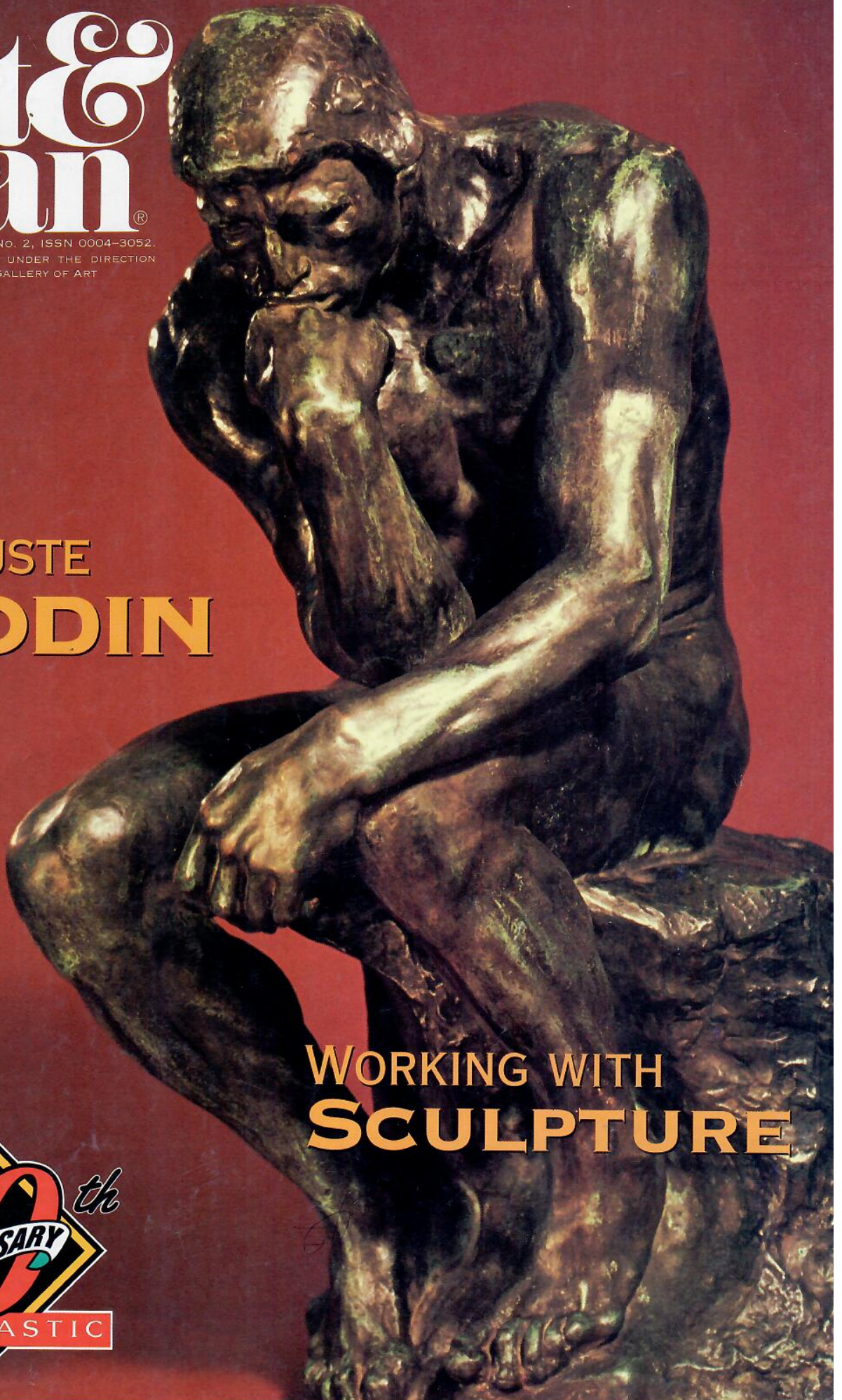


# art & man<sup>®</sup>

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OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

## AUGUSTE RODIN

## WORKING WITH SCULPTURE







COVER: Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). *The Thinker*, 1879-89. Bronze. Rodin Museum, Philadelphia. Photo, Art Resource.

**art & man**

Maurice R. Robinson, founder of Scholastic, Inc., 1895-1982

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# BRINGING CLAY TO LIFE

Does the brooding figure shown on the cover and in these pictures look familiar? He's been reproduced thousands of times,—in ads, cartoons, book covers, TV commercials. It



**American photographer Edward Steichen captured the power of Rodin's personality in this 1902 photograph.**

Edward Steichen (1879-1973). *Rodin*, 1902.

seems whenever a person is called upon to think, this sculpture, *The Thinker*, created by 19th-century French artist Auguste Rodin (Oh-GOOST Row-DAN), makes an appearance. The figure has become such a part of our culture, it's hard to imagine a time when it didn't exist. Just who is *The Thinker*, what is he thinking about, and how did this sculpture get to be so famous?

Auguste Rodin was born into a poor Parisian family in 1840. He hated school, and left at 13. "I always felt I was being held a prisoner," he said later. The only subject Rodin liked was drawing, so he went to a trade school for applied artists. At 17, he began to work in studios that produced decorative art. He made ornaments for a living and in his free time he did his own sculpture. In 1870, France was invaded by Germany (The Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71) and Rodin left Paris for Belgium. Later he traveled to Italy, where he first saw the work of the great Italian Renaissance sculptor Michelangelo. When he returned to France, Rodin began working on a series of large figure sculptures.

During the 1870s, Paris was the center of the art world. But French art was controlled by a powerful organization, the Academy of Fine Arts, and artists had to follow strict guidelines in order to have their work exhibited. As a result of these rigid rules, art had become, for the most part, artificial and lifeless.





