



CAMILLE CLAUDEL (1864 - 1943)

Perseus and the Gorgon

Bronze proof with brown-green patina, unnumbered
Sand cast by Eugène Blot; executed between 1905 and 1906 Founder's stamp : "EUG.
BLOT/ 5/ BD DE LA MADELEINE"
Signed: C. Claudel
51 x 30 x 22 cm

Acquired by the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo (Japan)

Provenance

- France, Private collection, c. 1960
- By inheritance

The work will be included in the *Catalogue critique de l'œuvre de Camille Claudel (The Critical Catalogue of Camille Claudel's Works)*, which is currently being edited by the Galerie Malaquais under the direction of Eve Turbat, under the number 2019-5B.

The work comes with a certificate of exportation for a cultural work, furnished by the ministry of culture (valid indefinitely).

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sculptures & dessins

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Introduction

In 1905, Camille Claudel said in a letter to Eugène Blot, "I've only done two life-statues in my life."[\[1\]](#) She was referring to the large pieces *Sakountala*, done in 1888, and *Perseus and the Gorgon*,[\[2\]](#) done in 1899. This means that *Perseus and the Gorgon* is Camille Claudel's "last large group," as Anne Rivière emphad in her extremely thorough article on the work, which came out in 2014.[\[3\]](#) *Perseus and the Gorgon* is one of Camille Claudel's major works. This work holds a particular place in her overall œuvre because of its subject matter,

which blends autobiography and mythology, and because it was commissioned by the Countess de Maigret, a faithful supporter of Claudel, and then was editioned by the dealer Eugène Blot. The work can be seen as a point of pride in Claudel's artistic development.

But before addressing these issues, it's worth exploring the detailed chronology of the creation of the work, which was issued in different s and materials between 1898 and 1905.

I/ Detailed Chronology

FIRST STAGE : 1898

Announcement in the press; creation of the model; beginning of the work on the large plaster

The journalist and art critic Mathias Morhardt first mentioned the group *Perseus and the Gorgon* in his article titled "Mlle Camille Claudel," published in the *Mercure de France* in March, 1898. At the end of his text, he listed the pieces that the sculptress was working on and announced their inclusion in upcoming exhibitions: "We will see [...] the group *Perseus and the Gorgon* in bronze and in marble, which she has done for the residence of Madame the Marchioness [sic] de Maigret." The piece was, from the very first, associated with the Countess Arthur de Maigret, who commissioned it from the artist for her private house in the rue de Téhéran (8th arrondissement).[\[4\]](#) Camille Claudel and the Countess Maigret seem to have known each other for about two years at that point.[\[5\]](#)

However, in a letter[\[6\]](#) written on June 10, 1898 from Camille Claudel to the art critic Paul Leroi under his real name, Léon Gauchez,[\[7\]](#) the sculptress explained to her correspondent that this work was still in its earliest stages. "I'm at work on a statue of Perseus looking at the head of the Gorgon in a mirror. He's a simple young man, in a pose from Antiquity, and in a style similar to that of the bust of my brother. I'll send you the photograph of the study, and I'm certain that, this time, you will like it very much."

Several weeks later, the sculptress did, in fact, send Léon Gauchez two photographs[\[8\]](#) of the initial stage of the group (one of them is reproduced here as ILL. 1); they constitute valuable documentation of the development of the work. They show the group *Perseus and the Gorgon*, about 50 cm tall, from two different angles, and posed on a stand. Camille Claudel stated in the letter that accompanied them, "It's going to be done life-, and I could sell a version in plaster for 2000f."[\[9\]](#)

SECOND STAGE: 1899

Completion of the large plaster; its exhibition at the Salon; contract for the creation of the large marble

In a letter that must date from the spring of 1899[\[10\]](#) Camille Claudel invited the critic Gustave Geffroy to come by to see her "large statue" at 19 quai Bourbon on the Île Saint-Louis. It was, undoubtedly, the plaster of *Perseus and the Gorgon* (246 cm high);[\[11\]](#) the sculptress must have wanted to show him the work before its exhibition in the Salon, which began on May 1.

A photograph[\[12\]](#) (ILL. 5) stands as a record of this large plaster: it is perched on a wooden stand in studio, under Claudel's protective gaze. And yet the artist probably destroyed it in a state of extreme fury and despair in 1912, when she was already seriously ill.[\[13\]](#)

The large plaster of *Perseus and the Gorgon* did not draw much attention during its exhibition at the 1899 Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts [\[14\]](#) ; it was overshadowed by the plaster of *L'Âge Mûr* (*The Age of Maturity*). Surprisingly, in May, 1899 (which is to say, during the Salon exhibition) in a letter to Léon Gauchez,[\[15\]](#) Camille Claudel told him that she didn't have enough money to complete the work (she was thinking of the large version in marble): "I cannot finish my perseus because I don't have the funds, and I'm afraid of overextending myself, but I could do a reduction in marble that would be very beautiful and would not cost too much."

