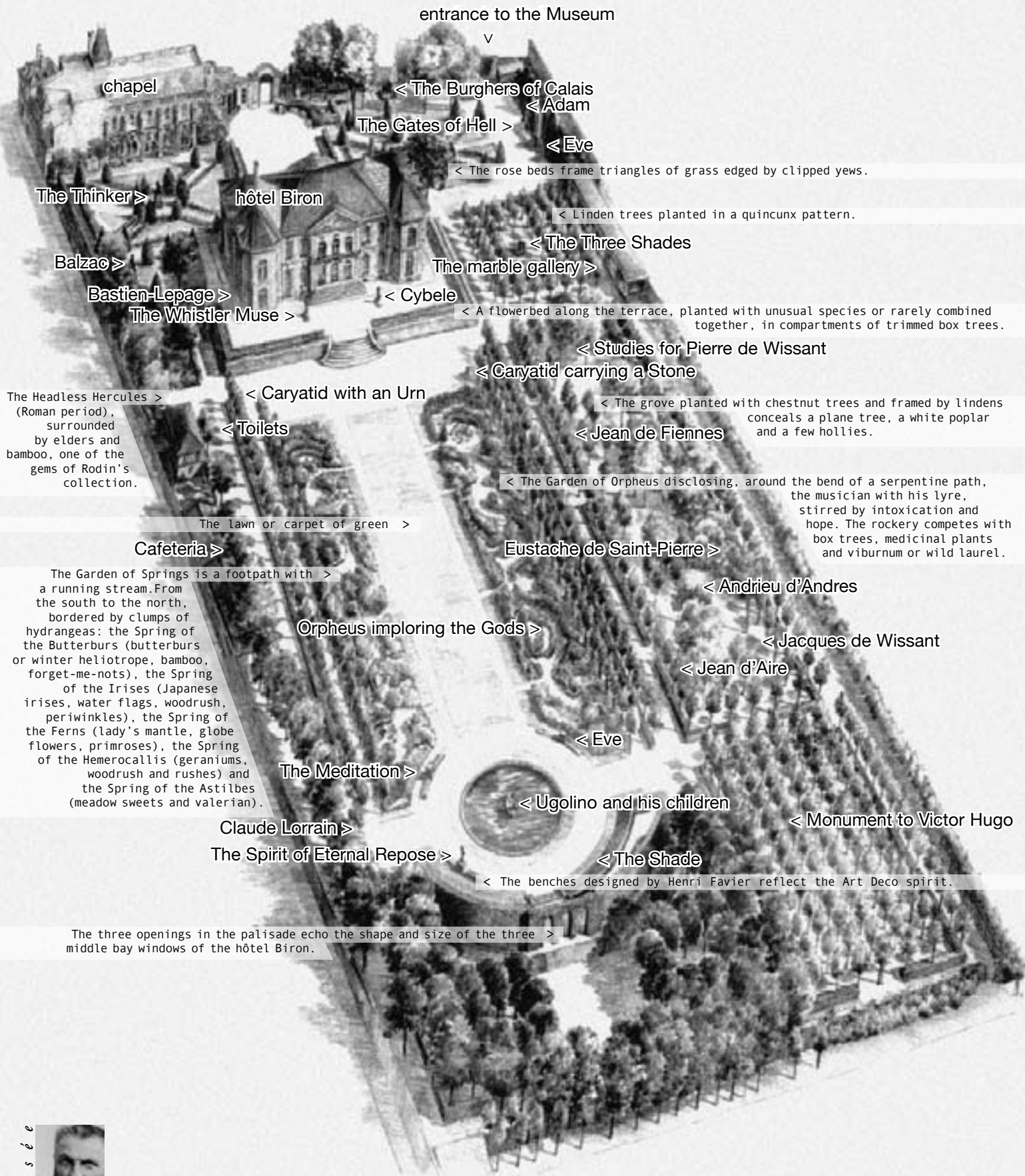


Rendez-vous in the Park

Rodin Museum, 4 and 5 June



entrance to the Museum

v

chapel

< The Burghers of Calais

< Adam

The Gates of Hell >

< Eve

< The rose beds frame triangles of grass edged by clipped yews.

