

FROM ARMAND RASSENFOSSE
TO MARCEL BROODTHAERS



VIRGINIE DEVILLEZ
· FINE ART ·

CHAPTER 7

FROM ARMAND RASSENFOSSE
TO MARCEL BROODTHAERS

including works by stanley brouwn,
John McCracken, and Théophile Alexandre Steinlen

VIRGINIE DEVILLEZ

• FINE ART •



Virginie Devillez Fine Art is delighted to present the exhibition *From Armand Rassenfosse to Marcel Broodthaers* at Galerie Jacques de la Béraudière in Brussels, housed in the former studio of Liège-born painter and illustrator Charles Michel. The historic space provides an ideal setting for a dialogue between artists across generations.

The exhibition will highlight a rare work by Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976), *Culture Internationale*, *Lucky Luciano* (1974), as a conceptual and literary take on Pop artists' fascination with gangsters — particularly Andy Warhol and his *Most Wanted Men* series. The work also recalls Broodthaers's "Peintures Littéraires" (Literary Paintings), in which the names of celebrated French writers become the very subject of the work.

Marcel Broodthaers had a deep interest in literature, having begun his career as a poet, writer, and critic. Exploring the labyrinth between word, image, and thought, he continuously deconstructed the texts of his favorite authors — Stéphane Mallarmé, Charles Baudelaire, and Isidore Ducasse, known as Lautréamont — and re-presented them within a shifted, unconventional space.

His work is therefore exhibited in dialogue with Armand Rassenfosse (1862–1934), whose significant body of illustrations for 19th-century authors includes, most notably, Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* and Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Les Diaboliques*.

Works by Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (1859–1923), the committed anarchist artist and illustrator, will also be shown alongside the conceptual and minimalist practices of Marcel Broodthaers, Stanley Broun (1935–2017), and John McCracken (1934–2011).

MARCEL BROODTHAERS

(1924–1976)

Culture Internationale, Lucky Luciano, 1974

—
TYPOGRAPHIC IMPRESSION ON CANVAS, IN 9 PARTS
80 × 100 CM (EACH)
DATED “1974” (IN FRONT)
—

Charles “Lucky” Luciano, born Salvatore Lucania in Sicily in 1897, was arguably the single most influential figure in the creation of the modern American Mafia and the National Crime Syndicate. After emigrating to the United States with his family at the age of ten and settling on New York’s Lower East Side, he was drawn into organised crime at an early age. Around the beginning of Prohibition in 1920, he became a gunman for Giuseppe “Joe the Boss” Masseria before joining Arnold Rothstein a few years later. By the mid-1920s, Luciano was reportedly earning millions of dollars from bootlegging.

On 6 June 1936, Luciano was convicted on 62 counts of compulsory prostitution and sentenced to 30 to 50 years in prison. During the Second World War, however, the U.S. government enlisted the Mafia’s assistance in securing the New York docks against strikes, sabotage and other wartime threats. In exchange for his cooperation, Luciano’s sentence was commuted on the condition that he return to Italy after the war. He spent the remainder of his life under close surveillance by the Italian authorities and died of a heart attack at Naples Airport in 1962 while on his way to meet a film producer considering a biography of his life.

Twelve years after Luciano’s death, the Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976) embarked on

a significant yet remarkably concise series of paintings devoted to some of the most emblematic figures of twentieth-century organised crime. Alongside Charles “Lucky” Luciano, he portrayed Al Capone and John Dillinger, transforming these notorious gangsters into enigmatic icons and exploring the uneasy relationship between history, myth and cultural memory.

Entitled *Culture Internationale*, this series was conceived for two major exhibitions of Broodthaers’ work held in Brussels in 1974: *Culture Internationale* at Galerie MTL and *Catalogue-Catalogus* at the Palais des Beaux-Arts. In the present work, the name “Lucky Luciano” appears in bold black capital letters alongside the date “1974” across nine unstretched canvases arranged in a three-by-three grid. Beneath Luciano’s name, each canvas bears, in an almost illegible typeface, the names of other legendary criminals. The austere monochrome composition is strikingly interrupted by a single red heart at the centre of the central canvas, the work’s only touch of colour.

The formal restraint of the series recalls the pared-down vocabulary of Minimalism, while the prominently displayed names of notorious criminals evoke the pervasive fascination with gangsters fostered by popular culture. Deeply attuned to the artistic concerns of his contemporaries, Broodthaers



View of the exhibition Marcel Broodthaers. *Éloge du Sujet* at the Kunstmuseum Basel, 1974

here engages with a subject that inevitably recalls Andy Warhol’s celebrated *Most Wanted Men* (1964), based on enlarged police mug shots of thirteen fugitives sought by the New York Police Department. Yet where Warhol relies on the seductive immediacy of photographic imagery, Broodthaers deliberately withholds the image. Instead, he constructs an imaginary pictorial space through language alone.

The viewer is confronted neither with recognisable faces nor with contemporary criminals drawn from everyday experience, but with names that have acquired an almost mythical status through their repeated circulation in popular culture. By juxtaposing a familiar popular subject with a conceptual exploration of language, Broodthaers appropriates

the traditional medium of painting only to question its conventions from within. The solitary red heart at the centre of the composition introduces an ironic counterpoint, contrasting with its criminal protagonists and subtly undermining the romantic mythology that has long surrounded such outlaw figures.

Broodthaers’s far-reaching oeuvre and profound influence on subsequent generations of artists and curators have been recognised through major institutional retrospectives, notably at the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid). The present work occupies a pivotal place in his career, marking the moment when he appropriated the traditional medium of painting only to challenge and redefine it



Marcel Broodthaers, *Culture Internationale, John Dillinger* (1974), typographic impression on canvas, in 9 parts, 80 × 100 cm (each), private collection



Andy Warhol, *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (c. 1964), black serigraph on brownish paper, 69.5 × 98.5 cm, private collection

from within. Among the most refined works exploring the nature of painting itself, this series also recalls his “Peintures Littéraires” (Literary Paintings), in which the names of celebrated French writers become the very subject of the work.

Like the “Peintures Littéraires”, *Culture Internationale*, *Lucky Luciano* unfolds in a space where written language and pictorial form converge. Rejecting the dominant avant-garde conception of painting as a primarily visual and spatial medium, Broodthaers instead shifted attention towards language and cognition, aligning his artistic practice as much with literature and poetry as with painting itself. Drawing on the legacy of Marcel Duchamp and René Magritte — both of whom redefined the relationship between image and language — he also found a decisive source of inspiration in the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. As Broodthaers himself observed: “Mallarmé is the origin of contemporary art. He unconsciously invented modern space.”¹

Just as Mallarmé sought to liberate language from the conventional constraints of typography and the printed page, Broodthaers similarly overturned the

conventions of painting. Echoing Mallarmé’s questioning of the relationship between language, representation and meaning, the present work operates in a realm where words are detached from any visual referent. In doing so, Broodthaers grants language an autonomous pictorial presence while profoundly rethinking the nature of representation and the conventions of artistic production.

