

Fernando
Zuppi

OPERA GALLERY
HONG KONG



Bernard BUFFET

Auguste RODIN

OPERA GALLERY
HONG KONG

PREFACE

It is our great privilege to bring you this exquisite collection celebrating the works of Bernard Buffet and Auguste Rodin.

The exhibition allows a unique view of the two Masters working and creating over two centuries, revolutionizing each in his own way the perception of the figurative form.



Buffet Nu aux perroquets



Rodin Age of Bronze

Simultaneously the show gives a rare presentation of the powerful impact the individual work of Rodin's art rooted deep in the 19th Century made on Bernard Buffet's 20th Century creation in the treatment of figurative elements.

Rodin's innovation liberated the treatment of the form from traditional techniques and paved the way to the development of Modern Art. Abandoning the classical representation allowed artists post Rodin era to adopt new individual treatment of the object escaping the academic strict representation.

A clear example is apparent in the woman figure, a powerful and repeated source of inspiration for both artists. Rodin was never tired of female subjects. Their beauty, energy, and sexuality - expressed in figures dancing, falling and walking - became the primary themes of his works. A clear link exists between the Rodin-Buffet females, in the deep understanding of the subject emotional state documented in the facial expressions and body alignment.

Both prolific artists worked relentlessly to find the truth hiding in their subject's presentation and researched their figures repeatedly. Fond of performing art subjects such as cirques figures and clowns in particular, Buffet simplified his objects to mere basic black lines and yet he did so without jeopardising their powerful presence or existence.



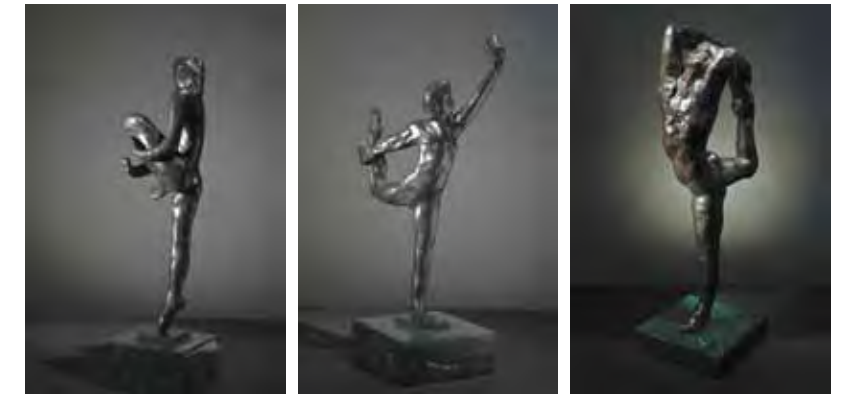
Buffet Véronique Mourousi



Rodin Crouching Woman



Buffet Le Cirque, la parade



Rodin Studies for dance movements

To have a deeper understanding of Rodin's innovation in figurative presentation, the exhibition gives a unique opportunity to observe his most significant works showcasing universally renowned figures as *The Age of Bronze*, *Eve*, *Adel's torso* and *The Thinker* among the 17 pieces on display.

As in many of Rodin's bronzes found in museums and public display worldwide, the works displayed here are primarily works that have been cast after the life of the artist and considered posthumous casts.

The plasters used to create these beautiful casts have been certified as authentic by the president of Comité Rodin, Jérôme Le Blay. Each piece is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed by Alain Beausire, the head archivist of the Rodin Museum in Paris. To further indisputably assure these works, Francois Privat, legal expert who has been utilized by the Rodin Museum and other national museums in France, has as well certified the plaster's authenticity.

Original casts of these artworks can be found in the world most important Museums and institutions such as the Musée Rodin in Paris, the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Rodin Museum), the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Gallery Washington, the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and the Victoria Albert Museum, among others.

Maurice Garnier, lifelong friend and certified expert of Bernard Buffet's work has certified all works exhibited in this show.

When viewing this collection we hope you feel the strong tie that lies between the sensual and the spiritual in Rodin's work along side the powerful realism documented in Buffet's graphic work, enhanced even further when displayed side by side.

Shirley Yablonsky
Director
Opera Gallery Hong Kong

Gilles Dyan
Founder and Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

Bernard BUFFET (1928 - 1999)

One of the most significant artists of the postwar era in Paris, Bernard Buffet was a French expressionist painter and member of the Anti-Abstract Art Group 'L'Homme Témoin'.

Buffet was a prolific artist producing over eight thousand oil paintings, sketches, watercolours, lithographs, and engravings before his tragic suicide in 1999. His subject matter ranged anywhere from landscapes, portraits and still life to religious pieces.

Experiencing meteoric success at the young age of 21, Buffet became an instant millionaire and pop celebrity within the art world referring to him as the principal figurative artist in Paris during the 1950's.

In 1955, Buffet was named the best postwar artist by the magazine *Connaissance des Arts*. In this phase the 'misérabilisme' movement influenced him (later followers of the dark postwar 'misérabilisme' include artists Lucien Freud and Francis Bacon). His compositions, all grays and dull whites, had a somber mood transcending the anxiety, misery and despair of the recent war. In his quiet mannerism he expressed suffrages and deserted loneliness taking form in thick black outline, intense expression and elongated body forms.

In 1958, at the age of 30, Buffet first retrospective was shown at the Galerie Charpentier. Another highlight that year was his marriage to Annabel Schwob, a former model. The celebrity duo quickly became familiar figures in *Paris Match* and French *Vogue*. The *New York Times* named him one of 'France's Fabulous Young Five' alongside such contemporaries as Yves Saint Laurent. Andy Warhol referred to him as a 'genius' on several occasions as well as 'the best artist to come out of Paris after the war'.

Buffet paintings were sought-after in the USA, Great Britain, Japan and France. In 1961 he painted a series of paintings depicting the life of Jesus Christ, intended to decorate the Chapelle de Château l'Arc. Ten years later, at the request of Monsignore Pasquale Macci (secretary to Pope Paul VI), he offered these paintings to the Vatican Museum where they remain on permanent exhibition.

The 1960's saw an unfortunate turn for Buffet's lightning success as the art establishment turned against him. Paris was now rolled by the raw energies of the New Realism of Yves Klein, César, Arman and Christo, and Buffet was soon to find his success and critically acclaimed reputation ripped away. André Malraux, France Minister of Culture in 1959, under Charles de Gaulle's presidency, was determined to re-establish the reputation of Paris as the art centre of the world. Malraux wanted to use the abstract movement of the 1950's as the vehicle to achieve his aim and Buffet represented all that is not abstract. His success and reputation threatened Malraux's plans and needed to be dismissed promptly.

At the same time Buffet's status was under threat from another great cultural figures of postwar France: Pablo Picasso. It was a known fact the Spanish genius detested Buffet for rivaling his fame and would mock his art on numerous occasions.

Life for Bernard Buffet as a critically acclaimed artist in his home country was pretty much over, after 1960. He was attacked for going commercial, designing movie posters and wine labels...it has been said he was, in this regard, like Andy Warhol, but without Warhol's charge of restless energy. Still Buffet remained vastly successful commercially, consistently admired by art critics in other countries, especially Japan and the USA hosting annual shows worldwide. In 1971 he was appointed Knight of the Honorary Legion of France and in 1973 inaugurated the Bernard Buffet Museum in Surugadaira, Japan by Kiichiro Okano. A year later, in 1974, he was elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts and in 1978, at the request of the Postal Administration, he designed a stamp depicting 'l'Institut et le Pont des Arts'.

Buffet's career came to a tragic ending in 1999 when Buffet put an end to his life committing suicide due to a deteriorating condition of Parkinson's disease. He publicly stated the day he couldn't paint any more would be the day he would die and so it was.

Despite being despised by Picasso and his name never appearing in art schools textbooks, in a poll realized in 1992 for the French magazine *Beaux-Arts*, French people declared preferring Bernard Buffet to Vermeer or Andy Warhol.

In 2009 the first large retrospective of Buffet paintings in France took place after more than 40 years the artist was banned in the country artistic circles. Sixty canvasses, including many never before shown publicly, were gathered by Les Musées de la Vieille Charité in Marseille.

Today Buffet's work is hung in The National Museum of Modern Art, Georges Pompidou centre's walls, alongside masters such as Matisse, Braque and Léger.

This profound collection we are presenting traces the artist's steps from the 1950's to the 1990's, a voyage through his coastal and Riviera scenes through his flowers and renowned clowns.

The show reinforces Buffet's artistic philosophy:

'Abstract Painting is limited and boring, while figurative is unlimited.'

Selected Museum Collections:

Tate Gallery, London, UK
Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco, USA
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, USA
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
National Museum of Modern Art, Georges Pompidou Centre, Paris, France
Bernard Buffet Museum, Surugadaira, Japan

Major Retrospective Exhibitions:

1958 Galerie Charpentier, Paris, France
1959 The French Institute, Berlin, Germany
Knokke-le-Zoute, Belgium
1963 The Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan
1969 The Unterlinden Museum, Colmar, France
1977 The Gemeentmuseum, Wieger Deurne, The Netherlands
1978 The Postal Museum, Paris, France
1983 The Seedamm Cultural Center, Zurich, Switzerland
1985 Réfectoire des Jacobins, Toulouse, France
1987 The Odakyu Museum, Tokyo, Japan
1991 The Pouchkine Museum, Moscow, Russia
The Ermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia
The Hyundai Museum, Seoul, Korea
1993 The Gustave Courbet Museum, Ornans, France
1994 Documenta-Halle, Kassel, Germany
1995 The Odakyu Museum, Tokyo, Japan
1996 Kaohsiung Museum & Fine Arts, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan

Trois papillons, 1996

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper right)

Titled 'Trois papillons' (on the reverse)

Oil on masonite 46 x 55 cm 18.1 x 21.7 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Dahlias, 1961

Signed and dated 'Bernard' (lower left), '61 Buffet' (lower right)

Titled 'Dahlias' (on the stretcher)

