

Jeune femme se

IN POWDERING

a.)

collection, on extended loan to

sold to Wildenstein and Co.,  
d Mrs. Leigh Block, Chicago,  
Wildenstein and Co., New  
York, May 1973

Jeune femme se poudrant  
We should not make too  
of them because the panel is  
of the would embark on a more  
turned to his canvas.  
deduce that the image on  
Her head and upper body  
of Buddha-like proportions  
ely fashioned. Also re-  
come above the skirt,  
color, and given two  
ping with the added  
and table permitted by  
ed border has clearly  
initial design.

### 215. *L'homme à femmes*. 1890

Ink, 10¼ x 6½ in. (26 x 16.5 cm.)  
Signed lower left: Seurat

Private collection

H 695; DR 196a

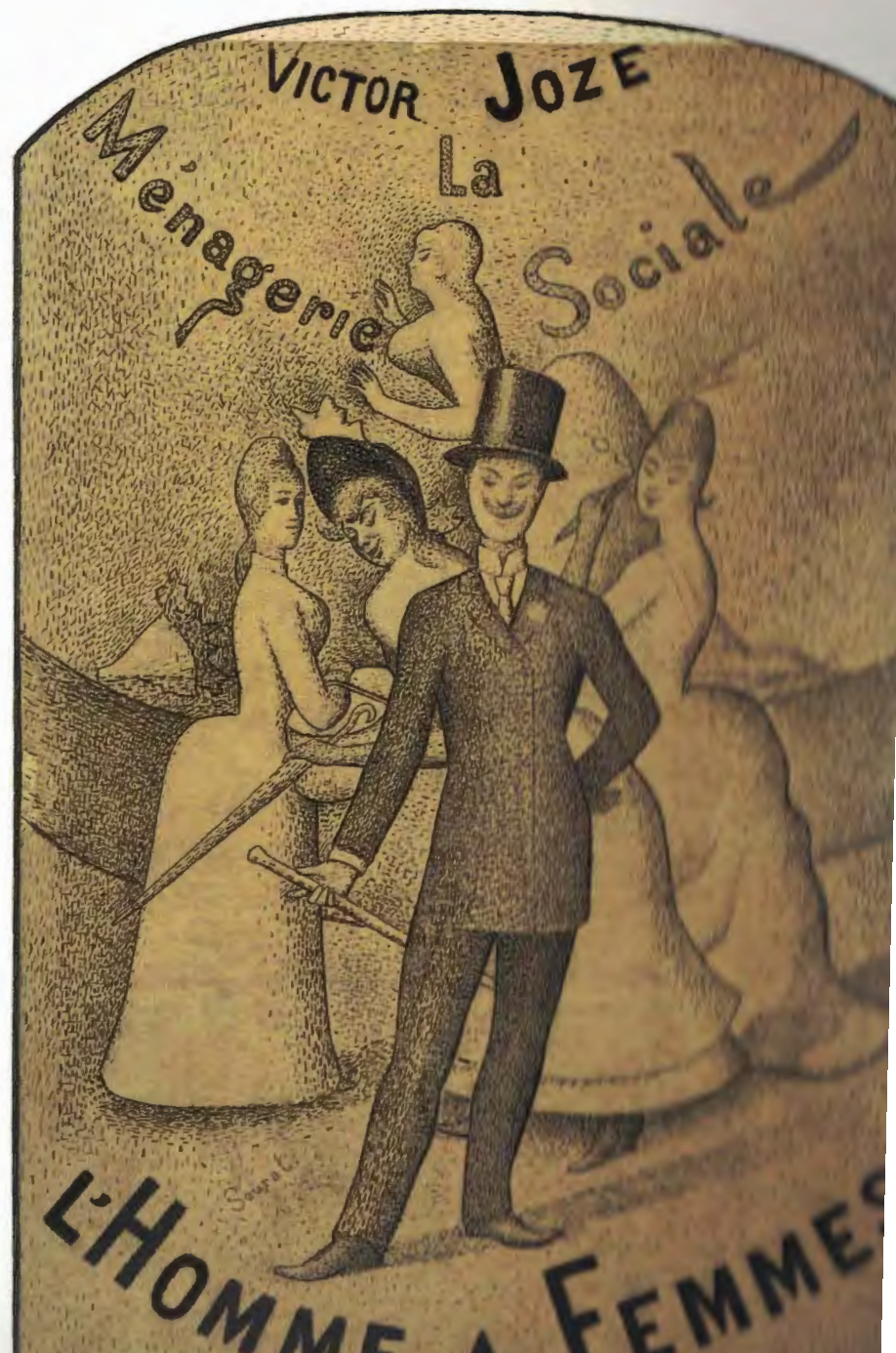
#### PROVENANCE

The artist until 1891. Posthumous inventory, dessin no. 377. Presumably given by the artist's family to Victor Joze in 1891; Félix Féneon, Paris, by 1926; Baron Robert von Hirsch, Basel, by 1958, until his death in 1977; his estate, 1977-78 (Von Hirsch sale, Sotheby's, London, June 27, 1978, no. 848); private collection; to present owner

#### EXHIBITIONS

1926 Paris, Bernheim-Jeune, no. 97  
1936 Paris, no. 127

Seurat made this drawing for the cover of the 1890 novel *L'homme à femmes* by Victor Joze, a Polish writer who circulated among the vanguard in Paris (both Toulouse-Lautrec and Bonnard did posters and covers for him, Lautrec's *Reine de joie* being the best known of these). In *L'homme à femmes* a naturalist writer, a café-concert singer, a prostitute, and others are involved in scandalous loves. Richard Thomson has convincingly demonstrated that "Georges Legrand" in the novel is Seurat himself, an artist whose current work included a picture of a *chahut*.<sup>1</sup>



Seurat's cover has the caricatural quality of his late work, including *Chahut* and *Cirque*, and like them it reveals not only his admiration of the poster artist Jules Chéret (1836–1932) but also his absorption in theories of linear expression. Seurat owned posters by Chéret, whose *L'amant des danseuses* is among the prototypes for *L'homme à femmes*.