No details selected as yet,
this is just an example

MODIGLIANI

& the Salon d'Automne, 1912

Cathy Corbett

When Modigliani showed seven of his carved stone heads (pls ID14, ID29, ID34, ID39) at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in 1912 it was the first time that he had shown his sculptures in a major public exhibition, and it turned out to be the only substantial exhibition of his sculpture during his lifetime (fig.CCfig1).[1] Modigliani was twenty-eight years old and a painter who, his later biographers believed, had always wanted to be a sculptor. Yet he made sculptures for little more than two years,[2] and his friends and family struggled to explain why his sculpting career had been so short. His friend, the artist and writer Nina Hamnett, suggested: 'He always regarded sculpture as his real métier, and it was probably only lack of money, the difficulty of obtaining his materials, and the amount of time required to complete a work in stone that made him return to painting during the last five years of his life.'[3]

Similarly, his daughter Jeanne Modigliani challenged 'those who consider his sculpture merely as an interlude', when she wrote that her father had made multiple drawings of sculptures before attempting a work in stone because of the 'cost of the material, his difficulties in finding a place to work (his studio was on the ground floor, and he had to work in the courtyard), his illness, [and] the pressure put on him by the dealers and patrons who would rather buy paintings and drawings'.[4]

This introduction to Modigliani's brief foray into sculpture-making will put his practice in the context of the other sculptors exhibiting their works at the Salon d'Automne in 1912, and will consider whether the practical difficulties of being a sculptor, as listed by Hamnett and his daughter Jeanne adequately explain why Modigliani made so few sculptures. It will also suggest that Modigliani's own description of his work – in his submission of seven carved stone heads to the Salon d'Automne – may have been linked to the other works he knew were going to be shown in the Salon and might also have partly shaped their contemporary reception.

Exhibitors at the Salon d'Automne, 1912

The Salon d'Automne had been established in 1903 by the architect and art nouveau enthusiast Frantz Jourdain as an annual exhibition where the decorative arts could be celebrated and displayed in the same spaces as the fine arts of sculpture and painting.[5]

In the catalogue for the Salon d'Automne 1912, Modigliani gave his address as 14, Cité Falguière, and listed his seven works with identical descriptions: 'Head, decorative ensemble, sc'.[6] The 'sc' indicated that these works were sculptures, but there was a curious lack of other information, a peculiarity to which we will return.

Modigliani's works were displayed in room XI on individual white plinths of varying heights alongside sculptures by Alexander Archipenko and Joseph Csáky, and in front of cubist paintings by, among others, Jean Metzinger and Henri Le Fauconnier.[7] A particular innovation of the Salon d'Automne was the presentation of room-sets in specific styles and elsewhere in the Salon André Mare and sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon had designed three rooms and a façade to provide a dialogue between architecture, paintings, furniture and furnishings, though perhaps surprisingly, given the input of Duchamp-Villon, very little sculpture was on view (figs CCfig2a & 2b). This ensemble of rooms was intended to show how art, largely with a cubist aesthetic, could be accommodated and experienced in the bourgeois home.[8] These rooms, quickly labelled the 'Maison

Detail of cat. xxx

Cubiste' (Cubist House) by the critics, became notorious, along with room XI, when questions were asked in the Paris council chambers about whether the Grand Palais should be used to promote the cubist works of foreigners, who were described as 'a band of villains' behaving like 'hooligans' in the art world'.[9] Recent research has established that it was actually relatively difficult for foreign newcomers to have their works accepted by the Salon d'Automne, because the jury system still favoured artists who were known to jurors, and it was expensive to enter, so it is incidentally perhaps a measure of how quickly Modigliani had thrown himself into the Parisian art scene that his paintings had been admitted to the exhibition for the first time in 1906, only a year after his arrival in Paris.[10]

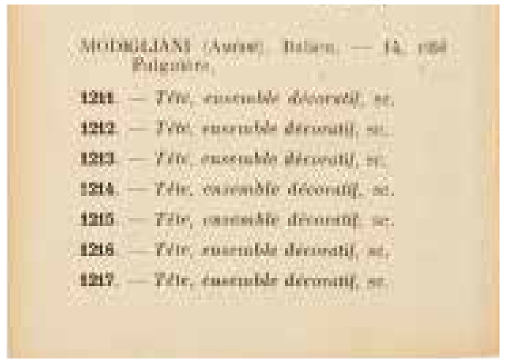
Sculpture was changing in 1912, and this Salon showed the work of a number of sculptors whose practice at that time cannot be easily categorised. Traditionally, academic sculptors had been trained in one of France's many academies of fine arts, and some émigrés had also benefited from a similar education at one of the schools in Europe that followed French academic principles.[11] Initial education, though, was not necessarily the key to the works they had gone on to make. Though small bronze nudes or portrait busts were still much in evidence at the Salon d'Automne, some sculptors with academic training, such as Antoine Bourdelle and Joseph Bernard, were producing work by 1912 which was seen as more progressive or 'independent'.[12] Bernard's education was also characteristic of this period when there was no set route to becoming a sculptor; he had been trained by his father as an artisanal stonecutter before studying as an academic sculptor in Lyons and Paris.[13] Others, such as Georges Lacombe, were painter-sculptors,[14] and Modigliani's friend the Russian sculptor Léon Indenbaum exhibited three plaster works in the show, though his output at that time also included both wood and stone carvings.[15] The Polish sculptor Elie Nadelman, an artist whose work Modigliani is known to have admired,[16] showed bronzes including a female nude and a juggler with elongated torsos and stylised facial features.[17] The works in plaster and cement shown by Csáky and Archipenko exhibited the sculptors' experimentation with cubism and doubtless contributed to the notoriety of room XI in which Modigliani also exhibited his *Heads*.[18]

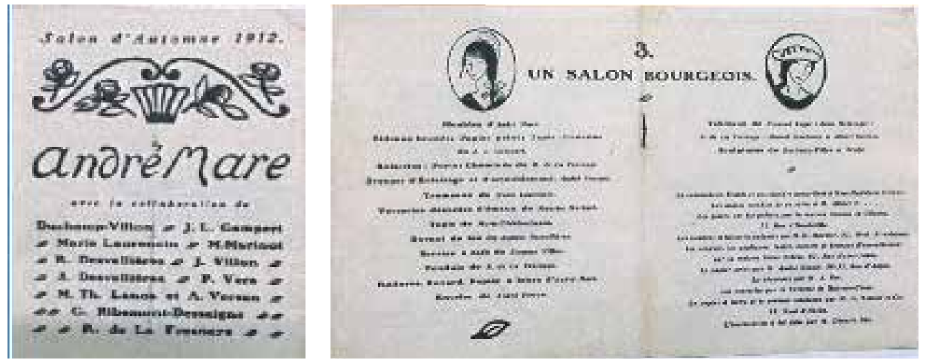
Overall then, the sculpture in the Salon d'Automne typified the sculpture generally seen in Parisian Salons at that time: it was not dominated by any one style or method, and it was perhaps its lack of cohesion, or possibly its want of any great self-promotion on the part of sculptors, that led to sculpture being largely unnoticed by the critics and the public. Lengthy press reviews of Salons, sometimes spread over several issues of a Paris-based journal, usually summarised the sculpture in a few lines at the end, with often no more than a listing of the sculptors who had caught the critic's eye. In the Salon des Indépendants earlier in 1912, Archipenko and Ossip Zadkine had exhibited innovative pieces of sculpture[19] alongside Brancusi, who had shown *Sleeping Muse, Prometheus* and *The Kiss*,[20] however, the complete lack of interest in these works was reflected by the art critic of *Le Figaro* who reported that there were no sculptures or *objets d'art* worth mentioning in the exhibition.[21]

Nonetheless, whether the press noticed them or not, all sculptors in Paris at that time needed the Salons, and Jeanne Modigliani was probably correct when she lamented that dealers and patrons were keener to buy paintings and drawings from Modigliani than they were his sculptures. Very few Parisian galleries were able to support a sculptor at this time, and there were only six solo exhibitions for sculptors between 1900 and 1914 in Paris.[22] Salons could provide the space and exposure that sculpture needed, though even then sculptures were still more often shown as small-scale plaster works, as sculptors touted for the commissions that would pay to allow them to transform their models into bronze, marble or stone.

(below, left) fig.CC1 Modigliani's works listed in the catalogue of the Salon d'automne, 1912. Bibliothèque nationale de France

(below, centre & right) fig.CC2a-b Cover and interior of the booklet published to accompany Andre Mare's ensemble of rooms at the Salon d'Automne, 1912. Bibliotheque Kandinsky, Paris


MODIGLIANI (Amédée), italien, — 14, cité Falguière.
1211. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.
1212. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.
1213. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.
1214. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.
1215. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.
1216. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.
1217. — Tête, ensemble décoratif, sc.


Salon d'Automne 1912.
André Mare
avec la collaboration de
Duchamp-Villon J. L. Gampert
Marie Laurencin M. Marinot
R. Desvallières J. Villon
J. Desvallières P. Vera
M. Th. Lanoa et A. Versan
G. Ribemont-Dessaignes
R. de La Fresnaye
3.
UN SALON BOURGEOIS.

Unravelling the Impediments

Jeanne Modigliani cited her father's 'difficulties in finding a place to work' as another of the impediments to his continuing to sculpt, however Cité Falguière was one of several artistic enclaves in Paris where Modigliani worked that would almost certainly have benefited his work as a sculptor. This cul-de-sac of artists' studios, established by a sculptor,[23] provided a working artists' environment in the middle of Montparnasse, and also importantly gave Modigliani proximity to the great majority of sculptors who were working in Paris in 1912. Much has been written about the relationships forged between avant-garde, émigré artists in that other famous Montparnasse artistic settlement, La Ruche, but many academic sculptors also had studios in Montparnasse at this time, and immigrant and French sculptors alike worked out of the Cité Falguière, the Impasse Ronsin, and La Ruche, as well as establishing studios in the surrounding streets.[24] This meant that Modigliani would have been able to visit the studios, see new works and informally network with a great number of other sculptors, and although those showing their works in the Salon d'Automne tended towards the progressive, an analysis of the addresses of sculptors submitting work to the 1912 Salon de la Société des Artistes Français, which attracted more academic sculptors, indicates that many of them also lived in the same few streets in Montparnasse.[25]

Jeanne Modigliani's comment that Modigliani 'had to work in the courtyard' outside his studio is mentioned by others too, and although it is not always clear if they were referring to the same studio, it is always in the context of the miserable conditions Modigliani endured.[26] While working unprotected from the elements would have been inhospitable in the winter, in La Ruche the ground floor studios were routinely assigned to the sculptors who often chose to work outside in the summer months when their little wedge-shaped studios became too hot.[27] Furthermore, bills from that period show that when the materials for sculpture were delivered, there was a surcharge if the materials were to be carried up flights of stairs,[28] so there were good reasons for sculptors to seek out ground-floor studios. Finding Modigliani sculpting in his courtyard might have inspired pity in those who called to see him, but he was by no means the only sculptor who worked outside to ensure comfort in the summer months and to keep the mess and dust out of his studio.[29]

It is not surprising that Jeanne Modigliani and Hamnett listed the cost of sculpting as an issue for Modigliani, as it seems likely that materials and tools would cost more than paints and canvas. Certainly if we look at the invoices of Bourdelle, who showed a maquette for a large double portrait relief in the 1912 Salon d'Automne[30] or at the bills of Modigliani's friend Brancusi, we can see that bronze casting, or the buying and transporting of marble and stone, were expensive, and traditional sculptural practices also incurred the expense of employing assistants, though this was another thing that was changing, as we shall see.[31] However, in the case of the *Heads* that Modigliani carved there is considerable anecdotal evidence that he and other carvers may have been sourcing their materials in less conventional ways. Hamnett wrote about keeping watch for Henri Gaudier-Brzeska while he stole pieces of marble for his sculpting from the yard of a monumental stonemasons' in Putney,[32] and Joseph Csáky also wrote entertainingly about a rich American ordering marble to be delivered to La Ruche and returning to his hobby several days later to discover his purchase missing and everyone nearby, apparently by coincidence, carving in marble.[33] Henri Doucet described how he and Modigliani, keen to try out wood carving, helped themselves to railway sleepers that were laid out beside the lines where the Barbès–Rochechouart metro station was being built,[34] and Charles Douglas added the detail that all Modigliani's works in wood at that time corresponded to the dimensions of those wooden sleepers.[35] When it came to Modigliani's *Heads*, many of them were carved from limestone, another material that was readily available in Montparnasse at that time. The entire Paris basin had been built on limestone and the creamy-white stone was used for the facades on many of the Haussmannian boulevards from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. It had been forbidden to mine stone from directly under Paris since 1813, so the limestone in the late nineteenth-century came from the Parisian suburbs,[36] as well as from places like Euville in the Lorraine region, which was much in demand as a city building material. By the time Modigliani was looking for materials, much of the building in central Paris was already finished, but Montparnasse was one of the later places to become a modern arrondissement, with, for example, parts of Boulevard Raspail not finished until 1913.[37] If Modigliani wanted to find discarded offcuts of limestone, or to ask favours of builders working on new stone facades,[38] then there was no better place to be than Montparnasse, and this readily-available stone, and the large amount of anecdotal evidence about the ways that sculptors at that time 'found' their materials, sheds some doubt on Jeanne Modigliani's claim that her father did very few sculptures in part because he couldn't afford the materials.