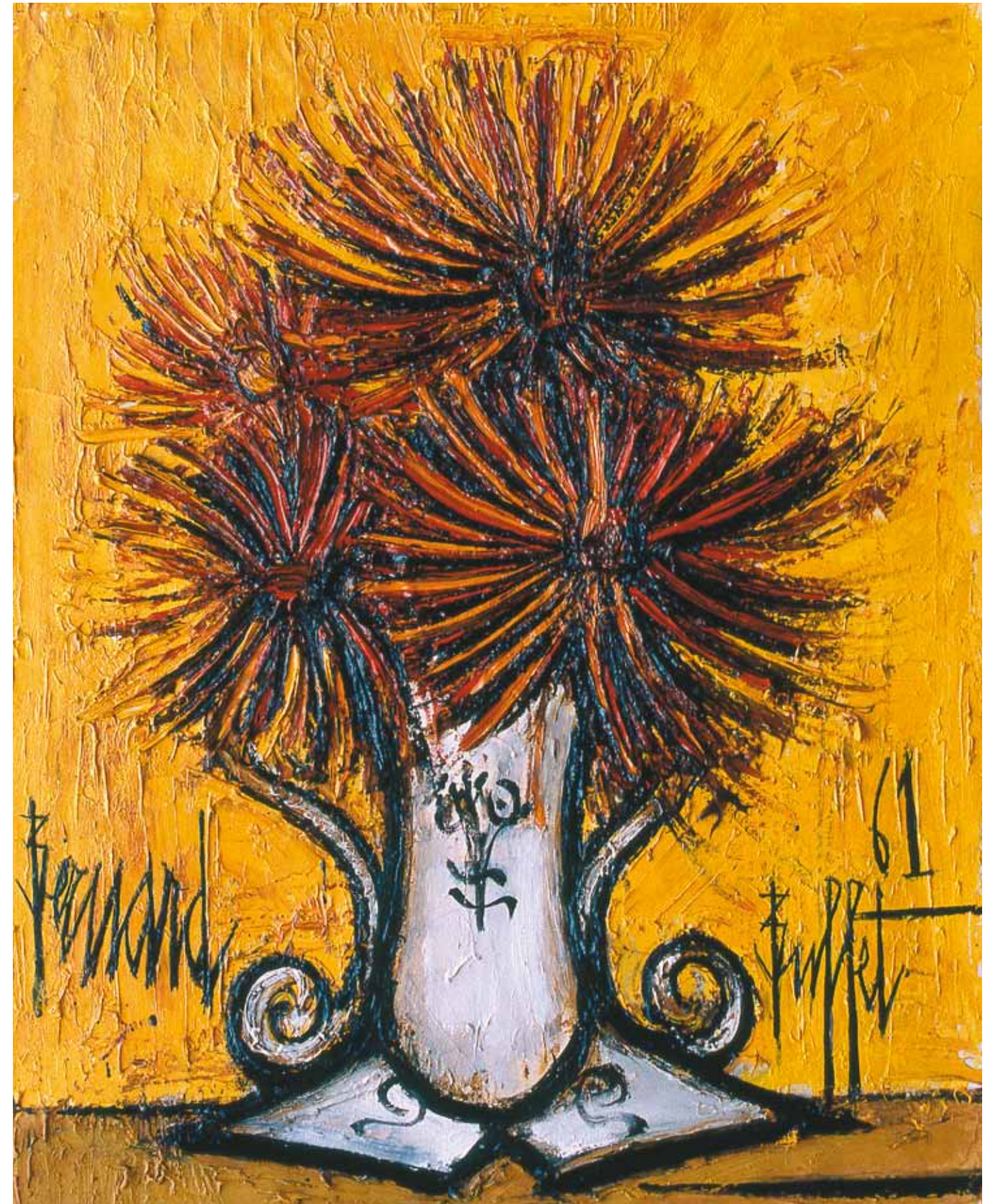
Oil on canvas 81 x 65 cm 31.9 x 25.6 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work

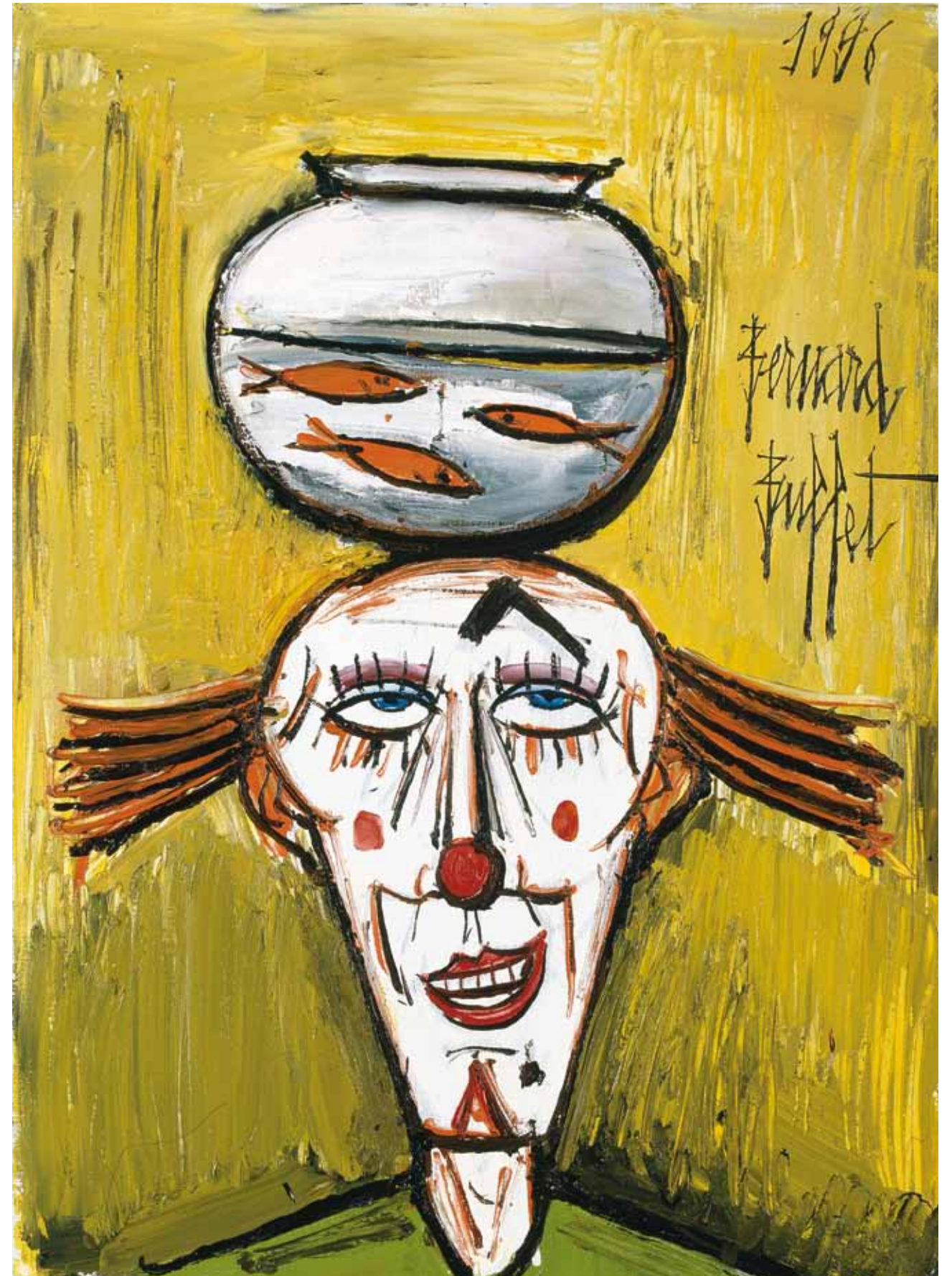


Clown aux poissons rouges, 1996

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (centre right) and dated '1996' (upper right corner)
Oil on canvas 100 x 73 cm 39.4 x 28.7 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Le Jeu d'échec, 1996

Signed and dated 'Bernard Buffet 1996' (lower right corner)

Titled 'Le Jeu d'échec' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 65 x 92 cm 25.6 x 36.2 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Rue de Rennes et la Tour Montparnasse, 1989

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper left) and dated '1989' (upper right corner)
Oil on canvas 114,3 x 146,3 cm 45 x 57.6 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Mykonos, 1994

Dated '1994' (upper left corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper right corner)

Titled 'Mykonos' (on the reverse and on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 73 x 54 cm 28.7 x 21.3 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



La Péniche d'Amsterdam, 1977

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (lower centre) and dated '1977' (lower right corner)

Titled and numbered 'La Péniche d'Amsterdam I' (on the reverse)

Oil on canvas 97,2 x 146,1 cm 38.3 x 57.5 in.

Provenance

Acquired by the present owner (2002)

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Orchidées et fleur bleue, 1982

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper left corner) and dated '1982' (lower left)

Titled 'Orchidées et fleur bleue' (on the stretcher)

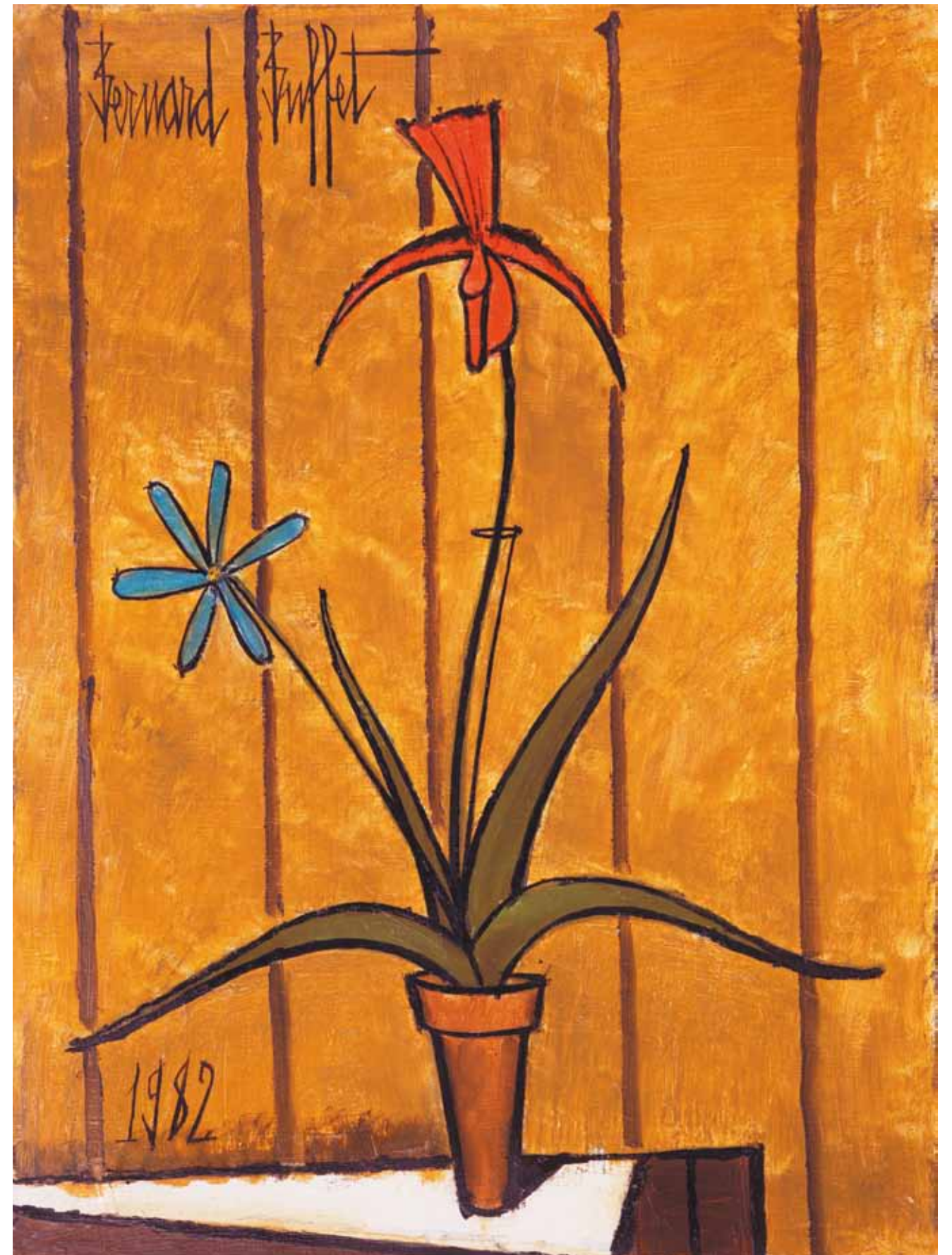
Oil on canvas 81 x 60 cm 31.9 x 23.6 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work