<sup>2</sup> Seurat registered gaiety by using Humbert de Superville's and Charles Henry's upward directions; in the unfamiliar realm of a book cover, however, his linking of a popular art form and "scientific" aesthetics seems patently obvious. The drawing nonetheless takes a logical place among Seurat's late works in which human performers become marionettes, befitting his concentration on the Montmartre world of entertainers and bohemians.

According to Fénéon, Seurat first did the small oil panel (H 211; Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania) whose composition is the same as this drawing.<sup>3</sup> He probably thought the panel would be the appropriate source for the cover, only to discover that the publisher preferred a drawing (the painting is not well suited to a book cover because its nuanced colors would not reproduce well). It remains a mystery why Seurat was not interested in lithography and etching, to which his techniques of drawing would have been admirably suited. The little oil painting for Joze's novel suggests the answer: he conceived of art in terms of color and atmosphere (drawings done for their own sake were always atmospheric), for he was first and foremost a painter, remote from the craft of making prints.

1. Thomson 1985, pp. 212–14. In the Signac Album there are two articles by Joze that mention the Neo-Impressionists, both entitled "Sztuki plastyczne," appearing in *Przegląd-tygasmowy* (Warsaw), May 8, 1887, and either May or June 1888 (incomplete clipping). Georges Lecomte devoted an article to Seurat's cover (Lecomte, "Une couverture de M. Seurat," 1890) in which he emulated Fénéon's style and invoked Henry: "la volutante majesté des lignes topographiques, on les croirait calculées par M. Charles Henry."
2. I juxtaposed the two works in my article documenting Seurat's knowledge of Chéret: Herbert, "Seurat and Jules Chéret," 1958.
3. Fénéon, "Précisions concernant Seurat," 1924. Fénéon said that the painting preceded the drawing, but he does not speculate on the reasons for this. It is authentic, despite Richard Thomson's unaccountable dismissal of it (Thomson 1985, p. 234, no. 101).