In fact, on May 23, François Pompon noted in his account book that he'd been commissioned to execute the large marble of *Perseus and the Gorgon*, and that the terms had been agreed upon.[\[16\]](#) He was asked to reduce the of the plaster model by one-seventh for the marble. It may well be that the plaster was delivered to him at the end of the Salon so that he could work on the project in his studio at 3 rue Campagne Première (14th arrondissement).[\[17\]](#)

THIRD STAGE: 1900

The half-length study (?); creation of the large marble; its exhibition at the Salon

The 1913 issue of *L'Art décoratif* includes the photograph of a study in plaster titled *Perseus* and dated 1900. The dimensions of this work, now lost, remain

unknown. This plaster, with its clearly visible seams, attests to intense explorative work that Camille Claudel did throughout a number of revisions, and yet it's very different from all the other versions of *Perseus and the Gorgon*; the decapitated head has long hair and is not seething with serpents, and the right arm of the half-length figure is animated by a highly stylized movement of the wrist. As the dates given in the 1913 *L'Art décoratif* are not always correct, it could be that this is a study that was done earlier in Camille Claudel's creative process, perhaps even before the 1898 study. It could also be a fragment of her *David and Goliath*, which she did at the beginning of her career.

Regarding the large marble, it seems that the block of stone was not delivered to the studio before May, 1900. The first contract between Camille Claudel and François Pompon was cancelled and replaced on April 24, 1900.[\[18\]](#) The execution of the marble, which was done using the mathematical and mechanical technique known as "the three-point compass method," seems to have been in process until the early months of 1902. The new contract specified that the marble would measure 190 cm rather than the initial 210 cm.[\[19\]](#) In actuality, it is exactly four-fifths the height of the original plaster, which is to say, 196 cm, and is held today in the collections of the Camille Claudel Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine (Inv. #2009.1, see ILL. 7). Besides this large *Perseus and the Gorgon* in marble, "[...] Camille Claudel received several commissions for marbles from Madame de Maigret, one for her own bust [...], one of her son Christian [...], a version of *Rêve au coin du feu* (*Dream by the Fire*) [...] and a version of the *Sakountala* titled *Vertumne et Pomone* (*Vertumnus and Pomona*) [...].[\[20\]](#) Madame de Maigret was a very important supporter of the sculptress, and at a time when she was particularly in need.[\[21\]](#) Unfortunately, this series of commissions came to an abrupt end with a disagreement between the two women. Camille Claudel refers to the argument in a letter written in the spring of 1905.[\[22\]](#) and their relationship seems to have ended after June 1905.[\[23\]](#) In May of 1902, in a letter[\[24\]](#) to Joanny Peytel, Camille Claudel declared that she was very upset by the exhibition of her large marble of *Perseus and the Gorgon* at the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts.[\[25\]](#) For one thing, while the work had been designed to be shown in an interior space, it was installed outside, where it could not not be viewed correctly, and for another, exhibiting it outside endangered the work, as it left it vulnerable to the vagaries of the weather.

The critical reception of the work was, nonetheless, over all quite positive.[\[26\]](#) Once the sculpture was complete, Maurice Pottecher, in a letter[\[27\]](#) to Gustave Geffroy on December 13, 1901, commented on the way he saw it in relation to the artist's work as a whole: "It's a Perseus victorious over the Gorgon, a powerful and noble work, and the most important thing that she has done." Maurice Hamel reproduced the work in this critique of the 1902 Salon;[\[28\]](#) the photograph (ILL. 6) shows a *Perseus* entirely in marble (and not in marble and

bronze).[\[29\]](#)

FOURTH STAGE: 1903-1904

Creation of the small marble (1903) and an abandoned project for a large bronze (1904)

In the 1913 *L'Art décoratif*, the page preceding the one with the half-length study shows a reproduction of the small *Perseus* in marble that belonged to the banker Joanny Peytel. This marble, around 50 cm high, was acquired in 1963 by the Rodin Museum from the descendants of the collector, who was close a close friend of Rodin (Inv. # S.01015, see ILL. 2). The history of this small marble is a bit of a mystery; there's no documentation relating to its commission, nor to its execution. In *L'œuvre de Camille Claudel (The Work of Camille Claudel)*, Reine-Marie Paris and Arnaud de La Chapelle suggest that it might be a reduction of the large marble executed by François Pompon, although there's no mention of the work in his accounts. They further suggest that François Pompon may have done the work without Camille Claudel's involvement in order to thank Joanny Peytel for the financial support that he contributed to the large marble of *Perseus and the Gorgon*. This hypothesis also accounts for the lack of a signature[\[30\]](#) on the small marble, as well as for the rather bland character of *Perseus'* face. And yet such an attitude on the part of François Pompon and Joanny Peytal in relation to Camille Claudel seems quite surprising. Furthermore, it's more plausible to think that she completed the 1898 study and then used it as the basis for the small Rodin Museum marble; this study is known from photographs dating from 1898, found and published by Ingrid Goddeeris in 2012. The date 1903 has been suggested for the small marble in the Rodin Museum[\[31\]](#).

