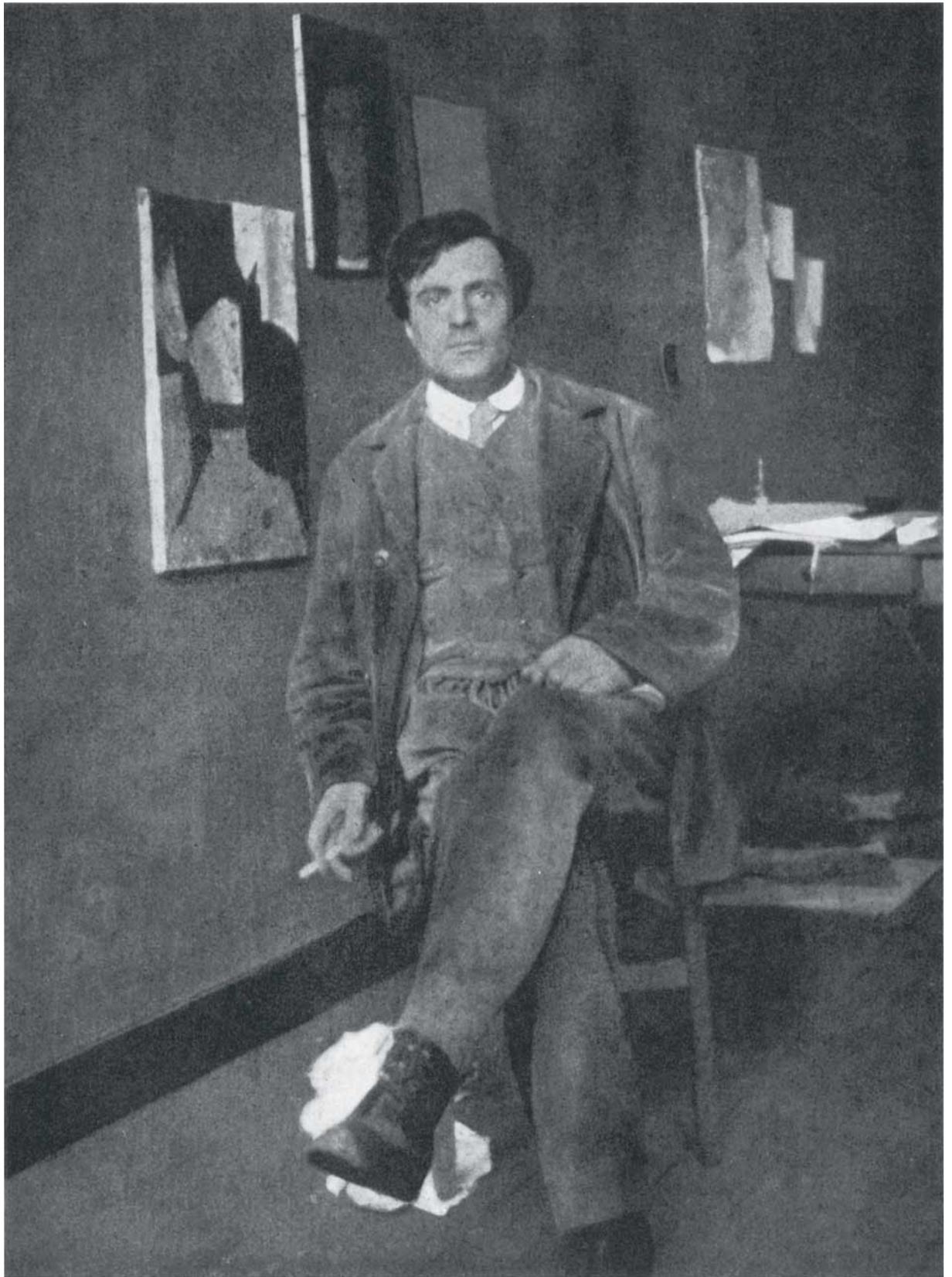


Amedeo Modigliani



Werner Schmalenbach

Amedeo Modigliani

Paintings · Sculptures · Drawings

PRESTEL

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Frontispiece: *Amedeo Modigliani in his Studio*, c. 1918

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Foreword

This book was inspired by a very special kind of identification with the art of Amadeo Modigliani, for the author acquired three outstanding works by the artist for the museum of modern art in Düsseldorf—now K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen—of which he was the director for 28 years. The first was an oil sketch of a caryatid dating from around 1911 when Modigliani still aspired to become a sculptor. It came to the collection in 1962—the year the museum was founded—almost directly from its previous owner Dr. Paul Alexandre who, by this time well advanced in years, had been Modigliani's doctor in Paris and also his first buyer. The second was acquired in 1965 at the memorable auction of the André Lefèvre collection in Paris. This was one of Modigliani's finest portraits, that of the poet Max Jacob from the year 1916. The third was added much later—in 1985—and was the highly unorthodox portrait of the Mexican painter Diego Rivera from 1914 who, like Max Jacob, was one of Modigliani's closest friends.

It was the presence of these three magnificent works in the collection which inspired the author to study the artist's oeuvre in greater depth. This resulted in an exhibition accompanied by a catalogue, the present book.

I would like to thank Dr. Anette Kruszynski for all her help in carrying out this project and in particular for compiling the texts following the plate section which are taken from statements about Modigliani made by his friends and contemporaries.

Thanks are also due to my publishers, Prestel Verlag, with whom it was yet again a real pleasure to work.

WERNER SCHMALENBACH



1 Bride and Groom 1915/16

Preface

To this day, the work of Amedeo Modigliani is still in many ways eclipsed by the legend of his life. Views of his art, of a more or less conventional nature, have been formulated and have gained currency; but the great fascination for many people remains the man himself. This is partly, but not wholly the consequence of a latter-day film based on a romanticized version of his life. It was not long after his death that his own literary friends and contemporaries, some of whom were to survive him by several decades, began to portray his life in a sensationally effective mixture of fact and fiction.