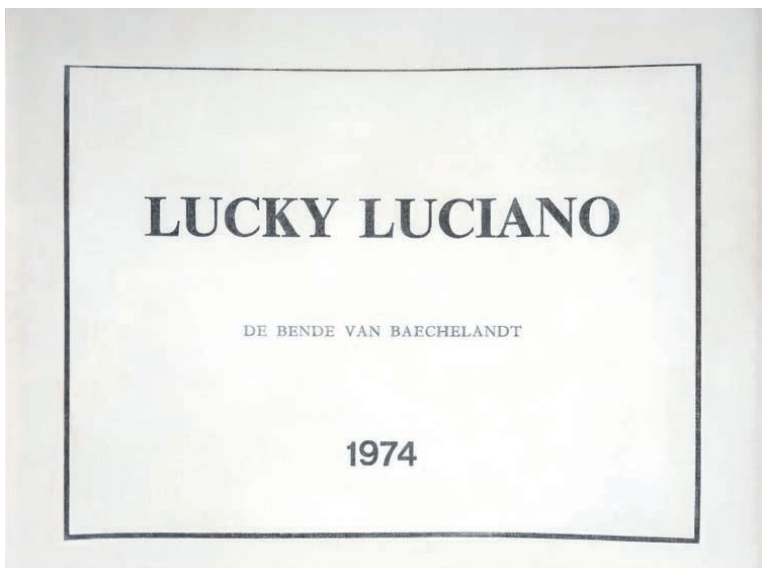
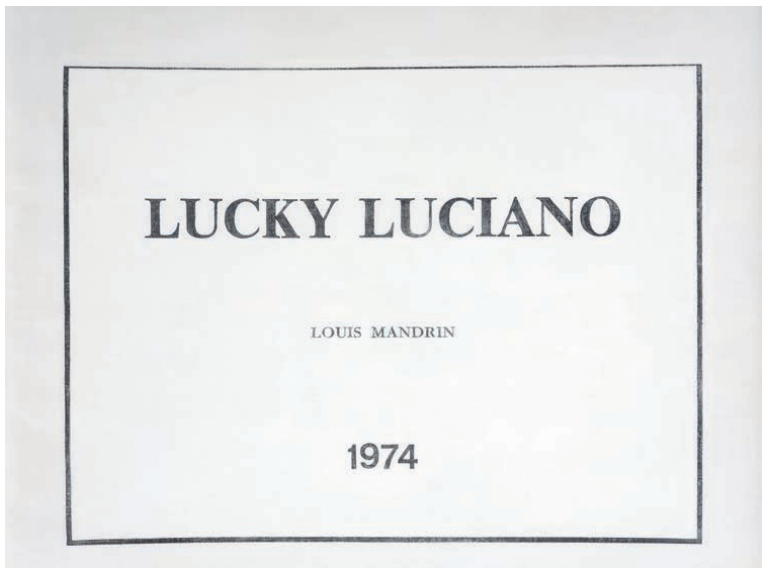
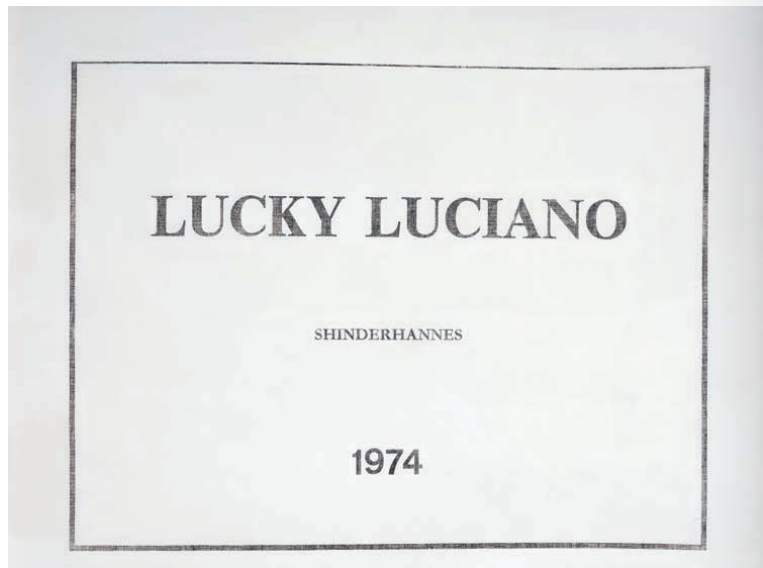
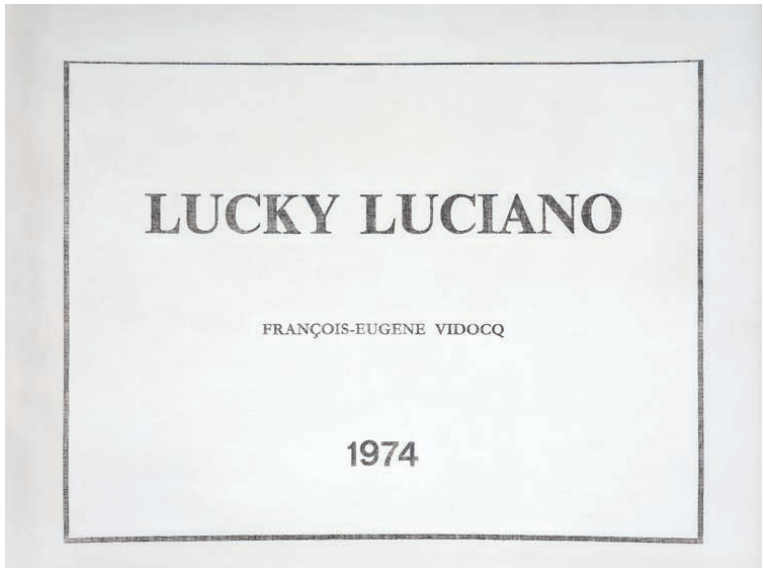
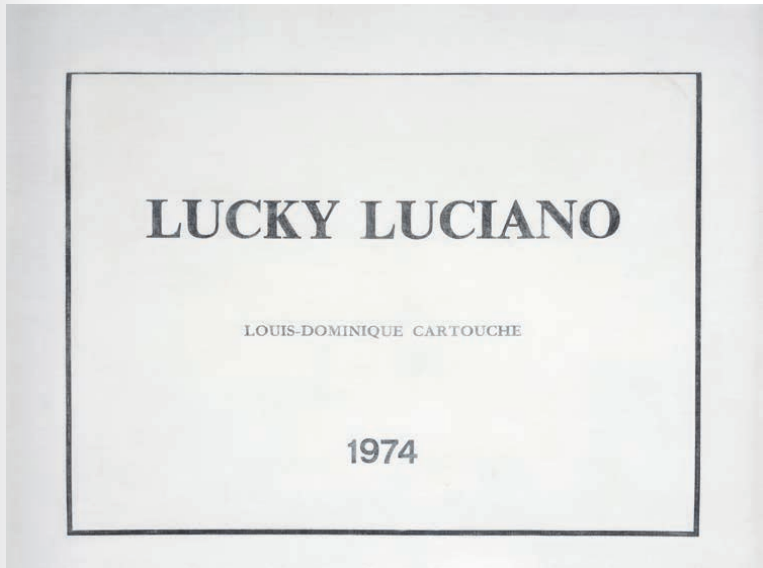
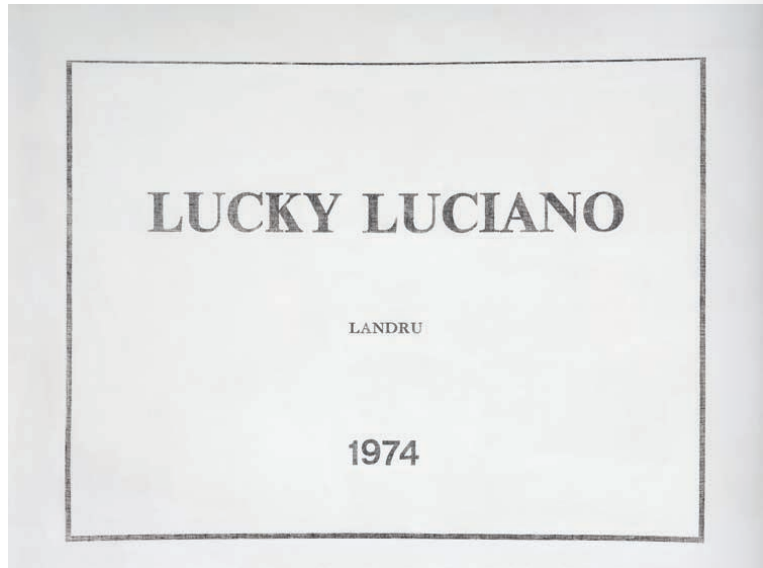
1. Marcel Broodthaers, quoted in Jean-François Chevrier, “To ‘whomever’...,” in *Art and Utopia: Restricted Action*, exh. cat., Barcelona, MACBA, 2004, p. 13.

PROVENANCE

Galerie MTL, Brussels; Private collection, Brussels (acquired from the above in 1976)

EXHIBITIONS

Brussels, Galerie MTL, *Culture Internationale*, 1974; Basel, Kunstmuseum Basel, *Marcel Broodthaers. Éloge du Sujet*, 1974; Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 1992





stanley brouwn asking for directions in Amsterdam, 1960s

STANLEY BROUWN

(1935-2017)

5 steps 4406 mm, 1975

PENCIL ON PAPER
125 × 46.5 CM (EACH)
TITLED, DATED, SIGNED & NUMBERED
“5 STEPS 4406 MM 1975 STANLEY BROUWN 1”; “2”; “3”; “4”; “5”

Born in Suriname, stanley brouwn (1935–2017) was one of the leading figures of conceptual art. His work gradually evolved into a distinctive way of relating his own body to the world. Beginning in the early 1960s, stanley brouwn deliberately withdrew from the public art scene. He neither attended the openings of his exhibitions nor permitted the publication of monographic catalogues, insisting that his work be experienced in its concrete reality alone, free from iconographic or textual mediation. In doing so, he remained entirely faithful to the logic of his work, which presents a radical experience of the relationship between the body and space. His practice may be summed up by the equation: “walking (and living) = making (art).”

After arriving in Amsterdam in 1957, stanley brouwn began collecting route sketches drawn by passers-by after asking them for directions, which he then stamped *This Way Brouwn* (1960). He then began systematically recording the length of his steps with administrative precision, drawing on the conceptual strategies of the period. *Three Steps = 2587 mm* (1973) consists of three metal compartments containing cards, each inscribed “1 mm”. The number of cards in each compartment corresponds exactly to the length of one of the artist's three steps — 864 mm, 860 mm and 863 mm for a total of 2,587 mm. Unlike the walking practices of artists such as Richard Long or Hamish Fulton, stanley brouwn's steps are detached from any geographical or experiential context; only their measurement counts. He later documented his

movements in books containing only numbers and units of measurement. He also explored the distances between himself and others, observing how they changed according to their respective movements and speeds.

stanley brouwn later distilled his relationship to the world into drawings reduced to two parallel lines, as in *One meter, One step*. The work entitled *1 × 1 m*, *1 × 1 step*, *1 × 1 cubit*, *1 × 1 foot* refers both to the standard unit of linear measurement and to the dimensions of the artist's own body expressed through historical units of measure. These works resist aesthetic evaluation in the traditional sense. Their titles correspond exactly to what they present. They signify nothing beyond the relationship between a concrete experience and space itself — perhaps the very domain of art.

