

Press release



Leaving Rodin behind? Sculpture in Paris, 1905 – 1914

10 March - 31 May 2009

Level 2, rooms 67, 68, 69 and 70 and terrace

This exhibition has been organised by the Musée d'Orsay, the Réunion des Musées Nationaux and the Fundaciòn cultural Mapfre, Madrid, with the special collaboration of the Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisburg.

It is part of the North Rhine-Westphalia *Artention* cultural season 2008/2009 and is supported by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

Around 1900, in sculpture, there was a pressing desire to find a new formal approach: “It seems that a modern kind of statuary is still to be created.” Sculptors aspired to rediscover the laws of their art: “We have to discover the ruling principle, through a lifetime of often desperate effort”, Bourdelle would say. Maurice Denis pointed out the predominant “feeling for form, for the beauty of line, for geometric perfection” in Maillol’s work, for his only guide was “an exquisite, instinctive, impulsive feeling for form”, moving closer to “the sphere and the cylinder”. The work of the German sculptor Lehmbruck picked up this theme: “Is not an intelligent observation of a physical law, inviting comparisons with the heavier-than-air craft, worth more than unbridled, sentimental inventiveness that nothing can codify and that, all too often, goes against the essential properties of the material?” Lehmbruck’s ideas are symptomatic of this whole generation, who opposed Rodin, and who were never classed as avant-garde, Fauvism and Cubism being considered at the time as, first and foremost, movements in painting.

At that time, artists from all over Europe were in Paris, revealing in their respective styles, the same preoccupations. Minne arrived for the first time in 1891. In 1900, Hoetger, Gonzalez and Clara moved to the French capital, joined by Manolo in 1901. Casanovas, Brancusi, Picasso and Nadelman set up there in 1904; Gargallo stayed on a number of occasions in 1903-1904, 1907 and 1912; and Epstein lived there between 1902 and 1905. In 1906, Modigliani arrived; in 1908, Archipenko and in 1909, Zadkine, Freundlich and Gutfreund. Lehmbruck lived there from 1910 to 1914, as did Haller and, in 1911, Ernesto De Fiori. Their paths all crossed in Paris and they all exhibited there. For ten years, the city was the crucible in which new ideas about sculpture were exchanged and intermingled in experimental variations that challenged conventional categories, only created after 1918. The idea that contemporary sculptors were creating modern sculpture was clearly evident in international exhibitions like the *Sonderbund* in Cologne in 1912, and the *Armory Show* in New York in 1913.

The first section of the exhibition looks at the end of Rodin’s influence – Joseph Bernard, Lehmbruck, Bourdelle, Matisse, and Duchamp-Villon, followed by the great change of 1905, with the figures of Bourdelle, Hoetger and Maillol. The main part of the exhibition looks at the experiments of this generation into volume and structure, focusing on pivotal subjects like the torso – from Bourdelle to Brancusi, including Gaudier-Brzeska and Archipenko – the curled figure – based around Maillol’s *La Méditerranée* – the head – from Manolo to Nadelman and Brancusi – and the kneeling figure, represented by the sculptures of Minne, Bartholomé, Lehmbruck, Archipenko, Brancusi and Gutfreund. There is also a section looking at relief sculpture.

When war broke out, everything was turned upside down. Since before 1914, there had been a noticeable shift in artistic preoccupations, and after 1919, the opposing forces were redistributed in a different way: Gaudier-Brzeska died in 1915, Duchamp-Villon in 1918, Archipenko left Paris for Berlin,

then moved permanently to America in 1923, as did Nadelman in 1914. Bartholomé died in 1928, Bourdelle in 1929, and Bernard in 1931 after a long illness that forced him to give up all creative work. Brancusi and Maillol came to symbolise opposing trends. Lehmbruck's final works, from 1914 to 1919, were not characteristic of his previous work or of German Expressionism, and were almost a symbol of the end of a world.

Curators:

Catherine Chevillot, commissioning curator, chief curator at the Musée d'Orsay

Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Laure de Margerie, archivist

Duisburg, Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum – Zentrum Internationaler Skulptur

Prof. Dr Christoph Brockhaus, director

Dr Katharina Lepper, curator

Media Partners: France Info, Paris Première, Le Figaro

Publications

Exhibition catalogue, Musée d'Orsay / MAPFRE Foundation / Editions Hazan.

42 euros. 332 pages.

Around the exhibition

In-house exhibitions

Sculpture drawings from Chapu to Bourdelle (10 March – 31 May 2009), Level 0, room 8.

Study day

Cosmopolitan Paris: the milieu of sculpture from 1905 to 1914

Thursday 12 March 2009, 9am – 5pm, in partnership with the French National Institute for the History of Art

In partnership with the National Institute for the History of Art (Paris), with the participation of: Ilaria Cicali, Uwe Fleckner, Valerie Fletcher, Silvia Garinei, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Aline Magnien, Pierre-Michel Menger, Peter Read, Paul-Louis Rinuy, Inga Rossi-Schrimpf and Malgorzata Szelagowska.

Auditorium

Cosmopolitan Paris, 5 March to 28 May 2009

Cycle of concerts based around the works of Igor Stravinsky, George Gershwin, Maurice Ravel, Richard Strauss, Béla Bartók etc.

Children's workshop: *At full volume*

How does one become a sculptor in the shadow of the mighty Rodin? By going back to simple, smooth shapes: the sphere and the cylinder. In the workshop, the children get straight down to it, creating giants, and modelling concave and convex shapes.

Practical information

Opening times: daily except Monday, 9.30am to 6pm, late night opening on Thursdays until 9.45pm

Admission: Museum entrance ticket: full rate: €8; concessions: €5.50

Access: through the main entrance, 1, rue de la Légion d'Honneur, 75007 Paris

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