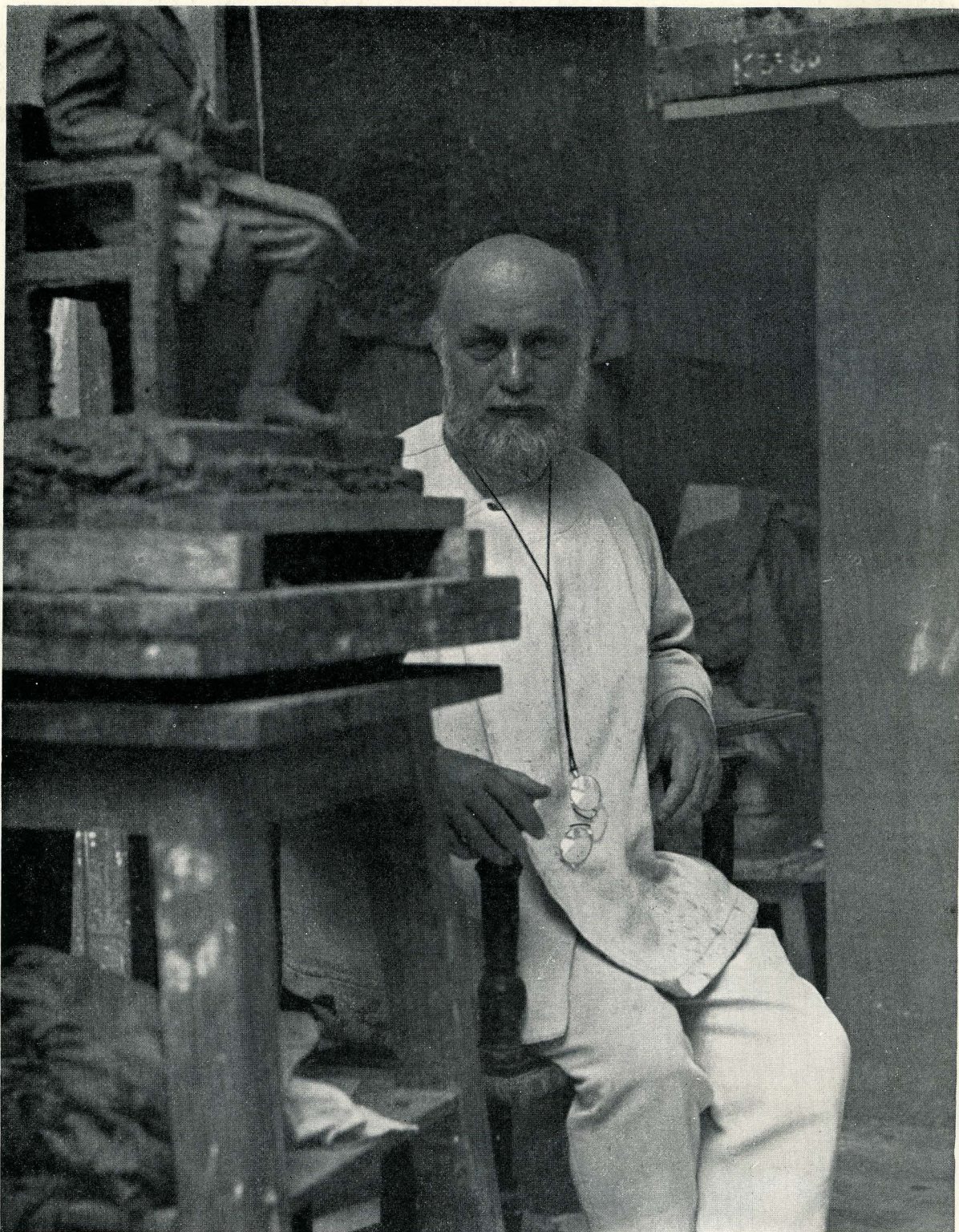


THE BOURDELLE
EXHIBITION OF
SCULPTURE

1925



ANTOINE BOURDELLE

Bourdelle works with passionate intensity in his Paris studio in the dingy and obscure *Impasse du Maine*; and to him there flock students from all parts of the world, who find him not only a sculptor but a philosopher and poet

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ANTOINE BOURDELLE

by

LOUIS GILLET

SINCE the death of Rodin Bourdelle has been the unquestioned master of French sculpture. In a group of splendid talents he is easily the greatest. Unfortunately his work lends itself with difficulty to exhibition: nothing could suffer more from being shown in a fragmentary state. In place of the great *ensembles*, one has unhappily only statuettes and details—*Membra disjecta poetæ*.

Bourdelle is indeed the master whose work is farthest removed from the trumpery ornaments which have reigned for thirty years in the salons of the bourgeois and on the public squares. Without doubt he has made also some perfect small figures, but it is none the less true that his thought appears more complete in his monumental works, in the sculpture of the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées* and in the frieze which surmounts the stage of the Opera at Marseilles. The beauty of his work is precisely that it cannot be detached, that it is of the very body of the monument, and

cannot be transported elsewhere. We must be resigned to give of this art only a mutilated image.



Bourdelle was twenty-five years old when, coming from Toulouse, he entered the studio of Rodin; he was forty when he produced in 1900 the work that placed him above his contemporaries, the *Monument to the Dead of 1870*, which raises its tumultuous mass at the entrance of his native village of Montauban. If I told his story, I should have to mention a multitude of earlier works, in which his genius formerly appeared. But I confine myself to essentials. It is noteworthy that Bourdelle, by the grace of God, is the only living artist who was reared, like those of the past, not in schools or academies but as an apprentice in the studio of a master, receiving his counsels, his experience and his secrets. There is nothing academic about him: all that he knows comes from practice, from reflection and from contact with a great man. Never has he striven for a medal or for a prize.

But the lessons of Rodin count less in the genius of Bourdelle than the inspiration that he drew from the breasts of his native soil. This southerner who was destined to give to sculpture a new life is a child of Languedoc. It is his boast today that he is a workman, sprung from a line of artisans: his father the carpenter, his uncle the stone-cutter, gave him the tools which are his coat of arms—the mallet, the compass and the chisel. They taught him the ancient knowledge which is preserved still in these humble occupations, respect for material, sense of construction, love of balance. At work upon the country furniture in his father's shop,

the future sculptor learned the architecture of the work of art. He learned taste, understanding of the *function* of things and the habit of disciplined expression, of beauty submitted to order. A whole secular inheritance of excellent traditions thus came to him from the example of his obscure forefathers. And from still farther back he remembers lessons that his young eyes had received from his birthplace, from the rude and sweet mountains of Quercy, where he tended his goats among fragrant hills. Here he grew to be twelve years old, living like a herdsman in the days of Theocritus, playing songs to the beasts on his box-wood flute, and modelling with his childish fingers creatures of clay, which he placed in the oven with his bread.

There without doubt is the inspiration for his charming works the *Faun and Wild Goat* and the *Young Girl and Ram* and I know not how many drawings which have the grace of a Greek epigram. The gods, who have given him the face of a shepherd, have willed that this great sculptor should have a childhood of legend, the marvelous childhood of a shepherd, to whom the Muse herself has offered the pipe. This Frenchman of today was nourished by Apollo as a son of Hellas. And Fate, who loves him, reserved for him as a supreme favor the fortune of wedding a Greek woman and seeing his genius crowned by a daughter of Homer.



