

press release



Rodin the centennial exhibition

22 March - 31 July 2017

Grand Palais
Galleries nationales
entrée Clemenceau

This exhibition is co-produced by the Musée Rodin and the Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais.

To mark the centenary of his death, the Musée Rodin and Réunion des musées nationaux Grand Palais are joining forces to celebrate Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). The exhibition reveals Rodin's creative universe, his relationship with his audience and the way in which sculptors have appropriated his style. Featuring over 200 of Rodin's works, it also includes sculptures and drawings by Bourdelle, Brancusi, Picasso, Matisse, Giacometti, Beuys, Baselitz and Gormley, shedding new light on this giant of sculpture.

Auguste Rodin, just like Monet and Picasso, was and remains a global phenomenon. He has fascinated the general public from generation to generation. Many artists have tried to equal his style, both through inspiration or in opposition. Rodin explored all facets of sculpture: from assemblage to partial figures and collage, practices inherited by Matisse and Picasso. His drawing technique pre-empted the major German expressionists, and his relationship with photography prefigured that of Brancusi and Moore. The exhibition presents his work and the changes to our visual appreciation that it engendered.

Rodin, the power of expression

From the 1880s onward, Rodin was celebrated for breathing life into sculpture: "Sculpture has moved from convention to expression". The human body provided the vocabulary of passions from which Rodin's own expressionism emerged. It's also the period of the "black drawings" – little known and rarely seen – which inspired the world of the future Gates of Hell.

Collectors defended his cause. At this point, he himself knew how to use all of the means at his disposal to build his career – collectors, the press and exhibitions – at a time when the art market in Paris was booming. Younger sculptors such as Bourdelle, Lehmbruck, Gaudier-Brzeska and Brancusi all had their Rodin-inspired periods.

Rodin the experimenter

The exhibition of his work that Rodin organised in 1900, to coincide with the Exposition Universelle, brought him to the forefront of the artistic stage. He used it to display an unseen side of his work through a series of works in plaster, his preferred medium: this immaculate material is perfectly suited to this art of light and space. The exhibition of 1900 revealed a process of constant reinvention that was fundamentally experimental. The artist sometimes combined incongruous elements, using repetition and fragmentation of shapes, rethinking the sculptures' position in a space.

The success he encountered led to a multiplication of versions, all different, that showed the sculptor developing his reflection. Bourdelle, Matisse, Brancusi and Picasso created their early works based on such techniques.

Auguste Rodin, *Nu féminin se penchant hors d'un vase antique de forme globulaire*, 1895-1910, plâtre et terre cuite ; 17,7 x 17,8 x 23,8 cm, Paris, musée Rodin. Donation Rodin, 1916, © Musée Rodin (photo Christian Baraja)

At the end of the 1890s, Rodin began to focus more on drawing. In 1902, he exhibited a major series in Prague, reproduced in part at the Grand Palais. This work is fully independent from his sculpture, and the freedom and modernity of this new form of expression is astonishing.

From the 1880s, Rodin took full advantage of the world of photography. The images retouched by the artist became works in themselves and were used for and integrated into his creative process. After 1945, artists such as Henry Moore would pursue this use of photography to its zenith.

Rodin: the shockwave

After the Second World War, a new image of Rodin emerged through a number of previously unknown facets of his oeuvre: assemblages of plaster figures and antique vases, dance movements and a mould of Balzac's dressing gown are as much of a shock to the general public as the avant-garde. Picasso's assemblages, Max Beckmann's acrobats and Beuys' felt works are a response to this.

Rodin collectors have donated many works to museums: the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia, the Metropolitan Museum of New York, National Gallery of Washington, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek in Copenhagen, Tokyo's National Museum of Western Art... One room explores the world of today's collector, where Rodin's works rub shoulders with those of his contemporaries.

What remains of his expressive and lyrical sensibility? It appears in numerous works and movements that reject standard geometry and idealism, asserting a libertarian and antirationalist approach. This sensibility opposes spontaneity at a conceptual level and asserts the weight of materiality (Germaine Richier, Alberto Giacometti, Willem De Kooning). There are elements of excess, drama (Markus Lüpertz) and jubilation (Barry Flanagan), violent and overflowing, playful or metamorphic in spirit.

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Curators: Catherine Chevillot, Chief Heritage Curator, Director of the Musée Rodin ;
Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, Honorary Chief Heritage Curator ;
Sophie Biass-Fabiani, Heritage Curator at the Musée Rodin ; Hélène Marraud, Assistant Curator in charge of sculpture at the Musée Rodin ; Véronique Mattiussi, Scientific Manager of Historical Archives at the Musée Rodin ; Hélène Pinet, Head of Research Services, Manager of the Photographic Archive at the Musée Rodin
scenography : Didier Blin, architect and designer

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open: Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays from 10 am to 8 pm. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10 am to 10 pm. Closed on Tuesdays.

closed on Monday, 1st May and Friday, 14 July

Nuit européenne des musées on the 20th, May 2017.

admission: €13, concession €9 (16-25 yearsold, job seekers and large families). Free for children under 16, low-income benefit recipients.

concession at the Musée Rodin on presentation of the ticket of the exhibition

access: metro line 1 and 13 «Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau» or line 9 «Franklin D. Roosevelt»

information and booking:

www.grandpalais.fr and www.rodin100.org

publications by Réunion des musées nationaux-Grand Palais, Paris 2017

- exhibition catalogue, 24,5 x 29 cm, 400 pages, 420 illustrations, € 49

- exhibition album, 24,5 x 29 cm, 48 pages, 55 illustrations, € 10

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