It may be surprising that the most prominently displayed work of sculpture at the Bauhaus School of Art and Design in Weimar in the early 1920s was Auguste Rodin's bronze *Eve* (see p. 104). The figure stood at the foot of the stairs in the entry hall of the main Bauhaus building, designed by Henry van de Velde. With her head lowered and arms covering her breasts, Eve steps down from a rock to leave the Garden of Eden, her downward motion and gently turning torso echoing the sweep of van de Velde's curving staircase (fig. 1).

In 1923 Rodin's *Eve* or, more accurately, its removal by the Bauhaus, provoked a bitter and illuminating controversy that will be the subject of this essay. In preparation for an exhibition, the Bauhaus replaced Rodin's *Eve* with a series of abstract geometric reliefs by the Bauhaus artist Joost Schmidt. Because the state rather than the Bauhaus had final authority over the building, this action set off a complex institutional battle over the nature and function of sculpture and the program of modernist art. By some measures perhaps a minor incident, the conflict—over Rodin's *Eve*, Schmidt's...
reliefs, and the space of the vestibule—has significant implications for understanding Rodin’s reception and the politics of modernism and gender at the Bauhaus. Rodin’s Eve had been effectively inherited by the Bauhaus when the school was created in 1919 out of the combination of the Grand-Ducal Saxon Academy of Art and the defunct Grand-Ducal Saxon School of Arts and Crafts. In taking over these institutions, the Bauhaus received not only their buildings, both designed by Henry van de Velde, and the remaining faculty of the academy but also several works of sculpture in the buildings and on their grounds.

One example is the marble *Figure of a Young Girl* (1907), by the little-known academic sculptor Adolf Britt that stood in the small courtyard between the two buildings. But far and away the most prominent sculpture inherited by the Bauhaus was Rodin’s Eve in the vestibule of the main Bauhaus building. Rodin’s sculpture had been purchased in 1911 for the Academy of Art in honor of the opening of its new building by van de Velde, the building that would later become the Bauhaus.

For Weimar, the purchase of Rodin’s sculpture in 1911 was a defiant assertion of modernism. Five years earlier, in 1906, an exhibition of Rodin’s watercolors at the Grand-Ducal Museum had provoked a scandal over their alleged pornographic and debased content, resulting in the resignation of the influential museum director Count Harry Kessler (fig. 2). Kessler had been appointed by Grand Duke Wilhelm Ernst with the hope that he could help lead Weimar out of the stifling provincialism and xenophobia that characterized the city despite, or perhaps because of, its position as the seat of German classicism, the home of Goethe and Schiller. For several years Kessler had been bringing exhibitions of contemporary international art to Weimar, and Kessler was instrumental in getting van de Velde to build the School of Arts and Crafts and the Academy of Art, which would later become the Bauhaus. On Kessler’s advice, Rodin sent the grand duke a portfolio of fourteen watercolors with a personal dedication. When these works were exhibited, conservative opponents of Kessler and the grand duke attacked the explicit eroticism of the works and accused Kessler of acquiring and exhibiting them without the knowledge of the grand duke. Although untrue, the charge became inflamed in the press and, in the end, Kessler was forced to resign from the museum and soon left Weimar. Because of this incident, Rodin’s international renown had an added local importance, and the acquisition of Eve by the Academy of Art in 1911 was regarded as a significant symbolic victory for supporters of modernism in Weimar. For sculptors in Weimar in the early 1910s, “Rodin was the idol,” recalled Schmidt, then a young student at the academy.

When the Bauhaus was founded in 1919, however, Rodin’s sculpture no longer fit into the program. Gropius and the Bauhaus did not directly criticize Rodin’s sculpture, “whose artistic worth we hold in high esteem,” but instead objected that Eve was conceived independently from its surroundings and therefore remained detached from them. For the Bauhaus, Rodin’s Eve, however impressive on its own as a self-contained work of art, only exemplified the failure of modernist autonomy against the imperatives of total design.

Nonetheless, Rodin’s Eve remained in this central position during the first few years of the Bauhaus. The removal of the sculpture became a priority only
in 1923 when the Bauhaus was planning a crucial exhibition that was to be the first major public showcase of the new school's program and achievements. In preparation for this exhibition it was decided that the vestibule containing Rodin's \textit{L'Homme}, along with several other spaces, should be redesigned to represent the principles of the Bauhaus more clearly. In an early proposal, Oskar Schlemmer, the head of the Bauhaus sculpture workshop, wrote that the vestibule “positively cries out for a solution and organization... The Bauhaus... has a mission here if we don't want to sink back with resignation into picture painting, but rather want to raise painting and sculpture to the functions that they had in the great ages: part of architecture as space and wall creation.” To begin with, the Bauhaus removed Rodin's \textit{L'Homme} and sent it to the State Museum in Weimar just a few blocks away. The main task of redesigning the vestibule was given to Schmidt, by then an advanced student in the sculpture workshop.

