

Hans von Marées, *Oarsmen* (1873)

Abstract

Hans von Marées (1837–1887), like Arnold Böcklin and all of their fellow “German-Romans,” spent much of his career in Italy. He went back to Germany in 1871–73 and experienced the feverish “founding period” that immediately followed unification. But he then returned to Italy, where he spent the rest of his life. There, he painted what has been described as a “timeless earthy paradise,” which was “‘poor’ in form but rich in color.” (Claude Keisch, in Françoise Forster-Hahn et al., *Spirit of an Age: Nineteenth-Century Paintings from the Nationalgalerie, Berlin*. London: National Gallery Company, 2001, p. 152). The work seen here is a preparatory oil painting for Marées’s first and only commission: frescoes for a marine observation station in Naples founded by the German zoologist Anton Dohrn. The style of *Oarsmen* differs from that of a Böcklin canvas, but it has a kinship with the work of Max Liebermann and other *plein-air* painters: the subject, for example, is treated in a straightforward manner, without any classical allusions. Wind, light, and color demand our attention as they animate the massive bodies in this enormous work (the preliminary “sketches” were actually equal in size to the completed frescos).

Source



Source: Hans von Marées, *Die Ruderer* [*Oarsmen*]. Painting (1873).

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