In a letter[\[32\]](#) addressed to the dealer and editioner Eugène Blot, which is thought to have been written in 1904, Camille Claudel asked him to try to get a commission from the state for a large *Perseus and the Gorgon* in bronze. This project was never realized.

FIFTH STAGE: 1905

Execution of the small “Blot Plaster”; Eugène Blot’s editioning of the small bronzes; Camille Claudel’s first solo show at Eugène Blot’s

In 1937-38, when a number of the models that Eugène Blot had editioned were ceded to Leblanc-Barbedienne, a series of documents detailing the plasters of the works that Blot had editioned were annotated and given to Leblanc-Barbedienne.^[33] One of these documents shows a small plaster of *Perseus and the Gorgon* (ILL. 3). This document can be dated to 1905, first, because Eugène Blot's editions began at this time, and second, because the address in the photograph taken by Larger of the work is 5 boulevard de la Madeleine, an address that Blot vacated in 1906. This plaster, whose current location is unknown,^[34] clearly served as the basis for the sand castings.^[35] Therefore, Eugène Blot's bronze edition of the small version of *Perseus and the Gorgon*, to which this piece belongs (ILL. 4), was started just before Camille Claudel's first solo show organized by Blot in his gallery from 4 to 16 December, 1905.^[36] This exhibition, which was accompanied by a catalogue with a preface by the art critic Louis Vauxcelles, presented a dozen of Camille Claudel's sculptures, including a proof of the small bronze of *Perseus and the Gorgon*.

II/ The Perseus and the Gorgon

The extensive preceding chronology reveals certain gaps in our knowledge of the genesis of the model for *Perseus and the Gorgon*. As of this moment, the versions known, in the order of their presumed creation, are:

- 1—a study (1898) approximately 50 cm high (lost, but known by two photographs: ILL. 1);
- 2—a half-length study (? 1898 or 1900) in plaster of unknown dimensions (lost, but known by a photograph);
- 3—a plaster (1898-1899) 246 cm high (probably destroyed, but known by a photograph, ILL. 5);
- 4—a marble (1900-1902) 196 cm high, held in the Camille Claudel Museum (ILL. 7);
- 5—a marble (1900) approximately 50 cm high, held in the Rodin Museum (ILL. 2);
- 6—the "Blot Plaster" (1905) approximately 50 cm high (lost, but known by a photograph, ILL. 3);
- 7—an edition (1905) limited to six proofs^[37] in bronze 50 cm tall.

The two "large *Perseus*", the plaster and the marble, constitute a first group. The "small *Perseus*," 50 cm high, which include the 1898 study, the 1903 marble, the 1905 "Blot Plaster" and the bronzes that were cast from it, constitute a second group.

The features of Perseus's face in the two large versions of *Perseus and the Gorgon* are harder and his hair is short, stiff, and close to his head. The expression on the face of the Gorgon is grimacing and her eyes are squinting.

The small *Perseus and the Gorgon*, on the other hand, differ in that the features of the hero are expressed with a certain softness, and his hair is freer, framing his face. The Gorgon's head is imposing, with its stylized hieratic majesty (with the exception of the double-chin).

In 1990, Reine-Marie Paris and Arnaud de La Chapelle suggested that the small marble in the Rodin collection, as well as the proofs from Blot's bronze edition, are the result of a three-quarter reduction of the large marble held in Nogent-sur-Seine. This has been repeated in all the publications on the artist up to today, perhaps above all because Camille Claudel herself brought up the idea of making "a reduction in marble" of the large plaster of her *Perseus and the Gorgon* in a letter to Léon Gauchez in May of 1899.[\[38\]](#) But the reduction she was thinking of, linked to her financial concerns, is certainly the one that Pompon executed in his work that reduced the 246 cm plaster to the 196 cm marble. Therefore, we don't find Reine-Marie Paris and Arnaud de La Chapelle's suggestion convincing.

Instead, we believe that the examples of the small *Perseus and the Gorgon* were not the result of a reduction, but of a reworking of the 1898 model, without a change of dimensions. There are two things to support this: the stylistic differences between the small and the large version of *Perseus* and the scale of the 1898 model, photographs of which have recently been discovered and were published in 2012.

