

Auguste RODIN 1840 - 1917

“Le Grand Penseur”

“The Monumental Thinker”

Bronze sculpture - 1880

Signed on the base A. RODIN

From the edition of twenty five numbered 1/25 to 25/25

Cast in 1998* at the VALSUANI FOUNDRY - Paris

180 centimeters in height – 71 inches

1,440 pounds

Valsuani Foundry mark
Stamped 1998 and 21/25

Certification

&

Authorization by The Rodin Museum – Paris 1998

** Most examples of the first edition of approximately 24 bronzes were also cast posthumously, ending in 1968. Two thirds of the first edition were cast after Rodin's death.*

Presentation – History of the Work

First conceived as the central and crowning figure of the “Gates of Hell” 1880, a monumental group of sculptures commissioned by the French government,

Rodin’s impressive composition, “The Thinker” has become as an independant work, indubitably one of the most well-known and celebrated sculpture of all times.

The first exhibited version in 1888 in Copenhagen, was in plaster and 71.5 cm high.

Only in 1902, when some of Rodin most popular sculptures were enlarged with the help of his collaborator Henri LeBossé, a monumental version of the 'Thinker' was created.

By the end of 1903 Rodin had completed the enlargement of the Thinker.

This impressive plaster cast of the Great Thinker, or Monumental Thinker (More than 6 feet high and 1,400 pounds of Bronze....) was first exhibited in London in 1904.

A bronze made after this plaster was exhibited in Paris that same year.

On April 21st 1906, funds were collected through public subscription and this bronze cast in 1904 was erected in front of the Pantheon in Paris.

To Rodin, this tribute was the crowning moment of his career. This version of the Thinker was to be transfered to the Rodin Museum on its opening in 1919, two years after Auguste Rodin’s death.

Kings interest

Shortly after the 1906 event, King Edward VII of England himself, decided to visit Rodin in his Meudon Studio.

Then followed by Prince Eugen of Sweden who wrote to Rodin. The Prince wanted to place the Thinker on a little rock in the garden of his palace of Waldemarsudde. Rodin promised to deliver a patinated bronze example as large as the Pantheon cast within 6 to 8 months, depending on the time needed for patination. After the statue was installed in Sweden, the Prince wrote to express his gratitude to Rodin for this sculpture telling him that he enjoyed it day after day.

Rodin’s masterpiece was launched...

In 2004, the world has celebrated the one hundred year anniversary of this work which is now exhibited in the most important public art collections in various parts of the globe. See page 7

By this time Rodin's fame was already established and he became a very famous and sought after sculptor during his lifetime. Unlike many great artists who only achieved success posthumously.

“Any contemporary of Rodin who had his bust sculpted by anybody else will go down in History, if at all, as the most extraordinary idiot”

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950)

The Foundry

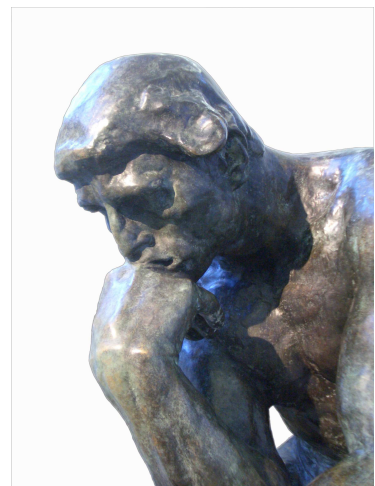
According to the famous Parisian art dealer Amroise Vollard (1868 – 1939),

“It's too great of a responsibility to leave something in bronze. This material is for eternity...”

Therefore, only the best of the best could be commissioned to work on such a universal masterpiece. And the stakes, in order for the casts to be validated and authorized by the Rodin Museum to bear Rodin's signature, were too important, not to consider this part of the work very seriously.

