

# Breaking the Mold: Nineteenth-Century French Sculpture at the Zimmerli Art Museum

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The exhibition *Breaking the Mold: Sculpture in Paris, from Daumier to Rodin* was organized by the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University from October 23, 2005 to March 12, 2006.<sup>1</sup> It was the ninth major project dealing with nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century French and European art in a series of comprehensive exhibitions and publications produced during my thirty-six year tenure as Director and Curator of European art at the Zimmerli. The goal of each of these projects listed below was to revise art history and to define and present unique areas of collecting at the museum:

- (1975) Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on French Art, 1854 - 1910;
- (1978) The Color Revolution: Color Lithography in France, 1890-1900;
- (1981) Circa 1800: The Beginning of Modern Printmaking, 1775-1835;
- (1985) The Circle of Toulouse Lautrec: An Exhibition of the Work of the Artist and of his Close Associates;
- (1989) The Nabis And the Parisian Avant-Garde [Organized by Patricia Eckert Boyer];
- (1992) From Pissarro to Picasso: Color Etching in France;
- (1992) Homage to Brussels: The Art of Belgian Posters, 1895-1915 [Organized by Trudy Hansen];
- (1996) The Spirit of Montmartre: Cabarets, Humor, and The Avant-Garde, 1875-1905.

Very few people in the museum field have the opportunity to build a museum and its collections almost from scratch. I, therefore, am very fortunate that Rutgers permitted me the independence to decide the focus of the collections and to develop the practical/financial means of building those collections, the structures which

house them, and the staff which documents and cares for them. While my areas of expertise are limited to nineteenth and early twentieth-century French art and Japonisme, I have enjoyed immensely initiating and negotiating the other priority collections at the museum, such as Russian and Soviet Nonconformist Art, illustrations for children's books, and American art. Equally, I appreciate and respect greatly the Zimmerli curators who have subsequently developed these collections into major strengths of the museum. To put things into perspective, in 1970 Rutgers had a small university art gallery with a collection of about 2000 miscellaneous works and a total staff of two; today the Zimmerli has over 55,000 works of art and a full and part-time staff of over forty. It is physically nearly the size of the Whitney museum. The Zimmerli is one of the most substantial university art museums in the country with internationally respected, in-depth holdings which because of their uniqueness and supplemental archival resources lend themselves particularly well to scholarship in the specific focused areas of art history.

Of the over 300 sculptures presented in the *Breaking the Mold* exhibition, more than half belonged to the Zimmerli Art Museum. However, prior to the year 2000, nineteenth-century European sculpture was represented at the museum only with a bronze example of Rodin's *Fleeting Love* (Figure 1), with several small bronzes by Alexandre Charpentier (Figure 2) and with examples of shadow theater zinc cutouts (Figure 3) which, in fact, I only recently felt could be rationalized as sculptures, *per se*, because of their seminal relationship to the relief metal silhouette-sculptures of J. F. Raffaëlli and the twentieth-century cut outs of Alexander Calder. The new millennium, however, brought with it a major gift from the New York collectors Herbert D. and Ruth Schimmel of more than thirty sculptures in

