



AUGUSTE RODIN (1840-1917)

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Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), *The Kiss*, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek

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- Today's talk is about Auguste Rodin and this is one of his best known works, *The Kiss*. He was a late starter but became a leading sculptor. After his death his reputation declined but he is now regarded as one of the great sculptors of the period. His great inspiration was the sculptures from ancient Greece and Michelangelo.

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Heracles, marble statue, workshop of Phidias, eastern pediment of the Parthenon, the Acropolis, Athens, c. 5th century BCE; British Museum



Michelangelo (1475–1564), *Dying Slave*, c.1513-15, marble, height 229 cm, Louvre Museum



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Eve*, model c. 1881, carved 1890/1891, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Heracles, marble statue produced in the workshop of Phidias, from the eastern pediment of the Parthenon, the Acropolis, Athens, c. 5th century BCE; in the British Museum

Michelangelo (1475–1564), *Dying Slave*, c.1513-15, marble, height 229 cm, Louvre Museum

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Eve*, model c. 1881, carved 1890/1891, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

- During his lifetime, **Auguste Rodin** (1840-1917, died age 77) **was compared to Phidias, the ancient Greek sculptor and to the Renaissance sculptor Michelangelo**, and was widely recognised as the greatest artist of the era. In the three decades following his death, his **popularity waned** with changing aesthetic values. Since the **1950s, Rodin's reputation has re-ascended**; he is recognised as one of the **most important sculptors of the modern era**, and has been the subject of much scholarly work. The sense of incompleteness offered by some of his sculpture, such as *The Walking Man*, influenced the **increasingly abstract sculptural forms of the 20th century**.
- For Rodin, the **Parthenon was a lifelong obsession**. His journey through sculpture was inspired by and energised by ancient Greek sculpture. For Rodin, **Phidias was sculpture** and together with Michelangelo was his lifelong master.
- He began *Eve* in 1881, later abandoning his intended colossal version of it when he realised his model, probably Adèle Abruzzesi, was pregnant. It was first exhibited to the public at the 1899 Paris Salon. It shows a strong influence

from Michelangelo, picked up by Rodin in Italy in 1876.

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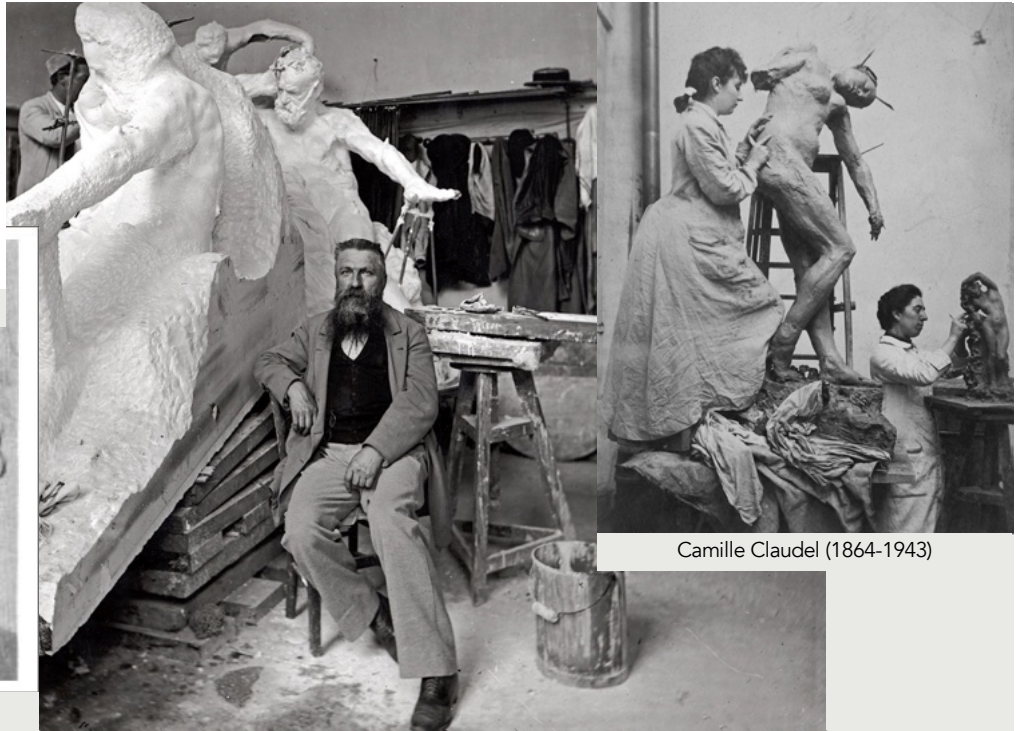
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Gwen John (1876-1939)



Rose Beuret (1844-1917)



Camille Claudel (1864-1943)

- **Auguste Rodin** (1840-1917) was born into a poor family and was largely self-educated.
- His talent wasn't instantly recognised. He failed to get into the **École des Beaux-Arts** school in Paris three times. From the age of 17 to 37 worked as an ornamenter. He worked for several years for the prominent sculptor Albert Ernest Carrier-Belleuse where he learnt skills necessary for running a large studio.
- (CLICK) When he was 24 he met Rose Beuret (pronounced 'bur-ray') and they had a son two years later.
- In 1881 he visited London for the first time. On a trip to the British Museum, he saw the Parthenon sculptures and was instantly captivated by the beauty of these ancient Greek masterpieces. He said "In my spare time I simply haunt the British Museum". [1]
- It was here that through his study of Greek sculpture such as Phidias's masterpiece, the Parthenon Marbles, he discovered the vitality that animates his work.
- Although the Parthenon sculptures had been broken and weathered over centuries Rodin took inspiration from the powerful expression that they conveyed through the body alone. He even removed the heads and limbs from his own figures to make them closer to the broken relics of the past. By doing so, he created a new genre of contemporary art – the headless, limbless torso.
- A few facts about his life:
 - **He never carved in marble.** He sometimes posed for the camera with

hammer and chisel in hand, but his practice was to model in clay for others to carve in marble or cast into bronze.

- **Rodin had many lovers.** Rodin's personal charm and fame attracted many female admirers.
- (CLICK) In 1883, Rodin when he was 43 he met the 18-year-old **Camille Claudel** (1864-1943). The two formed a passionate but stormy relationship. Claudel was the model for many of Rodin's figures but she was also a talented sculptor in her own right and the two artists influenced each other greatly. Claudel worked for many years in Rodin's studio and assisted him with his commissions. She later accused Rodin of **stealing her ideas** and even of plotting to kill her. She also destroyed much of her own work at this time. Thought at the time to be suffering from mental illness, she was admitted to a psychiatric hospital where she spent the rest of her life. Around 1900 he had become a famous artist and talented artists, dancers and actresses flocked to his studio and his house at Meudon. He became known as '**the Sultan of Meudon**' and was besieged by young women who wrote begging to become his model, his mistress and his muse. Rodin was in the habit of surrounding himself with naked models who were encouraged to adopt uninhibited poses. Rodin produced 7,000 drawings of these nude young women often showing two or more embracing or masturbating.
- (CLICK) In 1904, the Welsh artist **Gwen John** (1876-1939) began to model for Rodin when she was 28 years old, and became his lover. Their liaison lasted ten years, but **her passion** was overwhelming – she wrote **over a thousand letters to him** – and he had to distance himself from her. Throughout his life and other loves, he had a long relationship with seamstress **Rose Beuret** (1844-1917) beginning in 1864, and they had a child together. He **married her two weeks before her death in February 1917**. He died later that year.

BIO:RODIN

- Auguste Rodin (1840-1917, died age 77) was born to a working class family in Paris. He was largely self-educated and began to draw when he was 10. He went to the *Petite École* where he met Jules Dalou and Alphonse Legros.
- In 1857, Rodin was rejected three times by the *École des Beaux-Arts* which was surprising as the entrance requirements were not high. It may be that

his training in light 18th century techniques did not appeal to the judges neoclassical tastes. He left the École and spent the next twenty years working as a **craftsman and ornamentor**. During this time he trained in a Catholic order following his sister's death. The head of the order recognised his ability and encouraged him to continue as a sculptor. As a result he took classes with an animal sculptor.

