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**1** Edgar Degas, *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, 1878/1879–1881, pigmented beeswax, clay, metal armature, rope, paintbrushes, human hair, silk and linen ribbon, cotton faille bodice, cotton and silk tutu, linen slippers on wooden base, 94.4 × 35 × 35.8 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Alexander Eiling and Eva Mongi-Vollmer

# *en passant.* Impressionism in sculpture

## An approximation

In Paris of the 1880s, there was no question as to the existence of Impressionist sculpture.[1] It was proclaimed as a fact, cautiously defined and emotionally discussed. Less than four decades later, the matter was no longer quite as clear. In 1919, the French art critic André Salmon referred to the idea of Impressionist sculpture as simply "inane".[2] The collective silence on the subject that set in at the end of World War I was less harsh but more enduring. When we endeavour to pick up the threads again today, we find ourselves confronted with a series of questions: what was understood by the term "Impressionist sculpture" when it first emerged in 1881, and – contrary to Impressionist painting – why did it not become firmly established in art historiography? Moreover, which sculptors and/or works have even been labelled as Impressionist since the 1880s?

Our research drew our attention to five artists whose artistic approaches were all once discussed under this heading. Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), Medardo Rosso (1858–1928), Paolo Troubetzkoy (1866–1938) and Rembrandt Bugatti (1884–1916) – members of three different generations – all worked in Paris at least for a time, but otherwise shared only rather loose commonalities. This catalogue devotes an in-depth essay to each of them written by Alexander Eiling, Dominik Brabant, Eva Mongi-Vollmer, Yvette Deseyve and Philipp Demandt, respectively.

Of the sculptors cited, the only one to take part in the eponymous Parisian exhibitions between 1874 and 1886 was Degas. He showed a sculpture in public only once – the famous *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (fig. 1; see cat. 4) at the sixth Impressionist exhibition of 1881. It was this work that gave rise to the first references (in the press) to "Impressionist sculptors" ("sculpteurs impression[n]istes").[3] Several reviewers subsequently spoke of Degas as an Impressionist sculptor, or of his works as Impressionist – albeit always with respect to that sculpture and that exhibition only.

To understand the discussion of Impressionist sculpture that took Degas's presentation of his dancer as its point of departure, we must go back to 1846. It was in that year that Charles Baudelaire wrote a critique of the Salon in which he voiced a devastating blow to sculpture in general. In his text "Pourquoi la sculpture est ennuyeuse" (Why sculpture is boring/tedious), he denied the medium a rank equal to that of architecture and painting and categorically demanded that it subordinate itself to the other two.[4] He thus declared sculpture a decorative and complementary art. A lot of things about the medium bothered him, presumably

**2** Emmanuel Frémiet, *Jeanne d'Arc,* 1874, Place des Pyramides, Paris, historic postcard

**3** Claude Monet, *Impression, soleil levant,* 1872, oil on canvas, 48 × 63 cm, Musée Marmottan, Paris

first and foremost this: "Sculpture has several disadvantages which are a necessary consequence of its means and materials. Though as brutal and positive as nature herself, it has at the same time a certain vagueness and ambiguity, because it exhibits too many surfaces at once." The painter, on the other hand, decided on a single "exclusive and absolute" viewpoint, and his expression was accordingly much more forceful. In Baudelaire's opinion, sculpture was too close to nature per se, and the sculptor developed too little initiative to bring forth autonomous art. The contemplation of sculpture therefore did not require any imagination.

These provocative statements were still echoing decades later when, from the purely quantitative point of view, the medium of sculpture was in excellent shape. Around 1880, the spectrum ranged from the widespread phenomenon of the public monument to the countless objects that had found their way into upper-class homes and gardens as manifestations of a new collecting culture and, occasionally, also as status symbols.[5] In the public space, on the other hand, sculpture was assigned the task of conveying political or moral ideas in monumental form – heroes and gods gazed down from high pedestals (fig. 2).[6] At the same time, these works adhered for the most part to a conservative classical aesthetic increasingly regarded as oppressive. Modern sculptors in the period around 1880 were thus called upon to position themselves against both the fundamental Baudelairean accusation of missing artistic sensibility and the complete lack of innovation – with regard to form and content alike – encountered in mass-produced sculpture. At issue here, no less, was a renewal of sculpture and thus of a medium that, in the eyes of many present-day viewers, is far less accessible than two-dimensional art.