Thus is formed an art which appears, at its appointed time, with a character surprising in its novelty, but which is, however, only a return to the most basic laws of sculpture, those laws which Rodin sought in vain all his life.

Nothing is sadder, when one thinks of it, than the fate of Rodin, that incomparable poet of form, whose whole work nevertheless dissolves into fragments. Though he had the instinct for great things, of all the monuments that he undertook or dreamed, not one was finished. The tyranny of sensation, the charm of detail condemns them to be only a heap of fragments. Their unity does not go beyond a single figure. The groups fall apart before one's eyes and it is this fault which causes the incurable sense of melancholy in this work of voluptuous nothingness.

This disease was that of all the impressionists; it is common to every school of the end of the last century. But it is nowhere so disastrous as in sculpture. Since Rude and his bas-relief of the *Arc de Triomphe*, sculpture has failed to produce a monumental work. From the day when it began to evade architecture and became divorced from the wall and the column, it has only been able to attain to those abuses of the model, to those excesses of agitation and destruction, to that gesture in bad taste by which it pretended to compete with life.

This disorder teaches Bourdelle; he sees that one cannot get far on this slope of anarchy. One must bring art to reason and restore to it the "bridle of style." Compare the *Age of Bronze* or the *St. John the Baptist* of Rodin with a figure of Bourdelle; for example, the *Hercules* which was the manifesto of his art, and on which he worked not less than seven years (1900-1907). The whole body of the formidable archer is action. The god, whose small flat head resembles the point of an arrow carved from a piece of split flint, is seated firmly on bended leg, his foot planted in the

earth like a wedge and forming the pivot of the whole figure: the rest of the body, the torso bent forward, the left leg arched on a rock, is only an arc, a concave curve, an immense hook which draws to itself the branch of the convex arm: from the gripping toes to the trembling nostrils and the piercing glance all is energy, contraction, effort. The whole figure is taut as a gigantic spring. One sees here that which separates mere representation from the embodiment of an idea, the work of a skilful hand from the work of thought.

Without doubt Bourdelle sacrifices deliberately much of exterior charm, the softness of skin, that, in the work of Rodin, strikes the sense so deliciously. But he knows the price he pays and what he gains in exchange. He knows the life of art is not that of the flesh, that it is vain for beings of bronze to compete with creatures of blood, to simulate the radiance of glances, and the yielding warmth of limbs, to have soft eyebrows, hair, and draperies: all these things are ornaments of perishable beings. It is the sculptor's part to create immortal forms.



In 1910 the architect Auguste Perret called on Bourdelle for the great work which was destined to put him in the first rank; he proposed to him to decorate the façade of the theatre in the *Avenue Montaigne*.

I will not try to describe this celebrated ensemble, the greatest work of sculpture for a hundred years. Amongst these bas-reliefs consecrated to Parnassus, to the Dance, to the muses of the Stage and Poetry, there is one which appears to me very significant: two

young girls are shown, one holding a column, while the second places on the capital the figure of a winged victory. It is thus that Bourdelle celebrates a thing ancient and yet very new: the intimate connection between sculpture and architecture.

The bond between the two sisters has been broken for nearly a century: Bourdelle has reconciled them. Instead of liberty he courts submission; this marvelous sculptor does not wish for independence; he is even willing to acknowledge that the chief rôle belongs to the architect. It is the wall which commands, the sculptor obeys. He interferes only where the stone is not actively "at work," where it stretches and rests, where it offers the poet an interval of silence, a space for dream and song. Thus, in the course of a drama, come interludes of melody, intervals when the inner springs of emotion are allowed to gush forth.

This discovery made by Bourdelle, this return to the laws of monumental sculpture, is the origin of his style. It is clear, then, that such an artist can no more descend to the minutiae of imitation than the painter of frescoes can employ the trivial details of the easel picture. That which is called naturalism would here be a false note. Works such as these cannot be confined to the model. They should not savor of the flesh, the imitation of nature; it is another nature which the poet must invent, on the margin of ours, a stranger to our weakness and our miseries. Above all, it is necessary that the figures be a part of the monument, that they play a rôle, that they cleave to the white serenity, to the calm and majestic perpendicular of the walls. They must become identified with those calm surfaces, never break the pact which they have with

architecture. They must submit to this law of "Plan," which fixes in a façade the importance of the ledges, the interplay of light and shade, those secrets of fitness and beauty. This discipline is the condition of greatness. It communicates its plenitude to the style of Bourdelle: no more holes, no more emptiness, vagueness, wavering outlines. All is subservient to an imperious design, all, even the cloud, has a form purposefully halted; gestures are written in strong and powerful characters, in arabesques of a prodigious movement, having the grandeur, the stylization of the masques of the antique drama. The characters are enhanced, made greater still, by other lines, which repeat the first or are opposed to them; and the intervals, the repose, count as much as the animated parts; they are the silences where one perceives the strong vibration of the stone in the monument which serves as support for the figures.

It follows that with this service to architecture, in reality a magnificent liberty returns to Sculpture; it is the very art of composing, the genius of imagination. Bourdelle is the only living artist who has not found difficulty in re-creating Parnassus and Olympia. The nymphs of Rodin, his Danaïdes are women. The dancers of Bourdelle are muses and goddesses. There is in his art something quite superior, an intellectual element, which is in itself a purity and a virtue. This one-time goatherd, this shepherd who has received pure inspirations from heaven, lives naturally on the summits, not far from first sources, the neighbor of great thoughts. He has found again the source of myths and fables. He sees Venus rising from the briny foam and the tender Virgin posed on the Vosges, as the crescent star of evening appears on the summit of a hill.

Since the War this little man, full of an unbelievable energy, concealing within himself a fire as the spark is concealed in a flint, is certainly the most universally celebrated artist. It is to him that the republics, Argentine and Poland, entrust the glory of their heroes. It is he who carves, on the headland of the Pointe de Grave, the figure which commemorates the disembarking of the American troops. Giant figures, friezes, equestrian monuments, men and gods spring in a crowd from his creative hands. His science, served by method, allows him to give himself up to a prodigality of marvelously faultless improvisations. Rarely can one see such vigor in a master already sixty years old.

In all his work there is the dual character that one sees in his face with the Olympian dome of the forehead, behind which circulate so many ideas and dreams, where thoughts crowd, where so many images are ranged; and, below, the masque with eyes of jet, the shrewd mouth, with the short gray moustache and beard, that beard like a spade of the ancient statues of Aegina. It is a singular face, in which the vivacity of the faun is joined to the brain of the abstract thinker, ardor of temperament to rule of reason.

These two traits are found perpetually in his art: no one has made more beautiful busts than those of Koeberlé, Anatole France, M. Simu, Auguste Perret and Sir James Fraser. No one has been able to make portraits stronger than those of Alvear and Mickiewicz, the only statues, it is said, in which modern costumes are not ridiculous. Bourdelle no more disdains the coat of the poet than the epaulettes of the general. And he is at the same time the author of the most beautiful allegories, which he has been

able to make live, side by side, with the figures of history. He touches both ends of the chain. He is the master of a complete universe; reality and poetry are both in his domain.

