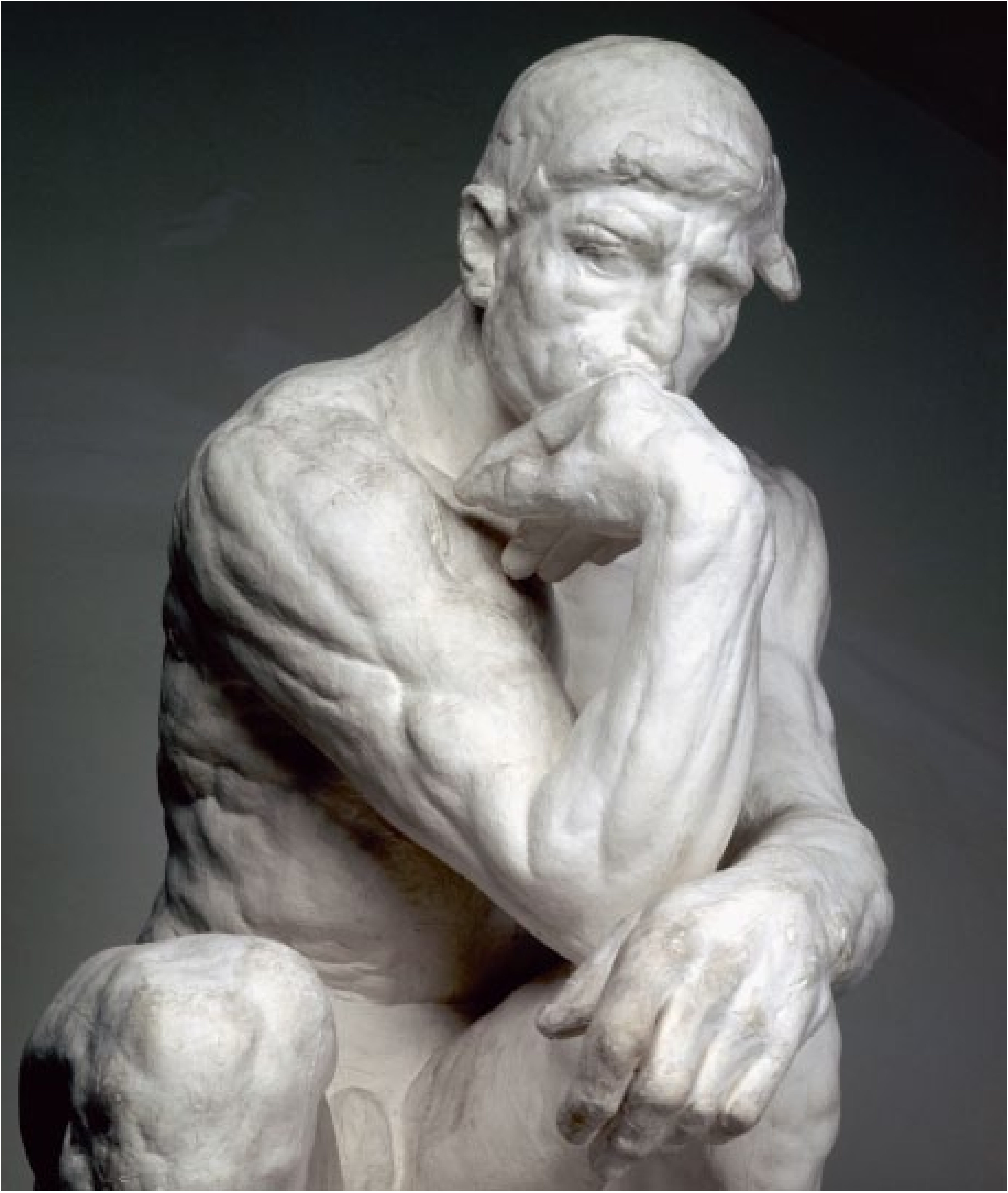
Rodin



Rodin

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ABBEVILLE PRESS PUBLISHERS
New York • London

I. The Affirmation of Difference

THE QUEST FOR OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

In early 1875, encouraged by the fact that his bust *The Man with the Broken Nose* (plate 35) had been accepted by the Salon, the annual Paris art exhibition, Rodin began to think about creating a large figure, the future *Age of Bronze* (plate 24). He would spend two years working on it, interrupted only by his first trip to Italy, in February 1876, when he visited Rome, Naples, and Florence. He initially studied photographs of professional models[1]—and perhaps even tried to have them pose—but disregarded them on the grounds that they gave him only conventional poses. Instead, in October 1875 he began working with Auguste Neyt, a twenty-two-year-old soldier. In the workshop on rue Sans-Souci, in Ixelles (Brussels), explained Neyt, "I had to go through all kinds of poses every day in order to get the muscles right. Rodin did not want any of the muscles to be exaggerated, he wanted naturalness. . . . The master wanted 'natural' action, taken from life. I succeeded by dint of practice."[2] Rodin made him try different positions in harmony with his nature until he found one with which he was entirely satisfied. The pose was chosen on its own merits and not in terms of its relevance to the subject. Rodin explained: "A sincere, passionate, unique love of life. That has always been the school, the rule for me. Even today, after I have dreamt of my figure, after I have fixed his gesture in my mind, I often find myself, when standing before the model that I attempted to get to adopt this pose, changing part of my project in accordance with the advice nature gives me. I never had cause to regret this docility: life, you see, is the most surprising of all mirages. You can see whatever you want in it."[3]

When the plaster was exhibited at the Cercle Artistique in Brussels in January 1877, it was admired for "a quality as precious as it is rare: life."[4] But it had neither title nor attributes that would have made it possible to identify the subject. The face, with its fine, almost feminine features, mouth slightly open, and half-shut eyes, has a hesitant expression that contrasts with the body, which quivers with suppressed activity; it gives off a fragility and an anxiety that are far removed from the somewhat heavyset energy of Auguste Neyt as captured in Gaudenzio Marconi's photographs (plate 25). Caught off guard, critics could find only one explanation, namely that the figure was cast from life, an accusation that Rodin took as an insult because it called into question his role as creator. Citing as an example Antonin Mercié's *David* (bronze, 1872–74, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), whose success was due in part to the fact that it had been seen to symbolize the hope of revenge over Germany, the Belgian critic Jean Rousseau advised Rodin to link his figure to the great series of works inspired by the French defeat of 1870 by placing a weapon in the hand: "What was the meaning of the half-closed eyes and the raised hand? Was this the statue of a sleepwalker? Fear not; everything is clearly and logically explained by the figure's title: *The Vanquished One*, and it is sufficient to add that the raised hand was to have held two spears."[5] But at this time, clarity and logic were at odds with Rodin's temperament, and the attribute, which turned out to be a lance that simply replaced the rod that the model leant on while posing, was only ever added in a drawing that was almost certainly executed later on.

PAGES 33–34
23
Ixelles Idyll
1883–84
Detail, plate 39

OPPOSITE PAGE
24
The Age of Bronze
1877
Bronze, cast by Thiébaut Frères, 1880, 70⅛ × 23¼ × 24 in. (178 × 59 × 61 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

THIS PAGE
25
Gaudenzio Marconi
Auguste Neyt, model for ***The Age of Bronze***
1877
Albumen print, 9⅝ × 5⅞ in. (24.3 × 14.8 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

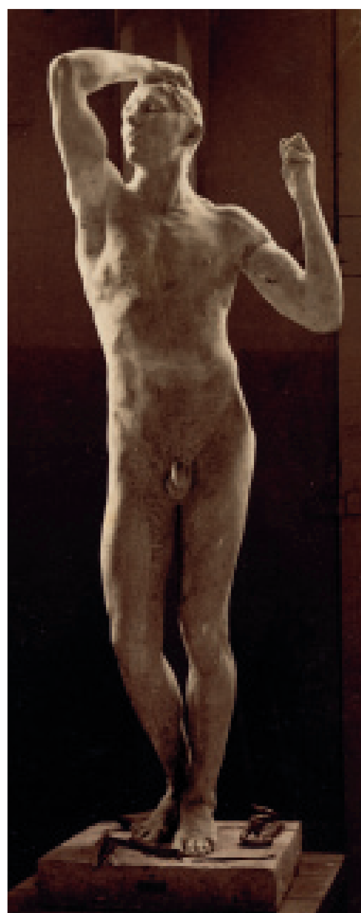
26
Unknown photographer
The Age of Bronze
(in plaster)
c. 1880
Albumen print, 6¼ × 2⅝ in. (16 × 6.8 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

27
The Age of Bronze
1883
Graphite, pen, brown ink, and gouache on cream paper, 12⅞ × 7½ in. (32.8 × 18.9 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

