

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)

Eve, 1881

Cast bronze with green patina

Signed “Rodin Deuxieme Epreuve” on base

Height: 68.5 inches

Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.68

Description:

The second of two bronze proofs titled *Eve* by Auguste Rodin, sculpted in 1881 and bronze cast in 1897. The specific version of *Eve* is sometimes referred to as the *grand modèle*.

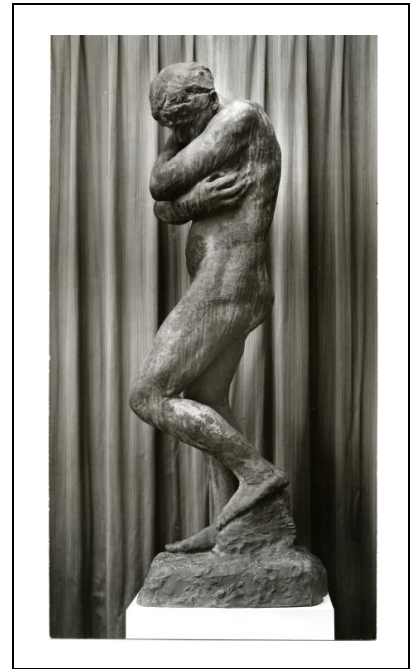
The Artist, the Sculpture, and the Provenance:

After showing his realistic sculpture titled *Jean the Baptiste* at the 1880 Salon in Paris (the official art exhibition of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts), Auguste Rodin was commissioned (August 1880) to make an entrance to a museum of decorative arts (never built because the French government instead built a train station in that designated space)¹. Rodin, preoccupied with Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, was inspired to design the entrance in likeness to the portal to Hell from part I, *Inferno*. Rodin began sculpting figures from *Inferno* as well as other individuals representing the suffering of human kind. These figures eventually materialized as a tangle of lost souls, in varying degrees of low to high relief, in *The Gates of Hell*.

During this project (circa 1880-1881), a spark of inspiration led Rodin to include figures of Adam and Eve, the original sinners, to flank the doors.² While sculpting *Eve*, Rodin was confronted by the unexpected: “Without knowing why, I saw my model changing. I modified my contours naively following the successive transformations of ever-amplifying forms. One day I learned that she was pregnant; then I understood. The contours of the belly had hardly changed; but you can see with what sincerity I copied nature in looking at the muscles of the loins and sides. It certainly hadn't occurred to me to take a pregnant woman as my model for *Eve*; an accident—happy for me—gave her to me, and it aided the character of the figure singularly. But soon, becoming too sensitive, my model found the studio too cold; she came less frequently, then not at all. That is why my ‘Eve’ is unfinished.”^{2 3 4} The plaster of *Eve* stood in Rodin's studio for many years while he worked on other projects, including 30-inch versions of *Eve* that were smoother, more detailed, and wildly popular among collectors.⁴

Although Rodin was left with what many considered an unfinished piece (with rough details left unrefined, and an obvious mark left from the metal supporting strap protruding from the right foot⁴), he was satisfied with his progress with *Eve* up to that point (in 1897), and arranged to cast two bronze proofs, or tests, of *Eve*. While the first proof was sold to a private collector that year, the second proof debuted at the Salon of 1899.² The unfinished-looking *Eve* perplexed exhibition-goers. In a review that was published in *Gazette de Beaux-Arts*, Louis de Fourcaud explains that despite his incomprehension as to the reason Rodin chose to display *Eve* on the ground, amongst dirt, without a pedestal, “Mr. Rodin's *Eve* is one of the most magnificently invented statues that I know...One cannot imagine a more expressive and powerful silhouette.” In another piece published by *The New York Times*, Minnie Robinson writes, “There were scornful sniffs at [*Eve*'s] lack of physical beauty, puzzled knittings of the brow as to its meaning, and numerous uncomplimentary comments on its general stupidity and lack of power. Now and then came some person guided by the ‘sixth sense’ that lingered and yet lingered as though the figure said much to him that he wished to know.”⁵ A journalist writing for *La Revue de l'Art* commented that he expected to see artists divide into factions over *Eve* and perhaps “come to blows over it.”² At this exhibition, Henri Duhem purchased this second proof of *Eve*, and displayed it in his garden in Douai, France. In a letter addressed to Henri Duhem, Rodin wrote, “My Dear Duhem, ...It had to be that a private person, a poet, a painter buys from me what the State or the City looks at without comment.”⁶

During the German military occupation in France during WWI (1914–1918), Duhem recognized the potential threat of sculpture looting and buried *Eve* in his garden⁴, where he also hid the uniforms and arms of escaping French soldiers. In the aftermath of the Great War, the “exhuming” of *Eve* appeared as “a poignant symbol of France's revival and of *Eve*'s ongoing legacy”⁷ in *L'Illustration* in December 1918, a month after the war had ended.