Revived Interest in Materials

Modigliani drew many more heads and caryatids than he ever sculpted, and Jeanne and others assumed this was partly attributable to the practical problems he had realising his ideas in stone. It may also have been, however, that Modigliani was rather more interested in drawing than he was in the process of carving. Modigliani carved the heads directly from stone, and for many sculptors this resurgent desire to carve was linked to a respect for their material. 'Direct carving' had been revived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by sculptors who started not with a preconceived idea, sketch or prepared clay model, but instead with the stone, marble or wood that they had in front of them, believing that the form sometimes emerged in the process of carving.[39] It was also fêted for a period as an activity that the sculptor did entirely him or herself, as opposed to collaborative sculptural practices both before and after this time, where a number of assistants would be needed in the preparation of moulds, the production of bronzes, or to help in the carving of the stone or marble.[40] By 1912 this revived interest in materials and the method of sculpting was just starting to become apparent in the way sculptors described their works in the Salon catalogues.[41] In the Indépendants of 1910 Brancusi had submitted a work with no title and labelled simply '*pierre sculpté*' (meaning sculpted or carved stone) and in the Indépendants the following year the Spanish artist Auguste Agero had labelled three works '*statue bois sculpté*' (carved or sculpted wooden statue).[42] In the 1911 Salon d'Automne, Bernard had listed some of his works for the first time as '*pierre directe*', suggesting that the stone had been carved direct, and by the Salon d'Automne of 1912, while many still submitted works with a nondescript 's' or 'sc' label, seven of Bernard's works were described as '*pierre directe*' while Georges Lacombe listed his work as '*bois sculpté*' (carved wood).

Modigliani had shown paintings in the Indépendants in 1911 and had been visiting the Salon d'Automne since he saw the Gauguin retrospective in 1906,[43] so he was likely aware of this subtle way in which sculptors were starting to change the way they described their work. However if we return to the description he gave his sculptures when he submitted them to the 1912 Salon d'Automne, we see that, even though he had carved his works himself from stone, Modigliani mentioned neither method nor material. His works were appended with 'sc', which could have meant anything from a plaster study to a full-scale bronze. Modigliani appears not to have been interested in making any statement about the material he had used, nor how it had been carved, and there are further hints about Modigliani's attitude to his materials from his contemporaries' accounts. His friend Paul Alexandre observed that Modigliani often threw the stone away if the sculpture was not working out as he wanted,[44] which suggests that the form Modigliani had already planned may have mattered more to him than the stone he had in front of him. Similarly Jacques Lipchitz recalled that Modigliani told him he really did not mind whether the stone was hard or soft because he could always give the stone any appearance he wanted.[45] When this is considered in combination with the large number of drawings that Modigliani drafted, one conclusion might be that, even if this wasn't the main reason he turned away from sculpture, Modigliani was more concerned about the forms and lines he was creating on paper than with the properties or potential of the stone with which he worked, and in this he was very different from many of the other sculptors rediscovering direct carving at this time.[46]

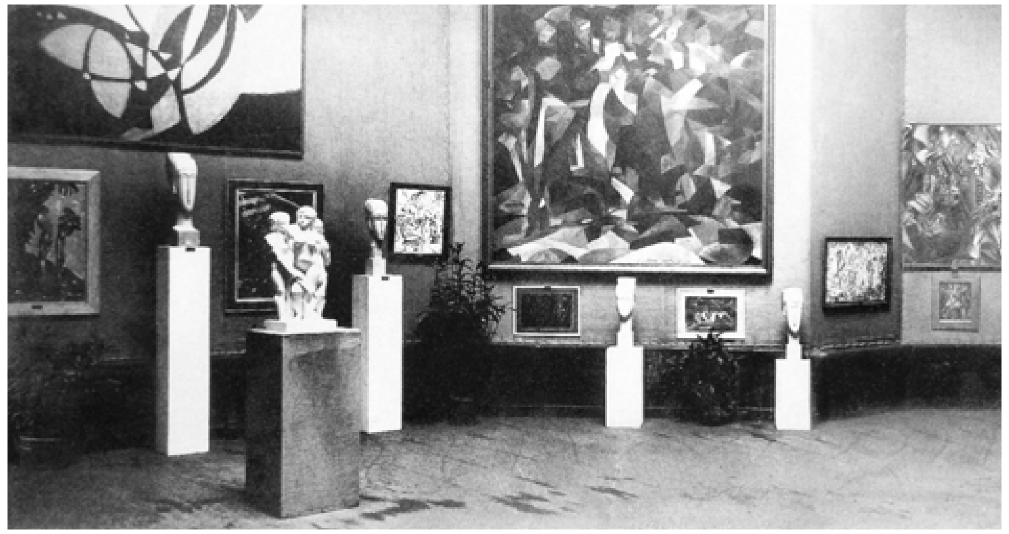


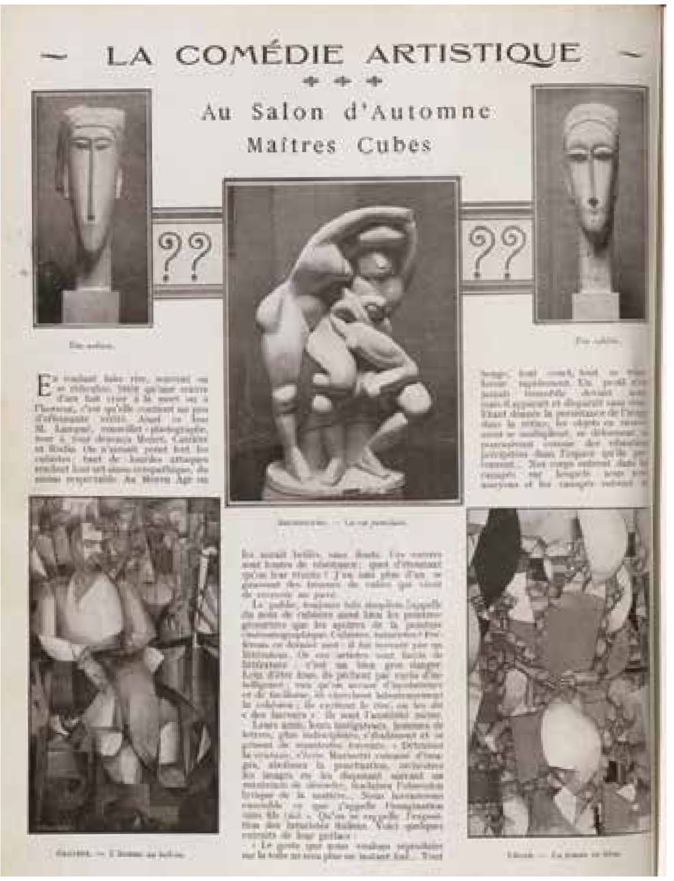
fig.CC3 Two of Modigliani's *Heads* frame a review of the cubist rooms at the Salon d'automne in *Comœdia illustré*, 20 October 1912. Bibliothèque nationale de France

fig.CC4 Four of Modigliani's works are the centrepiece of a view of the 1912 Salon d'automne, printed in *L'Illustration*, 12 October 1912

The final detail that is interesting about what Modigliani did and did not say about his sculpture in his submission to the Salon d'Automne is his use of the word 'decorative'. Some of the heads do have decorative markings on them, but when two of Modigliani's friends talked about how they had seen them before the exhibition, neither of them mentioned that aspect. Lipchitz reported that Modigliani had conceived them as an ensemble, and that when he saw them in the studio they were 'arranged in stepwise fashion like tubes of an organ to produce the special music he wanted'.[47] Jacob Epstein saw them at night in the studio, and said Modigliani had placed candles on top of each head so that they looked like a 'primitive temple'.[48] It is also possible that when Modigliani's seven *Heads* were laid out around room XI on plinths it was to remind viewers of the caryatid form or the human body as a whole. When he submitted his catalogue entry, however, the words Modigliani used may have had much more to do with the particular Salon he knew they were going to be displayed in, than as an evocation of his original conception. The term 'decorative' was not usually applied to sculpture, and was not used to describe any other sculptures in the Salons d'Automne of 1911 or 1912. But the 1912 Salon d'Automne was planning to have Mare and Duchamp-Villon's 'Maison Cubiste' in it, which, in keeping with the original intention of the Salon d'Automne, was to incorporate a decorative ensemble of furnishings, painted china, carpets and furniture alongside cubist paintings. Duchamp-Villon and Mare had been working on their room-sets for many months,[49] and in the geographically small world of Parisian sculptors it seems entirely likely that Modigliani would have known of the project, and may even have been disappointed that he had not been invited by Mare to contribute. We have seen that sculpture tended not to excite much interest in the Salons so it is possible that Modigliani, knowing this, may have wanted to have his sculptures considered, like the works in Mare's 'Maison Cubiste', as decorative pieces that could be incorporated, as part of an ensemble, into the modern bourgeois home.

Once the Salon opened, then, apart from the furore surrounding the cubist 'hooligans' and aside from a few encouraging words for some well-established French sculptors like Joseph Bernard,[50] the press, as in previous years, paid the sculpture little attention.