At the Salon of 1877, in May, the figure indeed had no lance and was called *The Age of Bronze*. This hardly left the public better informed, as it was a reference to the third of the four ages of humanity as described by the c. seventh-century BCE Greek poet Hesiod. This title did at least announce the direction in which Rodin was taking his work: Stubbornly rejecting descriptive elements of any kind, he was seeking to penetrate the inner world of humankind and, as Rainer Maria Rilke must have understood so well, its relationship to sculptural form: "Nothing is as important to us," observed Paul Gsell in one of his conversations with Rodin in *L'Art: Entretiens réunis par Paul Gsell*, "than our own feelings, our own intimate person."[6] Faced with the violence of that period of turmoil, man was becoming aware both of what he had lost and of the talents that would enable him to survive. The work became the image of a painful awakening, and indeed in 1900 it was exhibited with the title *The Awakening Man*, a direct reference to Michelangelo's *Adam* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

In 1899 the American sculptor Paul Wayland Bartlett persuaded the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts to buy a plaster cast of the figure. The aim was not to create a collection of artworks, but simply to acquire a remarkable anatomical model at a time when it was impossible to use live models in the United States.[7] This same quality was the very reason for the figure's failure in 1877 in Paris. Yet Rodin's contemporaries were not so much worried about the idea that sculpture was venturing into an emotional realm that they felt was inappropriate, rather they feared being outdone by an unknown artist. Once again, they revived the accusation that he had cast it from a live model, pointing to the extraordinary precision of the modeling. Léon Maillard, in his 1899 book on Rodin, recalled: "By giving free rein to such works, the sculpture of the *Ecole* was dead. The danger appeared so great that, to prevent it, an attempt was made to discredit the frightening object: It was described as a *cast from nature*. It was absurd. But if the accusation had been admitted to, they would have been forever rid of a formidable adversary."[8] Rodin would thereby have been relegated from the rank of sculptor, and thus of creator, to that of caster, of worker.

As he had in Brussels, Rodin clumsily attempted to defend himself but without success; the jury did not even bother to open the package containing the photographs and casts of Neyt. Rodin had moved back to Paris in order to try to forge a career there, but the first months were extremely difficult: "I am annoyed," he wrote to Rose Beuret, who had stayed in Brussels. "I was so close to my goal. Everyone found my figure beautiful, but some continue to say it was cast! . . . I am at the end of my tether, I am tired, I need money, I need to look for a workshop."[9] He had been counting on the statue to make him known and hoped that it would be bought by the state, which was how every career was launched, as he well knew. "What an unhappiness to see my figure, which was to help me find a future, a future that is starting late because I am 36 years old—what an unhappiness to see it thrust aside by this disgraceful suspicion."[10] In August and September 1879, he traveled to Nice with Charles Cordier, and at the beginning of 1880 to Strasbourg. He made up with Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, who entrusted him with new modeling work, in particular the four figures that make up the *Pedestal with Titans* (plate 28), modeled in around 1878. Carrier-Belleuse helped him to obtain a commission for the new Hôtel de Ville in Paris, a statue of the eighteenth-century French mathematician and physicist Jean le Rond D'Alembert (1880), and between 1879 and 1882 got him work at the Manufacture de Sèvres, the national porcelain factory, of which Carrier-Belleuse had



28
Rodin and Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse
Pedestal with Titans
c. 1878
Enameled earthenware, Manufacture de Choisy-le-Roi, 1902?,
15⅛ × 14⅝ × 14⅛ in.
(38.3 × 37 × 36 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

been appointed artistic director. Rodin was paid three francs an hour, making him the best paid of the four artists hired at the time. This was because Carrier-Belleuse was expecting Rodin to create a new type of decoration: "M. Rodin is an artist of considerable merit and unusually flexible talent. Because of this, we must find the way to apply his talent to our new problems. At this moment he is learning to draw in the ceramic paste, and, since he draws to perfection, on the day he masters the technical side of things, a day that will come very quickly, we shall have discovered a new way of working, a way of engraving figures into the porcelain, and that will be very interesting."[11] Rodin did indeed develop a procedure described by the critic Roger Marx as "drawing in relief": He would engrave in the soft paste, then emphasize the curves of the nymphs and bacchantes, young women and children, in very shallow relief, designs he prepared by making careful drawings.

However, the appointment of Edmond Turquet as director of the Beaux-Arts (the government fine-arts department) in February 1879 would change things for Rodin. At the age of nearly forty, after a long period of training, battles, and intense experimentation and effort, he was finally about to see his career take off. Rodin was warmly recommended to Turquet by his brother-in-law,

29
Charles Michelez
Saint John the Baptist, Bellone, and ***Man with the Broken Nose*** (plasters) in the studio at the Dépôt des Marbres
c. 1881–83
Albumen print retouched with gouache by Rodin, 8⅞ × 6 in. (22.5 × 15.3 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

Maurice Haquette. A painter and photographer, and assistant director of the Manufacture de Sèvres during the time Rodin was working there, Haquette was an "early admirer" of the sculptor. The sculptor had succeeded in convincing a group of official artists, most of them winners of the Prix de Rome—Paul Dubois, Alexandre Falguière, Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, Henri Chapu, Jules-Clément Chaplain, Gabriel-Jules Thomas, Eugène Delaplanche, and Charles Moreau—of his sincerity, and they testified to his modeling abilities in a joint letter sent to Turquet on February 23, 1880:

> Permit us, Mr. Undersecretary of State, to request your kind support for the sculptor Mr. Auguste Rodin. After visiting his workshop and conducting a thorough study of his works, we are pleased, in the interests of this artist and also in the interests of art, to point out to you the elevated tendencies of his talent. Thus his groups of figures and single figures, study fragments either sketched or finished, such as the *Saint John*, the *Creation of Man*, the bust of *La République*, and above all his statue of *The Age of Bronze*, are testimony to an energy and a power of modeling that is rare and of great character. We express our unanimous and sincere appreciation in order to put an end to the accusations of the figure being cast from life. This is absolutely in error. We would be happy, Mr. Undersecretary of State, if, taking our wishes into account, you would encourage this artist, who seems to us destined to occupy an important place among the sculptors of our time.

"Very important," wrote Turquet in the margin. "Attach to the file for the commission of the bronze. Do the decree. Inform the signatories of what I have done."[12]

Decrees were passed immediately for the acquisition of the plaster, for the price of 2,000 francs, on May 26, 1880, and, on the same day, for the bronze cast by Thiébaut Frères, for 2,200 francs. At this time, the bronze (to which had been added a fig leaf) was on display at the Salon, which had opened on May 1: The acquisition and the commission had thus been unofficially announced before being made official. In the autumn, *The Age of Bronze* was awarded the gold medal at the Ghent Salon. It was then assigned to the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris, where it was placed in the gardens in 1885.

The Age of Bronze was followed by *Saint John the Baptist* (plates 29, 30), which Rodin made deliberately larger than life in order to demonstrate that it was indeed an original modeling and not cast from a live model. A drawing showing a young mother playing with her child, annotated "project for the marble 1878,"[13] reveals that at this time Rodin was still under the influence of Carrier-Belleuse's neo-Renaissance style. But fate determined that he adopt a different tack. Rodin himself recounted on several occasions how a peasant from the Abruzzi, Pignatelli

(no doubt Cesare Pignatelli, born around 1845), had come to him to offer his services as a model: “When I saw him, I immediately thought of Saint John the Baptist, that is to say, a man of nature, a visionary, a believer, a forerunner who came to announce one greater than himself.”[14]

However, even though his aspect had been inspired by the model, the saint was also, unlike *The Age of Bronze*, a subject that was easily comprehensible for the Salon public, who had seen numerous representations of him: At the Salon of 1878, there had been no fewer than three sculptures on this theme, which generally took the form either of Saint John the Baptist as a child (see Paul Dubois's 1861–64 bronze and Jules-Isidore Lafrance's 1873–78 marble, both in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris), or, under the influence of Symbolism, the beheading of Saint John the Baptist. But Rodin renewed the traditional iconography by making his a walker, a leader of men. Critics were initially repelled by this image of a fierce, enlightened being, closer to those portrayed by Ernest Renan in the *Life of Jesus* (1863) and Gustave Flaubert in *Hérodias* (1877) than in any contemporary paintings or sculptures.

