



11. Hans von Marées, *Woman between Two Men*, 1874/1875.
Lead and white watercolour on brown paper.



19. *Orestes and Pylades before Thoas and Iphigenia*, about 65 AC. Pompeian fresco.

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Art as Autobiography: Hans von Marées and his Autobiographical Interpretation of the Antiques of Naples¹

For Gottfried Boehm on his 60th birthday

Naples is not only the single Italian city where an important work by Marées may be seen today – the frescoes in the Stazione Zoologica. There is also the fact that his comparatively short stays here and the encounter with antique art in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale have had a more important influence on Marées' pictorial universe, more than the proximity to any works of art in Florence or Rome during the many years of his stay in those cities.

During several journeys Hans von Marées had interested himself in certain works in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples – so intensely indeed that a large part of his œuvre in the years after 1874 consists of metamorphoses of prominent works in this collection. Marées' renewal of antique sculpture and painting from Pompeii and Herculaneum has been, as regards the frescoes, thoroughly analyzed by Annemarie Kuhn-Wengenmayr in this volume and by Rudolf Kuhn (1987). There has been hardly any attempt, however, to make clear that Marées developed his new interpretations of antique models under autobiographical auspices.

The so-called *Orpheus Relief* (Fig. 42), the best known copy of which is preserved at Naples, is of great importance for Marées' pictorial imagination (Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth 1988). Marées varied its motif in a series of drawings and paintings, reflecting the failure of his relationship with his friend and former lover Irene Koppel and with his friend and pupil Adolf

¹ See Blum (2005). Based on my PhD dissertation (Blum 1999) this book investigates the thematic elaboration of autobiographical subjects and their formal stylization in Marées' drawings and paintings since his early works – subjects which can be recognized more clearly with the help of (often unpublished) source material from the papers of Irene von Hildebrand, Adolf von Hildebrand, Konrad Fiedler and Johann Eichner (all in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich). The following text can only cursorily sketch the biographical constellations worked through in Marées' pictures, as well as their formal stylizations and metamorphoses.

Hildebrand (Fig. XVIII, 11 and 43). After Irene Koppel divorced her husband and married Hildebrand, Marées broke off his friendship with both of them – with those two people who (apart from his Maecenas Konrad Fiedler) probably were closest to him at the time. The trauma of this rupture was fundamental for most of his pictorial inventions since 1874.²

In several drawings Marées varies the formula of the antique relief with three figures. All are pictorial expressions for the failure of his own triangle with Irene Koppel and Adolf Hildebrand (MG 231, MG 232, MG 317, MG 324, MG 350). The painting *Woman between Two Men* (Fig. XXXI), which reflects his interest in the *Orpheus Relief*, he sent to both Irene Koppel and Adolf Hildebrand as an offer of reconciliation. This picture had been prepared by a well-known sketch (Fig. 11).

Two famous classical statues, referred to several times by Marées, are also exhibited in Naples: the so-called *Antinous* (Fig. 44), an alleged representation of the emperor Hadrian's favourite, and the well-known Roman copy of Polycleitus' *Doryphoros*. In several representations of Hildebrand the artist goes back to the Antinous figure, probably in allusion to the homoerotic content of the antique sculpture; this can be seen, for instance, in *The Stages of Life* (Fig. XV; Domm 1989; Bessenich 1967) and in his sketches for *Three Men* (Fig. 45, 46). The *Doryphoros* is a model for the female figures of the *Hesperides* triptych (Fig. XIX; Lenz 1987a; Blum 1996). Other models for these figures can be found in the so-called *Danzatrici*, a group of antique bronzes from Herculaneum which are now in Naples as well (Blum 1996). The *Reclining Hermes* of the Archaeological

² For autobiographical content in Marées' art see especially the groundbreaking essay by Leopold D. Ettlinger (1972) and the fundamental contributions by Christian Lenz (1987b) in the catalogue of his Munich exhibition (Lenz 1987a); also Domm (1989), Beyer (1997), Blum (1997; 2005). The most important printed sources for Marées' life are still the reminiscences of his pupils (Pidoll 1930; Volkmann 1912) and Meier-Graefe (1909-1910). The editions of Marées' letters by Domm (1987a) and Meier-Graefe (1909-1910), Vol. III, are both incomplete; a historical-critical edition is still a desideratum just as in the case of Fiedler's unpublished diaries and Irene Koppel's highly interesting memoirs. To anybody proposing to study Marées' drawings, the use of the photographic archive of his drawings built up by Christian Lenz for the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen is strongly recommended since a *Catalogue raisonné* of the drawings is lacking. For a catalogue of the drawings see Meier-Graefe (1909-1910, vol. II) and Wilhelms (1953). For the drawings in Munich see Scheffler (1987). For the theoretical foundations of Marées' art see, as of central importance, Boehm (1987; 1991). – Reference numbers to works from the Meier-Graefe catalogue (1909-1910, vol. II) are preceded by MG.

Museum is present as well in several of Marées' multifigural drawings, especially within the series of so-called *Idylls* (MG 221-260).

Marées' reaction to the Pompeian frescoes has already been thoroughly discussed. Let me just mention what was borrowed from Pompeian painting present in the work of Marées which can be seen within an autobiographical context. A fresco showing Chiron and Achilles,³ on display in the Archaeological Museum, has probably influenced the *Chiron and Achilles* drawings which, according to Meier-Graefe, are autobiographical and deal with Marées' relationship with his pupils in Rome (MG 785-800). The fresco *Orestes and Pylades before Thoas and Iphigenia* (Fig. 19) has been varied by Marées in several pictures, with a more or less explicitly autobiographical content, i.e. in the *Courtship* triptych (Fig. XVII), the autobiographical roots of which become evident in the sketch MG 885, where one man strides ahead resolutely, while another younger man (meaning Hildebrand) turns undecidedly towards a woman. This fresco had already inspired the drawing *Nestor in the Greek Camp* (MG 313) where Marées, for the first time, anticipates his role as the teacher of a group of pupils – a role he was to play after breaking up his friendship with Adolf Hildebrand and Irene Koppel and after moving to Rome.

In all these works Marées tested the actual reality of antique sculpture and painting by experimenting its potential to express certain relationships within his own life. At the same time he looked – following classicist tradition – for a foundation to his own art in a supposed fundamental language of painting valid through all the epochs, a language he saw formulated in Graeco-Roman painting. I want to demonstrate this twofold reason for Marées' going back to antique models by the example of the painting *Three Men* (Fig. XVIII) in the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal. This picture, as well, refers back to the antique fresco with Orestes and Pylades. It was painted in 1874/1875, shortly before Marées' move from Florence to Rome and, probably, also shortly before the *Nestor* drawing mentioned above.

To give this analysis of *Three Men* in its situational context let me say in advance that this painting can, like almost all of Marées' pictures, be read as an expression of autobiographical motifs. Like most of the works I have mentioned so far it shows a creative working-through of his friendship with Hildebrand and of the break-up with this friend and with Irene Koppel.

In turning back to formulae Marées found in antique art, *Three Men* –

³ A good illustration of the fresco can be found in Varone and Lessing (1995, 149).

just as others of his pictures – illustrates autobiographical themes as well as generalizing them. Marées only rarely goes back to the mythological subjects of his models. He is more interested in the body language and the formal expressiveness of his chosen exemplar. Through these qualities as he found them in figural compositions in antique art, compositions which he saw as connected with constellations of his own biography, the pattern of relations within his own life is expressed. For him this reaching back to certain antique groups of figures which he read in a ‘pre-iconographical’ fashion serves to depict individual, highly personal subjects. The mythological themes of classical art with their literary connotations, though, must have seemed to Marées rather useless in illustrating the highly personal content he wanted to give his own painting.

