

Rodin Collection on Campus

2017 marks the hundredth anniversary of the artist, Auguste Rodin's death. In honor of this landmark year there are many special exhibitions and events planned around the world. At the Cantor Arts Center, the museum plans to reinstall its permanent Rodin galleries and update landscape features in the outdoor sculpture garden.

The Cantor holds 200 works by Rodin, and its collection of bronzes is among the largest in existence. The majority of the collection occupies three ground floor galleries. Approximately 170 works by Rodin are on view inside the museum, mostly cast bronze, but also works in wax, plaster and terra cotta – most notable, the iconic *Thinker*. Twenty bronzes, including The *Gates of Hell*, on which Rodin worked for two decades, are outside in the Rodin Sculpture Garden.

This one-acre garden contains the largest collection of the work of Rodin outside of Paris. The centerpiece of the permanent exhibition of life-sized bronzes is the *Walking Man* and *Meditations*, and the only existing lost-wax casting of the renowned *Gates of Hell*. The Rodin Sculpture Garden is open all hours, with lighting for nighttime viewing.

The Garden was dedicated in 1985 to honor B. Gerald Cantor, the primary donor of the Center's Rodin collection. The original garden plan was designed by Robert Mittelstadt, who evoked the spirit of the Parisian gardens in which Rodin exhibited his public art during his lifetime. Additional benches and seating arrangements make the garden more comfortable.



The *Thinker*, a depiction of a nude man hunched over in apparent thought, was originally part of Rodin's masterpiece, the *Gates of Hell*. He planned to place the *Thinker* at the top of the gates. Rodin thought of the poet Dante as he began the sculpture, but the work evolved beyond the initial reference to represent the "muscular intellectual". Stanford's *Thinker* is monumental – Rodin's largest version of this work. It weighs approximately one ton, is 79 inches high, and is the 10th in an edition of 12 authorized by the Musée Rodin, in Paris, which inherited the right to cast editions of the sculptor's work.

Another famous piece by Rodin is the *Burghers of Calais* located nearby in the Main Quad. Many think that these six men were executed, but the true story is more hopeful. England's Edward III, laid siege to Calais for over a year. After the city fell, Edward offered to spare the people of the city if six of Calais' top leaders would surrender themselves to him, presumably to be executed. Edward demanded that they walk out wearing nooses around their necks, and carrying the keys to the city and castle. One of the wealthiest of the town leaders,

Eustache de Saint Pierre volunteered first, and five other burghers joined with him. It was this moment, and the poignant mix of defeat, heroic self-sacrifice and willingness to face death that Rodin captured in his sculpture. Although the burghers expected to be executed, their lives were spared by the intervention of England's queen Phillipa of Hainault, who persuaded her husband to show mercy,



claiming that their deaths would be a bad omen for their unborn child.

The Rodin collection on campus is almost entirely a product of the generosity of Iris and B. Gerald Cantor and their foundation. This collection reflect the guidance of the late Stanford professor Albert Elsen, one of the foremost Rodin scholars of his generation.