

HAMBURGER KUNSTHALLE

Anita Rée Retrospective

Edited by Karin Schick for the Hamburger Kunsthalle

An Art-Technological View of Anita Rée

"She had an exceptional feeling for colour but saw drawing as the foundation of all painting ..."

During her lifetime, the Hamburger Kunsthalle acquired fifteen works on paper and seven paintings by Anita Rée. Since then, nine of her works on paper, one sketchbook and six paintings have been added to the collection. The current retrospective provided a reason to examine the work of this artist, little known outside Hamburg, from an art-technological perspective and to investigate her working process.

As a woman, Anita Rée was denied the opportunity of attending an art academy. Her artistic training began under the Hamburg painter Arthur Siebelist, with whom she studied from 1904 to 1910 (fig. 1), followed by participation in shortterm studio collectives with both the Siebelist students Franz Nölken and Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, and Hestermann's wife, Alexandra Povorina. Little is known about Rée's contacts with other artists, and hardly any statements about her working method have come down to us, either from the artist herself or those around her.2 It has therefore not been possible to establish whether she attended courses during her stay in Paris in the winter of 1912 to 1913, or to discover which artists she met there.3 The impulses that led Rée to make changes in her materials and style between 1922 and 1925 are also little documented. Although Anita Rée joined artistic associations such as the Hamburg Secession or GEDOK, she remained essentially independent within these groups.4 Few conclusions about her technique and use of artistic materials can therefore be drawn from the known sources.



Fig. 1 Anita Rée in the painting class of Arthur Siebelist in Hittfeld, after 1904

The initial aim of these art-technological investigations was to obtain a fundamental understanding of the materials Anita Rée used and how each of those particular materials was applied. Along with the works in our own collection, it was possible to include a larger number of loaned works from her various artistic periods in the investigation, which involved the analysis of some seventy works on paper and twenty-six paintings. These were documented in detail and systematically compared with one another, which led to questions regarding the overlapping of technique in both artistic media. The works were principally examined with the usual optical methods. In addition to macroscopic and microscopic observations under normal light, examinations followed within ultraviolet and infrared spectral ranges. It was also possible to carry out non-destructive material analyses on a small selection of the works.5

The artistic work on paper

Those works on paper by Anita Rée that have been examined thus reveal a comparatively straightforward choice of artistic working materials and techniques.

With one exception, 6 there is no evidence to date of any printed work. 7 Even photography does not seem to have interested Rée as either a documentary or artistic means of expression. 8 In her work on paper, she concentrated primarily on drawing, which she executed with dry materials such as charcoal, graphite and red chalk, as well as white and coloured chalk (cat. 72, p. 182; cat. 73, p. 178; cat. 98, p. 150). These she blended with a stump or shaded with – among other things – her fingers. 9 As in the case of the *Self-Portrait, Facing Left* (cat. 55, p. 98) and *Portrait of a Lady with Hat*, 10 she occasionally used erasing devices to correct or to lighten areas of the image. Along with a mixture of various black drawing materials (charcoal, carbon pencil or graphite), she also reworked her drawings with watercolours, bodycolour or gouache (cat. 47, p. 87; cat. 48, p. 92; cat. 63, p. 181; cat. 58. p. 81).

Among Rée's early drawings are those contained in a sketch-book she used in 1903 during a stay at a health spa in Berchtesgaden. These small-format sketches in charcoal, red chalk and graphite record some of the spa guests and the surrounding area (fig. 2).¹¹ They show the incipient stages of a drawing talent, which her colleague Franz Nölken described around 1910 or 1911 with the thoroughly approving comment, "draws as well as any guy".¹² Carl Georg Heise – assistant to the Kunsthalle's director, Gustav Pauli, from 1916 to 1920 – wrote in his reminiscences of Anita Rée: "As a draughtswoman, she is superior to everyone else."¹³ The set of eight pencil drawings acquired by Pauli around 1915 and later purchases for the Kunsthalle's collection support such an appraisal.

During the 1920s, Rée's portraits of models, acquaintances, friends and their children were mostly larger than life-size, detailed and condensed (cat. 54, p. 80; cat. 122, p. 199; cat. 126, p. 204). The precise execution of these works illustrates her great confidence in this medium. Rée also repeatedly confronted and examined herself, as the large number of selfportraits on paper and canvas demonstrate. She drew and painted herself in the roles of a woman, an artist and - at times - a mother (fig. 3 and cat. 93, p. 146; cat. 154, p. 106). In the early years of her artistic work, Anita Rée laid out the compositional detail of her watercolours and gouaches in graphite, or more rarely in charcoal (fig. 4). In later work, and particularly in her last year and a half on Sylt, she abandoned this procedure entirely (cat. 159, p. 216; cat. 169, p. 226). When using watercolour and gouache paints, she predominantly employed a dry brush, which lent even these works more of a graphic quality.¹⁴ This was her preferred technique for landscapes (fig. 5), particularly during her stay in Positano and later on Sylt (cat. 75, p. 129; cat. 78, p. 118; cat. 170, p. 214). To the best of our knowledge, Rée only occasionally used oil-based paint on paper.