Apart from that, his use of antique models is a means of generalization, the turning of explicitly autobiographical sketches into monumental paintings. The meaning of these should, according to Marées’ intentions, be obvious to the viewer’s contemplation without any prior iconographical information. In particular the *Hesperides* (Fig. XIX) pictures, where the artist further develops the world of the *Orangegrove* (Fig. V, VI) in the *Stazione Zoologica*, are, according to the artist, intelligible to everybody (‘allen verständlich’⁴) and of general significance.⁵ Finally the use of antique models serves – paradoxically – to encrypt those autobiographical facts too risqué and personal for public exhibition.

In *Three Men* these attempts towards illustration, generalization and encryption cross and combine. On the one hand Marées left the painting behind in Florence⁶ after the break-up with Hildebrand, as a personal

⁴ Marées to Fiedler, letter, 3 July 1878 (Meier-Graefe [1909-1910]), III, 72).

⁵ For the artist’s claim to ‘general’ intelligibility and significance of his works see Blum (2005, 183-188).

⁶ There Meier-Graefe found it in great disrepair, as Hildebrand doesn’t seem to have taken good care of the painting. Meier-Graefe writes in a passage which in its objective tone is much more interesting than his pages of eulogy celebrating Marées as a spiritual hero: ‘The picture, left behind by Marées in San Francesco, was at the time when Hildebrand gave it to Mr. J.E. Sattler (the father of the present owner) for restoration in a very bad state. Large parts were covered by paints poured over it and by varnish’ (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, II, 244). The ‘paints poured over it and ... varnish’ may well have been Hildebrand’s work, in whose atelier even in 1896/1898 the first version of the middle panel of the *Hesperides* ‘was planed down for the wood to be used for new pictures’ (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, II, 292). According to Meier-Graefe the ‘photograph [of this panel] ... has been destroyed’ as well. That Hildebrand acted negligently or destructively towards some of these paintings while he took better care of others with a more general

message to the friend, on the other hand it is an important step towards a 'renewal of antique painting' (Kuhn 1987), especially through a new element within Marées' work, the reduction of the subject matter to a group of monumental nudes, a move which prepares the scenic constellation as well as the formal composition of the famous central panel of the *Hesperides* triptych.

The small-sized painting makes use of the antithetic opposition (which the sketches concentrate on; Fig. 45, 46) of an undecided young man crossing his hands behind his back and a 'staff-bearer'. Between these nude figures a third man is now placed who is accentuated by the varied reds of his short dress, some of them shining brightly.

The figure to the left, the man carrying a staff,⁷ represents the painter himself. This shows in the likeness of the face which can be seen in some of the sketches, too.⁸ The resigned, even somewhat bitter expression of the face is in contrast to the self-assured, almost cocky posture: his right hand is pushed into his hip, he holds in the stretched out left hand a staff (or perhaps a lance cut off by the upper edge of the picture; see MG 309; 313; 462), and both his feet are firmly planted on the ground. An interval marked by the wide stretching gesture of his left arm separates him from the two younger men standing close together on the right. The staff-bearer

content leads one to the explanation that he did indeed recognize the messages concerning himself and his wife in those pictures. His destructiveness is all the more remarkable since notwithstanding their personal differences Hildebrand always had been explicit in calling Marées his one and only artistic teacher and had referred to his art in many of his own works. For these connections between works by Marées and Hildebrand see the excellent monograph on Hildebrand by Esche-Braunfels (1993). It is well known that in all the texts by Hildebrand and Fiedler concerning Marées' art the authors only discuss 'problems of form', neglecting, although they knew better, subjective implications.

⁷ It is not clear whether the man on the left carries a staff or – as e. g. in the sketch MG 505 – a lance (cut off by the edge). A lance instead of a staff is carried by the figure of a young man (Hildebrand?) in a compositional sketch for a painting of three figures, a sketch in the middle of the sheet MG 509 kept in Munich (and counted by Meier-Graefe among the studies for *Three Men*) which shows various such group compositions. At the left an older man and a woman are turning towards each other. In the painting *Five Men in a Landscape* (MG 331, GL 138; Hamburg, private collection) – which I only know from insufficient illustrations – a young man carries a staff as one would carry a lance. Meier-Graefe has associated the staffs of the two right-hand figures in *Three Men* with lances, in a piece of distressing jargon: '... like young warriors [sic!] the powerful figures are standing here. The red of the dress worn by the stout fellow in the middle shines like a banner on the field of battle [sic!]' (Meier-Graefe [1909-1910], II, 300).

⁸ This has already been recognized by Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth (1988, 132).

is, in opposition to these figures, characterized by his dominant position which takes up a lot of space within the picture.⁹

The figure on the right, the much younger man with his hands crossed behind his back, shows a contrasting body language. Opposing the self-assured, spread-out posture of the staff-bearer we see a more self-conscious figure, retreating into itself. The opposing characters of the two figures are stressed by the fact that the one on the left covers more than half of the whole picture's breadth, while the narrow figure on the right is cut into by the picture's edge.

Relative to these two nudes on the sides, the middle figure is placed ambiguously; its body language relates to both of them equally. Its feet are pointing to the left and to the right. It directs an intense glance towards the young man on the right, standing very close to him. On the other hand, the upper part of the body is oriented towards the staff-bearer. The left, arm, too, points in his direction. Just like the figure on the left the middle one also holds a staff and has both feet planted on the ground. All in all, the middle figure is placed in a complex, self-contradictory relationship with the two figures on the sides, turning towards and away from them simultaneously. The figure, emphasized by its red dress, shows without any doubt the facial traits of Adolf Hildebrand. This is demonstrated by a comparison with the portrait of Marées' friend done a few years before which is to be seen in Wuppertal as well (MG 129, GL 80).¹⁰

Thus, *Three Men* must be seen as a 'Freundschaftsbild' ('friendship picture') with a complex message.¹¹ At its centre stands Hildebrand. Maybe in allusion to a well-known myth ('Herkules at the crossroads')

⁹ The edges of the picture have not been trimmed. Dr Antje BIRTHÄLMER of the Von der Heydt-Museum and the museum's restoration expert, Mr Joachim IGLHAUT, have been kind enough to take it out of its frame: On all four sides remnants of the priming and traces of paint can be seen around the edge of the painting.

¹⁰ The consistency seems to me obvious, in spite of the differing hair colour. Especially striking are the similarity of the shape of the head, the high brow, the characteristic hairline as well as the shapes of the nose and mouth (MG 130; GL 181). SCHMOLL gen. EISENWERTH (1998) has for the first time called attention to the autobiographical dimension of the painting. He leaves the identity of the middle figure open, hints, though, that it might be FIEDLER, while he sees a representation of HILDEBRAND in the figure on the right.

¹¹ See BLUM 2005, 212-228. For 'friendship pictures' ('Freundschaftsbilder') by Marées – especially the early *Double Portrait of Marées and Lenbach* (Fig. XIV) – see KRÜCKMANN (1987), who does not mention *Three Men*. For 'friendship pictures' in romantic painting in general see the monograph by LANKHEIT (1952), who has coined the term 'Freundschaftsbild'.

the young artist is shown at the moment of choice. The central figure which bears Hildebrand's traits is obviously uncertain whether it should turn to the left or to the right neighbouring figure. The metaphor of this constellation is obvious: Hildebrand is standing between two figures which show pointedly different postures and thus represent contrasting attitudes towards life.¹² The two figures at the sides can now be analyzed within the context of Marées' 'private iconography'.

The one on the left varies little from the decided and assertive posture of its counterpart in the sketches – the face showing even more clearly Marées' own physiognomy. The painter also uses a motif employed in two self-portraits from the same time,¹³ a motif probably derived from poets' portraits of the Italian Renaissance: the branches of a tree are shown behind the staff-bearer's head and seem to crown him with laurels. Not only this self-aggrandizement as *pictor laureatus*, but the motif of the staff-bearer itself, taken over from *Roman Landscape I* (Fig. 47), go to show that Marées has given us in the left figure of *Three Men* his coded, full-size self-portrait as an artist.

