

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

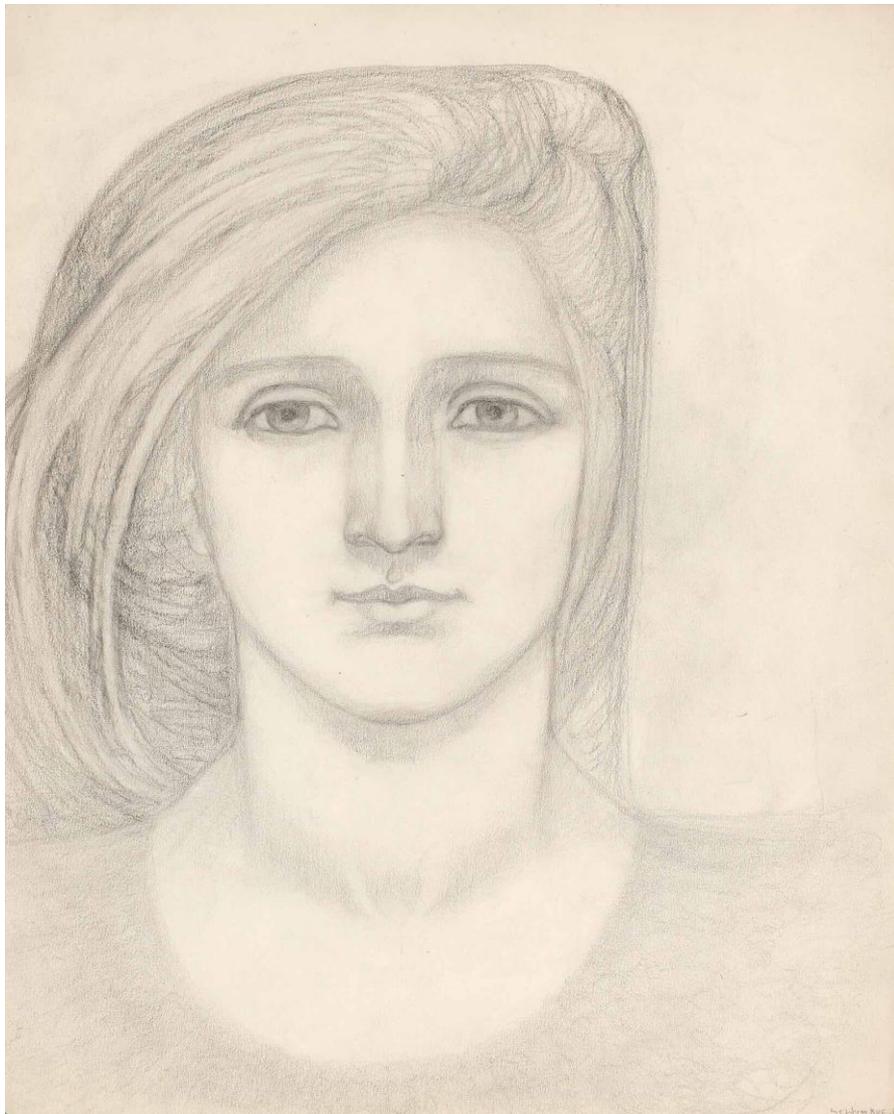
MASTER DRAWINGS

Suzanne Fabry
(Brussels 1904 – 1985)

Study of a female head

Dated lower right: *SEPTEMBRE 1921*
Pencil on paper
36.8 X 29.5cm. (17 ½ x 11 ½ in.)

Provenance:
Estate of the artist, until 2025.



This finely drawn female head study, dated September 1921, was executed by Suzanne Fabry when she was just sixteen or seventeen years old. Although it belongs to her juvenilia, the drawing already demonstrates a striking degree of technical assurance and a mature sensitivity to form, balance and psychological presence.

Rendered in pencil with delicacy and restraint, the head is presented frontally, its symmetry softened by subtle tonal transitions. The modelling of the eyes, nose and mouth is confident yet understated, creating a calm, inward expression that avoids anecdote or overt emotion. The hair is handled with fluid, rhythmic strokes that frame the face and lend the composition a gentle monumentality, while the neck and shoulders dissolve softly into the surrounding ground. Even at this early stage, Fabry shows an instinctive understanding of how to balance structural clarity with atmospheric nuance.

The drawing reflects the formative environment in which Fabry developed. Born in Brussels in 1904, she was the daughter of the Symbolist painter Émile Fabry and grew up immersed in an artistic milieu that valued idealisation, introspection and the expressive potential of the human figure. Although she would only formally enter the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts a few years later, this early work already reveals an affinity with the idealist tradition associated with Belgian Symbolism, filtered through a personal and quietly lyrical vision.

What is most striking in this sheet is not simply precocious skill, but the imaginative seriousness with which the subject is approached. The head does not read as a casual study from life but as a considered image, shaped by an interest in inner states rather than surface description. This concern with psychological presence would remain central to Fabry's work throughout her career, particularly in her sustained engagement with portraiture and self-representation (fig. 1)



Fig. 1, Suzanne Fabry, *Self-portrait*, 1940, red chalk on paper, 63.5 x 56 cm, formerly with Colnaghi Elliott Master Drawings

As an early work, this drawing provides valuable insight into Fabry's artistic formation. It stands as evidence of an exceptional natural ability already allied to a refined sensibility, and foreshadows the introspective restraint and compositional clarity that would define her mature oeuvre.