The work presented here, *5 Steps 4406 mm* (1975), comes from MTL Gallery (Brussels), one of the leading galleries for conceptual art during the 1970s. It records four and a half strides taken by stanley brouwn. Each stride is represented by a pencil line on a sheet of white paper, marking the distance with remarkable economy of means. The circumstances and context of the movement, about which the artist remained silent, are of no importance here; only the measurement of the four and a half strides counts.

PROVENANCE

Galerie MTL, Brussels; Private collection, Brussels (acquired from the above in 1975)



JOHN MCCRACKEN

(1934–2011)

Quannen, 1987

LACQUER ON WOOD

76.3 × 25 × 42 CM

SIGNED, DATED & TITLED: “MAC CRACKEN 87, QUANNEN” (BELOW)

John McCracken (1934–2011) developed his early sculptural work while studying painting at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While experimenting with increasingly three-dimensional canvases, the artist began to produce objects made with industrial materials, including plywood, sprayed lacquer, and pigmented resin, creating the highly reflective, smooth surfaces for which he was to become known. McCracken relocated to Los Angeles in the late 1960s and remained a fixture of the burgeoning art scene there through the early 1990s when he moved to Santa Fe, where he would remain for the rest of his life.

His work came to embody a distinctly West Coast interpretation of the emerging Minimalist aesthetic that was taking shape in New York during those years. In contrast to the industrially produced, non-referential objects created by their East Coast counterparts, McCracken and his contemporaries embraced synthetic materials such as plastic and fibreglass, producing sculptures with impeccably finished surfaces, often combined with luminous colours and the effects of light. These works evoke the brilliance of the Californian sun, Los Angeles’s vibrant culture of cars and surfboards, and a host of other associations rooted in the landscape and lifestyle of the American West Coast.

McCracken was one of the most celebrated exponents of “finish fetish,” a specifically Southern California aesthetic that emerged in the 1960s. It emphasizes meticulous craftsmanship, high-key colours, and dazzling light effects. With monolithic geometric

forms — singly or in pairs — McCracken examined the effect of colour and shape on the viewer’s perception. He built the armatures of his fibreglass-and-plywood sculptures by hand and typically applied between twenty and thirty coats of a single colour, which he then polished to create a highly reflective, lustrous surface that registers even minute changes in the surrounding environment.

Quannen, completed in 1987, exemplifies John McCracken’s enduring interest in the transcendent potential of Minimalist abstraction and its capacity to sustain a multitude of interpretations and associations. Though sleek in appearance, McCracken’s geometric forms are meticulously handcrafted from plywood coated with fibreglass and successive layers of pigmented polyester resin, then polished to such a high sheen that they partially reflect the world around them.

Often rendered in vibrant colours or glossy black, these sculptures appear as solid, monolithic forms from certain angles, while from others their polished surfaces mirror the surrounding space, lending them an almost immaterial, ghostly transparency. McCracken’s interest in ancient Greek and Egyptian architecture also led him to explore the phenomenological relationship between the artwork, the viewer, and the surrounding architectural space, creating an experience that is at once firmly grounded in the physical world and suggestive of vast, open realms.

PROVENANCE

Galerie Tanit, Munich; Private collection, Brussels (acquired from the above at FIAC, Paris, 1989)





ARMAND RASSENFOSSE
&
THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN
DRAWINGS FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION

ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

(1862–1934)

Destined to follow in his father's footsteps, Armand Rassenfosse (1862–1934) enters the family business in Liège after having finished secondary school. He practices drawing without a formal artistic training, which his parents refuse to provide. The ambiance of antiques and brocante auctions and curiosity shops which he visits with his father to source objects for the family's interior decoration business feeds into these early drawings. At the same time, he reads both classical and contemporary literature and starts collecting prints by Félicien Rops (1833–1898). In 1880 he buys an old engraving manual from an antiquarian bookseller, and starts to experiment with prints, using some basic tools and an improvised press.

Rassenfosse visits Paris regularly while on business trips for his father's shop. On one of these visits in 1888, the young artist summons all his courage and knocks at Félicien Rops' door. The latter, Rassenfosse's elder by thirty years, is by then a successful and celebrated Parisian artist, and he receives his fellow countryman wholeheartedly. At the time of his visit, Rassenfosse has already made numerous small etchings in which feminine subjects are predominant, and he shows his work to the master. The 1888 visit is the start of a long collaboration and a sustained correspondence. They exchange their findings on various innovative graphic processes with which they experiment. These experiments are related to

the *verniss mou* technique, which uses fat or Vaseline as an etching ground. Drawing on a sheet of paper covering the ground, produces etching lines which are much smoother than those made on a traditional ground of hardened varnish and allow for more subtle nuances and textures.

In 1890 Rassenfosse leaves the family business for good and starts working as an illustrator for Auguste Bénard, a French publisher-printer who had established his business in Liège in 1887. In this occupation Rassenfosse specialises in the design of posters, a means of public communication which develops into a full artistic discipline by the end of the nineteenth century, due to important advances in lithographic techniques. At the death of Bénard in 1907, Rassenfosse will become administrator and director of the printing house, which, under his management, will acquire international fame in lithographic production, in art book publishing and in bibliophile editions.

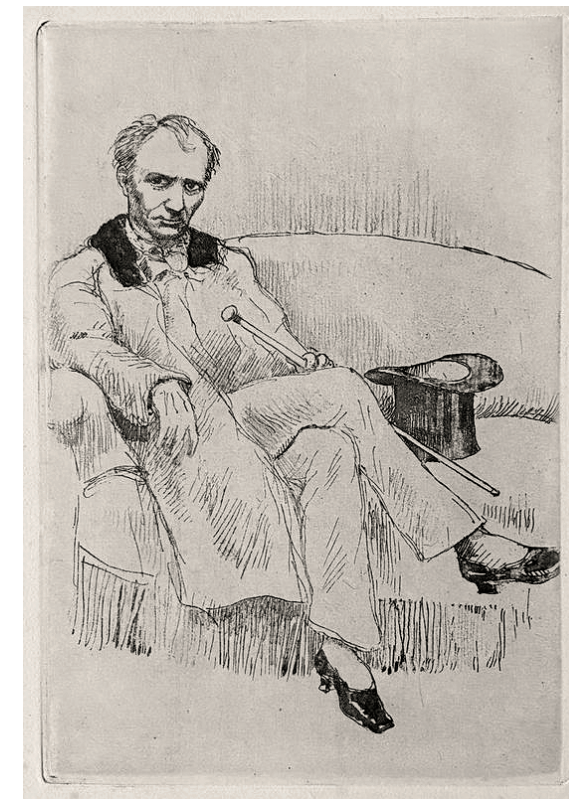
In the early 1890s Rops introduces his young artist friend in Parisian intellectual and artistic circles. From then on Rassenfosse publishes engravings and etchings in important contemporary periodicals such as *Le Courrier français*, *La Plume* and *Le Mercure de France*. In 1896 the president of the prestigious society "Les Cent bibliophiles" (The Hundred Bibliophiles) offers Rassenfosse a commission to illustrate

a bibliophile edition of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, some forty years after its first publication in 1857. Rassenfosse informs Rops of the commission he received in an enthusiastic letter of December 1896. He is excited at the prospect of illustrating Baudelaire's masterpiece, but at the same time daunted by the sheer volume of engravings which will be needed to illustrate the complete edition.

In the end the edition, in a print run of 115 copies, will comprise 167 etchings and 160 tailpieces. The illustrations are very diverse and of exceptional quality due to the mixed use of techniques such as *verniss mou*, aquatint and sugar lift etching, in combination with the drypoint needle and the roulette. Rassenfosse's drawing style is full of symbolism and influenced by Art Nouveau, providing an atmosphere which suits Baudelaire's intricately layered and

dark poems perfectly. Towards the end of the 1890s Rassenfosse is still under Rops' influence. This makes several of his drawings particularly suited to illustrate some of Baudelaire's more diabolic verses. Most of the drawings presented in this catalogue are studies for the 1899 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal* or date from this particularly fertile period in Rassenfosse's artistic career. They include, among others, *Coquetterie* (Coquetry), 1895, an etching enhanced with drawing; *Petite Sorcière* (Little Witch), 1897; and *Projet pour La Femme et le Pantin* (Project for *La Femme et le Pantin*), 1898, inspired by Pierre Louÿs's novel of the same title.

In 1893, Rassenfosse becomes a member of the Société Internationale des Aquafortistes (International Society of Etchers) which had been founded in 1869 under the impetus of Félicien Rops. The Society publishes Rassenfosse's engravings and etchings. In 1896–1897 he participates in the Salon de La Libre Esthétique in Brussels, and he has solo exhibitions at the Galleries Durand-Ruel and Georges Petit in Paris in 1913–14. Both exhibitions exclusively show oil paintings, a medium which Rassenfosse had started to explore around the turn of the century. After the first World War he increasingly exhibits abroad, culminating in his participation in the XIIIth Venice Biennale in 1922. His fame is such that in 1925 he becomes a correspondent member of the Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique (Royal Academy of Sciences, Literature and Fine Arts of Belgium). In 1930 he is elevated to the rank of full member of the Academy's Fine Arts Class and in 1934, the year of his death, he is appointed Director of the same Class.



