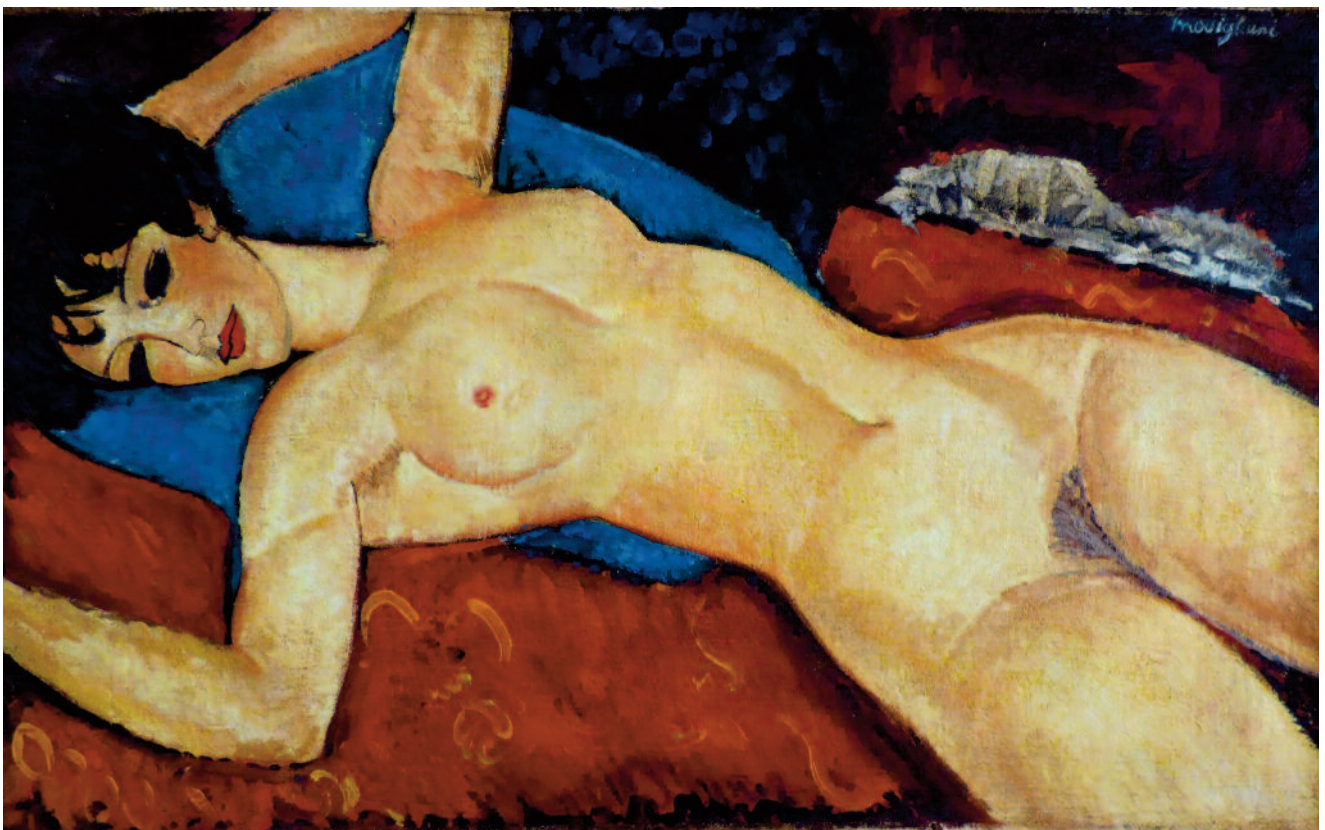


Modigliani and the scandalous model Elvira.
Unreleased portrait and nude pictures. New research trails.

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original text:

<https://www.stilearte.it/modigliani-e-la-scandalosa-modella-elvira-ritratto-inedito-e-foto-di-nudo-i-nuovi-indirizzi-della-ricerca/>



To become the artist he is considered to be today, Amedeo Modigliani, born in Livorno in 1884, needed to move to Paris. He completed this task precisely in 1906.

Considering he died Jan. 24 1920, he only had 14 years to become one of the most important Italian painters of the 20th century.

In Paris, he had the chance to meet every artistic current, though he didn't belong to any of them. He wasn't either a post-impressionist, nor a cubist, fauvist, surrealist, dadaist, and futurist.

