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Pubic Hair Untamed: Viewership, Body Hair, and Primitivism in Modigliani's Female Nudes

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Pubic Hair Untamed looks at the series of female nudes painted by early twentieth-century avant garde artist Amedeo Modigliani, focusing primarily on *Female Nude* from 1916. Modigliani's nudes are unique in that they depict women with pubic (and armpit) hair, which is a detail omitted almost entirely from women's bodies throughout the canon of art history. Within the canon, pubic hair has been acceptable on the bodies of nude men but otherwise only seen on women's bodies in erotic or pornographic art, or on the bodies of women of color. Therefore, in the context of Modigliani's nudes, pubic hair on a woman's body complicates notions of the male gaze and gender representation but also racial identity. Modigliani's studies of "primitivist" art offer some clues as to why he chose to include this more realistic depiction of a woman's body, as his studies are evident in the technical and stylistic choices of his nude paintings, but raises questions about the eroticization of race and gender representation. Thompson's research ultimately questions the power dynamics inherent between the viewer, the subject and the artist based on their varying identities and how each constructs the way in which women and their bodies are represented in art.