- In 1864 he began to live with a seamstress called **Rose Beuret** (pronounced 'buw-ray') with whom he stayed for the rest of his life although not always faithful. The couple **had a son**, Auguste-Eugène Beuret (1866–1934), two years later.
- Also in 1864 he submitted work to his first exhibition, ***The Man with the Broken Nose***, and started work as chief assistant to a mass producer of *object d'art* designing staircase and door embellishments. *The Man with a Broken Nose* was unconventional, half the head was absent, and it was rejected by the Paris Salon.
- He was called up during the Franco-Prussian war but was discharged because of his near-sightedness. Because of a shortage of work he **moved to Brussels** where he worked on ornamentation for the Brussels Stock Exchange. He spent the next six years outside France and it was a **pivotal time** in his life. He had been working as a craftsman and no one had seen the work in his studio as he could not afford casting.
- In 1875 he had saved enough to **travel to Italy** for two months where the work of Donatello and Michelangelo had a profound effect on his style. Rodin said, "**It is Michelangelo who has freed me from academic sculpture.**" On his return he began work on ***The Age of Bronze*** a life-size male figure modelled on a Belgian soldier and inspired by Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*. The work was **so accurate** that when it was exhibited in 1877 in Brussels and then the Paris Salon he was **accused on cheating** by taking a cast from a living model (*surmoulage*) and the lack of a theme troubled critics. His later work was larger or smaller than life to avoid this accusation.
- In 1877 he returned to Paris with Rose Beuret and lived in a small flat on the Left Bank. His personal life was difficult, his mother was dead, his father senile and his son, who had essentially abandoned for six years was possibly developmentally delayed. He worked on commissions with well-known sculptors in the style of Carpeaux but had limited success.
- In his own time he worked on ***St. John the Baptist Preaching*** which was **exhibited in 1880** at the Paris Salon and despite being dismissed by critics

it won third prize, he was 39. In 1880 he started work at the Sevres porcelain factory as a designer. His design work was appreciated and he began to be invited to Paris Salons.

- Through these contacts he was recommended to Government ministers and he **won a commission** to produce a **portal** for a planned museum of decorative arts which resulted in **Gates of Hell**. This occupied him for four years but it was never built and he worked on it for the rest of his life. It depicted scenes from Dante's *Inferno*. In its final form it depicts 186 figures many of which became sculptures in themselves, including his most famous, **The Thinker** (originally *The Poet*) and **The Kiss**. With the museum commission came a free studio, granting Rodin a new level of artistic freedom. Soon, he stopped working at the porcelain factory; his income came from **private commissions**.
- In 1883 he met **Camille Claudel** and formed a passionate and stormy relationship and both influenced each other artistically.
- In 1884, he won a commission to create a historical monument for the town of Calais first displayed in 1889 as **The Burgers of Calais**.
- In 1889 he was commissioned to produce a monument to Victor Hugo. His execution of both works clashed with traditional tastes, and met with varying degrees of disapproval from the organizations that sponsored the commissions. Still, Rodin was gaining support from diverse sources that propelled him toward fame. In 1889, the Paris Salon invited Rodin to be a judge on its artistic jury.
- Though Rodin's career was on the rise, Claudel and Beuret were becoming increasingly impatient with Rodin's "double life". Claudel and Rodin shared an atelier at a small old castle, but Rodin refused to relinquish his ties to Beuret, his loyal companion during the lean years, and mother of his son. During one absence, Rodin wrote to Beuret, "**I think of how much you must have loved me to put up with my caprices...I remain, in all tenderness, your Rodin.**"
- In 1898 he exhibited a monument to **Honoré de Balzac** which generated a great deal of negative reaction and was parodied in the press. As a result Rodin repaid the commission and placed the work in his garden. Yet, in the BBC series *Civilisation*, art historian Kenneth Clark praised the monument as "**the greatest piece of sculpture of the 19th Century, perhaps, indeed, the greatest since Michelangelo.**"

- Claudel and Rodin parted in 1898. Claudel suffered an alleged nervous breakdown several years later and was confined to an institution for 30 years by her family, until her death in 1943, despite numerous attempts by doctors to explain to her mother and brother that she was sane.
- **By 1900 his reputation was established** and he exhibited successfully at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris. He received prestigious portrait bust commissions, his assistants produced many duplicates and as his fame grew he attracted many supporters. He was a prolific artist and produced oils, watercolours and 7,000 drawings and prints as well as 56 portrait busts. He purchased a country estate in 1897 where he hosted King Edward VII.
- In 1908 he moved to Paris and started an affair with the American-born Duchesse de Choiseul and from 1910, he mentored the Russian sculptor, Moisey Kogan.

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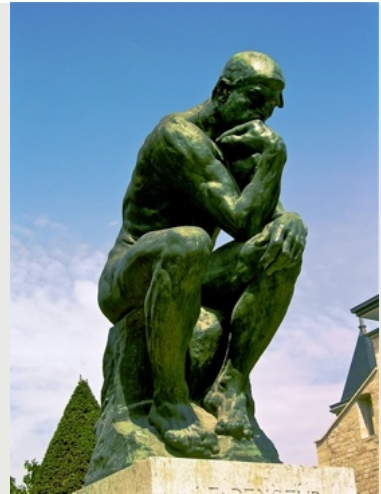
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The Kiss, c. 1882-87, The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo



The Gates of Hell. Plaster, 1900, Musée d'Orsay



The Thinker, 1904, Musée Rodin, Paris

The Gates of Hell. Plaster, 1900, Musée d'Orsay

The Thinker, 1904, Musée Rodin, Paris

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (1475-1564), *Il Pensieroso* ('*The Thoughtful One*'), tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence

- It was **not until Rodin was 40** that he received his **first major commission**, this work, *The Gates of Hell*.
- **His works were often controversial.**
- (CLICK) His sculpture ***The Age of Bronze* was so lifelike** that he was accused of having cast the work directly **from a living model** (*surmoulage*). He made his next sculptures deliberately larger than life to avoid these accusations again.
- (CLICK) But that's not all... When a marble version of ***The Kiss*** commissioned by the collector Edward Percy Warren went on display in Lewes Town Hall in 1913 it caused so many objections that it had to be surrounded by a railing and **draped with a sheet** because of its '**pagan sexuality**'! One version later entered the Tate collection.
- (CLICK) **His most famous sculptures didn't start out as individual pieces.** *The Kiss* and *The Thinker* are among Rodin's most famous works,
- (CLICK) but they were originally small figures created to sit on monumental gates, which had been commissioned for the entrance to a new decorative arts museum in Paris. *The Gates of Hell*. Plaster, 1900. Musée d'Orsay.

NOTES

- **The Kiss represented the doomed lovers** Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini **from Dante's *Inferno***. Although the sculpture is often thought of today in romantic terms, it didn't start out that way. In the epic poem *Divine Comedy*, Dante meets the lovers Paolo and Francesca in his travels around hell. They had been murdered by Francesca's husband (Paolo's brother) after he discovered the lovers together. The sculpture sees them at the moment just before death, lost in reckless passion.
- **The Thinker has been known by many different names**. This famous figure from *The Gates of Hell* initially represented **Minos, judge of the damned** in the *Divine Comedy*, and was later supposed to represent the poet Dante. It was given the name *The Thinker* not by the artist, but by foundry workers, who thought it looked similar to a statue of Lorenzo de Medici by Michelangelo nicknamed *Il Penseroso* (The Thinker).

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The Parthenon, Athens, 447-438 BC, a peripteral octastyle Doric temple on a curved stylobate and multi-drum shafts with entasis on top of which is an echinus and abacus supporting an entablature consisting of triglyphs (with mutules and guttae) and metopes, below a pediment whose tympanum contains sculptures

- Classical Greek architecture is discussed in my talk on Greek Art.
- When Rodin visited the British Museum he saw the inner frieze from the Parthenon, some of the bas relief metopes and some remaining sculptures from the pediment. It was enough to inspire him.

NOTES

- The Parthenon is a former treasury that held the wealth of Athens and the rest of the Delian League. It was dedicated to the goddess Athena and celebrated the glory of Athens.
- The Greco-Persians war lasted from 499 BC to 449 BC and the Persians sacked Athens in 480 BC. After the war Athens was rebuilt and construction of the Parthenon **began in 447 BC** when the Athenian Empire was at the peak of its power. It was completed in 438 BC, although decoration of the building continued until 432 BC. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece, generally considered the zenith of the Doric order.
- In the final decade of the sixth century AD, the Parthenon was converted into a **Christian church** dedicated to the Virgin Mary. After the **Ottoman conquest** in the mid-15th century, it was **turned into a mosque** in the early 1460s. On 26 September **1687**, an Ottoman ammunition dump inside the building exploded because of a Venetian bombardment. The resulting explosion severely damaged the Parthenon and its sculptures. From **1800 to 1803**, Thomas Bruce, **7th Earl of Elgin** removed some of the surviving sculptures with the permission of the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. These sculptures, now known

as the Elgin Marbles or the Parthenon Marbles, were **sold in 1816 to the British Museum**, where they are now displayed. Since 1983 the Greek government has been asking for the return of the sculptures to Greece.

