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André Lagrange
*Studies for 'La Fortune Et L'abondance Sortant Du Sillon
Creusé Par Le Laboureur', 1922*

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ANDRÉ LAGRANGE
(Paris 1889-1958 Arcueil)

*STUDIES FOR 'LA FORTUNE ET L'ABONDANCE SORTANT DU SILLON CREUSÉ PAR LE
LABOUREUR', 1922*

Red chalk on paper.

36 x 27 cm (14 1/8 x 10 5/8 in.)

Stamped "André Lagrange" lower right and "Institut de France / Académie des Beaux-Arts" upper left.

Provenance

The artist's studio (the sheet bearing his atelier stamp);
Private collection, France.

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This vibrant sheet is preparatory for André Lagrange's entry in the Prix de Rome de Peinture of 1922. The identification rests on comparison with the photographic record of the *calque* of his competition composition preserved among the Prix de Rome records of the Beaux-Arts de Paris (Cat'zArts), in which the principal figures of the present studies recur (fig. 1). The present whereabouts of Lagrange's definitive canvas for the competition have not been established.

Between 1920 and 1922, the Académie des Beaux-Arts departed from its usual practice and allowed the ten *logistes* a choice among three set subjects. In 1922 these were *La Fortune et l'Abondance sortant du sillon creusé par le laboureur*, *Le Travail* and *Le Bain*. Lagrange, who had entered the École des Beaux-Arts in November 1906 as a pupil of Fernand Cormon, chose the first subject. It was also treated by Pierre Ducos de La Haille, who won the *premier grand prix* and subsequently succeeded Paul Baudoüin as head of the École's fresco-painting atelier in 1929, and by André Gremmel, another pupil of Cormon, who received the *premier second grand prix*. Lagrange had previously competed in 1919, when the prescribed subject was *Jeunesse et Vieillesse*, and again in 1920, when he received a mention for *Une fête champêtre*, one of the three subjects offered that year.

The final competition proceeded according to a carefully regulated sequence. On the evening of the first day, each candidate was required to trace his own *esquisse* onto oiled paper; the resulting *calque* was checked against the original composition, verified by the professor in charge and thereafter served as the fixed point of reference for the final painting, from which the *logiste* was not permitted substantially to depart. The photographic record preserved at the Beaux-Arts de Paris reproduces Lagrange's official *calque* for the competition. The circular *Institut de France / Académie des Beaux-Arts* stamp at the upper left of the present sheet further associates it with the institutional context of the Prix de Rome. The 'André Lagrange' stamp at the lower right is an atelier or estate stamp, consistent with the sheet having remained among the artist's studio material.



Fig. 1. André Lagrange, *La Fortune et l'Abondance sortant du sillon creusé par le laboureur*, 1922, calque for the Prix de Rome painting competition, known through the contemporary photographic record. École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris.

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Read against the subject, the studies gathered around the standing nude answer to the allegory rather than to an academic exercise. The central figure is established through fluent red-chalk contours, while the repeated studies of hands, an arm and a half-length figure test alternative solutions of pose and gesture. More precisely, at the lower right and left one can see the artist working out the form of the basin or basket associated with 'Abundance', while the pose of the central figure, 'Fortune', already appears to have been largely established. There is no visible squaring, compositional framework or colour notation.

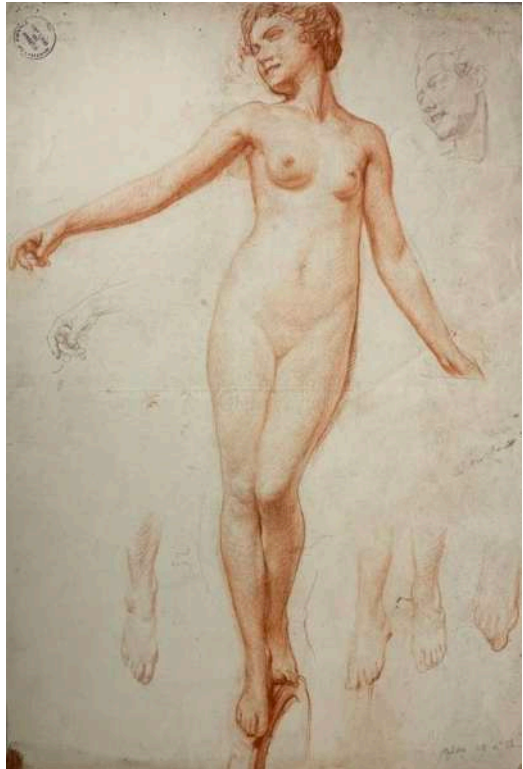


Fig. 2. André Lagrange, *Female nude*, red chalk on paper. Private collection

A particularly close comparison provides further insight into Lagrange's working process. In another, more highly finished drawing in red chalk, the principal standing figure explored on the present sheet reappears with striking similarity (fig. 2): the turn of the head, extended left arm and general disposition of the torso and legs are retained, while the anatomy and modelling are considerably more fully developed. The relationship suggests that the rapidly established figure on the present sheet records an early stage in the evolution of a pose that Lagrange subsequently worked up in greater detail.

Lagrange's growing recognition during the 1920s was marked by a succession of important distinctions: he was awarded the *Prix Rosa Bonheur* in 1924, the *Prix Eugène Thirion* in 1925 and the *Prix Jean-Jacques Henner* in 1927. In 1922 Lagrange was appointed Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur. Later on, he worked on a substantially larger decorative scale. The French Ministry of Culture records his marouflaged oil *Jeunes femmes au bord de l'eau*, measuring 255 × 175 cm, at the mairie of Saint-Maurice, and identifies him as the author of decorations for the casinos of Trouville, Cannes, Deauville and Pau. At Deauville, a triptych by Lagrange formed part of Georges Wybo's 1928 refurbishment of the Café de la Boule. Against this background, the present sheet offers a particularly direct record of the academic figure-drawing practice that underpinned his mature decorative work.

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Lagrange's interest in large-scale figure painting was already established by 1915. His monumental *By the Water*, a riverside composition of bathers measuring 180.7 × 156.2 cm, provides a significant early point of comparison for his construction of compositions through individual figure studies (fig. 3). Renewed appreciation of Lagrange's figural work was reflected recently when *By the Water*, formerly in the Seymour Stein collection, realised \$120,650 at Sotheby's New York in 2025, substantially exceeding its initial estimate.



Fig. 3. André Lagrange, *By the Water*, 1915, oil on canvas, 180.7 × 156.2 cm.
Formerly Collection of Seymour Stein; Sotheby's, New York, 2025.

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