All this has long since been corrected; but even today, the principal image of Modigliani in people's minds is that of a dazzling bohemian figure in pre-1920s Paris. By way of compensation, as it were, for their bourgeois lives, people seem to need a projection of their own unrealized dreams. They love to see—at a distance—a painter who appears to embody all the freedom that is beyond their own grasp, along with such appropriate trappings as women, drugs and alcohol in excess: a man who is radiant and tragic at one and the same time; a life that is lived to the full; a life that lurches towards a fated early death, followed two days later by the suicide of the woman who is carrying the artist's child. All this seems as beautiful and as terrible as stereotypical artistic life is supposed to be. It has very little to do with reality.

True, the triad of women, drugs and alcohol did play a crucial role in Modigliani's life. Even more crucial was his always precarious state of health, after the onset of tuberculosis in his early years in Italy. But how did all this affect his art? The answer is that it did not affect it at all. Artistically, Modigliani's restless life is an irrelevance. Accordingly, anyone who looks in this book for a *chronique scandaleuse* will look in vain. None of the perils that menaced his life is reflected in his art. None of them ever deflected him from his chosen artistic course. His painting is totally free of destructive influences; it is, indeed, an exceptionally controlled art. Everywhere we look there is form, order and a sense of artistic responsibility. It might be said that Modigliani led a double life: on the one hand his erratic existence on the streets of Paris, in cafés, dives and studios; on the other the life that he led with his art. Even where these two lives came into contact thematically, they were lived quite separately.

This is demonstrated by even his swiftest studies, those in which he captured the look of a man or woman at an adjoining café table: they show an unfailing mastery of form. Modigliani's line never wavers. His sketches, the works that by their nature are most exposed to the passing influences of life, are always remarkable for the amazing sureness of their line. This applies in particular to the last years of his life, when he was in a process of rapid physical decline. All of which means there is no need to dwell on his biography.

He was an Italian, and he was a Jew. He was a member of the *Ecole de Paris*, a school of painting that in the early years of last century was made up of numerous major and minor artists from every country under the sun. There was a strong contingent from Eastern Europe, and many of these were Jews. Modigliani knew almost all of them, and some of them were his friends. Artistically, however, he remained a loner—although Paul Cézanne remained his guiding star all his life, and although from a very early stage he was in touch with Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi and a few others.

For all his modernity, Modigliani was a great traditionalist; and yet, of all the artists of the past—and of the Italian Renaissance in particular—whose work he loved so much, there is not one to whom he can be said to have been particularly indebted. If there is a strong classical tendency in his art, this does not mean that his art was backward-looking, nor that he took any part in the varieties of Neo-classicism that were already beginning to emerge in his lifetime. Artistically, he stood at the periphery of the contemporary avant-garde, though he was surrounded by avant-garde artists.

The stature of his art is somewhat obscured by a large number of weak works, such as every strong artist produces, and in Modigliani's case these are largely responsible for the way in which his art is commonly visualized: they are the works in which certain stylistic traits are turned into formulas. From such a view of his work, which dismisses it as all 'swan necks and almond eyes', he needs to be liberated for the sake of those magnificent paintings by him that we possess—the portraits above all. Such is the purpose of this book, which treats Modigliani's art not as a mirror of his life but—in accordance with the artist's own lofty aesthetic ethos—as a body of work quite separate from the life.

The Sculptor: Heads and Caryatids

It seems to have been the dream of Modigliani's life—at least for a period, and possibly at a very early stage, when he was still living in his native Livorno—to become a sculptor. This is contradicted, admittedly, by the fact that in Livorno, in Florence and in Venice he studied not sculpture but painting, but it remains significant that when he was living in Paris, after 1906, his mother addressed her letters to 'Amedeo Modigliani, *scultore*'. It is suggested that he was prevented from realizing his dream by his less than robust state of health, and possibly also by the high cost of materials.

His output of sculptures is small and spans a very narrow thematic and stylistic range. Almost without exception, his sculptures are idol-like heads, carved in stone; there is also one kneeling caryatid, and one standing figure. Although we can assume that some works were destroyed—wooden sculptures in particular, only one of which has survived—the tally of surviving works is a modest twenty-five or so. This body of work is, however, accompanied by numerous drawings, watercolours and gouaches, and by a few oil sketches, on sculptural themes. Many of these studies relate directly to specific sculptural projects, whether realized or not.

Modigliani very rarely dated his works, so their chronology and evolutionary sequence are highly uncertain. It seems that his intensive concern with sculpture began in 1910, and that it was over by 1913 or 1914. At that point, for whatever reason, Modigliani lost interest; and if his work is considered as a whole—sculpture on one hand, painting on the other—it seems very likely that he simply concluded that he was not really a born sculptor. What he was born to do was to paint and to draw.

