



## Modern muses: representing the life model in fin de siècle France

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### Keywords

Jean Léon Gérôme, Henri Fantin-Latour, Georges Seurat, artist's model, artist's studio, nineteenth-century French painting.

### Abstract

Artistic inspiration has often been represented by the allegorical figure of a muse. Painters and critics of the 1860s who embraced the 'painting of modern life' seemed to have been dissatisfied with the archaism of a muse of truth, yet to be equally wary of depicting the life model as the representative of inspiration. This unease was renegotiated in the pocket books, novels and Salon paintings of the 1880s and 1890s. In these works, distancing structures of ethnicity and objectification served to neutralise the uncomfortable implications of representing the artist/model relationship. The space of the studio was demarcated as the irreproachable workplace of the artist in which the artist's gaze, and that of the implicit viewer, was granted a certain impunity. The studio scene with a nude female model in its midst appeared frequently in the Salons of the 1880s and 90s. This legitimisation of the gaze allowed these works to create a new form of high art erotica. Like Bacchante and seraglio scenes, the fantasy world of the studio allowed erotic visual imagery, even including the taboo juxtaposition of the clothed and the naked, to pass, though perhaps anxiously, on to the walls of the Salon. The 'modern' nudes of Seurat's *Les Poseuses* in their self-proclaimed art poses undermined the easy voyeurism these images had allowed. However, by thus invoking the model as a modern muse, this work nonetheless foregrounds the artist's solipsism rather than the life model as a social, creative being.

Artistic inspiration has often been represented by the allegorical figure of a muse. Many late nineteenth-century artists and writers wrestled with the complexities of reconciling their engagement with modernity with the representation of the nonetheless tantalisingly evocative motif of the artist muse. Painters, such as Gérôme and Fantin-Latour, and critics of the 1860s seemed to

have been dissatisfied with the archaism of a muse of truth, yet to be equally wary of depicting an obvious 'Realist' alternative, the life model, as the representation of creative inspiration. This unease was renegotiated in the pocket books, novels and Salon paintings of the 1880s and 1890s. The deployment of distancing structures of social 'otherness' and objectification was formulated

around the notion of the model which served to neutralise the uncomfortable implications of representing the socially delicate artist/model relationship. By the 1880s and 1890s the studio scene, previously a rare subject, appeared frequently at the Salons, usually with a nude female model in its midst. The space of the studio offered contradictory readings, at once demarcated as an irreproachable workplace in which the artist's gaze, and implicitly the viewer's, was granted a certain impunity, whilst also envisioning a new formulation of high art erotica. Like Bacchante and seraglio scenes, the fantasy world of the studio allowed erotic visual imagery, even including the taboo juxtaposition of the clothed and the naked, to pass, though perhaps anxiously, on to the walls of the Salon. The 'modern' nudes of Seurat's *Les Poseuses* (1888)<sup>1</sup> in their self-proclaimed art poses undermined the easy voyeurism allowed by the multitude of contemporary representations of the artist's model, envisioning the model as a modern muse, as Paul Smith persuasively argues, a utopian ideal.<sup>2</sup> By attending to popular culture and Salon painting in particular this investigation seeks to explore the wider visual culture within which Seurat's work emerged and was received.

#### **Models and muses: critical debates of the 1860s**

The concept of a 'modèle' evoked many implications for a nineteenth-century Parisian. The shifting complexities of this term can be helpfully elucidated by an initial glance at its definition in critical writing of the 1860s before a more detailed scrutiny of its preponderance in the visual and literary cultures of fin de siècle France. Pierre Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXième Siècle* juxtaposes the diversity of potential readings implicit within this term. The initial supposition of 'an object reproduced by imitation' becomes in a second meaning, 'by analogy', one imitated 'because

of its excellence'. The first definition suggests a process of observation and transcription, whereas the latter implies admiration and emulation. The section devoted to the relationship of *modèle* and *type* explores the question further.<sup>3</sup> An attempt is made to distinguish the two terms on three levels: literal or technical meaning, metaphorical or figurative implication, and discursive association. A *modèle*, in technical terms, is an object from which an external agent creates a similar object or copy, 'un semblable'. The *type*, however, reproduces its own image, either by impression or by casting. As such the replication of the type is more unmediated; it reproduces itself without alteration. Figuratively, however, it cannot be directly transcribed. Being ideal rather than real, the *type* can only be approached, not imitated. Finally the two terms can be distinguished linguistically in that *modèle* is ordinary parlance, whereas *type* appertains to the language of science and philosophy. At each level, the *type* is distinguished as somehow more significant, an exemplar accessible only to a more selective group and even to them unapproachable. The *modèle* in its more mundane and available reality is merely to be used rather than emulated.

The significance of the relationship of the *modèle* or *type* to its transcriber is a crucial one. The *modèle* seems to be much more an object of uncritical study, whereas the *type* inspires those who are tutored to discern its qualities. These oppositions are greatly confused when applied to the human model described in the Beaux-Arts and Encyclopaedic sections of the entry. This play between object of study and exemplar to be emulated became a key anxiety in the painting and criticism of the 1860s. A direct correlation between extraordinary physical beauty and moral virtue had become problematised.

The problem of moral legibility in beauty was vigorously debated in the reception of Gérôme's *Phryné devant L'Aréopage*, 1861



Figure 1 Jean Léon Gérôme, *Phryné devant L'Aréopage*, 1861, Kunsthalle, Hamburg

(figure 1). Phryné, an Athenian courtesan, also model for Praxiteles and Apelles, was brought before the august judges of the Areopagus on charges of impiety. Her legal defence, Hyperides, saved her by displaying her irreproachable beauty to the tribunal who then acquitted her. The perfection of her beauty absolved her from any possible accusation of impiety, beauty was equated with moral virtue.<sup>4</sup> Gérôme's painting was not so happily judged.

Various critics questioned the anachronism of Phryné's beauty as well as the judges' response to it. Amedée Cantaloube objected to the women in both of Gérôme's 1861 submissions.<sup>5</sup> He recognised Phryné's gesture as one of display rather than modesty, the last mock uncertainty of a striptease, titillating rather than concealing. Indeed by covering her own eyes, she invited an unrecriminated glance from the spectators within and without the painting. Olivier Merson saw Phryné's gesture as one of fear,

not only temporally but geographically inappropriate, more reminiscent of the supposed brutality and illicit sexuality of an Orientalist slave market than of a Greek court chamber, infusing a Eurocentric flavour to this debate.<sup>6</sup>

The association of models with prostitution was a crucial and complex aspect in the reading of their representation. Louis Lagrange could only envision this Phryné as an exhibitionist, a feat that even a prostitute, so closely regulated in public spaces, would not have undertaken.<sup>7</sup> She was more disturbing than the mysterious concealed women of the brothel; she was a curious, threatening creature who unclothed herself in a relatively public space, an act not very discrepant from the séance in the academy or the artist's studio. She was indeed a most unsatisfactory *modèle* as well as *type*.<sup>8</sup> Lagrange criticised the choice of model, who lacked a suitably perfect body, but perhaps even more importantly, the hand of M Gérôme, which was unable to enact a trans-

formation in execution. Earlier in the review Lagrange lamented Gérôme's distance from Poussin, whose 'general synthesis' he lacked, overemphatically favouring 'analyse', 'précision', 'le vrai'.<sup>9</sup> M Gérôme's attention to detail interfered with the unity of the picture's moral message.

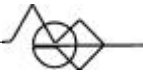
The relationship of the nude and detail was a very tense one. That which transfigured a naked woman into a nude was in many ways the suppression of detail, both within her own form and in her surroundings. Gérôme's Phryné too clearly evoked a specific woman, her torso too thin, her hip attached too high, her legs graceless. When the relationship of parts was not in canonical proportion, the nude was reduced to the nakedness of a specific woman rather than the nudity of an allegorical or ideal figure. The addition of external detail seemed to impinge even more emphatically upon the status of the figure. Paillot de Montabert in his artistic manual of the 1830s, *L'Artiste*, eloquently explained the dangerous implications for the Medici Venus of even a single article of clothing: 'An undergarment thrown on to the Medici Venus will make her into a dishonest woman; but as she is, this famous woman appears modest in all the eyes of the world'.<sup>10</sup> One could infer the moral status of the figure from the objects surrounding it. The inclusion of other figures with a nude was perhaps the most volatile detail of all. The nature of another figure's gaze, the reaction to the nude, provided the painting's viewer with insight into the nude's moral status. In Gérôme's Phryné, for example, the expressions of the Areopagites were fundamental in arousing the mistrust of various critics.

Théophile Gautier explained how the Greeks not only had a familiarity with nudity, which the contemporary world no longer appreciated, but also that the admiration of beauty itself had a religious inflexion.<sup>11</sup> The Greek judges should have been portrayed with an aloof though reverent aspect. They

admired physical beauty without the arousal of sexual interest. This pious beauty relied upon its inanimacy and generalisation, however. Ancient gymnasts were 'a white race of statues without draperies, without vine leaves'. Viewed in sanitised isolation, these bodies became objects supposedly desexualised and in turn commodified. 'One would no more wish to break an ivory of Phidias or a marble of Praxiteles. The excellent connoisseurs were incapable of destroying this precious living work of art'. The very idealised inanimacy which saved these nudes from 'breakage' simultaneously allowed a different kind of violation as non-sentient objects to be collected and consumed by connoisseurs.

The construction of the nude, indeed of the model, as an exemplary yet objectified source of inspiration and reverence, seemingly could not easily be assimilated into the 'Realist' aesthetic. A representation of a Realist muse seemed to have eluded the most determined efforts of various Realist painters.<sup>12</sup> An allegorical figure embodying those qualities which inspired the Realists would involve the kind of attention to detail for which Gérôme's Phryné was faulted. In many ways, the modern day Parisian model would have been an obvious modern muse, the literal embodiment of direct visual study, but the awkward implications of this choice for the social construction of the artist seemed to have interfered with this selection within several artists' attempted compositions.

Perhaps the most suggestive example of this effort was Henri Fantin-Latour's *Toast!* 1865.<sup>13</sup> Exhibited at the 1865 Paris Salon, this work met with mixed responses both privately amongst Fantin's friends, most notably in the correspondence with his English colleague Edwards, and in Salon reviews. The initial drawing studies for this work envision overtly allegorical compositions. A figure of truth stands on the edge of a well, mirror in hand, occasionally with an



old man in Grecian dress at her feet, holding a cast of Michelangelo's *Sleeping Slave*. A crowd of bearded men are seen in half-length to her right beneath her. The most heavily worked drawing of this phase [Louvre RF 12486] of 5 December 1864 has notations in the margins. 'Très bien' abuts the date; a more detailed study of a man with bowed head, somewhat isolated to the left of the woman on the well, identified as 'Gouis' floats beneath the drawing. Few of the men have distinguishing attributes, one man wears a top hat, another carries several books identified in the margin as 'livre ... Edition[s] Lévy': decisively contemporary details. One man with his back turned to the viewer carries a sign of gold embellished with flowers, a disparately allegorical and theatrical insertion. The external setting and ambiguous male figures then seem unsatisfactory, however, so Fantin shifts the composition to an indoor setting.

Once the scene is an interior, certain variables are wrestled with, recombined in many permutations. The spatial relationship between the woman and the men constantly fluctuates, both in terms of comparative height and placement amongst, or isolation from each other. The attributes multiply or disappear, both for the woman, the mirror and the degree of coverage by drapery, and the men, specified professional attributes: palette and easel, violin, table and writing materials. The number of figures moves from a single representative for each art to amorphous crowds, ambiguously interspersed by the identifiable features of friend practitioners. The progression of choices, if there is one, is perhaps less significant than their very mutability.<sup>14</sup> Certain relationships and visual languages seem never to coexist comfortably. Within each variable, the placing of the details informs the potential identification of the woman as model or muse. When she is too close to the men, the woman seems to be too much of an object of study, rather than an inspiration.<sup>15</sup> Without the mirror she

seems completely mortal, yet with it there is a disjunction with the utterly unmythological modernity of the top hat and plain black jackets, a juxtaposition which Fantin's friend and dealer Edwards found potentially ridiculous.<sup>16</sup> He suggested a more unified language of allegory with the painter awakening from sleep to find a vision of a muse before him.

In the last drawings [Louvre RF 12,415–12,419], Fantin removes the products of artistic endeavour – the painting and its easel, the writing materials and the table – leaving the men with only the tools of their trade: palette, violin, pen. As such the active process of transcribing is removed, as indeed to some extent is the threat of identification as an artists' orgy against which Edwards had also warned. The men, and indeed the woman, move once more into the realm of generalised allegorical representatives rather than active practitioners.

The background of the room similarly shifts in and out of specificity and most drawings alternate between a simple though sharply defined corner and an amorphous draped alcove. In one highly finished drawing [Louvre RF 12,419] of 16 January 1865, a complex neo-classical façade appears with the woman framed from behind by a niche (figure 2). She stands on a table surrounded on all sides. In the margins, the details which encircle her are hastily enumerated, a list of the names of the men who surround her on



Figure 2 Henri Fantin-Latour, Preliminary sketch for *Toast!* 16 January 1865, RF 12,419, Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, Paris.



the right<sup>17</sup> and of objects on the table on the left, 'Truth our ideal, star in silver ... the flowers and the bright red fruits serve to divide the two sides of the table cloth and the shift'.<sup>18</sup> The insignia and the brightness of colour in the flowers and fruit are what will separate her space and person ensconced in the 'chemise' from the men's realm of the table, 'la nape'. These two sets of details belong to two different visual languages, classical symbolism and realist colour and light effects. These discursive discontinuities in many ways typify the problem of representing the model in the studio in the 1860s. Unwilling to endanger the social status of the artist by revealing the intimacy of the relationship with a model within the workspace of the studio, an allegorical vocabulary impinges upon the contemporaneity, the 'realism' of the scene.

