Rodin and America: Influence and Adaptation, 1876–1936. Edited by Bernard Barryte and Roberta K. Tarbell.Published by the Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University – home to a substantial collection on Rodin's reception in the United States. The essays contained in the catalogue are each individually solid contributions to the literature. Barryte's introduction efficiently cuts through the Rodin mythology and history while summarizing the key points of the American reception. Tarbell's essay on American portraits of Rodin shows how effective Rodin was in establishing his own mythic persona and how it was that persona – just as much as any individual work – that was the object of consumption for many of his devotees. Her other essay, on Rodin's drawings, offers useful discussions of American collections and artists for whom the drawings were important, but she does not fully take on the relevance of the drawings (and the mythology of their process) to the establishment of Rodin's sexualized persona. Rodin shifted more aggressively towards drawing in the twentieth century, and these works and their unfinishing rendering of the female body seemed to offer confirmation to many viewers of the sexualized reputation he had established. While this is registered in Tarbell's essay, there is nevertheless a reticence to examine this most important component of the drawings’ contribution to the Rodin mythology internationally. Both of Tarbell’s essays, however, are rich with historical information and fundamental to the exhibition and the catalogue’s overall argument.

Hélène Pinet and Antoinette Le Normand-Romain’s essays continue both scholars’ long-running contributions to Rodin studies. Pinet’s contribution on Rodin and American photography further gives solid historical scholarship around the construction of the Rodin myth, and Le Normand-Romain’s concluding essay provides a historiographic overview of the vicissitudes of Rodin scholarship in the twentieth century that has not been, to my knowledge, so succinctly yet comprehensively recounted. Pinet on photographers of Rodin is joined by Bronwyn Griffith’s useful discussion of Rodin’s impact on American photography, showing how Rodin’s works proved to be an exemplary subject for photographic innovations. Focusing largely on Edward Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz, the essay does an admirable job in demonstrating the transmedial influence of Rodin’s practices (such as bodily fragmentation). Anna Tahinci has contributed another information-rich essay on Rodin’s collectors, this time with a focus on the Americans. It is followed by an invaluable appendix that lists the major lifetime collectors. Of special interest is Jennifer Jane Marshall’s essay on the negative impact of Rodin’s influence – or, rather, the rejection of the artist’s titanic presence by American sculptors. Just as much as his card-carrying followers, those who engaged with but rejected Rodin are an essential part of the story of modern sculpture. Marshall’s contribution makes the case for Rodin’s importance through the negative, showing how crucial he was as a foil for these other developments.

I will close by reiterating a point made earlier: that – in addition to its solid contribution to Rodin studies – this book is of significant value to scholars of American art more broadly. With its essays on photography, sculpture and drawing, it revises a history of American art that sought to absorb and compete with European modern art, here personified in Rodin’s mythic figure. The inventory and gazetteer section in turn requires comparison with the volumes of this series, as well as with earlier monographs such as London’s Immortals: The Complete Outdoor Commemorative Statues by John Blackwood (1986) and The Monument Guide to England and Wales by Jo Durke (1991). In terms of scholarship, Richard Barnes cannot quite vie with them, and it is regrettable that, unlike Blackwood or indeed the Public Sculpture of Britain project, he provides no proper references to his sources. Barnes can also be duped with a lack of punctuation and intuitive assumptions. That said, he is an amateur in the original and best sense, with a good eye for still somewhat underrated practitioners such as Francis Derwent Wood, above all manifesting an infectious enthusiasm for the subject and one that is clearly shared with Steggles. British Sculpture in India both educates and entertains, and is destined to be a major source of reference in future years. In her introduction, Steggles expresses the hope – and the current reviewer heartily concurs – that with this publication ‘there will be a continued or renewed interest in this area […] that remains, sadly, still under-researched’.  


From the end of the nineteenth century until his death in 1917, the French sculptor Auguste Rodin was arguably the most famous artist in the western world. Celebrated in endless exhibitions throughout Europe.

4. Ancient Greek art hugely influenced Rodin’s work and the Greek aesthetic still inspires fashion designers today. What makes it so appealing? I think it is their truth to nature. The sculptures in particular seem to live and breathe. The ancient sculptors have excelled in transforming cold hard marble into warm flesh and, when clothed, flowing diaphanous drapery. They are incredibly sexy.

5. Rodin was inspired by artful drapery of ancient Greek sculpture which ties in with one of our SS18 women’s wear trends. Sponsored by Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Enter below for the chance to win a one year British Museum joint membership, a one night stay for two at the Principal London Hotel and a £1000 Reiss shopping spree. Enter the competition.