Exhibited in plaster at the Salon of 1880, *Saint John the Baptist* was shown in bronze at the Salon of 1881, and acquired by the state by joint decree of July 5, 1881, in accordance with a commitment made by Edmond Turquet. Reminding him of his promise, Rodin averred that “the price that you wanted to fix yourself, 6,000 francs, although low if you take into consideration the execution of the bronze, will be an encouragement for me that will enable me to devote myself entirely to the work that you have been kind enough to entrust me with.”[15] The purchase of *The Age of Bronze* was indeed quickly followed by the commission for *The Gates of Hell*. Rodin had no compunction about acknowledging his debt to Turquet: “The trust that you placed in me as an artist gave me confidence. Your true impartiality, which only a courageous minister can afford himself, gave me an ever renewed gratitude toward you.”[16]

Before entering the Musée du Luxembourg in 1884, where it was the first work to represent the artist, *Saint John the Baptist* was exhibited in Brussels once more in 1881, in Vienna in 1882, and then again in Paris in 1883, during the national Salon known as the Triennal, which presented a compendium of recent art. To the indignation of the artist's admirers, Rodin's works were relegated to the “darkest corner of the darkest row.”[17] For many, however, his *Saint John* was “a work of the first order, one of the most remarkable in contemporary sculpture,”[18]

30
Saint John the Baptist
1878
Bronze, cast by Gruet (younger), 1880,
80⅜ × 24¾ × 43⅞ in.
(204 × 63 × 111.3 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

OPPOSITE PAGE
31
The Call to Arms
1879
Bronze, cast by Léon Perzinka, 1899,
44 × 25⅜ × 16⅞ in.
(111.7 × 64.5 × 43 cm)
Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal

"assuredly the strongest and most personal work in the Salon."[19] Louis de Fourcaud, an scholar of sculpture and biographer of the French sculptor François Rude, saw in it, as he did in *The Age of Bronze*, also on display, "wonderful realism, concentrated intimacy, clear and significant clarity. The soul of a Gothic fills this statue with life."[20] At this time, in 1883, Rodin was certainly still a controversial artist, but one whose importance and influence on the development of French sculpture were now acknowledged. Periodicals asked him for reproductions of his works and, "to avoid the opprobrium of photography," as Roger Marx put it,[21] he gave them drawings he had made of them: Images of *The Age of Bronze* were published in *L'Art* in 1877 and in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1883; and of *Saint John the Baptist* in *L'Art* in 1880 and in the *Catalogue illustré du Salon* in 1881. These drawings, however, were sometimes themselves executed from photographs. The drawing of *The Age of Bronze* reproduced in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in November 1883 (plate 27/D. 7677),[22] for example, was done from a photograph of the plaster (plate 26/Ph. 2998), as evidenced by the treatment of the light values.[23] The public was sensitive to the artist's originality and independence, to the flame burning inside him, even if some compared his sculptures to "bass drum beats."[24]

This very originality was the reason for Rodin's failure in the competition launched in 1879 for a *Monument to the Defense of Paris*, to be erected at the rond-point de Courbevoie, where the defense of the capital had been mounted in 1870 after the elections in January had confirmed the republican regime in France. The program, published on May 6, 1879, by the Seine prefecture, stipulated a group of two figures that would be cast in bronze and placed on a base that had been empty since 1870, after the statue *Napoléon en Petit Caporal* (Charles-Emile-Marie Seurre, 1833), erected there after being taken down from the Vendôme column, had been unbolted and thrown into the Seine. The deadline for submission of sketches to the Palais du Luxembourg was November 5.

Rodin was well aware that entering a competition was a good way of becoming known, so he submitted a maquette. Like most of the other one hundred or so entries, his consisted of an allegorical figure and a combatant. But his work, *The Call to Arms* (plate 31), instead of being defined by the costumes and the symbols accompanying the figures, was characterized by the contrast between the broken rhythm of the combatant's body, represented as dying rather than as an assured defender, and the vigor of the female figure. The latter bursts out of the composition in the manner of the figure in Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Genius of Dance* (1865–69) at the Opéra de Paris, her two arms and clenched fists thrust out, and her mouth wide open as in Rude's *Marseillaise* (1853) at the Arc de Triomphe, which Camille Claudel accused Rodin of copying.[25] But her broken wing, which is bent back, gave her a more human character, making her appear more vulnerable. As for the dying combatant, he was a direct transposition of the Christ in Michelangelo's *Deposition* (also known as the *Florence Pietà*) at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence, which Rodin had gazed at with "deep emotion."[26] Rodin did not conceal his influences, direct or indirect, and Michelangelo's dead Christ frequently served as a source of inspiration, as it also did for *The Oath of Spartacus* by Louis-Ernest Barrias (1871), which was dispatched from Rome and placed in the Jardins des Tuileries in 1875 and was presented at the Exposition Universelle in 1878.

The French art critic Arsène Alexandre later described Rodin's competition entry as, "A sturdy combatant, beaten to death, staggers and gives up, while, grimacing in rage, arms held out in an exasperated flight, the Genius of War, a sort of fierce Valkyrie, is intoxicated with the carnage and sings a hymn to death in the wind."[27] This group, resonating with an ideological violence that is unique in Rodin's work, was eliminated during the first phase of the competition, on November 29, 1879. It was deemed too revolutionary, with the genius wearing a Phrygian cap that was not even clearly identifiable (was it the symbol of Paris or of Liberty?). The crude modeling, sketchy rather than detailed, had certainly been a factor in scaring the jury, which chose the "solemn pastry of M. Barrias, prix de Rome."[28] Barrias was declared the winner in May 1880, and his monument (plate 32) was inaugurated on August 12, 1883. Three years later, Barrias, who in the meantime had been elected to the Académie des Beaux-Arts as a result of his work, declared, "If I had any wealth at all, the first work of art that I would acquire would be Rodin's *The Age of Bronze*"; to which Paul Leroi commented, "Never had an artist been praised in such flattering and tactful terms."[29]

The Paris municipal council then organized a competition with a view to creating an official image of the republic. It ended in failure, when not one of the sixty-three projects exhibited was selected by the jury. Rodin had also taken part, and Rose Beuret, "always prepared to make his task easier,"[30] lent her features to his work. But, guided by the expressiveness of Michelangelo and Rude, Rodin had given her the vindictive expression with which he was so

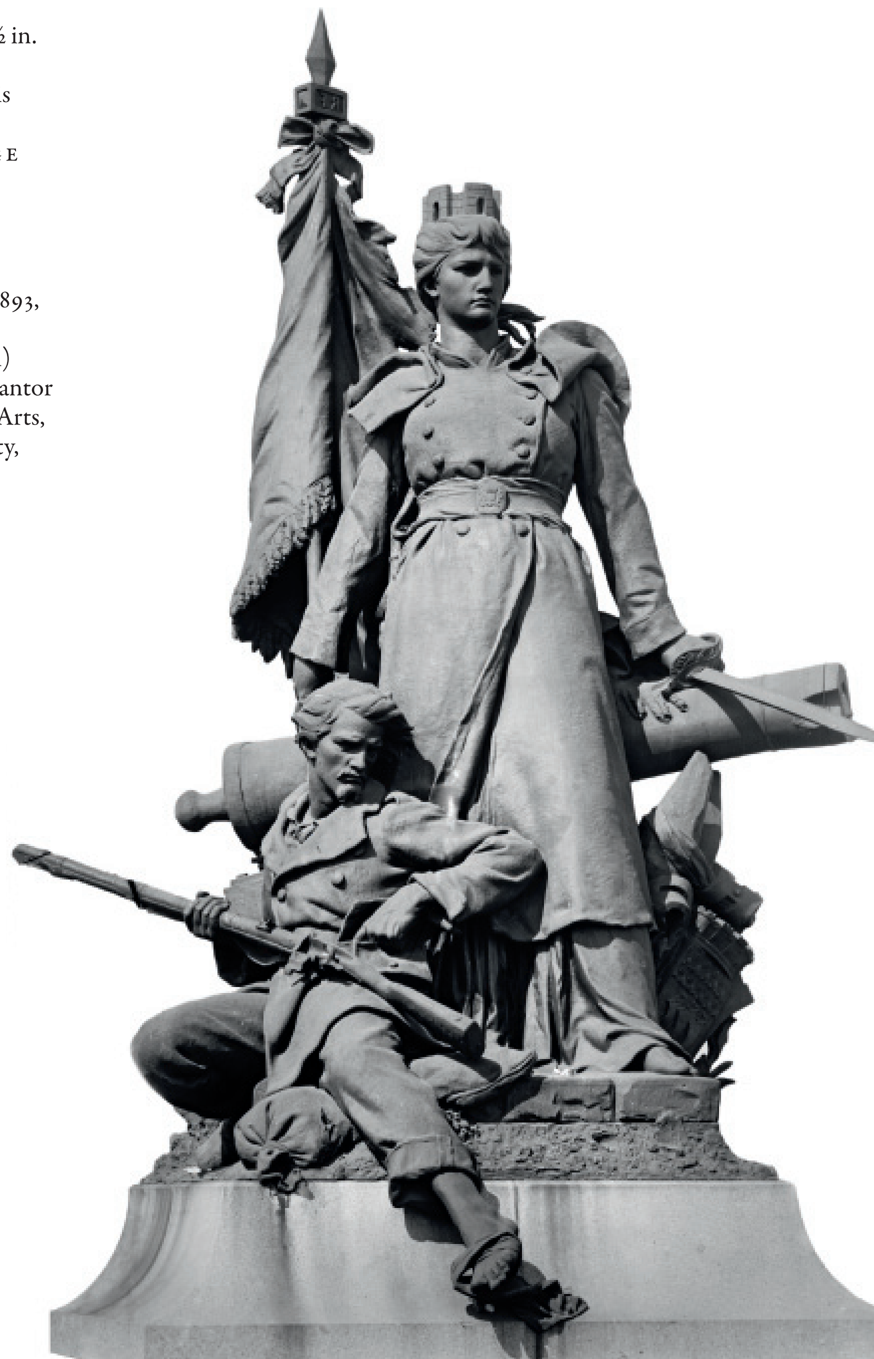
BELOW, LEFT
32
Louis-Ernest Barrias
Monument to the Defense of Paris
1881 (inaugurated August 12, 1883)
Bronze, cast by Thiébaut Frères, ht. 13 ft. (4 m)
Rond-point de la Défense, Paris

BELOW, RIGHT
33
Bellone
c. 1883
Drypoint, 5⅜ × 3½ in. (13.6 × 8.8 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

OPPOSITE PAGE
34
Bellone
1879
Bronze, cast by A. Gruet (elder), 1893, 32 × 18½ × 17¾ in. (81.3 × 47 × 45 cm)
Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, California

familiar. Indeed, he "made no secret of the fact that he had captured her from life, during the scenes his wife often threw."[31] And with the memory of his trip to Italy still very fresh in his mind, he had given her a splendid Renaissance-style helmet, even though the Phrygian cap had been one of the essential requirements of the competition. The result was a gloomy, fierce *Republic*, visibly hostile to any concession, and as a result completely at odds with the desire for peace that the Republicans wanted to express.