On that matter, Gino Severini in "Vita di un pittore" (Life of a painter), explicitly talks about

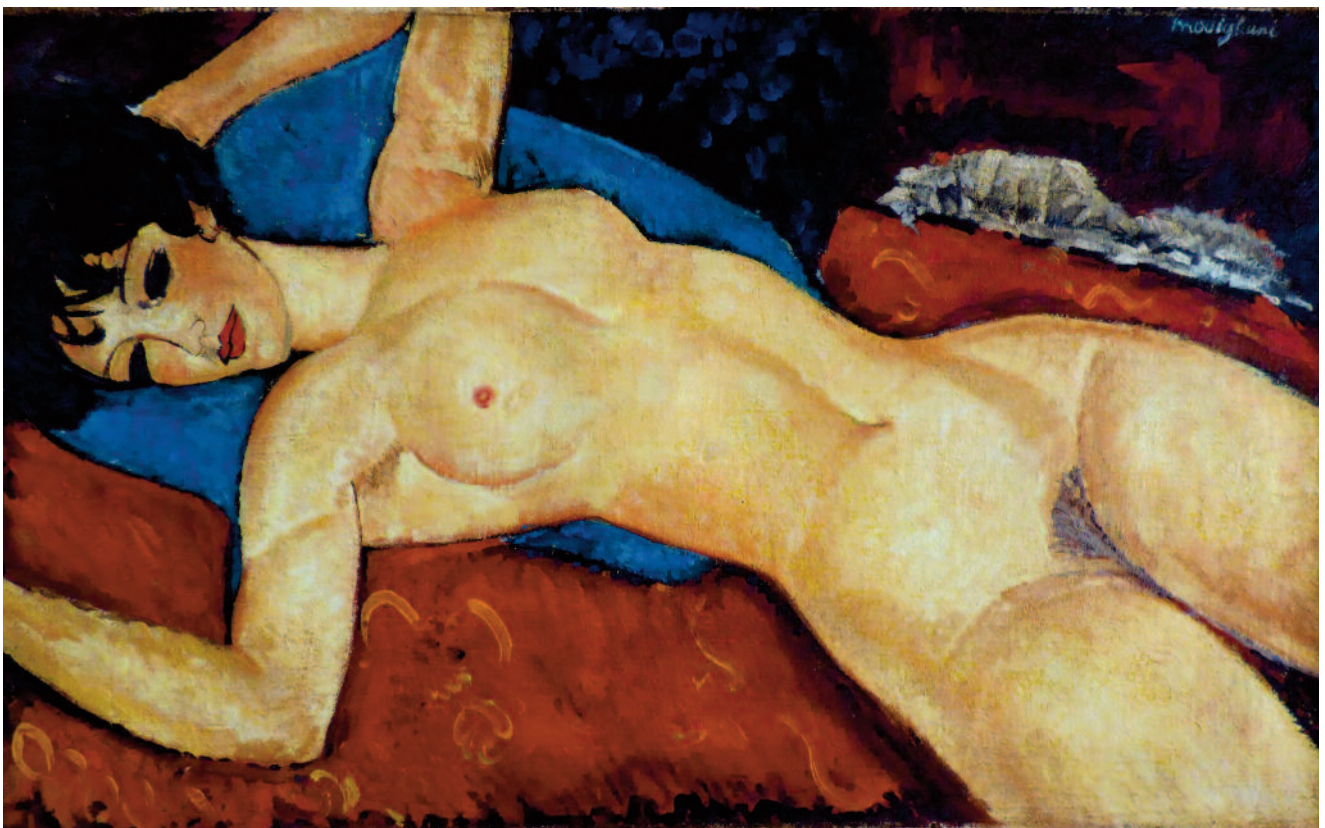
how Modigliani refused to be considered part of any movement, included futurism, the only Italian movement with a European spur at that time.

"These manifestations weren't right for him, "congenital complementarianism" sounded like a joke so, instead of following a current, he advised me against those, but my affection towards Boccioni was significant, besides, I always was, and still am, ready for an adventure [...]"

Was Modigliani an outcast in Paris during the early '900 then?

Actually not: Modigliani was well-educated and sophisticated, thanks to his roots and he surely mastered all of the formal and conceptual conquests achieved by the Macchiaioli - the first art current spread in Italy during the 19th century.

In 1902 he attended "Scuola del Nudo" at the Accademia Fiorentina, where he got in direct contact with Giovanni Fattori, leader of the avant-guard of Tuscan painting. Probably the several visits at the Uffizi Gallery and Museum already flashed him to Piero Della Francesca, Botticelli, Michelangelo e Leonardo, who then became a significant influence for him.



