



OFFICIAL SELECTION
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LES FILMS DU LENDEMAIN
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PRESENT

VINCENT
LINDON

IZIA
HIGELIN

SÉVERINE
CANEELE

RODIN

A FILM BY
JACQUES DOILLON

Le créateur de la série "Le 11 septembre" est de retour



Produced by
Les Films du Lendemain and Artémis Productions,
in coproduction with Wild Bunch and France 3 Cinéma



RODIN

A film by **Jacques Doillon**

Starring **Vincent Lindon, Izïa Higelin, Séverine Caneele**

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International PR
Magali Montet
magali@magalimontet.com

Gloria Zerbinati
gloria@magalimontet.com

International Sales
Wild Bunch
fbeauville@wildbunch.eu

Cannes Sales Office
4 Boulevard de La Croisette
1st floor
(In front of the Palais)

Download photos and press kit at www.rodin-lefilm.com/presse
or www.wildbunch.biz

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SYNOPSIS

Paris 1880, Auguste Rodin aged 40, finally receives his first state commission. He creates *The Gates of Hell*, composed of figurines some of which will become his most famous works: *The Kiss* and *The Thinker*. He shares his life with Rose, his lifelong partner, when he encounters the young Camille Claudel. His most gifted student, she quickly becomes his assistant, then his mistress. A decade of passion, mutual admiration and complicity ensues. Following their break up, Rodin continues to work relentlessly. He faces both the condemnation and enthusiasm provoked by the sensuality of his sculptures, and with his *Balzac*, rejected during his lifetime, creates the undeniable starting point of modern sculpture.

What led you to Rodin?

Chance. When my last film, *Love Battles*, was released, two documentary producers contacted me and told me it reminded them of Rodin. As the centenary of the sculptor's death was coming up, they asked me if I would consider directing a documentary about him. I was familiar with his work, but that's about it. I'd been to the museum a few times but nothing more. I accepted at first but soon I was imagining fictional scenes to "bring the beast to life." As I was writing, fiction began to dominate and I realised that I wasn't interested in or able to make a documentary film, that I needed actors. I therefore turned down the offer and continued to write. Once I had finished the first draft, I met with Vincent Lindon who was enthusiastic about the project. Vincent set the wheels in motion: Kristina Larsen wanted to produce the film, and *voilà!*

The physical and sensual dimension of *Love Battles* echoes Rodin's very sensual work...

In cinema, we focus on faces and words, but bodies generally don't express much and often appear "dead" to me. I always wanted my characters' bodies to "speak". It's true that directors also want to work with actors whose "movement" or body language they appreciate. Here we are getting closer to Rodin: his bodies express so much, and the fact that I was considered to direct a film about him doesn't seem entirely odd to me.

Early on, it is made clear that for Rodin, in the hierarchy of materials, clay is the most noble. Doesn't this say something about his relationship to materials and to life?

Yes, because clay is living matter. You have to mix it, pummel it, fold it, and knead it because you can't work with it straight away. Then at one point, it becomes alive and you have to seize it at that moment, to give it life; and soon enough it tells you it's tired, it has grown useless and lazy. It's very interesting to work with a material that is so "alive". I understand why Rodin let his practitioners reproduce his works (identically) in marble and stone; these dead materials didn't allow him to continue his research. He could go back to clay again and again, producing many models. For months and years until he was satisfied. As he says "It's in clay that I find my forms." And clay is like skin, it can be brushed and stroked.

You depict Rodin as someone receptive to nature, to trees which he likes to touch.

For as long as I remember, I have always liked to touch and play with trees. I plant some every year. I watch them grow and I admire their outlines, their veins, the twisting of a corkscrew hazel, a birch shedding its bark; that's quite something! The word sensuality doesn't strike me as excessive here, so to think that Rodin didn't also stroke them seems unimaginable to me.

Touch, the living and flesh are central to the film...

Yes, it is life that interests me and that wins. That's one of the reasons I need to be surprised when filming, so that life erupts. This is why I don't really like location scouting. When I arrive on set, I don't have any preconceived ideas about what



I am going to do. We have the scene and the dialogues but how the actors will move in my improvised set up is something I don't want to know beforehand, otherwise it's just execution. And the fun we will have finding the right music and the credibility of the scene is like searching for form in clay. It's the same for writing: I don't know where I'm going, I go from scene to scene without a thought-out plan. You also need to allow the writing to come to life, to find its own way, and the characters too.