Rodin thus failed in the competition, but the bust, renamed *Bellone* (plate 34), impressed those who saw it. When Dubois, Falguière, Carrier-Belleuse, Chapu, Chaplain, Thomas, and Delaplanche had appealed to Turquet on behalf of Rodin in 1880, they mentioned it as proof of the artist's talent for modeling and his expressive power. In around 1883 he made an etching of it; the Musée Rodin in Paris has a print of this with the dedication "to my wife" (plate 33). Rodin then had Jean Escoula make a marble of the piece (private collection, United States) that was slightly smaller and in which the helmet is adorned at the back with two putti instead of the simple laurel branch of the original motif. Exhibited in 1889 at the Galerie Georges Petit, this marble was reproduced in *L'Art français* on July 6, 1889. It was followed by bronze versions.



ENGLAND AND BELGIUM

As early as July 1881, Rodin had crossed the English Channel, drawn to London by Alphonse Legros, his classmate at the Petite Ecole, who had settled there in 1863 after experiencing a series of disappointments in France. The contacts that Rodin made there in turn were important for him. London, it seemed, was an appealing gathering place for French artists. Jules Bastien-Lepage, who had admired Rodin since meeting him through Jules Dalou and remained part of his innermost circle of friends until his death in December 1884, had done everything he could to establish his reputation in the English capital, spending the summers of 1879, 1880, 1881, and 1882 there. Bastien-Lepage shared the studio of the painter Dorothy Tennant (later Lady Stanley), who had met Rodin during a trip to Paris with her mother in the spring of 1881, and he gave London galleries the first option on some of his paintings. This was the case, in 1882, with his *Pas Mèche* and *Pauvre Fauvette*, which Rodin promised him he would go and see "one of these days in London."[32]

Rodin followed his friend's example. Exhibited under the simple title "Study of a Head" at London's Grosvenor Gallery in spring 1882 and the following year in Amsterdam (Exposition Universelle, no. 241 in the catalog), the mask of *The Man with the Broken Nose* immediately aroused the interest of collectors. This was thanks to Legros, to whom the example on display belonged, before being acquired shortly thereafter by Frederic Leighton, president of London's Royal Academy of Arts since 1878, "who was keen to have it."[33] The collector Constantine Ionides; the sculptors Gustav Natorp, pupil of Legros and then Rodin, and Robert Barrett Browning, son of the poet; William Ernest Henley, poet and art critic; and Frederick York Powell, history professor at Oxford, all bought copies of the mask. In an article published in *American Architect and Building News* on June 1, 1889, American sculptor Truman Howe Bartlett noted that there were already ten copies in English collections. The French painters Léon Lhermitte, Jean-Charles Cazin, and Théodule Ribot in Paris were also interested in it around the same time, while the Brussels-born painter Gustave Biot, who advised Rodin to fix "a serious price, you cannot always work for nothing,"[34] served as intermediary between the sculptor and Belgian friends. No doubt because of the use of different plasters, these masks offer variations in the treatment of the hair and the band holding it in place, in the carving of the face, and in its axis.

During his first trip to London in 1881, Rodin had come into contact with Constantine Ionides. A stockbroker of Greek ancestry, he had amassed a large collection (much of which he bequeathed to London's Victoria and Albert Museum) consisting of works by naturalistic artists close to Rodin—Bastien-Lepage, Lhermitte, Legros, Dalou—and he immediately commissioned a sculpture from Rodin, probably *Children Kissing* (plate 38).

At this time, Rodin was giving free rein to a predilection for childhood themes that had emerged first in Belgium and then in the decorative arts, particularly in works he executed at Sèvres (plate 37). In vases and the designs for them (plate 36), often sketched in red chalk, which Rodin rarely used elsewhere, he depicted nude young women and putti frolicking freely, "cupids kissing, tiny chubby-cheeked, winged cupids, so naive, so tottering, so charmingly awkward in their expansive tenderness that they conjure up childhood, an innocent childhood, playful and cute."[35] He dedicated one of the drawings—"Hello to my friend Boucher" (Musée Paul Dubois–Alfred Boucher, Nogent-sur-Seine, France)—to fellow sculptor Alfred Boucher, who had supported Rodin in the *Age of Bronze* affair by affirming that he had seen him model "heads and plump limbs with a stunning sureness and speed."[36] Boucher asked Rodin, in autumn 1882, to supervise a group of young female art students, who included Camille Claudel. Exhibited first in Paris, in plaster, then in bronze in London at the Dudley Gallery, *Children Kissing* is in a similar vein, one rooted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One reviewer wrote of it, "We do not know if it is love or rage, but the two babies look as though they are biting each other and clinging to each other's heads like wrestlers. This little group displays great verve."[37] Ionides then acquired the portrait of *Legros*, the mask of *The Man with the Broken Nose*, and finally, after being tempted by *The Kiss*[38] (plate 127), "Dante as Thinker," the first cast of *The Thinker* (plate 80), which he received in December 1884. He planned to place it "on a round table in the living room where it can be seen from every side," but finally gave it a higher position similar to the one it occupies in *The Gates of Hell*, for which it had been modeled (plate 94).[39]

The "exquisite charm"[40] of Rodin's embracing children prompted Belgian dealer and art critic Léon Gauchez, founder of the periodical *L'Art*, for which he wrote under the name Paul Leroi, and ardent defender of Rodin during this period, to commission a marble in a similar vein. The marble, today in the Musée d'Ixelles in Brussels, was

OPPOSITE PAGE
35
Mask of ***The Man with the Broken Nose***
1864
Bronze, likely cast by Gruet (younger), 1881,
12¼ × 7¾ × 6½ in.
(31.1 × 19.7 × 16.5 cm)
Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence

completed in early 1884, but Gauchez was worried about the title, and it was no doubt he who suggested to Rodin the name *Idyll*, under which it appeared shortly thereafter.

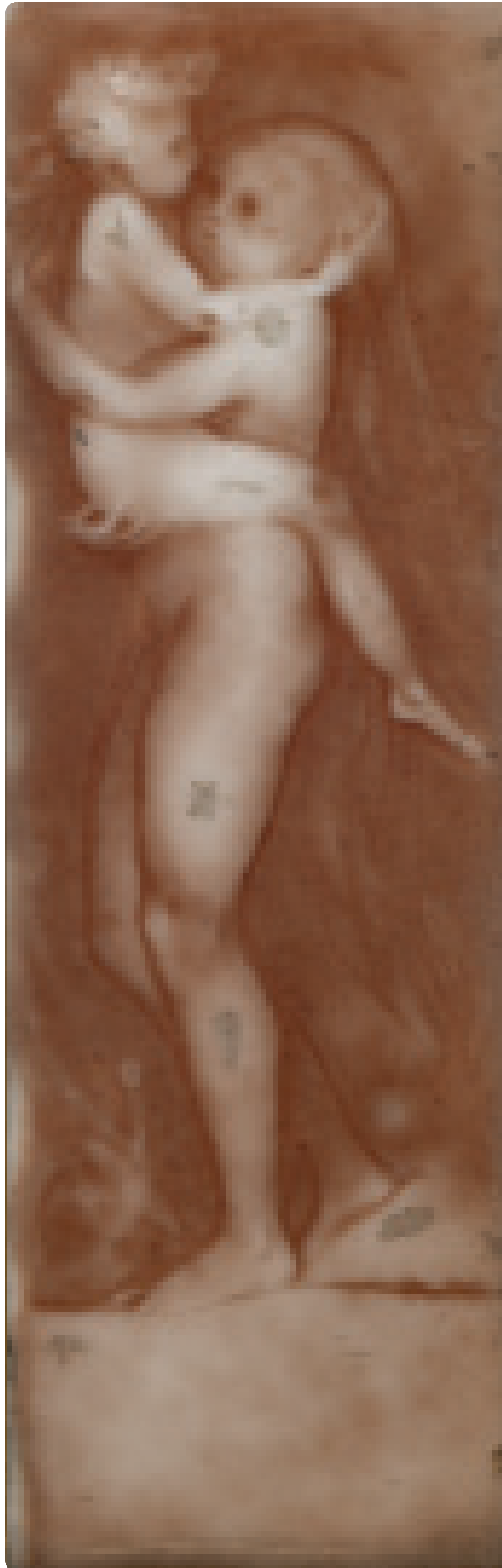
The following year, Eugène Gonon made a lost-wax cast from Gauchez's marble. The wax had been reworked and the bronze, known as the *Ixelles Idyll* (plate 39), is of very high quality, with excellent detailing of the hair, ribbon, and flowers on the base. Nevertheless, when Rodin wished to exhibit the piece at the Royal Academy in London in 1886, the work was rejected, to the outrage of the artist's admirers, who were still talking about it in 1902. As Gauchez, under his alias Paul Leroi, explained in *L'Art*:

> Last year, M. Rodin modeled a group of children, which work is itself an exquisite proof of the subtle and beautiful mind that inspired it. He had his group perfectly reproduced *à cire perdue*, called it "Idyll" and sent it to the Royal Academy exhibition which was just open. You are aware that he does not know a word of English. He heard nothing further of his contribution, but at last, received, toward the end of April, a card. . . . This document, M. Rodin simply took for a ticket [giving him access to] the exhibition and showed it to me as such. I had to undeceive him, and to explain, moreover, that the thing was actually a notice of the fact that he had been rejected and that he was requested to remove his work at his earliest convenience.[41]

The affair led to a debate in both the English and French press: Edward Armitage, an aging painter, professor at the Royal Academy, defended the decision and described Rodin as the "Zola of sculpture" in the *Times*. "I cannot understand why a man who has failed to obtain any reward since 1880, when he got a third-class medal, and whose work is too realistic and coarse even for the strong stomach of the French public, should be admitted as an honored guest to our own exhibition."[42] Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *Treasure Island*, took Rodin's defense: "The public are weary of statues that say nothing. Well, here is a man coming forward whose statues live and speak, and speak things worth uttering."[43] In response, Rodin gave the writer a plaster cast of *Eternal Spring* (plate 139) dedicated, "À R. L. Stevenson au sympathique artiste au grand et cher poète A. Rodin" (To the sympathetic artist, to the great and dear poet). It was one of the few objects the writer brought with him when he set sail for Samoa in 1888, and he kept it until his death there in

1894. As for the art critics Paul Leroi and William Henley, the latter of whom wrote for the *Magazine of Art*, a British monthly, they felt that Rodin's group had been rejected because it had had the misfortune to highlight the mediocrity of the exhibition, which featured the work of only one other sculptor, the rather characterless William Calder Marshall. But in reality this puzzling incident can be interpreted as having been a warning to Frederic Leighton, who was openly protecting Rodin. Ever since Leighton's *Athlete Wrestling with a Python* (bronze, Tate Britain, London), the first life-size male nude in English sculpture, had been exhibited in 1877, he had emerged as the leader of the New Sculpture movement that arose in reaction to the conventions of the Victorian period.[44] It was Leighton who was being targeted through Rodin, whose *Age of Bronze* was contemporary with the *Athlete* and displayed the similar qualities of life and movement; The Englishman was well aware of this, and even "sorry" about it, as Gauchez reported to Rodin on May 9, 1886,[45] but he could not intervene because his purchase of a mask of *The Man with the Broken Nose* threw his impartiality into question.

The *Idyll* that had been rejected in London was shown in Brussels in 1887, in what was an important exhibition for Rodin because it also included *The Kiss* and *Ugolino* (plate 116). Indeed, the Royal Academy affair had ended up driving him away from England, a place to which he had been strongly attracted at the time, and sending him to Belgium. The Belgian collector Jules Lequime, who had acquired the bust of *Saint John the Baptist* in 1880, reminded him in 1885: "I often think of you and your works; do not forget about me if you come to Belgium, where I have been one of your admirers; I read interesting things about you in the periodical *L'Art*; I am happy to have appreciated your noble and elevated talent at a time when, like all great and true innovative artists, you were spurned and jeered among the so-called artistic circle in Brussels."[46] Lequime's actions, and those of his brother Léon, who was linked to avant-garde movements in Brussels, notably the Groupe des XX, enabled Rodin to establish himself quickly in this milieu. Léon Lequime took pride in the admiration aroused by the bust *J. Danielli* (bronze, 1878 or 1882), which he had acquired in 1883: "Some of these gentlemen [who had seen the bust at his home] were enchanted by it. That is why they wanted you to collaborate in their exhibition."[47]



OPPOSITE PAGE
36
Vase with Putti
c. 1879
Charcoal, 15⅛ × 13 in.
(38.4 × 33.1 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

37
Manufacture de Sèvres
Young Girl and Child, or
Brother and Sister
c. 1882
Hard-paste porcelain,
5 × 2¼ × ½ in.
(12.8 × 5.7 × 1.2 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

PAGE 48
38
Children Kissing
1881?
Bronze, 1881,
15⅞ × 19⅛ × 10 in.
(40.3 × 48.5 × 25.3 cm)
National Gallery of
Victoria, Melbourne

PAGE 49
39
Ixelles Idyll
1883–84
Bronze, cast by
Eugène Gonon(?), 1885,
20⅞ × 16⅛ × 16⅜ in.
(53 × 41 × 41.5 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

PRODUCING A PORTRAIT OF A FAMOUS MAN

After *Saint John the Baptist* and *Adam* (plaster, Salon of 1881; bronze shown in plate 85), Rodin sent almost nothing but busts to the Salon. In the silence of his workshop, he applied himself to the major work that the state had commissioned from him, a model for the doors for the planned Musée des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels (the future *Gates of Hell*). These busts were for the most part portraits of members of his close circle—Legros, Dalou (plate 40), and Carrier-Belleuse (plate 41), in particular—with one important exception: his bust of Victor Hugo, shown in the 1884 Salon. At the Salon of 1882, this little-known sculptor who was beginning to attract attention presented busts of the painter Jean-Paul Laurens and the sculptor Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, while an artist nearing the end of his career, Victor Vilain, exhibited a mediocre bust of Victor Hugo crowned with a huge laurel wreath. The display prompted justifiable censure from Edmond Bazire, an ardent Republican and journalist for *L'Intransigeant*, who was close to Hugo. In the same article, however, Bazire expressed his enthusiasm for the bust of Laurens: "The sculptor shows the painter in whom there is nothing soft, who puts down brushstrokes like blows from his fist. My thanks to the sculptor."[48] The sculptor immediately expressed his own gratitude: "I am encouraged by a man who wields the pen with the vigor that you ascribe to the modeler of the bust of J. P. Laurens."[49] Rodin invited Bazire to come to see his work and told him about the difficulties he had experienced over *The Age of Bronze*. Bazire then suggested to him "a simple means of getting out of this," he recounted later. "You could make portraits of men who everyone would know were incapable of agreeing to such an odious action. Victor Hugo, for example, or perhaps [journalist and politician Henri de] Rochefort."[50]

Rodin had always been a great admirer of the poet and the suggestion no doubt pleased him greatly. Bazire drafted a letter to Hugo and succeeded in getting him to receive Rodin. "I saw Victor Hugo yesterday evening," Bazire then wrote to Rodin. "Don't forget to visit him on Sunday. You will spend the day having lunch with him, and he will begin posing. He will lay down the conditions. Accept them. Once work is underway, you will push him all the way, without difficulty."[51] Encouraged by Bazire, throughout the posing sessions, which lasted from February to April 1883, Rodin worked not in front of the

OPPOSITE PAGE
40
Aimé-Jules Dalou
1883
Bronze, cast by
Léon Perzinka, 1900,
20¼ × 19⅝ × 9¼ in.
(51.4 × 50 × 23.5 cm)
Museum für Kunst und
Gewerbe, Hamburg

THIS PAGE
41
Albert-Ernest
Carrier-Belleuse
1882
Bronze, cast by
Montagutelli Frères,
1913, 19¼ × 17 × 12 in.
(49 × 43.2 × 30.4 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

