



LALIT MOHAN SEN

An Enduring Legacy

Curated by **Emami Art**

In consultation with **Debdutta Gupta**



Preview on **July 14, 2023** , 4 - 7 pm

Exhibition continues till **September 30, 2023**

Time: 11 am to 7 pm

Ground floor

EMAMI ART

www.emamiart.com |  

Lalit Mohan Sen

An Enduring Legacy

Curated by Emami Art

In consultation with Debductta Gupta

A versatile artist, consummate teacher, and a well-known cultural figure throughout his career, Lalit Mohan Sen (1898-1954) was a leading Indian artist who lived and worked at the peak of the Gandhian era. *An Enduring Legacy* seeks to understand the artist as an ambitious practitioner in colonial South Asia while examining some of the central themes within the wide arc of his artistic practice. The exhibition features drawings, oil paintings, tempera, prints, photographs, designs, and sculptures, along with rare archival materials shown for the first time.

Born in Shantipur, West Bengal, into a family closely associated with the place's famous handloom textile tradition, Lalit Mohan Sen moved to Lucknow when young and spent most of his life there. He studied art at the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow (1917) and later at the Royal College of Art, London (1925). Originally a pupil of Nathaniel Heard and Sir William Rothenstein, he excelled in academic realism, portrait and landscape. Still, his works also show inspiration from Classical Indian art, the country's rich craft and decorative traditions and the new nationalist paintings of Abanindranath and his disciples. The renowned art historian Laurence Binyon commissioned him to copy the Bagh Cave paintings, and his mastery of the Indian Style is visible in his two large-scale murals on the Mughal emperor, Akbar and Buddha's life in India House, London in 1930. A fellow traveller of Indian nationalism, Lalit Mohan Sen was deeply sympathetic to India's political struggle against the British Raj, evident in his series of Gandhi's portraits in woodcut, done at different times. However, as an artist with a broad and open outlook, he avoided the oppositional spirit of anti-colonial nationalism. He did not view the new Indian art and Western realism – two dominant trends operative in the Indian art scene of the time – as antagonistic but as two distinctive paths of creative expression.

Lalit Mohan Sen worked in many styles and mediums, which gives his oeuvre extraordinary diversity. We witness him wrestling with what it means to be a modern artist while remaining sceptical about modernism's desire for stylistic singularity and hierarchy of values. As an artist and pedagogue who taught at his alma mater Lucknow Art School for almost three decades and later became

its Principal in 1945, he placed equal emphasis on the revered disciplines like painting and commercial/functional art, focusing as much on creative self-expression as on art's communicative potentiality. The large body of his posters, graphic prints, book illustrations, and design works, which form a significant part of his oeuvre, is also crucial in understanding his unique place in the history of modern Indian art.

An avid traveller, Sen carried his sketchbooks and camera when travelling. He was a member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain and showed a lifelong passion for photography. He took many powerful black-and-white photographs capturing the beauties of places and people, mainly the Jaunsar-Bawar in the Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand. The never-before-seen pictures in the show selected from his vast collection offer a glimpse into his intense and varied photographic practice.

Featuring vital new perspectives on Lalit Mohan Sen, who was well-known in his lifetime, now largely forgotten, the exhibition shows a diverse body of works from his family collection, aiming to open up spaces for art historical discussion and reevaluation. We are grateful to Prabartak Sen, the grand-nephew of the artist, for trusting us with the valuable artworks and to Debductta Gupta for his curation of the show.

Arkaprava Bose



Lalit Mohan Sen

Lalit Mohan Sen (1898-1954) was a painter, printmaker, designer, book illustrator and photographer. Born in Shantipur, Nadia, India, he studied at the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow and the Royal College of Art in London. He taught at his alma mater, Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow, for over twenty-five years and became its Principal in 1945.

Renowned art historian Laurence Binyon commissioned him to copy the Bagh Cave paintings, and he was one of the four Indian artists hired to decorate the newly built India House in London. His works were widely exhibited in India and abroad. Queen Mary bought his painting 'Potter Girl' from the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1930, and his woodcuts were displayed as permanent exhibits in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Sen's photographs were shown in the Royal Photographic Society's annual exhibitions and published in their journal. He was also a fine book illustrator known for his commercial art. He won the Federation of British Industries Prize (London) for the best poster design.

Lalit Mohan Sen passed away in Lucknow in 1954.

Installation Views

GALLERY 2

EMAMI ART

LALIT MOHAN SEN

An Enduring Legacy

Curated by **Emami Art**

In consultation with **Debdutta Gupta**

July 14 - September 30, 2023





GALLERY 2

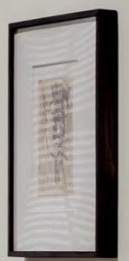
EMAMI ART

LALIT MOHAN SEN

An Enduring Legacy

Curated by Emami Art
In consultation with Debdutta Gupta

July 14 - September 30, 2023





A versatile artist, consummate teacher, and a well-known cultural figure throughout his career, Lalit Mohan Sen (1898-1964) was a leading Indian artist who lived and worked at the peak of the Gandhian era. *An Enduring Legacy* seeks to understand the artist as an ambitious practitioner in colonial South Asia while examining some of the central themes within the wide arc of his artistic practice. The exhibition features drawings, oil paintings, tempera, prints, photographs, designs, and sculptures, along with rare archival materials shown for the first time.

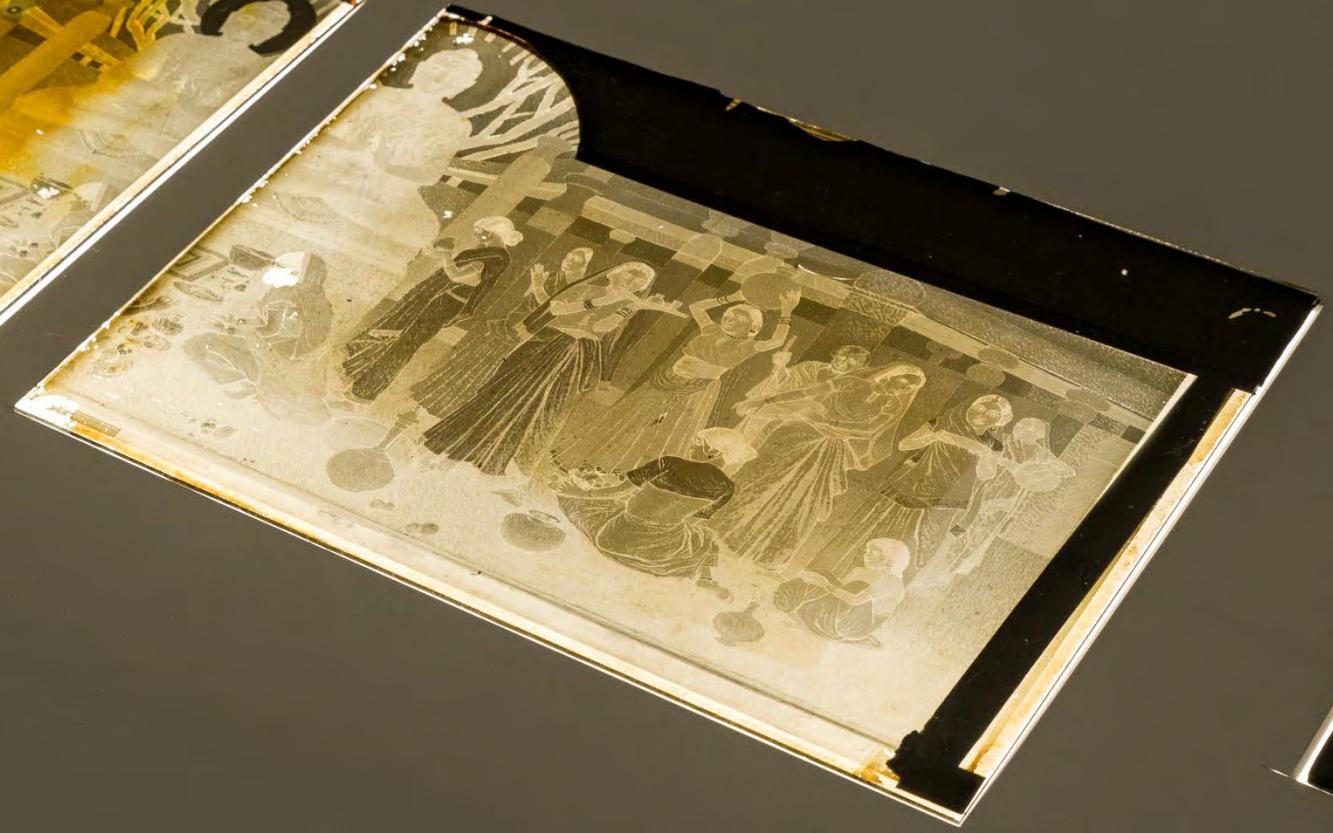
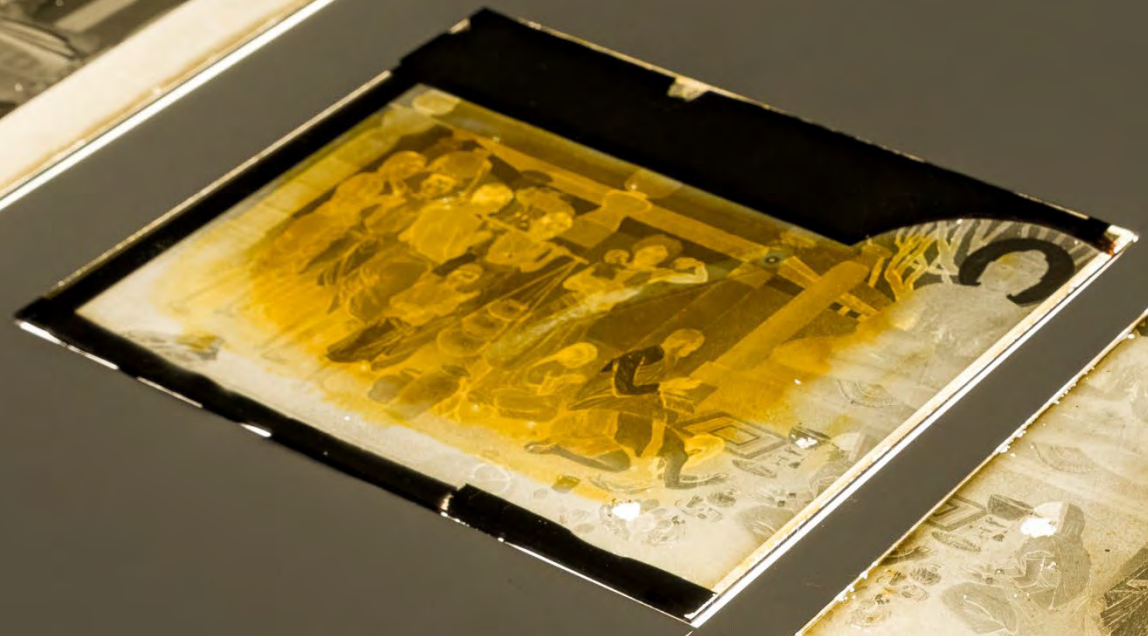
Born in Shantipur, West Bengal, into a family closely associated with the place's famous handloom textile tradition, Lalit Mohan Sen moved to Lucknow when young and spent most of his life there. He studied art at the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow (1917) and later at the Royal College of Art, London (1926). Originally a pupil of Nathaniel Hoad and Sir William Rothenstein, he excelled in academic realism, portrait and landscape. Still, his works also show inspiration from Classical Indian art, the country's rich craft and decorative traditions and the new nationalist paintings of Abanindranath and his disciples. The renowned art historian Laurence Binyon commissioned him to copy the Bhaja Cave paintings, and his mastery of the Indian style is visible in his two large-scale murals on the Mughal emperor Akbar and Buddha's life in India House, London in 1930. A fellow traveller of Indian nationalism, Lalit Mohan Sen was deeply sympathetic to India's political struggle against the British Raj, evident in his series of Gandhi's portraits in woodcut, done at different times. However, as an artist with a broad and open outlook, he avoided the oppositional spirit of anti-colonial nationalism. He did not view the new Indian art and Western realism – two dominant trends operative in the Indian art scene of the time – as antagonistic but as two distinctive paths of creative expression.

