

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

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Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Nude (Emma Dupont)*: The Pose as Praxis

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014)

Citation: Susan Waller, "Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Nude (Emma Dupont)*: The Pose as Praxis," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring14/new-discoveries-jean-leon-gerome-s-nude-emma-dupont>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

Notes:

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New Discoveries

Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Nude (Emma Dupont)*: The Pose as Praxis by Susan Waller

A nude study by Jean-Léon Gérôme, which is not included in Gerald Ackerman's catalogue raisonné of the artist's work and recently came up at auction, represents one of the artist's favorite models, Emma Dupont (fig. 1). While nineteenth-century nude studies are common, this work, because of its unusual provenance, opens the way for more expansive and nuanced consideration of the model's part within studio praxis in nineteenth-century Paris.



Fig. 1, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Nude (Emma Dupont)*, ca. 1876. Oil on canvas. Private collection. [\[larger image\]](#)

The work shows Dupont reclining on a plain, flat surface that evokes the model's platform in the working studio.^[1] The setting behind the figure, which is equally plain, is perfunctorily indicated, with no details to distract from the figure. She lies parallel to the picture plane with her buttocks facing front as she twists around, exposing her breasts. She gazes directly out, confronting the viewer's gaze with a slight smile. Her face, with its heavy jaw and eyes somewhat askew, is clearly a particularized likeness. The work served as a preparatory study for *Pool in a Harem* (fig. 2).^[2] Gérôme produced comparable studies for other paintings, but none have this work's distinctive history: it was owned by the model's descendants.^[3] Although nineteenth-century literature on artists' models includes stories of artists presenting works to their models, I know of no other likeness of a model with a comparable provenance.

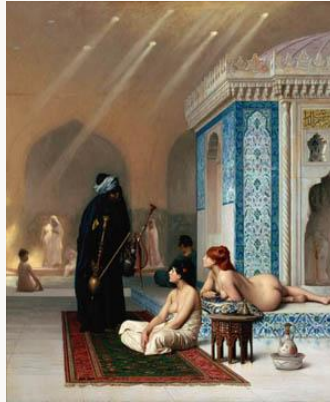


Fig. 2, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Pool in a Harem*, ca. 1876. Oil on canvas. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. [Ackerman, cat. no. 253]. [\[larger image\]](#)

Other works document that Dupont posed for Gérôme for over a decade. In a series of photographs made under Gérôme's direction, she reappears alongside the artist and a sculpture for which she was the model: *Omphale*, representing the Lydian queen to whom Hercules was enslaved (fig. 3).^[4] She also may have posed for several related paintings, including *The End of the Séance*^[5] and *Working in Marble, or the Artist Sculpting 'Tanagra'*, which exists in two versions (1892, Haggin Museum, Stockton, CA, and 1895, Dahesh Museum of Art; [fig. 4]).^[6] According to Gerald Ackerman, it was rumored that the model for *Omphale*—whose name he does not provide—was the artist's mistress, though Gérôme's family insisted that his granddaughter posed for the sculpture.^[7] It seems improbable that a bourgeois woman would have posed nude, except perhaps for her husband, but the story of the model as the artist's mistress has been repeated so often that it is a commonplace, brought forward whether or not there is direct evidence for such a relationship. The conflicting tales raise questions about Dupont's history and her association with the artist.



Fig. 3, Anonymous or Louis Bonnard, *Jean-Léon Gérôme with a model in frontal view, posing for 'Omphale,' plaster seen in frontal view*, ca. 1885. Albumen silver print. Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. [Dc-293 (a+) – Fol., tome 27]. [\[larger image\]](#)

The default assumption in the popular imagination—that the nude female model is the male artist's mistress—is of a piece with prevailing assumptions about their professional relationship. From Gustave Courbet's *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Artistic and Moral Life* (1854–55, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) to Georges Seurat's *Models* ([*Poseuses*] 1886–88, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia) and Gérôme's own series of late self-portraits,^[8] the image of the female model posing for the artist recurs across nineteenth-century French painting. While these works have suggested much about artists during this period, they reveal less about the women on the model stand. Typically the model is viewed not as an individual, but as a type; often she becomes simply a signifier of the feminine other, validating masculine creative agency. In practical terms, the prevailing assumption is that the artist contracts with and pays the model to stand or sit in a manner that suits him. Such accounts of the exchange between artist and model subsume the model's role into the artist's intention. Typically, the economic transaction becomes the template for the inter-subjective exchange, which has frequently been explained by notions of the gaze. Art historians have framed the role of models through a psychological account of the sexual economy of the gaze in which the female model—whether in representation or in the flesh—is the passive object of the active and desiring gaze of the male artist.^[9] Rather than accepting the popular presumptions, however, I would like to assume that a work of art for which a model posed is the product of a social relationship that is a professional, collusive, inter-subjective partnership in which eroticism may play a role, but is not an inevitable or essential precondition.^[10] Who, I will ask, was Emma Dupont? What was her role in the transaction that produced *Nude (Emma Dupont)*?

