130 **Auguste Rodin**

1840 – 1917 FRENCH

Andromède

bronze sculpture, signed A. Rodin, inscribed with the foundry mark, Alexis Rudier Fondeur Paris and stamped with the artist's signature, A. Rodin, on the inside of the bronze; this work was conceived in 1887 and cast in 1948

10 ⅜ × 13 ¼ × 7 ⅞ in, 26.4 × 33.7 × 20 cm

PROVENANCE

Musée Rodin, Paris, 1948
Acquired from the above by Galerie Huguette Berès, Paris, August 1952
Otto Gerson Gallery, New York
Canadian Art Galleries, Calgary, 1961
Hycroft Antiques, Vancouver
Acquired from the above by a Private Collector, Vancouver, 1981
By descent to the present Private Collection, Vancouver

EXHIBITED

Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, date unknown

AUGUSTE RODIN IS considered the father of modern sculpture. He began as an Academic Realist, but turned to Symbolist sculpture in the 1880s. Without wishing to oversimplify the Symbolist idiom, it was a late-nineteenth-century art movement, especially in France, that advocated the expression of ideas in art. Symbolist artists looked inwards—"the analysis of the self to the extreme," as Gustave Kahn expressed it—with feelings and ideas now the starting point of works of art.[1] Rodin was captivated by the human body. His brilliance lay in the ability to communicate inner truths ("the invisible"), as opposed to superficial, worldly appearances. Rodin frequently began a sculpture by drawing life models from various angles, often using a stepladder. He drew speedily, focusing laser-like on the subject—a technique that he referred to as "blind drawing"—to depict exactly what he saw in front of him. His drawings relied upon "sincere observation," to help him to "pass over useless details and seize only upon the truth of the whole."[2] *Andromède* (modeled in 1885; carved in 1886, collection of the Rodin Museum, Philadelphia) is indicative of the sculptor's use of intense scrutiny coupled with a powerful sense of psychological, Symbolist theatre.[3]

The rescue of Andromeda is recounted in a number of sources, most famously Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (written circa 8 CE). The fable has also been depicted by countless artists over the centuries. In Greek mythology, Andromeda—the beautiful daughter of the King and Queen of Aethiopia—is offered as a sacrifice to the sea monster Cetus. Andromeda is chained to a rock to await her fate, but is rescued by Perseus, son of Zeus. This bowed, twisted figure, exposed and lying dejected on a weathered rock, expresses a key moment of profound emotional suffering in the tale of Andromeda. When first exhibited, however, the marble was left pseudonymous, leading some scholars to suggest that it purely represents the life model at rest in the studio—a pose that inspired its current theme and title: *Andromède*.

Whatever the specific inspiration, Rodin's work, to quote Leo Steinberg, was always about this kind of "adaptability."[4] In fact, the statue recalls a similar series of figures from the 1880s, including the unique cast of *The Wave* (circa 1885 – 1900, The Burrell Collection, Glasgow), where "two bodies twist and turn [… and] the female figure seems to dive into the waves, her head dipping below the surface [… and] giving her the identity of a mythical siren."[5] Looking at the *Andromède* piece, her head and hair, right forearm, hand and leg likewise seem to merge with or issue out of the chiseled stone. In this way, Rodin heightens her sense of captivity and the concept of form as *idea* in sculpture. Or, as Michelangelo would have it, "liberating the figure from the marble that imprisons it."[6] Notably, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Perseus initially mistakes Andromeda for a statue, and no actual chains appear in Rodin's piece. In this context, it is clear that the artist is "in search of animate form"[7] by giving life—the moment of creation—to sculpture, a founding theory since antiquity.[8]

Drawing was at the heart of Rodin's practice, aiding him when addressing form in sculpture. "It's quite simple," he once commented, "my drawings are the key to my work."[9] Though Rodin's success relied upon bronze, stone or marble versions of his sculpture, he was the greatest of clay modelers.[10] Rodin fashioned the material into a mold, from which a plaster cast was rendered. Often, several casts were deemed model "originals," from which a marble sculpture could be carved, or used to create a bronze cast. When required, many versions could be manufactured in bronze, at various times, keeping up with public demand for Rodin's sculpture.