Certain aspects which gave Fantin particular pleasure caused the critics consternation.<sup>19</sup> The mingling of 'pure fantasy' and 'reality', both in the description and identity of the figures, was deemed confusing and contradictory. Paul Mantz claimed the Realist school no longer existed, so Fantin needed to assemble an image of his friends, however inappropriate, including Whistler the 'fantastical' and Manet the 'prince de chimériques'.<sup>20</sup> The confusion of visual languages within the work cancelled out the respective generalisation and specificity of the woman and men.<sup>21</sup> The muse became the morally ambiguous 'carrot-red' haired model, the allegorical proponents of the arts, in their readily identifiable portraits became supremely over-confident young upstarts.

There was a great shift in attitudes towards the visibility of the model between the 1860s and the 1880s. Popular accounts of 'the world of artists' started to include whole chapters on the qualities and working conditions of the models. Each Salon from 1879 to 1895 included at least three or four studio scenes focused upon the rest or arrangement of the model. This new visibility

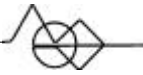
relied upon a shift in the terms in which these figures were handled, no longer floating down from clouds, but subsumed into a new deflated language of the nude. Like Bouguereau's Bacchantes and Gérôme's slave girls, the model in the studio could fuse the idealised language of the *type* with the provocative specificity implicit in the *modèle*. The women of the studio, marked as 'other' by ethnicity or objectification, were thus placed so far from the women of the hearth that they became representable. This otherness barred them, however, from ever holding a place of honour on the artist's hearth except nude on a bear rug.

### Popular culture and the 'otherness' of the artist's model:

#### Paul Dollfus's *Modèles d'Artistes*

The tension between the dubious moral status of the model and the representations of goddesses and saints derived from her was renegotiated, not eliminated in the 1880s. Various popular accounts legitimised their study of these 'fallen' women in that, however shameful, these women were fundamental tools of the artist.<sup>22</sup> Attempting to avoid the over-rhetorical stance of a muse or the tainting implications of a 'real' life model, representations of the studio in the 1880s operated within a complex discourse of object and anecdote. In many ways, Hyperides's case for Phryné's irreproachable beauty was reinvoked. An object of beauty, an idealised figure, was produced by the artist's selection of ideal parts from a variety of less than perfect models, or the inspiration of the slightly imperfect though evocative single model.<sup>23</sup> This desirable end outweighed the undesirable contact involved in its achievement. The artist's evaluative gaze, and by implication the space of the studio, were granted a certain impunity, while fragments and slight flaws were transfigured into female ideals.

As a valuable tool of the atelier, the model was therefore worthy of study. Her imperfec-



tions, both moral and physical, reinforced the traditional link between beauty and moral purity. The recognition of certain perfect parts could not fully distract an observer from the underlying imperfection of the whole figure, which mirrored the woman's moral status. The use of the model as the source of saints and mythological figures was acknowledged, but the emphasis on the artist's process of selection and transfiguration which created these perfections shifted the focus to the creativity of the artist rather than the morality of model. He could examine a naked woman with impunity. She was supposedly viewed purely to find her 'part' in a perfect figure. An examination of the dissolute lifestyles of models was not only acceptable within this construction, but vital in that the affirmation of their disgraceful status highlighted the artist's vision. A morally suspect woman was only a Diana under the artist's scrutiny in the studio and even then only an objectified fragment of her. The moment she left those confines she returned to a recognisably inferior social type.

In his popular pocket book *Modèles d'Artistes*, Paul Dollfus insisted there were no perfections such as one saw in 'the Gérômes' and 'the Henners'. Their marble breasts came from beneath the gaudy bodice of a young Italian, their thighs from rue Pigalle.<sup>24</sup> An accompanying illustration showed a nude severed into perfect fragments, an inkpot at her side (figure 3). Supposedly sanitised in fragmentation, the parts could then be sutured into a perfect woman by the imagination and ink of the artist (or the popular author). The movement between dissociated detail and generalised whole obscured the implicit violation involved both in the severing of parts and the voyeuristic consumption of the perfected whole. The litany of derivations for all her parts was followed by an anecdote of the two sisters from the rue Duperré. Both models were blond and called Léa. One had lovely thighs and an emaciated torso, the other had

an abundant bosom and skinny legs.<sup>25</sup> Together they formed a single perfect woman, an 'agreeable' error allowing a guiltless violation of the models who were merely art and illusion.<sup>26</sup>

The juxtaposition of the anonymous assemblage from all corners of Paris with the anecdote of the Léa twins typifies the discursive formulas Dollfus manipulates through much of his account. This curious play between generalised type and sexually available anecdote emerged in both visual and literary representations. Popular accounts vacillated between matter-of-fact, though stereotypical, descriptions of the types of models available, and a charged fascination with the model as exotic artefact. As a studio prop, these 'tools' had to have a certain unconventional aspect to inspire the artist and, one might argue, to differentiate the 'otherness' of his working space and work itself. Salon images created a false sense of specificity with minute details of surrounding studio props inflecting the still generalised ideal nude with ephemeral individuality, an evocation of 'model' through external detail rather than physical marks of mortal and moral imperfection.

One of the basic distinctions amongst model types highlighted in these pocket books was ethnicity. The traditional archetype of the model was constructed around an Italian persona. All three of the popular accounts considered here insisted upon identifiable characteristics and narratives: native costume, specific location of the group in restricted areas of Paris, the story of the models' transportation to Paris, the regional distinctions within the Italian type and their overall professional disposition. However, these variables were used to create two polarised depictions.<sup>27</sup> Dollfus and another popular author Charles Virmaître set up the Italian models as a negative construction from which a new Parisian type implicitly emerged as a better representative of modernity. Hughes Le Roux mourned the



**Figure 3**  
Anonymous illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 39.

passing of this traditional persona as symbolic of a more sweeping societal trend towards eradicating the picturesque in favour of the regulated uniformity of the urban. Despite the basic inversion between these two constructions, many of the same suppositions about the interactions within the studio remained the same. Whatever the nature of the model, the artist could view her nakedness without reproach.

Italian regional dress in its bright colours and archaic form marked these people as 'other' and Dollfus provided comic illustrations of the native dress for men, women and children. Chapter two, 'Les Modèles Italiens', opens with a double page of illustrations. On the left a well-proportioned girl sits languidly in a chair isolated in the undefined space of the page, her gaze averted. On the facing page a crowd of rustic Italian types shambles into view. The whole family is depicted: an

old patriarch with torn coat, the mother with traditional bodice and banded apron, a few scraggy children. These dressed figures are shown in their studio poses in a smaller scale underneath: the old man kneels with a halo on his head, his foot resting on a drawer, the pretty young women move forward to reveal their frontal nudity (figure 4). Hughes Le Roux similarly opened his chapter with a description of this distinguishing clothing amid a cheerful chattering procession, but without Dollfus's disturbing juxtaposition of nudes and vagrants. The Italians appeared as a happy reminder of a simpler rustic past, their brightly coloured, though ragged, garb and prattle cheering the drab uniformity of the roofs of the city centre.<sup>28</sup> Their quarter of Paris mirrored their attire in its archaism.<sup>29</sup> This bohemian world of entangled streets and medieval stone houses provided a charming glimpse of the sights and sounds of a lost world. Carefully demarcated and removed, it offered a brief escape to a lost, bohemian golden age.

Dollfus's artist, a narrative construction that provided a guiltless anonymous glance for the reader, revealed this arcadia to be a pestilent slum. He also described the Italians as a 'Bohemian clan', but one 'infesting the neighbourhood with vermin which follow them everywhere, like family'.<sup>30</sup> Squalor and claustrophobia pervaded this scene.<sup>31</sup> Instead of admiring the open courtyard full of musicians and fountains which had reminded Le Roux of a stage for the 'opéra-comique', Dollfus's artist entered one of the dwellings. The illustration shows a dapper youth crouching to enter the low door tethered by a string (figure 5). The uneven cobblestones are strewn with rubbish out of which peek the upright legs of a dead animal, while an arm reaches out from a window above to pour dirty water from a pitcher. Inside the uneven stairs were



Figure 4 Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 44 and 45.

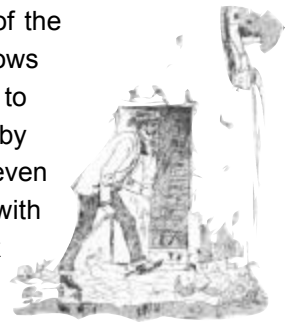
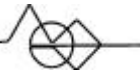


Figure 5 Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 52.





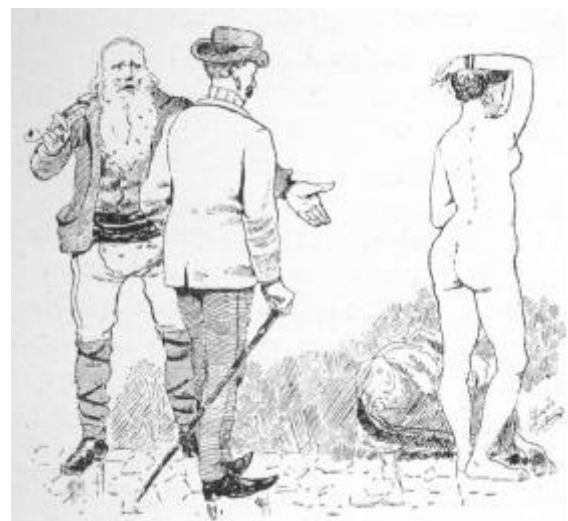
**Figure 7** a, b, c & d  
Anonymous Illustrations  
from Paul Dollfus,  
*Modèles d'Artistes*,  
1889: 114, 157, 191,  
194.

dangerously slippery from humidity and grime, but the railings were an even more horrifying prospect '... [these ropes] are varnished and saturated with such a grease that the hand sticks to them and one would rather risk a fall than prolong this horrid contact'.<sup>32</sup> The room finally reached, 10 or 12 people inhabited it, with its broken floor tiles, smoke stained, wallpaperless walls, furnished with cots and worthless drawings: 'Men, women, children all sleep together there enmired in a repugnant promiscuity of which they are insensible'.<sup>33</sup>

For Dollfus the extended Italian family huddled up in one room held none of the domestic bliss Le Roux invested in it. Le Roux praised the transplantation of whole families who strove after the traditional collective goal of buying land rather than the entrepreneurial 'padrone's' speculation. Virmaître also mentioned these 'rameneurs', but again took a different stance: 'it is a profession, they chose their wares'.<sup>34</sup> Le Roux lamented these 'glib-tongued' travelling musicians who brought 'little troupes to Paris and exploited them according to their fantasy'.<sup>35</sup> For Le Roux the family unit best oversaw the young model. Virmaître and Dollfus described the fathers and sons not as protectors, but as pay collectors<sup>36</sup> or, worse yet, merchandisers of their own family. Upon entering the squalid room in the Italian quarter, the artist in Dollfus's narrative was confronted with a young girl undressing for him in front of all her family, her finer parts praised to the prospective hirer by her heavily accented father (figure 6). The scene was significant not only in its defamation of the family unit, but also in the discursive formula it enacted. Whereas Le Roux described the Italians as a generalised group, 'the women', 'the models', Dollfus moved in and out of groups and individuals. 'Conjetta', as her father called the model, was no more a specific model than Le Roux's 'woman', but by employing a proper name and using dialogue Dollfus rendered the heartless other-

ness of the father's procuring more vivid and appalling. This account was no less generalised, but his manner of describing created an effect of immediacy suggesting authenticity. By entering the hovel, speaking with the models, witnessing the undressing, Dollfus, through his device of the artist-narrator-spectator, allowed the reader a position as an invisible, though immediate observer. One could enter socially inaccessible places, witness events unobservable to the general public. Thus the reader/viewer is allowed a new form of voyeurism comparable to the harem scenes of Ingres or Gérôme – the artist's workplace made available a private space for exploring and violating the fantastical 'other' with impunity.

The full-page 'portraits' interspersed with the illustrated text (seemingly at random) might at first glance seem to undercut this stereotyping. 'Marthe', 'Pauline Saucey', 'Bamboula', 'Adrienne' (usually only first names are given) appear in life-like drawings, identified by the part they pose and the artists who have employed them (figures 7a, b, c and d). The roles implicit in these identifications, as 'object studied' or appendage of the artist, contradict the initial sense of individuality the 'portrait' suggests. The 'portrait' rarely appears in conjunction with her/his



**Figure 6** Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 75.

own anecdote in the text, further distancing any multi-faceted representation. An analogous strategy emerged in the categorisation of Italians, who both Dollfus and Le Roux designated into regional types. The Piedmontese were farmers, the Neopolitains singers and musicians, the Romans most particularly models.<sup>37</sup> Dollfus particularly considered the distinguishing facial structures of Neopolitans and Romans. Neopolitan features were more delicate and animated and as such were more suited to images of Amazons, huntresses and virgin warriors. Romans had big heavy faces with



Figure 8 Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 61.

flat straight noses and broad foreheads. The impression derived from these faces was more restful, reminiscent of noble contemplative figures like Ceres or Minerva. An image of two half figures of women followed this analysis (figure 8). The profile of the Neopolitan cast a shadow of a mule, the frontal Roman a cow. Dollfus extended this regional typing, arguing certain local industries formulated invertedly gendered physical features, racial markings. Bestial facial features were coupled with heavy muscular limbs in the women; the men conversely had patrician hands and antique feet. In keeping with the emergence of fin de siècle physiognomic theory, Dollfus inscribed the Italians' 'otherness' not as a purely cultural otherness, but as physical and, implicitly, moral inferiority.