An avid traveller, Sen carried his sketchbooks and camera when travelling. He was a member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain and showed a lifelong passion for photography. He took many powerful black-and-white photographs capturing the beauties of places and people, mainly the Jaunsar-Bawer in the Garhwal regions of Uttarakhnand. The never-before-seen pictures in the show selected from his vast collection offer a glimpse into his intense and varied photographic practice.

Featuring vital new perspectives on Lalit Mohan Sen who was well-known in his lifetime, now largely forgotten, the exhibition shows a diverse body of works from his family collection, aiming to open up spaces for art historical discussion and reevaluation. We are grateful to Prabirak Sen, grand-nephew of the artist, for trusting us with the valuable artworks and to Debdutta Gupta.

Arkaprasad Bose





COUNTRY NEEDS YOUR SERVICES
Be trained for a successful career
AT THE **GOVT. SCHOOL of arts & Crafts** LUCKNOW
The object of the school is the training of creative ARTISTS & CRAFTSMEN
Write to the Principal for a free prospectus



Nudes

In the era of high modernism, LM Sen upheld the value of academic naturalism. He was a student of William Rothenstein and an admirer of Frank Brangwyn; the masters like Rembrandt, Rubens, Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds populated his spiritual ancestry. The human figure and portrait hold the central place of his artistic oeuvre.

At the Royal College of Art, he regularly attended life drawing classes, and later, as a teacher, Sen convinced his students of the importance of figure study as the foundation of any artistic practice. Besides his series of life drawings, mostly done at RCA, our collection has some of his excellent nude photographs exploring the aesthetics and erotics of the female form. We also have an album (1930) of small-size nude pictures of a European model, some of them were taken in nature.

Sen's 1927 painting 'The Plaything', done in the Indian Style, shows his masterly use of the female nude. A woman is portrayed as disrobing herself before an emperor, unmasking the use of pleasure and the male gaze in a patriarchal society.



Installation view



Figure Study
Conte and dry pastel on paper
15.2 x 11 in. (38.5 x 28 cm.)
1933
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1676

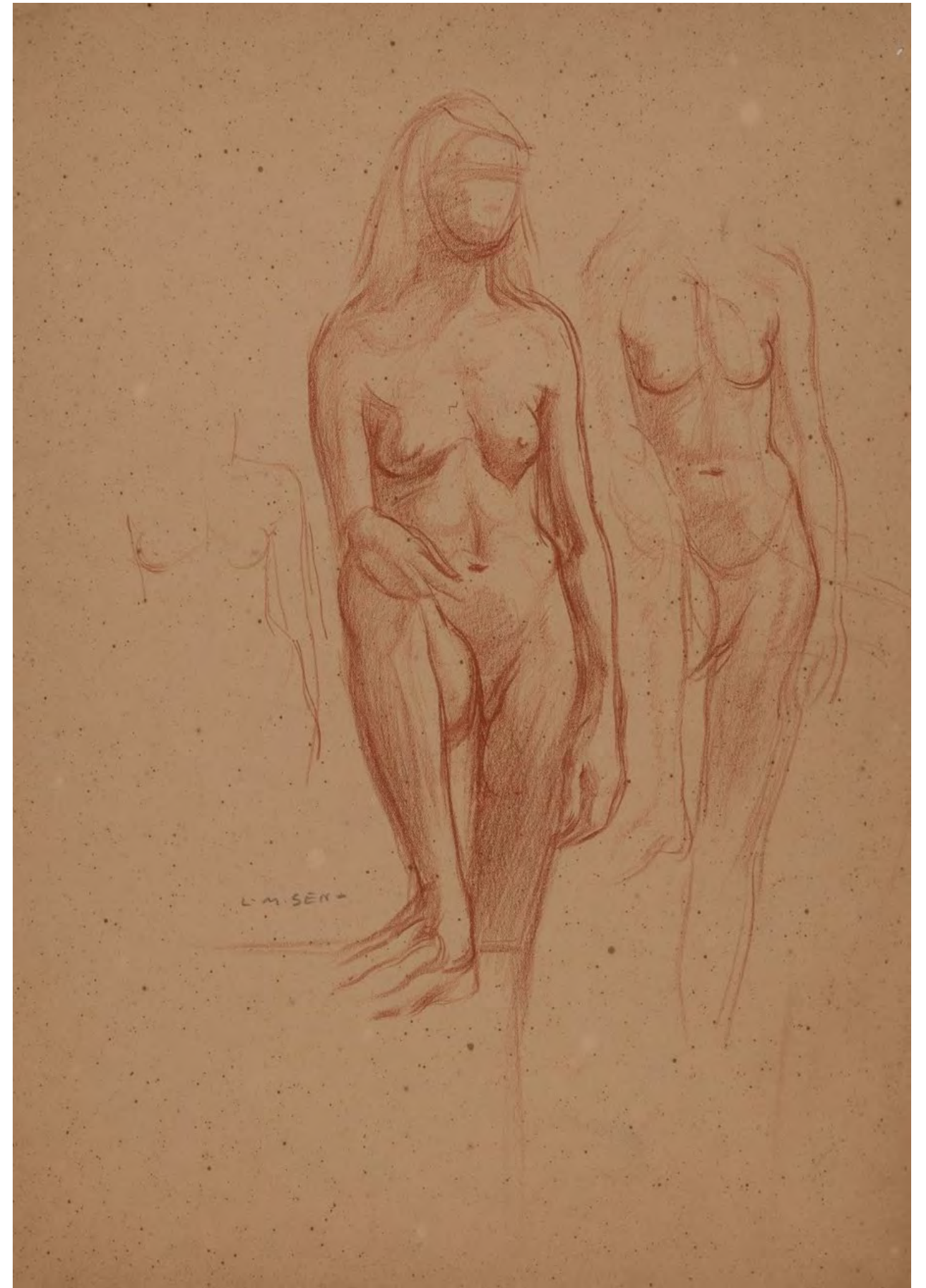
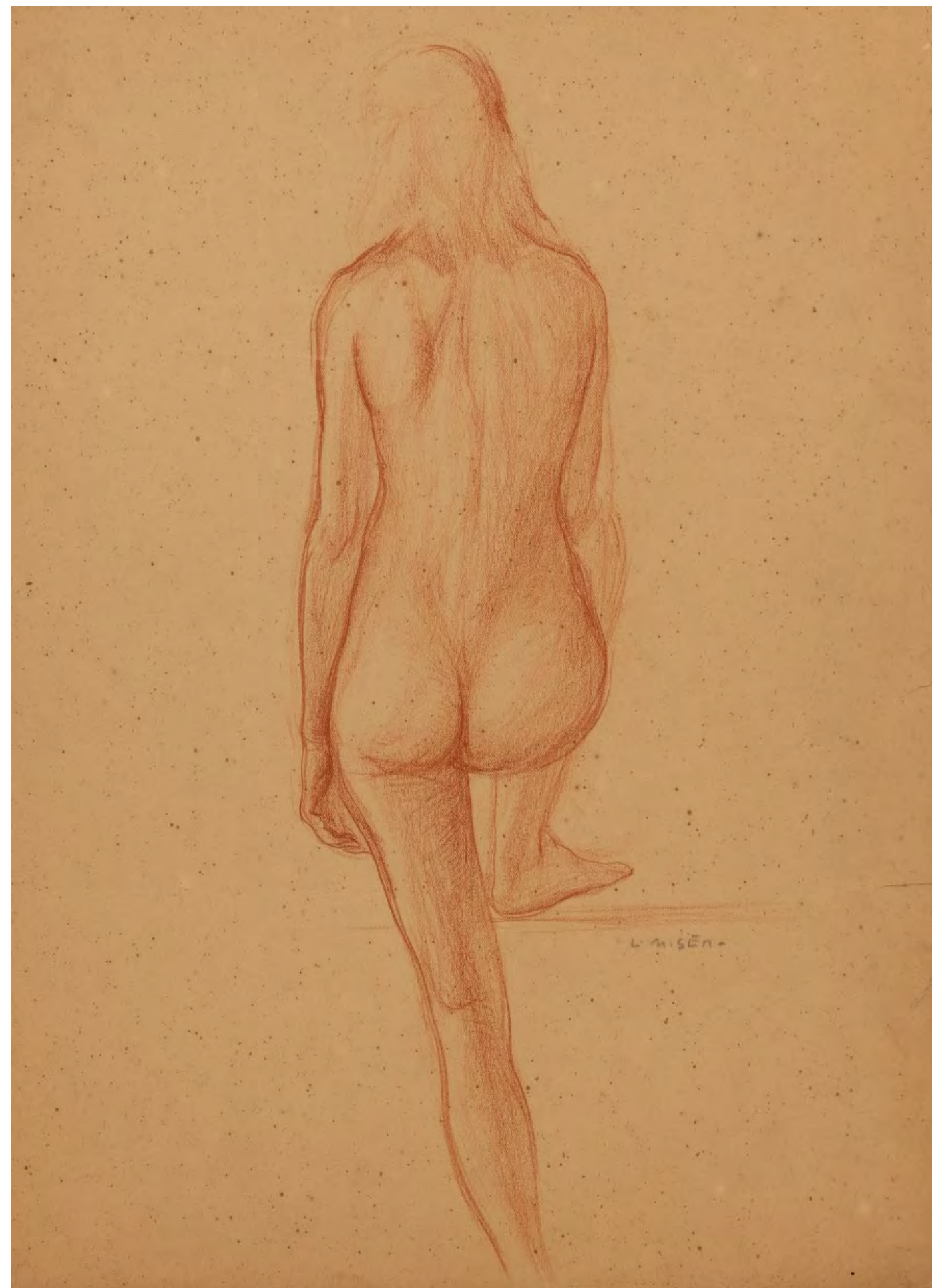




Figure Study
Crayon on paper
15 x 11 in. (38.5 x 28 cm.)
1925
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1670



