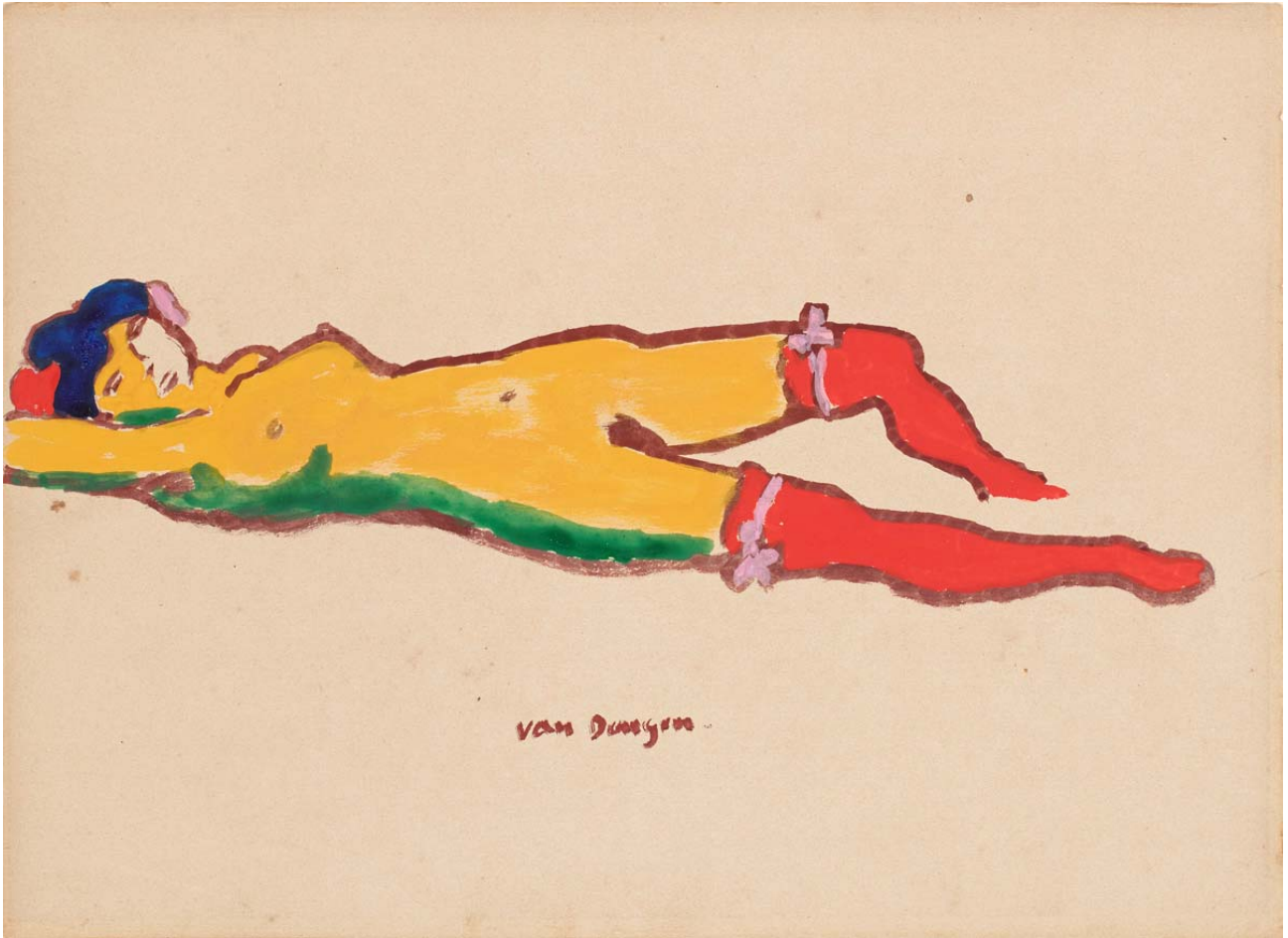


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KEES VAN DONGEN

1877 Delfshaven, near Rotterdam - Monte Carlo 1968

Nu couché aux bas rouges [*Reclining Nude with Red Stockings*]

Gouache on paper; executed circa 1910.