This edition of the Monumental Thinker was possible due to two main factors :

- A plaster in very good condition, recognized as authentic by the Musée Rodin,
- And the remarkable expertise of the prestigious and most acknowledged Valsuani Foundry which remains to be one of the few capable to master the lost wax casting method, in one block and on such a scale...



With this technique, a wax model is created that is covered and filled with heat-resistant plaster. When the plaster is heated, the molten wax flows away and leaves space for the fluid bronze that is poured into the mould. This is the only casting method that allows for a highly detailed surface and Auguste Rodin must have considered this quality suitable for such a significant project since he asked young Hébrard to cast the second bronze of the Monumental Thinker. (now at the University of Louisville - VA)



The Valsuani Foundry mark

Richard Guino, Renoir, Dali, Cesar, Picasso, Henry Moore, Giacometti, Degas, Modigliani, Germaine Richier, Pompon, Rembrandt Bugatti, Rodin....

The Valsuani foundry links back to Marcel Valsuani, who was the former director of the Hébrard foundry. Marcel Valsuani established his own foundry, rue des Plantes in Paris, in 1909.

From the plaster to the final bronze, not less than 19 different steps in the casting process and 4 months of work have been necessary....

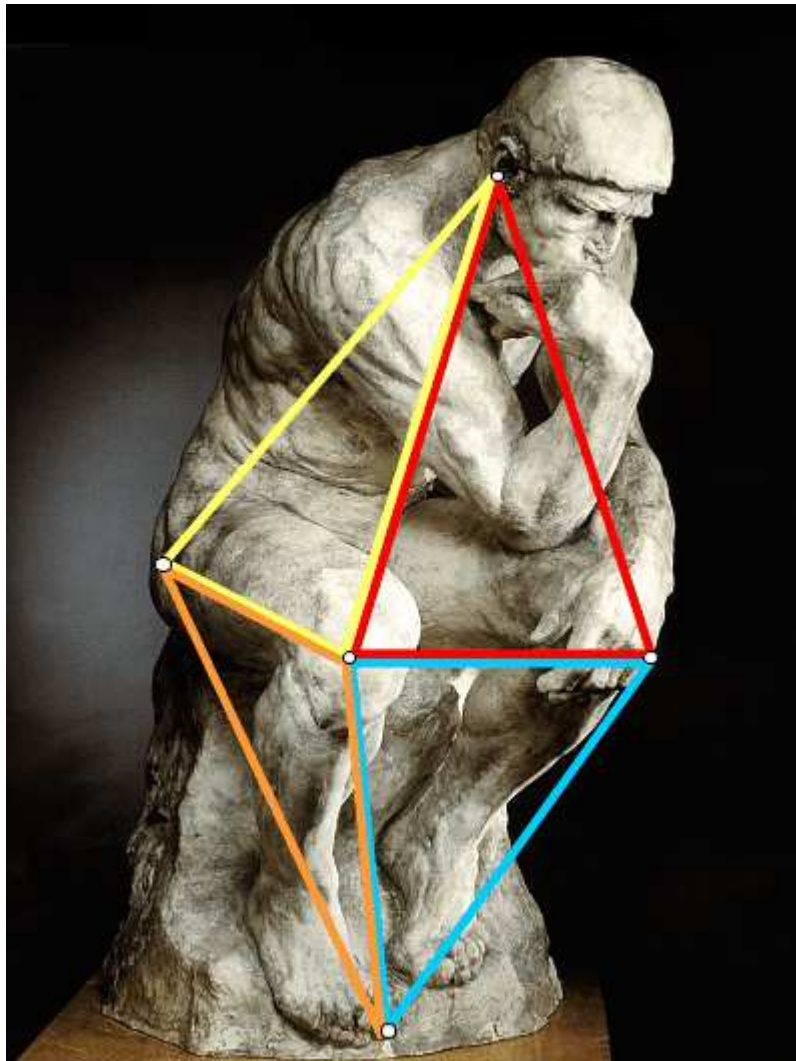
The Plaster

Several plasters for this work are known and currently belong to a number of institutions and museums. Among those :

Metropolitan Museum of NY, given in 1904 (said to be a “surmoulage”)
Dresden Museum (Germany), given in 1904,
Poznan Museum (Poland), 1905 donation
Strasbourg Museum of Art (France)
Meudon (former Rodin’s studio) etc...

