

French Sculpture

Daumier, Carpeaux, Rodin...

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Presentation

This visit provides an introduction to French sculpture in the greater part of the 19th century, beginning in 1850, with Honoré Daumier, through Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux and Auguste Rodin, right up to the first years of the 20th century with Émile Bourdelle and Joseph Bernard. This period was particularly fruitful, producing sculptures destined for the outdoors as well as indoors, for façades, fountains, squares, gardens and cemeteries. From 1880 onwards, the rise of monumental sculpture was such that the word "statue-mania" has been coined to describe the era. However, despite its variety of subjects and techniques and the scope of its achievements, interest for the sculpture of the epoch has been largely deflected by the beguiling turmoil which was taking place at the same time in the world of painting, especially the advent of impressionism in the 1870's-1880's.

Traditional subjects and new sources of inspiration

Sculpture retained its traditional themes: subjects derived from mythology such as the classical allegories of dance, music, theatre... but with new interpretations. Many artists (Barye, Fremiet...) continued the tradition of animal sculpture, which was flourishing.

The main developments occurred in the representation of people. With the fall of the monarchy and the secularisation of the State, images of saints and royalty were no longer being produced. The 19th century tended to replace these with public sculptures of important persons whose success was rather due to their own personal merit: the statues represented great men who were exemplary in terms of civic virtues and who were to be seen as figure-heads for the society as a whole.

Whether the subjects of the statues were heroes from Classical or contemporary times they most often embodied the idea of progress; humanity on the march and the victory of "reason". A good knowledge of the Classics was part of the established culture of the European elite: the Gracchi, Aristotle, and Virgil being familiar references for the 19th century public. Throughout the century, contemporary glories, although sometimes fleeting, were represented with an increasing regularity. The new taste was for leaders, such as Napoleon and Gambetta in politics, Balzac and Hugo in literature, Claude Bernard and Pasteur in the field of sciences. Less well-known characters were also included, such as the playwright Émile Augier, the engineer Léon Serpollet and Ernest Rousselle, president of the municipal council of Paris! The scope for allegorical representation was broadened too; the epoch produced numerous and diverse versions of Revolution, the Republic, Liberty... Finally, certain sculptors turned to the representation of faraway peoples, influenced by

the developing taste for the Orient, which had come about through exploratory voyages, colonisation and the birth of ethnological sciences.

The rules of the trade

The tuition of 19th century sculptors

The traditional education of a sculptor followed the course of tuition offered by the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine-Arts). This was mainly based on drawing, either from life models or after the Antique (plaster casts), along with the study of "history and the Classics". Studios, both in painting and sculpture, were only set up following the École's reform in 1865. Up until then, students had been allowed to enrol at private studios, most of which were run by tutors from the Beaux-Arts. Numerous competitions were organised, the most prestigious being the Prix de Rome, which awarded the laureate five years – reduced to four after 1865 – of study in the Villa Medici. Such an official blessing was the assurance of a career nourished by commissions and by exhibitions at the official Salon. Academicians dominated the juries of the École des Beaux-Arts, the Prix de Rome and the Salon and so determined the nature of the dominant aesthetic. Despite such institutional constraints, many artists succeeded in preserving their personal vision and by the end of the century, some of them began to receive instruction on the fringes of these institutions.

Materials and methods in sculpture

Whatever the material they used, artists had a choice of making three kinds of sculptures. They could make a "bas-relief" where the form is only slightly raised from the surface of the block; Bas-reliefs are most often used in architecture to decorate walls and façades. If the depth of the carving or modelling is more pronounced, although still not completely detached from the surface of the block, one speaks of "high-relief". Finally, "a sculpture in the round" is sculpted on all sides and can be walked around. During this epoch, the traditional image of the sculptor chiselling away at a block of stone to "reveal" the finished work, bore little relation to reality even though, by the end of the century, a few artists did adopt direct cutting. In most cases, several people were involved in the process of creation. The sculptor, considered as the main author, mainly gave shape to the idea in wax or clay, materials that are easy to model. This original model sparked a process of different stages which vary according to the material to be used for the definitive work.

The first stage was to make a hollow mould from the model, generally in Plaster-of-Paris. For reliefs, the mould was usually made in one piece, whereas for sculptures in the round it was made of two or more parts called "shells". The inside of the mould was then coated with a barrier substance (oil, shellac etc) to preventing sticking before being filled with Plaster-of-Paris. The form

obtained was called the "original plaster cast". At this point, techniques diverged depending on whether bronze or stone was to be used for the definitive work..

For bronze, the technique most often used in the 19th century was lost-wax casting. In a new hollow mould, made after the original plaster cast, the founder poured a skin of wax to get an exact replica of the model. Once set, the wax cast was surrounded by a network of wax funnels and outlets (runners and risers) through which, in the next stage, the bronze would be poured and the melted wax and gas would be chased out. The whole device was then covered by a thick shell made of heat resistant materials before being heated up. The melted wax, oozed out of the "risers" whilst the liquid metal was poured through the "runners" to fill the empty space. Once the bronze had cooled, the mould was broken, the runners and risers (now filled with bronze) were cut off at surface level, and the sculpture was chiselled back and polished before being patinated (coloured) through the chemical action of heated oxides. When a hollow statue was required, which was most frequently the case, especially where large formats were concerned, a core of heat resistant materials was introduced in the plaster mould at the beginning of the operation. The wax, and then the bronze, thus occupied only a narrow space between the mould and core. The core was then taken out and the sculpture left hollow. Using the original plaster the process could be repeated enabling multiple editions to be made of the same work.

