



BONJOUR!

Welcome to this month's issue of The Legacy of Rodin Society Newsletter! To start off we have included an interview with M. L. Snowden wherein she gives insight to her amazing living legacy. We also bring you exciting news regarding four new releases, Lightwave: Lightsurge, and Lumino: Lumina, Enjoy!

AN INTERVIEW WITH M.L. SNOWDEN

You sculpted alongside your father, G.H. Snowden, for 17 years as an apprentice in his professional studio, and through your father and his mentor, Robert Eberhard, you are also a protégé of Auguste Rodin. How did this time influence your work?

When we speak of Rodin, Eberhard and my father, we speak of a circle of very great sculptors who possess surpassing talent. Years ago, as a young person, I perceived these men—through my father—to have abilities that were larger than their period of time, and as such, they were able to create work that had lasting, universal value. They built for the ages, and this concept became my ideal. From age 5, I was brought into my father's sculpture studio. At about age 15, I knew I wanted to pursue sculpture as my life's work, so I rigorously prepared myself by filing volumes of drawing studies of anatomy from life to the point that today, I never use visual models of any kind in building my work. I sculpted, cast and chased my first bronze without any assistance about 37 years ago, finishing it on my 18th birthday. Throughout my time with my father, there was a rule set in place: Just as no one touched his work, no one was allowed to touch or alter the sculpture that I created. Therefore, although our technical secrets were shared through my developmental years, my individual handwork and vision were allowed to develop, flourish and remain truly my own. *Continued on Page 2*



THE LEGACY OF RODIN

AN INTERVIEW WITH M.L. SNOWDEN

Have you ever diverged from this initial teaching?

My inheritance of Rodin's techniques forms a tremendous foundation that ensures the museum quality of my bronze castings. However, my forms are quite different than my father's, Eberhard's or those of Rodin. My work centers on my unique meditation, which I developed in the 1980s. My works are geological expressions of energies and forces resulting in bronzes that are complicated and challenging to cast. However, many of the proprietary techniques that I use today are historically unchanged from those of Rodin. They are a lasting and profound inheritance.

Your rich heritage is also found in the sculpting tools you use. Tell us why they are special.

A sculpture tool is not only the extension of your own fingertips; it conveys your energy as a sculptor to your medium. The Rodin tools I inherited are like energy wands. Specifically, most of them are clay modeling tools, and they have wonderful, unusual surfaces. The Rodin tools chart a kind of mystery of creation and form a connection with the heart of great master sculptors. Rodin gave them to Eberhard as his praticien in Paris; Eberhard, in turn, gave the tools to my father upon his winning the Prix de Rome of 1927; and, my father willed them to me after his death in 1990.

You have been credited with several groundbreaking techniques in the field of sculpture. Tell us about some of them and how they changed your work.

Working with sculpture all of my life led me to realize that the sculpture I create is essentially geological. It suddenly occurred to me that my foundry was like visiting the center of the earth. As a master of metallurgy, working with bronze day and night, I began to experiment with what bronze is capable of, and I wrote new ways bronze could be extruded to support and float extensions of weight. Every bronze I've created pushes the envelope of what is possible for a bronze foundry to achieve. From a 1-inch mortise, I've supported a quarter-ton of bronze ("Helix Y"). I've also invented a wax that permits my sculptural waxes to be drawn from their molds in one piece. (Foundry waxes would normally shatter because they are traditionally too brittle for so many complex undercuts.) My inventions in gravity pour, ribboning, extrusion folding and other techniques have allowed me to experiment with new forms and compositions that I'm deeply excited about.

You've been commissioned to create several large-scale projects during your career. Which one stands out most to you?

I think forming the heart of the \$200-million Los Angeles Cathedral—the Golden Angels of the 8-ton main altar of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels—has meant a lot to me. For this, I was able to shape the first group of angels for the permanent public setting in the history of the City of Los Angeles. "The Los Angeles Angel Frieze," the original bronze panel that set the design for the eventual altar, is permanently mounted in the visitor's center. In celebration of the fifth anniversary of the cathedral, my newest work, "Creation's Gate," has been installed in Chapel Five for viewing in the ambulatory of the sanctuary.

