

30 & 31 July 2025

Art Appreciation lecture series 2025

Legendary Stories: Leonardo da Vinci to Murakami

The Gates of Hell, Auguste Rodin

Dr Geoffrey Edwards



Auguste Rodin, *The Gates of Hell*, 1800-1917

Lecture summary

The Gates of Hell by Auguste Rodin was a colossal project that occupied the great French sculptor for over three decades until his death in 1917. Discover the circumstances of its commission, the influence on Rodin of other artists such as Lorenzo Ghiberti, Michelangelo and Eugene Delacroix, the inclusion of subsequently famous component figures such as *The Thinker*, *The Kiss* and *The Three Shades*, and how Dante's *The Divine Comedy* was the original and primary inspiration for the work.

Slide list

1. Title slide
2. Photograph by Gertrude Kasebier of Auguste Rodin (AR) in his studio, c. 1906
3. AR, *The Gates of Hell* (GoH), 1880-1917, bronze cast 1925, Museo Soumaya, Mexico City, Mexico
4. Original plaster cast of GoH installed in the Musee d'Orsay, Paris
5. GoH bronze cast, Ht 6.35m x W 4m x D 0.85m (approx)
6. GoH plaster on display at Musee d'Orsay
7. GoH plaster during restoration, Musee d'Orsay

8. Title page of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (TDC) (c1308-21), first edition to use this title, 1555
9. Unknown artist, *Portrait of Dante Alighieri* (DA) (1265-1321), c1550, oil on panel, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut
10. William Blake, British (1757-1827), Illustration to *The Divine Comedy*, 1824-27 watercolour, Tate Gallery, London
11. Gustave Dore, French 1832–1883), *Dante addresses Pope Nicholas III*, 1861, engraving
12. GoH bronze cast
13. GoH plaster cast
14. GoH bronze (detail)
15. GoH plaster (detail)
16. Photograph of interior of Rodin's Pavilion de l'Alma with sculpture, 1900
17. Style of Johann Heiss (1640-1704), *Interior of sculptor's studio*, c1700, oil on canvas, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow
18. Photograph of Rodin in his studio, c1902
19. Photograph of Rodin observing his assistants working on the plaster model for *The Monument to Victor Hugo*, c1896
20. GoH, plaster cast (detail)
21. Ditto
22. GoH, bronze cast (detail showing *The Thinker*)
23. Photograph by Nadar of Claude Monet (1840-1926), c1899
24. Photograph by Georges Charles Beresford of AR (1840-1917), 1902
25. AR, *The Burghers of Calais* (TBoC), 1884-89, bronze, Calais
26. AR, *Monument to Balzac*, 1898, bronze, Musee Rodin, Paris
27. AR, *The Kiss*, 1882 (marble 1901-4), Tate Gallery, London
28. Photograph of *The Kiss* under drapes in Lewes Town Hall, 26 December 1915.
29. Photograph of AR and his lifelong companion Rose Beuret in their garden at Meudon, c1900
30. Photograph of Camille Claudel (1864-1943) (CC) at work on a clay model in her studio, c1887
31. Photograph by Cesar of CC, c1883
32. CC, *The Mature Age*, 1893-1900, bronze, Musee Rodin, Paris
33. CC, detail of above
34. AR, detail of TBoC
35. CC, *Bust of Rodin*, 1892, bronze, Musee Rodin, Paris
36. AR, *Camille Claudel with a bonnet*, 1884, plaster, Musee Rodin, Paris
37. AR, *Assemblage: Mask of Camille Claudel and left hand of Pierre de Wissant*, c1883, Musee Rodin, Paris
38. Antonio Canova (AC) Italian, (1757–1822), *Psyche revived by Cupid's kiss*, 1787-1793, marble. Louvre, Paris
39. Asa Briggs (ed), *The Nineteenth Century*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1985 (cover)
40. Bertel Thorvaldsen (BT), Danish (1768-1844), *Dancing girl*, marble, Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen
41. Horace Vernet (1789-1863), French, *Bertel Thorvaldsen with the bust of Horace Vernet*, c1833, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
42. James Pradier (JP) (1790–1852), Swiss-French, *Louise Colet*, 1837, plaster, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
43. Unknown artist, Figure of standing boy, marble
44. Photograph by Etienne Carjat of French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), c1862, British Library, London
45. JP, *The Three Graces*, 1831, marble, Louvre, Paris
46. Ditto
47. AR, *The Three Shades* (plaster), 1886, Musee Rodin, Paris
48. AR, *Adam, or The Creation of Man*, 1880–81, bronze, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
49. AR, *The Three Shades* (plaster), 1886
50. Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) French, *The Barque of Dante*, 1822, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris
51. Asa Briggs (ed), *The Nineteenth Century*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1985 (cover)
52. Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris
53. Photograph by Charles Hippolyte Aubry of Rodin in a smock, c 1862