If the sculptor wanted to make his work in stone (limestone, marble...), he used a "pointing" machine. This was a measuring instrument, a kind of three-dimensional set of compasses which allowed the points of reference marked on the original cast to be duplicated onto the block of stone. Sculptors usually relied on technical assistants to do this work. They began by roughing out a sketchy form on the block of stone before using the pointing machine to mark precise points which would help them to complete a work as close to the original cast as possible. With the machine, the technical assistant had the flexibility of retaining, enlarging or reducing the scale of the original whilst still respecting the proportions of the sculpture.

Illustrations to these explanations can be found in publications mentioned in the bibliography below or by visiting the display in the Musée d'Orsay's sculpture gallery (located behind the large clock, on the middle level).

The main artistic movements

Whilst avoiding a rigid classification of artworks and artists, it is possible - and useful in educational terms - to identify a few main artistic movements.

Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism means "inspired by Antiquity". This movement, which had begun in the Renaissance, was stimulated at the end of the 17th century by archaeological discoveries of Classical sculptures, in particular at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Neoclassicists were on a quest to find "ideal beauty", vying with Antiquity, which in their eyes was the only era in all history which had been able to attain it. In painting, the movement reached its peak with David (1748-1825) and his school in painting, and Antonio Canova (1757-1822) in sculpture, whose particularly striking sculptural group *Amour et Psyché (Love and Psyche, 1787-1795)* can be found at the Louvre. During the second half of the 19th century, Neoclassicism continued to be found in austere works dominated by heroic nudity and Classical-inspired drapery. The objective of such pieces was to convey moral values through the representation of mythical and allegorical figures or the heroes of Greco-Roman history. The preferred material of Neoclassical sculpture was marble as it suited solemnity, and the impassivity of expressions, although some, like Eugène Guillaume, were able to use bronze whilst remaining faithful to the Classical model in their choice of both subject and form.

Romanticism

In contrast to Neoclassical tradition, Romantic artists sought to probe the depth of the individual's internal world, to express torments, revolts and hopes. Rather than rendering the purity of forms, they endeavoured to convey their true expression, sometimes distorting proportions and modelling for the sake of liveliness. The best known representatives of French Romanticism are the painters Eugène Delacroix and Théodore Géricault, whose tormented and colourful compositions contrast sharply with the formal rigidity and emphasis on line extolled by the Neoclassicists. In the field of sculpture, some artists hotly contradicted Théophile Gautier's assertion: "Of all the arts, the least suited to express the romantic idea is assuredly sculpture. It seems that it received its definitive form from Antiquity... All sculptors are Classical by necessity". The Romantics were admirers of Goethe, who sought inspiration in Dante, Virgil and Shakespeare's evocations of death or the animal world, who contrived to convey the anguish and torments that haunted them, who aimed, as Romantic, Auguste Préault put it, to express not the "finished" but the "unfinished".

Eclecticism

Under the Second Empire (1852-1870), sculptors such as Carpeaux, wanting to overcome the traditional barrier between neo-classicism and romanticism, gave birth to a new style known as Eclecticism. These artists drew their inspiration from all the styles of the past giving no special place to Antiquity. They showed equal enthusiasm for the art of the Middle Ages, for the French and Italian Renaissance, the styles of Louis XIV, Louis XV and Louis XVI, as well as the Baroque! They synthesised these multiple references and did not hesitate in juxtaposing any or all of them in a single piece. Emerging from this movement was a group of artists called the "Neo-Florentines", who were specifically interested in the Tuscan Renaissance and whose sculptures, depicting gracefully delicate adolescents, invaded the Salons until the last quarter of the 19th century. Also classed with the Eclectic movement are those sculptors inspired by the Orient, either through fantasy or as a result of actual travels, some of whom gave a new lease of life to colour in sculpture, combining materials of different hues.

Realist movements

The realist movement in painting was born in the 1840's, and associated with the personalities of Gustave Courbet, Jean-François Millet and Honoré Daumier. At first it was considered to be related to the political and social movements of the time, in particular with the 1848 revolution. Yet not all realist artists claimed this connection. They wanted, beginning with the close observation of daily life, to depict social reality, which Courbet worded as follows: "To be able to translate morals, ideas, what my times look like according to my appreciation, to be not only a painter but also a man, in a word, to make living art, that is my goal". Realism was progressively less perceived as being subversive and came to be known by the new term "Naturalism". By the end of the century it had succeeded as one of the dominant movements, in particular as far as official commissions were concerned. Sculptors like Constantin Meunier and Jules Dalou substituted ancient heroes with contemporary figures and glorified Republican values and the world of workers and peasants. Stylistically, naturalist artists refused to idealise their models and gave their allegories the air of real human beings with all their strong and weak points. Many projects were made for monuments dedicated to labour, including sketches and preparatory works, through very few reached completion in the artists' lifetimes.

Symbolism

The Symbolist movement developing in parallel with Realism reproached the latter's lack of idealism and spirituality. The Symbolists, mostly writers and painters, and a lesser number of sculptors, refused a world dominated by science and machines and sought to translate the

untranslatable: thoughts, aspirations and dreams. In the words of Jean Moréas, "Art should not seek more in the objective, than an extremely succinct starting point". Thus defined, Symbolism pertains more to a state of mind than to a stylistic movement. For example, Auguste Rodin - an artist of genius who may not be categorised - in his famous monument to Balzac, only used the writer's physical characteristics as an inspirational starting point, eventually giving him a quasi-abstract image which symbolised his full might.