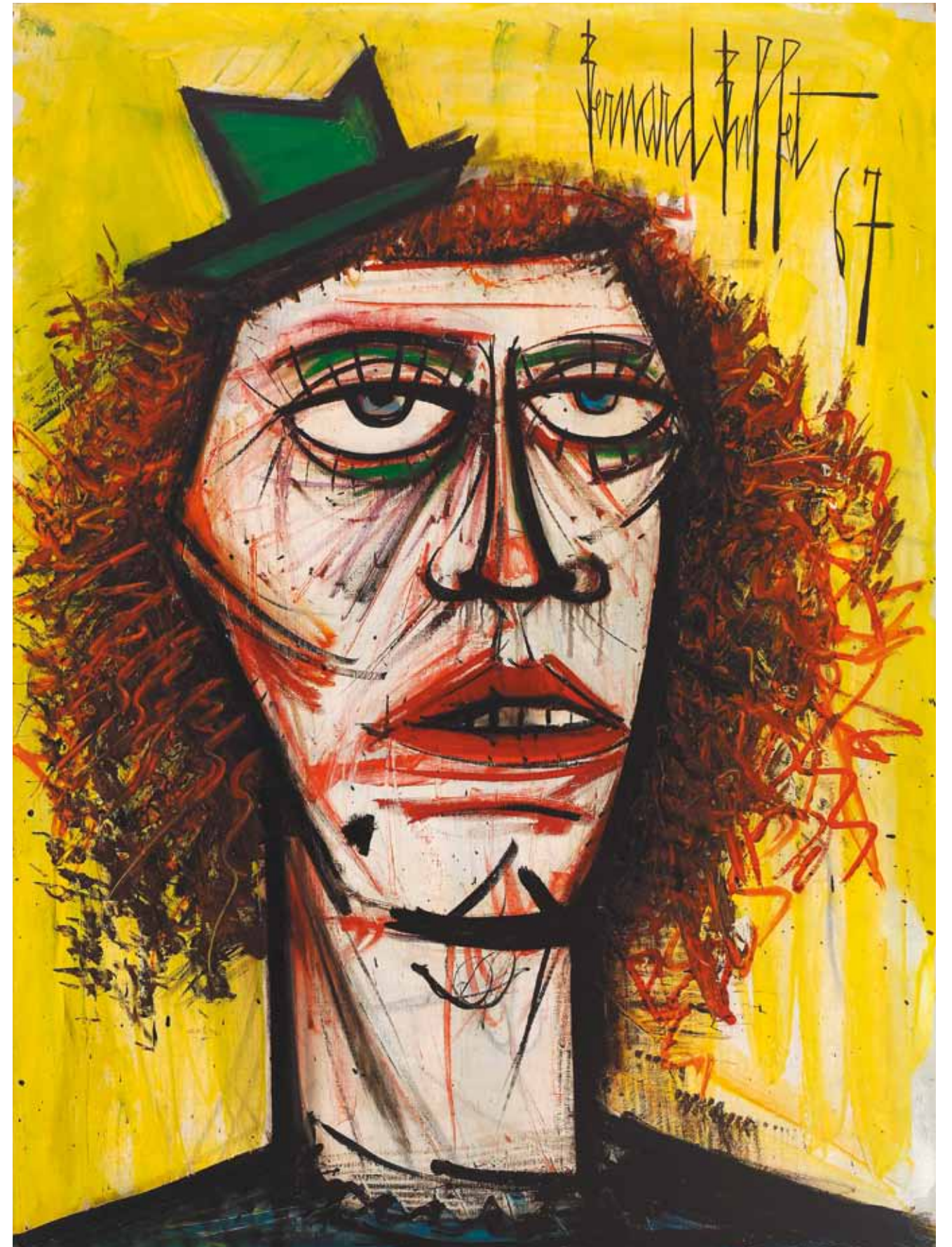


Tête de femme sur fond jaune, 1967

Signed and dated 'Bernard Buffet 67' (lower right corner)
Oil on canvas 131 x 96 cm 51.6 x 37.8 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Tentes sur la plage, 1990

Dated '1990' (upper left corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper right corner)

Titled 'Tentes sur la plage' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 73 x 116 cm 28.7 x 45.7 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Véronique Mourousi, 1987

Dated '1987' (upper right corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (centre right)

Inscribed 'Pour Yves et Véronique de la part de Bernard et Annabel Septembre 87' (on the reverse)

Oil on canvas 146 x 114 cm 57.5 x 44.9 in.

Provenance

Yves & Véronique Mourousi, a gift from the artist

Anonymous sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 17 June 1996, lot 63

Acquired at the above sale by the present owner

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Nature morte sur fond rouge, 1996

Dated '1996' (upper left corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper centre)

Titled 'Nature morte sur fond rouge' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 54 x 73 cm 21.3 x 28.7 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Tête de torero, 1958

Dated and signed '58 Bernard Buffet' (lower right corner)
Crayon on paper 75,2 x 56,1 cm 29.6 x 22.1 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Pigeon noir et pigeon blanc, 1996

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper left corner) and dated '1996' (upper right)

Titled 'Pigeon noir et pigeon blanc' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 65 x 92 cm 25.6 x 36.2 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Camélia

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (lower right)

Watercolour, brush and India ink on paper 64,8 x 49,8 cm 25.5 x 19.6 in.

Provenance

Private collection, Japan

Acquired from the above by the present owner (1998)

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Nu aux perroquets, 15 Aug. 1990

Signed and dated 'Bernard Buffet 1990' (lower left corner)

Titled 'Nu au perroquets' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 114 x 146 cm 44.9 x 57.5 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work





Fleurs dans une coupe de Chine, 1999

Dated '1999' (upper left) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (lower right corner)
Titled 'Fleurs dans une coupe de Chine' (on the stretcher)
Oil on canvas 50 x 65 cm 19.7 x 25.6 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed
the authenticity of this work



Nature morte aux carottes, 1977

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (lower centre), dated '1977' (lower right corner)
Titled 'Nature morte aux carottes' (on the stretcher)
Oil on canvas 114 x 146 cm 44.9 x 57.5 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed
the authenticity of this work

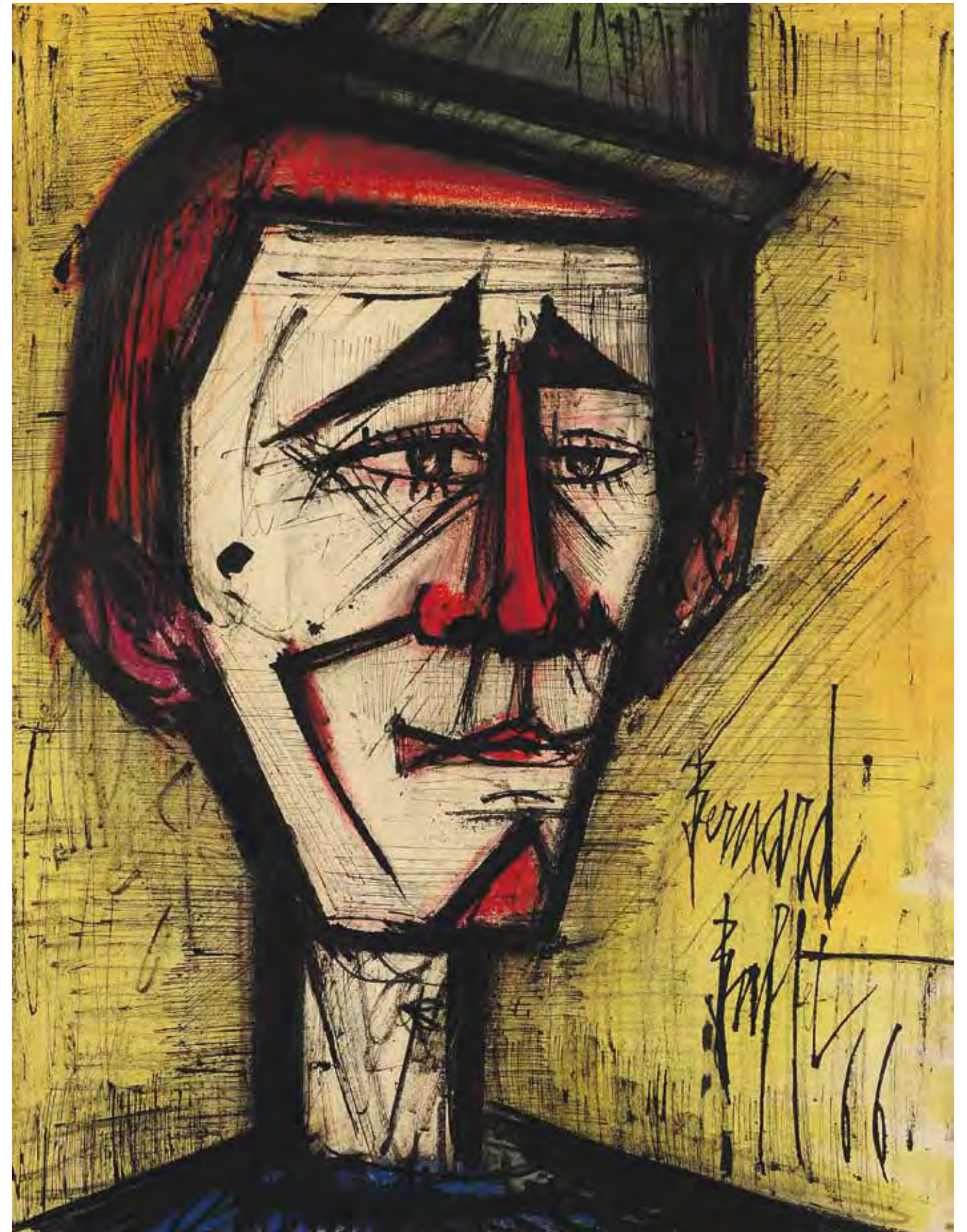
Tête de clown, 1966

Signed and dated 'Bernard Buffet 66' (lower right corner)

Watercolour and crayon on paper 65 x 50 cm 25.6 x 19.7 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Papillon, 1998

Dated and signed '1998 Bernard Buffet' (upper centre)

Titled 'Papillon' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 60 x 81 cm 23.6 x 31.9 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



La Baume, les casseroles, 1997

Dated '1997' (upper left corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper right)

Titled 'La Baume, les casseroles' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 130 x 89 cm 51.2 x 35 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Nature morte aux bouteilles, 1962

Signed and dated 'Bernard Buffet 62' (upper left corner)

Titled 'Nature morte aux bouteilles' (on the reverse)

Oil on canvas 97 x 146 cm 38.1 x 57.5 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Clown au chapeau vert sur fond jaune, 1966

Dated and signed '66 Bernard Buffet' (lower right corner)
Wax crayon on paper 65 x 50 cm 25.6 x 19.7 in.

Provenance

Galerie David et Garnier, Paris
Alex. Reid et Lefevre Ltd., London
Private collection

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work





Fleurs dans une jarre de Chine, 1999

Signed 'Bernard Buffet' (lower left corner) and dated '1999' (lower right corner)
Oil on canvas 100 x 73 cm 39.4 x 28.7 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed
the authenticity of this work



Le Temple des lamas, l'arche cérémoniale, 1995

Dated '1995' (upper left corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper right corner)
Titled 'Le Temple des lamas, l'arche cérémoniale' (on the reverse and on the stretcher)
Oil on canvas 114 x 146 cm 44.9 x 57.5 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed
the authenticity of this work

Café au bord de la rivière, 1993

Dated '1993' (upper left corner) and signed 'Bernard Buffet' (upper right)

Titled 'Café au bord de la rivière' (on the stretcher)

Oil on canvas 54 x 73 cm 21.3 x 28.7 in.

Provenance

Estate of Bernard Buffet

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work



Le Cirque, la parade

Mixed media on paper laid down on canvas 69,3 x 101,5 cm 27.3 x 40 in.

Certificate

Maurice Garnier has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Public notes

Bernard Buffet, an artist that cannot be ignored in the field of contemporary art, produced a number of works portraying the circus, such as this one entitled *Le Cirque, La parade*. Clowns and acrobats are skillfully depicted by the artist in his signature style. Bernard Buffet is still highly prized in the contemporary art market, with buyers seeking out his circus and urban landscape works, among others.



Auguste RODIN (1840-1917)

Auguste Rodin is regarded as the most remarkable sculptor of the 19th Century. An extraordinary creative and prolific French artist, Rodin was originally rejected from the prestigious art school, École des Beaux-Arts, turning him to one of the few self-taught French sculptors of his time. He is considered by many as the first Modern sculpture artist.