- **The Parthenon is a technical wonder** of the Greek builders' art. It incorporates many hidden 'devices'. There are virtually no straight lines or right angles. The columns bulge in the middle (called entasis) so that they appear straight. The platform on which it is built (called the stylobate) and the entablature curve down about 11 centimetres at the end of the long sides so they look level and the columns lean in slightly so that they appear vertical (this is so slight, about 6 centimetres, that if projected upwards the columns would not meet for 1.5 miles), the corner columns are slightly larger in diameter and are closer to the column next to them, the roof eaves overhang 1/12 of the column height so that it will be equidistant to the eye of someone standing 60 metres (200 feet) away.

TERMINOLOGY

- **Peripteral** – all four sides have columns,
- **Octastyle** – eight columns along the front and back,
- **Stylobate** – the base and supporting platform,
- **Entasis** - the subtle curve in of the top of the shaft, designed to make it look straight,
- **Abacus**- the square slab above the Tuscan and Doric orders that supports the architrave, below it is the **echinus**, below that the **necking** then sometimes an **astragal** at the top of the shaft,
- **Entablature** - the upper part of a classical building supported by columns or a colonnade, comprising the **architrave, frieze, and cornice**,
- **Triglyph** - a vertically channelled piece above a Doric column. It has two full vertical channels and one divided into two with half each side,
- **Mutules** - rectangular blocks that hangs from the **soffit** of the **cornice** containing many small cylinders called **guttae**,
- **Metope** - rectangular architectural element that fills the space between two triglyphs in a Doric frieze, which is a decorative band of alternating triglyphs and metopes above the architrave of a building of the Doric order,
- **Pediment** - the triangular space above the entablature at the short side of a temple,

- **Tympanum** - semi-circular or triangular decorative wall surface over an entrance, door or window, which is bounded by a lintel and arch that often contains sculpture or other imagery or ornaments.



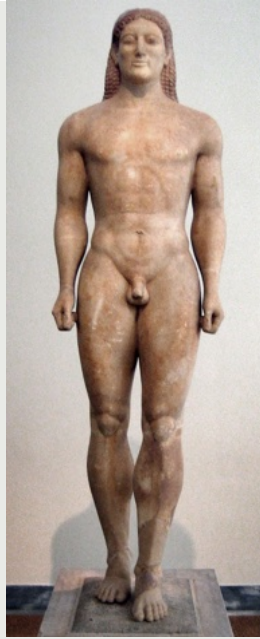
The Parthenon sculptures, c. 1890

- The Parthenon sculptures as they were displayed in the British Museum at the time Rodin would have seen them.
- Rodin never visited Greece but loved the British Museum. In 1881, aged 41, Rodin came to London and made the first of many visits to the British Museum. It was a time when the Parthenon sculptures were at the height of their fame. Although Rodin had already studied the sculptures from books, plaster casts and some originals in the Louvre, his encounter with them in the British Museum had a profound effect and influenced a number of his works.
- He drew inspiration from ancient Greek art. He drew inspiration from ancient Greek art. Rodin had a collection of over 6,000 antiquities and in 1900 he built a museum at Meudon in the outskirts of Paris to house his growing collection. At night, by lamplight, he would show visitors the subtle modelling of the carved marble. In summer, Rodin brought Greek sculptures into the garden and placed them on funerary altars. He said, 'I love the sculptures of ancient Greece. They have been and remain my masters.'

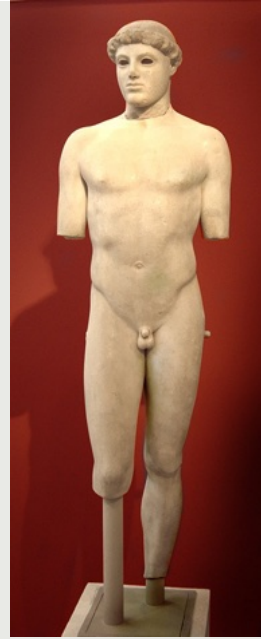
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- Article on Rodin by **Waldemar Januszczak** in *The Sunday Times*. Rodin's reputation has gone up and down over the years, currently he is up. After his death his reputation dropped and only in the last few decades has he been accepted as a **trailblazer of modern sculpture**. There are **two big problems**, '**authenticity**' and '**melodrama**'. Authenticity relates to what is a genuine

Rodin? He produced models in clay, he never carved, this was done by stone carvers. *The Kiss* at the exhibition is a plaster version of a marble version and neither was made by Rodin. Today authenticity is an aspect of a work to be played with so in this sense he was a pioneer. **He never visited Greece and was inspired by a visit to the British Museum in 1881** when he saw the Elgin marbles and was profoundly influenced immediately he saw them. The **melodrama** is Rodin's emphasis on the extreme and the disturbing. For example, **Greek sculptures are fragments** because of **damage** over the millennia but **Rodin preferred body parts**, figures with no heads or arms. The Centauress has the body and neck of a horse combined with a female head and arms, Iris is a **headless female who grabs one leg** and contorts herself into a 'position that offers a crudely detailed view of her sex'. The sculptures in the British Museum are not even as they were originally intended. In the 1930s they were scraped with wire brushes by Lord Duveen and his workmen. This removed the top layer of the sculptures and ruined the detail of the finish in his vain attempt to return them to his imagined view of their original pristine whiteness. This was an illusion as they were originally painted in strong colours.



Kroisos Kouros, c. 530 BCE



Kritios Boy, c. 480 BCE

Kroisos Kouros, c. 530 BC

Kritios Boy, c. 480 BCE

- A quick overview of ancient Greek sculpture. The Archaic Period was from 800 to 480 BCE and this is an early example of a kouros known as the Kroisos Kouros (pronounced 'kro-ee-sos koo-ros') as it was a grave marker for a fallen young warrior named Kroisos. Note its rigid stance, lack of emotion and possible resemblance to Egyptian statues.
- (CLICK) This marble **Kritios Boy** or Kritian Boy belongs to the Early Classical period of ancient Greek sculpture. It is the first statue from classical antiquity known to use contrapposto; the art critic Kenneth Clark called it "the first beautiful nude in art"

EARLY CLASSICAL

- The Early Classical began between 525 and 480 BCE and ended c. 450 BCE. One exception is the *Kritian boy*, c. 480 BCE whose contrapposto stance and inclination of head and shoulders breaks with the late Archaic kouros and is a step toward the greater naturalism and individualisation of the Classical.

NOTES

- It is possible, even likely, that earlier bronze statues had used the technique, but if they did, they have not survived and Susan Woodford has speculated that the statue is a copy of a bronze original. Based on little evidence Kritios Boy is

named after the sculptor Kritios, from around 480 BC.

NOTES ON ALASTAIR SOOKE, TREASURES OF ANCIENT GREECE, 2015, BBC

- Arthur Evans was the keeper of the Ashmolean and went to Crete and discovered Knossos. The centre of the **Minoan civilization** (1700-1400 BC). Further north the island of Santorini has been called the "Greek Pompeii" as the entire town of Akrotiri was buried by an earthquake in 1627 BC. It may have inspired Plato's story of Atlantis. It was a Minoan bronze age settlement. There is a room with live like blue monkeys on the walls. Before this settlement another civilization had reached the island - the Mycenaeans. Their capital was on a rocky hilltop in the Peloponnese area of Greece. It was discovered by Schliemann. Was there an Agamemnon? No. Mycenae is built by warriors for warriors. He found a golden horde including a gold death mask. By 11th C all strongholds on Greek mainland had been abandoned. Mycenae became the Greeks Age of Heroes. The abandonment became known as the Dark Ages 1100-800 BC. What was the cause? We don't know.
- Lefkandi during Dark Ages in a grave 10th c BC found a centaur and a Babylonian jewel 1000 years old at that time. The centaur has geometric pattern and mythology. Pattern would lead Greek art out of the Dark Ages. 750 BC the human figure returns, reliquary pot with human figures. By 7thC geometric patterns have been replaced by human figures. Then black figure technique. The block is iron oxide in clay that goes black on firing. The lines are inscribed with a point. Lasted a century or so. Many pots were decorated with mystical scenes. This created a growing sense of Greekness. 6th C figures scream Egyptian but with a subtle Greek sensuality. Kouroi or youths.
- Soon all the city states referred to themselves as Hellas. The artistic competition at Delphi helped to bind the city states.
- Kouroi were soon replaced by end of 6th C BC in Athens emerging as key state. 6r0BC tyrants were slayed led to statues of the tyrant slayers.