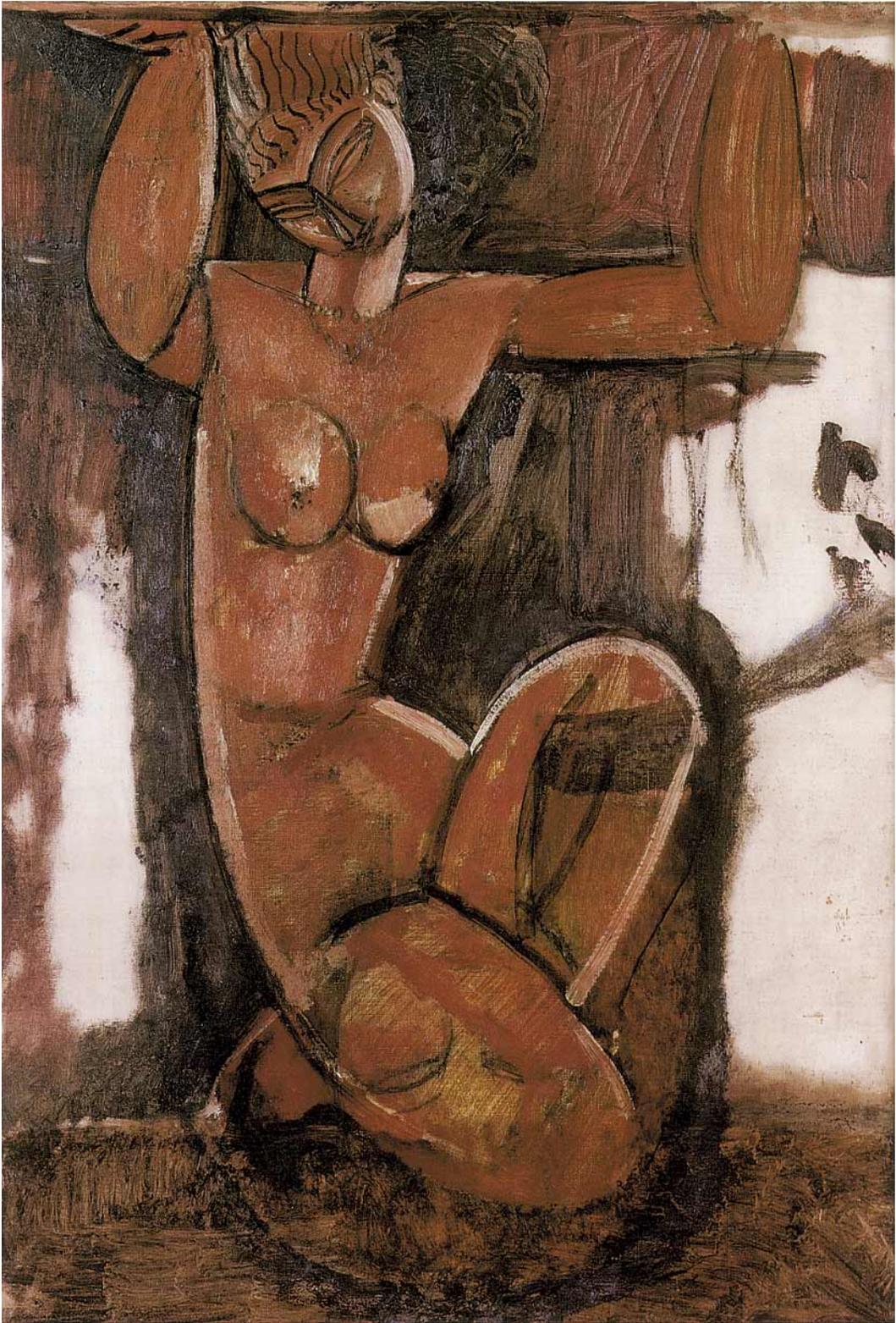
It has sometimes been said that Modigliani's work as a painter reveals a fundamental leaning towards sculpture, insofar as its only theme is the human individual, isolated from any context that might qualify his or her sheer physical presence. This is not wholly convincing, because his paintings are invariably characterized not only by painterly flesh-tones but by a strongly marked pictorial coherence. True, in his early works there are clear indications of volume, but these indicate a closeness to Cubism rather than to sculpture. It is

not true that in the depths of his being Modigliani was a sculptor, prevented by circumstances from pursuing his true vocation. He was a painter in the full sense of the word. Painting was his natural medium, and his few sculptural works—fine though they are—reveal that sculpture was not. That lifelong dream of his was a self-deception, and after a few years he gave it up.

It was around 1911 or 1912 that Modigliani painted an oil sketch of a kneeling or crouching *Caryatid* that has to be seen in the context of his interest in sculpture (pl. 2). By comparison with the rest of his paintings, it has a decidedly sculptural character: it looks rather as the artist might have imagined a stone caryatid to look.

What was it about the caryatid theme that fascinated Modigliani during his period of exclusive concentration on sculpture? It is true that the female human body was a lifelong preoccupation of his; but then, this can hardly be described as the body of a woman. This caryatid is not a nude. It is not a representation of an unclothed woman, although it is a female figure consisting of torso, limbs and head. The figure works primarily in a 'formal' way: its form exhausts its meaning. Under the pretext of carrying an—invisible—burden, the body and its component parts are forced in specific directions, generating a complex rhythm of horizontals, verticals, diagonals and curves. The artist has chosen his theme solely for the sake of this formal structure.

Accordingly, this *Caryatid*—in contradiction of the very definition of the word—does not assume the function of supporting an entablature. There is nothing there to support. The relevant posture is nothing but an attitude. The figure braces her arms (although 'braces' is far too active a word) against the upper edge of the picture; but the load-bearing theme remains an empty gesture, a mere undertone to a preoccupation with something quite different. The motif here is not the act of bearing a load but the rhythm of the parts of the female body, uninfluenced, and certainly uncoerced, by any load whatever. The artist is concerned with clear volumes, and with their rhythmic relationship to each other; he interprets his *Caryatid* entirely 'abstractly', as a strictly formal, totally static figure. Even in his late paintings a strong element of abstraction persists.



