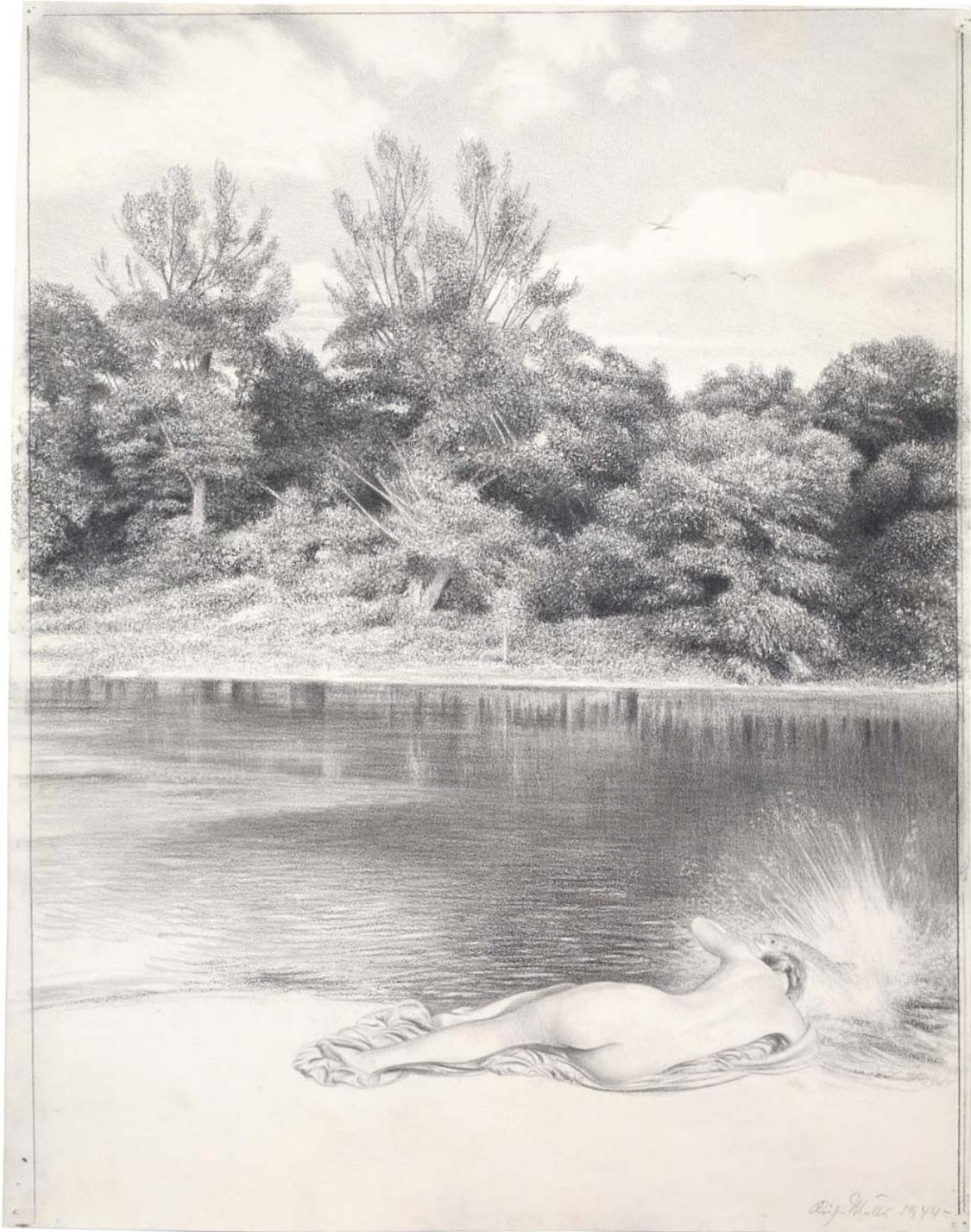


LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



RICHARD MÜLLER

1874 Tschirnitz, Bohemia - Dresden 1954

Reclining Female Nude at a Lake's Edge, Surprised by a Fish

Pencil on hand-made paper.

Signed and dated lower right: *Rich. Müller 1944.*

500 x 385 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Berlin

The son of a weaver, Richard Müller was born in the Bohemian town of Tschirnitz (now Cernýš, in the Czech Republic). His artistic talent was evident early on. In 1888, at the age of only fourteen, he was encouraged by a porcelain painter to apply for a place at the famous painting school of the Königlich-Sächsische Porzellanmanufaktur in Meissen and was immediately accepted. In 1890, he decided to move to Dresden independently and without financial support. He applied to the Academy of Art, although he was still below the minimum age for admission, becoming one of the youngest students ever accepted. In 1895, he met the graphic artist and sculptor Max Klinger, who inspired him to take up etching. By 1900, when he was appointed professor at the Academy, he was already as well-known in Dresden as Klinger. Müller's students included George Grosz and Otto Dix. In 1933, he was named president of the Academy. He died in Dresden at the age of eighty in 1954.

One of Müller's main themes was the interaction of female beauty with the animal world. In the present drawing, the activity of the fish and the reaction of the reclining model feed the viewer's erotic fantasy, heightening the sensual appeal of the nude figure. Müller's rendering of the human and natural elements in his motifs was old-masterly in its precision. In this, he drew on his study of the Old Masters at the Dresden Academy in the early 1890s. One important source of inspiration was his teacher Leonhard Gey, who in 1882 had taken on the newly-established, mid-level class in anatomical drawing and, as of 1888, the advanced class in nature and nude drawing. Like Gey, Leon Pohle also had an important influence on Müller. He, too, was an advocate of the strict reproduction of reality: *Under him he [Müller] learned the most fundamental craft skills. Workshop painting in the style of the Old Masters – lustrous drawings [...], a gentle exploration of the intellectual and emotional sides of one's fellow man.*¹ In the present drawing this reproductive aspect strikes a slightly mocking note, another characteristic of Müller's art.² The woman takes visible fright at the splash and sudden shock as a fish leaps from the water right beside her.

¹ Quoted from Franz Hermann Meißner, *Das Werk von Richard Müller*, Dresden 1921, p. 113.

² Richard Hüttel, 'Sexuality, death and misogyny – An exploration of selected Richard Müller works', in *Die Schöne und das Biest – Richard Müller & Mel Ramos & Wolfgang Joop*, exhib. cat., Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig 2013, p. 34.