

MUSÉE  
RODIN  
PARIS  
PRESS RELEASE  
CORPS ET  
DECORS  
RODIN AND  
THE  
DECORATIVE  
ARTS  
EXHIBITION  
16 APRIL -  
22 AUGUST  
2010

A Parisian version of the exhibition presented at Evian last summer, *Corps et décors* reveals a little-known dimension of Rodin's work devoted to monumental decoration and the decorative arts. The public will discover many of the exhibition's hundred and fifty works—vases, *objets d'art*, drawings, and decorative sculptures—for the very first time, since they have never before been displayed. The exhibition also offers the occasion to rediscover some of Rodin's well-known works, such as *The Gates of Hell*, in a decorative context. *Corps et décors* is an opportunity to consider the very contemporary question of the status and value of the decorative arts, which was the subject of aesthetic debates at the end of the 19th century.

It's easy to forget that Rodin began his career as a decorative sculptor. Trained at the Petite École de Dessin et d'Architecture, Rodin worked for the Carrier-Belleuse atelier in the early 1870s. He participated in several decorative projects, from the Théâtre des Gobelins to the fountains at Trocadero, including even the Stock Exchange of Brussels. Various studies, ornamental busts, and elements of monumental decoration from this period are part of the exhibition. In 1879, Rodin entered the Sèvres workshop. He produced several vases embellished with bacchantes, fauns, and children. *Corps et décors* presents the largest collection of these displayed since 1907, including two Shanghai vases that are recent Musée Rodin acquisitions.

*The Gates of Hell*, an unfinished masterpiece and inexhaustible source of figures, was originally a public commission. The State had initially planned it as the façade of a museum of decorative arts. Other commissions followed. They came from patrons like the Baron Vitta or the industrialist Maurice Fenaille, who wished to make Rodin's art a part of their daily surroundings. Simultaneously, reductions of subjects such as *The Kiss* or *Eternal Spring* were mass-produced, in response to the desires of buyers of more modest financial means. For Rodin, the 1880s saw a fertile convergence between the different domains of his activities. Later on, the artist began to experiment with different materials and changes of scale, incessantly reinterpreting his own creations.

"Decoration is not a crime," exhibition commissioner François Blanchetière, remarks, not without humour. *Corps et décors* thus presents a reflection on the place of Rodin in the universe of the decorative arts and of monumental decoration in an era where the traditional compartmentalization of artistic domains had broken down, resulting in multiple exchanges. The works exhibited evoke many questions and debates characteristic of the late 19th century: the unity of the arts, going beyond historical styles, the decorative value of works of art, the conditions of a monumental decoration, the diffusion of great art. The course of the exhibition allows visitors to relive these important debates in which Rodin participated, through both his life and his work, even though he never directly engaged in them.

In conjunction with this exhibition, in the context of the Musée Rodin's contemporary art programme, visitors will be welcomed in the courtyard by *Torre*, a monumental work by Wim Delvoye, a selection of whose sculptures will be presented inside the Hôtel Biron. Reinterpreting all genres, even the least compatible, this artist at once emphasizes the question of decoration and presents an overstatement that rejects the notion of taste in the decorative arts.

Catalogue of the exhibition: coedition Musée Rodin / Alternatives, 272 p., 24,5 x 30 cm, 39 €  
Lecture-visits, meetings, a study day, and a notebook of games complete the visit to the exhibition. All programme schedules available on [www.musee-rodin.fr](http://www.musee-rodin.fr).



Rodin and Carrier-Belleuse,  
*Pedestal of The Titans*  
© Paris, musée Rodin  
(ph. Christian Baraja)



Rodin, Pompeii vase,  
*The Night*, Sèvres porcelain  
© Paris, musée Rodin  
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**Musée Rodin**  
79 rue de Varenne  
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Tuesday through Sunday  
from 10.00 a.m. to 5.45 p.m.

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