The Monumental Thinker plaster after which this edition has been cast originates from the former Rudier foundry through the famous ceramist Jean Mayodon (1893 – 1967) who was the unique executor of the Rudier Estate.

The plaster has been validated after examination and comparison by the Rodin Museum.



Example of Triangulation comparison method on the plaster of the Great Thinker

A limited edition

To meet demand for his popular pieces, “The Kiss” for example Rodin allowed the Barbedienne Foundry to produce not less than 319 casts of “The Kiss” between 1898 and 1918.

This “mass production” didn’t prevent a 1955 cast of “The Kiss” to be estimated for auction at \$1,800,000 on Nov 4th 2002 at Philipps NY.

In order to follow the Rodin Museum requirements, the present work edition has been strictly limited to 25 examples. Compared to the hundreds of cast of “The Kiss”, it’s rather a very reasonable number which, added to the 24 casts already belonging to Museums worldwide, guarantees to the work, a steady and fair high value on the market.

Is a recent and posthumous edition a problem ?

Posthumous or recent casts have never been an issue. Even for the most prestigious collections, as long as the work are authentic and faithful to the best processes and quality standards.

A famous example of this statement remains famous Degas "Little Dancer aged 14". 35 examples (according to John Rewald) never cast during the artist's lifetime, who had only completed a wax sculpture. Yet, present in the best collections and museums and reaching \$15,000,000 at auction.

A quick review of The Metropolitan Museum of New York unquestionable collection of works by Rodin shows that a fair third of the major pieces are posthumous and even recent casts.

The Three Shades

Cast in 1969

Modeled circa 1881 – 1886

Flying Figure

Cast in 1975

Modeled circa 1890

Genius of Eternal Rest

Cast in 1980

Modeled circa 1899

Monument to Balzac

Cast in 1972

Modeled in 1897

Fallen Caryatid Carrying a Stone

Cast in 1981

Modeled in 1881

Fallen Caryatid Carrying an Urn

Cast in 1981

Modeled in 1883

Claude Lorrain, a Study for the Monument

Cast in 1981

Modeled in 1889

The Burghers of Calais
Modeled circa 1884 – 1885
And cast in 1985



The Burghers of Calais – Metropolitan NY – 83 in. high
Lost wax casting in 1985 from a plaster model.
Gift of I. And B. G Cantor - 1989

Museums and collections exhibiting Monumental Thinkers

Detroit Institute of Arts,
Prince Eugen Museum Sweden,
The City of San Francisco,
Meudon Rodin's tomb,
Cleveland Museum of Arts,
Rodin Museum of Philadelphia,
Columbia University NY,
Museum of Western Art, Tokyo,
Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow,
City of Buenos Aires, Argentina,
Laeken Cemetery, Brussels Belgium,
Baltimore Museum of Arts,
Milwaukee Museum Art Center,
Houston Museum of Fine Arts,
City of Kansas City,
Kyoto National Museum,
Nagoya Municipal Museum,
Colorado Savings and Loan Association, Denver,
Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany,
Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford,
Norton Simon Museum of Pasadena, CA
Rodin Museum, Paris,
University of Louisville,
Carlsberg Glyptothek of Copenhagen, Denmark.