To realize the deeper dimensions of the painting's autobiographical message, it now becomes necessary to briefly explore the meaning of Marées' various self-portraits as 'staff-bearer' within the context of his private iconography. It is a characteristic of Marées that he translates certain verbal metaphors that can be found in his letters in an astonishingly direct and literal fashion into pictorial inventions. This can be seen in the case of the commonplace German phrase for 'to stick to something', 'to keep on

¹² There are remarkable conceptual similarities to be seen in an oil painting called *The Choice of Hercules* by the classicist painter Eberhard Wächter (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, fig. in Einem, 1978, pl. 47). Here we have the same composition with three figures derived from antique reliefs, the same illustration of an inner conflict within the middle figure by the relationships established through body language and formal connections with two lateral figures. There are also subtle affinities of form, as well as of content with Annibale Carracci's *Ercole al bivio* in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples.

¹³ *Self-Portrait with Yellow Hat* (Fig. XL; GL 124; MG 286; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie) and *Self-Portrait with Hat in Hand* (GL 126; MG 287; Kunsthaus, Zurich). Regarding the Berlin self-portrait Lenz writes (1987a, 240), 'The evening light which has left the landscape lying in dusky darkness can be said to illumine the portrait's subject – the hands and the face form a living triad, and the golden-hued hat appears like a crown. That such a "crowning" has its meaning is shown by the laurel visible behind the head as a distinctive adornment honouring the painter.' The head of the Zurich self-portrait is, according to Lenz, similar to the left figure in *Three Men*, 'adorned with leaves'.

faithfully doing something', *bei der Stange bleiben*, literally: 'to stick to, to stay with the rod'. Marées uses this locution in letters, where he emphasizes the 'tenacity' with which he sticks to his artistic ideals and demands a comparable devotion from Hildebrand as well.¹⁴ This locution he translates into its pictorial equivalent by painting the staff-bearer.

For the first time this tenacious 'sticking to it' is embodied visually by the central figure of *Roman Landscape I* of 1868, an encrypted self-portrait,¹⁵ which turns away from the neighbouring woman and which by its ostentatious holding on to the staff shows Marées sticking to his lonesome artistic endeavour of *bei der Stange bleiben*. The decided posture of this figure contrasts with the idle, indecisive attitude of the young man in the foreground to the right, who bears Hildebrand's traits. He is the object of the middle figure's glance and he seems to be addressed by the imperious gesture of the middle figure presenting its staff.

Around 1870, during the time shared in Berlin with Hildebrand, the motif of the staff appears in several works of both the teacher and the pupil. Marées paints a *Youth With a Staff*¹⁶ – a figure which cannot simply be explained as a semantically indifferent representation of a male nude with a model's staff. The painting retouched around the face by another hand,¹⁷ probably was explicitly intended to be a representation of Hildebrand.

¹⁴ 'Your last letter has given me great pleasure since I can see that you have decided to stick to it (*daß Du bei der Stange bleibst*), don't let anybody confuse you' (to Hildebrand, no date, Dresden, June 1872; Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 61). Similarly he writes to his brother Georg in October 1879: 'The chief thing is and will always be that I myself stick to it (*daß ich nur immer selber bei der Stange bleibe*) and keep trying, without regard for praise or criticism, to set an example - instead of talking about the example of others.' On July 18th, 1871 he writes to Fiedler: 'I shall reach [the goal of my work], but I must not give up sticking to it (*darf nicht von der Stange lassen*) and I have to safeguard my terrain step by step' (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 49). It is significant that the metaphor of the rod is immediately followed by a military one ('safeguard my terrain' ['Terrain sichern']).

¹⁵ Marées refers by this figure to the well-known self-portrait by Raphael in the Uffizi. See the autobiographical interpretation of *Roman Landscape I* in Blum (2005, Chapter II).

¹⁶ Not in Meier-Graefe; GL 98. Oil on cardboard on wood, 64,5 x 49 cm, Hamburg, private collection. Sigrid Esche-Braunfels (1993, 33) has pointed out that Hildebrand refers to this work by Marées – with whom he shared an atelier at the time – in drawings which he made during the studies for his lost sculpture *Youth Leaning on a Shepherd's Staff* (exhibited 1870 in Berlin).

¹⁷ According to Gerlach-Laxner (1980, 111) the painting shows retouches 'for which the expression of the head, somewhat strange for Marées, and the general impression left by the picture could have been slightly changed'. Perhaps the traits of Hildebrand have been painted over.

rand holding a staff (the staff obviously being within the context of Marées' cryptical, private iconography of the early years a symbol of artistic dignity), even if he is only stepping ahead rather hesitatingly. The motif of the staff is taken over into Marées' studies for *Three Men* – it appears there as part of various self-representations bordering on exact likenesses.

In later pictures Marées transforms the staff into semantically more obvious objects: a banner or a lance. Leopold Ettlinger was able to interpret the so-called *The Man with the Standard* (Fig. 48) as a self-representation by Marées, using a passage from one of his letters which has, again, been translated pictorially in an astonishingly literal fashion. The passage which has, as often, a displeasingly militaristic tenor, runs as follows: 'I shall remain faithful to my life's program, and if I should, as people call it, perish by it, I'll do so holding the flag in the crook of my arm.'¹⁸

Just as in the case of *Roman Landscape I* and *The Man with the Standard* we can interpret the circumstance that the left figure in *Three Men* holds the staff with a firm grip as the pictorial equivalent of the epistolary phrases quoted where Marées talks about his artistic perseverance in terms of 'nicht von der Stange lassen' or 'bei der Stange bleiben'.

In *Three Men* Marées represents himself as a mature man who has 'seized' his vocation and holds on to his ideals 'with a firm grasp'. Again, his steady gaze directed out of the picture is to be seen as the pictorial translation of his vow 'to keep his eyes fixed firmly on his goal under all circumstances'.¹⁹ All in all this stable, decided, unshakable attitude of Marées expresses – especially in contrast with the other two male figures in the picture – tenacity.²⁰ And tenacity is, in Marées' martial rhetoric

¹⁸ To Konrad Fiedler, December 23rd, 1877 (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 169). See Ettlinger (1972). The metaphor of a 'battle', which is often encountered in the letters of Fiedler and Hildebrand as well, is frequently used by Marées to describe his life and his work. He writes to Fiedler already on June 14th, 1870: 'Above all I am engaged in a continuous battle for life or death, and I want to fight it to the end, I must and I probably can.' (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 34)

¹⁹ Letter to Artur Volkmann of December 7th, 1881 (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 223). Domm (1989, 45) points to similar phrases in the letters (see Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 130, 169, 187, 223, 281, 297). See the following quote (from a letter to Melanie Tauber, September 19th, 1873): 'Whoever wants to achieve something must *the devil* not ask what *people* say, he must have his goal before his eyes unalterably.... You have to be more interested in your cause than in people's opinion.' (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 83; Marées' emphasis)

²⁰ For the interpretation of the staff-bearer it is of importance that Marées uses the motif of the staff – the 'rod', that is, as in *bei der Stange bleiben* – in the context of

which shows his Prussian upbringing, 'the manliest of all manly virtues'.²¹

The question, which autobiographical meaning the right-hand figure in *Three Men* might have, is difficult to answer. As the 'softest' figure in the picture, it could hide a coded representation of Irene Koppel, as there are sketches (Fig. 45) which show besides Marées and Hildebrand a third standing figure, the future Mrs Hildebrand. This thesis is supported by a drawing (MG 321; Fig. 49) showing Marées, Hildebrand and Irene Koppel as well as possibly her first husband Franz Koppel and their little son Alfred. In this drawing the girlfriend is shown in a similar posture as the right-hand figure in *Three Men*, with the knees and upper thighs pressed closely together. A metamorphosis of the autobiographical constellation of two men and one woman into three figures of the same sex is, at any rate, known from the process of sketches leading to the painting *Three Youths* in Berlin (MG 358 and preliminary drawing MG 357).