Close examination of the "small examples of the *Perseus and the Gorgon*" supports this idea; all examples include certain distinct particularities:

- The plaster study from 1898 rests on a relatively thin rectangular base, and the hero looks at the Gorgon in a mirror, not in a shield.
- The marble from 1900 has the same base, though a bit higher, and Perseus is using his shield to observe the decapitated head of the Gorgon.
- The "Blot plaster" goes back to the thin rectangular base, but it is set among rocks that form a circular base.
- The Blot bronze proofs are identical to the plaster because they were cast from it.

Finally, the sculptress could have made a large terra cotta version 256 cm high, which she molded in order to get the plaster, which in turn served as the basis for the marble version 4/5ths the . While she was working on her only other large sculpture, *Sakountala*, a photograph taken by William Elborne[\[39\]](#) shows her working on these large figures directly in clay. This photograph echoes those taken in 1886 by Charles Bodmer (Paris, Rodin Museum, Inv. # Ph.00953) and Victor Pannelier (Paris, Rodin Museum, Inv. #s Ph.03275, Ph.03276, and Ph.03279) that immortalize Rodin's large-scale clay figures of his Burghers of Calais in his studio.

III/ From mythology to autobiography

Camille Claudel's interest in mythic tales is evident throughout her entire career, from *Œdipe et Antigone* (*Oedipus and Antigone*) (c. 1876-1877, a work now lost or destroyed) to *Clotho* (1893-1897, plaster, Paris, Rodin Museum) and *Niobide blessée* (*The Wounded Niobid*) (1886-1906, bronze, Poitiers, Sainte-Croix Museum). In *Perseus and the Gorgon*, she created the image of a hero's victory over a monster with a petrifying gaze. Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danae, is one day imprudent enough to promise King Polydectes that he will bring him the head of the Medusa, the only one of the three Gorgons who is mortal. After many adventures, he arrives at their lair and finds them all asleep. With the aid of Athena, who holds a bronze shield polished to create a mirror over the sleeping bodies, Perseus decapitates the Medusa. The winged horse Pegasus, spurts from her mutilated neck, and Perseus flies off on him, carrying the severed head of his victim in his saddlebag.^[40] In her *Perseus and the Gorgon*, Camille Claudel makes use of iconography traditional to the subject; one of the best-known examples in sculpture is Benvenuto Cellini's *Perseus* (1545-1554), which is in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence.

However, in the large *Perseus*, whether in the marble or the plaster, she seems to link the myth to her own biography by giving the Gorgon her own features.^[41] The artist had engaged with this play between mythology and autobiography since the beginning of the 1880s, with her small bust of *Diana* (c. 1881, plaster, Villeneuve-sur-Fère, the Paul and Camille Claudel House), which Anne Rivière has suggested is also a self-portrait. But in *Perseus and the Gorgon*, the expression is no longer fierce and confident, but is rather one of dark despair, as her brother, Paul Claudel,^[42] described in a text in 1951:^[43] "And now I come to the sinister face that rises up like the conclusion to a tragic career, even before the definitive shadows opened up: Perseus (he who kills without looking). What is that head with the bloody hair that he's holding up behind him, if not that of madness? And why am I not, instead, looking at a depiction of remorse? That face at the end of the raised arm, yes, I think I well recognize those disordered features. The rest is silence." Anne Rivière expressed Camille Claudel's despair in this concise formula: Gorgon, "the face of a petrifying monster [who] is perhaps also the self-portrait of the petrified artist."^[44]

IV/ The Blot edition

Eugène Blot (1857-1938)

The career of Eugène Blot, a dealer and editioner of bronzes known for his engaging personality, has been the subject of several studies, including those

by Élisabeth Lebon in 2003,[\[45\]](#) by Catherine Chevillot in 2005,[\[46\]](#) and by Bruno Gaudichon in 2014.[\[47\]](#) In the 1880s, Eugène Blot, as a young man, sought out the company of art critics such as Gustave Geffroy and Arsène Alexandre, dealers such as Vollard and Bernheim, and collectors, such as Camondo, Personnaz, and Havemeyer.[\[48\]](#) Around 1890, when he succeeded his father in the family business of bronze editioning, he did so "privileging the artistic aspect to the detriment of the industrial,"[\[49\]](#) "First, he modified the job of the producer-editioner by deciding to limit the editions and to number them."[\[50\]](#) That said, in his early years, the numbering wasn't done with systematic rigor or precision.