The difficulty in responding to these questions is the absence of primary written evidence—correspondence between Dupont and Gérôme, memoirs of one or the other—that would document their relationship according to the codes of modern historical practice. This is not unusual; the correspondence between artists and models that remains is limited and typically pertains to the mechanics of their association—appointment times and such.^[11] But other documents shed light on the praxis of the pose in the Belle Epoque and the context in which Dupont and Gérôme worked. These include the few published interviews with and memoirs of women who posed, the many memoirs of artists working in Paris, and journalists' reports on bohemian culture. Such accounts are largely anecdotal, unverifiable oral traditions, borrowed from the private sphere, whose veracity is generally disdained by historians.

Anecdotes, however, have played important roles in the development of historical narratives, as Lionel Grossman argues.^[12] He notes that the form ranges from short, concentrated anecdotes with a clear three-act structure—situation, crisis, and resolution—to less structured, raw journalistic reports of singular events published in the Parisian press under the headline *faits divers* or “news in brief.” Grossman's analysis of the anecdote as a genre provides a framework for assimilating the popular literature on artists' models from the Belle Epoque—the decades of peace and prosperity preceding World War I—which includes both informal and highly structured anecdotes. As a body, these *petites histoires*, as the French call them—to distinguish them from *grands récits* or master narratives—illuminate the praxis of the pose and collectively comprise a form of “counterhistory” that calls into question prevailing assumptions about the role of the model.^[13] They provide a social context for the relationship that resulted in *Nude (Emma Dupont)*.

In 1896 Paul Dollfus included a brief biography of Emma Dupont in *Modèles d'artistes*, a volume based on a series of articles initially published as “Paris qui Pose” in the weekly journal *La Vie moderne*.^[14] It was accompanied by a portrait head of Dupont (fig. 5). Dollfus reported that Dupont became a model in desperation. She came to Paris with a lover at the age of seventeen—her original home is not indicated—and when he abandoned her, she found herself on the streets without resources but unwilling to return to her family. As she loitered outside a café that she had frequented with her lover, fearful of entering since she had no money and hopeful that an acquaintance might turn up and provide some assistance, the proprietor came out to ask why she was not coming inside. Bursting into tears, she explained her dilemma; he gave her some money and told her to come back the next morning, promising a job. When she returned, he took her to the studio of Alfred Stevens. She was willing to pose for the head or in costume, but modestly refused to pose nude. Stevens, however, took her to Fernand Cormon, who persuaded her to disrobe. He convinced her that she would make a better model for the figure than for the head, and with his encouragement, Dupont became accustomed to posing nude. She began working for Tony Faivre, Auguste Feyen-Perrin, and finally Gérôme, who soon monopolized her time. Known as a tireless worker, he prized her conscientious attitude and even paid for her to accompany him when he and his family left Paris for the summer. In the intervals when he did not need her, Dupont posed for Cormon and Feyen-Perrin. Dollfus reported that her regular income allowed her to maintain a small apartment on the boulevard de Clichy. It was decorated with works given to her by the artists for whom she posed.



Fig. 5, G. Tavernier, “Emma, Gérôme’s regular model, who posed for ‘Omphale.’” Wood engraving. From Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'artistes* (Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, 1896), 100. [\[larger image\]](#)

Dollfus’s text, which seems to have been compiled from studio conversations and is rich in anecdotal details that would appeal to readers of a popular journal, provides a starting point for understanding Dupont’s history; statistical evidence about the community of Parisian models and the memoirs of several other women who posed extend the frame of reference to modeling as a métier. In 1886 the daily newspaper *L’Intransigeant* published a summary of a survey, conducted by an unidentified official agency, of female models for Parisian painters, sculptors and photographers.^[15] There were 671 women interviewed, and the survey sorted them by a variety of categories. Only a sixth were born in France; about a third were Italian and the balance were from various foreign countries, including Germany, Switzerland, Spain,

Belgium, England, Ireland, the United States, Portugal, and Austria-Hungary. They were young: 539 gave their ages as between 16 and 20, and only 130 were over 20. A number claimed another profession: 60 were *artistes dramatiques* (theatrical performers), 40 were *modistes* (milliners), 35 *fleuristes* (artificial flower makers), and 30 *couturiers* (dressmakers), while the balance gave no other profession. They earned as little as 2 francs and as much as 40 or even 50 francs a *séance* or sitting. One third had been convicted of posing for photographic pornography.

The few memoirs of women who posed that survive furnish a view from the model stand that complicates the usual assumptions about female models. Women entered the *métier* in a variety of ways. Some began posing as children. Marie Renard recalled that as a young girl she was on the street outside Mary Cassatt's framer when the artist spied her and asked her mother if she might pose.^[16] After some hesitation, Renard's mother agreed; Renard went on to a career as a respected model for academic and *juste milieu* artists such as Henri Gervex and Edouard Dantan as well as Cassatt and Berthe Morisot.^[17] Renard's early introduction into the *métier* was unusual for a Frenchwoman, but within the Italian immigrant community entire families, including children as well as adults, worked as models.^[18]

Frenchwomen and immigrants from countries other than Italy tended to come to the *métier* later and in circumstances that often parallel the trajectory that Dollfus outlined for Dupont. Fernande Olivier, who posed for various academic artists before she met Picasso, fled her early marriage to an abusive husband and landed in Paris, where she encountered a sculptor whom she called Laurent Debienne.^[19] He offered her a refuge in his studio, asked her to pose, seduced her, and encouraged her to take up modeling to supplement their income. Thérèse, who was among the models interviewed by the feminist journalist Marie Laparcerie for a series of articles on women's work published in *La Presse*, recounted that she had come to Paris from Alsace at the age of 18 to work as a governess.^[20] When she found that her pay was minimal and the treatment she received was poor, she sought another job:

One day I saw an advertisement for a model to pose in Greek costumes—I ran to the house indicated and when I was accepted I left my position as governess. . . . After four sittings the artist asked me if I would pose nude. I refused. Since he had finished with his Greek costume studies he thanked me. . . . There I was on the streets of Paris without a sou. For a long time I debated, not wanting to become a model for any price, but misery and hunger were stronger, and in a moment of despair I accepted the first place I was able to find.^[21]

The pattern of Thérèse's trajectory—escape from an abusive situation to work in the studio—is echoed in other second-hand reports. It helps to account for the high proportion of foreigners in the 1886 survey: young immigrants, confronted with difficulties in an alien city, would likely have had fewer family members or friends to fall back on.

The attraction of the pay can be readily understood when models' earnings are compared with the remuneration in other areas of employment open to working class women. Models were typically hired by the *séance*, which was customarily four hours. Men were paid 4 francs, women and children 5 francs a *séance*.^[22] According to notes that Emile Zola made in preparation for *L'Oeuvre*, women who were particularly sought after might earn more, but

male models were never paid more than 5 francs.^[23] This pay compared well with that of workers in other métiers: a skilled seamstress or an accomplished maker of artificial flowers often was compelled to work long hours to earn the average income of 5 francs a day.^[24]

Unlike other trades, however, posing carried a stigma in the popular imagination: since many models—though by no means all—posed nude, the métier was linked to illicit sexuality in the public mind.^[25] For women who regularly posed nude, however, undress became simply their professional costume. Thérèse reported to Marie Laparcerie that after the first four or five *séances*, she didn't think about her nudity.^[26] Indeed she learned to take pride in her body. Becoming an object of admiration was a new experience for her; on the street, in her shabby clothes, she was overshadowed by elegant Parisiennes, but in the studio, when she took off her clothes "I am a very sought after model—since I'm slim, I pose as young girls, nymphs and virgins."^[27]

The traditions of studio sub-culture justified models' nudity by distinguishing the space of the model stand from that of everyday routine and the professional gaze of those schooled in the processes of artistic production from those uninitiated into studio practice. One model explained to Marie Laparcerie the models' perspective on posing nude before a room full of male art students:

Although posing doesn't much matter to us, we are very uncomfortable when we are nude before students who are no longer working. When we are on the platform we are models, that is to say we are a kind of object, but as soon as we step down we become women again and our first gesture is an instinctive gesture of modesty.^[28]

An anecdote repeated frequently throughout the nineteenth century tells of the model who was perfectly comfortable on the model stand before a crowd of art students, but became unnerved when an outsider peeped into the atelier.^[29] In an anecdotal account of Parisian models journalist Emile Blavet explained the attitude thus:

For the model, the artist is not a man, any more than she is a woman for the painter. Artist and model live, during the pose, in an ideal world where the sexes don't exist and where matter presents itself, so to speak, to the eyes of the soul rather than the eyes of the body.^[30]

Thérèse, Marie Renard, and other women who posed—as well as twenty-first century models studied by sociologists—asserted that their nudity on the model stand was something that, after some initial discomfort, they came to accept.^[31] Dupont seems to have shared this attitude: although she reportedly refused to undress when she first visited Alfred Stevens, by 1885, when she was photographed in Gérôme's studio, she assumed the pose for *Omphale* and gazed with equanimity towards the camera as she demonstrated her role in the sculpture's production.

The convention distinguishing between those trained in the studio to see the model as "nude" and those outside the artistic community who construed her lack of clothing as "nakedness" has in recent art historical discourse been dismissed as an ideological mask for the artist's erotic engagement with his female model.^[32] Models themselves, however, continually

asserted that the presumption that artists and models were erotically engaged was misplaced. Fernande Olivier observed with frustration in her journal:

Yesterday a doctor who has been pursuing me for some time said, "Oh! You're posing for so-and-so and so-and-so. But these are great painters! Do you 'sleep' with them?" That was exactly the term he used. I shrugged my shoulders and said nothing. This bourgeois way of thinking is disgusting: artists usually respect their models, apart from a few maniacs, and a woman modeling can usually be sure not to be bothered.[\[33\]](#)

Thérèse affirmed to Marie Laparcerie that male artists' attitudes towards their female models varied:

Some seem to think that we're furniture like the marbles or the canvases in their studios . . . and others want to be too friendly—and you can imagine what they have in mind—covering us with compliments and sweet words, trying to place us "in pose" and arranging our heads and body with movements that leave no doubt about their intentions . . . but there are those who are perfectly kind and remain very proper. Some speak to us only to insult us. Oh! There are all types . . . just as everywhere.[\[34\]](#)