That's clear from your fluid and rigorous mise-en-scene where space is made for circulation of movement.

To understand the music of a scene, I need to feel the breadth of it, to see the full length of it. So I can't yell "Cut!" until the scene is finished. This is also why I shoot with two cameras. I refuse to cut while filming to allow a circulation of energy and to find the music of the whole sequence. If I had to proceed in fragments, I know that I wouldn't be able to grasp much. It's my job to allow the actors to enjoy playing a scene from beginning to end. They are hand-held cameras, not frenetic, somewhat "stable", but in the "right" place, so we can feel the fluidity of the actors' "choreography". Ideally, it's a barely visible mise-en-scene, like the extension of my hand, even though I'm not the one holding the camera.

The film's colour palette is quite soft.

I wanted a depth of field that allowed me to work on the set up, which is called a mise-en-scene in the end, and non-violent colours that didn't contrast too much. Colours close to the skin or the earth. Feminine, yes. And mobile framing, fluid, quivering. What we did with Christophe Beaucarne was perfect, as much with the lighting as the framing.

The notion of work is central to the film...

Rilke explains this perfectly: "I came to see you to ask you: How should one live?"

And you replied: By working.” I think that they all, from Camille Claudel to Rilke among many others, came to him to find this aptitude for consistently staying within your work. This is what Zweig recounts: Rodin was showing him his around the atelier when suddenly he removed a wet cloth from one of his models and started touching it. Zweig admired him in silence. When Rodin had finished with it, he went to close the atelier door and was suddenly surprised to find a stranger there! He had completely forgotten about the writer’s visit.

The great pleasure of filming is also the surprise of discovering the truthfulness of a scene after the seventeenth take, like something entirely new and unknown because it has become so credible that it makes me entirely forget that I wrote it and that we have been working on it for the past two or three hours.

So I really understand Rodin’s work, he who took seven years to finish his *Balzac* for example! The dissatisfaction with oneself and the idea that with work and reflection you might end up finding something satisfactory. I also understand why after all those years spent on his *Balzac*, Rodin would have wanted snapshots. With his drawings there are no pauses, no affectation, it is pure gesture. His drawings are so fearless, so free and so beautiful that we can now say that they are as impressive as the sculptures.

How did Vincent Lindon work on Rodin’s gestures?

Vincent was keen to manipulate clay and he took this very seriously. He attended many sculpture classes. How did Rodin work exactly? Nobody knows. There are many historical texts about him but no accounts from those close to him, describing him at work. There is a little film on him by Sacha Guitry, where we see him with a chisel hitting stone. It’s comical and Rodin himself smiles.

RODIN is a film about the act of creation that raises a fundamental question: at what moment is a work fulfilled? When is it completed? The *Balzac* statue that Rodin worked on for seven years is the most striking example.

Yes, especially as Rodin invented as he assembled. He could assemble two works that appeared to be completed, to create a new one. Sometimes he simply changed an arm or a hand, like a mechanic. That’s a new idea. When you see the final *Balzac* – and in the film I have him say: “I’ve got him!” – we understand and we see some of the stages that led him to this feeling of accomplishment.

The relationship between Rodin and Camille Claudel is treated differently to what we may have seen previously.

Up until now, Camille’s troubles were often thought to have stemmed from her break-up with RODIN, following his refusal to marry her. It’s obvious though, that her paranoia began a lot earlier, starting with her terrible relationship with her mother. We are familiar with Camille’s determination and fierce ambition to become a sculptor. Her entire family had moved to Paris so that she could live her art. As she reached a mastery that deserved true recognition, she quite rightly couldn’t bear to stay in her mentor’s shadow, considered only as his student and mistress. A lot of details remain elusive about the reasons that led to their break-up, but the question of lack of recognition is



probably the most important.

Similarly, the general idea that Rodin fed off her talent in order to destroy her is not a very serious proposition if you take an honest interest in the two of them. After Camille’s decision to break up, Rodin did a lot for her. One example: he proposed that a room in the future Rodin museum should be dedicated to Camille Claudel.

