

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



MAX KLINGER

1857 Leipzig - Großjena 1920

*Bathing Girl Looking at her Reflection in the Water*

Bronze with black patina; the base in varicoloured, faceted marble in black, white and olive-green.

A version in marble was made in 1897-8; the present, bronze version cast in c.1903.

Bearing the incised artist's monogram at the front on the inner wall of the tree stump: MK; with the foundry stamp: AKT. GES. vorm. H. GLADENBECK & SOHN | BERLIN-FRIEDRICHSHAGEN and number: 1 on the edge of the base at the rear.

Figure: height 62.2 cm. Marble base: height 3.0 cm.

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Berlin

SELECTED LITERATURE ON THE BRONZES: Paul Kühn, 'Max Klinger als Plastiker', in *Die Plastik. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für originale und reproduzierte Bildhauerkunst*, Aktiengesellschaft vorm. H. Gladenbeck & Sohn, Bildgießerei (ed.), Berlin-Friedrichshagen, y. 1903-4, H. 2 (Max Klinger, *Sculpturen*), January-March 1904, p. 16 – Richard Graul and Julius Norden, 'Skulpturen von Max Klinger', in *Moderne Kunst*, y. 18 (1903-4), H. 33, January 1904, pp. 129-32 – Aktiengesellschaft H. Gladenbeck & Sohn, *Katalog Bronzen*, Berlin 1905-10, LXXXVII, no. 1816 – Ursel Berger, 'Die Bronzegießereien Gladenbeck in Berlin', in *Weltkunst, Aktuelle Zeitschrift für Kunst und Antiquitäten*, y. 58, H. 22, November 1988, pp. 3496-3501 (Part 1) and H. 23, December 1988, pp. 3662-66 (Part II) – Ursel Berger, *Figürliche Bildhauerei im Georg-Kolbe-Museum Berlin vom Ende des 19. bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, exhib. cat., Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin 1994, II, pp. 3664-5 – Herwig Guratzsch (ed.), *Max Klinger. Bestandskatalog der Bildwerke, Gemälde und Zeichnungen im Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig*, Leipzig 1995, pp. 56 f., A 7a – Ingrid Mössinger and Conny Dietrich, *Max Klinger in Chemnitz*, Kunstsammlung Chemnitz, Leipzig 2007, pp. 134-9, no. 77 – *Max Klinger. Auf der Suche nach dem neuen Menschen*, Ursel Berger, Conny Dietrich and Ina Gayk (eds.), exhib. cat., Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin 2007, no. 22, p. 135

After his return from Rome and the move into a new studio in Leipzig-Plagwitz in December 1895, Klinger worked predominantly as a sculptor. In the following years he produced a series of mostly life-sized female figures in marble – a pair of socle figures titled *Remorse* [Fig. 3] and *Hope* to flank the monumental painting *Christ on Olympus* (1897), a figure of *Amphitrite* (1899), a *Crouching Woman* (1900) and the statue *Bathing Girl*. He began work on the figure of the *bather* in the summer of 1897. It was carved out of a block of marble that he had personally selected in Laas in South Tyrol and brought back to Leipzig by in November 1896. The block had originally been intended as a substitute for a block from a Paros stoneyard that he had planned to use for the figure of *Remorse* but which repeatedly failed to arrive. The Paros block was eventually delivered and the Laas stone therefore became available for the figure of the *Bathing Girl*. The two figures – *Remorse* and *Bathing Girl* – are very closely related in terms of Klinger's treatment of the figure and his portrayal of motion. The near life-sized marble version of *Bathing Girl* was completed by spring 1898. Originally partially polychromed and gilded, the piece is now in the Museum der Bildenden Künste in Leipzig [Fig. 1].<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> This and the following paragraphs are largely extracted from a comprehensive catalogue entry compiled by Ingrid Mössinger and Conny Dietrich. The entry describes a similarly-sized (height: 62 cm) cast of the *Bathing Girl* in the collection of the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz [inv. Pl. 127]; see *Max Klinger in Chemnitz*, Kunstsammlung Chemnitz 2007, no. 77, pp. 136-9 and pp. 134-5.