The analysis of painting and drawing materials on paper

Since there are barely any statements or documents¹⁵ from the artist herself regarding the materials she chose, thirteen works on paper were selected for closer investigation. With regard to the painting and drawing materials Rée used, the analysis revealed the range of pigments commonly employed at the time. 16 Mother and Child (cat. 62, p. 179), for example, executed around 1915 in watercolour and bodycolour, contains zinc oxide, white lead, Prussian blue, 17 cinnabar and charcoal-based black, as well as a red-orange pigment, which is probably rose madder (fig. 6).18 In the watercolour Still Life with Apples (cat. 67, p. 110), dated before 1919, the presence of white lead and zinc oxide (to some extent used simultaneously) can be verified, as can ultramarine, Prussian blue, chrome yellow and cinnabar. The green used was identified with the aid of multi-spectral imaging as a mixture of chrome yellow and ultramarine (figs. 7a and 7b).19

Rée's few known references to materials come from her time in Positano²⁰ – for example in a postcard of July 1924, in



Fig. 2
Page from a sketchbook, 1903,
Hamburger Kunsthalle, study in graphite



Fig. 3
Self-Portrait with a Paintbrush, 1932/33 (cat. 155, p. 107), graphite, stumped in some areas



Fig. 4 Infrared reflectography of *Still Life with Apples*, before 1919 (cat. 67, p. 110). With the IRR, the graphite drawing under the watercolour becomes visible.



Fig. 5

Village under Plum Trees, 1921,
Hamburger Kunsthalle,
watercolour over graphite



Fig. 6 UV fluorescence photograph of *Mother and Child*, c. 1915, (cat. 62, p. 179), watercolour and bodycolour over graphite; fluorescence in areas with zinc oxide (yellow-green) and rose madder (orange-pink)





Figs. 7a, 7b Multispectral imaging of *Still Life with Apples*, before 1919 (cat. 67, p. 110). The areas applied with chrome yellow (7a) and ultramarine (7b) watercolours appear darker in each image.

which she asked the painter Richard Seewald and his wife: "In Munich, can one get silver powder, gold, liquid black and white Indian ink, bistre and long screws?"21 In September 1924, she reported in a letter to her friend Gerta Hertz in Hamburg: "And now, I am in possession of all the wonderful treasures and truly do not know where to begin and where ever to end with boundless gratitude. Block of Idler watercolour paper,²² Ostwald colour box, bronze, washcloths, block of tracing paper (sadly arrived completely bent!), marvellous rubber sponge (always in use), wonderful mirror, toothbrush, pen, black Indian ink, case of watercolours in tubes, bistre, very splendid blancmange powder (for the most part already devoured), 50 white envelopes, two tubes of Syndetikon adhesive are in my enviable possession. Now you, good woman, would have had my thanks long since if everything hadn't been messed up by the letter, part of which I now have to rewrite because an acquaintance I gave it to some time ago to take to Naples managed to forget it."23

Analyses of Rée's works from this period – such as the drawing *Semi-Nude before a Prickly Pear Cactus* (cat. 86, p. 148) – revealed barium sulphate, zinc oxide,²⁴ Prussian blue, yellow and red ochre for the coloured chalks, iron gall ink and wax as

a binding agent or surface coating; and zinc oxide, white lead, white chalk, indigo, Prussian blue, chrome yellow, yellow and red ochre and cinnabar for her collage and gouache *Paola*, *Calabria* (*Woman with Child*, cat. 100, p. 139). The gold-coloured coating of the paper with which the collage elements – earnings, cross and orb – were produced contains brass.

Until 1922, Rée experimented with various artistic styles that demonstrate the influence of Paul Cézanne, Fernand Léger, André Derain and Pablo Picasso (see cat. 46, p. 98), but it was in Positano that she became freer in her approach to materials. She continued to use some of these materials in the following years; others were not employed again until a later date. While in Positano, she also began to use elements of collage, such as bronze and silver-coloured pigments (cat. 103, p. 141; cat. 106, p. 140).²⁵ Bronze was likewise found in several paintings from this period.26 In her works on paper, Rée again made use of gold paint in the early 1930s, in connection with Christian motifs (cat. 143, p. 173; cat. 142, p. 172). She continued her work with elements of collage on paper after her return from Positano. For the most part, she used the technique to create postcards and envelopes, at the same time integrating drawing and text into the collage (cat. 151, p. 219; cat. 140, p. 166).





Fig. 8 Woman from Calabria (recto/verso), 1924/25 (cat. 104, p. 141). The wax-like coating over the gouache and collage elements has leached through to the reverse side.

The use of fixatives, coatings and varnishes

As is the case with Semi-Nude before a Prickly Pear Cactus (cat. 86, p. 148), the Portrait of Bertha in Profile in front of Exotic Plants (cat. 119, p. 150), created later in Hamburg, also features a wax-like coating. While the lines of ink applied to the nude with a metal nib lie over the layer of wax,27 the wax on the Portrait of Bertha appears to have been applied when the rest of the work was complete.28 For the drawing Woman from Calabria (fig. 8), as with the Self-Portrait (cat. 46, p. 98) created around 1913, wax was probably used in liquid form and as a glossy coating. The 1931 Portrait of Lieselotte Pauli,29 a drawing executed in charcoal and black ink or Indian ink, is a further example with a wax coating. Clear evidence for the use of fixatives - such as the visually divergent appearance of the drawing materials, the distribution of particles in bordering sections of the paper or in some cases also a strong yellowing is identifiable in a series of charcoal drawings that were executed on paper with a smooth surface or on tracing paper. As these changes are to be found in both the works acquired at an early date by the Kunsthalle and those with other origins, it can be assumed that a fixative was applied by the artist herself or with her knowledge and permission (cat. 93, p. 146; cat. 126, p. 204; cat. 117, p. 206). The action seems to have been executed in different ways, some only in the area of the lines and some covering the entire surface.³⁰ Although conclusive analytical evidence for the fixatives used was not possible with the devices available, the first results do suggest that they are unlikely to consist of a protein-based substance.³¹

It remains unclear whether the application of varnish to the paper surface – of *Filomena Stupefatta*, for example³² – was undertaken by the artist herself or was ordered by her.

