

RODIN'S ADAM



Photo of Adam from www.metmuseum.org

Recently [MANY YEARS BACK!], two guides said they thought "The Age of Bronze" was Adam. This is not so. There is an Adam that pairs "our Eve" in the garden of The Musee Rodin in Paris. Adam stands on a plinth on one side of "The Gates of Hell" and Eve on the other. As you can see from the photo, Adam is of the same Michelangelesque figure type as Eve.

"The Age of Bronze", first called "The Vanquished One", caused some consternation initially as its inspiration was not from the Bible, mythology, history or allegorical. Rodin said his "sole ambition" had been "to make a simple piece of sculpture without reference to a subject".

Hope this will help to clear up the confusion.

Quote from "Rodin - The Shape of Genius" by Ruth Butler:

Olympio" (Les Voix intérieures), he showed how the man of superior genius struggles with his ability to see into the depths of life, which makes him both god and victim. We can imagine Rodin's feelings and thoughts as he encountered such images while he was searching for the right tack to take in the most important venture of his life.

As Rodin built a composition, shaped by images of transgression and judgment, he enlarged his vision to include Adam and Eve in the ensemble. He had already finished a figure of Adam and submitted it to the Salon of 1881 under the title *The Creation*. It continued his work with Michelangelesque figure types. In order to arrive at the power he wanted in this work, Rodin had engaged as his model a strongman from the circus, Caillou, known as "the man with the iron jaw." He got Caillou to twist his big limbs like a corkscrew, head down, touching his left shoulder as if he were a giant awakening to life. He showed a single finger of the right hand in isolation so that it quivered with significance, reminding us of the "touch of creation" bestowed upon Adam by Michelangelo's God in the Sistine ceiling.

Critics found Rodin's new figure difficult: "*The Creation of Man* is philosophically incomprehensible, in fact it is just plain bad," said the reviewer for *Le Figaro* (May 4, 1881). Few found it worthy of praise, but at least, as the critic for the *Revue littéraire* pointed out, "no one can accuse him of casting from nature this time" (June 1, 1881).

Whether or not they liked the figure, all the critics talked about Rodin's debt to Michelangelo.