The encounter and relationship between Camille Claudel and Eugène Blot

According to Eugène Blot's memoirs, they met each other through the art critic Gustave Geffroy, who brought him to Claudel's studio on the quai Bourbon. The year 1900 has been suggested, but that's perhaps a bit early; it is more likely that they met in 1904.[\[51\]](#) "Eugène Blot occupied a singular place in relation to the work of Camille Claudel because he was the only one to both editioning her pieces and acting as her dealer [...] while maintaining very warm relations with her."[\[52\]](#) From 1905 on, Eugène Blot carried twelve of Claudel's models in bronze in his gallery, then situated in the boulevard de la Madeleine. These works, which belonged to the gallery, were always on view and were also shown in exhibitions. Camille Claudel had three shows at the gallery; during the first, which was in December of 1905, works by Claudel and Bernard Hoetger were shown side by side. In the second, organized in 1907, Claudel's sculptures appeared along with paintings by Charles Manguin, Albert Marquet, and Jean Puy. And finally, in 1908, "Claudel is at the center of an exhibition that she shares with other female artists."[\[53\]](#)

Throughout the period of great solitude that marked the beginning of the century for Camille Claudel, she and Eugène Blot maintained an apparently simple friendship, free of tension or discord, perhaps because she was aware of the high esteem in which he held her art. In a letter from 1934, Eugène Blot described the way he saw the sculptress' work: "Camille Claudel was to Rodin what Berthe Morisot was to Manet: the same great art of life, less strong because less brutal, more feminine and more tender, but amazingly curious, original, and spiritual—alive."[\[54\]](#) In 1935, Eugène Blot wrote to Mathias Morhardt: "I was proud to edition her work and happy to be useful to her, for she sold very few of her superb works, and at such low prices ... So much so that I was never able to recover even half of my investment."[\[55\]](#)

Whether in his dealings with Camille Claudel or with the other sculptors whose works he editioned (Jouant, Hoetger), Eugène Blot did not always use a

contract, and he purged some contracts from his archives after ten years. In consequence, the exact terms of his agreement with Camille Claudel remain unknown. He seems to have had full ownership of the models that he bought from the sculptress and of the rights their reproduction until he ceded them by contract to the House of Leblanc-Barbedienne in 1937[56]. There is nothing in the archives that indicates that any rights were paid either to Camille Claudel or to her family[57].

The edition of *Perseus and the Gorgon* by Eugène Blot and the present location of the proofs

The edition, which was planned to include twenty-five proofs, was begun in 1905. However, according to documentation regarding the transfer of the Claudel models that Blot owned to Leblanc-Barbedienne in 1937, only six proofs were actually cast.

Blot's own personal proof, acquired by Leblanc-Barbedienne in 1938, was shown in the Camille Claudel exhibition at the Rodin Museum in 1951.[58] Its current location is unknown.

On the other hand, the locations of five of the proofs are known:

—The proof acquired by the Countess de Maigret; it has remained in the family, and was shown in Roubaix in 2014 in the exhibition *Camille Claudel Au miroir d'un Art nouveau*. [59] This proof carries Eugène Blot's stamp but is not numbered.

—Proof #5; it was shown in exhibitions at the musée des Jacobins of Morlaix in 1993[60] and at the Cercle municipal du Luxembourg in 1995.[61] It is in a private collection.

—Proof #6; it is also held in a private French collection and was reproduced by Reine-Marie Paris and Arnaud de La Chapelle in 1990 in *L'œuvre de Camille Claudel*. [62] It was shown in Avignon in 2013 in the exhibition *Les Papesses*. [63]

—A proof "signed, with Blot's stamp, but unnumbered is held in a private French collection (the former Larochoas collection)." It is mentioned by Reine-Marie Paris in her catalogues raisonnés. [64]

—Our proof, signed and with Eugène Blot's stamp, but not numbered, comes from a private collection from the west of France. It most likely entered that collection in the 1960s.

The particularities of the proof presented here

All of the known proofs have visible "*montages à la romaine*", seams joining the different pieces of the sculpture. They are at Perseus' left calf, at the top of his right thigh, and at the biceps of his right arm.

While the other known proofs all have a dark patina, our proof is distinguished by the remarkable nuances of color in its patina. Lightly gilded, the Gorgon's wings recall ancient texts that claim that the monster had wings of gold that allowed her to fly.

Our proof is further distinguished by the fact that it carries a Blot stamp that appears on relatively few works. It's a stamp composed of two arcs making an oval and giving the address, 5 Bd de la Madeleine. Élisabeth Lebon and John Ind, who are currently doing work on the dealer and editioner Eugène Blot, think that he used this stamp between 1899 and 1906, when the gallery was located at that address. [\[65\]](#) This stamp allows us to date this casting precisely between 1905, when the edition was begun, and 1906, when Eugène Blot left the boulevard de la Madeleine.