The paper used

At the beginning of the twentieth century, both paper and board once again gained greater significance as picture supports. Whereas in the nineteenth century paper had become progressively more affordable thanks to technological developments such as accelerated manufacturing processes and the discovery and increasing availability of a new raw material (wood pulp), by the early twentieth century it was primarily the changed working processes of avant-garde artists that led to the spread of paper as a support medium.³³ Paper was used not only as a comparatively inexpensive and easily handled support; it was also often consciously employed for its effect: the poor durability of paperboard and paper containing wood pulp was well known.³⁴

For her drawings, as well as her watercolours and gouaches, Anita Rée frequently used thin, partly translucent paper with a machine-finished or calendered surface, with either little or no surface texture. Much of this paper came from commer-

cially available writing pads and sketchbooks and still show the perforations of the torn-off edges on one or more sides.³⁵ The samples of paper examined consisted mostly of wood pulp - some with further additives such as coloured fibres or pigments - and included only a few instances of highquality paper, which mainly date back to the artist's time in Positano. Also in existence are two sheets of paper from this period that contain watermarks.³⁶ Rée also worked on tracing paper and even used it with wet media like watercolour.³⁷ In doing so, she no doubt allowed for the warping and buckling of the paper, but more often avoided this by using a dry application of paint (cat. 60, p. 178). Whether or not she modified the binding agent in the process also remains unclear. It was possible, however, to reliably demonstrate a match in the paper used for the Study for The Visitation and Paola, Calabria (Woman with Child, cat. 100, p. 139); both were executed on a pale grey paper.

In many of her works, Anita Rée appears to have trimmed one or more of the edges of the sheets, which makes it difficult to classify individual works merely according to the dimensions of the paper. Whether Rée cut the sheet before she began the work or cropped the completed image cannot be clearly determined on the basis of the sheets examined alone. A comparison with the way she used canvas would suggest the latter.³⁸

Paper marks

Several of the sheets examined are marked with a blind stamp. Three of these sheets bear the motif of a circle surrounding a leaf and the initials NB (2.5 x 2.5 cm),³⁹ and measuring 3 x 2.8 cm without the circular border (fig. 9).⁴⁰ Other sheets with different motif marks also exist, but it has not yet been possible to view the originals.⁴¹ Because of the alignment of the stamps in relation to the drawings (ninety degrees or inverted), it is currently assumed that the mark is the paper manufacturer's imprint and not that of a collector.⁴²

Changes in coloration

As the covered edges of individual works clearly show, many of Anita Rée's works on paper have sustained considerable damage from exposure to light. There is a noticeable fading of certain pigments, which causes a shift in their colouring, as well as a change in the paper's colour. Based on this interpretation and on a comparison of works on paper with paintings, it is cautiously suggested that works such as *Portrait of Bertha in Profile in front of Exotic Plants* and *Filomena Stupefatta* were originally much more intense in their coloration.



Fig. 9

Filomena Stupefatta (detail), 1926, private collection, Hamburg. Image of the blind stamp. Rée's monogram – R – is placed above the stamp and points in the opposite direction.



Fig. 11 Self-Portrait (detail), before 1915 (cat. 9, p. 99). Rée wiped the paint away and used the still visible ground layer as a means of expression.



Fig. 10 Still Life with Hebbel's Death Mask (detail), before 1915 (cat. 10, p. 91). Charcoal and oil paint on unprimed canvas, the uneven texture of which enlivens the surface. The underdrawing is visible and incorporated into the painting.



Fig. 12 Woman with Cat (Cat Woman), 1922–25 (cat. 23, p. 133). Stretching the already signed painting, Rée reduced the format to concentrate more on the figure (see red line).

The paintings: working methods

Supports

Anita Rée varied the formats of her paintings. It is, however, noteworthy that they are often almost square in shape. She favoured painting on fabrics⁴³ stretched on pinewood frames.⁴⁴ The inscriptions and handwritten numbering, as well as stamps and labels, frequently found on the frames are an indication of the authenticity and history of the paintings. There are striking differences in the quality and texture of the canvases.⁴⁵ The occasionally inferior quality may be explained by the shortage of materials due to the war and Rée's modest circumstances - although the varying quality seems to have been of marginal importance to the artist herself. She was apparently unable to purchase canvas in bulk and fell back on whatever she happened to have in the studio. At times, she used both sides of a canvas. From 1913 to around 1925, Rée integrated the structure and irregularities of the fabric into her paintings, which added to their lively surface character.

Ground

For the Portrait of a Girl (Käthe Robinow?, cat. 11, p. 177) and Still Life with Hebbel's Death Mask (cat. 10, p. 91 and fig. 10), Anita Rée painted directly on the canvas. All the other supports examined were primed with a white or light chalkbased ground.46 For about half the paintings examined, she used industrially pre-primed canvases from an artists' supply shop to make her work easier.⁴⁷ Others she primed herself with a paintbrush, having usually fixed the canvas on stretchers, although she sometimes affixed them to a backing and left them for the subsequent painting process (cat. 30, p. 101; cat. 23, p. 133). Between 1913 and 1921, she applied the ground rather thinly so that the structure of the fabric remained recognisable. She also incorporated the light colouring of the ground by leaving it unpainted or allowing it to show through the thin, loose paint (fig. 11). Rée applied an additional, relatively thin white layer on the industrially primed canvases, as with Agnes I (cat. 3, p. 86) and Chinese Youth (cat. 7, p. 93), which absorbed the oil of the paints. This enabled her to work faster and obtain a relatively matte picture surface. These were years in which Rée did not use varnishes or any glossy, transparent finishing coatings.

