

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: The Courtauld Institute of Art		
Unit of Assessment: 32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015 – 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Alexandra Gerstein	McQueens Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts	2005 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 – 2018		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Gerstein's research into the late dance-focused works of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) has created bridges between the fields of curation, conservation, art history and movement studies and resulted in a new model for carrying out interdisciplinary research projects based on embodied experiences of sculpture. Novel insights generated through collaborative research projects instigated and driven by Gerstein have been shared through two major exhibitions, a series of further education learning programmes, and a choreographic work performed at The Courtauld Gallery. Specialist audiences have been presented with a new perspective on an iconic artist's work, and creative, innovative exhibition design choices have engaged the public with an understanding of the importance of dance, movement and acrobatics in Rodin's sculptural and drawing works.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Since 2005 Dr Alexandra Gerstein (Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Courtauld Gallery since 2007, previously Assistant Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Courtauld Gallery) has undertaken extensive research into sculptural and decorative artworks in the Samuel Courtauld Trust collection. Focusing on two bronze works by Auguste Rodin held in this collection, she identified a gap in knowledge around Rodin's interest in dance and movement. Rodin's late sculpture has increasingly received scholarly attention, and his interest in dance has also been the subject of interest in general art historical publications; however, only the drawings from this period, resulting from his intensive sketching of dancers in his studio, had been seriously studied. The <i>Dance Movements</i>, a series of terracotta sculptures held at the Musée Rodin in Paris, remained under-researched. No studies explained how Rodin had approached the making of this series of figures or charted the genesis of these works and their place in his oeuvre, especially in relation to his drawings. To address this gap in knowledge Gerstein began preparations for an exhibition <i>Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement</i> (The Courtauld Gallery, 20/10/2016 – 22/01/2017), undertaking detailed research into the <i>Dance Movements</i> series through a collaborative technical study of the works with curators and conservators at the Musée Rodin instigated in 2015. She also carried out extensive archival and art historical research and instigated a collaborative movement study with academics from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London, focused on the figures' poses better to interpret how they related to Rodin's practice of working closely with models (especially dancers and acrobats) in the studio.</p> <p>Gerstein's most important findings relate to the collection of moulds used to cast <i>Dance Movements</i>. Building upon a research approach that the Musée Rodin had used previously, Gerstein and a curator from the Musée Rodin closely studied the artefacts, as did two conservators, and then compared their observations. The discovery that Rodin re-used existing moulds rather than modelling works independently and the close analysis of the original terracottas and plasters, provided new evidence of Rodin's technical processes. Coupled with further information about his relationship with acrobat and model Alda Moreno – evidenced by letters and photographs from Musée Rodin archives which Gerstein connected to Moreno – she was able to generate new insights into how Rodin incorporated the limitations and possibilities of</p>		

movement identified in his models into the figures he sculpted. By identifying a photograph of Moreno in a magazine purchased by Rodin in which Moreno takes the same pose as one of the *Dance Movements* figures, and published collections of letters in which Rodin tried to identify and find Moreno, Gerstein demonstrated the importance to Rodin of working closely with dancers and acrobatic models. Through rigorous archival research - the cross-referencing of sources including diary entries, dated drawings, and published correspondence, including a previously overlooked mention by Rodin's most trusted technical assistants on his choice to re-use a certain small plaster head for the figure of the dancers - Gerstein established a precise chronology for the creation of the *Dance Movements*. She and Kate Edmondson (paper Conservator at The Courtauld) carried out empirical research into Rodin's use of tracing in creating his drawings at the Musée Rodin, integrating these findings with the research on the *Dance Movements* series to produce a comprehensive understanding of the impact of dance and movement on Rodin's artistic techniques and processes.

From 2015 – 2017 Gerstein worked with Senior Lecturers at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama to develop movement workshops focused on the *Dance Movements* series and related drawings, bringing together art historical, curatorial, and movement-based approaches to research. Through these workshops and discussions, Gerstein and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama group (which involved the academics, movement researchers and postgraduate students) demonstrated an untapped potential for embodied and experiential research as a means of interpreting and understanding sculpture, pushing into a new field of interdisciplinary art historical exploration. Their findings fed into the text accompanying the works discussed in detail in the catalogue essays and entries [R2, R3], demonstrating new evidence that the *Dance Movements* sculptures presented composites of preparatory and stretching movements rather than, as had previously been assumed, dance movements. This helped Gerstein develop a curatorial taxonomy for display of the *Dance Movements* in the exhibition [R1] which centred on types of movement – 'uplift', 'extension' – identified in the sculptures during the movement workshops.