Italian models, Dollfus claimed in the next chapter, 'Le Modèle Moderne', lacked the modernity of their Parisian counterparts. This modernity depended precisely upon inverting the archaic stereotype so carefully constructed in the previous chapter.<sup>38</sup> Italians lacked 'variety', and as such the modernity which so

fascinated non-'pompiers' artists. The modern nude model required a 'nervousness', 'a precious sentimentality' which their classical features lacked. The closing paragraph and image of the previous chapter were telling in this regard (figure 9).

A portly gentleman walking a ridiculous toy dog glances mockingly at the gaily-dressed backs of the Italian models. One even confused the regional types now, Dollfus confessed.<sup>39</sup> The assimilated Italians had lost the fascinating detail of their 'otherness' and as such were caught between two worlds; 'Italiens des Batignolles'<sup>40</sup> were neither classically perfect nor engagingly, modernly imperfect.

This new construction of the 'modern' model, which offered intriguingly imperfect details as well as fragments of perfection, was envisioned differently across the genders. The modern female nude's chief merits were 'excitability' and 'sickly sentimentality'. It was not physiological attributes that disrupted the canon of the modern female body's proportion, so much as the temperament within it. Dollfus's arguments for mod-



Figure 9 Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 89.



Figure 10 L. Picardet, *Coin d'Atelier*, etude, 1888, engraving from F. G. Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 83.



els' 'realistic' physical types, bodies whose musculature itself revealed a certain trade or profession, were constructed solely around male subjects, in contrast to the virtually exclusive focus on female models throughout the rest of the text and illustrations. 'Realist truth' in painting required new anatomically specific models.<sup>41</sup> More precise contemporary anatomical study had revealed that different professions required and created different physical types (figure 10). An artist no longer posed just anyone for a figure relying upon the general laws of proportion, he supposedly transcribed 'real' labourers in their 'natural' activity. Dollfus's comparison of a soldier and smithy was a loaded one; not only had anatomical languages progressed, but both the nature of the heroic subject and the legibility of class had changed. 'Realist' images looked to labours rather than legends, to workmen rather than classical heroes.

The chapter opened with another double page illustration. On the left a fashionably dressed young woman lay smoking on a riverbank, coquettish fan in hand, observed by a rower in the distance. On the right a young man, presumably an artist, sat on a



**Figure 11** Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 92–93.

plush oriental settee watching a woman in elaborate frilly underwear remove her corset, one leg suggestively poised on a chair, amidst myriad fans, masks, lanterns and cushions (figure 11). It is difficult to discern the emphasis on progressive 'realist' anatomy in either scene. The realism of the female model resided not so much within her

body type as in the objects and details which envelop her. Her occupation was embodied by her fan, her corset, her pose, and the gaze which consumed her. The model was represented not by the specific musculature produced by her labour, but by the tools of her, and the artist's, trade and workplace.

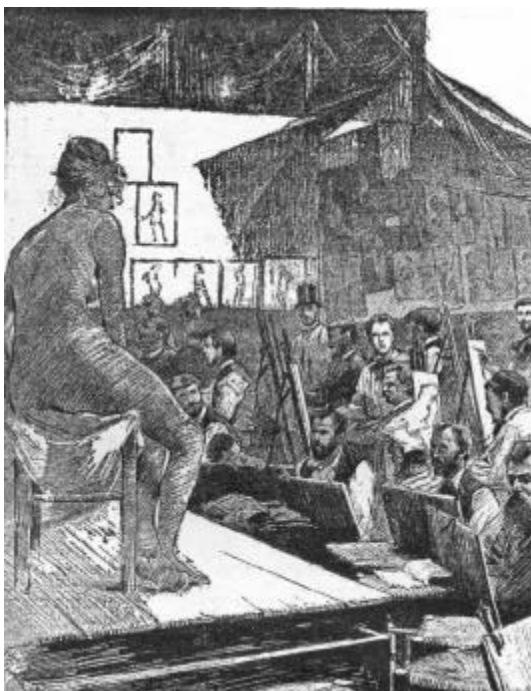
These popular culture accounts differed from Salon images in their focus on the daily experience of models outside the walls of the studio, constructing a kind of ethnographic survey. Dollfus described model's expenditure on food, lodging and clothing and favourite pastimes of boating on the Seine or visits to cafés.<sup>42</sup> A whole chapter, 'La fin des Modèles', examined the fate of models whose exhaustion or ugliness had forced them into other professions: hair-dressing, conciergerie, the selling of paint. M D Socci earned a lengthier description, having opened an agency for models which regularised their commercial transactions.<sup>43</sup> Dollfus praised this service: for a minimal fee of 5fr a year, M Socci would save the artist the task of searching out a model, providing guaranteed, punctual and appropriate men and women.<sup>44</sup> The agency would be most useful for 'amateur' painters unversed in the



**Figure 12** Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 79.

underworld of the studios.<sup>45</sup> As a former model and assimilated Italian, Socci could sanitise the selection of the model at least, avoiding the horrifying journey to the Italian quarter or, worse yet, the onslaught of hard-selling families of models on the unfortunate artist's doorstep (figure 12).

Salon paintings of the model in the studio represented many of the fascinations which had dominated the pocketbook accounts: the particularities and provocations of modern dress, the passion for the newly accessible treasures of the Orient, the mysterious bohemian construction of the atelier. The model as a public, social being was not a comfortable subject at the Salon; however this figure was glimpsed, if problematically, in the prurient voyages into the underworld of the model's daily life of the popular accounts. Instead safely contained within the special confines of the studio, constructed as the artist's 'copain' or tool, the model/muse provided a new form of legitimised, though still volatile, high art erotica, frequently exhibited at the Salon.



### Representing the séance at the Salon

Dollfus had focused his initial illustrations and descriptions on the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the private studios run by successful artists. The implicit class differences in these two types of art student were manifested in their relationships with the model.<sup>46</sup> Most Salon images depicted the model within the confines of the studio of a single artist<sup>47</sup> and two constructions of the model emerged – as a friend or 'copain', or as a still life object.

The specific moment of the life modelling séance in the studio was the most socially and aesthetically problematic moment to negotiate.<sup>48</sup> The two illustrations of life classes which Dollfus did include show the model raised above the eye level of the students, seated on a simple wicker stool on an unembellished stage (figures 13a and b). The only other objects are a clock on the wall and plasters and drawings. The studio interior is drastically different when it has a sole proprietor (figures 11 and 14). Patterned oriental rugs, masks and lanterns, huge bed-like sofas and decorative and domestic furniture like end-tables with ferns or exotic floral arrangements on them abound. The model



Figure 13 a & b Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 3, 14.

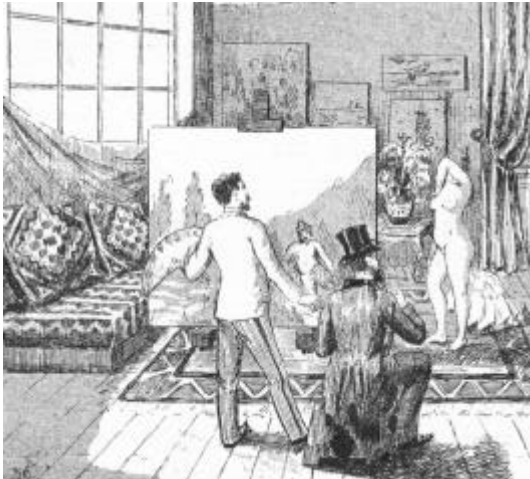
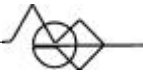


Figure 14 Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889:102.

stands on the same level as the artist, creating a dubious proximity between the nude and the clothed. These interiors enter a grey area between a place of work and one of domestic social interaction.

Dollfus's story of shy Emma highlighted the dangers of a one-to-one relationship and gaze between artist and model. Abandoned by her lover and acting on the advice of a café owner friend who brought her to Stevens's studio, Emma started to model. She refused to model anything more than the head and in despair Stevens brought her to Cormon's studio. In the presence of two men she was not ashamed to pose nude.<sup>49</sup> The suggestion of an impure gaze on the part of an independent artist became immediately subsumed in the affirmation of a pure collective artistic gaze. The moment of doubtful propriety was enough to demarcate the private studios as more provocative regions. A subsequent list of independent masters' relationships to models reinforced the initial supposition of Emma's story. In Dollfus's text, an enlarged first initial of each artist's name circumscribes risqué caricatural drawings of nude models (figure 15). Trouillebert, 'un grand amateur de jolies filles,' has a young woman running from his initial, 'when you go to ask him for work, he always makes you undress. Fat, with beady eyes, he sure knows how to look'.<sup>50</sup> The word play

between 'amateur', implying both a lesser artist and suggesting someone who 'likes' women, was more than a silly joke. Established master painters were excluded from these insinuations; their initials showed perfectly proper scenes. Bouguereau's mention only referred to his over-zealous rigour in the duration of the pose. Jean Béraud received sympathy for being overly patient with unreliable models. Unestablished yet independent artists seemed to pose the greatest threat to the purported suspension of arousal accorded to the life modelling séance.

However, it was this ambiguous space of the single artist's lavish studio which most Salon images adopted.<sup>51</sup> E A Duez's *Un Atelier de Peintre en 1885* and B J Lévy's *Interieur de l'Atelier* of 1890 are typical of this mise-en-scène (figures 16a and b). Hugely spacious, yet claustrophobically ornamented, these rooms were the primary means of identifying the figures as models.<sup>52</sup> The easel and canvas, palette and brushes are the only signifiers of this space as a work place, the women can only be tentatively identified as

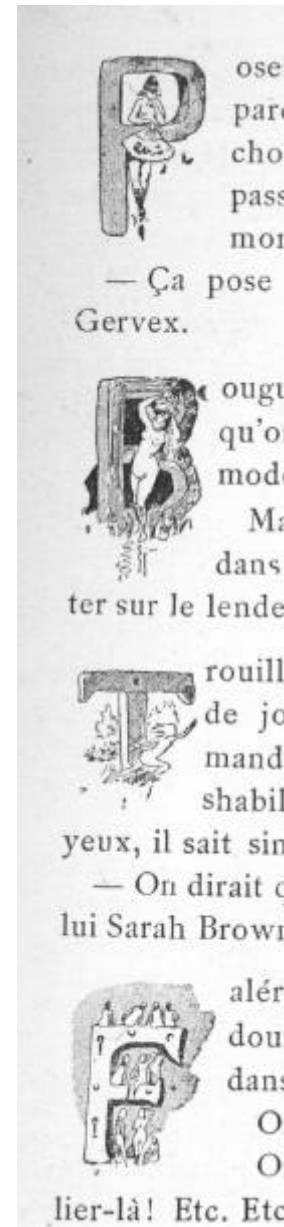
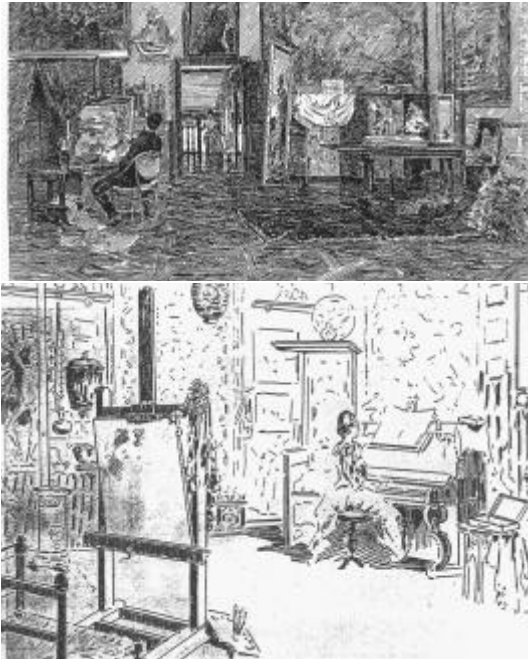


Figure 15 Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 152–153.





**Figure 16** a & b Ernest Duez *Un Atelier de Peintre en 1885*, 1885, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 15 and B J Lévy, *Intérieur de l'Atelier*, 1890, engraving from F G Dumas *Salon Illustré*: 199.

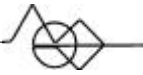
models rather than respectable sisters, friends or wives through the details of their surroundings. The luxurious carpets and drapes adorning the parquet floor in the Duez, are as much the accoutrements of a bourgeois salon as a painter's studio. The huge canvases on the walls may well be the prizes of a connoisseur instead of the products of an active painter. Only when one notices the sword handle protruding from beneath a fur rug on the armchair in the far right corner may one begin to identify the stacks of canvases as works in the studio rather than unhung acquisitions. Only the easel in the Lévy marks the orientalist treasures as potential props rather than gratuitously collected curiosities. A woman in these surroundings cannot avoid a potential identification as a model. In the Duez, the close juxtaposition of the screen and the fur-lined chair may well have invited a reading of the two initial phases of the séance: the undressing, sometimes performed behind a screen, and the posing on the plush fur rug. The sketches strewn at artist's feet suggest that he works from previous studies in the

absence of a model. His glance, while he still paints, upon the woman climbing up the stairs perhaps evokes the imminent change of technique to working directly from the life.

Both images suggest crucial elements of the studio scenario, not least the implicit gaze of the artist. Duez's artist and his gaze are more materially present than Lévy's, but the empty chair that emerges in the lower left, implicitly the space of the viewer, in Lévy's work offers this position, in a very tangible way, more directly to the viewer. The placement of the chair within the viewer's space and in front of the relinquished, though prepared, palette and the easel with a canvas in progress invites identification with the absent artist. The viewer is able to adopt the literal position and implicit irreproachability of the artist's gaze. This construction was fundamental in allowing the studio image to provide a new form of high art erotica, as much as an account of an aspect of the artist's labours, or of an unwitnessed social group.

