

RODIN:

TRUTH FORM LIFE

Selections from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collections

Educator's Guide

Western Heritage Museum & Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame
May 23- August 11, 2019

RODIN: TRUTH FORM LIFE

Selections from the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collections

The Western Heritage Museum and
Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame
on the Campus of New Mexico Junior College



This exhibition has been organized and made possible
by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation

EDUCATOR GUIDE

This educator guide is designed for use in conjunction with field trips to *Rodin: Truth Form Life, Selections from the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Collections*. The materials included here contain curriculum connections aligned with Common Core Standards for fine arts, social studies, and English language arts in elementary, middle, and high school grade levels.

Disclaimer

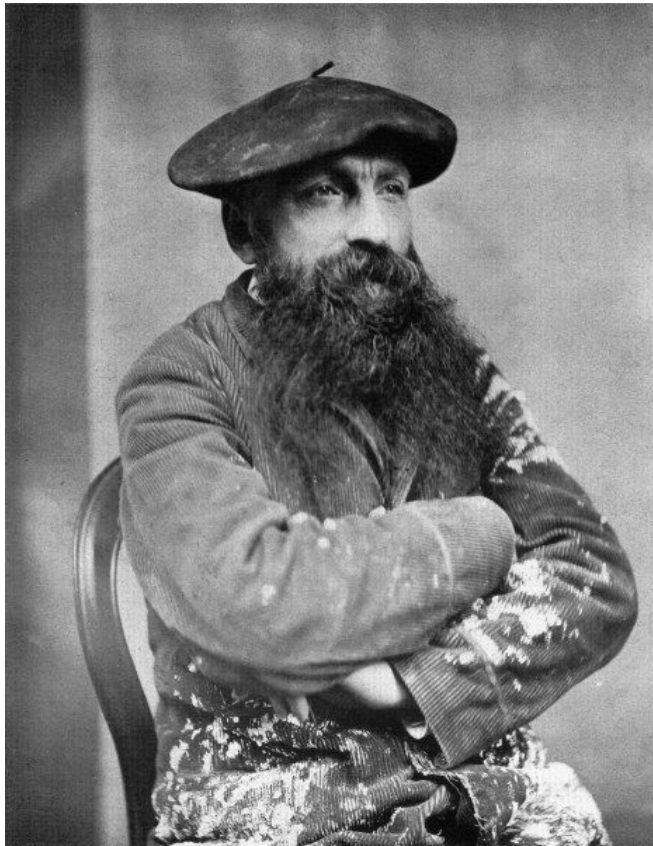
Teachers wishing to set up a school tour should be aware that some works in the exhibition *Rodin: Truth Life Form* may contain representations of nude figures and may not be appropriate for certain age groups. The Museum leaves it to the discretion of the teacher and the parents.

Those wishing to book a guided tour should contact Mary Lyle, Director of Education or Judy Taylor, Assistant Educator.

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AUGUSTE RODIN 1840-1917



Rodin covered in plaster wearing his iconic beret

Auguste Rodin is widely regarded as the “father of modern sculpture,” and by some, as the greatest sculptor since Michelangelo. Rodin left behind what he considered to be the outmoded 19th-century academic traditions and created his own unique style of sculpture. He captured movement and emotion by emphasizing modeling as a technique and broke away from traditional poses and gestures. Today, Rodin’s sculpture marks a turning point between traditional and modern art.

Born in Paris in 1840, to a modest middle-class family, Rodin showed an innate talent for art from an early age. In his teens, he attended the government school for art and craft design. There, he learned the traditional practice of observational drawing from plaster casts of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture. He also learned how to model in clay, a technique that he would continue to use throughout his career. He applied to the *École des Beaux-Arts*, an influential French art school, but was rejected three times.

His early career had many struggles. For almost a decade, he worked as an anonymous member of a workshop and produced decorative sculpture for another well-known artist named Albert Carrier-Belleuse. Rodin continued to want to exhibit his work under his own name, and in the 1860s he submitted his sculpture to annual juried Paris Salon exhibitions. However, he again suffered a series of rejections.