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*“When you touch my sculptures, you expect them to move.”*

—AUGUSTE RODIN

***The Thinker* is Auguste Rodin's most famous sculpture.**

*The Thinker*, 1879-89. Bronze. Photo by Lee Snider/Photo Images.

While a group of young French painters, known as *Impressionists*, were challenging the Academy's ideas about painting, bringing light, color, and spontaneity to that medium, most sculpture remained frozen, bland, and unoriginal. It was in this atmosphere that, in 1877, Rodin's first major work—a life-size-figure sculpture—was accepted by the Academy. However, the sculpture was so lifelike that some critics accused Rodin of simply having cast the work directly from the model's body.

A few critics, though, were impressed by the sculptor's creativity, and Rodin was offered his first important commission: a pair of giant

doors for a decorative-arts museum. Rodin decided to sculpt his version of Hell. It contained more than 180 writhing figures, watched over by the brooding figure of *The Thinker*. Even though the museum was never built, Rodin worked on *The Gates of Hell* during the next 40 years.

In 1884 Rodin obtained several commissions for large memorials. One was to commemorate an event that had happened in the French city of Calais (Kal-A). The sculpture Rodin created, *The Burghers of Calais* (see pages 6-9), is now regarded as one of the greatest examples of modern sculpture.





# SCULPTING THE SOUL

"A true portrait reveals the  
soul within."

—AUGUSTE RODIN

*Balzac*, 1897. Bronze. Rodin Museum,  
Paris. Photo by Lee Boltin



By 1891, Rodin had become a very controversial artist. Many people had criticized *The Burgers of Calais*. A few loved it. One of those who admired Rodin was France's most famous writer of the time,

Émile Zola (A-MEEL ZO-la). When the literary society of which he was president wanted to build a memorial to the French author Honoré de Balzac (on-oh-RAY de BAL-zak), Zola persuaded them to choose Rodin.

The sculptor began by trying to re-create Balzac's appearance and personality. But this giant of French literature wasn't very heroic looking. Rodin decided to sculpt the person within. He worked for seven years, modeling more than 40 clay studies of Balzac. He made him athletic, distorted, fat, thin. He sculpted portrait heads, like the one shown below. He did full-length studies of the writer wearing suits, cloaks, or nothing at all. The few sketches he showed the society greatly upset them. Time went by, and the society threatened to have Rodin dismissed.

In his research, Rodin learned that Balzac had worked throughout the night, wearing a long dressing gown. He found the taylor who had made Balzac's clothes and had him make up a dressing gown to Balzac's measurements. Then he covered the gown with plaster. When he unveiled his finished *Balzac* (left) in 1898, the result horrified most people. A huge

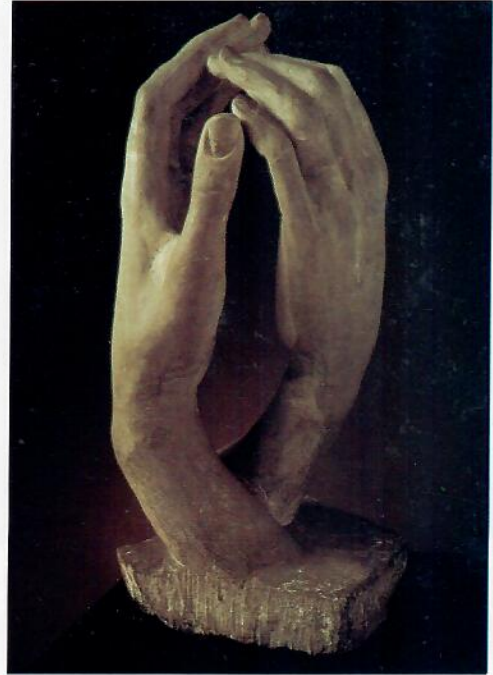
white slab towered over the crowd, its rugged features slashed into the masklike head on top. To many, it looked like a mistake, not a sculpture. Critics called it "an obscenity," "a toad in a sack," and "a lump of plaster kicked together by a lunatic." The literary society rejected the sculpture as unworthy of Balzac's memory. Rodin repaid the money they had given him and kept the sculpture.

Why was the sculpture rejected at the time? And why is it now considered a modern masterpiece? The work doesn't look like Balzac. It has been compared to a prehistoric stone, a huge primitive monolith. This sculpture of Balzac, is not just a memorial to a specific person; it celebrates and symbolizes the abstract quality of creativity.

The *Balzac* controversy depressed the artist, but it also made his work world famous. At the Paris Exposition of 1900 (something like a modern World's Fair), Rodin built his own exhibition hall containing more than 150 of his sculptures. The project was a huge success and brought him orders from around the world. Toward the end of his life, the sculptor stopped doing large figures. He preferred small, highly polished works like the hands in *Cathedral* (above). Rodin died at his villa outside Paris in 1917. His work had a great influence on modern sculpture, giving it a new sense of freedom, emotion, and spontaneity.