We often hear people talking about how Modigliani happened to be inspired by primitives.

Allow me to disagree: there is nothing closer in style to Piero Della Francesca and less primitive, even if it is high-handedly corporeal and carnal than the lying nude I named Elvira (private collection, unreleased, 33x45 cm), probably realized in 1912.

The portrait was later recreated for an exhibition in 1917, in increased dimensions (nearly twice as the original: 60x92 cm), employing a slightly different color palette, due to expositive

needs, yet not disregarding his extraordinary perfection of dimension and proportion
The one we are considering right now is the replica of the 1912 painting, known to the public as "Nu Couché" which was amongst those works regarded as disturbing in the exposition organized by Berthe Weill, Picasso's gallerist.

It was December 3, 1917, when, only a few hours after the opening of the exposition, commissioner Rousselot [someone who seems to have been forgotten by history, we tried to track him down but, to be honest, the research wasn't too serious] included the piece in amongst the "bawdinesses" that determined the sudden end of the exposition.

The piece was exposed accordingly to Modigliani's merchant at the time's will, Léopold Zbrorowski, to captivate onlookers: aim unquestionably achieved.

We are talking about the masterpiece, who would later become the third most expensive work of art, after the "Salvator Mundi" by Leonardo, believed to be Boltraffio's and for which we took part in the auction, and the "Version O" of "Women of Algiers" by Picasso.



"But classical art is full of nudes" will disagree Berthe, and it appears that the commissioner cut it short stating: "Sure, but in this case, you can clearly see her pubic hair!".

Pardon me, I broadly rambled on: back to Modigliani.

Before arriving in Paris, young Modigliani visited Naples and Rome, following a medieval tradition, even if historians link his travels to the outbreak of tuberculosis due to which Amedeo's uncle organized for his mother and him a trip to the south of Italy.

No matter what, Modigliani discovered Naples' churches and, for sure, Giuseppe Sanmartino's "Veiled Christ" who reportedly isn't Brancusi's.

In the archeological museum, he started considering the value of Phi (and) that Callipigia's butt cheeks aren't a joke.

On his way home, he was surely fascinated by Ancient Rome.

Don't even try to think he didn't visit San Luigi dei Francesi and Santa Maria del Popolo, because then I'll feel the need to prove how well he knew that fool Caravaggio, which sooner or later and, when time'll allow it, I most likely will.

Let's break down all the fairytales told by Modigliani's daughter, Jeanne.

You can't write the history of art with predestination, neither with self-references and moreover with genetic heritage.

Everybody saw how the Legal Archives she founded ended up.

While is true that the first sanitariums didn't appear until a couple of years later, it's singular how, after visiting Rome and Naples, Modigliani arrived in Venice, where he stayed between 1903 and 1905.

Did he get there to be healed amongst the miasmas of the Laguna or to study? Venice was, in our opinion, an unavoidable stop of an accurately and rationally planned trip.

Besides, while in Venice he lived in Dorsoduro, not far from the Gallerie dell'Accademia.

He finally made it to Paris in 1906 after attending, amongst other things, the Accademia Veneziana, another nude school, and some cathouses to keep on training. He takes with him all the carnal tradition of the lustful sonnets of the Aretino and the women of Giorgione and Tiziano.

When in 1906, he arrives in the French capital, Modigliani is by far the most savant of all the artist living in Paris back then.

Handsome and tastefully polite, he had the wicked attraction of a damned artist and owned the keys to read the reality around him, so he could employ it every way he liked.

He used to wander around rivers of absinthe and smokes of hashish (which he always carried with him in the pocket of his stylish moleskin jackets), because he's perfectly aware that he also needs to be a persona, besides being an artist.

He looks for recognition: the same kind of attention we seek today on social media through meaningless and worthless likes, for which we sometimes even end up paying for.

The same attention he discovered in Milan at least a century later.

He was considered an Antinous (which stands for Apollonian or, if you prefer, amazingly perfect) by Anselmo Bucci, who spent those years with him in Paris.

Sidenote: Bucci was one of the 20th-century art-masters and knew enough about what beauty was.