The model's gaze was also significant in these images. Dollfus in his preface quoted a passage from a reformed model's letter to him, describing her initial 'fall' into the world of modelling. Her father had consented to a sculptor's request that she model for him. Having posed her for the arms, hair, hands, feet, the sculptor undressed her to pose for the nude. Not surprisingly she was terrified, but by hiding her own gaze avoided immodesty.<sup>53</sup> This construction of the model's own gaze as the source of shame is crucial in granting the viewer impunity. It is the model's awareness of the viewer which threatens her modesty. This means of preserving modesty denies her the possibility of a confrontational gaze and thus allows the voyeuristic stare of the viewer to pass unchallenged. The gaze of the model on her own image, in mirrors or within the canvas on the easel, sanctions the viewer's looking in a different way. Her own vanity or her admiration of the sanitised gaze of the artist in the canvas legitimises the viewer's stare (figure 17).<sup>54</sup>





These questions of the source of immodesty and the nature of the gaze are manifested in each phase of the séance. Each part – the undressing or putting on of a costume, the selection of the pose, the posing itself, the rest period – engages these issues with varying intensity. The neglect of certain phases of the séance might have revealed those moments which were most problematic for the Salon public. The initial moment of undressing rarely appeared, for example, although it was often signified by the proximity of cast-off garments. Dollfus had recounted this moment with provocative relish at various points in his text and illustrations. The specific moment of Conjetta's undressing, a brief and systematic disrobing,<sup>55</sup> led to a consideration of how Italian and Parisian models undressed in dif-

ferent ways. Italians pull each garment over their heads, covering the face for a moment while displaying the rest of the body, while Parisians slip them down their bodies (figure 18).<sup>56</sup> With the removal of each garment, the Italian woman had a moment in which she has ceased to have a gaze; headless, she became objectified. The Parisian model performed a coquettish striptease, the fall of each garment offering a little more titillation, her gaze nonetheless remaining averted. The fall of the final chemise revealed her parts in a hierarchical order of sexual charge, questionably recognised by Dollfus as the order adopted by 'modesty'. It was the partial revelation of the naked body which was most erotic, the contrast of clothed and unclothed infinitely more provocative than the naked body in isolation.

Two images referring directly to dressing, undressing seems never to have been depicted, were exhibited during 1879–95: E Le Roux's *Fin de Séance* of 1892 and P L Ingelrans *A l'Atelier* of 1893 (figures 19a and b). Neither image shows the moment of undressing directly, however,



**Figure 18** Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 73–74.

but rather the subsequent process of redressing in a costume or street clothes. Le Roux shows a model dishevelled and exhausted, putting on her stockings. She sits on the modelling pedestal with the sculpting stand beside her, a slightly reclining figure in progress upon it. Though her chemise had slipped revealing her left breast, the model has demurely put on her skirt before her stockings so as to conceal her upper thigh as she replaces them. The image gives the lie to modest dressing



**Figure 17** Anonymous Illustration from Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'Artistes*, 1889: 228–229.

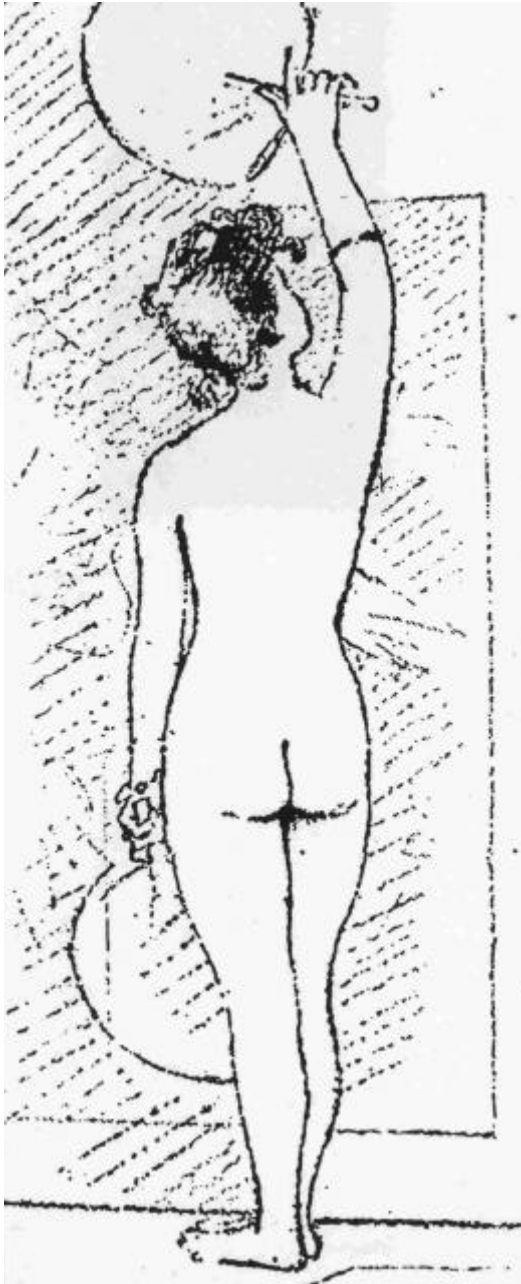
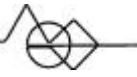


**Figure 19** a & b E E Le Roux, *Fin de Séance*, 1892, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 234 and P L Ingelrans, *A l'Atelier*, 1893, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 84.

behind a screen after the séance. P L Ingelrans's studio shows a far more suggestive moment. The model, notably leaning towards the viewer in her décolleté eighteenth-century bodice, is putting on her last detail of a petite bowed slipper. The artist leans against the sculpting stand watching her intently. Her boots are cast off to her left, perhaps suggesting she also had made little use of the screen behind her. Some relationship between the two people and the two sculpted figures behind seems undeniable. The model so closely resembling the statue, which depicts a soubrette pursued by a lover, also has an importunate young man over her right shoulder, though the gracelessness of her right leg wrenched up to put on the slipper renders life, as ever, less delicate than Art.

The selection of the pose was represented by two artists, interestingly both women. Both works are entitled *Cherchant la Pose*, by Mme F Vallet 1895 and Mlle M Turner 1889 (figures 20a and b). The pose was the sole professional talent attributed to the model and an intelligent model, Dollfus explained, attempted to intuit the artist's vision.<sup>57</sup> The play between helpmate and object is invoked. The intelligent model would attempt to inspire the artist's vision, her movement suggesting his composition. The stupid or lazy model sat in an 'inert mass' only briefly holding the 'shape' the artist requested. Intelligent or not, he concludes, in the mind of the artist all models become mannequins once on the posing table.

One image stands out in addressing this curious position between helpful collaborator and an 'inert mass' or object – A J Chantron's enigmatic contribution to the Salon of 1886 (figure 21). *La Toilette du Mannequin* juxtaposes these two roles quite literally, the poser posing the mannequin. A nude woman stands on plain floorboards, between an easel with a framed image of a seated nude upon it and a palette resting upon an ornate leather studded chair. The living model reaches up to straighten the floral bonnet of the mannequin which wears



gloves and a shawl and holds an umbrella. The image provokes an ambiguous play between the artificial and the natural. The bizarre studio doll wears the artificial accessories of the modern Parisienne, the elaborate silk flowers on the bonnet, the intricate pattern of the shawl and its tassels, the added touch of the bow on the umbrella, all bespeak the coquetties of the latest fashions. The living woman appears in all her supposed naturalness, only the twisted locks of her hair departing from the smooth curves of her well-balanced proportions. This



**Figure 20** a & b (left & above) Mme F Vallet, *Cherchant la Pose*, 1895, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 150 and Mlle M Turner, *Cherchant la Pose*, 1889, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 66.



**Figure 21** A J Chantron, *La Toilette du Mannequin*, 1886, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 150.



Figure 22 H Janet, *Le Repos du Modèle*, 1884, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 338.

proximity of the daily fashions to the nymph interferes with her idealisation. The two worlds of public fashion and private fantasy are too rudely thrust together, creating a jarring sense of ambiguity. The problematic moment of transfiguration is too overtly suggested – the dual presence of model and muse. However, it is also one of the few images which recognises the model as a creative entity.

This duality was explored in a variety of permutations in the most popular studio moment in Salon paintings – ‘le repos du modèle’. This potentially risqué phase, poised between the transcendent morality of the gaze upon an ‘Art’ pose and the unmediated social intercourse between the male artist and the female model within a private space, engaged the most attention. The category can in turn be divided into images of women models at rest in isolation, except for the viewer, and breaks enjoyed in the company of the artist.

The model resting in isolation tended to be depicted more as a decorative prop than an animate presence. Her attention and her gaze were typically directed away from the viewer to some amusement or to an examination of herself. Leaning against swathes of drapery and plush cushions, the model in H Janet’s *Le Repos du Modèle* of 1884 taunts a black cat with a string (figure 22). The cat’s dark coat highlights the pearly smoothness of its playmate’s skin and perhaps suggests the absent pubic hair, its tense body in sharp contrast to the languor of the nude’s slightly parted legs and dangling arm. Others appear asleep or with their backs turned.<sup>58</sup>

L A C Hodebert portrayed the model examining herself in a ‘psyche’, a common piece of domestic furniture – the standing mirror.<sup>59</sup> Two works by Hodebert exhibited in successive Salons include the psyche, *Le Modèle* of 1893 and *Eva* of 1894 (figures 23a and b), offering the inverse halves of the model’s body. Both figures raise one arm to expose a full breast, though *Eva* drops the other arm at her side, while *Le Modèle* stretches her left arm above her head revealing her full frontal nudity. She pulls her long hair up to the right, within the context of the image to expose her back to the psyche, but from an external viewpoint to expose her front and swathes of hair. This insistence upon the heavy silky hair echoes the variety of rich textures which surround her, the long-haired fur rug which brushes amongst

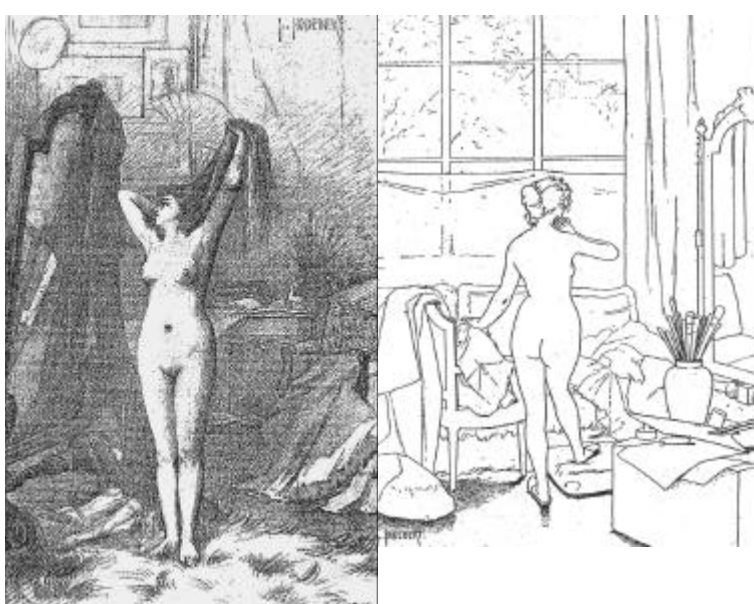
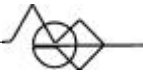


Figure 23 a & b L A C Hodebert, *Le Modèle*, 1893, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 136 and *Eva*, 1894, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 237.

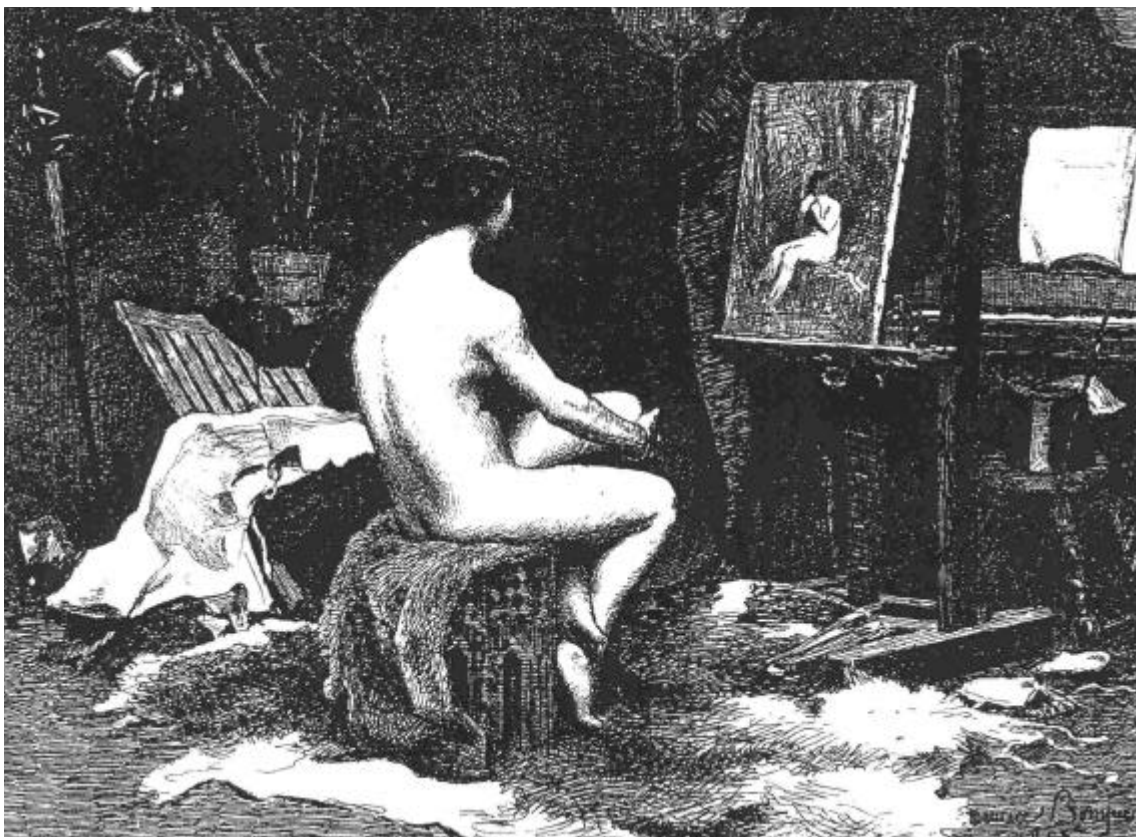


her toes, the heavy folds of drapery over the psyche, the lacey borders of her petticoat peeking out from beneath her cast-off street clothes on the armchair. The lavish furnishings are dotted with studio tools such as a vase of brushes and preparatory sketches, even a few ornamental Japanese fans. The placement of the figure between the armchair and the easel-like psyche is reminiscent of Chantron's juxtaposition, but it lacks the play between collaborator and doll. The model's perfect beauty invites the viewer's gaze unchallenged, avoiding questions of public and private existence in the legitimised space of the studio interior.

