



Amedeo Modigliani
Tête Profil Gauche
Black crayon on paper
16 5/8 x 10 1/2 inches
42.3 x 26.6 cm
Paul Alexandre stamp bottom right

Provenance

- Dr. Paul Alexandre, Paris (acquired from the artist)
- Private Collection, Paris (by descent from the above and sold: Sotheby's, London, June 28, 2000, lot 293)
- Galerie Cazeau-Béraudière, Paris (acquired at the above sale)
- Acquired from the above on December 6, 2005

Exhibited

- London, The Royal Academy & traveling, The Unknown Modigliani, Drawings from the Collection of Paul Alexandre, 1993-96, no. 198, illustrated in color in the catalogue
- Paris, Musée du Luxembourg, Modigliani, l'ange au visage grave, 2002-03, no. VIII, illustrated in the catalogue
- Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario; New York, The Jewish Museum & Washington, D.C., The Phillips Collection, Modigliani, Beyond the Myth, 2004-05, illustrated in the catalogue

Literature

Osvaldo Patani, Amedeo Modigliani, Catalogo Generale, Disegni 1906-1920, Milan, 1994, no. 899, illustrated p. 382

Condition

The work is in very good condition. Executed on cream wove paper. The sheet has been professionally cleaned to address staining in the lower register and presents beautifully in its current state. The sheet is hinged to a mount at several places along its verso. There is some light skinning to the paper most notably in the bottom right and bottom left corners, and some scattered minor staining. The paper is slightly undulating. The medium is well-preserved. With Paul Alexandre collection stamp in the lower right corner.

Catalogue Note

Distilling the profile of a woman to its most fundamental geometric forms, *Tête Profil Gauche* is representative of Modigliani's exhaustive pursuit of pure artistic fulfilment. Although deeply indebted to art's classical Western tradition, Modigliani's oeuvre was nevertheless rooted in the ancient traditions of Egypt, West Africa and the Khmer Empire (see fig. 1). A master painter, draftsman and sculptor, Modigliani's prolific drawing output elucidates his restless search to synthesize these varied visual influences. As scholar Kenneth Wayne writes, Modigliani's works "share many characteristics with the Egyptian art that he loved so much and visited regularly at the Louvre.

A quiet solemnity, a profound air of mystery and spirituality, blocky forms, blank almond-shaped eyes, a beatific smile, an imposing frontality and forward stare, and decorative elements in the hair and forehead. The blank eyes in Modigliani's sculpture also recall Greek and Roman sculptures as they have come down through time, with the painted elements worn off. Even the rough, unfinished quality of some of Modigliani's sculptures gives them the look and feel of bruised ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman sculptures" (Kenneth Wayne, "Modigliani, Modern Sculpture and the Influence of Antiquity," in *Modigliani, Sculptor* (exhibition catalogue), Il Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporaneo di Trento e Rovereto, Rovereto, Italy, p. 76).

In his aim to create a singular, perfect form, Modigliani's drawings were intertwined with his sculptural output. Of the twenty or so sculptures Modigliani produced, each work was based in dozens of preparatory drawings. These works were the genesis of Modigliani's creative sculptural impulse, and drawings such as *Tête Profil Gauche* most succinctly capture the artist's working process.

As Noël Alexandre writes: "*These drawings are derived from about twenty basic forms, each repeated in depth. Modigliani conducted his search for perfect balance by varying imperceptibly one or another element of the geometric and symbolic structure, and by heightening contrasts to the greatest possible degree...The elements which define the faces go back to fundamental forms: the circle, the oval, the intersection of two arcs, the rectangle, the triangle.*" (Noël Alexandre, *The Unknown Modigliani: Drawings from the Collection of Paul Alexandre*, New York, 1993, p. 237).

Tête Profil Gauche was initially acquired from Modigliani by Paul Alexandre, a pivotal figure in the artist's life. Alexandre met Modigliani in 1907 and invited the young artist to join his circle of students and artists. He would become one of Modigliani's first and most significant patrons and formed the most important collection of the artist's drawings. Alexandre closely followed the creation of the sculptures in particular, even tracking their origin in preparatory drawings.

As Alexandre once stated, *"I was immediately struck by his extraordinary talent and I wanted to do something for him. I purchased drawings and paintings from him, but I was his sole purchaser and I wasn't rich. I introduced him to my family. He already had the certainty of his own value rooted inside him. He knew that he was an initiator, not an imitator, but he had no commissions. I asked him to paint the portraits of my father, my brother Jean and several portraits of myself."* (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 59).