It might be argued, against the identification of the right-hand nude of *Three Men* as a coded embodiment of Irene Koppel, that this figure can also be traced back to the shy, undecided figure of Hildebrand in the preliminary drawings. The right-hand figure repeats the attitude with the hands crossed behind the back which we saw there (Fig. 45, 46). It is remarkable that in the finished painting (in contrast to the drawings) the face of Marées' friend and pupil is seen not on the right-hand nude but on the middle figure. Still the fact that the right-hand figure repeats Hildebrand's attitude in the drawings suggests that it also might represent the young sculptor – almost as the *alter ego* of the middle figure.²² This hypothesis is strengthened by the circumstance that the right-hand figure expresses through its body language indecisiveness and shyness, traits of personality which Marées seems to have seen as defining characteristics of his younger

pronouncing on the importance of tenacity (see footnote 14). Tenacity and fidelity towards the aims one has embraced were, to Marées, decisive virtues of the artist fighting against his times and for his ideals – that artist as which he was trying to style himself, that artist he wanted to educate Hildebrand to become. 'I believe it would be better, more rightful, to say: Act and live so as to be true to your principles, even if your *person* should perish. In this, and in no other way, all those works of man have been created which hold our life, our world together even after the death of their creators' (letter to Melanie Tauber of June 1877, Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 297, Marées' emphasis; see Domm 1989, 30).

²¹ To Hildebrand, November 21st, 1868 (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 22).

²² Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth (1988, 314) sees the right-hand figure as a representation of Hildebrand, the identity of the middle figure is left open, but he hints, as I have mentioned, that it might be Fiedler.

friend and which he had already embodied in the young man in the foreground of *Roman Landscape I* (Fig. 47). Whether the figure in the middle, then, shows Hildebrand concentrating on the contemplation of his 'other self' or whether the picture alludes to his love for Irene Koppel cannot be decided with any certainty. The painting contains ambiguities which can hardly be summarized verbally.

As the Hildebrand figure at the picture's centre is on the one hand fascinatedly contemplating the right-hand figure, on the other is grasping the lance or the staff presented – with a far more decisive gesture – by his teacher, we see a dilemma which is meant to confront the young sculptor. There is a conflict between, on the one hand, his shyness and inwardness or, as it might be, his absorption by the relationship with Irene Koppel – and on the other hand his own artistic vocation exemplified paradigmatically in the decided attitude of the figure on the left, representing Marées. The configuration of the three persons contains a narrative element. Hildebrand seems still to glance at the young man to the right, while he has already grasped the staff like the older man to the left, possibly being about to follow his teacher.²³ Thus, the picture may be read as the hopeful evocation of a development in Hildebrand desired by Marées, a development which in his eyes would have necessitated a separation from Irene Koppel. That such a reading is possible is demonstrated by the metamorphosis shown by the motif of successive development – from hesitating youth to mature adult – in the three women of the *Hesperides* (Fig. XIX) and in the central pictures of both versions of *The Judgment of Paris*.

The painting possesses multiple autobiographical meanings. To begin with it repeats an antithetical motif already used in *Roman Landscape I* to characterize Hildebrand. Again the young artist is shown torn between the adolescent fascination of a love affair and, on the other hand, an artistic vocation which has discovered its own sublimity. The latter Marées, not without a certain arrogance, embodied in the figure on the left of *Three Men* which represents the painter himself. Here, I cannot explain in detail how this conflict is articulated in the formal composition of the painting as well, and in a highly complex manner (see Blum 2005, 225-229). It is done, to put it briefly, by having the middle figure relate to both the lateral

²³ According to the lucid (if just general) interpretation of Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth (1988, 314) the man on the left holds 'the staff as if he wanted to pass it on to the young man at the right. It is a symbol of his mastery which he passes on to his disciple if the latter is ready to accept his teaching'.

figures at the same time. However, this doesn't lead to a harmonically balanced overall composition, which could be simultaneously viewed, because the relationships of the middle figure with the right-hand and the left-hand one are competing. Second, it is possible that the picture represents in a coded fashion Hildebrand in his conflict between Irene Koppel and Marées. Third, the picture shows a development from adolescent to adult which Marées suggests to his friend and pupil.

In *Three Men* the competing relationships of the man at the picture's centre with the figures on the left and on the right are illustrated by a set of formal correspondences, some of them expressed in body language. This arrangement shows an intense study of the Attic relief *Orpheus, Eurydice, and Hermes* (see Schmoll gen. Eisenwerth 1988, 311 sq.). This relief (Fig. 42) also shows a central figure (Eurydice) with conflicting emotions between two men. Marées ignores the mythological theme of his model, but he relates to its pre-iconographical level of meaning. This, in Marées' opinion, is immediately understandable through the body language and composition of the group of figures, and it is actualized by him to express something of his own life. In contrast to *Three Men*, the Greek relief balances the conflicting interests of the persons it shows within a formally balanced, harmonious overall composition.

Moreover, Marées refers in the constellation of figures in this 'Freundschaftsbild', as I have already mentioned, to elements from the Pompeian fresco *Orestes and Pylades before Thoas and Iphigenia* (Fig. 19) as well as from a closely related painting of the same theme from the Casa di Pinario Cereale (Andreae 1973, fig. 59). These antique frescoes both show to the left a pair of friends which also is clearly marked by the contrast between passivity and activity. The contrast between the proud attitude of Pylades and Orestes' resignation prefigures the opposition expressed in the body language of the lateral figures of *Three Men*.²⁴ Specifically the

²⁴ It is, moreover, quite possible that the group of figures on the Fresco inspired the constellation of all three men in Marées' painting. For it shows to the left of Orestes and Pylades another man, a bearded 'soldier dressed like a Persian', who 'guards' the friends 'with two lances' (Curtius 1972, 245, emphasis mine). Referring to *The Courtship* (Fig. XVII), which also uses the pair from the Pompeian fresco discussed above, Rudolf Kuhn (1987, 85-86) writes: 'The renewal of antique monumental painting chiefly used themes and figures from heroes' tales, not from the myths of the gods. And he used the figures and groups of heroes, when they arose in his memory while he tried out possibilities of composition, chiefly as figures and groups depicting general human situations: man and woman, friendship, courtship etc. He repeated the figures of classical heroes, changing them to figures of modern existence with modern emotions. By this he took away their names and their history. Orestes and Pylades, heroes from the family history of Agamemnon and

couple from the Casa di Pinario Cereale shows almost identical attitudes (especially the positions of the legs) as the two right-hand figures in Marées' painting. This painting owes, even if there are scenic differences, a debt to those Pompeian pictures where the inner relationship between the two friends Pylades and Orestes is not expressed through glances or actions but through multiple correspondences of their attitudes and contours. These are echoed in *Three Men*.²⁵ The image of the captives is changed in the right-hand figure of Marées' painting to a picture of an individual's captivity within himself.

The *Three Men* are of great importance for the further development of the *Hesperides* pictures because of the novel way the expressive values of body language and formal structure interact in monumental nudes (which finds a parallel in *Woman between Two Men*, Fig. XXXI, painted at about the same time). In both pictures Marées goes back to antique sculptures and frescoes. Though not out of an antiquarian, positivist interest. His pictures actualize antique art by attempting a representation of his own life by means of classical imagery. At the same time Marées 'classicizes' his own painting, the thematic origins of which were highly private and accidental, by assimilating it to antique art. By this he hopes, as his letters show, to 'generalize' his art and to give it a universal validity.

That Marées met the crisis of traditional history painting by putting his faith in the body's elementary expressiveness, this is owed less to his reception of classicist art (e.g. Jacob Asmus Carstens [1754-1798]) and art theory than to a direct study of antique works. In the tradition of Weimar classicism and the art theory of classicism (Blum 2005, 189-206) the pain-

Iphigenia and their protecting goddess Artemis became [in *The Courtship*] nameless young men [...] But we must ask whether Marées understood the heroes as general types of psychic situations, tied to their ancient tales only by a historicist imagination – whether he thought that quite apart from the variability of classical tradition they were freely available to modern consciousness?' – For Marées' possible discussion of the frontispiece copper engraving of an 1787 edition of Goethe's writings (Fig. 21) which also goes back to the Orestes and Pylades fresco in the Archaeological Museum at Naples, see Christa Lichtenstern in this volume.