Several images show the model mesmerised by the artist's image of herself. The model in Maurice Bompard's *Le Repos du Modèle* 1880 (figure 24) gazes entranced at the work in progress. Once again the variety of patterns and textures highlights her smooth whiteness; she rests upon an elaborate stool whose arched legs and geometric patterns are reminiscent of Arabian design, an oriental-

ist flavour further invoked by the fan and lantern. The eroticism of the furry rugs is coupled with the provocative juxtaposition of a gentleman's top hat, gloves and cane with a lady's corset and slippers. This suggestion of the external world of Paris, the public fashions of the modern city, was the closest Salon images came to acknowledging the social phenomenon of the model. The dress of her external life was the only sign of her existence beyond the confines of the studio.

The model's animate intelligence within the studio was also undermined and several titles went so far as to deny the model sentience. P Quinsac's *Nature Morte* of 1891 includes a well-proportioned nude amidst its still-life objects (figure 25). The misty cast of the image coupled with the heavy drapery and withered flower stems give the scene a funereal quality, though the arm of a chair emerging from the viewer's space in the left foreground infuses the model with a certain provocative charge, if not animacy.<sup>60</sup> A



**Figure 24** Maurice Bompard, *Le Repos du Modèle*, 1880, Witt Library mount (also engraved in F G Dumas *Salon Illustré*: 532).





Figure 25 P Quinsac, *Nature Morte*, 1891, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 319.

Dumas's *Coin de l'Atelier* of 1884 includes a model warming herself in front of the fire (figure 26). The suit of armour standing next to her underlines her nakedness and relative warmth and suppleness, but undermines this living presence. One questions what distance exists between mannequins, suits of armour and the living models in the perception of the artist whose palette lies neglected. The viewer can assume this aloof stance in the artist's absence to legitimise his voyeuristic gaze.

The sculptor's studio seems to have allowed a comfortable inclusion of both artist and model, to some extent defusing this meeting's awkward sexual implications. Where Dumas's warming model provokes, E E Le Roux's *Frisson* of 1894 (figure 27) shows the indifference of the sculptor to the model's eroticism, and cold! The nudity of the model seems only to engage the viewer, not the

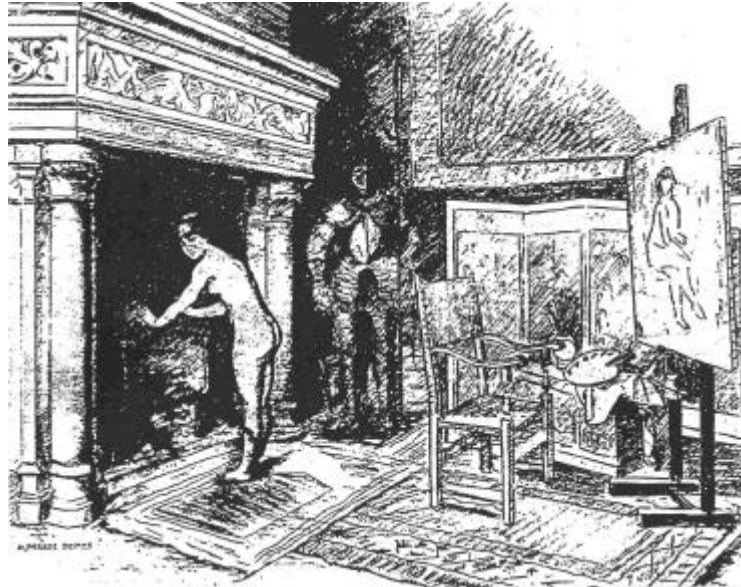


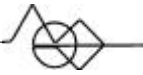
Figure 26 A Dumas, *Coin d'Atelier*, 1884, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 242.

sculptor, who sits absorbed in his newspaper. Dantan painted several images of the sculptor's studio, such as *Un Coin d'Atelier* of 1880, where while the sculptor works on a relief of the drunkenness of Silenius, the half nude model in the foreground seems to be more a surrogate for the viewer than a useful employee (figure 28). The sculptor works, not from



Figure 27 E E Le Roux, *Frisson*, 1894, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 19.





the life model at his side, but from a plaster cast whose strained bent right leg is copied in larger scale in the relief. Instead the model's admiring gaze prompts *our* awe before the artist at work, so detached that the wine bottles, glasses and neatly stacked china on the table suggest more the artist's neglect of them than their use in a studio orgy. The plethora of plaster casts defuses the potential eroticism of the model's nudity most directly. These severed hands and architectural ornaments, though reminiscent of the fragmented woman of Dollfus's opening chapter, also implicitly declare the body to be an object of dispassionate study. The only suggestion to the contrary might be the small clay maquette in progress upon the sculpting stand behind the relief to the right. This tempestuous pose might be the work for which the model in the foreground posed, yet its eroticism is tempered by the portrait bust which looms above it, its intense yet proper gaze perhaps suggesting the artist's pure engagement. For Dantan, the sculptor's focus is always fixated upon the work; in *Une Restauration* of 1891 (figure 29), the sculptor struggles on with perfecting the statue's drapery leaving the living beauty to step down from the pedestal unnoticed.

This shift of sexual charge to the object produced, the artwork, rather than the object studied, the model, was paralleled in several literary accounts of the model as well, perhaps most dramatically in Emile Zola's *L'Oeuvre* (1886). The 'death' of Mahoudeau's sculpture and the reaction of Christine to her painted rival in Claude's 'masterpiece' eloquently suggest this idolisation of the art object and its effect on the living model as well as the artist. Living in abject poverty, Mahoudeau could not afford to heat his studio, so his moistening clothes froze to the statues in progress. In his excitement to show Claude his latest effort, Mahoudeau heats the room too abruptly. A tragic inversion of the Pygmalion myth ensues. His *Bather* placed close to the stove



Figure 28 Edouard Dantan, *Un coin d'Atelier*, 1880, Witt Library mount (also engraved in F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 519).

'seemed to return to life'<sup>61</sup> while, unawares, the two artists sit describing each of her beautiful parts. Mahoudeau notes the shell-like curve of the abdomen leading to the loins. This sexually charged region is the first warning sign of the ephemerality of the statue's life. The flutter of the loins and thighs is followed by the disintegration of the statue.<sup>63</sup> The fall of the statue makes a cracking sound 'like the breaking of bones'. Mahoudeau cannot bear to witness the maiden's demise and rushes towards the statue as it falls, threatening his own life in



Figure 29 Edouard Dantan, *Une Restauration*, 1891, Witt Library mount (also engraved in F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 97).

the effort to save his ideal woman.<sup>62</sup> The dissolution of Mahoudeau's bather in many ways represented the result of attempting to breathe life into Dollfus's 'fragment woman'. Any direct contact with life led to the literal dissolution of the ideal. The fragments only coalesce into an ideal woman in the mind and artwork of the artist.

The destruction of the lover-object, the artwork, could be murder instead of Mahoudeau's unconscious act. Christine, having lived in shame and isolation as Claude's model/mistress, even Claude's best friend Sandoz could not introduce his wife to a 'fallen' woman, ceases to be Claude's lover on their wedding night. The 'other' woman, an allegorical figure in Claude's ubiquitous 'masterpiece' *La Ville de Paris*, gradually supplants her in his affections.<sup>64</sup> When in a moment of frustration Claude pierced the canvas with his fist, Christine revelled in the murder of her rival, only to see to her horror that Claude repaired the canvas and worked on the figure with even greater passion. In a final outburst Christine pleaded with Claude to relinquish his illusory mistress,<sup>65</sup> ending by railing against the shame that he did not even kiss her shoulder as she got dressed after each séance. The chastity of the model had become insignificant; the idolisation of the work superseded her enticements.

A more light-hearted engagement with this question appears in Louis Le Roux's one act comedy, *Le Modèle* (1876).<sup>66</sup> A sculptor, Antonin, had just married a pretty bourgeoisie, Elmina. The two-month honeymoon comes to an abrupt end when Elmina discovers that not all Antonin's models are elderly men, but that some are nubile young women. This fact becomes clear when Elmina and her stentorian mother Mme Cuirassier (!) find Antonin assisting his model Sara with the clasps of her corset, grown too snug with her increased weight for which Antonin matter-of-factly chides her. After much debate, and Mme Cuirassier's exit,

Elmina's initial demand that henceforth Antonin only use metal models becomes modified. She consents to his employment of Sara if she is present herself during the séance. Constant conversation is also required, proving that nothing untoward could happen behind the screen, the model Sara refused to pose in front of a woman.<sup>67</sup> When Antonin rather stupidly invites his jealous wife to see how strikingly *ressemblant* his work was, her critique was quite vigorous; she smashes the statuette, her 'odieuse rivale'.<sup>68</sup> Appalled by this act of violence, 'encore un chef-d'oeuvre inconnu', Antonin threatens never to touch Elmina again.<sup>69</sup> Elmina offers to model for him and he instructs her to open out her arms and then wrap him in a tight hug, 'a pose which must be held for a minute or two'. The play ends with Mme Cuirassier entering upon this embrace. Her initial shock upon seeing Antonin embracing his model again, turns into horror when she realises the model is her daughter. Antonin denies it, preferring to give up sculpture altogether. The lure of being an Academician's wife leads Elmina to concede. She accepts Sara back, having ascertained that Antonin would love her not just after the séance but 'Avant, pendant, et après!' This contented misogynist resolution, like the haunting figure of Christine, revealed one of the crucial attributes of the working model: she could never be a happy wife. Admittedly, however, there were many images of the model and artist as friends or 'copains', if never as wives. (Even in Le Roux's light comedy Elmina was never actually allowed to pose, to be both model and wife.) This artistic camaraderie was portrayed in scenes of innocent merriment. F J Barrias shows the artist and his model comfortably whiling away a *Repos pendant la Séance* (1895) smoking cigarettes around a piano, the wine cupboard open (figure 30). The image conveys a sense of almost sibling ease, neither face, nor gesture suggesting any ulterior motives in either person.



This rich tapestry of roles for the model – risqué nude, still-life object, friend or collaborator – denied the public, social presence of the model. She was in some ways represented as a muse, existing only in the studio and mind of the artist. Philippe Burty in his provocative conclusion to *Grave Imprudence* suggests this restriction of the model to the space of the studio. The artist protagonist, Brissot, had engaged Pauline as his model; she deserts him for a former lover who offered to marry her. A second relationship with a countess develops during Pauline's absence, carefully described as purely emotional whereas Pauline's physical contact was suggestively evoked. Pauline allows herself to be kept by a wealthy lover after the failure of the marriage. Wealthy but still unrespectable, Pauline agrees to pose one last time to help Brissot to a Salon success with an Orientalist 'machine'. The countess interrupts the séance and Brissot runs after her to explain. Pauline is his personal muse;<sup>70</sup> Pauline is granted a certain identity, but solely as an extension of the artist's personality.

Within these parameters, the only empowered gesture she can enact is her own destruction. In a fit of jealous rage with Brissot Pauline can only signify her dissatisfaction, and her presence, by erasing herself, literally, from Brissot's work with a handkerchief. The model's only act of self-assertion is her self-inflicted negation.

The model subsumed into the studio, images and temperament of the artist had moved closer to a muse, a constructed, generalised evocation of artistic inspiration, yet this process of defusing was essential to allowing her any representation within the Salon. The depiction of a naked woman in close proximity to a clothed man, even an artist, required a complex set of neutralising structures, which even then barely saved these images from the anxiety caused by works like Gérôme's *Phryné* or Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* or the fate of the suppressed *Rolla*.<sup>71</sup> Their sanitisation relied upon a naturalising of the nakedness, which rarely defused the sexual charge of the nudes, but legitimised the viewer's gaze



Figure 30 F J Barrias, *Repos pendant la Séance*, 1895, engraving from F G Dumas, *Salon Illustré*: 86.

through an elaborate construction of a distinct moral structure for the artist and his studio and, unlike the popular accounts, the denial of the model's problematic external social existence.

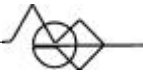
### Utopian muses: Seurat's *Les Poseuses*

Whilst the nuances of the critical scholarship attending to Seurat's *Les Poseuses* (1888) do differ, there is a sense of concordance over the distinctive idealising or utopian aspirations implicit within this celebrated studio painting.<sup>72</sup> The present investigation has sought to highlight in more detail the visual and literary conventions surrounding the representation of the model which Seurat subverted. Seurat combines the variables which most Salon images had seemed to avoid, the actual undressing, the holding of the pose, as well as the repose. The preferred details of the cast-off clothing, the studio space, and the artwork are toyed with in evocative ways. *Les Poseuses* in many ways subverts the Salon studio nude in such a fashion as to undermine its high art erotica status and signifying utopian ideals through a modern nude.

The studio presented is that of an independent artist, but holds none of the exotic luxuries one had come to expect. The furniture is rudimentary: a red settee, a tiny stove. The bleak walls with a few drawings upon them seem more reminiscent of the ascetic spaces of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts or the model's own room. Gustave Kahn, the painting's first owner, ascribed the 'lieu de la scène' specifically as Seurat's Boulevard de Clichy studio. Its simplicity signifies a different construction of the artist from the opulence of the orientalist studio interior which had been so popular, as Kahn suggested: 'the somewhat rigid purity of this Lohengrin of impressionism expresses itself through a nudity worthy of a monastic cell'.<sup>73</sup> In this construction the studio becomes a spartan space for 'avant-garde' artistic experimentation.