Among all the phases of this diverse and yet homogeneous work, I do not care to choose the greatest. But perhaps the general sense is not hard to understand: one can characterize it in one word—heroism. In place of that odor of flesh, of that frail sweat, of that eroticism which the sculpture of Rodin breathes, in place of that too human art, which love agitates and torments, which makes the figures of the old master resemble a wretched crowd of the luxurious and damned, here is a grave, virile art, an art all Dorian. Would the divine Plato exile from his republic the artist who brings back Athena? Nothing is more chaste than this sculpture of Bourdelle; nothing is less sensual than the virginal nakedness of his maidens, whose limbs recall the curve of young branches or the smooth spring of columns. There is in all the figures of this artist a simplicity like that of the youth of the world, the youth of Achilles and of Nausicaa, strong, verdant, uncorrupted, belonging to an epic century, vowed to great victories and to great destinies.



Bourdelle has been reproached for what one calls his archaism: but in truth, nothing is more sincere than this vision which allies his art to that of young civilizations, to the Greece of Delphi and Aegina, to the France of the portals of Chartres and Senlis. He has the eternal adolescence of a being nourished soberly and frugally by the muses on wild berries and goat's milk. This primitive qual-

ity in him communicates itself to whatever there is in our troubled times of the promise of a new and happier dawn for mankind.

And above all, whatever his forms may have of the slightly abstract is always corrected by two things: one, a prodigious feeling of life, a love of nature which shines in all his portraits, a homeliness which makes him find beauty in the weave of a basket for sifting coal, and a motive for a lighthouse in a miner's lamp.

Another trait is lyricism, a spontaneity with which is mingled, without disturbing it, the strength of reason, and which has the air of abandoning itself to impetuosity. No one has made more of a place in his work for the poets, the singers and for the bearers of the lyre than Bourdelle.

His figures have about them a suggestion of immense branches, of huge pinions and of a deep murmuring of wings. Like sails which the wind fills with the breath of genius, an unknown god bears them up. No sculptor has loaded his figures with such a luxury of lyres, wings, instruments of flight and of music. No one of today has so exalted the concept of the poet. Bourdelle thinks himself capable of restoring to earth order and harmony, as in the time when cities were built to the music of Amphion and Orpheus. If he knows that these dreams are too high that does not keep him from dreaming them. And the most profound symbol that he has made of his art is, perhaps, that figure of the *Wounded Centaur*, the divine quadruped, half man and half beast, struck down in full gallop on the heights, at the very moment when he seemed about to touch the stars, stopping before his fall, blasted and sublime, hanging between heaven and earth like a great lyre.

ANTOINE BOURDELLE ∞ PAR LOUIS GILLET

DEPUIS la mort de Rodin, c'est lui le maître incontesté de la sculpture française. Dans un groupe de beaux talents, il est le chef du chœur. Le malheur est que son œuvre se prête peu à une exposition : nulle n'a plus à souffrir d'être montrée à l'état de fragments. Au lieu de grands ensembles, on n'aura fatalement que des statuettes, des morceaux—*Membra disjecta poetæ.*

Bourdelle est en effet le maître dont l'œuvre s'éloigne le plus du bibelot, de l'objet d'étagère, tel qu'il règnait il y a trente ans, dans les salons bourgeois et sur les places publiques. Sans doute, il a fait aussi des figurines parfaites. Il n'en est pas moins vrai que sa pensée apparaît plus complète dans ses œuvres monumentales, au Théâtre des Champs Elysées, dans la frise qui surmonte la scène de l'Opéra de Marseille. La beauté de ces œuvres est précisément qu'elle ne se détache pas, qu'elle fait corps avec le monument, et ne peut se transporter ailleurs. Il faut se résigner à ne donner de cet art qu'une image mutilée.



Bourdelle avait vingt-cinq ans lorsqu'il entra, sortant de Toulouse, dans l'atelier de Rodin ; il en avait quarante lorsqu'il produisit en 1900 l'œuvre qui le mit hors de pair ; le *Monument aux Morts de 1870* qui dresse sa masse tumultueuse à l'entrée de sa ville natale de Montauban. Si je faisais son histoire, j'aurais à signaler une foule d'œuvres plus anciennes, où déjà se montre son génie. Mais je m'en tiens à l'essentiel. C'est ainsi que Bourdelle, par une faveur de la Providence, est le seul artiste vivant qui ait été élevé comme ceux du passé, non pas dans les écoles et les académies, mais comme un apprenti dans l'atelier d'un maître, recevant ses conseils, son expérience et ses secrets. Il n'y a en lui rien de scolaire : tout ce qu'il sait lui vient de la pratique, de la réflexion et du contact avec un grand homme. Jamais il n'a concouru pour une médaille ou pour un prix.

Mais les leçons de Rodin lui-même comptent moins dans le génie de Bourdelle que celles qu'il avait reçues des seins et de sa nourrice la terre. Ce Méridional est un enfant de ce Languedoc, auquel il fut donné de réinventer la sculpture. Sa gloire, qu'il connaît aujourd'hui, est d'être un ouvrier, le sang d'une race d'artisans : son père le menuisier, son oncle le tailleur de pierres lui donnèrent les outils dont se compose son blason, le maillet, le compas et le ciseau. Ils lui enseignèrent l'antique savoir qui se conservait encore dans ces humbles métiers, le respect de la matière, le sens de la construction, l'amour de l'équilibre. En ajustant des meubles rustiques dans la boutique paternelle, le futur sculpteur apprenait l'architecture de l'œuvre d'art. Il apprenait le goût, le sens de la fonction des choses, le dédain de l'ornement, et cette habitude de la règle, de l'expression mise à sa place, de la beauté soumise à un ordre. Tout un héritage séculaire de traditions excellentes lui venait ainsi de l'exemple de ses pères obscurs. Et de plus loin encore il se souvenait des leçons que ses yeux d'enfant avaient reçues du paysage natal, de ces rudes et douces montagnes du Quercy où il gardait ses chèvres parmi des collines parfumées. C'est là qu'il avait grandi jusqu'à douze ans au sein d'une nature poétiquement sauvage, comme un pâtre de Théocrite, jouant des chansons à ses bêtes sur sa flûte de buis et modelant de ses doigts d'enfant des bonshommes d'argile, qu'il mettait au four avec son pain.

Là est sans doute l'origine de ces charmants ouvrages, le *Faune au bouquetin*, la *jeune fille au bélier*, et de je ne sais combien de dessins qui ont la grâce de l'épigramme grecque. Les dieux, qui lui ont conservé sa face de chevrier, ont voulu que ce grand sculpteur eût une enfance de légende, l'enfance merveilleuse d'un berger à qui la Muse elle-même a tendu le pipeau. Ce Français d'aujourd'hui a été nourri par Apollon comme un fils de l'Hellade. Et le destin qui l'aime lui réservait pour suprême

faveur la fortune d'épouser la Grèce et de voir son génie couronné par une fille d'Homère.



Ainsi se forma un art qui apparaît, à son heure, avec un caractère surprenant de nouveauté, et qui n'était pourtant que le retour aux lois les plus constantes de la statuaire, à ces lois que Rodin chercha en vain toute sa vie.

Rien de plus triste, quand on y songe, que l'existence de cet enchanteur, poète incomparable de la forme, mais dont l'œuvre tout entière se résoud en morceaux: et cependant, il avait l'instinct des grandes choses. De tous les monuments qu'il entreprit ou qu'il rêva, pas un ne fut mené à bout. La tyrannie de la sensation, le charme du détail les condamnent à n'être qu'une poussière de morceaux. L'unité ne dépasse pas une figure entière. Les groupes se défont sous nos yeux, et c'est ce qui cause l'incurable mélancolie de cette œuvre de volupté et de néant.

