

Call for papers / publication

Maillol and after

Symposium

Tuesday May 17, 2022

10am–6pm

Auditorium of the Musée d'Orsay

On the occasion of the exhibition
Aristide Maillol (1861-1944).

The quest for harmony

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, April 11 – August 21, 2022

Scientific Committee:

Ariane Coulondre, Curator of Modern Collections,
National Museum of Modern Art, Centre Pompidou,
Paris;

Thierry Dufrêne, professor of contemporary art history,
director of the Master of Art History, University
of Paris-Nanterre;

Ophélie Ferlier-Bouat, Director of the Bourdelle
Museum, Paris;

Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, Honorary Director
General of the Institut National d'histoire de l'art,
Honorary General Curator of Heritage.

The Musée d'Orsay is devoting a retrospective to Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) which will show him in all the diversity of his work, painting, decorative art and sculpture. The last major Maillol exhibition in Paris was for the centenary of the of his birth, followed in 1975 by an exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, which prompted the American art historian Jonathan Crary to state, «Now, with the experience of art in the 1960s that moved us away from the spatially constructed and developed work of the 1940s-1950s, the compactness and conceptual precision of Maillol seems closer to our time.» In fact, as early as 1942, Mies van der Rohe combined Picasso's *Guernica* in one of his photomontages for a modern art museum project with Maillol's *Action in Chains (L'Action enchaînée)*. As proof of the lasting influence of the work, the proponents of biomorphism as well as those of constructive art, including minimalism, claim a connection with Maillol.

Art historians, however, continue to call him a classicist or even a traditionalist by including him in what has been called the «return to style,» as opposed to Rodin's expressionist approach. But they then fail to examine that which is also modern in his work. «It is beautiful, it means nothing, it is a silent work», declared André Gide in 1905 about the sculpture *The Mediterranean*. By examining the genesis of the sculptures, the continuity at work in his artistic production, analyzing the forty or so sketchbooks revealed to the public for the first time, and studying the bonds of friendship with his artist friends, we discover another Maillol. A Maillol that the 20th century welcomed all the more easily since he worked actively until his death in 1944. His formal search for simplification and balance was driven by a desire to break with the narrative and descriptive tradition of representation, leading him to the frontier of a geometric abstraction which had also been the preserve of many modern sculptors.

The symposium will thus provide an opportunity for the contemporary re-reading that Maillol's work calls for.

Papers on the following aspects of Maillol's work are expected:

- Sources (artistic, literary, musical);
- The modalities of exhibiting;
- Friendly and intellectual circles;
- Influence on sculptors of the 20th century and his place in the history of sculpture;
- The view of photographers and filmmakers;
- Critical reception;
- Contemporary echoes.

Application deadline:

February 15th, 2022

Documents to submit:

**presentation title, abstract
(max. 500 words) and short resume**

Recipient:

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Aristide Maillol (1861-1944),
Ile-de-France, circa 1925,
stone statue,
H. 152.0; W. 49.0; D. 57.5 cm
© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) /
Adrien Didierjean