Riace bronzes, 460-450 BC, examples of proto classic bronze sculpture, Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia, Reggio Calabria

- These are the Riace bronzes. The most popular theory is that two separate Greek artists created these bronzes about 30 years apart around the 5th century BCE.
- 'Statue A' was probably created between the years 460 and 450 BC, and 'Statue B' between 430 and 420 BC. Some believe that '**Statue A**' was the work of **Myron**, and that a pupil of Phidias, called **Alkamenes**, created '**Statue B**'. **Statue A** portrays a young warrior hero or god with a proud look, conscious of his own beauty and power. **Statue B**, on the other hand, portrays an older more mature warrior hero with a relaxed pose and a kind and gentle gaze.

NOTES

- The Riace bronzes are major additions to the surviving examples of ancient Greek sculpture. They belong to a transitional period from archaic Greek sculpture to the early Classical style, disguising their idealized geometry and impossible anatomy under a distracting and alluring 'realistic' surface. They are fine examples of contrapposto - their weight is on the back legs, making them much more realistic than with many other Archaic stances. Their musculature is clear, yet not incised, and looks soft enough to be visible and realistic. The bronzes' turned heads not only confer movement, but also add life to the figures. The asymmetrical layout of their arms and legs adds realism to them.

CLASSICAL PERIOD

- The Classical period saw a revolution of Greek sculpture, sometimes associated by historians with the popular culture surrounding the introduction of democracy and the end of the aristocratic culture associated with the kourai. The Classical period saw changes in the style and function of sculpture, along with a dramatic increase in the technical skill of Greek sculptors in depicting realistic human forms. Poses also became more naturalistic, notably during the beginning of the period. From about 500 BCE, Greek statues began increasingly to depict real people, as opposed to vague interpretations of myth or entirely fictional votive statues, although the style in which they were represented had not yet developed into a realistic form of portraiture.

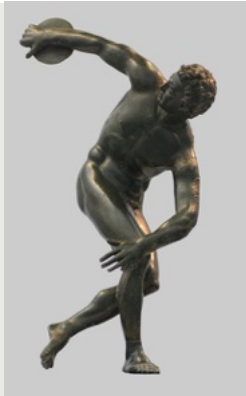
CONTRAPPOSTO

- It was in this period that sculpted figures adopted a contrapposto stance. The word describes a human figure standing with most of its weight on one foot so that its shoulders and arms twist off-axis from the hips and legs. This gives the figure a more dynamic, or alternatively relaxed appearance. Contrapposto was an extremely important sculptural development as it marks the first time in Western art that the human body was used to express a psychological disposition. The static, balanced stance of the kourai suggests the perfect, ideal man but contrapposto creates an individual real man and the point of movement.

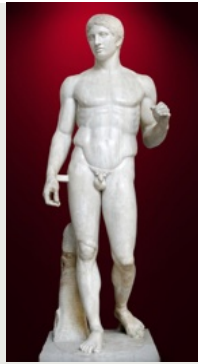
ILIAC CREST

- Despite the move towards realism there is one anomaly that stands out to the modern eye and that is the pronounced overhang of muscle at the top of the groin area, the so-called iliac crest. Although modern body builders do develop pronounced abdominal muscle, such as the 'six pack' (the rectus abdominus muscles) and an iliac crest it is positioned differently and does not extend round the back as it does in Greek statues such as the Riace bronzes. We do not know the reason. One suggestion (see *Reading between the Loins: A Curious Anomaly in the Portrayal of the Male Physique in Greek Sculpture*, P. Tennant, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg) is that classical sculptures are not naturalistic but structured to emphasize particular features. The ancient Greek interest in mathematical proportion and architecture led to a deconstruction of the body and its reassembly as an architectural form that ideally follows certain

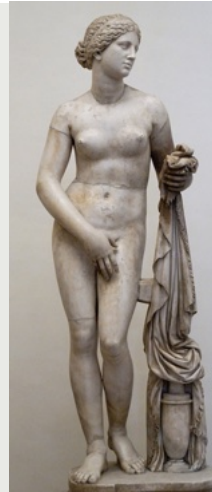
mathematical ratios. The pronounced crest is an artistic device that clearly separates the upper and lower body, acts as a type of architrave for the upper body and draws attention to the thighs. We know that well developed thighs were a source of homoerotic appeal as they are mentioned in texts such as Homer's *Odyssey* 'his great and shapely thighs'. Archaeological evidence suggests the inhabitants of ancient Greece were thickset and sturdy with relatively short lower limbs.



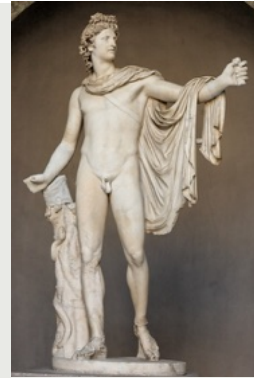
Myron's Discobolus,
Roman bronze
reduction, 2nd century
AD, based on a c. 460–
450 BCE Greek original,
Glyptothek, Munich



Doryphoros of
Polykleitos, 2.12
metres, Naples
National
Archaeological
Museum, copy of
bronze original c.
440 BCE



Ludovisi Cnidian
Aphrodite, Roman
marble copy (torso
and thighs), restored
head, arms, legs and
drapery support, after
Praxiteles, 4th C, BCE



Apollo Belvedere, after
Leochares, c. 120-140,
copy of bronze original
of c. 350-325 BCE, 224
cm, Vatican

Doryphoros of Polykleitos, 2.12 metres, Naples National Archaeological Museum, copy of bronze original c. 440 BCE

Ludovisi Cnidian Aphrodite, Roman marble copy (torso and thighs) with restored head, arms, legs and drapery support, after Praxiteles, 4th century BCE

Myron's Discobolus, Roman bronze reduction, 2nd century AD, based on a c. 460–450 BCE Greek original, Glyptothek, Munich

Apollo Belvedere, after Leochares, c. 120-140, copy of bronze original of c. 350-325 BCE, 224 cm, Vatican

- These are from the Classical Period which ended with the death of Alexander the Great.
- The four best-known ancient Greek sculptors were **Myron** (5th century BCE, *Discobolus* and a lost lifelike statue of a heifer), **Phidias** (c. 493-430 BCE, Parthenon frieze, *Athena*, *Zeus*), **Polyclitus** (5th century BCE, *Doryphoros* and his famous Canon) and **Praxiteles** (c. 400-330 BCE, *Aphrodite of Knidos*, *Hermes with the Infant Dionysus*). Other famous Greek sculptors include Leochares (pronounced 'Lee-OH-kah-rees'), Scopas, Lysippus, Callimachus and Alexandros.

NOTES

- The four best-known works represented by surviving copies are:
- **The Apollo Belvedere** was rediscovered in central Italy in the late 15th century,

during the Renaissance. From the mid-18th century it was considered the greatest ancient sculpture and for centuries epitomized ideals of aesthetic perfection for Europeans and westernized parts of the world. The Greek god Apollo is depicted as a standing archer having just shot an arrow. Although there is no agreement as to the precise narrative detail being depicted, the conventional view has been that he has just slain the serpent Python, the chthonic serpent guarding Delphi—making the sculpture a *Pythian Apollo*.