Taking sides seems invidious to me. We often talk of a catastrophic relationship, but they loved each other for a decade and their mutual admiration and communion in work, allowed them to better pursue their respective oeuvres.

Vincent Lindon is a very physical actor. Was his ‘grounded-ness’ important to you?

When you observe Rodin’s sculptures, you have the feeling that many of them have really taken root in the earth. Simply put, these are works of art which are either very anchored in the ground or which aspire to fly. His *Iris*, *Messenger of the Gods* flies! His *Nijinsky* aspires to. But *The Burghers of Calais* or *Balzac*, these cannot be uprooted. Vincent Lindon belongs to the latter category. In the scene where the young English woman comes to tell Rodin that Camille has left for England, Vincent was against the light, legs spread in a fairly wide shot, like an enormous bull about to enter the arena. Funnily, sometime later I came across a Bourdelle drawing of Rodin in this exact position. Vincent had become Rodin. I understand why he couldn’t turn down the role, because Rodin is Vincent. Undeniably.

Why did you cast Izia Higelin as Camille Claudel?

She became an obvious choice. I wanted youth and joy for Camille Claudel. I didn’t want her dark from the start. I had never seen Izia act and that suited me. I recognised the ebullient genes of her father, with whom I had worked twenty years before. She had a beautiful intensity and joyful vivacity; I felt it corresponded with Camille’s character, the joyful creativity that seduced Rodin and her elation that could quickly become tempestuous. She was an obvious choice from the beginning.

Séverine Canele, who we first saw in *L'Humanité* by Bruno Dumont, also possesses an “earthy” quality. How did you come to cast her as Rodin’s wife, Rose?

For Rose, I wanted someone from a working class background. Not an actress used to reading texts. This was essential to play this seamstress who had trouble reading and more so writing. I remembered this tall, sturdy woman. Initially she refused. Then she accepted as long as the scenes remained very chaste. Séverine is perfect as Rose.

Did you film in authentic settings?

We filmed in Meudon, in Rodin’s house, in his bedroom and in his dining room. The large Spanish figure of Christ that we see in his bedroom was his. For the rest, we couldn’t always use the models and original sculptures as these were too fragile. So we had reproductions made by very talented sculptors. In Meudon, *Balzac* was moved from the room where it is exhibited, to Rodin’s first atelier. For the one outside, we had a copy made which is now in my garden. I sometimes sit by his side to talk to him! He said to tell you that the Normandy air suits him quite well and that he never grows tired of watching the trains go by.

PUTTING ON THE SCULPTOR’S ROBE...

By **VÉRONIQUE MATTIUSSI**

Manager of Historical Archives at the Rodin Museum

The cinematographic construction of an historical character, from beginning to end, lies with the director. It is conditioned by his perception and what he wishes to convey. So how does a museum, guardian of the works with a mission to ensure the artist’s moral right is respected, support a project like this?

The first encounter

Rodin sparks controversy, garners clichés and can easily fascinate, fuelling preconceived ideas rooted in the construction of his legend. This was the only real pitfall that the museum was worried about, and it was soon cast aside after reading Jacques Doillon’s first draft of the screenplay. It was clear that the director had read exhaustively into the abundant literature on the subject, in order to understand the work of the sculptor and to dissect his life. His sharp analysis and his artistic ambitions had allowed him to get close to the truth of this man. From here onwards, the partnership was clear and the open exchange promised to be a successful one. And it was. Jacques Doillon’s very precise vision encouraged him to ensure that no details had been overlooked. This led him to make use of the museum’s scientific expertise so as to avoid anachronisms. The strength of a museum devoted to a single subject like the Musée Rodin is that it has gathered an invaluable source of information and resources, often unexpected and of course very attractive for a director such as Jacques Doillon. The museum’s expertise imposed itself, and was improvised and organised so as to meet his and his team’s expectations.

