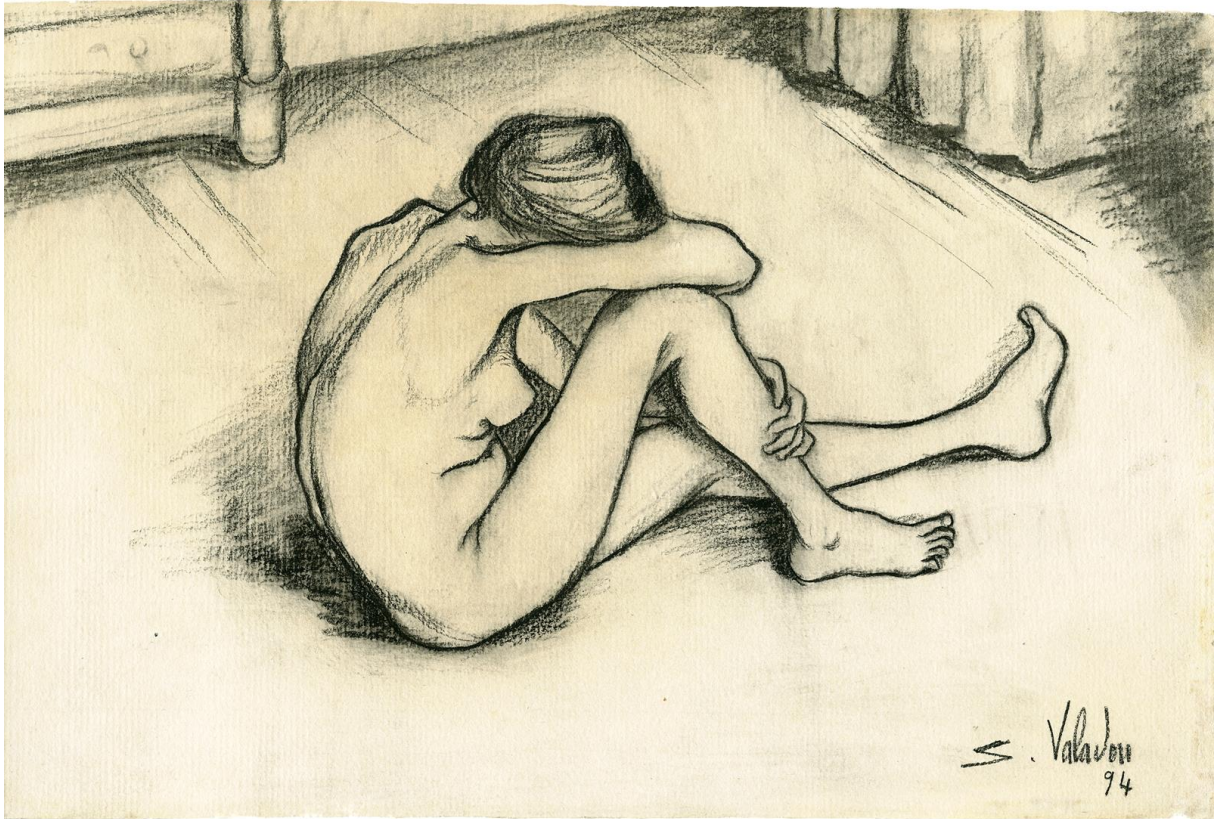


LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



SUZANNE VALADON

1867 Bessines - Paris 1938

Nu assis

Black chalk and estompe on paper; 1894.

Signed and dated at the lower right: *S. Valadon 94.*

190 x 295 mm

PROVENANCE: Mr. and Mrs. Jean Lonchamp, Paris – Thence by descent.

Suzanne Valadon was by the age of sixteen an artists' model, her voluptuous beauty fêted in Montmartre artistic circles. Puvis de Chavannes used her as his model for almost seven years and she also posed for artists like Auguste Renoir, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Berthe Morisot, and many others.

