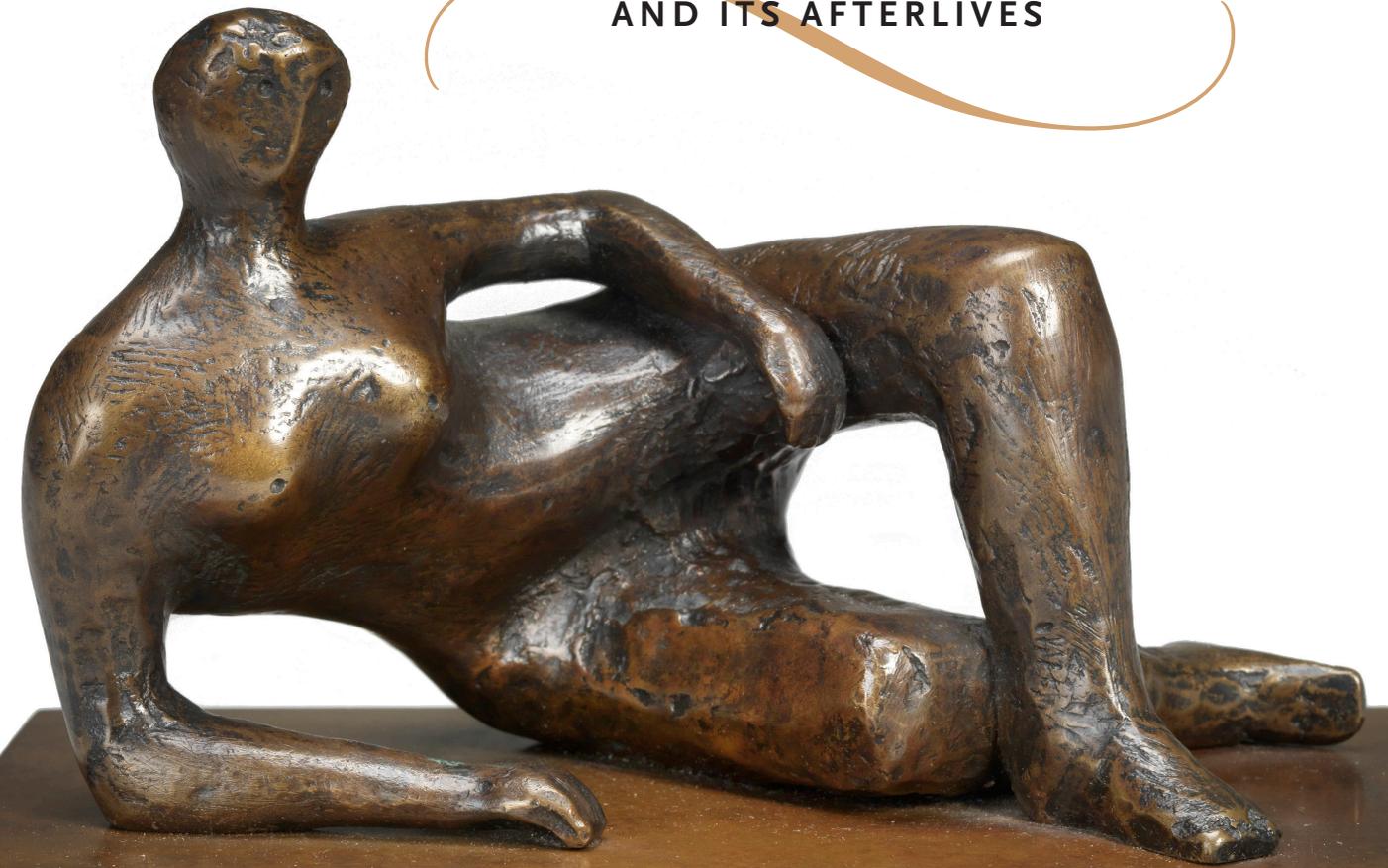




# A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT

NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCULPTURE

AND ITS AFTERLIVES





# A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT

## NINETEENTH-CENTURY SCULPTURE AND ITS AFTERLIVES

“All great work produces shock, and sets the imagination working, even when the work itself is serene.” This is how Jacob Epstein, one of the sculptors showcased here, defined powerful art. “Shock” in Epstein’s sense is triggered when the viewer is drawn into an unexpected encounter—one which disrupts the predictability of everyday life. In this exhibition, we encourage you to have encounters that will lure you out of the everyday, and activate your imagination.

