

Standing Female

Nude

Elie Nadelman (1882-1946), United States

1908

Pear wood

Acc. #96.125

G377

Elie Nadelman:

"I employ no other line than the curve, which possesses freshness and force. I compose these curves so as to bring them in accord or opposition to one another. In that way I obtain the life form, i.e., harmony." --Elie Nadelman

"... in love with style... the curved line... and sculpture as an elegant game " -- very nearly captures the artist Elie Nadelman. Strikingly handsome and urbane, he carried with him an aura of the well-bred and debonair. Influences from the caves of Lascaux, Ancient Greece, Michelangelo, Mannerism, Art Nouveau, Rodin and, finally, Folk Art, wound their way through his drawings, sculptures and carvings. He combined the intimate knowledge of 4000 years of carving and casting with brilliant craftsmanship and the ironic wit of the modernist.

Biographical:

Nadelman was born in Warsaw, Poland, the last of seven

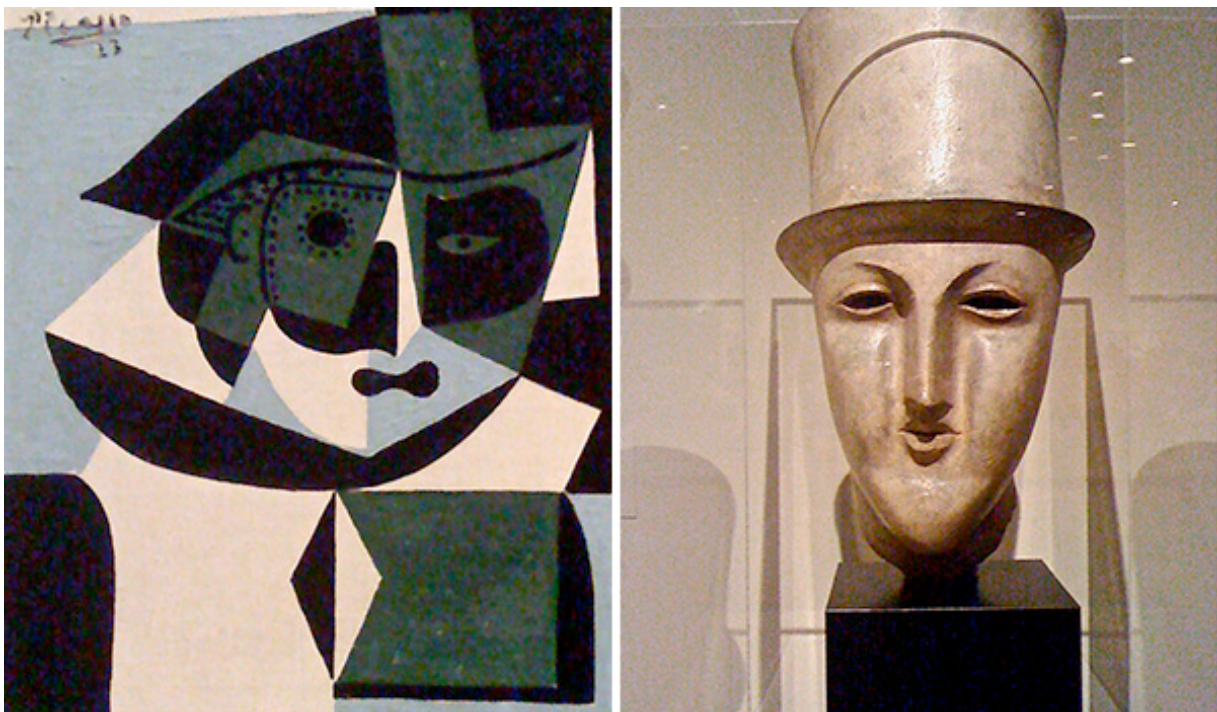


children, to an educated middle-class Jewish jeweler and his wife. They encouraged him in the liberal arts; he enjoyed singing, playing the flute, and, of course, art, which he pursued at Warsaw's Gymnasium and High School of Liberal Arts. In 1900 he joined the Imperial Russian Army (Poles were, at the time, Russian subjects), receiving somewhat favored status as an educated volunteer. Among his primary duties, were providing flute and art lessons to the children of officers and making decorative paintings for the mess hall. On his return a year later to Warsaw, Nadelman attended the Warsaw Art Academy. In 1904, following in the tradition of Frédéric Chopin and many other Polish artists, he headed west. The trip began in Munich, where he came in contact with



Jugendstil, the German form of Art Nouveau; the simplified and biting satirical drawings seen in intellectual and political magazines such as *Simplicissimus* and *Jugend*; the museums of classical art as well as of German folk art; and ideas about new directions for sculpture. Supplied with this new knowledge, he arrived in Paris six months later.

