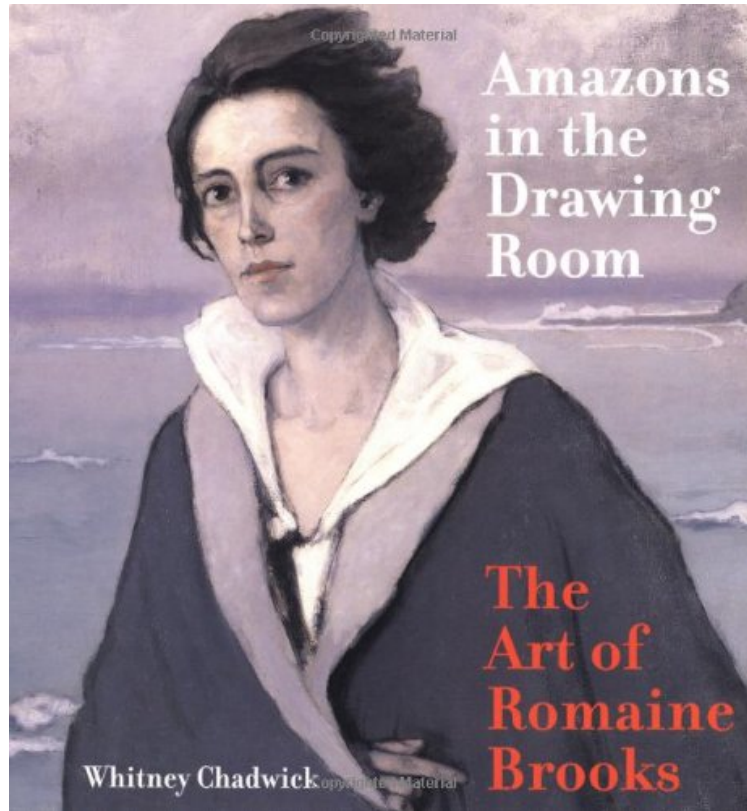


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Amazons in the Drawing Room: The Art of Romaine Brooks

Whitney Chadwick

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Whitney Chadwick : Amazons in the Drawing Room: The Art of Romaine Brooks before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Amazons in the Drawing Room: The Art of Romaine Brooks:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. RomaineBy maryon attwoodMost people don't know that Romaine's paintings are at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. And this book includes her drawings which I had never seen. This book is an excellent complement to the Wild Hearts book because it provides context for all of the paintings. It was wonderful to see the paintings as the focus of an 'art' book and pictures of the paintings large enough to be able to really look at them. Excellent book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy jessica robertsonyes great book!3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A beautiful bookBy Gerda AlbertA beautiful collection of work from an artist that deserves a much larger audience. I wish I could own an original.

Amazons in the Drawing Room presents a comprehensive and definitive analysis of the life and art of Romaine Brooks, reproducing for the first time in color thirty-four of the forty nudes and portraits she painted, as well as thirty-seven automatic pen-and-ink drawings. The first female painter since Artemisia Gentileschi in the seventeenth century to portray an ideal of heroic femininity, Romaine Brooks (1874-1970), like her contemporary Gwen John, shaped an image of the androgynous New Woman for the twentieth century.An American born in Rome, Brooks spent most of

her life in Paris. After a brief but passionate romance with the poet Gabriel D'Annunzio, with whom she maintained a lifelong friendship, she turned to relationships with women and to art to express her emerging self. For many years the companion of Natalie Barney, whom the artist depicted as L'Amazone in one of her most famous portraits, Brooks belonged to the international lesbian community that included Compton and Faith MacKenzie, Rene Vivien, Radclyffe Hall (who immortalized Brooks as the barely fictionalized American painter Venetia Ford in *The Forge*), and Una, Lady Troubridge. The milieu Brooks chose was the privileged, often eccentric demi-monde of wealthy aristocrats and expatriate writers, artists, intellectuals, and performers who gathered in Rome, London, Capri, Paris, and Florence. The social circles she traveled in included Somerset Maugham, Norman Douglas, Charles Freer, Count Robert de Montesquiou, Jean Cocteau, Augustus John, Carl Van Vechten, and Ida Rubenstein, several of whom were subjects for Brooks's portraits. *Amazons in the Drawing Room*, published in conjunction with a major traveling exhibition of Brooks's work--the first since 1971--opening at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in June 2000, provides a fresh context to view Brooks's haunting and compelling art. Whitney Chadwick's overview of Brooks's life and artistic focus and Joe Luchesi's examination of Brooks's portraits and photographs of Russian dancer Ida Rubenstein bring into sharp focus the complex artistic, literary, and political influences that shaped Brooks's sensibility and approach to portraiture.

.com There can be few art historians better placed than Whitney Chadwick (*Women, Art, and Society*) to write the biographical essay that prefaces this catalog of the work of Romaine Brooks, the expatriate American artist more famous for her role in Natalie Barney's sapphic circle in Paris in the 1910s and 1920s than for her striking paintings. Anyone familiar with the birth of modern art will immediately note Brooks's influences, from Whistler to Klimt, Schiele, and Gauguin. What is less obvious is her advancement, as Chadwick argues, of an ideal of heroic femininity: even if it is an ironic ideal, as seen in her most remarkable and possibly best-known painting, the 1924 portrait of Una, Lady Troubridge, the lover of Radclyffe Hall, in morning coat and striped trousers, flanked by her dachshunds. While art history continues to privilege stylistic innovation over content, there is hope for the resuscitation of Brooks as perhaps the first painter to document a lesbian gaze, as in her beautiful profile of the short-haired, androgynous Peter, *A Young English Girl* (1923-4). The book includes an essay by Joe Luchesi on Brooks's portraits of the dancer and mime Ida Rubenstein, one of her lovers. --Regina Marler
About the Author Whitney Chadwick is Professor of Art History at San Francisco State University and author of *Women, Art, and Society* (1990) as well as other books and articles on women in the arts and on surrealism. Joe Luchesi is a visiting instructor of Art History at Carleton College, and curator of the exhibition of Brooks's art organized by the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.