

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

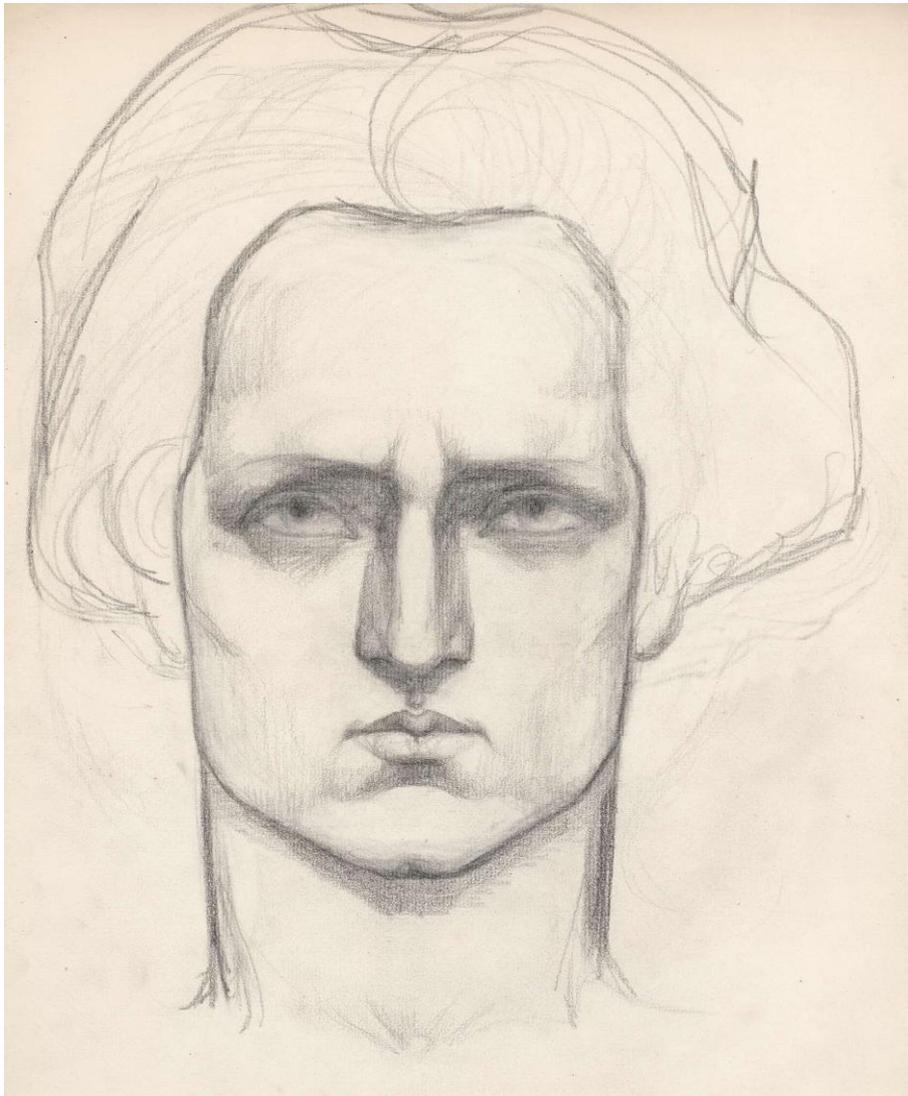
MASTER DRAWINGS

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

Head study of a man

Pencil on paper
34 x 28 cm. (13 ½ x 11 in.)

Provenance:
Estate of the artist, until 2025.



This powerful and austere drawing by Émile Fabry presents the head of a man frontally, rendered with striking economy and structural clarity. The face is constructed through firm, symmetrical modelling, with the features reduced to essential planes and tonal contrasts. The eyes, set deep beneath a strong brow, lend the figure a grave, introspective presence, while the tightly compressed mouth and pronounced jaw reinforce the sense of psychological intensity.

The handling of pencil is disciplined and purposeful. Shading is concentrated around the eyes, nose and mouth, creating a sculptural solidity that recalls Fabry's engagement with monumental figuration and idealised form. By contrast, the hair is only loosely indicated through light, exploratory lines, allowing the head to emerge starkly against the unworked ground. This tension between precise structure and open suggestion is characteristic of Fabry's draughtsmanship and contributes to the drawing's timeless, almost archetypal quality.

Émile Fabry was a central figure in Belgian Symbolism and a leading decorative painter of his generation. Trained at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, he became closely associated with Jean Delville and the idealist movement, producing large-scale murals and allegorical compositions for public buildings in Belgium and abroad (fig. 1). Drawing played a fundamental role in his practice, both as a preparatory tool and as an independent means of exploring form, expression and psychological depth.

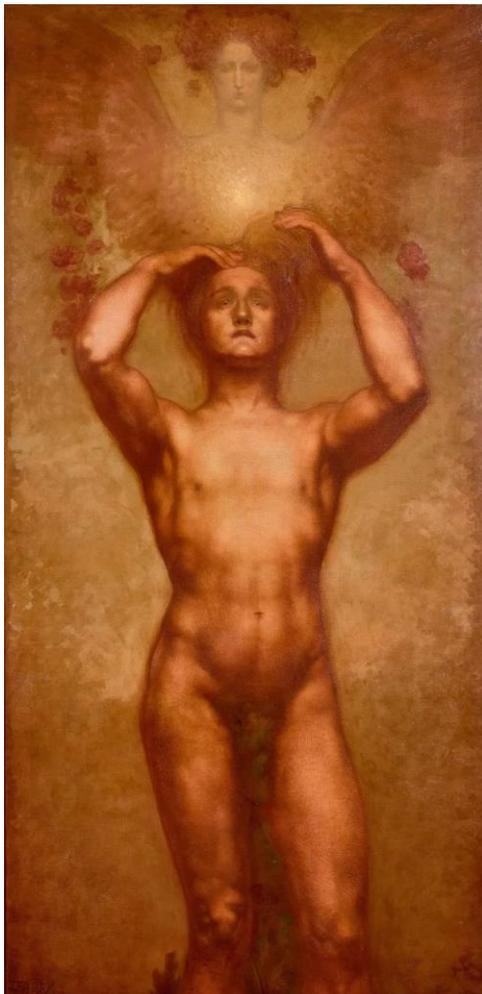


Fig. 1, Emile Fabry, *Vers l'idéal*, 1910, oil on canvas, 170.5 x 85.5cm, Private Collection

The present sheet reflects Fabry's interest in the human head as a site of inner life and moral gravity rather than individual portraiture in a descriptive sense. The image transcends likeness to assume a more universal character, aligned with the Symbolist pursuit of the ideal and the eternal. The frontal pose, axial symmetry and restrained emotional register echo the sculptural and architectural ambitions that underpin much of Fabry's work.

As a work on paper, this drawing offers valuable insight into Fabry's method and artistic priorities. It demonstrates his ability to convey intensity and presence through minimal means, and stands as a compelling example of early twentieth-century Belgian draughtsmanship shaped by Symbolist ideals and a commitment to monumental form.