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## **THE RODIN MUSEUM, PHILADELPHIA**

In a park setting at 22nd Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway (four blocks east of the Philadelphia Museum of Art) is one of the jewels of the city's cultural landscape. The Rodin Museum, with its elegant gardens and stunning Beaux-Arts architecture, is the legacy of one of Philadelphia's best-known philanthropists. Movie magnate Jules Mastbaum (1872-1926) fell in love with the work of French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) while on a visit to Paris in 1923. With characteristic energy Mastbaum spent the next three years assembling an extraordinary collection of sculpture and drawings by the artist, with the idea of establishing a Rodin Museum in Philadelphia for "the enjoyment of my fellow citizens."

While amassing his collection, Mastbaum commissioned the gifted architects Paul Cret and Jacques Gréber to design a building and formal garden on the new Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the broad, tree-lined boulevard designed to evoke another grand avenue, the Champs Elysees in Paris. The museum, simple in detail, is monumental in its conception and yet intimate in scale and feeling. The gateway leading to the garden and museum reproduces the façade of the Château d'Issy, which had been constructed on Rodin's property at Meudon in 1907. A cast of *The Thinker* (1902-04) is set in a location similar to that of the one at Meudon that serves as Rodin's headstone. The overall effect was intended to suggest the setting of Rodin's tomb.

Mastbaum died before he could see the realization of his dream. The Rodin Museum opened its doors on November 29, 1929, exactly one month after the stock market crash that signaled the beginning of the Great Depression. His collection has been cared for and administered since 1939 by the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The Rodin Museum is one of the most important collections of 19th-century sculpture anywhere in the world, and is one of the most distinguished museums devoted to the work of a single artist. It contains 127 bronzes, marbles, plasters, terra cottas and waxes, representing every aspect of the artist's career and all his major projects. Treasures at Philadelphia's Rodin Museum include a cast of *The Burghers of Calais* (1884-95), his most heroic and moving historical tribute; *The Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose* (1863-64); powerful monuments to leading French intellectuals such as *Apotheosis of Victor Hugo* (1890-91); as well as *The Thinker*, perhaps the most famous sculpture in the world, which greets visitors outside the Museum's entrance on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, where it is one of Philadelphia's many defining works of public art. *The Gates of Hell* (1880-1917), a monumental work considered among his most ambitious projects and one that occupied the artist for 37 years, rises to a height of twenty feet at the entrance to the Museum. It was cast in bronze for the first time at Mastbaum's request. Inside, visitors can see one of the important early models (1880) in which Rodin began to conceive his vision for the final version of *The Gates of Hell*.

Joseph J. Rishel, The Gisela and Dennis Alter Senior Curator of European Painting before 1900, and Senior Curator of the John G. Johnson Collection and the Rodin Museum, notes that Philadelphia offers visitors a unusual opportunity both to marvel at and fully explore Rodin's accomplishments. "There are three places in the world where one can become completely

absorbed with the work of Rodin. In Paris at the Musée Rodin, on the campus of Stanford University with the Cantor Collection, and on the Parkway in Philadelphia, thanks to Jules Mastbaum. At once a very accessible but in fact a remarkably complex and varied artist, Rodin profits immensely in being seen whole, from his early realistic works after nature to his titanic late visions. We're tremendously lucky to have this great resource in Philadelphia.”

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The Rodin Museum is located on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 22nd Street. For general information, call (215) 763-8100. Museum hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Mondays and holidays. A contribution of \$3 per person is suggested.

Public tours of the Rodin Museum are offered at 1:00 p.m. every Sunday and the first and third Saturdays of each month. Groups of 15 or more may arrange private tours by calling (215) 684-7863 or by sending an email to [gsales@philamuseum.org](mailto:gsales@philamuseum.org). School groups, call (215) 684-7582. College groups, call (215) 684-7598. Parking and barrier-free access are available. Listening enhancement system, touch tours, Braille and large-print materials available upon advance request by calling (215) 684.7601. TTY (215) 684.7600.