**Rodin did many studies like this for the work on the left.**

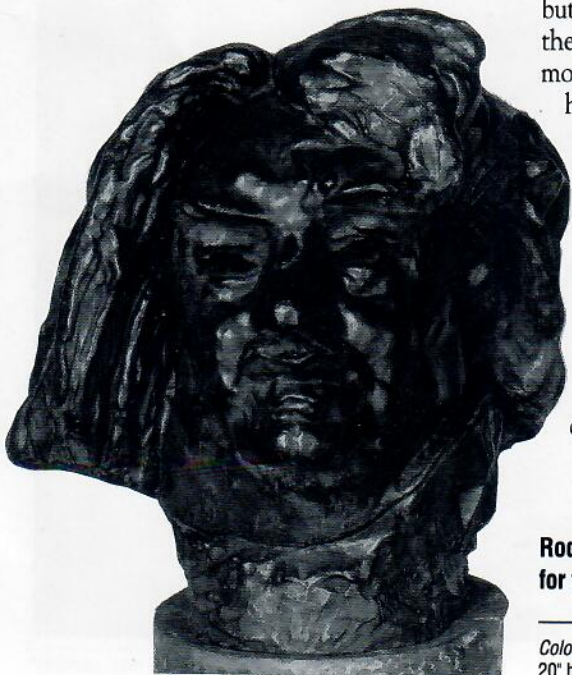
*Colossal Head of Balzac*, 1897. Bronze. 20' high. Rodin Museum, Philadelphia.



**"A meaningful part is just as suggestive of life as the whole."—AUGUSTE RODIN**

*The Cathedral*, 1908. Plaster. Rodin Museum, Paris. Photo by Lee Boltin

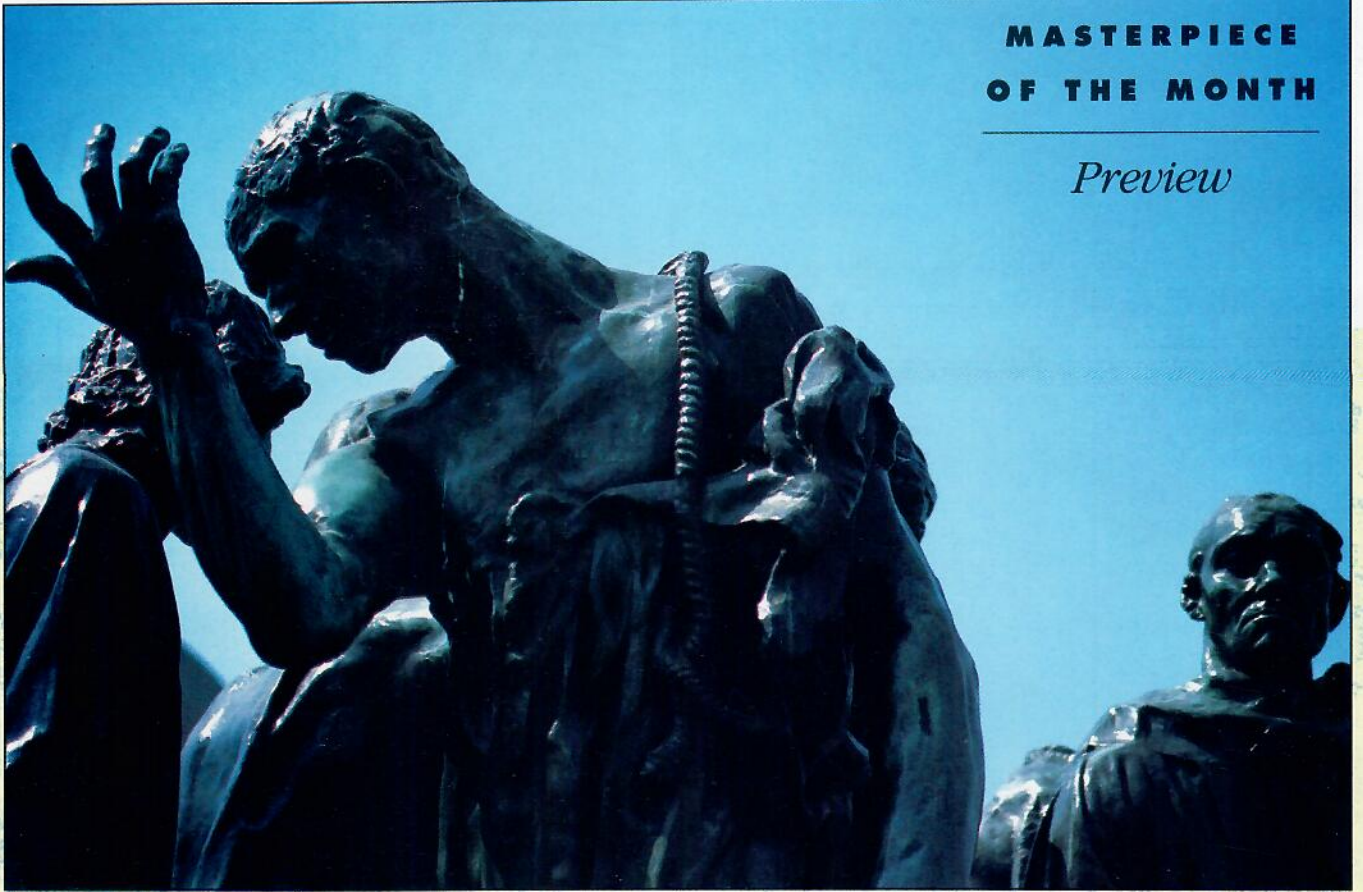
**The sculpture on the opposite page is considered a modern masterpiece.**





**MASTERPIECE  
OF THE MONTH**

*Preview*



## A MOVING TRIBUTE

**"Forms are not fixed but are  
always changing into others."  
—AUGUSTE RODIN**

*The Burghers of Calais* (detail), 1884-86.  
Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden,  
Washington, D.C. Photo by Ann Purcell.

**"The human body is a temple  
that walks—a moving architec-  
ture."  
—AUGUSTE RODIN**

*The Burghers of Calais* (detail), 1884-86.  
Calais town square. Photo by Lee Boltin.