2 Caryatid 1911/12

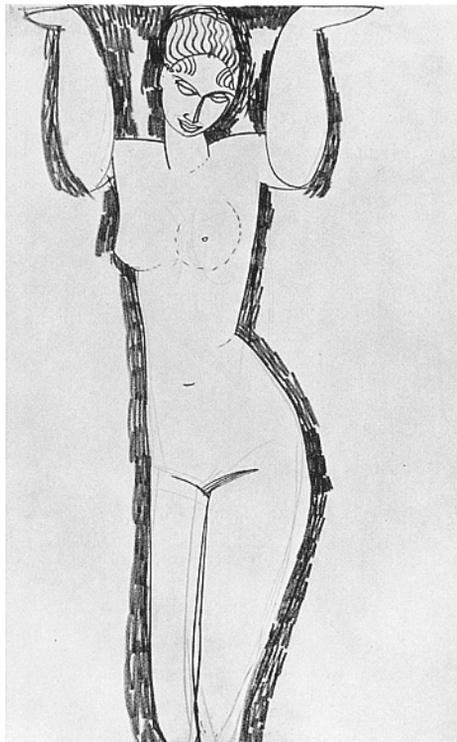
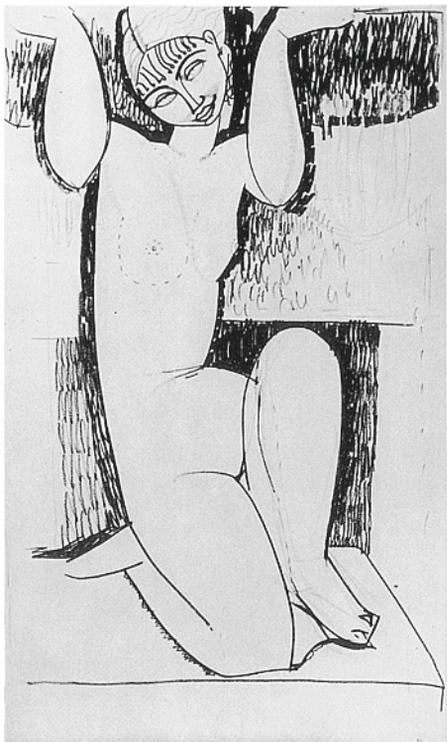


Fig. 1 *Caryatid*, 1910/11, charcoal

Fig. 2 *Caryatid*, 1910/11, charcoal

In all this, there is no such thing as an attempt at ‘spiritual’ expression. The ‘spirit’ lies in the artistic language itself; and that language, despite a few temperamental, freehand, sketchy brush-strokes, is devoid of expressiveness.

Whenever a painter takes the human body as his subject, he tells us a great deal by what he actually does to it. Modigliani is interested in clearly demarcating the individual solid forms from each other, thereby interrupting the organic flow. The body of his *Caryatid* is composed of a small number of solids separated by strong outlines: the trapezoid of the trunk, with the globes of the breasts; the thighs at right angles; the fore-arms acting as supports, one of which is perpendicular to the horizontal of the upper arm; and finally, supported by the cylindrical form of the neck and leaning in the opposite direction, the oval of the head—in which, again, the individual parts are precisely demarcated from each other: the narrow, volumetric triangle of the nose and the almond-shaped eyes beneath arched brows. The artist is concerned, above all, to set off form against form, and to give each individual part a high degree of formal autonomy. In many related drawings this becomes even more evident. This scansion of the body does not impair its overall form: all is held together by rhythm, colour and natural proportion.

The same sort of structuring consistently appears in Modigliani’s caryatid studies of 1910–12 (figs. 1, 2), whether the figure is kneeling or standing, and whether the technique is

pencil, pastel, watercolour or gouache. Occasional ‘painterly’ additions, often hugging the outer edge of contours, serve to emphasize the figure and to proclaim the ultimate purpose of the work, which is its realization as a sculpture (apart, that is, from those occasional cases where the additions were made much later by another hand). The strong decorative impulse is unmistakable—as is the linear schematization that arises in some of these works, with their near-geometric articulation and the clean divisions between their parts.

At the time when Modigliani painted his oil sketch of a *Caryatid*, the separation of volumes was a central principle in contemporary art. The notion of discontinuity unleashed, among the leading artists of his generation, an unprecedented questioning of the organic continuities of Nature. It was this idea of ‘Abstraction’ that Wilhelm Worringer contrasted with ‘Empathy’ in his celebrated book *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, published in 1908. ‘Abstraction’, in Worringer’s sense of the term, did not at all imply a renunciation of Nature as a whole but a refusal to ‘empathize’ with its organic essence. In sharp contrast to the ‘melodious’ linearity of Art Nouveau, art now became decidedly anti-organic. Cubism, above all, dismembered and fragmented everything in order to give full expression to form, as distinct from living Nature. Even the Fauves, who were not very interested in ‘form’, shattered the continuum of Nature with their ‘autonomous’ slabs of colour.



3 Caryatid 1914

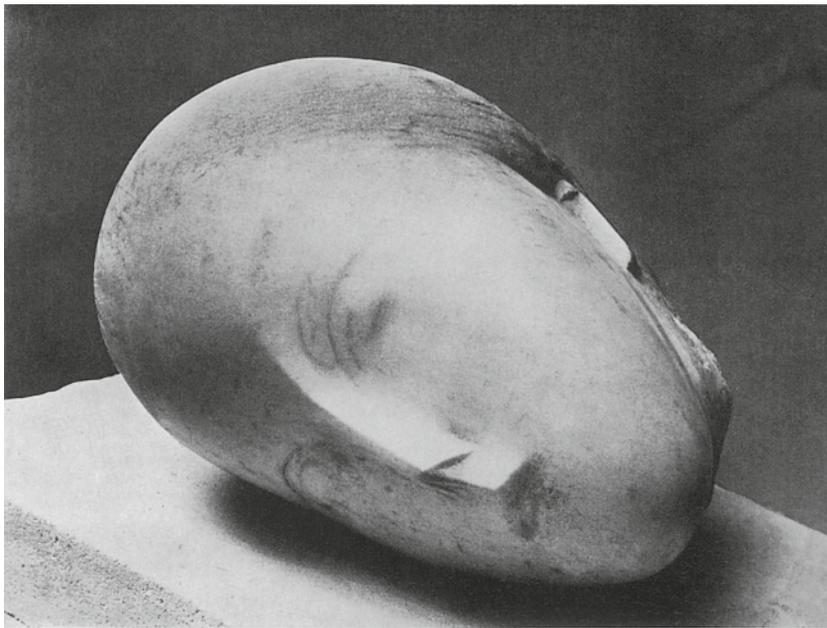


Fig. 3 Constantin Brancusi, *Sleeping Muse*, 1909, marble. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

The principle of discontinuity and disjunction was particularly potent in sculpture—not only in that of Picasso, but equally in that of Henri Matisse. The ‘logical’ consequences of the principle included collage and assemblage, techniques that were practised in the circles in which Modigliani himself moved; not only by the Cubist painters, the true originators of these new procedures, but also by such sculptors as Alexander Archipenko (whom Modigliani did not rate highly) and Henri Laurens.