Frontispiece Portrait of Baudelaire Seated
by Armand Rassenfosse, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1930)

ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Coquetterie (Coquetry), 1895

LITHOGRAPH HEIGHTENED WITH PENCIL, COLOURED PENCILS, INDIA INK & WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER
28.2 × 42.5 CM
MONOGRAMMED, DATED & TITLED "AR 1895" (LOWER LEFT) & "COQUETTERIE" (LOWER RIGHT)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Études pour le premier frontispice des *Fleurs du Mal*
(Studies for the First Frontispiece of *Les Fleurs du Mal*),
c. 1896–98

PENCIL, COLOURED PENCILS & WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER
27 × 20 CM

MONOGRAMMED & TITLED "AR ÉTUDES POUR LE PREMIER FRONTISPICE DES FLEURS DU MAL" (LOWER RIGHT)

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated
by Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899
(frontispiece)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

La Vie antérieure (The Former Life), c. 1896–98

PENCIL & RED CHALK ON PAPER

12.5 × 18 CM

MONOGRAMMED & TITLED "AR 12 LA VIE ANTÉRIEURE (1^{ER} PROJET)"

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 33)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

La Géante (The Giantess), c. 1896–98

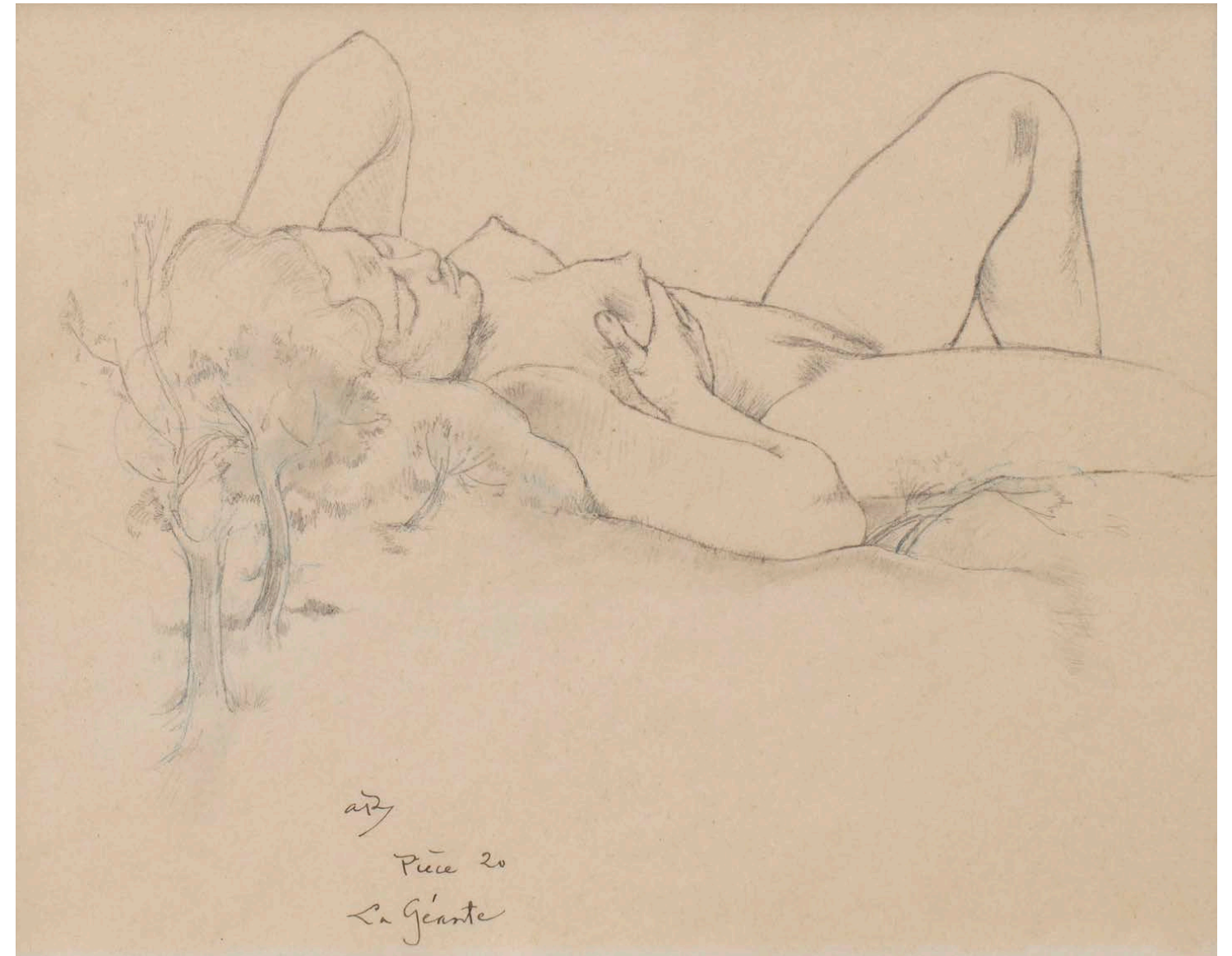
PENCIL, BLUE PENCIL & STUMP ON PAPER
13 × 16.5 CM
SIGNED & TITLED "AR PIÈCE 20 LA GÉANTE" (LOWER LEFT)

PROVENANCE

La Galerie Thiry, Liège

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 49)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Femmes damnées (Damned Women), c. 1896–98

PENCIL, COLOURED PENCILS, CHARCOAL & INDIA INK ON TRACING PAPER
15 × 14.5 CM
MONOGRAMMED, INSCRIBED & TITLED "AR 136 FEMMES DAMNÉES"

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 363)

EXHIBITIONS

Brussels, Association du Patrimoine artistique, *Armand Rassen-
fosse (1862–1934). Un dessin si particulier*, 2020 (p. 72)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Ciel brouillé (The Cloudy Sky), c. 1896–98

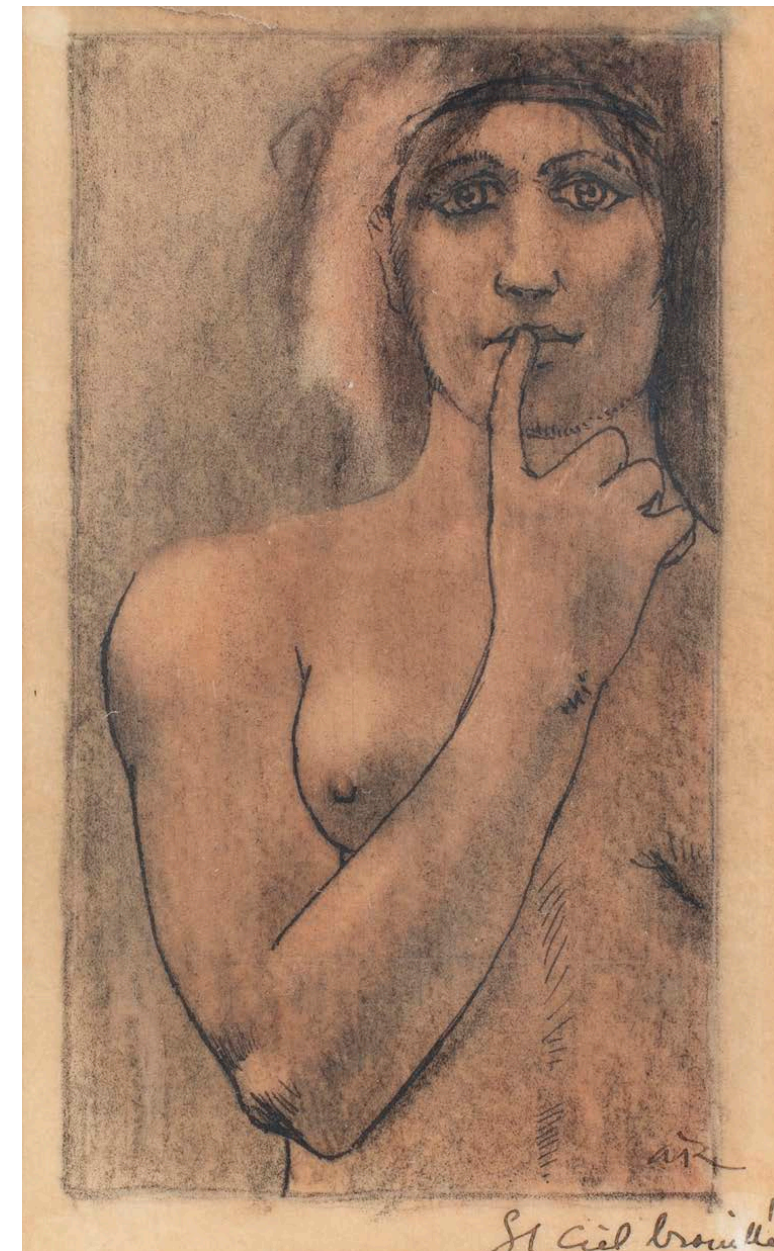
CHARCOAL, RED CHALK & INDIA INK ON PAPER
9 × 5 CM
MONOGRAMMED, INSCRIBED & TITLED “AR 51 CIEL BROUILLÉ”