Casting involved working with specialist foundries such as the Fonderie Alexis Rudier, which cast our bronze *Andromède*.[11] The foundry worked to produce either lost-wax or sand casts—ancient processes stretching back millennia. Both techniques had advantages and disadvantages. The former technique catered for subtle changes because the sculptor was able to make eleventh-hour adjustments by carving directly into the wax model. Alternatively, the latter excluded any last-minute alterations, but the process itself is far more faithful to the original design. During the sand casting process, nonetheless, the plaster model is damaged, with sections frequently removed and cast independently. The lost-wax process, conversely, did not damage the model, but actually reinforced the clay or plaster original.

The "assemblage" of individual works, both complete and in fragments, was another radical feature of Rodin's art. He called this technique *abatiss*, originating from accidental breakages in the studio. The *abattis* were dismantled and reassembled in different combinations, so they were never part of any one sculpture. Ultimately, Rodin's fragmented, reassembled bodies—including *Polyphemus with the Head of a Slavic Woman* (after 1900, Musée Rodin)—were in defiance of idealized notions of beauty and flawlessness. This was undeniably the most revolutionary feature of his practice, particularly the way he transformed his works through fragmentation, assemblage and multiplication. As Sophie Biass-Fabiani has shown, it was a creative system of "metamorphoses" in order to manufacture "a common language, a generative syntax that allows for an infinite number of sentences to be made from a finite number of elements."[12]

We thank John Finlay, a historian of French history specializing in twentieth-century modern art, for contributing the above essay.

Rodin made at least 13 bronze proofs from the plaster for this sculpture, three casts of which were made by the Alexis Rudier Foundry between 1928 and 1949. Ten casts were made later by the Georges Rudier Foundry, between 1968 and 1980. This rare work cast in 1948 is one of the important three casts that were made by the Alexis Rudier Foundry between 1928 and 1949.

This work will be included in Brame & Lorenceau's forthcoming *Catalogue critique de l'oeuvre sculptée d'Auguste Rodin*, under the direction of Jérôme le Blay, as catalogue #2022-6735B. Included with this lot is a letter signed by François Lorenceau and Jérôme Le Blay from the Comité Auguste Rodin dated December 8, 2022 confirming the work's inclusion.

1. Gustave Kahn, "Response to the Symbolists," *L'Evénément*, September 28, 1886, cited in John Rewald, *Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin*, rev. ed. (1956; London: Secker & Warburg, 1978), 12 (206).

2. William Harlan Hale, *The World of Rodin* (1962; Time-Life Books, 1972), 156.

3. Musée Rodin, Paris, owns the first marble version of this subject, made for the French art critic Roger Marx (1859–1913).

4. "No Rodin sculpture is known until it is known in its adaptability." Leo Steinberg, "Rodin," in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 377.

5. As Pippa Stevenson-Sit points out in *Introducing Auguste Rodin: The Burrell Collection* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums Publishing, 2022), 55, Rodin included (circa 1887) a group of three sirens in the *Gates of Hell* (commissioned 1880–1917, Musée Rodin, Paris) as well as integrating the group into his *Monument to Victor Hugo* (Palais-Royal, Paris).

6. Hale, *World of Rodin*, 12.

7. Anne M. Wagner, "Material Transactions," in *The Making of Rodin*, ed. Nabila Abdel Nabi, Chloé Ariot and Achim Borchardt-Hume (London: Tate Publishing, 2021), exhibition catalogue, 32.

8. "On sculptures that have later been cast in bronze, we often find his fingerprints and other marks that were embedded into the surface of the clay original, reminding us of the pliable, soft material that was worked by the artist." Stevenson-Sit, *Introducing Auguste Rodin*, 41.

9. Ibid.

10. In *Quand Rodin exposait* (Paris: Éditions Musée Rodin, 1988), Alain Beausire demonstrates very clearly how plaster came to dictate the making of his sculpture. "In the years 1899–1900 exhibited plasters outnumbered bronzes by fivefold, and marbles more than twenty times." Beausire's research is summarized by Penélope Curtis, "The White Sanctuary," *Making of Rodin*, 27.

11. For details regarding this (and other) bronze casts, see the paragraph following the essay.

12. Sophie Biass-Fabiani, "Rodin's Metamorphoses," in *Metamorphoses: In Rodin's Studio*, ed. Nathalie Bondil and Sophie Biass-Fabiani (Montreal: Museum of Fine Arts; Paris: Musée Rodin, 2015), 26.

ESTIMATE: $80,000 – 120,000