On display are fifteen small-scale sculptures from the Museum’s collection, offering an overview of different moments and modes in French, English, and American sculpture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A common thread in these works is the modern sculptor’s playful references to and critical revisions of the great sculptural traditions of the past. In competition with the past, these pieces seek to create enthralling—almost theatrical—experiences for

the viewers. Inhabiting the same three-dimensional space as we do, they invite our participation: our bodies respond to their bodies, our minds project onto them interior lives. They perform their magic when we engage with them for extended periods, take them in from various viewpoints, and look for the clues left behind by the artist: hidden details become visible, unanticipated narratives open up. Many of the pieces and artists in the exhibition are in conversation with one another. We invite you to tease out these dialogues, influences, competitions, and critiques.

**GÜLRU ÇAKMAK**, Guest Curator and Assistant Professor of Nineteenth-Century European Art, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

*This exhibition was developed by Professor Çakmak in conjunction with students in her fall 2016 seminar “Modernizing Sculpture from Canova to Duchamp.”*

1

HENRY MOORE (British, 1898–1986)

**Reclining Figure: Right Angles**, 1981, Bronze

Gift of Jeffrey H. Loria in honor of Julie Lavin (Class of 1986), 2005.23.3

The reclining figure was a subject that Henry Moore revisited time and again in the course of a productive career spanning several decades. A crucial influence on Moore in developing this motif was the ancient Mesoamerican Chacmool sculpture, a supine figure whose chest and legs face the heavens while the head is rotated to confront the viewer. *Reclining Figure: Right Angles*, created toward the end of Moore's life, represents a culmination of the artist's investigation into the endless possibilities of elaborating on this theme. Here, Moore has not only molded the body of the figure, but also the space surrounding it: each opening framed by the limbs and the torso functions as a window that gives the viewer a new and unexpected vista.



Far right: Chacmool figure, 900–1000 CE, Toltec-Maya, limestone, National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City.

2

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE (French, 1930–2002)

**Nana**, 1990–95 or before, Green marble

Gift of Jeffrey Loria in honor of Julie Lavin Loria (Class of 1986), 2007.11

*Nana* is a playful yet complex appropriation of prehistoric goddess figurines, biblical themes, and classical works of art, most notably the *Laocoön Group*. Just as the unfortunate Trojan priest is about to be devoured by a giant serpent, Nana is also in peril. Or is she? The phallic form of the snake ensnaring the thighs of this bulbous female humorously suggests sexual intercourse. Saint Phalle first examined the motif of the nude and the serpent in her mixed-media canvases of the late 1950s, subsequently inventing the figure “Nana” in the 1960s. *Nana* is the only piece in this gallery carved out of marble. Observe how the marble's natural green color and white veins play into the narrative.



Center left and right: *Laocoön and His Sons*, also known as the *Laocoön Group*, early 1st century BCE, Roman copy after a ca. 200 BCE Hellenistic original, marble, Vatican Museums, Vatican City; *Seated Mother Goddess flanked by two feline heads*, ca. 6000–5500 BCE (Neolithic age), Turkish, baked clay, Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara, Turkey

3

MAN RAY (American, 1890–1976)

**Herma**, 1975, Polished bronze

Gift of Anne W. Wells (Class of 1945), 2004.8

Here we see an ambiguous figure that appeared in many works by Man Ray throughout his career. Its title evokes the classical Greek myth of Hermaphroditus, the son of gods Hermes and Aphrodite. One day, the nymph Salmacis fell in love with this handsome youth and asked the gods to unite them forever. Her request was granted, but not in the way she had expected. Their bodies were merged, creating one deity with both male and female genitalia. *Herma's* reflective surface catches the eye and invites us to walk around it, giving us distorted and fragmented images of our faces that never unify into a coherent likeness. This is one of a series of bronzes cast by the Paris auction house Artcurial one year before the artist's death.