The return to style

In the very first years of the 20th century, sculptors turned away from both Naturalism and Symbolism and endeavoured to recover the Classical qualities of clarity and balance without imitating Classical sculpture as the Neoclassicists had done. On the formal plane, artists simplified figures, favouring a single view point and treated the surface with an extreme regularity. André Gide compared the harmony, the passionless balance of the gestures, the perfect self-control of the bodies sculpted by Aristide Maillol to Rodin's: "panting, worried, significant, full of pathetic clamour". The aesthetic choices of this "return to style" are to be felt particularly in the relationship between architecture and sculpture, as can be seen in the bas-reliefs sculpted by Antoine Bourdelle for the façade of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

Sculptures by painters

Numerous painters tackled sculpture as a complement, preparation or follow-up to their painted work. But some of them, whilst essentially remaining painters, practised sculpture for its own sake. Thus Edgar Degas, although exhibiting only one sculpture during his lifetime (*The Little Dancer*), has left many figurines in which he strove, using three dimensions, to convey a feeling of life and movement as accurately as possible. In not having had the sculptors' academic training, and not seeking fame through their sculptures, these artists practiced this art with a total liberty and so opened the way to modernity.

Objectives

- This visit is targeted at pupils from all school levels: primary school, lower secondary school (visual arts, history) and upper secondary school (visual arts, history of art, A level history).
- To introduce pupils to 19th century sculpture, highlighting its diversity.
- The pupils may take advantage of the multi-disciplinary nature of the Museum's collections to compare sculpture (three dimensions) and painting (two dimensions): the different materials and the respective ways in which they are worked, the series production of cast works...
- To identify the different aesthetic movements and introduce the most important sculptors.
- To stimulate curiosity (identify and recognise scenes from mythology, literature and history).
- To identify recurring themes and subjects: great men, allegories, literary or historic characters...
- To introduce some great characters from mythology (Heracles...), Antiquity (The Gracchi, Virgil...), from literature (Ugolino/Dante, Goethe, Balzac), from contemporary history (the parliamentarians of the July Monarchy with Daumier, the Imperial Prince, Gambetta...), political and religious symbols (Saint Michael...) and study how they have been represented.
- Encourage the discovery of sculpture in the city, its location, dimensions, podium and complementary elements (bas-reliefs, plates, inscriptions).

Before and after the visit

The visit to the Musée d'Orsay is an opportunity to explore several aspects of sculpture with the pupils:

- the volumes (composition, gestures, balance...)
- the effects (colours and textures of the materials, lighting effects...)
- the techniques (materials, fabrication processes...)
- the functions (decorative, religious, political, commemorative...).

Primary schools

Information comprehensible to young children may be selected from the "presentation" section, in particular on technical aspects and on the most commonly illustrated themes in 19th century sculpture.

1. the vocabulary

Identify the sculptures in the round, bas-reliefs and high-reliefs (see presentation above). Sculpture or statue?

The word "sculpture" comes from the Latin verb *sculperere* which means shaping. It focuses on the sculptor's action as he creates a form out of the material.

The word sculpture refers to the artist's work but also to their work as a whole (e.g. Rodin's sculpture). It covers a more generic use (for instance "Greek sculpture" or "19th century sculpture" meaning all the sculptures made during these periods).

The term "statue" also comes from Latin, from the verb *stare* which means to stand, thus describing one of the essential characteristics of sculpture, that of balance.

The statue also refers to an artwork representing a single character.

These etymologies also give us the terms "sculptor" and "statuary".

Sculptors master the art of modelling forms, while "statuary" consists in making human or animal figures in a hard material. In the 19th century "statuary" is sometimes applied to sculptures ornamenting a building.

The "technical assistant" has the task of carving an artwork in stone or marble, using the template of a clay or plaster model made previously by the sculptor.

2. Materials and tools

Compare the choice of materials used by 19th century artists with those of today. Explore the notions of durable or ephemeral work.

Classify the materials according to their characteristics (hard, supple, liquid materials), find out their origins (mineral, vegetable, animal, metal).

Try out the actions to be performed in order to transform them (modelling, carving, moulding,

casting, founding) and to construct forms (adding, taking away, combining).

Observe the tools used in its action and their traces which may sometimes be seen on the sculptures (boasting chisel, sculpting knife, chisel, wooden mallet, stone carver's mallet, point, tooth chisel, bore, bush-hammer, rasp).

3. Suggested activities

How to organise volumes?

Allow the children to explore material and volumes by touching them.

It is nevertheless necessary to warn them of the fragility of artworks (delicate parts that may break, but also surfaces and patina that may be damaged by contact with visitors' hands), and that it is our responsibility not to touch artworks in museums in order to preserve the heritage for future generations.

Bumps and hollows

Make a bas-relief on a plate of clay creating a rhythm of bumps and hollows (with folds, drapery, geometric shapes...).

Look for the same effects with a variety of materials: crumpled paper, cardboard, cloth dipped into Plaster of Paris, aluminium foil, modelling clay, objects...

All the resulting objects can be put together to make a collective artwork.

Rough and smooth materials

Touch the texture of materials which, like the surface of a skin, constitute the "grain" of the sculpture: (smooth material, without traces of tools, rough materials, with traces of tools). Observe the surfaces which absorb light and those over which it glides.

Encourage the children to find the rhythms of textures based on oppositions of words like smooth/coarse, finished/rough.

Guide the children by suggesting verbs linked to cutting (carving, digging, emptying, piercing, marking, engraving, boring, punching...) or to polishing (polishing, planing, sanding, softening, filing, scraping, rasping...). Link these to specific tools.

Get the children to take prints of different objects and fabrics...

Volumes that "stand"

Make experiments with the balance of one's own body, moving or still, in order to understand why some sculpted figures lean on something (trees, columns, drapery...).

Test the limits of balance by making a movement resting on 4, 3, 2 and then 1 point on the ground. The experiment may be videoed to watch the movements in slow motion.