Cette fatalité fut celle de tous les impressionnistes: elle est commune à toute l'école de la fin du dernier siècle. Mais elle n'est nulle part aussi funeste qu'en sculpture. Depuis Rude et son bas-relief de l'Arc de Triomphe, la sculpture a toujours échoué à produire une œuvre monumentale. Du jour où elle s'est mise à fuir l'architecture, où elle a divorcé avec le mur et la colonne, elle ne pouvait que courir à ces abus du modelé, à ces excès d'agitation et de déchiquetage, à cette gesticulation de mauvais goût par où elle prétendait faire concurrence à la vie.

Ce désordre instruisit Bourdelle: il vit qu'on ne pouvait aller plus loin sur cette pente de l'anarchie. Il fallait mettre l'art à la raison et lui rendre le "frein du style." Comparez l'*Age d'airain* ou le *Saint Jean-Baptiste* de Rodin à une figure de Bourdelle, par exemple à cet *Héraklès* qui fut le manifeste de son art, et auquel il ne travailla pas moins de sept années (1900-1907). Tout le corps de l'archer formidable est action. Le dieu, dont la petite tête plate ressemble à la pointe d'une flèche taillée dans un morceau de silex éclaté, est assis fortement sur

une jambe repliée, dont le pied entre en terre comme un coin et forme le pivot de toute la figure; le reste du corps, le torse qui se penche en arrière, la jambe gauche arc-boutée à une roche, n'est plus qu'un arc, une courbe concave, un immense crochet qui attire à lui les branches de l'arme convexe: depuis les orteils crispés jusqu'aux narines frémissantes et au regard aigu, tout est énergie, contraction, effort. La figure se bande tout entière comme un gigantesque ressort. On voit ici ce qui sépare le reproduction d'une idée, la copie d'une création, l'individu d'un type, l'ouvrage d'une main prestigieuse et l'ouvrage de la pensée.

Sans doute, Bourdelle sacrifie délibérément beaucoup de charme extérieur, des attraits d'épiderme, ce frisson de Rodin, qui prend à la peau comme un délice. Mais il sait ce qu'il fait et ce qu'il gagne en échange. Il sait que la vie de l'art n'est pas celle de la chair, qu'il est vain à des êtres de bronze de lutter avec des créatures de sang, avec l'éclat des regards et la souple tiédeur des membres, à plus forte raison avec des cils, des cheveux, des étoffes, des parures: toutes ces choses sont l'ornement des êtres périssables. Au sculpteur de créer des formes immortelles.



C'est en 1910 que l'architecte Auguste Perret demanda à Bourdelle l'ouvrage capital qui devait le mettre au premier rang: il lui proposa de décorer la façade du théâtre de l'avenue Montaigne.

Je ne vais pas décrire cet ensemble célèbre, l'œuvre capitale de la sculpture depuis une centaine d'années. Parmi ces bas-reliefs consacrés au Parnasse, à la Danse, aux muses de la scène et de la poésie, il en est un qui me semble très significatif: on y voit deux jeunes filles dont l'une dispose une colonne, tandis que la seconde place sur le chapiteau la figure d'une victoire ailée. C'est ainsi que Bourdelle célébrait une chose ancienne et très nouvelle: l'amitié de la statuaire et de l'architecture.

Ce ménage des deux sœurs s'était rompu depuis près d'un siècle; Bourdelle les a récon-

ciliées. Au lieu de la liberté, il cherche la soumission; ce merveilleux sculpteur ne veut pas de l'indépendance; il est même tout prêt à reconnaître que le premier rôle appartient à l'architecte. C'est la muraille qui commande, le sculpteur obéit. Il n'intervient qu'aux endroits où la pierre ne "travaille" pas, où elle se dilate et respire, où elle offre au poète un intervalle de silence, un espace pour le rêve et le chant. Ainsi, dans le récitatif d'un drame, arrivent des instants mélodiques, des moments d'effusion où les sources intérieures s'épanchent.

Cette découverte faite par Bourdelle, ce retour aux lois monumentales, est l'origine de tout son style. Il est clair, d'abord, qu'un tel art ne souffre pas les minuties de l'imitation, pas plus que la fresque ne supporte la préciosité du tableau de chevalet. Ce qu'on appelle le naturalisme y serait un contre-sens. De tels ouvrages ne peuvent être assujettis au modèle. Ils ne doivent pas sentir la chair, le calque de la nature: c'est une autre nature que doit inventer le poète, en marge de la nôtre, étrangère à nos faiblesses et à nos misères. Avant tout, il faut que les figures participent du monument, qu'elles y jouent un rôle, qu'elles adhèrent à la blanche sérénité, au calme et à l'aplomb majestueux des murailles. Elles doivent s'identifier à la paix des surfaces, ne rompre jamais le pacte qu'elles font avec l'architecture. Elles doivent se soumettre à cette loi du "Plan," qui détermine dans une façade l'importance des saillies, le rapport des ombres et des lumières, et qui est le secret de la convenance et de la beauté. Cette discipline devient la condition de la grandeur. Elle communique au style de Bourdelle sa plénitude; plus de trous, plus de vides, plus de vague et de choses flottantes: tout est soumis à un impérieux dessein, tout, même le nuage, à une forme volontairement arrêtée; les gestes s'écrivent en caractères puissants et souverains, en arabesques d'un mouvement prodigieux, ayant cet agrandissement, cette stylisation des masques du drame antique, et que doublent, agrandissent encore d'autres lignes qui répètent les premières ou s'y oppo-

sent; et les intervalles, les repos, comptent autant que les parties animées; ce sont les silences où l'on perçoit la sourde palpitation de la pierre dans le monument qui sert de support aux figures.

Il suit de là qu'avec cette servitude de l'architecture, c'est en réalité une magnifique liberté qui rentre dans la sculpture: c'est l'art lui-même de composer, c'est le génie de l'imagination. Bourdelle est le seul artiste vivant qui n'ait pas eu de peine à créer des Parnasses et des Olympes. Les nymphes de Rodin, ses Danaïdes sont femmes. Les danseuses de Bourdelle sont des muses et des déesses. Il y a dans son art quelque chose de supérieur, un élément intellectuel qui est déjà une pureté et une vertu. Cet ancien gardeur de chèvres, ce pâtre qui a reçu les pures inspirations du ciel, vit naturellement sur les cîmes, non loin des sources, près des idées. Il a retrouvé spontanément le sens des mythes et des fables. Il voit la longue Vénus jaillir de l'écume amère et la Vierge attendrie se poser sur les Vosges, comme paraît au sommet d'une colline le croissant de l'astre des soirs.



Depuis la guerre, ce petit homme d'énergie incroyable, couvant le feu comme l'étincelle se cache dans le caillou, est certainement l'artiste le plus universellement célèbre. C'est à lui que les Républiques, Argentine ou Pologne, confient la gloire de leurs héros. C'est lui qui sculpte à la proue de la Pointe de Grave la figure qui commémore le débarquement des troupes américaines. Les colosses, les frises, les monuments équestres, les hommes et les dieux sortent en foule de ses mains créatrices. Sa science, servie par la méthode, lui permet de se livrer sans erreur à une prodigalité d'improvisations merveilleuses. Rarement on a eu le spectacle d'une pareille vigueur chez un maître arrivé à la soixantaine.