By the time Rodin was in his 40s, however, his art began to gain in popularity. During the 19th century, artwork with universal themes was most sought after, and artworks that were meant for public spaces were held in the highest regard. Rodin received his first public commission in 1880 to create sculpture for the entrance of a new museum of decorative arts in Paris. He titled this work *The Gates of Hell*, and his design was based on the epic poem *The Divine Comedy* by Dante, which was popular in France at the time. The museum was not built, however, and the commission was canceled. Rodin decided to use some of the figurative reliefs from the door and turned them into independent sculpture, also reusing some of the parts to create new sculptures.

Later, Rodin was commissioned to create other monuments, portraits of famous people at the time, as well as noncommissioned works. During the 1890s, Rodin created many artworks, and by the year 1900 he was the most famous sculptor in Europe. The Paris World Exposition dedicated an entire pavilion to a retrospective exhibition of his work. In 1908, Rodin moved his studio and gallery to the Hôtel Biron, a large mansion in Paris, where he worked until his death in 1917.



Rodin Museum Paris

Before he died, Rodin donated the contents of his studio and his home to the people of France in exchange for an agreement that a Rodin museum would be established. Today, the Musée Rodin is made up of two sites: the Hôtel Biron and the structures and land in Meudon, the suburb of Paris where Rodin's home was located.

Timeline: Rodin and the World

RODIN

1840 – 1850

Auguste Rodin born November 12, 1840 in Paris, France.

Rodin has his first formal drawing lesson at age 10.

1851 - 1860

Rodin begins studies at Petite École.

Rodin works commercially in decorative arts, plaster and stone carving.

1861 – 1870

Rodin's sister dies; in mourning he briefly joins a Catholic order.

Rodin meets Rose Beuret, who is to become his lifelong companion and mother of his son, Auguste-Eugène.

1871 – 1880

Travels in Italy, sees Michelangelo's work in Florence.

1878 Creates *Saint John the Baptist Preaching*.

1880 Commission for *The Gates of Hell*.

1881 – 1890

1883 Rodin meets Camille Claudel.

1884 Commission for the *Burghers of Calais*.

1886 Shows plaster of *The Kiss*; 1886 French government purchases a marble version.

1889 Commission for Victor Hugo monument.

1891 – 1900

Elected president of sculpture section of Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts.

1891 Commission for Balzac monument.

1898 Ends relationship with Camille Claudel.

1901 – 1917

Marries Rose Beuret January 29, 1917; she dies three weeks later.

Rodin dies November 17, 1917 and is laid to rest at Meudon; bequeaths his estate to France.

WORLD

1840 – 1850

1840 Claude Monet born.

1848 French Revolution aka the February Revolution establishes the Second Republic.

1850 death of Honoré de Balzac.

1851 - 1860

Louis Napoleon declares himself emperor 1852;

1859 Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* is published

1861 - 1870

1861-1865 U.S. Civil War

1862 Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is published.

1863 Napoleon III holds "Salon de Refusés" to exhibit works rejected by Salon des Beaux Arts.

1870 France declares war on Prussia.

1871 – 1880

1874 First Impressionists Exhibition held.

1879 Thomas A. Edison invents practical electric light.

1881 – 1890

1885 U. S. Grant, the 18th President of the United States dies.

1886 *Statue of Liberty* dedicated

1889 *Eiffel Tower* completed for the World's Fair in Paris.