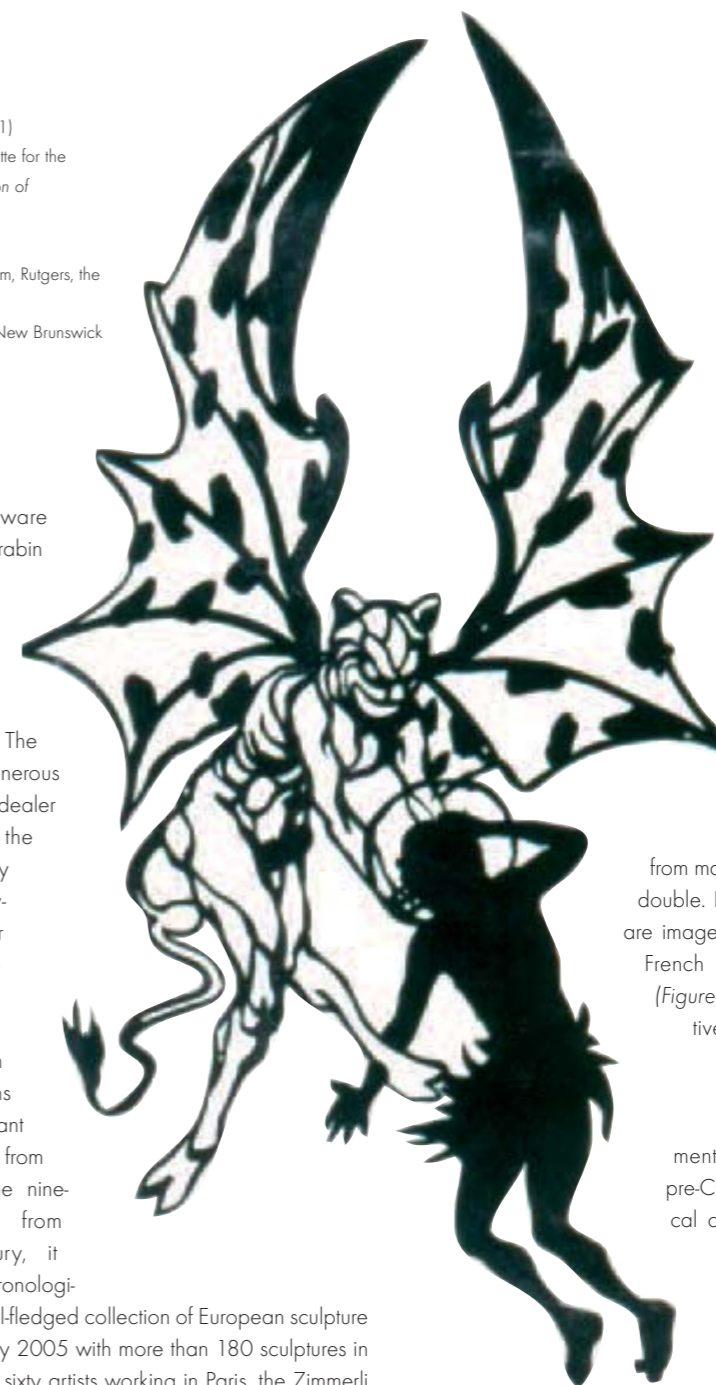
Figure 1, Auguste Rodin (1840-1917)  
*Fugit Amor (Fleeting Love)*, from *The Gates of Hell*, 1881-87  
 Bronze 50 x 78 x 28 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Gift of Hans Arnhold  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 1243



Figure 2, Alexandre-Louis-Marie Charpentier (1856-1909)  
*Violin Player*, 1893  
 Bronze keyhole cover 7.8 x 20 x 4.8 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Gift of Herbert D. and Ruth Schimmel  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 1996.0536



Figure 3, Henri Rivière (1864-1951)  
*Saint Anthony and the Devil silhouette* for the shadow theater play *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, 1887  
 Zinc 75 x 42 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Gift of University College Rutgers New Brunswick Alumni Association  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 1986.0081



bronze, wax and stoneware (Figure 4) by Rupert Carabin (1862 - 1932). This windfall positioned the Zimmerli as the largest collection outside of France of this important turn-of-the-century sculptor. The next year thanks to the generous intervention of the Parisian dealer Arsène Bonafous-Murat, the Zimmerli acquired the only complete set of the early-twentieth-century plaster and terra cotta casts of the thirty-six caricatural busts (1832-35) by Honoré Daumier (Figure 5). With these two major acquisitions in hand representing important aspects of French sculpture from the second quarter of the nineteenth century and from turn-of-the-twentieth century, it made sense to fill in the chronological gap by developing a full-fledged collection of European sculpture made principally in Paris. By 2005 with more than 180 sculptures in a variety of media by over sixty artists working in Paris, the Zimmerli had gone a long way in fulfilling this goal. However, it is important to state that five years earlier, I like most American curators of European art had very little knowledge of or respect for the medium of nineteenth-century sculpture. My knowledge of French sculpture was overwhelmed by my interest in the media of painting, drawing, print-making and book/journal illustration. It was necessary for me to begin fresh and to learn all I could in a short time about sculpture—its techniques, aesthetics and history. It was due to my naïveté that the Zimmerli collection has a somewhat unorthodox perspective on nineteenth and early twentieth century European sculpture. As Anne Pingeot generously describes in her preface to the *Breaking the Mold* catalogue:

Though a connoisseur of the Old World, Cate retains his American sense of freedom; he is not bound by the French scale of values. A curator in France would not, for example, house Honoré Daumier's (1808-1879) *Celebrities of the July Monarchy* series of

caricatural busts (Figure 5) and Lyonnais puppets or Guignols (Figure 6) in the same museum....Another shibboleth that Cate blithely ignores is that of the safety of attributions, for he has no fear of unsigned works.... In a similar manner, Cate also enjoys the viability of masks: the theater, which emerged from masks, is carrying on the praise of the double. Included in the Zimmerli's holdings are images of such great nineteenth-century French "pop stars" as Yvette Guilbert (Figure 7) and Réjane, created, respectively, by Leonetto Cappiello (1875-1942) and Alexandre Charpentier (1856-1909). The Zimmerli collection documents the innovative, anti-academic pre-Cubist aesthetic, thematic and technical concerns of sculptors in Paris from 1832 to 1914—from the July Monarchy to the First World War. The collection is based on the premise that Art is what Artists make not necessarily what others at the time or later make of

it. A case in point is Daumier's thirty-six caricatural busts (1832-1835) of the *Celebrities of the July Monarchy*. At the time of their creation, they did not fit into academic standards for sculpture. Academic sculpture of the nineteenth century was based upon classical Greek/Roman canons of art which emphasized the idealization of the human figure, the use of the "noble" medium of marble, and the moralization of subject matter. Sculpture was not to be realistic, colorful, distorted, ugly or humorous. Even as late as 1927 the Louvre refused to acquire the heads because they were "caricatures", and as recently as 1964 the British critic Herbert Read rejected them as forerunners to modern sculpture because "Daumier was a caricaturist, and the kind of deformations [of his heads] have nothing in common with formal conceptions of a Rodin."<sup>2</sup> Today, of course, Daumier's expressionistic busts are generally considered as dynamic precursors to modern sculpture and worthy of prominent display at



Figure 4  
 François Rupert Carabin  
 (1862-1932)  
 Loïe Fuller, ca. 1897-98  
 Enameled stoneware  
 45.7 x 38.5 x 21.2 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art  
 Museum, Rutgers, the State  
 University of NJ  
 Gift of Herbert D. and  
 Ruth Schimmel  
 Photograph by Jack  
 Abraham  
 2000.0668



Figure 5, Honoré Daumier (1808-1879)  
 Celebrities of the Juste Milieu, 1832-35 (cast in  
 1927-37)  
 Series of unfired clay, terracotta, and plaster casts  
 derived from the original clay busts located at the  
 Musée d'Orsay, Paris  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State  
 University of NJ  
 Acquired in honor of Barbara Voorhees  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2001.0372-0407

the Musée d'Orsay. Obviously, opinions on the value of a particular work of art may change from one period of time to another. Yet unlike the medium of painting, much of the sculptural achievements of artists in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Paris is relatively unknown. While the sculptures by Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Pierre Renoir, Auguste Rodin, Emile Antoine Bordelle (Figure 8), Henri Matisse, and Constantin Brancusi are relatively well known, it is unlikely that regular museum goers—or for that matter many art historians—in the U.S. or in Europe are familiar with most of the artists that make up the Zimmerli collection. As Anne Pingeot states in her preface to the *Breaking the Mold* catalogue:

Bypassing famous names (and high prices) in order to select those artists who helped form the art of the end of the nineteenth century is a unique distinguishing feature of the Zimmerli Art Museum's collecting practices. How could a due tribute not be paid to the individual who has provided a different image of France than that generally presented in American museums: the France of Alexandre Charpentier,<sup>3</sup> who has finally been restored to his rightful place of honor; that of Emmanuel Frémiet (1824-1910) and his beautiful blue enameled stoneware; the nation that welcomed both the German artist Hans-Stoltenberg Lerche (Figure 10) (1867-1920), who parodied Rodin's *Balzac* in his *One Step Ahead*, and the Polish sculptor Boleslaw Biegas (1877-1954), creator of *God of Space* (Figure 9); the high-society France as seen through Vernhes's stunning wax figure *Young Girl Standing* (Figure 11) and Jean Auguste Dampé's (1853-1946) enigmatic portrait *The Painter Aman-Jean* (Figure 12); or that of Elisée Cavillon (1873-1954), whose praises had been sung by no less than

Guillaume Apollinaire.  
 In painting this portrait of a country that he understands so well, Dennis Cate has in effect created a kind of self-portrait. An artist often reveals more about himself than about his sitter. This "composition" of original, nonconformist selections has itself become an original artistic creation.

The exhibition *Breaking the Mold* endeavored to place into context sculpture by well-known artists with that by many lesser-known and by unidentified artists, as well, all of whom in my judgment contributed much to the innovative artistic environment of Paris from 1832 to 1914. The Zimmerli collection presents the full-range of media explored by these artists: plaster, terra cotta, bronze, wax, pâte-de-verre, wood, enameled stoneware, zinc, and mixed media. The Zimmerli collection also takes liberties with the generally accepted categories of sculpture by emphasizing three-dimensional caricatures and by including popular art forms such as puppets and zinc cut-outs for shadow theaters which not only served as sources of artistic inspi-



Figure 6, Unidentified artist  
*Traveling Guignol theater with puppets*, ca. 1880  
 Painted wood and fabric 250 x 110 x 90 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 1994.0666

Figure 7, Leonetto Cappiello (Italian, 1875-1942)  
*Portrait of Yvette Guilbert*, 1899  
 Painted plaster 34 x 23.5 x 17.4 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Carleton A. Holstrom and Mary Beth Kineke Purchase Fund  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2001.0976



Figure 8, Emile Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929)  
*Self-Portrait*, 1908  
 Bronze 58 x 26.5 x 29 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Acquired in the name of Michael Angelides  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2001.0967

Figure 9, Boleslaw Biegas (Polish, 1877-1954)  
*The God of Space*, ca. 1900  
 Painted plaster 55.5 x 15 x 14 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Acquired in the name of Michael Angelides  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2002.0100



Figure 10, Hans Stoltenberg Lerche (German, 1867-1920)  
*One Step Forward*, 1898  
 Plaster 22.5 x 9.5 x 11 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Regina Best Heldrich Art Acquisition Fund  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2001.1041

ration but also stand alone as credible works of art. Again, I quote Anne Pingot:

Zinc showed up at the Musée d'Orsay only in 2003, but it was already present seventeen years earlier in the Zimmerli collection in the form of Henri Somm's (1844-1907), Henri Rivière's (1864-1951), and other artists' silhouette zinc cutouts for the productions of the Chat Noir cabaret. Tin appears in Alexandre Charpentier's *Jug* (1893), and copper in Rupert Carabin's (1862-1932) symbolist mirror of 1896-97. Wax is the primary material of Henri-Edouard Vernhes's (1854-1926)

life-size sculpture in the round, *Young Girl Standing* (1894). It may also be seen in the Belgian artist Guillaume Charlier's huge relief *Monument of the Fishermen, the Transport of Fish* (Figure 13). This is indeed a far cry from February 9, 1886, when Etienne Arago, the curator of the Luxembourg Museum, refused to display the wax figure of Auguste Cain's (1822-1894) *French Cock*, explaining that "In a gallery where there are only marble and bronze statues, the work is an eyesore. If plaster is excluded, can wax be included?" Cain's wax figure of *French Cock* (sometimes known as *Gaul*) was therefore "deleted from