Dans toute cette œuvre règne le double caractère que l'on voit dans son visage: le dôme olympien du front, la puissance du génie rêveur, où circulent tant d'idées, où se pressent les songes, où s'ordonnent tant d'images; et,

audessous, le masque aux yeux de jais, à la bouche narquoise qu'entoure la courte barbe grise, la barbe en étrier des vieilles statues éginétiques. Visage singulier où la vivacité du faune s'allie au cerveau de l'abstracteur, et l'ardeur du tempérament à l'empire de la raison.

Ces deux traits se retrouvent perpétuellement dans son art: personne n'a fait de plus beaux bustes que ceux de Koeberlé, d'Anatole France, de M. Simu, d'Auguste Perret, de Sir James Frazer. Personne n'a su faire de portraits plus puissants que ceux d'Alvear ou de Mickiewicz, les seules statues peut-être, on l'a dit, où le costume contemporain ne soit pas ridicule. Bourdelle ne dédaigne pas plus le carrick du poète que les épauettes du général. Et il est en même temps l'auteur des plus belles allégories, qu'il trouve moyen de faire vivre cote à côte avec les figures de l'histoire réelle. Il touche les deux bouts de la chaîne. Il est le maître d'un univers complet; la réalité est de son domaine comme la poésie.

Dans toutes les parties de cette œuvre diverse et homogène, je ne me mêle pas de choisir. Mais peut-être que le sens général n'est pas difficile à saisir: on peut le caractériser d'un seul mot, l'héroïsme. Au lieu de cette odeur de chair, de cette féminine moiteur, de cet érotisme que respire la sculpture de Rodin, au lieu de cet art trop humain que l'amour agite et tourmente, et qui fait ressembler les figures du vieux maître à un lot misérable de luxurieux et de damnées, voici un art grave, viril, un art tout dorien: le divin Platon voudrait-il exiler de sa République l'artiste qui ramène Athéné? Rien de plus chaste que cette sculpture de Bourdelle: rien de moins sensuel que cette nudité matinale de ses vierges, dont les membres évoquent la courbe des jeunes branches ou l'élan lisse des colonnes. Il y a dans toutes les figures de l'artiste un accent mâle, une simplicité, la jeunesse des Achilles et des Nausicaas: c'est une nature qui a seize ans, forte, verdoyante, incorrompue, l'image qui convient à un siècle épique, promis aux grandes victoires et aux grandes destinées.

On a reproché à Bourdelle ce qu'on appelle son archaïsme: en réalité, rien de plus sincère que cette vision qui apparente son art à celui des civilisations jeunes, à la Grèce de Delphes et d'Egine, à la France des portails de Chartres et de Senlis. Il a l'éternelle adolescence d'un être nourri par les muses de baies sauvages et de lait de chèvre, parmi des montagnes sobres et d'une élégante maigreur. Cette aurore de sa vie rejoint ce qu'il y a dans nos temps troublés d'une aube qui s'annonce et de promesses pour demain.

Et surtout, ce que ses formes pourraient avoir d'un peu abstrait, est toujours corrigé par deux choses: l'une est un prodigieux sentiment de la vie, l'amour de la nature qui éclate dans ses portraits, ce je ne sais quoi de familier qui lui fait trouver de la beauté dans les vanneries d'un panier à cribler le charbon, et un motif de phare dans une lampe de mineur. Le second trait est le lyrisme, cette puissance d'inspiration qui se mêle sans le troubler à la puissance du raisonnement, et qui, lorsqu'il calcule, a l'air de s'abandonner à l'impétuosité. Personne n'a fait plus de place dans son œuvre aux poètes, aux aèdes et aux porteurs de lyre. Ses figures ont autour d'elles d'immenses ramures, de vastes éventails et un profond frémissement d'ailes, comme une voilure que le vent gonfle et où souffle le génie: un dieu inconnu les soulève. Aucun sculpteur n'a embarrassé ses personnages d'un pareil luxe de lyres, d'ailes, d'instruments de vol et de musique. Personne ne se fait aujourd'hui du poète une idée plus magnifique. Il le croit capable de remettre dans la cité l'ordre et l'harmonie, comme au temps où les villes s'élevaient aux accents d'Amphion ou d'Orphée. S'il sait que ces rêves sont trop hauts, cela ne l'empêche pas de les rêver. Et le plus profond symbole qu'il ait fait de son art est peut-être cette figure du *Centaure blessé*, le divin quadrupède, demi-homme et demi-bête, frappé en plein galop sur les cîmes, au moment où il touchait les astres, et qui s'arrête avant de s'abattre, foudroyé et sublime, suspendu entre ciel et terre, comme une grande lyre.

LIST OF EXHIBITS

Works in Bronze

1. Relief. Three Young Sisters. 1890.
2. Fragment of Relief from Monument to the Dead of 1870-1871 at Montauban. 1900.
3. Beethoven. 1900.
4. Head of Apollo. 1900.
5. Penelope. 1905.
6. Head of Penelope. 1905.
7. Sappho. 1907.
8. Bust of Ingres. 1908.
9. Faun and Goat. 1908.
10. Torso of Woman. 1908.
11. Hercules, archer. 1909.
12. Bust of Charles Louis Phillipe. 1910.
13. Music.
Relief for *Théâtre des Champs Elysées*. 1912.
14. Bust of Koeberlé. 1914.
15. Dying Centaur. 1914.
16. Saint Barbara. 1915.
17. Victory.
From the Monument to General Alvear at Buenos Aires. 1915.
18. Head of Mickiewicz.
Detail of Monument to be erected in Warsaw, Poland. 1917.
19. Bust of Anatole France. 1919.
20. The Virgin of Alsace.
The original of stone, twenty feet in height, stands on a mountain in Alsace. It marks the return of Alsace to France. 1922.
21. Head of Young Girl. 1922.
22. The Moon. 1923.
23. Maternity.
24. Melancholy.
25. Rodin at Work.
26. Joan of Arc.
27. Man with Goat.
28. Bacchante (small).
29. The Cloud.

30. Head. The Sphinx.
31. Woman with Goat.
32. Bust of Rouveyre.
33. The Timid Model.
34. Bacchante (large).
35. Woman at Prayer.
36. Monogram.
37. The Apples.
38. Head of Rodin.