The inclusion of Seurat's own masterpiece, *La Grande Jatte*, might also initially have seemed to have corroborated this romantic heroisation of the artist through his studio. The juxtaposition of female roles and social spaces it invokes is perhaps more significant, however. The relationship between the women in *La Grande Jatte* and the women in the studio struck several critics as provocative. Geffroy writing for *La Justice* saw the nudes' slender proportions as the result of living conditions in the urban environment external to the studio.<sup>74</sup> These models seem partially to enact Dollfus's claims for the greater suitability of Parisian models for modern subjects. Their nude bodies as well as their clothes and umbrellas are marked with urban life.<sup>75</sup> Malnourished, with the musculature developed from hard work, these women were described with an unprecedented social specificity, both 'cruel and kind'.

The juxtaposition of this 'realism' with the rigidity of the figures of *La Grande Jatte* deepens ambiguities about the identification of the 'real' and the 'artificial'. The elegant Parisienne on the gentleman's arm in the foreground of the image, approximately the same size as the women next to her, is highly artificial both in her costume and deportment. Physically moulded into unnatural proportions by corsetry and a bustle, the woman appears to be equally restricted in gesture and self-expression. Another critic, Paul Adam, noted the contrast between the 'natural simplicity' of the models and the 'Egyptian' rigidity of the figures in the public scene.<sup>76</sup> Seurat did not render the models 'naturally', however. The models are 'clothed' in traditional artistic poses rather than in corsets. The girl with her back turned to the viewer surely evokes the *Valpinçon Bather*, the woman seated in profile the *Spinario*, the standing figure the *Venus pudica*.<sup>77</sup> This studio nude is no more 'natural' than the woman of *La Grande Jatte* or the conventionalised studio nude of 1880s Salon paintings, but the viewer is forced to



acknowledge her 'un-naturalness', her 'posing'. These artistic poses save these potentially over-specific nudes from unacceptable 'realism', while recognising the process of legitimisation necessary to allow them to be portrayed at all.

The comparison of an initial life study for the central figure and the image reproduced in *La Vie Moderne*<sup>78</sup> highlights the distance between these 'natural' nudes and a life-study, which itself is by no means unmediated. The slightly disproportionate breasts, 'the squatter proportions of the figure, the broader face, the hair flat upon the head'<sup>79</sup> suggest the alterations involved in creating the finished figure. Tiny adjustments, the more elaborate hairstyle and the slightly modified, yet infinitely more graceful stance, (the hands shift from an awkward upward clasp, the rigidly symmetrical pose eases into a classical contrapposto) render the naked model into a nude. The details of the still life to the left of the Spinario nude are attenuated and elaborated in a way not dissimilar to that applied to the figures. A conté crayon study shows the hat with a more rounded brim, the umbrella's fabric falls in withered folds rather than the taut arrow of the painted one, and both the bow on the umbrella and the more elaborate ribboning of the hat are absent.<sup>80</sup> Gustave Kahn's almost apologetic explanation of these 'modestes accessoires' which set the scene failed to recognise that even these objects were embellished upon from the even plainer possessions which had originally been studied.<sup>81</sup> The fact that these women can still only be recognised as models through these external details affirms the impossibility of the kind of 'realist' body types for which Dollfus argued.

Seurat's *Poseuses* did problematise the easy voyeurism of the new studio nude genre, through both an appealing class empathy and visually seductive aesthetic departures. The invocation of an external life for these women and the recognition of the art pose and basic idealisation necessary to

distinguish the 'natural' nude from the risqué one, challengingly engaged the relationship between model/muse and artist, sanitised or sexualised in the texts and images examined here. Yet despite its utopian claims for the aesthetic spaces and relationships of the avant-garde studio, *Les Poseuses* remains aloof from embracing the blemished individuality of an artist model as a socially specific person. Once unclothed, the model in representations from all three domains considered here, popular culture, the Salon and the 'avant-garde', seems to reaffirm a problematic objectification intrinsic to the spectatorship of nakedness whether the gaze be legitimised, lewd or empathetic, cast upon a muse, a man or a Montmartrois. Surrounding detail remains the key to the reading of nakedness, Seurat's costumes of 'art' poses and modern physiques are perhaps not as distant from the luxury and orientalist props of the Salon studios as we would like. Both strategies suggest a permutation of altering fantasy permissible only for the privileged gazes of artists and their implicitly accepted usurpers, ourselves:

There will ... be in striptease a whole series of coverings placed upon the body of the woman in proportion as she pretends to strip it bare. Exoticism is the first of these barriers, for it is always of a petrified kind which transports the body into the world of legend or romance...all aim at establishing the woman *right from the start* as an object in disguise. The end of the striptease is then no longer to drag into the light the hidden depth, but to signify, through the shedding of incongruous and artificial clothing, nakedness as a *natural* vesture of woman, which amounts in the end to regaining a perfectly chaste state of the flesh.<sup>82</sup>

These fascinating and contradictory images which wrestle with the attempt to imagine the hidden depths of both the artist and the life model, prompt questions of how to represent artistic inspiration, figuratively or otherwise. As an artist, let alone a viewer, can one ever

look upon the nude as an unproblematic utopian ideal, in the knowledge that our gaze upon it relies at some level upon a certain negation of our model's hidden depths to express our own?

### Acknowledgements

My thanks to John House for his patient and inspired supervision of this piece in an earlier incarnation.

- 1 The Berggruen and Barnes collections each hold a version of this painting. Scholars continue to debate whether the Berggruen painting is a final study or a replica.
- 2 Paul Smith deploys *Les Poseuses* thoughtfully and succinctly within his larger argument about Wagnerism and Seurat's Symbolist aesthetic strategies. Both Paul Smith's and Richard Thomson's work on Seurat were essential sources for this article. See Smith, P, *Seurat and the Language of the Avant Garde*, London: Yale University Press, 1997: 112–115 and Thomson, R, *Seurat*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1985: 136–147.
- 3 'Dans le sens propre, le modèle est l'objet qu'on a sous les yeux quand on veut en former un semblable; le type est l'objet qui produit lui-même sa propre image et qui la multiplie soit par impression soit par le moulage. Au figuré, le modèle est quelque chose d'idéal dont on cherche seulement à approcher. Enfin, les deux mots peuvent encore être distingués en ce que modèle appartient au langage ordinaire et type à celui de la science et la philosophie.' Pierre Larousse, *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXième Siècle*, Paris, 1874: 359.
- 4 Ackerman, G, *Jean Léon Gérôme*, London: Sotheby's, 1986: 54.
- 5 '... one has to point out that Phryné would not have displayed the false modesty of a parisienne flaunting her charms, ogled by a crowd of burlesque and lascivious Areopagites ... Aspasia would have borne no resemblance, no more than Phryné, to the women of Breda street, and would not have given her body a licentious allure ...' Cantaloube, A, 'Lettre sur les Expositions et le Salon de 1861', Paris 1861: 70–1 cited in Clark, TJ, *The Painting of Modern Life*, London: Thames and Hudson 1985, footnote 113.
- 6 'Tous les peuples n'expriment pas de la même sentiment, chaque âge à sa manière de sentir et de rendre la même impression. Eh bien! j'ai dit que le mouvement de Phryné de M. Gérôme est enfantin, il faut ajouter qu'il n'est pas dans la donnée archaïque: c'est le geste d'une petite Cicassienne [sic] mise en vente dans un bazar de Constantinople et nullement celui d'une courtisane d'Athènes'. Merson, O, *La Peinture en France: Exposition de 1861*, Paris 1861: 207.
- 7 '...je ne puis voir en elle qu'une femme nue et non pas une belle femme, et l'impression qu'elle produit sur ses juges, public et tribunal, est aussi celle que produirait une femme belle ou non, se dépouillant toute nue dans un lieu public, un café, par exemple, ou un théâtre'. Lagrange, L, 'Salon de 1861', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, June 1861, vol 10: 264.
- 8 'On critiquera le choix du modèle de la Phryné, dont la hanche s'attache trop haut, dont le torse est étroit, dont les jambes manquent de grâce; on regrettera que la forme humaine ne prenne pas sous la main de M. Gérôme un accent plus ferme, plus soutenu; on blâmera la ténuité de l'exécution'. Lagrange 1861: 265.
- 9 'Poussin subordonnait l'analyse à une synthèse générale qui avait pour bût l'expression du beau moral. M Gérôme laisse carte blanche à l'analyse, fait bon marché du beau et surtout de la morale ...' Lagrange 1861: 265.
- 10 'Un peignoir jeté sur la Vénus de Médicis en fait aussitôt une femme déshonnête; mais tel qu'elle est, cette célèbre figure de femme semble aux yeux de tout le monde fort pudique'. Paillot de Montabert, *L'Artiste*, Paris, text written in the 1830s published posthumously: 1855: 221.
- 11 '[Les Juges] paraissent émus sensuellement par le nudité découverte à leurs yeux. C'est là un effet tout moderne. Des Grecs habitués aux luttes du gymnase dont le nom seul dit dans quel costume on y combattait, aux cérémonies choragiques, aux concours de beauté, entourés d'un blanc peuple de statues sans draperies et sans feuilles de vigne, ne devaient pas se troubler ainsi à l'aspect d'une femme dépouillée de ses voiles....Ce qui frappe les juges, c'est la perfection divine de ce corps, idéal des statuaires, chef d'oeuvre de la nature, que l'art Athénien à sa plus belle époque sut à peine égaler. L'admiration et non la concupiscence, dut animer leur visages impassibles. Comme les vieillards assis aux Portes Scées se levant à l'apparition d'Hélène, les aréopagites céderont à un sentiment de religieux respect pour la beauté...la courtisane accusée d'impiété fut absolue....On ne voulut pas plus la briser qu'un ivoire de Phidias ou un marbre de Praxitele. Les excellents connaisseurs étaient incapables de détruire ce précieux objet d'art vivant'. Gautier, T, *L'Abécédaire du Salon de 1861*, Paris: 1861: 178.
- 12 Courbet's *L'Atelier* (1855: Musée D'Orsay, Paris) perhaps most successfully engaged this task. The scathing critiques of the 'model's' relatively unidealised flesh (like those of *The Bathers* as well) suggests a discontent which speaks to the successful evocation of both model and muse. Another work, *The Fountain of Hippocrene*, reveals that Courbet was not perhaps fully at ease with this figure. The painting, supposedly destroyed by his sister's careless opening of a door which smashed the easel on to a chair, depicted an allegory of modern poetry with the new 'realist' masters drinking from a fountain into which the model/muse spits. The fact that Courbet insisted emphatically upon the canvas' merit in a letter to Castagnary of 18 Janvier 1864 (cited in Courthion, P, *Courbet Raconté par Lui-même*, Geneva: 1950: 96–98) yet never recommenced it, bespeaks the anxiety behind the boasting.
- 13 The work has subsequently been destroyed. However, a small, faded nineteenth-century photograph of the work survives in Mme Fantin-Latour's scrapbook now in the Bibliothèque Nationale.
- 14 Many drawings are undated or dated several times and as such the suggestion of a progression, as was made in the 1982 Grand Palais exhibition catalogue, perhaps seems unwise. See Grand Palais, *Henri Fantin-Latour*, Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux 1982: 178–180.
- 15 In one drawing she even reclines on the floor beneath several standing male figures, but the sketch is very hasty,