- **The Doryphoros of Polyclitus** is one of the best known Greek sculptures of classical antiquity, depicting a solidly-built, well-muscled standing warrior, originally bearing a spear balanced on his left shoulder. Rendered somewhat above life-size proportions, the lost bronze original of the work would have been cast circa 440 BCE, but it is today known only from later (mainly Roman period) marble copies. The work nonetheless forms an important early example of both Classical Greek contrapposto and classical realism; as such, the iconic Doryphoros proved highly influential elsewhere in ancient art. The Canon of Polykleitos is a lost text describing the perfect proportions of the human body to achieve beauty. Sometime in the 2nd century CE, the Greek medical writer Galen wrote about the Doryphoros as the perfect visual expression of the Greeks' search for harmony and beauty, which is rendered in the perfectly proportioned sculpted male nude
- **The Aphrodite of Cnidos** was a Greek sculpture of Aphrodite created by **Praxiteles** of Athens around the 4th century BCE. It is one of the first life-sized representations of the nude female form in Greek history, displaying an alternative idea to male heroic nudity. Praxiteles' Aphrodite is shown nude, reaching for a bath towel while covering her pubis, which, in turn leaves her breasts exposed. The original Greek sculpture is lost but many Roman copies survive. Variants of the *Venus Pudica* (suggesting an action to cover the breasts) are the *Venus de' Medici* and the *Capitoline Venus*.
- **The Discobolus of Myron** ("discus thrower", Greek: Δισκοβόλος, Diskobólos) is a Greek sculpture completed towards the end of the Severe Period, figuring a youthful ancient Greek athlete throwing discus, circa 460–450 BC. The original Greek bronze is lost but the work is known through numerous Roman copies, both full-scale ones in marble, which was cheaper than bronze, such as the first to be recovered, the Palombara Discobolus, and smaller scaled versions in bronze. A discus thrower is depicted about to release his throw: "by sheer intelligence", Kenneth Clark

observed in *The Nude*, "Myron has created the enduring pattern of athletic energy. He has taken a moment of action so transitory that students of athletics still debate if it is feasible, and he has given it the completeness of a cameo." The moment thus captured in the statue is an example of *rhythmos*, harmony and balance. Myron is often credited with being the first sculptor to master this style.

Rodin said, '**No artist will ever surpass Pheidias... The greatest of the sculptors, who appeared at the time when the entire human dream could be contained in the pediment of a temple, will never be equalled.**'
(Auguste Rodin, 1911)



The Dying Gaul, 230-220 BC, Capitoline Museums, Rome.

The Dying Gaul, 230-220 BC, Capitoline Museums, Rome.

The Dying Gaul, also called *The Dying Galatian* or *The Dying Gladiator*, is an ancient Roman marble copy of a lost Hellenistic sculpture, thought to have been originally executed in bronze. The original may have been commissioned some time between 230 and 220 BC by Attalus I of Pergamon.

HELLENISTIC

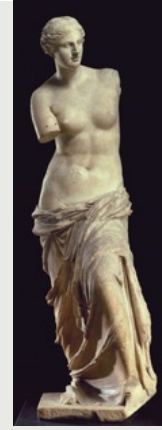
- The transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic (or Hellenic) (Hellenic is not the same era as the Hellenistic) period occurred during the 4th century BCE. **Greek art became increasingly diverse, influenced by the cultures of the peoples drawn into the Greek orbit, by the conquest's of Alexander the Great** (336 to 323 BCE). In the view of some art historians, this is described as a **decline in quality and originality**; however, individuals of the time may not have shared this outlook. Many sculptures previously considered classical masterpieces are now known to be of the Hellenistic age.
- During this period, sculpture again experienced a shift towards increasing naturalism. Common people, women, children, animals, and domestic scenes became acceptable subjects for sculpture, which was commissioned by wealthy families for the adornment of their homes and gardens.



The Winged Victory of Samothrace, from the island of Samothrace, 200-190 BCE, Louvre



Laocoön and His Sons, 200 BCE – 70 CE, Vatican



The Venus de Milo, discovered at the Greek island of Milos, 130-100 BCE, Louvre



Pergamon Altar, first half of the 2nd century BCE, Pergamon Museum, Berlin

The Winged Victory of Samothrace, from the island of Samothrace, 200-190 BCE, Louvre

Laocoön and His Sons, 200 BCE – 70 CE, Vatican

The Venus de Milo, discovered at the Greek island of Milos, 130-100 BCE, Louvre

Pergamon Altar, first half of the 2nd century BCE, Pergamon Museum, Berlin

- Four well-known works from the Hellenistic Period—from left to right: the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, from the island of Samothrace, 200-190 BC now in the Louvre; the *Laocoön* now in the Vatican, the *Pergamon Altar*, now in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin and the *Venus de Milo*, discovered at the Greek island of Milos, 130-100 BCE, now in the Louvre.

NOTES

- ***The Winged Victory of Samothrace*** is one of the most celebrated sculptures in the world and a masterpiece of the Hellenistic period. It is one of a small number of major Hellenistic statues surviving in the original, rather than Roman copies. The statue's outstretched right wing is a symmetric plaster version of the original left one. The Greek government has asked the Louvre to return the statue to the Aegean island of Samothrace.
- ***Laocoön and His Sons***. **Pliny attributes** the work, then in the palace of Emperor Titus, to three Greek sculptors from the island of Rhodes: **Agessander, Athenodoros and Polydorus**, but does not give a date or patron. In style it is considered "**one of the finest examples of the Hellenistic baroque**" and

certainly in the Greek tradition, but it is not known whether it is an original work or a copy of an earlier sculpture, probably in bronze, or made for a Greek or Roman commission. The view that it is an original work of the 2nd century BCE now has few if any supporters, although many still see it as a copy of such a work made in the early Imperial period, **probably of a bronze original**. Others see it as probably an original work of the later period, continuing to use the Pergamene style of some two centuries earlier. In either case, it was probably commissioned for the home of a wealthy Roman, possibly of the Imperial family. Various dates have been suggested for the statue, ranging from about 200 BC to the 70s AD, though "a Julio-Claudian date (between 27 BC and 68 CE) ... is now preferred"

- **The Pergamon Altar** is a monumental construction built during the reign of king Eumenes II in the first half of the 2nd century BCE on one of the terraces of the acropolis of the ancient Greek city of Pergamon in Asia Minor. The structure is 35.64 metres wide and 33.4 metres deep; the front stairway alone is almost 20 metres wide. The base is decorated with a frieze in high relief showing the battle between the Giants and the Olympian gods known as the Gigantomachy. The hall housing the Pergamon Altar will remain closed until 2023 due to renovations.
- **The Venus de Milo**. The *Aphrodite of Milos*, better but mistakenly known as the *Venus de Milo*, is an ancient Greek statue and one of the most famous works of ancient Greek sculpture. Initially it was attributed to the sculptor **Praxiteles**, however from an inscription that was on its plinth, the statue is thought to be the work of **Alexandros of Antioch**. Created sometime between 130 and 100 BC, the statue is believed to depict Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty; however, some scholars claim it is the sea-goddess Amphitrite, venerated on Milos. The original plinth containing the name of the sculptor Alexandros of Antioch has been 'lost' by the Louvre and its website comments on the way it evokes the work of Praxiteles. The great fame of the Venus de Milo during the nineteenth century was not simply the result of its admitted beauty; it also owed much to a major propaganda effort by the French authorities. In 1815, France had returned the Medici Venus to the Italians after it had been looted by Napoleon Bonaparte. The Medici Venus, regarded as one of the finest classical sculptures in existence, caused the French to promote the Venus de Milo as a greater treasure than that which they recently had

lost. The statue was praised dutifully by many artists and critics as the epitome of graceful female beauty. However, Pierre-Auguste Renoir was among its detractors, labelling it a 'big gendarme'.

HELLENISTIC PERIOD

- Hellenistic art is the art of the period in classical antiquity generally taken to begin with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and end with the conquest of the Greek world by the Romans, a process well underway by 146 BCE, when the Greek mainland was taken, and essentially ending in 31 BCE with the conquest of Ptolemaic Egypt following the Battle of Actium. A number of the best-known works of Greek sculpture belong to this period, including *Laocoön and His Sons*, *Venus de Milo*, and the *Winged Victory of Samothrace*.