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 131)

EXHIBITIONS

Brussels, Association du Patrimoine artistique, *Armand Rassen-
fosse (1862–1934). Un dessin si particulier*, 2020 (p. 70)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Lola de Valence (d'après Édouard Manet)
(Lola de Valence [after Édouard Manet]), c. 1896–98

BROWN INK ON TRACING PAPER

14.5 × 10.5 CM

MONOGRAMMED, INSCRIBED & TITLED "AR PIÈCE 110 LOLA DE VALENCE D'APRÈS ED. MANET" (LOWER LEFT)

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 283)



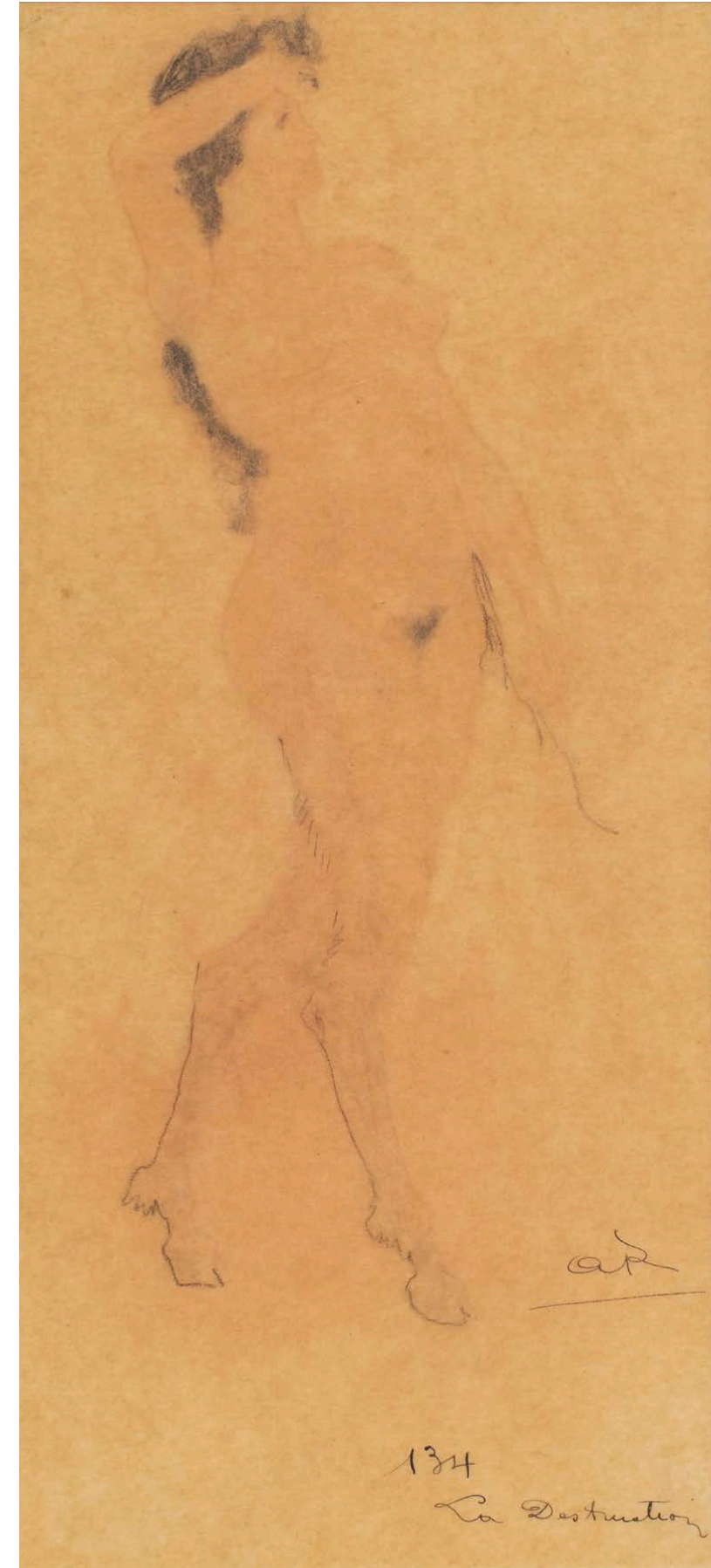
ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

La Destruction (The Destruction), *c.* 1896–98

PENCIL & WATERCOLOUR ON TRACING PAPER
20 × 8.5 CM
MONOGRAMMED, NUMBERED & TITLED “AR 134 LA DESTRUCTION”

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 357)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Étude pour une Martyre (Study for a Martyr), c. 1896–98

INDIA INK, WATERCOLOUR & WHITE PASTEL ON PAPER

13.5 × 20 CM

MONOGRAMMED, NUMBERED & TITLED "AR 135 ÉTUDE POUR UNE MARTYRE"

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 359)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Allégorie (Allegory), c. 1896–98

PENCIL, COLOURED PENCIL & WATERCOLOUR ON TRACING PAPER
15 × 13 CM
MONOGRAMMED & TITLED "AR 139 ALLÉGORIE"

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 371)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

La Mort des Artistes (The Death of Artists), c. 1896–98

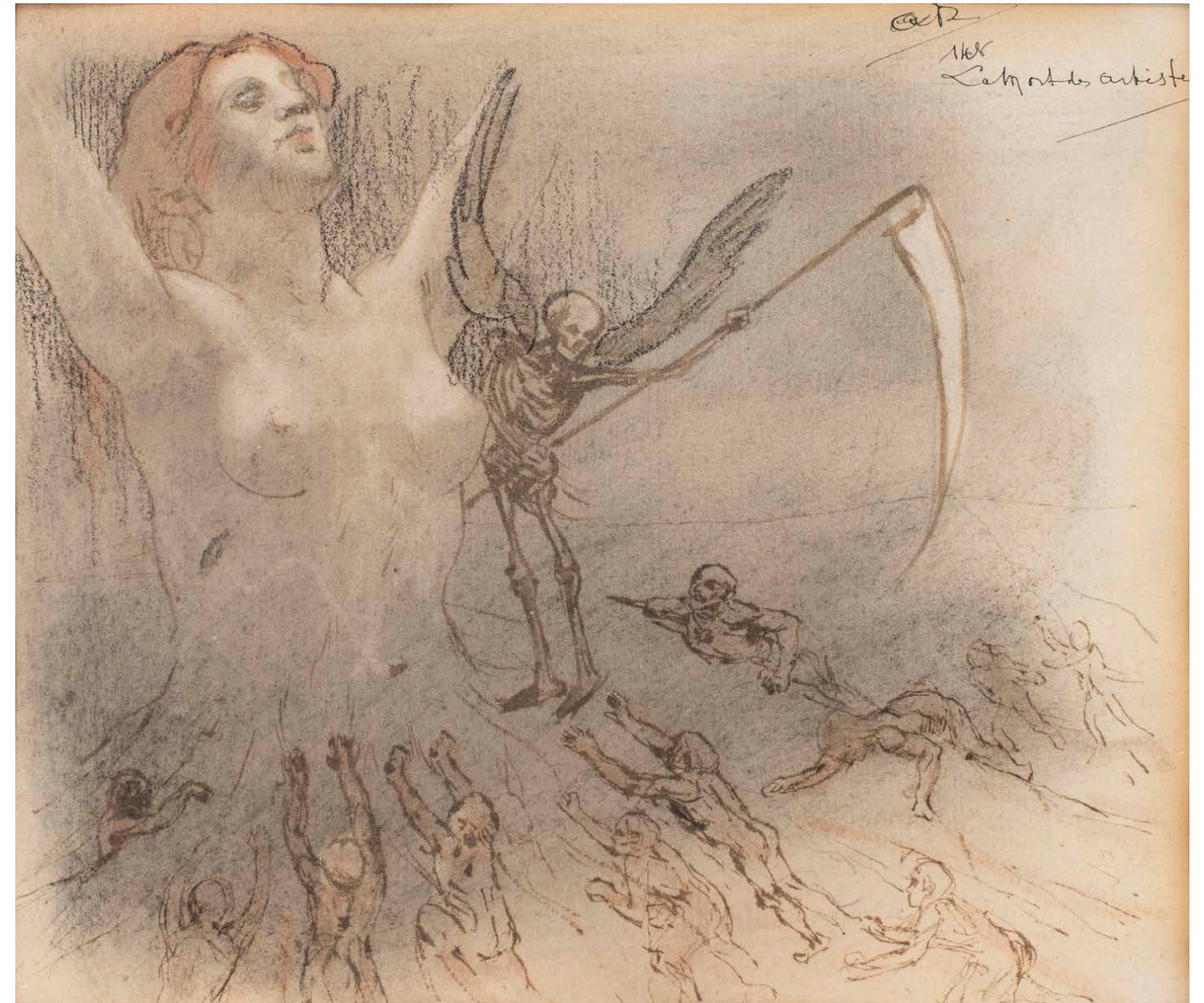
CHARCOAL, PENCIL, COLOURED PENCILS, BROWN INK & WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER

12.5 × 14.5 CM

MONOGRAMMED & TITLED "AR 148 LA MORT DES ARTISTES" (UPPER RIGHT)

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (p. 403)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

À celle qui est trop gaie (To One Who Is Too Gay),
c. 1896–98

PENCIL, INDIA INK, RED INK, WHITE PASTEL & WATERCOLOUR ON TRACING PAPER
12.5 × 15 CM

TITLED, INSCRIBED & MONOGRAMMED "À CELLE QUI EST TROP GAIE P.C AR" (UPPER CENTRE LEFT)

PROVENANCE

La Galerie Thiry, Liège

LITERATURE

Study for Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, illustrated by
Armand Rassenfosse, Paris, Les Cent Bibliophiles, 1899 (*Pièces
condamnées*, p. xvii)

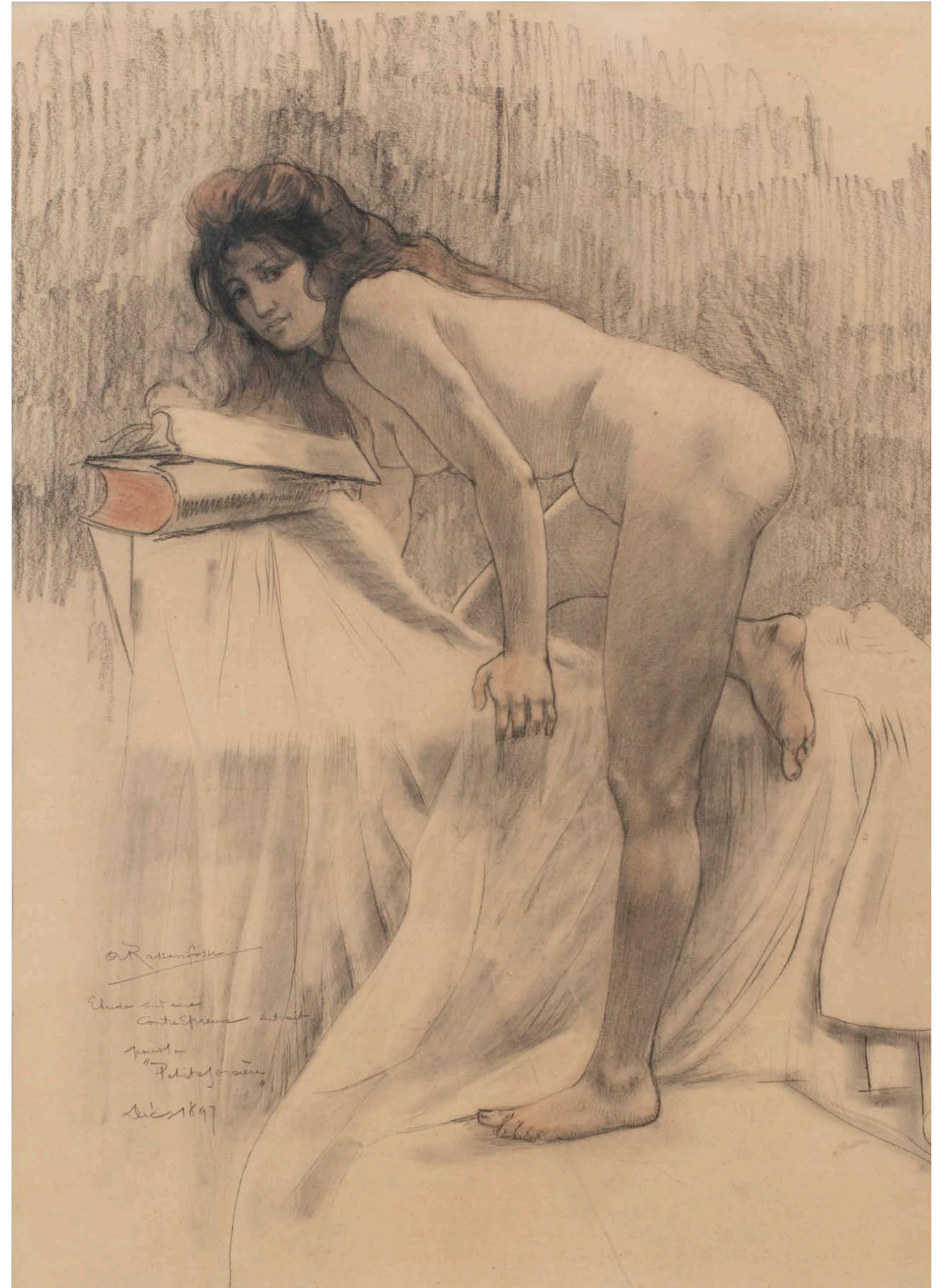


ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Petite Sorcière (Little Witch), 1897

CHARCOAL, PENCIL & RED CHALK ON PAPER
42 × 29 CM

MONOGRAMMED, TITLED & DATED "A RASSENFOSSE ÉTUDE SUR
UNE CONTRE ÉPREUVE DU TRAIT POUR LA 'PETITE SORCIÈRE' DÉC. 1897"



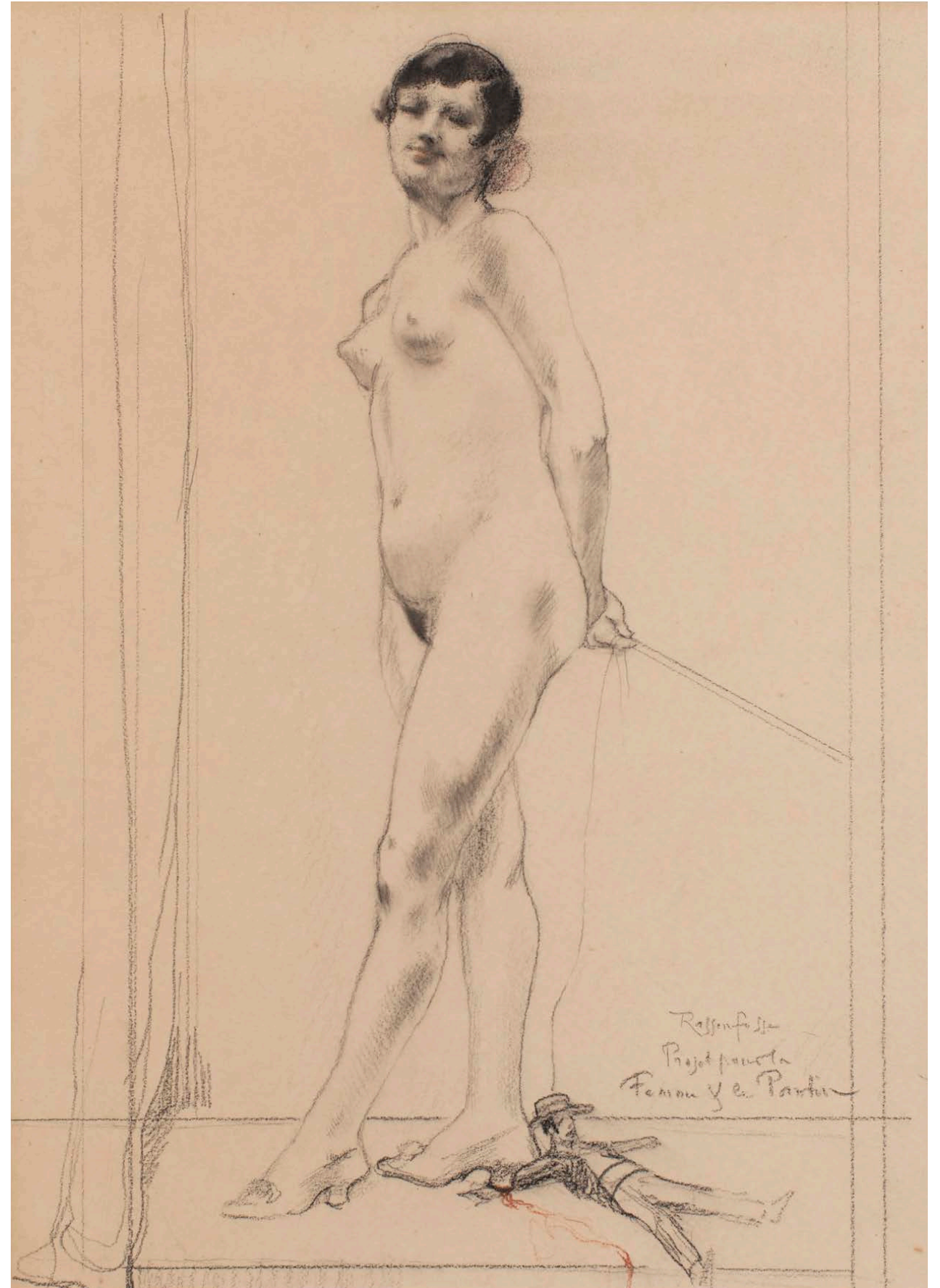
ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Projet pour *la Femme et le Pantin*
(Project for *la Femme et le Pantin*), c. 1898

PENCIL, COLOURED PENCILS & PASTEL ON PAPER

29 × 20.5 CM

SIGNED & TITLED "RASSENFOSSE PROJET POUR LA FEMME ET LE PANTIN"



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

**Femme au chapeau avec face-à-main
(Woman in a Hat with a Lorgnette), n.d.**

—
CHARCOAL, GRAPHITE & STUMP ON PAPER
22 × 14.5 CM
MONOGRAMMED STAMP “AR” (LOWER RIGHT)
—

EXHIBITIONS

Brussels, Espace Roi Baudouin, Palais des Académies, *Armand Rassenfosse*, 2005, cat. no. 79 (p. 89); Brussels, Association du Patrimoine artistique, *Armand Rassenfosse (1862–1934). Un dessin si particulier*, 2020 (p. 47)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

Étude pour un Ex-Libris (Study for an Ex Libris), n.d.