Experienced models learned to avoid artists whose interest veered from the professional: when Olivier wanted to avoid Giovanni Boldini's sexual advances, she simply never returned to his studio.[\[35\]](#) Women who were less well established in the métier or more desperate for work would, however, have been more vulnerable to sexual coercion, and certainly there were artists and models whose relationships shifted from professional to sexual by mutual agreement: Gwen John, who began posing for Auguste Rodin in 1905, became emotionally as well as professionally enmeshed with the sculptor. [\[36\]](#) But Zola maintained that artists and models were rarely lovers.[\[37\]](#)

Accomplished models brought to the model stand competencies that artists relied upon, which included suggesting a pose. As journalist Hugues Le Roux explained *La Vie artistique*, many artists particularly appreciated models who were quick to understand their project and intuit their needs:

The artist begins by instructing the model in detail about what he intends to create. He explains the historical or mythological subject or the purely plastic idea. He attempts to get the model to seize the character, and then, before imposing his idea, allows the model to seek the appropriate gesture, instinctively, by himself, since such movements are always more graceful.[\[38\]](#)

In other instances, artists allowed their model to settle into a posture and shaped their work and its title to the pose. Rodin recalled that the gesture of his *St. John the Baptist* was based on the stance that his model—Pignatelli, an Italian peasant newly arrived in Paris—assumed when he stepped on the model stand for the first time:

The peasant undressed and climbed on the turntable as though he had never posed: he placed himself firmly, the torso erect on both legs, open like a compass. The movement was so exact, so characteristic and so true that I said to myself, "But it is a walking man!" I resolved immediately to make what I had seen. [\[39\]](#)

Some artists did dictate the model's gesture, shaping the pose to their idea. In the academic practice that prevailed in the first part of the century and was the basis of academic pedagogy, painters typically were trained to develop a composition through an *ébauche* or sketch and adjusted the model's pose to match their idea (though they also might rely on an experienced model's knowledge of a repertoire of gestures).^[40] This was a practice more likely to contribute to the strain of posing. Fernande Olivier recalled that Walter MacEwen placed his models in awkward poses and then forgot that they were "flesh and blood and not a 'robot.'"^[41] Alice Michel, who published an account of posing for Edgar Degas, recounted his impatience with her difficulties maintaining a pose on one foot.^[42] Although the artist's decision is the final determinant of a pose, the question of how a pose is initiated opens up the artist/model transaction: developing a pose can be seen as a process, an exchange between artist and model in which the model stand becomes a stage and the pose a form of performance.

Maintaining even a simple pose was a skill in itself and physically challenging, as Barclay Day, a British artist who studied in the Atelier Bonnat, explained:

Some of the easiest poses are very hard to keep; and toward the end of a sitting, in all standing attitudes, however simple and natural they may be, the mere weight of the body pressing on the soles of the naked feet is to some models little short of torture. Some positions can only be kept for a few minutes at a time; but these are rarely selected in the studios, and even if they be, a model who is well up in his business and has a reputation as a good sitter to sustain, will generally refuse to take them. ^[43]

Thérèse recalled that when she was asked to pose as Salomé, "I had to lean on my left leg, arch my back and hold my head behind and to the side—the painter kept me in that pose for four or five hours each sitting. Granted not all artists are so demanding!"^[44] Seasoned models took pride in managing the pain and boredom that the enforced stillness of the pose required and developed strategies for doing so, as Olivier described:

Fortunately this work allows me to think about anything except what I'm doing. I'm sure this is why artists find me such a good model, amenable, graceful and not stiff. Holding a pose if you're bored gets too tiring and you get tense and don't look natural. If you're worried about keeping still, you get stiff and rigid. To pose well you have to forget you're posing, think of something else, not be aware of the slowness of time but forget life, forget who you are, lose yourself in another life completely within yourself, a life that's filled with a happiness you could never find except in our dreams. Luckily I have this facility for dividing myself into two, which is ideal for this exhausting job.^[45]

Emma Dupont's pose for Gérôme's study, with its extreme twist of the spine, would have been punishing to maintain for any length of time—if it were even possible to assume. Emile Blavet reported that Emma, "a clever model, establishes her poses herself."^[46] The nudes in Gérôme's paintings, however, frequently adopted a spiraling attitude, ranging from the subtle twist of the woman in the foreground of *Greek Interior*, *The Women's Apartments* (fig. 6) to the exaggerated coil in his sculpture of *The Ball Player* (fig. 7).^[47] Is Dupont's contortion a testament to her extraordinary suppleness and her professional pride in assuming a taxing pose? Or is it a display of Gérôme's painterly skill in joining two separate poses—front and back—to generate a figure of erotic fantasy?



Fig. 6, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *A Greek Interior: The Women's Apartments*, 1850. Oil on canvas. Collection of Lady Micheline Connery. [Ackerman, cat. no. 29]. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 7, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Ballplayer*, 1902. Tinted marble. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen. [Ackerman, cat. no. S57]. [\[larger image\]](#)

The pose of the figure in the finished harem painting has been relaxed somewhat: the woman's elbows are supported on a cushion and her face is seen in profile rather than twisting back to confront the viewer. This is accompanied by other subtle modifications: the curve of the buttocks is less exaggerated, the musculature of the shoulders and arms is softened, the face is no longer a particularized likeness, and Dupont's brunette tresses have become red. The most significant transformation is in the set of her head: rather than looking the viewer in the eye, she turns to address the servant so the viewer's gaze encounters the side of her face, depersonalizing her. If the study presents Dupont as a distinct individual at work on a model stand, in the finished work these subtle changes transform her into a generic and objectified nude.