1891 – 1900

1895 The Nobel Prize is established.

1893 New Zealand becomes the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote.

1900 Pablo Picasso makes his first trip to Paris.

1901 – 1917

1914-1917 WWI

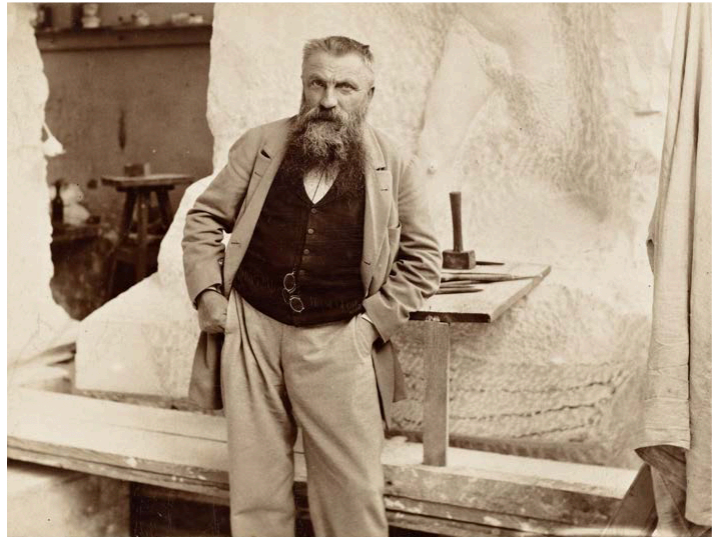
1912 RMS Titanic sinks in the North Atlantic.

1917 Russian Revolution begins.

IN RODIN'S STUDIO

In his studio, Rodin produced sculpture following studio practices based on those of the great sculptors of the Renaissance and later periods.

During Rodin's lifetime, sculpture was very popular, and markets for art and collecting sculpture appealed to a growing middle class. After the year 1880, Rodin's art was in high demand. As a result, he set up his studio and used the process of bronze casting to produce large editions of artworks in a variety of sizes.



At the same time, the city of Paris was being rebuilt due to destruction caused by the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. This rebuilding period led to many government commissions for monuments, and Rodin was considered the most modern and admired sculptor. It was during this period that he created public monuments such as *The Burghers of Calais* and the *Monument to Balzac*, both significant to the growth of sculpture as an art form.

Rodin was trained as a modeler, which meant he started with clay to make his sculptures. Traditionally, a master sculptor would first create an artwork in clay. Then, craftsmen created replicas of the master's model in clay or plaster. Then they would use those clay and plaster models to make further replicas in stone (called carvings) or in metal (usually bronze, called castings). The master would supervise, but at the stage of making the stone or metal sculptures, he would rely on the hired craftspeople and foundries to guarantee the quality of the carving or casting was to his satisfaction.

This process of replicating the original modeled clay or wax in another material made it possible to change the replica in size and according to the artist's or patron's desires. Rodin did employ machines and procedures that existed at the time to transform the size of his sculptures. Enlargements and reductions were done by studio assistants.

Rodin used foundries to make casts outside of his studio. Rodin used many different foundries in Paris. Some specialized in signature patinas. A patina is the surface color of a bronze casting, and this exhibition includes work with many different patinas. Studio assistants also supervised this work for the artist.

After initially modeling the sculptures, Rodin generally did not give much attention to the artworks after passing them along to his studio assistants. Rodin also probably would not have paid much attention to today's posthumous casts (casts permitted by Rodin to be made after his death by the Musée Rodin for the Nation of France). While Rodin is renowned for his ability to model the human figure to capture a sense of motion and expressed emotion, he left it to others to replicate his genius for the art market.

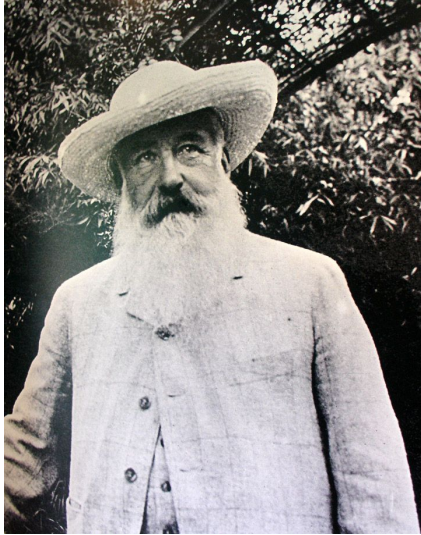
RODIN AS A MASTER ARTIST AND TEACHER

Rodin was inspired by the sculpture of Italian Renaissance master Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), and he traveled to Italy in 1876 to study Michelangelo's work. Michelangelo is said to have "breathed life" into his figures, and Rodin sought to create sculptures that broke with the academic tradition and emerged from the block of material. Rodin has since been compared to Michelangelo and is now also seen as a master artist.