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST

As a sculptor, Klinger had previously made a name for himself with depictions of mythological and symbolist subjects such as *Cassandra* (1895) and *Salome* (1893) but his attention now turned to a generalized portrayal of the nude and to the solution of formal sculptural questions associated with it. This development was triggered by his encounter with classical antiquity experienced on visits to Italy (1888-93) and Greece (1894). At the same time, he was looking to portray new configurations of physical motion that would allow him to express psychological and emotional situations. The motif of the self-absorbed *Bathing Girl* gazing at her own reflection in the water clearly stands in the tradition of the sixteenth-century *Toilet of Venus* and the *Venus Pudica* genre of classical antiquity. However, the convoluted intertwining of the figure's arms behind her back and the angle of the raised right leg produce a distinctly provocative pose that tests the limits of what is anatomically possible.

In his art-theoretical discourse titled *Malerei und Zeichnung*, published in 1891, Klinger made a powerful case for the representation of the naked human body. He wrote: 'Human beings and the human body continue to be the core of all art. The be-all and end-all of every style is the study and representation of the naked body.'<sup>2</sup> He criticised the body-hostile prudery and false modesty of his time and demanded a natural relationship with the body that would allow the artist to represent the nude without a fig leaf, without idealization and without the pseudo-respectability of allegorical or mythological content. In this respect, the figure of the *Bathing Girl* is one of the finest and most distinctive examples of Klinger's perception of beauty. In addition, since the sculpture is designed in the round – that is, as a free-standing figure to be seen from multiple perspectives – the viewer can only appreciate the full extent of Klinger's artistry by walking round the sculpture to see it from every angle. To produce such a piece, exact knowledge of the human body is all-important and Klinger acquired this through intensive study from life. The model for the present figure was Helene Donath, whose profile portrait Klinger painted in oil in 1902 [Fig. 2]. Donath was his preferred life model for many years and posed for the socle figure *Remorse* [Fig. 3]. In a letter sent in winter 1897 to his patron Marie Meyer, Klinger writes: 'For 1½ years I have had an acceptable and reliable model who possesses the rare virtue of remaining silent during long and extremely long posing sessions, thus enabling one to work with full, undivided attention.'<sup>3</sup>

In 1902, when Klinger's monumental statue of Beethoven saw him at the zenith of his artistic career, the Berlin foundry Bildgießerei H. Gladenbeck & Sohn A.G., in cooperation with the Leipzig publishing firm Carl. B. Lorck and a number of art dealerships, succeeded in persuading him to produce bronze casts of his marble sculptures and reduced-format versions, also in bronze, for sale to a wider public. In May 1900, a copy in plaster of the marble version of the *Bathing Girl* was made for the sculpture collection at the Albertinum in Dresden at the request of Georg Treu, the curator of this collection. The production of versions in bronze began in 1903. A correspondence between Treu and Carl. B. Lorck dating from mid November 1902 indicates that the Gladenbeck foundry used a mould of the Dresden plaster cast as a model.<sup>4</sup> The art historian Julius Norden, in his article on Klinger's bronzes published in the magazine *Moderne Kunst* in January 1904, notes that Klinger worked over the bronzes himself after casting. Some were produced using the sand casting process and others using the lost

---

<sup>2</sup> Cited after Ursel Berger, 'Bewegte weibliche Körper in der Malerei und Skulptur von Max Klinger', in exhib.-cat., Berlin 2007, op. cit., pp. 24-5.

<sup>3</sup> Klinger to Hummel, 12.6.1901. Cited after U. Berger, in exhib. cat., Berlin 2007, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Cited after I. Mössinger and C. Dietrich, 2007, op. cit., p. 139, note 9, relating to the correspondence in the archives of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

wax technique.<sup>5</sup> Little is known about the exact date of production and the edition size. The bronzes were produced in five different formats.