In the painted study, Dupont's gaze confronts the viewer—or the artist—directly. She seems engaged and alert, less impassive than in the 1885 photograph made in the sculpture studio. This is not the vacant look of a model who, like Fernande Olivier, manages the discomforts of a pose by retreating into a daydream. Nor is it the blank and guarded expression that Victorine Meurent presents to the viewer in Edouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) or the

coy invitation extended by the model for Alexandre Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* (1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Smiling slightly, Emma Dupont conveys a sense of self-possession, actively colluding with the pose and the praxes of artistic production.

This brings us back to the perpetual question: Was the relationship between artist and model erotic as well as professional? Gérôme's study was retained by Dupont's family along with other works by the artist: two drawings and two paintings of lions.^[48] Emile Blavet noted that "almost all models have their own museum. What painter would refuse a sketch or a study to the beautiful girl who displayed herself nude to him during several hours, but was concealed on the street?"^[49] Ellen Andrée, who posed for Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, and other modernists, recalled that she was offered many works by the artists for whom she posed and lamented that she was not a collector at heart.^[50] Gérôme's study, however, is an exceptionally private work: it is a clearly a nude likeness of a particular individual. Visitors who encountered it in Gérôme's studio might well have identified the model—recognition that would have compromised her modesty. Removed from his studio to her apartment, the image remained in the model's control. Gérôme's gift allowed Dupont to maintain her reserve and honored her professional role.

If the absence of direct evidence complicates any determination of the precise nature of the relationship between Dupont and Gérôme, the question is further muddled by catalogue entries for two other paintings by Gérôme that belonged to Dupont's descendants. When they were sold at auction in 2006, the catalogue listed them as "from the collection of Madame Emma Dupont-Bonnat, wife of Léon Bonnat."^[51] Bonnat was a close friend of Gérôme, was also on the faculty of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and became best known in the 1870s for dignified portraits commissioned by prominent Europeans and Americans.^[52] Devoted to his sister and mother, he remained unmarried throughout his life.^[53] Was Emma Dupont perhaps Bonnat's mistress? Did she serve, costumed, as a stand-in for some of his portrait subjects? Again the archive is silent on this question; according to Léonce Bénédict, Bonnat was exceptionally private about his personal life and burned all his papers.^[54]

In the absence of further documentation, the question of whether Emma Dupont was the mistress—of either Gérôme or Bonnat—cannot be answered definitively. It is certain, however, she and Gérôme worked closely together in the peculiarly intimate studio praxes of posing and painting and that the smile in *Nude (Emma Dupont)* projects the warm feelings between artist and model who colluded in the production of works that included *The Pool in the Harem* and *Omphale*.

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Notes

I want to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by James Whitman, Anthony Crichton-Stuart, Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Robert Alvin Adler, Isabel Taube, and the anonymous

reviewer, at various stages in the development of this essay.

All translations by the author unless otherwise noted.

[1] *Tableaux Anciens et du XIX^e Siècle; Espace Tajan, 14 Decembre 2011*, auction cat., sale 9650 (Paris: Tajan, 2011), 62–63, lot 73.

[2] “Pool in a Harem,” The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/>; and Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme: Monographie révisée, catalogue raisonné mis à jour* (Courbevoie: ACR, 2000), no. 253. The catalogue raisonné was initially published as: Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a catalogue raisonné* (London and New York: Sotheby's Publications, 1986). Catalogue numbers are consistent in both editions. Ackerman uses the title under which the work was exhibited at the Salon of 1876: *Femmes au bain*. See Société des Artistes Français and Grand-Palais des Champs-Élysées, *Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, et lithographie des artistes vivants: Exposés au Palais des Champs-Élysées le 1er mai 1876* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1876), 110.

[3] For a comparable works, see Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, nos. 111.3, 111.4.

[4] On this series of photographs, see Jean-Léon Gérôme and others, *The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme: 1824–1904*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 308–10, nos. 177, 178, and 179; Sylvie Aubenas, *L'art du nu au XIX^e siècle: Le photographe et son modèle*, exh. cat. (Paris: Hazan, 1997), 187, no. 74.

[5] Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, nos. 348, 348.2, 348.3. See also Gérôme and others, *Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, no. 176.

[6] Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, nos. 419, 419.3. Ackerman uses the title, *Le travail du marbre (Le modèle d'artiste)*. See also Gérôme and others, *Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, no. 173; “Jean-Léon Gérôme: The Artist and His Model,” The Haggin Museum, accessed November 2, 2013, http://www.hagginmuseum.org/collections/gerome_artist_model.shtml; and “Jean-Léon Gérôme, Working in Marble, or The Artist Sculpting Tanagra,” Dahesh Museum of Art, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.daheshmuseum.org/portfolio/jean-leon-geromeworking-in-marble-or-the-artist-sculpting-tanagra/>.

[7] Gerald M. Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Sculpture: The Problems of Realist Sculpture,” *Arts Magazine* 60, no. 6 (February 1986): 84.