## Impressionism in sculpture – the debate

It was primarily the artists participating in the Impressionist exhibitions mounted in Paris who set out in search of radical approaches to modernisation. The label "Impressionists" jeeringly introduced in 1874 by the art critic Louis Leroy had its origins in the term "impression" that had already been under discussion for some time. As chance would have it, Claude Monet adopted it for the title of his famous work *Impression, soleil levant* (fig. 3), which he presented in the first Impressionist exhibition. The reviews by such critics as Jules-Antoine Castagnary and Émile Zola emphasised that, like the other artists taking part in the show, Monet was no longer interested in the reproduction of a given subject, but in the conscious individual visual sensation it elicited.[7] Representational depiction now faded into the background as the focus of the artworks shifted to the act of perception. Under these conditions, sculpture – as the prototypical representative of objectness – came under fire from all sides. It seemed essentially to be the pure antithesis to the impressions so fleetingly and sketchily captured by the painters. After all, painting was incomparably better at conveying the constant fluctuation of modern-day motifs seemingly perceived in passing (*en passant*) than sculpture, with its oppressive heaviness and immobility.

Yet if our exhibition discusses the existence of Impressionist sculpture, our first step must be to clarify what is meant by the highly ambiguous term "impressionism". The studies of the past decades have adopted a wide range of different viewpoints in the attempt to formulate a definition. Apart from the pure fact of an artist's participation in the Impressionist exhibitions,[8] they have taken a number of other aspects into account. Sociohistorical factors such as society's urbanisation and embourgeoisement[9] have been as much part of the debate as deliberations on the relationship between the academy and the avant-garde. Scholars have looked into the connection between the then-new artistic practices, on the one hand, and the history of physiological optics and scientific study of visual and perceptive processes[10], on the other hand, but also the role played by art criticism.[11]

**4** Auguste Rodin, *Head of Saint John the Baptist*, 1877/78, terracotta, 30.5 × 23.7 × 21.1 cm, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe (cat. 102)

**5** Auguste Rodin, *Head of Saint John the Baptist* (detail), 1877/78

And not least importantly, they have carried out analyses of the painting techniques that have shed light on the special characteristics of impressionism, for example the *non-finito*.[12] As the contribution by Fabienne Ruppen in this catalogue shows, however, by the time Impressionism reached its heyday, there were a wide range of criteria underlying the definition of the term – even if many of them later lost currency and were replaced by others.

As was already the case back then, impressionism is today perceived primarily as a two-dimensional art, making the question as to what constitutes Impressionist sculpture all the more complex. Sculptures were already on view in the first Impressionist exhibition, albeit far outnumbered by other mediums. The spectrum of the sculptures presented between 1874 and 1886 is as remarkable as it is heterogeneous. It ranges from neoclassicist examples by Auguste-Louis-Marie Ottin (1811–1890; cat. 1–2), a sculptor meanwhile all but forgotten, to pieces by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903; cat. 3) in marble and wood, and even a figure in wax: Degas's *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* (p. 12, fig. 1). Hardly any of these works exhibits the ephemerality we associate with Impressionism today – quite the contrary. When the critic Jules Claretie responded to Degas's sculpture of a dancer on display at the sixth Impressionist exhibition in 1881 with an exclamation oscillating between hope and fear – "*Good God*! We are going to see *Impressionist* sculptors!"[13] – he was still drifting in a definitional vacuum. Of course, various approaches to interpreting the Impressionist movement had already been circulating since 1876, but none of them referred specifically to sculpture.

The dissimilarity of the sculptures featured in the Impressionist exhibitions and the changing constellations of the group of artists participating in that very show necessitate a clarification of the terminology. Initially, Claretie and other contemporary reviewers regarded the sculptures on display in the exhibitions as Impressionist. After the turn of the century, a new definition was attempted, now with a focus on the works' modern character and the relationship between painting and sculpture. In keeping with the temporal distance, this endeavour no longer revolved solely around the works of sculpture that had been on view in the Impressionist exhibitions, but above all around two artistic figures active at the time, namely Rodin and Rosso, who contributed decisively to a renewal of the medium. In this context, a survey initiated by Edmond Claris in 1901 for the newspaper *La Nouvelle Revue* and forming the point of departure for his 1902 publication *De l'Impressionnisme en sculpture* played a major role.[14] The key question was whether modern sculpture – at the time referred to Impressionist – in particular that by Rodin and Rosso, had disproved Baudelaire's damning assessment of 1846. The respondents to the survey unanimously agreed that it had. Rodin's and Rosso's works accordingly now came to be considered prototypical proofs of the existence of Impressionist sculpture.