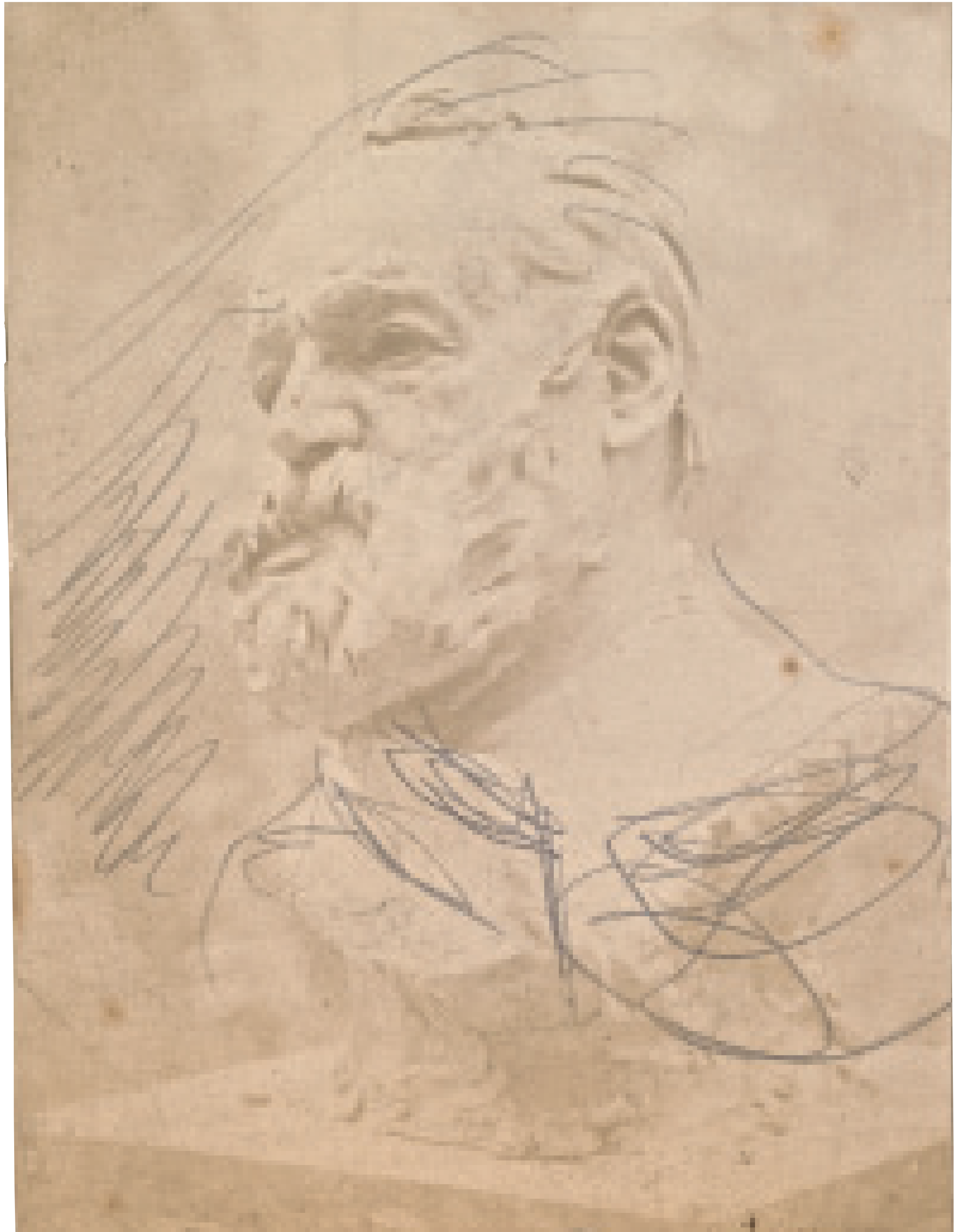
42
Portrait of Victor Hugo in Profile
1883
Pen, brown and black ink, ink wash with gouache highlights, on laid paper glued on folio sheet,
6⅛ × 3⅞ in. (15.4 × 10 cm)
André Bromberg collection, Paris

poet but next to him (plates 42, 43): "For more than a month, I went to his house every day to produce his bust. I worked on his veranda and at mealtimes I observed him furtively but attentively, because he did not want to pose. He allowed himself to be seen, and from every side—that did not bother him—but he did not want to pose. And I was thus able to get a Victor Hugo who was *true*."[52] In 1907, Rodin reminisced to Count Harry Kessler: "Hugo had been very deaf and heard nothing that was said. He therefore did not mingle in the conversation. From time to time he would break out of his silence suddenly, and speak about some completely different topic very loudly for a few minutes, and then, just as swiftly, become silent again and eat quietly. The impression had been quite comic."[53] The model of the bust that Rodin executed was very complete as far as the face was concerned, but the hair was more hastily rendered, and the bust remained for the most part sketchy, Hugo having abruptly brought the sessions to an end.

Shown at Hugo's house on February 26, 1884, on his eighty-second birthday, the first bronze, dedicated "To the Illustrious Master" (plate 44), had been cast in the autumn of 1883. It was followed a few months later by a second one that bore the inscription "A poet is a world enclosed within a man," taken from Hugo's *Légende des siècles*, and was presented at the Salon of 1884. The bust was widely admired, and benefited, moreover, from an extraordinary context when Victor Hugo died on May 22, 1885. The bust was subsequently widely distributed but in a slightly different form, for the public's surprise at the work's unfinished appearance prompted Rodin to alter it. He cut off the bust beneath the lapel of the frock coat, thereby eliminating the large, crudely sketched base. In June 1885, the firm Susse Frères made a plaster version of it that was "widely looked at and admired."[54] Other plasters followed, as well as bronzes either in the original size or reductions, for in the weeks following the poet's death, the founder Pierre Bingen had made a reduction of the bust. He reworked the surface of the wax during the fettling, particularly on the beard and the hair, which took on a more decorative appearance, and cast two bronzes in 1886. The one that is conserved in the Musée Rodin (plate 45) is a cast of excellent quality: The grain of the wood used in making the pedestal supporting the model is still visible even after the molding and casting processes. Like this one, the other copy, today in the Musée d'Orsay, has unique details.

A new reduction was then created, from which the various bronze versions were subsequently made. Another approach was adopted for these busts, with the shoulders becoming more substantial, rendering accessories redundant.

43
Unknown photographer
Bust of ***Victor Hugo***
(in clay)
1883
Albumen print reworked in graphite, 5⅜ × 4¾ in. (13.5 × 12 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris



RIGHT AND
OPPOSITE PAGE
44
Bust of ***Victor Hugo***, dedicated "To the Illustrious Master"
1883
Bronze, cast by François Rudier, 1883, 19⅛ × 11⅜ × 12 in. (48.5 × 29 × 30.5 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

IN PARIS: FIRST DEALERS, FIRST COLLECTORS

Although Rodin was following to the letter Bazire's suggestion—making a name for himself by exhibiting a portrait of a famous man—he did not neglect another sphere of activity, namely creating a private clientele. He was helped in this respect by Léon Gauchez, who acted as intermediary for a group of artists looking to sell their works. "Your periodical, *L'Art*, is a monument in which every artist, every true talent, finds help and protection," acknowledged Rodin on July 4, 1889.[55] In particular, Gauchez had succeeded in getting baronness Charlotte de Rothschild and her brother Alphonse de Rothschild to take an interest in his "stable." A member of the Institut de France since 1886, the latter Rothschild was the owner of *L'Art* and an ideal kind of art lover and a major donor to French museums. He practiced an unusual form of patronage, buying works from young artists and immediately giving them to public institutions. Rodin twice benefited from his generosity. First he executed for him a small group in marble, *Children Playing* (plate 46), which was displayed at the gallery of Georges Petit in 1887 and given two years later to the Musée de Picardie in Amiens. It was, Rodin told Truman Bartlett, the first well-paid commission that he had received.[56] Rothschild subsequently acquired a mask of *Crying Woman* in bronze, which entered the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon in 1891.

Up until the creation of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1890, it was rare for the public to discover these kinds of works at the Salon. They were more commonly encountered at exhibitions organized by dealers. Rodin was quick to understand the advantages—and freedom—offered by these exhibitions and, from 1884 on, preferred the Expositions Internationales de Peinture et de Sculpture that Georges Petit organized in the spring of each year. He focused his efforts on these shows and presented at them his boldest works—most notably, in 1886 and 1887, elements modeled for *The Gates of Hell*

OPPOSITE PAGE
45
Victor Hugo
1885
Bronze, cast by Pierre Bingen, 1886, 15⅜ × 7⅛ × 7 in. (39 × 18 × 17.7 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

THIS PAGE
46
Children Playing
c. 1886
Marble, 16 × 8½ × 10⅝ in. (40.5 × 21.5 × 27 cm)
Musée de Picardie, Amiens, France

BELOW
47
Victor Pannelier
Bust of ***Madame Roll***
(in plaster) in the studio
c. 1883
Albumen print,
9 × 6¾ in. (23 × 17.2 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

RIGHT
48
Antonin Proust
1884
Bronze, cast by
Pierre Bingen, 1884,
20⅜ × 9¾ × 9¾ in.
(51.8 × 24.8 × 24.7 cm)
Harvard Art Museums/
Fogg Museum,
Cambridge,
Massachusetts

OPPOSITE PAGE
49
Caryatid, or ***Caryatid Carrying a Stone***
c. 1881–82
Marble, 1883,
19⅝ × 12 × 10½ in. in.
(50 × 30.5 × 26.7 cm)
Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston

(plate 63), because "their passion and their energy" (terms that cropped up frequently) and their freedom were better suited to these types of events than the official Salons. The bronzes and marbles executed after the plasters were for the most part acquired by a first nucleus of collectors, consisting at this time mostly of painters, such as Jules Bastien-Lepage and Alfred Roll, who commissioned a bust of his wife (plate 47) from Rodin, and journalists, who among others included Charles Vacquerie, Octave Mirbeau, Félicien Champsaur, Gustave Geffroy (who Rodin met in 1884), Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Roger Marx, who had defended the sculptor in an article titled "Le paria de l'art" (the pariah of art).[57] These early collectors spread the word; one wrote, "I have just encountered my friend Antonin Proust after leaving your workshop so excited about your works, which are so alive, so gripping. It appears that I was not eloquent but convincing, for he wants to visit your workshop as soon as possible."[58] The subsequent visit was such a success that Proust, who was president of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs and thus directly interested in Rodin's works, asked the artist to do his portrait (plate 48).