In 1883, Rodin received a commission to create a public monument for the French city of Calais. The memorial was intended to celebrate an incident in the city's past. During the Hundred Years' War (1338-1453) between England and France, Calais was captured by the English army. The English king was about to destroy the city when six of its leading citizens, or *burghers* (burgers), offered their lives in exchange for the city's safety. The king was so impressed by their courage, he spared both the citizens and Calais.

The mayor of the city and his committee had a very traditional memorial in mind—a single, large, formal figure symbolizing civic virtue, to be set high on a pedestal. Rodin began reading accounts of the 1347 event he was going to sculpt: “The six men, trailed by a weeping crowd, set off to the English camp bareheaded, barefooted, with ropes around their necks and the keys to the city in their hands.” When the committee saw that Rodin was planning to use a group of figures, they were outraged. Rodin threatened to drop the project, so they reluctantly let him go ahead.

It wasn't surprising that the Calais monument committee was so upset with Rodin's ideas. The finished sculpture of *The Burghers of Calais* was completely different from the usual public monument. To 19th-century eyes, the six ragged, life-size figures (shown here and on pages 8-9) with their large hands and feet, rough features, and powerful bodies looked more like laborers than city officials. Rodin had created a new kind of sculpture. Instead of a **closed, balanced idealized** figure, he presented an **informal, open, straggling group** who seemed to be wandering across a stage. And the **spaces in between** are as important as the figures themselves. Instead of the **smooth, calm, unbroken surfaces** of traditional monuments, the **rough textures** in this sculpture produce **highlights and shadows** that give a feeling of energy and tension.

\*Froissart, 14th century historian



For the viewer walking around the work, a sense of **movement** is set up. The figures can be seen as one person in various stages of motion, or as a group that changes constantly. And as the group progresses toward its fate, each man experiences the thought of death differently. One bows his head in sorrow; another is stiff with anger; the body of one twists with agony; one man hides his eyes in terror; another holds his head in despair. The youngest stands doubtfully and looks behind him, as if he is having second thoughts.

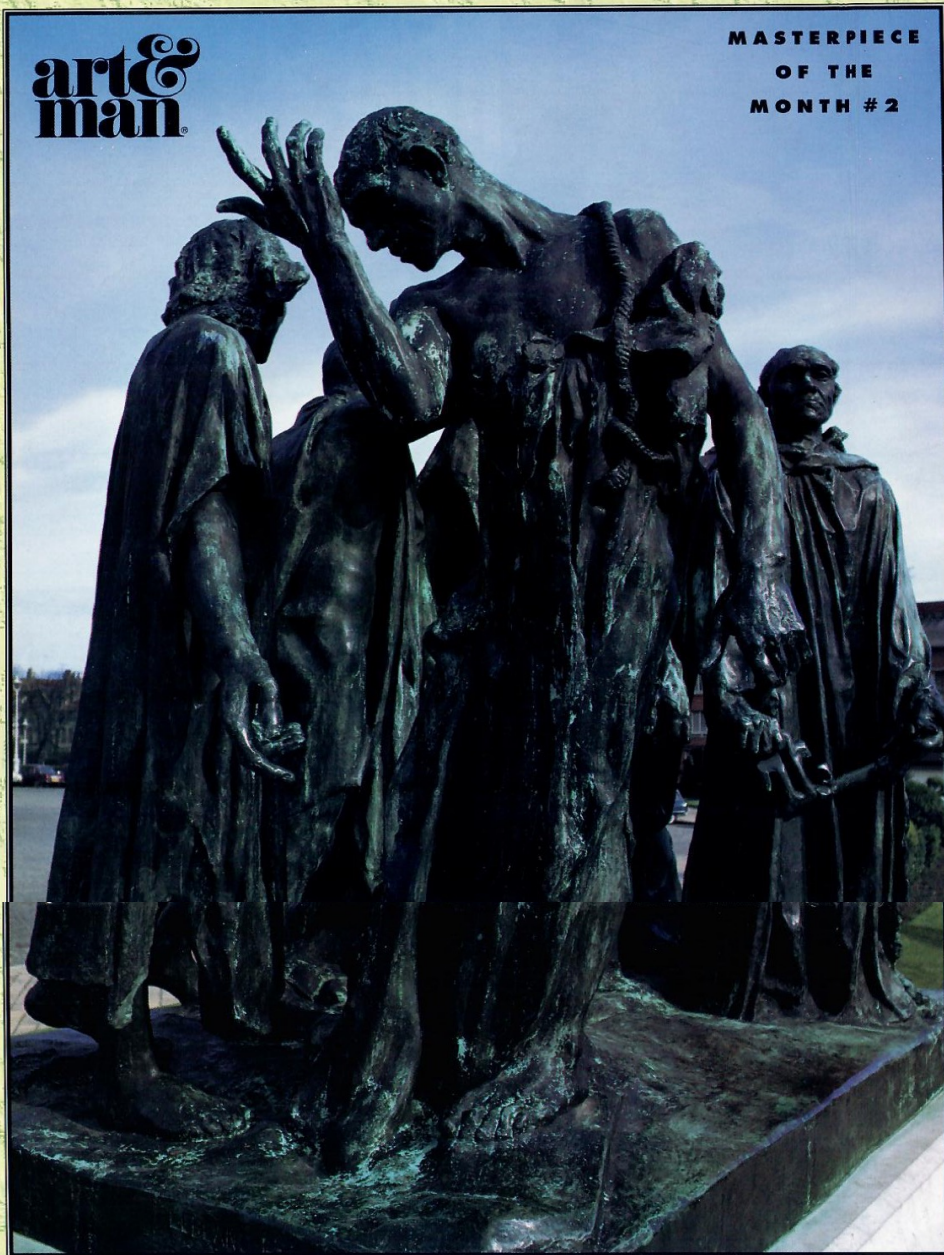
Rodin designed the original monument to be seen at **eye level**, so that the viewer could identify with each figure. But the committee insisted on a pedestal. When the finished sculpture was finally unveiled in Calais in 1895, it was placed on a high platform—something like a coffin—surrounded by a little iron railing. Today *The Burghers of Calais* stands at ground level, as Rodin intended, one of the most famous visual **symbols** of courage ever created.