Modigliani himself never took the decisive step of ‘destroying’ objects and figures. It was characteristic of him that he always avoided extreme Modernist gestures. There are no assemblages in his work, nor even any collages, which became the dominant trend in Cubist circles from 1912 or 1913, with such momentous consequences for all of twentieth-century painting. Just once, he prominently affixed a newspaper clipping to one of his paintings (pl. 28). His relationship to the various Modernist movements was—to put it paradoxically—one of close detachment. This applied particularly to Cubism, whose influence on Modigliani’s early work is visible but should not be exaggerated. He painted portraits of Picasso and of Juan Gris, but he was very little influenced by their art. He was never prepared to ‘destroy’ a bodily whole for the sake of a totally different conception of pictorial wholeness.

His *Caryatid*, despite her brusquely juxtaposed parts, is a ‘whole’ figure, not only because of the unified colour scheme but because the proportions of the human body have been

respected. In particular, the body is unified by the unbroken curve that leads from the right armpit down to the right knee, and past the fractures in the central parts of the body and at the top of the thighs. Modigliani took no part in what used to be called, wrongly, the Cubist shattering of form. All destructiveness—even where, as in the work of the Cubists, it had a manifestly constructive pictorial function—was profoundly alien to him. The *Caryatid* makes it clear that his intention, despite his almost geometrical reduction of the individual parts, was constructive, even architectural.

It should be said that by 1910 or 1911, when the *Caryatid* was painted, the decomposition (or ‘shattering’) of objects for the sake of new formal structures was no longer part of the Cubists’ programme; their eye was already much more on the autonomous rhythm of the pictorial components, in which the objective motif ended by being almost entirely absorbed. In this sense, Modigliani’s approach was not only distanced from theirs but retarded—closer, in fact, to the early Cubism of 1908 than to that of the period around 1910 or 1911. This ‘retardation’ is a plain fact to anyone aware of the historical dynamics involved, but it has no bearing on any assessment of artistic stature. No artist is under any obligation to keep up with history.

Was Modigliani simply a moderate, a measured Modernist? That is one way to put it, certainly, especially as the whole idea of measure is undoubtedly central to his whole work—remarkably so for an artist whose life showed such an appalling lack of it. Cézanne’s historic exhortation to repro-



Fig. 4 Constantin Brancusi, *Mademoiselle Pogany*, 1913, marble. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

duce Nature in accordance with its formal content of 'spheres, cones and cylinders' reached Modigliani around 1908, although he did not draw from it the same logical conclusions as did the Cubists. The Cézanne retrospective at the 1908 Salon des Indépendants came as a revelation to him, as it did to many contemporary artists. His *Caryatid* can hardly be called Cézannesque, but its form is clearly dictated by the 'spheres, cones and cylinders' posited by Cézanne.

This strictly formal, 'architectonic' concern is connected with Modigliani's lifelong desire to give his paintings a tight skin of paint and with it the qualities of solidity, stability and durability. *Caryatid* exemplifies this. It may be regarded as an essential characteristic of his painting that he set out to convey, through composition and through the paint itself, an impression of something constant and enduring, beyond personal 'temperament', beyond any individual need for self-expression, and also beyond the aesthetic precepts of the moment. Beauty, harmony, proportion, euphony are constant features of his art, features that we associate with the idea of the classical.

This deep-seated preoccupation enabled Modigliani to absorb the powerful influence of Cézanne while at the same time distancing himself from any further evolutionary moves, whether made by Picasso or by Matisse. He stood aloof from all kinds of radical innovation, such as defined the image of new art in his day. And yet his art, for all its ties with artistic traditions, and especially with those of his native Italy, was not backward-looking; in its own time it was

entirely 'modern', even though some were already reproaching him for not being progressive enough. Modigliani's art contained no trace of his training in the Italian academies. But it also stayed free of contemporary artistic trends; and this was both its strength and its weakness. It was its strength, as an entirely individual and autonomous art; and its weakness, as an art that opened up no new territory.

One influence that was present, and powerfully so for a time, was that of Brancusi, who was his neighbour in the Cité Falguière just after he moved from Montmartre to Montparnasse in 1908–09. In artistic terms this move represented a decisive break with the past: it was now that he embarked on his 'own' path as an artist, and at the beginning of that path stood not only Cézanne but Brancusi. Modigliani and Brancusi were both engaged in finding an artistic language of their own, and each probably had something to give to the other; but the Romanian sculptor, who was eight years older and had come to Paris two years earlier, was probably more important to Modigliani than Modigliani was to him.

It is noteworthy that, in spite of Modigliani's innate classicizing tendency, it was not Aristide Maillol who influenced him—as he influenced the young German sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, also in Paris at that time, who needed Maillol as a way to free himself from Rodin. Modigliani's contact with the more radical innovator Brancusi meant that he had no need to take the detour by way of Maillol.



Fig. 5 Constantin Brancusi, *Caryatid*, 1915, wood. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Brancusi and Modigliani remained very close for a while. Modigliani made just one portrait of his older friend—not a very convincing one—on the back of one of the two versions of his *Cellist*. Later, when Modigliani gave up sculpture, he and Brancusi became estranged.

