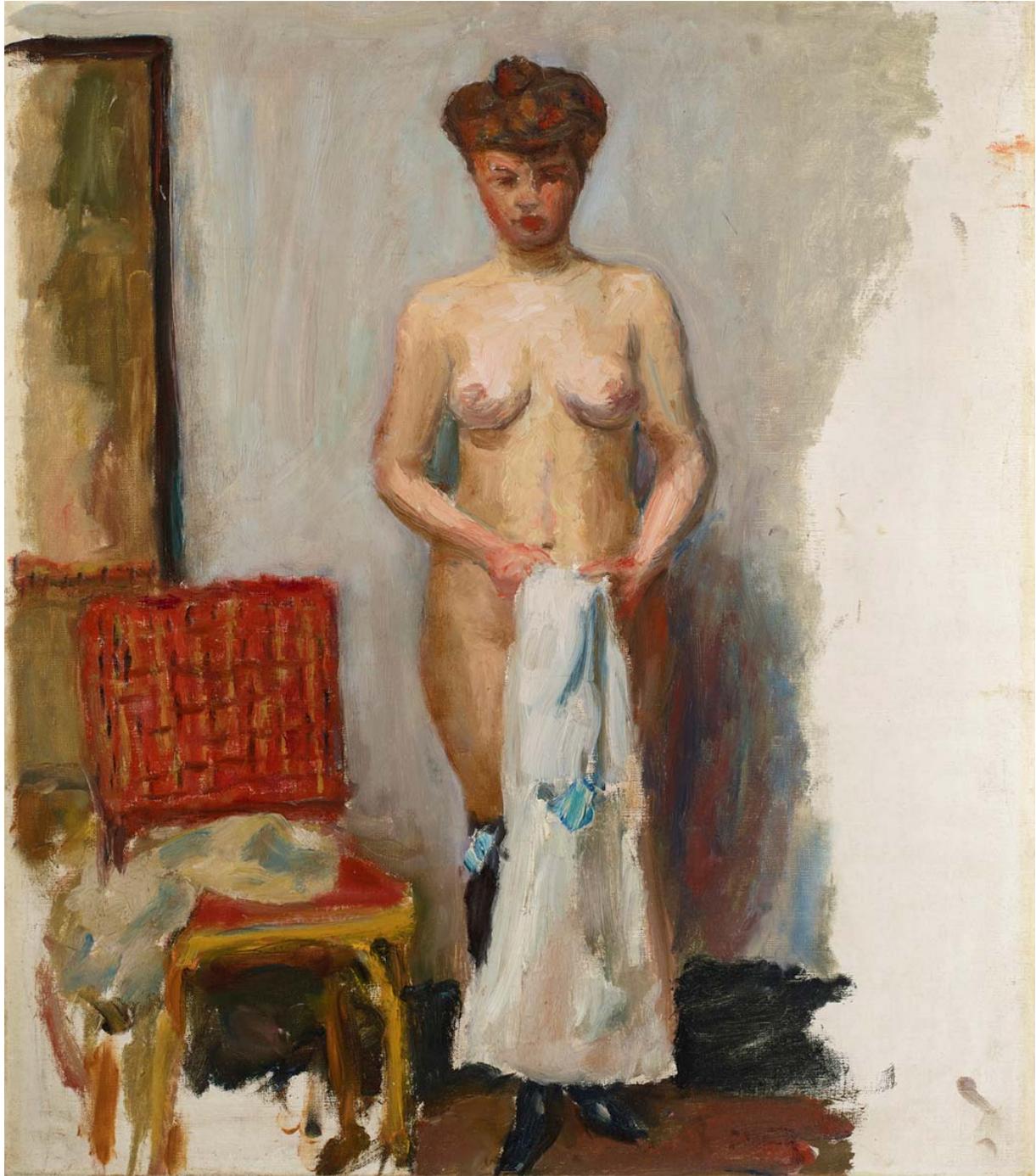


# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



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PIERRE BONNARD

1867 Fontenay-aux-Roses – Le Cannet 1947

*Nu, chaise rouge*

Oil on canvas; painted *circa* 1905.