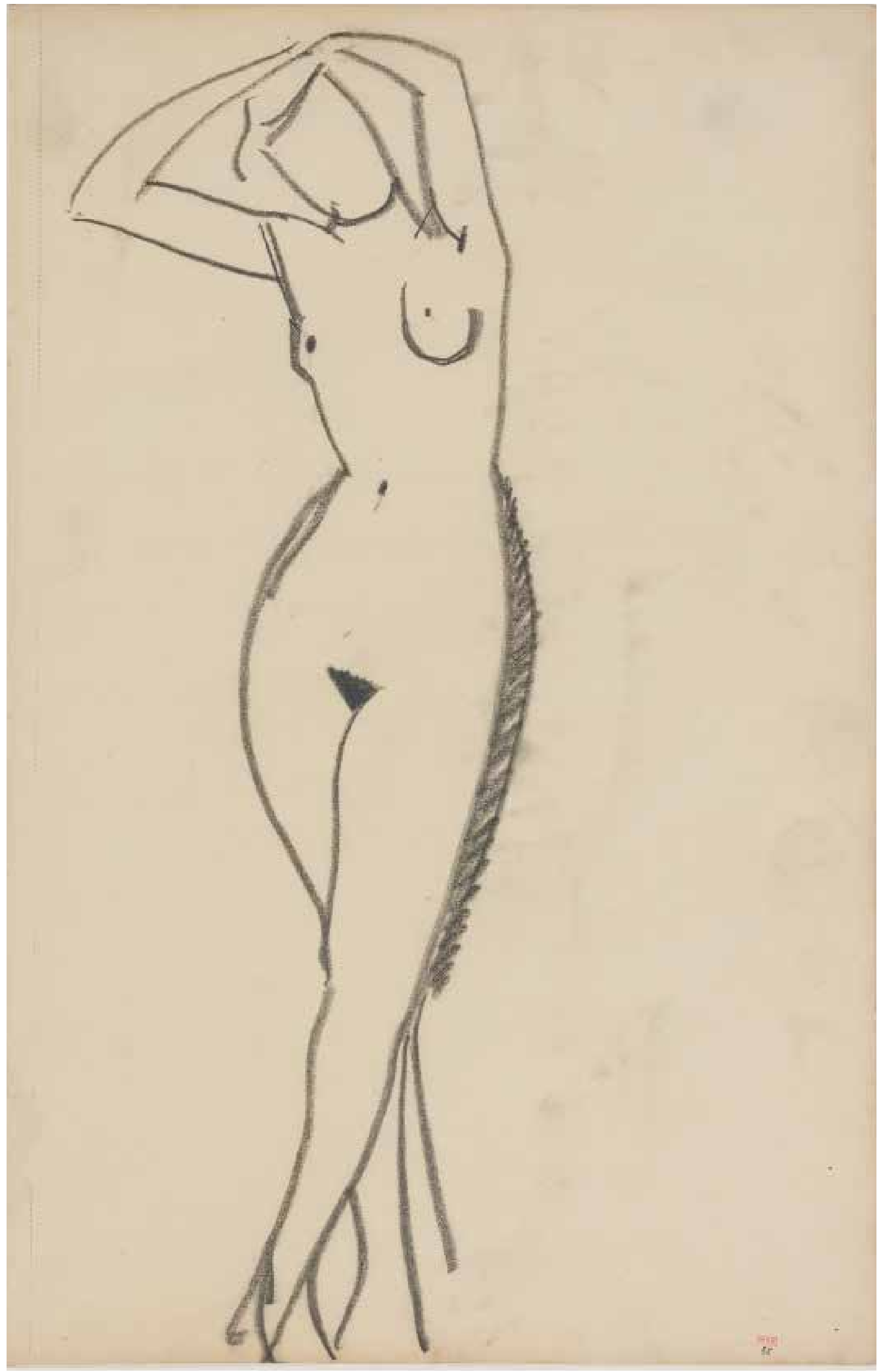
And there was no comment as such on Modigliani's sculpture, however images of his *Heads* did feature prominently in three reviews of the Salon d'Automne. In *La Vie Parisienne*[51] there was no mention of his works in the editorial, but sketches of two *Heads* stood on each side of the text, their striking and similar shapes a gift for an editor looking to frame the article. Photographs of two Heads were also used on either side of the title in a review for *Comœdia illustré* (fig.CCfig3).[52] Most strikingly of all, four of Modigliani's works made it into a large photograph in the mass-circulation *L'Illustration* on 12 October 1912 (fig.CCfig4), where, interspersed with pot plants and paintings, the evenly distributed plinths made an attractive composition. Modigliani may also have been gratified to see that, while the names of the other sculptors, Archipenko and Csáky, had been entirely omitted from the caption, the sub-editor had taken Modigliani's own words and had written under the photograph: 'Sculptures by A. Modigliani. Heads forming a "decorative ensemble."'[53]