[8] On Gérôme’s self-portraits, see Susan Waller, “Fin de Partie: A Group of Self-Portraits by Jean-Leon-Gérôme,” *Nineteenth Century Art World Wide* 9, no. 1 (spring 2010), accessed January 9, 2014; <http://19thc-artworldwide.org/spring10/group-of-self-portraits-by-gerome>.

[9] On the gaze, the foundational text is Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6–18. For discussions of artists and models see Linda Nochlin, “Women, Art and Power,” in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row 1988), 1–36; and Carol Duncan, “Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting,” in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 293–313.

[10] On the artwork as a deposit of a social relationship, see Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 1.

[11] Rodin’s notes on his models provide a useful example: his voluminous records on his models were largely comprised of reminders of appointments and models’ physical characteristics. See the discussion in Hélène Pinet, *Rodin et ses modèles: Le portrait photographié* (Paris: Musée Rodin, 1990), 16, 30–31. Rodin’s professional and erotic relationship with Gwen John is documented through the thousands of letters she wrote to him, which are in the archives of the Musée Rodin and have not been published. The National Library of Wales holds the Gwen John papers, which include sixty-nine letters from Rodin to John, many written by his secretaries; these are also unpublished. On their correspondence, see Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, *Gwen John: Letters and Notebooks* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 9, and Sue Roe, *Gwen John: A Life* (London: Vintage, 2002), 102–3.

[12] Lionel Gossman, “Anecdote and History,” *History and Theory* 42, no. 2 (May 2003): 143–68. As Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz argued, anecdotes are also central to the heroization of the artist in western mythic traditions. Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979), 3–13 in particular.

[13] My sense of anecdotal narratives of models as a form of “counterhistory” is indebted to the illuminating discussion in Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 49–74. The impact of the insertion of *petites histoires* within *grands récits* is considered in Joel Fineman, “The History of the Anecdote:

Fiction and Fiction," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veaser (London: Routledge: 1989), 49–76.

[14] Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'artistes* (Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, 1896), 99–103, 147–49. Dollfus identifies two additional women as having posed for Gérôme: Adrienne, a model for the head (194) and Marie Louise, a *modèle d'ensemble* (223). Sylvie Aubenas considers the drawing of Marie Louise to have a striking likeness to the model in the 1885 photograph taken in Gérôme's studio. See Aubenas, *L'Art du nu*, 187. While the pose of the drawing is similar, to my eyes the proportions of the figure in the drawing are stockier than those of the woman in the photograph. See also, Paul Dollfus, "Paris qui Pose," *La Vie moderne*, yr. 9, no. 18 (April 30, 1887): 274–77; yr. 9, no. 19 (May 7, 1887): 300–302; yr. 9, no. 20 (May 14, 1887): 313–14; and yr. 9, no. 21 (May 21, 1887), 329–48. Dupont's biography is not included in the essays in *La Vie moderne*.

[15] "Beaux Arts," *L'Intransigeant*, May 14, 1886, 3. My thanks to Martha Ward for bringing this reference to my attention. The original report remains unlocated. There were also, of course, a substantial number of male models in Paris at this time. In 1896 in a census of Parisian industries and professions conducted by the Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie, des Postes et Télégraphes included models working in Paris: those enumerated were almost evenly split between men and women. See Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie, des Postes et des Télégraphes, *Resultats Statistiques du recensement des industries et professions [Dénombrement général de la population du 29 mars 1896]*, vol. 1, *Région de Paris au nord et à l'est* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1899), 294–95. For an overview of models in nineteenth-century Paris, see Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, "A Short History of Modeling," *Art in America* 79, no. 5 (May 1991): 156–63, 183.

[16] Marie Renard, "Au Temps des Poseuses," *Verve* 1, no. 4 (March 1939): 71. For an extensive account of a model's experience posing for Degas see Alice Michel, "Degas et Son Modèle," *Mercure de France*, November 16, 1919, 457–78, 623–39. It has been examined in Heather Dawkins, *The Nude in French Art and Culture, 1870–1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86–114.

[17] On Renard's work for Dantan see Sophie de Juvigny, *Edouard Dantan, 1848–97*, exh. cat. (Paris, Somogy, 2002), 110–12.

[18] The situation of immigrant Italian models was explored in Raniero Paulucci di Calboli, "Les Modèles Italiens," *La Revue et Revue des revues*, July 15, 1901, 8–129.

[19] Fernande Olivier, *Loving Picasso: The Private Journal of Fernande Olivier* (New York: Abrams, 2001), 60–80.

[20] Marie Laparcerie, "La Femme à Paris: Les Modèles," *La Presse*, December 15, 1902, 2; portions were translated and published as "Life of an Artist's Model in Paris: A Transcript from the Experiences of One Who Poses for Painters and Sculptors," *New York Tribune*, January 25, 1903, 1.

[21] "Un jour je vois sur un journal qu'on demandait un modèle pour des costumes grecs; je cours à la maison indiquée, on m'accepte, je lâche ma place de gouvernante. . . . Après quatre séances le peintre chez qui j'étais veut me prendre pour le nu; je refuse; ayant fini ses costumes grecs il me remercie. . . . Me voici sur le pavé de Paris, sans un sou devant moi; longtemps je me suis débattue, ne voulant à aucun prix me faire modèle, mais la misère et la faim ont été les plus fortes, et j'ai accepté dans un moment de désespoir la première place de modèle que j'ai pu trouver." Laparcerie, "La Femme à Paris."