What do you want to convey to your collectors through your work?

One thing that is important to me is that a lifetime of love of sculpture is present in each work and that each piece of numbered sculpture is uniquely made. It is not, in actuality, a limited edition, but rather, it is what I like to call a French Original Limited Edition, meaning that each number of a limited edition is remade entirely by hand. This is different from the normal understanding of a limited edition, such as a run of photographs that are reproduced mechanically without variance. In the case of my Fournier bronzes, the re-translation of form through all its stages of molding with complete hand re-working over more than seven translations beckons new bronze collectors to understand that each of my bronzes is an original limited edition with qualities of direct, intensive handwork that make it an original work of art.

THE LEGACY OF RODIN

NEW RELEASES! LIGHTWAVE & LIGHTSURGE

Lightwave and Lightsurge form two distinct yet joined harmonious evocations of light energy. The composition of Lightwave ascends on a curl of bronze in the shape of a roundel; it is an elongated wave of light that morphs into an aperture. In contemplating the opposite sculpture, Lightsurge, we again meet the “S” formation that distinguishes a radiant wavelength. In both of these masculine and feminine partitions, bronze expresses the substance of light almost as a rhythmic veil of sonic cloth, evoking a small portion of a long train sweeping across a vast comic trajectory. As one critic recently observed, “Here in these remarkable works the cultor has achieved the inexpressible portrait of light captured in an eternal bronze moment.” In the sculptor’s contemplation, these two bronzes exist as octaves of one another. Forming these sculptures has allowed the sculptor to enter into a private artistic meditation that sees human anatomy – both masculine and feminineas expressive of shapes similar to wavelengths of light. As critic Victor Solada remarks, “Indeed, if one carefully examines the anatomical nuances of Lightwave and Lightsurge, it is possible to appreciate how the unrivaled ease and fluidity of Snowden’s sculptural style is achieved through a deep understanding of “S” formations that one can almost trace with one’s finger. Building upon Rodin’s proprietary armature, Snowden structures the human form in ways that achieve synergy throughout these two delicate Asiatic floating fingers. With slightly lengthened torsos and exotic features, Snowden enchants bronze



Detail of Lightwave



Detail of Lightsurge

THE LEGACY OF RODIN

LIGHTWAVE & LIGHTSURGE CONT.

into lines of sheer grace. Indeed, rarely in art history has there been a sculptor such as Snowden, who is completely at ease with freeing bone and sinew to express curvature while retaining anatomical accuracy. Snowden goes beyond bronze in Lightwave and Lightsurge to realize the human spirit as light.” Lightwave and Lightsurge, as with all the sculptural meditations of the Geological Corium, express M.L. Snowden’s central idea that the very substance of humankind, stars, planetary masses and bronze are created of the same interrelated yet differently arranged elements. Using no models or references to express form, Snowden sculpts Lightwave and Lightsurge in compositions which increase the demand upon the armature to uphold weighty passages of cleanly formed abstractions. The welded joints and structural axis of these two bronzes become invisible to the eye yet is ever present in maintaining the eternal ring and wave formations of these castings. The sheer technical requirements of these works extend over many hours devoted to smooth and chasing. From important roots in the Paris studios of Rodin and Antonin Mercié, Snowden brings to Lightwave and Lightsurge the glowing luminous platinum Fournier Patina and the touch of the historic Rodin tools.



Lightwave and Lightsurge, Respectively

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Detail of Lumino and Lumina

Lumina . M.S. Snowden

THE LEGACY OF RODIN

LUMINO & LUMINA CONT.



Lumino and Lumina, Respectively

MERCI FOR YOUR PATRONAGE!

We hope that you have enjoyed this month's issue of The Legacy of Rodin Society's Newsletter. We look forward to bringing you more wonderful issues in the future with insights into M.L. Snowden sculpture and previews of upcoming works.