

The kiss: brancusi and rodin



Auguste Rodin was a French artist most famous for his sculpting. He was born in 1840 and survived into the Twentieth century, dying in November of 1917. He possessed an innate ability to sculpt in clay, creating dynamic movement in roughly pock marked human figures with a high degree of realism. His work was not well received initially though he came into vogue rather quickly.

He was schooled in a traditional manner on the Ecole de Beaux Arte in Paris but in his work he was in the vanguard of the movement toward modern sculpture (Wikipedia. org Rodin). Constantin Brancusi was born in Romania in 1876 and died in 1957. His sculptures were simple, reflecting his background as a stonemason in his native land. Having run away from home at an early age to escape the abuse of his father and brothers, he impressed an employer with his carving ability and the man financed his secondary education at a crafts school where he graduated with honors. He then attended the Bucharest School of Fine Arts (Wikipedia. org Brancusi).

Brancusi made his way to Paris, the center of the world of art at that time, and made the acquaintance of fellow artists and intellectuals (Franck & Liebow). For two years he labored in the workshop of Antonin Mercie of the Paris Ecole des Beaux Arte. At that point he was invited to work with the master, Auguste Rodin. Brancusi recognized the genius of Rodin but apparently felt smothered by the essence of the great sculptor and left after a few months. He was quoted as saying that, " Nothing can grow under big trees," (Wikipedia. org Brancusi) Rodin was, at his core, a naturalist, and as consumed with the emotion and character he found in the model as he was in faithfully rendering an exact likeness.

He also, it was said, believed, more so than other sculptors, that a human's character is revealed in his physical features. His theory was that every portion of the sculpted work had a part to play in communicating the feeling, power and inner strength of the work. The grip of the toes, for instance, in his Thinker, is depicted to show the intensity with which the subject is going about his task. " What makes my Thinker think is that he thinks not only with his brain, with his knitted brow, his distended nostrils and compressed lips, but with every muscle of his arms, back, and legs, with his clenched fist and gripping toes" (quoted in Wikipedia. org Rodin) he said.

While most of Paris' sculptors were working in clay and having their work cast in bronze, Brancusi most often labored as a carver and utilized the direct method of creating his sculpture. He removed the superfluous material and was left with his creation. In the case of his original The Kiss, (there are several versions), as the old saw goes, he simple cut off everything that did not look like a pair of kissers. Carved in limestone, it measures 23" x 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". It is a highly stylized depiction of a man and woman face to face, their arms entwined, their lips pressed together and their bodies touching.

The work gives the impression that the two are so engrossed and joined in love and sensuality that they have become one. Rodin's version of the same subject is likewise carved directly into stone, in this case, marble, though there exist many replicas of the work in bronze, cast from Rodin's original carving. The original title was Francesca da Rimini and depicted a scene from Dante's Inferno. It represents an Italian noblewoman who falls in love with her husband's younger brother. The couple are nude and embracing, with

their lips close, each to the other, but not actually touching, so the kiss is not consummated.

Both works by these two contemporary masters, working in the same city, are of the same subject and both are carved directly into stone. Here the similarity between the two ends. Rodin's powerful style is seen in the work and there is no question as to what he means to say. The sensuality of the Rodin work is manifest in the texture of the piece and the rendition of muscle and bone. There is a tension in the work that is palpable. Brancusi's Kiss is simple and direct. It is highly stylized and cubistic in its conception.

There is more than a hint of the primitive in the statue. The two artists chose to handle form in a drastically different manner while addressing the same theme. Rodin's work and even its original title suggest sensuality, passion and perhaps even outright sin. Brancusi's Kiss is more suggestive of love than of passion (Art 101). It is static and has no movement to it. The two humans depicted in Brancusi's work are bonded as if they are one unit, suggesting a stability and deeper emotional unity than that conveyed by Rodin

The two artists have, as would have likely pleased Robert Frost, taken different roads. It is not certain which of the two men chose the one less traveled but there are differences that make it obvious that they diverge. As to which is the better work, that is not possible to determine, for art, like much of life, is subjective and largely up to individual taste.

But Rodin's work is more academic and conventional where Brancusi's work is more primal and addresses a basic emotion in the heart and soul of humanity in perhaps a more direct manner. It is possible to dismiss <https://assignbuster.com/the-kiss-brancusi-and-rodin/>

Brancusi's work at first glance, saying that a child could have done it, while Rodin's piece has a realism that would belie such a thought.

There are those critics who suggest that the Emperor is indeed nude and the Brancusi work is a joke foisted on the art public much like the attitude many take toward the works of Picasso. Rodin's work became acceptable after a period of adjustment and the public began to understand what he meant to convey. Brancusi's work is similar in that aspect, and more acceptable as the public gets past their original assessment. Still, both pieces are from the hand of a master who has chosen his own method of bringing his vision to the world.

Works Cited

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