

**CATALOGUE OF
PAINTINGS BY ARTISTS OF
THE DÜSSELDORF
ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS**

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Catalogue of Paintings by Artists of the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts by Various

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VARIOUS

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OF
P A I N T I N G S ,

BY ARTISTS OF THE

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Anonymous

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FOGG ART MUSEUM
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**FOGG ART MUSEUM
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF THE
DUSSELDORF SCHOOL OF ART.

To the connoisseur *au courant* with the progress of modern art, the origin and present condition of the Düsseldorf School of Painting are of course familiar; but, as it has sprung into existence and risen to celebrity within the last forty years, and as the rare collection of pictures to which this catalogue refers is the only exposition of its works ever opened in this country, it is presumed that the following brief outline of its history will be interesting to a majority of the visitors to the "DUSSELDORF GALLERY."

It is somewhat strange that Düsseldorf, the capital of the inconsiderable duchy of Berg, in the Rhenish provinces of Prussia,—a town of little note, dignified by no historical associations, situated on the monotonous flats of the Rhine, far below the region of its grandeur and enchantment, with nothing to boast in the way of palaces, churches, theaters, or ruins, the great staples of continental cities,—should, nevertheless, be the seat of a school of painting, perhaps the most conspicuous on the Continent, and which has aided in giving stability and strength to the most important movements in the history of modern art. It is true that a famous collection of pictures once adorned the walls of the electoral palace; but the palace was destroyed in 1794 by the French, and the pictures were removed to Munich. It was long after their removal that the school began to flourish and become prominent. It seems to have found some congenial influences which are hidden from common observation, and make up for the apparent deficiencies of the

place. Perhaps the artists who have congregated in so unromantic a locality have been urged to greater efforts after ideal beauty by the very presence of the natural barrenness which surrounds them.

Cornelius, to whom, we believe, belongs the honor of the foundation of the school of Dusseldorf, was a native of the town. Though little known in this country, his name stands at the head of the modern German painters, especially of those who, in immediate connection with him, broke through the conventional mannerisms by which the genius of artists was trammelled and the spirit of art degraded, and, in opposition to academies and professors, sought a freer field for the exercise of "the gift and faculty divine" of which they were the possessors. Of these men, Cornelius, Overbeck, and Schadow were the most distinguished. They met at Rome, whither they had gone for a common purpose—that of seeking among the works of the greatest masters for the truest inspiration. They regarded themselves as the martyrs of the modern absurdities and insipidities which usurped the places and authority of art. Overbeck had, in fact, been expelled from the Academy of Vienna, for exercising that independence of thought which never fails to excite the horror of old "foundations." He had taken refuge from the academicians, amongst the grand memorials of the early painters of Italy. He found kindred spirits in his countrymen, banished like himself by the puerilities and pompous absurdities of the German schools, and like himself in quest of a purer standard of taste and a more congenial field of labor.

Under such circumstances, it was very natural that they should go from one extreme to the other; from the ultra-modern to the ultra-medieval; from the overloaded ornaments and artificial redundancies of painting which were nearest to them in point of time, to the simplicity and sincerity which were farthest off—even beyond the period of highest excellence, quite back to the infancy of the Revival of Art. Equally natural was it that they should have found in their new associations, controlling motives of life, higher than the standards of artistic taste. The old masters led them to the old faith. They exchanged the cold formalities of German Lutheranism for the more vivid ritual of that church over whose altars, and in whose aisles and sacristies and cloisters, they had studied the works of the masters of their adoption, and found in their pure and simple creations not less the inspiration of genius than the fervor of unaffected faith. Cornelius was born a Roman Catholic. A large number of his fellow students in Rome, including Overbeck and Schadow, were converted to Romanism, and, as a matter of course, went far beyond him in devotion to their new faith. Their fanaticism, how-

ever,—for with some it reached that point,—gave new ardor to the zeal with which they devoted themselves to their art.

