

## PRESS RELEASE

March 2019

### **Rodin's *The Thinker* on display at The New Art Gallery Walsall**

**Rodin: rethinking the fragment**, 2 February – 29 April 2019, Linked to the 2018 British Museum exhibition *Rodin and the art of ancient Greece*, this Spotlight loan from the British Museum brings key national works to three regional galleries across the UK, including *The Thinker*, from the Burrell Collection, Glasgow. This exhibition introduces Rodin's relationship with classical sculpture, demonstrating the inspiration he found visiting the British Museum and viewing the Parthenon friezes, and his adoption of the fragment as a central component of his oeuvre.

The French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) was a radical and innovative artist who challenged the rules of contemporary sculpture. Perhaps his most important legacy was the idea that a fragment – an incomplete figure or even an isolated hand – could be a work of art in its own right.

*The Thinker* was conceived to sit high up on Rodin's *The Gates of Hell*, monumental doors designed for decorative arts museum in Paris that was never built. The Gates were inspired by the epic poem *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri (about 1265-1321) and the poetry of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Rodin's inspiration for *The Thinker* included one of the most celebrated sculpture fragments to survive from antiquity, the *Belvedere Torso*.

The figure had various identities. First it was Minos, judge of the damned in Dante's Hell, then Dante contemplating the Underworld, and finally it became the artist himself as creator. In 1903 Rodin enlarged the figure to make a monumental work, which gradually became a universal symbol of a thinking man. One of the numerous casts of the large-scale model was placed on Rodin's own grave.

Julie Brown, Collections Curator says ‘We’re delighted to be able to show Rodin’s *The Thinker* at The New Art Gallery (until 28 April 2019), as part of the British Museum’s Spotlight loan which brings key national works to three regional galleries across the UK. It’s particularly fitting in this, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sir Jacob Epstein’s death, to have Rodin’s *The Thinker* on display in our permanent Garman Ryan Collection galleries as Rodin was an artist greatly admired by Epstein. The Gallery is fortunate to have two of Rodin’s works featured in the Garman Ryan Collection, a watercolour study and bronze head, which are shown as part of this display”.

**Note to editors**

**Photo opportunity: 2pm Tuesday 26 March with Christine Sanders, Gallery Assistant, The New Art Gallery Walsall.**

For gallery photo opportunities and further information, please contact: Chris Wilkinson, Marketing Officer on 01922 654416, email:

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Open Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 12noon – 4pm. Closed Mondays and Bank Holidays. Free admission. For more information visit:

[thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk](http://thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk) The New Art Gallery Walsall is a Walsall Council facility and it also receives significant financial support from Arts Council England.



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