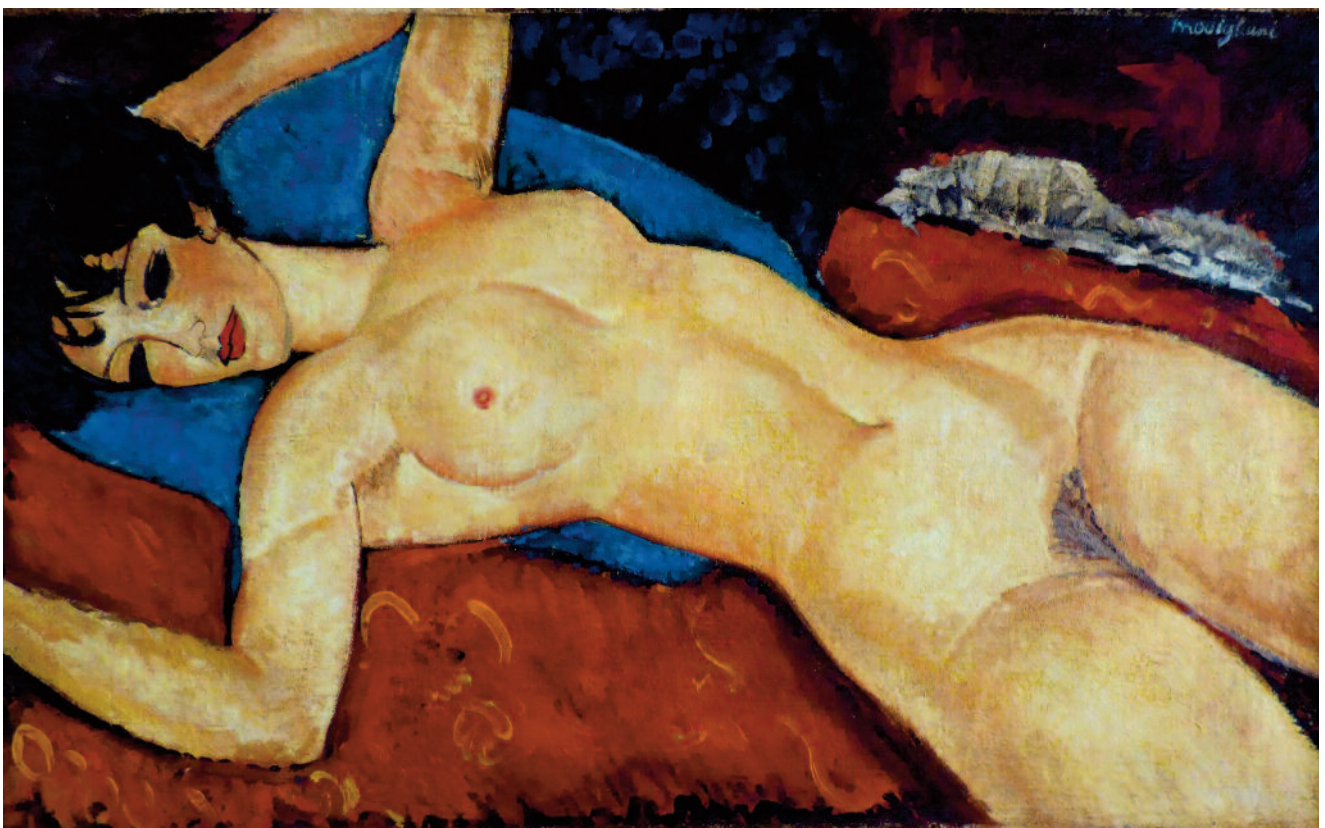
Modigliani was considered to be a prince everybody adored and a lady-killer, as described by Jean Cocteau (poet, essayist, playwright, screenwriter, drawer, writer, librettist, director, and actor... let's just say he was kind of versatile).

Therefore, just to restore some truth, Modigliani wasn't predestined at all: he was prepared since his childhood to become the most prominent artist of the 20th century.

"Women's God", says Cocteau... as far as we care, considering the piece we're talking about, there is only one woman. The most beautiful prostitute in Paris: Elvira "La Quiqué" - the sweet grasshopper - very liberally translated.

A heavenly ode to sensuality and the face of an angel. We believe not being wrong considering her the subject of the two old pictures we are showing you here.

It occurs to us, the representations of his outstretched nude (picture below).



The image of Elvira's outstretched nude reaches our time through the picture in which the woman is portrayed shabbily dressed in one of Alexandres' ateliers, possibly the Delta.