- lacking even a few of the outlines and is located on the back of a more finished drawing, suggesting that this very dubious spatial relationship was almost immediately rejected [Louvre RF 12,394].
- 16 Edwards's letter to Fantin of 30 October 1864, in Grand Palais, 1982: 180.
  - 17 Bracquemond, Cordier, Duranty, Manet, La Vérité, Whistler, Astruc, Scholderer, Edwards.
  - 18 'Vérité notre idéal étoile en argent ... les fleurs et fruits rouge très vif couleur de façon à divier [sic] les 2 flancs de la nape et de la chemise'.
  - 19 'Dans un fond sombre un nuage éclatant descend, il s'ouvre et au milieu apparaît la Vérité, nue, brillante de jeunesse; d'un bras, elle s'appuie sur ce nuage, de l'autre tient un miroir. Un peu de draperie blanche cache la partie inférieure du corps. Dessous elle, qui coupe la figure, une table avec fleurs, fruits, verres, bouteilles, instruments de musique, palette, attributs des Arts et des Sciences. Devant la table, debout, la main sur la hanche, un verre à la main, Whistler en Japonais. Moi, le no. 1, me retournant et montrant la Vérité, puis autour, des gens, le verre à la main qui portent Un Toast à la Vérité, leur idéal, et parure de ces licences permises à la peinture et qui sont un de ces charmes, leur idéal, le sujet de leur Toast apparaît pour celui qui regarde le tableau. C'est de la fantaisie pure, mêlée de réalité.' Fantin to Edwards, 3 February 1865 in Grand Palais, 1982: 189.
  - 20 He concluded '... la confusion de Babel recommence, les mots enivrés déraisonnent, ou plutôt il n'y a plus des réalistes'. Mantz, P, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, July 1865, vol 19: 6.
  - 21 'M Fantin ... traverse (je veux l'espérer) une crise singulière, assez fréquente chez les natures artistes—la crise d'orgueil ... La tête lui a tourné et il se borne à envoyer aux Expositions des collections de portraits ... qu'il groupe d'une manière tout à fait niaise, avec la majestueuse prétention ... de donner une leçon à ses contemporains. Ce petit garçon qui a tant de choses à apprendre, qui sait l'orthographe de sa langue, mais qui n'a point encore trouvé un discours, une phrase, ni une formule nouvelle, ... réunit [ses amis] de ci, de là, un verre de gros bleu à la main ... et dure boîte à surprise rembourée d'ouate pour simuler les nuages mythologiques, il fait jaillir une fille court vêtue sous ces cheveux rouge-carotte; et, de peur qu'on ne s'y trompe, il écrit d'un pinceau hardi dans le décor, le nom de la drôlesse: Vérité. C'est un hommage à la Vérité!' Chesneau, E, 'Beaux Arts: Salon de 1865 III: Les Excentriques MM Manet, Fantin Latour, Whistler, Lambron, Viry, J. Tissot, Courbet ...', *Le Constitutionnel*, 16 May 1865.
  - 22 A recent thoughtful intervention explores the representation of the life model in French 'high' literature such as Balzac, Baudelaire, Maupassant and Zola; her analysis of the archetype of the Jewish model in Goncourt's *Manette Salomon* has strong parallels to the ensuing analysis of the Italian model: Marie Lathers, *Bodies of Art French Literary Realism and the Artist's Model*, Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
  - 23 A single model was occasionally used as the sole source for an artist. Several popular accounts describe Titian's use of Laura di Dianti. The Duke of Alphonse d'Este so earnestly admired his mistress' perfect beauty that he allowed Titian to use her as a model so that it might be preserved for posterity. 'Le corps de la duchesse de la main gauche était unique au monde – et périssable'. Dollfus, P, *Modèles d'Artistes*, Paris: 1889: 231. Jean Léon Gérôme's *Le Modèle d'Artiste* (1895, Haggin Museum, Stockton, California) suggests a process of idealisation and editing derived from a single model.
  - 24 'En quoi ces beautés superbes, ces perfections que nous montrent les Bouguereau, les Cabanel, les Boulanger, les Gérôme, les Henner, les Lefèvre ne sont que tromperies, accommodages, assemblages, pièces cousues l'une à l'autre. Hélas oui! Ces femmes si belles, qui consolent l'homme d'avoir épousé un laidron, ces déesses, ces nymphes, ces chasseresses, ces saintes, n'ont pas d'original, qu'on ait chance de rencontrer un jour vivant? Hélas non! C'est une fille de Montmartre qui a leur face lascive et leurs yeux étranges. C'est une jeune Italienne du quartier Mouffetard qui abrite leur seins de marbre sous son corsage bariolé. Leurs belles mains appartiennent à une patricienne amie du peintre. Leur cheveux d'or sont à une brune qui s'est fait teindre. Vous trouverez leurs cuisses, rue Pigalle. Et leur chevilles, rue Marcadet. Tant pis! Tant pis'. Dollfus, 1889: 38–40.
  - 25 '... le soir, on s'y trompait. Après quelques erreurs ... agréables, on pouvait croire à l'existence d'une seule Léa...parfait. Elles posaient, et se présentaient toujours ensemble chez les artistes. Elles se déshabillaient toutes deux, avec cette formule ... Auriez-vous besoin d'un joli modèle d'ensemble? L'art n'est qu'illusion ou tromperie. Mais si l'illusion est agréable?' The passage offers the beauty in the artwork as a consolation (perhaps a fantasy substitute?) for the absent eroticism of the ugly wife. Dollfus, 1889: 39–40.
  - 26 The innuendo implicit in the dots and the reference to night encounters suggests a more loaded use and consumption of the Léas.
  - 27 Three 1880s pocket books provide the most in-depth popular accounts of the model I have found. Paul Dollfus's *Modèles d'Artistes* 1889 is by far the most elaborate. Three hundred pages in length and comically illustrated, it focuses almost exclusively on the world of the model. Charles Virmaître's *Paris-Palette*, Paris: 1888 devotes one of its chapters to the model (most of the text centres upon the café art scene). Relying heavily upon Dollfus's account the text even quotes word for word one anecdote of a voyeuristic curé posing as an artist to observe a model. Hughes Le Roux's chapter 'Les Modèles' in his *L'Enfer Parisien*, Paris 1888 (each chapter is devoted to a profession – 'jockeys', for example) provides a very different construction of the model, a last vestige of a pre-industrial Arcadia.
  - 28 'Tous les gens qui se lèvent matin, et qui connaissent le Paris d'avant huit heures, ont rencontré sur leur route ces smalas d'enfants italiens dont les claires guenilles égaient la monotone procession des trottoirs. Garçons, jeunes filles, ils s'en vont par bandes ou par couples, toujours bavards, toujours rieurs, toujours armés de lamentables parapluies de cotonnade'. The only depressing aspect of their merry band was the Parisian imposition of an umbrella, necessarily tawdry in comparison with their native cheerful colourfulness. Le Roux, 1888: 68.
  - 29 'Les Italiens ne sont pas dispersés au quatre coins de Paris. Ils ont, à part, leur campement bohème, groupé autour de quatre ou cinq boutiques de macaroni. Entre la place Monge et le Jardin des Plantes, s'échafaude un quartier baroque, bâti en toile araignée, enchevêtrement d'impasses et de ruelles [sic], qui toutes plus ou moins

- convergent vers la place Jussieu. Ce sont les rues des Boulangers, du Puits-de-l'Ermite, du Gril, de la Clef, du Battoi, des rues vides et sonores comme des églises, pleines des fleurs, de cages d'oiseaux, de loques étendues, avec des balcons de fer, des porches cintrés, des escaliers de pierre et des pavés verts de mousse. C'est le quartier Italien'. Le Roux, 1888: 68–69.
- 30 'Infestant tout le voisinage d'une vermine qu'ils traînent partout avec eux, comme une famille'. Dollfus, 1889: 48.
- 31 'Ils s'installent dans les environs du quartier Mouffetard, en des maisons qui semblent faites exprès pour eux et que nul autres, certes, ne voudrait habiter. Imaginez la rue St Médard, étroite, sale, mal pavée, avec un ruisseau boueux qui tient tout l'espace entre les deux minuscules trottoirs. A droite, à gauche des masures se dressent, sans régularité, toutes différentes et pourtant toutes pareilles par l'insupportable odeur de misère malpropre qu'elles dégagent. De hauts murs gris, percés de fenêtres toutes petites. A ces fenêtres, des guenilles multicolores pendues à des ficelles, devant des vitres si empoussiérées que le soleil a bien de la peine à les traverser'. Dollfus, 1889: 51.
- 32 '...une telle graisse les vernit et les recouvre que la main s'y engue et qu'on aime mieux risquer une chute que ressentir plus longtemps cette affreux contact'. Dollfus, 1889: 52.
- 33 'Hommes, femmes, enfants dorment là entassés dans une promiscuité répugnante dont ils n'ont nulle conscience'. Dollfus, 1889: 57.
- 34 '...c'est une profession...ils choisissent leur marchandise'. Virmaître 1888: 77–78.
- 35 Le Roux, 1888: 71.
- 36 Virmaître described how the fathers and husbands often went with the women to the studio: 'La jalousie n'entre pour rien dans cette sollicitude. C'est l'argent qui en est le mobile, car l'Italien est pratique; à son point de vue, il est plus naturel qu'il encaisse le produit du travail des siens que de le faire encaisser par un autre qui pourrait en distraire une partie, ou même tout garder'. Virmaître, 1888: 79.
- 37 Le Roux, 1888: 70.
- 38 'L'Italienne, si parfaite en académie n'a qu'une élégance très relative en costume moderne; c'est surtout par coquetterie instinctive qu'elle s'en tient à ses oripeaux classiques. Même pour le nu, elle manque de ce nervosisme, de cet affinement, de cette mièvrerie malade qui distingue les figures peintes ou sculptées par des artistes qui détestent le genre 'pompiers'. En outre, la race Italienne a un grand tort: l'identité, le manque de variété. On est donc venu très nettement à chercher des modèles parmi les Parisiens et les Parisiennes'. Le Roux, 1888: 95–96.
- 39 'On les enveloppe dans une même réprobation ... Et le bourgeois qui les voit passer, vêtus de leur oripeaux coloristes, parés de leur bijoux faux, le bourgeois qui jadis les regardait comme des étrangers intéressants, les flétrit aujourd'hui d'une épithète goguenarde: — Tiens! s'écrie-t-il des Italiens des Batignolles'. Le Roux, 1888: 88–9.
- 40 The models, interestingly, are identified by their artist-employers' quarter rather than their own, reinforcing the reader's special position. The Bourgeois recognises the Italians only by their brief visits closer to his world. He does not venture, even in his speech, into their taboo quarter (the 5e, around rue Mouffetard) as the artist and the reader have done.
- 41 'Pour faire le vrai, il faut que leurs modèles rappellent du plus près possible la vérité. On ne se contente plus pour figurer un guerrier, de mettre un sabre dans la main d'un hercule, dut il brandir ce sabre de la main gauche, pour l'harmonie de l'oeuvre. L'anatomie ayant fait de sensibles progrès, les artistes se sont aperçus que chaque labeur, chaque métier, chaque habitude produisent un développement musculaire particulier. Et que, si le forgeron, le charpentier et le lutteur ont tous trois des biceps saillants, la forme de leurs outils et leur mode d'emploi, amènent chez chacun d'eux une différence subtile, mais notable'. Dollfus, 1889: 93–4. This was also true in Salon images of models. Only two images in the *Salon Illustré* suggest any external profession for the posing model, both workmen types – J Picardet, *Etude dans l'Atelier*, of 1888 (figure 10) and G Lefebvre, *Le Sculpteur*, of 1890.
- 42 In the chapter 'La Vie des Modèles', Dollfus claimed to have transcribed 'Marguerite's' exact accounts of her expenses which she rigorously recorded in a notebook:  
Dimanche: Déjeuner (avec Elise) au restaurant 12fr 75 Dîner (seule) pain 0 fr 10 pâté de foie 0 fr 10 ci. 20 Lundi: Déjeuner — d — 20 Dîner — d — 20. Clothes, which rarely included a corset, consisted of shoes at 12fr 50, black stockings at 1fr 50. All jewellery was a gift, their hats, homemade. Their rooms were most often in a hotel with a calico bed cover and artists' gifts of drawings as their only ornament. Dollfus, 1889: 144–6.
- 43 Hughes Le Roux, although recognising the potential time saving this service might offer, regretted its syndicalisation of the age-old practice: 'je ne puis m'empêcher de regretter, pour tout ce monde pittoresque, le temps fini de la liberté, des courses à l'aventure, et je déplore amèrement les habitudes pratiques d'une époque qui oblige les Dianas, les Hébé, les Faunes et les Antinoüs à se syndiquer pour vivre...comme des garçons limonadiers'. Le Roux, 1888: 81–2.
- 44 'L'Agence des Modèles vivants était un véritable bureau de placement pour les modèles. Fondée par un ancien modèle Italien, D. Socci, plus intelligent, moins fainéant et surtout plus avide de bien-être que ces compatriotes, elle fût aidée lors de ses débuts par le journal *La Vie Moderne*'. Dollfus, 1889: 126. This enthusiastic account might partially have been inspired by *La Vie Moderne's* patronage of M Socci, the same journal which had published Dollfus's original articles on the model.
- 45 '...aux gens du monde qui ne sont pas mêlés suffisamment à la vie des ateliers pour connaître les modèles'. Dollfus, 1889: 127.
- 46 'Nous devons dire, en passant, que les artistes sont, comme tout le monde, en proie aux luttes de castes et de classes.  
On est démocrate à l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts.  
On est aristocrate dans les ateliers dirigés par des particuliers.  
Là, on fraie plus souvent avec le modèle; on est plus disposé à l'admettre dans la camaraderie.  
Ici, même les femmes très jolies, ne sont considérées par messieurs les élèves, que comme des accessoires, à qui on n'adresse pas plus la parole qu'à un chevalet ou une palette.' Dollfus, 1889: 20–1.