What the two artists had in common was their attempt to integrate the immediacy of the working process into the conception of their sculptures in the form of peaks and pits on the surfaces, along with visible traces of their fingertips. An outstanding example is Rodin's terracotta *Head of Saint John the Baptist* (figs. 4 and 5; cat. 102). Here the aim was no longer the final and inevitable polishing, cleaning or patination, but, again and again, to leave the sculpture in an unfinished state as an expression of a process in continual flux. According to this approach, the torso, the *non-finito* – that is, the practice of leaving unprocessed areas as they were – and the imperfect surface sufficed to capture the essence of a sculpture and its state as a work in progress at a certain moment in time. Let us recall here the unvarnished paintings of the Impressionists, whose lively surfaces differed resolutely from the smoothness of Salon art and likewise allowed the viewer to take part in the painting process, if after the fact. Even the flickering light on the surfaces of these sculptures was factored in.

**6** Claude Monet, *Houses by the Bank of the River Zaan,* 1871, oil on canvas, 47.7 × 73.7 cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Twentieth-century art history placed Auguste Rodin's sculptural oeuvre in the broader context of Impressionism. While he did not participate in any of the eight Impressionist exhibitions, on at least one occasion he did present his works in direct juxtaposition with paintings by the chief exponent of the Impressionist movement, Claude Monet (fig. 6). In June 1889, the Georges Petit gallery in Paris opened the exhibition *Claude Monet – Auguste Rodin,* featuring 145 paintings by Monet and 36 sculptures by Rodin (see cat. 80–84).[15] It was Monet's first retrospective, and he had not only initiated it but also done everything in his power to ensure that it would come about.[16] Rodin, for his part, had already established himself as a member of the jury of the Exposition universelle and a Knight of the Legion of Honour, and considered his name to be the poster child for the event. For the discussion of Rodin as an "Impressionist sculptor", this exhibition was of fundamental importance already on account of its unique constellation alone. Rodin and Monet took a similar approach to their motifs, for example, but also the degree of execution. In the catalogue, Rodin entitled five of his sculptures "études", and Monet (like the other artists participating in the Impressionist exhibitions) had already long cultivated an emphasis on the tentative nature of the object depicted.

Yet Rodin's and Rosso's productive phases played out at a time when resistance to the Impressionists' supposed aestheticism was beginning to stir. The Symbolists, for example, demanded that artists lend expression to the permanently valid order lying concealed behind the fleeting appearances. They produced imagery populated with religious and mythological figures and aimed at blurring the boundaries between reality and illusion. In their works, timelessness took the place of the time-bound; the vision supplanted the impression. No sooner had Rodin's oeuvre been classified as Impressionist than it was also often subsumed under the category of Symbolism. And indeed, the sculptor not only pursued much the same themes as the adherents to that style, but also shared their effect-aesthetical objectives.

Despite this terminological uncertainty, Claris and the authors who cited him treated Impressionist sculpture as an established fact. A case in point is Julius Meier-Graefe and his *Entwickelungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst,* which was published in Germany in 1904 and advanced to become a veritable bestseller. He began his chapter on "Impressionismus in der Plastik" (Impressionism in Sculpture) with a passage devoted to the relationship between sculpture and painting. The painterly, he argued, had also come to dominate sculpture in France, leading to an assimilation of visual habits and a public that learned to appreciate in sculpture precisely those qualities it was already long accustomed to in Impressionist painting.[17] Like Claris, he repudiated Baudelaire's frontal assault on sculpture by pointing out the various possibilities of relief, which satisfied Baudelaire's call for a single vantage point (see cat. 3).[18] In the further course of his deliberations, he placed sculptural Impressionism in a larger historical context. He posed the question of whether it was perhaps in fact an "extreme of the Baroque", then going on to introduce the term "Baroque Impressionism" a few sentences later.[19] His Swiss colleague Heinrich Wölfflin picked up on the idea and inverted it, concluding in his *Principles of Art History* (1915) that the painterly modelled sculpture of the Baroque "cannot be described as anything other than impressionistic".[20]