Born to a humble family in 1840 and slow to gain recognition, Rodin nonetheless won five of France's largest commissions for monuments during the 1880s and 1890s (*The Gates of Hell*, *The Burghers of Calais*, *Victor Hugo*, *The Kiss* and *Balzac*). During these decades he produced grand public works and a vast oeuvre of drawings and small sculptures. By 1890 Rodin had become the most renowned sculptor in France and by 1900 he had achieved international recognition.

The start of his career was nevertheless challenging. At the age of 14, Rodin persuades his father to let him attend the Petite École. While learning traditional techniques, he practiced the skills of observation and drawing from memory spending much of his time sketching in the Louvre studying Greek antiquities and Master sculptors. The numerous sketches and studies that he made in the early 1870s bear witness to his ongoing interest in the diverse models offered by different periods in art history.

Three failing attempts to pass the entry exams to the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts sent Rodin to pursue his artistic career outside of the formal academic channels. He started working in the studio of the ornamentalist Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, first in Paris, then in Brussels, where his skill became apparent.

In 1864 he met Rose Beuret, then aged 20, who became his lifelong companion. Despite numerous affairs throughout his life, Beuret remained by his side until her death in 1917. Rodin finally married her 2 weeks before she died.

1875 marked a turning point in Rodin's public recognition. He exhibited in Paris Salon a piece titled *Man with the Broken Nose*. Rodin was extremely fond of this portrait, which he regarded as his 'first good sculpture'. The acceptance of his work at the Salon was a victory in itself, finally being acknowledged by the artistic circles as a worthy artist by his own right.

The same year, Rodin travelled to Italy where he discovered the works of Renaissance artists and in particular of Michelangelo. This discovery turned to be a decisive moment in his career leading to Rodin's ground-breaking sculptures, introducing methods and techniques that were central to his own artistic aesthetics.

Rodin designed a life-size nude study as a tribute to Michelangelo named *The Age of Bronze* (shown page 69 in catalog). Through that figure, an allusion to the third of the four ages of mankind, as described by the early Greek poet Hesiod, Rodin found his own approach and was already using the 'multiple profiles technique' publicized by the press much later.



The French government purchased a cast of *The Age of Bronze* for the sum of 2,000 francs in 1880, then commissioned Rodin to design a portal for a future Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Rodin designed *The Gates of Hell*, a project he would pursue for the rest of his life, without ever delivering it or seeing it cast in bronze. *The Gates* would remain a repertory of figures, constantly reworked, rearranged and modified. Many of Rodin most famous sculptures started as the composition design for the portal such as *The Thinker*, *The Three Shades* and *The Kiss*.

From *The Age of Bronze* onwards, Rodin preferred to depict a body in motion rather than to work from a fixed, academic pose. Rodin had a superb, unmatched gift for modelling clay and plaster. He began most of his sculptures by modelling small versions of them, which made them easier to handle and enabled him to pursue his creative idea without having to worry about technical constraints. For both small and large figures, he worked from the live model to develop a series of profiles. Only when the clay figure possessed the required movement he would proceed to make an image in plaster or another medium. Working while observing a life model played a fundamental role in Rodin's creative process. There was no visual compromise nor stage effects, the nude was not 'arranged in a pose' as in Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet's 'studied' painting.

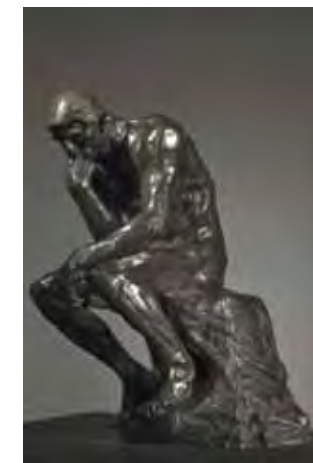
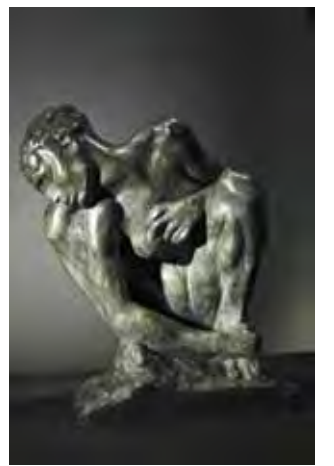
'Since I began,' Rodin declared enthusiastically, 'I have the impression that I know how to draw... and I know why my drawings have this intensity: it's because I do not intervene. Between nature and paper, I eliminated talent. I do not reason. I simply let myself go.' (Figures d'Eros, p. 50)

Abandoning the practice of representing the body in its entirety, flawless in form, Rodin's fragment thus earned its independence, broke away from the figure to which it had originally belonged and became a work of art in its own right. Such was the case with the clay model of *Adel's torso* (page 73) a small, strikingly sensual, partial figure, executed before 1884. The cast was used as the base on numerous works that followed; once completed with arms and legs for one of the figures on *The Gates of Hell* and on another occasion, modified and fitted with a head, it became the starting point for the female figure in *Eternal Springtime* (page 63).



In *Pierre de Wissant, Nude without Head and Arms* (page 89), Rodin produced an unprecedented and powerfully expressive interpretation of the human form, breaking further away from the accepted norms of bodily representation.

The female figure served as an ongoing inspiration as Rodin kept investigating its form using live models, dancers, fortune hunters, grandes dames, and aristocratic soulmates alongside his lifelong companion Rose Beuret and his decade-long lover Camille Claudel in his observations as represented by *Crouching Woman* and *Iris, Messenger of the Gods*. (pages 61, 65 and 67).



Chronologically the years 1880-1899 are considered Rodin's greatest years of creation. In 1881 he modeled the figures *Adam, Eve* (page 59) and *The Thinker* (page 75). The major exhibition titled 'Claude Monet - Auguste Rodin' took place at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1894. In 1897 *The Monument to Victor Hugo* was shown at the 'Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts'.

Rodin's international reputation attracted a new affluent celebrity clientele, who soon commissioned works from him. Because of its refinement and elegance, Rodin often preferred to use marble for those portraits. Rodin's international recognition continued to flourish and he was awarded numerous honorable titles, the highest being the Grand Officier of the Legion of Honour in 1910. In 1912 the Rodin Room was inaugurated at the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

In 1916 a stroke left the artist in a severe condition. Subsequently Rodin offered to donate all his works to the French government on condition that the Hôtel Biron, where he had lived and worked for some years, is converted into a museum in his honour. The request was granted by the Senate and in 1919, two years after Rodin's death, the Musée Rodin opened to the public.

Rodin admired the human body and once described his feelings when seeing a marble head of a young woman titled *La Tête Warren*:

'It's life itself. It embodies all that is beautiful, life itself, beauty itself. It is admirable. Those parted lips. I am not a man of Letters; hence I am unable to describe this truly great work of art. I feel but I cannot find the words that will give expression to what I feel. This is a Venus! You cannot imagine how much this Venus interests me. She is like a flower, a perfect jewel. So perfect that it is as disconcerting as nature itself. Nothing could describe it.' (Interview with M. Rodin: A Praxiteles Venus, Morning Post, 28 May 1903)

© Robert Farber for all Rodin bronze sculptures
© plasters by Christian Baraja

Eve, 1883

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the right of the base), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP H: 68,7 cm H: 27 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

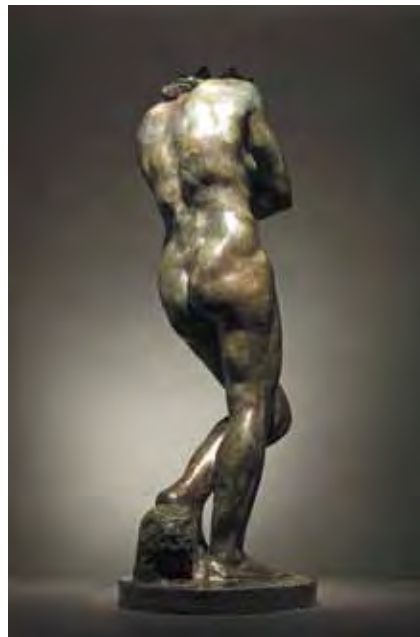
François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

In his design for *The Gates of Hell*, dating from 1881, Rodin wanted to place *Adam* and *Eve* either side of *The Gates* as pendants. He later described how he had started to model a large female figure when he had had to stop because his sitter, who was pregnant, could no longer pose for him. He did not exhibit this unfinished statue of *Eve* until 1899, by which time he felt bold enough to show his works in a fragmentary or incomplete state.

The rough surface of the skin, the lack of detail and the trace of the metal armature still visible on the right foot all attest to the fact that this was a work in progress that Rodin had decided to retain.

In the meantime, he had completed a small version of *Eve*, which was exhibited in 1883 and greeted with enthusiasm. The sensuality of her body, now very smooth, in strong contrast with the modesty of the gesture she makes by lowering her head and crossing her arms, made it extremely popular.



Crouching Woman, 1881-1882

Signed 'A. Rodin' (back left), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters
Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 32,4 x 24 x 17,9 cm 12.8 x 9.4 x 7 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

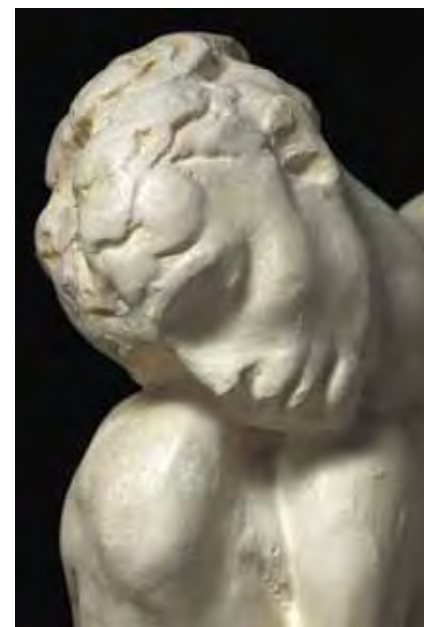
François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

Crouching Woman, purchased by the French state at the Salon of 1909 for the Musée du Luxembourg, bears witness to Rodin's working method. The original figure, conceived for the tympanum of *The Gates of Hell*, looks like a compact block with limbs gathered together and pressed tightly against the torso. This block-like sculpture reflects Rodin's aesthetic analysis of Michelangelo's sculpture: it is a work that, to quote the great Italian artist, could roll down a hill without breaking. One of the earliest figures modelled for *The Gates of Hell*, it was enlarged and slightly modified several years after its conception.

In its simultaneously open and closed posture, the figure is representative of the raw eroticism expressed in some of Rodin's works during this period. Not the eroticism found in his figures of naiads or *The Kiss*, but a dark, disturbing sexuality, often regarded as obscene because of the muffled violence that seems to emanate from the sculpture. The quasi-animal sensuality of this figure, nicknamed the 'frog', or a 'batrachian' by some of Rodin's contemporaries, is what made it so successful. Rodin reworked it in different materials and sizes, for example in *I Am Beautiful* and *The Fallen Caryatid carrying her Stone* or *The Fallen Caryatid with Urn*.

Vigorously modelled, the work has been compared to Michelangelo's *Crouching Youth* (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg), which Rodin may have known through reproductions and form which he might notably have borrowed the powerfully erotic motif of the arm placed between the outspread knees.