**Can you guess which emotions each of these figures represent?**

*The Burghers of Calais* (detail), 1884-86. Calais town square. Photo by Lee Boltin.

**“My figures seem to grow from within, like life itself.”** —AUGUSTE RODIN





Auguste Rodin  
(1840-1917), *The  
Burgers of Calais*,  
1884-86. Calais town  
square. Photo by Lee  
Bolton.

## THE BURGHERS OF CALAIS

BY AUGUSTE RODIN

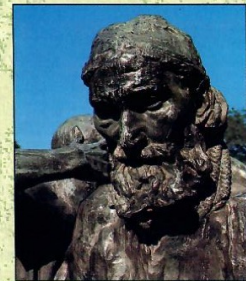
“Each man moves at his own pace yet all are in a rhythmic circular movement...  
The feet drag, the hands are tortured, each body struggles for life as the group moves toward death.”—AUGUSTE RODIN



The youngest burgess turns, filled with doubts and regrets.



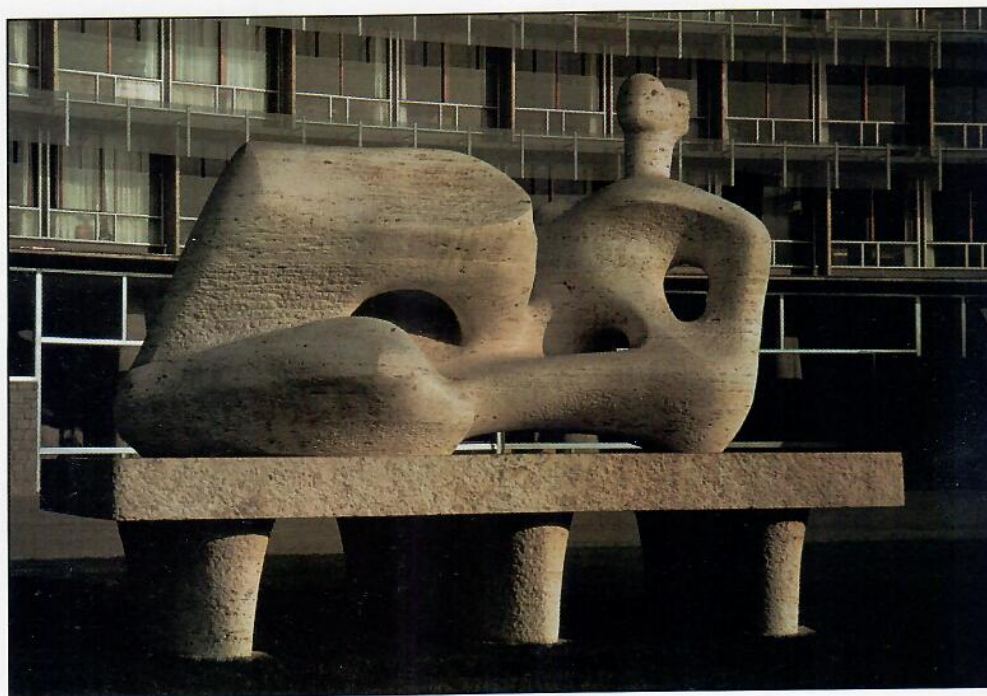
This burgess hides his eyes in fear.



The leader of the group has no doubts about his decision.



Sculpting the Figure:  
Like Rodin, these three modern  
sculptors have used the  
human figure in their work.



*Monuments in Stone*

**When Henry Moore carved a sculpture, he felt he was really “releasing the life within the stone.”**

Henry Moore (1898-1986). *Reclining Figure*, 1957-58. Marble, 17' long. UNESCO Headquarters, Paris.

Twentieth-century British sculptor Henry Moore carved the huge *Reclining Figure* shown above out of a piece of marble that weighed more than 60 tons! In fact, the block was so heavy, no equipment was able to move it. The sculptor had to bring his tools to the quarry and carve for nearly a year until the basic shape was blocked out. Compare this monument to Rodin’s memorial to *Balzac* on page 4. Both are figures. Both are large outdoor public sculptures. But how do they differ? Rodin *modeled*, or built up his

forms using clay, while Moore *chipped away* pieces to create his solid marble figure. Moore’s **simplified, abstract shape** suggests a human figure. Two large forms represent the body and legs and only the two “eye” holes suggest that the tiny shape on the right might represent a head. The **spaces** that break up the figure link it to its surroundings. Rodin *modeled* his textures out of clay. Moore has kept the marble’s **natural texture** which heightens the feeling that this rocklike giant might have been created centuries ago.



## Colorful Fragments

Auguste Rodin felt that unfinished fragments could make as much of a statement as an entire figure. Most 19th-century art critics disagreed with him. But some modern sculptors like contemporary American Ben

Jones choose to use *only* fragments in their work. Jones is interested in showing the impact of African culture on American society. In his sculptures he uses patterns and marks like those used in African tribal rituals. He selects the body

parts—heads, arms, legs—that most effectively display African tribal markings. He makes plaster casts from models. The brightly colored **lines, dots, and shapes** painted on the casts are **repeated, varied, and woven** into rich, **textured patterns** reminiscent of African sculpture. And the artist's use of contemporary symbols, popular emblems, and Day-Glo colors suggests the connection between the African past and today's American culture.

