

RODIN & BALZAC

"Rodin & Balzac," an exhibition of 11 bronze studies that reveal the evolution of Rodin's masterpiece Monument to Balzac, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from September 20 through November 16, 1976. In conjunction with the exhibition, on the evening of its opening, at 8:30, Albert Elsen, Professor of Art History at Stanford University and noted author and expert on Rodin, will present an illustrated lecture. Tickets are free of charge and are available at the Museum's Lobby Information Desk.

Ten of the studies in the exhibition are recent gifts to the Museum from the B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, and the Final Study for the Monument to Balzac has been lent by Mr. Cantor. The exhibition and the accompanying free lecture have been made possible by a generous grant from The Cantor, Fitzgerald Group.

The nine-foot bronze Monument to Balzac, which has been on view in the Museum's Sculpture Garden since 1955, was one of Rodin's most important and most difficult commissions. He was absorbed in the project for six years, beginning in 1891, reading Balzac's works, studying portraits of him, and producing a great variety of preliminary studies. The final work, however, was considered at the time a great failure. It aroused intense controversy — the literary society which had sponsored it cancelled the commission, and the City of Paris withdrew its plan to display the monument in the courtyard of the Palais Royal. It was only in 1939, forty-one years later, that the Balzac was finally erected as a public monument in Paris.

Included in the exhibition, directed by Alicia Legg, Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture, are five heads of Balzac, ranging from one depicting him in his youth to the penultimate study in which the head is thrown back, the hair disheveled, and the features sharply modeled. Three nude

figure studies indicate Rodin's preliminary thoughts on the pose for the figure, and a fourth nude, with folded arms and wide stance, has the massive shape that supports Balzac's robe in the final work.

Rodin himself said of the work, "Never has a statue caused me more worry and work, put my patience more to the test...how I was slandered, insulted! But all my preparatory sketches reflect, on the contrary, my integrity, my great desire to execute an 'honest' statue!"