

JANE POUPELET (1874-1932)

Seated Woman

Bronze, unnumbered
Sand cast, unknown founder, 1922
Dark brown patina with green nuances
Signed (on the right of the base): J. Poupelet
58 x 25,5 x 31 cm

Provenance

- United States, Acheson Collection
- France, private collection

Bibliography

- 1913 ARTICLE : Guillemot, Maurice, « Jane Poupelet », *Art et Décoration*, 1913, p.51-56, repr. (plaster, full model, "2^{e}état").
- 1922 ARTICLE : Vitry, Paul, « La Sculpture aux Salons », *Art et Décoration*, 1922, n°1456, p.175, repr. (a bronze proof).
- 1922 CATALOGUE : Salon de 1922, Catalogue du Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, n°1456.
- 1926 ARTICLE : Kahn, Gustave, « Jane Poupelet », *L'Art et les Artistes*, 1926, p.81, repr. (a bronze proof) [1].
- 1927 ARTICLE : Kunstler, Charles, « Jane Poupelet », *L'Amour de l'Art*, septembre 1927, n°9, p.321-327, repr p.322-323 (Brooklyn Museum bronze proof).

- 1927 ARTICLE : *A.B.C Magazine d'Art*, octobre 1927, n°34, repr. (Brooklyn Museum bronze proof).
- 1928 EXPOSITION : *Jane Poupelet Dessins et Sculptures*, Paris, Galerie Bernier (24 janvier-11 février), Girard Binino, Paris, 1928.
- 1928 MARTINIE : Martinie, A-H, *La Sculpture*, coll. L'Art français depuis vingt ans, les Éditions Rieder, Paris, 1928, repr. pl. XV (bronze proof exhibited at the SNBA Salon in 1922).
- 1930 KUNSTLER : Charles Kunstler, *Jane Poupelet*, Paris, Éditions G. Crès & Cie, 1930, repr., n°6 (Brooklyn Museum bronze proof).
- 1937 EXPOSITION : *Les maîtres de l'art indépendant 1895-1937*, Petit Palais, juin-octobre, Paris, Éd. Arts et métiers graphiques, 1937, p.84, non repr. (bronze proof).
- 1973 WAPLER : Vincent-Fabian Wapler, *Jane Poupelet sculpteur 1878-1932*, mémoire de maîtrise présenté sous la direction de Monsieur Souchal Professeur d'histoire de l'art en mai 1973, faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Lille III, n°52, p. 192-196.
- 2005 RIVIÈRE : Anne Rivière, « Jane Poupelet 1874-1932 « La beauté dans la simplicité » », in *Jane Poupelet (1874-1932)*, catalogue d'exposition, Roubaix, La Piscine – musée d'art et industrie André Diligent (15 octobre 2005– 15 janvier 2006) ; Bordeaux, musée des Beaux-Arts (24 février – 4 juin 2006) ; Mont-de-Marsan, musée Despiau-Wlérick (24 juin – 2 octobre 2006), Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 2005, n°76, p.98, repr. (our bronze proof).

Selection of exhibitions for *Seated Woman*

- 1922, Paris, Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, n°1456[2].
- 1937, Paris, Petit Palais, juin-octobre, *Les maîtres de l'art indépendant 1895-1937*, salle 21, n°4.
- 1938, Paris, Galerie Bernier, du 6 au 24 mai, *Jane Poupelet sculpteur*.
- 2005, Roubaix, La Piscine – musée d'art et industrie André Diligent, 15 octobre 2005– 15 janvier 2006, ; Bordeaux, musée des Beaux-Arts, 24 février – 4 juin 2006 ; Mont-de-Marsan, musée Despiau-Wlérick, 24 juin – 2 octobre 2006, *Jane Poupelet 1874-1932 « La beauté dans la simplicité »*, n°76, p.98.

"The planes and the volumes of her nudes obey her calculations and reject all impressionism, and because of this, she achieves beautifully disciplined rhythms."[3]

By 1913, the year in which she made the model *Seated Woman*, Jane Poupelet was a recognized and appreciated artist. She was a member of the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts and an active member of the network of French and American feminists.[4] She showed with *Les Quelques* and at the

Galerie Georges Petit with Rodin, and she was asked by the Manès group to participate in *The Exhibition of Young French Sculpture* in Prague and Vienna. Showing her works regularly in various galleries, she was firmly established in the art network of the United States, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York acquired her *Woman at Her Toilet* (inv 13.192).