Claris's and Meier-Graefe's certainty with regard to the existence of Impressionism in sculpture was countered by authors who were uncomfortable with the concept and held the view that sculpture could, per se, not be Impressionist. In 1905, for example, Max Osborn formulated the problem of the contradiction between the idea of ephemerality as a characteristic of Impressionist painting and motionlessness as an inherent quality of the sculpture medium: "Modern sculpture – those are two words and two fierce opponents. There the flowing, nervously moved, wistfully urging, seething, festering. Here the solid, calm, reliable, self-contained,


Degas

# “*Good God*! We are going to see *Impressionist* sculptors!”

Jules Claretie, 1881

Edgar Degas

Edgar Degas's *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* – the first Impressionist sculpture?

Cat. 4

Cat. 4

Cat. 18 Edgar Degas, **Dancers on the Stage** (**Danseuses sur la scène**), c. 1889; oil on canvas, 76 × 82 cm; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, Legs Jacqueline Delubac, 1997, inv. no. 1997-29 Cat. 19 Edgar Degas, **Dancer at Rest, Hands behind Her Back, Right Leg Forward** (**Danseuse au repos, les mains sur les hanches, jambe droite en avant, première étude**), 1885–1890; bronze, 45.5 × 14.7 × 23.5 cm; stamped on the plinth: "41/HER"; private collection

Cat. 18

Cat. 19

Cat. 24 Edgar Degas, **Dancer Looking at the Sole of Her Right Foot** (**Danseuse regardant la plante de son pied droit, troisième étude**), 1896–1911; bronze, 49 × 33.5 × 22.5 cm; stamped on the plinth: "69/C"; private collection, London

Cat. 24

Cat.53 Medardo Rosso, **Impression d'une concierge** (**La Portinaia**), 1883/84, cast in 1887; bronze, 45 × 37 × 21 cm; Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, inv. no. 52.139.U
Cat.54 Medardo Rosso, **La Portinaia**, 1883/8; cast in 1910, wax over plaster, 38.5 × 31 × 17.5 cm; Collection PCC, Switzerland


Cat.53

Cat. 54

Cat. 85–88

# Auguste Rodin's *Balzac* – the embodiment of Impressionist sculpture?

Auguste Rodin was not explicitly referred to as an "Impressionist sculptor" until after the turn of the century – based on his sculpture *Balzac*.[1] Commissioned in 1891 by the Société des Gens de Lettres, the creation of the figure took seven years and involved, among other things, excursions to Tours, the home town of Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), which were conceived as study trips. In 1892, after Rodin decided to portray the poet in the monk's cowl he normally wore when he worked, he initially set to work on nude studies.[2] As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who temporarily worked as Rodin's secretary, recorded, for this purpose he used "live models of similar physical proportions [...]. The men he employed for this task were heavy, sturdy types, with thick legs and short arms."[3] These model studies resulted in a bust with crossed arms (cat. 85) as well as a standing nude with splayed legs, his left hand on the hollow of his back and his right extended outward with a raised thumb (cat. 86). Rodin ultimately clothed the poet in a simple robe that almost seems to coalesce with the body and devour it, so to speak (cat. 87).

Rodin presented his *Balzac* for the first time in a plaster version at the Salon in 1898. Medardo Rosso saw the figure there and recognised such striking parallels with his own sculpture *The Bookmaker* from 1894 that he accused Rodin of having used it as a model (see cat. 63). The undeniable similarities between the two works led to a personal rift between the two friendly sculptors; however, the parallels contributed in no small measure to Rodin and Rosso being referred to as the two main representatives of "Impressionist sculpture" from then on.[4] Both sculptors played a crucial role in Edmond Claris's enthusiastic endorsement of this "renewal movement" as well as in a chapter on "Impressionism in Sculpture" based on it in Julius Meier-Graefe's *Entwickelungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst* (Modern Art. Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics) both published shortly after the turn of the century; they chose Rodin's *Balzac* as the embodiment of "Impressionist sculpture".[5] In their opinion, this sculpture epitomised the orientation to nature that was essential for Impressionist sculptors and painters alike. Rodin himself even expressed the necessity to turn away from arbitrary conventions and towards nature.[6] Claris took this up and stated that, in the case of *Balzac*, Rodin reproduced the impression received directly from nature in the same way as an Impressionist painter;[7] in it was found "no arrangement, nature itself was the main speaker".[8] This assessment was rooted primarily in his impression of facing not a sculpture, but the true Balzac, which is understandable in view of Eugène Druet's photograph, in which the sculpture dramatically delivers itself from darkness (cat. 88).

