

Media release

Rodin / Arp

13 December 2020 – 16 May 2021

*»And so the truth of my figures, instead of being merely superficial, seemed to unfold from within,
like life itself.«*
Auguste Rodin

*»We do not want to copy nature. We do not want to reproduce, we want to produce. We want to produce
like a plant that produces a fruit and not to reproduce.«*
Hans Arp

For the first time, a museum exhibition brings into dialogue Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) and Hans Arp (1886–1966), pairing the groundbreaking work of late 19th-century sculpture's great reformer with the influential work of a major protagonist of 20th-century abstract sculpture. Both artists displayed exceptional artistic inventiveness and enthusiasm for experimentation. Their works left a deep imprint on their times and retain their full relevance to this day.

The sculptural milestones created by Auguste Rodin and Hans Arp provide remarkable illustrations of fundamental aspects in the development of modern sculpture. Rodin introduced transformational ideas and new artistic possibilities, which Arp later took up, developed, reinterpreted or contrasted in his biomorphic shapes. Even though we cannot be certain that Rodin and Arp ever met in person, their works display great artistic kinship and many shared references, as well as marked differences, which makes the confrontation of their distinctive creations a particularly revealing visual experience.

The exhibition takes as its starting point Arp's 1938 sculpture *Automatic Sculpture (Homage to Rodin)* and his 1952 poem *Rodin* – tributes to the great precursor, which also illustrate Arp's broad creative range. Next to such explicit references, the artistic dialogue between Rodin and Arp also brings to light many further links, shared sources and comparable artistic preoccupations. The exhibition exposes connections in terms of content and conceptual approach, rooted in the exploration of existential themes such as creation, growth, transformation and decay. The works represent human, animal or vegetal bodies, fused and conflated in a novel manner. One finds in Rodin and in Arp a wholly personal yet comparable conception of nature and art, which brings to the fore processual and experimental aspects, and also turns chance into an artistic principle. Both artists were interested in the notion of aliveness as a philosophical theme, to which they gave expression in vibrant sculptures. Rodin's and Arp's lively and moving sculptural bodies also fascinate with their interplay of sensual, fluid, flawless volumes on the one hand and damaged, fragmented surfaces and shapes on the other hand, which find their ideal in the torso. The articulation of construction and deconstruction also becomes apparent in the genre of assemblage, which Rodin introduced into the realm of sculpture and Arp developed further. The two artists are also linked in terms of methods, for example the transfer of figures from one material to another, and their execution on different scales, from small formats to monuments. They also turned their attention to their sculptures' presentation, more particularly the plinth, which Rodin was the first to question and interrogate. Finally, Rodin and Arp are related in terms of motifs, such as shadows, the creative hand or the vase as an object and a body. They often drew from literature, such as ancient mythology or Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Bringing together around 110 works from international museums and private collections, «Rodin / Arp» is one of the most extensive sculpture exhibitions staged to date at the Fondation Beyeler. While its focus lies on Rodin's and Arp's sculptures (including a monumental outdoor sculpture in the museum park), it will also present reliefs by Arp as well as drawings and collages by both artists.

The exhibition brings together iconic works such as Rodin's *Thinker* and *Kiss* as well as Arp's *Ptolemy* and *Torso*. Lesser-known works make the relations between the two artists all the more graspable.

The exhibition was conceived by the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, in cooperation with the Arp Museum Bahnhof Rolandseck, Remagen, and organized in collaboration with the Musée Rodin, Paris. The exhibition is curated by Dr. Raphael Bouvier.

With reference to the exhibition «Rodin / Arp», celebrated choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, one of the most influential figures of contemporary dance, will present a new performance, on view at the Fondation Beyeler between 29 January and 14 February 2021. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker confronts her *Dark Red* with Auguste Rodin and Hans Arp's sculptural universe. The palpable power of Rodin's obsession with the human body and its implicitly narrative force and Arp's desire for formal emancipation directly resonate with De Keersmaeker's choreographic research: an exploration of the body's capacities for abstraction, an arrangement of movement in time and space.

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Fondation Beyeler opening hours: 10am to 6pm daily, Wednesday 10am to 8pm