In 1909 Brancusi made the prone marble head to which he gave the title *Sleeping Muse* (fig. 3). Its closeness to Modigliani's *Caryatid*, and to a number of his drawings on the same theme, is unmistakable, although, surprisingly, the volumetric articulation is more marked in the painter's work than in that of the sculptor. Brancusi's concern with volumetric detail seems much greater three years later, in *Mademoiselle Pogany* (fig. 4). Thereafter, his interest turned in the direction of absolute form, which became his ideal world. Modigliani was too involved with the human image to be capable of following Brancusi along this more 'Modernist' path. This is evident from a comparison of any sculpture of a head by Modigliani with any by Brancusi, even though these hieratic idols mark the extreme of formal absoluteness in Modigliani's oeuvre. In 1915 Brancusi carved a wooden *Caryatid* of his own (fig. 5). This audacious work goes far beyond Modigliani; surprisingly, its proportions are rather African-looking, far more so than is ever the case in Modigliani, and to a degree that by 1915 was decidedly out of fashion.

The two artists inevitably parted company; indeed, as *Sleeping Muse* shows, they had been on different paths from the very first. Modigliani's art was frankly anthropocentric. The

human form was its content and its measure, so exclusively so that in the whole of his output there are just four landscapes and not one single still life—let alone a 'narrative' image or, at the opposite extreme, a gesture towards non-figurative, non-objective, 'absolute' art: the art, represented by Brancusi, to which the immediate future belonged.

Whenever one considers these early Paris years of Modigliani's, the name of Picasso spontaneously comes to mind, not only because he was the central avant-garde figure at that time but because he embodied, as no one else did, the 'Cézanne tradition', while simultaneously taking the decisive steps that led beyond Cézanne. Picasso was central to Modigliani's field of view, even though the latter felt closer, personally, to other artists in his circle. It was clear that Picasso set the standard, both through his commanding stature and through his incomparably innovative action and thought.

In 1907, the year after Modigliani's arrival in Paris, Picasso painted *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O. J. no. 1149), the key work in early twentieth-century art. It may be assumed that Modigliani saw it in Picasso's studio, which was close to his own. In the centre of this massive painting stands a woman with her arms linked above her head. She may not be a caryatid, but the figure—especially in Picasso's numerous sketches for the painting—definitely bears comparison with Modigliani's work on the caryatid theme. For Picasso, too, this is a purely formal theme, in which the principle of discontinuity, drastically reduced to a few lines, is even more decisively



Fig. 6 Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, 1907, oil on canvas. The Museum of Modern Art, New York



Fig. 7 Pablo Picasso, *Standing Nude*, 1907, watercolour

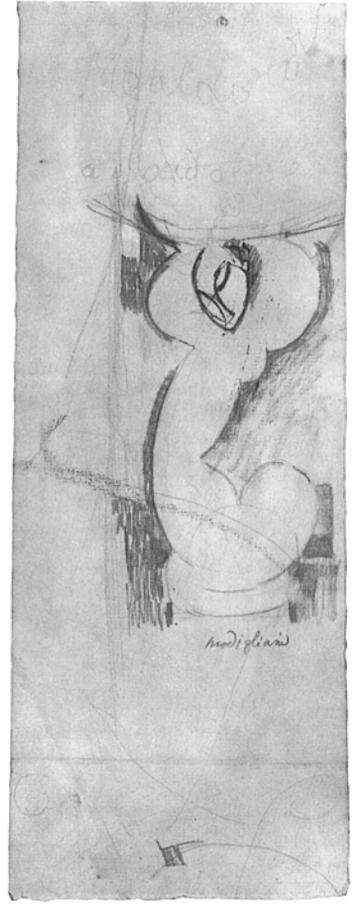


Fig. 8 *Caryatid*, 1911-14, Graphite pencil, black ink and pale red crayon

applied than it is by Modigliani: the triangle of the torso, the splayed thighs, the rectangle of the folded arms. In the final painting, admittedly, Picasso goes beyond the formal into the expressive. We need not assume that Modigliani saw Picasso's sketches, but the affinity is obvious; and it is anything but accidental, because this way of structuring the human body reveals the destined course of art after 1900: away from organic unity and towards an opposite, near-geometric, non-organic approach to form.

In almost every one of his studies, however hasty, Picasso shows himself to be the more dynamic and expressive artist; Modigliani always remains not only static but often purely decorative. Many of his caryatid drawings foreshadow what later became known as 'Art Deco'. Only rarely does one of Modigliani's drawings betray the 'expressive' influence of Picasso. If one of these works is compared with a Picasso watercolour study dated 1907 (figs. 7, 8), the affinities are as obvious as the differences. The cast of the facial features is surprisingly similar in both artists; but the body in Modigliani, by contrast with that of Picasso, reposes in the harmony

of its curves. Picasso's dynamism, his forward impulse, his crossing of boundaries, is entirely foreign to Modigliani. His ideal of beauty is wholly different, which one might be tempted to ascribe to his Italian origins were it not for the fact that around 1910 Italian art was represented by the Futurists.

The theme of the caryatid has a dignified tradition of its own. In the history of European art and architecture it has close ties with the idea of Classicism, especially as it takes its exemplary form in the caryatid portico of the Erechtheum on the Acropolis in Athens. But the origins of the motif are far older; and to Modigliani, for all his classical bent, the home of the caryatid was in Archaic and—closer to his own heart—in Etruscan art.

The art of other ancient cultures was also important to him, notably that of Africa, which from the mid 1900s onwards became the focus of the aesthetic debate and which, in artistic and intellectual circles, very soon became a dominant fashion. In African art the caryatid theme appears especially in the supporting figures of the stools made by the Luba (fig. 9), in

present-day Zaire, and also in Cameroon, Nigeria and elsewhere, although less often in the former French colonies, which were the sources most readily accessible to Paris.

Black African art had been 'discovered' a few years before Modigliani's arrival by a number of artists whom he was to know well, including Picasso, Matisse, André Derain and Maurice de Vlaminck, all of whom became passionate collectors. Others who became his friends, including the sculptors Jacques Lipchitz and Jacob Epstein, were collectors of African art, as was the painter Frank Burty Haviland of whom Modigliani painted two portraits (pl. 21). And finally there was Paul Guillaume, the subject of several portraits (pls. 36, 37) and Modigliani's occasional dealer from 1914 onwards, who dealt not only in the work of the leading younger artists but also, with great enthusiasm, in African sculpture.