The combination of concentrated technical research, close comparative study of Rodin's sculptures, drawings, and moulds, newly contextualised archival materials, and practical findings on the links between the *Dance Movements* and the limitations and possibilities of human movement, created a significant new body of knowledge around Rodin which has been the foundation of two major exhibitions – at The Courtauld [R1] and the Musée Rodin [R4] – and a series of public events surrounding them.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] A. Gerstein, *Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement*, exhibition at The Courtauld Gallery, London, 20 October 2016 – 22 January 2017, curator. **[Submitted to REF2 as part of a multi-component output]**

[R2] A. Gerstein, *Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement*, exhibition catalogue, (London: Paul Holberton Publishers, 2016), editor **[Submitted to REF2 as part of a multi-component output]**

[R3] A. Gerstein, 'Flight, arabesque and cantilever in Rodin's movement studies', in *Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement*, (London: Paul Holberton Publishers, 2016), pp. 24 - 39. This essay was translated into French for the catalogue accompanying the below exhibition at the Musée Rodin. **[Submitted to REF2 as part of a multi-component output]**

[R4] A. Gerstein *Rodin et la danse*, exhibition at the Musée Rodin, Paris, 4 April – 22 July 2018, associate curator.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Rodin and Dance: The Essence of Movement, curated by Gerstein, (The Courtauld Gallery, 22/10/2016 – 22/01/2016) was seen by 51,930 people [1], an increase of 10,000 on the predicted marketing figures for the exhibition by 10k [2]. It included works from The Courtauld's own collection alongside generous loans from the Musée Rodin, including the full *Dance Movement* series in terracotta and plaster which had never previously been loaned in its entirety, and some of their most important drawings and cut-outs by Rodin. The exhibition was significant for its new perspectives on Rodin's dance and movement-focused works, its presentation of

information relating to Rodin's processes (not just his finished works), and for integrating practical research and creative responses into the exhibition design and interpretation. The result was an exhibition which inspired and informed specialists and the general public alike and engaged students of dance and art, choreographers, dancers, and movement specialists with the study of sculpture in a productive and dynamic way. It was also the inspiration for the Musée Rodin to host a connected exhibition which directly drew on Gerstein's research and curatorial approach, and even used the mounts made specially for *Rodin and Dance* [7,10]. *Rodin and Dance* was accompanied by a catalogue edited by Gerstein, featuring essays by Gerstein and specialists from The Courtauld, the Musée Rodin and from the international field, which a former sculpture curator from the Musée Rodin stated '*reflect[ed] the ambition of Gerstein's project*' in that '*the essays it contains completely renewed the understanding of this famous series*' [10]. In addition, new research was presented through an introductory video from Gerstein watched by 12,359 people [3], three curator talks accompanied by live dance performances attended by around 150 people, the production of research-centred learning resources of which 290 hard copies were distributed and approximately 70 more digital copies downloaded [4], and a range of school workshops, including practical workshops with 41 attendees [4].

Much of the significance of *Rodin and Dance* came from Gerstein's interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research. Her work with curators and conservators at the Musée Rodin meant that aspects of Rodin's process – namely the moulds for the *Movements* series – were able to be made public for the first time. The collaborative research project instigated by Gerstein with the Musée Rodin not only influenced how the works were presented in the exhibition, but also had a significant impact on the Musée's curatorial team's knowledge and understanding of these works from their collection. The former curator from the Musée Rodin noted that Gerstein's exhibition proposal provided '*a great occasion to conduct a very precise material study of Dance Movements*' and that when Gerstein proposed the research for the exhibition he was '*convinced that there were still some things to discover on this series as a whole*'. Reflecting on the knowledge generated through this collaboration, the former curator stated '*It proved very exciting as we were able to collectively understand and explain the genesis of the series*'. New knowledge and understandings were generated within the Musée Rodin which were then able to feed into Gerstein's presentation of the works: Gerstein displayed panels accompanying the moulds which made explicit the findings around Rodin's processes and their relationship to the works presented at the centre of the exhibition, the *Dance Movements*.