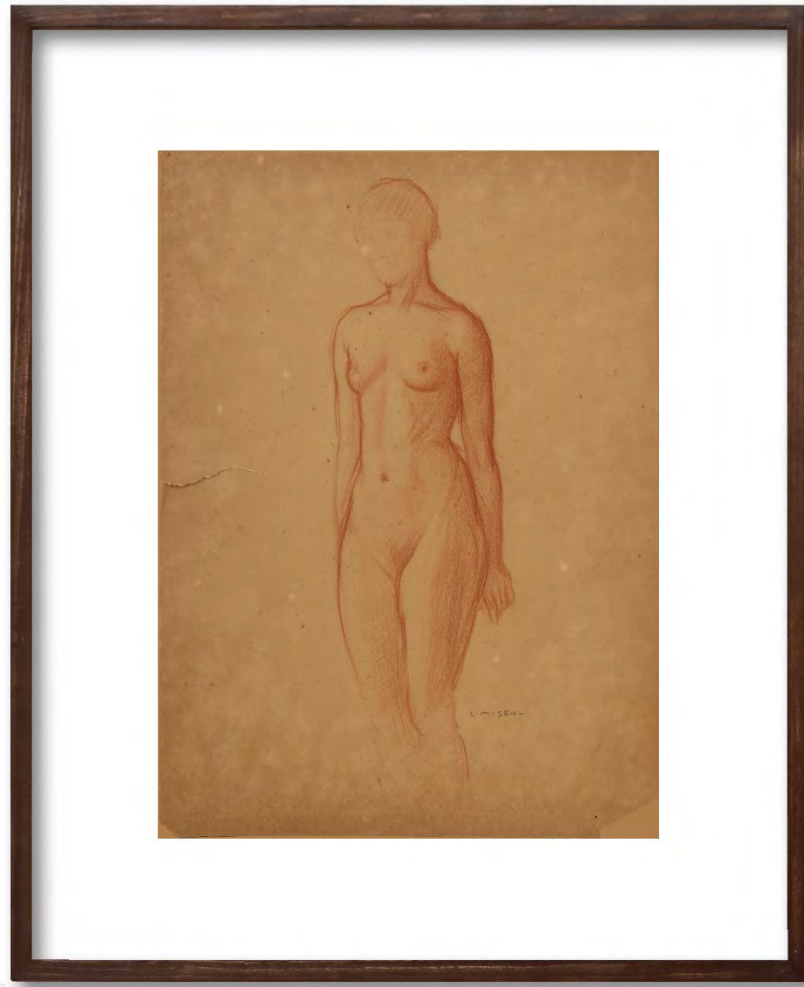


Figure Study

Crayon on paper

15 x 11 in. (38.5 x 28 cm.)

1926

Signed in English (lower right)

AB1671

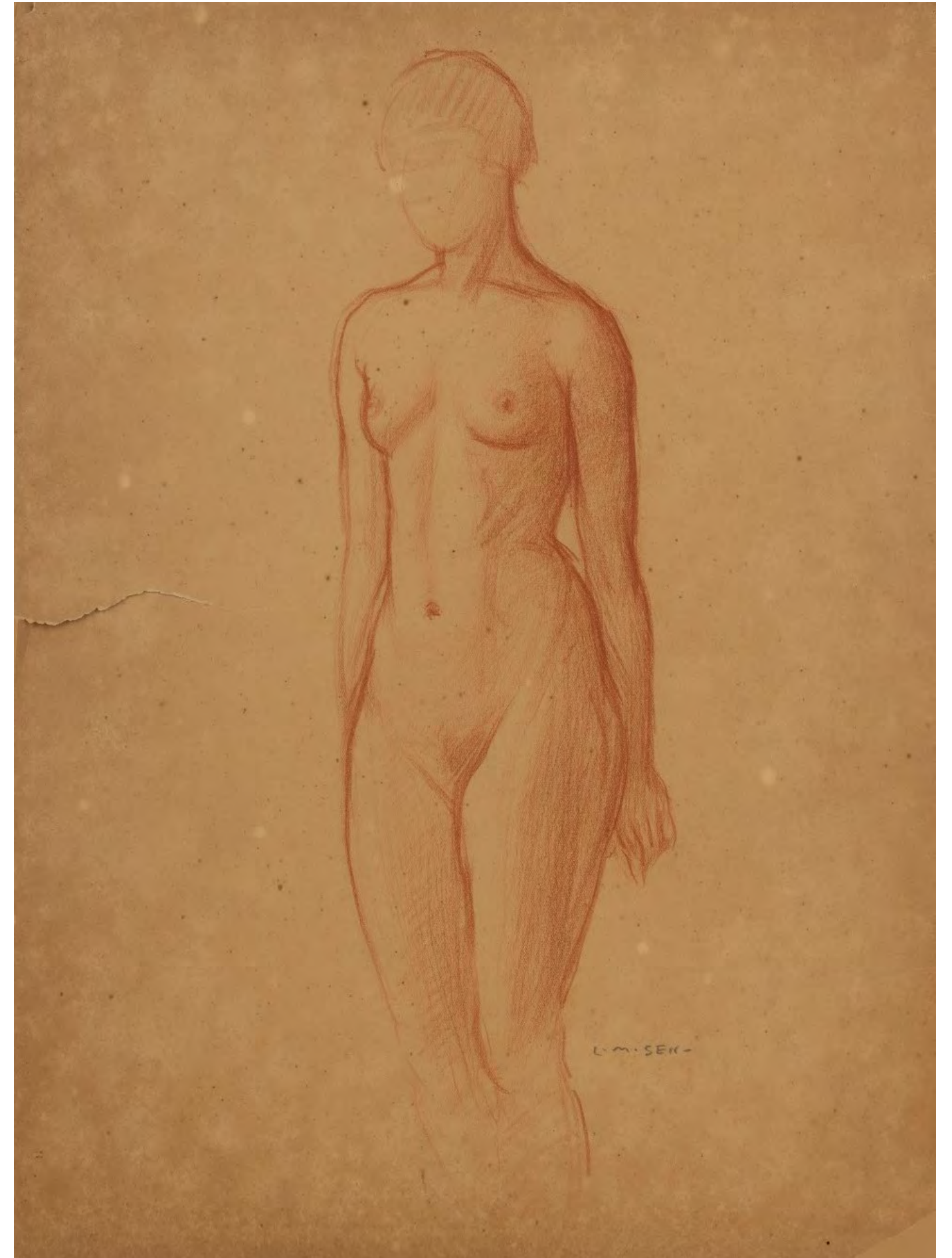




Figure Study
Crayon and dry pastel on paper
10.6 x 15.7 in. (27 x 40 cm.)
c.1920s
Unsigned