Eve at Sunnylands:

A letter between the Annenbergs and the fine art gallery Wildenstein & Co., Inc. evidences that *Eve* was purchased in the summer of 1965 (final receipt says 1967) to be delivered to Sunnylands that fall.⁶ Correspondence with the designers of Sunnylands shows that *Eve* was purchased by the Annenbergs with the intention of displaying it in the atrium before they moved in. *Eve* has been displayed in the atrium at Sunnylands ever since, surrounded by plants—an allusion to her past garden settings.

Common Tour Questions:

Where is *Adam*?

The first cast of *Adam* was stored in Rodin's studio as a plaster until 1910, when the first bronze was cast for the Metropolitan of Art in New York where it resides today. There are about 20 other known casts of *Adam*.⁴

How did the Annenbergs come to the decision to purchase *Eve*?

The Annenbergs enjoyed surrounding themselves in art at their homes. Sometimes they went antique shopping on a weekend afternoon and other times, they visited galleries to view fine art or bought pieces at auctions. The Annenbergs purchased *Eve* from Wildenstein & Co., Inc. (a major international art dealer) in New York.

Was the atrium designed with *Eve* in mind? Does the pedestal swivel and elevate?

Yes, the Atrium was designed with *Eve* in mind.⁶ The pedestal does swivel but it does not elevate.

Where can the public view see the *Gates of Hell*?

A number of casts of *The Gates of Hell* exist; one is on view at the Gerald Cantor Rodin Sculpture Garden at Stanford University, California, and another is on view at the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Who bought the other *Eve*? What other major museums hold casts of *Eve*? How many casts of *Eve* exist?

Auguste Pellerin bought the first proof of *Eve* and it has been passed through museums and private collectors ever since. There are about 30 known life-size bronze casts of this version of *Eve*.⁴ LACMA, the Rodin Museum, and Musée Rodin in Paris France own casts of this same *Eve*. There are also many 30-inch-tall smooth versions of *Eve* (other than the *grand modèle*) in private collections.⁴

Is the Sunnylands *Eve* the piece that showed in the Paris Salon in 1899, that showed in the World's Fair in 1900, and that was buried in Duhem's Douai garden?

Yes.⁴

Was the Sunnylands *Eve* ever incorporated into *The Gates of Hell* installation?

No. Although the idea for the piece was intended for the installation, the museum was never built and the Sunnylands *Eve* was shown independent of *The Gates of Hell*.

How was *Eve* cleaned?

Research is ongoing. In 2013, the Sunnylands archive contracted Silverlake Conservation of Los Angeles to perform routine conservation. This involved light brushing, removing previous coatings with solvents, washing with neutral mild detergent, removing deposits with skewers, and waxing.

How much does *Eve* weigh?

Another bronze *Eve* at the Musée Rodin in Paris weighs 357 pounds and a bronze *Eve* at LACMA weighs 438 pounds.^{8,9}

1. "Selected Bronzes." *Iris B Gerald Cantor Foundation Selected Bronzes Comments*. Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, 2012. Web. Nov. 2014.

2. Tancock, John L. "Eve." *The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin: The Collection of the Rodin Museum, Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1976. N. pag. Print.

3. Lami, Stanislaus. "Auguste Rodin." In *Dictionnaire des Sculpteurs de l'école française au dix-neuvième siècle*, vol 4. pp. 161-75. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1921.

4. Normand-Romain, Antoinette Le, Hélène Marraud, Diane Tytgat, Dominique Viéville, Jacques Vilain, Ruth Butler, and Auguste Rodin. "Eve." *The Bronzes of Rodin: Catalogue of Works in the Musée Rodin*. Paris: Musée Rodin, 2007. N. pag. Print

5. Robinson, Minnie. "Rodin's Eve." © *The New York Times*. Published 24 June 1899.

6. Wildenstein. Receipt. N.d. Raw data. 19 East 64th Street, New York. A receipt for the purchase of a sculpture titled Eve rendered by August Rodin by Walter H. Annenberg from Wildenstein and Co., Inc.

7. Glover Lindsay, Suzanne. "Rodin's Eve and Eternal Spring." *Sunnylands: Art and Architecture of the Annenberg Estate in Rancho Mirage, California*. By David De Long, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Anne D'Harnoncourt. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 2009. N. pag. Print.

8. Blanchetière, François. "Eve's Weight." E-mail interview. 30 Oct. 2014.

9. "Eve." Search Collections. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, n.d. Web. 30 Oct. 2014. <<http://collections.lacma.org/node/240393>>.