Nadelman began by frequenting the Louvre, taking in antique Greek sculpture such as Praxiteles' marble Aphrodite, Michelangelo's bound slaves, and probably the sixteenth-century French sculptor Germain Pilon's funerary sculpture combining marble and bronze. Elements of each of these works turn up in Nadelman's later work. Like Rodin, Nadelman was enthralled by what had been accomplished in the sculpture of the past and searched for ways to perpetuate and advance tradition, rather than cut himself off from it. Very quickly he became part of the Paris avant-garde, and his first exhibition at Galerie Druet in 1909 was an immediate success. Leo Stein, brother of Gertrude, brought Picasso to Nadelman's studio where he saw a head in plaster created from alternating curves, whose influence on Cubism has been debated since. The French poet and art critic André Salmon wrote in 1914, "Let us not forget that Nadelman sacrificed everything to the relations of volumes a long time before the Cubists."



Harlequin by Pablo Picasso and Le Boulevardier by Elie Nadelman

In 1911 an exhibition of his work was held at the Patterson Gallery in London, containing 15 marble heads. It created a sensation. Here was neo-classicism based on poses and properties of Greek antiquity, yet not cold. There was a contemporary feeling in the combining of Mannerism and Classicism that resulted in fluidity and elegance. The collection was purchased in its entirety by Helena Rubenstein (Princess Gourielli-Tchkonja), a fellow Pole (yes, she of the cosmetics empire) who became Nadelman's

patron, helping him emigrate to America on the eve of World War I.

He arrived in New York a respected artist and quickly became a member of Manhattan's High Bohemia; his charismatic personality, striking looks, elegant demeanor, and passionate intelligence helped him gain entree into New York's exclusive social and artistic circles. Alfred Stieglitz, the iconoclastic dealer and master photographer, mounted a show of Nadelman's sculptures and drawings in 1915 at his Gallery 291, where Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Auguste Rodin, and Paul Cezanne had their first American shows. The work Nadelman exhibited demonstrated his radical simplification of form.

In 1919 he married a wealthy widow, Mrs. Joseph Flannery, and they began amassing a large collection of Folk Art through the 1920's. His work borrowed some of Folk Art's directness and naive qualities, but he imbued his figures with an elegant worldliness and sly wit that makes them some of his most valued works today.



The Tango, The Whitney Museum of American Art

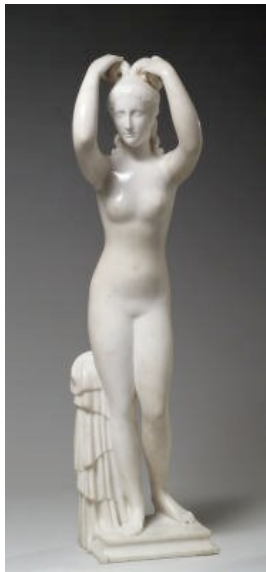
In 1929 their fortune was wiped out. They retired to their estate, Alderbrook at Riverdale-on-Hudson, where he became more reclusive though he never stopped creating. The tiny figures of his later years were done in plaster and terra cotta, influenced by the Tanagra figurines of Ancient Greece; but they are far from graceful, and show dark and unreal distortions, by far the most anti-classical of his career. He died in 1946 surrounded by the creations of his final years.

MIA's Standing Female Nude:

- looked back to Roman sculpture, classical forms; updated archaic forms
- also modern; pared down, dynamic
- abstract
- manipulates reality; Manneristic
- contaposto pose

Questions/Discussion:

1. Compare our Standing Female Nude with the Walker Art Center's Nude from



1925. How are they alike? How are they different?
2. How does the choice of materials contribute to the sculpture?
3. How would our sculpture be different if it were in another material? Bronze, ceramic?
4. In what ways is she realistic? In what ways is she abstract?
5. What are some words that come to mind when you look at this sculpture?

Possible Tours:

Sculpture; Off the Wall
Women in Art
Artistic Influences
What's it Made Of?
The Figure/Nudes
Interior Decorator's Dream

Resources:

www.antiquestandfineart.com

fromonethingtoanother.com

www.sbmadocents.org

article by the artist's granddaughter, Cynthia Nadelman, written for American Heritage,

www.americanheritage.com

The Whitney Museum of American Art
class notes

Submitted by Lin Stein, February, 2012