< Linden trees planted in a quincunx pattern.

< The Three Shades

The marble gallery >

Balzac >

Bastien-Lepage >

The Whistler Muse >

< Cybele

< A flowerbed along the terrace, planted with unusual species or rarely combined together, in compartments of trimmed box trees.

< Studies for Pierre de Wissant

< Caryatid carrying a Stone

< Caryatid with an Urn

< The grove planted with chestnut trees and framed by lindens conceals a plane tree, a white poplar and a few hollies.

< Toilets

< Jean de Fiennes

The Headless Hercules >

(Roman period), surrounded by elders and bamboo, one of the gems of Rodin's collection.

The lawn or carpet of green >

< The Garden of Orpheus disclosing, around the bend of a serpentine path, the musician with his lyre, stirred by intoxication and hope. The rockery competes with box trees, medicinal plants and viburnum or wild laurel.

Cafeteria >

Eustache de Saint-Pierre >

< Andrieu d'Andres

The Garden of Springs is a footpath with a running stream. From the south to the north, bordered by clumps of hydrangeas: the Spring of the Butterburs (butterburs or winter heliotrope, bamboo, forget-me-nots), the Spring of the Irises (Japanese irises, water flags, woodrush, periwinkles), the Spring of the Ferns (lady's mantle, globe flowers, primroses), the Spring of the Hemerocallis (geraniums, woodrush and rushes) and the Spring of the Astilbes (meadow sweets and valerian).

Orpheus imploring the Gods >

< Jacques de Wissant

< Jean d'Aire

< Eve

The Meditation >

< Ugolino and his children

< Monument to Victor Hugo

Claude Lorrain >

The Spirit of Eternal Repose >

< The Shade

< The benches designed by Henri Favier reflect the Art Deco spirit.

The three openings in the palisade echo the shape and size of the three middle bay windows of the hôtel Biron.



RODIN

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The Chapel,

erected in 1876 by the architect Lisch, is now currently being renovated. In November, Pierre-Louis Faloci will deliver new areas designed to receive the public and to house temporary exhibitions, an auditorium, an archives consultation room, a library, and the Museum offices.

The Burghers of Calais.

In 1347, the town of Calais surrendered after a siege laid by the English. Six burghers, Eustache de Saint-Pierre, Jean de Fiennes, Andrieu d'Andres, Jean d'Aire, and Pierre and Jacques de Wissant, agreed to hand over the keys of the town to King Edward III. With a rope round their neck and wearing a tunic, they chose to sacrifice themselves to save their fellow citizens but they were saved thanks to the Queen's intervention.

The Gates of Hell

(6 metres high), with its 227 figures, illustrates Hell as described by Dante Alighieri (who died in 1321) in his "Divine Comedy". On the right stands Adam, with a musculature inspired by Michelangelo, and on the left Eve, with a belly that Rodin never completed (evident from the still visible lumps of clay) as his model left the studio when she became pregnant.

The Three Shades,

intended for the top of *The Gates of Hell*, have been enlarged in this version. They reflect the way Rodin sculpted, the group being composed of the same figure repeated three times.

The marble gallery

gives an insight into how Rodin wanted his practitioners to carve marble by creating a contrast between the smooth polished aspect of marble with the parts left in their original state.

Orpheus,

a sublime musician who played the lyre, was given a chance to save Eurydice from Hell as long as he did not turn around.

The Monument to Victor Hugo

portrays the poet naked, one arm stretched out, the other to his ear listening to the muse leaning over him.

Count Ugolino

was accused of betrayal and condemned to die of hunger with his children. This monumental group is set in the middle of the ornamental pool; Rodin had modelled a smaller version for the left leaf of *The Gates of Hell*.

The Meditation,

graceful and powerful, was created for *The Gates of Hell* (the left tympanum), and then incorporated in the *Monument to Victor Hugo*. And yet it is an armless version, with a knee cut off and part of the right leg removed, that Rodin considered to be finished (plaster in the hall).

