



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAJOR RODIN EXHIBITION TO OPEN AT THE HIGH MUSEUM OF ART THIS FALL

Featuring 70 artworks that demonstrate the artist’s singular style, “Rodin in the United States: Confronting the Modern” traces his rise to prominence in America

ATLANTA, July 6, 2022 — Auguste Rodin (French, 1840-1917) is one of the most celebrated sculptors of the modern age, represented in museums and private collections across the globe. However, this was not always the case. From his first sculpture to enter an American museum in 1893 and culminating with his popular revival in the 1980s, “Rodin in the United States: Confronting the Modern” — on view at the High Oct. 21, 2022-Jan. 15, 2023 — follows Rodin’s rise to eminence in America due in large part to the collectors, critics and curators who helped make it happen. The exhibition will also reveal Rodin’s incredible daring and inventiveness as he continually pushed against and beyond traditional notions of sculpture.

“Though now holding pride of place in major American museum collections, and renowned for its distinctive aesthetic, it’s perhaps only in the last 40 years that Rodin’s work has become recognized as among the greatest achievements in Modern art,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High. “This exhibition takes the audience on a journey, as Rodin’s reputation builds, declines and rises again. It’s a fascinating story, illustrated by many of Rodin’s most striking and beautiful works.”

The 45 sculptures and 25 works on paper in the exhibition encompass many of Rodin’s best-known compositions, including “The Thinker,” “Monument to Balzac” and “The Kiss,” as well as less-familiar subjects and an exceptional number of his expressive and probing drawings. The works show Rodin working across an array of media — from terracotta and plaster to bronze and marble — and illuminate his creative process, from studies and maquettes to completed works.

“All of us have stood awestruck in front of Rodin’s more-than-life-size figures, like the 9-foot ‘Monument to Balzac’ or the massive, 2,000-pound ‘Thinker’,” said Claudia Einecke, the High’s Frances B. Bunzl Family curator of European art. “But it is a testament to Rodin’s unsurpassed power of evocation that even diminutive figures, such as the 5-inch ‘Female Torso’ or a 6-inch portrait head of the actress Hanako, can impress us with the same physical energy and monumental presence. Visitors will be delighted to see the breadth of Rodin’s work in this exhibition and to learn how he came to be among the 20th century’s most revered artists.” Rodin’s path to acceptance in the United States was a complicated, winding one, and the stories of the collectors and institutions that embraced his work reveal a desire to look beyond the conventional to confront, and embrace, the modern.

Rodin first gained significant attention in the United States in 1893, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art made the first acquisition of his artwork by an American institution. That same year, he made his controversial debut at Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition with three marble sculptures, which were quickly judged too provocative and moved to a private space that was only accessible by request. As the exposition progressed, however, the censorship propelled public interest in his work.

This notoriety sparked an early-20th-century collecting frenzy, promoted by noted philanthropist Katherine Seney Simpson, avant-garde performer Loïe Fuller, and collector Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, among others. The exhibition details the intriguing confluence of these Rodin enthusiasts and the roles they played in generating interest in his art.

In the 1920s and 1930s, many American museums made important acquisitions of Rodin's work, further fueling avid interest in the artist. However, these institutions tended to display his more finished, narrative subjects. The majority of his seemingly unfinished, fragmented or more "erotic" works — appreciated today for their daring and modernity — were consigned to storage, where they languished for years. By the Second World War, enthusiasm for his work had waned and critical sentiment regarding his art shifted, leading museums to relegate his sculptures to less prominent places or remove them from the public eye.

In 1954, Museum of Modern Art Director Alfred H. Barr Jr. requested a bronze cast of Rodin's "Monument to Balzac" for the museum's collection, which spurred scholars and critics to reappraise Rodin's works. Nearly 30 years later, the National Portrait Gallery's 1981 exhibition "Rodin Rediscovered" ushered in a resurgence of appreciation for Rodin's art in the United States, which continues today.

"Confronting the Modern" traces these ebbs and flows of Rodin's American popularity and includes loans of key works from more than 30 museums and private collections across the country. These works include:

- The Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Bust of St. John the Baptist" (bronze, original model 1880, cast 1883), the first Rodin work to enter an American museum collection.
- The marble bust "Katherine Seney Simpson" (1903), which immortalized Rodin's early advocate, who was instrumental in developing the Met's Rodin collection and donated her private collection of his art to the National Gallery of Art upon her death.
- Bronze sculptures "The Thinker" (cast 1928) and "The Kiss" (cast 1888) from the Baltimore Museum of Art's collection. "Rodin in the United States" marks the first time that the Baltimore Museum of Art has loaned "The Thinker" to an exhibition.
- The Museum of Modern Art's "Monument to Balzac" (cast 1954), which instigated renewed interest in Rodin's work.
- Drawings related to some of Rodin's most famous compositions, such as "The Thinker" and "Ugolino and His Sons."

- A group of diminutive plaster studies exploring the expressive power of the human hand, which were gifts from the artist to the Met's Rodin Gallery, established in 1912.

"Rodin in the United States: Confronting the Modern" will be accompanied by a fully illustrated, 260-page catalogue edited by exhibition curator Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, with contributions by Christina Buley-Urbe, Patrick R. Crowley, C. D. Dickerson III, Laure de Margerie, Véronique Mattiussi, Elyse Nelson, Jennifer A. Thompson and Nora M. Rosengarten. The book is published by the Clark Art Institute and distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven.

The exhibition will be presented in the Cousins Family Special Exhibition Galleries on the Second Level of the High's Wieland Pavilion.

Exhibition Organization and Support

"Rodin in the United States: Confronting the Modern" is organized by the Clark Art Institute, Williamston, Massachusetts, and guest curated by independent scholar Antoinette Le Normand-Romain.

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About the High Museum of Art

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features

a collection of more than 18,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

About the Clark Art Institute

The Clark Art Institute, located in Williamstown, in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, is one of a small number of institutions globally that is both an art museum and a center for research, critical discussion and higher education in the visual arts. Opened in 1955, the Clark houses exceptional European and American paintings and sculpture, extensive collections of master prints and drawings, English silver, and early photography. Acting as convener through its Research and Academic Program, the Clark gathers an international community of scholars to participate in a lively program of conferences, colloquia and workshops on topics of vital importance to the visual arts. The Clark library, consisting of more than 285,000 volumes, is one of the nation's premier art history libraries. The Clark also houses and co-sponsors the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art.

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