Claris furthermore stressed that Rodin "*saw*" the writer "draped in the folds of a cloak, walking back and forth in his room, his head thrown backwards".[9] This seeing is to be understood as penetrating the motif, which other critics had already established more than ten years previously regarding the *Burghers of Calais* (see cat. 80–84). By capturing the character traits of the author, the sculptor called attention to the man behind the celebrity and enabled the viewer to have a quasi-real encounter with the deceased.[10] Rodin knew how to create this closeness in other sculptures as well – in particular by placing emphasis on the expressive qualities of those being portrayed, hence by means of facial expressions and gestures (see cat. 89–92).[11] Whereas those who commissioned the *Balzac* rejected it as unrecognisable, others regarded the few clearly fashioned physiognomic features as the essence of the writer's personality: "Balzac's face sparkles with life, a piece of breathing flesh."[12] This description by Meier-Graefe is reminiscent of the reactions to Edgar Degas's presentation of the *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen* in 1881 (see cat. 4), whose "terrible reality" had been horrifying at the time.[13] As early as 1889, reviewers of the joint exhibition of Rodin and Claude Monet considered such realistic features to be a positive attribute connecting the sculptor and the painter (see cat. 80–84), and they still aroused enthusiasm 15 years later. The closeness to reality observed by Claris and Meier-Graefe made reference to an impressionistically interpreted immediacy.[14] This is due to a markedly non-illusionist execution in which traces of work, such as fingerprints and casting seams, were not smoothed but, comparable to the brushstrokes in Impressionist paintings, remained visible (see cat. 90–91).[15]

> "[...] no arrangement, nature itself was the main speaker."
>
> Edmond Claris, 1902

Despite such indisputable formal parallels between Impressionist painting and Rodin's sculpture, the analogies made by Claris and Meier-Graefe are problematic, as they applied criteria that were developed scarcely 30 years earlier with respect to painting but made no mention at all about the sculptures displayed in the Impressionist exhibitions. Instead of the fact of their participation in the exhibitions, the artistic technique comparable with painting served them as grounds for assigning Rodin and Rosso to Impressionism. Around two decades after Claretie,[16] they announced a second birth of Impressionist sculpture, according to which it began considerably later than the style of painting provided with the same label. Although the sculpture was evaluated as equally progressive, in this way they placed it in the succession of painting. Given this implicit vanguard role of the latter, it is hardly surprising that Rodin rejected the label of "Impressionist sculptor", emphasising that "[s]culpture is either strong or weak" but "not 'impressionist'".[17] — FR

Cat.85 Auguste Rodin, **Balzac, Bust of Nude Study C**, c. 1892/93, cast 1918–1927; bronze, 44.5 × 37 × 33.5 cm; private collection, London Cat.86 Auguste Rodin, **Balzac Study (Nude Study A)**, 1893–1895; bronze, 40.7 × 29.8 × 18.8 cm; stamped on the inside: "A. Rodin", on the plinth: "© Musée Rodin", "Rudier / Fondeur PARiS", signed on the plinth: "A. Rodin"; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, inv. no. St.P 469