–ZOË BURNETT, University of Massachusetts Amherst MA'17  
(Department of the History of Art & Architecture)

4

SIR ALFRED GILBERT (British, 1854–1934)  
**An Offering to Hymen**, ca. 1886 model, Bronze  
 Gift of Nicolette Wernick, 1985.24

The awkward uncertainty of adolescence is emphasized in this small sculpture by a prominent member of the New Sculpture movement in England. Poised at the brink of adulthood, the figure holds out her offerings to Hymen—the ancient Greek god of marriage. A branch of hawthorn is presented in her right hand while her left contains a miniature statue of Anteros—the god of reciprocal love. Gilbert’s piece is contextualized by the expectations of the Victorian era, a time when early marriage was common if not expected. This sculpture asks you to share the uncertainty of a young girl venturing into adulthood and to consider the uneasiness that accompanies her transition. What conflicts or outside forces might she face in the future?

—EVA FAHEY, University of Massachusetts Amherst '17



Jean-Léon Gérôme (French, 1824–1904), *Phryne before the Tribunal*, 1861, oil on canvas, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Germany.

5

ARISTIDE MAILLOL (French, 1861–1944)  
**Petite Phryne à la draperie (Small Phryne with Drapery)**, 1910, Bronze  
 Gift of Jeffrey H. Loria in honor of Julie A. Lavin (Class of 1986), 2006.25.2

Initially trained as a painter, Aristide Maillol turned to sculpture later in life and became widely known for his stately female nudes. *Small Phryne with Drapery* revisits a classical Greek subject popularized in the 19th century by the French painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, one of Maillol’s teachers. When Phryne, a courtesan famous for her beauty, was brought to court for impiety, her lawyer revealed her naked body in a desperate gesture. Enthralled by her heavenly beauty, the jurors acquitted her. While Gérôme’s painting shows the various reactions of the judges ranging from surprise to lust at the instant of Phryne’s disrobing, Maillol’s sculpture dramatically puts us, the viewers, in the position of witnesses to the courtesan’s beauty, triggering our imagination to participate in her judgment.

6

EMILIE E. STAMM (American, 1914–1988)  
**Standing Nude**, 1938 model, Bronze  
 Bequest of the artist (Class of 1936), 1989.3.1

Emilie Stamm made this work while studying at the Grand Central School of Art in New York, where she won a gold medal for sculpture in 1937. In a formal announcement reported in *The Art News: An International Pictorial Newspaper* on June 21, 1924, the school’s director Edmund Greacen declared the mission of the school as conducting education “along American lines,” and offering “an opportunity for the development of individual expression as opposed to the existent ‘follow-the-master’ fallacy.” Stamm’s piece depicts the model in a naturalist manner. Compared to Chana Orloff’s *Maria Lani* or Jacob Epstein’s *Chaim Weizmann*, it refuses the abstract stylization of the human figure associated with European sculpture of the time. In its emphasis on the unidealized body, this piece evokes the work of earlier sculptors in this exhibition, in particular Alfred Gilbert’s truthful depiction of the adolescent body in *An Offering to Hymen*.



7

FREDERIC LEIGHTON (British, 1830–1896)  
**The Sluggard**, 1890, Bronze  
 Purchase with the Warbeke Art Museum Fund, 1985.4

Already a renowned painter, Frederic Leighton became an influential sculptor almost by accident. Like many other 19th-century painters, he sculpted small clay figurines to aid him in his paintings. One of these studies, *Athlete Wrestling with a Python*, was enlarged to life-size and exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1877, gaining him recognition as a sculptor. *The Sluggard* in this exhibition relates to Leighton’s second life-size sculpture (1886, Tate Britain, London), and is one of the numerous bronze statuettes cast from his preparatory sketch-model. If the *Athlete* shows a powerful Olympian hero at work, *The Sluggard* suggests languor, sensuality, and passivity. Both works quickly became a clarion call for the “New Sculpture” in England, a stylistically diverse movement marked by innovative reconsiderations of classical sculpture.