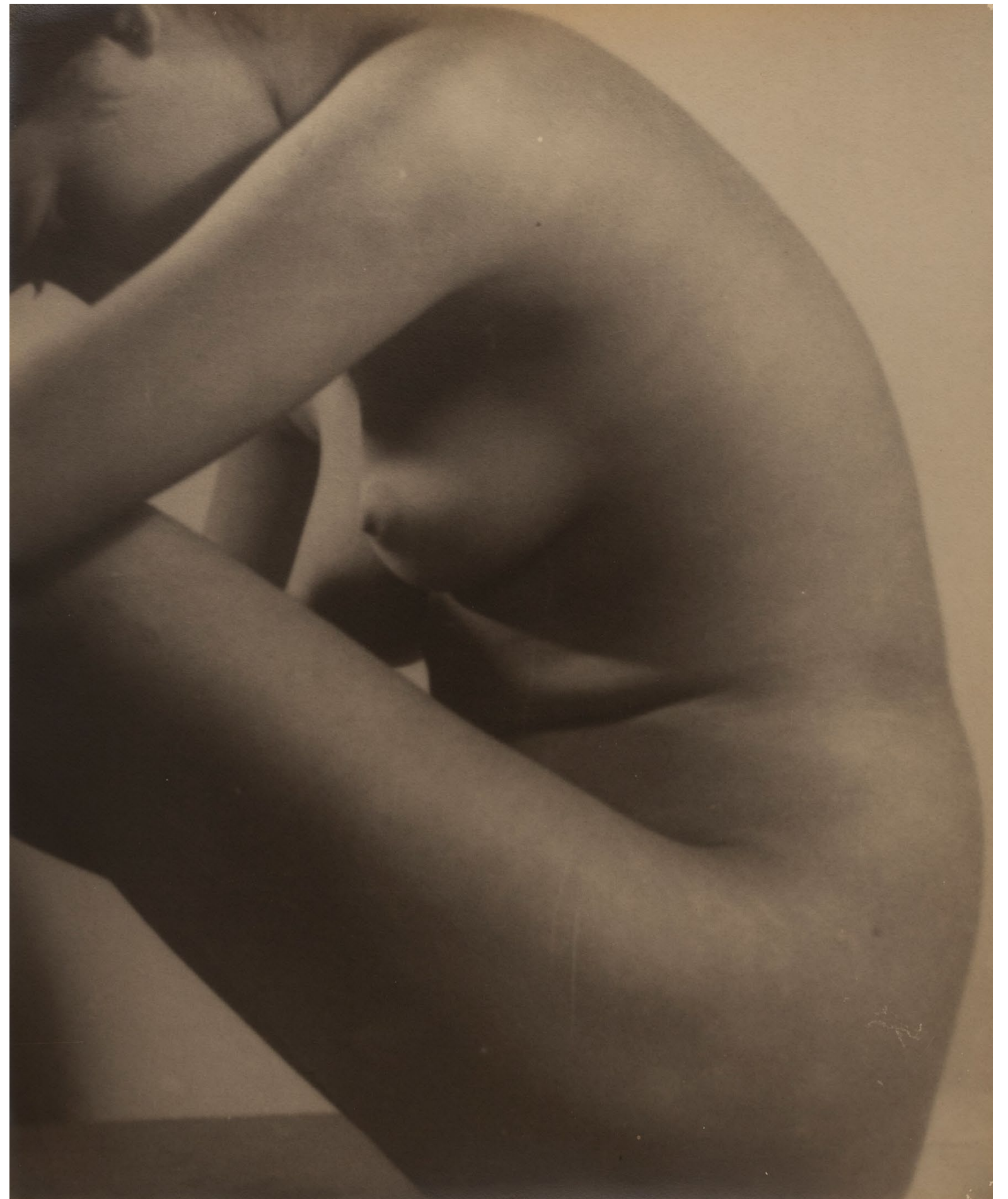
AB1673

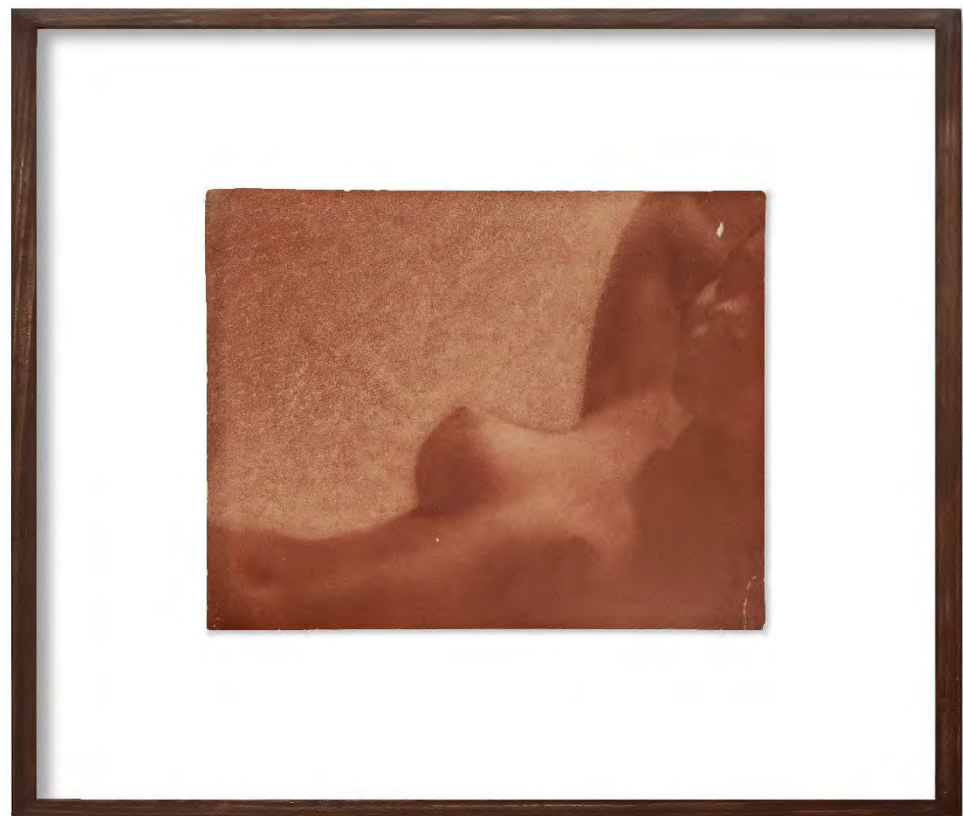




Nude I
Silver Gelatin print
12 x 10 in. (30.4 x 25.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1712





Nude IV
Silver Gelatin print (Bromoil)
11.3 x 14.3 in. (28.7 x 36.3 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1715