LA COMÉDIE ARTISTIQUE

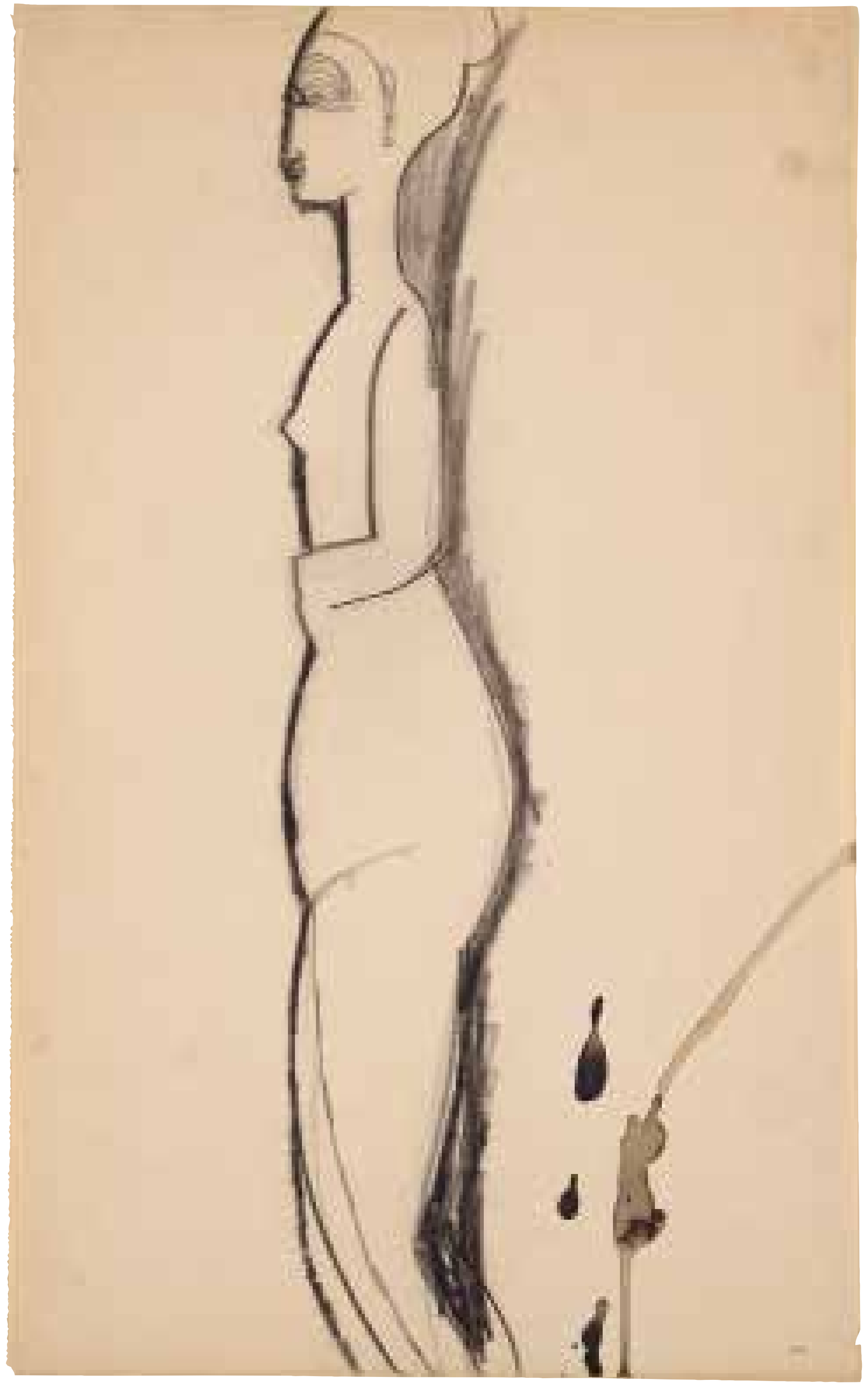
Au Salon d'Automne

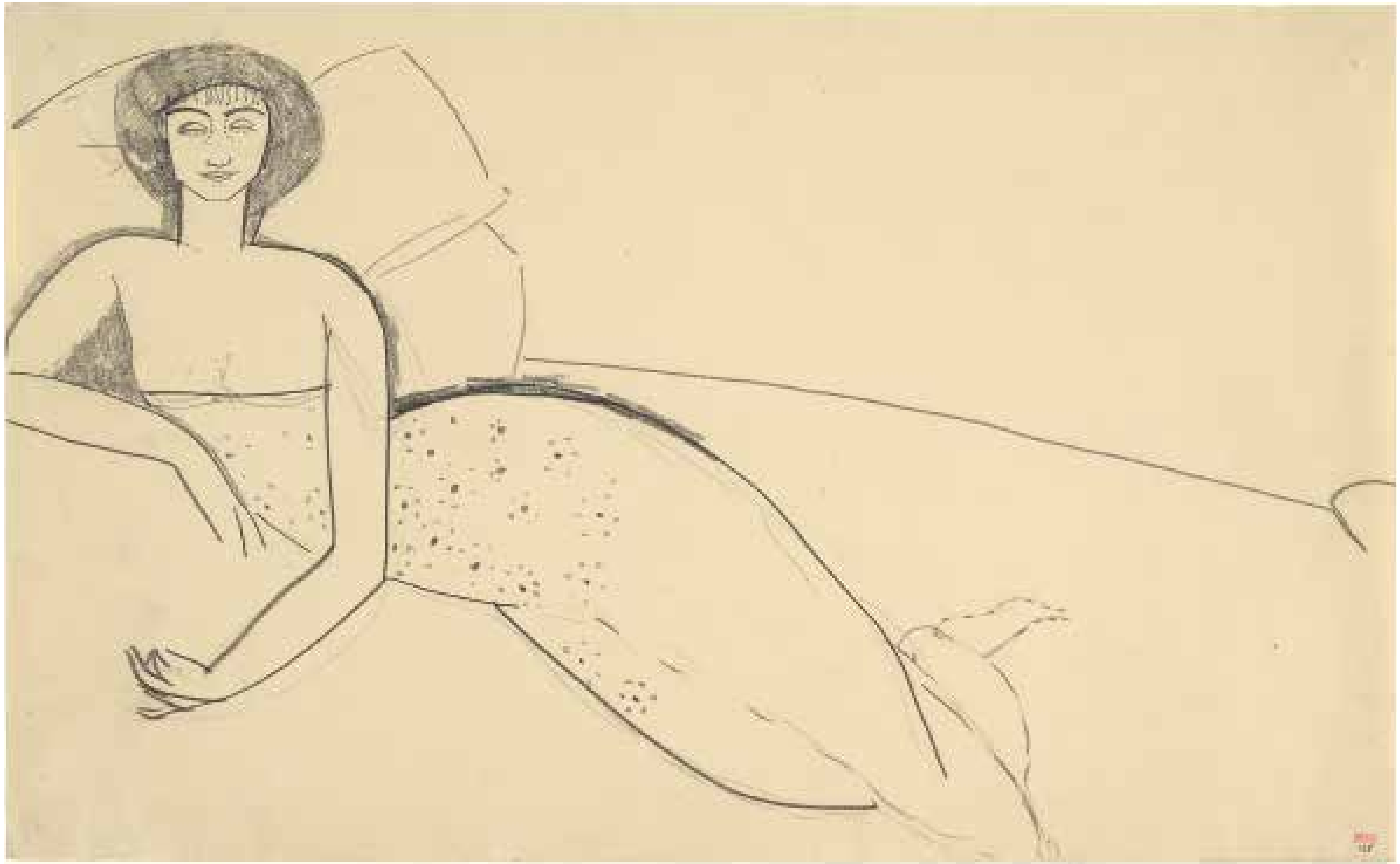
Maîtres Cubes



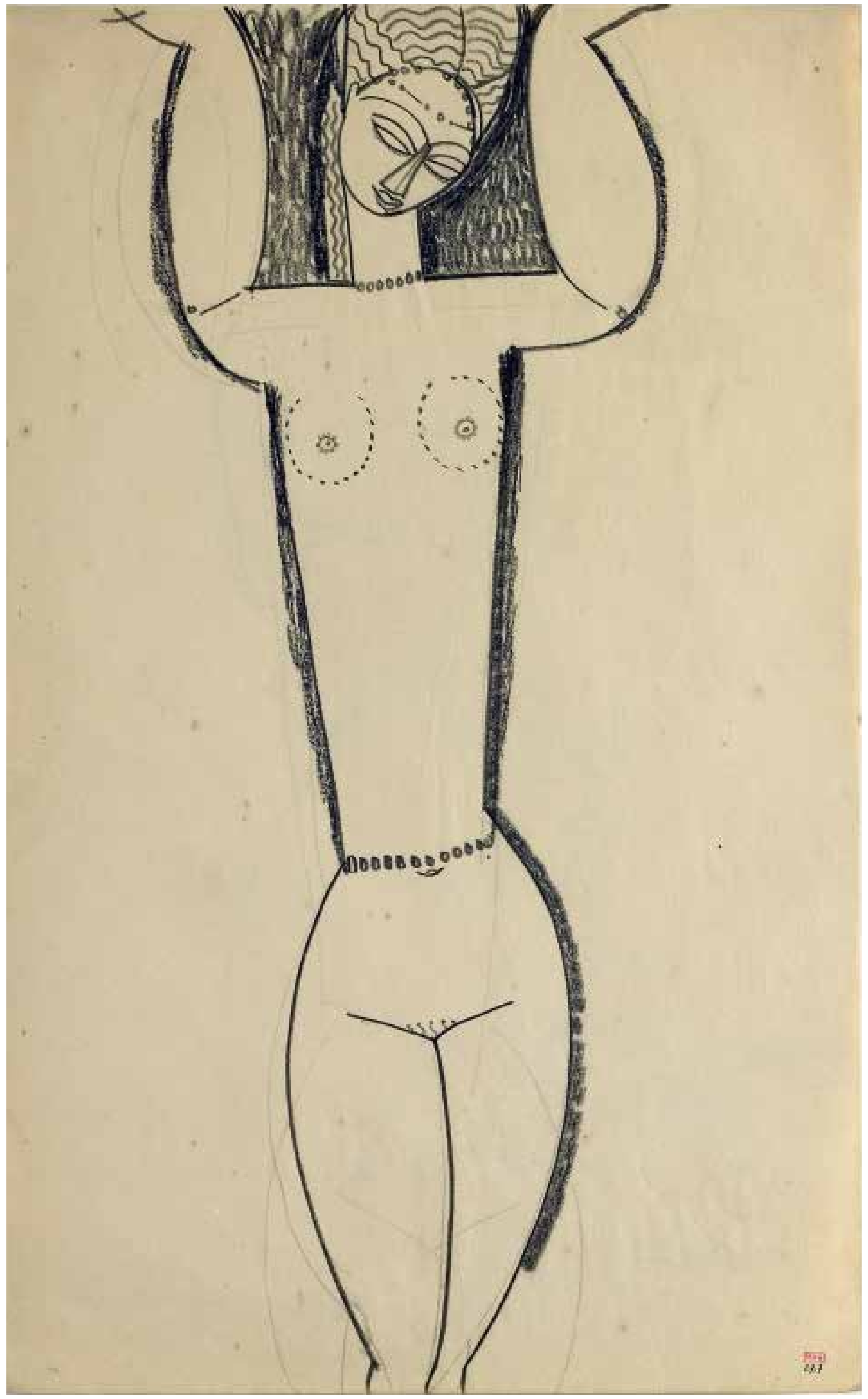
ID117 *Study of Female Nude*
undated
Crayon on paper, 43 x 27.5
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

ID45 *Standing Nude in Profile*
c.1910–11
Charcoal on paper, 42.7 x 26.3
Laure Denier Collection, Family
of Paul Alexandre, Courtesy of
Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



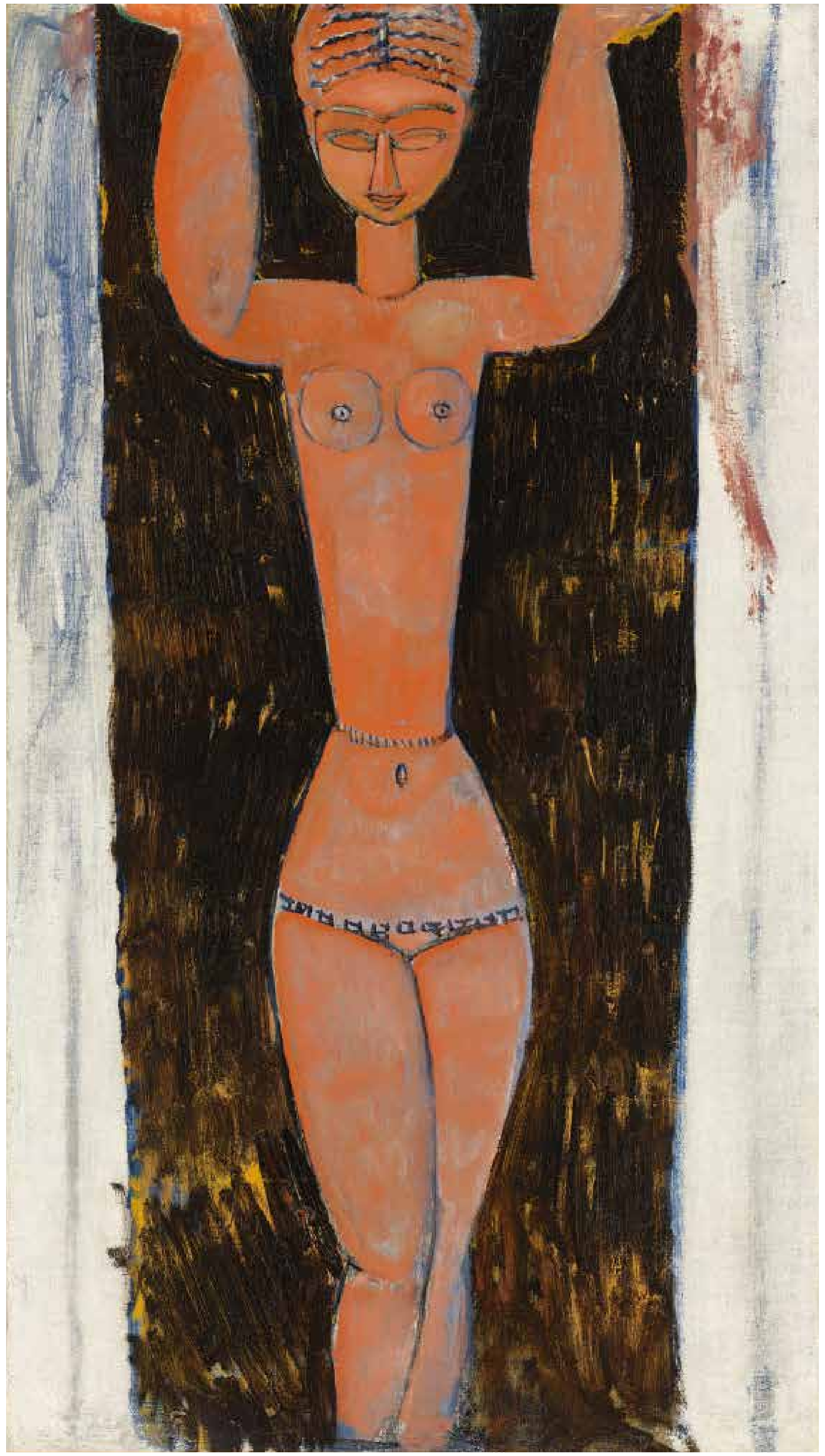


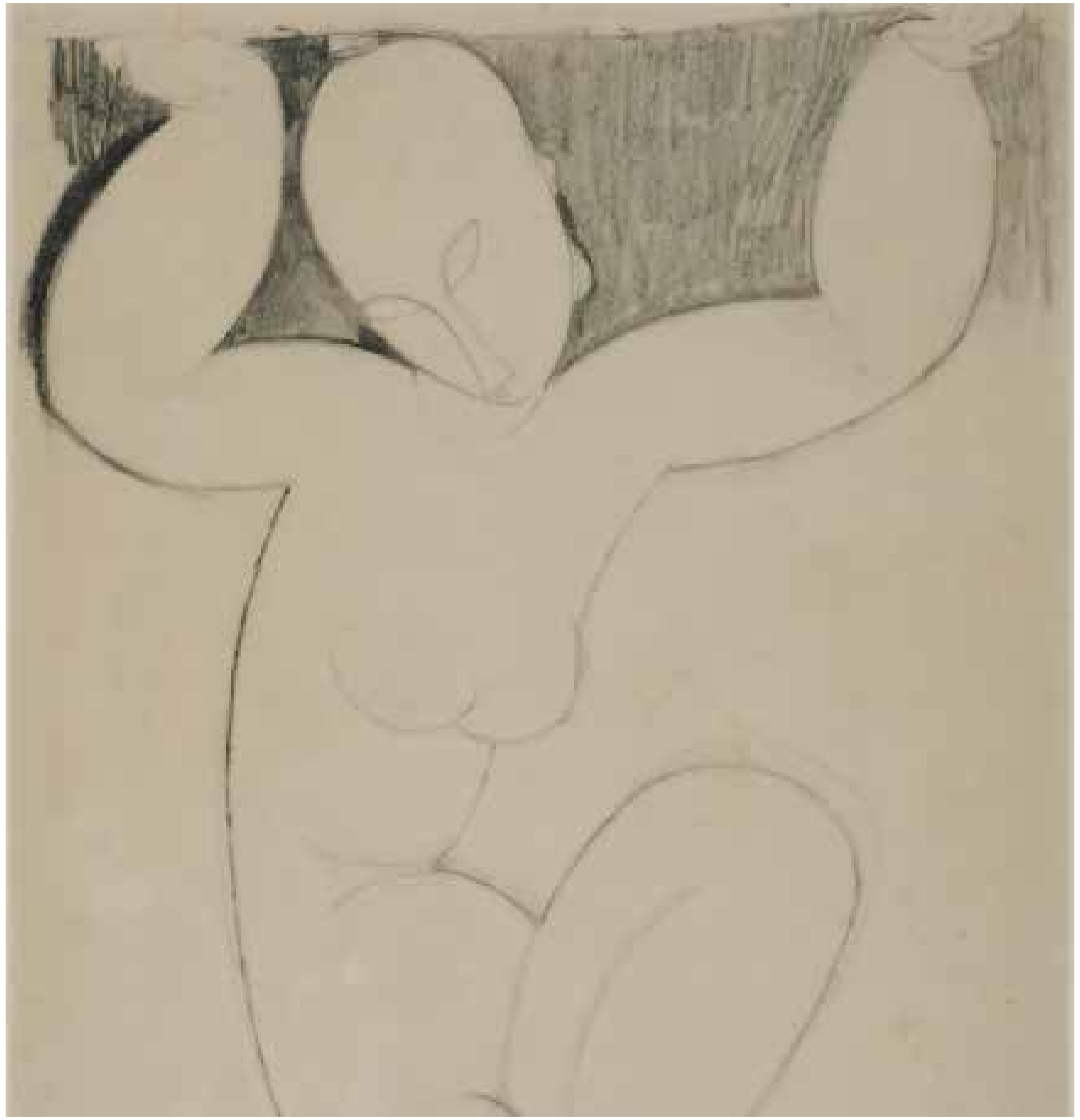
ID161 Woman Dressed in Low-Cut Gown
Reclining on a Bed (Akhmatova) *c.*1911
Crayon on paper, 26.3 x 42.7
Private collection, courtesy
of Richard Nathanson



