

# COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

**Anton Prinner (born Anna Prinner)**

(Budapest 1902 – 1983 Paris)

*Two figures holding hands, 1939*

Signed and dated, lower right: 'Prinner 1939'

Pen and ink on paper

23.5 x 30.5 cm

9 1/4 x 12 in

**Provenance:**

Régine and Guy Dulong Collection, Paris;

Their sale, Giquello, 26 May 2016, Paris, lot 35;

Private Collection, Paris.



Anton Prinner was born Anna Prinner in Budapest in 1902 and grew up in a liberal and artistic family. She became a student at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1920 where, at the time, men and women were taught separately. In search of greater artistic freedom and stimulation, Prinner left Budapest for Paris in 1927. There, Anna soon changed her name to Anton, adopting a male identity for the rest of his life. Although very attached to his Hungarian roots, the artist only ever returned to Budapest once for a short time in 1936.

Fig. 1, Denise Colomb, *Portrait of Anton Prinner in his studio*, 1947



In Paris, Prinner reunited with his best friend from the Budapest Academy, Árpád Szenes (1897-1985) and together they attended the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. An inseparable friend of Gábor Peterdi (1915-2001) and Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908-1992), and counting amongst his inner circle the photographer Robert Capa (1913-1954), Prinner was firmly part of the Montparnasse avant-garde of the 1930s. During the war, he remained in Paris and helped fellow Hungarian artists, mostly hiding from persecution due to their Jewish background. He later published a powerful prose poem, *Le Femme tondue*, denouncing the cruelty meted out towards women deemed Nazi collaborators. Prinner remained in Paris until 1950, thereafter moving to Vallauris in the South of France. Although he had met Picasso as early as 1942, Vallauris was where Prinner developed a friendship with the Spaniard, an artist he greatly admired. He moved back to Paris in the mid 1960s and his work was exhibited in several Parisian and international exhibitions. The artist lived in poverty for most of his life and died destitute in 1982.

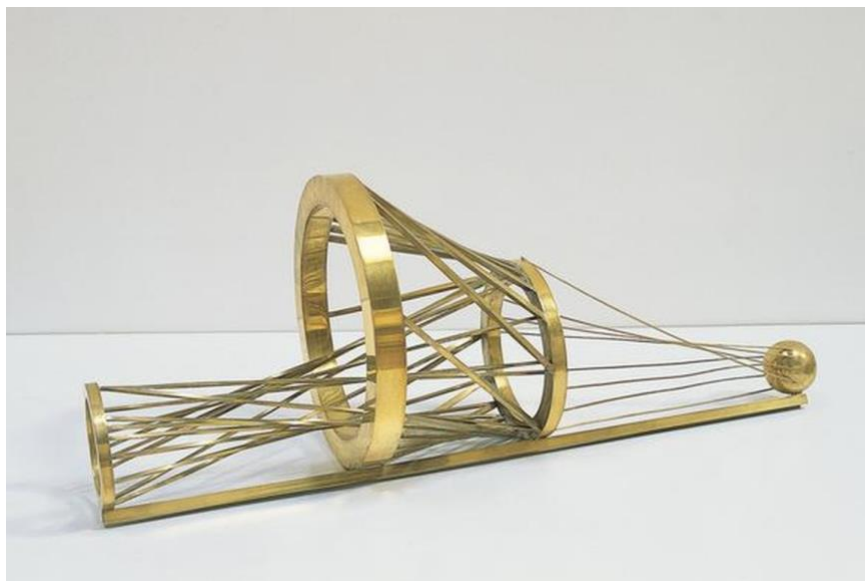
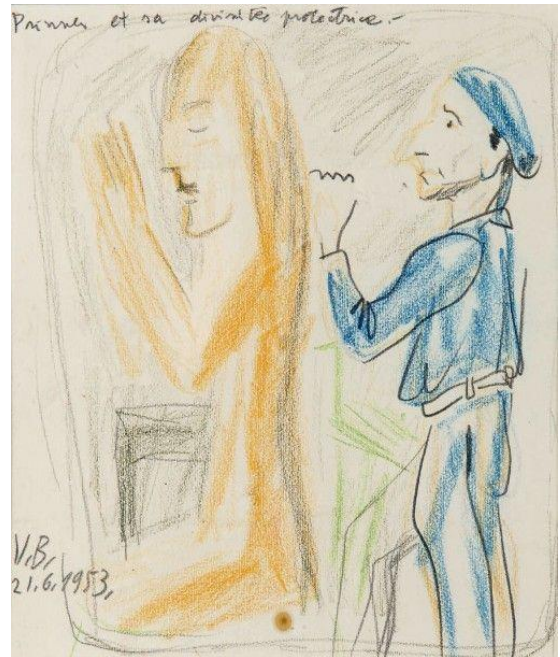


Fig. 2, Anton Prinner, *Construction à cuivre*, 1935, brass and copper, 50 x 50 x 135cm, Musée de Grenoble, France



Throughout the 1930s, Prinner explored constructivism in multiple mediums, including sculpture (Fig.2), before breaking away from the movement and returning to figurative work in 1938. The artist created sculptures, drawings, paintings and, from the 1950s, decorative objects for Le Tapis Vert. Nicknamed 'le petit pic-vert' by Picasso because he carved monumental wooden sculptures, Prinner fascinated his contemporaries, as can be seen in the drawing attributed to Victor Brauner representing Prinner at work (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3, Attributed to Victor Brauner, *Prinner et sa divinité protectrice*, 1953, pencil on paper, monogrammed and dated (lower left) V.B. 21.6.1953, 24 x 20.5 cm, Private Collection



Our drawing belongs to a series of works on paper in ink executed in 1939. In these, bodies and objects are stretched and contorted within a constraining frame, in a surrealist and dreamlike juxtaposition of elements. The drawing presented here shows two figures, eyes shut, their interlocked hands forming the focal point of the composition. They appear to be in a tranquil state of repose, united in a gentle yet powerful gesture of trust. The figures, sharing a physiognomic closeness, are androgynous and their respective sexes indeterminable. These elements consistently permeate Prinner's figurative work.



Fig. 4, Anton Prinner, *Two figures and a cockerel*, alabaster relief in a plaster frame, signed and dated 1939, Private Collection

The exploration of dreams and the subconscious, as was the case for many Parisian avant-garde contemporaries, remained a key and recurring subject in the work of Anton Prinner. During the 1940s and 1950s, the artist developed dual and interrelated interests in esoterism and Ancient Egypt, influences which manifest themselves in the various media Prinner worked in. The dreamlike visions of contorted bodies, which Prinner was already exploring in sculpture at the time (Fig. 4), continued to appear in many works in the following decades: whether harsh and angular in *La Femme tondue* (Fig. 5) or instead imbued with certain softness, as demonstrated in *La Femme tournesol* (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5, Anton Prinner, *La Femme tondue*, Paris, A.P.R., 1946, 8 original engravings, 116/150



Fig. 6, Anton Prinner, *Femme au tournesol*, carved wooden panel, c. 1947, signed, Private Collection