Canvas stretching

One can often tell from the stretcher frame, the canvas edges and any nail marks whether, and how often, a painting has already been stretched. The original stretchers survive for nineteen of Rée's paintings examined; thirteen of these have retained the original mounting by the artist. The remaining works were newly affixed during subsequent restorations. One can only speculate as to why Anita Rée repeatedly unmounted and restretched some of the paintings herself. Even though all the canvas sizes are manageable, it is possible that she removed certain paintings from their stretchers for transport, for example when travelling from Tyrol or Italy back to Hamburg. It is therefore worth noting that eight of the Italian paintings examined were restretched by the artist, partly because of changes in format or small painted revisions. In other cases, she restretched canvases that had already been painted, so as to reuse them (cat. 27, p. 147; cat. 33, p. 198; cat. 40, p. 105), or removed them during the working process in order to crop the image (fig. 12).

Underdrawing

Anita Rée approached her work with a clear conception of the image she wished to produce. For the arrangement of a composition, she drafted faint lines in graphite and/or charcoal and thin blue-grey oil paint, which she usually left visible (fig. 10).⁴⁹ Infrared imaging reveals that Rée, as a rule, rarely deviated from her preliminary drawing while painting. She was a draughtswoman confident in her lines (fig. 13). When she undertook small changes, she did not always fully remove or cover them – either because it would have hindered her deliberate work process or because she was not concerned if some corrections remained visible.

Development of the painting technique

The only known statement by Anita Rée on her painting technique occurs in a letter to Richard Hertz dated 31 August 1916.50 In it, she gave a detailed description of her general ideas about painting and her own systematic artistic approach, through which she gradually found her way towards a composition. Unlike the Expressionists, she did not immediately begin with strong contrasts in colour (such as red and green), preferring instead to use a subtle graduation of tonal values, from light to dark, in order to attain the main contrasts in her images. Only at the conclusion of a work did she add accentuating lights, while avoiding pure white. A statement by Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann also confirms that Rée did not proceed spontaneously in her manner of painting but rather with great deliberation: "Anita admired and envied her [Alexandra Povorinal for her impulsive stream of colourful expressiveness and simply for the spontaneity that she herself had relinquished, whereas my wife felt the same admiration for her and was just as envious of the steady single-mindedness with which she obtained the form she had in mind, as well as an almost surgical self-assurance in her masterly control of paint."51

When it came to choosing paints, Anita Rée remained consistent throughout her life, apparently using only oil paint,⁵²

despite the fact that her painting technique and style altered over the course of her artistic career. Between 1904 and 1910, as a student of Arthur Siebelist, Rée's style was still naturalistic. In *Self-Portrait in Hittfeld* (cat. 1, p. 96), she applied the blended oil paints side by side in an impasto style, leaving the structure of the canvas unrecognisable, and already demonstrating that she valued clear contours, rarely blurring the transitions from one colour to another.

After 1912/1913, the Modernist currents from France were decisive for her work. Fellow artists such as Nölken and Ahlers-Hestermann returned from Paris with new ideas, and Rée also spent some time there. In the ten years that followed, she oriented herself towards the lighter style of painting pioneered by Cézanne and Derain. Taken as a whole, her paintings indicate a rapid method of working; for example, a self-portrait dating from before 1915 (cat. 9, p. 99) and the painting Chinese Youth (cat. 7, p. 93) were probably executed in one session. Rée laid out the composition in lines, initially applied thin and then partially thicker paint with a bristle brush or even a palette knife, wiped (fig. 14) or scraped away areas, and drew or scraped structures in the wet paint with the handle of the brush. Sure of her precise drawing, Rée often used the brush handle decisively to draw structures in the fresh paint (fig. 15).

Agnes I (cat. 3, p. 86) provides a distinctive example of this method of working, which until about 1921 displayed a stronger interconnection between drawing and painting (cat. 47, p. 87). The artist apparently first drew the entire composition in graphite and charcoal, along with the numerous lines in the background that provide a tense contrast to the figure's curves. In particular areas, she applied thinned paint, allowing ground and lines to remain visible, or even painted over them with black oil paint. Layer upon layer followed, brushed or even dabbed on with the brush. Now and then, the paint already applied would be wiped or scraped away again. Many of her paintings exhibit such sections. Rée often doubted her work, especially in the early years: "We were at Anita's place and pushed our way into her studio. She had assured us initially that she had nothing to show, that everything had turned out badly and been scraped off again, until my wife forcefully strode over to a cupboard and, in spite of Anita's protests, pulled out the canvases hidden behind it. And splendid things often emerged ..."53 Such traces were already visible in Rée's early work; later, she seems to have deliberately employed the removal of paint as a means of expression. In connection with the light ground and the structure of the canvas, she thus attained a degree of transparency and materiality (figs. 11 and 14). Moreover, because of the predominantly matte, powdery effect of the applied paint, the paintings of these years are reminiscent of watercolours or pastels (cat. 7, p. 93; cat. 10, p. 91).

The stay in Italy

A further technical development took place between 1922 and 1925, during Rée's stay in Italy. The layers of paint became compact, with the ground still visible only in isolated spots, and contours began to play a subordinate role. In the Self-Portrait on Pantelleria (cat. 30, p. 101) and Head of a Woman (Inclined Head, cat. 28, p. 145), the structure of the canvas, although still affecting the picture's surface, recedes further into the background (fig. 15, cat. 25, p. 149). On closer inspection, the seemingly smooth surfaces of Teresina, Couple (Two Roman Heads) and White Nut Trees (cat. 26, p. 151; cat. 27, p. 147; cat. 22, p. 125) reveal Rée's brushwork and the structures she scratched into the paint with the brush handle (fig. 15).⁵⁴ The paintings give the impression of a calm working process. The artist applied herself to details and spent considerably more time elaborating them than she had in previous years. She painted in multiple phases and allowed the applied paint to dry in order later to add further layers.