We know from Lipchitz that Modigliani was a great admirer of the art of Africa and Oceania, but there can be no question of it having had a very strong influence on his work. The direct influence of 'primitive' art on the Parisian artists of those years has in any case tended to be overestimated. They were very deeply impressed, but the impact on their own work remained generalized. Those who were first captivated by this art, the Fauves, reveal next to no influence in their own work. For clear symptoms of a personal confrontation with African art, we must turn to Picasso.

Fig. 9 Stool from Zaire (Luba/Hemba). Museum für Völkerkunde, Frankfurt/Main



Aside from what was spoken of, in highly general terms, as its 'primitive' quality, African art was perceived (although this was never made explicit) in terms of the principle of separation of volumes, together with the vitality inherent in the material, which was wood: an anti-organic formal principle on one hand, and the organic natural power of the material on the other. The interaction of these two opposing forces generated the extraordinary formal and expressive intensity that was so admired in African sculpture.

Paul Gauguin had failed to perceive this, as can be seen from his own ostensibly 'primitive' woodcarvings; these works, in which he attempted to come closer to the formal ideas of the peoples of Oceania, are strange hybrids of European, Indian and Oceanic elements. Gauguin's horizon, in keeping with the artistic sensibilities of his generation, was bounded by the ancient cultures of Egypt and India. In his paintings he never disrupted the organic unity of the human body. This was done only in the generation that followed him, and it was only in that generation that any real encounter between European art and the art of (mainly) Black Africa, but also East Africa, could take place.

Here, too, Modigliani kept his distance. A comparison immediately shows just how un-African even his caryatid studies are. His figures have none of the vitality, and none of the expressiveness, of the African stool-supporters. Their spirit is a completely different one, as is their wholly un-

Fig. 10 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Fruit Bowl*, 1912, carving. Kirchner-Haus, Davos



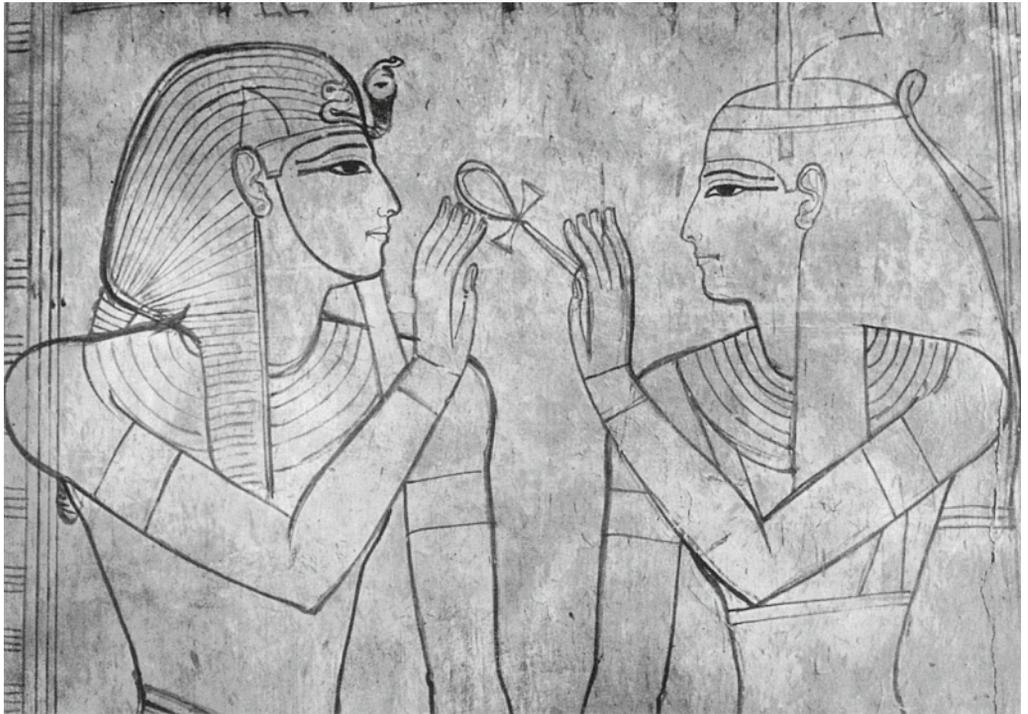


Fig. 11 Sethos I. before Maat, c. 1300 BC.
tomb of Sethos I., Thebes, Valley of Kings

African air of proportion and elegance. Just how much more directly it was possible for an artist of Modigliani's generation to respond to these works is shown by a wooden caryatid figure carved by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (fig. 10)—even though Kirchner's deliberately crude treatment of his material is based on a misconception of the nature of 'primitive' art, which it seems to attempt to outdo in primitiveness.

Modigliani was more strongly influenced by other artistic worlds: Egypt, India, Archaic Greece, the Etruscans. Here, too, however, direct influences are found only very occasionally, even though these worlds had already been important to some of the artists of the preceding generation, and to Gauguin in particular. Here and there, even so, there is an allusion to Egypt (figs. 11, 12). The Russian poet Anna Akhmatova tells us that Modigliani often used to take her to the Egyptian department of the Louvre; according to her, he dreamed of Egypt and 'all the rest could be disregarded'. Several of his stone idols have the 'Archaic Smile' (fig. 13, pl. 94), found not only in early Greece (fig. 14) but in India and even in the Gothic art of mediaeval Europe. Modigliani was well aware of all this, and the affinities are conscious. He also certainly found stimulus in Cycladic and Cretan art.