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917),
Man with the Broken Nose, 1863,
bronze, 12.5 x 15.1 x 15.3 cm,
Museo Soumaya at Plaza Carso



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Man with the Broken Nose*, 1863, bronze, 12.5 x 15.1 x 15.3 cm, Museo Soumaya at Plaza Carso

- This one of **Rodin's earliest works**. He is experimenting with the conventions of sculpture. The face, modelled on a working man called Bibi, does not wear the sage-like expression of the ancient classical busts of philosophers. The broken nose and crumpled expression suggest violence rather than reason.
- The first version of this work suffered an accident. In the depths of winter **the head froze and the front separated from the back**. Overnight it seemed to have aged 2,000 years to become an **archaeological fragment**. Rodin said, **'That mask determined all my future work; it's the first modelled piece I did**. Ever since, I've tried to see my works from all possible points of view and to draw them in every one of their aspects. **That mask has been on my mind in every thing I have done.**' Rodin submitted the shell of the face to the Salon of 1864. The art world was not ready and it was refused although it was accepted ten years later. It became a great success, particularly in London where it was praised by the artists Alphonse Legros and Frederic Leighton. **Today, he is regarded as a great artist, but at the time he was seen as a radical.**

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Michelangelo Buonarroti
(1475-1564),
The Dying Slave,
1513-15, 228 cm, Louvre



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917),
The Age of Bronze, 1875/76,
Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery), Berlin

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Age of Bronze*, 1875/76, Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery), Berlin

Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), *The Dying Slave*, 1513-15, 228 cm, Louvre, commissioned in 1505 for the tomb of Pope Julius II

- In **1875** (aged 35) he had saved enough to **travel to Italy** for two months where the work of Donatello and Michelangelo had a profound effect on his style. Rodin said, "**It is Michelangelo who has freed me from academic sculpture.**" On his return he began work on ***The Age of Bronze*** a life-size male figure modelled on a Belgian soldier called Auguste Neyt
- (CLICK) and inspired by Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* and a figure from the Parthenon frieze. The work was **so accurate** that when it was exhibited in 1877 in Brussels and then the Paris Salon he was **accused on cheating** by taking a cast from a living model (*surmoulage*) and the lack of a theme troubled critics. His later work was larger or smaller than life to avoid this accusation.

REFERENCES

<http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/age-bronze>



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917),
The Age of Bronze, 1877



Block XLVII (figs. 132–136) unmounted
youths preparing for the cavalcade, north
frieze of the Parthenon, c. 438–432 BCE


Doryphoros of
Polykleitos, 2.12 metres,
Naples National
Archaeological Museum,
copy of bronze original c.
440 BCE



Block XLVII (figs. 132–136) of unmounted youths preparing for the cavalcade from the north frieze of the Parthenon, c. 438–432 BC, British Museum

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Age of Bronze*, 1877, bronze, sand cast before 1916, Musée Rodin

- Rodin wrote, **“I love the sculptures of ancient Greece. They have been and remain my masters ... They are, above all, sincere. [The Greeks] searched for this sincerity in Nature and through hard work they found it.”**
- (CLICK) The work seems to reference *Doryphoros* or spear-bearer of Polykleitos but it charged with emotion rather than fixed in monumental perfection. Another reference is the figure on the left of this carving from the north frieze of the Parthenon.



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *St. John the Baptist Preaching*, 1877, Musée d'Orsay

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *St. John the Baptist Preaching*, 1877, Musée d'Orsay

- In 1877 he returned to Paris with Rose Beuret (born 1844), who was to become his lifelong partner, and lived in a small flat on the Left Bank. His personal life was difficult, his mother was dead, his father senile and his son, who had essentially abandoned for six years was possibly developmentally delayed. He worked on commissions with well-known sculptors in the style of Carpeaux but had limited success.
- In his own time he worked on ***St. John the Baptist Preaching*** which was **exhibited in 1880** at the Paris Salon and despite being dismissed by critics it **won third prize**, he was 39. In 1880 he started work at the **Sevres porcelain factory** as a designer. His design work was appreciated and he began to be invited to Paris Salons.

NOTES

- 'Rodin himself described how the idea for this figure had been suggested to him by an **Italian peasant** from the Abruzzi called **Pignatelli**, who came to offer him his services as a model : "As soon as I saw him, I was filled with admiration; this **rough, hairy man** expressed violence in his bearing... yet also the mystical character of his race. I immediately thought of a Saint John the Baptist, in other words, a man of nature, a visionary, a believer, a precursor who came to announce one greater than himself. The peasant undressed, climbed onto the

revolving stand as if he had never posed before; he planted himself firmly on his feet, head up, torso straight, at the same time putting his weight on both legs, open like a compass. The movement was so right, so straightforward and so true that I cried: 'But it's a man walking!' I immediately resolved to model what I had seen." (Dujardin-Beaumetz, 1913).' (Rodin Museum website)

- In 1900 Rodin **produced *The Walking Man*** on a Corinthian column **based on a model of the torso** he produced as a study for *St John the Baptist*.



Auguste Rodin
(1840–1917),
Gates of Hell,
Musée d'Orsay,
Paris



Auguste Rodin (1840–
1917), *Gates of Hell*,
Kunsthaus, Zürich,
Switzerland

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Gates of Hell*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Gates of Hell*, Kunsthaus, Zürich, Switzerland

- Through the contacts he made at the Paris Salon he was recommended to Government ministers and in 1880 he **won a commission** to produce a **portal** for a planned museum of decorative arts which resulted in ***Gates of Hell***. This occupied him for forty years but it was never built and he worked on it for the rest of his life. The version in the Musée d'Orsay is the original plaster model. After his death seven bronze casts were produced now located around the world including this one in Zürich.
- It depicts scenes from ***Dante's Inferno***. His vision was to recreate the experience of Hell as described by Dante particularly his warning "**Abandon every hope, who enter here**".
- In its final form it depicts 186 figures of which at least nine became sculptures in their own right, including his most famous, ***The Thinker*** (originally *The Poet*) and ***The Kiss***. With the museum commission came a free studio, granting Rodin a new level of artistic freedom. Soon, **he stopped working at the porcelain factory**; his income came from **private commissions**.
- In 1883 he met **Camille Claudel** and formed a passionate and stormy relationship and both influenced each other artistically.

NOTES

- *The Gates of Hell* depict a scene from the *Inferno*, the first section of Dante

Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*. It stands at 6 metres high, 4 metres wide and 1 metre deep and contains 180 figures. The figures range from 15 centimetres (6 in) high up to more than one metre (3 ft). Several of the figures were also cast independently by Rodin.

- The sculpture was **commissioned** by the Directorate of Fine Arts in **1880** and was meant to be **delivered in 1885**. Rodin would continue to **work on and off** on this project for **37 years**, until his death in 1917. The Directorate asked for an inviting entrance to a planned Decorative Arts Museum with the theme being left to Rodin's selection.
- Rodin conceived that people would walk toward the work, perhaps up a flight of stairs, and be overwhelmed frontally by the massive gates, contemplating the experience of hell that Dante describes in his *Inferno*. Rodin thought particularly of Dante's warning over the entrance of the Inferno, "Abandon every hope, who enter here."
- Rodin was inspired by medieval bas reliefs, Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* at the Baptistery of St. John, Florence, Michelangelo's fresco *The Last Judgment*, Delacroix's painting *The Barque of Dante*, Balzac's collection *La Comédie humaine* and Baudelaire's poems *Les Fleurs du mal*,
- Rodin said: "**For a whole year I lived with Dante, with him alone, drawing the circles of his inferno. At the end of this year, I realized that while my drawing rendered my vision of Dante, they had become too remote from reality. So I started all over again, working from nature, with my models.**"
- Many elements of the doors became works in their own right including:
 - *The Thinker*, also called *The Poet*, variously interpreted as Rodin himself or as Adam.
 - *The Kiss*, originally representing Paolo and Francesca da Rimini but eventually removed as they conflicted with the other suffering figures.
 - *Ugolino and his Children*
 - *The Three Shades*
 - *Fleeting Love*
 - *Meditation*
 - *The Old Courtesan*

- *Eternal Springtime*
- *Adam and Eve*



The London cast of The Burgers of Calais, with the Palace of Westminster in the background

1917), *The Burgers of Calais*, 1884-89, bronze, 201.6 × 205.4 × 195.9, Calais

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Burgers of Calais*, 1884-89, bronze, 201.6 × 205.4 × 195.9, Calais

The London cast of The Burgers of Calais, with the Palace of Westminster in the background

- In 1884, he won a commission to create a historical monument for the town of Calais first displayed in 1889 as ***The Burgers of Calais***.
- (CLICK) There are also nine other casts including Paris, New York, Washington and London. The sculpture should be raised on a plinth to head height so the viewer looks up into the faces of the burghers.
- The statue commemorates six citizens of Calais who offered themselves as hostages to **Edward III** after he had vainly besieged their town for nearly a year in 1347. It is said that their lives were spared on the intercession of **Edward's queen Philippa of Hainault**.