Works in Plaster

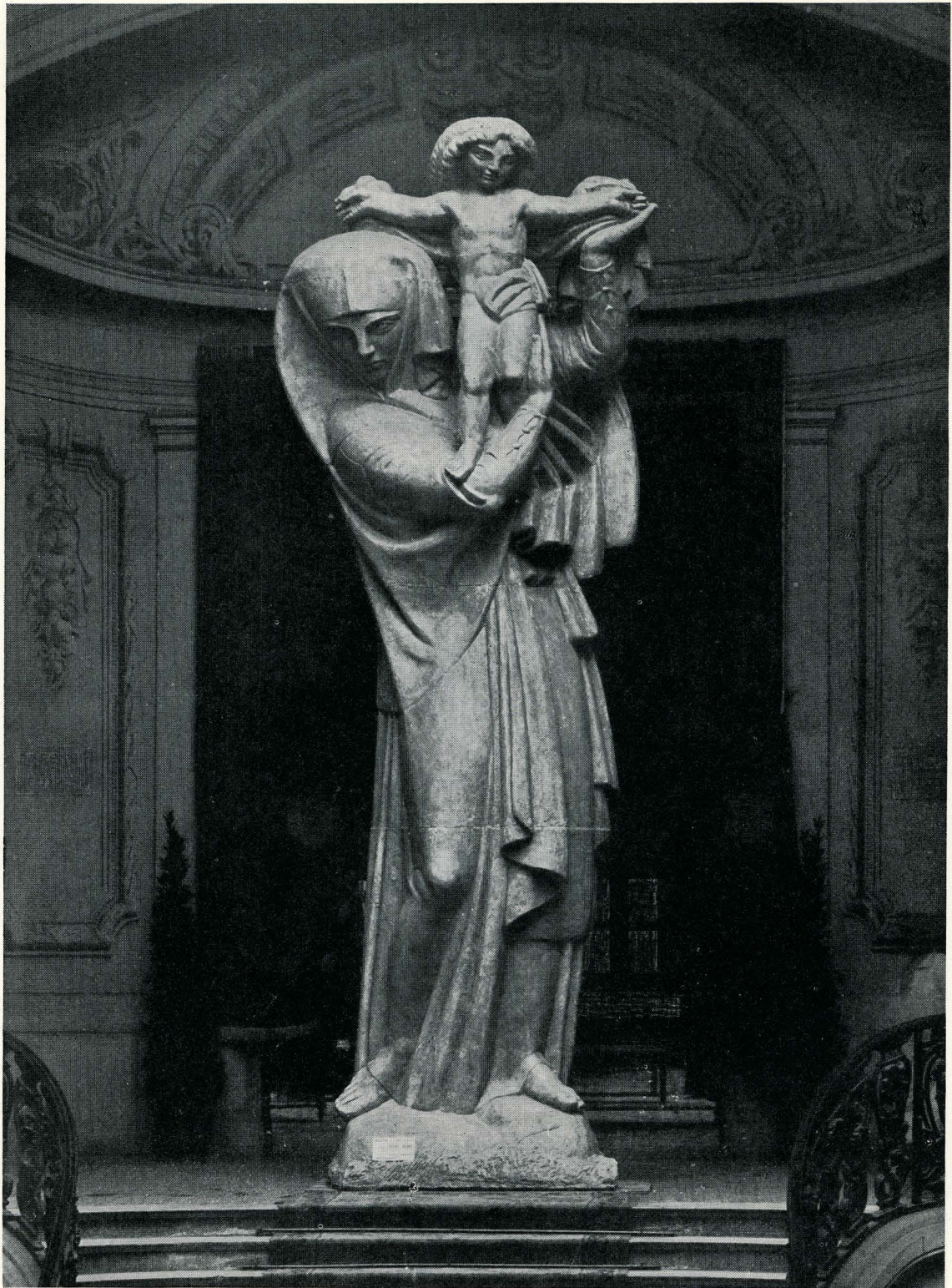
1. Beethoven. 1900.
2. The Noble Burden. 1906.
3. The Fruit. 1907.
4. Study for Portrait. 1909.
5. Head of Polish Girl. 1910.
6. Head of Miss Breckens. 1910.
7. Relief. The Muse and Pegasus.
8. Relief. The Poet and Pegasus.
9. Relief. Minerva Combattant.
Numbers 7, 8 and 9 for the *Tour des Loges, Théâtre des Champs Elysées*. 1912.
10. Relief. The Dance.
11. Relief. Music.
12. Relief. Tragedy.
13. Relief. Modern and Ancient Comedy.
14. Muse. Detail of Relief.
Numbers 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 for *Théâtre des Champs Elysées*. 1912.
15. Dying Centaur. 1914.
16. Victory. Head and Torso. 1916.
17. Head of Force. Detail of Monument to General Alvear.
18. Head of La France. 1925.
Detail of Monument to be erected in France on the Pointe de Grave. France salutes the American Army and Navy on their landing.
19. Stele. Mecislas Goldberg.
20. Sculptor at Work.

*Information regarding the sale of works in this exhibition can be obtained
from the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, N. Y.*



HERCULES

This heroic and strenuous conception of Hercules has found wide favor. It is in the Park of Prince Eugène de Suède and there is a replica in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among others in New York and in the museums of Rome and Brussels



VIRGIN OF ALSACE

A noble piece of sculpture erected at Neiderdruck on a hill in the Vosges Mountains. The figure, Gothic in manner, celebrates the reunion of Alsace-Lorraine with France. Note the native headdress of plaited linen



BEETHOVEN

One of three portraits of Beethoven made by Bourdelle. On this heroic head he spent a long period of time and for it he made many studies. It has been widely shown and acclaimed



SAINT BARBARA

Bourdelle has worked on many themes and in many modes. This figure is in the Gothic manner of the old cathedrals, the workmanship of which has been much admired by this sculptor



SAPPHO

A decorative and stylized study of the Grecian poet



HEAD OF APOLLO

Another of Bourdelle's Greek themes, thoroughly classic in conception and treatment



INGRES

A striking portrait of the great French artist whose name was so long a storm centre



DETAILS FROM THE FRESCO OF THE THÉÂTRE DES CHAMPS ELYSÉES

One of the most interesting phases of Bourdelle's work is the sculptural fresco, a type of frieze for the interior decoration of public buildings which is done in extreme haste. Bourdelle's great distinction as an architectural sculptor is nowhere more clearly shown than in these frescoes. The figures are all in low



relief and in such perfect proportion with the space that they are to occupy that they never seem clumsy excrescences. The details shown on these pages are from the fresco over the proscenium arch in the *Théâtre des Champs Elysées*, for which theatre Bourdelle also did exterior sculpture. He has similarly decorated the *Théâtre de Marseilles* with a fresco which has in addition the charm of being in color



DETAIL FROM RELIEF

This is another detail from one of Bourdelle's sculptural frescoes



BACCHANTE

One of the most vivid of Bourdelle's Hellenic studies, joyous and poetic in mood



DYING CENTAUR

One of the works of Bourdelle to command wide attention. This moving representation of a dying mythological creature may be interpreted to represent also the death of a great age of pagan culture. Done in bronze for Argentine