[22] Henry Bacon, *A Parisian Year* (Boston: Roberts Bros, 1882), 113–14; Hugues Le Roux, "Le Monde des Modèles," *La Vie*, yr. 3, no. 18 (May 5, 1889): 142–43; "Nos Artistes et leurs modèles: Autour de la table de pose," *Lectures pour tous*, April 1910, 644–45.

[23] Emile Zola and Henri Mitterand, *Carnets d'enquêtes: Une ethnographie inédite de la France* (Paris: Plon, 1986), 252.

[24] Lenard R. Berlanstein, *The Working People of Paris, 1871–1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 44.

[25] Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 49–64.

[26] Laparcerie, "La Femme à Paris."

[27] "Je suis un des modèles les plus recherchés—comme je suis mince, je fais les jeunes filles, les nymphes, les vierges." Laparcerie, "La Femme à Paris."

[28] "Autant cela nous coûte peu de poser, autant nous nous sentons gênées de rester nues devant les élèves sitôt qu'on ne travaille plus; quand nous sommes sur le tréteau nous sommes des modèles, c'est à dire quelque peu 'des objets' sitôt descendues nous redevenons des femmes et notre premier mouvement est un instinctif mouvement de la pudeur." Marie Laparcerie, "La Femme à Paris: Les Modèles," *La Presse*, January 1, 1903, 1.

[29] Waller, *Invention of the Model*, 43–45.

[30] “Pour lui, le peintre n’est pas un homme, pas plus qu’elle n’est une femme pour le peintre. Artiste et modèle vivent, au courant de la pose, dans un monde idéal où les sexes n’existent pas et où la matière se révèle, pour ainsi dire, aux yeux de l’âme plutôt qu’aux yeux du corps.” Emile Blavet, *La Vie Parisienne: La ville & le théâtre* (1884) (Paris: L. Boulanger, 1885), 120.

[31] On the attitudes of twenty-first-century models see Sarah R. Phillips, *Modeling Life: Art Models Speak About Nudity, Sexuality, and the Creative Process* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 49–54.

[32] For example, see Nochlin, “Women, Art and Power,” 293–313.

[33] Olivier, *Loving Picasso*, 151. According to Zola, artists and models were rarely lovers. See Zola and Mitterand, *Carnets d’enquêtes*, 252.

[34] “Les uns semblent croire que nous n’existons pas plus que les marbres ou que les toiles de leur atelier . . . les autres voulant être trop aimables—et vous devinez dans quel but—nous accablent de compliments et de mots doux: s’attardent à nous placer ‘en pose’ à nous arranger la tête ou le corps avec des mouvements qui ne laissent aucun doute sur leurs intentions . . . par contre, il y en a qui savent être parfaitement gentils tout en restant très corrects avec nous. . . . Certains ne nous adressent la parole que pour nous insulter. Oh! Il y en a de tous . . . c’est comme partout.” Laparcerie, “La femme à Paris.” See also Zola and Mitterand, *Carnets d’enquêtes*, 252.

[35] Olivier, *Loving Picasso*, 151.

[36] Sue Roe, *Gwen John: A Life* (London: Vintage, 2002), 47–67.

[37] Zola and Mitterand, *Carnets d’enquêtes*, 252.

[38] “L’artiste commence par lui apprendre avec de grands détails ce qu’il a l’intention de créer. Il lui raconte le sujet historique, mythologique ou purement plastique. Il s’efforce de lui en faire saisir le caractère et, ensuite, avant de lui imposer sa propre volonté, il le laisse chercher tout seul le mouvement juste, instinctif, qui est toujours le plus gracieux.” Le Roux, “Le Monde des Modèles,” 143.

[39] “Le paysan se déshabille, monte sur la table tournante comme s’il n’avait jamais posé: il se campe, la tête relevée, le torse droit, portant à la fois sur les deux jambes, ouvertes comme un compas. Le mouvement était si juste, si caractérise et si vrai que je m’écrierai, ‘Mais c’est un homme qui marche!’ Je résolus immédiatement de faire ce que j’avais vu.” François Dujardin-Beaumetz, *Entretiens avec Rodin* (Paris: Dupont, 1913), 65–66. See also Pinet, *Rodin et ses modèles*, 16–17.

[40] The standard work on academic praxes in the nineteenth century is Albert Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Phaidon, 1971).

[41] Olivier, *Loving Picasso*, 147.

[42] Michel, “Degas et Son Modèle,” 457–59.

[43] Barclay Day, “Studio Life in Paris,” *Magazine of Art* 5 (1882): 511.

[44] “Il fallait qu’appuyée sur la jambe gauche je camber les reins et je tiens la tête penchée sur le côté et renversée en arrière, le peintre me tenait ainsi quatre ou cinq heures chaque séance. Il est vrai que nous rencontrons rarement des artistes aussi exigeants que celui-ci.” Laparcerie, “La Femme à Paris.”

[45] Olivier, *Loving Picasso*, 97.

[46] “Emma, modèle savant, trouve ses poses elle-même.” Blavet, *La Vie Parisienne*, 123.

[47] Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, nos. 29 and 557.