Seated Woman is one of a series of feminine models that Jane Poupelet sculpted from 1907 on; others include the well-known *Woman at her Toilet* (1907), *Woman Reflected in Water* (1909), *Before the Wave* (1909), and *Baigneuse au bord de l'eau* (*Bather on the Shore* (1911).
Though these feminine models are of complete figures, Poupelet had already begun to use marcottage,[5] reusing the heads to make new sculptures; for instance, the 1907 *Self-Portrait* uses the head taken from *Woman at her Toilet*, and the *Heads* in plaster and terracotta presented on small pedestals are taken from the *Woman Reflected in Water*.
This model of *Seated Woman* has neither head nor arms. It comes from a complete model that is described in the catalogue raisonné established by Vincent Wapler in two states in plaster, one with the right foot raised and the other with the right foot on a base;[6] both have disappeared.[7] Jane Poupelet's working process was known: she first drew a sketch of the pose and then went on to a quickly modeled maquette. She molded that in plaster and then reworked the plaster, making various other casts, to arrive at a number of states for any given model. Thus, between the creation of the complete model in 1913 and the model without head and arms, several years passed, including those of the war. The version presented here most likely dates from 1921-22.
A later model, from 1924, returns to the complete version of *Seated Woman*, but the legs are crossed, and the left arm holds the right arm, on which the head is leaning; it is titled *Meditation*.[8]
The version of *Seated Woman* that Jane Poupelet decided to edit in bronze was also headless and features asymmetrically truncated arms—the left arm is cut under the shoulder, and the right is cut off at the wrist. The definitive model is the incomplete model. Poupelet had done other partial figures; she had created at least one headless sculpture in 1908[9] and did another after the war, the audacious and powerful *Entreaty* (1923) in the La Piscine museum in Roubaix, which is a seated figure with arms raised and coming together over an absent head.
In her drawings, whether representations of animals or of women, the heads are often cut off, often by the edge of the paper: the head is out of the picture; in other words, the body speaks for itself. This is the case with the brown ink *Seated Female Nude* (Galerie Malaquais), which can be considered a preparatory drawing for *Seated Woman*.[10]
The composition of *Seated Woman* is sober, with crisp, regular lines, perfectly harmonious proportions, and simple and fluid planes. The purified and dignified

work has a beautiful, somber patina and a geometric base that clearly shows the influence of Egyptian art and, more precisely, the seated figures from the Late Period, examples of which are in the Louvre (example 1; example 2).
“Based on the beauty of its proportions and the majesty of its style, *Seated Woman*, with its truncated arms, could be compared to statues from the Saitic Period. Aren’t the divinities of ancient Egypt marked by pure contours, large, luminous planes, peaceful rhythms, mysterious grace, a bit severe, and above all, simple?”[11]
Jane Poupelet also draws on the art of the entire Mediterranean region. These references stem, in particular, from her training with Lucien Schnegg, leader of the *Bande à Schnegg*, of which she was a member at the turn of the century. This group united independent sculptors who wanted to break with Rodin's lyrical style and advocated a return to the calm of antiquity.
Here, the idealization and the beauty of the proportions nonetheless leave room for a certain realism marked by sensuality, shown through details such as the soft undulations of the belly, the impression of the arm folded up onto the breast, and the discreet texture of the pubis. Though this is a vision of the eternal woman, it also introduces us to the modern and sportive woman of the early 20th century, a woman who affirms her femininity through an image made by a sculptor deeply engaged with feminist movements in both France and the United States.
Seated Woman in bronze was shown at the Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1922. Jane Poupelet had already presented the model (though it seems to have been the complete figure in plaster) in the United States in 1915 in the context of an exhibition of *The Association of Women Painters and Sculptors* at the Anderson Gallery in New York, and in 1921, the Brooklyn Museum acquired a proof of *Seated Woman*.
In the current state of our knowledge, four proofs of *Seated Woman* are known. The catalogue raisonné established by Vincent Wapler lists three bronze proofs:
—one in the André Moulinié Collection (the nephew of the artist), still in the artist’s family today,
—one in the Brooklyn Museum inv n°21.245 (provenance: 1921, Ella C. Woodward Memorial Fund),
—and one in the Acheson Collection, USA (1925), which joined a private French collection in 1992; this is the proof presented here.
And we add a proof kept by the Fine Arts Museum of Algiers[12].
The founder of the work remains unknown, but Poupelet herself was present at every stage of the creation of the bronze—she molded, chiseled, and did the patina herself, as is documented in the description of the work in the Salon’s catalogue.[13] Such diligence required a lot of the artist’s time and energy, and given the fragile state of her health, it is quite likely that no other or very few other bronzes of the *Seated Woman* were cast.

[1] Note: the caption of the photograph says that it is in stone, but this is definitely an error.
[2] According to 2005 RIVIÈRE, p.98, n°76.
[3] 1928 MARTINIE, p. 83.
[4] In 1908, Jane Poupelet joined the *American Women's Club* and the *Club des Unes internationales* (*Club of the International Ones*), in 1909, the *Women's International Art Club*, and in 1912, *The Association of Women Painters and Sculptors.*
[5] This practice, widely used by Auguste Rodin, consists of "the composition of a new sculpted work by partially or entirely reusing works already executed. The sculptor fragments his own works and reintroduces them into a new work." from *Sculpture, méthode et vocabulaire*, éditions du patrimoine, 2000, p.549.
[6] Reproduced in 1913 ARTICLE, p. 53.
[7] 1973 WAPLER, p. 193.
[8] 2005 RIVIÈRE, n°87-88, p.100.
[9] 2005 RIVIÈRE: *Headless Nude, leaning on a pedestal, left knee raised*, paster, H. 42 cm, n° 48.
[10] Another is *Seated Nude with Arms Raised*, probably a study for *Entreaty*, held in the collections of the National Museum of Modern Art, Paris: AM1202D.
[11] 1930 KUNSTLER, p.12.
[12] *Cent chefs-d'œuvre du Musée national des beaux-arts d'Alger*, Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1951, n°97, repr.
[13] 1922 CATALOGUE, n°1456 "Torso of a woman (bronze finished and patinaed by the artist)." Two other mentions should be noted:
-In 1926 KAHN, p. 82: "She is her own molder, her own finisher. She creates her own patinas. The founder is only called in to furnish his necessary services."
-In 1927 KUNSTLER, p. 321: "I finish my bronzes myself. No matter how well they've been cast, the founder has to retouch them, and no matter how expert he may be, he always deforms, always distorts the original work."