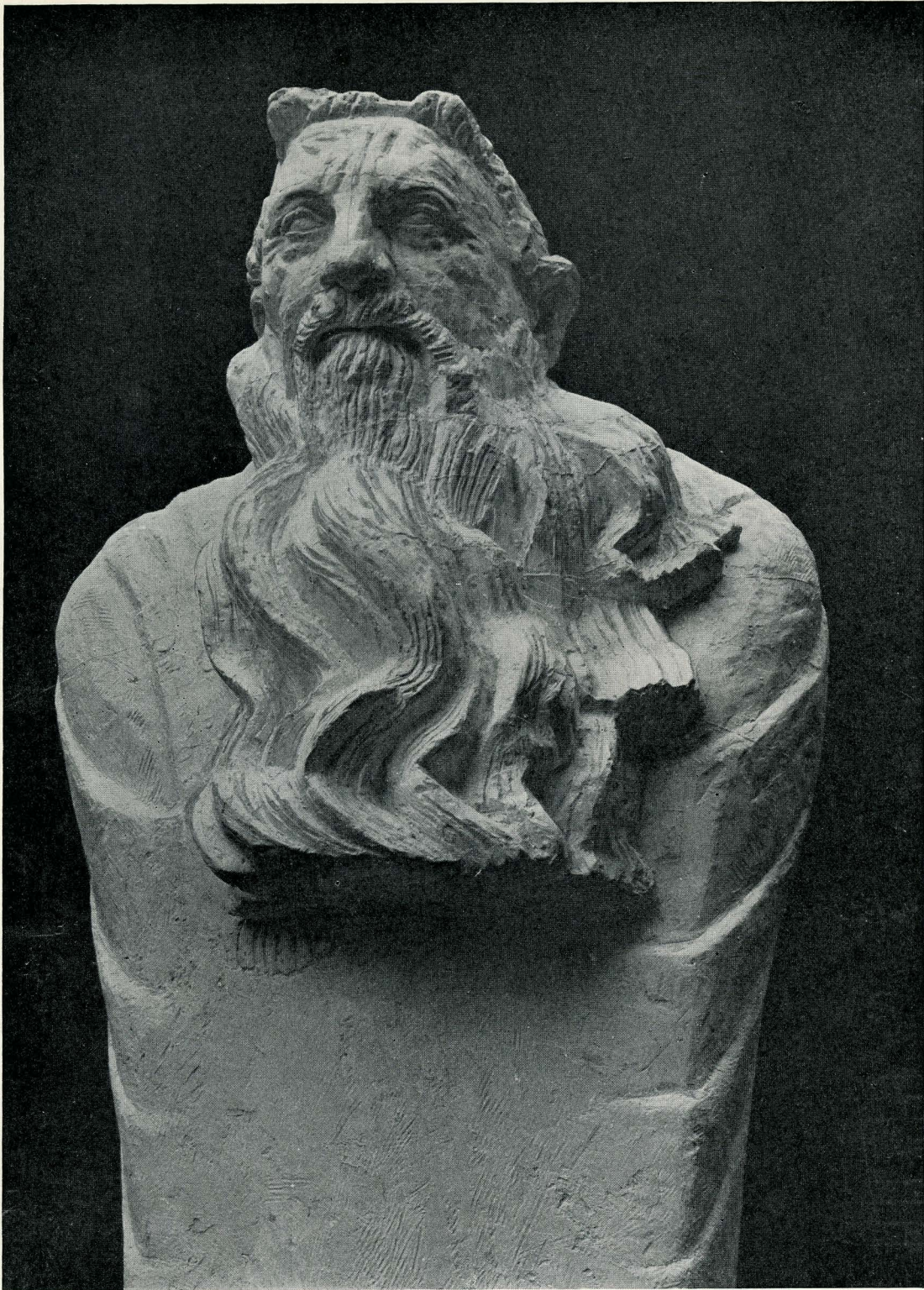
ANATOLE FRANCE

A thoughtful and striking portrait of the great French ironist, who was also Bourdelle's friend



HEAD OF FORCE

Perhaps the most notable single piece of Bourdelle's sculpture. The figure of Force is one of the four at the base of the great General Alvear statue in Buenos Ayres. Monumental sculpture is Bourdelle's métier



RODIN

One of two studies of the great French sculptor who was Bourdelle's teacher and who was for many years a dominating influence in the sculptural art of France and of the world



HEAD OF YOUNG GIRL

A bronze: classic in its feeling and in its severe simplicity



WOMAN WITH GOAT

A vigorous and humorous study from peasant life, with which Bourdelle was intimately acquainted

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THE GRAND CENTRAL ART GALLERIES of New York were established with the object of marketing the work of the living American Artists of the highest standing. It was realized that every other thing produced in the world, and for which there was a craving in the heart of man, was being exploited by efficient business organizations, while paintings and sculptures had been entirely overlooked in this march of progress.

To attempt to meet this situation, our organization was formed by a group of well-known business men who are giving their services entirely without remuneration, no profit or benefit accruing to anyone but the Artists themselves.

A permanent gallery was established occupying the entire top floor of the Grand Central Terminal in New York, where Artist Members can have their work constantly before the public.

Special exhibitions are sent to cities and towns anywhere, they paying transportation, insurance, etc. Many of the artists themselves accompany these exhibitions, together with experienced salesmen, and results have been most gratifying. During July we had an important exhibition at Newport, R. I., under the auspices of the Art Association of that city. Other exhibitions will be given at Norfolk, Va., Atlanta, Ga., Houston, Texas, and Aurora, Ill.

Special exhibitions of importance are held in our galleries which attract the art-loving public—last year our visitors numbering over One Hundred and Fifty Thousand (150,000). This whole undertaking is on a scale never before attempted in the interest of art, and this broad publicity is the most important element in the project. American art at the present day is the finest in the world and no better demonstration can be had of this than by a visit to our galleries.

The Association was started on a test period of three years. A little over two years of this three-year period has now elapsed, and *our sales to date* have been over Nine Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$900,000) including only the work of our one hundred and sixty (160) Artist Members. This figure greatly exceeds any estimate that had been previously made. A large proportion of the buyers have been new in the field of art patronage. Thus, it would seem that we are already laying a foundation for a larger opportunity for all, including not only the Artists themselves, but for those who deal in their productions everywhere.

Encouraged by our success in New York, the city of Chicago is now forming an Association similar to ours, which will operate in the middle states and in the Northwest. We heartily welcome all effort of this nature, knowing that there is in this country a practically unlimited market for things of real

beauty and that all that is necessary is a proper presentation and the widest publicity.

WE have arranged a schedule of exhibitions for the coming season which probably will be the most important event in the Art World this year. The present exhibition, including about seventy (70) of the most important **WORKS OF BOURDELLE**, tells its own story with an eloquence which cannot be equalled with the pen.

THE CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN will occupy the entire galleries December 1st to January 3rd, and will include one of the most important examples of each American Painter and Sculptor Academician during the past one hundred years. Months of hard work and persistent effort have been devoted by the National Academy of Design in securing the finest examples of such men as Gilbert Stuart, R. A. Blakelock, Winslow Homer, George Inness, A. H. Wyant, George DeForest Brush, Abbott Thayer, A. P. Ryder, Homer Martin, Daniel Chester French, Frederick MacMonnies, Herbert Adams, Paul Manship, Edward McCartan, Adolph A. Weinman, John Singer Sargent, Charles W. Hawthorne, James Earle Fraser, Lorado Taft, Elliott Daingerfield, John Sloan, Randall Davey, Cecilia Beaux, John C. Johansen, Leopold Seyffert, Charles H. Davis, Paul Dougherty, W. Elmer Schofield and many, many others.

The Centennial Exhibition was opened October 17th, in the Corcoran Galleries, Washington, D. C., by President and Mrs. Coolidge, and a distinguished group of patrons, marking an epoch in American Art by this unqualified national endorsement. It is believed that Art Lovers from all over the United States will come to New York to visit this exhibition in the Grand Central Art Galleries, and it is agreed by practically everyone who has seen the Show that it is the finest and most important exhibit of American Art ever held in this country. Great credit is due the National Academy of Design for its persistent and con-

stant efforts in the behalf of the growth and maintenance of American painting and sculpture.

An **EXHIBITION OF ITALIAN ART**, assembled under the guidance of the Italy America Society and sponsored by the Italian Government and his Majesty The King of Italy, will open in our galleries January 20th and continue through February 20th, 1926. The Grand Central Art Galleries feel that in presenting two or three large worth-while exhibitions of European Art they are rendering a service to the American Artist and the American people at large, both of educational and cultural value. They do not believe in art boundaries nor art limitations, but these galleries do feel that this policy will result in the greater sale of American Art, which is the sole object for which they were founded.

So that there may be no mistake, let it be definitely stated herewith that the European works of art are not for sale by the Grand Central Art Galleries, whose every effort is dedicated to the sale of the works of its own Artist Members. Great progress has been made by the contemporary Italian painters and the arrival of this exhibition from that country—famous through centuries for the works of its Artists—will be awaited with great interest.