Cat.85

Cat.86

1 Elliott 2014, p. 210.
2 On the genesis of the work, see inv. cat. Paris 2007a, vol. 1, pp. 164–190.
3 Rilke [1902] 2011, p. 64.
4 Thus with Camille de Sainte-Croix, it was initially an advocate of Rosso who mentioned Rodin in this connection within the scope of a comparison of the two artists; see Elliott 2014, p. 213. On Rodin and Rosso, see the contribution by Eva Mongi-Vollmer in this catalogue, pp. 126–133, esp. pp. 126–127.
5 Claris 1902 (French), pp. 1, 10, 13; Meier-Graefe 1904, vol. 1, pp. 303–312. De Sainte-Croix also acknowledged *Balzac* as the initial spark for the discussion; however, he pointed out that Rosso had already achieved something similar 15 to 20 years prior to that; Camille de Sainte-Croix, in Claris 1902 (French), pp. 58, 61. Claris initially named *Balzac* as Rosso's point of departure, while he changed sides in his 1929 article and stated that Rodin drew inspiration from Rosso for his *Balzac*; Claris 1929, p. 134. Claris was not the first one to understand Rodin as part of a "renewal movement": Jean Le Fustec spoke of a "mouvement artistique actuel" with reference to Monet and Rodin; Le Fustec 1889; quoted in: exh. cat. Paris 1989, p. 229.
6 See Auguste Rodin, in Claris 1902 (French), pp. 31–38.
7 Claris 1902 (French), p. 5.
8 "Dans *le Balzac* pas d'arrangement. La nature se compose elle-même."; ibid., p. 13.
9 "Il [Rodin] l'a [Balzac] VU, drapé dans son large manteau, se promenant à travers sa chambre, la tête en arrière […]"; ibid., p. 14 (small caps in the original).
10 "Dans cette silhouette qui nous est apparue sous le jeu des lumières, n'avons-nous pas, en effet, été frappés par la grâce et la souplesse de ces formes en mouvement, n'avons-nous pas eu la sensation nette de la vie, du génie de Balzac?" Ibid., p. 15.
11 See the essay by Dominik Brabant in this catalogue, pp. 174–183, esp. p. 178. Nina Schallenberg discussed this aspect under the heading of "caractère"; Gülicher 2011, p. 26.
12 "[D]as Gesicht Balzacs von Leben sprüht, ein Stück atmenden Fleisches." Meier-Graefe 1915, vol. 3, p. 470.
13 Huysmans 1883a, p. 226. See the essay by Fabienne Ruppen in this catalogue, pp. 24–34, esp. p. 29, as well as p. 34, note 50.
14 The realistic, animated quality, which had also established itself in the late 1860s as a feature of modern sculpture, can be classed as being in the tradition of the Pygmalion topos; see Scott 1998, p. 111.
15 See, for example, Meier-Graefe 1904, vol. 1, p. 304. The same author wrote in a later edition: "Man verbot dem Gießer jeder Retusche an der Impression und ehrte die Gussnaht wie ein Jungfernhäutchen." Meier-Graefe 1915, vol. 3, p. 474.
16 See Claretie 1881. See the essay by Fabienne Ruppen in this catalogue, pp. 24–34, esp. pp. 31–32.
17 "'Sculpture is either strong or weak', [Rodin] said; 'it is not "impressionist" as a sketch might be. If you use marble and bronze, your work must be well studied and continuous in its development.'" Anonymous 1907. See the essay by Dominik Brabant in this catalogue, pp. 174–183, esp. pp. 175–176.

Cat. 95

Cat.95

Cat. 99 Camille Claudel, **The Waltz** (**La Valse**), 1889–1905, foundry: Coubertin, 2005; bronze, 43 × 36.5 × 18 cm; Musée Camille Claudel, Nogent-sur-Seine

Cat. 99

Cat.99

Cat. 115

# Tranquillo Cremona and the painting of the "Scapigliati"

Tranquillo Cremona (1837–1878) was a student of Giacomo Trécourt at the Civica Scuola di Pittura school of painting in Pavia before moving to Venice in 1852, where he attended the Accademia di Belle Arti. From 1859 onwards, he resided in Milan, where he studied painting under Giuseppe Bertini at the Accademia di Brera, and where he founded the artists' group La Scapigliatura along with the painter Daniele Ranzoni, the sculptor Giuseppe Grandi, and the writers Emilio Praga, Cletto Arrighi (the anagrammatic pseudonym of Carlo Righetti), Arrigo Boito and Carlo Dossi. The group's name – from *scapigliato*, dishevelled – derived from the title of a novel by Arrighi. Besides their friendship, what connected the group's members was their openly aired rebellion against middle-class conventions, the urge to violate rules and to break up academic hierarchies, and their delight in provocative digression and the scandalous, which also had an effect on their social behaviour. In artistic terms, the "scapligliati" stand for innovative, gossamer painting executed with soft brushstrokes that vibrate in direct light and, in some respects, are related to French Impressionism.