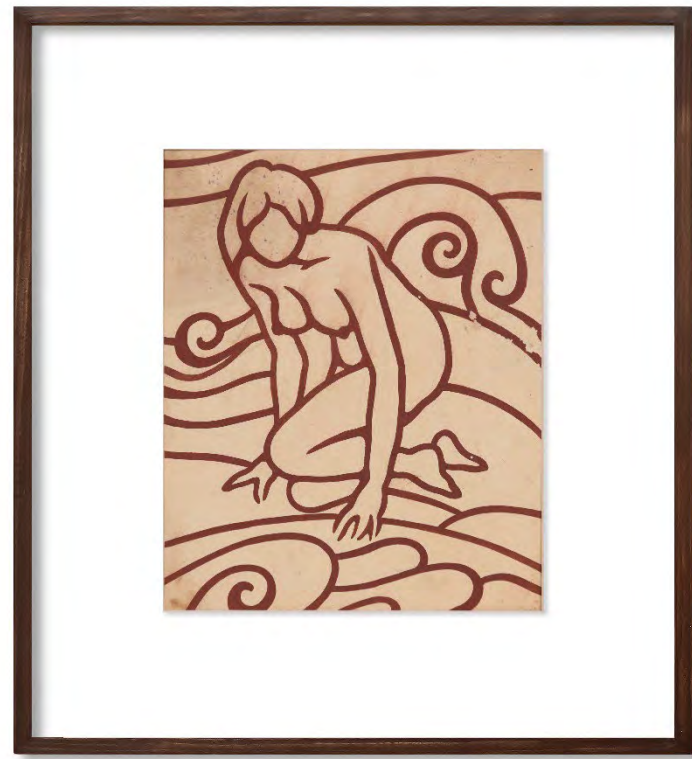




Untitled
Watercolour on paper
9 x 7 in. (23 x 18.5 cm.)
c.1930s
Unsigned

AB1652

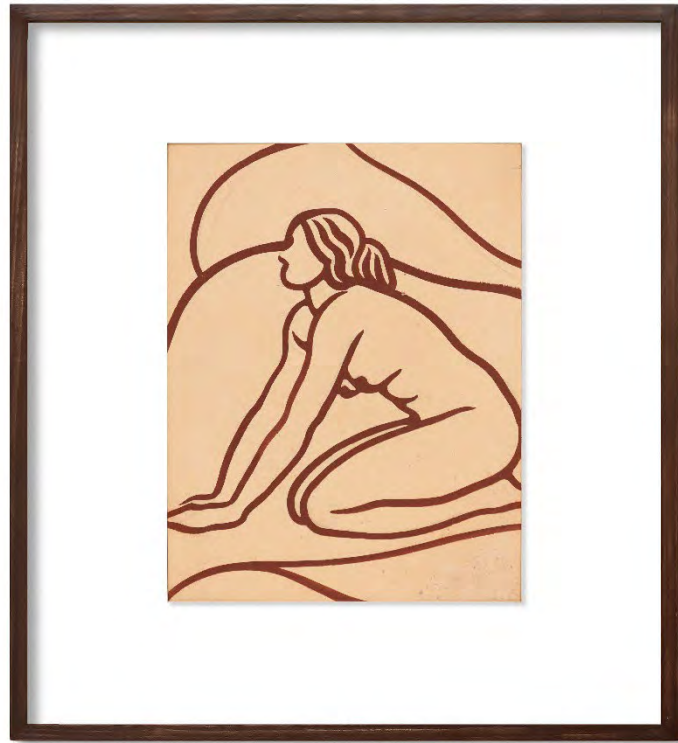




Untitled
Watercolour on paper
9 x 7.2 in. (23 x 18.5 cm.)
c.1930s
Unsigned

AB1658



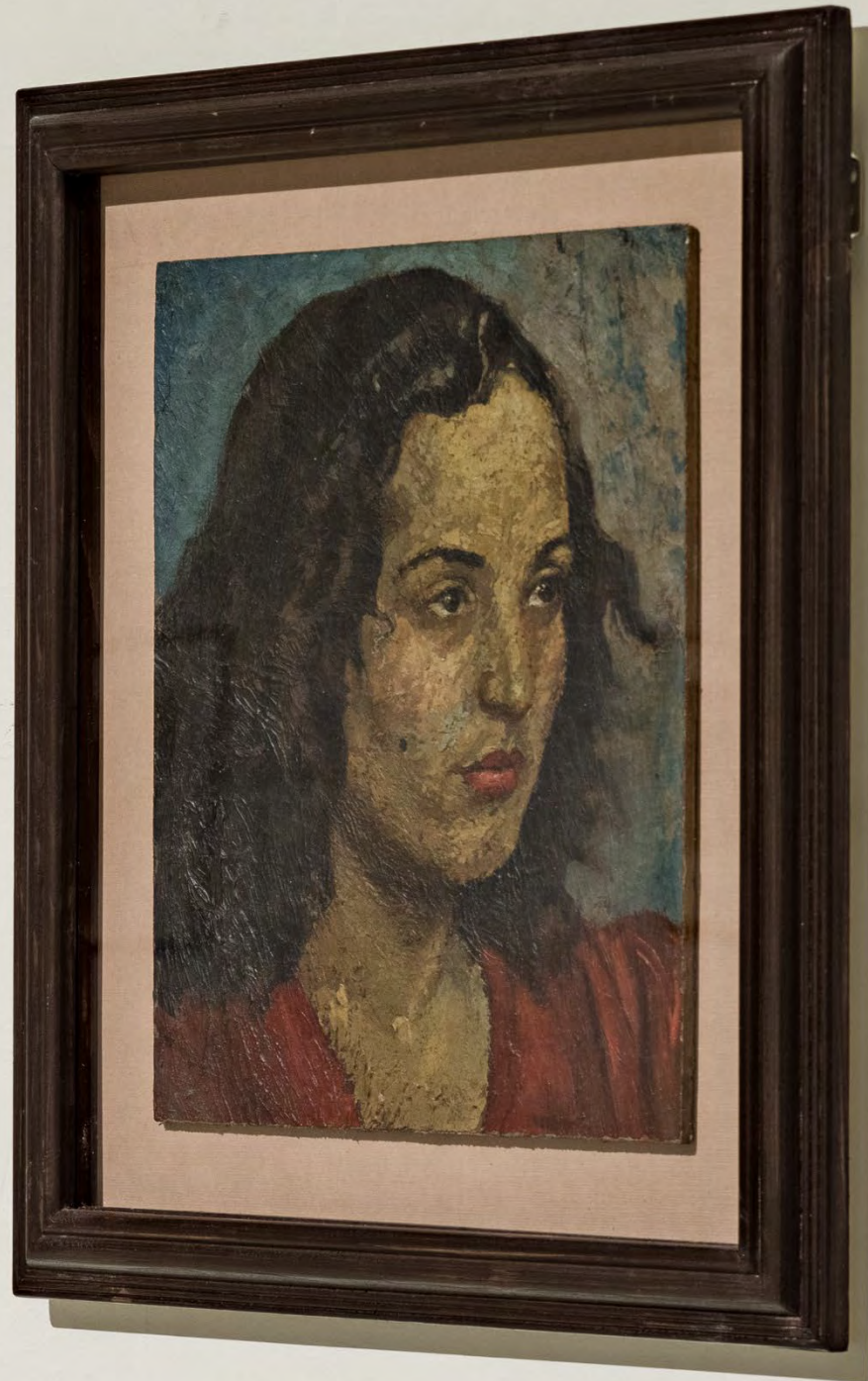


Untitled
Watercolour on paper
9 x 7 in. (22.7 x 17.5 cm.)
c.1930s
Unsigned

AB1659



Portraits





Portrait of a Girl
Oil on canvas
14 x 12 in. (36 x 31 cm.)
c.1930s
Unsigned

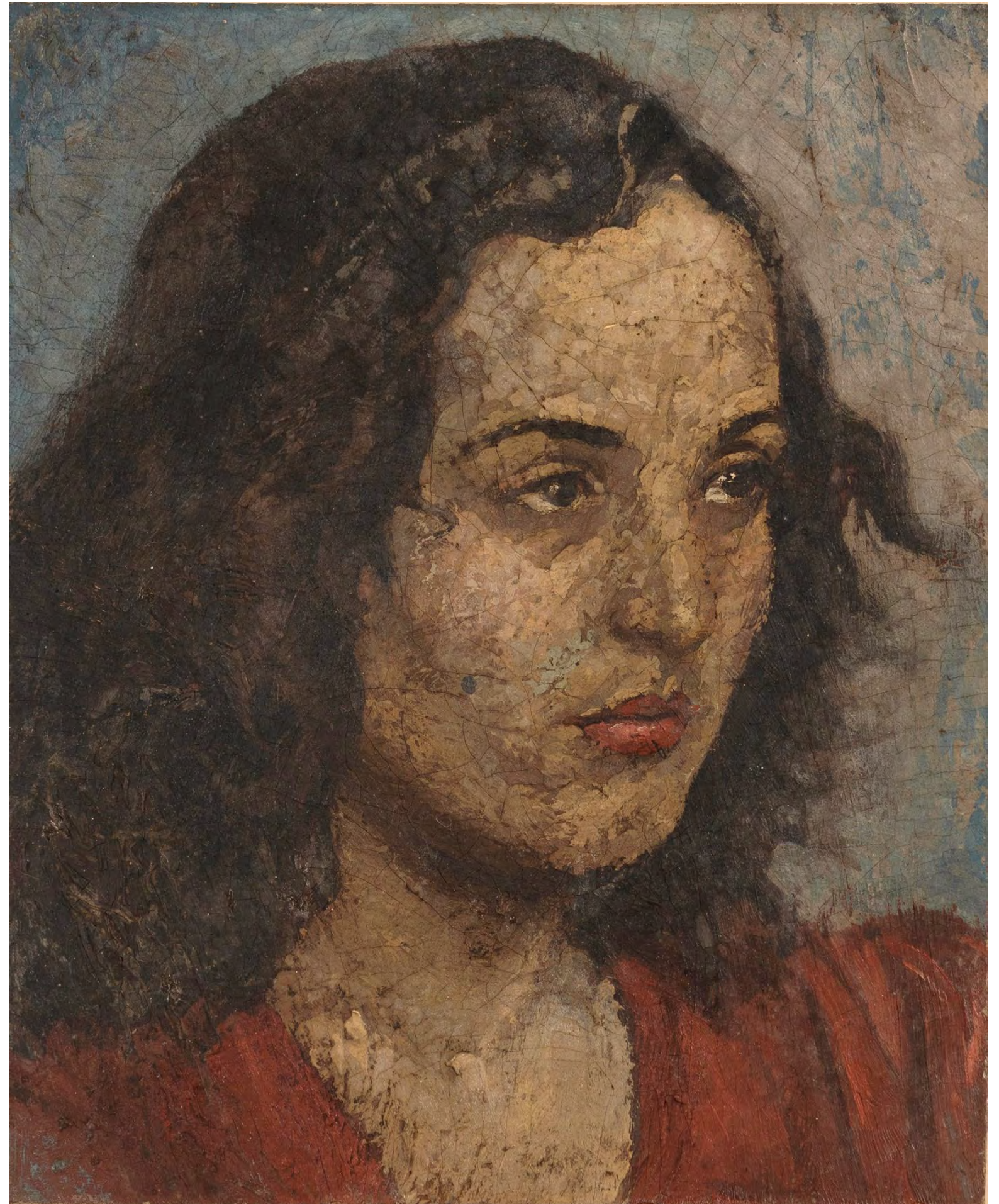
AB1667





Portrait of a Village Woman
Oil on ply board
11.8 x 11.8 in. (30 x 30 cm.)
c.1940s
Unsigned

AB1705





Portrait of a Village Woman
Oil on ply board
11.8 x 11.8 in. (30 x 30 cm.)
c.1940s
Unsigned

AB1704





Man with a bamboo hat
Oil on ply board
11.8 x 11.8 in. (30 x 30 cm.)
1949
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1702

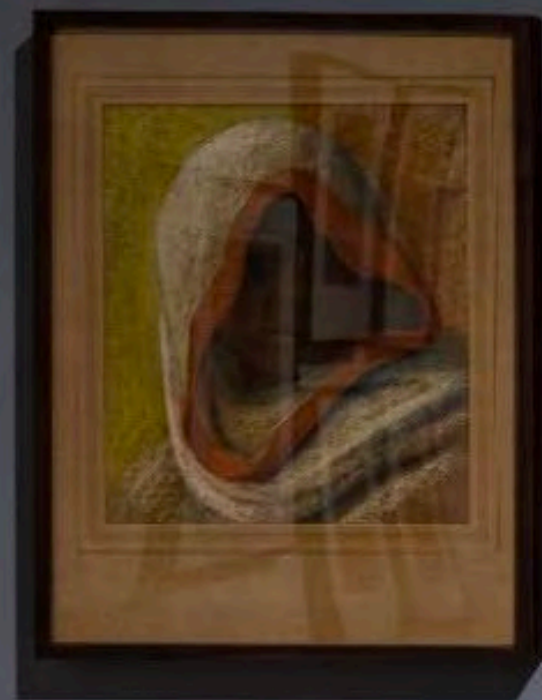




Portrait Study
Conte and charcoal on paper
15 x 11.3 in. (38 x 28.7 cm.)
1933
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1669







Woman with a Veil
Dry pastel on paper
11.7 x 10.2 in. (50.5 x 38 cm.)
1937
Signed in English (lower left)

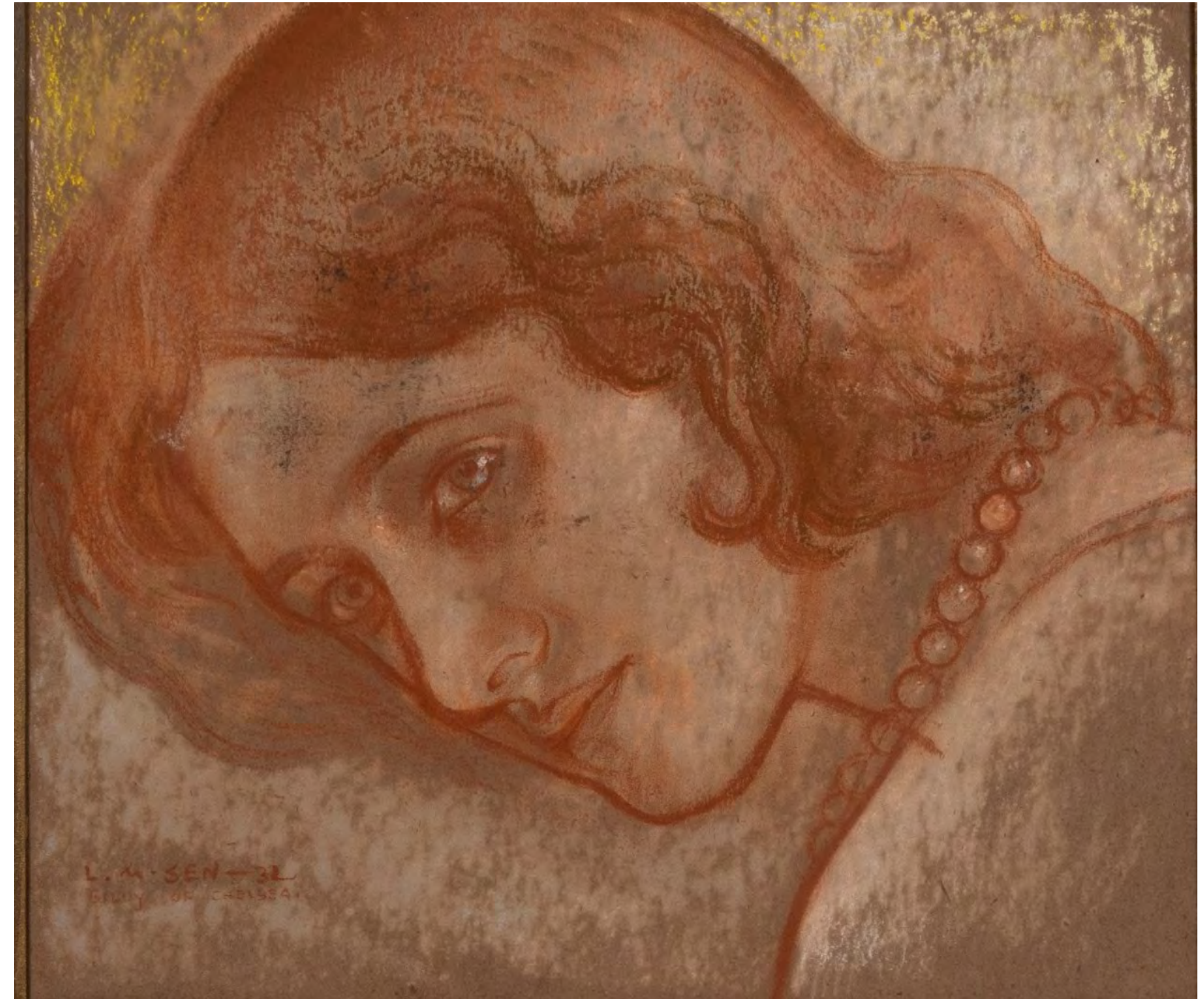
AB1691





Billy of Chelsea
Crayon and dry pastel on paper
15.2 x 14.2 in. (38.5 x 36.5 cm.)
1932
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1695

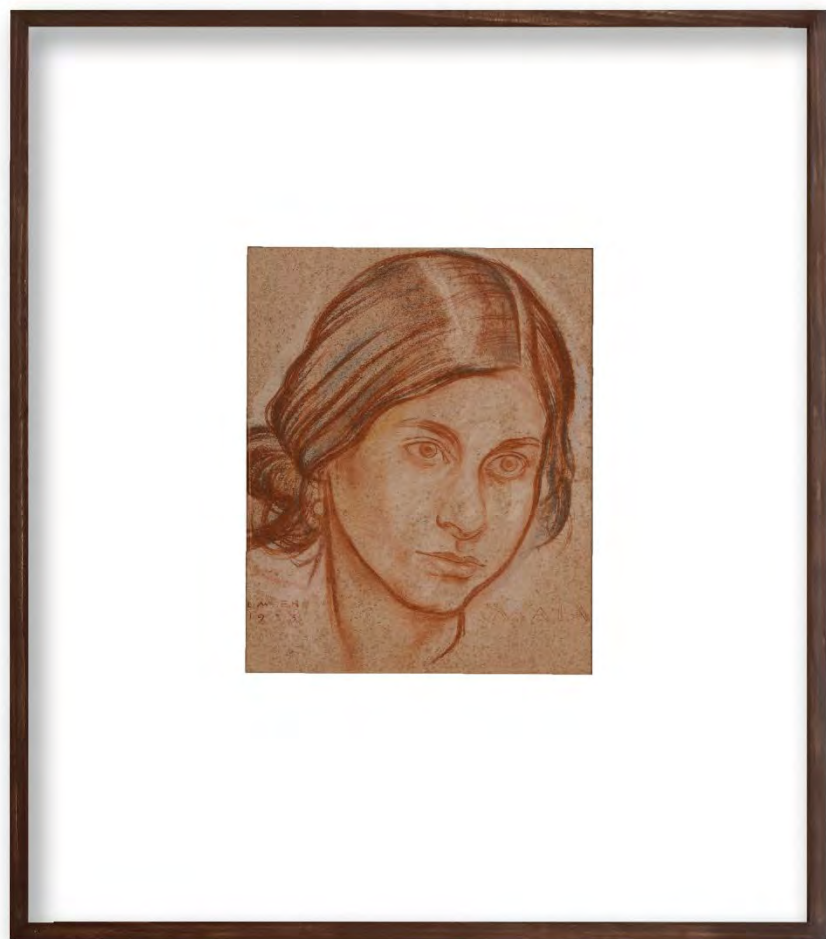




Portrait of a Woman
Crayon and dry pastel on paper
14.7 x 11.2 in. (37.5 x 28.5 cm.)
1931
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1696





Mala
Conte and dry pastel on paper
14.7 x 11.2 in. (37.5 x 28.5 cm.)
1933
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1697





A Woman from Bhira Kheri, U.P.
Dry pastel on paper
20 x 15 in. (50.5 x 38 cm.)
1948
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1690





Adolf Hitler
Red pigment on paper
9.5 x 8 in. (24 x 20 cm.)
1934
Signed in English (lower left)

