



BOSTON ATHENÆUM

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Athenæum Exhibition Sheds New Light on Renowned American Sculptor **Daniel Chester French**

Public Invited to Attend Exhibition Preview and Curator's Presentation on October 6



Boston, MA – September 30, 2016 – The Boston Athenæum is pleased to present *Daniel Chester French: The Female Form Revealed*. The exhibition will run from October 7, 2016–February 19, 2017 with a [public gallery preview](#) on October 6 featuring illustrated remarks by the exhibition's co-curator, David Dearing, and a reception.



Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) was one of America's foremost sculptors of public monuments, best known for his heroic bronze *The Minute Man* (1875) at Concord, MA and his colossal marble *Abraham Lincoln* (1922) at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. French's reputation for these images of men is merited; but as curator David Dearing notes, "as a classically-trained artist of the American Renaissance, French was naturally fascinated with the female form." In fact, "he was probably more inspired by the women he knew—his wife and daughter, his female apprentices, and the professional models he employed—than anything or anyone else." Indeed, feminine beauty in its idealized form was often at the forefront of French's work.

This aspect of French's oeuvre, which has previously received little scholarly attention, is the focus of this ambitious exhibition, described by Elizabeth E. Barker, the Athenæum's Stanford Calderwood Director, as a "feat not only of ideas but also of art-shipping logistics." The exhibition features important loans from Chesterwood, the artist's country home and studio in Stockbridge, MA, of over forty preliminary models and studies for some of French's most famous works, including *Mourning Victory, Maquette* (1906; opposite) and *Spirit of the Waters, Maquette* (1913; below). The objects on display range in size from 5 inches to 50 inches and over 200 pounds. The exhibition will mark the public debut of French's *Wisdom* (1898), a recent acquisition by the Boston Athenæum.

Daniel Chester French: The Female Form Revealed is a collaboration between [Chesterwood](#) and the [Boston Athenæum](#). Curators David B. Dearing, PhD, Director of Exhibitions and Susan Morse Hilles Senior Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the Boston Athenæum, and Donna Hassler, Executive Director of Chesterwood and Administrator at the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, are eager to foster a "fresh, scholarly investigation" of French's work and to expose a previously "neglected part of French's career" to the public by exhibiting rarely-displayed works.

The exhibition will be enhanced by a series of [related programs](#) including lectures, gallery talks, a mobile application, and an online version of the installation. A full-color catalogue of the exhibition is available for purchase.

About the Boston Athenæum:

The Boston Athenæum, a membership library and fine art museum, first opened its doors in 1807 as a sanctuary of arts and letters for Boston intellectuals. Today, it offers a distinguished circulating and research collection, rich archival collections specializing in New England history, extensive electronic resources, handsome reading spaces, and a dynamic programming schedule. The exhibition gallery and many events are open to the public. Membership is open to all. For more information, visit bostonathenaeum.org.



Image credits: 1. Daniel Chester French, *The Melvin Memorial: Mourning Victory* (detail), 1906-1908, marble. Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Massachusetts. Photograph © Richard Cheek. 2. Daniel Chester French, *Mourning Victory, Maquette*, ca. 1906, plaster, 14 7/8 x 7 3/4 x 2 3/4 inches. Chesterwood, a National Trust Site, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Gift of Daniel Chester French Foundation. Photograph by Paul Rocheleau, courtesy Chesterwood. 3. Daniel Chester French, *The Spirit of the Waters, Maquette (Trask Memorial)*, 1913, plaster, 11 7/8 x 9 1/4 x 5 1/8 inches. Chesterwood, a National Trust Site, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Gift of Daniel Chester French Foundation. Photograph by Paul Rocheleau, courtesy Chesterwood.