Make experiments about balance using all kinds of materials, blocks of wood, cardboard, metal, plastic and test their weights. Build a very stable volume, pyramid-shaped, and then try to reduce the number of resting points. One may also disturb the usual laws of gravity by introducing magnets in metallic blocks.

Multiple points of view

To see a sculpture in the round entirely, one has to walk around it.

Lay constructed volumes or sketches made of clay on a sculptor's wheel or on a piece of cardboard that may be moved around.

Record the different "points of view" with photographic shots or by projecting the silhouette on a sheet of paper as in a shadow show. By juxtaposing the different sheets and photographs, we receive flat images of the sculpture's overall form, which highlights the relationships between the full and empty parts of the volume.

Identify the sculptor's favourite point(s) of view (different parts of the body, often the face, the back or particular gestures).

Lighting

Under an intense source of light, the relationship between bumps and hollows is hugely dramatised. Light accentuates the sculpture's form by contrasting the highlights and shadows. Try out the effects of lighting on a volume or on a face. Vary the intensity and direction of light so that certain zones are highlighted. The distortions which can be obtained on the face, are reminiscent of those used by Daumier in his caricatures of Parliamentarians.

Secondary schools

Provide the pupils with the information concerning techniques and artistic movements provided in the "presentation" section. Identify the different places where sculptures may be found:

- inside: museums, private houses, town halls and religious buildings.
- outside: in streets, squares, gardens, fountains, on the façades of buildings and also on bridges, in cemeteries and on war memorials.

With the pupils, list the main sculptures to be seen around the school (in large cities) or in their town. In the case of bronze sculptures, look for the architect's or sculptor's signature, and foundry mark

Classify the subjects of these sculptures:

- allegories: name them and study the attributes associated with them. List in a more generic way the themes of the most common allegories (arts, virtues, politics...) and the attributes which permit their identification. Are such clues still immediately understandable today?

• people:

Are they real people (writers, musicians, politicians, scientists...)? If so, name them and find out information about their life and work.

Are they mythological characters? If so, study the myths and tales in which they appear.

At upper secondary level, consider the political or cultural significance of the choice of represented allegories, beginning with this quote from René Doumic published in 1896 in *La Revue des Deux-Mondes*: "We ask what kind of future a city is preparing for itself, if it adorns its squares with the

statue of Riot (Marcel), the statue of Disobedience to the Law (Dolet), the statue of Immorality (Diderot), the statue of Violence and Hate (Danton)?"

Consider how monuments are set, the height of their podiums. Consider the space in which they are placed. Rodin's *Balzac*, for example, is perceived differently when it is in the garden of the Musée Rodin, at the crossing of Boulevard Raspail than, as it was during the exhibition organised in 1996, on the road island of the Champs-Élysées.

With the pupils, try changing the relative scale of sculptures within their surroundings by enlarging or reducing its image and pasting it on the same view of the area.

Visits to other museums

Many museums hold by 19th century sculptors, in particular in Dijon, Lyon, Lille, Nogent-sur-Seine, Troyes, Amiens...

Other museums are dedicated to the work of just one artist:

- in Paris: Rodin, Bourdelle, Bouchard, Maillol.
- in the rest of France: Carpeaux in Valenciennes, David d'Anger in Angers, Augustin Dumont in Semur-en-Auxois, Denys Puech in Rodez.

The visit: list of artworks

- David d'Angers : *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, 1851
- Honoré Daumier : *Portraits des Célébrités du Juste milieu* (*Portraits of the Celebrities of the Juste milieu*), 1851
- Pierre-Jules Cavelier : *Cornélie, mère des Gracques* (*Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi*), 1861
- Eugène Guillaume : *Les Gracques* (*The Gracchi*), 1847-1848
- Eugène Guillaume : *Le Faucheur* (*The Reaper*), 1849
- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *Ugolin* (*Ugolino*), 1862
- Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier : *Nègre du Soudan en costume algérien* (*Sudanese Man in Algerian Costume*), Salon de 1857 ; *L'Arabe d'El Aghouat en burnous* (*The Arab from El Aghuat Wearing a Burnoose*), 1856-1857 ; *La Capresse ou Nègresse des Colonies* (*Woman from the Colonies*), 1861
- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *La Danse* (*Dance*), 1865
- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *Le Prince impérial* (*The Imperial Prince*), 1865
- Auguste Rodin : *Ugolin* (*Ugolino*), 1882
- Auguste Rodin : *Balzac*, 1898
- Jules Dalou : *Le Grand Paysan* (*The Large Peasant*), 1889-1899
- Constantin Meunier : *Débardeur du port d'Anvers* (*Antwerp Harbour Dockers*), vers 1899
- Bernhard Høetger : *La Machine humaine* (*The Human Machine*) 1902
- Jean-Paul Aubé : *Monument à Gambetta* (*Monument to Gambetta*), 1884
- Joseph Bernard : *La Danse* (*Dance*), 1912-1915

- Émile-Antoine Bourdelle : *Héraklès tue les oiseaux du lac Stymphale* (*Heracles Killing the Birds on the Stymphalian Marshes*), 1909
- Edgar Degas : *La Petite danseuse de quatorze ans* (*The Little Dancer*), 1878-1881

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French Sculpture

Daumier, Carpeaux, Rodin...

• The visit: the artworks

1. Pierre Jean David, known as David d'Angers (Angers, 1788 - Paris, 1856): *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* (1749-1832), 1851, monumental bust, plaster
Location: ground floor, entrance to the central aisle, on the right

"It is difficult to imagine Goethe in another aspect than the Olympian bust by David d'Angers" Théophile Gautier wrote in his *Portraits contemporains* (*Contemporary Portraits*, Charpentier, 1874).

