

Anton von Werner, *The Proclamation of the German Empire on January 18, 1871* (no date)

Abstract

This wood engraving of *The Proclamation of the German Empire* differs significantly from the “palace version” of 1877. Among other changes, Anton von Werner fundamentally altered the composition and perspective and portrayed the entire scene in a more dramatic and historically significant light. This later rendering pays even greater attention to the assembled officers’ uniforms, depicts their swords in the more triumphant raised position, and shows the principal figures in greater proximity. The most significant change, perhaps, can be seen in Bismarck’s attire. He now appears in the white dress coat of the Cuirassiers—as opposed to the drab blue uniform that he actually wore on the day of the proclamation. (Apparently, he had neglected to bring formal attire to France.) In the earlier palace version, Werner held fast to sartorial truth and depicted Bismarck in blue. But in this and subsequent versions of the scene, including the famous *Zeughaus* (1882) and *Friedrichsruh* (1885) versions, Werner portrayed Bismarck in his white gala uniform. It was, as Werner knew, what he *should* have worn according to protocol.

Source



Source: Anton von Werner, *Die Kaiserproklamation in Versailles am 18. Januar 1871* [*The Proclamation of the German Empire on January 18, 1871*]. Wood engraving (no date) after a drawing by Anton von Werner. bpk-Bildagentur, image number 30012997. For rights inquiries, please contact Art Resource at requests@artres.com (North America) or bpk-Bildagentur at kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de (for all other countries).

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