This oval Blot stamp with the boulevard de la Madeleine address also appears on a proof of the *Machine humaine* by Bernard Hoetger, dated 1902 and held in the Musée d'Orsay (gift of Madame Marcel Duchamp in 1977, Inv. #DO 1983 75, AM 1977 582). John Ind [\[66\]](#) made an extremely detailed study of the two stamps (ILL. 8 and ILL. 9) and he notes that the images superimpose perfectly. Our stamp shows a doubling, which occurred frequently on Blot's stamps, a doubling that comes from the hammer's bouncing when it struck.

V/ Aesthetic pinnacle and "high intellectuality"

The composition of *Perseus and the Gorgon* inspires admiration; it features two people whose postures, radically unbalanced, are yet connected by a beautifully inventive element: a wing that blends upward into drapery. Capturing the motion of a rising spiral, the composition requires the viewer to turn around it in order to see it as a whole. The art critic François Monod stated that Camille Claudel had "found lines (...) with an entirely new rhythm" [\[67\]](#) in her *Perseus and the Gorgon*. Its great harmony, which rests on the play between the balance of the masses and the imbalance of the postures, its freedom, and the perfection of the compact profiles are all characteristic of Claudel's art.

This work is the result of a *marcottage*, [\[68\]](#) in line with the practices of Albert Carrier-Belleuse and Auguste Rodin. Perseus has "the body and the attitude" of the dancer in *La Valse (The Waltz)* (1889-1905) while the Gorgon includes part of the body of the *Femme accroupie (Crouching Woman)* (1884-1885), and the composition of the group is based on a victor trampling the vanquished underfoot, like her *David and Goliath* [\[69\]](#) created around 1876-1877, a work that has been lost but that was described in great detail by Mathias Morhardt in 1898. [\[70\]](#) Though Camille Claudel didn't use the technique of *marcottage* at the

beginning of her career, she used it several times from the end of the 1890s on, for instance, on the sculpture *La Fortune* (1902-1905) and also on *Niobide blessée* (*The Wounded Niobid*) (1907).

Other signatures of her art are also present in *Perseus and the Gorgon*:

—The artist's admiration for the Florentine Renaissance, and, in consequence, the interest she had in Verrochio's *David* and Cellini's *Perseus and the Gorgon*. Louis Vauxcelles refers to this relationship when he speaks of Perseus as "pure and male, like a Jean de Bologne."[\[71\]](#)

—The primacy given to the figures' eyes. Perseus, quite prudently, observes the Medusa through the mediation of his shield while the Medusa herself has her fixed gaze anchored on the distance in order to petrify the unfortunates careless enough to look at her. This attention given to the power of the gaze is also found in the distraught eyes of *La Petite Châtelaine* (*The Little Chatelaine*), in the supplicating eyes of *L'Implorante* (*The Implorer*), and in the eyes devoured by curiosity of the *Causeuses* (*The Gossips*).

—The expressivity that emanates from her sculpted works. Here, though she chose a typical turn-of-the-century subject, depicting a decapitation, this *Perseus and the Gorgon* group is different from contemporary works in that it's animated by a spirit that other sculptures of the era don't possess.

Camille Claudel is not simply engaged in narrative. Her representations of the characters' signature attributes, such as the inventive visual telescoping of the "wing-drapery," plunges us into her powerful imaginary, and she manages to imbue the work with motion, Eros, Thanatos, and eternity all at once ... She confronts us, as does no one else, with the unfathomable mysteries of humanity.

Conclusion

In the catalogue from the 1905 exhibition at the Eugène Blot gallery,[\[72\]](#) the art critic Louis Vauxcelles wrote: "For ten years, Camille Claudel has distinguished herself by the continuity of her work, by its science, its will, and its great intellectuality. She has both a deep understanding of mythology and a sharp sense of modernism." That quotation perfectly captures the extraordinary subtlety that emanates from the *Perseus and the Gorgon* group, a sculpture of extraordinary subtlety. The appearance of a proof of this work on the market is extremely rare, if not unprecedented. Furthermore, as of the current moment, no public collection has one of the bronze proofs of this *Perseus and the Gorgon*.

[\[1\]](#) Letter from Camille Claudel to Eugène Blot, n.d. [October-November, 1905], held in a private collection, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #246, p. 245.

[2] It should be noted that in most older citations, the work is called simply *Perseus*.

[3] RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 187.

[4] When the work was found at the beginning of the 1980s, it was in the entryway, at the foot of the grand staircase of the residence. (See RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 188).

[5] RIVIÈRE, 2005, p. 250-259. As far as is known, no archival documentation that details the date or the manner of the Countess de Maigret's commission have yet been found.

[6] Letter from Camille Claudel to Léon Gauchez on June 10, 1898, held in the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #153, p. 159-162.