Eternal Springtime, circa 1884

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the edge of the base, left of the group), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 64 x 58 x 44,5 cm 25.2 x 22.8 x 17.5 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

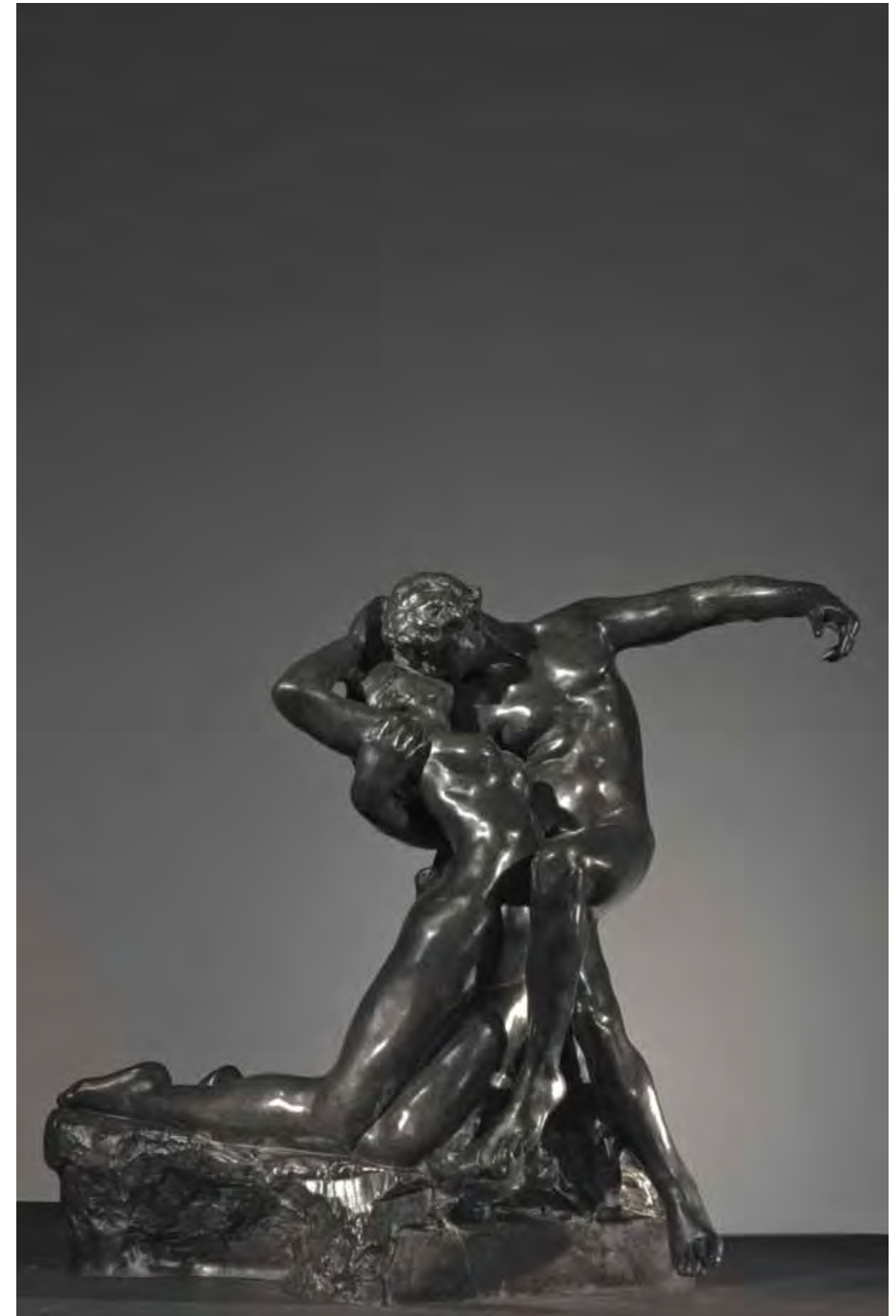
Public notes

Eternal Springtime was modelled during Rodin's intense period of activity for *The Gates of Hell*, but this graceful two-figure work never appeared on the portal: like *The Kiss*, of which it is a sort of variant, its subject evokes the happiness of two young lovers, a euphoria too inappropriate for the tragedy being played out on *The Gates*. With its rhythmic movement reminiscent of 18th Century decorative sculpture, which Rodin liked and had frequently imitated when working for ornamentalists, *Eternal Springtime* was very successful and was translated several times into bronze and marble.

The female figure of this group was based on *Adel's torso*, an earlier work modelled by Rodin and used on the tympanum of *The Gates of Hell*. Through its sensuality, this straining body with arched back fits into the composition perfectly. Responding to this ascending curve is the broad movement of the man, the dominant figure in this pair of lovers.

The idea for the piece is said to have come to him while listening to Beethoven's Second Symphony: 'God, how he must have suffered to write that! And yet, it was while listening to it for the first time that I pictured *Eternal Springtime*, just as I have modelled it since,' he confided much later to Jeanne Russel. At the peak of his powers, aided by the youth and openness of the models who posed for him, he conveyed his own euphoria in this group with a very skilful composition, built on an X, whose elegant forms, enhanced by the languidness of the bodies and the delicacy of the embrace, made it one of his most highly acclaimed works.

Excluded from *The Gates*, the figures began their lives as an independent sculpture.



Iris, Messenger of the Gods, circa 1891-1893

Signed 'A. Rodin', stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (under the left foot), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 39,5 x 43,5 x 24 cm 15.6 x 17.1 x 9.4 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

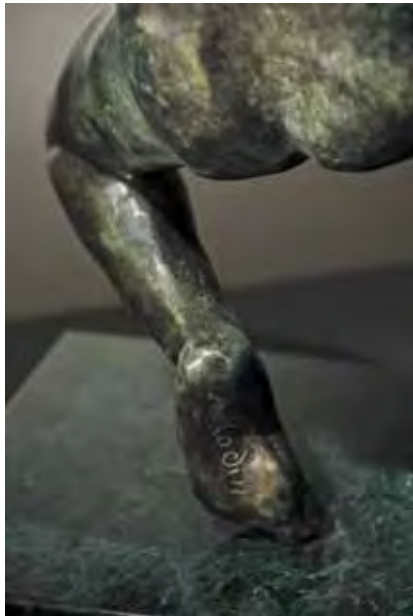
Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

Designed in 1891, the figure of *Iris* was completed with a pair of wings and arranged in a swooping movement in the second project for the *Monument to Victor Hugo*, in 1897. In 1894, however, she was enlarged, turned the right way up, placed in a vertical position and cast in bronze by Alexis Rudier, before being photographed in front of *The Gates of Hell*, in 1896-98.

In Greek mythology, Iris acted as a link between the world of men and the gods. Entitled *Iris, Messenger of the Gods*, or *Flying Figure*, or even *Eternal Tunnel*, the work was both symbolic and mythological, yet also assumed a powerful formal presence. The position chosen by Rodin, which naturally recalls *The Origin of the World* (1866) by Gustave Courbet (1819-77), aroused not only indignation but also fascination. Weightless, energetic, the work suggests the movements of the French cancan and a gymnast stretching her limbs. The position, as well as the absence of the head and one of the arms, centre attention on the female genitalia.



Iris, Messenger of the Gods, 1895

Signed 'A. Rodin', stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (under the left foot), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 82,5 x 90 x 42,5 cm 32.5 x 35.4 x 16.7 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

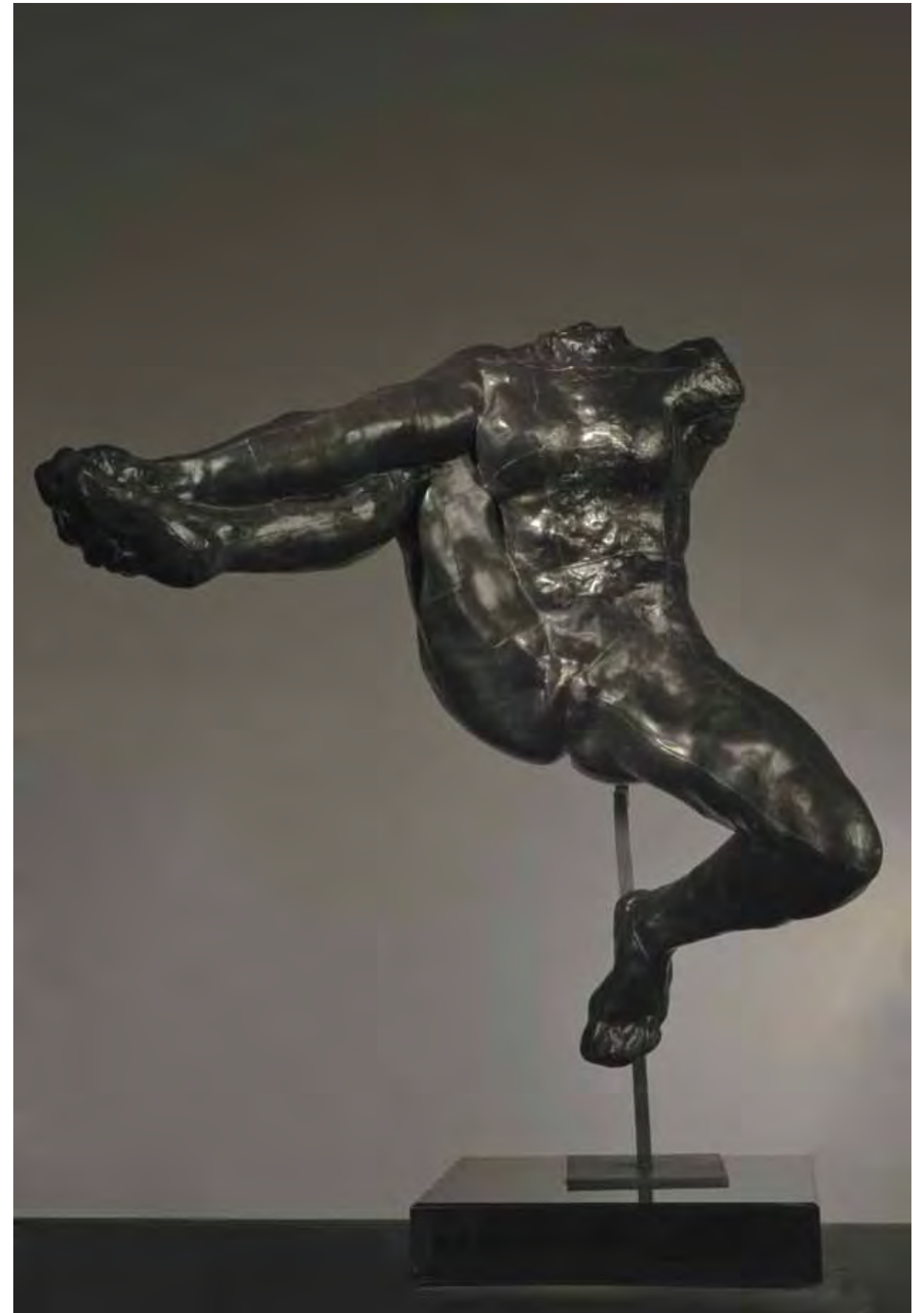
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François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

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The Age of Bronze, 1903-04 and 1907

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the base, left of the left foot), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP

Exists in 2 sizes: Large (1st reduction, 1903-04) H: 105,3 cm H: 41.5 in. Small (2nd reduction, 1907) H: 64,2 cm H: 25.3 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

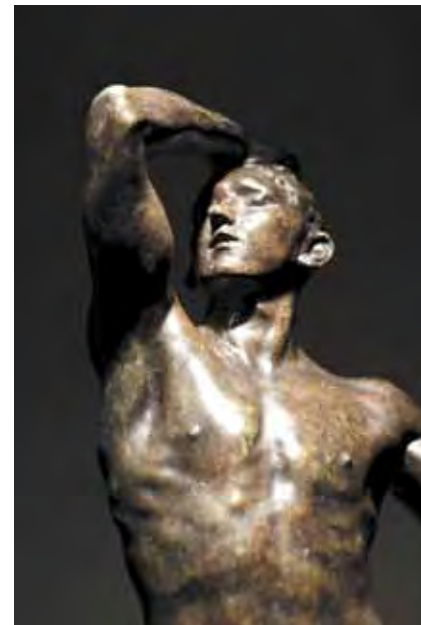
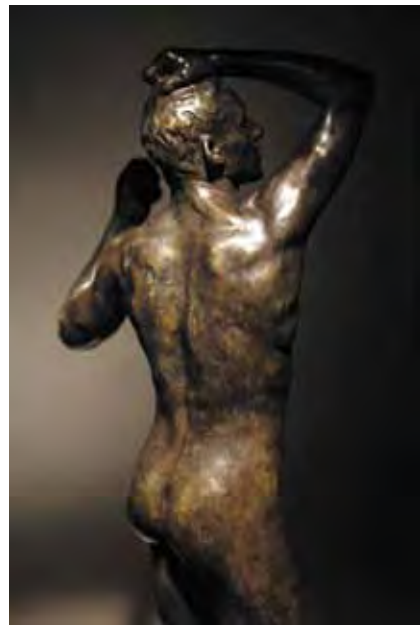
François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

Made in Brussels, this figure, one of Rodin's most famous works, attests to the sculptor's masterly skill and his attention to living nature that informs the pose and the modelling. A young Belgian soldier, Auguste Ney, was the model for this statue devoid of any element that would shed light on the subject's identity. The untitled work was exhibited at the Cercle Artistique, Brussels, in 1877, then, entitled *The Age of Bronze*, at the Salon in Paris, where it caused a scandal.

