

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Richard MULLER (Tschirnitz 1874 - Dresden 1954)

Study of the Hermann Monument

Black chalk, with stumping.

Signed, dated and inscribed Rich. Müller / Hermanns Denkmal Teutoburger Wald 26.8.17 at the bottom.

173 x 147 mm. (6 4/5 x 5 3/4 in.)

Drawn on 26th of August 1917, this drawing depicts the Hermannsdenkmal, or Hermann Monument, in the Teutoburg Forest in the German province of North Rhine-Westphalia. Seen here from its base, the colossal statue is dedicated to Arminius (later translated into German as Hermann), the war chief of the Cherusci tribe, who led an alliance of Germanic clans that defeated three Roman legions in battle in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD.

A prince of the Cherusci people, as a child Arminius was sent as a hostage to Rome, where he was raised. He joined the Roman army and eventually became a Roman citizen. Sent to Magna Germania to aid the Roman general Publius Quinctilius Varus in his subjugation of the Germanic peoples, Arminius secretly formed an alliance of the Cherusci with five other Germanic tribes. He used his knowledge of Roman military tactics to lead Varus's forces into an ambush, resulting in the complete annihilation of the XVII, XVIII and XIX legions, with the loss of between 15,000 and 20,000 Roman soldiers. Generally regarded by historians as Rome's greatest military defeat, and one of the most decisive military engagements of all time, Arminius's victory in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest precipitated the Roman empire's eventual strategic withdrawal from Germania and prevented its expansion east of the Rhine. By the time of the unification of Germany in 1871, Arminius had come to be regarded as a symbol of German nationalism and freedom.

The Hermannsdenkmal was built between 1838 and 1875 near the city of Detmold, on what was thought, at the time, to have been the site of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. Designed and constructed by the architect and sculptor Ernst von Bandel (1800-1876), the monument rises to a height of nearly 54 metres, including the pedestal and base, with the figure of Arminius itself measuring some 25 metres to the tip of his sword. The monument remains a major tourist attraction today, receiving well over half a million visitors a year.

Exhibitions

New York, Shepherd Gallery, Winter Exhibition 1991: European Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture, 19th and early 20th century, 1991, no.57.

Artist description:

A superbly gifted draughtsman and printmaker, Richard Müller was born in the Bohemian town of Tschirnitz (today Cernovice in the Czech Republic). The son of a weaver, he manifested considerable artistic talent as a child, and by fourteen had enrolled in the school of the Royal Saxon porcelain factory at Meissen. Two years later, at the age of sixteen, he entered the Akademie in Dresden as one of the youngest students ever admitted to the school. Müller studied in Dresden between 1890 and 1893, and his earliest drawings – landscapes and studies of animals, for the most part – already reflect the lifelong stylistic inspiration of his older contemporary, Adolph Menzel. Another profound influence on the young artist was the printmaker Max Klinger, whose work he encountered in Leipzig, and who encouraged him to take up etching. In 1897 Müller won the Rome prize at the Prussian Academy of Arts, and the following year the first portfolio of his graphic work was published. For over thirty years, beginning in 1903, he served as a professor at the Dresden Akademie, where his students included George Grosz and Otto Dix. In 1921 an exhibition of Müller's work was held in Dresden, and the same year the first monograph dedicated to his oeuvre was published. After 1924, he largely abandoned printmaking and concentrated on drawings and paintings whose subjects were often fantastical, sometimes quite macabre and occasionally erotic. Müller was appointed Director of the Akademie in Dresden in 1933, but was forced to resign two years later, under the Nazi regime, for 'subversive tendencies' in his art. After the war, he was refused membership in the East German artist's union, and spent the rest of his life struggling for commissions and recognition. The artist's son Adrian Lukas Müller was active as an art dealer, scholar and publisher, and sold some of his father's work.