[7] GODDEERIS, 2014, p. 19-21.

[8] The two photographs, attached to a letter from Camille Claudel to Léon Gauchez, are also held in the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels. They are reproduced GODDEERIS, 2012, p. 76 and in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 163 (note: the photograph on the right is reversed).

[9] Letter from Camille Claudel to Léon Gauchez, n.d., [June, 1898], held in the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #154, p. 162-163.

[10] See RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #168, p. 172.

[11] Account books of François Pompon (July 1884-August 1908) p. 73 (left and right), p. 76 (left), Pompon René Demeurisse Holdings ODO 1996-46-2 and ODO 1996-46-3, Archives of the Musée d'Orsay.

[12] A print of this photograph, taken by Simons, is held in the Marguerite Durand Library in Paris. It is reproduced in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 190.

[13] See RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2001, p. 168.

[14] The exhibition of the Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts was held from May 1 to June 30, 1899.

[15] Letter from Camille Claudel to Léon Gauchez, n.d. [May 1899], held in the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #170, p. 173-174.

[16] Account books of François Pompon (July 1884-August 1908) p. 73 (left), Pompon René Demeurisse Holdings ODO 1996-46-2 and ODO 1996-46-3, Archives of the Musée d'Orsay.

[17] On December 13, 1901, Maurice Pottecher, a man of the theater and a friend of Paul Claudel, wrote to Gustave Geffroy saying that he could come to see the marble of *Perseus* at 3 rue Campagne Première (RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 198).

[18] François Pompon's account book (July 1884-August 1908) p. 73 (left), p. 76 (left and right), p. 77 (April 26, 1900 letter from the assistant Musetti to Pompon), Pompon René Demeurisse Collection ODO 1996-46-2 and ODO 1996-

46-3, Archives of the Musée d'Orsay.

[19] Based on Pompon's account books (see footnote 18), it's possible to create the following table:

Contracts	What's written in the contracts	Calculations
1 st contract : May 23, 1899		
Not executed, estimated cost: 9.600f	Reduction by 1/7 of the 246 cm plaster Projected height of the marble = 210 cm	246,7 = 35,1 210,9
2 nd contract : April 24, 1900		
Executed, estimated cost: 9.000f	Reduction by 1/4 of the 246 cm Projected height of the marble = 190 cm	246,4 = 61,5 184,5

What was actually done:

Although it was the second contract that was executed, the 246 cm plaster was reduced by one-fifth to create the marble. The marble measures 196 cm (thus 50 cm less than the plaster).

[20] RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 187. The busts of the Count Christian de Maigret (1899) and of the Countess Arthur de Maigret (1900), while *Vertumne et Pomone* (1905) entered the collections of the Rodin Museum in 1952 (Inv. # s.1293), and the *Rêve au coin du feu* (1899) entered the collections of the Palace of the Legion of Honor in 2018 (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, inv. 2018.88).

[21] RIVIÈRE, 2005, p. 250-259.

[22] Letter from Camille Claudel to Henry Lerolle, n.d. [spring 1905?], typed copy held in the Société des Manuscrits des Auteurs Français, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #229, p. 226-228.

[23] RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 188.

[24] Letter from Camille Claudel to Joanny Peytel, n.d. [May 1902], held in the archives of the Rodin Museum, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #217, p. 211-212.

[25] The exact dates of the exhibition are not given in the Salon's brochure.

[26] See the critical commentary by Gustave Babin, "Les salons de 1902", *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, Paris, January-February, 1902; by Henry Marcel, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, 1902; and by Tristan Klingsor, "Les Salons de 1902, la Société nationale," *La Plume*, #313, May 1, 1902.

[27] This letter is held in the Rodin Museum (AMR Ma 168). RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 198.

[28] Maurice Hamel, *Salons de 1902*, Paris, 1902, Goupil et Cie., p. 74. The photograph is reproduced in RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 188. This photograph shows Perseus holding his marble shield in his right arm. This one is still held in place at the level of the wrist by a strut that is normally removed when the work is finished.

[29] When the large *Perseus* was found at the beginning of the 1980s, it was missing its marble shield (broken since then) and the strut that supported it (removed during the finishing process).

[30] As far as is currently known, it is possible to find only one other marble by Camille Claudel not signed; it is *La Petite Châtelaine* (thin, curved braid), which was held in the Philippe Escudier collection. The work is reproduced in CATALOGUE, 2014, p. 107 and plate p. 277.

[31] See RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 192. This dating seems more accurate than that of 1900, claimed by *L'Art décoratif*. From 1900 to 1902, Camille Claudel worked with François Pompon on the large marble, which she presented at the 1902 Salon. If, in fact, she did the small marble immediately afterward, again with the aid of her assistant, that would explain why it wasn't shown at the Salon.