The monumental head is indeed proportional to the admiration the sculptor had for the great Romantic German poet. He travelled to Weimar in 1829 to meet Goethe, and contemplate and study his features before making his portrait. The two men developed a genuine friendship, as testified by the *Carnets* (*Notebooks*) left by David d'Angers. Goethe's head is powerful, dominated by a prominent forehead and hair that has been described as "sparkling", evocative of his intellectual radiance.

Goethe was the main representative of the Enlightenment in Germany. His glory spread throughout the civilised world of the epoch and was celebrated throughout the 19th century. As a universal spirit, he has deliberately been placed at the entrance to the Musée d'Orsay which is committed to all the arts of the later half of the nineteenth century. David d'Angers, whose work combines Academic tradition with Romantic ambition was also heir to the humanist values of the previous century.

Note (from the footbridge to get a better view of the sculpture): the impressive head, the continuous line between the neck and the chin, the unseeing eyes, the vast and prominent forehead - described as being "too Olympian" - and the rendering of the hair.

2. Honoré Daumier (Marseilles, 1808 - Valmondois, Seine-et-Oise, 1879): *Portraits des Célébrités du Juste Milieu* (*Portraits of Celebrities of the Juste Milieu*), 1851, coloured clay
Location: ground floor, gallery 4, Daumier

Daumier was all three; painter, sculptor and draughtsman. He executed these thirty six coloured clay busts following commissions for lithographs from Charles Philipon, to be published in the satirical newspapers the *Charivari* and the *Caricature* of which Philipon was the director. Most of the busts represent parliamentarians elected to the Chambre des députés at the beginning of the July Monarchy and were mostly chosen from among the Orleanist majority who supported or took part in Louis-Philippe's governments. One of the busts represents Daumier's patron Philipon, himself. These busts are rumoured to have been modelled in the lower chamber but it is more likely that Daumier only observed the parliamentarians there. His prodigious memory allowed him to accurately summarise the personality he wished to characterise later in his studio.

Caricature is a physical revelation of the deepest elements of a models' personality. On the Museum's labels, one may read the adjectives attributed to each character by Maurice Gobin when he set up the catalogue of Daumier's work in 1952.

Note: the distortions and exaggerations the artist applied to his models' features, and also the evidence of the modelling process and the colours added to the clay.

Identify which of the characters reappeared on the lithographs - exhibited opposite the busts - and note the way the artist treated the volumes of the faces with a play of light and shadow.

3. Pierre-Jules Cavalier (Paris, 1814 - Paris, 1894): *Cornélie, mère des Gracques* (*Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi*), 1851, sculpted group, marble
Location: ground floor, central aisle

This work features two Classical heroes as children: Caius and Tiberus Gracchus with their mother, Cornelia. She sits calm and dignified, exerting full authority over her two children. Classical tradition often associated self control and gravity and severity with the naturally cold aspect of marble.

The archaeological discoveries of ancient statues, unearthed without their original colours, influenced the purity of Neoclassical works. The absent gaze gives Cornelia's face an appearance of impassivity and distance.

The subject, related to the civic ideal and Classical culture of the time, the careful, quasi-archaeological reconstruction, in particular of the drapery, and the harmonious composition are absolutely characteristic of a Neoclassical work conforming to the taste of the time.

Note: the pyramidal construction, the different attitudes of the three characters allowing the viewer to read each character's psychology: the younger son, Caius, is full of energy; his elder brother, Tiberus, is more thoughtful and is shown with a diploma; Cornelia, who is responsible for them, sits in majesty.

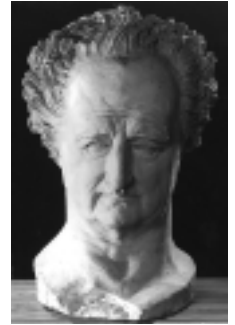
Observe the contrast between smooth zones and the drapery, in particular between young Caius's body and the folds surrounding him. Note the variety in the rendering of the curly or straight hair: Cornelia's ringlets are no doubt a concession to the fashionable hairstyles of the 19th century.

See also: Eugène Guillaume (1822-1905): *Les Gracques* (*The Gracchi*), 1847-48, double bust, bronze

4. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (Valenciennes, 1827 - Courbevoie, 1875): *Ugolin* (*Ugolino*), 1862, sculpted group, bronze

Location: ground floor, middle of the central aisle

Carpeaux found inspiration in Canto XXXIII of Dante's *Divine Comedy* which told of the meeting in hell of Ugolino della Gherardesca with Dante, led by Virgil. The writer described the punishment the count was subjected to. In 13th century Pisa,



after betraying the Ghibelins' party which had supported the Emperor in his struggle against the Pope, who was supported by the Guelfi, Ugolino was gaoled in a tower. His rival, the archbishop d'Ubal dini, condemned him to starve in gaol. According to the legend, Ugolino yielded after having eaten his sons and nephews who shared his cell.

Carpeaux created this sculpted group in 1857 at the end of his sojourn in the Villa Médici. The artist did not respect the academic standard which imposed the portrayal of just one or two figures and a subject taken either from Antiquity or the

1. Pierre Jean David dit David d'Angers : *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* (1749-1832), 1851, bust, plaster
2. Honoré Daumier : *Portraits des Célébrités du Juste Milieu*, 1851, coloured clay
3. Pierre-Jules Cavalier : *Cornélie, mère des Gracques*, 1851, sculpted group, marble
4. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *Ugolin*, 1862, sculpted group, bronze

Bible. Ignoring reproaches, he chose, as he wrote in a letter to a friend, to “express the most violent passions with the most delicate tenderness”.