In February and March 1883, Rodin exhibited drawings and "India ink sketches dedicated . . . to my friend

Roll" at the Cercle des Arts Libéraux in rue Vivienne in Paris—the first time they had been seen by the public—together with sculptures, including a marble *Caryatid* (plate 49), which Bartlett described under the title "Sorrow,"[59] and the *Small Eve* (plate 52). Louis de Fourcaud emphasized the multiple talents of this "eminent sculptor . . . [and] peerless draftsman with appetites by turns gothic and Michelangelesque."[60] It might have been at this time that Fourcaud became the owner of *The Sculptor's Vision* (D. 7629), a drawing that for Bartlett reflected the career and personality of an artist who was surrounded by the shadows of his dreams—his future sculptures.[61]

The *Small Eve*, captured in a photograph by César in its almost completed clay form in the workshop (plate 51), was presented in bronze but at the same time served as a starting point for several of the very fine drawings Rodin produced during this period, in which the form emerges from a dense mass of pen and ink marks (plate 50). Soon after, a marble version of the sculpture was made. This was almost certainly the very fine example acquired by Auguste Vacquerie in December 1885 for 1,200 francs. Very enthusiastic about the work, Vacquerie took great pains over displaying it in his home, and Rodin, who

ABOVE
50
Eve
1884
Pen, black ink, and brown and black ink wash, 10 × 7⅜ in. (25.4 × 18.7 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

was invited to dinner on December 31, 1886, expressed his satisfaction in a letter illustrated with a sketch that he sent on January 12 to Léon Gauchez, who had also been tempted to buy it: "The figure is tastefully placed on a small piece of Louis XV furniture, with two large vases on either side, a Venetian mirror behind. A very beautiful arrangement."[62]

The acquisition of the *Small Eve* by Vacquerie, a writer and journalist who was close to Hugo and the Romantics, was excellent publicity for Rodin, for it was mentioned in the press. In *L'Art*, Paul Leroi (Gauchez) spoke of the "admirable marble" he had seen at Vacquerie's, while Truman Bartlett, quoting an article by Armand Sylvestre in *L'Indépendance belge*, declared it "beyond comparison, beautiful" and reproduced the *Eve* at the head of his own text.[63] In late 1886 Félicien Champsaur revealed to Rodin, without shame, his desire to place a plaster copy on his mantelpiece; and when he had to describe the (fictional?) living room of Mme Savinel, a banker's wife, on avenue de Friedland in Paris in an article in *L'Evénement*, he mentioned the marble *Eve*, "prototype and ideal of a brutal, primitive beauty . . . the symbol of woman, [representing] the goddess."[64] Next in line was the actor known as Coquelin Cadet, a self-professed "passionate admirer and sincere friend" of Rodin, who claimed to be waiting "with impatience for the divine Eve."[65] By this time, December 1888, there were already three marbles, which were soon followed by many others.

A NEW SOCIAL STATUS

The portrait Guy de Maupassant painted of Rodin, giving him the name "Prédolé," in his novel *Notre Cœur* (1890) reflected the sculptor's changed social status. Having

RIGHT
51
César
Small Eve (in clay) in the studio
c. 1882
Albumen print, 5⅞ × 4 in. (14.8 × 10.3 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

OPPOSITE PAGE
52
Small Eve
1883
Marble, c. 1887, 30 × 10¾ × 10¼ in. (76.2 × 27.4 × 21 cm)
The Art Institute of Chicago

BELOW AND OPPOSITE PAGE
53
Madame Morla-Vicuña
1888
Marble, executed by Jean Escoula,
22⅜ × 19⅝ × 14⅜ in.
(56.9 × 49.9 × 37 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

at last achieved recognition, he began attending salons, such as those of Aline Ménard-Dorian (he had met her through Bazire in 1883, but only became a close friend in 1888), Marie and Maurice Fenaille, and Juliette Adam. In Maupassant's novel, the sculptor Prédolé initially surprises the elegant group of people present at Mme de Burne's salon by his awkwardness and his shy, bashful air. "Upon looking more closely at his face, however, it was seen to be illuminated by clear, piercing, gray eyes of extreme expressiveness, and these alone served to impart some degree of life to the man's heavy and torpid expression. They were constantly searching, inquiring, scrutinizing, darting their rapid, shifting glances here, there, and everywhere, and it was plainly to be seen that these eager, inquisitive looks were the animating principle of deep and comprehensive intellect." After a period of embarrassment, he is asked about "the sculpture of those men who are painters, and the painting of those who also practice sculpture." In accompaniment to his brilliant demonstration, "He waved his great hands before him as if they were full of modeling material, with such ease and grace of motion as to delight every eye, calling up above the plates and glasses the pictures that his tongue told of, and reconstructing the work that he mentioned with such conviction that everyone followed the motions of his fingers with curiosity. Then some dishes that he fancied were placed before him and he ceased talking and began eating. He sculpted while he talked, with surprising reliefs and delightful modeling obtained by the precision of his words."[66]

The early friends and admirers—Legros, Bastien-Lepage, Roll, and Félix Bracquemond—and the second group, made up largely of writers, were followed by collectors. "You know that my friend Gauchez would like me to place something with a great family," Rodin wrote to Roger Marx in November 1885, "and yet everything he sees in my workshop he thinks won't be liked. It is a shame not to have enough talent for the use of the great families and rich collectors. So there will only be men of letters and artists who fear nothing and who, like you dear friend, will have the kind of sculpture I like on their mantelpiece."[67]

In reality, the situation had begun to change around this time. A few weeks later, and no doubt thanks to Gauchez, Rodin met Carlos Morla y Vicuña, a Chilean journalist and diplomat posted in Paris in 1885, and his wife, the ravishing Luisa, whose portrait he sculpted in 1887–88 (plate 53). Rodin had been drawn to her by her elegance and also, at a time when it no doubt was becoming necessary for him, by her position in high society. Thanks to the Morla y Vicuña household, Rodin subsequently came into contact with Eugenia Errazuriz, the future patron of Picasso, who bought *Galatea*, almost certainly the "marble figurine" (plate 62) that he had promised to Camille Claudel in the famous contract of October 12, 1886, in which he put himself entirely at her disposition (see chapter 1).

OPPOSITE PAGE
54
Seated Children, known as ***Fenaille Children***
1886
Plaster and modeling clay, 10⅛ × 8⅝ × 8½ in. (25.9 × 22 × 21.6 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris

PAGES 66–67
55
Young Woman Carrying a Child across Her Shoulders
c. 1888
Terra-cotta, 13¼ × 7⅝ × 9¾ in. (33.6 × 19.4 × 24.7 cm)
Private collection, courtesy of Galerie Talabardon and Gautier

Around the same time, the architect Emile Bastien-Lepage, the painter's brother, had introduced Rodin to Maurice Fenaille, a pioneer of the oil industry in France, a great patron and art lover. In 1886 Rodin gave Fenaille models of several sculptures—all small—to adorn the Florentine-style villa that Bastien-Lepage had just finished building for him in rue de la Ferme in Neuilly. They consisted of a group of children for the banisters of the front steps (plate 54) and a relief with two Mannerist genii presenting a cartouche bearing the names of the owner and the architect. "I would like to thank you for having the tact to offer me some money," Rodin wrote to his patron in August 1886. "I do indeed need some. If you can give me 1,500 or 2,000 francs to tide me over, I would be very grateful to you. I have to pay my assistant who is making progress on the marble."[68] Fenaille then commissioned a marble relief, the *Young Mother and the Cave* (1889, location unknown; see plate 97), and later acquired others, *Andromeda* (1887), and *Psyche-Spring* (c. 1888?). The particular character of his collection was influenced above all by the presence of several terracottas of eighteenth-century inspiration, such as *Young Woman Carrying a Child across Her Shoulders*, *Faun and Nymph* (c. 1886), and the four *Bathers* (1898), which were arranged near the swimming pool that Fenaille had also had made. Although quite free in their creation, these very sensual figures betrayed a certain pragmatism. The main figure in *Young Woman Carrying a Child across Her Shoulders* (plate 55) has recognizably the same body as that those of the *Zoubaloff Bather* and the *Seated Laughing Fauness* (discussed below), characterized by a backward-leaning posture, rounded abdomen, and narrow pelvis. The young woman's body, made from a mold, the left leg of which was modified, forms the main element of the composition. To this Rodin added elements that were modeled so vigorously that traces of fingerprints can still be seen. The child—one of those plump putti of the kind that Rodin had made during his stay in Belgium—the woman's face, and the vegetation give the work an original character.

