

AUGUSTE RODIN

LE BAISER (1886 -1904)

Second réduction (also known as N°4)

Bronze, shaded brown patina

H : 59,4 cm, L : 37 cm, D : 41 cm

Lifetime cast signed on the rock «Rodin», inscribed «F.Barbedienne fondeur».

Cast between 1905 and 1910.

Edition references (Comité Rodin inclusion letter n°2016-4966B)

Exhibition references of the model :

E.U. in 1889

Salon in 1898 (marble, model for the bronze, musée Rodin)

E.U in 1900 (marble, model for the bronze, musée Rodin)

Provenance :

Ader-Picard-Tajan, Hôtel George V Paris, June 17 1976 n°58

Private collection, France (acquired at the above sale)

Private collection (by descent of the above)

Private collection



Rodin first conceived this group representing a man and woman embracing as a bas-relief for the Porte de l'Enfer. It first appeared in the center of the left leaf. Taken from Dante's Inferno, the subject represents Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini exchanging a kiss, a shameful kiss as Francesca was married to Paolo's old brother. They fell in love while reading courtly love novels. Caught amidst their first kiss, they were stabbed by Giancotto, Francesca's husband.

Rodin therefore chose to represent the loving embrace of the two lovers, before they were condemned to Hell. This group was later removed from the Porte de l'Enfer, because it evoked a state of pure happiness which did not match with this tormented composition.

The two "lovers" were shown for the first time to the public in 1887 as Paolo et Francesca, title which was soon replaced by Le Baiser chosen by the critics. At once successful, a marble example was commissioned by the French State in 1888 in view of the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The success of the work was of course largely due to its quality but also to the perfume of scandal around it : as a matter of fact, it had to be locked up in a special room at the 1893 Exposition Universelle so as not to scare away the Puritans.

Le Baiser is probably the most emblematic and well-known work of Auguste Rodin, as well as one of the most recognizable sculptures in the history of art. This model known as "2nd reduction" because it is the second existing size, was edited by Barbedienne from 1904 to 1918 in 65 to 69 examples according to the inventories.