- 47 The principal source for the Salon images referred to here are the *Salon Illustrés* of F G Dumas and Goupil et Cie, 1879–1890. The illustrations are engravings reproduced in editions of the *Salon Illustrés* held in the Courtauld Institute Library.
- 48 A very few exceptions of a Salon image of a life class do exist such as Felix Barrias's *A Life Class in a Paris Studio*, 1869.
- 49 'Sa pudeur, d'ailleurs, était moins affarouchée: il y avait là deux hommes et non pas un seul.' Dollfus: 1889: 102.
- 50 'Quand on va lui demander du travail, il fait toujours déshabiller pour voir. Gras, avec des petits yeux, il sait singulièrement regarder'. Dollfus, 1889: 153.
- 51 The sculptor's studio departed from this construction typically being a barnlike space crowded with plaster casts and sacks of clay, devoid of the dubious signifiers of domestic interiors. This space offered another range of interpretive structures to be examined briefly in relationship to Edouard Dantan later.
- 52 With the notable exception of the detail of the artist at work as shown in this image.
- 53 'Enfin mes yeux se portèrent sur une toile verte, accrochée derrière moi. J'allais sans rien dire, me cacher la tête sous cette toile qui me descendait jusqu'au nez et je pris la pose...il pu continuer sa statue tranquillement: du moment où moi, je ne le vis plus me regarder, ma pudeur était sauvée'. Dollfus, 1889: 73–74.
- 54 The vanity of the model was frequently referred to in the popular accounts. Varnishing days were their most flagrant displays. A model often stood in front of the image she had assisted waiting for or, at times, even announcing her own likeness.
- 55 'Aussitôt, elle ôte ses vêtements, non un à un, mais par paquets systématiques: on sent qu'elle n'aime pas à faire attendre'. Dollfus, 1889: 72.
- 56 'C'est là une habitude. Le modèle italien femme retire tous ses vêtements par en haut. Le modèle parisien est plus coquet, a davantage la science du déshabillage: il laisse tomber ses jupes et ses robes autour de lui, et la chemise elle-même glisse le long des épaules, puis du corps, découvrant un à un ses charmes, dans l'ordre généralement adopté par la pudeur qui résiste encore mollement'. Dollfus, 1889: 73–4.
- 57 'Ce mouvement est souvent difficile à fixer. Et c'est là qu'apparaît la valeur du modèle. Si celui-ci est intelligent, il s'efforce de saisir l'idée de l'artiste; il a vu le projet dessiné par lui, et comprenant sa pensée—comme un acteur,—il tâche à exprimer de son mieux, par son attitude, par son expression de physionomie, tout en évitant de prendre une pose qui pourrait détruire l'harmonie de l'ensemble. Ce modèle-là s'intéresse, en général, au personnage qu'il figure, et à l'œuvre qu'il sert à exécuter. Les artistes aiment à travailler avec lui, le distinguent, lui font une réputation, et il est bientôt recherché. Le modèle inintelligent, au contraire, n'est qu'une pure machine qu'il faut tant bien que mal mettre au point. Indifférent, il obéit comme une bête brute, aux indications qu'on lui donne. Et c'est une chose étonnante pour l'artiste que d'avoir devant lui cette masse inerte qu'il faut sans cesse rappeler à la vérité de la pose, lorsqu'elle ne s'aperçoit pas qu'une déviation légère change le caractère entier du personnage. Mais, intelligent ou non, le modèle devient, une fois sur la table de pose, une sorte de mannequin qu'on tourne, qu'on manie, qu'on cale comme une poupée; avec des points de repaire pour lui permettre de retrouver toujours son mouvement et son attitude exactes'. Dollfus, 1889: 27–9.
- 58 F H Giacomotti, *Coin d'Atelier, étude* 1889; G Roussin, *Endormie*, 1889, etc.
- 59 Alfred Stevens had explored the enigmatic potential of *Le Psyché* in 1875 similarly rhyming the painting's frame and the psyche's, the dolls's skirts leaning against the screen and the woman's, perhaps model's, dress draped over the edge of the psyche.
- 60 K Cartier's *Un coin de mon Tableau du Salon*, 1886, similarly included a living figure as one of the 'objects' within his submission.
- 61 '...semblait revivre, sous le souffle tiède qui lui montait le long de l'échine, des jarrets à la nuque'. Zola, E, *L'Oeuvre*, Paris 1886: 296–7.
- 62 'A ce moment, Claude, les yeux sur le ventre crut avoir une hallucination. La Baigneuse bougeait, le ventre avait frémi d'une onde légère, la hanche gauche s'était tendue encore, comme si la jambe droite allait se mettre en marche...Peu à peu, la statue animait toute entière. Les reins roulaient, la gorge gonflait dans un grand soupir, entre les bras desserrés. Et brusquement, la tête s'inclina, les cuisses fléchirent, elle tombait d'une chute vivante, avec l'angoisse effarée, l'élan de douleur d'une femme qui se jette'. Zola, 1886: 297–8.
- 63 'Mais tremblant de la voir s'achever sur le sol, Mahoudeau restait les mains tendues. Et elle sembla lui tomber au cou, il la reçut dans son étreinte, serra la gorge sous cette grande nudité vierge, qui s'animait comme sous le premier éveil de la chair. Il y entra, la gorge amoureuse s'aplatit contre son épaule, les cuisses vinrent abattre les siennes, tandis que la tête, détachée, roulait par terre. La secousse fut si rude, qu'il se trouva emporté, culbuté jus qu'au mur; et sans lâcher ce tronçon de femme, il demeura étourdi, gisant près d'elle ... Ses sanglots redoublaient, une lamentation d'agonie, une douleur hurlante d'amant devant le cadavre mutilé de ses tendresses. De ses mains égarées, il en touchait les membres, pars autour de lui, la tête, le torse, les bras qui s'étaient rompus; mais surtout la gorge défoncée, ce sein aplati, comme opéré d'un mal affreux le suffoquait, le faisait revenir toujours là, sondant la plaie, cherchant la fente par laquelle la vie s'en est allée; ses larmes sanglantes ruisselaient, tachaient de rouge les blessures'. Zola, 1886: 298–9.
- 64 '...avec cette sensation d'un obstacle entre eux, d'un autre corps, dont le froid les avait déjà effleurés....' Zola, 1886: 303.
- 65 'Mais je suis vivante, moi! et elles sont mortes les femmes que tu aimes ... Oh! ne dis pas non, je sais bien que ce sont tes maîtresses, toutes ces femmes peintes. Avant d'être la tienne, je m'en étais aperçu déjà, il n'y avait qu'à voir de quelle main tu caressais leur nudité, de quels yeux tu les contemplais ensuite, pendant des heures. Hein? était-ce malsain et stupide, un pareil désir chez un garçon? brûler pour des images, serrer dans ses bras le vide d'une illusion! et tu en avais conscience, tu t'en cachais comme une chose inavouable ...' Zola, 1886: 467.
- 66 First performed on 15 May 1876 at the Théâtre du Palais Royal in Paris.

- 67 This may reflect a deep-rooted fear of lesbian sexuality which runs through many of the popular accounts. Dollfus tells the story of Mme X, the bestial bourgeois woman artist who led a poor model astray into 'les goûts ou du moins les habitudes chères à Sappho'. The model's moment of voluptuous folly, which could only be brought about by her abandonment by a male lover, put her at the mercy of the machinations of Mme X with 'sa face un peu bestiale, aux lèvres longues, aux mâchoires fortes, aux narines larges', and almost caused her death. Having cut her hair short and indulged in sexual excess, 'la pauvre fille en tomba malade, demi-épuisée, demi-folle, crachant du sang'. Her parents and an old beau who despite her folly asked for her hand a second time saved her from death and her own sexuality. Dollfus concluded 'reassuringly': 'Tout est bien qui fini bien'. Dollfus, 1889: 195–9. The threat of women artists became a site for subduing the threat of active female sexuality. Interestingly even wicked female artists were ascribed a certain sexually charged, though abberantly so, creativity. For a thoughtful perspective on the female artist's relationship to the male life model in popular literature see Garb, T, 'The Forbidden Gaze: Women artists and the male nude in late nineteenth-century France,' in Pointon, M, *Naked Authority: The Body in Western Painting 1830-1908*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990: 33–43.
- 68 Elmina (furieuse tout à coup): Alors, je veux l'écraser, l'anéantir, cette fatale beauté! [Elle prend un maillet et se précipite vers la selle].  
Antonin (voulant la retenir): Arrêtez, Elmina!  
Elmina (frappants à coups redoublés sur la statuette qu'Antonin a recouverte d'un linge mouillé): Non! Tiens! Tiens! la voilà, mon odieuse rivale! ... Dollfus, 1889: sc x: 35–36.
- 69 Antonin: Vous, vous êtes une iconoclaste, voilà ce que vous êtes!  
Elmina (étonnée): Une lco?  
Antonin: Noclaste ... une barbare ... pour parler la langue de la Ferté-sous-Jouarre: (the bourgeois quarter where the Cuirassier family lived) [Il jette avec colère sa casquette loin de lui] Pour un rien, je me passerais quelque chose au travers du corps.  
Elmina: (se levant): Je vous le défends, entendez-vous, je vous le défends.  
Antonin: Je n'ai plus d'ordres à recevoir de vous ...  
Elmina: Antonin ... Venez m'embrasser ... ça me remettra.  
Antonin: Plus souvent!  
Elmina: Je t'en prie!  
Antonin: Après votre indigne conduite, vous ne pouvez plus me faire qu'horreur ou pitié; choisissez!  
Elmina: J'ai peut-être eu tort de...travailler à ta statue!  
Antonin: Elle appelle ça travailler!  
Elmina: Tonin! ... Mon petit Ninnin! ...  
Antonin: Il n'y a plus de Ninnin! ... Dollfus, 1889: sc xiii: 44.
- 70 'Je voudrais vous faire comprendre la compassion que j'éprouvais pour cette pauvre créature, qui ne pourra plus s'arracher à la boue, et surtout la place qu'elle tenait dans ma vie d'artiste. Ne croyez pas que c'est brutal; c'est très subtil au contraire. Quand je vous faisais distinguer dans les oeuvres des vrais maîtres une certaine beauté, qu'il poursuivaient partout, toujours, à leur insu, avec une ténacité d'amoureux monomanes, n'y reconnaissez-vous pas toujours les traits les charmes d'une seule et unique femme? A tort ou à raison, Pauline était le type qui aurait imprimé à mon oeuvre son originalité. Pourquoi elle plutôt qu'une autre? Ah! voilà...je ne sais pas, mais c'est ainsi. Les gens du monde croient que nous posons quand nous leur répétons que nous mettons beaucoup de nous-mêmes dans nos oeuvre. Ils se trompent ...' Burty, P, *Grave Imprudence*, Paris: 1880: 236–237.
- 71 Henri Gervex's *Rolla* was initially accepted for the 1878 Salon and then removed. Contemporary reports suggested the painting was rejected though this would have been impossible given the artist's *hors concours* status. Susan Hollis-Clayson provides an eloquent account of how the details of the painting's interior would have marked the nude as a *filie insoumise*. Hollis-Clayson, S, *Painted love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era*, London: Yale University Press, 1991.
- 72 'Monsieur Seurat a une grande toile intitulée *Poseuses* qui dans sa pensée doit faire pâmer de jalousie l'Institut, car il ne craint pas d'y aborder le nu, l'academie'. Anon, Paris Artiste: *L'Observateur Français* 26 Mars 1888, in Dorra, H, and Rewald, J, *Seurat*, Paris: Les Beaux-Arts, 1959: 216. '... une tableau d'une sérénité souriante et suprême, *Les Poseuses*, qui apparaît comme le plus ambitieux effort de l'art nouveau. Nues, dessinées par la couleur et par la lumière selon un style pur ineffablement ...' Fénéon, F, 'Le Néo-impressionnisme à la IVe Exposition des Artistes Indépendants, *L'Art Moderne*, 15 April 1888: 122.  
Thomson offers a lucid analysis of the classical quotations and Neo-Impressionist innovations as applied to the subject of the nude. 'The purpose of *Les Poseuses* was to put the case for Néo-Impressionism in the most elevated diction of high art: the language of the nude'. Thomson, 1985: 137. Paul Smith thoughtfully articulates the utopian ideals and aesthetics of Seurat's representation of the models, Smith, 1997: 111–116.
- 73 '...la pureté un peu rigide de ce Lohengrin d'impressionnisme s'exprimait par une nudité digne de la cellule d'un moine'. For further discussion of this complex passage see Huyghe, 'Trois Poseuses', *Bulletin des Musées de France*, 12 Aout 1947, in Dorra and Rewald, 1959: 215.
- 74 'Les chairs, toutes piquetées qu'elles sont, présentent des souplesses et des grâces jeunes, les membres ont la gracilité et le mal nourri des maigres filles vite poussées, hâtivement pubères; les jambes de la jeune femme debout sont bisarrement sinueuses et d'attaches peu vérifiées, mais les bras minces, la gorge, les épaules, sont de construction savante. Le modèle assis, se rhabillant, est surtout vrai, de la vérité des villes et des métiers ardues. Le petit profil, penché, le cou long, le dos voûté, le bras étendu, tout occupé à ajuster d'atroces bas verts, le ventre et le bassin de chairs un peu boursofflées, tout cela est d'une cruauté et d'une gentillesse bien particulières. La lumière, s'il faut le répéter, est plutôt de la pâleur'. Geffroy G, 'Pointillé-Cloisonnisme', *La Justice*, 11 April 1888.



- 75 Huysmans eloquently conveyed this notion of a modern urban nude in his analysis of Gauguin's submission to the 1881 Impressionist show. '[Beauty] exists, it is there in the street, where those wretches who have been swotting away in the halls of the Louvre do not notice, as they come out, the girls passing by, displaying the delightful charm of their youth, made languid and almost holy by the debilitating air of the cities; the nude is there, beneath that tight armour, which clings to the arms and thighs, moulds the belly, and thrusts out the bosom ... a nude different from that of previous centuries, a tired, delicate, refined vibrant nude whose carefully wrought charm is that of desperation'. In House, J, 'Meaning in Seurat's Figure Paintings', *Art History*, vol 3, 3 September 1980: 356.
- 76 'Voici les êtres dans la simplicité de la nature, avec aux lèvres, la souriante énigme féminine, avec les courbes élégantes at les seins menus des jouvencelles et les nacures de leurs dermes doux. Voilà les êtres dans l'apparât de la fête, raides et guindés, solonels sous la tiède frondaison de l'été; avec des gestes et des pretences qui les assimilent aux Egyptiens défilant en pieuse théorie par les stèles et les sarcophages'. Adam, P, 'Les Impressionistes à l'Exposition des Indépendants', *La Vie Moderne*, 15 April 1888: 229.
- 77 Thomson, 1985: 141; House, 1980: 350.
- 78 The charcoal life study, 1887, is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. The illustration for *La Vie Moderne* appeared 15 April 1888; Seurat derived it from the work, it is signed bottom left. The catalogue entry reads 'étude d'après *Les Poseuses*'. Dorra and Rewald, 1959: 222.
- 79 Robert Goldwater, 'Some Aspects of the Development of Seurat's Style', *Art Bulletin*, June 1941: 118.
- 80 Preliminary sketch, 1886–7, Walter C Baker collection, New York.
- 81 'Et certes les modestes accessoires qui entourent ses *Poseuses*, corps de femmes transfigurés par la lumière et l'élégance de la ligne, ne sont-ils pas, par leur qualités essentiellement picturales, aussi beaux et décoratifs qu'un fond de décor de fresque féerique?' Kahn, G, 'Georges Seurat', *L'Art Moderne*, 5 April 1891.
- 82 Roland Barthes's essay on the Parisian striptease articulates a similar *duality* (Barthes' italics). Barthes, R, *Mythologies*, London: Paladin/Harper Collins, 1973: 91–92.