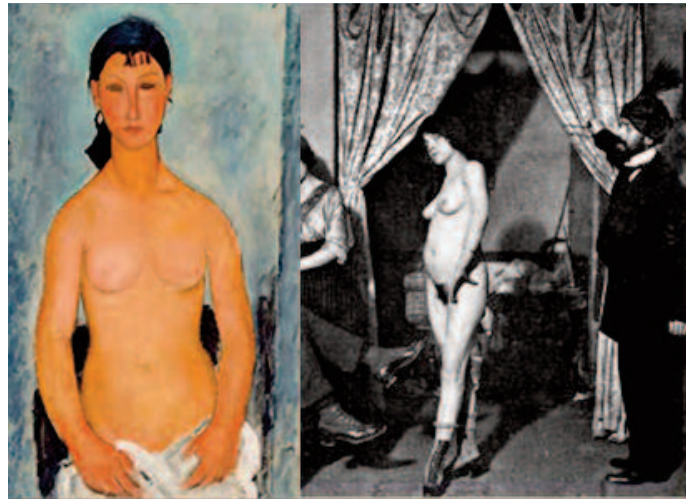
We can actually spot a man who looks like Jean Alexander behind the couch (below).



Maybe at a party at the Alexandres, where both of the brothers seem to be present (below), we can see her as a white dressed angel, with crossed legs, showing her gorgeous and lengthy thighs.



And if that's not her, it's like Modigliani's nude Elvira is the exact representation of this woman. Sidenote: Modigliani's portrait is inspired by a Saint Louis Art Museums painting's detail.



Art's history is written even through those emotions and suggestions communicated by art pieces, and the same goes for photography. We are well aware that at the time Modigliani used to visit another remarkably beautiful prostitute. Beautiful Gaby was her name. It appears that Gaby shared her attention between Modigliani and her pimp and lover, but as far as we are concerned, and due to the lack of tangible records, it doesn't really matter. If you don't like the name Elvira, you can call our unpublished nude Gaby, but according to Modigliani's biography, it looks like Elvira could be more accurate. Elvira, everyone's dream, couldn't belong exclusively to Modigliani, yet ever since they met,

they never split. It seems like they kept on seeing each other even after the painter established a stable relationship with Jeanne Hebuterne, with whom he also had a daughter.

According to legend (we don't know whether it's true or not), Elvira's humanness pushed the woman up to poor Jeanne's grave to pay her homage with a bouquet after the painter's wife killed herself.

According to Modigliani's daughter, her father and Elvira locked themselves up together with canvases, colors, alcohol, and drugs in a studio in Place J. B. Clément.

Since Modigliani moved out of that studio in 1912, it might seem like our story has come to an end, yet the studio background of his meeting with Elvira, could be, according to others, the one located in Rue Ravignan, often mistaken with the first one mentioned, where Modigliani moved in in 1914.

To us, the first theory looks more realistic, mostly because we believe our nude belonged to Paul Alexandre, and not to Paul Guillaume, who succeeded Alexandre as Modigliani's merchant. Besides, if the woman portrayed is indeed Elvira, we must acknowledge that in the naked picture, dated February 1913, she appears to be a few months pregnant.

In Modigliani's nude, the woman doesn't look pregnant yet, so we suppose the portrait was created a couple of months before.

We are well aware that critics date Elvira's nude as painted in 1919, but then again if there wasn't any mystery behind the woman, everything would seem a lot less appealing.

Anyhow between the meeting, whether it happened in 1912, as we think, or in 1914, and 1919 [the year of the painting], there would be too much of a year gap.

If in the room where Elvira and Modigliani locked up in, there actually where colors and canvases, aside from alcohol and drugs, the two couldn't have spent their time solely having unbridled sex, could they? There must be some painting portraying Elvira...

The style of Modigliani's works from 1912 might rule out the belonging of our nude to that period, however, we firmly believe that the timeline of Modigliani's art pieces needs to be considerably revised and several pieces need to be definitely backdated.

All of Modigliani's biographers follow, more or less divinely, Pfannstiel & Ceroni's cataloging system.

The former was an unsuccessful painter, translator, nazi and finally, art historian. The latter was instead banker, valuer for banks and auction houses and ultimately art critics.

The nude we are presenting today holds the consistency that arises from classical statuary. The woman, portrayed in a state of pleasant abandon and with half-closed eyes is in an offering position, or, to be precise, already offered herself.

The outstretched figure painted on the canvas represents the accurate and compelling evidence of Modigliani's perfect knowledge of Elvira's body and the several intercoursés the two had together.

Elvira's body rises from the canvas to excite and touch once again the painter.

This piece grows directly from Elvira's scented flesh and sensuality.

Colder and more detached is, instead, the version of the painting recreated for specific expositive needs, and while the latter is still wonderful, to us, it seems like the Nu Couché rather represents a sweet memory through this gorgeous, more intimate canvas.

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