

LE CLAIRE KUNST SEIT 1982

WILHELM LEHMBRUCK
1881 Duisburg - Berlin - 1919

Sitzender Akt in ganzer Figur

Pencil on paper; c.1910-11.
Signed lower right: *W. Lehmbruck.*
350 x 210 mm

In an article titled *Paris 1910/11* published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in commemoration of Wilhelm Lehmbruck's fiftieth birthday in 1932 Julius Meier-Graefe wrote: *Lehmbruck was in Paris from 1910 to 1914 and this period [...] saw him create all his major works.*¹

The present drawing is very probably a preparatory study for the sculpture of 1910 titled *Standing Female Figure* [Fig.1]. It is almost certainly related to a important body of pencil drawings associated with a sketchbook Lehmbruck used in Paris in 1910-12. The sketchbook – it is known as 'Sketchbook II' – contains a large group of drawings depicting reclining and standing nudes. They are distinguished by their sweeping contours and an almost complete lack of modelling detail. The present drawing shares these stylistic features.

The nudes executed in the years 1910-11 have not yet lost their impression of voluptuous roundness. This was to give way to increasingly attenuated forms with elongated, almost mannerist proportions. In the present drawing soft, fluid curves define the figure of the seated female nude. They recall the contours of the sculpture of 1910. At the time, Lehmbruck's wife Anita was his main model and he often depicted her with their son Gustav Wilhelm (Guwi, b.1909). The head of the seated figure in the drawing is slightly bent to one side, a stylistic device frequently used by Lehmbruck. The facial features are barely defined, giving the figure a universal quality. Its restrained pose and complete lack of monumentality enhance the impression of interiorization and introspective contemplation. Although volume is briefly indicated by outlines, fine lines of hatching and areas of controlled faint stumping, the untouched areas and the pale tone of the paper play a more important role in defining the volumes of the figure. But what in fact emerges is the abstract idea of a figure, something Erich Franz has described as a *mental sculpture*.²

This very fine drawing was executed in Lehmbruck's most productive, and on a personal level most emotionally satisfying and optimistic period. He arrived at his own distinctive style as a result of his stay in Paris in 1910-14. Two major works of the period are the sculptures *Standing Female Figure* of 1910 and *Kneeling Woman* of 1911. Impulsive and highly individual as Lehmbruck's draughtsmanship often was, his drawings nonetheless stand as important independent works alongside his sculptural oeuvre. The human figure and the expression of human emotions and states of mind are the central themes linking his sculptures, his drawings and his prints. In all three genres he developed a unique artistic vocabulary that is both symbolic and expressionistic.

¹ *Lehmbruck war von 1910 bis 1914 in Paris, und in dieser Zeit ... sind alle seine Hauptwerke entstanden.* See Gerhard Händler, *Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Die Zeichnungen der Reifezeit*, Stuttgart 1985, p.11.

² Erich Franz, *Sich dem Blick entziehen. Lehmbrucks Zeichnungen als mentale Plastik* in exhib. cat., *Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Zeichnungen*, Zurich and elsewhere, 1990-1, p.8f.

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Fig.1: *Standing Female Figure*, 1910.
Stone cast, height 196 cm