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French Sculptures in the US Stand Up to Be Counted

By [Benjamin Sutton](#) on December 30, 2014

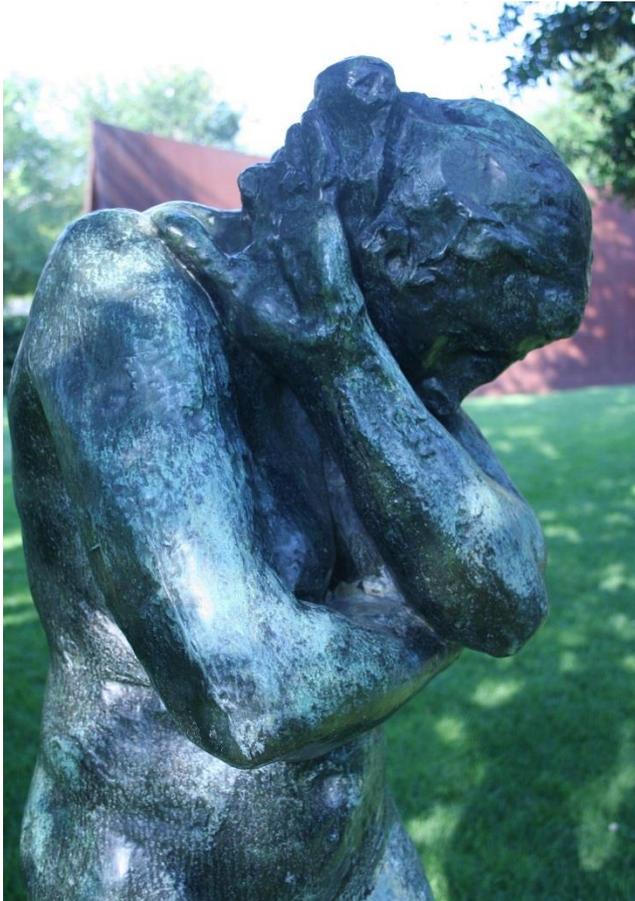
<http://hyperallergic.com/172025/french-sculptures-in-the-us-stand-up-to-be-counted/>



Aristide Maillol, "[The River](#)" (1938–43, cast 1948) at the Museum of Modern Art (photo by [c_nilsen/Flickr](#))

On the hunt for one of Emmanuel Fremiet's [cat bronzes](#)? Want to play a game on Man Ray's [chess set](#)? Curious to know which state has the most Louise Bourgeois [sculptures](#)? (It's New York, hands down.) All these pressing queries and more will be answered thanks to the [French Sculpture Census](#), an initiative to catalogue every single sculpture by a French artist in a US cultural institution or collection. Spearheaded by University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) professor [Laure de Margerie](#), the digital database, which launched this month and is formally titled "The Census of French Sculpture in American Public Collections (1500-

1960),” already has over 7,100 entries (which can be browsed by [artist](#) or [location](#)) and is expected to include records for between 15,000 and 20,000 pieces by the time it’s complete.



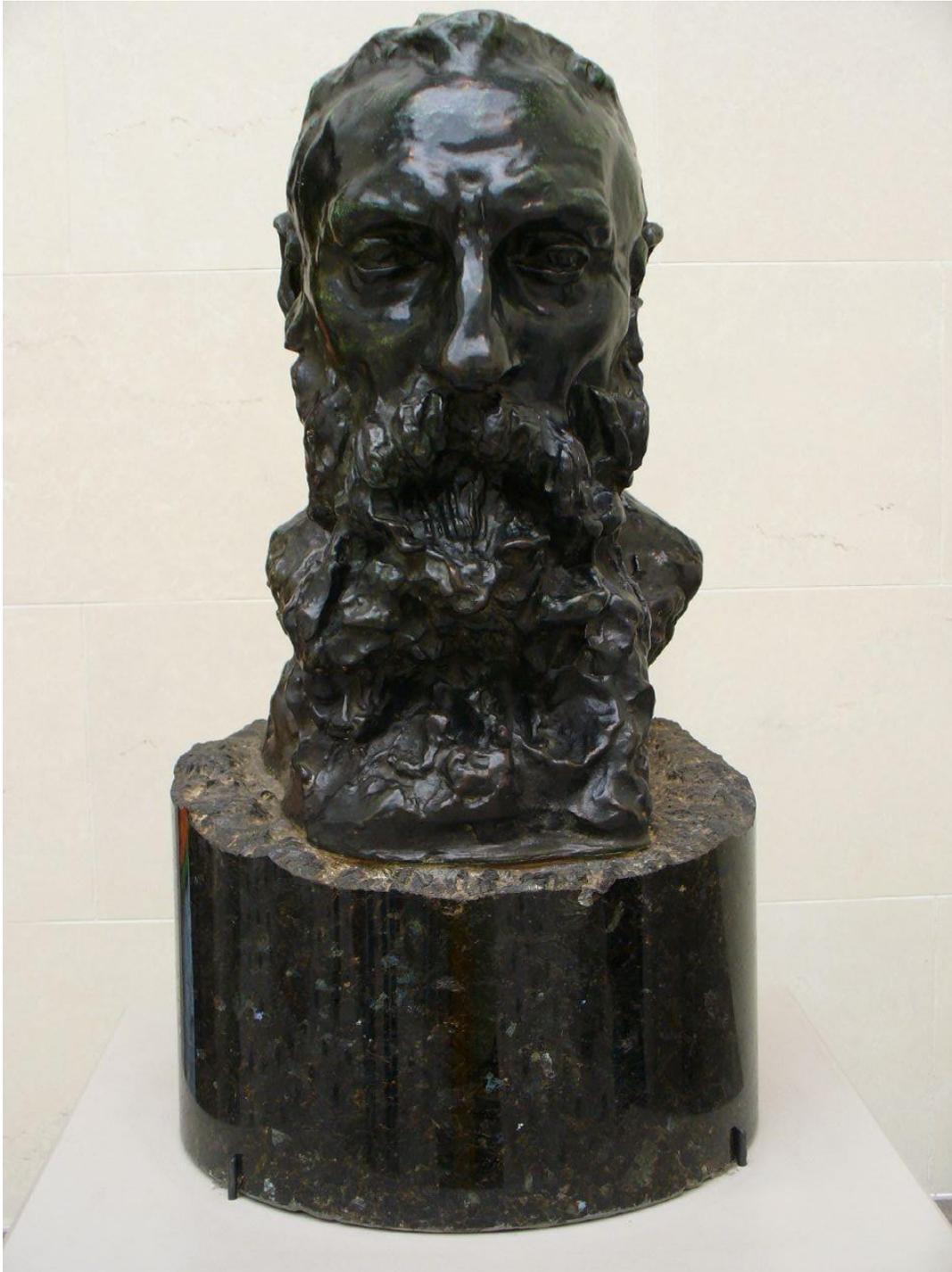
Auguste Rodin, “[Eve](#)” (1881, cast before 1932) at the Nasher Sculpture Center (photo by [Alan Levine/Flickr](#)) (click to enlarge)

The project began, in embryonic form, in 2001. Inspired by the global inventory of 19th-century French sculptures at the [Musée d’Orsay](#), where she worked for 30 years, de Margerie began a similar census of US museum collections using the library of the Clark Art Institute in Massachusetts. After moving to Dallas in 2009, she reactivated the long-dormant project, and, with help from UTD, the [Nasher Sculpture Center](#), Paris’s [Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art](#), Musée d’Orsay, [Musée Rodin](#), and the [École du Louvre](#), the census’s website launched earlier this month.

The project aims to cover not only museum collections, but also the holdings of libraries, public institutions, historic houses, government buildings, science museums, and public spaces. And don’t be startled when you come across works in the database by an artist who is obviously not French, like, say, [Medardo Rosso](#). You have not accidentally stumbled onto the Italian Sculpture Census; rather, de Margerie’s project also [includes](#) works “created by artists who came to France to work durably or settle permanently.”

However, the most glaring question raised by the project remains unanswered: why French sculpture? In her [introduction](#) to the site, de Margerie cites Jean-Antoine Houdon’s late-18th-century [statue](#) of

George Washington and France's gift of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty in the late 19th century as crucial moments in American history and art history. The census may become a valuable resource for scholars and students — or, at the very least, it will settle disputes between drunken art-loving Francophiles over who's better represented in US art collections, [Seraphin Soudbinine](#) or [Théodore Rivière](#). (Spoiler alert: It's Rivière, by a landslide.)



Camille Claudel, "[Head of Rodin](#)" (c. 1900) at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco (photo by [lilakb/Flickr](#))