Schmidt created three large wall reliefs for the vestibule using a restricted vocabulary of elemental shapes and concave and convex forms designed to articulate the architectural space and the possibilities of movement through it (figs. 3-5). Made primarily of plaster, but punctuated by elements of colored glass, each relief is an assemblage of interpenetrating forms and intersecting lines. Structured by a series of simple oppositions, cones and spheres intersect, forms in high relief are sliced by flat or sunken ones, while thin strips of wood extend along the wall to link with adjacent panels and the existing lines of the vestibule.

In one of the reliefs (fig. 3), the intersection of strong vertical and horizontal elements almost suggests a human figure, but its network of grooved passages and interconnected chambers also reflects the circulatory function of the vestibule in organizing passage through the building's floors and hallways. In the panel at the foot of the stairs (fig. 4), a variety of raised and dug-out forms appear to move into and through each other. Below, two broad horizontal bands sweep upward and end in the merged form of a cone and sphere, the latter echoing the shape and surface of the redesigned staircase balustrade, one of several additional changes Schmidt made to the architectural details of the vestibule. The open staircase banister was made solid and continuous, and some of the window casings and light fixtures were replaced as well.

The importance of Schmidt's reliefs, completed just in time for the exhibition, was underscored by the central location of the vestibule and the legacy of the highly regarded van de Velde. At the opening celebration for the exhibition on August 15, 1923, Gropius gave a speech in which he coined the phrase “Art and Technology: A New Unity,” which would become synonymous with the Bauhaus legacy of rationalist modernism. Following this speech, a reception was held in the vestibule (fig. 6), where until recently Rodin's sculpture had stood but that was now adorned with Schmidt's reliefs.

The controversy over Schmidt's reliefs and Rodin's \textit{L'Homme} arose because the Bauhaus did not have complete control over the vestibule. Among the many complications of the Bauhaus in Weimar was that, from 1921 on, it was forced to share the building
with a rival institution—a reestablished, more conservative Academy of Art that, existing in direct competition with the Bauhaus, occupied one wing of the building. Only over vehement protests by the academy did the state Ministry of Education, the ultimate authority over the building, grant the Bauhaus permission to redesign the vestibule, while leaving open the question of whether the changes were to be permanent.10

Following the exhibition, the reestablished academy resumed its objections to both the removal of Rodin’s Eve and the presence of Schmidt’s reliefs. The academy faculty argued that Rodin’s Eve was an essential resource for their own sculpture classes, and that their students considered Schmidt’s reliefs “an affront to their artistic will and direction.”11 With both sides claiming legal authority as well as aesthetic superiority, the dispute over the vestibule dragged on well past the close of the Bauhaus exhibition. The conflict finally boiled over in May 1924, when a group of students from the academy vandalized Schmidt’s reliefs in the middle of the night, using a hammer to smash the plaster and shatter the glass elements while urinating on the walls for good measure.12 Following this attack—which can be counted as the first right-wing destruction of Bauhaus works of art—the Ministry of Education ordered the Bauhaus to remove the remnants of Schmidt’s reliefs and return the Rodin to the vestibule, where it stands today.13

In one sense this was an institutional conflict made bitter by a network of intense personal animosities and the political gamesmanship of courting state favor and the financial support that comes with it. (Gropius and the Bauhaus would ultimately lose this struggle, resulting in the school’s leaving Weimar and moving to Dessau in 1925.) Beyond the issue of institutional control, however, this was a major dispute over the aesthetics of sculpture and the program of modernist art. Schmidt’s reliefs and Rodin’s Eve represent radically divergent conceptions of sculpture: sculpture as presented by Rodin’s bronze, as an essentially narrative art, dealing primarily with the human figure, and existing independently from its spatial surroundings; versus the Bauhaus commitment to aesthetic totality and a modernist language of elemental form.

Gropius had described the basic aesthetic program for Schmidt’s reliefs in a letter to Henry van de Velde. Although Schmidt’s plans were not yet complete, Gropius explained that “the wall panels will be sculpturally organized _plastische gestaltet_ and specifically so that they do not represent some kind of Renaissance-like inserted panels, but rather take on a functional significance for the entire space.... The forms of the reliefs refer to the basic forms,
interpenetration of cylinders, spheres, cones, and the like." Defining the reliefs as "functionally significant" was crucial for Gropius, who conceived of the project not as decoration but as the decisive articulation and organization of the architectural space of the vestibule. In this sense, Schmidt's reliefs could not easily coexist with Rodin's bronze.