[48] *Tableaux Anciens et du XIX^e Siècle: Espace Tajan*, 22 juin 2006, auction cat., sale 6613 (Paris: Tajan, 2006), 93, lots 72 and 73. Lot 72 seems to belong to a series of lion studies. See Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, nos. 529, 529.2, 530, 531, 530. Lot 73 appears to be a study for *Lionne et lionceaux*, Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, no. 536. For the drawings see *Dessins Anciens: Espace Tajan*, 18 Novembre, 2011, sale 9641, auction cat. (Paris: Tajan, 2011), lots 124 and 125.

[49] “Presque tous les modèles ont leur musée. Quel peintre refuserait une esquisse, un croquis, à la belle fille qui s’est montrée à lui, plusieurs heures durant, toute voilée dehors?” Blavet, *La Vie Parisienne*, 123.

[50] “Des peintres et leur modèle,” *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, yr. 2, no. 9 (May 1, 1921): 262.

[51] “Collection Madame Emma Dupont-Bonnat, épouse de Léon Bonnat,” *Tableaux Anciens et du XIX^e Siècle: Espace Tajan*, 22 juin 2006, lots 72 and 73.

[52] Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing, 1830–1900*, exh. cat. (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), 164–66, 271–73.

[53] Ibid., 272; and William A. Coffin, “The Late Léon Bonnat: His Leadership in French Art and His Lifelong Interest in America and Americans,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1922.

[54] Léonce Benedite, “Léon Bonnat, 1833–1922,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 5th per., 7 (January 1923): 1–15. Sophie Harent, Directeur and Conservateur en Chef of the Musée Bonnat-Helleu, reports that the name of Emma Dupont is unknown to her and to Guy Saigne, who is compiling a catalogue raisonné of Bonnat’s portraits (email to author, June 13, 2012); Alisa Luxenberg, Professor of Art History at Lamar Dodd School of Art, the University of Georgia and the author of “Léon Bonnat (1833–1922)” (PhD diss., New York University, 1991), is also unfamiliar with Emma Dupont (email to author, March 26, 2012). My thanks to them and also to Gabriel P. Weisberg, Jon and Linda Whiteley, and Rachel Woodruff for their assistance in pursuing the Dupont-Bonnat connection. A portrait by Bonnat dated 1888, which was sold at auction under the title *Belle Epoque Beauty*, bears a resemblance to Gérôme’s likeness of Dupont. The young woman’s heavy jaw, slightly askew eyes and steady gaze all recall the features in Gérôme’s study. See Christie’s South Kensington, Ltd. *19th century European Art: Including Orientalist Art*, September 12, 2013, auction cat., sale 9429 (London: Christie’s South Kensington, 2013), lot 0047, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://m.christies.com/sale/lot/sale/24241/lot/5710270/p/1/?KSID=2b447e4efd5e0935be418a3eb276d2c6>.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Nude (Emma Dupont)*, ca. 1876. Oil on canvas. Private collection. [\[return to text\]](#)

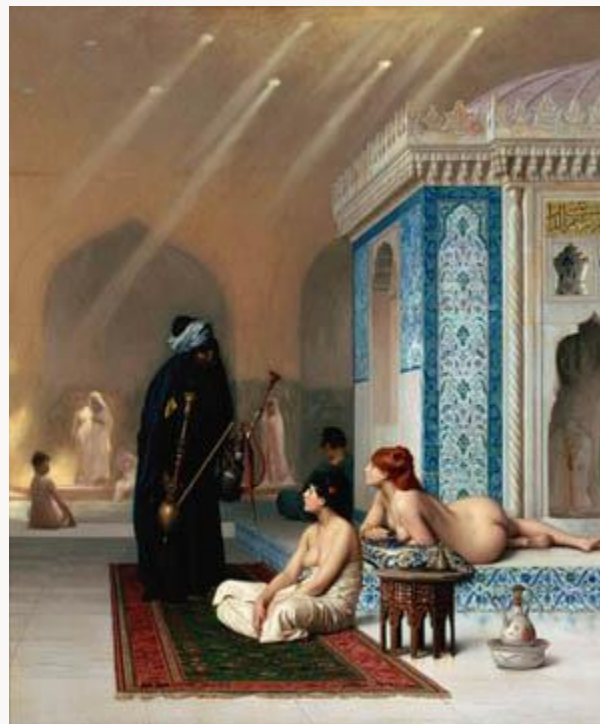


Fig. 2, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Pool in a Harem*, ca. 1876. Oil on canvas. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. [Ackerman, cat. no. 253]. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Anonymous or Louis Bonnard, *Jean-Léon Gérôme with a model in frontal view, posing for 'Omphale,' plaster seen in frontal view*, ca. 1885. Albumen silver print. Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. [Dc-293 (a+) – Fol., tome 27]. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, G. Taverne, "Emma, Gérôme's regular model, who posed for 'Omphale.'" Wood engraving. From Paul Dollfus, *Modèles d'artistes* (Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion, 1896), 100. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *A Greek Interior: The Women's Apartments*, 1850. Oil on canvas. Collection of Lady Micheline Connery. [Ackerman, cat. no. 29]. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Ballplayer*, 1902. Tinted marble. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen. [Ackerman, cat. no. S57]. [\[return to text\]](#)