AUGUSTE RODIN

ESQUISSE POUR LA CATHÉDRALE (1900)

Assembly «Main Gauche n°02» and «Main Droite n°30»

Bronze, richly dark red brown patina

H : 15 cm, L : 9,1 cm, P : 6,2 cm

Authentic example signed «A. Rodin», cast by «Alexis Rudier Fondeur Paris», inside «A. Rodin» relief seal and numbered «4/12» on the edge.

Cast in 1944

Edition references (Comité Rodin Advice n°2019-5933B) :

17 examples cast by Alexis Rudier between 1927 and 1945.

One example identified in the collections of the Fine Arts Museum of Buenos Aires.



Rodin's hands have a fascinating power due to their resonance in space, their fingers resolutely in movement, their monumental virtue, regardless of the format chosen, and their sculptural character, giving the fragment an assumed status as a Sculpture. Originally, in the 1880s and 1890s, Rodin developed the hands as studies for the figures included in The Porte de l'Enfer. However, his keen interest in the collection of Greek and Roman antiquities quickly prompted him to reclassify the fragment as a work of art.

The first assemblages appeared at the very end of the 1890s with La Main de Dieu, which associates the hand of the creator with the original couple in the idea of Creation. Assemblages of hands proper date from the early 20th century, probably following Les Mains d'Amants or Épousailles from 1904 (model, brick, and plaster, Paris, Musée Rodin, inv. S. 2680). The Esquisse pour la Cathédrale follows the same principle of creation, bringing together two pre-existing hands by the artist: the "Main gauche n°2" and the "Main droite n°30". Its finished version, larger in size (65 cm), was completed in 1908. It precedes another model, Le Secret (1909), considered to be its pendant, making a pair. This assemblage de mains, known as the Arche d'alliance, probably taken in 1914, draws on La Cathédrale following Rodin's publication of his book on Les Cathédrales de France.

The evocation of La Cathédrale stems both from the slender, upward-reaching construction of the hands and the interior void, so sought after by the sculptor, echoing the Gothic architecture of cathedrals. Beyond their sculptural aspect, these groups – Main de Dieu, Épousailles, La Cathédrale, and Le Secret – have an evocative spiritual dimension.

From an editorial point of view, the Esquisse de la Cathédrale is one of the first models cast by the Rodin Museum with the idea of a justified numbering of twelve examples. This specificity and anteriority explain why, unusually, the numbering "4/12" appearing on our bronze is affixed to the inside of the bronze and not to the outside, as will be done for subsequent editions. Despite this limitation, the actual number of casts is estimated at around 17, as listed by the

Comité Rodin. Among the unnumbered bronzes is the one purchased by Sacha Guitry from the museum in August 1940. Guitry opposed the museum's subsequent proposal to number the casts.

We will give to the buyer of this bronze the original invoice from the Rodin Museum, issued by the curator at the time, Georges Grappe, on August 11th, 1944, to its first owner, Mr. Minet.

Museum reference:

• Buenos Aires, National Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 7766, Alexis Rudier foundry, 1927, unnumbered.