

MANUEL MARTINEZ HUGUÉ DIT MANOLO (1872-1945)

Crouching Woman

Medallion
Bronze proof
Label (on the back): GALERIE LOUISE LEIRIS / 29 bis, Rue d'Astorg / PARIS (VIIIe) / 1930
illegible / Manolo /Femme accroupie / 6x6 / (8 épr)
D. 6 cm

Provenance

- Paris, Louise Leiris Gallery
- France, Private Collection

Bibliography

- 1930 PIA: Pia, Pascal, *MANOLO*, collection Sculpteurs nouveaux, Paris, Librarie Gallimard, 1930.
- 1974: *Manolo, Sculptures, Peintures, Dessins*, Éditions Cercle d'Art, Paris, 1974, n°285, p.150.
- 1995 CATALOGUE: Mont-de-Marsan, Despiau-Wlérick Museum, June 28 to September 4, 1995; Pontoise, Tavet-Delacour Museum, September 16 to November 26, 1995, *Manolo Hugué (1872-1945*), 1995.

Manuel Martinez Hugué, known as Manolo, was born in Barcelona in 1872 to a relatively poor family. In 1900, he decided to leave his homeland and move to

Paris. Without a cent to his name, he lived a Bohemian life and was forced to accept whatever contracts were offered to him. On the advice of the Basque sculptor and silversmith, Francisco Durrio (1868-1940), who was also living in Paris, he went to work for the Parisian jewelry manufacturer Arnould et Vin.

Manolo was interested in creating beautiful and valuable jewelry for its symbolism and aesthetics more than for its financial worth. In a 1919 letter addressed to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884-1974), he wrote: "*At that time, I often went to the Louvre, where everything that I saw transformed before my eyes into pendants and belt buckles that I worked up in plaster, and when they had been made, I took them around Paris, going into all sorts of shops that often had nothing to do with my business*."

At the beginning of the 20th century, jewelry was at the height of fashion, thanks to a number of technical and stylistic developments, and a school of Spanish artists was very active in the Parisian world of jewelry making. This school included notable sculptors such as Julio Gonzalez, Pablo Gargallo, Francisco Durrio, and, of course, Manolo Hugué, all inheritors of their country's grand tradition of blacksmithing and forging, which goes back to the Middle Ages. Their aesthetic was strongly influenced by Art Nouveau and then later by Art Deco.

At the beginning, Manolo designed pieces that were then made by silversmiths, but after a while, he decided to make his own, more personal, jewelry based on plaster and terra cotta models using sculptural techniques that he'd learned during his training. Manolo's first pieces, which he signed "Hugué," not yet using "Manolo," took the forms of willowy insects, graceful birds, and sensual female faces and bodies, all of which were typical subjects of Art Nouveau jewelry. His silver jewelry gravitated toward fine, purified lines and interlacing animal forms. Several pieces from this period that came out of his work with the Arnould company are held today in the collections of the National Museum of Art of Catalonia, including two broaches, one of two cranes facing each other and the other of two crickets in the same position.

After the 1910s, Manolo worked much less with jewelry, though he returned to it later, during the 1930s, creating pieces for his adopted daughter, Rosa. But these works are of a distinctly different style than those of the first period. The medallion *Crouching Woman*, done in 1930, is thus from this second period, when he was living in Caldas de Montbui, where he'd gone to recover from a severe bout of arthritis.

Though there are no traces of findings that indicate that it was meant to be worn, our medallion incorporates many qualities associated with jewelry: it's

small in , the details are refined, and it's aesthetically related to other jewelry created by Manolo. Given its dimensions, the medallion could have been used as a belt-buckle. Earlier, Manolo had made other belt-buckles, such as *L'Étreinte* (*The Embrace*), done in 1907. By that time, he'd already become fascinated by the problem of inserting, even interweaving, a body into a tight, restricted space. Aesthetically, this medallion shares principles with Art Nouveau, with its fondness for lavish curves and organic forms, though our medallion includes more stylized and geometric elements.

