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3/4 (view 1)

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Gallery Text

Rodin modeled more than two hundred figures inspired

by Dante's Inferno for his massive sculptural project that came to be known as the Gates of Hell (1880–c. 1890). This celebrated figural group, derived from that work, was carved for the painter Eugène Carrière, who reluctantly lent it to the watershed 1900 Rodin retrospective exhibition. There it was so enthusiastically received that Rodin produced a second marble of the figures. The title is puzzling. Women were often described as “idols” in nineteenth-century poetry; the woman here may be only an ideal, in spite of her cool, fleshly presence. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote: “a mysterious greatness emanates from this group. . . . One doesn't dare assign a meaning to it. . . . A heaven is near, but is not yet attained; a hell is near, and not yet forgotten.”

Identification and Creation

Object Number

1943.1034

People

Auguste Rodin, French (Paris, France 1840 - 1917 Meudon, France)

Carved by Jean Escoula, French

Title

Eternal Idol

Classification

Sculpture

Work Type

sculpture

Date

1893

Culture

French

Location

Level 2, Room 2120, European and American Art, 17th–19th century, The Lure of the East

 [View this object's location on our interactive map](#)

Physical Descriptions

Medium

Marble

Dimensions

72.4 x 63.5 x 40 cm (28 1/2 x 25 x 15 3/4 in.)

Provenance

Commissioned from the artist by Eugène Carrière, 1900 [through Leopold Blondin], by descent; to Carrière family, sold; to Sir Edmund Davis, 1907 [via Jean Delvolvé, Carrière's son-in-law], sold; to Grenville L. Winthrop, New York, NY, 1939 [via Martin Birnbaum], bequest; to Fogg Art Museum, 1943.

Acquisition and Rights

Credit Line

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop

Accession Year

1943

Object Number

1943.1034

Division

European and American Art

Contact

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Publication History

Vidor Frisch and Joseph T. Shipley, *Auguste Rodin: A Biography*, Frederick A. Stokes Company (New York, NY, 1939), p. 298

Georges Grappe, *Rodin*, Oxford University Press (NY) and Oxford University Press (UK) (New York, NY, 1939), p. 25

John L. Tancock, *The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin*, David R. Godine/Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA, 1976), mentioned in introduction, p. 30; no. 22, p. 210; repr. p. 47, pl. 9

Jacques de Caso and Patricia B. Sanders, *Rodin's Sculpture: A Critical Study of the Spreckels Collection*, Charles E. Tuttle Co. (Rutland, VT and Tokyo, Japan, 1977), p. 65, repr. in b/w

Alain Beausire, *Quand Rodin Exposait*, Editions du Musée Rodin (Paris, France, 1988), p. 189

Daniel Rosenfeld, "Auguste Rodin's Carved Sculpture (Volumes I-III)" (1993), p. 479-483, cat. no. 55a

Olivier Meslay, "Invitation à la Visite: la Collection de Sir Edmund Davis", *La Revue du Musée d'Orsay* (Spring 1999), no. 8, p. 48

Anna Tahinci, "Camille Claudel: From self-image to self-destruct", *Sculpture Review* (Fall 2000), vol. 49, no.

3, pp. 8-13, 31, repr. p. 13

Stephan Wolohojian, ed., *A Private Passion: 19th-Century Paintings and Drawings from the Grenville L. Winthrop Collection*, Harvard University, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press (New York, NY, 2003), no. 119, pp. 291-293, repr. in color

Stephan Wolohojian, *Ingres, Burne-Jones, Whistler, Renoir... La Collection Grenville L. Winthrop*, exh. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon and Réunion des Musées Nationaux (Paris, France, 2003), no. 119, pp. 299-301, repr. in color

Anna Tahinci, "Private Patronage: Rodin and his Early British Collectors", *Rodin, the Zola of Sculpture*, ed. Claudine Mitchell, Ashgate Publishing Company (Burlington, VT, 2004), pp. 95-117, p. 110, repr. as fig. 5.2

Rodin: La chair, le marbre, exh. cat., Musée Rodin (Paris, 2012), p. 17, repr. p. 17, fig. 4

Exhibition History

Exposition Rodin, Pavillon Rodin, Paris, 06/01/1900 - 11/30/1900

Sublimations: Art and Sensuality in the 19th Century, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, 07/13/1996 - 07/21/2002

A Private Passion: 19th-Century Paintings and Drawings from the Grenville L. Winthrop Collection, Harvard University, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 10/23/2003 - 01/25/2004

For Students of Art and Lovers of Beauty: Highlights from the Collection of Grenville L. Winthrop, Harvard University Art Museums, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, 04/16/2004

Ancient to Modern, Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge,
01/31/2012 - 06/01/2013

32Q: 2120 19th Century, Harvard Art Museums,
Cambridge, 11/01/2014

Subjects and Contexts

Google Art Project

This record has been reviewed by the curatorial staff but may be incomplete. Our records are frequently revised and enhanced. For more information please contact the Division of European and American Art at am_europeanamerican@harvard.edu