²⁵ The painting in the National Museum shows the engaged and disengaged legs of the two friends mirrored in symmetrical diagonals. Moreover the engaged leg of Orestes is related symmetrically to the disengaged leg of Pylades. Similarly complex correspondences between the legs of the heroes are shown in the fresco that has remained *in situ*. Here the outside contours of the two figures which are turned towards one another appear as if mirroring each other – just as the corresponding contours of the two figures on the right in *Three Men* do.

ter recognizes in the attitudes and gestures of nude figures and in their scenic-spatial disposition as well as in their compositional grouping within the picture plane a pictorial 'primal language' which has been realized pragmatically in Graeco-Roman antiquity. Its universal validity is for Marées proven by the continued and (by him) unquestioned intelligibility and dignity of figural representations from antique as well as Renaissance art.

For Marées the individual and the general, presence and past meet in the elementary language of the nude body. The exemplary models he finds for his figurations in antique painting strengthen his conviction that human beings with their emotions and actions have remained basically unchanged since classical times. About the historical continuity of the human passions as a precondition for the continuing actuality of artistic *chef-d'œuvres* he writes in a letter of January 19th, 1882 to Fiedler: 'Art [is] not really old [...]; it is as old and new as the so far unchanging passions of man are [...]' (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 232).²⁶ Elsewhere Marées writes: '[...] and truly people walk around on their feet just as they did two thousand years ago, just as people probably knew in those times how to distinguish near and far, shadow and light, just as well as we do today' (letter to Fiedler, February 5th, 1882; Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 235). What Gottfried Boehm (1998, 14) has said about Hildebrand goes for Marées as well: the 'history of art [...] was not past and it didn't need any art-historical exploration in our modern sense. Instead, he saw there a repertoire of artistic possibilities that could be actualized.'

By transforming groups of portrait-like figures into constellations of typical nudes Marées reaches a generalization of his initially autobiographical inventions in a twofold sense.²⁷ The figures of the *Hesperides* pictures are seen by the painter as *universally valid* by embodying 'general human traits' (letter to Fiedler, May 9th, 1883; Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 250). At the same time, Marées kept them *generally intelligible* by going back to an antique grammar of bodily expression. Here he follows the classicist concept of the 'picture articulating itself' (Kemp 1985, 255).

Marées' assigning to antique art as well as to his own painting a trans-historical rank feeds on many historical precedents. His claim to transtem-

²⁶ Floerke (1901, 170) reports that Marées said: 'I can let the sun breed the same things out of myself as it bred out of the Greeks. The world always hangs in the same hinges, the same sun is shining.'

²⁷ Referring to this process of generalization Marées wrote to Fiedler on September 29th, 1876 that he was led by 'a specific theme always straight away into the general' (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 147).

porality should not keep us from a historical-critical analysis of the (highly contemporary) concepts appearing in his letters as well as in his pictures – his idea of the artist, of manliness, of the relationship between man and woman, of art as a ‘battle’, etc. The contemporaneousness of his own intentions cannot be hidden either by the classicizing gestus of his painting or by the critical diatribes from his Roman ‘exile’²⁸.

In a historical perspective Marées’ timeless view of the antique and of his own art – a view based on supposed anthropological universals – is revealed as a construct fully of its own time.²⁹ If one looks at his letters, the same characteristic mixture can be discovered there – of enthusiasm for the antique, of an emphasis on the universal and the ideal on the one hand and, on the other, of militarism,³⁰ nationalism³¹ and antisemitism³² (the latter

²⁸ Marées hardly reflects on this, in contrast to Édouard Manet, whose style more than once seems to become visible in Marées’ pictures, in particular after his stay in Paris in 1869 (Blum 2005, 61-67).

²⁹ For Marées’ place in his context of the history of ideas and culture see the important study by Hamann/Hermand (1965/1977) which has hardly received any attention so far within the field of Marées studies. The dissertation by Anne S. Domm (1989) deals for the first time with the anti-modernist reception of Marées’ work, especially in the first third of the 20th century, and offers valuable approaches to an interpretation of Marées from the point of view of the history of ideas and culture (see also Domm 1978b, 330 sq.) It must be said, though, that Domm does not always distinguish closely enough between Marées’ own intentions and his work’s reception by later artists who often coarsened his intent. The vast monograph by Meier-Graefe (1909-1910) continues Marées’ own self-stylization in his letters emphatically and uncritically.

³⁰ In looking back, his former friend Irene von Hildebrand talked about Marées’ ‘Prussian martialness’ which she saw ‘as opposed to the artist’s real being’. It is ironical that the self-image Marées tried to project in his letters to the women he loved, Irene Koppel (later: [von] Hildebrand) and Melanie Tauber, an image of a knightly fighter for art (which can also be discovered in *Three Men*), led Irene von Hildebrand to perceive in him ‘something unintentionally funny’ – a circumstance which she held to be ‘love’s greatest enemy’ (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Hildebrand-Archiv, Ana 550, Irene v. Hildebrand, *Writings about her Mother Jessy Hildebrand, [...], Hans von Marées*, no pagination, typed copy by Bernhard Sattler).

³¹ During the Franco-German war of 1870/71 Marées writes: ‘If one sees our men massed together like this, powerful figures, intelligent citizens, it is impossible to believe that they could ever be defeated by any other nation. It is only to be regretted that the blood spilt on our side is so much nobler than that of our enemies. What one can see of Frenchmen on those transports of the wounded which are passing through all too frequently here, seems outwardly mean, shabby, dull-witted’ (letter to K. Fiedler, August 10th, 1870, in: Domm 1987a, 60). Marées descended from a French family on his father’s side.

³² In a letter to Fiedler of November 15th, 1870 he writes: ‘As the landlord, even though a Jew, seems to be a rather decent man, I hope to find some rest here for a longer

against Marées' own origins) – as can be found in vast parts of the educated German *bourgeoisie*, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, of the later 19th Century. Marées' pictures, though, do not entirely talk the same language – not only because they belong to another medium. They do carry a different meaning from his opinions in letters and conversations. Some of his figurations do belong to a way of thinking that is very closely linked to a contemporary mood and its topics, in the case of the 'staff-bearer', for instance, to the general idea of the artist as a 'standard-bearer of the spirit' (Ferdinand Freiligrath in Mommsen 2002, 245). But in the case of Marées' intention and œuvre are to an unusual degree non-identical. His pictures partly contradict his own plan voiced in his letters several times – to make his intentions immediately visible in his painting. If, as Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man have shown,³³ there are necessarily more or less marked contradictions between intention and realization in every text or picture, these unintentional contradictions are in Marées' work of central importance.

In his paintings and drawings ambiguities and paradoxicalities are visible as well as weaknesses and deviations from the social norm, as for example in those works (MG 324, MG 238, MG 434, MG 786, MG 797, MG 678) which have a more or less openly homoerotic theme, a theme hardly acknowledged by the painter in his letters (as far as we still possess them). The paintings reach a specifically pictorial ambiguity of concentrated multiple meanings, a complexity which surpasses that of the artist's letters by far. His pictures are – luckily, we must say in his case – not simply transparent realizations of those intentions which can be reconstructed from the letters and memoirs of his circle. Only in its difference from his own intentions Marées' painting *Three Men* gets to be more than a crude stereotype of an artistic ideology current in the *Gründerzeit* epoch.³⁴ His pictorial inventions are, if seen from an analytical perspective of cultural history, multilayered, dense examples of the genesis (or pathogenesis) of certain exemplary paradigms of imperial Germany. In art, they were only discovered around 1900 by the artists of the so-called New Idealism

time' (Domm 1987a, 63); to his brother Georg on December 25th, 1877: 'I do not care at all for ephemeral glory, for to be famous nowadays means nothing else but to know that one's name is on the mouths of a certain number of impudent Jews, a rather stinky abode' (Meier-Graefe 1909-1910, III, 170). Marées' mother was Jewish.