All this particularly applies to the stone heads that form the major proportion of his surviving sculpture. It seems that Modigliani visualized these idol-like heads, seven of which he showed at the 1912 Salon d'Automne, as a large 'decora-

Fig. 12 *Female Head in Profile*, 1910/11, charcoal.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York,
The Loan and Lester Avnet Collection





Fig. 13 *Head*, 1911/12 (pl. 94)



Fig. 14 *Head of a Standing Goddess*, attic, c. 580 BC. Antiken-Sammlung, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin

tive ensemble'. Similarly, as Paul Guillaume and Ossip Zadkine both tell us, he seems to have imagined his caryatids as *colonnes de tendresse*: pillars in a temple of beauty. Such quasi-religious ideas are in keeping with the hieratic austerity of the heads, their abandonment of naturalism, and the remoteness of their expressions. In these works Modigliani, surely under the influence of Brancusi, carried the ideal of formal purity far beyond all the abstractness and 'purism' of his paintings. Here, far more radically than in his paintings, he was an artist of the twentieth century—not that that meant anything to him.

His *Heads* are 'formal' to an extreme degree, without thereby losing their enigmatic character. The most radically formalized is the splendid *Head* from the Niarchos collection (pl. 98), with its exaggerated verticality, the utterly disproportionate nose that juts so sharply from the swelling form of its face, its long chin, and its vestigial forehead. To varying degrees, most of the *Heads* show the same characteristics. Not only are they strictly frontal in design, but they are almost invariably left rough on the back, and this in itself may indicate that the artist did not really think in three-

dimensional terms and was therefore not wholly a sculptor. In the course of the few years he spent as a sculptor, Modigliani's style underwent a transformation. His one and only *Standing Figure*—also conceived as a caryatid, faintly reminiscent of Cycladic idols (figs. 15, 16)—is still stylistically close to the purely formal studies; by contrast, the figure of a *Kneeling Caryatid* is much more strongly spatial and voluminous (pl. 100). In this it differs markedly from the *Caryatid* in the earlier oil sketch (pl. 2), despite the related pose. Its individual forms no longer have the same decisiveness; all is softer, more rounded, more mobile. The woman's body detectably bends under the weight of the superincumbent slab, though there is no sign of muscular exertion. These comparatively organic properties make the figure far removed from the Cubist vision, which still shows its influence in the oil sketch. On the other hand, the principle of the discreteness and autonomy of the individual masses is completely maintained.

This sculpture is accompanied by numerous related studies, which are also less formalized and less static than their predecessors: more lively, mobile, dynamic (fig. 17). Slender-



Fig. 15 *Standing Figure*,
c. 1912/13, limestone. Australian
National Gallery, Canberra

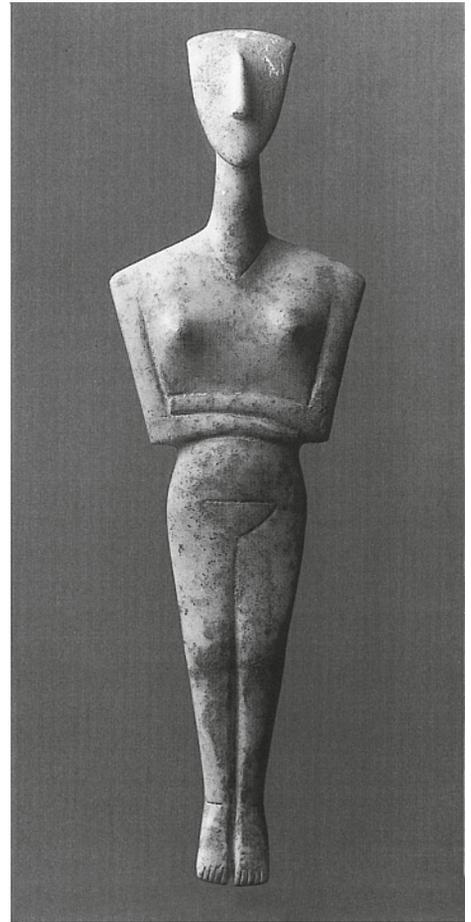


Fig. 16 *Idol*, Greece,
2700 - 2400 BC, marble.
Cyclades, Naxos,
The Menil Collection, Houston

ness has given way to ampler forms. Everything now seems more organic; but the increased dynamism is based not so much on a natural deployment of forces as on a vigorous jockeying for position on the part of the individual body parts. Sometimes this takes place at the expense of anatomy, in that individual parts are disproportionately emphasized. It is also noticeable how inorganically the oval or round form of the head rests on the shoulders.

The bodies in the earlier studies are so decoratively articulated that they seem to fit effortlessly into the rectangle of the paper, but in the later works the bodies seem not only to fill the picture area to the very edges but to be on the point of bursting out of it. The drooping heads, pressed down by their burden, still recall Brancusi, but even these are now much more freely handled, with less concern for volume in detail and much more solidity of effect overall. This applies even more strongly to the head of the *Kneeling Caryatid* sculpture, which presents itself as an almost amorphous mass (pl. 100). All this is in keeping with the way in which the finely articulated line of the early studies is replaced by a freer, more painterly idiom in the later ones. The choice of

technique is also symptomatic: initially more pencil, later more pastel, watercolour and gouache.

In the context of the sculpture of his time, Modigliani, with his tiny oeuvre, stands very much alone, despite his close link with Brancusi. There is nothing in contemporary sculpture remotely like, for instance, his hieratic *Heads*. Some have wondered whether he ever met Lehbruck, who was in Paris from 1910 to 1914, the very period in which Modigliani was active as a sculptor. It is entirely likely that the two did meet, in Brancusi's studio or elsewhere, but no record of such a meeting exists. The fact is, however, that the answer to the question would be of no more than biographical interest unless it were to have some artistic relevance; and artistically there is no connection between Modigliani and Lehbruck. The fact that Lehbruck's female figures and busts, too, have a certain elegiac air—which would in any case link them rather with Modigliani's later paintings than with his sculptures—is no evidence of a connection.

Lehbruck was virtually unaffected by anything that was going on in Paris at that time. What mattered to him was an