Unexpected resources

Thus the photographic archive was used to assist with the casting of all the characters, to collect information on urban fashions and the garments worn in the ateliers, to identify materials and get an idea of the space and lay out of the various studios, where each element, each tool or accessory significant for the craft, was carefully listed as a reference for the set design. The costume designers, set designers and location managers studied these sources very carefully and no detail was overlooked. Photographs were also referenced to stay true to

the exact chronology of the construction of *The Gates of Hell*.

Transformation

At the same time, Vincent Lindon was familiarising himself with the scope of his work, every Monday at the museum in Paris or in the Meudon archives. Hours and hours of discussion to learn about his life and work, from beginning to end. There were many more hours dedicated to learning the craft. Private sculpture and modelling lessons allowed him to face the material and to assimilate the gestures naturally. “My most enthusiastic student,” according to his teacher, Hervé Manis. This approach also seemed natural and became essential to the actor who was anxious to slip into the sculptor’s robe with credibility.

His beard emerging, he let the magic happen, allowing the physical resemblance to intertwine with the psychology of the man. Both of them exuding liberty, the actor shares with the sculptor that same animal instinct, a similar intuitive way of functioning, a shared taste for endurance and a confident determination to succeed. A perfect mix of violence and softness for a single temperament, both rough and soothing, and a heartfelt creative ambiguity that delivers a lucid and profound moral portrait.

To summarise, the museum was keen to answer the production’s precise needs, while discovering day to day the needs and cinematographic constraints of such an ambitious historical project. The museum’s enthusiasm, most certainly reinforced by the desire to be a part, in its own way, of an exceptional adventure while contributing to the project, was rewarded by Jacques Doillon’s honest understanding of the interiority of sculpture, the torments of a genius and his devastating self. The screenplay, as personal as it is poetic, miraculously conveys the authentic story of the journey of an exceptional artist.



How did you immerse yourself in Rodin's world?

I was not very familiar with Rodin, apart from his classics. I tend to prefer contemporary art. But my point of view has changed and I like Rodin very much. I delved into the subject as if I were writing a thesis, with the desire to know everything, which is of course impossible.

You have to find an idea that imposes itself. Here it is sculpture that we wish to draw attention to: white forms on black backgrounds; that was the direction. Luckily the Rodin museum helped us in our research as they own a lot of material which is not always easily accessible, but enough to feed our needs.

The subject of the film is Rodin, his work, sculpture, artistic creation. I used all my energy to get as close as I could to the works, to remain faithful in their elaboration, from conception to larger scale models and reproductions.

How did you approach this character and his work?

His work is very expressive: the female nudes are sensual, the male nudes are powerful, and the hands extremely suggestive. His *Balzac* is immense: its story and its final form. The man resembles his work, his creation is groundbreaking, the beginning of modern art. I find Vincent Lindon's interpretation very true.

You reproduced *The Gates of Hell* in its entirety...

It was a fantastic experience. Dante's *Divine Comedy* in sculptural form. *The Gates of Hell* is the heart of the atelier, it's the work of his life. We chose to make a life-size reproduction. It couldn't be any bigger to avoid touching the roof. During the four weeks of filming in the atelier, *The Gate* would evolve according to the scenes. Every morning or evening, sculptors would place the new elements that we had built during our seven weeks of preparation.

We find all of Rodin's major works here: *The Thinker*, *The Kiss*, *The Three Shadows*, *Crouching Woman* etc. Of course, we didn't reproduce the exact same door, as it is continually evolving in Rodin's work. We didn't reproduce the tympanum... It's the spirit we tried to bring to life, the mechanisms of creation with all the techniques Rodin used: assemblages, fragmentation and enlarged models.

Did you shoot in authentic settings?

We filmed in the Villa des Brillants, Rodin's house on the heights of Meudon, where he worked and lived with his partner Rose Beuret. We didn't transform it, it had been renovated a while ago according to the museum's guidelines.

It's monumental to have his *Balzac* right next to you, it's overwhelming. It was also moving to have Rodin's grave before us as we filmed.

In the atelier, we filmed the drawing scenes. It was reconfigured with Rodin's original sculptures and antiques from the museum. This required very thorough organisation and great trust on the part of the museum, to allow us to shoot for five days in the house.