To conclude

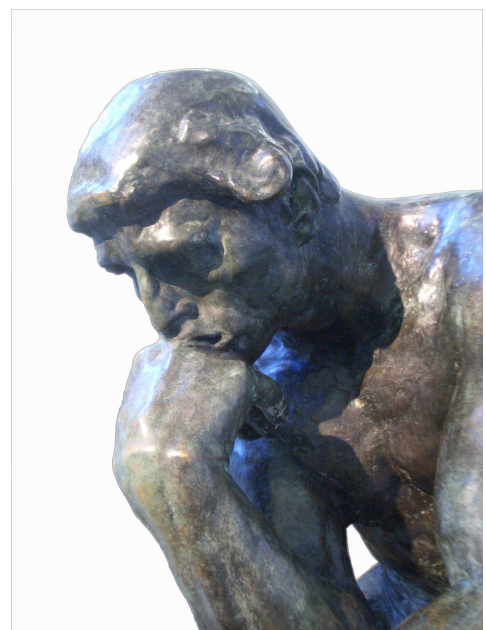
The outstanding quality of the present cast,

The rarity of this work, and yet it's universal reputation,

Combined with it's fascinating power of expression enhanced by it's striking monumental size,

Place the presented work, as a very unique opportunity for the discerning collector to raise his collection level to the highest standards.

All certificates are provided.



Some significant auction records for pieces of importance and recent casts

Especially the Monumental Balzac, never cast during Rodin's lifetime and of a comparable monumental size.

Monumental Balzac
294cm – 116 in. Cast 1971 May 6th
2003
Sothebys NY Est \$4,000,000

Balzac in a Monk Robe
105cm – 41 1/2 in. Cast 1981 Nov 10th
2000
Sothebys NY \$360,000

Study for Balzac
112cm – 44 in. Cast 1983 May 6th
2003
Sothebys NY Est \$800,000

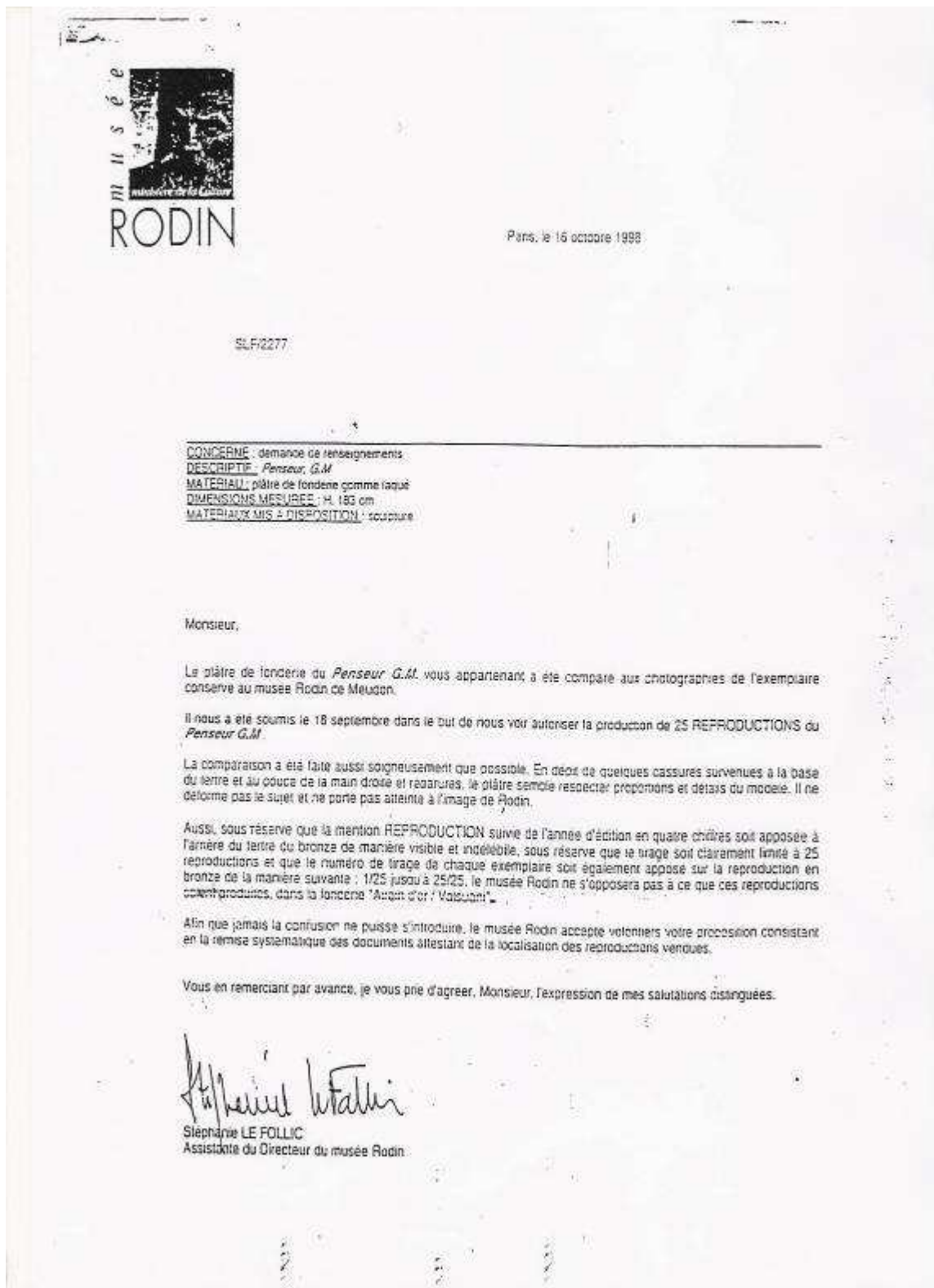
Monumental Balzac
294cm – 116 in. Cast 1971 May 13th
1998
Sothebys NY \$3,600,000

