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AUGUSTE RODIN'S LIFE AND WORK

François-Auguste-René Rodin was born in Paris in 1840. By the time he died in 1917, he was not only the most celebrated sculptor in France, but also one of the most famous artists in the world. Rodin rewrote the rules of what was possible in sculpture. Controversial and celebrated during his lifetime, Rodin broke new ground with vigorous sculptures of the human form that often convey great drama and pathos. For him, beauty existed in the truthful representation of inner states, and to this end he often subtly distorted anatomy. His genius provided inspiration for a host of successors such as Henri Matisse, Constantin Brancusi and Henry Moore.

Unlike contemporary Impressionist Paul Cézanne---whose work was more revered after his death---Rodin enjoyed fame as a living artist. He saw a room in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York dedicated to his work and willed his townhouse in Paris, the Hôtel Biron, to the state as a last memorial to himself. But he was also the subject of intense debate over the merits of his art, and in 1898 he attracted a storm of controversy for his unconventional monument to French literary icon Honoré de Balzac.

MAJOR EVENTS IN RODIN'S LIFE

- 1840 November 12. Rodin is born in Paris.
- 1854 Enters La Petite École, a special school for drawing and mathematics.
- 1857 Fails in three attempts to be admitted at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts.
- 1858 Begins to do decorative stonework in order to make his living
- 1862 Enters Society of the Blessed Sacrament following the death of his sister Maria.
- 1863 Leaves religious order after Pierre-Julien Eymard, the father superior, recognizes Rodin's talents and encouraged him to pursue his art.

- 1864 Meets seamstress Rose Beuret, who would become his life companion and the model for many of his works; submits his *Man with a Broken Nose* to the Paris Salon. It is rejected. Camille Claudel is born.
- 1875 Travels to Italy and studies the works of Michelangelo.
- 1876 Eight Rodin sculptures are exhibited at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.
- 1877 *The Age of Bronze* causes a scandal when critics find it so realistic they accuse Rodin of casting a live model.
- 1880 Receives the commission to create a bronze door for the future Museum of Decorative Arts (*The Gates of Hell*).
- 1883 Meets Camille Claudel, a talented nineteen-year-old sculptor, with whom he would have a fifteen-year affair
- 1884 Receives the commission for *The Burghers of Calais*
- 1889 Receives the commissions for a *Monument to Victor Hugo* to be placed near the Pantheon and the *Monument to Claude Lorrain* for the city of Nancy.
- 1890 Project for the Victor Hugo monument is rejected.
- 1891 The Soci  t   des Gens de Lettres commissions a *Monument to Balzac*
- 1894 Meets C  zanne; receives commission for *Monument to President Sarmiento* of Argentina.
- 1895 *Burghers of Calais* is unveiled at Calais.
- 1898 Breaks off affair with Camille Claudel; *Monument to Balzac* is exhibited at the Salon and is rejected by The Soci  t   des Gens de Lettres, causing a national scandal.
- 1899 The first important exhibition devoted to Rodin is seen in Brussels, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague.
- 1900 Rodin's first major retrospective exhibition opens in conjunction with the International Exhibition in Paris.
- 1908 Edward Steichen takes a famous series of photographs at Meudon; Rodin moves into the H  tel Biron, outside Paris.
- 1911 The British Government purchases a cast of *The Burghers of Calais*, to be displayed near the Houses of Parliament.
- 1912 The Rodin Room opens in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.
- 1913 Camille Claudel is committed to an asylum.
- 1916 Rodin falls seriously ill; in three donations, he formally offers his work and collections to the French State.
- 1917 January 29. Marries Rose Beuret.
February 14. Rose dies.
November 17. Rodin dies at Meudon.
November 24. Rodin is buried on the grounds of his home, beside Rose, with *The Thinker* as their monument.
- 1919 August 4. The Mus  e Rodin opens in the H  tel Biron, Paris.
- 1929 November 29. The Rodin Museum opens in Philadelphia.