For the Bauhaus, the seemingly arbitrary placement of Eve exemplified only the absence of "functional significance" that plagued modern sculpture. Rodin's Eve, the Bauhaus argued, was simply in the way and neither articulated nor clarified space, but quite literally occupied it. The Bauhaus masters complained that the sculpture was continually being "knocked into during the transport of objects," and Gropius reported that "in the dark people coming down the stairs would run into it." The suggestion, however, that Eve posed a physical obstacle is very unconvincing since the vestibule is quite large enough to accommodate the statue easily. As if anticipating the need for an additional argument, Gropius added his concern that the sculpture was at risk from damage by student pranks in which ball bearings placed precariously on Eve would suddenly roll off to the shock and surprise of people walking by. With these tales of Rodin's bronze as a nighttime danger and sculpture transformed into mischievous prankster, Gropius depicted Eve as an almost specter-like creature haunting the spaces of the Bauhaus. The very oddity of Gropius's references together with the simple inadequacy of the would-be pragmatic argument about space and movement suggest that more might be at stake in the Bauhaus removal of Rodin's Eve.

Nonetheless, questions of gender and sexuality may well have helped drive the desire of the Bauhaus to remove Rodin's sculpture. That the subject of Eve is sexually charged goes without saying. But the degree to which Eve could belong to a misogynistic imaginary is suggested by a 1919 etching, Eve with the Zebra, the first sheet in the portfolio Original Sins: An Erotic Story of Creation, by Walther Klemm, a Weimar artist and briefly a member of the Bauhaus before joining the reestablished academy (fig. 7).

Rodin's treatment of the subject is certainly a good deal more complex. Yet both the narrative subject of Eve and the pathos of Rodin's treatment clash with the image of a mechanized, rational body projected in the Bauhaus slogan "Art and Technology: A New Unity." As the first woman and agent of humanity's downfall, both temptress and victim of temptation, Eve steps down from her pedestal to leave the Garden of Eden. The complex interplay of Eve's shame and her powerful muscular solidity, and in particular the undisguised sexuality of her body, are incompatible with the geometric logic of Schmidt's reliefs, part of the emerging rhetoric of modernist functionalism. The question arises

![Fig. 6: Vestibule of the main building of the Weimar Bauhaus during the opening celebration of the Bauhaus Exhibition, August 1923. Photo: Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. Bauhaus Bildarchiv. Bauhaus Album, Ausstellung 1923, p. 20.](image-url)
whether the expulsion of Rodin’s Eve might also be understood in terms of the construction of a rationalized masculine subjectivity that is imbedded in Bauhaus modernism?

Some might object here that the removal of Rodin’s Eve, a product of the eroticized male gaze of nineteenth-century sculpture, was one of the institutional reforms of the Bauhaus, whose 1919 statutes and bylaws mandated absolute equality between male and female students. Despite the rhetoric of gender equality, however, the number of women at the Bauhaus was considered a problem almost from the beginning. In 1920 an unofficial quota aimed to limit the number of women to no more than one-third of the student body. Moreover, women’s course of study at the Bauhaus was somewhat restricted. Most female students were directed away from painting and sculpture and toward the “light” crafts—especially the weaving workshop—where more traditional notions of “women’s work” could be perpetuated. As in other areas of German culture, the presence of large numbers of women at the Bauhaus provoked resentment and a defensive reaction that denied women full access to the instruments of cultural production.

The imperative for removing Rodin’s Eve belongs to this discourse on gender and the role of women at the Bauhaus. Previously more safely positioned within an established order, Eve now circulated uneasily within an environment where the threat to traditional gender roles was all too real. Within the context of the Bauhaus, the complex eroticized body of Rodin’s Eve stood as a reminder of modernity’s destabilization of traditional gender roles and of the sexuality that the increasingly functionalist rhetoric of the Bauhaus served to repress.

The very placement of Rodin’s bronze at the foot of the stairs called attention to the formal analogy of Eve’s twisting body with van de Velde’s curved staircase and marked the Bauhaus building as an anthropomorphic and corporeal space. The abstracted geometries of Schmidt’s reliefs not only eliminated Eve’s sexualized body but also recast the entire building in the dematerialized and supposedly neutral language of elemental geometries. To the extent that Schmidt’s reliefs suggest the figure at all, they do so not in terms of an empathetic human analogue, as is the case with Rodin’s bronze, but as models of a rationalized body constructed from standardized and interchangeable elements and propelled by regularized rhythmic forms.