Many elements that appear in the film are authentic: the dining room, elements of the atelier, as well as the bed. It's a funny sensation to make these places live again, to walk up the same stairs, to tread the same floor, to sit in the atelier and see Vincent Lindon's silhouette; it's a journey through time.

How did you create the other sets?

The main set, the one where we spent the most time, is obviously Rodin's atelier. I arranged the space very early to allow the team of sculptors to work in this setting, so they could live as they might have done in Rodin's time. We brought together sculptors from the entertainment industry, young sculptors from the Beaux-Arts school and teachers who worked for many weeks in this atelier. We used a 3D printer for about ten sculptures.

Rodin had many ateliers so we brought them together to create only one where the models would come and pose, where the clay, the modelling, casting and marble were worked.

RODIN is a film haunted by the sensuality of bodies and materials. In what way did your set designs take into account the circulation of movement in the film?

The circulation and movement of the cameras were made possible by the creation of sets that could be filmed in 360°, which allowed us to follow all the actors' gestures and movements. You will notice many curtains in all the sets; these were to hide the cameras. Jacques Doillon always films with two cameras. It's rather like a ballet or an orchestration.

Do the bodies, voices, faces of the actors inspire you in the creation of your sets?

Jacques Doillon's voice, his intelligence, his sense of *mise-en-scène*, Vincent Lindon's dedication, his transformation into Rodin as we prepared, his beard, his sculptural work as well as Izia Higelin's freshness – yes, actors inspire me with colours, a direction for the film. I need to believe in it all.

CAST

<i>Auguste Rodin</i>	Vincent LINDON
<i>Camille Claudel</i>	Izïa HIGELIN
<i>Rose Beuret</i>	Séverine CANEELE
<i>Victor Hugo</i>	Bernard VERLEY
<i>Rainer Maria Rilke</i>	Anders DANIELSEN LIE
<i>Claude Monet</i>	Olivier CADIOT
<i>Paul Cézanne</i>	Arthur NAUZYCIEL
<i>Octave Mirbeau</i>	Laurent POITRENAUX
<i>Juliette Drouet</i>	Guylène PÉAN
<i>Sophie Postolska</i>	Magdalena MALINA
<i>Jessie Lipscomb</i>	Léa JACKSON



CREW

<i>Written and Directed by</i>	Jacques DOILLON
<i>Produced by</i>	Kristina LARSEN
<i>DP</i>	Christophe BEAUCARNE
<i>Sound Engineer</i>	Erwan KERZANET
<i>Re-recording Mixer</i>	Thomas GAUDER
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Pascaline CHAVANNE
<i>Production Designer</i>	Katia WYSZKOP
<i>Production Manager</i>	Aude CATHELIN
<i>1st Assistant Director</i>	Nicolas GUILLEMINOT
<i>Editor</i>	Frédéric FICHEFET
<i>Original Music</i>	Philippe SARDE
<i>With the support of</i>	La SACEM
<i>Co-producer</i>	Patrick QUINET
<i>Co-producer</i>	Charles S. COHEN
<i>A Franco - Belgium co-production</i>	Les Films du Lendemain Artémis Productions
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<i>In association with</i>	Palatine Etoile 14 Sofitvcine 4

JACQUES DOILLON FILMOGRAPHY

2013	LOVE BATTLES
2012	A CHILD OF YOURS
2009	THE THREE-WAY WEDDING
2008	JUST ANYBODY
2003	RAJA
2001	CARRÉMENT À L'OUEST
1999	LITTLE BROTHERS
1998	TROP (PEU) D'AMOUR
1996	PONETTE
1994	GERMAINE AND BANJAMIN
1993	A MAN AT SEA
1993	YOUNG WERTHER
1992	LOVER
1991	LEST WE FORGET
1990	A WOMAN'S REVENGE
1990	THE LITTLE GANGSTER
1989	THE 15 YEAR OLD GIRL
1988	POUR UN OUI OU POUR UN NON
1987	COMEDY!
1987	L'AMOUREUSE
1986	THE PRUDE
1985	FAMILY LIFE
1985	THE TEMPTATION OF ISABELLE
1983	THE PIRATE
1983	L'ARBRE
1981	THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER
1978	THE CRYING WOMAN
1978	THE HUSSY
1975	A BAG OF MARBLES



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