Observe the volume in the round, the pyramidal composition. Note that each child represents a stage towards death. Observe the expression of pain and anguish of the father: the face, the tense hands and feet, the nervous modelling of the body and in particular of the back, testifying to Carpeaux’s close study of the antique *Laocoon* by Michael-Angelo and of Géricault. Compare the position of the bodies with the terracotta sketch on which the more rigid drapery, traces of the artist’s fingers and of his tools may be observed.

5. Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier (Cambrai, 1827 - Algiers, 1905): *Nègre du Soudan en costume algérien* (Sudanese Man in Algerian Costume), 1857 Salon ; *L’Arabe d’El Aghouat en burnous* (Arab from El Aghuat Wearing a Burnoose), 1856-57 ; *La Capresse or Nègresse des Colonies* (Woman from the Colonies), 1861

Location: ground floor, end of the central aisle

Materials: bronze, onyx extracted from a quarry in El Aghuat (Algeria) and porphyry piedouches (pedestals) from the Vosges for the first two; onyx, gilded bronze with patina and pink marble piedouche for the third.

These polychrome sculptures tell of Cordier’s realist and ethnographic tendencies. Commissioned by the Muséum d’histoire naturelle, Cordier sculpted a series of busts intended to illustrate the “History of Races” for the anthropology gallery. The sculptor went on assignment to Algeria and Greece to study human types, whom it was feared were “on the verge of dissipating into a sole people”. The term “race”, as it was commonly used in the 19th century, meant simply a human group sharing common characteristics.

Cordier’s approach was related to the Orientalist movement stimulated by 19th century colonial conquests and committed to realism. Théophile Gautier admired the accuracy and realistic rendering of these figures: “the black bronze head reproduces perfectly the traits and colour of the original [...]”

Sculptors began to reuse colour under the Second Empire thanks to both the exhumation of antique sculptures on which there remained traces of paint and the interest in medieval art. For these sculptures, Cordier chose onyx extracted from Algerian quarries, exploited by France following colonisation. The nuances of this material allowed him to evoke the colourful costumes he had seen during his sojourn.

Note: the assemblage in several parts of *L’Arabe d’El Aghouat en burnous*: the bust stands on little pedestals in coloured marble (the piedouches), then the bronze mask is attached to the bust, the front part of the Burnoose is yet another part, and finally, the skull cap is attached at the back.

6. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (Valenciennes, 1827 - Courbevoie, 1875): *La Danse* (Dance), 1865, sculpted group, Échaillon stone

Location: ground floor, end of the central aisle, to the left

This high relief is an example of a work made by public commission for a public building. Garnier, the architect of the Paris Opéra, had asked Prix de Rome laureates to embellish the façade of his building with sculptures. The commission specified the size and composition of the sculpted group which was to consist of a central figure flanked by two allegorical figures. Only Carpeaux did not respect its terms, but Garnier, aware of Carpeaux’s genius, accepted his project which included seven figures.

The subject is that of a dance bacchanal. Priestesses of the god Bacchus dance a wild farandole around a winged genius who seems to surge from the wall and fly into the air. All the lines, the curves of the bodies and arms, the diagonals of the legs, contribute in creating an effect of upward movement and unbridled rhythm. When it was unveiled, the sculpture caused a scandal. In an act of vandalism, a bottle of ink was thrown at the female figures. Some critics of the time saw in it “a dishevelled group, with lascivious movements, panting nudity...”, symbolising “imperial celebration”. But with the war of 1870, the scandal was forgotten and when the Opéra was inaugurated in 1875, there is no question of removing the sculpture. Carpeaux died on October 12, 1875.

The group on show in the museum is the much damaged original. It is being sheltered here from the weather and pollution and has been replaced at the Opéra by a copy made by Paul Belmondo (the son of the actor) in 1964.

Observe the three superimposed stones of this high relief. Note the expressions of the faces, the smiles of the bacchantes, the deep shadow of the eyes that animates the gaze.

The work of cutting the stone using the pointing technique was made by technical assistants (traces are still visible on the legs at the bottom right of the sculpture).

7. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (Valenciennes, 1827 - Courbevoie, 1875): *Le Prince impérial* (The Imperial Prince), 1865, marble

Location: ground floor, at the end of the central aisle, on the left

Carpeaux was working on the restoration of the Pavillon de Flore when the imperial couple (Napoleon III and Eugénie) commissioned him to make a portrait of their child. The artist knew the eight year old Imperial Prince well as he taught him the art of drawing and modelling. This full-length figure represents him in a casual pose, with clothes in the fashion of his time: velvet jacket and baggy trousers, necktie and buckled shoes. Remarkable on the absence of attributes hinting of his future power, someone said: “the Prince has come down to the square” (has come



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down to street level). Alongside the Prince Carpeaux also represented Néro, the Emperor’s favourite dog. The prince affectionately pats it with his left hand, while the animal confidently turns its head towards its young master. This official portrait not only endeavours to render the physical characteristics of the child, it is also intended to move the public. It is part of the propaganda which favoured the continuity of a regime embodied by the imperial child – a regime under threat by both Republicans and Monarchists. The sculpture’s popularity was such that the image survived right through to the

5. Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier : *Nègre du Soudan en costume algérien*, 1857 Salon

6. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *La Danse*, 1865, sculpted group, Échaillon stone

7. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *Le Prince impérial*, 1865, marble

Second Empire in numerous editions in all sizes and materials, under the depoliticised title of *Child With Dog*.

