

Laocoon's famous words from Virgil's *Aeneid* II:

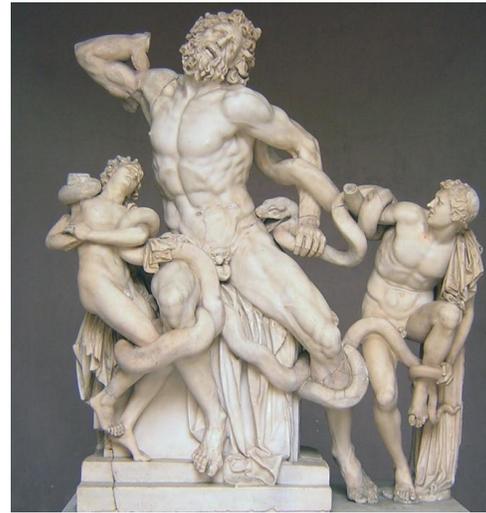
*"Equo ne credite, Teucri / Quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentes"*

The description of his death:

*Ille simul manibus tendit divellere nodos  
perfusus sanie vittas atroque veneno,  
clamores simul horrendos ad sidera  
tollit:  
qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
taurus et incertam excussit cervice  
securim.*

"At the same time he stretched forth to  
tear the knots with his hands, his fillets  
soaked with saliva and black venom,  
At the same time he lifted to heaven  
horrendous cries:  
Like the bellowing when a wounded bull  
has fled from the altar and has shaken  
the ill-aimed axe from its neck."

- Different dates for when it was sculpted:
  - Mid-second century BC
  - 14-37 AD: copied from a bronze from ca. 140 BC
  - 20-40 AD: by Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus of Rhodes
  - 41-68 AD: an original composition inspired by late-Classical and Hellenistic precedent
- 70s AD: Pliny the Elder records that the Laocoon group can be found in the home of Emperor Titus:



*Latin:* "Nec deinde multo plurimum fama est, quorundam claritati in operibus eximiis obstante numero artificum, quoniam nec unus occupat gloriam nec plures pariter nuncupari possunt, sicut in Laocoonte, qui est in Titi imperatoris domo, opus omnibus et picturae et statuariae artis praeferendum. ex uno lapide eum ac liberos draconumque mirabiles nexus de consilii sententia fecere summi artifices Hagesander et Polydorus et Athenodorus Rhodii" (ed. Carolus Mayhoff, Leipzig, Teubner 1897).

*English translation:* "Beyond these, there are not many sculptors of high repute; for, in the case of several works of very great excellence, the number of artists that have been engaged upon them has proved a considerable obstacle to the fame of each, no individual being able to engross the whole of the credit, and it being impossible to award it in due proportion to the names of the several artists combined. Such is the case with the Laocoon, for example, in the palace of the Emperor Titus, a work that may be looked upon as preferable to any other production of the art of painting or of statuary. It is sculptured from a single block, both the main figure as well as the children, and the serpents with their marvelous folds. This group was made in concert by three most eminent artists, Agesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus, natives of Rhodes" (translated by ed. John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S., H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A.).

- January 13/14, 1506: the Laocoon group is discovered on the Oppian Hill under the Baths of Titus, and it is not sculpted from a single block of marble
- March 23, 1506: Pope Julius II buys it and moves it to the Vatican
- Sixteenth century AD:
  - the figures are arranged in different ways
  - broken and missing pieces are slowly restored—there are debates about the position of the father’s raised arm
  - copies are made in wax and bronze



- July 1798: the Laocöon group is taken to Paris. The modern, restored arms are left in Rome. There is a competition for some one to do a new restoration, but no one enters, so they add plaster arms.

- October 1815: Napoleon is defeated and the Laocöon group returns to Rome and the Vatican.
- 1905: the father’s right arm is discovered in a sculptor’s shop on the Via Labicana.
- 1957: the false restorations are removed and the discovered arm is added.