The publishers Carl B. Lorck began to issue invitations to view the bronzes at their premises on Thomasring 13 in Leipzig in late November 1903. Initially, two formats each of *Salome* (1893), *Cassandra* (1895) and *Bathing Girl* were made available for purchase. In addition, bust versions of *Salome* and *Cassandra* were offered. In his 1904 article (published two months later), Norden refers to three formats of the *Bathing Girl* with the heights 62 cm, 40 cm and 25 cm.<sup>6</sup> He also mentions a plan to produce five additional bronze casts in the format of the original marble. Eight years later, however, a letter from Carl B. Lorck to Georg Treu dated 17 February 1912 states that three more casts than originally planned, namely eight additional casts in original format had been produced. The letter mentions that Klinger had issued further authorisation for a numbered edition of 30 one-metre high bronze casts of *Bathing Girl*.<sup>7</sup> A few of the surviving Klinger bronzes are numbered. Obviously, even in the first years, castings were created both with and without numbering.<sup>8</sup> Since the present bronze bears the number '1' it is the very first cast of *Bathing Girl* to have been produced in the reduced format of 62 cm (height), which was one of the two formats initially offered by Carl B. Lorck for viewing in Leipzig in November 1903. It would thus be entirely legitimate to argue that the present bronze is one of the earliest casts of Klinger's *Bathing Girl*.

In their 2012 handbook Robert Kashey and David Wojciechowski praise the outstanding quality of the Gladenbeck casts: 'Notable was the outstanding quality of their casts, and the smooth, highly glossed finishes with rich, deep black patinations.'<sup>9</sup> And as Paul Kühn in the brochure for the 1904 selling exhibition emphasized: 'We have before us bronze casts whose quality is unmatched in Germany. The casts reproduce the delicate delineation of the distinctive facial features and the drapery, and the finest rise and fall of the surfaces. In the figure of the *Bathing Girl* [...] one may delight in the excellent modelling of the back, the smoothness in the treatment of skin, both entirely true to the original. One may indeed say that these reproductions of Klinger's work have ushered in a new phase in the trade in fine art bronzes in Germany.'<sup>10</sup>

The production of bronze castings from the original marble sculpture of *Bathing Girl Looking at her Reflection* has contributed significantly to the figure's importance as one of Klinger's best-known works. It went on to influence the sculptural oeuvre of Georg Kolbe<sup>11</sup> and Wilhelm Lehmbruck. The latter's *Bathing Girl* [Fig. 4] is a sensuous paraphrase of Klinger's figure.

---

<sup>5</sup> R. Graul and J. Norden, 1904, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> Eid., op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>7</sup> Cited after. Mössinger and Dietrich, 2007. op. cit., p. 139, note 12, relating to the correspondence in the archives of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

<sup>8</sup> See Ursel Berger, in exhib. cat., Georg-Kolbe-Museum, Berlin 2007, op. cit., p.136 under no. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer S. Brown, Robert Kashey and David Wojciechowski (eds.), *Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century European Sculpture. A Handbook*, Shepherd Galleries, Associates, New York 2012, p. 87 f.

<sup>10</sup> P. Kühn, 1904, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> See Ursel Berger, 'Einer, der Vorhänge aufreißt - Georg Kolbe im Bannkreis Max Klingers', in exhib. cat., Leipzig and Hamburg 2007-8, op. cit., pp. 52-5.



Fig. 1: *Bathing Girl Looking at her Reflection*, 1896-7, Laas marble, traces of resorcinol colouring, hair formerly gilded, height: 151.4 cm.  
Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig [inv. P 27]



Fig. 3: *Remorse*, 1897, marble, partially polychromed. One of two socle figures flanking the painting *Christ on Olympus*, height c.160 cm.  
Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig.  
On permanent loan from the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



Fig. 2: *Portrait of Helene Donath*, 1902, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 37 cm.  
Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig  
[inv. 975]



Fig. 4: Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Bathing Girl*, 1902-5, bronze, height: 66 cm.  
Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum, Duisburg.  
[inv. 30a/1930]