

Auguste RODIN (1840-1917)



ÂGE D'AIRAIN (1875-1877)

Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina

H : 63.8 cm, L : 22 cm, D : 18 cm

Bronze signed «A.Rodin», «Alexis Rudier
fondeur Paris»(mark), patina by Jean Limet,
inside relief seals «A.Rodin»
and «M» (For Musée A.Rodin).

Cast in 1922

The *Age d'Airain* is the first life-size figure which makes Rodin known, first to his peers, then to the Administration of Fine Arts, critics, and amateurs finally as one of the hopes of his generation.

The young artist modelled his sculpture between 1875 and 1877. He has conceived it as «a study of nude, a good figure, correct drawing, precise style and fine modeling». During his first trip to Italy in 1876, he discovered similarities with Donatello's *David*, and was rather satisfied with his current work, which was well advanced but not completed.

The *Age d'Airain* is in the spirit of the Florentine Revival works of the second half of the 19th century, like the *David* by Mercié, the *Chanteur Florentin* by Dubois, the *Vainqueur au coq* by Falguière and later *L'Arlequin* by Saint Marceaux.

But Rodin's sculpture appears above all as resolutely modern because, unlike those of his colleagues, he avoids Anecdote and refuses the «utensils & accessories», usual in the 19th century, which gives his work a timeless aspect. It simply represents a man who awakens to life, with a movement of legs still undecided, but a musculature is more defined in the torso and belly, while the arms that rise above the head reinforce the attitude of awakening or birth to life...

His study is apparently so close to Perfection that, when the plaster is exhibited «life-size» at the Salon in 1877, Rodin is accused of having mould the body of his model, Auguste Neyt, a young Belgian of twenty years, and of having wanted to deceive the jury. At this time, this is a serious accusation for a young artist who tries to impose himself. To exonerate himself, he brought in confreres who followed him in his way of working (Boucher, Dubois, Falguière, Carrier-Belleuse, etc.) and the scandal fell back. The State even commissioned an example of it in 1880. It is the example kept in the Musée d'Orsay.



Provenance :

Musée Rodin (1922)

Baron Morimura V (Tokyo, 1923)

Sotheby's (New York, 11 nov. 1999)

Jan Krugier (Genève)

François Ditesheim (Neuchâtel)

Collection UDB



At the beginning of the 20th century, Rodin followed a logic of enlargement and reduction, he made two reductions of that model, the medium model in 1903-1904, and the small model the third of the size in November 1904. These are not only mechanical reductions, but modelling reworked by his assistant, Henri Lebossé.

EDITION ÂGE D’AIRAIN, SMALL MODEL

The reduction, third of the size, dates from November 1904. Five copies were cast during Rodin’s lifetime between 1907 and 1917 by Alexis Rudier, the second edition for Auguste Neyt (LENORMAND ROMAIN Antoinette, Catalogue de l’oeuvre édité en bronze, 2007).

It is also listed some 32 examples between 1918 and 1968 by Alexis then Georges Rudier, all not numbered as those of Rodin .

OUR BRONZE « M »

Our example bears the usual internal stamp «A. Rodin» that Alexis Rudier affixed before the cast and the much rarer stamp «M» affixed in the same way in relief at the same foundry: M for museum probably specifies the reference book of the said museum.

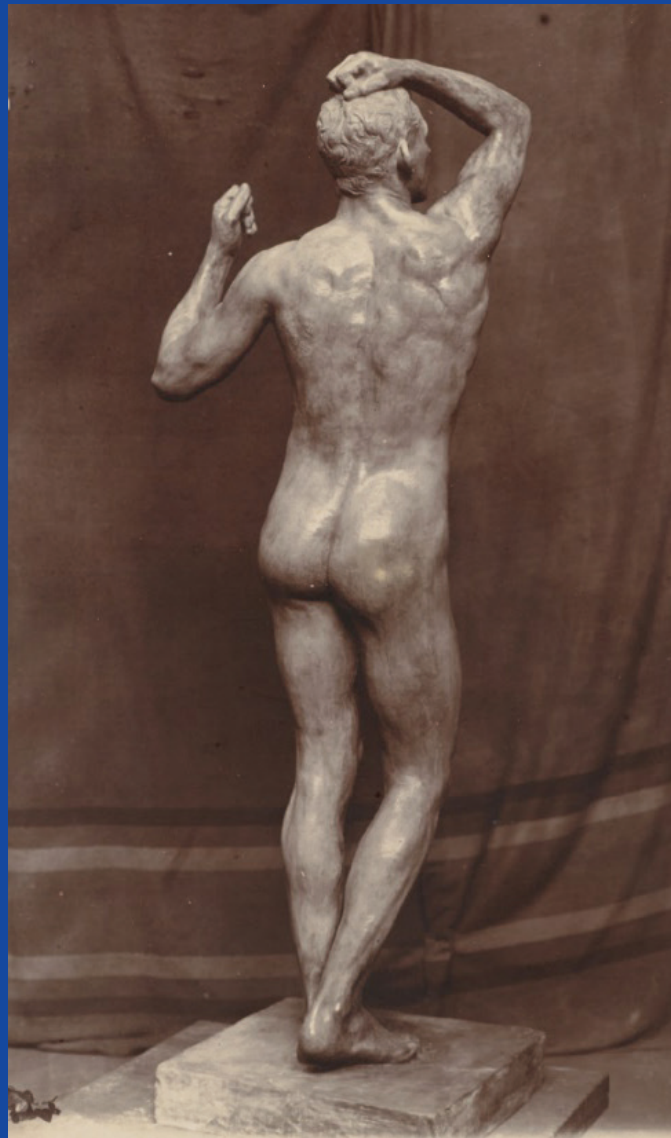
The *Catalogue de l’oeuvre édité en bronze* published in 2007 also specifies that, in the public collections, it is listed only about ten pieces with this «M». This mark, the only one that distinguishes a posthumous bronze example from a lifetime one, seems to have only been used for few years (circa 1920-1925?).