Age of Bronze
104cm – 41 in. Cast 1959 Feb 7th
2005
Christies London \$420,000

Age of Bronze
180cm – 72 in. Cast 1939 May 8th
2001
Sothebys NY \$1,600,000

The Kiss
88cm – 34 in. Cast 1955 Nov 4th
2002
Philipps NY Est \$1,800,000

The edition of the Monumental Thinker, approved by the Rodin Museum,
Letter signed by the Assistant Curator of the Museum and following translation,



“Sir,

The foundry plaster of the Monumental Thinker belonging to you has been compared to photographs of the example belonging to the Rodin Museum in Meudon.

We have been asked by you on September 18th to authorize the production of 25 casts of the Monumental Thinker.

Comparison has been made, as accurately as possible. Despite a few cracks that occurred to the base of the rock and to the right hand thumb, the plaster seems to respect proportions and details of the model. It doesn't distort the subject neither it undermines Rodin's image.

Hence, under the reserve that the mention “reproduction” followed by the year of the edition in 4 digits is being stamped on the back of the base of the bronze in a visible and indelible way, under the reserve that the edition is clearly limited to 25 casts and that the casting number of each example is being stamped as well on the bronze work in the following manner : 1/25 to 25/25, the Rodin Museum won't raise any objection against the casting of these bronzes by the Airain d'Or/Valsuani foundry.

In order that never any confusion might occur, the Rodin Museum graciously accepts your offer of systematical transmission of the documents testifying to the locations of the the sold recasts.

Thanking you in advance for this, please receive, Sir, the expression of my best regards”

Stephanie LE FOLLIC
Assistant to the Director of the Rodin Museum.

Copyrights legislation and French particularities,

Auguste Rodin bronze cast using Rodin's foundry plasters is authorized by the laws of the United States, countries of the European Union, countries of South America, and Asia. More specifically, this work is lawful under both the copyright, and moral rights statutes that have been enacted in these countries.

With respect to copyright law, the United States, Europe, South America, and Asia provide that all copyright in a work expire seventy (70) years after the death of the author. Since, Rodin died in 1917, all copyright rights in his works, including the foundry plasters used in this project and the works previously created with them, terminated in 1987 with exception of France, which terminated in 1989 for reasons particular to France's national history.