Manolo was almost sixty years old when he made *Crouching Woman*, and his style, compared to that of earlier years, had become more refined. This medallion can be compared to another piece of jewelry held in the National Art Museum of Catalonia that shows a Venus before her mirror and was done around the same time. It is mounted as a broach. Though this piece also reflects his fascination for the feminine figure and for overlapping forms, its composition incorporates voids, while that of our piece is full.

Its circular form welcomes the young, crouching woman. Folded over on herself, she is shown filling out the frame and fused all around with the edges of the piece. The back of the young woman takes up the entire right half of the medallion. The sensual, rounded back is extended by the generously curved left thigh, and then further by the ample calf. The forms are compressed together, heavy and full. In order to conform to the frame, some parts of the body have been eroded or deformed. The head, leaning over the rest of the body in an exaggerated fashion, is extended by the long, undulating hair gathered up in the left hand. The left ankle and foot are eroded or crushed. Manolo paid particular attention to volumes. To accentuate the sensual shape of the left thigh, the artist has put it in light relief. He used the same approach for the muscles of the left arm, which surge up from the background. To further indicate the power of this body, the shoulder blades also standout, rounded and firm. The work shows a distinct interest in detail; for instance, the hair is finely modeled, and the artist has paid particular attention to each of the fingers.

Though Manolo never embraced cubism, its influence, or more precisely, its echoes are nonetheless perceptible here in the geometric treatment of the volumes, the clarity of the lines that delimit them, and the parts of the body that have been deformed as needed. And as in the works of the cubists, the geometrical rigor and the aesthetic treatment of the subject take precedent over narrative content.
Manolo had a highly developed interest in the female body and its representation, and he often emphad its form through tight framing, as in another *Crouching Woman*, a sculpture in the round, cast in bronze in 1913 and currently held in the collections of La Piscine in Roubaix. In that piece, the

figure is compressed into a rectangular block. In the context of jewelry and silverwork, his 1907 medallion *The Embrace* (formerly in the Kahnweiler collection), which also represents a woman folded in on herself, is another example of his interest in contorted bodies. The small, unique formats that jewelry requires allowed Manolo to experiment freely in this direction, and the *Crouching Woman* medallion presented here is a beautiful illustration of this.

Between 1912 and 1933, Manolo was under contract with the dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. Their agreement stipulated that everything that Manolo produced went to the dealer in exchange for a monthly stipend. Manolo was the only sculptor that Kahnweiler represented until 1920, when Henri Laurens joined this exclusive group.

The medallion *Crouching Woman* was created for commercial purposes. This bronze proof has a label from Louise Leiris's gallery, which is the third gallery run by Kahnweiler. After the First World War, on September 1, 1920, the dealer, whose holdings had all been sequestered, went into partnership with André Simon to open a second gallery at 29 bis rue d'Astorg. It was known as the Galerie Simon and was open from 1920 to 1941. In the course of three auctions in 1921, 1922, and 1923, all of Kahnweiler's goods were sold. Fortunately, he was able to buy back his collection of Manolo sculptures.[1] In 1941, the dealer's activities were again threatened because the gallery was subjected to a procedure known as "Aryanization." Louise Leiris, his daughter-in-law, bought his inventory. Thus, the gallery was saved and continued in business until 1988, when Louise Leiris died. Manolo's sculptures continued to be legitimately editioned through the Galerie Simon period.

Kahnweiler editioned the models, scrupulously indicating the number of each proof on a label glued discretely onto the inside of the work. Though the edition of the medallion *Crouching Woman* comprised eight proofs (as is indicated by the label), the location of none of the other proofs is currently known.

This editioning principle allowed the dealer to sell his protégé's work and to make it widely known.

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[1] June 13-14, 1921: first sale of good sequestered by the Germans, "Henry Kahnweiler Collection, modern paintings, sculptures, and ceramics," Part 1: https://archive.org/details/CollectionHenryKahnweiller13To14June1921/page/n25