Our example was cast in 1922. It was purchased on January 23rd, 1923 by Baron Morimura V from Tokyo. Later, it joined the collection of Jan Krugier and that of his business partner before UDB acquired it.



Porcelaine Noritake - Baron Morimura



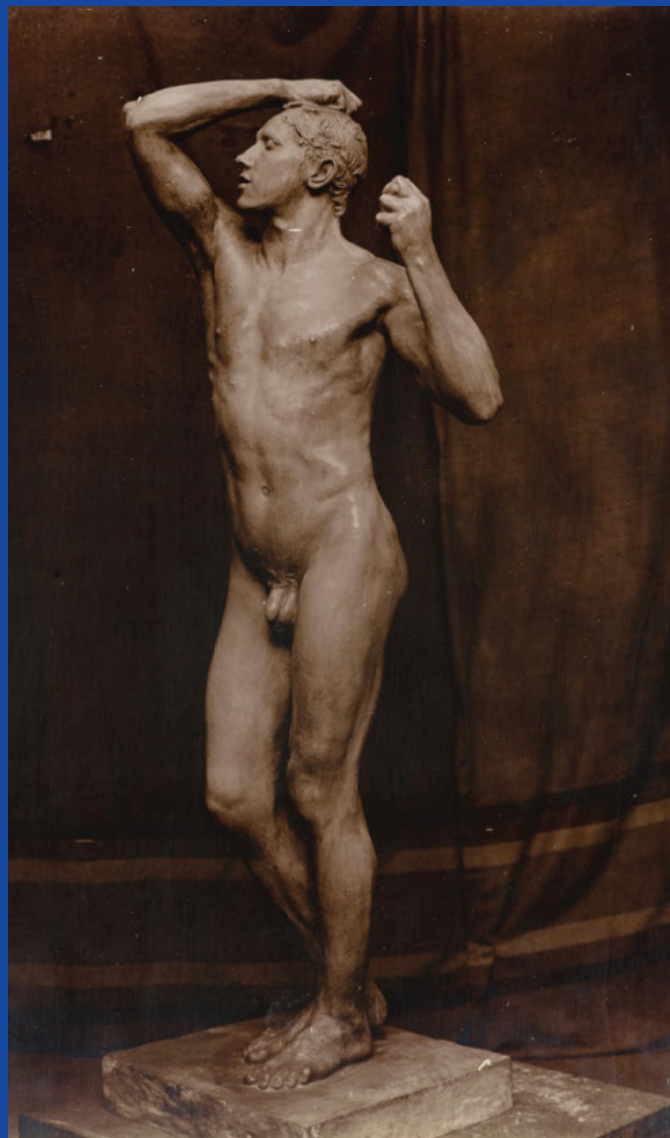


Âge d'Airain, picture by Jean Limet, Paris, Musée Rodin.

Eugene Rudier (1875-1952), son and nephew of founders, worked for Rodin from 1902 at the age of 27. He quickly became his favorite founder, captured most of the production and created an authentication mark, the «A. Rodin» relief seal.

After the death of the sculptor, to keep the clients of the Museum, he produced casts of great qualities. After Eugene, it was his nephew, Georges Rudier, who took over, and we note that the first bronzes produced are also sumptuous cast and patina.

Âge d'Airain, picture by Jean Limet, Paris, Musée Rodin.



Rodin was very concerned about his patins, which he considered difficult to achieve because of the hollows and bumps treatment of his sculptures, particularly visible here on the back of the model.

At the very beginning of the 20th century, he worked with Jean-François Limet (1855-1941), painter and photographer, who became his favorite «colour maker» for patina with bluish reflections, emerald green, and lilac shades found here on the terrace.