*The Reader* belongs to a group of works that Cremona produced between 1873 and 1878 and deliberately left unfinished. After his premature death on 10 June 1878, they remained in his studio. Some of them stand out due to their stylistic relatedness: *Visiting the College* (*La visita al collegio*, 1875–1878; private collection), *The Spanish Woman* (*La spagnola*, 1876–1878; private collection) and *Poor but Proud* (*Povero ma superbo*, 1877/78; Frugone Collection, Genoa). These works are characterised by the momentum in drawing and brushstroke with which the painter experimented from the early 1870s onwards. A new style emerged at the time, "[…] a strange approach to painting, everything behind a layer of veils, of things implied, in hues without contours, without any apparent use of line, with the most disparate colours, and with a certain flocculent touch that requires a distance of one hundred metres to obscure it," as the critic and writer Filippo Filippi remarked in 1872.[1] It was a type of painting that was capable of dissolving forms – and likewise their traditional chiaroscuro structure – and merging them into the surrounding atmosphere in such a way that they became one. Paintings originated that communicated a vague idea of "[…] faces, melted and blurred beneath a feathery, hazy, indistinct layer"; paintings that "seem to have been hurled down out of spite, or else as a practical joke, having been finished in one day", but which were in fact "the fruit of repeated attempts and revisions, of spending not days but months on them."[2]

Cremona's new style, "stil novo", is of a complex nature, a unique form that cannot be traced back to another one. It is based in the extraordinary, subtle harmony of its colours and in its very distinct painting style. The result is highly sophisticated painting whose materiality features crystalline purity, comparable only with the great Netherlandish masters of the seventeenth century. This becomes particularly apparent when viewing *The Reader*, where the exploration of its outer appearance subordinates itself to purely painterly solutions, from the gentle bursts of light and shadow and the subtle connections between the shades of colour to the sophisticatedly constructed spatiality.

> "[…] faces, melted and blurred beneath a feathery, hazy, indistinct layer […]."
>
> Filippo Filippi, 1872