Note: the casual pose, the clothes, the fineness of the features of the child's face, the rendering of the hair. Observe the use of the dog, necessary to the balance of the statue, but also reinforcing the impression of realism and the affectionate attitude of the Prince, note an irregularity in the marble corresponding to a vein in Néro's throat.

Compare with the plaster model in a showcase near gallery 22.

8. Auguste Rodin (Paris, 1840 - Meudon, 1917): *Ugolin (Ugolino)*, 1882, plaster
Location: middle level, last terrace

Rodin, like Carpeaux, was inspired by the *Divine Comedy* for this *Ugolino*. Yet he chose another moment in the drama illustrating Dante's line: "Already blind, to groping over each: and three days called them after they were dead. [...] Then hunger did what sorrow could not do". Ugolino roved like an animal moved by his sole instinct. The blind man is here deprived of all human dignity and reduced to the state of a wild beast. Unlike Carpeaux who had chosen a pyramidal composition, Rodin organised the characters around a central void to better signify the drama of starvation that is being played out. The man's position, kneeling, is reminiscent of that of the Roman she-wolf protecting abandoned children and highlights the contrast that here the father, turned animal is unable to save his children.

Note: the dislocated bodies of the children, the deformation of their limbs, feet and hands, the bestial face of the father. Rodin used a particular technique known as assemblage, consisting in making casts of his sculptures and combining the different fragments to make new compositions. The artist connected the different elements of this sculpted group with a play on drapery. Pick out the Ugolino group on the left-hand door of the *Gates to Hell* and observe the differences in their poses.

9. Auguste Rodin (Paris, 1840 - Meudon, 1917): *Balzac*, 1898, plaster
Location: middle level, last terrace

This monument, memorial to the great writer, was commissioned in 1891 from Rodin by Zola, who was then chairman of the Société des Gens de Lettres. Rodin worked extremely hard at this project which he was later to consider as his masterpiece and delivered the statue long after the deadline imposed by the committee had expired. It caused a scandal when it was exhibited at the Salon national des Beaux-Arts in 1898. Its symbolic power was not understood by the public who considered it to be a provocation. They were shocked by Balzac's dressing gown, and by the monumentality and monolithic aspect of the sculpture. Critics described it as "an unbalanced dolmen" or "an owl's head".

The Société des Gens de Lettres decided to refuse what it considered as a preparatory work in which they did not recognise Balzac's image. The project was then entrusted to Alexandre Falguière (1831-1900) whose statue is still to be seen avenue de Friedman. Rodin, misunderstood by his contemporaries, took the artwork back to his studio in Meudon. In 1939 at last, Rodin's statue, cast in bronze, was erected on the boulevard Raspail in Paris.

Note the monolithic aspect of the sculpture that shocked visitors to the Salon.

Note the realism of the dressing gown, the lines that lead the viewer's gaze towards the head, symbolising the genius of the writer. Observe the exaggeration of the facial features, the deep shadows.

10. Jules Dalou (Paris, 1838 - Paris, 1902): *Le Grand Paysan (The Large Peasant)*, 1898-1899
Location: middle level, gallery 56

This sculpture, made towards the end of the 19th century, was intended to be to a *Monument to Work* in which the artist wanted to exalt the worker's status. Jules Dalou, a committed Republican, had prepared many studies of workers for this piece, which was never completed.

This *Large Peasant* is an example of the search for a truthful way of depicting peasants in a simple style devoid of grandiloquence. Jules Dalou broke with the previous classical conventions which had insisted in placing the peasants in a mythological or allegorical context. The peasant, legs planted, is looking down at the earth from above, his sleeves are rolled back, he is about to set about his work "the forehead lowered, like that of a ploughing ox".

This figured embodied hard peasant labour in a fresh way whilst, in this era of industrial revolution, other artists were working on symbolising the menial labour of factory workers.

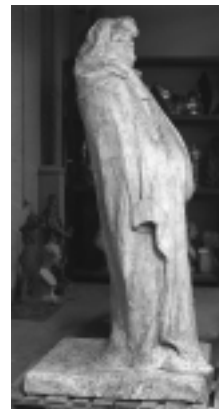
11. Jean-Paul Aubé (Longwy, 1837 - 1916): *Monument à Gambetta (Monument to Gambetta)*, plaster, 1884, architect Louis-Charles Boileau
Location: middle level, former lounge of the Hôtel d'Orsay, gallery 52, Art and décor of the Third Republic

A subscription was opened on the day following Gambetta's funeral to erect a public monument to the glory of the great man. The sculpture strove to highlight his qualities both as a great Frenchman and a great Republican at a time when the Republic was still in a phase of consolidating its power. First and foremost, the artwork is an exaltation of the patriot who led the struggle against the Prussian invader in the 1870-71 war. Gambetta the Republican was victorious over his monarchist adversaries in the political struggles of the following years and the sculpture testifies to his renowned oratory skills.

He is delivering a speech, the text of which is engraved above his head, exhorting citizens to defend their national territory while his extended



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arm seems to gesture towards the border. Above him, a worker, rifle in hand, is mesmerized by the orator's speech.

The 27-metre high monument was erected in the Cour Napoléon in the Louvre (approximately where the pyramid now stands) and inaugurated on July 14, 1888. The bronze elements were taken off and melted by the Vichy government. Fragments of the central group were installed in 1982, on the occasion of the centenary of Léon Gambetta's death in the garden located behind the town hall of the 20th arrondissement, where he had been mayor.