The Caryatids,

two crouching women under the burden of an urn and a stone, come from *The Gates of Hell* (left and right of the tympanum).

The Whistler Muse

is a tribute to the painter James Whistler, bearing the features of a young English artist Gwen John.

The Balzac,

the ultimate scandal and "artistic legacy" of Rodin, his head expressing the fiery temperament of a genius, springs out of a massive block formed by his dressing gown.

The Thinker,

the first figure modelled by Rodin for *The Gates of Hell*, is the symbol of the sculptor-poet, a symbiosis between Rodin and Dante. It assumes its full expressive power in this enlarged version.

From Splendour to Neglect

The mansion, built between 1728 and 1730, according to the plans of Gabriel and under the supervision of Jean Aubert, is a dazzling proof of the success of Abraham Peyrenc de Moras. Built in the Rocaille style, it did not have a terrace originally and led directly into the garden.

In 1753, the mansion was sold to Maréchal de Biron who gave it the present name and transformed the garden sumptuously. He enlarged it, the flowerbeds were changed, and the last line of the vegetable garden consisted of a succession of specialised gardens: a Dutch garden, tulip garden, orange grove, melon bed and fig grove; garlands of honeysuckle encircled the tree trunks and linked the lindens together. For the first time in Paris, magnolias bloomed and nectarines were cultivated.

In 1820, the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus became the owners of the property. Its vocation was to educate the young girls of high society. It stripped the mansion of all its embellishments and allowed the garden to grow wild.

When the Church was separated from the State in 1905, the hôtel Biron was rented out to artists. Its illustrious tenants included Jean Cocteau, Isadora Duncan, Henri Matisse and Rainer-Maria Rilke. The latter wrote about the mansion to Rodin on 31 August 1908:

"My dear friend, you should see this fine building and the room that I have been living in since this morning. The three bay windows have a splendid view of an abandoned garden where you can occasionally catch a glimpse of naïve rabbits jumping through the trellises like in an old tapestry." Rodin rented a row of three rooms facing south. Moss and weeds had invaded the neglected garden, the lawns resembled meadows, and undisciplined tree branches blocked the paths. Rodin discovered a wild place reigned by silence, fragrances and colours: "A fabulous tangle of wild rose bushes filled the air with fragrance and twined around each other in the middle of a kind of circus of sand and weeds. It was the only place that had not been invaded by brambles and branches. The rest formed a small virgin forest, an inextricable disorder of vegetation."

The Restoration of the Garden

The garden was certainly in need of renovation but the question was how? By restoring it to its original 18th century aspect or by recreating the wild area with its brambles as Rodin had known it?

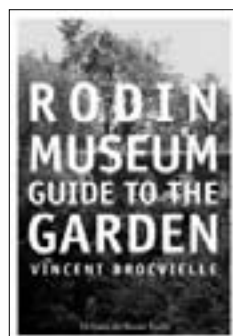
In 1993, the landscape architect Jacques Sgard decides to retain its basic classical structure but the new garden has more lawns, while the two sides of greenery would be pierced with sinuous paths.

The left side forms a stage for the renovated Orpheus, nestled among ivy, a creeper that symbolises Bacchus, and poisonous plants, giving the impression that the sculpture is springing out of the rock and vegetation. In the Garden of Springs on the right, streams flow out of springs in a more or less natural way. The plants are less omnipresent and are clustered into several specific areas.

A terrace and arbour close the view at the bottom of the garden, and a children's playground is laid out at the back.

Rodin Museum, guide to the garden

Text: Vincent Brocvielle, drawings: Emmanuel Pierre, 80 pages, 10€.



The Guide to the Garden is a circuit through the landscaped park of the Rodin Museum, a walk through the diversity, beauty and wealth of a garden. It is a synopsis of botany and sculpture, a manual written for art lovers but also for people who are curious about nature and mythology.

Available at the bookstore and at the museum's cafeteria.