A peculiarity of the painting technique in her Italian works is the frequent use of metal powder (bronze) bound with a transparent binding agent. In *Head of a Woman (Inclined Head)* and *Self-Portrait on Pantelleria*, the bronze is merely a subtle sheen on the surface of the painting (fig. 16). Rée tended to apply bronze decoratively, as she does here, or to use the precious-looking material to enhance the significance of the representation. In *Roman Woman before a Golden Background* (cat. 29, p. 144), however, she applied the bronze extensively across the background, in the iconographic tradition.⁵⁵ She continued using this technique in subsequent years after she had left Italy.

Back in Hamburg

After her return to Hamburg at the end of 1925, Rée no longer added as much thinner to the radiant oil paints she used. Initially, the application of paint remained compact across the whole surface. While the monochromatic backgrounds of Profile against Red (Bertha?, cat. 39, p. 142) and Portrait of Dorothy Tillmann (cat. 33, p. 198) exhibit pronounced brushwork, the flesh tones, especially in Portrait of Dorothy Tillmann and Portrait of Hildegard Heise (cat. 32, p. 209), are as smooth as porcelain - Rée having applied the paint with soft brushes. In her Portrait of Otto Pauly (cat. 35, p. 192), the background and flesh tones are painted relatively thinly, whereas the paint for the tie has been laid on thickly to convey its materiality, and shaped with the brush handle. A highly glossy varnish, applied by Rée herself, is found for the first time on the Tillmann, Heise and Pauly portraits - each of which was painted in the late 1920s. It is worth nothing that Rée did not varnish the surfaces evenly; she applied the varnish separately to individual sections of the image with "painterly" brush strokes (fig. 17).



Fig. 13
Self-Portrait (detail), 1930 (cat. 40, p. 105).
The infrared reflectography shows the lines of underdrawing.
The hand was oriented differently in the underdrawing and still features a thumb.



Fig. 14

Chinese Youth (detail), c.1913 (cat. 7, p. 93).

The lines of the underdrawing are distinctly visible over the light ground layer. With a thin application of paint, partly wiped away, Rée generated materiality and spatial depth.



Fig. 15
White Nut Trees (detail), 1922–25 (cat. 22, p. 125).
Rée often used the brush handle to structure paint application.



Fig. 16

Head of a Woman (Inclined Head, detail), 1922–25
(cat. 28, p. 145). A subtle glimmer of bronze powder, mixed with a transparent binding medium, has been applied over the painting.

Many of the methods, mentioned above, that are typical of Rée's work between about 1912 and 1925 are to be found in the large-format *Self-Portrait* (cat. 40, p. 105) from her final creative period. On the reused canvas, ⁵⁶ she applied the compositional lines with black carbon pencil and thinned dark blue paint. The predominantly thin application of paint was partly wiped with a cloth to allow the white ground, applied with the distinct strokes of a bristle brush, to show through. With a reduced but decisive application of paint over a light ground, she achieved the impression of vitality and spatial depth. This work also marks Rée's return to an open style and matte, unvarnished painting.

Dates and signatures

Anita Rée dated only one of the paintings examined. In *Agnes I*, she wrote "1913" in blue pencil below the signature, top left. Signatures, on the other hand, appear to have played an essential role for her, and she changed hers several times during her life. Before her trip to Tyrol, she signed "Rée" in italics. For this, she chose a colour from the palette of that particular painting and, having finished it, added her unobtrusive signature in thin paint to one of the corners. The signatures of



Fig. 17
UV fluorescence photograph of *Portrait of Dorothy Tillmann*, 1927 (cat. 33, p. 198). The painterly characteristic of the yellow fluorescing varnish is visible under ultraviolet radiation.

two paintings created in Tyrol in 1921 are notable for the tiny lettering of "Rée". Seven of the eight paintings created in Italy which underwent examination here were signed with her initials: AR – a signature she continued to use after her return to Hamburg. And whereas four early (pre-1915) self-portraits are unsigned, she ended her last self-portrait, in 1930, with a bold, intensely coloured and capitalised "RÉE".

On several of the pictures she painted in Italy, the signatures are partially smeared or covered by paint and thus difficult to read. In these cases, Rée had evidently already finished the painting but was carrying out minor revisions to the work in connection with its restretching. Why the artist wiped out, painted over her signatures or occasionally signed a work twice – as in *Ravine at Pians* (cat. 20, p. 115 and fig. 18) – remains unexplained. Perhaps she simply thought it unimportant to add a more visible signature to a reworked painting. Or maybe she felt that the signatures on some of her pictures were too dominant, and downsized them or changed them accordingly. In other cases, she obviously signed the work anew after making selective painted revisions.

Picture frames

"Please allow me kindly to remind you of my handcrafted picture frames", wrote Alfred Lochte in 1926 to Gustav Pauli at the Hamburger Kunsthalle.⁵⁷ And to this, he added: "... encouraged by the painter Miss Anita Rée, who is effusively partial to my work." On the frames of Rée's Self-Portrait on Pantelleria and Portrait of Dorothy Tillmann are stamps reading "Art and Frame Dealer Alfred Lochte, Hamburg". Lochte not only supplied Rée with frames, but also exhibited her pictures and stored them temporarily for her. It can therefore be assumed that Rée thoroughly approved of his frames.

Three further paintings – Agnes I, Couple (Two Roman Heads) and White Nut Trees (cat. 3, p. 86; cat. 27, p. 147, cat. 22, p. 125) – were framed shortly after completion, and these frames can therefore also be regarded as original.

