

# Rodin

*"[I want to express the] existential situation of modern man, his inability to communicate, his despair. . . to render inner feelings through muscular movement."*

*"The sculptor must learn to reproduce the surface, which means all that vibrates on the surface, soul, love, passion, life. . . Sculpture is thus the art of hollows and mounds, not of smoothness, or even polished planes."*

*"There is no recipe for improving nature. The only thing is to see. . . The artist sees; that is to say, his eye, grafted on his heart, reads deeply into the bosom of nature"*

## Biographical Notes:

Lived 1840 - 1917  
studied the work of Donatello, Michelangelo and Puget  
influenced by the photography of Muybridge - studies of body in motion  
worked extensively from the live model - did "sketches" in drawing media but also in clay

## Important Works:

The Man with the Broken Nose  
The Thinker  
The Kiss  
Monument to Balzac

Age of Bronze  
Gates of Hell  
Burghers of Calais  
Walking Man

## Technical considerations:

carved in stone (marble) (The Kiss and Studies of Hands)  
primarily worked in clay and wax, later casting them in bronze - in several editions  
many figures over life size  
many commissions and pieces left unfinished or unresolved (in several different states)  
many commissions later rejected by their patrons as too radical, controversial or "unfinished"  
nude form the principle subject of his work

## Stylistic Traits: vigorous - movement

dissolves the surface of forms - play of light off surfaces emphasized

*"what matters in sculpture is not whether it is "finished" or "complete" but whether it conveys to the beholder the way it grew"* Janson

*"He was the first to make of unfinishedness an aesthetic principle that governed both his handling of surfaces and the whole shape of the work"* Janson

often fragmentary aspect to his pieces - individual studies of body parts and gestures

passion, emotion, sexual desire, longing, frustration, inner agony

**Life and Death of the Buddha**  
 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE Schist stone  
 Frieze from Gandhara, Pakistan



#### Context:

- Aniconic Buddhist images prior to this
- One of earliest pictorial narrative cycles in which Buddha is in human form
  - Displays changing perception of Buddha:
    - Enlightened mortal → divinity
    - Followers of Buddhism now want images to worship
- Receives some iconography from Great Stupa's eastern gateway sculptures (*yakshi* posture of mother of Buddha giving birth used here)
- Alexander the Great's conquests in 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE → Greek states in northern India
  - → Hellenized culture and art- influences from (Western) Greco-Roman art
  - Roman reliefs and art: sarcophagi and distribution of figures over the picture plane
    - Figures behind the first row seem suspended in air
    - Hierarchical composition/organization
- Buddhism as a patron of the arts (temples and sculptures)
- Located in Gandhara (northwest India)



#### Content:

- Chronological order from left to right (narrative cycles in a relief) of Buddha's life combining Greek and Buddhist artistic forms
  - 1) Birth at Lumbini, 2) enlightenment at Badh Gaya, 3) first sermon at Sarnath, 4) death at Kushinagara
- 1) Queen Maya giving birth to Prince Siddhartha, who is received by god Indra
- 2) Buddha under the Bodhi tree in search of enlightenment
  - Reaches *Nirvana* and touches the earth
- 3) Buddha preaches *The Eightfold Path to Nirvana* (which he achieved) in Deer Park
  - Wheel of Law presented with deer, and right hand raised in *abhaya mudra*
- 4) "Parinirvana"- relieved from suffering and the cycle of rebirth

#### Iconography & Meaning:

- In first relief panel: Buddha born with "ushnisha" and "urna" already
  - Surrounded by elegant and wealthy court life (born as Prince Siddhartha)
    - Representative of the life Buddha left behind to follow spirituality
- Right hand's gesture in third panel: Buddha telling followers to approach without fear and blessing those who came to listen to his first sermon
- Idea of following in the footsteps of Buddha (as seen in the Great Stupa at Sanchi also) to reach *Nirvana* through the *Eightfold Path*
- Communicates basic Buddhist beliefs along with the life of Buddha as an example

#### Function:

- Reliefs are both religious and power and authority pieces
  - Religious: iconography and symbolism illustrate Buddhist beliefs and goals
  - Power and authority: hierarchical composition places Buddha in the center of each scene and in a larger scale than the other figures
- Records the life and death of Buddha and path one must take to reach *Nirvana* (free of the cycle of rebirth)
- Religious relief is somewhat didactic- teaches Buddhist followers of Buddha's life in addition to using the figure as a "role model" in following basic Buddhist beliefs and becoming enlightened