³³ See also Menke 1993; Norris 1996; Jannidis *et al.* 2000; Forster 1996. Essential in this context for the history and theory of autobiography: Wagner-Egelhaaf 2005.

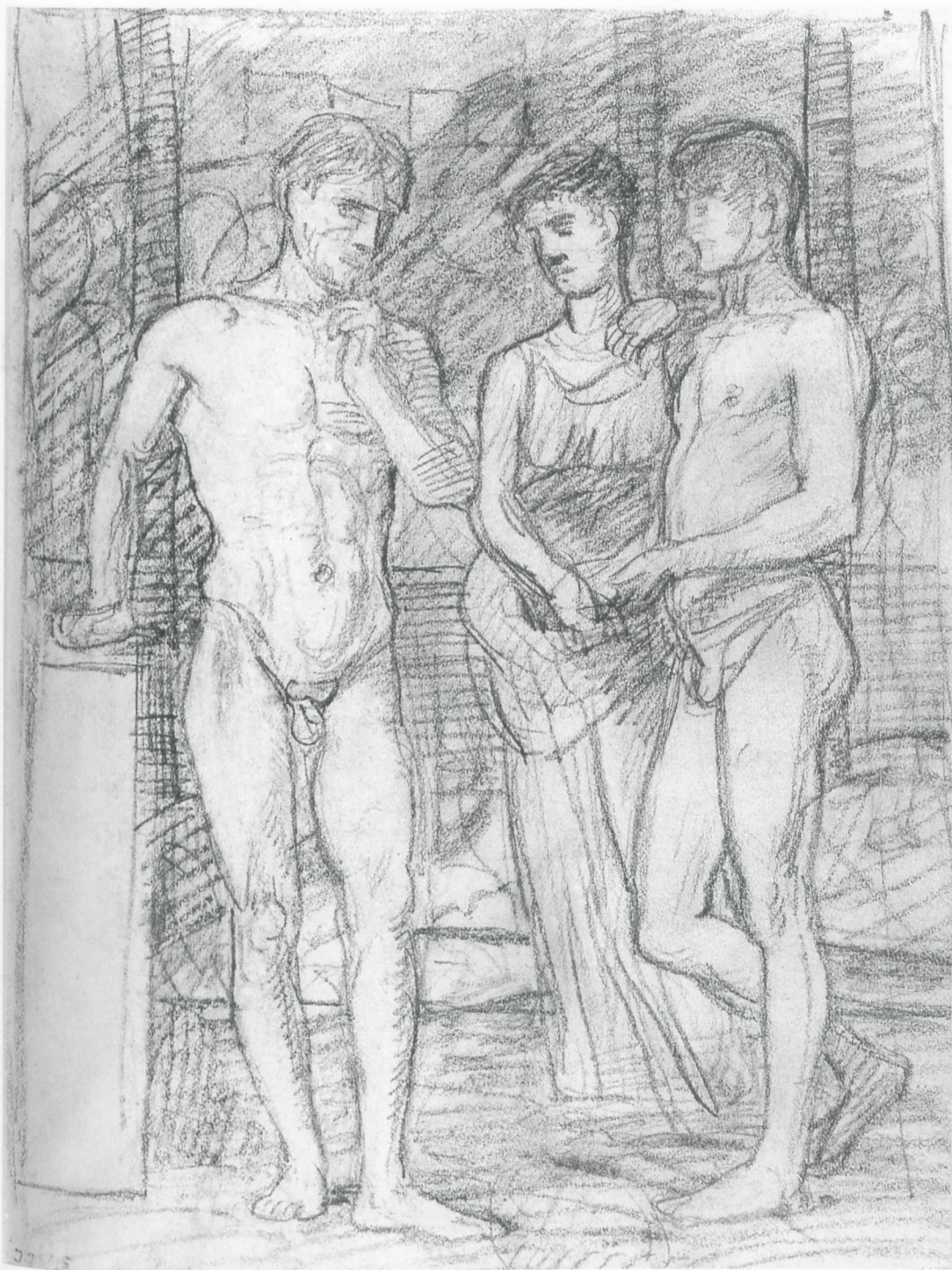
³⁴ Blum (2005), 281-314. - Contradictions in Marées' artistic theory have been pointed out for the first time by Gottfried Boehm (1987).

(*Neuidealismus*), i.e., Fritz Boehle (Domm 1989). As visual works of art Marées' paintings emphatically call for an intense contemplation by the beholder, something the artist explicitly demanded. Nonetheless, the viewer today must necessarily experience an ambiguous reaction: even if he recognizes the impressive presence of a painting such as *Three Men* and values its art, he'll hardly want to ignore its dubious ideological subtext. I have tried to show, though, that precisely in its problematical contradictions the œuvre of Marées shows one of the most startling encounters with the classical works of art preserved in Naples.³⁵

³⁵ I gratefully state that only by the extraordinary and un-bureaucratic endeavours of Dr. Sigrig von Moisy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich it was possible for me to use the materials of the 'Hildebrand-Archive' (which have only some years ago come into the Library's possession from Adolf von Hildebrand's heirs).



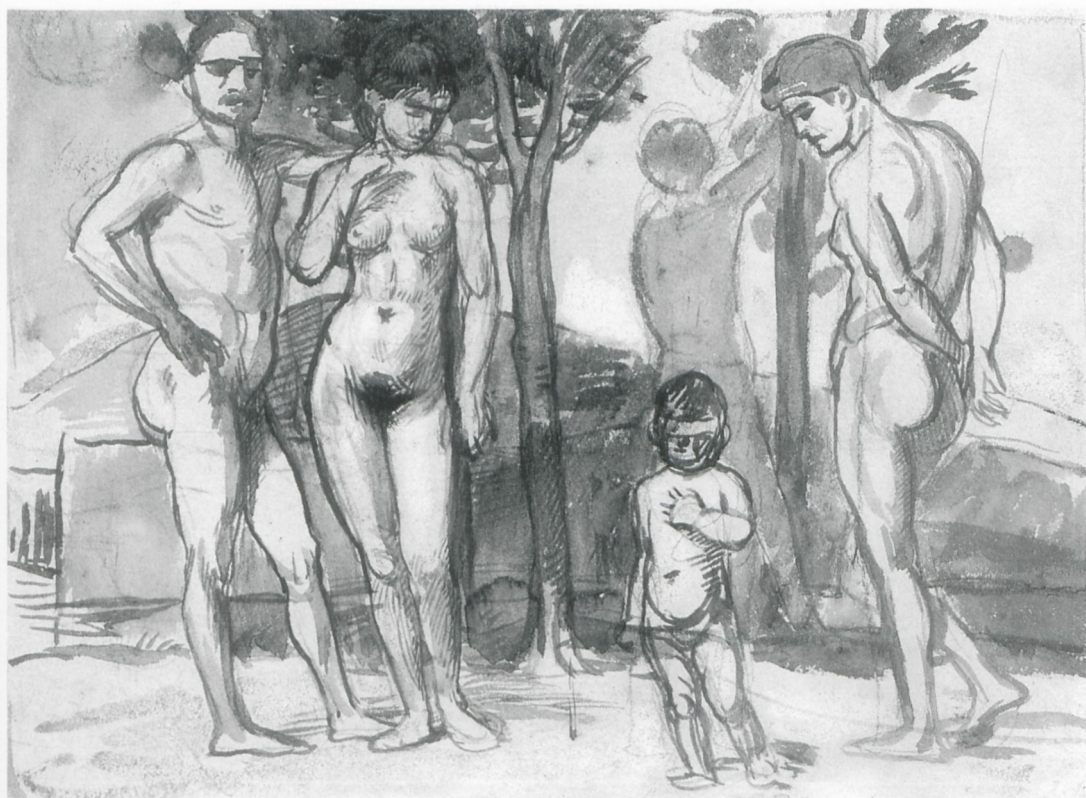
42. Orpheus, Eurydice and Hermes, copy of an attic Relief.



