

LE CLAIRE

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HANS VON MARÉES

1837 Elberfeld – 1887 Rome

Young Bacchus

Red chalk on laid paper; circa 1883.

In the lower margin with the sketch of a female head. In the upper right numbered in pencil 6/67; in the lower right numbered with pencil and violet copying pencil 9/67.

57.5 x 22.5-24.5 cm

PROVENANCE: Artur Volkmann (1851-1941), Rome – *Die Sammlung eines süddeutschen Kunstfreundes, Gemälde und Zeichnungen deutscher und französischer Meister des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, auction sale, Paul Cassirer, Berlin, 3-4 March 1925, lot 220, plate 94 – The handwritten entry in the auction catalogue records the buyer's name as 'Brandt'¹ – Professor Leopold Reidemeister (1900-87; appointed Director General of Cologne municipal museums in 1954; appointed Director general of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin in 1957) – Thence by descent in the family, Switzerland.

LITERATURE: Julius Meier-Graefe, *Hans von Marées. Sein Leben und sein Werk*, II, Munich and Leipzig 1909, p. 484, no. 748.

This drawing by Hans von Marées belongs to a group of nude studies for a marble statue of Bacchus by the sculptor Artur Volkmann [Fig. 1]. As Meier-Graefe noted in 1909, Marées was 'actively involved in the genesis of the figure'. He wrote: 'Volkmann created a terracotta version before he went to Germany in autumn 1883 and began work on a marble version after his return to Rome in 1885. The figure was completed after Marées' death. The marble is in the collection of Breslau Museum'² [Fig. 1]. Marées' drawings both pre-date and post-date Volkmann's visit to Germany.'³

In 1876, Volkmann was awarded a scholarship enabling him to study in Rome. Konrad Fiedler, a leading art historian and critic, furnished him with a letter recommending him to his friend Hans von Marées. Their first meeting was in December 1876, as Meier-Graefe records. He commented: 'It appears that he [Marées] exerted a profound influence on the hitherto guideless individual from the very start.'⁴ In a letter of June 1877 to Fiedler Marées remarked: 'He has given himself into my hands by force.'⁵ Meier-Graefe went on to explain what Volkmann, the sculptor, learnt from the painter and draughtsman Marées: 'At first, these were very general artistic concepts common to both painting and sculpture, and whose benefit consisted in a liberating influence, in preparing the ground for a natural development. However, Marées, seeing how Volkmann was struggling, gradually came to

¹ Cited after the entry in the handwritten auction protocol; the auctioneer's catalogue is held in the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich. See <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cassirer_helbing1925_03_03ax/0127>.

² See *Katalog der Gemälde und Skulpturen, Schlesisches Museum der bildenden Künste Breslau*, Breslau 1926, no. 66. While working on a Marées exhibition at Munich's Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in 1987-88 curator Gisela Scheffler found no evidence of the sculpture in any of the Breslau museum collections. (See G. Scheffler, *Hans von Marées, Zeichnungen*, Munich 1987, p. 55, no. 84, note 1).

³ Meier-Graefe, op. cit., II, p. 484 f. Meier-Graefe lists 23 drawings by Marées related to Volkmann's figure of *Young Bacchus* (nos. 678, 678 A, 745-64, 767 A).

⁴ Id., I, p. 341.

⁵ Karl von Pidoll, *Aus der Werkstatt eines Künstlers. Erinnerungen an den Maler Hans von Marées aus den Jahren 1880-81 und 1884-85*, Luxembourg 1890, p. 60.

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*take a closer interest in the creative process. He began to intensify his own study of sculpture and was able to express the results in the form of immediate corrections.*⁶

The present sheet exemplifies the extent of Marées' influence. In an independent drawing of his own he formulated his personal idea of the figure of Bacchus. Volkmann then made a copy of Marées' drawing on the left side of the sheet and applied the finishing touches. At some point between 1909 (when the Meier-Graefe catalogue raisonné was published) and 1925 (the year of the Paul Cassirer auction) the sheet – originally 43 centimetres wide – was cut horizontally, separating the two versions. The probable intention was to underline the uniqueness of Marées' drawing as a virtuoso, independent work of art – it is undeniably one of the finest studies in the Bacchus series.

Volkmann's two-year stay in Germany in 1883-5 created a hiatus in Marées' occupation with the figure of Bacchus. Both artists returned to the subject in 1885 and Volkmann began work on a version in marble. The present sheet is one of Marées' early studies and dates from around 1883. It depicts a youthful, rather well-built male nude in frontal view standing in classical contrapposto. In his hands the youth holds lightly sketched grapes and a wine cup. Light from the upper left models the figure, creating powerful contrasts. Assertive hatched strokes darken some areas of the background. A few brief lines serve to mark the boundary between the wall and the floor surface, thus situating the figure in space.

In Marées' later studies, after 1885, the figure of Bacchus appears more elongated and masculine. The sculptor Louis Tuaillon (1862-1919), who lived in Rome from 1885 to 1903 and was a friend of Marées, was quick to notice this change. Meier-Graefe, who relied on the details supplied by Tuaillon for his evaluation of the drawings, noted: *'According to Tuaillon, as long as Marées worked on it, the sculpture was much fuller and rounder than how the completed version would turn out.'*⁷

Drawings by Marées of such remarkable quality and in such excellent condition are extremely rare.

⁶ Meier-Graefe, op. cit., I, p. 342.

⁷ Id., II, p. 484, for comparisons see the reproductions on p. 485 and p.487.



Fig. 1: Artur Josef Wilhelm Volkmann (1851 Leipzig - Geislingen 1941)
Young Bacchus, marble with a reddish tone, 1893, height 164 cm.
Formerly Schlesisches Museum der bildenden Künste, Breslau.
Photo c.1895-1920. Bildarchiv Foto Marburg <<https://www.bildindex.de/document/obj20194943>>