For many years the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pa., has pursued a broad policy relative to Art and has brought to this country the works of all the greatest painters of the World and assembled them in one magnificent exhibition where all can come and see and form their own opinions unbiased. For the first time, this **INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION** will be shown in New York, in the Grand Central Art Galleries, from March 7th to April 21st. The works of the leading artists of thirteen (13) Nations will be hung in our galleries, classified according to nationality.

Ardent patriots can here fight their battles for artistic supremacy, but it is the belief of these galleries that the chief honors will be awarded where they rightfully belong—to the American Painters and Sculptors of today.



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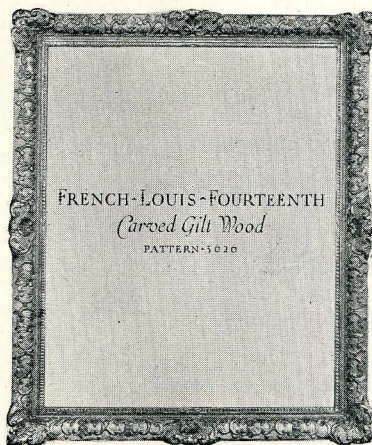
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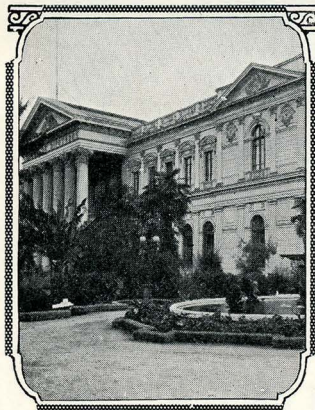
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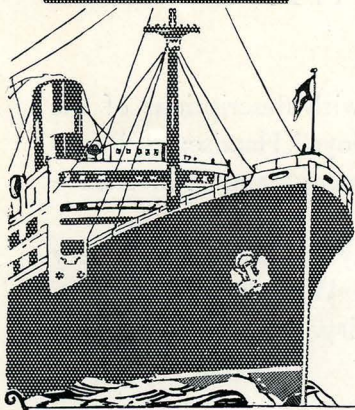
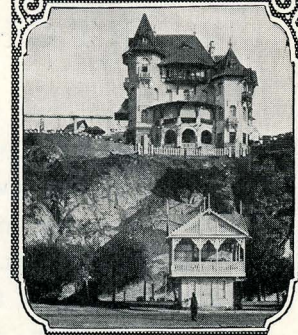
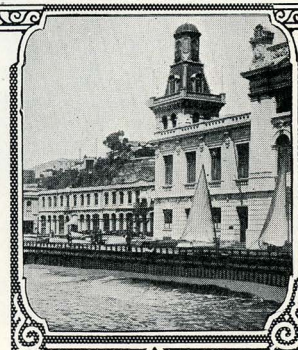
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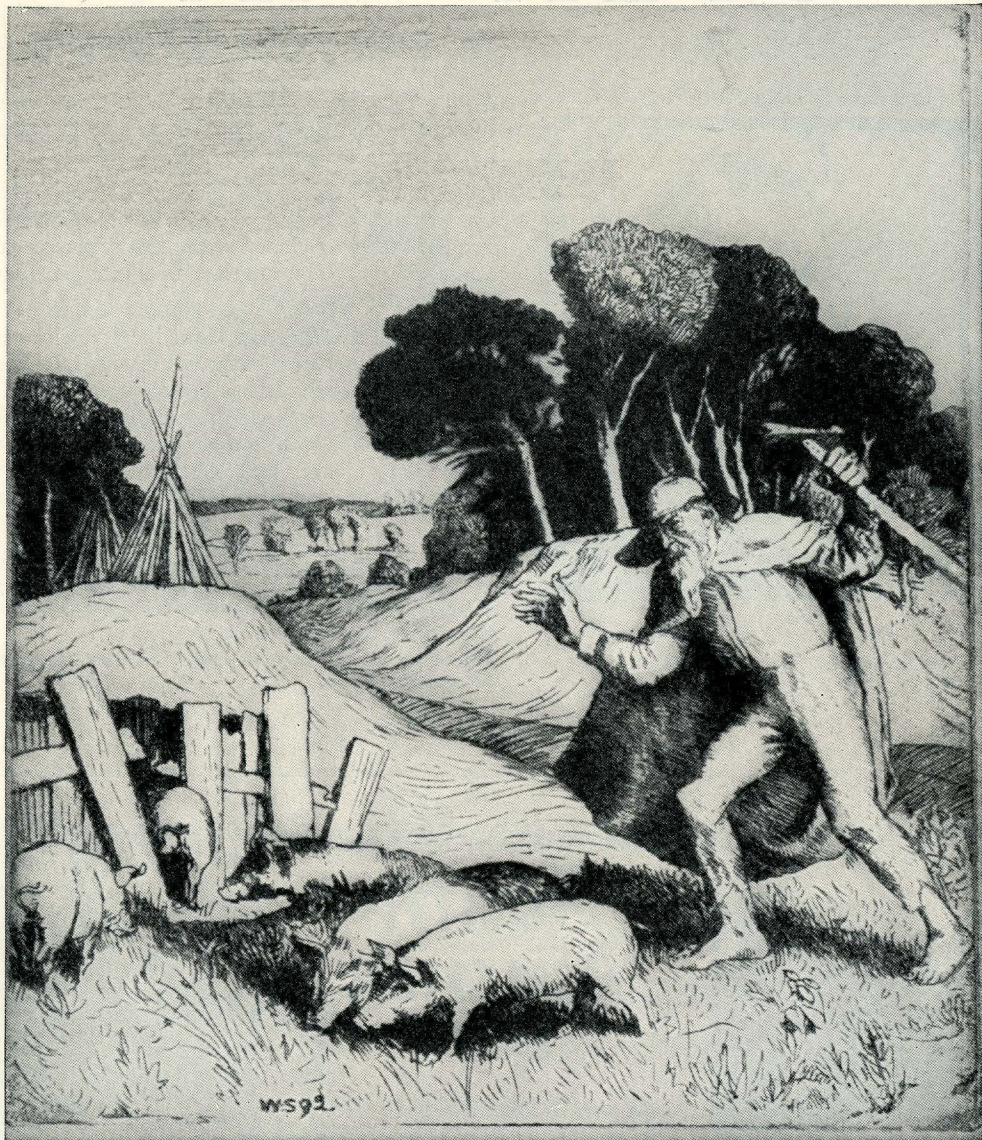
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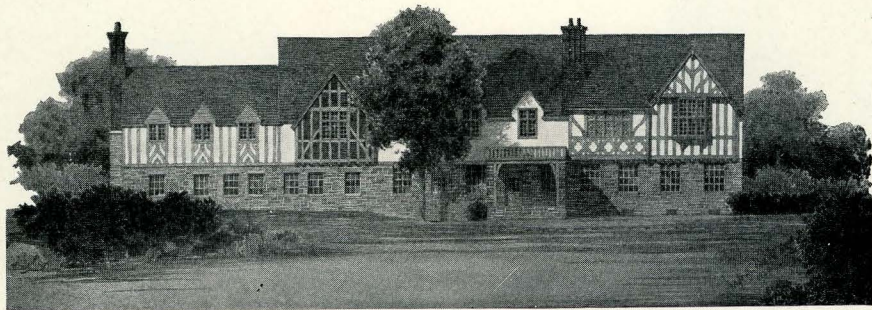
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