8. Auguste Rodin : *Ugolin*, 1882, plaster

9. Auguste Rodin : *Balzac*, 1898, plaster

10. Jules Dalou : *Le Grand Paysan*, 1898-1899

11. Jean-Paul Aubé : *Monument à Gambetta*, plaster, 1884, architect Louis-Charles Boileau

Note Gambetta's place in relation to the plinth, at the side, rather than on top. Among the allegorical figures are "Human Rights" at the top of the monument, to the side, the figure of "Strength" leaning on a fasces symbolising "Unity", the figure of "Truth", holding a mirror, and above Gambetta, the allegorical representation of the genius which inspired him. A cartouche specifies the circumstances of the subscription, the other inscriptions being four excerpts from Gambetta's speeches. Cherubs on both sides of the dedication plate "To L. Gambetta, the Fatherland and the Republic" hold shields with the interlaced letters RF.

12. Joseph Bernard (Vienne 1866 – Boulogne-sur-Seine, 1951): *La Danse* (Dance), 1912-1915, marble frieze

Location: middle level, Lille terrace, in front of gallery 72

This bas-relief is an example of a private commission. It was made for the music salon of Paul Nocard's mansion in Neuilly. Its shape is adapted to the room, which included a small amphitheatre for the musicians. Initially comprising of three panels, two small linking stones were added later to adapt the sculpture to a new location.

Groups of characters, musicians and dancers, give the surface its rhythm with children at the bottom mimicking the gestures of the adults. Joseph Bernard alternated immobile figures with others that appear frozen in suspended movement who all converge on the central couple who seem to be carried off into a whirl. Rather than meeting standards of realism the artist was concerned with rhythm and the decorative qualities in the combination of forms. The relief is shallow, yet he endeavoured to create an illusion of depth through the juxtaposition of the figures. Such illusions sometimes led him to make distortions, in particular in the group of cymbal players in the curved part to the left of the frieze.

In this work Bernard adopted the technique of direct cutting, also used by other sculptors at the end of the century. In cutting the material himself he had no need of technical assistants nor any process of mechanical reproduction after a plaster model. After many preparatory sketches, he sketched out the suggestion of forms on the marble with charcoal and started cutting the rough shapes using punches and chisels before working for a more accurate finish.

Note: the bas relief and quasi-absence of shadows. Identify the references to Antiquity: the faces inspired by Greek art, the drapery reminiscent of Roman sarcophagi. Observe the modulations in the rhythm of figures (immobility/movement) and the contrast in the treatment of surfaces (smooth/worked). Note the graphic treatment of the drapery, hair and foliage.

Note the two small reliefs added in 1918 that make the piece a continuous frieze. Observe the differences in the quality of the marble (whiter, more opaque) and the difference in the carving



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which was realised by a technical assistant who worked under the supervision of the artist who was, by then, ill.

15. Émile-Antoine Bourdelle (Montauban, 1861 – Le Vésinet, 1929): *Héraklès tue les oiseaux du lac Stymphale* (Heracles Killing the Birds on the Stymphalian Marshes), 1909

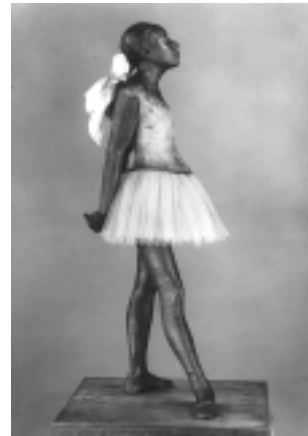
Location: middle level, Lille terrace, opposite gallery 69

From the 1900's onwards, Bourdelle took inspiration from mythological tales and figures such as Penelope, Apollo and the centaur. With one of the episodes of the twelve Labours of Hercules (Heracles in Greek), he portrayed the hero's victory over monsters: Eurystheus had asked Heracles to destroy man-eating birds. The hero's pose is off balance, as he shoots his arrows in a powerful and tense movement. When it was presented at the Salon in 1910, the sculpture caused a sensation, "the incredibly bold movement of this athlete half-kneeling, balanced in mid-air, foot braced against a rock...". The composition of this piece perfectly demonstrates Bourdelle's mastery of the distribution of space and mass. To him this was a crucial piece, and he asked his teacher, Auguste Rodin, to come and see "one of his most important works".

Note: the expression of the hero's strength: the muscular tension, the exaggeration, the leaning points of the feet, the sharp edges, the play of spaces, the modelling of the limbs, the golden colour of the bronze. Identify the cartouches (plaques) representing other episodes of the labours: Nemees's lion and Lerne's Hydra and the letters A.B. that constituted the artist's monogram.



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14. Edgar Degas (Paris, 1854 – Paris, 1917): *La Petite danseuse de quatorze ans* (The Little Dancer), 1878-1881

Location: Galerie des Hauteurs, gallery 51

First and foremost a painter, Edgar Degas nevertheless made close to 150 sculptures. To him these were "exercises" allowing a meticulous study of the movements of both horses and dancers; tools to enable him to endow his paintings with more life and expression. Only 75 of these clay and wax models survived him. Yet *The Little Dancer* is quite different from these numerous, small studies of dancing exercises. The artist worked at it for three years before exhibiting it, in 1881, at the sixth impressionist exhibition. Its realism is striking, the dancer is wearing a net tutu and her hair is tied with a real satin ribbon. The piece exhibited at the Musée d'Orsay is a

bronze, executed posthumously after a wax original now located in the United States. The wax sculpture includes doll's hair, a corselet and genuine dancing shoes that give it "terrible realness".

Never, before this work, had such materials been incorporated into sculpture and it caused genuine uneasiness amongst the public of the time. Critics complained of "its bestial effrontery" and "its forehead, like its lips, marked by a profoundly vicious character".

Note: the diverse materials of the sculpture: bronze, the cloth tutu, pink satin ribbon and wooden base, and the nuances of the bronze (black patina for the hair, blond for the corsage, pink for the shoes).