STUDIO ASSISTANTS AND STUDENTS

Rodin also had many studio assistants such as Antoine Bourdelle, Camille Claudel, Charles Despiau, and Malvina Hoffman. His legacy as a master artist can be seen through observation of their work, as many of his students and assistants became noted artists in their own right.

MONET AND OTHER ARTISTS



Claude Monet

Rodin was a contemporary and friend of Claude Monet, the foremost Impressionist artist. Although their careers were very different in the sense that Rodin was renowned for his sculpture while Monet was a painter, the two did on occasion exhibit artwork in the same exhibitions and kept in communication throughout their lives. It is said that Rodin also traveled to Monet's home and studio in Giverny and while there was introduced to other artists including Cézanne.

LESSON I

CONTINUOUS DRAWING

One of Rodin's most important innovations, *continuous drawing*, involved his quest to render human movement in art more faithfully. As traditionally taught, the connection between the artist and the subject is broken when the artist must look down to draw on paper. Rodin asked himself, "Why not draw continuously on the paper while not taking one's eyes off the model?" Rodin concluded that in this way, direct contact with the subject will be maintained.¹



Rodin. *Hanako*. -1906-07, Rodin Museum

Continuous/blind contour line drawing has two rules. First, once your pencil is placed on the surface, you may not lift it again. Secondly, you may not look at the paper. In other words, you must try to move your pencil at the same speed as your eyes move over the surface of the contour lines of the object.

Continuous/blind contour line drawing is an exercise that can be done almost anywhere. It can actually lead to finished drawings as well.

Supplies:

- Paper
- Pencil or pen
- A timer

Once you have the right supplies:

1. Choose a subject to draw — still-life objects or the figure work well for this exercise
2. Set the timer for 5 minutes.
3. Tape the paper to your drawing surface so it doesn't shift as you draw.
4. Arrange yourself so you can see the object you will be drawing without seeing the paper.
5. Focus your eyes on some part of the object and begin moving your pencil to record what your eyes observe.
6. Do not look down at the paper as you draw. Rather, force yourself to concentrate on how the shapes, lines, and contours of the object relate to one another.²

¹ Elsen, Albert E., and Rosalyn Frankel. Jamison. *Rodin's Art. The Rodin Collection of the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

² "Blind Contour Drawing: Drawing Lessons for Kids." *KinderArt*, 11 Jan. 2018, kinderart.com/art-lessons/drawing/blind-contour-drawing/.

LESSON II

RODIN FOIL SCULPTURE ACTIVITY

Objective: Students will manipulate and shape aluminum foil to create a sculpture of an action figure that represents human movement and gesture.

Materials:

- Heavy-duty foil, 15 x 18 inches
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Staplers
- 5x5 cardboard or one large notecard

Steps:

1. Make five cuts into the sides of a large rectangle of heavy aluminum foil (Figure 1).

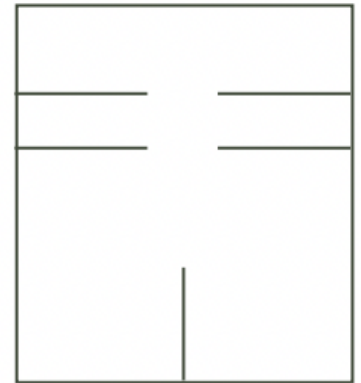


Figure 1

2. Lay foil flat on the table. Crumple the sides in at the top to form a head.
3. Next, crumple and squeeze the arm sections.
4. Then, crumple and squeeze the right side to form the body and the right leg.



Figure 2

5. Repeat this on the left side to form the body and the left leg.
6. Bend the figure at the joint: knees, elbows, waist, and neck to show movement of the human figure.
7. Once complete, the figure may be stapled to the piece of cardboard, and students can display their work (Figure 2).