But there is a particularity of French copyrights that doesn't exist, hence is not enforced in other countries.

In march 1981, the French Government passed a decree enforcing a new rule which is peculiar to France and relates only to sculpture. The law basically states that if an edition of sculpture is cast in France and consists of more than twelve bronzes, it is designated as a multiple.

24 bronzes of the Great Thinker already belonging to Museums and institutions, the edition of the current work is liable to this decree.

While the law was passed with the best of intentions to protect the artist's reputation, the law has actually had the opposite effect. It has created confusion and havoc in the world of sculpture.

In fact, rather than protecting the artist's reputation, it has undermined it by having the word "reproduction" stamped on authentic works. As a result, many genuine sculptures are assumed to be reproductions whereas many copies or fraudulent works appear to be genuine as they have no such stamp. The "reproduction" mention as stated by law, having only to be applied in France on authentic works.

Hence our work has to bear the "reproduction word". Discretely and actually weaning regarding the monumental size of the work.



Example of a reproduction mention

Thus came the following paradox :

A genuine bronze, validated by the Rodin Museum, sole competent authority on Rodin's work and Rights has to be stamped "reproduction" while at the same time, the millions of copies of Rodin's Thinker around the world bear no such stamp.

Ironically, had the bronze not been stamped in such a manner, it would have been considered bogus. So by stamping it with the word "reproduction" it became under the particular French law, a legitimate genuine cast. And had the 24 Monumental Thinkers previously cast been cast under the current law, they would have had to bear exactly the same stamp "reproduction" !!!

Reproduction word here has of course to be taken with the meaning of a re-cast.

All the bronzes in this edition have been certified as having been cast "from the foundry model of the master, Auguste Rodin." Thus, they are all genuine and as genuine as the ones from the former editions.

The law has changed, not the authenticity of the bronzes.

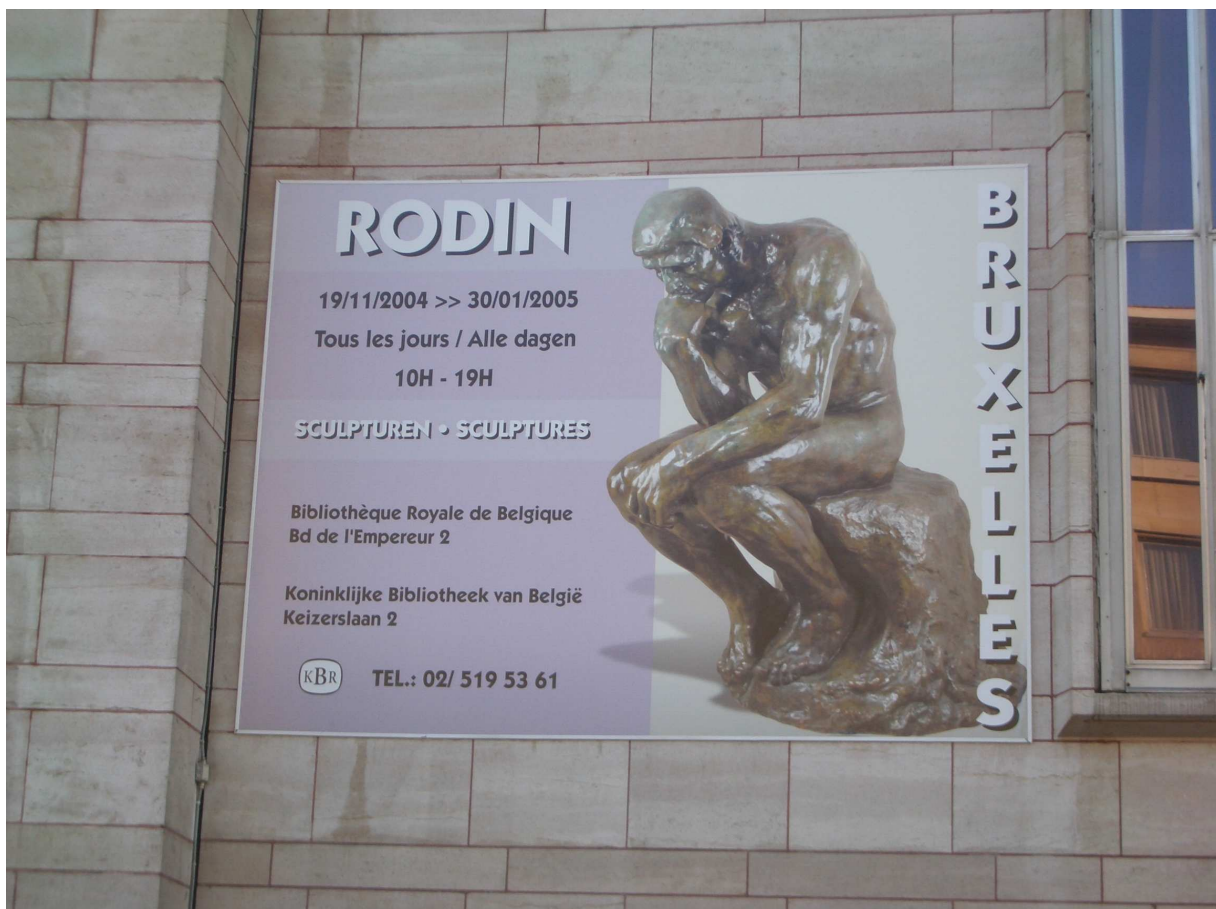
Quick International Press overview,
Monumental Thinkers of the Valsuani Edition,