54. Leon Bonnet (1833-1922), French, *Portrait of Barye with a wax model of 'Seated Lion'*, 1885, oil on canvas, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore
55. Antoine-Louis Barye (A-LB) (1795-1875), French, *Theseus fighting the Centaur Bianor*, modelled 1849, cast c1867, bronze, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
56. After A-LB, *Tiger walking*, c1836, cast post-1875, bronze, AGNSW
57. After A-LB, *Lion walking*, c, 1840, cast post-1875, bronze, AGNSW
58. AR, *The Prodigal Son*, 1885-87, bronze 1970, AGNSW
59. AR, *Second maquette for TBoC*, 1885, cast 1972, bronze, AGNSW
60. Photograph by Etienne Carjat of Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (AEC-B), (1824-1887)
61. AEC-B, *La Bacchante*, 1863, marble, Musee d'Orsay
62. AR, *Bacchante (Grapes or Autumn)*, c1874, terracotta, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York
63. AEC-B, *Pair of busts*, 1860s, glazed ceramic
64. Honore Daumier (1808-1879), *Portrait of Carrier-Belleuse*, 1863, lithograph
65. AR, *Man with the broken nose* (front and back views), 1863, bronze
66. AR, *Man with the broken nose*, 1875, marble, Musee Rodin
67. Michelangelo (1475-1564), *Dying slave*, 1513-16, marble, Louvre, Paris
68. AR, *The Age of Bronze*, 1877, bronze, Musee Rodin
69. Photograph by Gaudenzio Marconi of Auguste Neyt, the model for *The Age of Bronze*
70. AR, *The Age of Bronze*, 1877, bronze
71. Polykleitos (active 5th century BCE), *Spear-bearer (Doryphoros)* Roman marble copy of original bronze, National Archaeological Museum, Naples
72. Illustration by Emile Bayard for original edition of *Les Miserables*, 1862
73. Photograph by Etienne Carjat of Victor Hugo (1802-1885), 1876
74. Photograph of AR in his studio with assistants working on the plaster model for the *Monument to Victor Hugo*
75. AR, *Monument to Victor Hugo*, 1889-90 (bronze 1900), Palais Royal, Paris
76. Photograph of 1898 Paris Salon with sculpture display including plaster model of Balzac
77. AR, *Monument to Balzac*, 1898 (first cast in bronze in 1939), Musee Rodin
78. AR, preparatory model of Balzac's head, 1891, terracotta, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
79. Photograph by Louis-Auguste Bisson of Honore Balzac (1799-1850), 1842
80. Alexandre Falguiere, French (1831-1900), *Monument to Balzac*, 1898-1902, marble, Paris
81. AR, *Monument to Balzac*, 1898
82. Fragmentary male torso, Roman 1st century CE, marble
83. AR, *The Walking Man*, 1907, bronze
84. Photograph of Rodin, 1875-80
85. Illustration of Gambetta's reconnaissance flight over German lines in the Franco-Prussian war, 1870
86. Photograph by Etienne Carjat of Leon Gambetta (1838-1882), c1870-82
87. Photograph by Ernest Ladrey of Edmond Turquet (1836-1914), 1880s
88. Cartoon by Gill, Paris of Edmond Turquet, 1880s
89. Domenico di Michelino (1417-1491), *Dante Alighieri with Florence and the Realms of the Divine Comedy (Hell, Purgatory, Paradise)*, 1465, tempera on canvas applied to a panel, Florence Cathedral
90. Charles Beaudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, first edition with author's notes, 1857
91. Illustration to *Les Fleurs du Mal*
92. Cover of contemporary edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*
93. Lorenzo Ghiberti (LG) (1378-1455), East doors (1452) to the Baptistery, Florence
94. Baptistery, Florence
95. LG, East doors to the Baptistery
96. Ditto (detail)
97. Ditto (detail showing head of Ghiberti)
98. La Madeleine, Paris (completed 1842)
99. Ditto showing doors created by Baron Henri de Triqueti (1803-1874)
100. Detail of Triqueti doors
101. Ditto
102. Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, 1536-1541, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Rome
103. Ditto (detail)
104. Ditto (detail) with detail of GoH
105. Ditto (detail) with detail of GoH