From the original frames available, one can deduce that Anita Rée preferred massive, plain frames, occasionally with coves. The frames boast no ornamentation or shiny, burnished gilding; they are matte bronze, subsequently glazed with dark paint. Rather than distract the viewer's gaze from the paintings, these frames guided it towards the picture. Pauli, however, chose the frames himself for the five paintings he acquired directly from the artist between 1911 and 1921. In a letter to Rée dated 3 January 1916, he requested: "Send us only the picture without a frame." With their laurel garland and shiny gilding, his frames did indeed divert the viewer's gaze and evidently contradicted Rée's notion: "Hopefully, instead of turning yellow, the gold of the frames will develop an old gold tone", as she wrote to Pauli in 1919, clearly wishing that the effect of the gold would be reduced by a patina. 60





Fig. 18
Rée had already signed the painting *Teresina* (cat. 26, p. 151) before a second working session.
She first signed the painting *Ravine at Pians* (cat. 20, p. 115) with a brush and light grey paint.
She signed it again, but with dark blue paint, presumably after restretching and some final corrections.

Summary and outlook

If one considers Anita Rée's oeuvre as encompassing a variety of materials, parallels become apparent between her handling of paper and canvas. These are also to be found in Otto Thode's characterisation of her working method cited at the beginning of this text.

Rée drew very securely in every medium. She seldom corrected her sketches and undertook few changes in their elaboration. On paper as well as on canvas, she used charcoal for underdrawings (presumably in pencil form) or blue paint for contour lines. Black and dark-blue pencils and paint were used systematically and forcefully, leaving clear traces of her working process on the support medium and in the layers of paint. Rée thus used her drawing talent to the same extent on paper as she did when composing an outline on canvas.

In many instances, both the paper and primed canvas remained visible within the drawing or painting. At the same time, the character of the support did not seem to have any great significance for Rée, and she employed canvases of inferior quality or paper taken from ordinary writing pads, which she did not attempt to conceal. A further correlation is found in the way in which Rée dealt with the formats of paper sheets or canvases. She restretched a number of canvases several times, and in doing so sometimes also changed the format of her work. In some cases, she trimmed at least one of the edges of the sheet. She seldom changed the type of support medium in the course of her artistic production, preferring to continue using what she was already familiar with. She worked more experimentally in her application of paint, readily combining or mixing various drawing and painting materials and applying different

surface coatings. The assurance with which she used paints, as described by Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, is also reflected in her works on paper.

Rée often dealt with a subject several times, on paper as well as on canvas, and the support does not always indicate whether the work is a sketch or a finished picture. The boundaries are fluid, as is demonstrated particularly well in her versions of *Agnes, Chinese Man* and *Semi-Nude before a Prickly Pear Cactus* (figs. 19 and 20), as well as in some of her self-portraits.

The detailed examination of Anita Rée's work has shown that she experimented with materials and techniques, as did many other artists of her time. Like them, she used watercolours or oil-based pigments, relatively dry or thin, later reworked her drawings and paintings in places or applied a surface coat to them, changed formats or included elements of collage. One of the peculiarities of her work is her use of metallic pigments.

This is the first time that art-technological research of this scope has been conducted on the work of an artist from Hamburg. In the course of the investigation, it became clear that very few sources exist or have thus far been made accessible with regard to Anita Rée's artistic technique. It would therefore be desirable to perform further analyses of her materials and working methods and to compare them with those of other artists in Hamburg from the first decades of the twentieth century – and in so doing, to be able to provide a better perspective of artistic creation of art in the Hanseatic city.



Fig. 19
Semi-Nude before a Prickly Pear Cactus, 1922–25
(cat. 86, p. 148). Detailed drawing executed in coloured chalk, ink/Indian ink and wax.

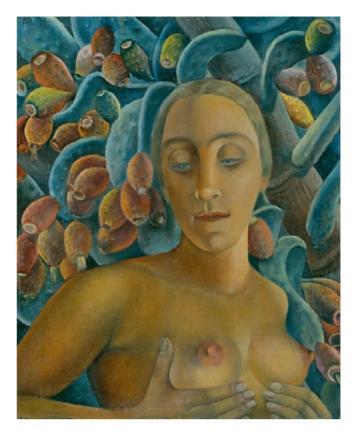


Fig. 20 Semi-Nude Before a Prickly Pear Cactus, 1922–25 (cat. 25, p. 149)

For their collaboration in this investigation, we would like to thank Martina Schrei as well as Rhea Blok, Olivier Bonnerot, Silvia Castro, Oliver Hahn, Larina Held, Wolfram Neumann, Gerlinde Römer, Ivan Shevchuk and Simon Steger.

Examination methods and devices

Imaging investigations

| IRR (Infrared Reflectography)* | OSIRIS-A1 |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| | |
| | N 2606-06 IR-Vidikon Hamamatsu, Filter: Heliopan RG 1000 |
| | infrared filter 1000 nm, 20013 |
| Multi-Spectral Digitisation** | Multi-spectral camera: MegaVision E7 Monochrome Sensor 50MP Schneider- |
| | Kreuznach shutter NK0-0118 MegaVision ApoChromat 120 mm f/4.5 lens |
| | MegaVision filter wheel with 6 filters: UVB - Schott GG400, UV Block, |
| | UVP – Hoya U360, UV Pass, B47 – Wratten, Blue, G58 – Wratten, Green, |
| | O22 – Wratten, Orange, R25 – Wratten, Red, MegaVision Eureka (TM) LED |
| | main light panels with 19 discrete wavelengths |
| | (365 nm – 1050 nm) @45deg, raking light panels with 450 nm and 940 nm |
| | LED illumination @11deg, transmissive light panel with 505 nm, 635 nm, |
| | 735 nm, 940 nm LED Illumination |
| | Operating software: MegaVision Photoshoot V |
| | Image analysis program: ENVI5.3, |
| | ICA Algorithm – Independent Component Analysis |
| Ultraviolet Fluorescence Photography | Hand lamp: Dr. Höhnle UVA HAND 250 and Reskolux UV 365, |
| | Fa. Analytik Jena |
| General photographic images | Canon EOS 550D |
| | Nikon D90 |

^{*} The images were made by the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Stuttgart.

