



# MUSEUM FRIDAY FEATURE

## Unbelievable!

by Cathy Callaway, Museum Educator

**C**assandra was the daughter of Queen Hecuba and King Priam, the last rulers of Troy during the Trojan War. She describes her situation in the play *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus (525–556 BCE): Apollo bestowed upon her the gift of prophecy in exchange for her sexual favors, but she reneged on her promise, and the god turned the blessing into a curse by causing her predictions to be disbelieved. Today someone who utters valid warnings but is not believed can be called “a Cassandra.” At the birth of her brother Paris, she foretold the trouble he would cause and recommended the infant be exposed. Paris would later bring Helen to Troy, an act that caused the Greek retaliation and the war against Troy. Cassandra also warned of the danger of the wooden horse left behind by the Greeks, which contained Greek soldiers who would sack the city, once they were inside Troy’s gates. Her warnings were of no avail, however, and all were dismissed as the rantings of a mad woman. The effect of being disbelieved and shunned by her own people clearly threatened her sanity. Her fate only worsened when she was raped by Ajax the Lesser in the temple of Athena, after Troy fell. Though the angry goddess punished Ajax for the desecration of her temple, Cassandra ended up as a spoil of war awarded to King Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks. Cassandra was again not believed when she predicted his death at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra, who also murdered the enslaved princess shortly after her arrival at the palace in Mycenae.

A sculpture of *Cassandra* by the artist Max Klinger (German, 1857–1920; this year is the centennial anniversary of his death) is in the Museum of Art and Archaeology’s collection. Her unusual pose, with crossed arms strengthening the emphatic diagonals, and disarrayed drapery add tension, as does the knowledge of her unsettling story.



Max Klinger (German, 1857–1920)  
*Cassandra*, ca.1895  
Bronze on marble base  
Gift of Museum Associates (79.95)

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Klinger was a painter, printmaker, and sculptor. Perhaps most famous for his ten etchings, *A Glove* (printed in 1881), the series caused him to be considered a leader in the Symbolist movement of the late nineteenth century and a forerunner of Surrealism. His later work was primarily sculpture. His first version of the *Cassandra* or *Kassandra* sculpture (right; in the [Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig](#)) was of mixed materials, with a red marble pedestal, pale alabaster draperies, Pentelic marble arms, a painted Carrara marble head, and haunting amber eyes. Creating a sculpture with multiple stone pieces was difficult, and Klinger also issued bronze reproductions of his sculptural works. (Photographic reproductions and postcards of *Cassandra* were available as well at the time). Like Auguste Rodin, Klinger worked in multiples and would often cast several bronze sculptures from the same model.

The Museum of Art and Archaeology's *Cassandra* is smaller than the original marble version and the eighth in a series of these bronze sculptures issued by different German foundries for the artist. The Museum's bronze is signed "M. KLINGER" on the right thigh of the figure, and the foundry mark appears on the right buttock. ■



Max Klinger (German, 1857–1920)  
*Kassandra*, 1895  
Marble  
Leipzig: Museum der bildenden Künste