

Public Abstract

First Name: Hyewon

Last Name: Lee

Degree: PhD

Department: Art History and Archaeology

Adviser's First Name: John

Adviser's Last Name: Klein

Co-adviser's First Name:

Co-adviser's Last Name:

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Title: The Cult of Rodin: Words, Photographs, and Colonial History in the Spread of Auguste Rodin's Reputation in Northeast Asia

This dissertation explores the growth of Auguste Rodin's phenomenal acclaim in Northeast Asia, where he was introduced in the early 20th century, when China, Japan, and Korea were undergoing social, political, and cultural turmoil caused by colonial intrusions of the West, and became established largely through pictures and textual accounts before actual works by the sculptor were exhibited. By carefully examining printed materials circulated in the three countries from the early 1900s to the first Rodin exhibition in Japan, Korea, and China held in 1966, 1985, and 1993, respectively, this study argues that wide dissemination of images and written accounts of the sculptor's works, fueled by each country's urge to emulate the culture of the West, created a powerful version of the Rodin myth in the Far East.

The first chapter examines the role of governmental patronage in the rapid expansion of Western art in Northeast Asian countries--as a crucial step for a clearer understanding of the following chapters on Rodin's reception and reputation in the three countries, which was closely related to each country's response to the imported art. The second chapter considers how Rodin was presented in the written accounts published in the Far East, and the third chapter explores the contribution of photographic reproductions to the spread of the sculptor's reputation in the region. By focusing on the first major Rodin exhibition held in each of the three countries, the final chapter discusses how Northeast Asians responded to the Rodin myth established through printed materials.