

AUDIO DESCRIPTION



Self-portrait of Suzanne Valadon is a drawing measuring 28.2 cm high x 20.3 cm wide created in 1894. It is framed. The technique employed is graphite pencil, charcoal and watercolour on paper.

The graphite pencil is a writing and drawing tool consisting of a lead or coloured stick, generally made of graphite, encapsulated in a cylinder of wood, paper or metal. Graphite is a black, soft mineral, which makes it easy to use for writing and drawing.

Charcoal is a traditional drawing material, widely used throughout the history of art. It is obtained by carbonising thin branches of trees. The result is a soft, smooth charcoal that can be used to create dark and expressive strokes on paper.

Watercolour is a technique that uses coloured pigments dissolved in water to create images on paper. This technique is characterised by its transparency, luminosity and ability to produce different colour and texture effects.

Suzanne Valadon is portrayed in three-quarter view, with her head tilted slightly to the side and her hair gathered, with a small curl on the left side of her face. Her face exhibits symmetrical features and full lips, with a confident gaze that challenges the viewer.

In this portrait, black colours predominate in her hair, thick eyebrows and shirt, as well as brownish tones on the face and neck, and also on the whole background.

On this date, the artist was 29 years old and was the first woman to be admitted to the *Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. It was an association of independent artists, created in 1862, where every year major names in painting, sculpture and engraving exhibited their works.

At the bottom right, there is a dedication to her friend, the engraver and illustrator Jean Gabriel Daragnès.

Suzanne Valadon (1865-1938) was a prominent woman painter and a key figure in post-impressionist art. Her life and work are an example of overcoming adversity and artistic freedom, in an era in which women faced great social limitations.

She was born in Bessines-sur-Gartempe, France, into a humble family. From a young age she worked in various jobs, including as a circus acrobat, until an injury led her to look for other opportunities.

At the age of 15 she began to work as a model for renowned painters such as Renoir, Toulouse-Lautrec and Puvis de Chavannes. Her beauty and charisma made her the muse of many celebrated works.

Although self-taught, she developed her artistic talent while observing the painters for whom she posed. Edgar Degas, impressed by her drawings, became her teacher and encouraged her to devote herself fully to art.

Valadon stood out for her cheerful compositions, her bright colours and her ability to capture the essence of her subjects. She painted nudes (both women and men), portraits, still lifes and landscapes.

She was the partner of Miquel Utrillo and the mother of the painter Maurice Utrillo, whose career she also helped to launch. She led an unconventional life, characterised by her free spirit.

Suzanne Valadon broke conventions to become a recognised artist in a world dominated by men. Her works are exhibited in museums such as the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Her life and work continue to be an inspiration for women artists around the world.