

AUGUSTE RODIN (1840-1917)

Femme-Pyjama

Graphite and watercolor on vellum paper
Not signed
H. 39.9; W. 27 cm

Provenance

- Previously in the Eugène Rehns collection[1]

Bibliography

- Judrin, Claudie, *Inventaire des dessins du musée Rodin*, tomes I à V et tome Expositions/Bibliographie/Index, éd. musée Rodin, 1992. (*Inventory of the Drawings in the Rodin Museum*, volumes I through V and the volume "Exhibitions/Bibliography/Index)
- *Rodin*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 23 September 2006 – 1 January 2007, Kunsthaus, Zurich, 9 February – 13 May 2007.
- *Rodin, la lumière de l'Antique*, (*Rodin, the Light of Antiquity*) under the direction of Pascale Picard, Arles, Departmental Museum of Ancient Arles, 6 April – 1er September 2013, Paris, Musée Rodin, 19 November 2013 – 23 February 2014, Editions Gallimard, 2013.

This "*femme-pyjama*" is part of an exceptional series of fifteen drawings showing a Spanish dancer dressed in loose-fitting pants seemingly open up to her sex.

“Part of this series was shown in London in 1901 at the galleries of the Royal Institute during an exhibition of the Pastel Society, at the instigation of the English artist Esther Sutro, who noted in a letter that “the drawings were done after Camilos.” Does this refer to “Mlle Camillot-Prévost” whom Rodin called “the little Spanish dancer” and whose references he’d jotted down in one of his notebooks of models? The naked torso, taken in itself, was one of Rodin’s favorite themes toward the end of the 1890s, as his numerous “vase-women” indicate. The collection of “femmes-pyjama” is special in that it depicts a single model in a series of slightly different poses; it’s also unusual in that it anchors the gaze on the torso itself. Uncovering her body, the model leans her head sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, opening the pantaloons sometimes with the right hand, sometimes with the left, and shifting her weight, sometimes to the right leg, sometimes to the left, in an undulating motion. The torso is the subject of each drawing, with the dark oval of the pantaloons serving to isolate the bust and make its contours stand out sharply. Rodin intentionally showed these drawings as a series in order to emphasize the fact that it was the fragmented body that interested him, and that it was seen at its best from the sort of distance imposed by a serial display. From that distance, it’s the evolution of the white torso that first strikes the eye. In some of the drawings, the hands and feet also stand out, as if isolated from the body, somewhat like his grafted “abattis” or separately sculpted body parts, which were also inspired by fragmentary antique sculpture groups[2]”.

In this drawing, the model has adopted almost the same pose as another “femme-pyjama” in a drawing held in the Rodin Museum (D.4582), but here the treatment of the clothing is distinguished by a lovely marbled effect.

Christina Buley-Uribe

Some details of the showing of the “femmes-pyjama” series in London in 1901:

—Esther Sutro, a member of the Pastel Society, chose a group of 13 watercolors, one graphite drawing, and a reproduction of a woman’s torso by Auguste Rodin in order to include them in the exhibition, which was held in the “Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters” at Piccadilly in London in June of 1901.

—According to the Pastel Society exhibition catalogue, five drawings by Auguste Rodin were shown under the numbers 208 through 212, but there is no archival material indicating which ones these were.

—On the other hand, correspondence between Esther Sutro and Auguste Rodin from May 1901 includes a list of prices along with photographs of the 13 watercolors chosen. Of these 13, only one is not a “femme-pyjama.”[3]

Archives relating to the 1901 London exhibition therefore establish the inclusion of 12 watercolors from the series, of which:

- 7 are held in the Rodin Museum[4]
- 1 is held in the Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, WA, United States
- 1 is held in the Museum of Weimar, Germany[5
- and the locations of 3 are currently unknown.

Two other watercolors belong with this collection, of which:

- 1 is in a private collection[6]
- and the other is the one described here.

Currently, there are 14 watercolor “femmes-pyjama” known. Two pencil and stump drawings held in the Rodin Museum[7] are also considered part of the series, and the Rodin Museum has another series of five older pencil and stump drawings[8] that are closely related to it.

[1] Eugène Rehns was an important Rodin collector. Having made his fortune in the perfume industry, he acquired numerous sculptures, including *Fugit Amor, Eternal Spring*, and *The Inner Voice*. During his visits to Meudon, he came to know Rodin and to understand the essential place that drawing occupied in his creative process. From the dealers Georges Petit, Devambez, and Clovis Sagot, he acquired various Rodin drawings, including this *Femme-Pyjama*.

[2] Christina Buley-Uribe, excerpt from the exhibition catalogue from *Rodin, the Light of Antiquity.* Arles, Departmental Museum of Ancient Arles, Gallimard, 2013, p. 249.

[3] A photograph in the Rodin Museum (Ph.7741) shows a group of drawing about to be sent to an exhibition, including several “femmes-pyjamas.”

[4] Inv. D.4582 /D4673 /D.4678 /D.4682 /D.5029 /D.7200 /D.7707.

[5] Inv. KK1264.

[6] Reproduced in the catalogue *Rodin, The Light of Antiquity*, p. 249, n°163.

[7] Inv. D.3098 et D.7176.

[8] Inv. D.1450 / D.2673 / D.2684 / D.2760 / D.2929.