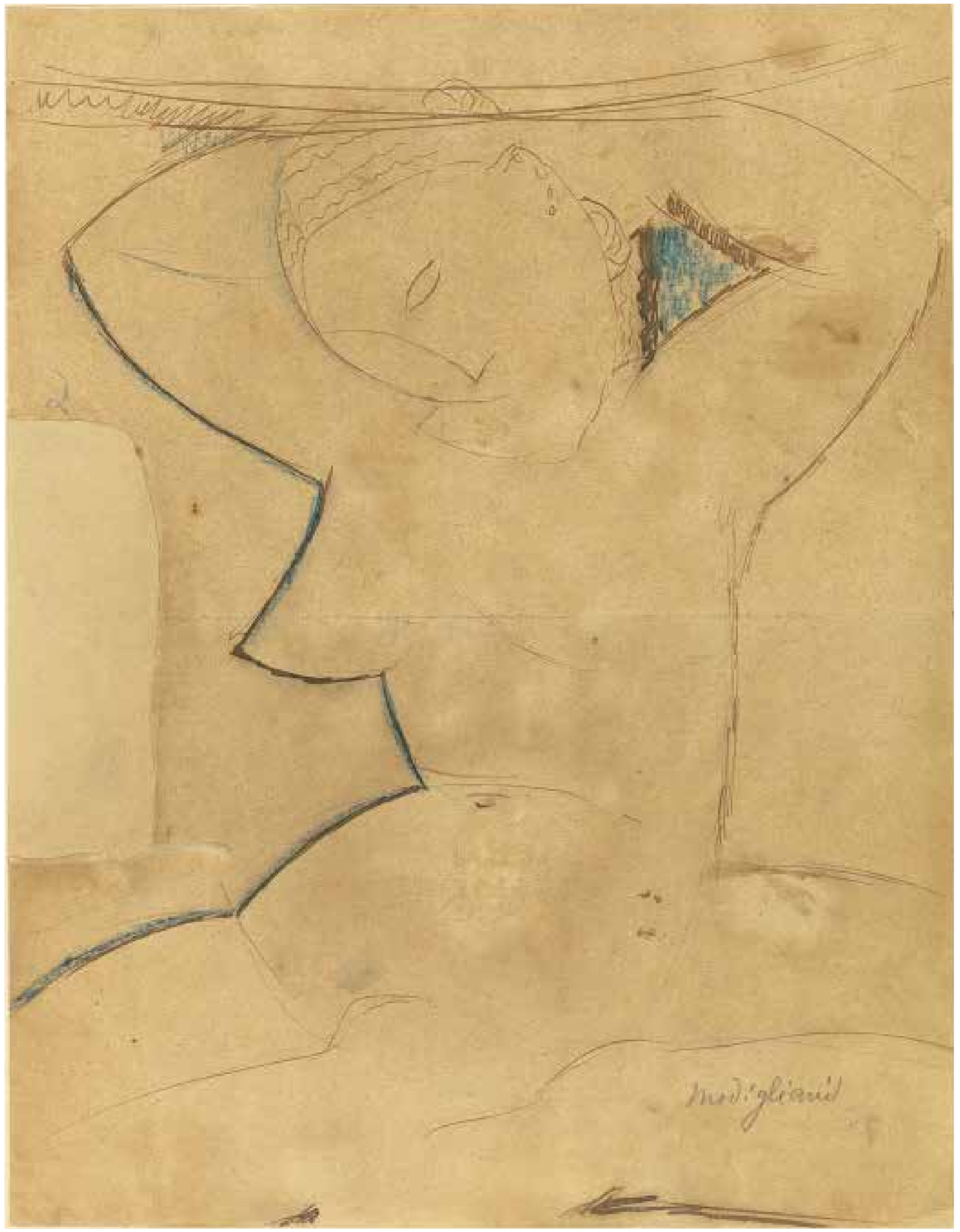
ID121 *Caryatid, Frontal View* *c.*1911
Crayon on paper, 42.9 x 26.5
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen

ID46 *Caryatid* 1913
Oil on canvas, 81 x 45
Private collection

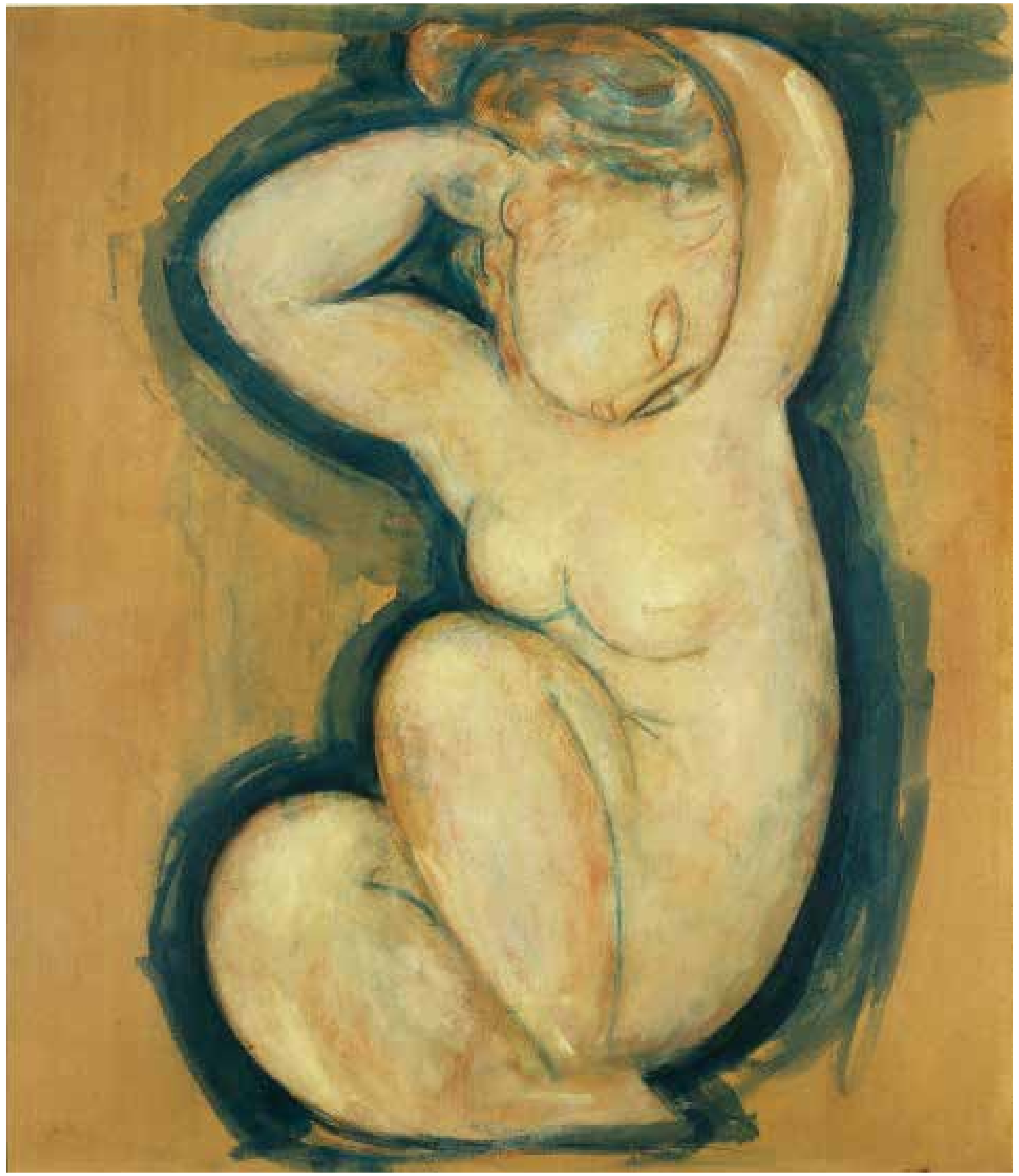




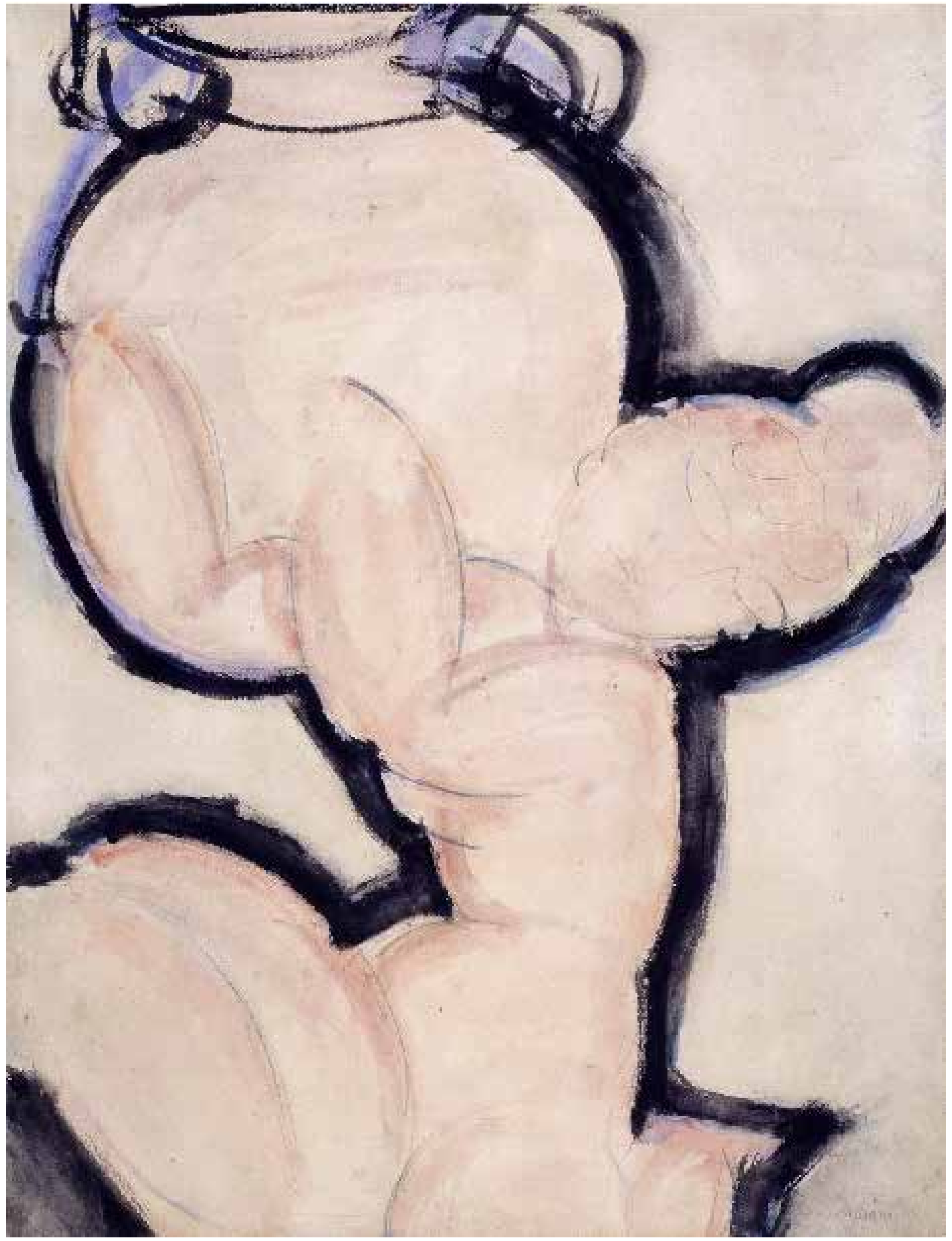
ID165 *Caryatid* c.1913-4
Graphite on paper, 54.9 x 44.8
Tate. Purchased 1957 [T00149]



ID152 *Caryatid with Pointed Breast*
c.1913–14
Pen, ink and crayon on paper, 27 x 20.8
Yale University Art Gallery, Collection of
Frances and Ward Cheney, B.A. 1922