Sexuality, nonetheless, remains oddly present in Schmidt’s reliefs, not least in the motif of interpenetration and the body-part analogies of the conical protrusions. Schmidt’s discrete rational geometries, the fetishized forms of industrial modernity, now replace the unified body as object of desire. Schmidt later said of his reliefs that “the expressive functions of the elemental forms became clearer to me. The geometric figures were no longer expressionless scientific structures. The beauty of geometry revealed itself.” Here Schmidt reinscribes desire into these abstract forms, an eroticism that is now sublimated within the modernist rhetoric of elementary form. It is perhaps this abstracted but still present eroticism that prompted such important modernist critics as Adolf Behne to reject Schmidt’s reliefs as too decorative and as a
fundamental misunderstanding of the modernist imperative to “rigorously avoid all decoration and to save all power and means for a task of creating from the ground up.”

On one level the controversy over Rodin’s *Eve* at the Bauhaus is a simple confrontation of artistic programs and principles: figurative versus abstract; autonomous sculpture versus total design. It also suggests how radically the terms of modernism were shifting in the first decades of the twentieth century. The 1911 acquisition of *Eve* for the Academy of Art could be rightly hailed as a minor triumph for modernism in Weimar. By 1923, however, in little more than a decade, the situation was almost reversed. The Bauhaus considered the Rodin’s sculpture an obstacle to its pursuit of a modernist totality, while the conservative academics now championed Rodin as a symbol of more traditional artistic values to be defended against the cultural depravity of the Bauhaus. Such was the pace of change that reactionary conservatives, who had once detested Rodin as a sign of liberal modernity, could now make him a cause célèbre, clinging to his bronze statue as a vestige of an earlier heroic moment of modernism and an emblem, however unlikely, of conventions of nineteenth-century narrative, figurative statuary.

By any account, however, Rodin’s *Eve* is an ill-suited defender of aesthetic conventions. The sculpture’s nonidealized form and the active, mottled, unfinished surface of *Eve’s* body constitute part of Rodin’s break with the classical tradition of sculpture. By the 1920s at the Bauhaus and elsewhere, the tradition was in crisis. Rodin’s own reworking of and often radical disregard for the conventions of monuments and figurative statuary was an early indicator as well as instigator of what would soon become a profound uncertainty over the nature of sculpture and its role in a program of modernist art.

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1 Research for this essay was made possible by a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD.
2 This episode has been briefly mentioned in H. Deuchar, *Inside the Bauhaus*. New York, 1986, 167; in a footnote in W. Herzog, *Waltz*.
4 See T. Fohs, “Kunstpolitik und Lebenswandel: Das Neue Weimar im Spiegel der Beziehungen zwischen Henry van de Velde und Harry Graf Kessler,” in *Bauhaus*.
6 The sculpture was the gift of Robert Peter, an industrialist from nearby Aypad. During a visit to Paris earlier that year, the director of the academy, the painter Fritz Mackensen, had first seen the sculpture in Rodin’s studio. See Keesing (as in n. 1), 107.
8 The precise dimensions of the original panels are not known, although in 1947 Schmidt’s widow wrote detailed descriptions based on unpublished sketches. See Herzog (as in n. 1), 258; and W. Herzog, *Vom Ornament zum Herzmokranken oder: Warum gab es so wenige Reliefs am Bauhaus?*, in *Reliefs, Entwürfe und Skulpturen von 1933–1934*. Berlin, 1934, 80; also cited in Herzog (as in n. 1), 258.
RODIN’S “AMERICAN CONNECTION”
TRUMAN HOWE BARTLETT (1835–1922) & PAUL WAYLAND BARTLETT (1865–1925)

THOMAS P. SOMMA

During the late 1880s the American sculptor, teacher, art critic, and historian Truman Howe Bartlett (fig. 1) conducted a series of extensive interviews with Auguste Rodin in Paris, the results of which were published in 1889 in the American periodical the American Architect and Building News.¹ Even the most cursory examination of the literature reveals the significance of Bartlett’s interviews to Rodin scholarship, especially with respect to the French master’s early career and to such major early works as Mask of the Man with the Broken Nose (1863–64), The Age of Bronze (1875–77), and The Gates of Hell (1880–1917).² About the same time that Bartlett’s study on Rodin was published, his son, the expatriate American sculptor Paul Wayland Bartlett (fig. 2), began training with Rodin. Bartlett also continued to work as an assistant in Rodin’s studio until 1898, when the young American sculptor won the much coveted commission to produce an equestrian statue of the marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834) to be given to France by the United States as a reciprocal gift for Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi’s Liberty Enlightening the World (Statue of Liberty; 1886).³

Significant art historical figures in their own right, the two Bartletts are nonetheless relatively unknown among scholars of both French and American sculpture. The purpose of this study is to introduce some basic information regarding the art lives of these two important American friends,
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