

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Emile Fabry
(Verviers 1865 – 1966 Woluwe-Saint-Pierre)

Woman with eyes closed

Pencil on paper
17.5 x 11.3. (6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

Provenance:
Estate of the artist, until 2025.



This evocative head study by Émile Fabry depicts a woman with her eyes closed, her features rendered with gravity and restraint. Drawn in pencil with confident, repetitive strokes, the face emerges through layered modelling rather than precise outline. The closed eyes, heavy lids, and compressed mouth lend the image a sense of inwardness and quiet solemnity, suggesting contemplation or introspection rather than portrait likeness.

The handling is characteristic of Fabry's draughtsmanship. Tonal emphasis is concentrated around the eyes, nose and mouth, giving the head a sculptural solidity, while the hair and neck are articulated through rhythmic, almost incantatory lines. The repeated contouring around the face reinforces its axial symmetry and monumental presence, transforming a modest study into an image of psychological intensity. Although intimate in scale, the drawing carries an almost iconic quality, aligned with Fabry's lifelong pursuit of idealised form and inner meaning.

The drawing is executed on the reverse of an invitation card for a public session of the Académie royale de Belgique, a detail that adds both historical and conceptual interest. Fabry was closely associated with the Belgian academic and intellectual establishment, and the reuse of such a printed document as a drawing support suggests the immediacy of his practice and the centrality of drawing within his daily artistic life. The juxtaposition of official printed text and private artistic exploration underscores the dual nature of Fabry's work, balancing public monumentality with inward reflection.

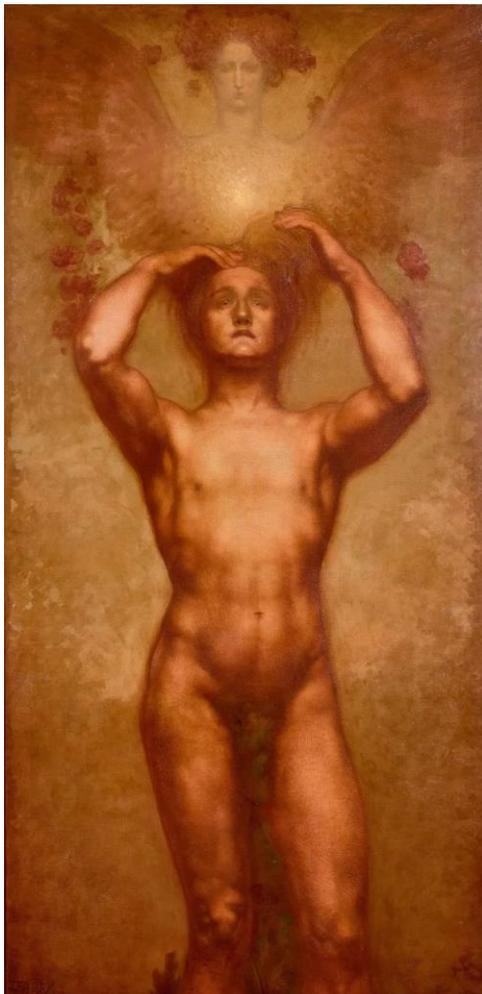


Fig. 1, Emile Fabry, *Vers l'idéal*, 1910, oil on canvas, 170.5 x 85.5cm, Private Collection

Émile Fabry was a leading figure in Belgian Symbolism and an influential decorative painter, known for his large-scale allegorical murals and idealist compositions (fig. 1). Drawing played a fundamental role in his practice, serving not merely as preparation but as an independent means of probing expression, form and psychological depth. In works such as this, the human face becomes a site of spiritual and emotional inquiry rather than individual characterisation.

This head study exemplifies Fabry's ability to invest even the most modest sheet with a sense of timeless gravity. At once intimate and monumental, it offers a concentrated expression of his Symbolist ideals and stands as a compelling example of early twentieth-century Belgian draughtsmanship shaped by introspection, discipline, and a commitment to the inner life.