Faintly stamped: *Bonnard* (towards lower right)

47.9 x 41.9 cm

PROVENANCE: Charles Zadok, New York – Acquavella Galleries, New York – Acquired from the above in 1972 – Mamdouha and Elmer Holmes Bobst, New York

LITERATURE: Jean and Henry Dauberville, *Bonnard, catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint révisé et augmenté 1888-1905*, I, Paris 1992, no. 367, repr. p. 320

By the early years of the twentieth century the Nabis<sup>1</sup> had separated, and Pierre Bonnard travelled extensively, visiting several European countries, often accompanied by Édouard Vuillard. This was a period of reflection, discovery and research. Although there were a number of new movements to observe in Paris alone, Bonnard always maintained a distance and independence from them. His use of colour, in particular, distinguished his work at a time when the Fauves were applying it in almost violent hues, and the Cubists were treating it in greys and earth colours.

Bonnard persisted in developing his own style, often organizing compositions around strong verticals or horizontals determined by the framework of walls, doors, windows or pieces of furniture. The contours of his figures began to dissolve and he used colour to model forms, creating a subtle interplay of light and shadow.<sup>2</sup>

Black stockings with their erotic connotations had already featured in Bonnard's depictions of female figures in the years around 1890. In 1904-5, the motif reappeared in his painting when he began to work directly from a model in his sparsely furnished studio, having the subject dress in various types of clothing and adopt different, staged poses. Often, he would play with the contrast between subtly graded flesh tones and the black of the stockings. He saw interiors as realms of pure inner harmony, interpretable as symbols of a perfect inner world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'nabi' means 'prophet' in Hebrew. A group of young artists – Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Vuillard, Ker-Xavier Roussel and others – chose this term to refer to themselves in order to state their common willingness to renew painting. Under the leadership of Paul Sérusier, these young pupils formed a coherent group in Paris over a short period of time, from 1888 to 1900.

<sup>2</sup> Marina Ferretti Bocquillon, *Des coups de pinceau en plein cœur. Les nus de Bonnard. Intimité: de la chambre à l'atelier*, in Guy Cogeval and Isabelle Cahn, *Pierre Bonnard. Peindre l'Arcadie*, exhib. cat., Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 17 March - 19 July 2015; Fundación MAPFRE, Madrid, 10 September 2015 - 6 January 2016; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 6 February - 15 May 2016, p. 132 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ursula Perucchi-Petri, *Das Interieur – eine Gegenwelt*, in *Intimie Welten. Das Interieur bei den Nabis, Bonnard, Vuillard, Vallotton*, exhib. cat., Villa Flora, Winterthur 1999, p. 77.

Contrary to his usual working practice, he chose at this point in his career to work with professional models rather than use close family members and friends as his subjects. This was certainly a change of approach of some significance, even though it was only short-lived.

Annabel Zettel notes: *Bonnard's depictions of women show his sheer pleasure in modelling the female body. The studio furnishings too have a vitality of their own. In these interiors it is the same objects over and over again that surround the figures and serve as active elements determining the structure of the composition – a mirror in a black frame on a bare white wall, a patterned canapé, a nondescript chair, a black stove or a discarded pile of clothing.*<sup>4</sup>

The present work combines all the distinctive attributes of the paintings of nudes Bonnard produced in his new studio on rue Douai 60 in the years around 1905 – a model poses for him standing before a bare wall next to a large black mirror, beside her is a red chair with a weave back, in an otherwise sparsely furnished studio.

The painting is a study for a larger-format work titled *Nu à la chemise (Nu à la chaise)*<sup>5</sup> [Fig. 1]. It belongs to a group of works [see Figs. 2, 3 and 4] that document a key moment in this early stage of Bonnard's career. He was not to return to the theme of the female nude until over a decade later, and the women he was to observe and portray then were women he knew well, rather than professional models hired to pose for him.



Fig 1: *Nu à la chemise* or *Nu à la chaise*,  
oil on canvas, 56 x 39 cm.  
Private collection

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<sup>4</sup> Annabel Zettel, *Der Akt – ein neues Thema bei Vuillard, Bonnard und Vallotton*, in *Édouard Vuillard 1868-1940*, exhib. cat, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 24 August-23 November 2014, p. 135 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Bonnard, *Nu à la chemise (or Nu à la chaise)*, circa 1905, oil on canvas, 56 x 39 cm, Dauberville no. 369.



Fig. 2 : Pierre Bonnard, *Grand nu*, 1906,  
oil on canvas, 140 x 80 cm.  
Private collection



Fig. 3 : Pierre Bonnard, *Nu debout à la serviette*, 1905, oil on canvas, 77.5 x 51.2 cm.  
Private collection



Fig. 4 : Pierre Bonnard, *Nu assis se reflétant dans un miroir*, 1905,  
oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm.  
Private collection