



Study for Woman in Blue

Date

c. 1919

Primary Maker

Oskar Kokoschka

Medium

Ink on paper

Description

Oskar Kokoschka studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts) in Vienna and was involved in the Viennese Secession and the Expressionist movement. While serving in World War I, he was severely wounded and treated for “shell

shock,” or combat fatigue. After the war, he taught at the Kunstakademie (Art Academy) in Dresden, from 1919 to 1924. The artist’s love affair with Alma Schindler, Gustav Mahler’s widow and a composer in her own right, from 1912 to 1914 had a profound impact on his life and work. After the relationship ended, Kokoschka commissioned the costume designer (and occasional creator of marionettes) Hermine Moos to construct a life-sized replica of Schindler as a receptacle for his emotions. That Kokoschka brought the doll out in public and hired a housekeeper to spread rumors about it, specifically to other artists, suggests that his intentions were not merely emotional but perhaps promotional as well—to bolster his reputation as an eccentric for the sake of his artistic practice. The creation of the doll has been read in a number of ways: as an act of misogyny, a psychological prosthesis, a Dada joke, or a grand performance piece. Although the doll did not turn out very realistic—upon its delivery in 1919, Kokoschka wrote that the swanskin used to cover the figure was “suitable for a shaggy imitation bedside rug rather than the soft and pliable skin of a woman”—the artist used it as a model for three canvases, including his 1919 *Woman in Blue* (now in the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart), for which this drawing is a study. Kokoschka created about 160 sketches for the painting, which was atypical of his practice and indicates its importance. The drawing depicts the doll lying on a settee, propped up on its right elbow in a classic odalisque pose; in the final composition, the figure is truncated so that only the upper body is visible, although the overall pose and placement of the hands are maintained. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS*, 2017)

Dimensions

Sheet: 14 9/16 × 19 1/8 in. (37 × 48.6 cm)