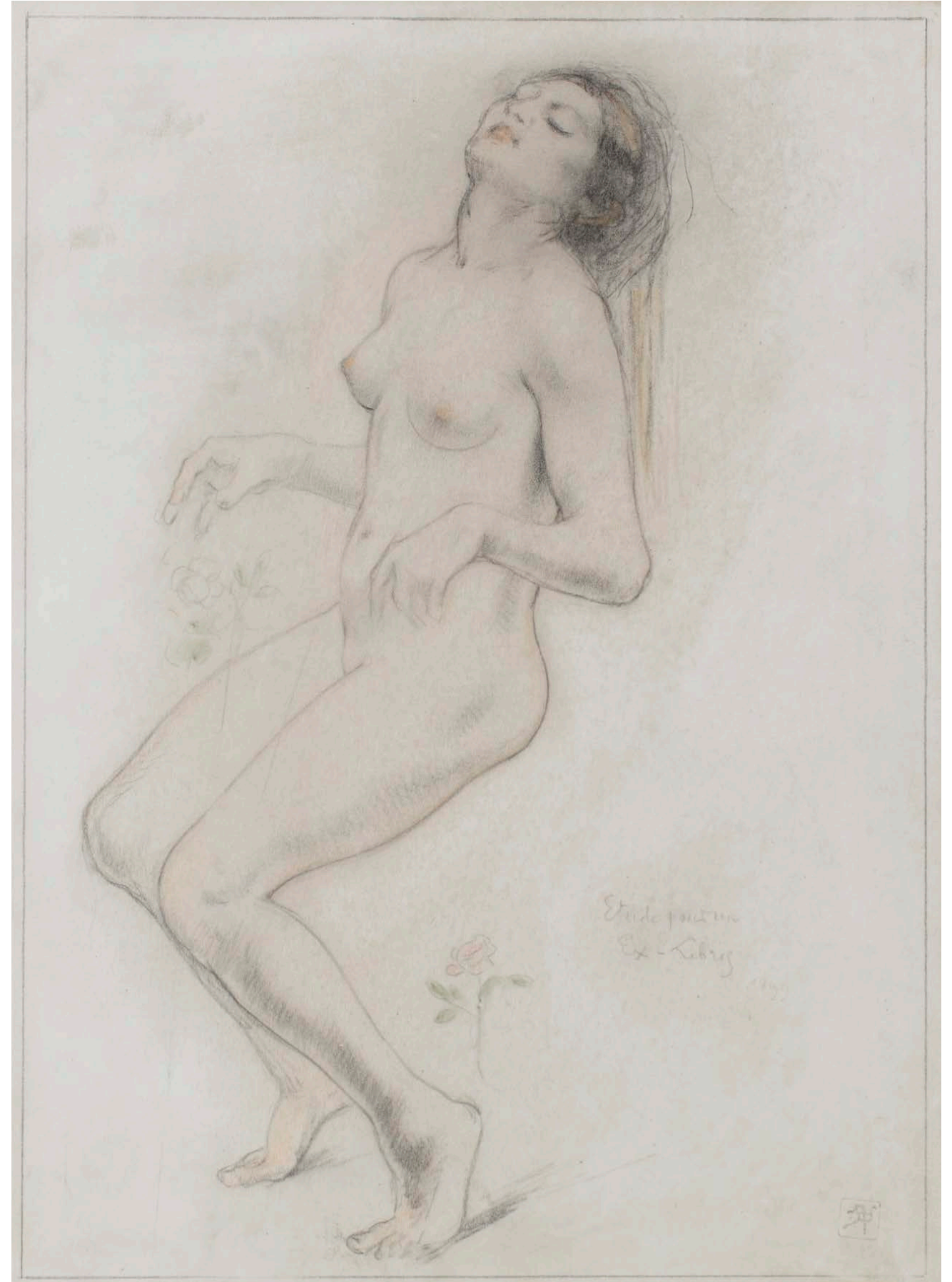
CHARCOAL, PENCIL & COLOURED PENCILS ON PAPER

26.7 × 20 CM

TITLED & BEARING THE MONOGRAMMED STAMP "ÉTUDE POUR UN EX-LIBRIS AR" (LOWER RIGHT)

EXHIBITIONS

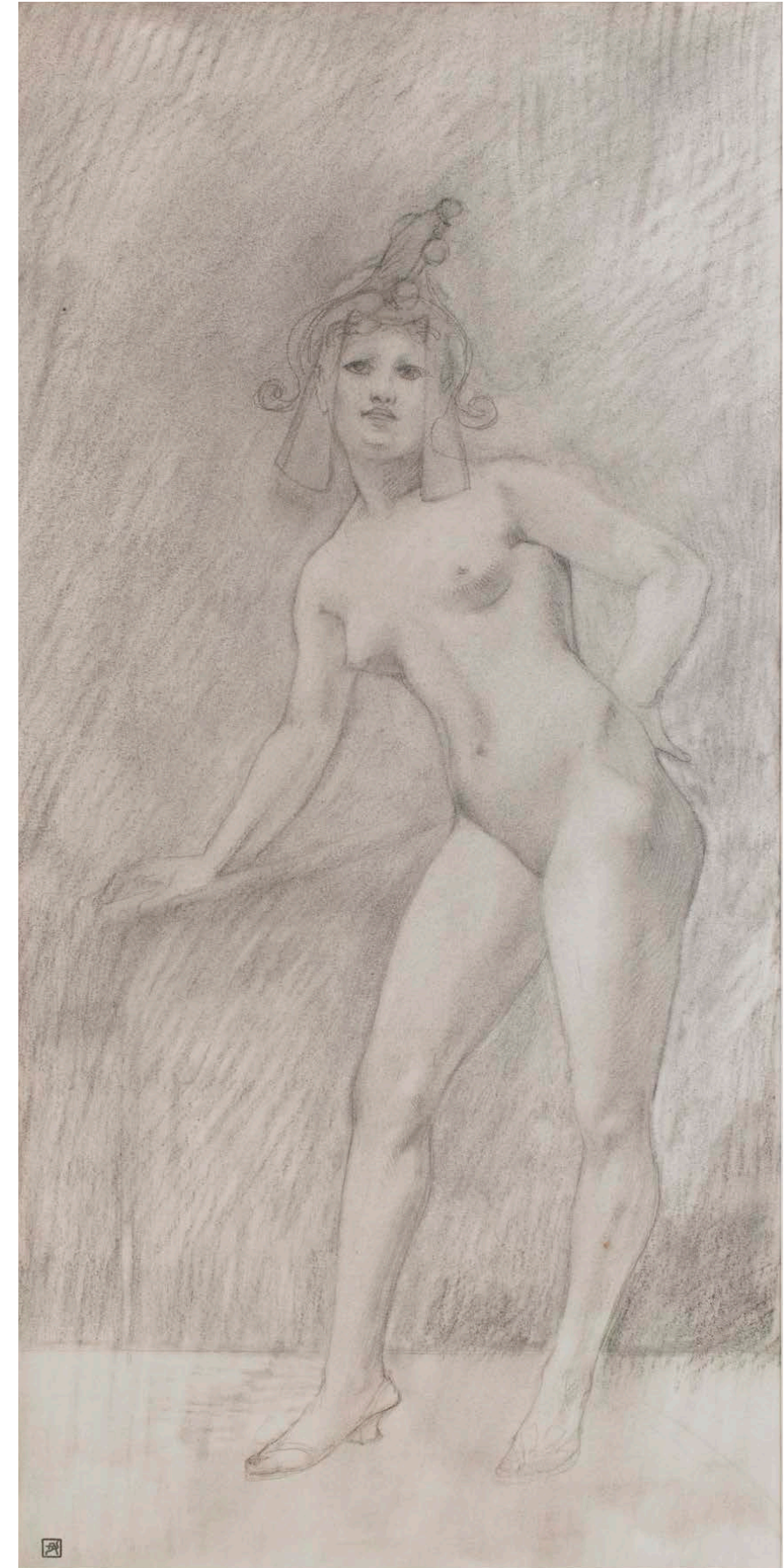
Brussels, Association du Patrimoine artistique, *Armand Rassenfosse (1862–1934). Un dessin si particulier*, 2020 (p. 10)



ARMAND RASSENFOSSE

L'Égyptienne (The Egyptian Woman), n.d.