NOTES

- The nine casts are:
 - Musée Rodin, Paris,
 - the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.,
 - the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra,
 - the Brooklyn Museum, New York City,
 - the Kunstmuseum, Basel,

- the Rodin Museum, Philadelphia,
 - the garden of the Musée Rodin, Paris,
 - and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem,
 - And the Victoria Tower Gardens, **Westminster**, London.
- The Burghers of Calais statue by Rodin in Victoria Tower Gardens, **Westminster**, London.
 - “A technical matter. Consider the height at which it is displayed. This is of crucial importance too. See how it is raised up so that we confront it, body to body, just as Rodin would have wished. Rodin was very punctilious about this question of height of display. A few years ago there was an entire exhibition devoted to the subject at the Rodin Museum in Paris. The single most revelatory ensemble of figures to be seen there was **The Burghers of Calais**, which was **raised up high** on a wooden scaffolding. This is just **as Rodin had originally intended** – there were fading photographs to prove it. We had to look up into the faces of the burghers. And in so doing, they came alive. Their heroic struggle had the meaning of which it has been **completely robbed as we see it now in Victoria Tower Gardens**, where the burghers stand on a **low plinth**, unenergised, lacking in purposefulness, robbed of meaning.” (Michael Glover, *The Independent*, 20 November, 2010)



Female centaurs flanking Venus, mosaic pavement from Roman Tunisia, 2nd-4th century AD, Bardo Museum, Tunisia



Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), *The Centauress*, modelled c. 1887, cast 1925, bronze, 46 x 43.2 x 14.9 cm, Rodin Museum

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), *The Centauress*, modelled c. 1887, cast 1925, bronze, 46 x 43.2 x 14.9 cm, Rodin Museum. Signed top of base to right, near horse's left hoof: A. Rodin Foundry mark back of base to left: Alexis Rudier/Fondeur Paris, Made in France, Europe. Cast by the founder Alexis Rudier, Paris, 1874 – 1952

Female centaurs flanking Venus, mosaic pavement from Roman Tunisia, 2nd-4th century AD, Bardo Museum, Tunisia

- The Centaurs are legendary half-human, half-horse creatures from ancient Greece. For the ancient Greeks they represented violence, passion and lust and they often represented Centauromachy's where they are shown fighting the Lapiths who represented reason and the Lapiths always win.
- Female are not often shown but on this mosaic pavement from Roman Tunisia the goddess Aphrodite is shown with a Centauress either side holding a wreath of myrtle. The text is difficult to translate. Polystephanus was a Greek writer of books describing miraculous stories and unbelievable things. Archeus is the life force and 'Rationis est' is 'the reason'.
- **(CLICK) In 1887 Rodin produced a statue of a Centauress.**
- **Female centaurs**, called centaurides or centauresses, are not mentioned in early Greek literature and art, but they do **appear occasionally in later antiquity**. Rodin may be referencing the centauress Hylonome in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who committed suicide on hearing of the death of her husband Cyllarus in the fight against the Lapiths (legendary people of Greek

mythology).

- The most common theory regarding the idea of centaurs is that they arose from the first reaction of a non-riding culture, such as the Minoan, to nomads who were mounted on horseback.



Phidias, *Iris*, Parthenon, British Museum



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Iris, Messenger of the Gods*, cast by Alexis Rudier, modelled ca. 1890, cast 1965, bronze, 44.5 × 41.6 × 22.9 cm, 4.3 kg, height, 48.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Phidias, *Iris*, Parthenon, British Museum

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *Iris, Messenger of the Gods*, cast by Alexis Rudier (French), modeled ca. 1890, cast 1965, bronze, 44.5 × 41.6 × 22.9 cm, 4.3 kg, height, 48.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

- “This unabashedly **erotic partial figure** was inspired by Rodin’s interest in dance. Extending her legs in mid-flight, the messenger of the gods is rendered weightless through her acrobatic pose. A large-scale winged version, symbolising poetic inspiration, was originally intended for Rodin’s monument to the Romantic poet Victor Hugo.” (Metropolitan Museum of Art)
- She is Iris, Messenger of the Gods, perhaps on a mission to convince us that sculpture should be vigorous. **Too much sculpture, before and after Rodin, seems monumentally lifelessness.**” (*The Independent*, 26 November, 2010)
- Rodin sculpted figures like this in poses that project energy, vitality, movement and eroticism tempered by the headless body and the removal of one arm. Rodin removed heads and arms even though they were originally present in ancient Greek sculptures in order to capture the essence of the human form and emotion without the distraction of a complete figure.
- The ancient Greeks also painted their work in bright colours and Rodin was even less inclined to emulate this. He was not trying to mimic ancient Greek work but was inspired by it to create the beauty that resides in the human form.

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Honoré de
Balzac (1799-
1850)

Auguste Rodin (French, 1840-1917),
Monument to Balzac, 1892-97,
bronze,
270 x 120 x 128 cm,
Jardin du Musée Rodin



Auguste Rodin (French, 1840-1917), *Monument to Balzac*, 1892-97, bronze, 270 x 120 x 128 cm, Jardin du Musée Rodin in autumn, VIIe arrondissement, Paris

- Rodin explained that this sculpture that he produced in memory of the French novelist **Honoré Balzac portrayed the writer's persona rather than a physical likeness.**
- (CLICK) shown here.
- The work was **commissioned in 1891** by the Société des Gens de Lettres, a full-size plaster model was displayed in 1898. After coming under criticism the model was rejected by the société and Rodin moved it to his home in Meudon. On July 2, 1939 (22 years after the sculptor's death) the model was cast in bronze for the first time and placed on the Boulevard du Montparnasse.
- Rodin was given eighteen months to complete the work but worked on it for seven years, reading all Balzac's works, travelling many times to his home town and having clothes made by his tailor, using a cloak similar to Balzac's writing cloak for his final statue. Because of the delay, the **Société threatened legal action** and to give the commission to another artist yet Rodin continued to ask for more time as he became infatuated with capturing the author's strength. Rodin said, "**The only thing I realize today is that the neck is too strong. I thought I had to enlarge it because according to me, modern sculpture must exaggerate the forms for the moral point of view. Through the exaggerated neck I wanted to represent strength I realize that the execution exceeded the idea.**"

- One feature that caused amusement and discussion was the pronounced priapic bulge.



Anonymous, Gwen John modelling, casts of the Parthenon frieze behind, c. 1907-11, photograph, National Library of Wales, Cardiff



Gwen John (1876-1939), Self-Portrait, 1902



Auguste Rodin, *Draped Muse* from the *Monument to Whistler*, fourth stage, 1914-18, plaster and plasticine, 238 x 115 x 128 cm, Musée Rodin

Auguste Rodin, *Draped Muse* from the *Monument to Whistler*, fourth stage, 1914-18, plaster and plasticine, 238 x 115 x 128 cm, Musée Rodin

Anonymous, Gwen John modelling in a studio, with casts of the Parthenon frieze on the wall behind, c. 1907-11, photograph, National Library of Wales, Cardiff

- “In **1903** Rodin was unanimously elected **president of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers** founded by the artist James McNeill Whistler in 1898. In **1905** he received a **commission for a memorial to Whistler**. The monument was not completed by the time of Rodin’s death but Rodin had chosen to evoke the theme of a **muse climbing the mountain of glory**, placing allegory at the centre of the composition. The return to the antique and the observation of nature were at the heart of his preoccupations.
- (CLICK) Using as his model the **artist Gwen John** (1876-1939), with whom he was having an affair, he captures the female body in all its vivacious life force. The drapery hanging from the hips around the lower part of the body evokes the statue of the *Venus de Milo*, which Rodin passionately admired and which he wrote an article about in 1910. **On the raised left knee Rodin placed a cast of a Roman funerary altar from his collection**, another example, of incorporating an pre-existing ancient object in his work.” (p. 182)



Michelangelo, *Il Pensieroso* ('The Thoughtful One'), tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, Medici Chapel, San Lorenzo, Florence



Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875), *Ugolino and His Sons*, 1865–67, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Thinker (Le Penseur)*, 1904, Rodin Museum

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Thinker (Le Penseur)*, 1904, Rodin Museum
Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875), *Ugolino and His Sons*, 1865–67, Saint-Béat marble, 2247.6 kg, 197.5 × 149.9 × 110.5 cm, pedestal 1705.1 kg, Metropolitan Museum of Art. It depicts the story of Ugolino from Dante's *Inferno* in which the 13th century count is imprisoned and starving with his children. The work, known for its expressive detail, launched Carpeaux's career.