43. Hans von Marées, *Drawing with three figures*.



44. *Antinous*, marble.



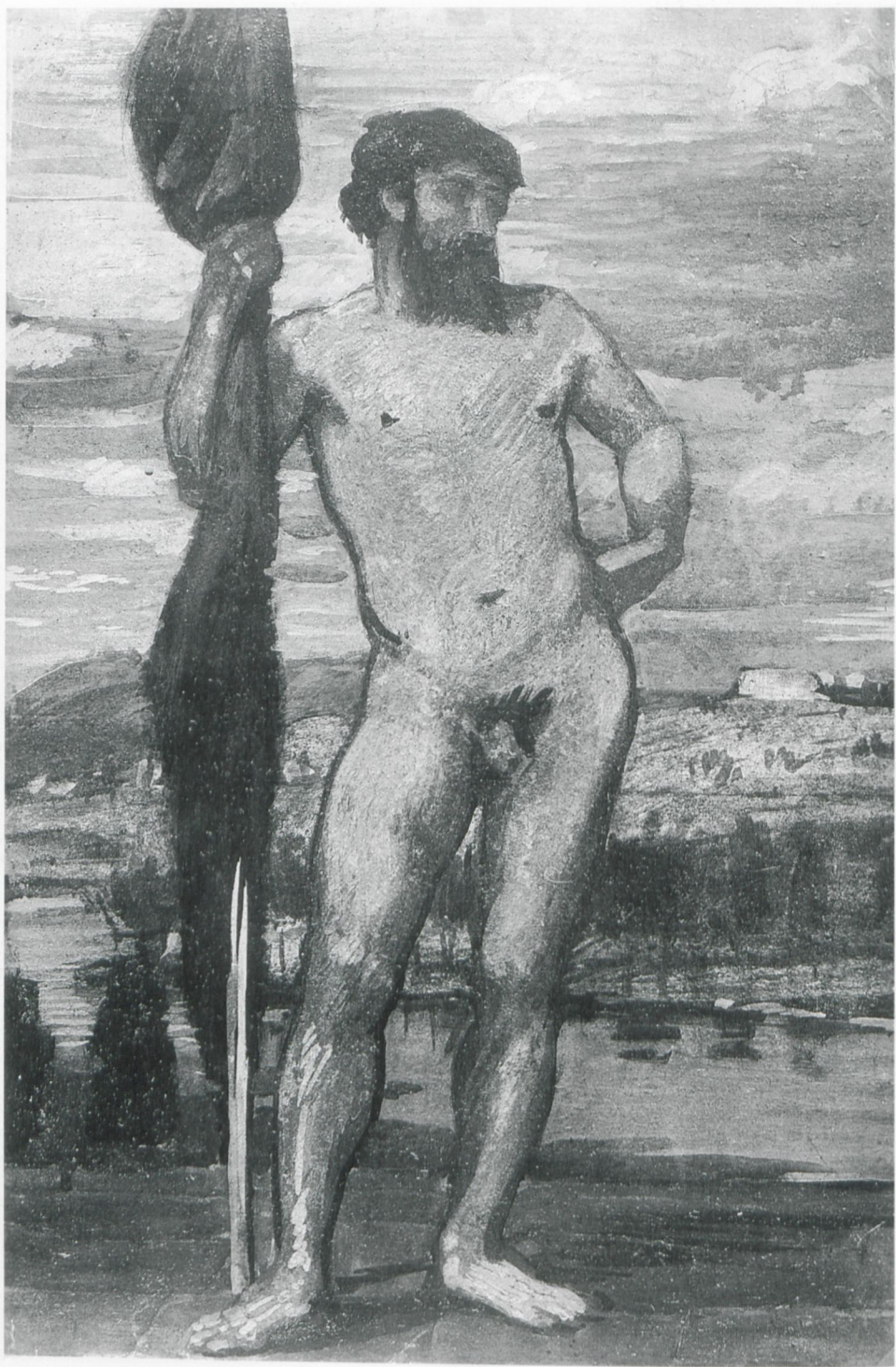
45. Hans von Marées, Sketch for *Three Men*, 1874.
Black and white indian ink on brown paper.



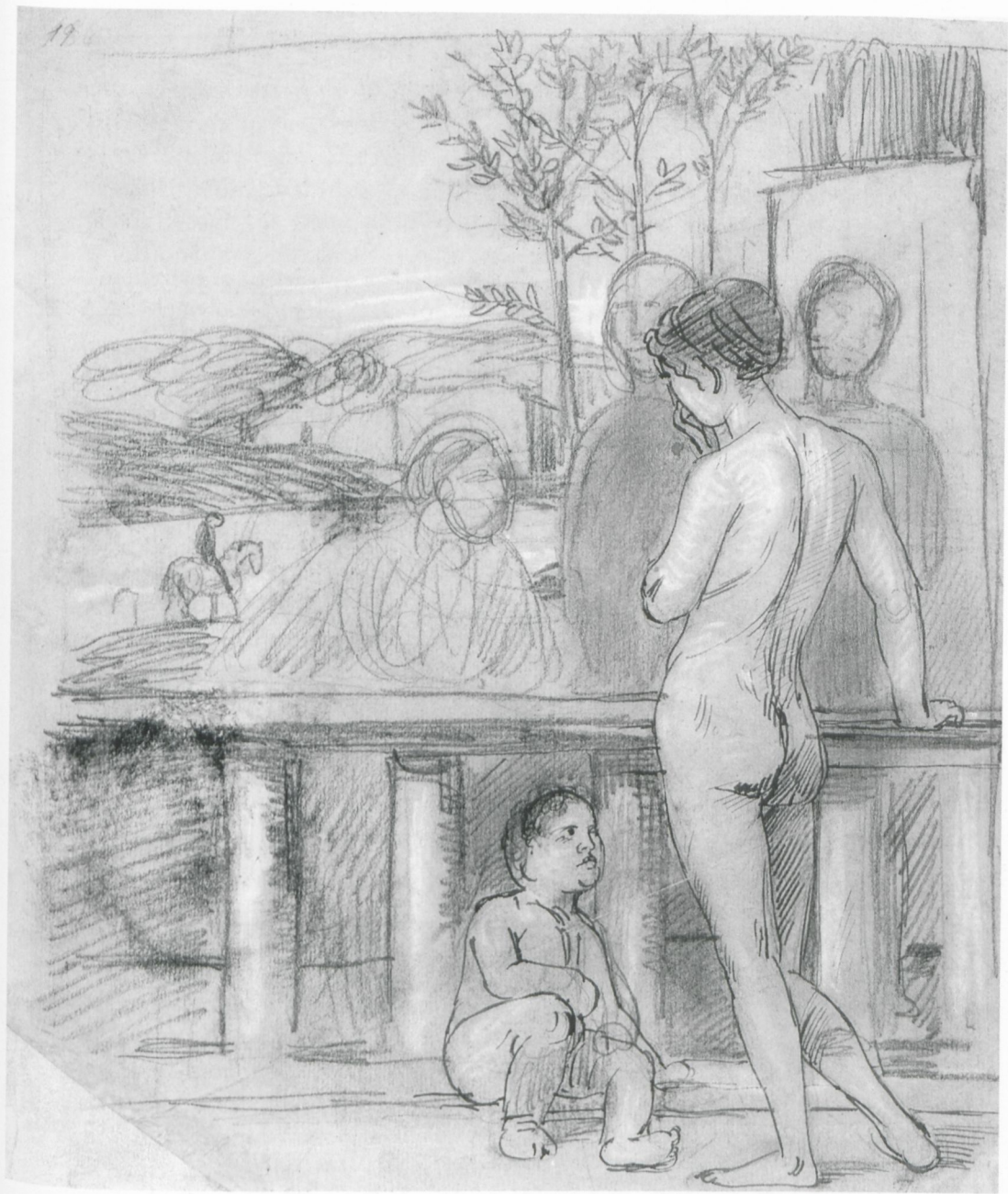
46. Hans von Marées, Sketch for *Three Men*, 1874.
Charcoal with white on brown paper.