—
PENCIL ON PAPER
42 × 20 CM
MONOGRAMMED STAMP "AR" (LOWER LEFT)
—





THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

(1859–1923)

Born in Lausanne, Switzerland, Théophile Alexandre Steinlen (1859–1923) settled in Montmartre in 1881, where he soon discovered the cabaret Le Chat Noir, for which he designed its now-iconic poster. There he collaborated with a wide range of artists and writers, including Henri Rivière and George Auriol. A leading figure within this anarchist-leaning circle, Steinlen became one of the principal contributors to the weekly satirical and literary magazine *Le Chat Noir*.

Steinlen was also among the most prolific press illustrators of the late nineteenth century, contributing drawings to some twenty French and international publications, including *Gil Blas* and *Simplicissimus*. He was also the principal illustrator for *Le Mirliton*, the periodical associated with the cabaret founded by Aristide Bruant. Accompanying Bruant through the working-class districts of Paris, Steinlen portrayed the people of the streets as well as the world of popular entertainment with humour, irony, and, at times, poignant gravity.

Following in the tradition of Realist artists such as Daumier and Grandville, as well as the writer Balzac, Steinlen developed a genuine typology of the working classes. Peasants, laundresses, bread carriers, carters, miners, coal sorters, and many others are portrayed with a style that combines naturalistic observation and remarkable economy of means. Influenced from an early age by the ideas of Émile Zola, Steinlen worked directly from life, making sketches on site in order to capture the physiognomy, gestures, and daily routines of working people within their own environment.

Among the street figures represented by Steinlen, the prostitute occupies a particularly prominent

place. The diversity and ambiguity surrounding the status of these “women without names” made them a favourite subject for writers and artists during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Steinlen was particularly drawn to women from the lower strata of society, whose occupation was unmistakable, such as the *pierreuse* (street prostitute) to the *promeneuse* (street walker), the *midinette* (young fashion worker), and the *trottin* (errand girl). While he sometimes portrayed these women through conventional stereotypes, he more often adopted a documentary approach, recording their social marginalisation and the harsh realities of their daily lives.

One of the defining figures of Montmartre, Steinlen is above all celebrated for his lifelong depictions of cats, with which his name remains inseparably associated. He drew, painted, and sculpted cats of every kind and in every conceivable pose, while also exploring the rich symbolism of the animal, long regarded as an emblem of artistic bohemianism and associated with mystery and witchcraft.

The group of drawings presented here reflects the principal strands of Steinlen's artistic production. It includes illustrations, represented by *Le Réveil* (The Awakening) and the portrait of Dagny Björnson-Langen reading, wife of the publisher of *Simplicissimus*; his treatment of prostitution, exemplified by *La Pierreuse* (The Streetwalker); and, finally, his celebrated depictions of cats, shown either at rest or interacting with a young courtesan.

THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

Le Réveil (The Awakening), n.d.

PENCIL, COLOURED PENCILS, CHARCOAL, PASTEL & INDIA INK ON PAPER
36 × 27.5 CM

SIGNED "STEINLEN" (LOWER RIGHT), TITLED "LE RÉVEIL" (LOWER LEFT) & ANNOTATED "200 165 L'ŒUVRE DE MORT –
M. LEBLANC" (BENEATH THE MOUNT); PENCIL STUDY OF THE SAME COMPOSITION ON THE REVERSE

PROVENANCE

Paul Brandt, Amsterdam



THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

Le Chat (The Cat), n.d.

—
BLACK CHALK ON PAPER
27.5 × 36 CM
SIGNED "STEINLEN" (LOWER LEFT)
—

PROVENANCE

Janine Sudie



THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

La Pierreuse (The Streetwalker), n.d.

CHARCOAL ON PAPER
23.5 × 17 CM
SIGNED "STEINLEN" (LOWER RIGHT)



THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

Femme au chat (Woman with a Cat), n.d.

PENCIL & CHARCOAL ON PAPER
12.5 × 25 CM
SIGNED "STEINLEN" (LOWER LEFT)



THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

Femme lisant (probablement Dagny Bjørnson-Langen)
(Woman reading [probably Dagny Bjørnson-Langen]), c. 1905

—
BLACK CHALK, CHARCOAL & RED CHALK ON PAPER
48.5 × 61.5 CM
SIGNED "STEINLEN" (LOWER RIGHT)
—

Dagny Bjørnson-Langen (1876–1974) was the daughter of the Norwegian writer and Nobel Prize laureate Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and the wife of the publisher Albert Langen, founder of the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus*. A close friend of Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen and Paul Iribe, she actively supported the latter's journal *Le Témoin*. With her Pre-Raphaelite beauty and refined elegance, she embodied the ideal of the cultivated woman of the Art Nouveau era.



THÉOPHILE ALEXANDRE STEINLEN

Deux chats (Two Cats), n.d.

—
CHARCOAL ON PAPER
44 × 60.5 CM
SIGNED "STEINLEN" (CENTRE RIGHT)
—



CHAPTER 7
FROM ARMAND RASSENFOSSE
TO MARCEL BROODTHAERS

including works by stanley brouwn,
John McCracken, and Théophile Alexandre Steinlen

11 September – 6 November 2026

Galerie Jacques de la Béraudière
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TEXTS & RESEARCH
Virginie Devillez and Suzanne Vanderveken

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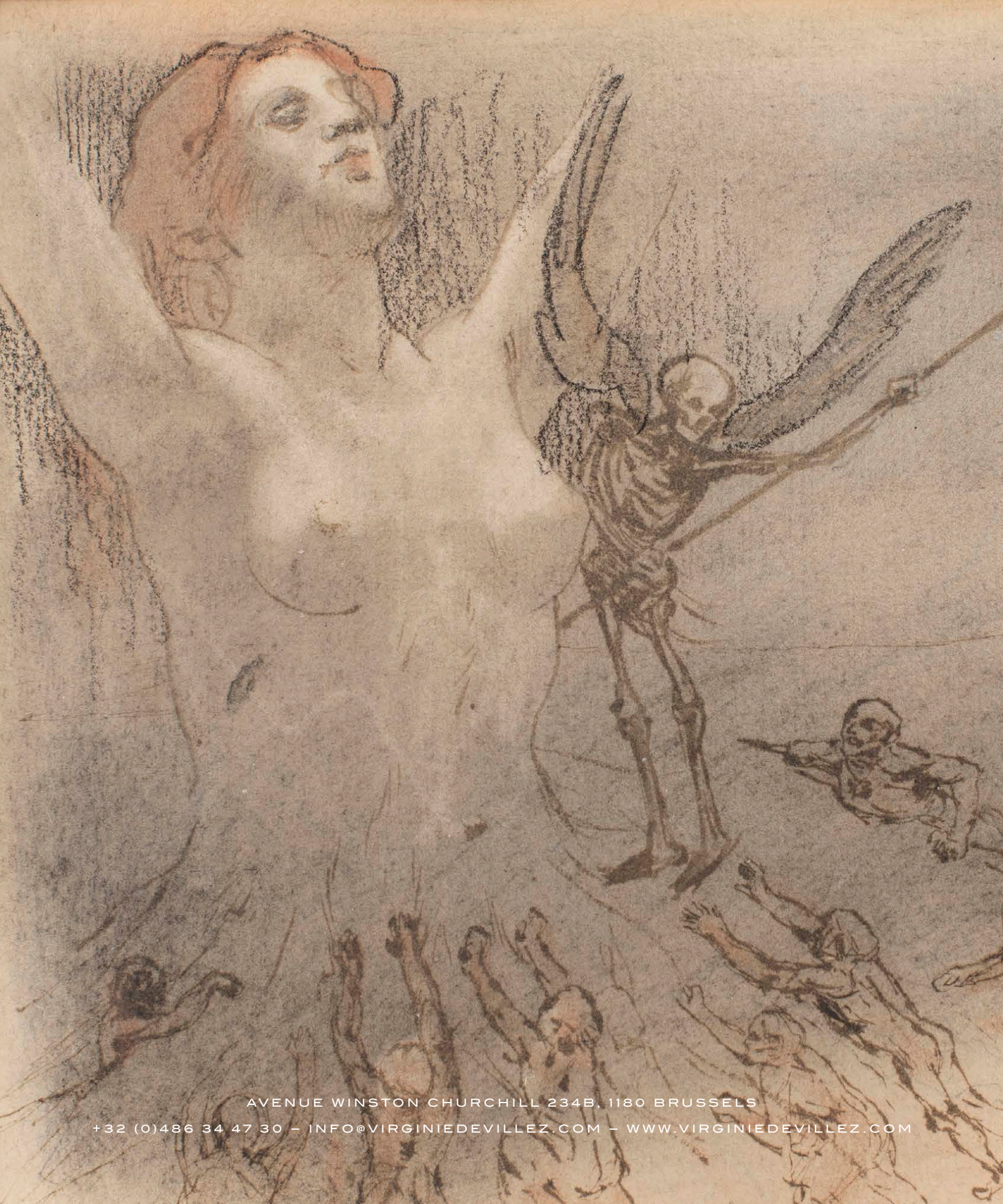
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Front cover:
Marcel Broodthaers, *Culture Internationale*, *Lucky Luciano* (1974)
© The Estate of Marcel Broodthaers c/o SABAM Belgium 2026.
Photo: Vincent Everarts

Back cover:
Armand Rassenfosse, *La Mort des Artistes* (The Death of Artists), c. 1896–98

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