—ROBERT CHESNUT, University of Massachusetts Amherst '16



Frederic Leighton (British, 1830–1896), *An Athlete Wrestling with a Python*, 1877, bronze, Tate Britain, London

8

PAUL JEAN BAPTISTE GASQ (French, 1860–1944)

**Diana**, ca. 1902, Bronze

Gift of Russell W. Magna, 1957.1.M.OI

This athletic woman who has just shot an arrow at an invisible prey is Diana, the classical Roman goddess of the hunt. Gasq's depiction of the goddess is part of a long and popular sculptural tradition that began in ancient art. Diana is typically portrayed as a youthful woman in pursuit of her victim, and although she is traditionally not depicted in the nude, here her fluttering tunic reveals the outlines of her body. The smooth surface of the bronze barely shows any trace of the artist's hand, and remnants of gilding are still visible. Originally, the sculpture stood on a manually revolving marble pedestal.

–SUPRIYA SUDAN, University of Massachusetts Amherst MA candidate (Department of the History of Art & Architecture)



*Diana the Hunter*, 2nd century CE, Roman copy after a ca. 330 Greek BCE original, marble, Louvre Museum, Paris.

9

ANNA HYATT HUNTINGTON (American, 1876–1973)

**Fawns Playing**, 1934, Bronze

Gift of the artist, 1937.2.1(b).OI

Despite being one of the most successful American artists of the first half of the 20th century, Anna Hyatt Huntington is little known today. Huntington spent her childhood around her father, a professor of paleontology at Harvard, and he inspired in her a love for animals that became evident in her sculptures. *Fawns Playing* at first seems to depict two fawns in a single, frozen moment. However, the piece evolves and morphs depending where the viewer stands. Each angle shows something new, creating a dynamic dance between the two animals. Building on ideas from the famous 19th-century French animal sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye, *Fawns Playing* depicts a dramatic struggle, and the figures are represented with attention to anatomical accuracy.

–CHARLES HOLT, University of Massachusetts Amherst '18



10

PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR (French, 1841–1919), and Louis Fernand Morel (French, 1887–1975)

**Danseuse au Tambourin (Dancer with Tambourine)**, ca. 1918–19 model, Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Harold Kaplan in honor of her daughter Irene Kaplan Leiwant (Class of 1947) 1997.9.1

This lively figure of a nude female dancer, moving her body to the rhythm of the tambourine in her left hand, is the product of a collaboration between the elderly and severely arthritic Impressionist painter Renoir and a young French sculptor. It is a hybrid between a relief sculpture and a statuette: while the left side of the dancer's body is embedded into the background, her right arm raised in air and right leg stepping out of the frame are in the round. This adds to the dynamism of the sculpture, creating an illusion of motion: try walking from the left of the figure toward her right, and observe the dancer come to life.



11

AUGUSTE RODIN (French, 1840–1917)

**Tête de Balzac (Head of Balzac)**, 1897 model/1955 cast, Bronze

Gift of T. Marc Futter, 2001.6.3

Auguste Rodin's *Monument of Honoré de Balzac*, honoring the famous 19th-century French novelist, was highly controversial, to say the least. Standing aghast in front of the full-length plaster model at the Salon exhibition in 1898, Parisian audiences and critics described a head that, bearing the weight of its thoughts, had become deformed, even grotesque. This sculpture was cast in bronze by Georges Rudier nearly forty years after Rodin's death from one of the numerous plaster fragments and studies made in preparation for the monument and left behind in the artist's studio. With its black and green patina, the murky appearance of the surface complements the head's disturbing lack of symmetry and distortion, giving the composition a sense of putrefaction.

–BENJAMIN QUINN, University of Massachusetts Amherst '17



Far right: Auguste Rodin (French, 1840–1917), *Monument of Honoré de Balzac*, 1898 model/posthumous cast, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California.