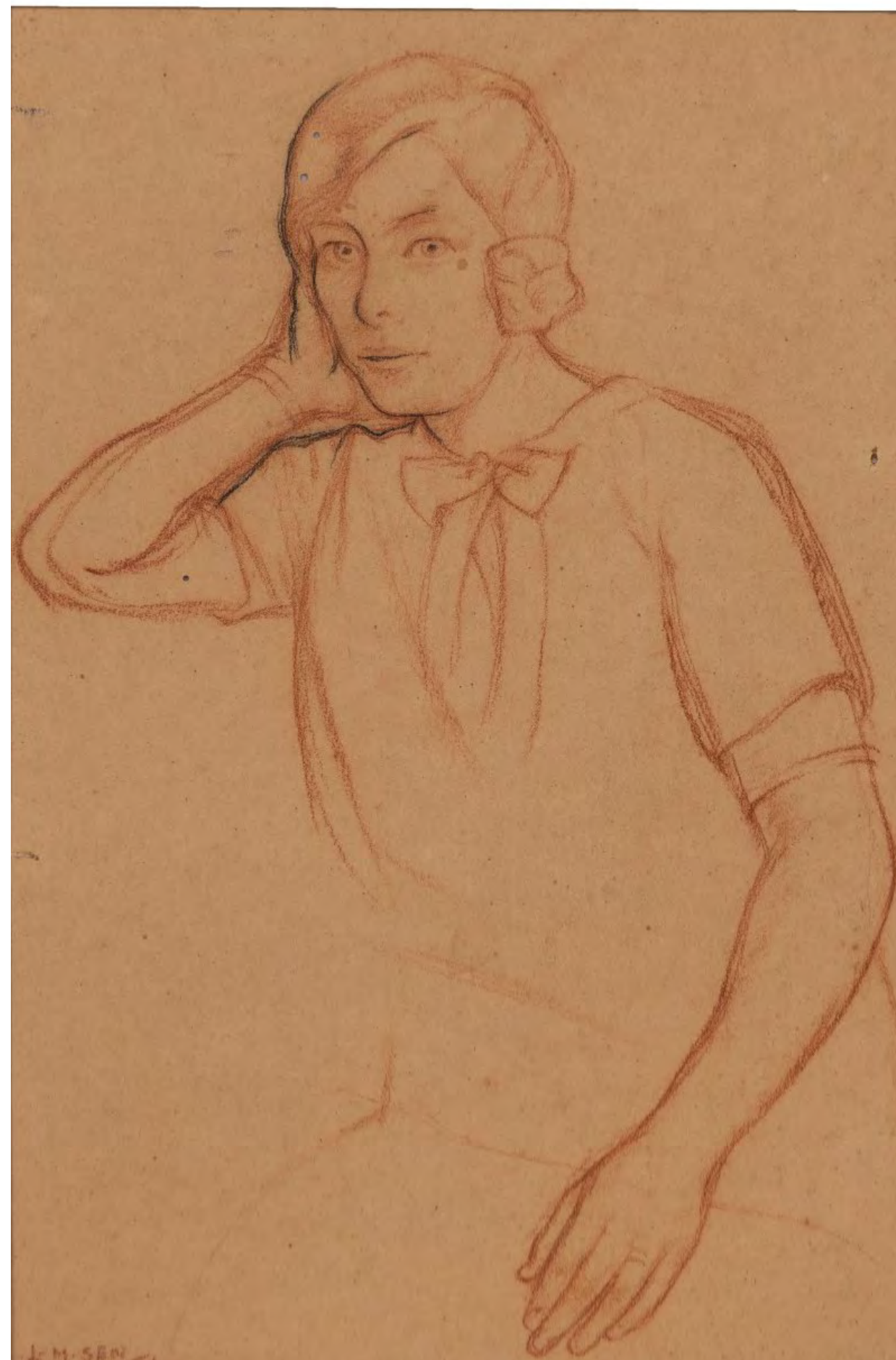
AB1692

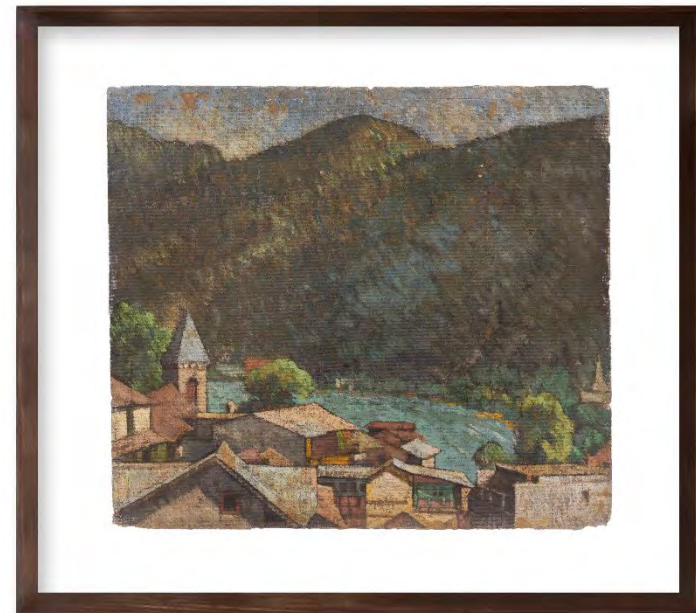




Figure Study
Crayon on paper
13 x 9.7 in. (33 x 24.5 cm.)
1926
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1682





A. *Portrait of a Boy*
Oil on canvas
15 x 13 in. (37.5 x 32 cm.)
1933
Signed in English (lower right)

B. *Mountain Village*
Oil on canvas
13 x 15 in. (32 x 37.5 cm.)
c.1930s
Unsigned

AB1666



Landscapes



The Temple Corner
Oil on board
17.7 x 20.5 in. (45 x 52 cm.)
c.1940s
Signed in English (on the reverse)

AB1699





Clouds gathering
Tempera on board
15 x 18 in. (38 x 45.5 cm.)
1934
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1700





Islamic Monument

Watercolour on paper

10 x 13.7 in. (25.5 x 35 cm.)

c.1930s - 40s

Signed in English (lower right)

AB1665





Smiling Gold
Oil on board
19 x 21.7 in. (48.2 x 55 cm.)
1950
Signed in English (lower left)

AB1701





Photograph for the painting Smiling Gold
Silver Gelatin print
10 x 15 in. (25.4 x 38 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1716



Indian Style



A. *The Three Wise Men from the East*

B. *Untitled*

Watercolour on paper

A - 4.7 x 5.7 in. (12 x 14.5 cm.)

B - 4.7 x 5.7 in. (12 x 14.5 cm.)

1932, London

Signed in English (on the reverse)

AB1664



A Musical Performance
Watercolour on paper
8 x 11 in. (19.5 x 28.5 cm.)
c.1920s - 30s
Unsigned

AB1668





Portrait of a Hill Woman
Ink on paper
9.4 x 7.6 in. (24 x 19.5 cm.)
c.1920s
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1694



Printmaking

LM Sen, one of the pioneers of modern printmaking in India, was the first Indian artist whose woodcuts of Gandhi and Rabindranath, done in 1922, were acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum for permanent display. He joined the Royal College of Art's (RCA) Engraving School under Professor Osborne in 1925 and did his first etching there. Besides obtaining a diploma in drawing and painting, he also earned a special certificate in wood engraving from RCA.

LM Sen is widely known for his woodcuts and linocuts. In our collection, we have three albums: *Woodcuts* (1928; 15 woodcuts); *Badrinath Sketches in Lino and Woodcuts* (1940, 13 folios); and *Amarabatir Rajkumarir Snan-Yatra* (1941; 8 folios).

Many of his woodcuts and linocuts, even those that appeared in the albums, were published in popular magazines like *Aloka*, *Shilpi* and *The Hindoostan*. He also created linocuts for books, such as *Snowballs of Garhwal* (1946) and *Field Songs of Chattisgarh* (1947).

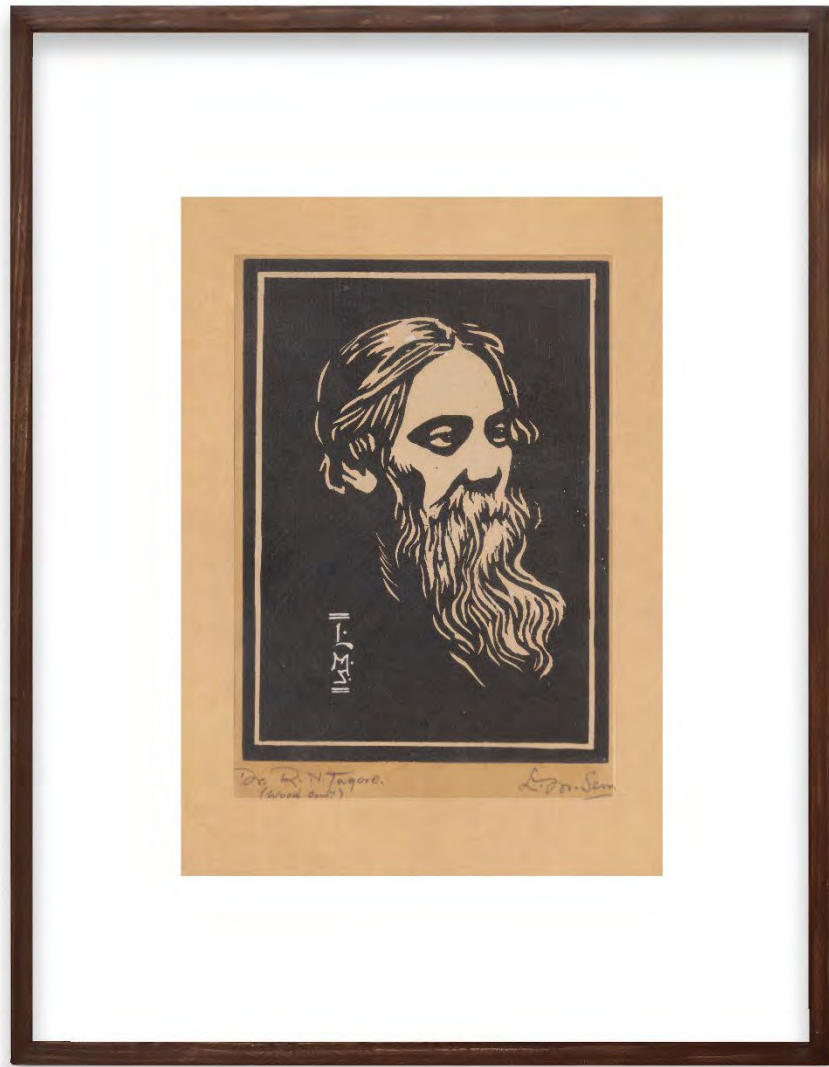




Copy After a Self-Portrait by Anthony van Dyck
Etching
5.7 x 4 in. (14.5 x 10 cm.)
1926, London
Signed in English (lower left)