Instrument investigations*

| XRF (X-ray fluorescence) | Tracer III-SD (measuring spot 1 cm diameter), company Bruker GmbH, |
|----------------------------------|--|
| | rhodium tube (40 kV; 15 μA) ARTAX (with X-ray optics, measuring spot 70 μm |
| | diameter), company Bruker GmbH; molybdenum X-ray tube (50 kV; 600 µA) |
| FTIR (Fourier transform infrared | FTIR in diffuse reflection: ExoScan, company Agilent GmbH; |
| spectroscopy) | spectral range: 4000-650 cm-1 (2.5-15.4 µm), spectral resolution: 4 cm-1 |
| Raman spectroscopy | BWTec: excitation of 785 nm (30 mW, 100 sec), spectral range: |
| | 100–3600 cm-1, spectral resolution: 4 cm-1 |
| UV/VIS (ultraviolet-visible | UV/VIS spectrophotometer: GretagMacbeth; spectral range: 380-730 nm, |
| spectrophotometry) | spectral resolution: 10 nm |

^{*} The measurements were carried out by the University of Hamburg's Collaborative Research Centre SFB 950

^{**} The measurements were carried out by the University of Hamburg's Collaborative Research Centre SFB 950

[&]quot;Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe", sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

[&]quot;Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe", sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

- 1 Otto Thode on Anita Rée, quoted in Maike Bruhns, *Anita Ree:* Leben und Werk einer Hamburger Malerin 1885–1933, Hamburg 1986, p. 55.
- 2 Several pieces of information are provided in Bruhns 1986 (see note 1).
- 3 See Karin Schick's contribution in this publication, pp. 26-33.
- 4 See Gabriele Himmelmann's contribution in this publication, pp. 41–51.
- 5 XRF, FTIR, Raman, UV/VIS. All the methods and devices used in the examination are listed at the end of this essay.
- 6 Only the monotype *Copy after Giotto* is securely documented. See Bruhns 1986 (see note 1), Z 7.
- 7 An introduction to printing techniques was given, for example, by Gerda Koppel at the "Private Women's School", where Nölken and Ahlers-Hestermann also taught. The students included artists known to Rée, such as Gretchen Wohlwill, Alma del Banco and Lore Feldberg-Eber; Bruhns 1986 (see note 1), p. 18. Such training would have been available to Rée if she had been interested.
- 8 See Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, who used photography artistically and in a documentary manner; see Karin Schick, "Farbe in Schwarz-Weiß: Kompositionen bei Kirchner", in Aufbruch in die Farbe - Ernst Ludwig Kirchner und das Neue Malen am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts, (Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung 27 (2013) no. 1), pp. 55-65, Stuttgart, 2013, p. 55. See Gabriele Münter, who used the photographic medium artistically during her trip to the United States; see Daniel Oggenfuss, "Kamera- und Verfahrenstechnik der Amerika-Photographien Gabriele Münters", in Gabriele Münter – Die Reise nach Amerika – Photographien 1898–1900 (exhib. cat. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau, Munich), Munich 2006, pp. 191-92; Ulrich Pohlmann, "Die Fragilität des Augenblicks - Gabriele Münters Photographien der USA-Reise im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen (Moment-) Photographie", in ibid., pp. 203ff.
- 9 See Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, "Erinnerungen an Anita Rée", in Carl Georg Heise and Hildegard Heise (eds.), *Anita Rée. Ein Gedenkbuch von ihren Freunden*, Hamburg 1968, p. 15.
- 10 Graphite, with some stumping, 26.9 x 19.9 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. 1915-982; Bruhns 1986 (see note 1), Z 12.
- 11 Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. 1969-43; Bruhns 1986 (see note 1), Z 1. To date, no further surviving sketchbooks are known. One can only assume that such sketchbooks existed and were destroyed by the executors of her estate, perhaps together with other works.
- 12 See Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, *Pause vor dem dritten Akt*, Hamburg 1949, p. 232.
- 13 Carl Georg Heise, "Erinnerungen an Anita Rée", in Heise 1968 (see note 9), p. 7.
- 14 The manner of painting was not unusual at this time; it was practised by other artists, for example by Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele. Rée and Kokoschka exhibited alongside other artists in Geneva in 1920; see Max Goth, "Le premier Salon international d'art modern", in *Arts et Lettres Bulletin de critique indépendante* 1 (Geneva 1920), p. 3.