Gerstein also instigated a significant interdisciplinary project with researchers from the International Centre for Movement at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London. This involved talks by Gerstein on her findings about Rodin's processes, research trips to view Rodin's works in situ at the Musée Rodin, and movement workshops for practitioners to respond physically to the sculptures and drawings. A Senior Lecturer in Movement involved in the project praised the unique opportunity for access that she and other researchers and students had to Gerstein's research as a result of this project, which then allowed a deeper exploration of the works through movement and dance response. A key part of the project highlighted by the Senior Lecturer was the sharing of Gerstein's findings about Rodin's process of making *Dance Movements*, a central element of the exhibition: '*Knowing that allowed us then to start thinking about movement as a fragmented thing; our explorations really started looking at body parts and the impossibility of reaching certain postures. That was a really key moment*' [8]. The Senior Lecturer commented on Gerstein's findings about model Alda Moreno as '*a really good example of how a piece of tangible historical research opened up how we started to envisage the bodies which informed Rodin's work*', this being a driver of practice-based elements of the research process involving a student with acrobatic training [8]. This transfer of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries had an effect beyond the individual project: '*you can see how an event like this, a workshop, an understanding, an encounter, between art curation and movement teaching and movement directing, then had a ripple onto our students*'. [8] Similar sentiments were echoed in one co-researcher's comment: '*we discovered that by moving our bodies in response to Rodin's work with clear objectives, a deeper empathy or understanding of the artwork could be encountered*' [6]; co-researchers, themselves practitioners, and students engaged with sculpture as inspiration for future dance and movement works. Reviewers also

commented on the significance of movement workshops in conveying knowledge and understanding of Rodin's processes: *'the poses generally ring true – something confirmed by a group of dancers from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama when the Courtauld exhibition's curator Alexandra Gerstein persuaded them to undertake a little practical research'* [5]. Discussions between Gerstein and movement practitioners in this project also played a key role in shaping the language of the exhibition catalogue, to express effectively to the public the embodied elements of Rodin's practice [6].

Rodin and Dance was hailed as a *'landmark exploration of late, rarely or never-seen small scale sculptures'* [5]. Many reviews focused positively on the new perspectives presented through Gerstein's research, interpretation and display choices. One noted that the careful attention Gerstein paid to the display of the work resulted in *'a fascinating study of precise movements of the body'* [5]. Gerstein's careful integration of her research findings into the exhibition, and the greater depth of understanding they gave the audience, were widely praised. Reviews focused on the *'unique'* aspects of what an *Apollo Magazine* reviewer called a *'perfectly realised exhibition'*, which combined both drawing and sculpture. The inclusion of the *Dance Movements* was hailed as particularly important and engaging – *'it is the small sculptures that really sell this show'* - in giving the public an opportunity to see works *'on display in Britain for the first time'* as well as highlighting the centrality of Gerstein's research, providing informed insight for visitors throughout [5]. Reviewers noted the new perspective offered: *'this exhibition reveals yet another dimension to [Rodin's] genius.'* More specialist visitors had similar responses and emphasised its success in providing a new viewpoint on the work of an artist widely explored previously. The Telegraph's 4* review declared the exhibition *'challenged and transformed'* understandings of Rodin; the London Review of Books praised how Gerstein *'brings Rodin's complex process alive'* through the inclusion of photographs and the display of archival and artistic objects [5]. Both acknowledged the importance of Gerstein's research into Rodin's creative process which allowed the exhibition to transcend conventional curatorial approaches to his work. Additionally, Bowman Sculpture, a commercial gallery specialising in Rodin, references Gerstein's findings and the *Rodin and Dance* exhibition in their listings for Rodin's dance-based sculpture works in their collection. [5]

Emphasising the importance of her findings with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama team, Gerstein commissioned new choreography from Shobana Jeyasingh which responded to Rodin's *Dance Movements* and was performed in the exhibition space [9]. The work - titled [études](#) – was performed by dancer Noora Kela on 02/11/2016, 07/12/2016 and 04/01/2017 following curatorial talks by Gerstein, and seen by 150 people [9]; the film of it has been watched 844 times [3]. Reviewers and audience members responded positively to the use of dance as an interpretive strategy: it helps *'extend dialogue and engagement with the exhibition'* and was deemed a *'collaborative achievement [...] that should be celebrated'* [5]. The Independent's 5* review of the performances stated that *'the choreography embodies the connection between sculpture and drawing made in the exhibition'* [9]. One visitor specifically commented that the element they had most enjoyed was *'the connection between the art history and the actual dance'* [9]. Visitors at the events repeatedly cited the dance as one of the elements they enjoyed the most, along with the knowledge Gerstein's interpretive strategies had given them about how the works were made. Jeyasingh has subsequently used the footage of the dance with other pieces she has choreographed inspired by visual art in her 'SJD Shorts' online screening series. Gerstein was also invited to lecture on the exhibition to 'Performance of Heritage' MA students at the University of Roehampton and gave a personal tour of the exhibition to dancer and choreographer Dane Hurst. Other dance-related events around the exhibition included a screening of the film *Journey in Sensuality – Anna Halprin & Rodin* (19/01/2017) followed by a Q&A with the Gerstein and the film's director, Ruedi Gerber.