With Shimon Peres and Ariel Sharon



Shanghai Art Fair



2004 – 2005 Exhibition at the Royal Library of Belgium



The Economist



With Former China leader Jiang Zemin

Museums and collections exhibiting Monumental Thinkers

Detroit Institute of Arts,
Prince Eugen Museum Sweden,
The City of San Francisco,
Meudon Rodin's tomb,
Cleveland Museum of Arts, (bombed in 1970)
Rodin Museum of Philadelphia,
Columbia University NY,
Museum of Western Art, Tokyo,
Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow,
City of Buenos Aires, Argentina,
Laeken Cemetery, Brussels Belgium,
Baltimore Museum of Arts,
Milwaukee Museum Art Center,
Houston Museum of Fine Arts,
City of Kansas City,
Kyoto National Museum,
Nagoya Municipal Museum,
Colorado Savings and Loan Association, Denver,
Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany,
Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford,
Norton Simon Museum of Pasadena, CA
Rodin Museum, Paris,
University of Louisville, (Hebrard)
Carlsberg Glyptothek of Copenhagen, Denmark.

LOCALISATIONS “Grands Penseurs” de RODIN edition Valsuani

1 - 2 Penseurs en Israel appartenant à des fondations, dont un au Tel Aviv Museum of Art (photo de ce penseur avec Sharon et Peres)

2 - Santiago CHILI

3 - Shangai CHINE - La place publique sur laquelle le Penseur est expose a été rebaptisée Place Rodin –

4 - Taipei - Un Musée est en cours d'ouverture qui incluera ce Penseur ainsi qu'un Balzac Monumental (comme celui du MOMA)

5 - Moscou - Collection privée

6 - Madrid - Euroconsult Art Foundation

7 - Canada - Orne le parc du chateau d'une importante collection.

8 - Japon - Fondation

9 - Seoul Ho Ham Museum. Un Grand Penseur, ainsi que les Portes de l'Enfer et les Bourgeois de Calais, avec des oeuvres de Chagall, De Kooning, Rothko, Giacometti, Bacon, Warhol, Oldenburg, Lichtenstein

10 - Miami - Fisher Island private Collection

11 – New York – Private Collection

12 – California – Private Collection