- 15 The handwritten notation "drawn with silverpoint" is present on three of the drawings available for examination and, as of this date, is also documented on eleven further drawings.
- 16 See Faith Zieske, "Paul Cézanne's Watercolors: His Choice of Pigments and Papers", in Harriet K. Stratis and Britt Salvesen (eds.), The Broad Spectrum: Studies in the Materials, Techniques, and Conservation of Color on Paper, London 2002, pp. 89–100; Danièle Gros and Christoph Herm, "Die Ölfarbenstifte des J.-F. Raffaëlli", in Zeitschrift für Kunsttechnologie und Konservierung 18, no. 1 (2004), pp. 5–28; Wilhelm Ostwald, Malerbriefe. Beiträge zur Theorie und Praxis der Malerei, new edition, Paderborn 2012, pp. 18ff.
- 17 Prussian blue was also labelled Berlin blue or Parisian blue.
- 18 The same pigment was verified in the 1921 painting *Lionarda*, the Farmer's Wife (cat. 21, p. 113).
- 19 Since no result could be gathered through the use of XRF, multispectral imaging was additionally used to look for a numerical similarity of spectral reflectance. In fig. 7a, all areas applied with chrome yellow, and with ultramarine in fig. 7b, are represented as dark. The decreasing contrast in the area of the apples is explained by the mixing or overlapping of the blue pigments with yellow.
- 20 See Anna Heinze's contribution in this publication, pp. 34-43.
- 21 Postcard from Anita Rée to Richard Seewald and his wife, postmarked 18 July 1924, Estate of Richard Seewald, Deutsches Kunstarchiv, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.
- 22 She may possibly have meant, "Jdler".
- 23 Letter from Anita Rée to Gerta Hertz, September 1924, Archiv Hamburger Kunst, Hamburg.
- 24 It could be lithopone.
- 25 Such as brass and aluminium.
- 26 See p. 66 in this essay.
- 27 The ink dripped off the surface or remained concentrated on it in certain areas.
- 28 That the layer of wax does not fully cover certain areas of paint is microscopically visible. The white heightening in the hair is superimposed on the wax layer.
- 29 Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. 1995-51; not included in Bruhns 1986 (see note 1).
- 30 Regarding the range of fixatives available at the time, see Joseph Meder, *Die Handzeichnung: Ihre Technik und Entwicklung*, Vienna 1919, pp. 191ff; Ostwald 2012 (see note 16), pp. 21ff.; Max Doerner, *Malmaterial und seine Verwendung im Bilde*, 11th edition, Stuttgart 1960, p. 225.
- 31 However, casein or even skimmed milk could also have been used.
- 32 1926, gouache on paper, wood backing, 49 x 63 cm, private collection; Bruhns 1986 (see note 1), G 106.
- 33 See Christine Vogt, "Das Papierbild im frühen 20. Jahrhundert", in Linien – Flächen – Farben: Das Papierbild im frühen 20. Jahrhundert, (inventory catalogue XXV of the Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum Aachen), Aachen 1999, pp. 5–7.
- 34 Albrecht Pohlmann, "Wilhelm Ostwald und die Situation der Maltechnik in Deutschland um 1900", in Wilhelm Ostwald Maltechnische Schriften 1904–1914, (Mitteilungen der Wilhelm Ostwald Gesellschaft zu Großbothen e.V. 10, special issue 22), Großbothen 2005, p. 22.

- 35 See Rée's instructions in her letter to Gerta Hertz from September 1924, Archiv Hamburger Kunst, Hamburg.
- 36 See *Città Morta, City on a Steep Slope* (Bruhns 1986 [see note 1], Z 172), where two not entirely legible inscriptions and a symbol can be found: an anchor in a circle. In *Visitation, Study*, ink and India ink, watercolour, 45.7 x 28 cm, private collection (not included in Bruhns 1986 [see note 1]), a watermark can be discerned, but has so far not been conclusively identified.
- 37 Rée does not appear to have used tracing paper as an intermediate material or for copying.
- 38 See pp. 64-65 in this essay.
- 39 See Portrait of Lieselotte Pauli (Bruhns 1986 [see note 1], Z 201).
- 40 See *Filomena Stupefatta* (Bruhns 1986 [see note 1], G 106), on which the mark was probably painted over; *Portrait of a Young Girl* (location: Hamburger Kunsthalle).
- 41 Among these is a mark of the Schoellershammer paper manufacturer (cat. 57, p. 82).
- 42 Email and verbal communication with Rhea Blok, Fondation Custodia, Paris, on 9 May 2017. The Fondation Custodia maintains a database of collector's stamps and marks.
- 43 These will be referred to below as "canvas".
- 44 Two paintings on board (*Profile against Red* (*Bertha?*), before 1929, cat. 39, p. 142, and *Self-Portrait*, before 1915, cat. 9, p. 99), as well as a painting on panel (*Self-Portrait*, c. 1911, cat. 2, p. 97) are not considered in this essay.
- 45 All the fabrics display the so-called plain or "linen" weave, the simplest weave with an alternating criss-cross pattern of warp and weft threads.
- 46 Percentages of oil and pigment are possible in some primers. A scientific material analysis was not conducted in addition to the optical findings.
- 47 Industrially pre-primed canvas, which could be cut from a roll to the desired measurements, was already available in the mid-19th century from suppliers of art materials.
- 48 Parallel running cracks in the paint layer of many paintings suggest that the canvases were rolled.
- 49 According to optical findings, Anita Rée worked with oil paints. With the aid of UV/VIS, the pigment Prussian blue was detected in the outline drawing of three of the paintings examined.
- 50 Letter from Anita Rée to Richard Hertz, 31 August 1916 (transcript by Carmen Hertz), Archiv Hamburger Kunst, Hamburg.
- 51 Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, "Erinnerungen an Anita Rée", in Heise 1968 (see note 9), p. 17.
- 52 To what extent the artist modified her paints for example by adding pigment binders, drying agents and varnishes, paint thinners, resins or wax was not examined.
- 53 Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann, "Erinnerungen an Anita Rée", in Heise 1968 (see note 9), p. 17.
- 54 See also Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Simeon und Hanna im Tempel*, 1627, Hamburger Kunsthalle, inv. no. HK-88. That Rée had concerned herself with Rembrandt in particular is shown by one of her self-portraits, in the background of which she included a small painting by the Dutch Baroque master. See Bruhns 1986 (see note 1), p. 17.

- 55 Rée was certainly inspired in her use of bronze by the gold backgrounds of Christian art in Italy. She may also have adopted the work of Jugendstil artists such as Gustav Klimt or Franz von Stuck as examples.
- 56 The reverse of the canvas shows the sketch for a female portrait.
- 57 HAHK, PO 191/267.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 HAHK, PO 142/417.
- 60 HAHK, PO 168/336, regarding cat. 2, p. 97.