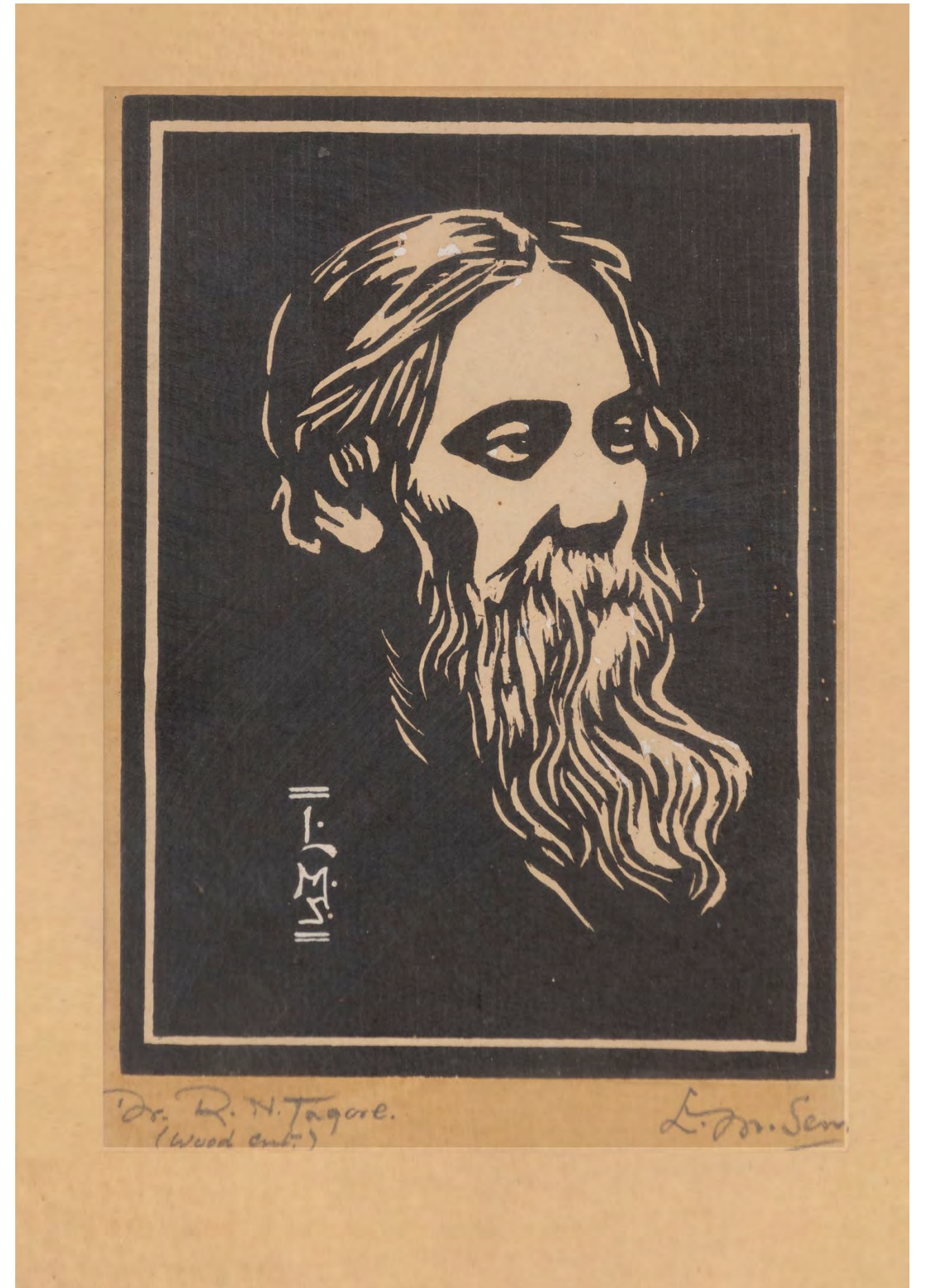
AB1637





Dr. R.N. Tagore
Woodcut
7 x 5 in. (18 x 12.7 cm.)
1922
Signed in English (lower right and lower left)

AB1633





Gandhi Reading a Book
Wood engraving
12.5 x 11.4 in. (32 x 29 cm.)
1947
Unsigned

AB1639





Dal Lake, Kashmir
Woodcut
2.5 x 3.3 in. (6.5 x 8 cm.)
c.1920s
Unsigned

AB1635





A Dark Girl
Woodcut
4.6 x 3 in. (11.5 x 7.5 cm.)
1928
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1641





Shah Hamdan Mosque , Kashmir
Woodcut
2.7 x 3.5 in. (7 x 9.4 cm.)
1926, Lucknow
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1645



Functional Art

LM Sen's hometown Shantipur is famous for handloom textiles, and his father was the last of a long generation of master artisans. Sen also showed genuine interest in textiles and wrote a monograph, "Textile Printing by Hand Block" (1941) and made a series of creative patterns. He was a skilled commercial artist whose poster in the RCA's Sketch Club exhibition won him the Federation of British Industries's first prize in 1925. He also received the Lal Chand and Sons' Prize for the best Calendar in Simla Fine Art Societies Exhibition. Sen made several posters on Kashmir and studied the art of typography at RCA, particularly Edward Johnston's styles. He tried to create a new commercial art language in India, influenced by the graphic works of the Beggarstaffs. He was fascinated by the neatness of their design and stencilling method.

His linocut illustrations were widely appreciated, and he also created decorative pottery, leather and wooden works, showing his interest in functional crafts.





Untitled
Watercolour on paper
15 x 11 in. (38 x 28 cm.)
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1655

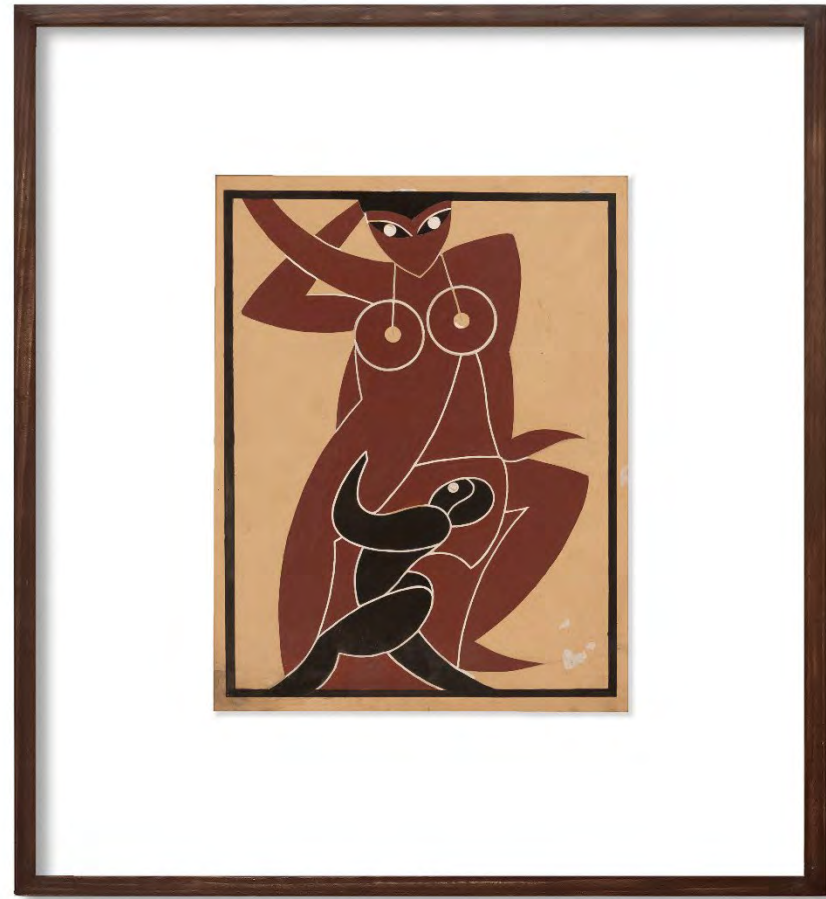




Untitled
Watercolour on paper
15 x 11 in. (38 x 28 cm.)
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1657





Putana
Watercolour on paper
15 x 11 in. (38 x 28 cm.)
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1656





Patterns
Watercolour and gouache on paper
12 x 7 in. (31 x 18 cm.)
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1660





Patterns
Watercolour and gouache on paper
13 x 6.3 in. (33 x 16 cm.)
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1661



Untitled
Earthenware
11.7 x 8.5 in. (29.7 x 21.5 cm.)
2.830 kg.
c.1920s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1758



Photography

LM Sen became a member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain in early 1925 when he was a student at the Royal College of Art, London. However, his earliest photograph in our collection dates back to 1922, taken in Kashmir. In London, he regularly practised photography, and one of his photographs, 'Homewards', was shown in the society's annual exhibition in 1925. He played a crucial role in spreading photographic culture in India through the UP Amature Photographic Association (Est. c. 1933). He is said to have established a Commercial Art section at Lucknow Art School, where photography was taught.

Most of his photographs are black and white, which he often used for paintings, drawings and prints. He experimented extensively with the photographic medium, using various kinds of paper and techniques, such as Bromoil, to create different visual effects. He took pictures of the posed models, but many of his photographs are about the indigenous people and places, mainly of the Garhwal regions of Uttarakhand.

Sher Singh, Sharan Thapar and Seth Sahebs of the Seth Studio were his friends. They all went to the forest together to hunt, except Sen Saheb. He spent much of his time with nature and the forest people in Jaunsar-Bawer, near Lucknow. He drew and photographed their life. Many of his woodcuts and linocuts were based on them. After spending ten-fifteen days in the forest, he returned, and none could find him for another few days—the time he spent developing negatives in the darkroom. It was the age of black-and-white photography, but he had a magical talent. He used novel techniques to create various tones for his pictures. As a result, even an ordinary photograph looked attractive.