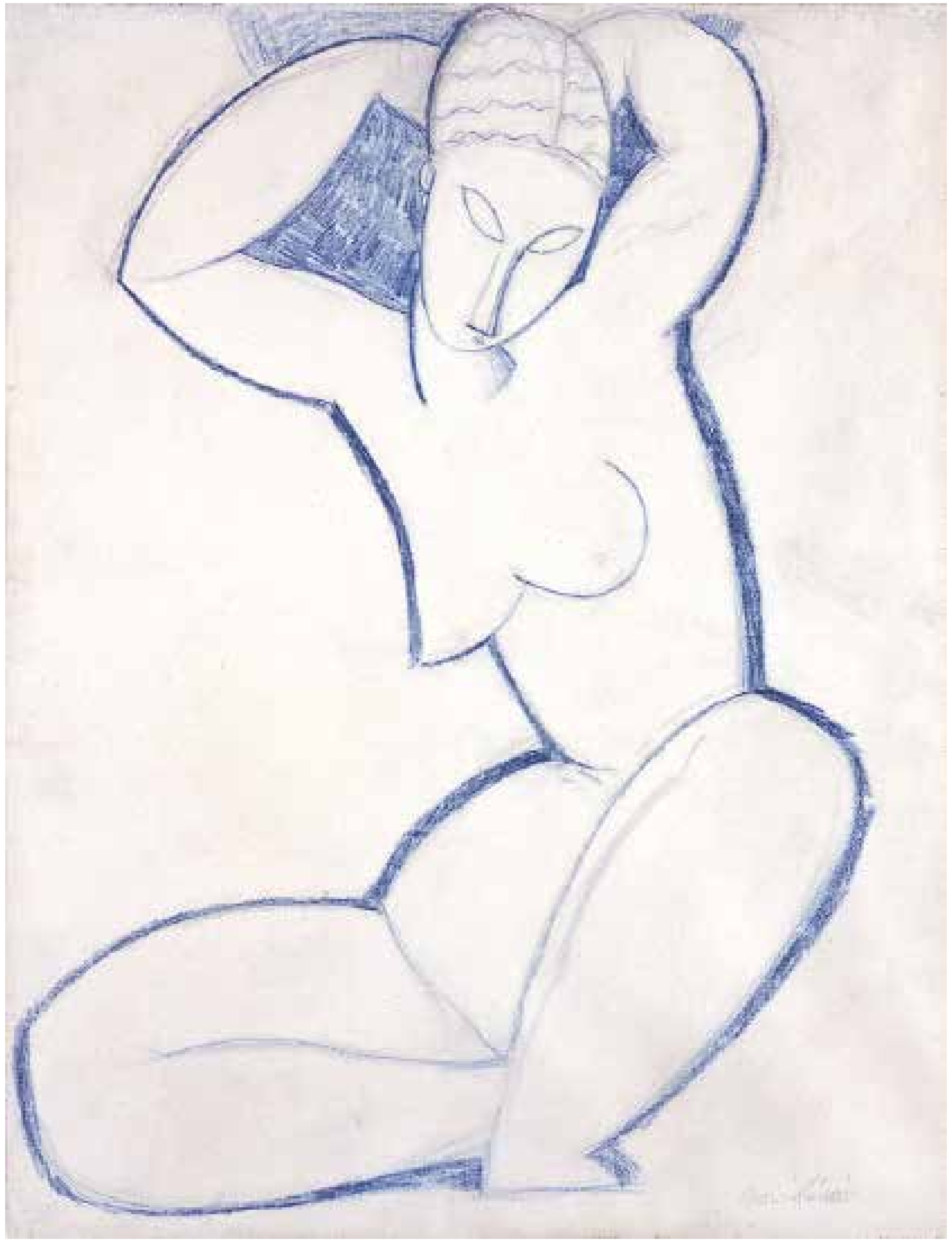


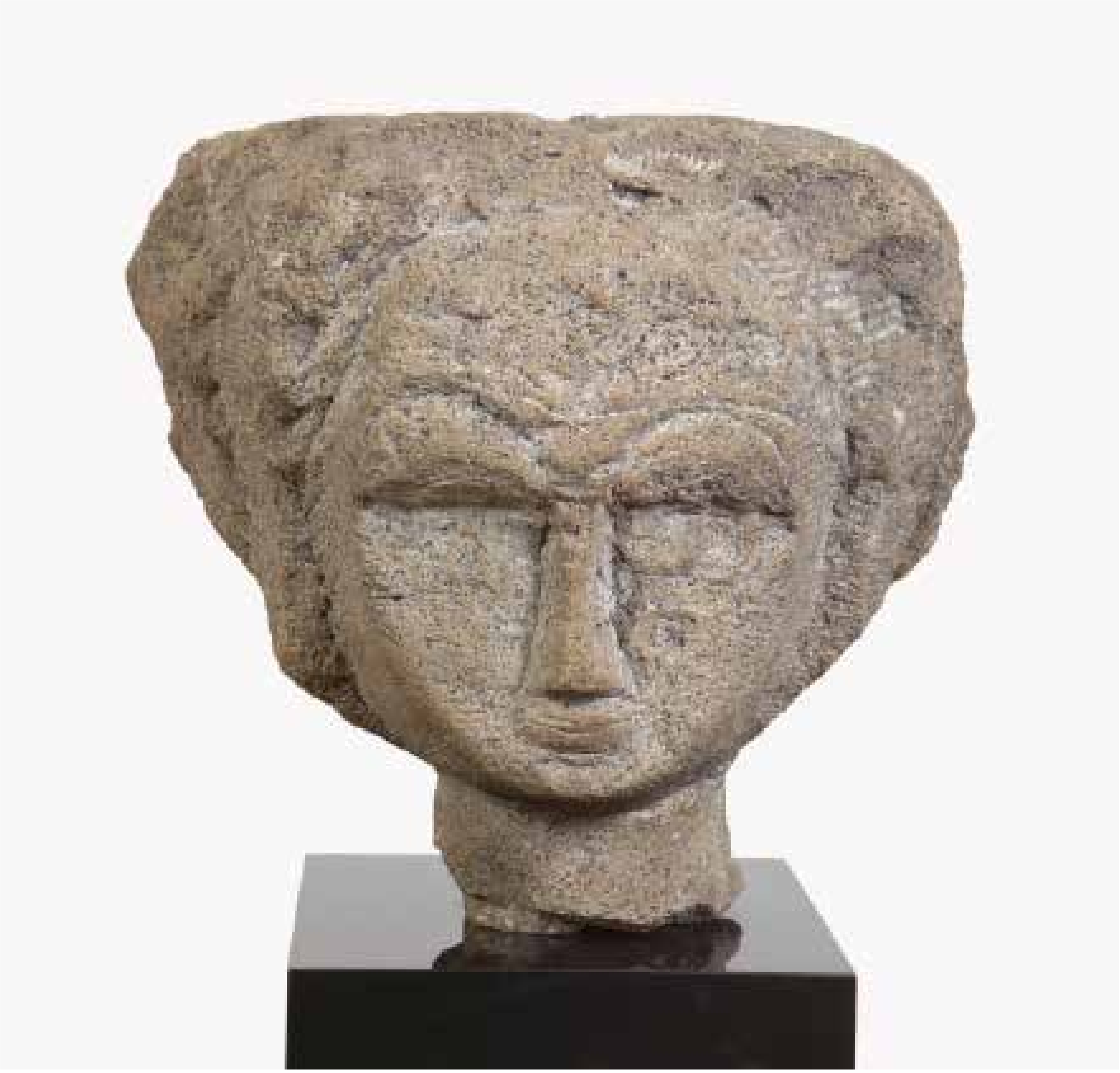
ID121 *Caryatid* 1913
Oil and pencil on cardboard, 60 x 54
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle, AM 2929 P

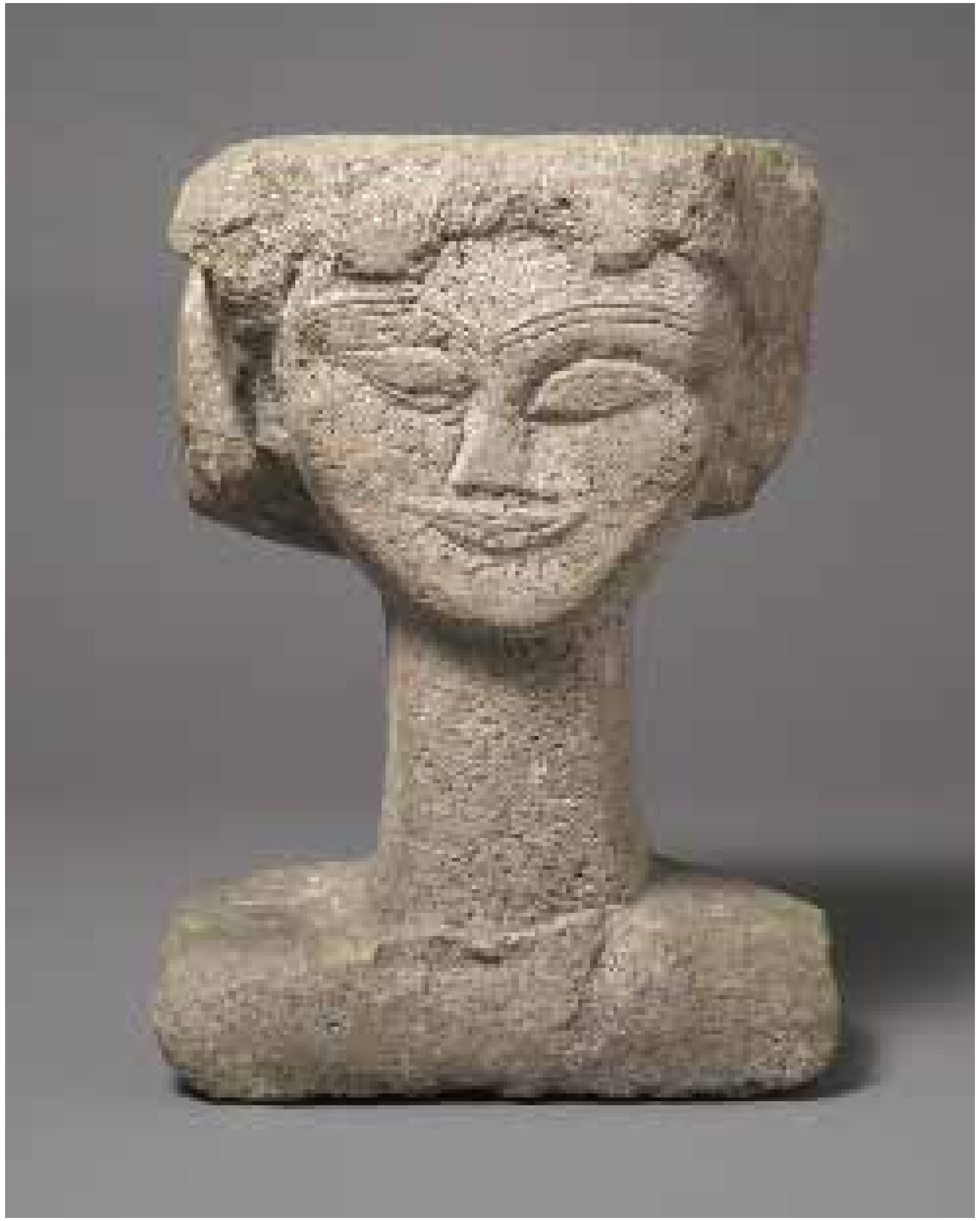


ID166 *Caryatid with a Vase* 1914
Watercolour on paper, 63.3 x 48.1
Tate. Bequeathed by Mrs A.F. Kessler 1983
[T03570]