Also known as *The Awakening Man* or *The Vanquished One*, the statue recalls one of the early ages of mankind. There was originally a spear in the left hand, as is shown in a photograph by Gaudenzio Marconi, but Rodin decided to suppress the weapon so as to free the arm of any attribute and infuse the gesture with a new liberality.

Accused of having used a life cast of his sitter, when the statue was shown in Paris, Rodin had to prove that the quality of his sculpture's modelling came from a thorough study of profiles, not from a life cast. His critics eventually recognized that the sculptor was innocent of any trickery. The scandal, however, did draw attention to Rodin and earned him the commission for *The Gates of Hell* in 1880.



Eternal Idol, 1893

Signed 'A. Rodin', numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 73,4 x 58,7 x 40,8 cm 28.9 x 23.1 x 16.1 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

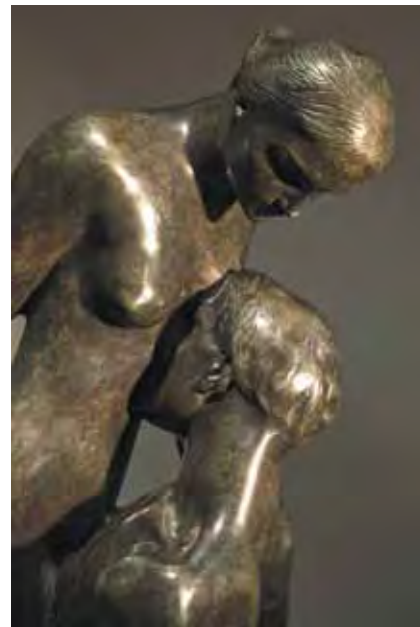
Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

The smallest version of the *Eternal Idol* in its original size began as a motif for *The Gates of Hell*. Conceived during Rodin's prolific period of creative activity for *The Gates*, the two figures were incorporated into the right door separately at an unknown date before being used individually in various other compositions. In 1980 (at the latest), they were combined to form an independent group. 'Grasping the theme of the couple, Rodin searched for diversity in it; he expressed in several works the silent adoration of man for woman and his submission before love... The group here *Eternal Idol* attained a degree of perfection rarely equaled. It is necessary to consider it from all angles to establish the unimpeachable position of the two people. Whatever angle from which it is viewed there is always a new aspect to be seen. On an emotional level, the duality of the sexes is apparent in the indifference of the woman to the homage the man is rendering to her beauty' (Cecile Goldscheider, *Homage to Rodin*, San Francisco, 1967, p. 62).

Conceived in 1893, the present sculpture is one of Rodin's most successful and powerful groups that explores the relationship between man and woman with great sensitivity, grace and emotive force. Its origins lie in an incident in the sculptor's studio which Jules Desbois, one of the master's assistants, was later to recount: 'One day, from up on the scaffold where I was working on the *Burghers of Calais*, I noticed Rodin, who between some screens, was doing a nude sculpture, for which the model was a young woman, stretched out on a table. As the session was drawing to a close he bent over toward the woman and kissed her tenderly on the belly - a gesture of adoration of nature, which gave him much joy' (as quoted in Judith Cladel, *Rodin*, London, 1953, p. 271).



Adel's Torso, circa 1884

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the right side), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (under the right knee)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 12,6 x 44,2 x 26 cm 5 x 17.4 x 10.2 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

One of Rodin's favourite models was Adèle Abbruzzesi, from whose supple, muscular body he drew inspiration for several strikingly sensual, female figures. Clay, which he modelled while standing in front of the sitter or which he pressed into a mould and later reworked, was the ideal material to use for a sketch, notably because of its capacity to evoke the velvety texture of the skin. With his virtuoso modelling skills, Rodin managed to convey the softness of a woman's belly, her arched back and even the weight of her breasts.

Adel's Torso did not appear on *The Gates of Hell* until the final version of the tympanum (circa 1889).

The violent twisting movement of the body owes an evident debt to Michelangelo and Delacroix: 'How can one possibly look at the arched back in *Adel's Torso* without thinking of the woman attached to the Turk's horse in *The Massacre of Chios*?' By drawing a parallel between a work like *The Crouching Woman*, this twisting movement establishes a dating of shortly before or after 1880.

The sculptor was very fond of this study, which he completed by adding legs and arms, so as to use it as a sort of linking device on the upper left-hand corner of *The Gates of Hell*. In a slightly modified version, with a head, this torso was also used for the female figure in *Eternal Springtime*.



The Thinker, 1881-1882

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the left of the mound), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 72,6 x 47,6 x 57 cm 28.6 x 18.7 x 22.4 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

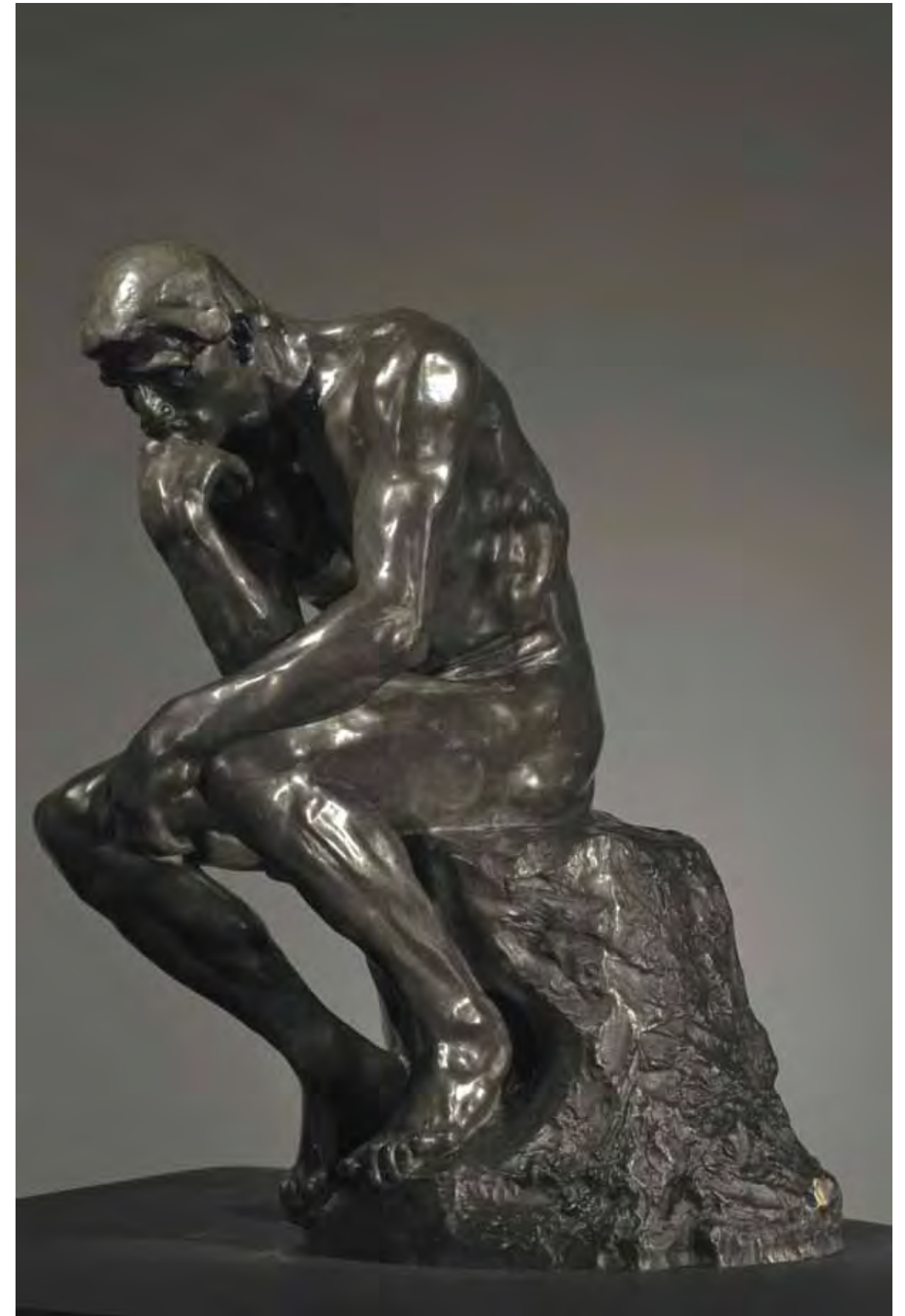
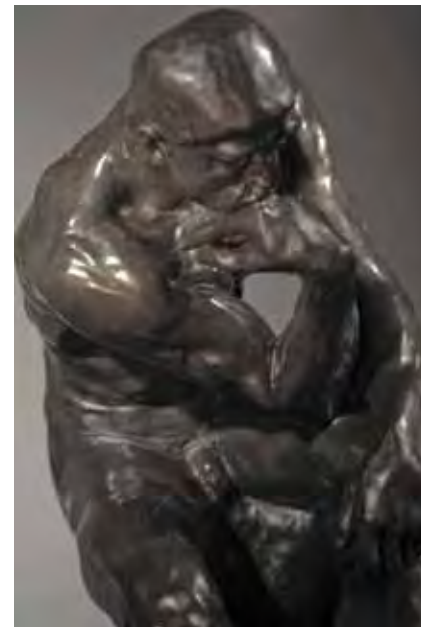
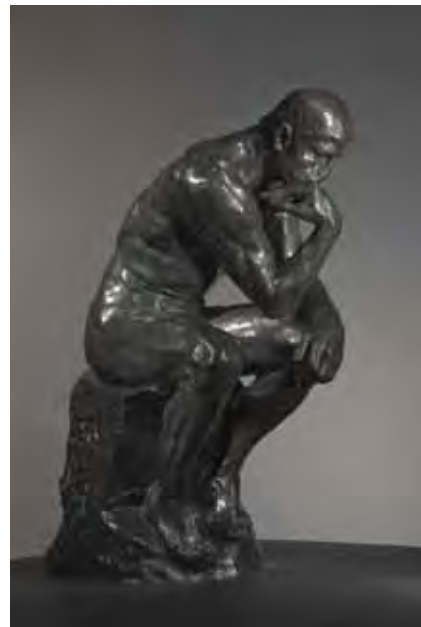
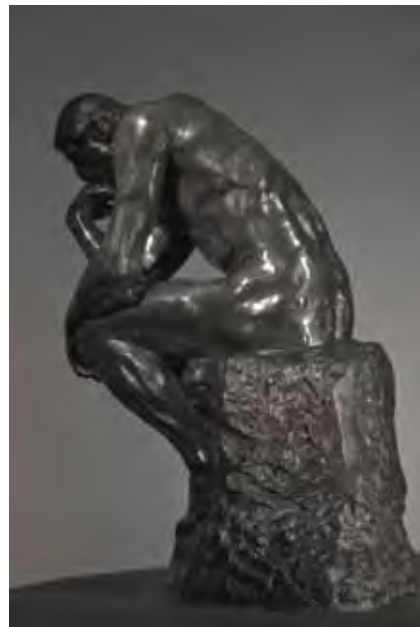
Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

When conceived in 1880 in its original size (approx. 70 cm) as the crowning element of *The Gates of Hell*, seated on the tympanum, *The Thinker* was entitled *The Poet*. He represented Dante, author of the *Divine Comedy* which had inspired *The Gates*, leaning forward to observe the circles of Hell, while meditating on his work. *The Thinker* was therefore initially both a being with a tortured body, almost a damned soul, and a free-thinking man, determined to transcend his suffering through poetry. The pose of this figure owes much to Carpeaux's *Ugolino* (1861) and to the seated portrait of Lorenzo de Medici carved by Michelangelo (1526-31).