47. Hans von Marées, *Roman Landscape I*, 1868. Oil painting on canvas.



48. Hans von Marées, *The Man with the Standard*, 1880. Oil painting on wood panel.



49. Hans von Marées, *Young Girl and Putto in front of a Balustrade*, about 1875.
Sketch related to *Three Men*. Lead, indian ink and white chalk on light brown paper.



V



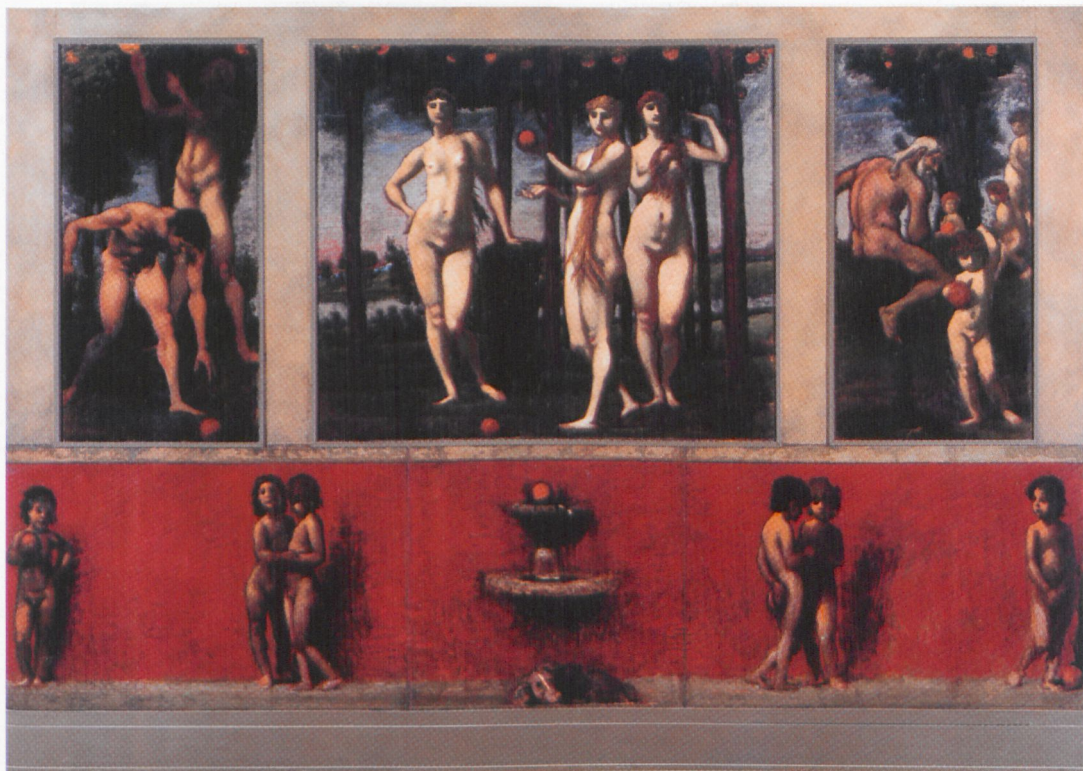
VI

V - Hans von Marées, *The Orangegrove: The Two Women*, 1873.
Fresco, 473×236 cm, Fresco Room: south wall.

VI - Hans von Marées, *The Orangegrove: The Three Stages of Life*, 1873.
Fresco, 473×236 cm, Fresco Room: south wall.

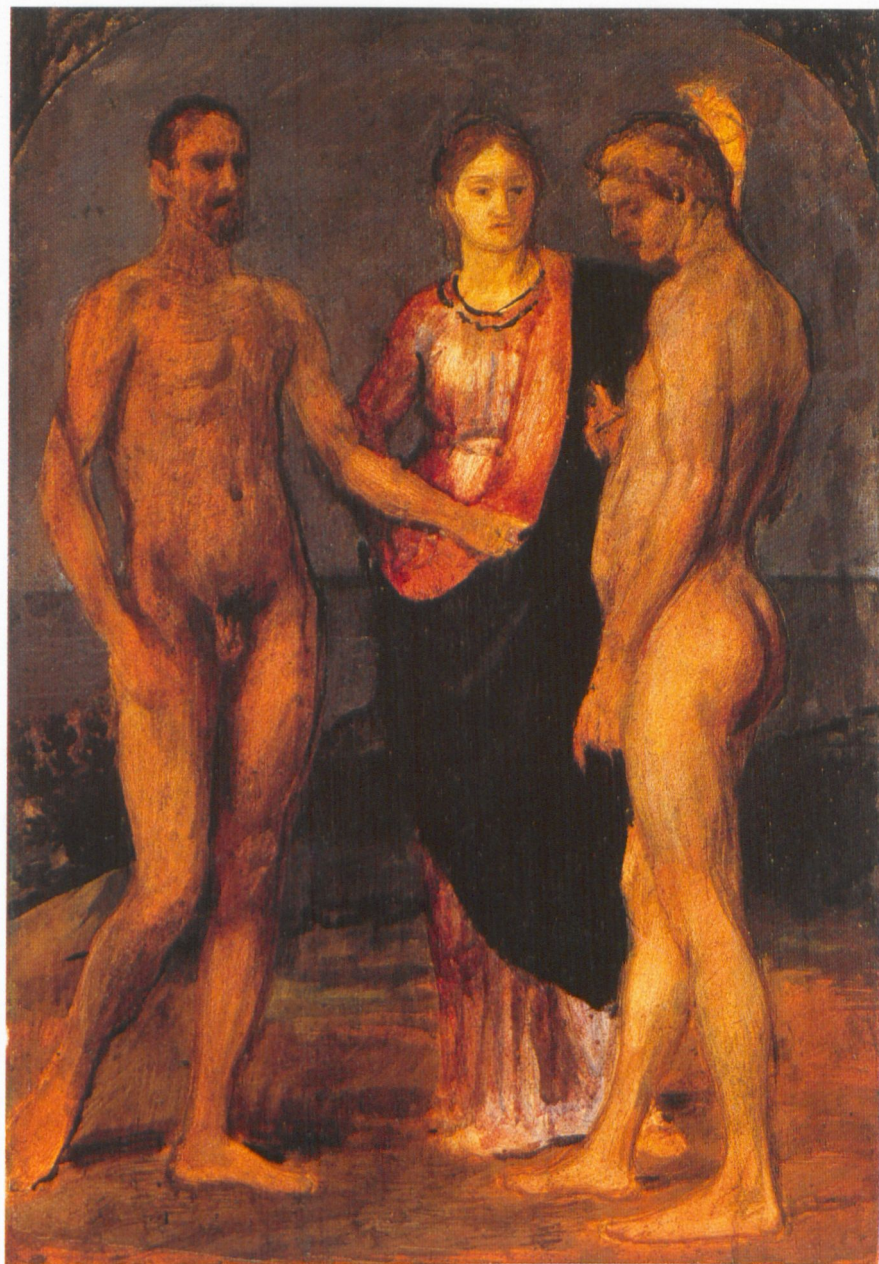


XVIII - Hans von Marées, *Three Men*, about 1874.
Oil painting on wood panel, 66×53 cm.



XIX - Hans von Marées, *The Hesperides*, 1884/1885.

Triptych, mixed technique on wood panel; left wing: 175×87,5 cm; central panel: 174×203 cm; right wing: 175×88,5 cm; base: 110,5×482 cm.



XXXI - Hans von Marées, *Woman between Two Men*, 1875.
Mixed painting technique on wood panel, 48×33,5 cm.