12

SIR JACOB EPSTEIN (British, 1880–1959)

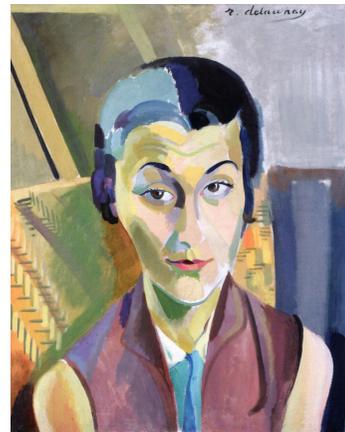
**Chaim Weizmann**, 1933 model, Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Norman Cahners (Helene Rabb, Class of 1942), 1979.6

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the first president of the State of Israel, was a chemist at the British Admiralty Laboratories during World War I and a key figure in the Zionist movement. Weizmann sat for Jacob Epstein for this portrait bust in 1933. Epstein imbued Weizmann's face with an intense expression, accentuated by hollow eye sockets that capture and absorb the ambient light, indicative of a mysterious interiority invisible to us. The visible handmarks left by Epstein as he molded the bust are striking: this is as much a portrait of an important political figure as it is a document of the artist's craft. It is displayed adjacent to Rodin's *Head of Balzac* to highlight Epstein's debt to, and interpretation of, the style and technique of the older sculptor.



Far right: Robert Delaunay (French, 1885–1941), *Portrait of Maria Lani*, ca. 1929, Private Collection.



13

CHANA ORLOFF (Israeli and French, b. Ukraine, 1888–1968)

**Maria Lani, Shepherdess**, 1928 model, Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Randall Chadwick, 1956.3.M.OI

In 1928 Maria Lani, a young actress, arrived in Paris from Berlin and devised an elaborate scheme. A charismatic figure, she convinced fifty-nine eminent artists to make her portraits, which she claimed were to be featured in a movie. While the film was never produced, the portraits were exhibited in the United States and Europe. This bust by Chana Orloff, made as part of that campaign, exploits Lani's ever-changing persona as noted by her contemporaries. A careful look reveals that she is wearing a hairnet, probably in preparation for a wig—a detail that alludes to Lani as a player of roles. Orloff, a member of the School of Paris, the vibrant artistic avant-garde that flourished at the Montparnasse district of Paris, rose to prominence as a portraitist of the Parisian elite in the 1920s.

—PAVITHRA DEVARAJAN, University of Massachusetts Amherst '19

14

DIMITRI HADZI (American, 1921–2006)

**Floating Helmets**, 1961, Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Andrew Ritchie in memory of her husband, 1979.7

Life and death, safety and destruction—all are invoked by this complex work. Its form references a soldier's helmet, while simultaneously suggesting an atomic mushroom cloud, the protective nature of a turtle's shell, the mysterious structure of a jellyfish, and innumerable other images. Due to this ambiguity, and the power that an object holds when it is unfamiliar to the human mind, this sculpture begins to resemble a sentient being for the viewer who engages with it for an extended period of time. It commands one to walk around and peer beneath it in a (perhaps futile) attempt to know it completely. Hadzi, a son of Greek immigrant parents and a member of the United States Air Force during World War II, was heavily influenced by war and mythology.

—CHARLOTTE YOUNG, University of Massachusetts Amherst '17



15

HENRY ROX (American, 1899–1967)

**Girl With Flowers**, 1966, Bronze

Commissioned and given by family and friends of Adelaide Avery Button (Member MHC Art Dept. 1954–1963), 1966.13.1(b).OI

This work by Henry Rox, a longtime member of the Art Department at Mount Holyoke College from 1939 until his retirement in 1964, is a playful interpretation of the statuette format: a stool acts as the pedestal of the piece, which features a young girl holding a bouquet of flowers ingeniously made of metal wire springs. The figure's slender body, awkward posture, and oversized feet show her to be on the brink of adolescence, echoing a theme explored by Alfred Gilbert in *An Offering to Hymen*, also exhibited in this gallery. The surface of the sculpture is deliberately left rough to show the touch of the artist, inserting this piece in the same lineage as works by Auguste Rodin and Jacob Epstein.