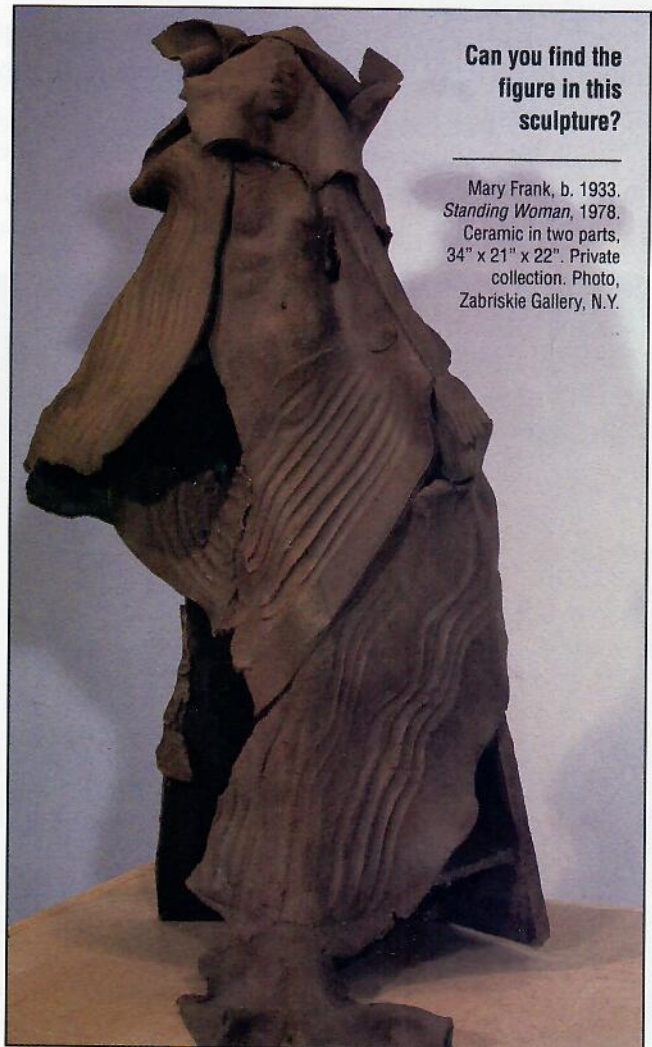
Sometimes a few fragments can suggest an entire human figure.

Ben Jones, b.1942. *Black Face and Arm Unit (detail)*, 1971. Painted plaster. Life size. New Jersey State Museum, Trenton. Photo Michael Bergman.

## A Mysterious Figure

Like Rodin, contemporary American sculptor Mary Frank *models* her figures, rather than *carving* them or making plaster casts. The sculpture on the right, *Standing Woman*, was assembled from thin sections of baked clay, which were wrapped around each other to form a figure. The **negative spaces** between the sections are as important as the **positive shapes** of the clay. Various parts of the

woman's body seem to change and melt into one another, giving the figure a light, mysterious quality. **Jagged edges** curl in and out of **gently curving forms**. Areas of **rough texture** play against **smooth, finished shapes** that appear to grow from the ground or sink back into it. Could the artist's **hollow, disconnected** figures be reflecting any qualities she feels might be found in today's culture?

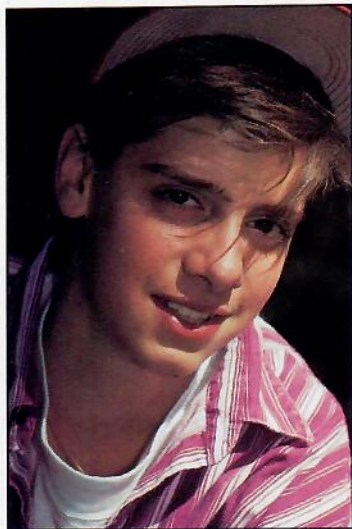


Can you find the figure in this sculpture?

Mary Frank, b. 1933. *Standing Woman*, 1978. Ceramic in two parts, 34" x 21" x 22". Private collection. Photo, Zabriskie Gallery, N.Y.