ID159 *Caryatid* 1913–14
Pencil and crayon on paper, 55 x 41.5
The New Art Gallery Walsall,
Garman Ryan Collection



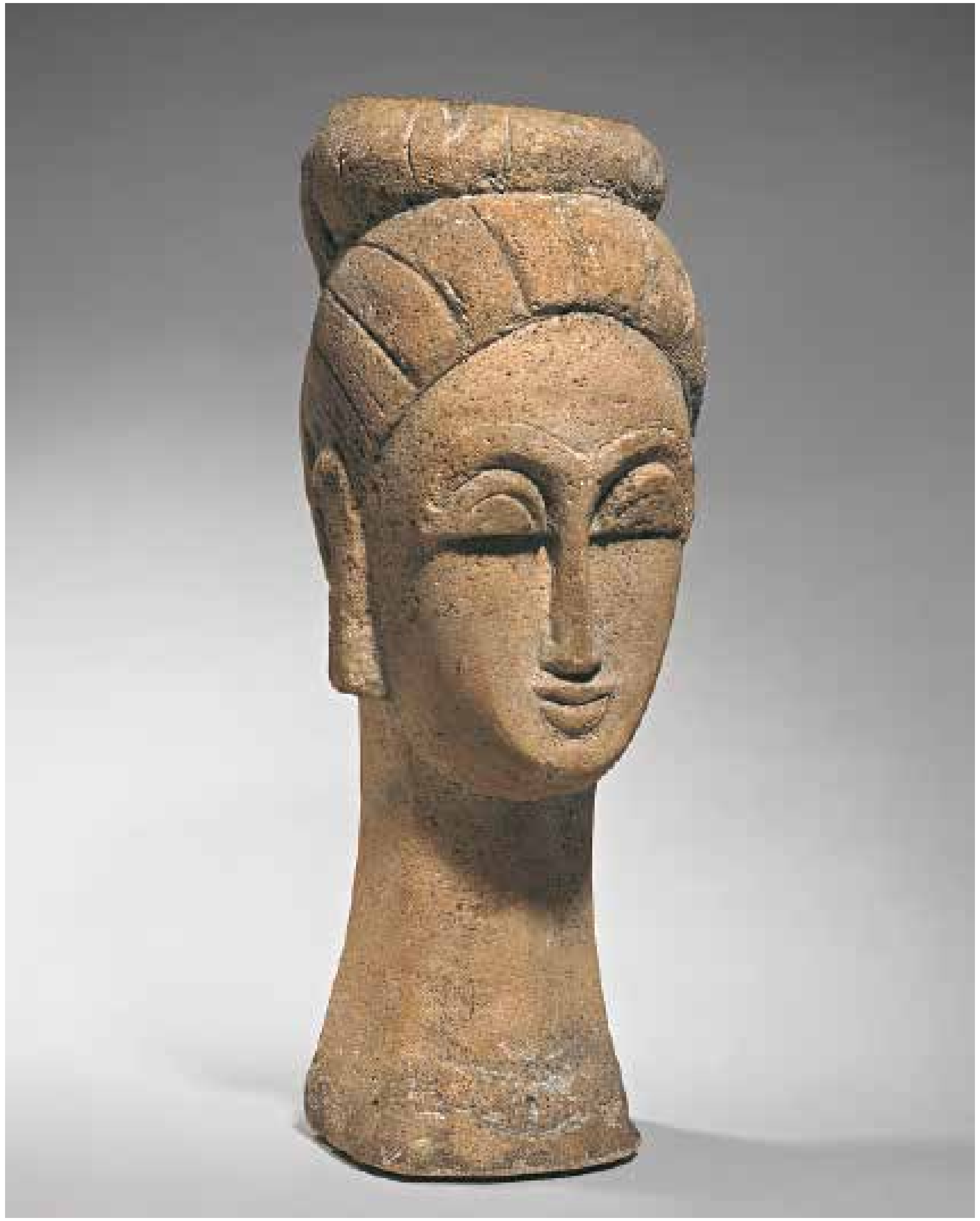


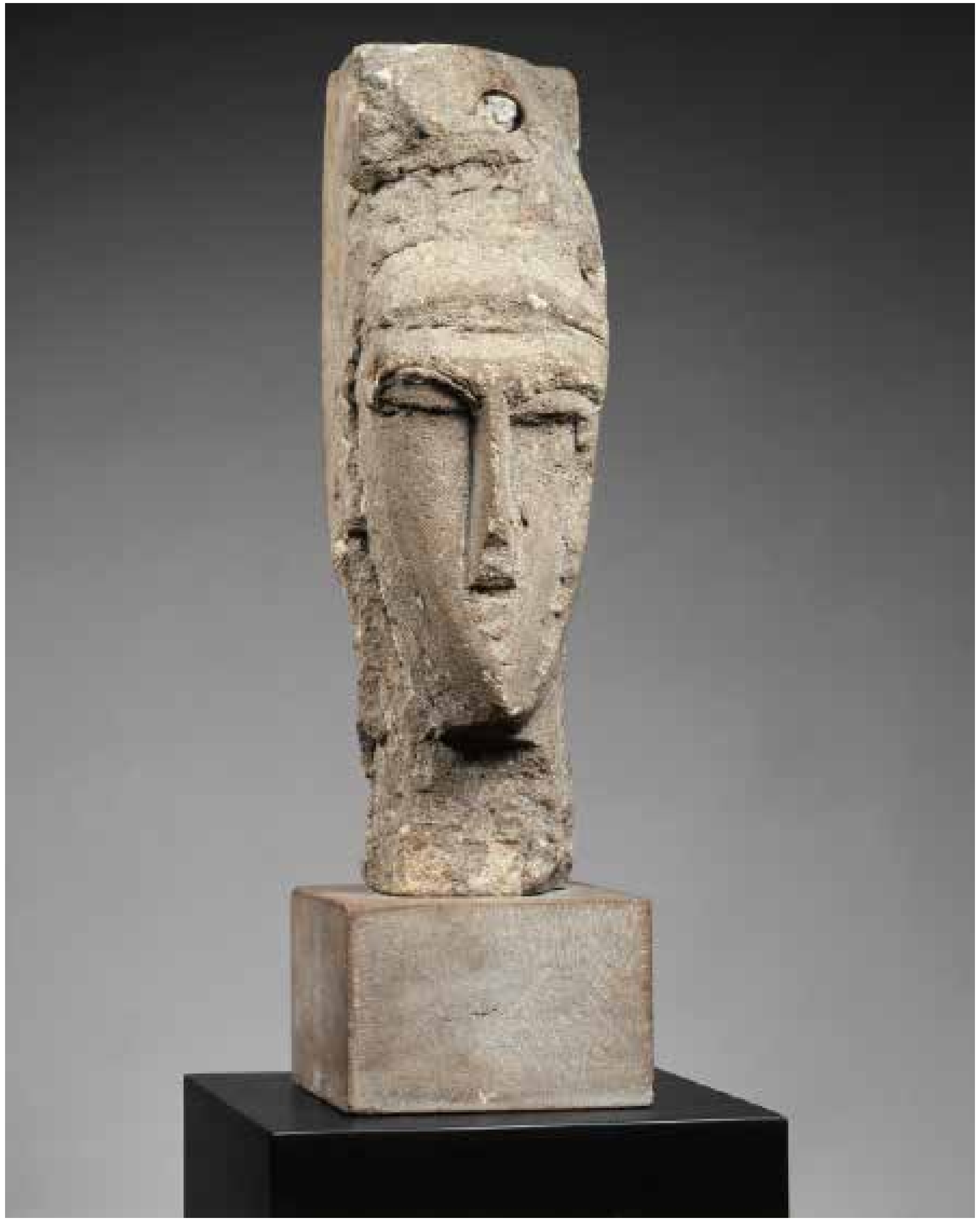


ID14 *Head* c.1911–12
Stone, 23.5 x 29 x 23
Abelló Collection

ID96 *Head* c.1911
Stone, 39.4 x 31.1 x 18.7
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,
Gift of Lois Orswell, 1992.254

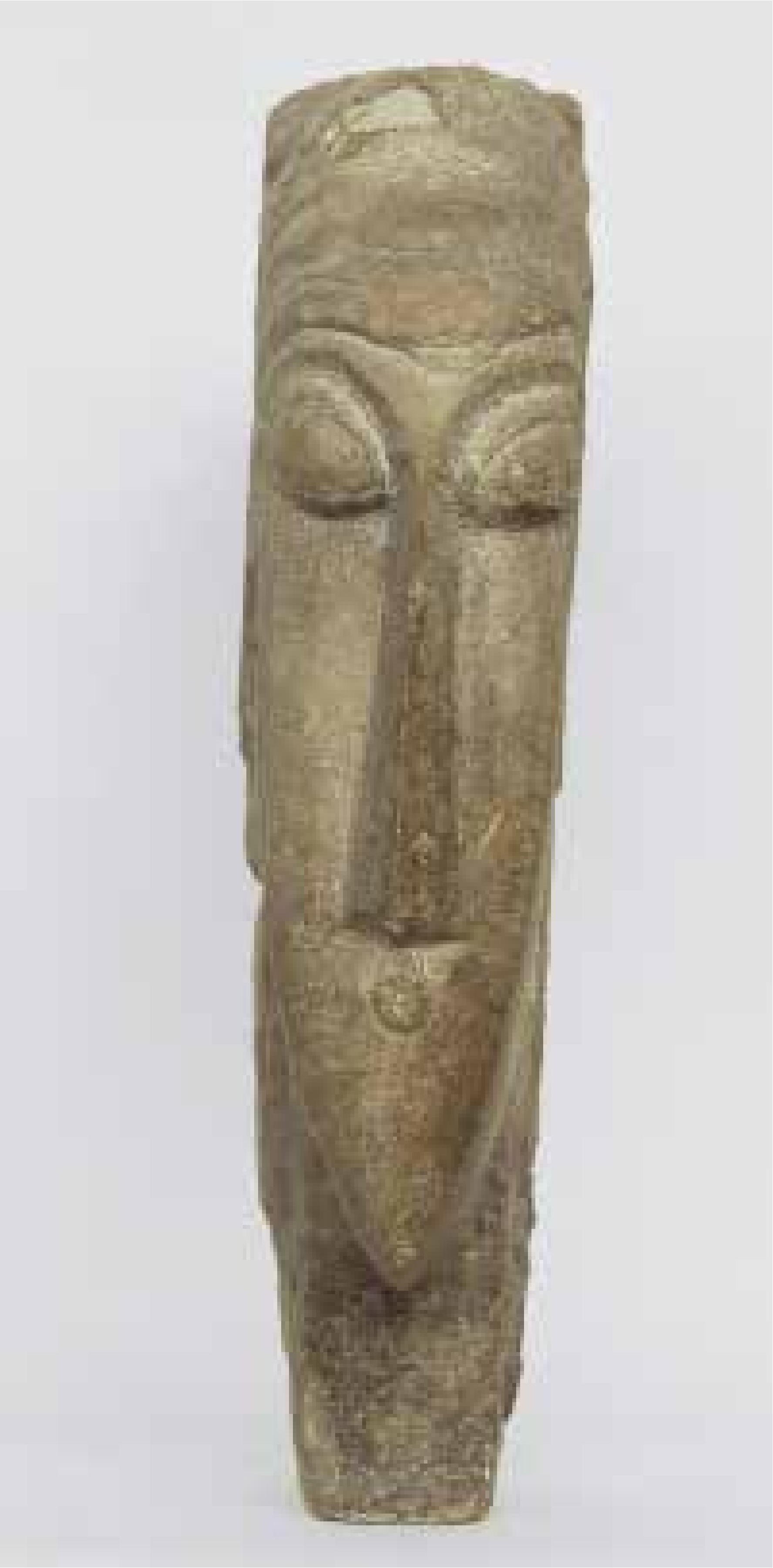
ID29 *Woman's Head (with Chignon)*
1911–12
Sandstone
57.2 x 21.9 x 23.5
Merzbacher Kunststiftung, Zürich