- This is known as *The Thinker*.
- “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.
- (CLICK) The pose of this figure owes much to Carpeaux's *Ugolino and His Sons* (1861)
- (CLICK) 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." (Musée Rodin)

- It is a bronze sculpture usually placed on a stone pedestal. The work shows a nude male figure of over life-size sitting on a rock with his chin resting on one hand as though deep in thought and is often used as an image to represent philosophy. There are about 28 full size castings, in which the figure is about 186 centimetres (73 in) high, though not all were made during Rodin's lifetime and under his supervision; as well as various other versions, several in plaster, studies, and posthumous castings exist in a range of sizes. The first of the familiar monumental bronze castings did not appear until 1904.

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917),
The Kiss (Baiser), 1882, Pentelican
marble, object: 182.2 × 121.9 ×
153 cm, 3180 kg, Tate



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Kiss (Baiser)*, 1882, marble, 181.5 × 112.5 × 117 cm, Tate

- The Kiss proved a hit with the public at once. It was quickly copied in bronze in various sizes, and more than 300 casts had appeared by 1917. **Three over-life-size marble versions** of the sculpture were executed in Rodin's lifetime. The earliest is in the collection of the **Musée Rodin** in Paris.
- Another was commissioned by the American Edward Warren who specified that the penis should be more prominent. He lived in a mansion in East Sussex but the statue was so large it was stored in a stable. He loaned it to Lewes Town Hall creating a scandal. Influential locals, led by a stern headmistress called **Miss Fowler-Tutt**, considered it offensive particularly after troops were billeted in the Town Hall during the First World War. Fearing the naked lovers would inflame the soldiers the statue was covered in a tarpaulin. In 1955 it was bought by the Tate for £7,500.
- The third version was commissioned for a museum in Copenhagen, Denmark. **Rodin himself was dismissive of it:** he once called *The Kiss* "a large sculpted knick-knack following the usual formula".
- In 2003 the artist Cornelia Parker caused controversy by wrapping it in a mile of string in reference to Marcel Duchamp.
- In the original 13th century story by Dante Alighieri, called the *Divine Comedy*, Francesca and Paolo fell in love as they were reading together. You can see the book slipping from his hand round the back of the sculpture. The affair lasted

ten years until Francesca's husband and Paolo's brother found them and stabbed them both to death. Rodin depicts them at the moment of their first kiss although their lips do not actually meet.

- A bronze version of *The Kiss* (74 centimetres high) was to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago but it was considered unsuitable for general display and put in a room with admission by personal application.

NOTES

- Francesca da Rimini (1255-c. 1285) daughter of the Lord of Ravenna was a contemporary of Dante who portrayed her as a character in his *Divine Comedy*. She was married to Giovanni Malatesta in 1275, an arranged marriage, but fell in love with his younger brother Paolo, who was also married. They carried on an affair for ten years until Giovanni surprised them both in her bedroom and killed them. In the first volume of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante and Virgil meet Francesca and her lover Paolo in the second circle of hell, reserved for the lustful.

REFERENCES

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kiss_\(Rodin_sculpture\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kiss_(Rodin_sculpture))



Figures L and M of goddesses in diaphanous drapery from the east pediment of the Parthenon, c. 438–432 BCE



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Kiss (Baiser)*, 1882, marble, 181.5 × 112.5 × 117 cm, Tate

Figures L and M of goddesses in diaphanous drapery from the east pediment of the Parthenon, c. 438–432 BCE

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Kiss (Baiser)*, 1882, marble, 181.5 × 112.5 × 117 cm, Tate

- In *The Kiss*, the sculpture transcended its original purpose to become representative both of Rodin's own works and of a new naturalism in the history of art. ***The Kiss* has almost become a cliché** demonstrating how great works of art become overfamiliar. But by placing *The Kiss* together with these figures from the east pediment of the Parthenon, we see almost for the first time the miraculous ability of **both Rodin and Pheidias to conjure warm flesh out of cold marble**.
- ***The Kiss*** highlights the problem of deciding what is a genuine Rodin. **He did not carve and he only produced models in clay**. These were then given to stone carvers who produced the full size version. Sometimes there are **many version** such as here there is a plaster version of *The Kiss* and there are marble versions. Deciding **which is an authentic Rodin is an impossible question** as none are if we mean carved by his hand. Using these factory methods he was able to increase his productivity and **he grew very rich**. It also meant that **forgers could easily copy his work** and the **result was indistinguishable** from the 'original'. There are therefore many fake Rodin's in the market. Today, raising questions of authenticity by using factory production techniques is seen as part of the avant garde questioning of the need for authenticity.



Figure K of a goddess from the east pediment of the Parthenon, c. 438–432 BCE



Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Walking Man*, 1907, bronze, sand cast by Alexis Rudier in 1913, Musée Rodin

Figure K of a goddess from the east pediment of the Parthenon, c. 438–432 BCE
Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), *The Walking Man*, 1907, bronze, sand cast by Alexis Rudier in 1913, Musée Rodin

- **Both artists were the most famous sculptors of their lifetimes.** Despite living centuries apart, Rodin wrote and spoke as if he **knew Pheidias personally**. Seeing his hand at work in the sculptures of the Parthenon, Rodin imagined Pheidias as a friend and teacher who guided his hand as he created representations of the human form.

- ***“No artist will ever surpass Pheidias... The greatest of the sculptors, who appeared at the time when the entire human dream could be contained in the pediment of a temple, will never be equalled.”***

Auguste Rodin, 1911

- Like Pheidias, Rodin did not personally carve everything that we put his name to. Rodin was sometimes seen posing for the camera with hammer and chisel in hand, but **he did not carve in marble himself**. He preferred to model figures in clay, and then have them cast in plaster or bronze.
- If he was working in **marble**, he would delegate the task of copying the clay model to a **stone carver** under his personal control. In this, his practice may not have been very different from that of Pheidias. It is most unlikely that Pheidias would have carved any part of the architectural sculpture of the Parthenon, but he very probably designed it, fashioning models and making drawings for the pediment and frieze.

- A goddess (figure K) from the Parthenon's east pediment – headless, armless – is shown with Rodin's *Walking Man*, also headless and armless. The one is raising herself from her seat, the other strides along into a different world, that of modernism and abstract expressionism. In *Walking Man*, we can see how Rodin radically lopped off the head of his own sculpture in order to make it more like the Parthenon sculptures.

NOTES

- During the 1890s Rodin's practice became more and more radical in his pursuit of **fragmentation**, the combination of figures at different scales, and the making of new compositions from his earlier work. A prime example of this is the bold *The Walking Man* (1899–1900), which was exhibited as his major one-person show in 1900. This is **composed of two sculptures from the 1870s** that Rodin found in his studio – a **broken and damaged torso** that had fallen into neglect and the **lower extremities** of a statuette version of his 1878 *St. John the Baptist Preaching* he was having re-sculpted at a reduced scale.
- Without finessing the join between upper and lower, between torso and legs, Rodin created a work that many sculptors at the time and subsequently have seen **as one of his strongest and most singular works**. This is despite the fact that the object conveys two different styles, exhibits two different attitudes toward finish, and lacks any attempt to hide the arbitrary fusion of these two components. It was the freedom and creativity with which Rodin used these practices – along with his activation surfaces of sculptures through traces of his own touch and with his more open attitude toward bodily pose, sensual subject matter, and non-realistic surface – that marked Rodin's re-making of traditional 19th century sculptural techniques into the prototype for modern sculpture.
- The Elgin marbles continue to inspire generations of artists. There are **many questions raised over Rodin's work** although his greatest works are inspiring. However, the **lasting impression is the power, beauty and quietly understated yet unforgettable quality of the Greek sculptures**.



AUGUSTE RODIN
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Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), *The Thinker*, 1904-17, Baltimore Museum of Art

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), *The Thinker*, 1904-17 (original model 1880), Baltimore Museum of Art

- Rodin is unique in the history of art for his intense determination to bridge the gap between the past and the present. What mattered for him in his own work was the expressive power of the body and he found it in the works of Pheidias and Michelangelo.
- I began with one of his best known works, *The Kiss*, and I end with another *The Thinker*. Some believe it is a depiction of Dante Alighieri but others believe he sculpted this as a self-portrait.
- Thank you for your time and attention and I look forward to talking to you again very soon.