



MAX KLINGER

(Leipzig, 1857 - Großjena, 1920)

Female nude with faun
pen and black ink

signed and dated, lower left: *MK 7. Aug 89*; indistinctly numbered, upper right: [?]xxxxl/

290 x 182 mm, original frame by Simon Cooper, 1989

Provenance:

Barry Humphries (1934-2024), Sydney and London

During the 1870s and 1880s, Max Klinger conceived a philosophy of drawing and developed the foundations of a graphic style which would establish his fame in etching cycles such as *Ein Handschuh*. Klinger's pen and ink drawings of the period, filled with fantastical pictorial ideas, are among the artist's most original creations. His 1891 credo *Malerei und Zeichnung* (Painting and Drawing) has long been admired as an aesthetic declaration of independence for the graphic arts and celebrated the art of drawing as the unrestricted development of artistic freedom and individuality, "the most outstanding characteristic of drawing emerges: the artist's strong subjectivity". In the essay, Klinger also claimed that music, poetry, and the graphic arts were uniquely suited to subjectively probe life's "dark side".

This characteristically virtuosic work from 1889 vividly demonstrates the artist's interest in the "dark side", as well as the erotic and the social issues of moral decay which occupied modern debate. Drawn in Klinger's print-like manner, a faun and a female nude are entwined. The faun was a Greek mythological subject, popular in Symbolist circles and with artists like Franz von Stuck for its musical and pestilent qualities. Most famously, however, the faun featured as the protagonist of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, which was first published in 1876 with illustrations by Édouard Manet and established popular perceptions for the creature. In a dreamlike monologue, the poem describes the sensual experiences of a faun who has just woken from sleep. The faun records his attempts to seduce nymphs and play music, before returning to a wine-induced slumber.

In subject matter and style, this drawing compares closely with another fantastical erotic nude, *Seated Nude Woman Beckoning a Dancing Phallus*, formerly with Kunkel Fine Art, dated to 1882.