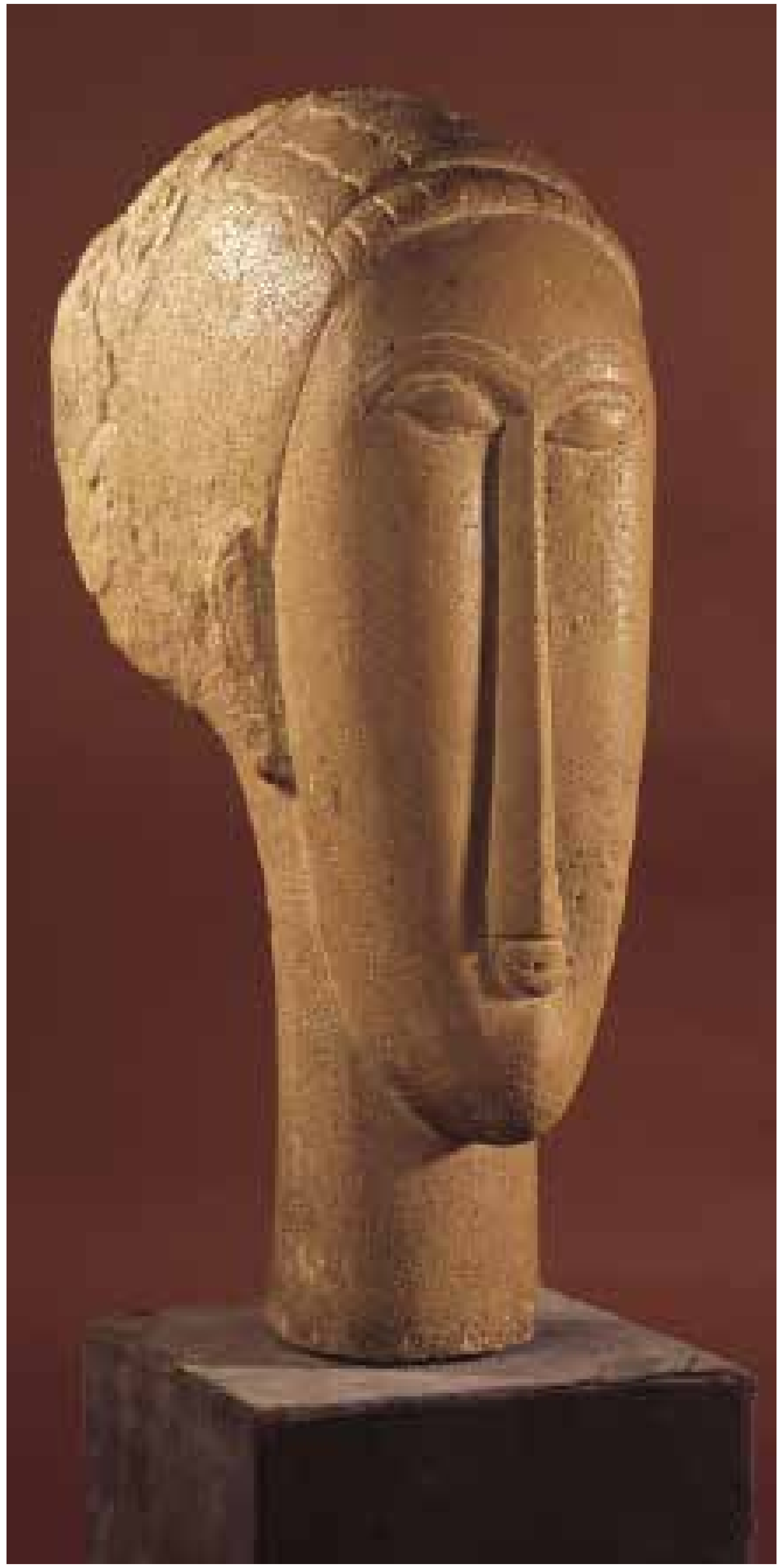




ID148 *Head* 1910–11
Limestone, 41.8 x 12.5 x 17
The Henry and Rose Pearlman Foundation
on long term loan to Princeton University
Art Museum

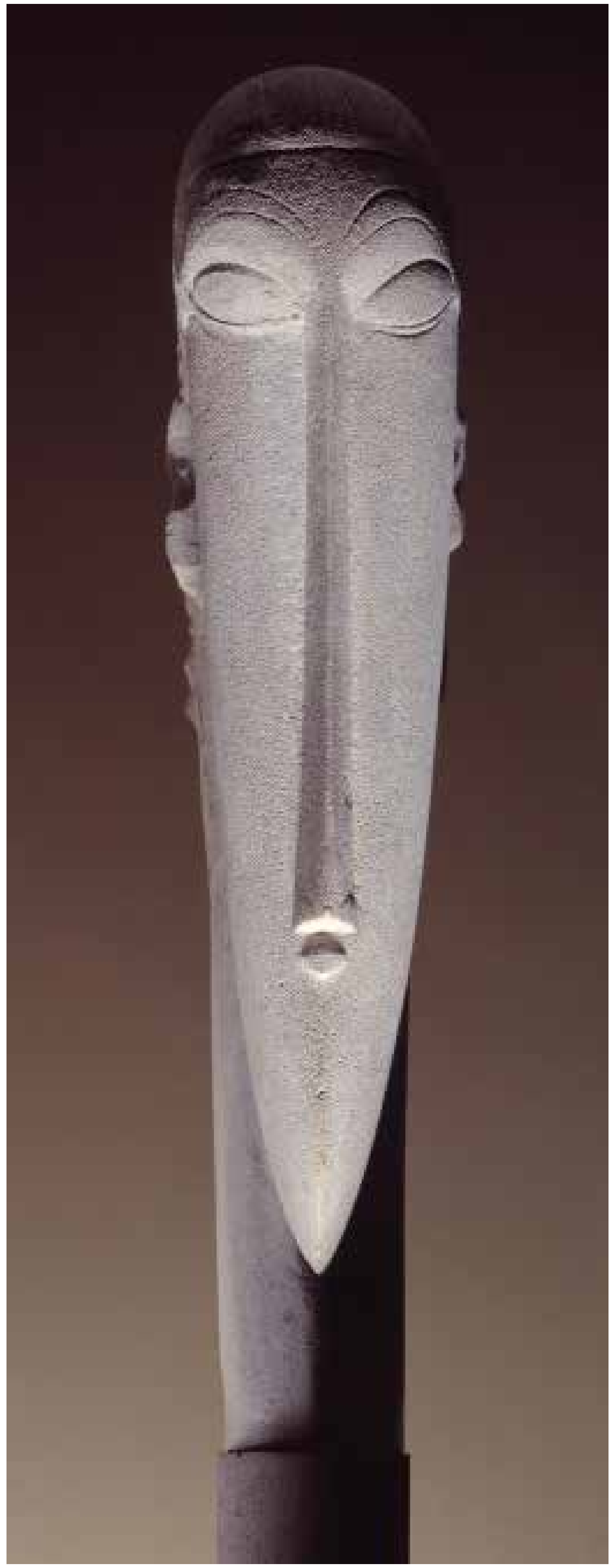
ID129 *Head* c.1915
Limestone, 56.5 x 12.7 x 37.4
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller in memory
of Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, 1939 593.1939

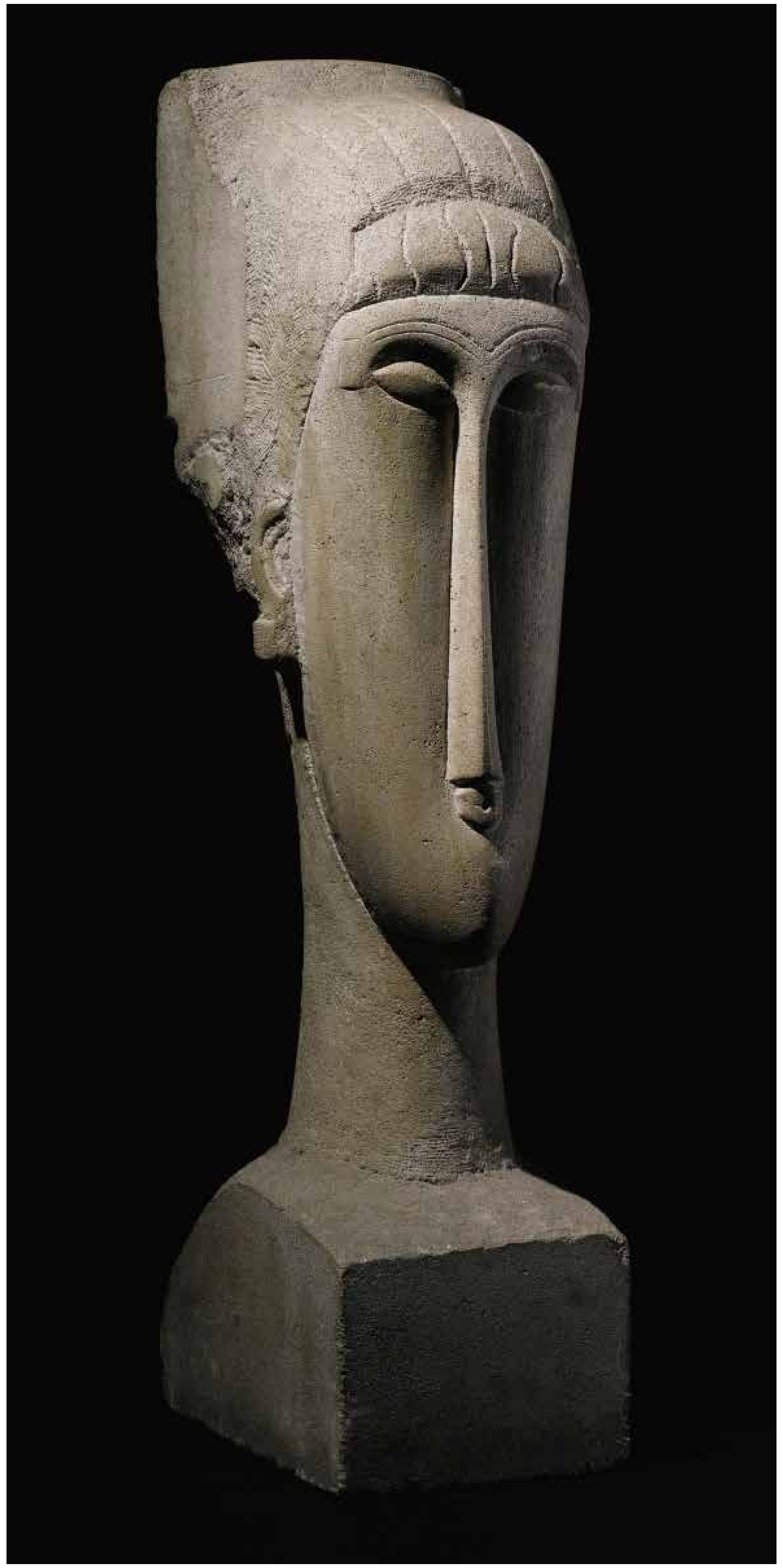




ID34 *Head* 1911–12
Limestone, 48.2
Private collection

ID164 *Head* c.1911–12
Limestone, 89.2 x 14 x 35.2
Tate. Transferred from the Victoria & Albert Museum 1983 [T03760]





ID39 *Head* 1911–122
Stone, 73
Private collection

ID108 *Head*, 1911–12
Limestone
65.4 x 17.1 x 21.3
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Mr. and
Mrs. John Cowles, 62.73.1