Jogendra Nath Yogi, a student of LM Sen at Lucknow Art School
(JN Yogi, 'Lalit Mohan Sen Smarane,' *Achman*, V. 2, I. 3, Howrah, 2019)



Installation view



Installation view



Face
Silver Gelatin print
14 x 12 in. (35.5 x 30.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1738





Little Girl
Silver Gelatin print
12 x 10 in. (30.4 x 25.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1719





Village Girl
Silver Gelatin print
14.3 x 11 in. (36.3 x 28 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1727





Woman at the Door
Silver Gelatin print
12 x 10 in. (30.4 x 25.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1736





Woman Leaning against the tree
Silver Gelatin print
15 x 12 in. (38 x 30.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1739

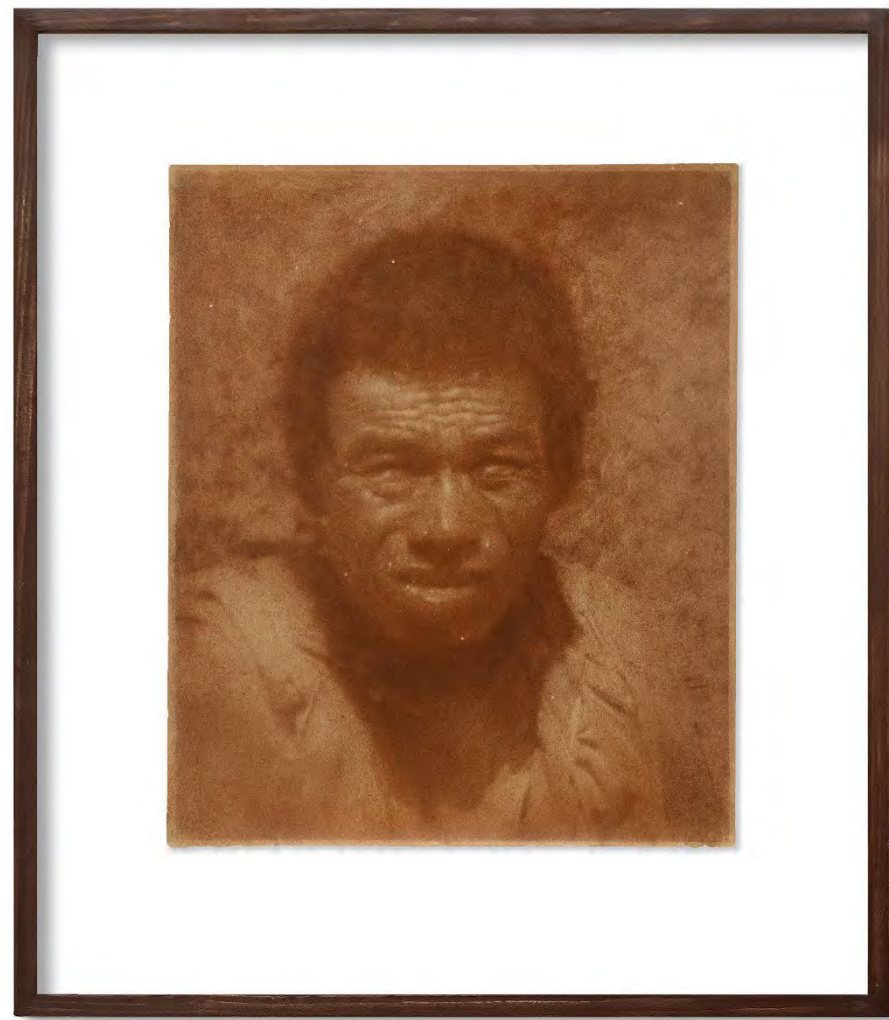




Photograph for the painting *Smiling Gold*
Silver Gelatin print
10 x 15 in. (25.4 x 38 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

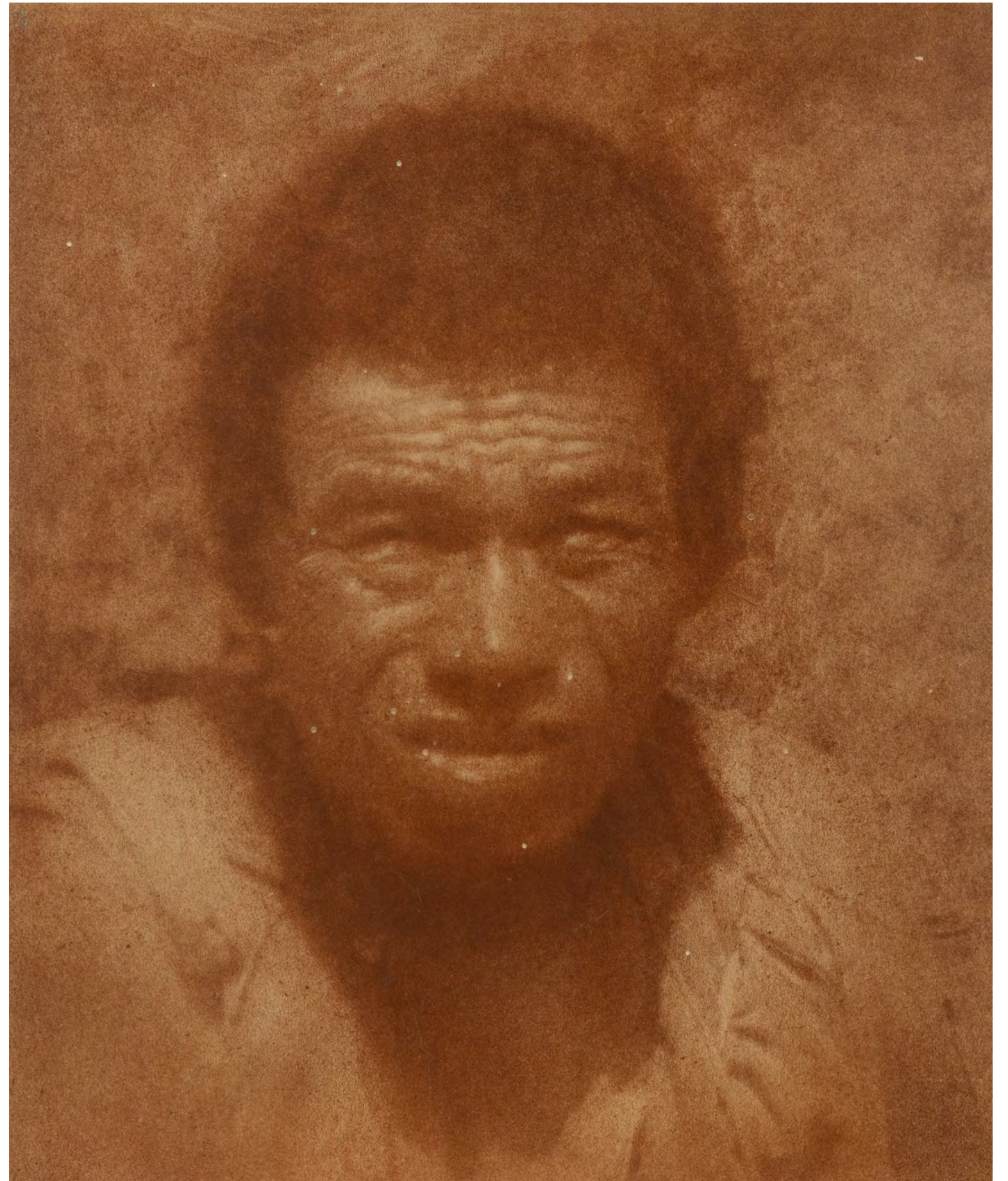
AB1717

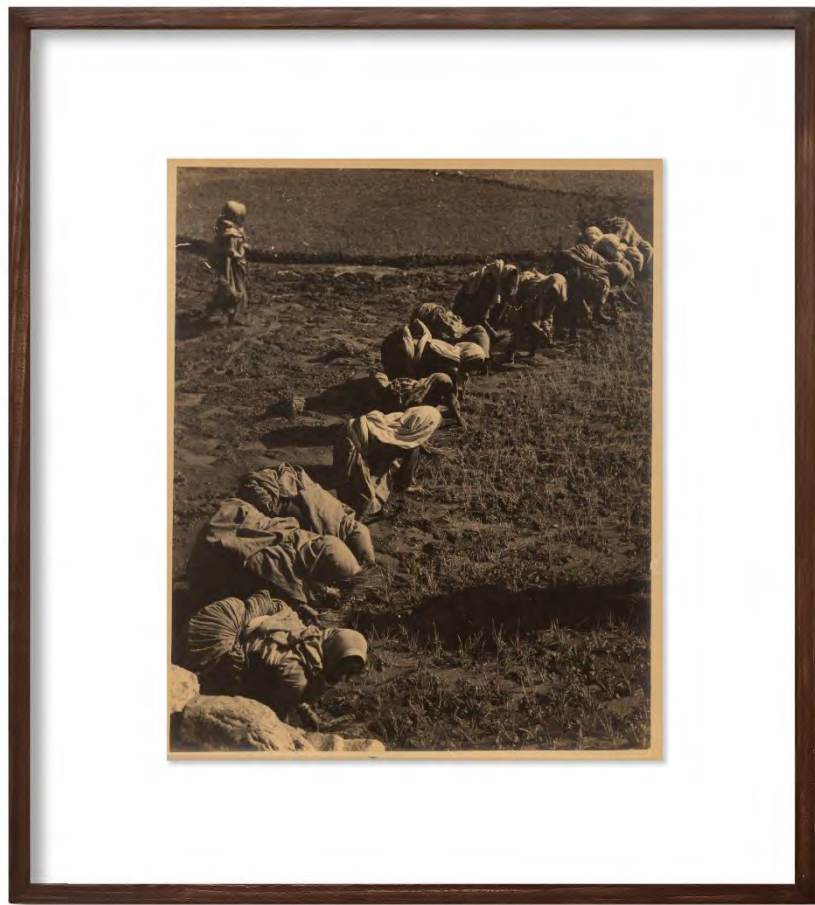




Portrait of a Man
Silver Gelatin print (Bromoil)
12 x 10 in. (30.4 x 25.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1720





Harvest Season
Silver Gelatin print
12 x 10 in. (30.4 x 25.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1730





Preparing Morning Tea
Silver Gelatin print
10.5 x 12 in. (26.6 x 30.4 cm.)
1952
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1733





After her Bath
Silver Gelatin print
11 x 14 in. (28 x 35.5 cm.)
1949
Unsigned

AB1740





Untitled
Silver Gelatin print
12 x 10 in. (30.4 x 25.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1745





Untitled
Silver Gelatin print
15 x 12 in. (38 x 30.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1747





Forest View
Silver Gelatin print
10 x 12 in. (25.4 x 30.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1749





Sky View
Silver Gelatin print
8 x 11.5 in. (20.3 x 29.2 cm.)
1941
Signed in English (lower right)

AB1750





Weeds in a Large Pond
Silver Gelatin print
10 x 12 in. (25.4 x 30.4 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1751





Fields on the Hills
Silver Gelatin print
10.2 x 14.2 in. (26 x 36 cm.)
c.1940s - 50s
Unsigned

AB1752



Sculpture



Installation view

Woman Figure
Wood
14.9 x 4.3 x 4.9 in. (38 x 11 x 12.5 cm.)
1.700 kg.
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1757



Woman Figure
Wood
14.9 x 4.3 x 4.9 in. (38 x 11 x 12.5 cm.)
1.700 kg.
c.1930s - 40s
Unsigned

AB1756



Standing Woman

Bronze

7.8 x 1.8 x 1.3 in. (19.8 x 4.5 x 3.3 cm.)

1.030 kg.

c.1930s - 40s

Unsigned

AB1706



EMAMI ART

KOLKATA, INDIA

Emami Art is a contemporary art gallery based in the green purpose built Kolkata Centre for Creativity building in Kolkata, India. Promoting emerging, mid-career and established artists and engaging with contemporary and historical material, the gallery produces exhibitions of modern, contemporary and cutting-edge art as well as commissioning artists to create site-specific pieces.

The gallery programme includes a regular lineup of talks, seminars, panel discussions and conversations with artists, curators and key partners. The gallery delivers its commitment to providing a long-term supportive environment for emerging talent through free access to mentorship programs, workshops, residency opportunities and innovative educational activities that facilitate artistic development. It also stages events across the cultural spectrum, such as concerts, performances, symposiums, publications, collaborative projects, film screenings, and learning-orientated incubator programmes.

EMAMI ART

Kolkata Centre for Creativity

777 Anandapur | E.M. Bypass | Kolkata 700107 | 033 6623 2300

www.emamiart.com | Facebook: @emamiart | Instagram: emami_art