# Charles Damman: SCULPTING MOVEMENT

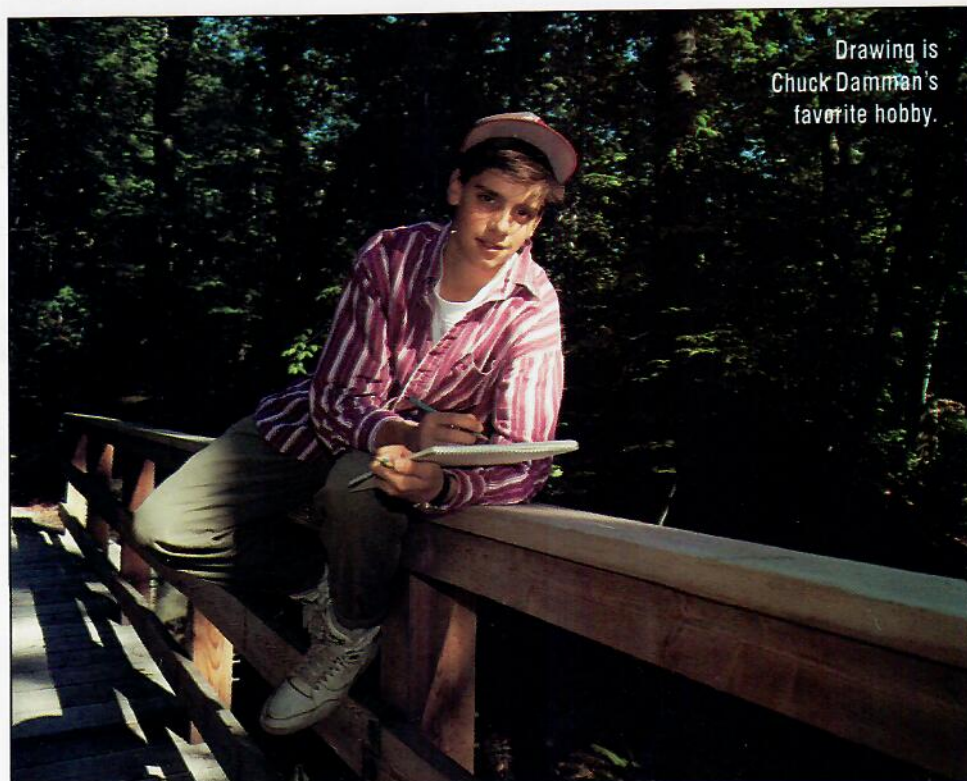


What kind of creature do you see on the opposite page and what is it doing? Even when it's standing still, it seems to be leaping into the air. How did the artist create this effect?

Sixteen-year-old Charles ("Chuck") Damman of Akron, Ohio, was a junior at Akron Central High School when he created this unusual Scholastic Art Award-winning sculpture called *Monkey*. The piece was made out of wire and garbage bags. The spaces and

hollows in its body link the figure with its surroundings and make this monkey almost seem to be lighter than air.

When he graduates from high school, Chuck hopes to study architectural engineering at Akron University. During the winter, he enjoys downhill skiing. He also runs track, although he adds, "I'm not very good at it."



Drawing is  
Chuck Damman's  
favorite hobby.

## How long have you been interested in art?

I've been drawing as far back as I can remember. In elementary school, my friends and I used to have competitions drawing cars. Sculpture is more recent. I just started doing it this year when I enrolled in a sculpture class.

## What was the project that produced the monkey?

We were supposed to make a sculpture of a photo we found in a magazine. As soon as I saw this photograph of a monkey in *National Geographic*, I knew it was the one for me. I liked its form, its motion, its muscle shape.

## How did you begin?

I studied the picture and made a drawing of how I was going to put the wire together. Then I started with the main frame of the monkey. I used one wire for the legs, one for the backbone, and one for the neck, which I extended into a circle for the head. After that, I began adding more wire to the legs and bringing it up to make a rib cage. I put three wires into the tail, and two into the legs. The classroom project ended at this point.

## Why and how did you keep working?

When I started with the wire, my teacher liked the way it was going together. As we got closer to the end, she told me I should

Photographed by Bruce Zake



try and build on it a little more and maybe use some other materials. I was thinking about using wax or foam to coat it. But then I saw these garbage bags lying around. One was black and the other was the same color I wanted for the fur so I said, "That's it." I used a gas torch to melt the bags onto the legs and rib cage. When the bags were heated, they just rippled up onto the wire. Then I added white packing to give more shape and texture.

**What about the face?**

I didn't want to get too involved with the face and head. I wanted to stay with the ripples of the muscles and the feeling of movement, so I just used loops of wire to suggest a monkey's head.

**How long did the sculpture take to do?**

I worked on it for three weeks in class, then I worked on my own for four more weeks. This is when I got really involved and it took up most of my time.

**Can you describe this feeling of involvement?**

People began telling me how much they liked it. By that time, I wanted to make it look even better. It was one of my main projects that semester. I ended up putting most of my other interests aside—except my school work—to concentrate on it. When I got an idea at home, I couldn't wait to get to school to try it out.

**How do you like working with wire?**

I tried clay and didn't do very well with it. It was too solid. I like wire because I can get more of a feeling of motion and form



*"I like wire because I can get more of a feeling of motion and form with it. I can also keep moving wire around to change and improve the shapes."*

with it. I can also keep moving wire around to change and improve the shapes. Since finishing the monkey, I've been working with wire hangers to make more animal shapes.

**How do you suggest movement in your sculptures?**

I do it with the shape of the wire—a front leg extended forward and a right leg extended back. In this sculpture, part of the movement is shown by texture. You can see that the animal is exerting strength, that its muscles have tension.

**How did you know when you were finished?**

I worked right up to the Scholastic deadline. I knew I was finished when I would do something, and then think, "Well, that's too much." For instance, I melted more plastic garbage bags, around the head so it would look more enclosed.

But I didn't like the effect so I burned them off.

**Were you pleased with the finished product?**

When I was finally done with the sculpture I was happy because of the way it expresses motion. And I was pleased that the garbage bags worked out. I felt this was my best work — it spurred me on to do more. My other grades even went up.

**What advice do you have about sculpture?**

If someone is really interested in doing sculpture, I think they should look at different styles—either in magazines or by going to exhibitions—and try to blend what they've seen with their own styles. Also they should go through the process of trying out different materials until they discover the one they like. Once you start working, the style will just come to you.

**We select our Artist of the Month only from among students who have won medals in the current Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadlines and rules book.**



# CREATING HANDS OF CLAY



Use clay tools to add details like nails, wrinkles, veins.

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Morrison (IL) High School. Assisted by Sara Domdey.  
Photos by Larry Gregory.

