

Ethnohistorical collection

# Model

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Collections / model





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Sculpture by Robert Burns in patinated plaster with a metal frame. The figure is standing with his left leg slightly forward in contrapposto. He holds a book in his left hand. Behind him is a fallen tree trunk, a reference to the nature he likes to surround himself with. He is dressed in a long frock coat with wide lapels, worn over an open jacket buttoned halfway up, and a tie looped around his neck. His pants and shoes complete the attire typical of late 18th-century England. Hill remains faithful to Burns' physiognomy as depicted in the poet's portraits. The underside of the sock is covered with green felt.

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Accession Number 2021.34

Artiste / Auteur Hill, George William

Materials fiber, metal, lead?, paint, plaster

Measurements 49 x 39 x 20 cm

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## Historical context

The statuette represents the Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796), considered a pioneer of Romanticism, whose work is inspired by nature, country life and popular culture. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Burns became a cult figure. The general appearance of this model is reminiscent of the Burns monument by Boston-based sculptor Henry Hudson Kitson (1863-1947). Kitson won the competition launched in 1911 for a monument to the poet. His work, created in 1920, shows Burns holding a book in his left hand, the other hand resting on a stick, holding a drapery and accompanied by his dog, alluding to the many walks in nature evoked in his poems. The statue was unveiled in Back Bay Fens Park, not far from the Charles River, and relocated in 1975 to Winthrop Square, on the corner of Franklin and Devonshire Streets in Boston. As a good academic, largely inspired by the works he admired, could Hill have created this preparatory work for a monument project with an image almost modelled on the American model, and then abandoned it or had it been rejected? The mystery remains, but several of the artist's public monuments suggest that he drew his inspiration from works he had seen during his stay in France\* or elsewhere, which does not detract from the fact that he was one of Canada's most renowned sculptors of his time.

The artist George Anderson Lawson (1832-1904) created a bronze monument to Burns in Ayr, Scotland, in 1892. A posthumous replica was made in 1930, then donated to the City of Montreal to mark the 83rd anniversary of the poet's death. This copy stands in Dorchester Square, Montreal.

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Photo by Paul Dionne

On display