

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 10, 2015

Rodin: Evolution of a Genius

Exhibition explores master sculptor's studio and process

An exhibition honoring the creative genius of master sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) will be on display at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts from November 21, 2015 to March 13, 2016. Drawn primarily from collections of the Musée Rodin, Paris, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the exhibition brings together more than 200 objects – fragile plasters, patinated bronzes, marbles, ceramics and works on paper – and examines the artist's creative process. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn more about Rodin's techniques, materials, models, and assistants, and to explore the artistic vision behind some of his best known works – including *The Kiss*, *The Thinker*, and *The Burghers of Calais*. The presenting sponsor for the exhibition is Altria Group.

“Rodin completely revitalized the very language of sculpture with his passion for the creative act,” Director Alex Nyerges said. “His work has captivated human imagination for more than a century, and is still relevant and contemporary today. We are honored that VMFA is the premiere East Coast venue for this fantastic exhibition.”

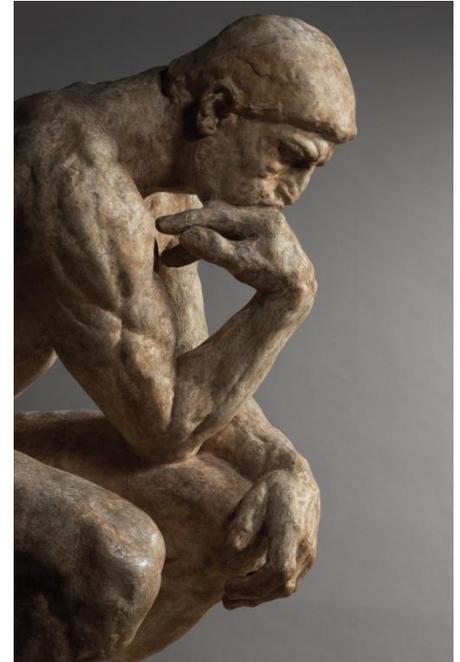
During the 19th century, Rodin became one of the most successful French artists and received many commissions for public monuments. In addition to creating enduring public works, he was a tireless artist who produced numerous small and poetic sculptures, as well as portrait busts. Garnering international acclaim for more than a century, he is widely regarded as the pioneer of modern sculpture and its most skilled exponent of symbolism.

Rodin: Evolution of a Genius is organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Musée Rodin, Paris. It is organized for VMFA by Dr. Mitchell Merling, Paul Mellon Curator and Head of the Department of European Art. The exhibition catalogue, with contributions on Rodin's process by leading scholars, is published by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The exhibition is organized into eight sections: The Hand of the Master, The Art of Assemblage, Rodin and his Models, Sculpture in Space: Enlargements, Fragments, Pedestals, Timeline: Rodin's Life and Career, Rodin and his Collaborators: the Marbles, and Bronze: Rodin's Legacy, the Studio-Museum.

Contemporary video installation: *The Burghers of Vancouver*

Rodin's famous sculpture *The Burghers of Calais* (1885) commemorates an event in 14th-century France when the port city of Calais was under siege. England's King Edward III offered to spare the town from destruction if six leading citizens would surrender themselves to him with the keys to the city. Six men came forward, but their lives were spared when the Queen of England intervened and prevented her



Auguste Rodin, *The Thinker* (large-size model), 1903, patinated plaster. © Musée Rodin (photo: Christian Baraja)

husband from executing them. Rodin's statue was commissioned more than 500 years after this event and captures brave, selfless men as they walked to the city gates. Three of the six figures from Rodin's work are included in *Rodin: Evolution of a Genius*.

A video installation, created by artist Adad Hannah and filmmaker Denys Arcand, revisits the concept of the urban monument by recreating *The Burghers of Calais* using present-day models. *The Burghers of Vancouver* tells the story of six people hired temporarily by a mysterious patron to enact Rodin's famous sculptural ensemble as a tableau vivant in downtown Vancouver. A nameless poet, a Korean woman who only speaks in her native language, a fraud artist, a ski bum, a laid-off worker, and an ex-junkie meet every day, don their costumes, assume their roles on the square in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, and then go home at the end of the day. They each take the pose of one of the six figures making up the Rodin sculpture and recount what led them to accept this work and how they experience the project, which seems to take place without any notice from passers-by. *The Burghers of Vancouver* will be installed in VMFA's Lewis Focus Gallery throughout the exhibition.

Sculptor-in-Residence

Visitors will have a chance to engage with a contemporary sculptor at work. Located in the Cochrane Atrium, the Sculptor Cart will feature a different artist every two weeks. Different sculpting materials and tools will be available to explore through touch. Visit vmfa.museum for the list of artists, dates, and times.

Selected Programs

Rodin & Co.: The Master and His Studio Collaborators

Public Lecture with Nathalie Bondil, Director and Chief Curator, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

December 4 | 6:30 p.m.

Leslie Cheek Theater

\$8 (VMFA members \$5)

Bondil explores the roles of Rodin's principal collaborators, the technical challenges of sculpture, and daily life in the artist's studio.

Film: *Camille Claudel* (1988)

January 10 | 1 – 5 p.m.

Leslie Cheek Theater

Isabelle Adjani stars as the pupil, model, assistant, and lover of Auguste Rodin (Gérard Depardieu) in a biographical drama about this rare 19th-century female artist who could and did compete with the best male sculptors of her time. The movie will be introduced by Dr. Mitchell Merling, VMFA's Paul Mellon Curator and Head of the Department of European Art.

Rodin and the Tradition of the Nude

Dr. Mitchell Merling, Paul Mellon Curator and Head of the European Art Department, VMFA

February 26 | 6:30 p.m.

Leslie Cheek Theater

\$8 (VMFA members \$5)

Most of Auguste Rodin's sculptures depict the naked human body. This lecture will explore his lifelong engagement with the subject. Through the in-depth examination of such works as the *Age of Bronze*, *The Thinker* and *The Kiss*, Rodin will be shown to be one of art history's most profound and original artists.

About the Exhibition

- **TITLE:** Rodin: Evolution of a Genius
- **DATES:** November 21, 2015 – March 13, 2016
- **CURATORS:** Sylvain Cordier, Curator of Early Decorative Arts at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and Nathalie Bondil, Director and Chief Curator of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Organizing curator for VMFA is Dr. Mitchell Merling, Paul Mellon Curator and Head of European Art, VMFA.
- **ORGANIZERS:** Organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the Musée Rodin, Paris.
- **NUMBER OF WORKS:** Approximately 200.
- **ITINERARY:** Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, May 30 – October 18, 2015; VMFA; Peabody Essex Museum, May 16–September 5, 2016.
- **ADMISSION:** \$15; \$12 for seniors and groups of 10 or more; \$10 for students with valid ID. Free for members. 804.340.1405.
- **AUDIO TOURS:** Audio wands in English are available for \$5. Four free versions will be available for [streaming or download](#), including adult and family guides in both English and French.
- **CATALOGUE:** The 304-page exhibition catalogue, with more than 475 illustrations and contributions on Rodin's process by leading scholars, will be published by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, \$49.95.
- **SPONSORS:** The exhibition is presented at VMFA by Altria Group with additional support from The Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans Exhibition Endowment, The Julia Louise Reynolds Fund, The Julia and Tunnicliff Fox Foundation, Lilli and William Beyer, Norfolk Southern Corporation, The Northern Trust Company, The Rock Foundation.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA, a certified Virginia Green attraction, is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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Press Contact:

Pryor Green, pryor.green@vmfa.museum, 804.204.2701
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 200 N. Boulevard, Richmond VA 23220-4007