An extensive teacher's resource *The Body in Motion* [4] and related educational programmes were developed by The Courtauld's Public Programmes team from Gerstein's research, with input from Jeyasingh, Kela and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama collaborators further complementing these findings. 290 physical copies of the packs were distributed during visits and workshops, and 70 downloaded digitally [4], for use in a diverse range of schools and

year groups. The Public Programmes team also engaged Jeyasingh and Kela in two workshops for post-16 students. The first workshop (15/11 – 13/12/2016) involved 18 Year 12-13 students who focused on how Rodin and other artists used dance and movement in their work. One aim was to help students create their own artworks exploring the relationship between movement and physical space. A student stated: ‘*This workshop was very helpful and allowed me to learn about the artist Rodin*’, and a tutor noted that the session ‘*engaged the students with exciting ideas*’ [4]. In the second group (16/12/2016 - 25/03/2017), 23 BTEC Level 3 students participated in study days at The Courtauld, watching Noora perform *études*, followed by movement workshops at their college. The outcome was a series of works, choreographed by the students, responding to a piece from The Courtauld Gallery. The students were engaged by the workshops stating that ‘*I really enjoyed linking dance to art and other mediums*’ and ‘*It was great working with a professional dancer/choreographer*’ [4]. An ‘Insights into Art History workshop (26/10/2016) was also attended by 18 post-16 students and included an exhibition introduction from Gerstein and a practical workshop. A participant reported that ‘*It has developed my knowledge of movement and fluidity of the human body and taught me how to capture movement*’ [1]

Following the success of the exhibition and driven by Gerstein’s new findings about Rodin’s practice from their collection and archives and collaborative technical research, the Musée Rodin mounted an exhibition *Rodin et la Danse* (07/04 – 22/07/2018). The exhibition catalogue reproduced essays from the *Rodin and Dance* catalogue, translated into French; the lead curator and introductory exhibition panel both cited Gerstein as a key curatorial contributor for the exhibition [7]. Reviews of the exhibition in the French media also highlighted The Courtauld exhibition as being foundational to the Musée Rodin exhibition [7]. In total, 67,268 visitors attended *Rodin et la Danse*. 987 attended exhibition previews and an average of 731 visitors to the exhibition per day, the highest at the Musée Rodin for the 2016-18 exhibition period [7]. A total of 801 copies of the exhibition catalogue were sold during the exhibition period. The former sculpture curator from the Musée Rodin noted that he was ‘*very happy that the high quality of research made thanks to Dr Gerstein’s project... [was] acknowledged and endorsed by the Musée Rodin so that its vast French and international audiences could enjoy it*’ [10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Sources not accessible through URLs have been provided as PDFs.

[1] Exhibition report for exhibition funders, including visitor figures and participant feedback

[2] Exhibition marketing report from The Courtauld’s Marketing Team

[3] YouTube exhibition content links and viewer analytics

[4] Reports on learning programmes and resource pack uptake. Teacher’s Resource pack can be found here: https://assets.courtauld.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/31135546/The-Body-in-Motion-Teachers-Resource-1.pdf?_ga=2.251590342.1196379631.1620632823-672306500.1619548193

[5] Press coverage report. Additional comment by Bowman Sculpture can be found here: https://www.bowmansculpture.com/modern/artist/auguste_rodin/7dc0aa8/mouvement-de-danse-f

[6] Participant responses to the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama collaboration: <https://www.cssd.ac.uk/responses-rodin-research>; <http://violabruni.com/a-contortionist-in-the-studio-marvellous-transformations/>.

[7] Visitor figures and catalogues sales information for *Rodin et la danse* exhibition.

[8] Testimonial statement and corroboration from a Senior Lecturer at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, London.

[9] Visitor feedback and reviews of the live performances of *études* by Noora Kela.

[10] Testimonial statement and corroboration from a former Curator at the Musée Rodin.

[11] *Rodin et la Danse* exhibition introductory panel and curator’s introduction (in French). Reference in the French media can be found here: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/arts-expos/sculpture/corps-et-mouvement-la-passion-de-rodin-pour-la-danse-au-musee-rodin_3282571.html#