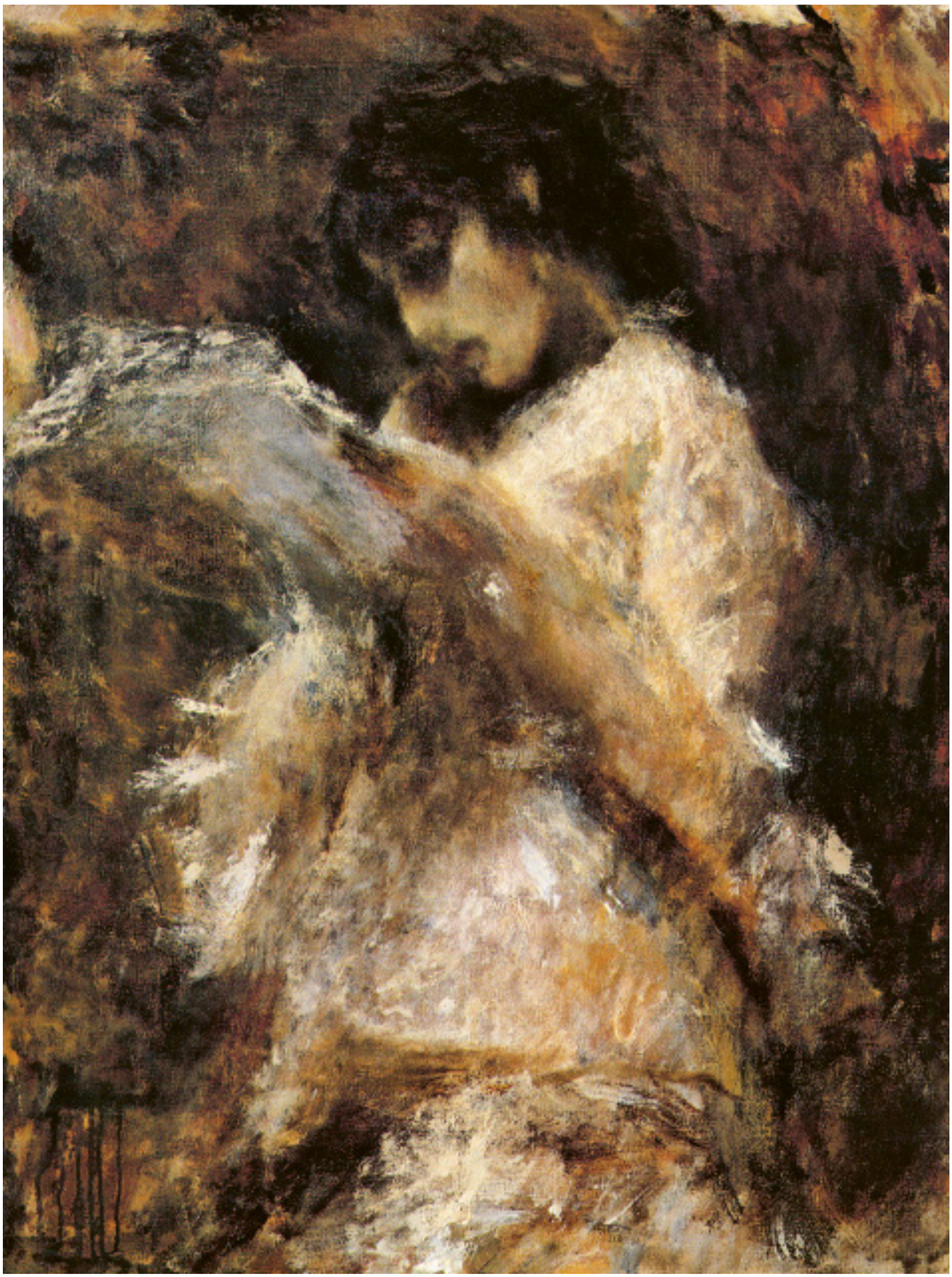
The painter played with breaking up the volumes by means of complicated dark–light effects, using the brush to place dabs of pure colour alongside one another and then rubbing them with his fingertips (a technique he preferred, which, according to contemporary sources, led to his death by lead poisoning) in order to vary and invigorate the colours. As a result, the figure completely immerses itself in space, in a holistic vision that becomes palpable thanks to the all-encompassing continuity of the fabric spun out of light. "[…] here painting has reached its furthest limits, beyond which music reigns," Carlo Dossi wrote in 1873 – and, in doing so, provided the viewer with an astute interpretative approach for the works that Cremona produced in the 1870s.[3] — SB

1 "[…] una pittura strana, tutta a veli, a sottintesi, a sfumature senza contorni, senza disegno apparente, coi colori i più disparati, e con un certo tocco fioccoso che ha bisogno di cento metri di distanza per essere dissimulato." Filippi 1872.

2 "[…] di volti, fusa e confusa sotto uno strato piumoso, nebbioso, indefinibile [… tele] che sembrano gettate giù per dispetto, e fatte in un giorno [… ma che invece] sono il frutto di tentativi e di rifacimenti continui, da spenderci sopra non giorni ma mesi." Ibid.

3 "[…] qui la pittura è giunta ai suoi fini ultimi, di là dei quali regna la musica." Dossi 1873; quoted in: Dossi 2006. For additional information about the painting, see the following references: Bossaglia 1994, p. 160, no. 159 (Giovanni Dainotti; with older references); exh. cat. Brescia 2003, pp. 170, 236, no. 91; exh. cat. Novi Ligure 2007, p. 120, no. 65; exh. cat. Milan 2009, pp. 273, 295, no. 254; exh. cat. Milan 2015a, pp. 8, 62, no. 1.

Cat. 115 Tranquillo Cremona, **The Reader** (**La lettrice**), 1873–1878; oil on canvas, 105 × 85 cm; private collection, courtesy Galleria Bottegantica, Milan



Cat. 115

# Rembrandt Bugatti

Cat.127 Giovanni Segantini, **A Goat with Her Kid**, 1890; oil on canvas, 42 × 71.5 cm; Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Gift of Mr and Mrs Kessler-Hülsmann, Kapelle op den Bosch, inv. no. SK-A-3346 Cat.128 Rembrandt Bugatti, **Family of Goats**, 1904; bronze, 34.5 × 74 × 22 cm; signed: "R. Bugatti", stamped "C. VALSUANI"; Woburn Abbey Collection

Cat.127

Cat. 128