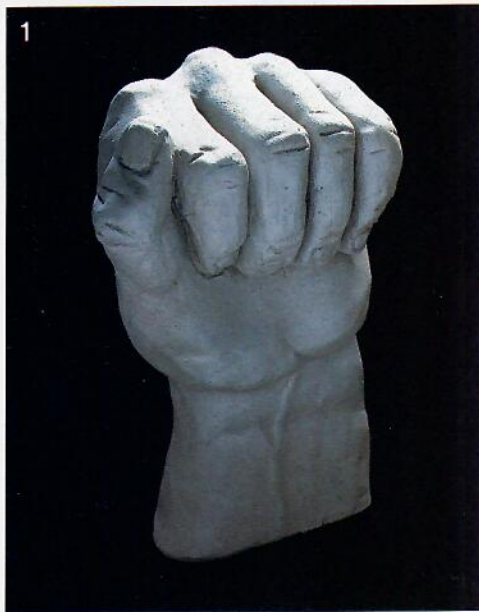
## Materials

- Low fire, oil base or self-hardening clay
- Base to support sculpture (dinner plate, plastic or wood board)
- Simple modeling tools
- Plastic and cloth to cover work in progress
- Wire for armature (if using oil base modeling clay)

As you've been reading in this issue, Rodin thought fragments could say as much about a person as showing the entire figure. What an artist *leaves out* is sometimes as important as what the artist chooses to include. Individual features like feet, legs, and hands can convey a variety of emotions. What does Rodin's sculpture of two hands on page 5 remind you of? The title, *Cathedral*, should provide some clues. In addition to resembling a church steeple or looking as if they're praying, the hands generally seem very peaceful. The hands could be seen as protecting each other. In this workshop, you'll express a basic emotion by sculpting a life-size clay version of your own hand.







“A  
*meaningful  
 part is as  
 suggestive of  
 life as the  
 whole.*”

—AUGUSTE RODIN



### Starting Out

Step 1: Consider the expressive quality of the hand position you are going to sculpt. Think of how a *hand* might be able to show the emotion of an entire person. How will the fingers relate to the rest of the hand? Will the forms be **open** or **closed**; will the hand be **upright** or **on its side**; **relaxed** or **tense**; will its shape be **realistic** or **simplified**; will its surface be **rough** or **smooth**? Make sure your sculpture is constructed so it can stand on its own.

### Step 2.

Refer to your own hand for correct proportion and accuracy. Knead clay until you can work it easily. Model overall shape, then use tools to *subtract* areas or to indicate texture. Include features that make your hand unique—muscles, veins, nails, knuckles, folds, wrinkles, palm. Develop your own personal **surface texture**.

### Step 3.

When complete, allow hand to dry. With some types of clay, you can re-work in pre-leather and leather-hard stages. When dry, you can spray paint white,

stain, or glaze. You may wish to add a touch of fantasy to your sculpture by using unusual colors or designs (see the work of Ben Jones on pages 10-11).

### Some Solutions

What kind of hands are those shown on this page—*angry*; *grasping*; *questioning*; *fearful*; *warning*; *helpful*; *strong*; *threatening*; *persuasive*; *relaxed*; *anxious*? How will your hand **interact with the surrounding space**? How will you create **highlights and shadows**? How will you use **cast shadows**? Will

you contrast **finished** with **unfinished** areas? Will your hand sculpture be **convex** or **concave**? You could try contrasting **smooth** and **rough surfaces**. What kind of **texture** will you develop—**linear**; **unfinished**; **patterned** (you could imprint a texture of *repeat patterns* into the clay)? Try to think of the work you are creating as a *sculpture*, not just as a representation of a hand.



**What unique features make your hand distinctive?**

(1) Toby Hicks (2) Amanda Grove  
 (3) Missy Bramm (4) Michael Tapson





## Compare Rodin's large public sculptures with those done today by a contemporary American artist.

This version of Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* is in London, but you may not have to go to Europe to see this famous sculpture.

Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). *The Burghers of Calais*, 1884-86. London. Photo by Lee Snider/Photo Images.



### A Sculptor of Today

What does the work below by contemporary Afro-American sculptor Martin Puryear remind you of? It's nearly 14 feet long, and is called *Lever #3*.

Martin Puryear combines Western woodworking techniques with the symbols and materials of African culture. Unlike Rodin's realistic-looking works, Puryear's pieces are **abstract**; they *suggest* various subjects: animals, people, plants, and everyday objects. What shapes and forms do you see in *Lever #3*? One viewer

might see a giant long-necked bird. Someone else might see a growing plant or the prow of a Viking ship. This work seems very mysterious. The artist contrasts the **long, open, organic (curved) line** with the **closed, solid, geometric (square) shape** of the dark base. The surface is scratched, hammered, and scraped, giving it a weather-beaten **texture**. Puryear's sculptures are like those of Rodin in that they are **large**, **texture** is important, and they work visually from all angles.



### Rodin in America

Rodin usually created his sculptures in plaster or clay. From the original, he could make many *casts*—or exact copies—in bronze. Casts of *The Burghers of Calais* (above) and other Rodin works can be found in various museums around the world, including the United States. *Balzac* (page 4) as well as *The Burghers of Calais* are in

the Sculpture Garden of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C. In Washington, you can also see many of Rodin's works at the National Gallery of Art. In Philadelphia, you will find the Rodin Museum, and in Goldendale, California, the Maryhill Museum features drawings and sculptures by Rodin. Other Ro-

din works can be found at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. Even if you aren't planning a visit to one of these cities, you may still be able to see a Rodin sculpture, since so many museums have examples of his work. Be sure to check out the art museums and collections in your own city or town.

Like Rodin's works, many of Martin Puryear's sculptures are created for outdoor public spaces.

Martin Puryear, b. 1941.  
*Lever #3*, 1989. 85" x 162" x 13"  
Photo, Margo Leavin Gallery,  
Los Angeles.