Signed in the lower centre: *van Dongen*.

246 x 337 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Paris (acquired from the artist in 1951-2) – Galerie Cazeau-Béraudière, Paris – Acquired from the above in 1997 by a Belgian private collection.

LITERATURE: *Le Journal du Dimanche*, Paris, 10 February 2002, p. 28 (illustrated in colour) – *Swiss Dayori, le Journal japonais de Suisse*, Geneva, no. 79, Spring 2002 (illustrated) – *Schweizer Illustrierte*, Zurich, February 2002, p. 71 (illustrated)

EXHIBITION: *Kees van Dongen*, Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny, January - June 2002, p. 80, no. 37 (illustrated in colour)

Kees van Dongen's artistic career in Paris began in 1904. First, he presented several works at the *Salon des Indépendants* and the *Salon d'Automne* with limited success. In November of that year, Vollard devoted an exhibition to him, whose catalogue was prefaced by the famous art critic Félix Fénéon. Success then dawned and his vivid and contrasting colours made a significant impression on the general public.

In the following year, van Dongen exhibited two canvases at the *Salon d'Automne*, the exhibition that marked the birth of the "*Fauves*". The works of Henri Matisse, André Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck, Albert Marquet and some others were hung in room 7. The public jeered at the *orgy of pure colors*, judging the works primitive, brutal, and violent. The artists were dubbed *fauves* [wild beasts], and room 7 became *la cage*. The term *fauve* has stuck. It describes a style that was the first avant-garde wave of the twentieth century. Van Dongen was soon at the heart of this movement, and according to the critic Louis Vauxcelles, even became *un de nos plus audacieux parmi les jeunes exposants des 'Indépendants'*.¹ Although van Dongen's works were not hung in room 7, he was invited a few weeks later to take part in the exhibition at the Prath & Maynier bookshop and thus became officially attached to the group of *Fauves*.

The present gouache of this striking reclining nude is closely related to an oil painting of the same subject, executed around 1906-07 (fig. 1). Both works reflect Kees van Dongen's involvement with the *Fauves*. It was around this time that he moved both his studio and apartment to rue Saulnie, neighbouring the famous music hall the Folies-Bergère, which he often frequented with other artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec. The world of music halls and cabarets served as a constant source of inspiration for van Dongen, whose oeuvre capitalized on the highly provocative and sultry *demimondaines* and

¹ Louis Vauxcelles, *Exposition van Dongen* (Galerie Kahnweiler, Paris), in *Gil Blas*, Paris, 4th March 1908, p. 2.

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Bohemian courtesans. In 1908-10, van Dongen worked almost exclusively with two models, Nini from the Folies-Bergère and Anita the Bohemian, who was probably the model in the present sheet.

In our drawing the artist redefines the classic reclining nude, giving her a contemporary appearance with the addition of fashionable attributes such as her roseleaf red stockings and expressive makeup. The figure's black-ringed eyes accentuate her face; her gaze is steady. The bold use of strongly contrasted colours gives the work a particular strength, revealing the artist's talents as a colourist. The present sheet is a superb example of van Dongen's rendition of the modern woman,

Donald Kuspit wrote: *Fauvism is eager for art to have the vital power of the female. It is this that the Fauvist images of females pursue, and that van Dongen articulates with a special vehemence. For me, his most important pictures are those of women and the female theme continues throughout his life.*²

This work will be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Kees van Dongen being prepared by Jacques Chalom des Cordes under the sponsorship of the Wildenstein Institute.



Fig. 1: *Nu couché aux bas rouges*; circa 1906-07

Oil on board. 33.5 by 99.6 cm.

Sotheby's, New York, *Impressionist and Modern Art*, 10 mai 2016, lot 361.

² Donald Kuspit, *Kees van Dongen: Unequivocal Colour and Equivocal Sexuality*, in, *Kees van Dongen*, exhib. cat., Museum Boymans-van-Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1989-90, pp. 37-9.