106. Michelangelo, *The Bearded Slave* and *The Atlas*, c1525-30, marble, Accademia, Florence
107. AR, *Adam*, 1880-81, bronze, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
108. AR, *Iris, Messenger of the Gods*, 1891-94, bronze cast 1895, Museo Soumaya, Mexico City
109. Michelangelo, *Night*, 1526-33, marble, New Sacristy, Medici tomb, Florence
110. AR, preliminary sketches for GoH
111. AR, maquette for GoH
112. AR, drawings for GoH
113. AR, clay model for *The Thinker*
114. AR, sketches of models
115. AR, sketches of models
116. AR, GoH (detail)
117. AR, GoH
118. AR, GoH (detail)
119. Ditto
120. Ditto
121. AR, *The Falling Man*, 1882, bronze, Museo Soumaya, Mexico City
122. AR, *I am beautiful*, 1882, bronze
123. AR, *Crouching woman*, 1880-82, bronze, Smithsonian, Washington DC
124. AR, GoH (detail)
125. Ditto
126. Ditto
127. Ditto
128. Gustave Dore, *Francesca and Paolo da Rimini*, c.1860, engraving
129. AR, GoH (detail showing Francesca and Paolo)
130. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, French (1780-1867), *Paolo and Francesca*, 1819, oil on canvas, Musee des Beaux Arts, d'Angers
131. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, English (1828-1882), *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini*, 1855, watercolour, Tate Gallery, London
132. GoH (detail showing Paolo and Francesca)
133. GoH (detail)
134. Ditto
135. Ditto
136. AR, *Ugolino and his sons*, 1881, plaster, Musee Rodin
137. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875), *Ugolino and his sons*, 1865-67, marble, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
138. AR, *Ugolino and his sons*, plaster
139. GoH plaster
140. AR, *The Thinker* (detail of GoH)
141. Ditto
142. Ditto
143. Cartoon of *The Thinker*
144. Ditto
145. Poster for Paris Exposition 1900
146. Paris Exposition 1900
147. Exhibition of sculpture in Grand Palais, Paris
148. Rodin's Pavilion de l'Alma
149. Ditto (entrance rotunda)
150. Ditto (interior)
151. AR, Altered photograph of plaster figure
152. Interior of Pavilion de l'Alma with plaster cast of GoH
153. GoH (detail of plaster cast)
154. Photograph of Professor Albert E. Elsen with artist Paul Jenkins c1970
155. AR the NGV's cast of *The Thinker* on display
156. AR, *The Thinker* (detail)
157. AR, *The Thinker*
158. Ditto
159. Ditto

160. Photograph of the collector Constantin Ionides (1833-1900)
161. Photograph of the Ionides collection showing *The Thinker* in an elevated position in the collector's apartment
162. *The Thinker* (detail)
163. Unknown artist, *Allegorical portrait of Dante*, 1550-90, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
164. *The Thinker* (detail)
165. *The Thinker* on display in the NGV
166. Photograph of sculptor William Tucker
167. Catalogue illustration of Tucker's *Homage to Rodin*, 1999, bronze
168. Gallery view of Tucker bronzes
169. Ditto
170. Antony Gormley sculpture alongside sculpture by AR and Musee Rodin
171. Gormley sculpture at Musee Rodin
172. Ditto
173. AR, *The Age of Bronze*, 1877
174. Photograph of Austrian poet and novelist Rainer Maria Rilke in 1900
175. Photograph of AR
176. GoH bronze cast

References

Rodin, Raphael Masson and Veronique Mattiussi, translated from the French by Deke Dusinberre, 2004, 2015, Flammarion and Musee Rodin, Paris

Rodin, The Shape of Genius, Ruth Butler, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993

In Rodin's studio, Albert E Elsen, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1980

Two insights into Auguste Rodin's The thinker, Francois Blanchetiere and David Thurrowgood, Art Journal 52, September 2014, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Various useful YouTube videos focus on different aspects of Rodin's practice including *Auguste Rodin - Challenging Beauty*, based on the Rodin collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, and narrated by Alicia Robinson, Senior Curator of Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass