

Images of the sculpture discussed in the following transcript can be seen on the Conference home page.

### **Introductory Remarks by Steven A. Nash, Director, Nasher Sculpture Center**

Welcome to Part Two of our International Conference on Variable States in Modern Sculpture. We are going to try some things that have not been done before in any symposia that we are aware of, going where no art historian has gone before. There may be a few glitches. We've rehearsed. We've done as much background preparation as possible. And if we break down momentarily along the way, this goes with the territory. Give us a little patience, and we will get things back on track. We can say, however, that we are breaking new ground with our format and technology, and we trust that visibility of discussions in the gallery will be enhanced for everyone by broadcasting the proceedings onto this large screen in the auditorium.

I want to start with a very brief overview of the day's schedule. We will start with two papers from Penelope Curtis and Derek Pullen, which will give us an overview of the general issues involved in this symposium, one from a curatorial point of view and the other from a conservator's perspective. These will lead next into the gallery discussions. Our three teams of panelists will convene successively in the gallery, with the first devoted to discussion of Rodin's *The Age of Bronze* and the four casts of this work we have assembled. That will take place for approximately half an hour and include the televising of proceedings from the gallery into the auditorium. After the gallery discussion, the panelists will reassemble in the auditorium to answer any questions you may have on what has transpired.

After that, we have a new addition to the schedule that I hope you will find exciting, a presentation of a new digital analysis system. We have been working here at the Nasher for the last few months with a digital scanning technique for mapping sculptures, which has come to us out of industrial practice. There is a group in Dallas [Van Duzen

Archives] that came to the museum and proposed using this scanning technology on modern sculpture. Using a laser, a sculpture is scanned, and its information is captured in a computer. The segmented images are put together within the computer to produce an entire rendering of the sculpture, which can then be manipulated and looked at from any different point of view. Most importantly, it measures that sculpture down to micron levels so that the precise measurements are recorded. These digital images can then be put to different uses. Archivaly, you have the image stored forever, to be used as a base line against which to compare any damage that might occur to the work or any suspicion of damage. Or, very germane to the discussion about the Rodin casts in this exhibition and how they differ from one another, one can actually overlay the digital images, superimpose them and measure graphically and mathematically the differences between two objects. We will demonstrate how this is possible. The techniques are in the early stages of art application, but I think they have amazing long-range potential, especially in conservation but also in museum record-keeping, website usage, historical research, and so forth.

That demonstration will conclude the morning session. We will reassemble about 2:00 in the auditorium, and proceed with two more gallery discussions, one on *The Bust of Diego* by Giacometti and the last on the Jeff Koons sculpture of Louis XIV. At that point, all of the panelists will join together here on stage, and we will hold an open roundtable discussion with everyone present. We count on and invite audience participation and encourage as free-flowing an exchange as possible. I will moderate and prod if necessary, but a group discussion has great potential for us as a way both to summarize and dig deeper into our major issues. As I said last night, we do hope to condense the proceedings eventually into a publication, probably a website publication. It may take us a while to do this, but we do not want the proceedings to just evaporate. We intend to record them and make them available for reference for others who could not attend.

At this point, however, I want to invite to the podium Penelope Curtis, who is Director of the Henry Moore Institute at Leeds. She has been in curatorial life for a long time at the Tate, writing several important books on modern sculpture, and in her position at Leeds,

where she has developed a program that ranks as the preeminent sculpture study and exhibition program in the world. They are very active with exhibitions, symposia, and publications, and really do a fantastic job. So Penelope, we are delighted to have you here.

**Sculpture and Conservation Conference**  
**Introductory Papers**  
**Dallas, Texas, October 22-23, 2004**

**Session Speaker Key**

**PC** Penelope Curtis  
**DP** Derek Pullen  
**Q** Question or commentary from the audience

**A Curator's View, Presentation by Penelope Curtis**

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Modern sculpture is often thought of as, in some way, transgressive, a unique creative act, but in fact much of what applies to sculpture traditionally, that is its very ability to be reproduced, applies to modern sculpture, too, and has been overlooked. Whereas it is standard practice to compare editions of Renaissance bronzes, who looks in any detail at the editions of modern sculpture? Who, indeed, other than the dealer or the auctioneer. Discussions of modern sculpture have focused much more on ideas than in the making, but in so doing, have overlooked the way in which a traditional methodology like casting can carry meaning too.

The conservators of contemporary sculpture have had to deal with all kinds of modern problems, including the treatment of unstable and transitory materials new to the sculptural corpus. But in fact, we all need to look back and focus on traditional problems if we are to fully engage with the meaning of modern works like the ones on show here.

So Derek Pullen, who is the conservator of modern sculpture at the Tate Gallery in London, and I are going to offer you two points of view, two personal ways of reading sculpture, which will inevitably reflect our different professional formations, and then we'll attempt to weave them together in a concluding discussion of a single work of art. We think we can show that curators and conservators are not so far apart in the way they deal with works. Though the emphasis may be different, we are both concerned with meaning, and we intend to introduce our positions with an assessment of our first appraisal of a sculpture.

In the preliminary discussion with Derek, he contrasted the long view of sculpture with the close-up examination. We don't want to adopt such contrasting roles, but we will play with these two approaches: the appraisal taken at a distance, which embraces the standpoint of the viewer and the context of the sculpture, and close, or even hands-on looking which involves the inside and underneath of the sculpture. This conference is entitled *Variable States*, and this title means something. So we intend to structure our individual readings by looking at these words — variable and states — and assessing what they mean for us. I'll begin with variability and look at the means by which it is effected, the edition or the multiple.

Paintings are singular. Sculptures were not and are still not, necessarily. But we rarely view this multiplicity as a positive characteristic but rather as something regrettable, which we may have to acknowledge but tend to prefer not to dwell on. Editions and the size of editions at best seem uninteresting and at worst positively embarrassing. Instead we have a funny way of seeking originality or aura in sculpture, looking either for the first cast or the notionally original plaster when, in fact, as Derek pointed out to me, the last in a run of casts may be more successful, because the detailed technical aspects have now been fully mastered. And, indeed our interest in originality has rather oddly been located at the beginning rather than at the end of the sculptural process.

We try to find singularity in sculpture by looking for the first sketch in clay or the original clay model, and then we look for the lifetime cast, hypothetically controlled by the artist. How many exhibitions have been devoted to sketch models and maquettes and how few to comparing the end results? We are much happier with the idea of uniqueness than with reproduction, though this may be a modern blind spot, which in fact ignores the way in which images have acquired their power. If we are first to acknowledge and then to explore the fact that editioning may involve meaning, then we can face up to one of the fundamental attributes of cast sculpture, along with the fact that we need to acknowledge that the motivation is, as often as not, primarily economic, as made clear by the fact that even contemporary video sculpture is produced in small and carefully-guarded editions.

Discussions leading up to this symposium led to the exhibition that we have on show here today, which is in itself an unusual sequence and an important chance to take stock of the multiple character of sculpture and what this can tell us about an artist's intention. In our discussions, it seemed to me

that the conservatorial half of our team took it as read that the artist's intention was their primary guiding light. But to this I think we have to add our, the viewers', interpretations.

So how do I read these sculptures, in terms of why they were cast in a multiple edition? I think we might see Rodin as comparatively unconcerned with the various reproductions of his *The Age of Bronze*. Many examples were cast in his lifetime, consecutively but at irregular intervals over time according to demand, rather than together at the same time as part of an artistic exercise. Moreover, Rodin probably relied upon casting as a way of assuring a work's future while restricting its availability in the present. Perhaps, therefore, our own reading of the multiplicity of *The Age of Bronze* means as much, if not more, as that of the artist.

This would seem quite unlike Giacometti who, in his portraits of his brother Diego, suddenly steps outside normal practice to finish his bronzes by painting them. One is tempted to read this as a highly personalized and familiar gesture for his brother. But we know that Alberto painted his bronzes on other occasions and seems to have used the multiple but similar surfaces offered to him in one bronze edition to extend and make good what canvases never could — that is, the continued possibility of choice and of temporary or coexistent multiple conclusions.

For Jeff Koons, on the other hand, the potential of reproducibility and the possibility of exact reproduction is a one-off notion to be tried as its own objective. Jeff Koons' use of the reproduction is, of course, very different to that of Rodin. By the 1980s multiple casting was no longer the norm within the practice of sculpture. Koons made his metal editions precisely to test the possibility of eliminating variation. Giacometti, on the other hand, used casting and editioning so as to assay difference not sameness, while Rodin, thirdly, may well not have been interested in either sameness or difference. He used casting for a functional reason, to disseminate his work in the world and among those who wished to acquire it.

The theory behind casting is to make more than one copy available in the same way. Koons tests the truth of this theory in his Louis XIV. Is real similitude possible? Do we feel more or less comfortable with Koons' attempt to use casting for what it is or what it is meant to be than with

Giacometti's interest in pointing up the difference or with Rodin's apparent indifference to the means of reproduction and its potential significance?

Rodin's work is a rather private early work which became public because of the controversy it caused. It came to advertise Rodin and the struggle of genius, and collectors wanted it as such. A much-reproduced work, which nevertheless spoke of authenticity and determination, *The Age of Bronze* was rather like the calling card of the artist. Giacometti's work is a family portrait. Do we see it as a private gesture or as part of his persona as an artist? Diego's image had to be uncovered by his portraitist, whereas Louis XIV was an image already captured whether or not it was Louis XIV himself. Giacometti's Diego looks as if it might slip away from us, while Louis XIV sits there as proud and as shining as a soup tureen. Koons' use of Louis XIV as his subject is not unimportant. The Sun King was as interested in his image as Koons was, and his reign was much associated with narcissism and, of course, with absolutism. Royal busts would have originally been widely reproduced at the behest of the ruler. Now they are multiple because the artist wishes them to be so.

The fact that casting can lead us to evaluate at the same time the notions of sameness and difference means that it leads us to explore the meaning of sculpture itself. Sculpture has long been a multiple art, and its multiplicity has been subject to abuse as much as to invention. We judge in gross, and we judge in detail. Multiplicity can be used well, creatively, but it can also be used in ways which appall those who have had the fortune of seeing the so-called original.

Some sculptors are subject to, or are the engines of, abuse during their lifetimes; others, only posthumously. Rodin was discrete, if not secretive, about his works' reproduction, and this led to a shock at his death, in which the values of his sculptures were questioned. This gave rise ultimately to a project such as that by Koons or those by Allan McCollum or Sherri Levine, in which the reproduction of sculpture is the subject of sculpture. On the one hand, stainless steel gives the impression of silver and of luxury, and on the other, of the perfection of the production line. This exhibition gives us a unique chance to consider the perfectibility of reproduction and to consider the passage of time as played out on nominally similar objects and to ask whether time enhances or warps variability and our ability to read the artist's intention.

This brings me to the second of our key words: states. Adam Gopnik was saying yesterday that you rarely see photographs with people in them, real people, so here's one. The idea of states of sculpture can be taken in a technical sense, a given stage on the road to reproduction. Or, in a more realistic sense, the different states which affect a sculptor's look and their reading of it. And, to a large extent, these states are connected with time and space. We think of sculpture as rather permanent, as rather durable. Conservators will tell you that they are anything but. The changes which sculptures will undergo may happen at the time they are made, because the artists wishes them, or because a client demands them, or much later because of the conditions under which they have changed. Changes can be absolutely deliberate or very much accidental. Understanding how best to restore the original surface and how best to deal with a sculpture's contemporary conditions are not necessarily compatible. Artists' intentions may be documented, but they may still be open to question. Tapes, photographs and words are as open to investigation as the sculpture itself.

Giacometti's portrait, painted bronze, was somewhere between painting and sculpture and an excellent synthesis of his two practices. Its features struggle to cohere. Its painted surface gives it an endless impermanence, a refusal to settle, which contrasts and contradicts the very stability of Koons. As so often with later Giacometti, the material is cast as provisional and even unsatisfactory. His broken and multiple surfaces refuse the skin of sculpture and its containing profile. Giacometti's paint makes his bronze wet, clay-like, close to his touch, close to the effort and not the result. However, Koons speaks about complicity [sic] and of pictorialism, graphic and defined image rather than of the process of attempting to define and grasp the image. The surface of Koons rejects not only our eyes and our questions, but it almost succeeds in rejecting time itself. It seems to deny the aging process. So this is how I want to understand Giacometti and Koons, their use of casting, of editioning and of these works. This is how I make sense of this nexus. We have to take account, and we have to listen to our own interpretation, to think about how we understand the sculpture.

A sculpture's history is often communal, and alongside an artist's intention, I think we need to deal with our own intentions and also with dealers' and museums' intentions. A professional conservator can link sculptures to a given institution rather like children to a family, because they show the way they have been looked after. Indeed their histories of care make a very ready link to the notion of institutionalized childcare. You can tell who's been looking after these sculptures; you can tell



whether they've had good or bad parents. Besides which, what about accepting changing meaning and changing circumstance and unplanned results? We may find more beautiful, more meaningful, more poignant artworks which have survived to speak to us in what must be very different ways than their author's intended. As authors, as historians, as viewers, we can appreciate the hand of history in the figures from Romanesque cathedrals. For example, all figures from Greece and Rome. And indeed Rodin was very affected by the effects which time had wrought on the sculptures on the cathedrals of Chartres and Rheims and of the Greek and Roman pieces that he himself collected.

Time moves at different speeds across the surfaces of sculptures. After only 40 years, Eva Hesse's latex sculptures are almost irretrievably aged, but bronze, however, has traditionally lasted well. Outdoor sculptures raise questions of restoration most quickly, and it is relevant to ask whether Rodin himself could have accepted the effects of only 100 years of weather and time, as visible in the Leeds' *The Age of Bronze*, which you see on the left when it was outdoors. [For an image: [www.leeds.gov.uk/artgallery/art\\_sculpt09.html](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/artgallery/art_sculpt09.html).] Sculpture is seen as something rather solid. We know it changes with time, use and touch. This much is well known, but we tend not to associate this continual state of evolution with surface. We tend to associate sculpture with solid state rather than with its effervescent changing surface. Yet with these three sculptures, chosen because they are cast, all from metal, the choices are associated with their surface, the top layer of the more or less constant substructure.

The surface of a sculpture is an arena of choice for some sculptors and not for others, but it is always an area involving choice for the conservator. So we're looking here at something rather like a painter's finish and the choices which are bound up with surface are our subject today. We're not looking so much at form or its subject as at how these matters are also expressed in their finish, so we're looking at that fine and fleeting touché or layer, that area in which the artist makes a final and determining choice, or series of choices, and most pertinently, for today perhaps, that area in which a contemporary conservator has to exercise special judgment. Surfaces vanish, break up and discolor, and it is here on this skin-thin domain that intentions can be lost, rediscovered and remade. This is, in the phrase coined by Jim Coddington, who was part of our advisory group during our discussions, the discretionary surface. This, in an important sense, comes from the conservator's point of view. The conservator's discretion is enacted according to what he or she judges to be the artist's choice. It

is a surface which embodies possibility. It has no one way of being, and it's up to us to judge how it might best be now.

Today we have the unique possibility of looking at, to compare, the same works with different after-lives, and this is a vast admission of the multiple character of sculpture, a fundamental but frequently sectioned aspect of the art. Now we can focus on sameness and difference, on the works which have led different lives and whose appearances, for better or worse, have been chosen for them, according to different curatorial and conservatorial decisions. So if we look at casting as a way of effecting difference as much as sameness, we are perhaps closer to the heart of the problem. This is a problem which should affect art historian and conservator alike. To what extent should we embrace difference within an edition? To what extent was it the artist's intention to make change? To what extent is it our wish to present difference, and to what extent should we restore sameness? Thank you.

### ***A Conservator's Point of View, Presentation by Derek Pullen***

Thank you, Penelope, and welcome, everyone. When Penelope and I were discussing how we should present this part of the symposium, she suggested that it was an opportunity to present my own credo. Well, credo or creed would be far too grand a title for it, but something said by David Sylvester, the writer on art and maker of exhibitions, has been important to me for a long time. He said something to the effect that looking at detail risks missing the overall picture, but not looking at detail is not looking at all. I often recall Sylvester's remark both as a reminder to take a step back and as justification for what, as a conservator, I enjoy doing most. That is exploring sculptures through their details. While we have many aids to assist looking at sculptures, perhaps the most useful is a willingness to empathize both with the object and its maker. I do believe that you can only do this by trying to read the sculptor making his decisions right down to the fine detail.

Today we have an opportunity to go further than just looking and to benefit from the insights of a range of experts to explore why sculptures look as they do and what meaning their similarities and differences carry for us. Like Penelope, I'll be suggesting questions to stimulate debate. For example, the Koons' busts of Louis XIV stand here like identical twins, which even the adopted parents, the owners, can't be sure of which is which. Would it matter if the wrong one was sent

back? I sort of know it would, but *why* is the interesting question here, and I think Adam addressed this a little last night.

So we decided to examine the title, *Variable States*. The phrase describes what, as a conservator, I understand to be the nature of things. In the material world, the world of materials, constant states don't exist. All materials are liable to change, but the rate of change is itself variable. It can be speeded up or slowed down by how we decide to treat the material. It's no surprise, for example, that outdoor bronzes corrode faster than indoor ones. Variable can also mean adjustable, so there is choice. We can often slow down the rate of change, but only if that's the right thing to do. First, we have to characterize the condition of an object, its state, establish what we're dealing with, and then determine its potential for change and the significance of that change.

For example, a rusting armature in a plaster threatens to burst the plaster as it expands. It has to be dealt with, but a corroding outdoor bronze may be intended to turn green, or not. The condition, which may be consistent with long outdoor exposure, can mislead spectators into thinking the sculpture is meant to look weathered. Or, the aged appearance may help the viewers to identify with the work, say, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After all, we don't expect such works to be in perfect condition, and it can indeed be very unnerving when such works are in perfect condition. These are judgments about variability best worked out in the sort of discussions we'll be having here today. And, the collaborative approach does happen outside these conferences, but not perhaps as often as it should.

As part of the characterization process, we can collect large amounts of technical detail about a sculpture. We can analyze the material, the alloy, the core, the surface coating, and we can measure the dimensional and weight variations between one cast and another. Conservators thrive on identifying these different states. A simple technique, which is also the most prized privilege of conservators is to handle the works, to touch — with gloves on, of course — to feel, as well as measure the weight, to look underneath and inside the bronze, and perhaps see whether it's been made by sand-casting or lost wax technique. Immediately, we're let into a secret and feel more engaged with both the sculpture and sculptor.

In this context, bronze casting itself is almost a secret process. Each foundry does it slightly differently. Processes and foundry work has changed, and they rarely document what they do. There are still far too few descriptions of the making of sculpture that make it come alive and still nothing at all to match Cellini's account of the casting of his *Perseus* in 16<sup>th</sup> century Florence, for conveying the excitement and the complexity of the casting process. So lacking good firsthand accounts of what happens in the foundries, we often have to rely on the information embedded in the object, summed up in the phrase, "Not written in words, but wrought by labor." Less hands-on are non-destructive technologies borrowed from medicine and engineering, such as x-rays and ultrasound scans that need no samples or interference with the object. They show the hidden structure of sculptures that need interpretation.

We may see some more x-rays later today of both the Nasher and the National Gallery plaster [of *The Age of Bronze*]. Put this information together with what we can learn with the naked eye, perhaps supplemented by ultraviolet or raking light examination — and you'll see, today, people using torches rather like CSI actors to examine pieces carefully — we can start to formulate how a figure was made and perhaps for what purpose. Today, facing three groups of sculpture, we are largely without technical data, and we'll have to speculate and hypothesize. There will be evidence, what we can see and what others know, and a few may be allowed to touch, but mostly we shall have to rely on the insights of scholarship and people's experience of related sculptures.

Penelope mentioned conservators' reliance on preserving the artist's intent as a guiding principle for our actions. And let me stress here that that's not the same as trying to keep objects in perfect original condition. Intent has become much more important as another guiding principle for conservation. "Reversibility" has been much more closely examined. So-called reversible treatments sometimes fail to recognize that change never stops, especially in outdoor situations. Reversibility is still an aspiration, but more and more we're looking to sustainable treatments that recognize that some change is unavoidable. We opt for actions that involve the minimum of actual interference with a sculpture and concentrate on achieving equilibrium with its environment. This might be a carefully balanced maintenance program or a display case with low humidity micro-climate to reduce corrosion. At stake are the subtle distinctions of surface color and texture where we might expect the sculptor to have had the final say.

Sometimes this results in a conflict of purpose, as in the case of Brancusi. The sculptor insisted some of his work should be highly polished and forbade the use of lacquer to preserve that polish.

Polishing the metal, however, wears away inscriptions and highlights the imperfections that exist in every cast bronze. Nowadays we try to interview sculptors and record their views on display, surface change, maintenance and future restoration. We record details of when, where, how and why the sculptures were made and their relationship to other works in the sculptor's oeuvre. Which changes in the future would matter and which would not, what matters more to the artist — fingerprints on a polished bronze or the absence of lacquer? Always, we try to suggest solutions, but I'm strongly of the opinion that conservators should not seek to take the edge off contemporary works by making them too safe. Standing back a little has this additional meaning.

One way of structuring the discussions that follow would be to ask, what would we want to know from Rodin and Giacometti if they were here now? After all, we can ask Koons if he REALLY requires that his casts should be perfect replicas and remain so, forever. It seems to me that when sculptors do articulate why they do something, they often give very practical reasons and are highly aware of limitations imposed by cost, space and availability of materials. Unfortunately, there's nothing to stop them contradicting themselves next time they're interviewed. If, however, a sculptor uses the sculpture rather than words to express meaning, then we can confront the conservation problems they pose in a similarly tacit way by silently questioning the object. Sometimes the right thing to do is the one that feels right by the sculpture. I am tempted to call this judgment, "Artist's intent by proxy." A sculptor may indeed have no view about the future of the works, or their known likes and dislikes may be reinterpreted to suit various arguments. Henry Moore once rhapsodized over the streaky corrosion patterns on the horse's belly of the Marcus Aurelius equestrian statue in Rome. They form a sort of contour map that hugs the bronze form, not unlike the lines in Moore's own drawings, but I've heard this taken as license to leave Moore's own bronzes to corrode as he would have wished. In some cases, maybe, but not when one observes that Moore's later bronzes all left the foundry with a lacquer coating designed specifically to resist the corroding effects of outdoor display and preserve the inner and outer contrasts of his distinctive light and dark brown patinas. (By the way, the Marcus Aurelius, which was taken indoors for conservation, is now kept indoors, and a replica is in its place in a covered area.)

For this reason, Tate decided some years ago not to loan casts for outdoor display any longer. The Henry Moore Foundation also has a collection of casts, many from the same editions as Tate's. The Foundation does lend to outdoor venues and despite good maintenance has now and then to repatinate its bronzes. Most of Tate's Moores will remain as a sort of reference collection, displayed in much less harsh conditions indoors where we can confidently predict their slower rate of change. The Henry Moore Foundation's and Tate's complementary display policies are only a temporary answer to a question closely linked to today's theme: how variable can variable states become?

I've spoken a lot about outdoor bronzes because that inside versus outside decision is something we can all recognize as crucial to the rate at which sculptures will change. Cleaning and maintenance decisions are also key factors in the long-term appearance of outdoor sculptures. Cleaning is one of the most easily misapplied conservation techniques, which can lead to large collections of bronzes acquiring a uniform oxidized finish that masks and possibly destroys variations that were present when first made. In Central London, bronze statues were, for many years after the Second World War, government-maintained. They all acquired a uniform black patina due to the identical cleaning and oiling treatment applied to them without regard for the bronzes' original appearance. Here, today, we can all participate in the evaluation of different and similar appearances and perhaps discuss how they have arisen. We'll need to go beyond the technical explanations and probe how we feel about these differences.

This is the sort of standing back, look hard and feeling at a deliberately subjective level, that I think is helpful to decision-making in conservation. As an example, we had the Medardo Rosso exhibition that was held here earlier this year. For many decades before his death, Rosso's technique was described as modeling in wax over plaster — that's **modeling** in wax over plaster. But even before I looked in detail at any Rosso wax sculpture, it seemed to me odd that any artist would churn out essentially the same sculpture over and over again by so laborious a technique. Indeed, when one looks at the detail, all Rosso's sculptures show signs of **casting**, and there are no indications of original modeling. The waxes, the bronzes, the plasters, they're all cast. I think Rosso was very unusual in his interest in exploiting the potential of casting to yield similar but different sculptures — the variable states of our title here. Few sculptors think of editions as opportunities for experiment

and variation, and I realize this is something we're going to have to discuss a bit more. Does it defame their intentions to suggest that for the most part they aim to make an object and then move on?

Here, I'm suggesting that many variable states are accidentally buried or are executed beyond the control of the artist. The Picasso *The Cubist Portraits of Fernande Olivier* exhibition, also shown here earlier this year, showed that, having made his clay model in a burst of creative intensity, Picasso had relatively little — one could almost say very little — interest in what happened afterwards, as numerous bronze versions of it were cast over the next 50 years or so. Research started by Valerie Fletcher and Shelley Sturman continues, but it has been suggested that the earliest Fernande bronzes were less faithful to the form of the plasters than the later bronzes. In the latter, there is an improvement in exact replication that represents changes in foundry practices from sand-casting to lost wax and from piece molds to gelatin and silicon rubber molds. What do we make of this? Do we value the authenticity of the rough bronze cast shortly after the sculpture was conceived in clay more than the exactitude of the much later casts?

This hanging question leads on to my final suggestion for our discussion today: posthumous casts. There's a market for posthumous casts because they supply a demand for the almost-real thing. The laws relating to copyright and taxation regulate this trade. It thus operates within legal limits and fulfills a useful function. For example, we wouldn't have any Degas bronzes at all, nor quite so many Rodins. Nonetheless, what I view when I know a work is a posthumous cast makes me feel uncomfortable, no matter how right the form. Again, I think we're talking about feelings and things that Adam addressed last night.

However, posthumous, bad/lifetime, good is just too easy a division. What are the lifetime bronzes? Perhaps heads of Fernande cast 50 years later, which the sculptor probably never saw. Indeed how many sculptors do see every cast in an edition? Is the meaning of these disconnected casts so different from a posthumous cast or an unauthorized copy? So Penelope and I both peppered our presentations with unanswered questions as our contribution to today's discussions. They illustrate the different interests and backgrounds we bring to looking at sculpture and the overlaps. Let me finish with a thought that echoes both Adam Gopnik's and Penelope's presentations. They stressed

how we must have a relationship with what sculptures have become, with what they mean to us as well as to the artist. In examining sculptures in detail and in looking for evidence of artists' intent, I often have to admit with a slightly cynical eye, that technical factors determine appearance more often than is widely realized. I believe it does lead to a relationship with the object that enhances our ability to preserve its past and present meanings. Thank you.

### **Joint Presentation**

PC: We're just going to finish with a final joint presentation in which we try and improve how we have talked to each other. What we're going to show you is the Rodin *The Age of Bronze*, which is in the collection in Leeds where I work. [For an image: [www.leeds.gov.uk/artgallery/art\\_sculpt09.html](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/artgallery/art_sculpt09.html).] We acquired this ten years ago, so at that time — ten years ago — I sought Derek's advice, because Derek is the most well-known conservator of modern sculpture in Britain, and we had a discussion about this. We didn't really agree. Then ten years later, this conference provided another opportunity for us to get together, and we thought this was a sensible work to come back to and look at it again together and discuss how our points of view coincided or differed. Just to give you a little bit of history, this piece was commissioned from Rodin by the Beckett family in London, and they ordered it in 1908. The first cast that arrived from Rodin in Paris, they didn't like, and they sent it back to Rodin. Unfortunately, although the letters in the Rodin Museum tell us that much, they don't tell us why they didn't like it. Anyway, it was sent back to Paris, a second version came back to London, they liked it, and they sent it to their Yorkshire estate and put it in the gardens. It was outdoors in Yorkshire for 100 years, and then we bought it in 1994. I'm sorry. It's very poorly displayed in these photographs. It's a temporary position, but this is how Derek and I looked at it in the summer. I think we still felt that we came at it really quite differently.

DP: Yes. Originally, when Leeds first got the piece, you displayed it in the glazed entrance porch in daylight, and it certainly looked great there. But my first reaction on seeing this piece was, well, when are you going to restore it, because here was a piece that had been outside for 80 years, would it be?



PC: Nearly a century.

DP: Nearly a century. Okay. What I saw was a great example of outdoor weathering, and I found it very difficult to get beyond that. This whole conference has sort of loosened me up, my view on this, but I wondered, going back to Leeds to see it with Penelope, whether I would just sort of cave in and say, no, you're right. Leave it. In fact, when I saw it again, I have had the same feeling, and I do find the streaking, the corrosion, distracting. It's safe, and I commend Leeds. It's been well looked after. No further harm is going to come to this piece if you do nothing at all, but we're really back to two viewpoints. On the one hand, I think, Penelope, you see it as beautiful. And it is beautiful, but I look at it and say, but it's corroded. One of the things I'd be interested in doing now, because I think we're running pretty well on time, is to actually hear some things from the audience. You may want to say a little bit as these slides run through.

PC: I think what I learned from talking with Derek about this, again, was that one of the reasons that allowed me, I felt as a responsible curator, not to have this piece fully restored was because there were so many other versions. Therefore, I felt that — as we can see here already — there are three different bronzes, and we know that there are probably 19 or 20 lifetime casts of this piece in different places. Even just in England, there are examples in Manchester, which is near Leeds, and in London, so people can see how this piece looks, and they can see it in a much more original and complete and cohesive and coherent patina. So I think I did find this corrosion quite beautiful, and I also thought that, because there were so many other versions, that gave me some license to leave it as it was, to stabilize it, but to leave it as it was. I think I felt that its 100-year history outdoors in a garden in a Yorkshire country home was now part of its meaning. I suppose that's where we differed, because I think Derek to a certain extent could see that there was some beauty, but it was wrong. This was damage, and he saw this as a damaged body, really, that needed to be restored. You also felt, Derek, I think, that the corrosion meant that you read the sculpture wrongly so that its highlights and darks and lights were incorrect. So, I felt we came to look very much at the surface like a painter and that the color balance was wrong on this painting.

DP: Yeah, I think that's a good summary. I wonder if perhaps we could have some comments.

### **Question & Answer Session**

Q: How much is the curatorial view also colored by our knowledge that Rodin loved accident. He believed in fragmentation, often abused and misused things considerably during his own career as a sculptor. So that your sense of beauty is also perhaps a sense of what you might think Rodin ...[inaudible].

PC: Yes, I think already we've been looking at the Rodins next door and looking at what we would like to see as the embrace of accident by Rodin, because we know what an inventive and experimental artist he was. But I think in this case I felt — it didn't seem such a hard decision because there were so many other examples. Therefore, I thought it was that that allowed me not to make the difficult decision. Whereas if this had been a unique cast, I would have felt obliged, probably, to restore it to something more like an original patina.

Q: Rodin clearly knew he wanted to achieve a certain kind of effect in his outdoor works. In fact in some of his letters he specified whether he wanted to do an indoor work or an outdoor work. So he had patinas that were specifically meant to be left outside and age, and so it is very different, I think, than the earlier version of *Thinker* that you showed which was an extremely good example of why you do need to reverse the corrosion process. Looking at artist's intentions and looking at the state of the work are two things that I think also need to be carefully balanced and whether or not we can determine whether something is as he intended or not is, of course, very difficult but we can look at something and say how far it has been removed from what he might have intended. That does put us on a subjective level.

DP: Thank you.

Q: I'm perplexed by two issues that keep coming up. I think of what Adam said last night that close looking at objects is close looking at time but then I hear what you're saying Derek and I think about if this were a painting and this were not a coexistent multiple, as you said Penelope, we would feel that this damage interfered with the image as we saw it and we

would feel the need to pull it together visually to preserve the artist's intent. So, I'm wondering if we are really talking about artist intent at all. But what Adam was saying about our relationship with time.

PC: I think you've put your finger on the difference between painting and sculpture. The outdoor question is a very big one, and one of the questions is, should we accept this work as an outdoor sculpture, or should we see it as an indoor sculpture? Should we restore it to an indoor state? To come back to the earlier comment from the audience, I think this is where painting and sculpture are different. If you have a big cast, a big edition, then you're interested in seeing the difference between the different casts, aren't you? Whereas if you have painting, you feel you must restore it to something like what you feel it should have been originally.

Q: [audience response from earlier comment] Well, I think that's right. What I'm interested in is how we use that term "artist's intent" to discuss both.

Q: I would like to add one more thing to your comment on the difference between painting and sculpture. This object stands on its form as well as its surface. And what you are addressing is its surface.

PC: Yes. So you would agree with Derek that its form is currently eroding, and it should be treated?

Q: That's interesting that you've asked that because Rodin is one place where I feel comfortable talking about this in this context. *Thinker* [Philadelphia Museum of Art cast], of course, was quite grotesque in its stripedness. To me, looking at it here, I keep thinking — well, I think your idea that there are a number of examples that exist — I would go with that, personally, but maybe [it is because] I was trained as an art historian before I switched to being a conservator. I would want to see this myself, if I were just judging this one piece, before I could evaluate because this is in a much more ambiguous zone. As my friend next to me said,

well, maybe I could mark out and get rid of a few stripes but not redo the whole thing. So there you are. If it was black — get rid of a few of the worst stripes.

PC: Yes. So you're very much in this discretionary area?

Q: Absolutely.

PC: So do you leave what you have, because this is its history, this is its 100-year history, or do you kind of take it back to some kind of unknown stage before it —

Q: Personally, I would probably, without thinking about it a lot and without seeing the real piece, because there are so many, leave it alone.

DP: The only problem is that I haven't seen many in preparation for this conference. I'm more comfortable with leaving it, but I'm very aware that for the people of Leeds, mostly, this will be the first time they've seen this piece. So I do think we sort of have to consider what they would make of it, not just what we would make of it.

Q: Just talking about this piece, the bronze, as compared to, let's say, *The Burgers of Calais*, and about the content of this piece, because it is still on some level about the birth of the world, about origin, a kind of newness, in other words, or freshness, it would seem to me, in terms of the content, the notion of the surface would demand a different kind of understanding than a later work, and I just wondered sort of why when you considered the surface, the actual meaning of this particular piece didn't seem to enter into the discussion. Maybe I'm just misinterpreting the work, but somehow the idea of the newness and freshness and beginnings would seem to be built into the surface notion here in a way it wouldn't necessarily with other pieces. Maybe that would, to some degree, also shape the way you would think of the patina over time.

PC: Yes. That's very interesting. I suppose what I'm probably coming back to all the time is, when this piece was conceived in 1877, it was conceived as some kind of awakening piece as

well as being a piece about being vanquished. But now, it is 130 years later, and it's had another history, and I find that I think that's part of its meaning now too. I keep coming back to the fact that I felt what would we have been trying to achieve if we had given this a complete restoration and what might we have lost? We would have given it something, I think, that was in some ways false, and in other ways, I feel that this is true. This is how it is, and we would be giving it a new surface that was a conservator's surface and a conservator's idea of what the original surface should have been like. In a sense, this has a truth to me. Although I can see that it's a different truth.

DP: We need to move on, but we could take just a very brief question ...

Q: When I saw just this one single cast, I tended to agree with Derek saying that yes, the actual forms which made up the whole sculpture are being disturbed by these vertical lines. On the other hand, considering that there are several casts existing, I think you made a very good point of argument. This should be taken further on, however. I can only accept this point of argument if I assume that there is a very close and serious connection between all the owners of the casts and all the treatment and the point of view of all of them. I think it really should have been addressed. Assuming this, and assuming that this half is functioning extremely well, Penelope has a good argument, saying that this is something which happened and can show us what can happen or what might have happened. The bottom line is, 100 years after this piece has been outside, we have no idea if Rodin were here whether he would say okay, or no. Therein is a point that depends on which point we want to make. We could pull quotes from the artist or somebody who knew the artist, pro or contra. So I wouldn't be peaceful in my mind about this sculpture, until I'm clear about all of these questions, and I would really suggest the issue of whether we really communicate enough about these authentic copies that we can really afford leaving one this way, one the other way? Do we trust our colleagues enough that we would have some kind of global benefit from this?

DP: I think that moves us nicely to the next session.

**Sculpture and Conservation Conference  
The Age of Bronze Gallery Discussion and  
Panel Discussion with Audience Questions  
Dallas, Texas, October 22-23, 2004**

**Session Speaker Key**

**MB**    **Malcolm Baker**  
**RB**    **Ruth Butler**  
**DG**    **David Getsy**  
**AL**    **Andrew Lins**  
**JS**    **Joel Shapiro**  
**Q**     **Question or commentary from the audience**

**Gallery Discussion**

**MB:** All right. Here we are in our first gallery session, with the experiment of broadcasting our discussions back to the auditorium. We should introduce ourselves. I'm Malcolm Baker. I teach at the University of Southern California, and I'm a curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum. I came to this general topic from the study of earlier sculpture, particularly the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**RB:** I'm Ruth Butler. I'm a retired professor from the University of Massachusetts, and I've been working on Rodin's sculpture all my scholarly life. Three things I'd mention. I worked with Al Elsen on putting together the extensive *Rodin Rediscovered* exhibition at the National Gallery in 1981. And I catalogued part of the sculpture collection in the National Gallery, which has one of the most important collections of Rodins in the country including mostly lifetime works. I published a biography of Rodin in 1993, that was the first biography of Rodin based on the archives at the Musée Rodin, which had recently been opened.

**AL:** I'm Andrew Lins. I'm a conservator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and at the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia.

**JS:** I'm Joel Shapiro. I'm a sculptor and not an expert on Rodin, but I'm interested. I hope I have some insights.

DG: My name is David Getsy. I am a Getty post-doctoral fellow and a visiting scholar at Harvard University, and I work on modern sculpture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

MB: Good. So that's who we are. Perhaps I should say, as the moderator, something about the format of these three sessions. We'll have changing groups for each of the three groups of works, but myself and David will be constants, as it were. Our format is innovative, just as this show is really very innovative. I can't think of any other show, or very few shows, which have gathered together versions of the same works from this period.

RB: There was the recent Medardo Rosso show that included multiple versions of works, and then back in 1975, *Metamorphosis* at Harvard University gathered together 19<sup>th</sup>-century casts.

MB: Yes. But it's still rather unusual. And we are very much feeling our way, but we trust that our format and procedure will work. We'll have a discussion here in the gallery, in each of three sessions. We'll have an art historian giving an introduction, then a response from a conservator, followed by a general discussion. Then we'll migrate back into the auditorium to have a discussion with everybody. But the whole point of having a small group here in the gallery is that we can be in front of the works and talk and walk around them, discussing the specifics of each piece and direct one-to-one comparisons. So that's the format. We'll begin with Ruth.

RB: I hope that some of the people here have been able to walk into this gallery and look from a distance at the three bronze casts of *The Age of Bronze* and think about their differences. Some of you might have known already that one of them had been left outdoors, and two of them have always been inside. All three were done by the same foundry, by Rudier, and they are only five years apart. One was done in Rodin's lifetime, in 1915, one was done around 1920, and one was done — well, two posthumous — and one was done in 1925. It would be easy, I think, to pick out the Philadelphia cast, the one from 1925, because it has been out of doors, but ponder the other two and see what you think: a posthumous cast and a lifetime cast. I won't say any more about that now.

We're talking about multiples and casts and many versions, but when we talk about *The Age of Bronze*, what we want to think about is that it is a truly unique work in Rodin's oeuvre. First of all, it is a life-size work. You'll see other works that feel life-size, like *Eve* or *Saint John the Baptist*, but they are over-life-size; they read as life-size. But this is a life-size work, and that's a unique aspect of it. Another unique aspect is that Rodin worked on it for a long time, for a year and a half. If you think about the *Balzac*, he worked on that for about six years, but there are many, many versions, studies, and all sorts of approaches to the subject. But *The Age of Bronze* exists only in this version. Rodin worked on the clay original, full-size, for a year and a half, and he never did that again. Another aspect of its uniqueness is that he did it in a foreign country, in Belgium, and he did it for the purpose of propelling himself home again. Another aspect of its very special place in the life of Rodin, the career of Rodin, is that it was the impetus for the most important commission of his life, the work we call *The Gates of Hell*. So it's absolutely unique and crucial.

Rodin began working on this in the second half of 1875. He was living in Brussels with his mistress Rose Beuret, and he hired a soldier as a model. That's very important, because it's the beginning of our thinking about Rodin as a man who didn't like professional models, who preferred really to form the model, the physical person, himself in terms of sculpture. Also, it had particular meaning because the model originally had a lance. Rodin had the soldier hold a lance in his hand, as a reference to the recent war. Rodin had left France because of the Franco-Prussian War in a kind of economic exile, so the war was still a big subject, and the work began as a subject related to a warrior. But as he said to Truman Bartlett, who had interviews with Rodin in the '70s and '80s, "I began with a warrior, but by the time I was really working on it, I just wanted to do a beautiful nude sculpture -- something that was very cohesive, that would hold together."

In the middle of the work, he decided that he had to see Italy, so he went to Italy for one month in 1876 to see Michelangelo and to see works of antiquity that would play into his inspiration. He came back to Brussels, finished the work and had it ready to show in 1877, in January. By the way, Auguste Neyt — the soldier — gave interviews about modeling for this.



He said it was really tough. He would work three and four hours a day, an hour at a time, but Rodin did not want muscles to be too tight or too prominent. So he had to keep changing the pose and to get it in just the right position. Finally they showed the sculpture, and Rodin had some help from a critic in deciding on a title. Referring to a warrior, they called it *The Vanquished One*. Everyone has seen in the title not only a reference to the war Rodin fled but also to himself, to a self-portrait element — and I absolutely believe that — that Rodin felt himself in the work. It is a figure that seems to grow, the way the feet are close together, the knees apart, tight hips, chest expanding, arms moving away from the body, and the head slightly up. So it's a growing figure. He suppressed the lance for exhibition, and this made for a lot of confusion. People didn't know what the figure really meant. It lost its warrioriness, and when he prepared it for his big homecoming, at the Salon of 1877 in Paris, he thought that he'd better change the title, because it hadn't worked in Brussels. He changed it to *The Age of Bronze*. This, too, is very contemporary because Hesiod had just been translated into French, so it was the Ages of Man, the Third Age of Man, to which he refers. And this whole sense of growth and awakening was very much a part of its meaning.

A very ugly thing had happened in Brussels, actually. In one of the newspaper reviews a critic said, "What part casting from life has played in this statue, we cannot tell." Of course, Rodin was furious, and he wrote letters to the editor and so forth. But the slur followed him to Paris and was always repeated. People said, "We don't know what part casting plays" or "I believe that it's an honest work; nevertheless, it's a rather crass work." So the reviews were not particularly good. Rodin felt that he had to prove that his figure was honest, that it was not a cast from life, which was a perfectly legitimate 19<sup>th</sup>-century practice. So he went to the head of The Fine Arts Commission and got no response at all from the Marquis des Chennevières. Two years later, 1879, Edmond Turquet became Minister of Fine Arts, so he went to Turquet, and Turquet who had seen and liked the work in its plaster form in the Salon of 1877 said, "Let's get a commission together. Artists will look at it." They came back with a couple of reports, and the final one good, indicating that it was really an excellent work from an outstanding sculptor, so the State purchased it.

Then the first bronze cast, which this is not, was commissioned by the State. They paid 2,000 francs for the plaster and paid 2,200 francs to have it cast in bronze by the foundry, Thiebaut. The rest of its 19<sup>th</sup>-century history is that by 1884 the bronze cast was moved into the Jardin du Luxembourg where it stayed until 1889 and was then shown at the Universal Exhibition, the great exhibition of the Tour Eiffel.

MB: That's the one we saw earlier in the slide? [Slide shown earlier by Ruth Butler before gallery session began.]

RB: That's what we saw. We saw the one in the garden. That's the only one that existed, so they moved that indoors for the exhibition in 1889. Rodin, as I said, wanted it to be restored for the show. They didn't do it. They moved it back into the garden, where it remained until the end of the century.

RB: Rodin had a lot of blows in the '90s, so he was very depressed about his career, but Judith Cladel organized a great exhibition in 1899 for Brussels and Amsterdam. Actually, it had four venues in the Lowlands. She wanted to put in *The Age of Bronze* but he said, "No, no, no. I've done better things since. Let's not bother." She tells the story in one of her books. She said, "I took him to the Jardin du Luxembourg and began to slowly walk him over to the Boulevard St. Michel into the grove where it was installed. He stood for a long time, looked at it, and he said, 'It really is beautiful.'" So he accepted it, re-accepted his work, which he had thought was overworked up until that point, and it was shown in the great 1900 retrospective, in bronze, in the Centennial Exhibition and in plaster in his own personal retrospective, and after that it became a world phenomenon. Orders began to pour in. It is the most exhibited work of Rodin's history. I can't say it has the most casts, but it is the most exhibited work. The Germans came after it, madly. They were the first. Americans bought it, too.

MB: So, let's focus on the casts in the exhibition.

AL: Well, maybe thinking a little bit further back to the question that arose regarding condition and whether Rodin really cared what happened to his pieces afterwards, the fact is that in '89, just four or five years after the first cast of this piece was in the Luxembourg garden, he wrote about it in two letters. In one of them, he says that he wants to “nettoyer patiner” the bronze. In the next letter, a couple of months later in April, he says that he just wants to clean it. But he obviously cared quite a bit about the appearance of his patina and his forms after a season of very bad weather, apparently, in Paris, and he went to the effort of trying to bring the piece to his studio, unsuccessfully, to have it brought back to a closer approximation of what he originally intended. We see that in other correspondence when there's something that has occurred unexpectedly to the bronzes. In the case, for example, of Max Linde's piece, that was cast about the same time as the Jacobsen casts were done, in 1901 — 1900 to 1901.

MB: Do you refer to this Philadelphia cast?

AL: Well, not this very one, but another version that was exposed outdoors. There was a flaw in the way it was cast, and it was joined with lead. Linde writes very unhappily to Rodin that there's something the matter with his version, and that he wishes to have the piece replaced. Rodin was extremely upset. He said that the founder who had worked for him and sent him that piece, which had been rushed to begin with, no longer worked for him, and it was supposed to be cast in one piece, by lost wax, and that he will replace it. Frankly, he made a very rapid replacement. Within two months or so, he had a new cast of *The Age of Bronze* sent to Linde, and Linde talked about its patina in his correspondence back to Rodin, which is recorded in the Detroit Institute of Arts' bulletin. Here and in further correspondence, you see that Rodin is very worried that the patina shows properly. Then he adds, more than once in his correspondence, that some of these things are up to nature and out of his control. He actually even writes a little regime for keeping the patina stable — that is, so that the surface state remains as stable as possible, by washing once a year.

JS: Isn't it inevitable that all outdoor sculpture will change and alter? When you look at these three pieces, the three bronzes, does it really matter that one is more eroded, or less eroded, or that one is brown, one is black and one is green? I mean, the work is so depictive, in itself,

that it overwhelms the surface variation. The surface aspect is really secondary. Now, if it's destructive to the sculpture, change it. But if it's not, let it be.

MB: But doesn't the surface really play a major role in the way we view and interpret the work?

JS: Well, I think his work is so depictive. It's the depiction that really is significant.

DG: You know, I have to disagree entirely. I think one of the things that we need to understand about this sculpture is how remarkable it was in relationship to what had come before it. The 19<sup>th</sup> century relied on a very precise and elaborate vocabulary of the figure that postulated clearly articulated anatomical structures and what, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they called naturalistic or the freshness of surface. That looks very different from what Rodin is doing here. There are all these great anecdotes about him climbing up on ladders, trying to look at the model from different viewpoints and studying the way that changes in light, his own position, and the model's movements alter the way we look at that body. So what he does in this work that's so remarkable is try to capture that physical and temporal engagement, that moving in and around the figure, by working on the surface itself. Because in a Rodin sculpture, beginning in this work and continuing, I think through all of them, the surface is this membrane. It represents the contact point between the sculptor, the material object and the viewer's vision. He put so much emphasis on the fleetingness of the perception. So if we look at these figures - they're wonderful, to have all three together - you see that they're all the same, yet they're remarkably different. Part of that comes through the subtle faceting that he did across the surface. So unlike an earlier 19<sup>th</sup>-century naturalistic figure where we would see the pectorals clearly articulated, here, it's almost difficult to figure out where they begin and where they end. This is what we're supposed to do. Look in this way. This is his own process.

JS: If that has a green patina and that one has a brown patina, how do you perceive one surface differently? That's what I'm asking.

DG: I think they're remarkably different.

JS: What aspect of the *form* is different?

RB: I want to jump in here, because I think that's a really important point. Nineteenth-century practice for successful sculptors involved shops. Sculptors like Carpeaux or Carrier-Belleuse, the people who prefigured Rodin, had shops. You could turn out what you could sell and put it in a shop, people would come in, and they could see things that were very, very similar. Rodin didn't want to be one of those people. He turned things out by order. And I think if we had three casts that had been produced by the same founder the same time that had the same finish, we would not find this as interesting an exhibition as it is.

JS: I think it's interesting, and it's pleasing, but I'm just talking about whether you have to return the sculpture to this mythic original state, which nobody knows what it is anyway. They have a vague idea what it is. Why bother doing that? Why not stabilize it? This piece, which is highly eroded [Philadelphia Museum of Art], you have a greater sense of the internal structure. You can see the seams and the welds and the this and the that.

MB: In a sense, this is much easier to look at, isn't it, than this better preserved example?

JS: Well, it's more abstract.

RB: Our eyes are different. We now have a big sophisticated public, and good wall texts that explain about casts and their process and histories. But not long ago, we just provided the name, the date, and people didn't even know when something was cast. Casting was a confusing subject. But now people are interested in that, so we have a different audience, and we can delve more into the process. With this one Rodin [PMA], the seams come out very strongly, which you don't see on the pieces that haven't been outside. Now, Rodin did not emphasize seams so early in his career.

AL: No, that's right.

- RB: He didn't want you to see the seams. It's early in the 1890s that he begins to think that seams are interesting, and we can now read the seams in this work and also find it interesting.
- DG: It is interesting information, but do these changes over time destroy our perception of Rodin's intent?
- RB: Not at all. Of course, he himself changed his opinions.
- DG: If we look at the bronze cast that's the darkest [Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco], Malcolm is very correct to say that it's difficult to see some of the facets in what's happening on the surface, in part because there's such an evenness to the tone. So with the weathered version [PMA], or also with the plaster [Nasher Collection], we can pick up those differentiations and see his modeling a little bit better, but one of the things that I think he was emphasizing was how difficult it should be to fix those details in the darkness of the bronze for which it was intended. The claims that it was cast from life came partly because it just seemed to be too complex for any one sculptor to have done it. That's really why it was called so remarkably real.
- JS: But if a piece is dark, it amplifies the mass.
- RB: It's interesting. You called it a brown cast, and the San Francisco catalogue calls it a brown cast, but I don't read it that way.
- JS: Well, I know, but that's its overall effect. If you were a foundry, and you wanted something to look like that, you'd talk about brown and green and ferrous oxide.
- AL: But the difference between then and now is that a lot of the foundries that produce a brown patina now just have one layer of brown, and this early cast [FAMSF] is actually built up in a much more sophisticated way. Certainly the later casts that were done after 1952 have very different surface treatments.

JS: But at foundries, you know, they use cold patinas and hot patinas. But a hot patina always requires a certain number of applications of the chemical, and there's endless beading and buffing —

AL: Oh, yes, absolutely. My comment was only that, in the case of the Rudier foundry and certainly the Limet patination shop that produced probably all of these patinas we see here today, they were pretty careful to build up a patina that they knew Rodin approved of. He actually talked a lot with Limet, corresponded with the workshop and vice versa, about what the thickness of the coloration of the patina would be and that it had to be just so. They obviously had a great understanding between each other as to what was an acceptable appearance. Limet also frequently commented on the quality of the cast that he received prior to the patination process.

JS: But even indoors, the patina will evolve.

RB: Yes, that's right. The patina lives.

JS: So I still don't know exactly, unless there are color photographs of Rodin's hot off the press and he's looking at them, how we know what the standard was.

MB: It's not a fixed point.

DG: It's kind of a red herring from some perspectives to continue to go after this sort of original state, especially with multiple castings.

AL: Well, from having done quite a lot of x-ray diffractions and other analyses over patinas that we've made, even a patina that looks stable will actually change even at room temperature, protected, in a period of five to ten years. It depends on the chemistry of the patina. They are not stable. They're not made of stable chemicals. They alter subtly, and the analysis that you made ten years ago will not be the same as what you get now, for quite a few patinas that were applied at Rodin's shop.

JS: Patina itself is about age. I mean, it really is about an attempt to emulate some older look.

AL: Right.

JS: I wish my works would patinate themselves.

AL: But Joel, don't you agree that Rodin wanted to control the appearance? He couldn't just let nature take over.

JS: I don't think there's anything wrong with patina, but I'm just saying that I don't know enough about Rodin to know what he wanted. Patina is decorative. Its very essence is decorative.

MB: The cast we saw earlier from Leeds [in presentation by Penelope Curtis], it has this association with the antique, like a Herculanean patina. It has an age value, and that might be one of the attractions.

RB: Rodin got into that, intellectually, later in his life. He really thought about the question. In the '90s, you begin to get a dull green patina under the influence of antiquities, but again, that's a later Rodin. It's not this early Rodin.

DG: I'd like to refocus this idea, I think, in terms of the variability of Rodin's intentions, not just through patina, which we're focusing a lot on, but also the very idea of casting. As Ruth said, at its outset, *The Age of Bronze* was a unique cast, which is why Rodin placed so much emphasis on the quality of that cast. But, in Rodin's career, casting became a conceptual endeavor for him, especially in plaster. So if you look at *The Gates of Hell*, those same figures were repeated in other sculptures. This is because he was playing with the ideas of replication and reproduce-ability on the conceptual level. It's the meat and potatoes of sculpture. But what's interesting is that we might be able to confidently say that by the time the later works were cast, regardless of when the original form was sculpted, his attitude toward allowing them to change also had changed. Much like Penelope was saying, once he



had multiple *The Age of Bronzes* out there, he may have found value in those levels of chance and variability and reproduce-ability.

MB: We talk about this as Rodin's first major work. We've very eloquently described that, but the fact that he went on producing versions of it means that it, as it were, crops up all through his career, doesn't it?

RB: Well, I think it's interesting that he turned his back on it, more or less.

MB: Oh, really?

RB: I mean, when he finally let it go to the mold-maker, it killed him to release it, but then he eventually did things that were so different and that he was so excited about that he turned his back on it. I love the story about Judith Cladel - that she has to take him into the garden to rediscover his work. It's a very beautiful story.

MB: Before we get back into the auditorium can we just turn to the plaster [Nasher]?

RB: Yes. Also, one more thing before we go back, and that is, as the orders began to pour in, in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they would come in with an *avec feuille de vigne* or *sans feuille de vigne* — with a fig leaf or without a fig leaf.

AL: But on that same point that you were making, the plasters were often sent to expositions as a kind of advertisement for sale, and one of the things that Rodin was pretty worried about, apparently, was the way in which his plasters were handled. It cost him a lot to make a nice bright white plaster. He would send them a long way away, and they'd come back dirty and broken. He writes about that with some aggravation, so he didn't let everything go. He was always careful that his work showed to best advantage so that it could be sold.

RB: I'd like to say something about the Philadelphia cast, which is very important. Paul Bartlett, a young sculptor, had a studio just down the street from Rodin and was a worshipper of Rodin.

There was no Rodin figure in the United States, and Bartlett wanted there to be one. So he got involved with the Pennsylvania Academy to acquire *The Age of Bronze* in plaster. This is remarkable, that in this country we had one Rodin, *The Age of Bronze* in plaster in 1896. Bartlett sort of pulled the wool over everybody's eyes, because as many in this audience know, the Pennsylvania Academy had the scandal of Eakins being fired because he was working with nude models as part of the instruction for students. This was unacceptable. So Paul Bartlett introduced in 1896 — or he commissioned it in that year — an *The Age of Bronze* in plaster that would be a model for students to use instead of nude models. So it came under that auspice. Now Rodin had no idea that it wasn't going as a work of art. He sold it, because Paul Bartlett was his friend, for \$120. It was way under cost. It went into the Philadelphia Academy, and they did put it in an art show, but they didn't say they owned it. They didn't want anyone to know. I found this work, in the 1980s, in the corridor of the Pennsylvania Academy, all dusty, with scratches on it, in terrible condition, still there as a plaster cast after all those years.

MB: In terms of Rodin's use of plasters, thinking of this one in particular: just to sort of clarify this, it isn't as though there was one plaster, and then all the bronzes came from that one work. But there were different plasters, which were used in the production of the molds for the bronzes. Is that fair enough?

RB: Right. Well, what became a normal Rodin practice, not quite at this time but later on, was to make between six and twelve plasters of every work. So others were there to be used when the first one fell apart. The original plaster did fall apart. It was reproduced in the '90s. They turned out four — or as many as seven. We are not sure, but four exist now that came from that '90s casting.

MB: And what you see here, these various scratch lines on the side of the plaster are, in part, the evidence of taking molds —

RB: I'm assuming that this comes from Rudier, from his great foundry.

MB: Good. I think it's probably time to return to the auditorium and engage with other voices.  
Thank you.

### **Panel Discussion in Auditorium**

[Discussion joined in progress]

AL: I would say, as you all know, the Rodin after-casts, made after his death in 1917 until about 1952, were almost all done legally by the Alexis Rudier foundry. But in the interval after that, Georges Rudier, who was the nephew of Eugène, continued to cast for the Musée Rodin. Also, the Susse, Godard, and Coubertin foundries produced casts in that interval. Frankly, the patinas from all those different foundries are all a little different than what was being executed by Rudier during Rodin's lifetime and then immediately in the 10 or 15 years after his death. That's when the Limet brothers still ran their patination shop as they had in Rodin's lifetime.

MB: We didn't really talk very much about the posthumous casts... can we have a comment?

AL: There is a substantial difference in the depth and appearance of the patination, more apparent on the indoor pieces than on the outdoor pieces. The outdoor pieces are harder to judge because they've gone through the weathering cycle, but you can see the differences very clearly on the interior pieces, and some of it is the reflection of bronze technology. Most of those later casts are actually lost wax rather than the sand-casting of the Rudiers. The Rudiers finished their pieces very differently at different times.

RB: I'd add to that. First of all, the Musée Rodin must deal with more than one foundry. That's a legal issue. They cannot deal solely with a single foundry, although the majority of the works that have been cast now come from Coubertin, which is a great, great foundry, and I admire them very much, but the taste of Coubertin is for a shinier finish than a Rudier finish. So the look of recent casts is often very shiny; it's a different kind of finish. It's a taste.

- JS: The whole issue of posthumous casting, I think, is problematic. And it exists so much with Rodin. It's abusive. If the artist is still alive, he can control things or change things in the process.
- RB: If we had no posthumous casts, we would have no *Gates of Hell*, which Rodin was desperate to have, we would have no *Balzac* in bronze, which he also wanted badly — I mean, it was his dream. The fact that they were not cast had been a big failure, and it was a big dream.
- Q: To Joel Shapiro's remarks, posthumous casting is the legacy of the *droite de suivre*. The whole existence of the Musée Rodin, and Rodin's legacy was predicated on his understanding that that right of succession would follow from the creation of that entity. It's fairly common in auctions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, that an artist's estate would go up for auction, and you would buy the original plaster, so-called, and that would be sold at the Hôtel Drouot with the *droite de suivre*, meaning that you as the purchaser of a plaster could then go off and make an edition. So it's part of the artist and how he or she perceives his or her legacy in what follows subsequent to their lifetimes. That doesn't mean that there isn't a difference of degree between something the artist actually has his hand on and that which happens outside, but it nevertheless conforms to a certain notion of intentionality that seems very important to why these things existed.
- JS: It's also problematic.
- Q: I just had a question about the surface treatment of the plaster which we were looking at. It seems that Rodin had some interest in presenting the plasters as works of art in themselves, and I'm just wondering whether we have some indication as to his preferences as to the surface treatment of the plasters.
- DG: Just as a general point, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was common to exhibit plaster casts in lieu of a bronze or marble, in order to get a commission for it. So they were treated as — depending on the artist — both de facto works of art, or at other times as a placeholder for what could be.

MB: Just as in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at the salon.

DG: So with this one, much of the variability of the surface and what almost looks like, if you could call it that, almost a patina on the plaster, which is an incorrect term, it comes from the casting process itself. In terms of the treatment of the plasters, as far as I know, the ones that were exhibited in the '80s, he left as-is. I mean, he didn't want to vary them — he wanted them to be pristine.

RB: He loved the whiteness of plaster. He just loved it. Any of you who haven't been to Meudon [site of Rodin's house], when you get a chance, go and see those beautiful, beautiful plasters. It's just as thrilling as seeing the in-town museum. Rodin loved that look. He loved his studio, and he loved the look of very white, well-kept clean plaster.

AL: Not to over-characterize him and put him in a box, he also did intentionally color his plasters from time to time, and he was very careful about how his plasters were made. Dieudonné and Eugène Guioche, father and son, and all of those people who worked for him, were very precise about how they had to model things. For instance, when they put the *Thinker* out in front of the Pantheon, to test it, as it were, in plaster, they actually patinated it — they painted it the color of what patination would be, to see how it would look when it was set there. So he wasn't just a one-song guy.

Q: I wanted to go back to the comment Ruth made about the Coubertin patina being shinier and a matter of taste and combine that with Penelope this morning, when Derek said that your feeling was that *The Age of Bronze* looks beautiful in the way it does. I was trying to link that with what Adam said last night, also, about patina and our response being the passage of time. We have to remember that Penelope's feeling of this looking beautiful has very much to do with late 20<sup>th</sup>-century, early 21<sup>st</sup>-century ideology. I was reminded of a time — I was telling this to a couple of people — when we had an Adolph Gottlieb sculpture that we were treating that looked very much like this streaked Rodin. We were working on it, trying to go somewhere in that middle ground of leaving some of that outdoor patina and then touching in others. Then Judith Shea, a contemporary artist, walked into our lab, and went, "Oh, my God,

you're not going to take any of that off, are you? I spent six months trying to get my sculpture to look like that." So it's all very much our perception of beauty that has to do with where we're coming from, because look at the example that Derek gave of right after World War II, with all the sculptures looking black. Or, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we've got lots of Renaissance terracottas where the polychromy was taken off, because the sensibility was to get rid of the color. So our sense of beauty is going to change very much as well. I just want people to remember that.

**MB:** Thank you very much. I think that's a good point to end on before we go onto the next presentation.

**Sculpture and Conservation Conference  
Bust of Diego Gallery Discussion and  
Panel Discussion with Audience Questions  
Dallas, Texas, October 22-23, 2004**

**Session Speaker Key**

<b>MB</b>	<b>Malcolm Baker</b>
<b>MiB</b>	<b>Michael Brenson</b>
<b>VF</b>	<b>Valerie Fletcher</b>
<b>DG</b>	<b>David Getsy</b>
<b>HM</b>	<b>Hanspeter Marty</b>
<b>SN</b>	<b>Steven A. Nash</b>
<b>VW</b>	<b>Véronique Wiesinger</b>
<b>Q</b>	<b>Question or comment from the audience</b>

**Gallery Discussion**

SN: Welcome back. I think, as soon as they get our signal, they're ready to roll for the next segment, Giacometti, *The Bust of Diego*.

VW: I'm Véronique Wiesinger. I'm the director of the Giacometti Foundation in Paris. The foundation was created a year ago, but I've been working on the collections of the Giacometti estate for four years before that. I've been studying sculpture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century as a museum curator for the past 20 years.

MiB: I'm Michael Brenson. I'm an art critic, and I teach in the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.

VF: I'm Valerie Fletcher. I've been the curator of modern sculpture at the Hirshhorn Museum for the past 20-some years. I started on Giacometti, with his drawings, in 1977, organized an exhibition in 1988, and finished my dissertation on his paintings in 1994.

HM: My name is Hanspeter Marty, and I'm from the art museum in Zurich. I've been involved with Giacometti for 25 years now, and I'm a conservator.

MiB: Maybe just a couple of words. First of all, Diego was Alberto's younger brother by one year. Alberto was born in 1901, and Diego was born in 1902. Alberto went to Paris from Switzerland in 1922, and Diego, after spectacularly inauspicious professional beginnings, joined him there in about 1925 or 1926 and then became his indispensable assistant and partner and friend. For the rest of Alberto's life, he was the person he saw the most, the image he knew the best. Diego posed for him as a model between 1935 and 1940 pretty much every day, and then after the war he made all sorts of images of Diego in painting and sculpture. It was a connection to the valley of their birth in Switzerland, a connection to where he came from. His images tend to be either perceptual so that they were made from life or from memory, and I tend to think this is an image from memory. I think the whole apparitional quality of the image itself, the way the head seems to pop out of the mud of the body almost like a mushroom, and the fact that it has such a stern guardian-like quality, almost as if he made an image that he wanted to look after him and somehow protect him. I wanted to raise a couple of issues with the bronze. It just so happens that I have a remark that Genet made about the bronzes and Giacometti that I think is really significant to keep in mind. It was an essay that Genet wrote in 1957 on the studio of Giacometti. It was a very famous essay, and it was made shortly after these bronzes were cast, and apparently was the essay on his works that Giacometti himself preferred. He's talking about the standing women, but I think it applies to the bronzes in general. According to Genet, Alberto said, "You saw them when they were plaster. You remember them in plaster?" and Genet said, "Yes." "Do you think they lose something cast in bronze," "No, not at all." "Do you think they gain something?" "Again, I hesitate to say what best expresses my feeling. You'll think I'm being ridiculous all over again, but they make a strange impression. I wouldn't say they gain, but the bronze has gained something. For the first time in its life, the bronze has won out. Your women are bronze's victory over itself, maybe." I think it's a comment that makes two points for me. First of all, that bronze was an issue; that anyone coming out of a radical or avant-garde tradition, a sculptor at that point in the century, really had to find a way to make bronze part of the essential content of the work rather than just part of its duplication. The second point is that bronze is an essential material. Along with clay and plaster, or maybe even more than clay and plaster, it's *the* essential material. It's a material that allows Giacometti to congeal a sense of matter, to create a sense of base matter. It's a material that allows him to



work the whole idea of survival into the work, the struggle with survival and maybe even the triumph over it. Just as important, it's the issue of light, because Giacometti thought very much about light — as someone who created a certain thickness in space, who psychologized space, who made space around the work as important as the work itself. This depends on bronze, it depends on the patina, it depends upon the light, and it's also the question of availability, because the surrealist works — the game boards, *No More Play*, *The Woman with Her Throat Cut*, *The Palace at 4:00 a.m.* — they create the impression of availability, the impression of participation, but not actual participation, which is one reason why I think Giacometti found the surrealist works precious in the end. Here, because of the surfaces, there are surfaces in the imagery, there's an actual availability. And, the final point I want to make — and it also touches on the politics of Giacometti's aesthetics — and that is that everything for him — whether it was a piece of paper, whether it was a chair, whether it was a towel — had an irreducible identity. It had a uniqueness; it had a particularity. So there's something about the duplicating, the bronze process itself, the duplication of the image — but creating the individuality within the apparent sameness, that's really important.

This bronze here [Nasher], which is, I think in some ways the most evenly patinated, it's almost the most neutrally patinated, although it's patination that really brings out the kind of molten quality of the bronze itself. But it's also a work that's painted. Here [Walker Art Center], he's left the accident in the work. He's left the burning that comes out of the bronze and incorporated it. He's left certain nodules and blisters rather than removing them, which by and large he did do in the others. You can see it here, but there's also — there's almost a sense of petrification. When I look at this, I almost have a sense of watching water at the very moment where it turns to ice, where it freezes. This petrified quality, this petrified identity, is very different than the more liquid molten quality of this one [Nasher]. Then the surface of this last one, which belongs to the Hirshhorn, is completely different again. It's a shinier surface, there's a papery quality, sort of a caramel quality, and it takes the light in a completely different way. It's hard to know whether it was fully patinated or not. It's the one that, in my own mind, I have the most questions about. But the main point I want to make concerns the extreme individuality of each particular image within this duplication, and the way most of them relate back to different ideas of matter, to different ideas of nature.

MB: Good. That's very suggestive, eloquent, a reading that I think will probably prompt all sorts of comments both here and in the auditorium. Hanspeter? Coming from a conservator —

HM: These [the *Bust of Diego* pieces] are very different in scale than the Rodins. They are smaller and cast in one piece, not in different pieces like the Rodins. The whole series was cast at the Susse foundry. We have the black one [Walker], which is #1 in this edition, and the Hirshhorn piece is #2, and the painted one [Nasher] is #7. The Nasher piece has the initials 0/6, which means that in this series, it was the last one cast.

We also see the same sculpture finished in different ways. The piece from the Walker, installed in the middle of the row, has a black surface. The Hirshhorn piece has a bronze patination, which was definitely coated at a later date, because I've never seen a surface like that with this kind of brilliance except when conservators put it on. [On the Nasher piece], we see this wonderful coating which is kind of liquid, painted on, oil-paint on the surface. Looking at these three together also gives us an idea of how a sculpture survives in a private collection, where you often get hand marks where the tops of forms are rubbed.

MB: Thanks. Some other comments? Véronique?

VW: A lot has been said on patinas, but I would like to draw the attention of everyone here to the finish of the bronzes, because due to the special shape of Giacometti's sculpture, there are lots of recesses. In the casting process, this causes problems like air bubbles, so these air bubbles have to be removed at some point by chiseling after the cast is made. You can see the surface is much rougher [in the Walker version] than the other two. I would like to know what you make of this, in terms of how you respond to that kind of difference.

VF: Well, since I've lived with the one from the Hirshhorn for a long, long time, I've known the Nasher cast a long time, and I've seen two of the other casts that aren't here, my first response on seeing them all together for the first time was that the darker patina causes a certain effect. The darker patina here [Walker] makes me see more clearly the subtleties of the modeling,

especially in the back where the recesses are deep, they become much more obvious. He modeled this with his hands in plastilene, and then it was cast in plaster and then cast in bronze. But you can see in all of them this downward streak here, and you can see in all of them a kind of V incision because he often used a knife to cut into them. If you look in the back — I don't know if the camera can get to it — the back is almost volcanic. If you look at lava as it solidifies, you've got the sense really, as Mike said, that it has suddenly congealed, but it's congealed with a sense of real activity. The hollows are very deep and emphasized, whereas when you look at the back of the painted one [Nasher], I don't get that same impression. I'm more impressed by the continuity of the oil paint covering it. Then when you turn to the Hirshhorn one, I see things — we're talking about perceptions, visual/optical perception, but that's really what Giacometti himself was seeing, all the different perceptions of the same model, over and over again. This one [Hirshhorn], for example, when I stand back, I see most clearly that V on the forehead. Now that may be partly because of the variegated modeled patina, but it may also largely be due to the fact that it had a layer of microcrystalline wax added before I became the curator there. That automatically makes certain the highlights pick up reflections, especially of artificial light. What I see here, just in these three, leaving out the intervening casts #3, #4, #5 and #6, what I see personally, is part of his — really a perfect example of his seeking of different perceptions — his own personal perceptions, subjective perceptions and some of them perhaps a little bit more objective, but always subjective to some degree. So you have something here with the first cast [Walker] — what I can imagine — and that's all I'm doing is imagining — is that this came in, and we know that in 1954 he was now able to make more than one cast at a time, sometimes all five or six at a time — this comes in, and he sees a certain effect. It has its own drama, emphasizing the texture of the modeling, but perhaps it is not so much allowing the face to stand out. Mike, I think that I actually need to correct you, because when this was bought, very soon after it was made and exhibited, the invoice from the artist to the dealer and the dealer to Mr. Hirshhorn titled it as *Diego (Study from Life)*. Perhaps the artist looked at this [Walker] and thought, well, it looks like lava, chocolate brownie mix, but it doesn't perhaps give that sense of intensity in the face that he intended with this V-like incision [Hirshhorn] and the prominence of the nose and the lips. To me, I see him with his brother Diego saying, "Okay, we've got that one. We've got one with a similar brown patina. Now let's see what

we can do with that,” and they started experimenting and playing with it. That achieved a certain result [Hirshhorn]. It’s uneven —

MiB: I’m just curious what you think about the surface [Hirshhorn], because it does have this caramel quality. It’s very papery. It’s almost crinkly. As such, it really loses — I guess there’s still a kind of liquid quality in it, but it definitely loses the kind of weight and mass, the sense of matter that both of the other ones have.

VF: It does, actually, but again I’ve lived with it [Hirshhorn] for a long time. I don’t know if the camera can capture what he’s talking about, this thin papery effect. In essence, in addition to the different colors in this patina — the browns, the greens, the earthy, yellowish ochre, almost orangey tones — you see areas like here where part of the patina has flaked off, and you see the green layer underneath. That sense of the flaking off of this patina contributes, in fact, creates a sense of thin papery — I guess what a conservator would call friable — coating. If it weren’t for the wax coating, it would seem very dry and does indeed flake off. There are areas where it flakes off right down to the bare bronze. Véronique and I were talking about it just this morning, about the possibility of the patina being applied in an experimental manner with Diego knowing how to mix the chemicals, and Alberto wanting to have a certain effect. That it was basically an on-the-spot experiment, and in terms of the stability of the patina, it was not a success. In terms of the variegation, the kind of earthy quality it entails, it was a success. I think what you’re picking up on was not intended, but it has its own effectiveness, the sense of being delicate and papery and almost older than it really is.

MB: Véronique?

VW: I would just add that maybe stability was not Giacometti’s main purpose, and when he painted the bronze, for instance, he used the same oil paint he used on canvas. Of course, it’s not intended to be used on bronze, and he certainly knew quite well that this was not a standard procedure.

MB: This [Nasher] was painted considerably later, wasn't it?

VW: It was painted in 1964, and I must add that at the time Giacometti painted those bronzes, he painted other bronzes in the outdoors, knowing that these painted bronzes would remain outside under rain and in weather conditions that are terrible.

DG: One of the things that we should remember, I think, as well, that mass is also a very vexed quality for Giacometti. So to say that necessarily, these [Nasher/Walker] are more massive and earthy, and this one [Hirshhorn] is less so, is also picking up on one of the things that he played with in his own sculpture, especially the post-War work. The relationship, for instance, between the thin figures and the heavy bases is a play on the relative experience of mass.

MB: With this narrow neck —

DG: Well, to bridge from the Rodin discussion to the Giacometti discussion, one of the things that Rodin and Giacometti are both interested in is the variability of the three-dimensional object when you view it from multiple angles. For Giacometti, this took on a metaphoric and philosophic level in that it became the difficulty of seeing another subject. This is a portrait bust in a very conventional format, the head and shoulders bust, but it's shrunken down so that we don't see it as a portrait, but rather we see the difficulty of actually discerning a face. So that the variability amongst all the casts is a way of playing with that. So the sculpture is not a fixed entity, but rather also an object of perception. One formal quality we can point to is the way that, in each of them, there is a bilateral distinction between the left and the right. And they're colored in such a way that — this one [Nasher], for instance, seems almost to have a light source. We have lighter and darker sides that imply a shadow across the face. I see that not happening in this one [Hirshhorn]. That's something that we could perhaps talk about, the way that the colors are used to achieve different effects, in terms of the kind of environment in which he would have been seeing the work.

VF: Actually, that brings up a very interesting point, because when Giacometti painted his bronze casts, which he did at certain specific times, he would occasionally do just one, but when he

actually painted several at a go, it tended to coincide with when he was in a very intense period of painting, painting on canvas, and he just used the same brushes, the same colors off the same palette. But it's not widely known — it's a very rare experience, and it just occurred to me that maybe they can make it happen here — if you take a painting that he did in his dim, dingy studio, which had a north light, but was covered by an even dingier cloth, and then you take it outside and see it in the sunlight, it's astounding how different it looks. That's sort of what we're seeing a little bit here. I'd be very curious to see what this painted piece [Nasher] looks like in daylight compared to the electric light we have, because when he was painting the ones in the '60s, usually it was in exhibitions under artificial lights. When he painted the casts in 1950, it was in his studio and for a deliberate experiment for exhibition, but he didn't take them outside. He hadn't seen them under strong electric light.

MiB: I'm sort of curious. I'm curious about a couple of things. The faces look very different, and with the painted one here [Nasher], you don't lose the detail. It keeps the detail of the eye, the cheek, everything. I don't know whether this is a question of light, whereas in the other one, certainly in this one [Walker], because of the depth of the shadow there —

MB: It's dramatized.

MiB: It's dramatized, and also it gives it a completely different personality. Over there [Hirshhorn], there's another completely different personality — so they could be three different people, three different stages or three different personalities of the same person, but my question is whether you think that the painting there [Nasher] is, in part, to hold every detail of the face and not to allow the face itself to be lost in shadow, whether it's a protection against that.

VF: Yes, I do think so, because one of the things he said — his letters haven't been published, and we have to piece together things with perhaps greater guesswork than with Rodin, but he said, in one instance, when someone asked him why he was painting, using oil paints with flesh tints, the pink-taupe flesh tints, he said that it's because it makes them look more alive, it makes them look more real. It seems to be succeeding, just from our observation here.

DG: Well, maybe a way to think of it is, not just to fix the traits of the face, but to fix the moment in which that face was visible to him. This is the one [Nasher] of the three that I feel does that the most. Maybe this is just my reading of the color, in terms of the relative light source and shadow, but it seems to be that, again, constantly with Giacometti, it's the struggle to see another individual, another person, another subject, and the struggle with the image of Diego is very much that — he's the person who's probably closest to him in his life, yet there's a constant inability to see him fully. So with this one, you can almost see it as trying to capture the moment in the studio at that point, at that glimpse of the face.

MiB: The paint there really seals it in the present. You see he talked about this process between living and dying, or the actual movement, seeing a living person sort of move into the stage of death, and I wonder, then, if you see this [Nasher] as holding it in the moment — in a living moment, and these [Walker and Hirshhorn] as actually moving a little bit more towards a death mask, that somehow the painting and the shadows itself continue to reenact this process between life and death that he was always involved in.

MB: In a way, that's implicit within the whole bust format. The bust is an image, even if it's a living person, and it will go on continuing as the image of a dead person, eventually.

DG: And it's also the question that comes up again and again when we start coloring sculpture. It's exactly this dialogue between the living and the dead in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that when you color something, it suddenly seems to be both more living but also more inanimate, because it approximates what we see a lot more of.

MB: But for me, looking at these, coming to it from earlier sculpture, I see the format of these being like those Cologne reliquary busts of around 1400, which were cut off at the shoulders, and they stand on an altar.

MiB: But that's why I think the perceptual issue is a difficult one, Valerie, because even if it is a study from life, it's a particular format. There's a particular format, and there's an idea built

into that format. There's certainly an idea built into that head that he's working with. So it's perceptual, but with all sorts of qualifications.

VF: Yes, it's part of a series and part of his most intense thinking about phenomenology and the idea that one can never grasp at any one time any more than an aspect of reality or a person or a glass or a table or whatever. I mean, he was getting very seriously into this question of phenomenology when he began working more serially, making compositions in painting, drawings and sculpture that were closer to each other in composition and size, so as to focus on the more subtle aspects of it. One of the things that emerges in studying his paintings is that he never expected there to be a final or definitive state. We all know that as kind of a commonplace truism about Giacometti, but when you see, say, three casts like these together, or if you ever get to see the paintings of Isaku Yanaihara — there's six or seven, but if you see three of the best, you go, oh, my gosh, I see what he meant. There really is a sense of distance in this one, and he really has a sense of aura or space around him, in the other. I believe that this is an example of active interaction, where he's having his brother perhaps function as his hands in painting with chemicals, and then later, acting for himself with paints in oil. Each one of them, just as the different busts are different perceptions one from the other, the casts and the different patinas are different perceptual states, one from the other.

MB: He needed bronze. His work can't exist without bronze?

VF: Indeed. He said that when he couldn't do it in painting, he said he had to go back to sculpture.

MB: Hanspeter?

HM: I think our discussion is also saying something about how the work is displayed. I think if you see the two sculptures upstairs in the gallery [additional works in the Nasher Collection accessible through [www.NasherSculptureCenter.org](http://www.NasherSculptureCenter.org)] and if you look at this sculpture, they look totally different. Because on the upper level, we have the strong, natural light which is coming from the side partly, and as you see it here, we have this artificial light, which is, in



my opinion, a little bit too much from the top. So you see especially this upper part of the sculpture. The second thing is, what we've been thinking about for the last ten years: how to exhibit Giacometti. First, never on too bright pedestals, so we have them greyed down, and also even the walls — I mean, these walls here are quite good, but normally, in exhibitions, you see white walls, which are totally wrong. I mean, it is not as problematic with these three sculptures, because they are not the thin figures that we have upstairs. With those, you won't see anything — if the eye is closing — if you have too bright a light shining, or the walls are too white.

VW: His studio was never bright.

HM: Exactly. That's what we said before, exactly. If you see the studio in which he was working, then you realize how to look at his sculpture.

MB: That raises the question of where you see sculpture. For a lot of sculptors, it's in the studio. The studio was the viewing place.

VW: And the studio was a big part of Giacometti's work.

MB: Yes.

VW: I would like to add something to what Valerie said about the aura. It's true that the aura around this sculpture [Walker], because of the roughness of the finish, is totally different from the aura that comes out of this other very smooth surface [Nasher] and the kind of radiance that the painting gives. This goes with what you were saying about trying to make living forms — not to capture the life, but really to make it alive. You can see how he succeeded in these instances.

VF: In quite different ways.

VW: In quite different ways. These are three various aspects of a real living being. The sculpture becoming a kind of living being.

VF: Not through realism, but through other means.

VW: Yes, exactly.

VF: Mike started with a great quote, and I wanted to throw in another. He was interviewed late in his life, and he was asked about his patinas. He said, “You can’t worry about patina. In the natural bronze, the light glances over the surface. It has a special character. When the metal is darkened, there are shadows and depths. Perhaps it’s best to show several casts of a single piece each with a different patina, but you can’t get involved too much in the details, the tricks of patinas.” That’s exactly what we’re doing, so —

MB: Yes. Can I just follow that with a question? A sort of basic question about technique, because one thing that comes across to me with these busts is their insistently modeled quality. So you read them. Okay, you read them as bronzes, but you read them as modeled.

VF: As squishy.

MB: Squishy sculptures, yes. So for me, when I first saw that [Nasher], I didn’t know the details of the chronology or the circumstances with which it had been painted. I assumed it had been painted to, as it were, bring out its ambiguity as a bronze, but also its potential to be read as a clay model.

VF: Do you think that was his intention, or do you have that perception?

HM: But you also have to realize that with the painted one [Nasher], the bronze itself is softer. So if you look at the front side, there are a few holes — they are very clearly seen on the two first casts, and they are not seen here [Nasher], so he was working on the casts. If you look at it in

several sections, the bronze is softer even without paint. It's something a little bit different than the other two. The paint makes it even more soft.

VW: This is true, in a certain way. But really the chiseling phase is so important, the degree to which all the bubbles and roughness can be taken out. It depends on who is in charge of finishing the piece.

MB: Exactly.

VF: As I was standing here looking at the model in profile in sequence, rather than directly in front or in back, there is more that appears, the more you look — one of you, maybe Hanspeter, pointed out that in the painted one [Nasher], for example, the neck becomes more noticeable. It seems longer, it's more taut, it is more V-shaped — as if the head is more stretched upward and separate from the body, whereas by the time we get down to the Hirshhorn one where the patina seems to almost camouflage all that, the head and the torso are almost as one, even though the forms in measurement are the same.

MiB: Concerning the question you raised about modeling: it's a great subject, where he comes out of Rodin, in some ways, and takes it to another point, but there is the whole resistance to preciousness that you were talking about, plus the importance of the matter itself, the sort of liquid, molten quality of it. I really do think these things were meant to be touched. Genet talks about it in that essay, and it's a problem in museums, but I think that when he put these things in the world, he really thought about them in terms of a kind of availability and accessibility that maybe one or two works wouldn't have, but out of six or eight, according to where they would wind up, some would be there. They would be there and available physically for a kind of physical intimate engagement in a way that the surrealist work promised, but did not deliver.

MB: Yes. But on the other hand, it's in a great tradition of small-scale bronzes.

- VW: I would like to add something about the plaster. The difference with Rodin is that there was one plaster made for this bronze, and once the plaster was sent to the foundry, it was never shown again. Rodin would make other plaster casts, and Giacometti did not do that. So really what we're seeing now, the bronzes, are the ultimate steps of a process.
- DG: Also, back to this question of touching, just briefly, what's interesting is that the question of the tactile is so much related to the base, below the neck. That's where we see the traces of Giacometti's own process, where there's so much formal weight. But it's exactly with the face, the site of subjectivity, where it becomes so much more difficult to imagine having that kind of intimate tactile relationship.
- MiB: I don't feel that way with those [Walker and Hirshhorn]. I mean, with the painted one [Nasher], I agree with you, but I'm not sure.
- DG: You can still see the marks of the knife on the face and everything, but I mean, literally, just in terms of the weight of it, it's much less. There's much less to grab onto, and I think that we can tie back into some of the actual subjects that he's thinking about while doing these. I think it's a very important point.
- VF: There are also different kinds of tactility in the sense that, for example, with the Rodin *Age of Bronze* or Michelangelo's *David*, I don't know about every other viewer, but my first desire is to go up and rub my hands over them, whereas this is both inviting and off-putting in terms of its tactility. So in a way, the patinas can reinforce this quality, and here might reinforce the aliveness of the face, but at the same time I don't find that any of these invite the touch quite so much as some of the patinas we see on the Rodins.
- VW: I agree with you. It can be even aggressive. I mean, if you brush against this one [Walker], I'm sure you are going to lose some of the threads of your sweater.
- MB: Perhaps at this point we should move back into the auditorium, and open up the talk wider.

### **Discussion with audience in the auditorium**

Q: I'm interested in this question of the conservator's hand and time, the history of the sculpture and alteration over time. We started out this morning with a difference of opinion on whether to adjust the patina on a bronze that had been outdoors. These three sculptures have been indoors, so in a sense the effect of time has been much less, but they do alter. As a conservator, I would be tempted to put some sort of a barrier coating to isolate the surface from perhaps acid from people touching the bronze. But that wax that I would probably apply could alter the surface. I would be interested in various people's opinions on that. I would be somewhat hesitant to put a wax on an oil-painted bronze, partly because of issues of reversibility, but also altering the reflections. On a patinated bronze, I would be more tempted to, but I would also be very concerned with a Giacometti-type surface getting microcrystalline wax embedded in crevices. Valerie — this is partly a question for Valerie, because you started by saying that when you became a curator, you had the microcrystalline wax removed.

VF: No, it was put on before I got there and actually is still on there, which is why it appears shiny. It has lessened over time because we have lots of people — we have almost 1 million people visit a year, and it's been on view for nearly 25 years, one way or another. But I didn't authorize the removal of the wax on this one, because I was worried about what it might do to an already unstable patina. In contrast, we have a 1948 tall figure, one of the three that he did. The most massive one with a tall base. And that had wax on it, but its patina was perfectly stable and rather monochromatic, so we took the wax off of that, and I've got to tell you, that was a long job, getting wax out of all those crevices.

Q: I am a conservator, too, and I would like to at least partially answer the first question. If you look at the Hirshhorn piece, you can actually see that most of the protruding surfaces are shiny, but if you look on the left side, the deeper crevices, you will see that it is completely matte surfaces with all of, I assume, the original patination on it. Especially on the left shoulder, you will see some areas where — I think Valerie you pointed out — it is already flaking in tiny, tiny bubbles on the shiny surfaces, which I find personally disturbing and kind

of confusing. We had to look at it for a while to actually see that probably it was coated by somebody, and then probably accidentally some areas were left out. Compared to the other surfaces, this was shiny, and the others were not. So personally I think this is a destruction of the true history of the piece, and I would be very careful even trying to remove it — I agree with Valerie — because it could lead to serious problems. But ethically, for me, as a conservator seeing it, it disturbs me. It gives me very contradictory messages about what it is.

VF: It does indeed, and it's unfortunate that when the Hirshhorn opened in 1974, the policy was to apply wax to every single bronze, indoors or out, and after 20 years, I'm still undoing some of that or having some of it undone. On the other hand, the Giacometti expert in me wants to say, well, Alberto loved ambivalence, not necessarily ambiguity but ambivalence. I think that our bust, despite the sadness of its having been waxed and the patina having not been stable in the first place — it makes it even more wonderfully ambivalent.

Q: One thing we haven't touched upon, I think, as a reference, is that we haven't looked at the pure raw ugliness of freshly cast bronze and the reason for patina in the first place, if I could just open that for discussion.

VW: It's a very interesting point you're raising because Giacometti wrote that he liked the metal as nude as possible. He wrote this just after the War, so there was a point where we know for sure that he liked the way the cast went out of the foundry. What is interesting, too, is the quality of the bronzes made over a long period of time is not even. We know for sure that some casts that were made under his supervision are considered not good quality casts. There are some parts that are burnt, burnt so deeply that patina can't be applied to it, because it won't stick. The metal becomes too porous, and this was approved by Giacometti. He was interested also in the accidents that could come from the casting process. I think that at some point he would have preferred even to matte the metal, just out of the casting.

VF: He did, in fact, do that. We own two of them. By sheer chance, we have Giacometti's at the Hirshhorn that Joe Hirshhorn bought fresh off the presses, from the artist, the foundry, the dealer to Hirshhorn and then to us. There is one which — it's a 1957 bust of Diego which has

that kind of — if you take bronze when it comes out, and it's kind of goldeny, but it's messy, it's not an even appealing golden. Well, that one was made more appealing, more consistently golden throughout and then left. It is slowly — but I'm surprised — very, very slowly changing with time. It's remarkably similar to the earliest photos we have of it. Another one, a much smaller bust of Diego, they didn't put a basic — the undercoating, if you will, of brown or black or dark on which colors are then effected. He put colors on some places and left the bare bronze as it was. That one is changing over time as well. So it's interesting to watch those three, the one here, the goldeny one, and the one that's sort of splotchy goldeny, how they're aging with time. It's a study right there in an experiment by an artist who didn't know much, if anything, about the chemical aspects of patina, but was interested in their visual effects.

VW: I would link back to the paintings. When he paints, he leaves part of the canvas without painting on it, and it's true that there is something like that also in the bronzes.

MiB: I just have a couple of responses to what you said. First of all, what you said about the product is true, but I also think if we're going to get into the bronze process, there is still this miraculous sense when something actually comes out. It's something — it's sort of born from this whole process that the patina in some sense recreates. Also, I think about Giacometti — and I don't know about truth to materials, but this feeling for fire that he had and this whole sort of molten quality of the material itself, I think there's something in the material itself, in bronze. There is a kind of truth to materials, and there is something about the whole process that I think does get built back into the work. You're right that the patina is necessary to do, but then I would just want to keep in mind the whole process.

Q: I want to talk to the panelists about what they thought of Michael Brenson's idea about these being post-surrealist sculptures, which are about inviting interaction from the person who owns them or who might handle them. I didn't know whether other people agreed with this idea or not.

VF: Actually, I do. I don't say that it's as successful in some of the post-War sculptures as he would have liked, and equally so in many of the paintings. But when they're a success, yes, there's a kind of haunting quality that gets you. There's a connection that he felt with Diego, or whatever subject he had in mind, whether it was visual or mental, memory/imagination, and it's somehow that transcending quality, if you will, but not in a religious sense.

Q: It had to do with touch?

VF: For him it had to do with touch, but it also had to do with whether when you'd finished touching — I mean, he would model and sometimes paint, restlessly, sometimes not even looking at it, just feeling it and feeling it and feeling it. When it felt right, or when a dealer said he needed it for a show, he stopped. But I think you can tell by your reactions to any of his sculptures whether he stopped at a point where it achieves that. *The Walking Man*, he did variations on that, and the pose itself, you could connect with, but some of them, you look at them — I think it's the one in Pittsburgh from 1960 — you experience it, and all of a sudden, you've got this connection. It's not a real person, it's not a portrait, and the artist has been dead since 1965, yet there's something that connects. To me that's the epitome of surreal sculpture.

DG: And there's also I think — I very much agree. I think there's also this dialogue between matter and perception that's going on, especially in things like this. If you look at a lot of the thin works, when you encounter them, if you turn the corner of the museum or gallery, they strike you with this almost iconic line, but then you begin to approach and see the details, changes. Where with these, it's so much about we're confronted with this sort of obdurate thing, but pocked with these hollows. They create this huge amount of shadows that allow us to look at it and be confronted with the thing as matter, but then pull back out of it and see it as the subject as well. I'm really struck by the shoulders part of the head and shoulders. I think I would agree with that.

MiB: I just wanted to raise this political thing, because Giacometti was certainly not a political artist, but he had politics. Around 34 or 35, at the point where he really turned his back on the



surrealists, it was a point where he was closely involved with Aragon. He was a socialist, and he made political drawings. He was sympathetic with the Popular Front, and I do think there is a democratizing impulse that's very strong in his work. It began increasingly to take over, so within that framework, a lot of this stuff from surrealism obviously got incorporated, but within a completely different language for which I think the word "democratizing" is important.

MB: Can I just add a comment? One thing hasn't been mentioned, I think, and one thing that intrigues me is that here you have this sitter Diego, who is the sitter for the portrait, but then he himself becomes involved in the production of the thing, so it isn't a self-portrait, because it's a portrait by Alberto, his brother, but he's involved with it. There's an ambivalence here, but that seems to be perhaps involved in some way.

VF: And Diego was never tempted to alter them in any way, which is an indicator of how supportive he was of Alberto, because some of the portraits can be rather scary-looking.

Q: Well, Valerie you brought up this nuts and bolts question, and I really wanted to ask people in the room. I've wondered about this a lot. That's that word, wax. What is the policy now? You've said what you want to do in your collection. I know that a lot of the bronzes in Tokyo, the Rodins in Tokyo, are all waxed with a color material in them, which has enormous effect. I'm just very curious as to what, in curatorial groups, is the going thought on this.

VF: I'm not sure that many curators think about it at all. It's usually a decision that's made by conservators, at least it has been in my experience. When I became involved in questioning the use of wax at the Hirshhorn on the Hirshhorn sculptures, there was a reaction of outrage that I would dare to even question the policy. I think that the policy is much more associated with the 1970s, and that in some cases it has done wonders for works. For example, the bronzes that we have outdoors in our sculpture garden are right downtown, and like the Musée Rodin in Paris, there's a lot of corrosion that is precipitated very quickly on bronzes in that environment. By keeping them washed and rigorously waxed, they have not changed in 30 years, but they also don't look good. So what I've been interested in learning from

conservators and the makers of wax, and what we've been doing most recently at the Hirshhorn, is establishing, for example, that certain artists did not like a shiny surface. Marino Marini, for example, it's a crime to add wax to any of his, but all the ones in the Hirshhorn are waxed. Fortunately, the wax came off most of them without any harm. But what's being done with wax now as a protectant, but without interfering is much more sophisticated and subtle and much less intrusive aesthetically. The addition of pigments to wax was commonplace in the '70s. Our *Burghers of Calais* had a kind of dark brown to black, basic patina with that kind of acid green that the Musée Rodin commissioned on all of the post-World War II bronzes. You couldn't see the green, and that was good to some people, because green equals corrosion. I mean, that's the level of ignorance at that point. I didn't even know for the first four years that there was brown pigment in the wax that was applied. By the time I found out, I stopped. Now it only has clear wax, and now we don't wax it as often. And sometimes we leave works unwaxed for a while to allow a weathering of the patina. It's an institution by institution decision.

MB: Perhaps we should ask Hanspeter.

HM: I think we shouldn't talk too much about wax, because we never wax any of our sculptures. I think we are not in the same case that the Rodin people are. We have no sculpture outside. So if you have them inside, normally, they are kind of treated with a little tiny bit of wax after casting, making the patina. I think, normally, it is absolutely enough, and there are some cases where maybe you have to add a little bit. But in the normal case, I would say, please don't use wax.

MB: Let's move on to the next session, looking at *Louis XIV*.

**Sculpture and Conservation Conference  
Louis XIV Gallery Discussion and  
Panel Discussion with Audience Questions  
Dallas, Texas, October 22-23, 2004**

**Session Speaker Key**

**MB**    **Malcolm Baker**  
**RD**    **Richard Deacon**  
**DG**    **David Getsy**  
**SN**    **Steven A. Nash**  
**JW**    **Julie Wolfe**  
**Q**     **Question or commentary from the audience**

**Gallery Discussion**

**MB:**    Now we're on to our third session confronting these two busts of Louis XIV by Jeff Koons. David and I are here again, and the other panelists will introduce themselves.

**SN:**    Steve Nash, and I have to admit that I'm standing in here, probably poorly, for Robert Rosenblum who really is a Koons expert. I cannot claim any such notoriety. He couldn't be with us, but he asked me to carry on, so I'm going to be introducing these two — probably the most challenging — works we're going to talk about, talking about the differences in works for which there aren't many appreciable differences. As Adam Gopnik said last night, these are sort of the twins that the parents couldn't tell apart. But, in fact, there are subtle differences. Maybe just from a visual point of view, they wouldn't allow for much discrimination between one and the other, but for certain conceptual reasons and as part of the casting history that the artist Jeff Koons has followed, has implemented, these differentiations actually are significant.

**RD:**    I'm Richard Deacon, and I'm an artist.

**JW:**    I'm Julie Wolfe, and I'm a sculpture conservator.

**MB:**    Thank you. Go ahead.

SN: We'll give you a little bit of background, because Koons is an artist who really divides critical attention right down the middle. There are those on one side who are great fans and think that he is one of the most significant artists of our generation. The critical opinion from across the aisle would include words like charlatan or clever opportunist, and there's a very lively debate, which we might have even amongst our panel, as to Koons' importance. Perhaps the *Louis XIV* is not the best example. It's a rather benign piece as far as Koons goes, but many of you are familiar with other pieces that aren't quite so benign — his famous, very large, ceramic painted sculpture of Michael Jackson with his chimp Bubbles, pieces like the carved and painted giant bear, pornographic images that he used to make, photo paintings of him and his Italian porn-star wife, and on and on. I mean, there are things which have been very confrontational, and that has been very much the strategy of Jeff Koons. You might say that he is a purveyor of kitsch, in a way, that he has taken popular culture, but of its lowest forms, its most debased forms, and turned them around into a "high" art as a way of commenting on various aspects of modern life and society and art. There are a host of different kinds of critical issues that intertwine in these works of art: capitalism, the celebration of consumer society, for instance, or the sexuality of desire, of consumer goods, which Koons is always playing off, the fetishisms that grow up amongst us all the time in our world of consumer activity. He's talking about always vindicating bourgeois taste or the free zone between the banal and the sublime that Gopnik was talking about.

There are lots and lots of different aspects to this body of work, which we could go on about, but we really need to concentrate on these particular works. What he's done in this series, which is called *The Statuary Series* from 1986, probably the most famous component of which was the stainless steel bunny which is a cast of an inflated rubber toy. He made seven or eight other sculptures in the series, and he took, in each one of these works, a piece that comes out of toy stores or knickknack shops or flea markets, or one thing or another, real objects, found objects that he would then make molds from and cast into stainless steel, this very hard, very polished, very strongly reflective material, which Koons actually likes to work with a lot. He says that it is the poor man's luxury. This is something that we have around us in our daily lives, but we find it in pots and pans and pieces of building equipment and cars, et cetera. But because of its shininess, its hardness, its kind of macho quality, it has the

connotation of something that is special and elegant and luxurious. So he takes that rather than using silver in these pieces — he actually said that silver would not do nearly as well, because it tarnishes much more rapidly, of course, but it's real luxury. It has real value, and what he's trying to do, I think, in these particular pieces, is to turn this idea of value on its head.

In the case of the *Louis XIV*, he wants to create an icon of royalty, of the monarchy, which is actually a sham. It's a hollow symbol of the monarchy and the false luxury of the stainless steel is part of that strategy. For this piece, we've been trying to determine what it came from, what actually was the original object from which it was cast. There are some memories from the people who worked on it originally at the foundry, but not exactly clear memories. It seems like an unusually large object, but he did consistently take his molds from actual objects. So we have to more or less assume that he didn't enlarge it, although that remains to be seen with some research. But this is a piece which may have been a ceramic, or it may have been a painted plaster. I think it's an 19<sup>th</sup>-century imitation of an 18<sup>th</sup>- or 17<sup>th</sup>-century bust, the way that other things in the *Statuary* series are really imitations of more glamorous objects, stainless steel casts that reproduce objects like ceramic knock-offs of 18<sup>th</sup>-century ceramics. I mean, all of these things are debased and lowly — you have here a copy of an imitation, which represented originally a nostalgia for a foregone, long-past period of stable monarchy, the kind of decorative bust you would find in public places and homes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That, I think, explains at least in my mind the kind of strategy or point of view involved and why the material is particularly important. Are there differences? There are subtle differences, and Julie Wolfe, who has been doing a lot of looking and researching into the casting process, will be able to maybe fill us in on some of those. Julie?

JW: Yes. Well, Jeff Koons was very involved in the fabrication process of these pieces. He had them cast at a foundry in Beacon, New York, Tallix. And Tallix was founded by Dick Polich in the '70s — Dick Polich actually started, 20 years later, a new foundry called the Polich Art Works. The people that worked on this piece at the time are now working at Polich. I was able to talk to them, and they do recall working very closely with Koons on this. He was involved in every step of the way, and he really was there for all the processes, from start to

end. Basically, what he did was bring in what they remember being a glazed ceramic model, which they then took a mold from, a silicon mold, covered that with a plaster mother-mold, and then in one piece, they were able to slush in some wax to make a model from that. So they had a complete wax model of this piece. Before casting, they used a ceramic shell technique of investing, and before investing the piece as a whole, in order to really coat the piece well, they cut out sections from the wax, in order to get a better investment. What they described was maybe two or three pieces, about a hand-size, were cut out from the pieces. You can see up close that there are some weld joints around in the hair where there's a little bit more smearing of the seal. So those are probably areas where the wax sections were cut out, and — it's right here. Those pieces were cast separately and then welded in place after casting. The process after casting these involves cutting away and chiseling all the gates from the casting process, which is very laborious, and then polishing. They did all the polishing by hand, with carbide bits, and ended up polishing with Tripoli to get that mirror-finish.

MB: The stainless steel is much harder than rock.

JW: It is much harder, and the time, in order to do this with steel, is probably three times longer than to work with bronze, and it's a very time-consuming process. So there was a lot of hands-on work going on, but again, Koons was there through it all, and he was directing the level of polish. You know, just to answer Derek's question from this morning — about whether you could send this one home instead of that one? — well, actually, if you get out your OptiVisor and look with OptiVisor speculation, you can see some slight differences, and one of the things you'll note is that there is a little bit less polish on this piece [Nasher]. In particular, if you look in the back, there is a little more texture, for example, on the sockle of this piece. In comparison, on this one [Broad Art Foundation], you can see here that there is a much higher level of polish. The technicians that worked at the foundry do recall that when they passed the first one, Koons wanted the piece to be of this level of polish. This texture existed in the glazed ceramic model. Then when they had done the second piece [Broad], Koons decided he wanted it a little bit more highly polished, so he instructed them, when it was in the wax stage, to kind of polish down the texture a little bit, and then during the hand-buffing stage, also to do more polishing. So there is a slight difference in the level of polish,

and if you do look carefully, you can see slight differences, say, in the eyes. The shapes of the pupils are just slightly different on the two pieces. On this one [Broad], you notice that the figure's left eye is darker than the right eye, whereas in the Nasher piece the eyes are more similar to each other. Other very slight changes may be in this piece of costume on the figure's right shoulder, which tends to flip up more on the Broad version. Due to the fabrication and all the handling, you wouldn't be surprised to see those small changes. Because of working just in the wax, you might see that type of subtle change.

RD: They're also different colors.

JW: Color?

RD: Yeah, this one [Broad] is cooler, and that one [Nasher] is warmer, very obviously.

JW: And do you think that's because of the level of polish, this one being a little bit less so?

RD: That, I don't know. I mean, they're different colors.

JW: Yeah.

SN: Or could it have been because this one [Nasher] was outdoors? Could there have been a tarnishing factor involved in stainless steel?

JW: Yes, there could be, and that's something I didn't mention. These are both cast from the same steel alloy, a 316, which is a very stable alloy. It's very strong. The reason that it's so non-corrosive — and this is why the foundry chose this alloy — is because of the higher levels of chromium and nickel. Then with this particular alloy, they've added molybdenum, which makes it very corrosion-resistant. I mean, it's a very strong, hard durable material. The audience can come in and touch this, actually. Go ahead and touch this one. Not the others, but this one is okay. You can kick it. You know, it's very strong, but you do have a problem, if it's been outdoors, that you will get some pitting corrosion beginning to happen. And in the

case of this piece [Nasher], it was outdoors for several years. How many years was it? Was it 20 years that it was outdoors?

SN: Something like that.

JW: So if you do look up closely, you can see some little spots of corrosion. They're easier to see on this area over here [Nasher/side shoulder area] where there are a lot of porosities in the metal, which happened during the casting, but those are the most likely spots to corrode when it's outdoors. The water collects there, then chlorides from the environment can collect, and they will cause the protective layer to break down and corrosion will start to form. The reason that stainless steels are so non-corrosive is because of these elements that are added in. When exposed to air, they automatically react with the air, and chromium oxides will form on the surface. In the case of this, chromium, nickel and molybdenum oxides are actually forming on the surface. You can't see it. It's an invisible-to-the-eye film, but it's there, and it's protective. As long as there isn't anything getting onto the surface that's going to break that down, it is going to be very stable and permanent. So there is an issue with this in the conservation — what level of treatment are you going to do with this? On this one [Broad], which has been indoors all its life, it's in really pristine condition and does not have any signs of pitting corrosion. This one [Nasher] has lost a little bit of its luster because of that corrosion.

DG: Well, it's interesting. One of the issues today is the problem of the artist's intention with sculpture, and one of the most interesting things about this is the shininess of it. Now there is a history of shine in modernist sculpture, but it's less often applied to these kinds of work. This leads me to talk about, I think the elephant in the room, which is how remarkably and, I would add, wonderfully tacky these objects are. That's important to talk about, because that's how we understand Koons. What we need to remember is that Koons' work from '80 to at least '88 or '89 is about valuing the debased. So if we understand his understanding of kitsch, we can better understand these specific works and why they look as they do. The whole idea of kitsch in the classic formulation, provided most obnoxiously perhaps by Clement Greenberg, is that kitsch is high culture that has then been mass-produced, thus devaluing it



and evacuating it of its true meaning and power. There's a much more complex reading going on. For Koons, he's all about taking these things that have been debased, that are no longer considered high art, and bringing them back. It's interesting that the prototype for this was not a marble or a bronze sculpture but a ceramic one, which we would more often find — well, in Koons' sort of approach, we would not find that in the sculpture galleries but maybe in the decorative arts galleries. He's relying on that kind of hierarchy, however problematic that is, between fine arts and decorative arts. But even more so, because the other works in the series are also things that wouldn't be considered sculpture. So one of them was a big-headed Bob Hope doll, then there was the rabbit that Steve mentioned, and here are ceramic busts.

MB: But in this case it's more complicated than some of the others, because there seems a very odd ambiguity about this, particularly a large full-scale ceramic?

DG: Yes, but I think this is a transitional work when he's beginning — this is really one of the works that he takes into the next series. But one other thing that I wanted to mention before we go into that is the name for the series, *Statuary*. Now statuary is a debased category for modern sculpture, right? We talk about modern sculpture, but very rarely do we talk about modern statues. So it's even in that that Koons is trying to take these things that are beyond the pale and bring them back. That's what makes this work so interesting because it bridges the relationship between kitsch and those kinds of sculpture that have been degraded. But I think it allows us to really think of some different ways to approach these questions. Back to the question of scale, I think you're right. I think it's monstrous in its scale.

RD: Statuary can also mean still. You're assuming that statuary relates to a category of statue. Statuary can also mean still, and still in this context can mean sticking at one place in time, unchanging.

DG: Yeah, but he talked about them as statues, and about this category as something —

MB: By statuary, he meant statues in this category?

DG: Yes, all the works in this series — and he worked in series — are figures of this sort, so I take your point, but I think it needs to be a secondary point to what he's working with.

RD: Secondary, I don't know. The material is permanent. What you have here is something that gets as close to permanence as you can get, so when Ron Hubbard's testaments are on stainless steel plates in a nitrogen environment, that means they're going to survive forever, and here, you have things which are getting near to being permanent. They're unlike the other works in this show. They're made, and their making is a process of erasing their own making. The casting process used, as has been pointed out, is an incredibly long-winded process. It's really, really hard work, and it's really hard work on such a complex surface. The original image may be kitschy, but you're presented with something which is materially present in an awesome way, in a way that the bronze [bronzes in the exhibition by Rodin and Giacometti] is not so evidently present, or is more expressionistic. The bronze itself is friendly to a certain kind of manipulation. But in these Koons pieces, you have a materiality that's present, and also because of their — someone used the word monstrous yesterday — because they're kind of monstrous, you're confronted with this implacability. The material is there, and this effort to make them the same, which is futile in the end, because the process of production is so craft-oriented, it can't possibly be the same. There's no possibility that a craft process can give you what an industrial production process can.

MB: Which is what stainless steel would usually involve.

RD: Yes. That's a good point.

MB: But isn't there another thing, which is the point I was coming to, that can sort of tie in here, if we're assuming that he takes a full-scale glazed ceramic or something that in itself is debased, is a reproduction of a sculpture, a statuary in a nobler material, say, marble? What you've got here, actually, I don't think is in any way a bust of Louis XIV. I mean, what it's likely to be is a bust of about 1700, perhaps produced by one of those sculptors like Grupello working in Düsseldorf for the Rhineland-Palatinate, possibly sort of linked with late-Medici courts. It

has a characteristic of both of those schools of sculpture where large-scale, some might say over-blown, portrait busts of these rulers who were actually — they were the last of the Medici. They were coming to the end of their line. It's only relatively recently — actually about the time that Koons was doing these things — that this whole area of sculpture was being reevaluated. But I have no idea to what extent he might have been aware of that or whether I'm right at all about this. But my sort of sense is that he's taking something that started off as very grand, then became debased, possibly — well, it seems to me that the hair on both of these suggests that it's been perhaps cast from a marble or a bronze, and it's lost some of the detail in the source that he was using. So this is sort of a debased source.

SN: The overblown-ness is basic to its sardonic nature. This is an absurdity. Clearly, that's what makes these things so powerful. It's because they are so absurd, because they are so absurd on the one hand. But as Richard is saying they also have an amazing kind of in-your-face, confrontational, tough presence, but a formal and material presence embodying their sardonic message.

RD: Just to have the clout to insist on making it is impressive.

MB: Yes, and in this material.

DG: Stainless steel was one of his favorite materials for a number of series that he did, for these very reasons, because it's something that we associate not with art production and the casting tradition in the same way, but with the shiny false luxury, all the things he talks about.

MB: But there's also sort of an element of effeminacy here, isn't there?

SN: Yeah, but he talks about that, specifically. He says that these have both a feminine and a masculine side. So that there is this kind of macho, kind of tough, erupting kind of statement, a volcano of stainless steel, yet the facial features are also absurdly polished and romanticized and made so, so precious. The person doesn't look, as you say, anything like Louis XIV, so

you've got that rough and tough, masculine side, and you've got that decorative, the feminine side.

JW: Well, nobody's really mentioned the reflection, too, which is so dramatic. The refractions on the face, you get these circular patterns that do make his face look almost ghoulish, someone said the other day, and it's true that, because of the reflections moving around, it changes, and it just can really —

MB: You almost see yourself in it.

JW: Well, you do see yourself. It's scary.

DG: To return to Richard's point about the toughness and the materiality of these things, which exist in this tense dialogue with almost the feignedness of the surface itself, so it's shiny, there's an anecdote — now we've been warned about giving anecdotes, but I'm going to give one about Koons and stainless steel. You have to always take his anecdotes with a degree of caution, because he's creating his own mythology, but he says that when working on the last of the *Statuary* series in 1987, which was a life-sized statue for the Münster sculpture project, a worked called *Kiepenkerl*, it went horribly wrong and in a mode that revisits Cellini's famous discussion of casting process. The sculpture, the stainless steel, was all distended and didn't work right. And he and the founders had to literally bend it back into place, and Koons, in his traditional overblown fashion, said, "This is when I learned to work with my hands and become an artist." From that — and that's the shift that suddenly Koons steps out to become this sort of bad-boy artist — he starts emphasizing his own persona a bit more. But it's interesting that it's actually from the dialogue with materiality that he would construct this mythology.

RD: To talk to the point, we could talk a bit more about the polish. The most highly polished area in the work is the face. So even the base, which potentially could have a high polish because there are flat surfaces, is slightly matted down. So the surface which tells us the least is actually the face, so talking about the surface, the face of the work, its appearance, is one that

denies looking in the strongest way. The most inhuman bit of the work is the face, in fact. That kind of terminates it, too. The rest, you know, the surface is slightly soft. The polishing has produced a slightly inflected surface, but not with the face. Which is opposed to the Giacomettis over there, where the work is concentrated toward looking out from the face, and on *The Age of Bronze*, the eyes are closed, and the face is expressive. Despite this apparent steel obduracy, if you start to look, there are decisions being made about what it was, what the work is about. In the Bunny, which has this universal polish, it's completely resistant to being looked at, whereas here it's only in the face that you get that quality.

SN: Well, is the fact that it's not Louis XIV part of Koons's irony, do you think?

DG: Well, or that it could be an emulator of Louis XIV, and, therefore, we're adding one more level of simulation to a chain of them.

RD: Steve said something about a hollow sham image, and one could say, on all images of monarchy, they are "hollow shams." Where's one that isn't?

SN: Without wanting to be though.

MB: You could say that about the Baroque, as well, for a lot of Baroque sculpture. Good. Shall we return to the forum, as it were?

### **Panel Discussion in Auditorium**

MB: I hope that has raised a whole lot of different questions.

Q: I think this sort of sociological reading of Koons, all the kitschy aspects, it's an aspect of the work, but when they succeed, I agree with Richard that they succeed on real principles of sculpture. I mean, I saw a retrospective. Like the bar set really works because of negative space. Those balloon pieces have a kind of tension in the surface that makes them really

operative. I think those sort of porcelain kitsch pieces are the translation of two-dimensional images into three dimensions. I mean, I think there is some real dialogue with sculpture that he's involved with. He kind of denies it. I said, "Well, I thought that piece was great," and he changes the subject. He won't even enter into it. But I think all this sort of kitsch — you know, the elevation of this to that — I mean, I don't know how important that is.

SN: Well, don't you think the iconology is in the form?

Q: Well, that's a style.

DG: Earlier, one of Joel Shapiro's comments in the Rodin discussion was that form — that the Rodin was a depictive sculpture — and that's how we should attend to it, and now we're going the other way. You're right. I think he's an interesting sculptor, and those works are formally very powerful and compelling. When I call something tacky, that's not necessarily a bad thing. So the point is that I actually think that exists in a very productive and intense dialogue with his own stated intentions about kitsch and also with our responses to it. We can't just approach that from a formalist perspective and look at it, in terms of its negative or positive space. However much it works on an interesting level in that way, we're constantly faced with the fact that there is this resplendent and gargantuan tacky face staring back. That's part of it. I'm not going to say that we should just have this sort of socio-cultural reading of him, but I also wouldn't agree that we need to just sort of denigrate that, in respect to the formal power of the work. I think they work and are productive. That's what makes them good.

Q: I'm not denigrating it. I think it's stylistic and incidental, and I think when there's not some formal aspect that's operative, it's just a dumb object of no interest.

SN: That's why he has survived. Really, that's why people are so interested in the work. His new blown-up balloon dogs are just amazing things to look at. I mean — forget about what they mean.

Q: He's part of the discourse, for better or worse. People really don't like it so much.

MB: Are you saying that, as it were, the subject matter is just arbitrary?

Q: No, I don't think it's arbitrary, but I think it's conditioned by — you know, it's shrewd, it's smart, and he's a kind of brilliant operator, but I also think that beneath that, there's some real investment in the form, in terms of personal meaning. I don't quite know — it's hard to see. I mean, I think these are really rambunctious, monstrous pieces, and I don't know how successful they are, in terms of it.

Q: In spite of how we feel, the fact is it's an object in our care. As conservators, collectors and curators, they are in our care. We are the keepers of it, and it seems to me — and I keep going back again to what Adam said last night about time. Time is the factor that unites all of these objects. Close-looking at objects, Adam said, is close-looking at time, and perhaps part of the affront of Koons is that, by making it in such a so-called permanent material that changes at a rate much slower than anything else we're used to looking at, it's almost an affront that time is not apparent on it. So I wonder, as we look at these objects — and I hope that later, in the bigger discussion, we can talk a little bit more about time and the artist's intent, but as we look at these objects, and consider caring for them, I think we really do have to think about time in this one.

DG: And that's something that Koons is very interested in. For instance, the *Made in Heaven* series, which is the one with all of the pornographic imagery — those are oil inkjet prints on canvas. So they're photographic, but they're technically paintings so that they can be exhibited, more than if they were just photographs, so he's very conscious of the way in which these objects work in relationship to their life in institutions. I think that's an excellent point and just sort of adds to the complexity of the choice of stainless steel.

Q: Previously, we talked about how it was difficult to talk about sameness. I just want to talk about that again and see if I can encourage you to say a bit more about that, because with the other sculptures, the other series — in terms of time, but the sculptures become different.

Therefore, you can exercise your own choice, and you can respond to them and interpret them, and they each become like different people, in a way, whereas here with the Koons you have the sense of virtually identical sculptures. In fact, apart from what Julie was saying, your discussion might as well have been about one sculpture than about two, because you were talking about the object rather than the two objects and your responses to two objects. They are very impersonal, which in a sense seems to suit the portrait of a king, which ought to be absolutely the same everywhere — absolute monarchy, that kind of dissemination — so the subject is perhaps important here, but, of course, he did the same thing with other kinds of subjects. So can you try and talk about sameness a little bit?

SN: Well, sameness, in his hands, was part of the artistic intent, of course. To make these as identical as possible figures into the iconography of commenting on consumer society. I mean, these are things that supposedly would be coming off of a production line, produced in a highly industrial fashion that would make them as closely similar as possible so that his insistence on similarity or uniformity is just as much a part of their meaning as the image itself. But the fact that they are somewhat different, really, for all intents and purposes doesn't matter that much, except from a technical point of view. It's fascinating for people who are taking care of these objects, for instance. I mean, you look at the graining on the back of those bases, and ask if they should look alike? If Koons really meant them to be identical, should they be made to look more identical? Should all differences resulting from exposure to weather be removed? That's where the issue of sameness or difference in Koons becomes a really practical issue.

RD: Well, they're not the same. They can't be the same. It's impossible, in the production process, for them to be the same. If you put that on one side, I don't think it's sameness that's the interesting thing. It's the lack of an original. It's mythologized, whatever the original is, so what you have is just a series of reproductions. There's no original. For *The Age of Bronze*, we had photographs of the original model, photographs – et cetera, so there's a whole sense of growth from the original, and the same with the portraits of Diego. There's a sense that there's a living person which belongs to that portrait. Now with those [Koons busts], you have a group of four, strictly limited things, which are more like each other than they are like



anything else in the world. Their commonality, the commonality of that relationship is crucial. So as you look at them, you are always aware that there are three others which are akin, or very, very closely akin to this, so you're never given the myth that what you're looking at is an original, a kind of unique object, which despite the 20 casts of the Rodin, somehow that notion still attaches. You're looking at something that has some authenticity attached to it. I think that's the question you're asking. It's not about sameness. It's about something which exists without an original.

SN: Would you say that this is part of the furthering of the kind of Duchamp/Warhol tradition or lineage, the denial of the original of the artist's hand through found objects? But in this case, there isn't even a found object anymore. I mean, even the found object is gone.

RD: Well, yesterday we were talking about that a bit, and I said it again today, that the notion of erasure of the hand, particularly on this, because the production process is so long, it's ludicrous that you attempt to erase the evidence of making from something so complex. To do so is only to emphasize that this is a made-object. The more you rub it out, the more it's still there.

MB: Could you say that the way he uses material is defiantly inauthentic?

DG: I mean, that's kind of a loaded question — or, I mean a leading question. Perhaps maybe a way to talk about this in a different way would be to think about why we find that sameness and that lack of originality so disturbing. We treat art as if it has this subjective level, however much that is a mythic construction of its own. When we look at something like the identical Koons pieces, that access is almost a fear of identity that has been going on for a long time. We look at the discussions of cloning, the fear of the doppelganger, and there is a long tradition of an anxiety about reproducing exactly another person and having a person be identical to someone else. It's that same problem we have when we encounter a sculpture like this. We're desperate to find those moments where it becomes unique, just like the way we want to see ourselves, right? Unique and worthwhile on its own. And it's so frustrating with works like the Koons, because he's saying, well, art is like a commodity, which is not

necessarily a negative zone to put it in, but rather it gains its value by being one of many that are exchangeable.

RD: One of four.

Q: I don't think it was so disturbing that you haven't talked about it.

RD: I think it is important to say that they're one of four. I tried to find out. I do think that actually three plus one is something that exists in other series of Koons.

DG: Yes, it's the common edition size.

Q: Well, to follow on Richard's comment, it does beg the issue — I mean, these are all the same. If you want them all the same and to all have relatively the same value, it would be kind of absurd to see one of these Koonses going up for much more at an auction than another. So the issue of sameness obviates something. With Rodin, we're always comparing the value of a particular object, the one that we might have, not so much to other casts but back to this mythologized original. So sameness and difference is not just a comparison between states of individual pieces. It's this notion of the numerous things we have with whether or not there is some kind of original source. It's common in all three of these artists, and they've all attacked it quite differently.

MB: That sounds like one of these big issues that we're going to be returning to.

**Sculpture and Conservation Conference**  
**Final Panel Discussion**  
**Dallas, Texas, October 22-23, 2004**

**Session Speaker Key**

<b>MB</b>	<b>Malcolm Baker</b>
<b>MiB</b>	<b>Michael Brenson</b>
<b>RB</b>	<b>Ruth Butler</b>
<b>PC</b>	<b>Penelope Curtis</b>
<b>RD</b>	<b>Richard Deacon</b>
<b>VF</b>	<b>Valerie Fletcher</b>
<b>DG</b>	<b>David Getsy</b>
<b>AL</b>	<b>Andrew Lins</b>
<b>HM</b>	<b>Hanspeter Marty</b>
<b>SN</b>	<b>Steven A. Nash</b>
<b>DP</b>	<b>Derek Pullen</b>
<b>JS</b>	<b>Joel Shapiro</b>
<b>VW</b>	<b>Véronique Wiesinger</b>
<b>JW</b>	<b>Julie Wolfe</b>
<b>Q</b>	<b>Question or commentary from the audience</b>

**Final Panel Discussion in Auditorium**

Q: There's a question here, and maybe you wise men and women can help me answer it. It really came up as we were talking about Jeff Koons and the issue of statuary, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century concept of a statuaire and how a maker of statues, hierarchically, differed from sculptors, the poor slob who had to carve the damn thing. Certainly, it speaks to Koons' prescience, but it also had me thinking about issues around authenticity which seem to be at the core of what each of you, in your group presentations, were discussing in very different ways. It seems to me one of the things that we're talking about here is authenticity. How do we get back to what it is that the artists aspired to create? In the case of Giacometti, we talked about empirical analysis of what we see. Then there is Koons' problematic notion of an original that he was trying to fulfill with his particular statue. I'm wondering if there isn't something that we ultimately aspire to fulfill in looking at these variable states and what these artists achieve, that is truly authentic in the work. It brings us back to where we began, and this will

end my question that isn't quite a question: the problem with the Rodin *The Age of Bronze* and whether or not you patinate it. It seemed to me, when you were talking about that, the real question is whether you have a more authentic experience of what Rodin intended by repatinating the piece and creating something that would have been close to what he had when he took it out of the Luxembourg gardens and put it on display. Or do you ultimately compromise its authenticity and, therefore, leave it to the oxidation of time, even though it seems far removed from what Rodin originally intended? It's a question that seems very germane to this whole discussion of variability, and the ways in which that is posed differently by each of these three artists.

SN: I think that is true, and there were various questions about conservation in all of these groups — to restore or not to restore — and that's maybe the most clear-cut one, and probably a good place to start. Richard?

RD: Just after we finished speaking, just now, as we were breaking up, Ruth Butler came up to me and said, "You don't mean to say that you think there was an original for *The Age of Bronze*, do you?" which opened a trap door beneath my feet, because clearly I did, in the context of Penelope's question. But if I reflect on it, there isn't. So the question of authenticity, I think, is probably a blind alley. There isn't anything.

SN: Well, Ruth, don't you need to expand on that, because there was a clay original. There isn't one anymore, but there was.

RB: A jolt went through my backbone when Richard said that, because the first person I spoke to at the Nasher — outside in the garden, who wasn't among the audience and participants here — was an everyday curious visitor with other people. They were looking at Rodin's *Eve*, and he said to his companions, "Well, this is a copy of the original, and I think there are other copies." Of course, I spent half my life trying to educate people that that's not what we're dealing with here. As far as *The Age of Bronze* goes, the clay was destroyed, the first plaster fell apart, but as I'm constantly saying, don't call these casts copies.

- RD: On one level, you could also say that *The Age of Bronze* is a work in bronze by Auguste Rodin. There's no original. When I'm making a work, there are original bits of wood that go into the making of it, but the sculpture is the bronze. The casting process is a way of making something. When Joel makes something — and I'd be interested to hear what Joel says about this — there's something which goes towards the process of making, but the idea of an original is, in some sense, absurd. What you have is something made in stainless steel, something made in bronze, or —
- SN: They're all originals. I mean, they're all multiple originals, but it would be better to say there's a first version.
- RB: Which has more value. In economic terms, that carries weight, just like a provenance from a famous museum carries weight. If you're going to borrow it for your exhibition, it carries more weight than something that you don't quite know when it was made, and hasn't come through a provenance that you can trust. It may not be better to look at, but it has weight.
- AL: One of the things I understood the first question to be aimed at is, while we're looking at altered states, when something is altered so far from what its original state was, is it no longer acceptable as a displayable object, and at what point do you step in as a curator or conservator to effect a better approximation of what the artist's intent was? I'll tell you an answer we made to the rather gruesome-looking *Thinker* that Derek projected from our website, which you're welcome to look at, at PMA, [www.philamuseum.org](http://www.philamuseum.org). We had a sculpture that could not be read. The high points were black, and the low points were white, or green, and streaked. It was not successful. You couldn't tell what it looked like. Actually, the public even complained. Despite our rather conservative approach to intervention at our particular museum, we decided we needed to return the sculpture to a form in which you could read it. So what we did was apply a series of chelating agents to remove all of the black material from the top and then converted all the rest of the material to a more stable corrosion product. We didn't really change it. We took the material that had actually built up on the surface — the vehicular tars and aerosol deposits — selectively removed them, and we changed the topography back closer to what it was, we hope. At the same time, we then applied a patina

to make the top surface green, then we covered it with black, and then we tried not to mess with it, because our view is that the surface has already been altered, substantially, detrimentally, and it's weathered. But we're letting it now weather again in a way that will let you read the high points and the low points and make it come into balance with its environment a little bit better, an environment where people climb on it and put traffic cones on its head and a whole bunch of other things in Philadelphia. So we're just trying to have an adjustment that will be reasonable, that people can actually aesthetically appreciate still, because, at the point it was, its altered state was not appreciable any longer.

RB: The Musée Rodin does the same thing. It may be not as complicated, but *The Burghers of Calais*, from time to time, gets black holes so that what you see are not eyes but black holes, and they paint them so that you can still read it.

SN: But coming back to the Philadelphia *The Age of Bronze* here and the question of — or the Leeds *The Age of Bronze*, I guess either one, and the question of conservation and treatment, how many people in here would treat those works? Attempt some form of restoration?

Q: Well, I was struck, during Penelope's talk this morning, because she said a number of times that she was resisting a total restoration, I think you said, or a total treatment. I was struck by the word "total," because I think that there's a middle ground. I think that when there is bright streaky-green corrosion on a bronze like that — it's a situation that we faced at the Getty with *The Juggling Man* by Adriaen de Vries that, when acquired, had been outdoors and unrecognized. I'm sure some of you know the object. We decided to adjust the tonal relationships conservatively but to tone down the bright streaky-green corrosion to a point where the form of the object is more legible. It was not a re-patination, by any means. It was merely an application of some toning on top of the really bright corrosion to reduce the contrast. So I don't think that we need to think of a situation like the Leeds piece as leave it alone, or re-patinate it. I think there are a lot of middle steps.

Q: I also want to tell you our Rodin story. Like Philadelphia, we have a *Thinker*. Our website, by the way, is [www.thinker.org](http://www.thinker.org). You can also look at our picture of *Thinker*. Our *Thinker*

also had, after 65 years of outside exposure, acquired a very greenish, light greenish, streaky, quite awful patina, and the museum was frequently accused of being negligent in maintaining its main symbol at the Legion of Honor. I remember back about 15 or 20 years ago maybe, a fairly fierce argument by the Rodin scholar Albert Elsen at Stanford University, who was trying to get our director at that time to actually allow the Coubertin foundry to come in, strip the sculpture and re-patinate it. We, as conservators, had to really hold the line on that one. We felt that the patina was salvageable, that the Rudier patina was historic, that the streaking was indeed disfiguring, and that there were certain things you could do to mitigate the appearance. Similar to the treatment at the Getty to the sculpture that was previously discussed, or that Andrew Lins talked about at Philadelphia, we simply studied which corrosion products were the most harmful, reduced them mechanically, applied an evening surface coating, which consisted of a fairly decent wax, and left it alone. It's looking pretty good, and it's surviving very, very well. I think there are conservative solutions that make it possible to act responsibly.

MB: Can I come back from the consideration of particular objects and surfaces, which is obviously a key part of the question? Also, it seems to me, lurking within that question is something much broader, which for me raises all sorts of issues, about the whole idea of retrieving the authentic. For me, even though I might have a lot of respect for the evidence and the documentation and the material evidence for investigative conservation and so on, the whole idea of retrieving the authentic, retrieving the original — not necessarily the original object, but even the notion of the original — is in many ways a sort of false one. I mean, we are where we are, and whatever we're looking at, we look at. I mean, it's a rather obviously relativist point, but we're looking at it through our own eyes, and we're reading it in that way. Every period will have its own "authentic." So we have to keep that in play. One of the things that interests me about sculpture and the variable states about sculpture is that, necessarily, you have to actually keep in play this change of perspective. So the very thinking about sculpture and these problems involves you in that, continuously.

AL: Could I comment just briefly on that? I don't want to pick on any particular figure, but just let me remark that sculptures positioned outdoors, even in relatively benign environments, do

not have a choice of retaining their original surface. Unfortunately. So there isn't really original material left on the surfaces after a given period of time, depending on the environment, the exposure conditions, the coating, et cetera. The surface is no longer the original surface. So when you talk about interfering with the original, you have to be a little careful about how you're phrasing it.

MB: Well, I would certainly go along with that, but I think one of the interests of the Jeff Koons piece is that it raises just these sorts of issues, because it challenges any idea of the authentic.

JS: I think authentic experience is what's valuable. I mean, my recollection of certain literature on Rodin, Rodin's contribution, is his radical idea of reproduction and utilization of prior casts in a kind of cannibalization of his own work. I guess if he touched it, it's authentic, but the experience of authenticity, when you're looking at something, you actually believe it, assuming you're sophisticated, and that's the real value. Well, if the piece is in so catastrophic a condition that you can no longer see it and no longer appreciate it, then you have to restore it. But if you can't, why bother, since there is no standard reference?

Q: Who makes that decision?

JS: I think intelligent consensus. I would say by experience — I think when you look at it, and it's no longer viable. I mean visually viable.

VF: But Joel, if you put two curators and two conservators in a room, you're going to have four different opinions, so achieving that intelligent consensus is not always as easy as it sounds.

JS: But maybe conservators shouldn't be the people who are making that decision.

VF: Maybe curators neither.

JS: No, I mean maybe conservators should be following — there should be, which I'm sure there is, some close discourse.



Q: Joel, you're an artist. How about yourself? Give us your intention for the preservation of your work in the future.

JS: Of my work?

Q: How do you feel about yours now? Are they turning green, or whatever?

JS: Well, I was talking to somebody today. I mean, there's a certain kind of whitening of the bronze that I don't particularly like, that I'd like to be able to resolve, but I think you can do it, early on. I mean, I think you have to maintain the piece. It requires a lot of maintenance, and many institutions, or many individuals, don't bother doing it. So I think work is a responsibility. You have to clean it, whether it's waxing or not waxing, or cleaning bird droppings off the piece, it's burdensome. I mean, it is really a lot of work, and I think that is the responsibility of institutions, to maintain the works so that basically conservators have a little less — so that they're doing due diligence — to avoid these sorts of catastrophic situations. I'm sure if you wax and clean a bronze outside three times a year, this probably is not an issue. Well, it's a lot cheaper than a big loss.

VF: But Joel, when a museum does do that, as ours did before I got there and still does to this day in modified form, there are criticisms leveled at us that we are not allowing the bronzes that are intended for outdoor display to achieve an outdoor look.

JS: Well, it's difficult. Generally speaking, if you have some sense of what something was, and there's a way of maintaining it — you know, I have instructions about how to maintain pieces. Even my own work that I have retained and have outdoors in the country in the Adirondacks is a lot of work. I mean, I'm ready to bring a lot of it inside. It's so much maintenance. On the other hand, the pieces have gotten richer, the patina is deeper, and things do acquire a kind of quality from being outside that's desirable. But I do think there's a point where it goes to the other side, and it becomes catastrophic, so that's a balance that you have to maintain.

Q: I think this might be a good point to segue into a comment that I wanted to make earlier. I just wanted to dispel any misconceptions that seem to come up a lot that — it would be wrong for anyone to leave this meeting, thinking that conservators run around over-zealously trying to protect every outdoor sculpture, putting wax on it all the time, or that they're not consulting anyone, because that's really not the case. Just the same way we've been talking here about preserving artists' intent, conservators, all of my colleagues — many of them are here right now — work very diligently to meet with curators, to meet with artists when the artist is alive, to examine literature, to bring in conservators from other institutions, to bring in curators from other institutions. Everyone is part of that decision, so it's not something that anyone takes lightly. I think it's also important, since Valerie brought it up, that perhaps at her institution there's another thing going on, but I agree with her that we don't want every outdoor sculpture to look exactly alike. If that's what's happened over there, you should know that there are other ways of treating outdoor sculpture. In our sculpture garden outdoors, you see objects that don't all look alike, because there are many different ways of applying wax or other kinds of coatings. You can apply it hot, you can apply it cold, you can spray it, you can put it on by hand, you can buff it, you can not buff it, you can buff it with a power buffer, you don't have to use wax at all, or you can wait every two years to wax it. You can put oils on. So I just think, as was previously brought up, that we have this mandate to protect and preserve our pieces, yet at the same time we don't want to have them all indoors. We want them outdoors, to be able to appreciate them. I think there are ways to do it, so I don't want anyone to go away with any wrong ideas here.

SN: What I would say myself from curatorial experience is that the most important, gratifying and exciting moments in one's curatorial career are spent in the laboratory in consultation with conservators. You're really working hard together, trying to make these very difficult decisions, which aren't always easy. But you try to come up with some rationally-based solutions — you bring in outside experts, and that's what a lot of our responsibility is.

Q: I think we have been talking about time, a shorter time period and timelessness, in terms of Koons and other things here. One of the most important lessons, I think, to come home from

here is what you were talking about, how important it is that we are trying to come up with a really sensible consensus among several people and several different specialties coming together. On the other hand, I think we should be a little humble, because we have been talking about artists' intent here in our whole conference, where not even the only artist in the exhibition who is alive and would be able to comment on the sculpture decided to come. Actually, I feel there is somehow a very unclear line between what was the artist's intent and what we are trying all together, with all of our efforts, to second-guess. I would just like to point out that all of our very well-educated guesses and best intentions are in a time capsule, the time capsule of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century or 21<sup>st</sup> century. If we look back at, say, the history of conservation, I think I only have to point out a few things to everyone, seeing all of those Baroque altars which were painted very, very colorfully and gilded, and we had to restore them in a stage completely stripped. Shall I say that the conservators of that age were insensitive to colors and gildings? So I would try to be a little more humble second-guessing the artist's opinion, because we cannot do anything better, generally, unless we have some literal and specific information from the artist that this particular work has to look like this, and so on and so on. We are very unfortunate not to have many of these.

VF: Actually, may I respond to that? Because many of us are used to talking about sculpture that's 100 or more years old. The Koonses obviously aren't, but the Rodins certainly are. One of the things that was launched in some museums, including the Hirshhorn, but I think MoMA started it long before, was contacting the living artists who had works in our collection and asking them to specify what significance the material had and what their view was for the long-term care of it. If we didn't get sufficiently helpful answers, we would later track them down and try and ask them specific questions. I'm saying this is a positive thing for the future. For example, I think that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a transition period in which our technological abilities accelerated our ability to test things, to recreate things, to destroy things through environmental pollution. Both accelerated, and we're now trying to catch up with all of the possibilities raised by those two accelerating conditions. But looking to the future, many of the artists active in the '60s, '70s and '80s have seen how their works have deteriorated, and they have come around to taking proactive action. And some of the younger ones are doing that, very much so. I'd just like to give you two examples which I think are

very heartening. Donald Judd made innumerable stack pieces, in wonderful shining plastic. Well, plastic doesn't last forever. I mean, the brass might last a long, long time, but the plastic won't. Ours is a really bizarre wonderful magenta with a kind of orange glow inside it. I mean, if you tried to make that from scratch, I doubt that you'd be able to, and it would be very, very time-consuming with a lot of failed experiments. So he said, "Well, here, I'm going to give you extra sheets, and if you'll just wrap them, they won't last forever either. But when you need them, they'll be in better condition than the ones that have been exposed to light and people touching them."

Then the younger generation — I don't know if you know the Spanish sculptor, Juan Muñoz. He actually didn't make outdoor pieces at first. He made indoor pieces, largely cast in resin. When he became interested, partly at the prodding of museums, curators and collectors, to cast them into a more durable material so that they could be placed outdoors, he did so, and he used a foundry in Spain. I don't know the name of it, but it did terrible work. The alloy mixture was horrendous, and the patination was not very knowledgeable. When we interviewed him — we acquired a piece — he sent it with the kind of patina that was kind of greenish with whitish overtones, as if it were corroded already 200 or 300 years, and that's what he wanted. He wanted it to look as if it were more than 100 or 200 years old, but he didn't know how to achieve it, technically. So, literally, within three months, it washed off in the rain. The alloy of the bronze is so difficult to get any patina to adhere to, is so irregular, that basically after many conversations and taking the piece to a foundry and just working it out, I just basically said, "Let me get this straight. You want your sculpture to always look like it's a couple of hundred years old, like it's been corroded outdoors? You don't want it to actually corrode, is that correct?" and he said, "Yes, that's correct." So what we have to do, because of the poor quality of the alloy, is we basically have to make it look corroded without letting it corrode, which is ironic, in view of this discussion we're having. But it's also heartening, because we now know exactly what he wanted. The message we're achieving, technologically/chemically, may change over time, but the result — I mean, we literally have samples, bronze samples, with different patinas on them, in which you'd say, "No, no, no — yes, that's it. That's what I want." Like medicine, prevention is the better part of treatment.

PC: I just wanted to say that I feel in large institutions, especially, conservators are closer to artists and to the art, very often, than curators are. That's certainly my experience. Having worked in the Tate, I've always felt their conservators are closer to the artists than the curators. Similarly, to the second question, I didn't think there was a lack of humility in our discussions today. It seemed to me that we weren't being particularly autocratic. I think we've now moved on to a discussion of a history of care and changing institutional care, and that's different from a history of neglect and what to do about 100 years of neglect, largely of works that haven't been in institutions. That's very, very different. Of course, conservatorial practice changes. Every generation, you see things going in and out of fashion. I think looking at the history of neglect is quite different.

Q: Just to build on what other people are saying, it might be interesting for some people in the audience to know that conservators are very aware and concerned about these issues and have, for years, been interviewing artists, as curators have, and archiving these documents. There's been considerable discussion in our field about this, and the realization that artists change their minds from one interview to another. Some institutions may have information when other institutions need it. We've been looking at issues of copyright, ownership of the information once someone interviews an artist and has that information in their archives. There are various efforts right now to share that information, and we're running into, again, issues of copyright law and ownership of information, but we're trying to move beyond that. There's a really interesting model that was developed, several years back in the Netherlands in cooperation with the Tate Gallery, called INCCA. It's now established in Europe, and it's being brought to the U.S., slowly right now. We're having another meeting in December at the Getty. It's basically a database of membership, museums and organizations that have information from artists in their archives. These member organizations are able to post the fact that they have information, so it's a meta database. It's not the information itself, but they can say, "We have interviewed Joel Shapiro. We have a recording of what he had to say at our museum." Then if someone is interested, they can negotiate with the owners of that video, or whatever it might be. So it can't be distributed, but someone might be able to offer, "Yes, we actually have the artist's permission to share this information with another

conservator from another institution.” So we’re being very careful about the dissemination, but we are moving forward — I say we, as a field — in sharing information.

MB: This is really taking us in another direction, in a way stepping back from what we’ve been doing and thinking historically. One thing that has been done within the exhibition, that we’ve been concerned with in these couple of days, is looking very closely at variable states, the sameness, but even more so, the differences between different versions and so on. My impression is — perhaps you’ll all contradict me — but it’s still fairly new for modern sculpture to be looked at in that way. Now conversely, with historic sculpture — say, Renaissance bronzes, 18<sup>th</sup>-century sculpture — there are all sorts of questions, commonplace in modern sculpture studies, about modes of viewing and phenomenology and so on, which are only just beginning to be explored among historians of earlier sculpture. But what has been central to a whole tradition of connoisseurship within, say Renaissance bronzes, has been this close comparison. It goes back probably to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where people would compare their versions of Giambologna bronzes. I remember back in 1978 when we had a big Giambologna exhibition that began in Edinburgh and then went to London and Vienna, and one of the aims was to highlight how Giambologna, the major sculptor between Michelangelo and Bernini, was the first sculptor to really use replication in a serious way. Part of the point of the exhibition was to get different versions together and compare them. So we had, I think, eight different versions of a statuette of Mars lined up in one long case, which very soon became known as the Mars bar. It is something that people who work on earlier sculpture are very much used to, but this is a great divide, because some of the really interesting questions that are asked by historians of modern sculpture have been completely ignored, until recently, by historians of earlier sculpture and vice versa. I think one of the things happening here is an attempt to bring these things together.

DG: I’d like to build on that and move at right angles to the line of conversation so far. I think it’s a misconception to say that we’ve been just concerned with artistic intention. I mean, one of the interesting things about the variable states is the differences in reception and the way that we’re encountering these objects differently. So it’s not just this recovery process that makes it interesting to compare those Giacomettis, for instance. Rather, it’s about how they operate

differently as individual objects. I mean, one of the points I think we should all gain from comparing these three different historical periods is that sculpture is this collaborative art, in both its creation and in its experience. One of the things that makes it so weird and wonderful is that it's a thing in our space that we have to encounter, and we have to see each other as we're walking around it. There's all of that going on too.

MB: Often together.

DG: And often together, and one of the things that I think is one of the big benefits of this is not just trying to figure out which of those Giacomettis is more authentic, in terms of how the coloration is dealt with, or which of the Rodins. Those are pressing historical questions, but something I'd also like to talk about is how is it that seeing these same sculptures together changes our conception of how we're looking at sculpture, and what are our own investments in these questions of viewing?

JS: I have to say one thing, and this is a plea. My experience is that I have had to be consulted, regarding restoration of some of my work, but very little of it from being outdoors and affected in ways that couldn't be retrieved. The real problem comes during installations and during shipping, and the level of abuse that goes on is remarkable, at least with contemporary art. Maybe if it's a Rodin, they take care. I think Donald Judd wrote about this. I think contemporary art is really banged around as if it has no value. I mean, the installation people don't necessarily understand it. I have had pieces ripped literally to pieces, ripped in half during a de-installation. Half of the piece catapulted up in the air, because it wasn't pulled off at the angle of the mount. I mean, conserving some sort of natural erosion from the outdoors is reasonable, but when you have to reconstruct a work because of some malfeasance or under-budgeted institution, it's really problematic.

Q: I just wanted to follow up on what both Malcolm and David said. I'm particularly interested, Malcolm, since you've worked so much on the history of viewing sculpture and reception. One thing that I noted in today's discussions was that only one person addressed himself to how the sculptures would have been originally displayed, the color of the pedestals and the

color of the wall. I wonder if we could take this conversation a little bit into how we contextualize sculpture as institutions, what our responsibilities are in that sense. And, how we impact, therefore, its reception? I think what's so wonderful about this exhibition is that it's completely perverse — forget just putting a number of versions of a single sculpture together, but to have Koons confront the busts of Diego is something that is really impacting how we respond to both of them. I wonder if you might discuss that a little, because it's an area where you've done so much work in the past, or that many of you may have worked on in the past.

MB: I'm not sure I've got an easy answer to that, but I think it's as if the discussion of settings and viewing conditions for sculpture, say, in the salon, the Luxembourg gardens, or whatever, is separated from issues of what we do now. But there's a continuum, and we consider earlier conditions of viewing through our own experience of these things. So to actually keep this constantly in play — I think perhaps we should have done more of this within the sessions.

DG: But also one of the ways that modern sculpture has so often been talked about is having a kind of sightlessness and homelessness, in a way. This is a sub-question that I wanted to raise earlier: can we necessarily assume that *The Age of Bronze* was intended as an outdoor work at all, or rather was it a salon sculpture? Even though it was exhibited at the Luxembourg. We have works that are created for a museum institution, these sorts of modern institutions that exist either comfortably or uncomfortably with it. I think the Koons works can go in and dominate that room quite well, because that's what they were intended to do, in some way.

Q: I'd like to say a word for and against artistic intent. We've been having a lot of discussion about the artist's intent. Almost every single one of us in this room has mentioned that word today, that phrase. I'm making a pledge to myself to try never to do it again, and the reason is that I see how we all manipulate it to our needs, to make our own decisions. I was interested in hearing about multiples and how, therefore, you could have them in different states, because you can see another one. Then I hear, no, they're all individual, and they're original. Forget original, but they're all individual. I realize there's really no solid ground here. I was listening very intently to Joel when he was talking about his pieces outside in the Adirondacks



and how they look, and now maybe he'll bring them in, and he kind of likes the way they look. I understand that this is a response. It's emotional and — it's a response, and it changes, and that's the way it should be, so I don't think we're on firm ground when we use the word "artist's intent." I understand what you're saying, David, about the individual's experience of art. I mean, in a way, the work of art, the experience is the immaterial part of it, how you feel when you're standing [in front of it] and how it affects us. But the conservator has to deal with the material part of it, and in my case anyway, artistic intent is not something I think I understand fully.

DG: I wasn't suggesting that we run off into rampant subjectivism, or anything like that, or that we just forget about conservation. But that encounter — and I would use a different word than "experience," because aesthetic experience implies a certain kind of value judgment — but the encounter between viewers and objects is itself a historical and un-mappable phenomenon. I think that's quite important, and that's just something I felt was falling out of, especially, this session, this last session — that we weren't talking about what we were looking at. We were talking about how the object was made. So again, I'm not saying that we should just go around feeling the sculptures, in a certain emotional sense, but that has to exist in dialogue with what we are actually seeing and encountering.

MiB: I wanted to come back to your question, just because I felt like somebody should answer the issue of installing sculpture in museums, because we were saying that we could do a whole conference around it since it's such a complicated issue. Just to point out that one of the reasons I was so glad that the Nasher Sculpture Center existed was that there really was a space that paid attention to the way sculpture was installed and at least approached the whole issue with a great deal of respect, because it's so problematic. I've seen so many places around the country for a long time where sculpture is installed so miserably. It's such a secondary art to painting and, in some ways, photography. It's too big a subject, except that I do open my mouth when I see it. I write letters, and they're not always well received, but who cares? Dia:Beacon raises this issue in a whole other way, but I think the issue of respect is important, and at least if I see that the institution has thought about it and realized the sort of gravity of the placement in how a work of sculpture needs to be installed, in order to be

seen with some kind of appropriate intelligence and engagement, that somehow — the respect of the approach — at least is a starting point for me. When I don't see that, then it's a real problem.

SN: I think the most common museological crime in the world is pushing sculptures against walls, and as you go around to any museum anyplace in the world, you find a surprising and annoying amount of that practice. But this is just a small part of what you're talking about. We've covered so much territory here, and there's been so much interesting information of a technical variety, issues of artistic intent, documentation, and all the comparative analysis which has come out. I wanted to go back — relative to a lot of things that have come up — to one key point. It's really what Adam Gopnik was talking about last night, to a large degree. I mean, how do you stop time? How do you humanize time? That is about looking at these works of art, really the experience of them, sharing their space and sharing their particular historicism and historic time. I feel that we've accomplished some of that today, but perhaps not all we might have. One of the key premises that we set when we were talking about this conference was the idea of close-looking, that fine-grained looking and visual analysis that our exhibition would promote, and we've done a lot of it. Very important technical issues have come out of the process, but I think that one thought to leave you with is, each one of those works of art out there has a different expressive value, has a different sort of meaning and psychological life. I feel that we didn't get as much into that kind of hard looking and discrimination and interpretation of the expressive life of the object as we might have. Time did not allow it. But that's a small flaw in what has been an overwhelmingly positive, wonderful experience. I hope that you all share this conclusion. Panelists, you're amazing, really. You've harmonized and interacted so well. And for all of you in the audience, too — thank you. Thank you for coming and paying attention and asking wonderful questions. You have played a major role in the overall success of our conference.