

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



ÉDOUARD VUILLARD

1868 Cuiseaux (Saône-et-Loire) - La Baule 1940

Fleurs (Study for the painting *Comtesse Anna de Noailles*)

Pastel and lead pencil; executed in 1931.

With the artist's studio stamp lower right.

210 x 135 mm.

PROVENANCE: Countess Anna de Noailles [very probably a gift from the artist] - Private collection, France

For his painting *Comtesse Anna de Noailles* [Fig.1], Vuillard sought to capture the Countess in the 'narrow alcove' of her bed, in ill health at the time and dismissive of the endless stream of relatives and admirers who came to visit her.

Anna de Noailles (1877-1933) [Fig.2], a Romanian princess and descendant of Romanian boyars, was a well-known poet, a model of modernity and a doyenne of cosmopolitan Parisian society. She mingled with the intellectual, literary and artistic elite of the day and enjoyed such popularity that many leading artists of the day portrayed her. Among them were Ignacio Zuloaga (1870–1945) [Fig.3] and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) [Fig.4].

When working on the portrait Vuillard visited the Countess's home almost daily. He would focus on certain details and never stayed longer than twenty minutes at a time. What is striking about this portrait is not so much the pose and posture of the model as the jumble of objects cluttering up the room and the legendary attention the painter brings to bear on them: the perfume bottles, hearing trumpet, lampshade and floral-patterned silk counterpane.¹

In this study for the floral-patterned Chinese counterpane on the Countess's bed Vuillard's attention focuses on the pattern itself. Isolating the motif as if from a close-up viewpoint he captures the vibrancy of the blossoms and detail of their petals and tiny green leaves in rapid, mobile strokes.²

This drawing will be included in the forthcoming supplement to the catalogue raisonné of Edouard Vuillard's paintings and drawings being prepared by the Wildenstein Institute.

¹ Antoine Salomon and Guy Cogeval, *Vuillard, The Inexhaustible Glance, Critical Catalogue of Paintings and Pastels*, III, p. 1494 ff., XII-83, *Comtesse Anna de Noailles*.

² Vuillard produced a second version of the painting (op. cit. XII-84) where the colours of the floral-patterned counterpane differ slightly from the colours of the well-known first version reproduced in the present catalogue entry.



Fig. 1: Édouard Vuillard, *Comtesse Anna de Noailles (first version)*, 1931,
glue-based distemper on canvas, 110 x 126.5 cm.
Private collection



Anonymous, Countess Anna de Noailles photographed in her bed, 1931

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Ignacio Zuloaga, *Comtesse Mathieu de Noailles*, 1913, oil on canvas,
152 x 195.5 cm.
Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao



Auguste Rodin, *Madame X (Countess Anna-Elizabeth de Noailles)*, c.1907,
marble, 49.5 x 54.3 x 48.3 cm.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York