 1900, although they were largely completed by the spring of 1884. The Gates ultimately included 186 figures. They were originally a commission for the portal of the new Musée des Art Decoratif in Paris, but were never cast in Rodin's lifetime. Many of Rodin's most famous sculptures had their origins in The Gates of Hell. On view will be 28 bronze casts including Adam, Eve, Walking Figure, Crouching Woman, The Thinker, The Kiss, Head of Sorrow, Meditation, Prodigal Son and Old Man with Beard.

The Partial Figure. Rodin's most influential contribution to modern sculpture was the partial figure, conveying the beauty and expressiveness of the whole, yet stripping the figure of unessential adornment. Approximately 22 bronze casts dating from 1880 to 1917 will be on view, including Torso of Adele, Walking Man, The Earth, Torso of a Young Girl, Flying Figure and 12 versions of Hands. In this section will also be a group of Rodin's life drawings and watercolors, most of them not previously exhibited or reproduced. These will demonstrate in unprecedented fashion the innovative procedures of Rodin's draftsmanship in his later years. The artist first made numerous rapid pencil drawings, never taking his eyes off the models who constantly moved before him in unconstrained gymnastic actions. From these initial life drawings he then made simplified watercolors, and from the watercolors extraordinarily bold cut-out forms he could combine and re-arrange on the page at will. Only from the artist's own collection could a group of drawings be assembled to reveal, as this does, the complete process of Rodin's draftsmanship. (Note that the selection of watercolors will be changed three times during the course of the exhibition for conservation reasons.)

Figures in Motion. This room will highlight Rodin's fascination with the depiction of rapid movement, particularly in the dance. A selection of small sculptures of dancers and acrobatic figures will be shown, along with a sequence of drawings chosen to show his rapid, virtually cinematic analysis of a dancing model's gestures as she moved before his eyes. Watercolors and cut-out drawings in which such gestures were subsequently clarified and synthesized will further elucidate the study of dynamism, and the urge to simplification, embodied in the sculptures.

The Beginnings of Modern Sculpture. This final section places Rodin in the context of some of the pioneers of modern sculpture, showing his influence on them as well as how some reacted against him. Works in the exhibition by Matisse (Serf), Duchamp-Villon (Torso of a Young Man), Lehmbruck (Torso of a Young Woman Bending Forward), Maillol (Torso of the Ile de France), Archipenko (Walking Man), Brancusi (Torso of a Young Man), Picasso (Cubist Head of 1909), and Lipchitz (Half Standing Figure) will be on view. Sculptures by Rodin will include Walking Man, Torso of the Walking Man, Torso of a Young Girl and Large Head of Iris.

Film: A film is being made on the casting of The Gates of Hell at the Fondation Coubertin in France. It is being produced by Bruce Bassett, New York.

Symposia: A two-day symposium is being planned for the fall of 1982 with leading Rodin scholars from the United States and France presenting papers on various aspects of the art of Rodin and his contemporaries. Developed by the National Gallery's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the speakers and topics will be announced at a later date.

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April 14, 1981

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION or photographs, contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer) or Pamela J. Driscoll, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 511