



From Plaster to Bronze: The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin

The MacLaren Art Centre of Barrie, Ontario announces the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) as the first in a series of international venues to present the major traveling exhibition, *From Plaster to Bronze: the Sculpture of Auguste Rodin*.

From September 20th until December 23rd, 2001, the ROM's Level Two Terrace Gallery will host this remarkable new exhibition, featuring a spectacular forty-million dollar collection of approximately seventy plaster and bronze sculptures by the French master, Auguste Rodin. This show will include plaster sculptures that have never before been exhibited in public.

These works are being gifted to the MacLaren Art Centre in support of Barrie's ArtCity project, this important donation constitutes the world's largest single collection of plasters outside the Musee Rodin in Paris. Curated by Rodin scholar Dr. David Schaff, in collaboration with Mary Reid and Colin Wiginton of the MacLaren Art Centre, *From Plaster to Bronze* offers the public a unique opportunity to appreciate Rodin's working methods by highlighting the formative plaster works that led to the emergence of his better known bronze pieces. As Schaff explains, "In no other Rodin exhibition has so much attention been given to the plasters - the material to which Rodin gave so much of his time, and which speaks so much of his genius."

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) is one of the most prominent artists of the modern era: his impact equals that of his contemporaries, the Impressionists, while his enduring influence on sculpture ranks with that of the Ancient Greeks and Michelangelo. Although his themes and sources of inspiration recall the great masters of classical antiquity, and the Medieval and Renaissance periods, he stirred controversy and achieved celebrity within his own lifetime through his vigorous style and provocative composition. Rodin's devotion to the human form - in his words, a "temple that marches"- remained unswerving, from his naturalistic *The Age of Bronze* to the floating, fragmented pieces of his later years.

Few artists set out so honestly, or so successfully, to capture the essence of the human figure in all its varied manifestations and emotions. In his fidelity to the truth of nature, Rodin departed from the style of his contemporaries and paved a new road for successors such as Henri Matisse, Aristide Maillol and Constantin Brancusi. As famed British artist Henry Moore commented, Rodin "helped open the eyes of modern sculptors to the fragment, the sketch, the accident, and the importance of much older sculpture that was being ignored." Rodin's masterful touch, so powerfully evident in his plaster works, was likened to "the hand of God" by one of his subjects, playwright George Bernard Shaw.

Shaping, deconstructing and reshaping the white plaster figures with painstaking attention to detail, Rodin clearly saw them not as part of an incomplete process, but as art objects in their own right, and expressed his admiration for "those beautiful blond shadows that supply all the softness". His working method allowed him to make multiple copies of the same subject in different sizes, and to explore their expressive potential through their recasting in bronze. In addition to the plasters, *From Plaster to Bronze* will feature posthumous bronze castings of some of his most famous works, including *The Thinker*, *The Age of Bronze*, *Eve*, *Crouching Woman* and *Eternal Spring*. The exhibition will also present a technical analysis of the casting process, revealing the progression from plaster to bronze using the "lost wax" casting technique.

To enhance understanding of the process, a six-part recreation of the molds and other materials used to cast *Torso*, *Walking Man* will also be included. The viewer's journey through the exhibition will be further enriched by hands-on elements, historical photographs and artifacts while, an evocation of Rodin's studio at Meudon will suggest the atmosphere in which he worked. After its launch at the ROM, *From Plaster to Bronze: The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin*, organized by the MacLaren Art Centre, will embark on an international tour before returning to its permanent new home in Barrie, Ontario, as part of ArtCity, a revolutionary urban art project of the MacLaren Art Centre.

ArtCity will feature Canadian and international works of art throughout the public areas of Barrie, transforming the whole city into a vibrant, evolving outdoor art museum. Since its founding in the 1980s, the MacLaren Art Centre, a not-for-profit public art gallery, has become the fastest growing cultural organization in Canada. It has achieved dramatic and unprecedented success and is soon to open a new six-million dollar gallery facility in Barrie. MacLaren is currently in the planning and design stages of what will become a permanent Rodin Museum for this collection as part of ArtCity; the international tour of *From Plaster to Bronze: The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin* will support funding for this exciting project.

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