While remaining in place on the monumental *Gates of Hell*, *The Thinker* was exhibited individually in 1888 and thus became an independent work. Enlarged in 1904, its colossal version proved even more popular: this image of a man lost in thought, but whose powerful body suggests a great capacity for action, has become one of the most celebrated sculptures ever known. Numerous casts exist worldwide, including the one now in the gardens of the Musée Rodin, a gift to the City of Paris installed outside the Panthéon in 1906, and another in the gardens of Rodin's house in Meudon, on the tomb of the sculptor and his wife.



Large dance, study for dance movement A, circa 1911

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the left of the left foot), numbered (beside the signature), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base, back right)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 65 x 14,8 x 31,5 cm 25.6 x 5.8 x 12.4 in.

Certificate

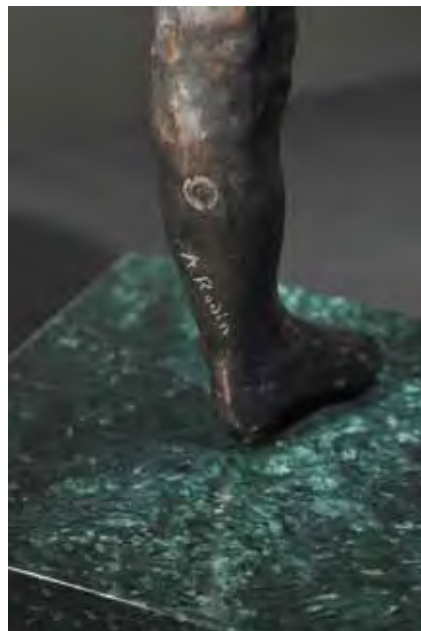
Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

Admired by Henry Moore, who knew from experience that it was far easier to render movement 'with the line of a drawing than with a solid material,' the *Dance Movements Series* (nine different movements, identified from A to I), alongside the small *Nijinsky*, constitute the final resurgence of Rodin's talent as a sculptor. No longer capable of modelling large-scale figures using his customary working method, the artist who had spent his whole life looking to the future attempted to capture the essence of the human form in movement in these statuettes, or rather these sketches, in which the relationship with the medium is so important. Though the plasters are dipped in slip, obliterating the details, the traces left by his hands and the knife marks are visible in the clays, while the size and elasticity of the cylindrical 'pellets' of clay govern the arrangement of the forms.



Study for dance movement E, *circa* 1911

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the socle, on the left foot), numbered (beneath the signature), inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the left leg)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 35,1 x 10 x 19,6 cm 13.8 x 3.9 x 7.7 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

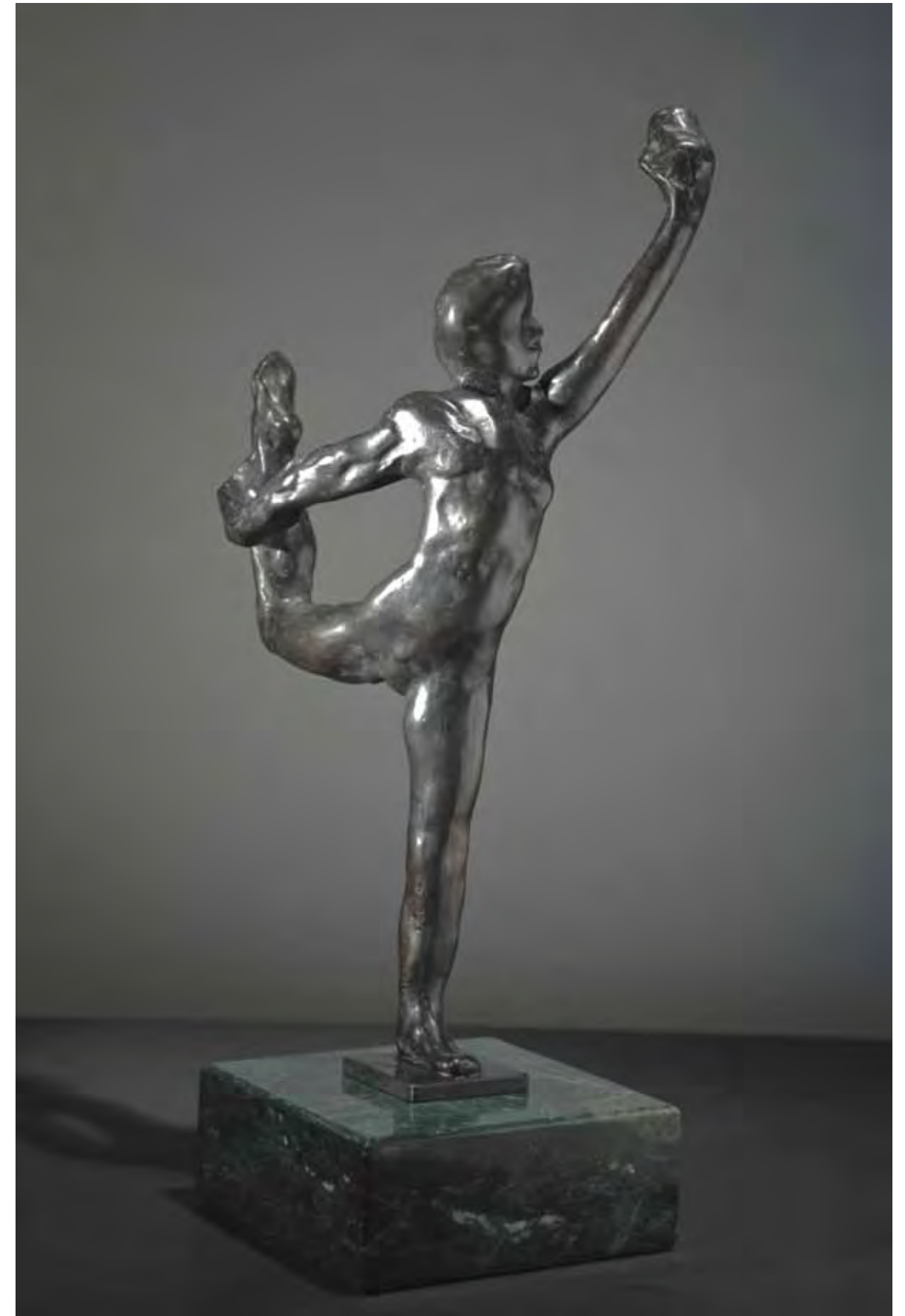
Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

The American Loïe Fuller's veil dances at the Folies Bergère in 1892 became the rage of Paris. Her free and spontaneous approach to movement kindled in Rodin an interest in dance, and during this time he also became friendly with Isadora Duncan, who established a 'temple' to the cult of the Greek dance in Bellevue, near the sculptor's studio in Meudon.

Rodin sketched her students in their movements, lamenting 'if I had only known such models when I was young. Models who move and whose movement is in close harmony with nature' (Descharnes and Chabrun, op. cit, p. 246). Rodin executed nine figures in 1910-1919 entitled *Dance Movements*. The plaster versions remain in the collection of the Musée Rodin, which then cast them posthumously.



Study for dance movement D, circa 1911

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the socle on the right foot), numbered (beneath the signature), inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the right leg)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 33 x 9,6 x 11 cm 13 x 3.8 x 4.3 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work
Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of this work
François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Public notes

These sculptures of dance movements belonged to the most secret side of Rodin's life, and he showed them only to the privileged few, including Kessler, Diaghilev, and Nijinski.

Kessler painted a vivid picture: 'They are studies of an exceptionally supple girl, some kind of acrobat, whose poses create all sorts of new and peculiar arabesques... Rodin then took into the room where he keeps the sculptural studies of the same model... a number of smaller figurines of the greatest beauty... He sees in these arabesques something like preliminaries to Woman, moments of transition from the animal kingdom to Woman: beetles, frog-like forms, sphinx-like creatures, out of which Woman emerges as from a chrysalis.' The sculptor then told his visitors: 'There are some people who would find that obscene, and yet it's almost pure mathematics. It's not passionate.' Rodin regarded them as his most innovative work.

Nijinski marvelled at these *Dance Movements*. Kessler asked Rodin if it would be possible to have them cast in bronze. Rodin did not answer at first and then finally admitted that he was afraid to show them, because he believed that he had done something completely new and he feared that someone might steal his idea.



Pierre de Wissant's Right and Left Hands, *circa* 1885-86

Signed 'A. Rodin' (across the wrist, on the inner arm), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the upper arm)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP

Pierre de Wissant's Left Hand: 33 x 18,2 x 13 cm 10.7 x 7.1 x 5.2 in.

Pierre de Wissant's Right Hand: 31 x 18 x 19 cm 12.6 x 7.1 x 5.2 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

In 1900, the critic Gustave Kahn wrote, 'Rodin is the sculptor of hands, raging, tensed, arched, damned hands'. There is no doubt that Rodin attached more importance to this part of the body than any other. Fascinated by the expressive power of isolated hands, he studied them unceasingly, accumulating in his studio numerous studies in clay or plaster, in which the sensitivity of the modelling vies with the verisimilitude of the gesture.

Through hands, Rodin expresses the full range of human emotions, from anxiety to suffering, from resignation to despair. As revealing as the face, on their own they can sometimes symbolize a form of human activity.



The Shade, before 1886

Signed 'A. Rodin', numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 96 x 55,5 x 29,2 cm 37.8 x 21.9 x 11.5 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

Before embarking upon the study of this subject, it is necessary to place *The Shades* in the context of the large-sized figures made in the 1870s, even though its dimensions were quite small (less than one meter). One must also recall and qualify the influence of Michelangelo, which Rodin in turn integrated, rejected and transcended.

Rodin's idea to group three copies of *The Shades* to lighten *The Gates of Hell* by placing them on top of the *Gates* was perhaps influenced by the three figures of *The Baptism of Christ* surmounting *The Gates of Paradise* in the Florence Baptistery (Andrea Sansovino, 1502-1505). The first written evidence of it was provided by Félicien Champsaur who, in *Le Figaro Littéraire* dated January 16th, 1886, mentioned the three figures crowning *The Gates*: 'Towering above the whole monument, three characters seem to embody the sentence inscribed on the pediment: "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate"'. According to some authors, it seems that the hands were still there, and that Rodin cut off the right hand and reduced the left hand to a mere stump when he removed the Dantean inscription. In any case, the absence of the inscription and of the hands was attested in 1887 when a photograph was sent by Jessie Lipscomb to Rodin.

It tends to illustrate his famous 'multiple profiles technique,' and also enables us to visualize the greatest number of profiles, the sculptor having always been attached to the necessity of being able to 'move around' a sculpture in the round, which, in the case of *The Gates of Hell*, is impossible.

That assemblage of three copies illustrating three different profiles was not the only experiment carried out by Rodin. Beside the many layerings of dual subjects, he presented three plasters of *Despair* facing one another in a triangle in Frankfurt notably in 1908.

