

<p>Auguste Rodin <i>The Thinker</i> 1881-1903, bronze, 180 x 98 x 145 cm (71 x 39 x 57") Cast made by Fonderie Alexis Rudier in 1904. Transferred to Musée Rodin in 1922.</p>	<p>initial analysis</p>	<p>Rodin would often complete preliminary sketches and models, then leave the carving of the full size marble or plaster cast for a mould to one of his assistants. Eventually, the artist would take control of the work to add finishing touches and make sure that the piece fitted his exacting standards. This process is how <i>The Thinker</i> would have been developed.</p>
<p>When conceived in 1880 <i>The Thinker</i> was entitled <i>The Poet</i>. He represented Dante, author of the <i>Comedy [Divine Comedy]</i> which had inspired <i>The Gates of Hell</i>. <i>The Thinker</i> was the crowning element of <i>The Gates</i>, seated on the tympanum, leaning forward to observe the circles of Hell.</p>		<p>There is a particularity in the composition to <i>The Gates</i>, notably in the placement of the larger figures. The monumental <i>Adam and Eve</i>, freestanding before <i>The Gates</i>, form the base of a pyramid, at the zenith of which stand <i>The Three Shades</i> and, directly below them, <i>The Thinker</i>. This arrangement focuses the viewer's attention on the complex of reliefs adorning the Gates.</p>
<p>The concept of the <i>Gates</i> can partly be understood by considering <i>The Gates of Paradise</i> by Ghiberti, 1425-52, in Florence.</p> <p>The figure of the <i>The Thinker</i> combines a number of considerations made by Rodin. The most immediate of these would be Michelangelo's <i>Tomb of Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Urbino, with Dawn and Evening</i>, 1520-34, in the Basilica di San Lorenzo in Florence. A more recent exemplar for Rodin could have been the father figure in Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's sculpture of <i>Ugolino and his Sons</i>, 1861, depicting part of a story from <i>The Inferno</i> in Dante's <i>Comedy</i>. The Carpeaux also pays homage to <i>Laocoön and his Sons</i>, in the Vatican collection, a Hellenistic Greek sculpture Michelangelo saw excavated from the ground in Rome in 1515.</p>		<p>The sculpted figure also has an impact because of its depiction of muscularity, its verisimilitude and its scale, slightly larger than life. It is given an added impact when seen in the context of the tympanum looking down and meditating on the souls in Dante's <i>Hell</i>.</p> <p>The subject taken beyond a named human takes on a gravitas metonymically for all humankind.</p> <p>Rodin used a drawing of <i>The Thinker</i> as one of his illustrations for Charles Baudelaire's <i>Fleurs de Mal (The Flowers of Evil)</i> (XX), printed in 1918.</p> <p>There are more than 20 bona fide copies of the sculpture. One most notably in the Musée Rodin in Paris and another in the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University.</p>