Valadon already had contacts within Parisian artistic circles when she met Edgar Degas in the early 1890s. Degas bought some of her early drawings and actively promoted her artistic talents, encouraging her to take up painting. Her first exhibition was at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts du Champ de Mars in 1894 – she was the only female artist. Her early work shows the influence of Toulouse-Lautrec and Puvis de Chavannes but in terms of technique and subject matter Degas was her main model.

For years those reflections of her beauty seen through other people's eyes overshadowed her own artistic achievement and forceful personality. Once she had gained confidence in her ability, Valadon made her art the centre of her life. Valadon gleaned her "art education" from studying the painters she sat for as closely as they observed her.

To achieve her objective, to express herself as an artist, Valadon had to overcome greater obstacles than any other woman of her time. As an artist she was fiercely independent and ignored the sweeping influences of experimental art, relying on her own instinct and intuition. Her colleagues called her Valadon, an indication that she was regarded as an artist rather than a woman artist.¹

Daniel Marchesseau writes: "Fearful of giving in to portraiture yet again, she took new-found inspiration from her masters and reinvented their themes: women at their toilette, reclining nudes, interior scenes. Her firm, strong lines emphasize light-catching body curves.

The vibrant emotion that comes forth in her drawings stems from fraternal observation of these women's bodies, constantly captured in silent, timeless, grave immobility. Not content with being complacent, she tirelessly searched for truth in the modest anatomies her models offered up in dark, private places like beds, or in a shimmer of filtered light. In her depiction of a movement or a pose, of plumpness or wrinkles, of thinning hair or thick chignon, Valadon open our eyes to the grandeur of ordinary life. Like Lautrec and Degas, her humble servants are a celebration of day-to-day heroines."²

¹ June Rose, *A male brutality?*, in: Daniel Marchesseau, *Suzanne Valadon*, exhib. cat., Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny 1996, p. 55 ff.

² Daniel Marchesseau, *Suzanne Valadon, A Furor for painting*, in: op. cit., p. 16 ff.

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The simplicity and intimacy of the scene underline Valadon's compassionate and unsentimental view of her subjects. Her sitters were Montmartre working women, although whoever crossed her threshold could be asked to disrobe. Most probably the same young model of our delicate drawing was depicted in a further drawing also dated c.1894 [Fig.1]³.

The authenticity of the present drawing has been confirmed by Gilbert Pétridès in a certificate dated 17 January 1991.

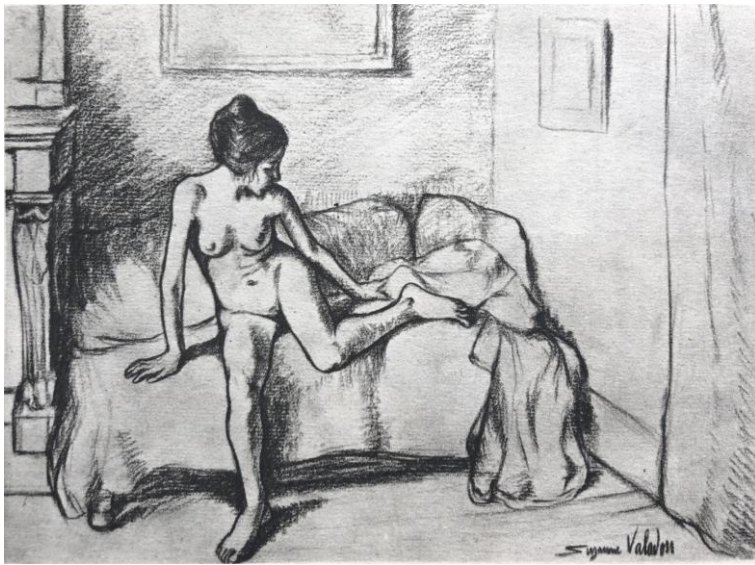


Fig.1: *Nu au sofa près d'une cheminée*, c.1894,
black chalk, 210 x 290 mm.
Private collection

³ For further comparable drawings see: Paul Pétridès, *L'œuvre complet de Suzanne Valadon*, Paris 1971. The catalogue lists 273 drawings.