The Three Shades were exhibited for the first time, in plaster version and under the name *Studies* during the 'Monet-Rodin' exhibition at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1889. Charles Frémine referred to them as *Large Painful Figures* in a paper called *Paris* dated June 22nd 1889.



Hand of Rodin holding a Female Torso

Signed 'A. Rodin', numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the side of the wrist)

Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 17 x 11 x 22 cm 6.7 x 4.3 x 8.7 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work

Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

The hand that models is the creative tool *par excellence*. Rodin was convinced of this, according to Judith Cladel explaining 'this central idea: the first thing God thought about when creating the World, if one can imagine what God was thinking, was modelling. Isn't it strange to see God primarily as a sculptor?'

Shortly before his death, Rodin accepted that his hand be cast holding *Small Torso A* (seated female torso devoid of arms or legs but for the thighs). Therefore appears as a symbol of his work, of his love of nature, but nature reduced to the essential: the torso alone is the very essence of femininity. Nicole Barbier rightly points out that the assemblage 'is perfectly evocative of the artist examining an object from all sides, capturing all the light effects and thinking about how he could still metamorphose it.' The author alludes here to an extract in the interviews of Rodin by Paul Gsell where the sculptor showed him the incomparable modelling of a small Greek statue of Venus placed before an oil lamp.

Judith Cladel evoked the sadness of the moment when his impression was taken: 'One afternoon, on the order of M. Bénédite who was absent, caster Paul Cruet made a cast of Rodin's hand. I would have liked the master himself to supervise the operation, but he obediently let the caster take over with a meekness which was due to his illness. Cruet succeeded with great skill. Unfortunately, although the cast was well made, he could not restore to the hand of the great modeler what had begun to leave him, life and thought. Like his eyes and his countenance, it had lost all character. It was merely inert; its former strength had relaxed into eternal rest.'

The cast may not have been made by Paul Cruet however, but by the famous caster Amédée Bertault, according to his grandson.

During the last weeks or even the last months of the sculptor's life when he was ill and weak (see Cladel, *op. cit.*), many people came to visit him regularly, friends and more or less distant relatives whose intentions were far from being disinterested. He would sign anything, people would steal objects or documents from him, and although he had readily accepted to have his hand cast, he took no interest in what would happen to the cast afterwards and how it would be exploited. Léonce Bénédite (the future curator of the Musée Rodin) was not innocent in all those matters. Consequently, a great number of reproductions were made of that cast with apocryphal dedications.



Pierre de Wissant, *Nude without Head and Arms*, circa 1906

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the base, behind the left foot), stamped 'A. Rodin' in relief (on the inside), numbered and inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (on the base)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 63 x 33 x 20 cm 25.1 x 13.4 x 8.1 in.

Certificate

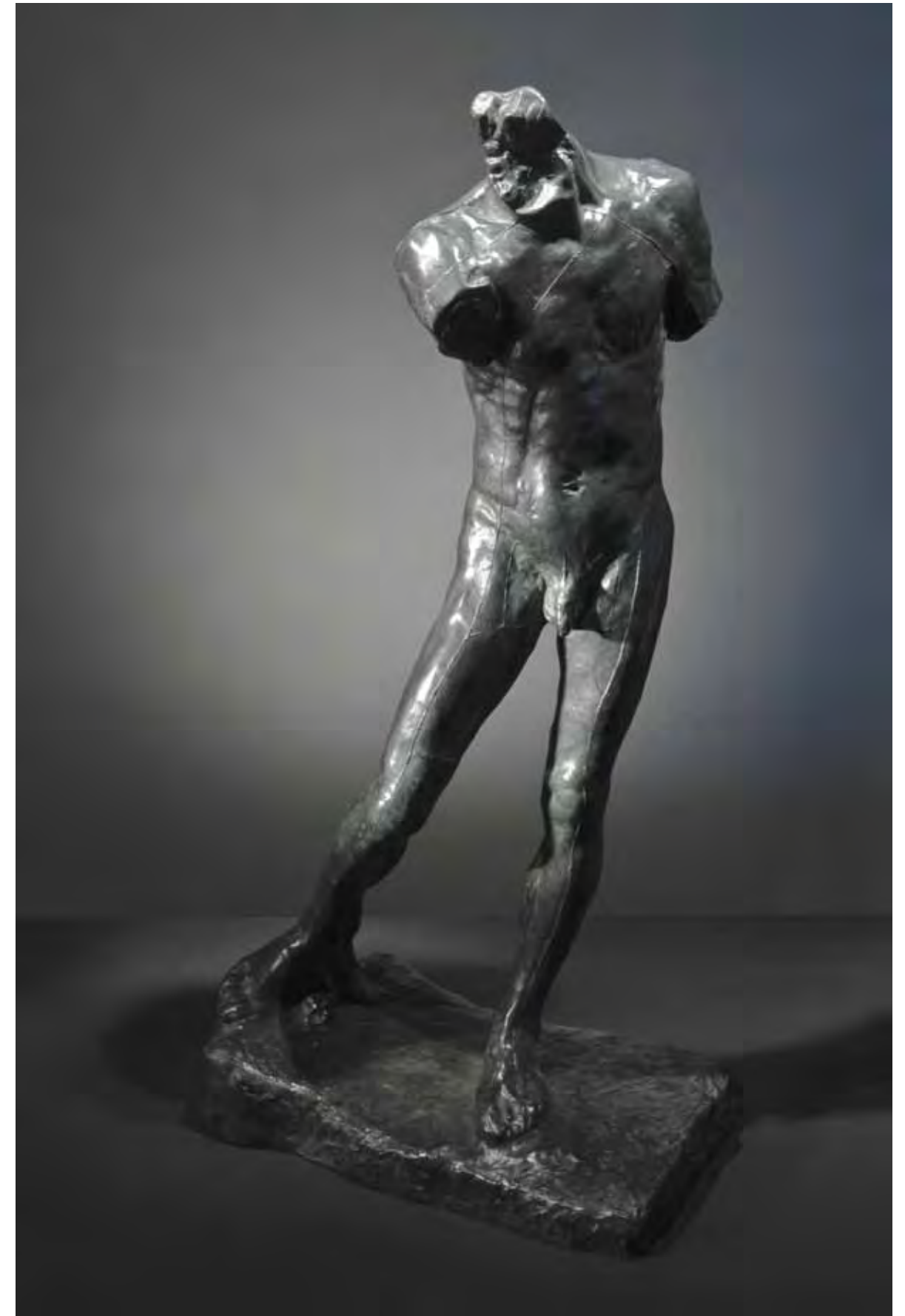
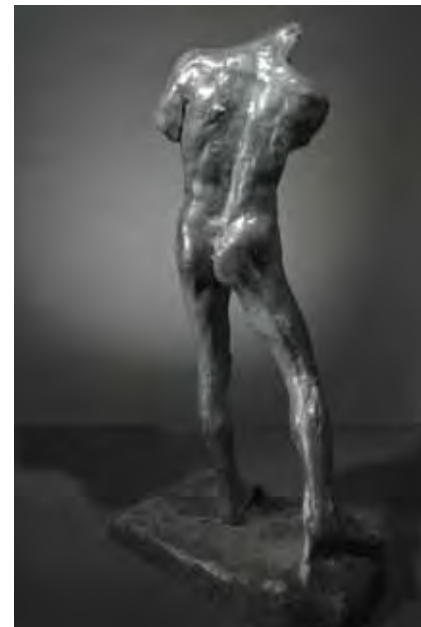
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François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

An invoice from Lebossé, dated 18 August 1906, suggests that this nude was not a study but a reduction of the large-scale model; the anatomical details and unevenness of the surface of the torso are reproduced with the faithfulness characteristic of a reduction by mechanical means. A month later, Lebossé asked Rodin for the arms. But this request seems to have been ignored, since Rodin, in his search for the essence of form, stripped the latter of all features considered to be unnecessary.



Balzac in Dominican robe, circa 1893

Signed 'A. Rodin' (on the lower edge of the drapery), numbered (beside the signature), inscribed with publisher mark 'Bronze Masters Reproduction' and inscribed with foundry mark 'Gantz' (back right)
Bronze, edition of 25 + 5 AP 107 x 50,8 x 38 cm 42.1 x 20 x 15 in.

Certificate

Valère Lamblot from Bronze Masters International has confirmed the authenticity of this work
Alain Beausire from the Rodin Institute has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast
François Privat from Art Expertises has confirmed the authenticity of the plaster which served as model for the cast

Public notes

'The creative process behind the monument dedicated to Balzac was one of the greatest tragedies of modern sculpture. Rodin made the sculpture from a portrait of the writer with the intention of representing him as a symbol of creation. Probably no work of art, before or since, has met with such opposition upon its first public exhibition. On the other hand, it is also difficult to imagine such intelligence, emotion and work brought together in one single piece of work'. Albert Elsen, 1980.

One century before Albert Elsen's edifying and judicious remark, Zola could not suspect such a long-lasting stir in art history; nor could he imagine that he would be instrumental to the creation of a masterpiece, nor even that he would trigger a long scandal causing him to be simultaneously involved in two scandals: 'l'Affaire Balzac' and 'l'Affaire Dreyfus'.

Indeed, as early as 1880, he asked for a committee to be formed in view of erecting a monument to Balzac. 'Put me down for a thousand francs,' he said, ('A Statue for Balzac', in *Le Figaro*, Dec. 6th, 1880). The 'Société des Gens de Lettres' started a public fund in 1885. Chapu who was in charge of the task died in April 1891. Upon the advice of Léon Cladel, Zola chose Rodin who thanked him in July 1891. Because of the sculptor's lack of discretion, the press published the information before the official decision. Rodin was officially notified of the commission by a letter from Zola dated August 14th. He was to submit his proposal in November.

The sculptor started gathering documents about Balzac, portraits and writings, with the help of his friends, and stayed in the Tours region a few times notably to find people with the same physical features as his model (Aug.-Sep. 1891).

On December 19th, 1891, he showed his first project to Zola, which must have been *Balzac in Dominican Robe* (as shown here). But, the sculptor, as was his custom, had already made several sketches of nudes and heads. *Le Temps* dated January 11th, 1892 had this to say about the project: 'Balzac is standing with his arms crossed, holding his head high and draped in his legendary monk's gown tightened at the waist by a cord. The Commission congratulated Mr Rodin for his work and asked him to start working immediately on the marble.'

After the Salon of 1898, in the eyes of the press, the public and even the politicians, Rodin's statue became instrumentalized for the purposes of the 'Affaire Dreyfus,' just as the 'Affaire Dreyfus' served as a socio-political backdrop to the 'Affaire Balzac.' After the inauguration of the Salon, the 'Société des Gens de Lettres' refused the Balzac (decision dated May 9th, 1898). Some of Rodin's friends circulated a petition protesting against the refusal, which listed the greatest names in the artistic and literary world. Among the subscribers were Monet, Cézanne, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Catulle, Mendès, Verhaeren, Mallarmé, Pierre Louys, Clémenceau, etc. The first cast of Rodin's *Balzac* was made in 1930 for Antwerp, and is currently located in the Museum of Middleheim, Antwerp. Finally, upon Georges Lecomte's initiative, Rodin's statue was inaugurated in July 1939, on the Boulevard Raspail where it stands to this day, discreetly set back from the Boulevard Montparnasse and unfortunately screened by trees and road signs, as if it were dangerously provocative given its involuntary association with the 'Affaire Dreyfus', at a time when the most basic anti-Semitic feelings burst out in the Western world in the most violent form ever. Honorary Presidents Maillol and Despiau unveiled it.



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Front cover: detail of *Clown aux poissons rouges* by Buffet / Inside front cover: *The Shade* by Rodin / Inside back cover: detail of *Véronique Mourousi* by Buffet / Back cover: detail of *Eve* by Rodin