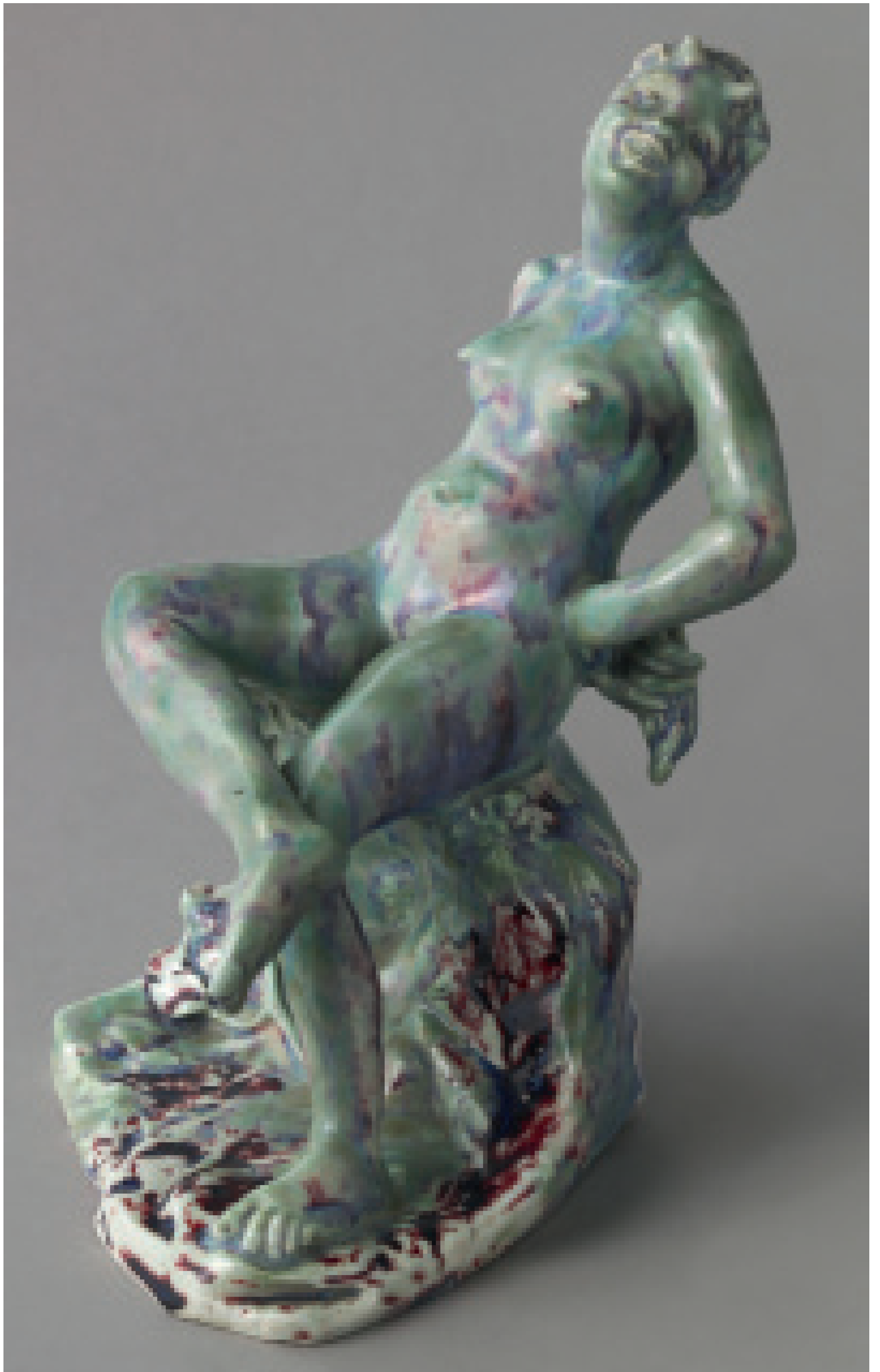
An enduring friendship blossomed between the two men. Fenaille continued to commission works from Rodin to the end of the artist's career, including the *Dream of Life* column (plate 194) and multiple versions of his wife's portrait (plates 306–8). It was also Fenaille who financed, in 1897, the publication of the album *Les Dessins de Auguste Rodin*, thanks to which the public was able to discover another aspect of the artist's work.

Following Fenaille, other collectors joined Rodin's entourage. In 1889, Johanny Peytel likely acquired the *Seated Laughing Fauness* (bronze, 1888, Musée Rodin, Paris), also derived from the *Zoubaloff Bather*, and which in its turn gave rise to a version in enameled hard-paste porcelain by Ernest Chaplet, known as the *Seated Laughing Bacchante* (plate 56). The bright colors on this latter work suit the small figure, which radiates joie de vivre. The director of the Crédit Algérien, Peytel possessed numerous works by Rodin and proved to be a loyal friend, supporting the construction of the pavilion in the place de l'Alma in 1900. Antony Roux, who was described by Guillaume Apollinaire at the time his collection was being broken up in May 1914[69] as "the first collector who dared to buy from Rodin," had a very different, more extroverted personality. An enthusiastic collector, he particularly admired the painters Félix Ziem, Gustave Ricard, Elie Delaunay, and above all Gustave Moreau. Roux probably met Rodin for the first time in late 1886 and corresponded with him until he died. His letters were very free in tone, by turns enthusiastic, businesslike, and trivial. After congratulating Rodin on receiving the Légion d'Honneur, he went on:

> And that stomach of yours, how is it? Take care of it, because it seems to be raging. Think of the chained satyr in a dazzling state and unable to quench its passion, which many people describe as violent, but I don't know why, for this is nature. Without being a satyr, my dear Monsieur Rodin, you have had twenty to twenty-five years of being very close to a woman who entices you through her eyes and her forms, of being held by bonds, ah! You could put that in your Dante's Hell.[70]

Roux spent part of the year in Monaco, which prevented him from following Rodin's work on a daily basis, and this was a source of disappointment to him. "You make my mouth water. . . . These two figures must be grouped with an infinite art, like everything that comes out of your artist's brain. How can I see the group? If you would be kind enough to help me, and I hope you will, you have simply to entrust the object to M. Pottier, the most skillful packager of the known world. I am talking, of course, about a plaster cast."[71] In November 1890 Roux confirmed the commission of three bronzes, *The Eternal Idol*, the *Fauness*, and *The Awakening* (large). He was still hesitating between two other works, the *Idyll* and *Danae*.

RIGHT AND
OPPOSITE PAGE
56
Auguste Rodin
and Ernest Chaplet
Seated Laughing Bacchante
c. 1888–90
Enameled hard-paste
porcelain, 1890,
12⅝ × 9⅞ × 7¾ in.
(32 × 25 × 20 cm)
Cité de la Céramique,
Sèvres, France



Negotiations seem to have been difficult, for Roux was determined to have *The Eternal Idol*: "I am keen to be nice to myself, you can well imagine and understand the interest I take in myself and my very strong, very fervent desire to please myself."[72] He demanded exclusive rights to the works he owned, which he often asked Rodin to modify. When making his first acquisition, *The Man with a Serpent*, a variant of *Falling Man*, he stated: "I will remain the sole owner of this group. . . . You have the right to use the figure of the man, but only with modifications in the pose and without the serpent."[73] But Rodin refused to agree to such conditions for *The Eternal Idol*, even reneging on an initial agreement. Roux had to give way, agreeing to give Rodin several hundred francs more. "Every year," he complained, "you put your prices up and, let's be honest, this increase does not fill me with great joy, but that does not prevent me from always doing what you ask."[74] He also offered him the opportunity to make "three or four enlarged copies in marble" of *The Eternal Idol*.[75] "Give me all of that modeled by the hand of the great master Rodin and I will console myself," concluded Roux,[76] who, up until his death, owned nineteen of the artist's sculptures, mostly bronzes, sometimes accompanied by the "original plaster," in other words, a plaster cast of which the Musée Rodin almost always has another specimen. In fact, Roux only rarely enjoyed these exclusive rights that were so important to him. It would seem that only in the case of the so-called *Antony Roux Idyll* (plate 57) were they absolutely guaranteed. All the evidence suggests that in this particular case Rodin stuck to the agreement when giving Roux the group cast by Griffoul et Lorge in July 1891. He had certified "that the model is unique and can never be reproduced in any other material," and he promised to smash the plaster model, the only one in existence, used for the bronze cast.[77]

LEFT AND
OPPOSITE PAGE
57
Idyll, known as
Antony Roux Idyll
before 1887
Bronze, cast by
Griffoul and Lorge, 1891,
18⅞ × 11¾ × 12¼ in.
(48.1 × 30 × 31 cm)
Musée Rodin, Paris