[32] Letter from Camille Claudel to Eugène Blot, n.d. [May 1904?], held in the archives of the Rodin Museum, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #220, p. 214.

[33] These documents are held in the National Archives (Inv. #368 AP3). Pencil annotations state the height of the models and the number of the edition.

[34] If it had been possible to study the small plaster, whose location is unknown, and which is probably lost, it might have given indications as to whether it was produced through reduction or through work in clay.

[35] A number of documents concerning the transfer of models from Eugène Blot to Leblanc-Barbedienne show the plasters, though it is known that Eugène Blot also used *chefs-models* (master copies) for his sand casts, for instance, for *L'Aurore (The Dawn)*, held in the Camille Claudel Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine (Inv. #2010.2.2) and for *Profonde Pensée (Deep in Thought)*, held in the Saint-Croix Museum in Poitiers (Inv. #2000-00-2). As far as we know, the documents for the edition of the *Perseus* were published for the first time in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2003, p. 220.

[36] CATALOGUE, 1905.

[37] For the exact number of proofs of this edition, see below the paragraph "The edition of *Perseus and the Gorgon* by Eugène Blot and the present location of the proofs" in *IV/ The Blot Edition*.

[38] Letter from Camille Claudel to Léon Gauchez, n.d. [May 1899], held in the Belgian Royal Library in Brussels, in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, #170, p. 173-174.

[39] William Elborne, *Camille Claudel sculpting Sakountala (Jessie Lipscomb in the Background)*, 1887, private collection. This photograph is reproduced in RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 35.

[40] For a complete version of the myth, see Pierre Grimal, *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1951.

[41] CATALOGUE, 1984, p. 78, and RIVIÈRE-GAUDICHON, 2000, p. 170..

[42] In 1948, in the *Cantique des Cantiques (The Song of Songs)*, Paul Claudel had already written a few lines on his sister's *Perseus and the Gorgon*.

[43] CATALOGUE, 1951, p. 12. Paul Claudel's text is reproduced in CATALOGUE, 2014, p. 254-257.

[44] RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 188.

[45] LEBON, 2003, p. 121-123.

- [46] CHEVILLOT, 2005, p. 260-273.
- [47] GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 194-199.
- [48] CHEVILLOT, 2005, p. 262.
- [49] LEBON, 2003, p. 121.
- [50] LEBON, 2003, p. 122.
- [51] GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 196.
- [52] CHEVILLOT, 2005, p. 261.
- [53] GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 196.
- [54] Eugène Blot, *Histoire d'une collection de tableaux modernes : 50 ans de peinture (de 1882 à 1932)*, Paris, éditions d'art, 1934, p. 23.
- [55] Letter from Eugène Blot to Mathias Morhardt, September 21, 1935, Paris, Rodin Museum archives, cited by GAUDICHON, 2014, p. 197.
- [56] Some of the documents pertaining to the cession of works by Eugène Blot to the Barbedienne house (Paris, National Archives, inv. #368 AP3) were shown in the exhibition *Camille Claudel : Fateful Encounter* (CATALOGUE, 2005, p. 369, cat. 259 to 261).
- [57] CHEVILLOT, 2005, p. 269.
- [58] CATALOGUE, 1951, #28, p. 15.
- [59] CATALOGUE, 2014, cat. #81, p. 193.
- [60] CATALOGUE, 1993, #41, p. 53-54.
- [61] CATALOGUE, 1995, #43.
- [62] PARIS-LA CHAPELLE, 1990, p. 196.
- [63] CATALOGUE, 2013, p. 355.
- [64] PARIS, 2000, p. 426 and 2019, p. 680.
- [65] Information communicated by Élisabeth Lebon on June 4, 2019.
- [66] Exchange of emails with John Ind, February, 2020.
- [67] François Monod, "L'exposition de Mlle Claudel et de M. Bernard Hoetger, Les poteries de M. Lenoble," *Art et Décoration* (supplement), January, 1906, p. 1.
- [68] "Marcottage is an operation that consists of composing a new work of sculpture by either partially or wholly reusing works already executed by the sculptor. The sculptor breaks up his or her own works and reworks them into a new piece." Marie-Thérèse Baudry, with the collaboration of Dominique Bozo, *Sculpture méthode et vocabulaire*, Imprimerie nationale, 3rd edition, 1990, p. 549.
- [69] RIVIÈRE, 2014, p. 187-188.
- [70] MORHARDT, 1898, p. 711-712
- [71] Louis Vauxcelles, "Les arts: retrospective Camille Claudel," *Le Monde illustré*, May 12, 1934, p. 391.
- [72] CATALOGUE, 1905.