Figure 11, Henri Edouard Vernhes (1854-1926)  
*Young Girl Standing*, 1894  
 Wax over plaster support 138.3 x 47 x 47.5 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Regina Best Heldrich Art Acquisition Fund  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2001.0886

Figure 12, Jean Baptiste Auguste Dampé (1854-1945)  
*Portrait of the Painter Aman Jean*, 1892  
 Plaster 53.5 x 51.5 x 37 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Acquired in the name of the Newark Group and Edward and Joanne Mullen  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2001.0968

The Zimmerli collection also features outstanding sets of glazed ceramic stoneware. These include the works produced by the ceramicist Ernest Chaplet (1835-1919) on Hexamer's and Jean Désiré Ringel d'Illzach's (1849-1916) designs (Figure 14), as well as those of Paul Jeanneney (1861-1920), such as his portrait of friend and fellow artist Jean Carriès (1855-1894).

Also represented in the collection are works related to or studies for such major public monuments as Rude's *Arc-de-triomphe* (1833-1836), Dalou's *Triomphe de la République* (1879-1899), Chapu's *Cantate* for the front of the Paris Opéra (1868-1869), and Aubé's *Monument to Gambetta* (1883), and for such important but unachieved monuments as David D'Anger's *Liberty* (1839), Carriès' *Persifal Gate* (1890-1894, Figure 15), Rodin's *Gates of Hell* (1881-1917) and Meunier's and Dalou's separate plans for a monument to workers of the 1890s. Finally, the display at the Zimmerli of sculpture from the period is often related to the subject matter and the aesthetics of its sister multiple art form—printmaking—with works by such artists as Louis Léopold Boilly, Honoré Daumier, Antoine-Louis Barye, Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Francois Millet, Edouard Manet, Louis Legrand, Jean-Louis Forain, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Alexandre Charpentier, and Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen. In fact, it was with the medium of printmaking that artists often ventured beyond the prevailing aesthetics and themes of academic art.

Most importantly the collection emphasizes the development of sculpture during this eighty-five year period as an art form independent from the often artistically-inhibiting and politically-motivated commissions of large public monuments. Numerous artists during this intensely artistic and political time figuratively, and literally, "break the mold" of academic sculpture with innovative explorations into the pur-

the inventories of national museums." The Director of the Musée des Beaux-Arts wisely offered it to Antonin Proust, President of the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, who accepted the piece.

Less unusual but equally important is the wax-embossed plaster cast of Pierre-Jules Mêne's (1810-1879) *Flemish Cow and Her Calf*. This piece shows the artistic process, with its traces of Mêne's reworking, retouching, and creative experiments. Works in other media contained in the Zimmerli's collection sometimes evoke antique precedents. Examples are Henri Cros's (1840-1907) terracotta painted to look like a Greek ostracón and pieces produced by means of *pâte de verre*, the artist's reinvention of an ancient Greek technique for creating glass paste.





Figure 13, Guillaume Charlier (1854-1925)  
 Procession of Fishermen, 1888  
 Wax model for Monument to Fishermen, the Transport of Fish, 88 x 105 x 14 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Gift of Phillip Dennis Cate and Lynn Gumpert  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2004.0030

Figure 14, Jean-Désiré Ringel d'Illzach (1847-1916)  
 Ernest Chaplet (1835-1909)  
 Bowl with scenes from *The Circus*, 1883  
 Enameled stoneware 27.4 x 42 cm in diameter  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Gift of Phillip Dennis Cate and Lynn Gumpert  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham



pose, subject, style and media of sculpture and initiate the pre-Cubist, modernist movement in Western three-dimensional art.

During the five years in which the Zimmerli's collection of European sculpture evolved, I received an enormous amount of good will, advice and assistants from private collectors, dealers, and curators. As referred to above, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the Parisian art dealer Arsène Bonafous-Murat for making possible the acquisition of Daumier's rare and spectacular thirty-six *Celebrities of the July Monarchy*. Once again, this important dealer primarily of graphic arts—with whom I have had the pleasure to work for over twenty-five years—directed significant nineteenth-century art to the Zimmerli. For nearly thirty years the New York dealers, David and Constance Yates, have introduced to American collectors the splendors and subtleties of French sculpture from the dramatic and full-of-character bronze or terracotta medallions of David d'Angers and of Alexandre Charpentier to the idiosyncratic, enameled-stoneware grotesque masks of Jean Carriès (Figure 15). The Yateses are responsible for a number of the major works acquired by the Zimmerli. I appreciated greatly their willingness to regularly listen to and objectively comment on my evolving views of the history of sculpture in Paris. They had been essential to the organization of *Breaking the Mold* by introducing me to their private collector-clients who so generously lent work to the exhibition. In Paris Jacques Fischer of the Galerie Jacques Fischer, had been an important and constant source of objects, of sound advice and education on sculpture. Other dealers in Paris with whom I have particularly enjoyed visiting and working in the organization of the museum's collection are: Lucille Audouy of Galerie Elstir, Patrice Bellanger of Galerie Patrice Bellanger, Allan Chinn, Jean and Sandrine Nicollier of Galerie Elseneur and Bertrand Talabardon and Bertrand Gautier of Galerie Talabardon & Gauthier.

Although, I had the pleasure of viewing a broad range of sculpture housed in numerous museums throughout France and Belgium, the encyclopedic sculpture collection at the Musée d'Orsay was the principal source of inspiration and visual education for me in the development of the Zimmerli collection. From the early 1970s to the inauguration of the Museum in 1986 and to her retirement in the spring of 2008, the Orsay's sculpture collection had been gathered, acquired, organized, researched and defined under the leadership of Anne Pingeot, General Curator. Complementing the collection is the museum's extraordinary research tool—the Department of Documentation—which houses an extensive, up-to-date archival collection of a variety of clippings, articles and photos related to work by artists in the Orsay's collection.

Previous to the *Breaking the Mold* exhibition, the most comprehensive exhibition in the U.S. of nineteenth-century French sculpture was organized in 1981 by the Los Angeles County Museum. Peter Fusco and H.W. Jansen curated this groundbreaking exhibition entitled *The Romantics to Rodin*. This was followed in 1986 at the Grand

2004.0029  
 Figure 15, Jean-Joseph-Marie Carriès (1855-1894)  
 Grotesque Head for the Porte de Persifal, ca. 1892  
 Enameled stoneware  
 38.5 x 35 x 10 cm  
 Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of NJ  
 Gift of David and Constance Yates  
 Photograph by Jack Abraham  
 2002.0498



Palais, Paris by Anne Pingeot's and her colleague's encyclopedic exhibition, *La Sculpture Française au XIXe Siècle*. More recently, Andreas Blüm at the van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam organized *The Colour of Sculpture, 1840-1910* which emphasized polychrome sculpture and gave much greater attention to fin-de-siècle ceramic sculpture. The *Breaking the Mold* exhibition and the Zimmerli collection owe much to these three major exhibitions/publications as well as to the numerous smaller monographic and general studies which over the last twenty-years, in particular, have made impressive contributions to the field of nineteenth-century sculpture in France.

In the end, however, it was walking the streets of Paris, visiting galleries, small shops and the flea-markets that enabled me to discover and acquire sculpture for the Zimmerli. It was that nitty-gritty experience which, I feel, allowed me to create a significant collection of sculpture which "Breaks the Mold" of numerous traditional views on nineteenth century art.

#### Notes

1. Phillip Dennis Cate, Ed., *Breaking the Mold: Sculpture in Paris from Daumier to Rodin* (New Brunswick: 2005).
2. Herbert Read, *Modern Sculpture, A Concise History* (New York: 1985), 12 [first published in 1964].
3. The Musée d'Orsay held its retrospective exhibition of Alexandre Charpentier from January 22 to April 13, 2008; it traveled to Brussels, le Musée communal d'Ixelles [May 29 - August 31, 2008].