A school of painters formed under such influences, and animated by such inducements, could not have failed of success. Their extravagance was not of a kind to interfere with their progress; for it was the extravagance of simplicity and adherence to the real forms of nature. It was the imitation of a former style, it is true; but that was better as a foundation than conformity to any modern standard.

The king of Bavaria, whose abdication and downfall ought to be lamented by all the painters and paint brushes in Christendom, visited Rome about 1820, during the residence there of these new enthusiasts of the old school. He adopted their notions of art, and, what was more to the purpose, adopted a great number of the artists themselves, and proved a constant and munificent patron of their labors. To him, more than to any other man, Germany is indebted for the success of modern art. Munich is full of the pictures of Cornelius and his disciples, painted under the auspices and directions of Louis of Bavaria.

But to come back to Dusseldorf. Soon after the consummation of the new movements at Rome and the accession of King Louis, Cornelius was established at Munich, and Schadow, his co-worker, was appointed Director of the Dusseldorf Academy; to which he immediately communicated the spirit and style which they had both adopted, and by means of which a new impulse had been given to German art.

It was thus that the Dusseldorf school derived the distinctive peculiarities which characterize its works, of sacred art. Schadow, since he has been at its head, has devoted himself almost exclusively to the painting of purely religious pictures; and the best productions of the Academy have been of this description. The school, however, has been by no means confined in its labors, or in its reputation, to this department of art. Some of its most distinguished artists are painters of historical pictures, landscapes, and still life. Many of them are Protestants, and ultra Protestants; the religious opinions of both sides of the school being sharpened by contact with each other. At the head of the latter class stands Lessing, who has acquired a great reputation from his pictures of the scenes and heroes of the Reformation, and who is looked up to as the head of the Protestant branch of the Academy.

The Dusseldorf Collection in this city, is one of unusual magnitude and comprehensiveness in the way of art; for it is in fact a revelation of a *whole school of painters* whose existence, until within the last few years, has been almost unknown to the general public of this country. When

the exhibition was first opened, it comprised only a few pictures, and was not enriched by the productions of the most eminent artists of the Academy. These minor specimens of the school proved, however, in the highest degree acceptable, not only to the *dilettanti* but to the popular taste. Their striking fidelity to nature, in drawing, coloring, and expression, was universally appreciated; and the American public, charmed with the inkling they had obtained of the new school, became eager to extend their acquaintance with its productions. Under these circumstances new paintings, many of them by the greatest names of the Academy, were from time to time added to the Gallery; until at length Lessing's last and greatest work, "The Martyrdom of Huse," and Sohn's enchanting picture of "Diana and her Nymphs," crowned the attractions of the exhibition.

Variety is one of the most pleasing characteristics of the collection. It embraces all classes of subjects, from the sublime to the grotesque; and the light and humorous pictures appear to be as perfect in their way as the grander works of art which illustrate striking events in sacred and profane history. But the beauties and defects of the collection, whatever they may be, cannot properly be discussed in the preface to a catalogue. It would be easy, indeed, to quote voluminously and favorably from the columns of the public press; but it is not designed to forestall individual opinion. Let visitors be their own critics, and pronounce for themselves upon the merits of the pictures before them.

CATALOGUE
OF
P A I N T I N G S

BY ARTISTS OF THE

ACADEMY AT DUSSELDORF.

1. Lessing's Great Historical Picture, "*Hues before the Stake,*"
or "*The Martyrdom of Hues.*"

This being Lessing's greatest work, and unquestionably one of the grandest productions of modern art, it has occasioned some surprise that it should have been permitted to find its way across the Atlantic. The simple fact is, that Mr. Boker, the proprietor of the collection, who, during a residence of twenty years at Dusseldorf, had been well acquainted with Mr. Lessing, obtained his promise of a preference in the purchase of this picture, at the time of its commencement; and in the spring of 1850, when it was nearly finished, they finally agreed upon the price. Thus, Mr. B. became the possessor while the picture was uncompleted in the artist's studio. Had it been submitted to the ordeal of public judgment, the chance of its becoming private property would undoubtedly have been lost. It was expressly stipulated with Mr. Lessing, that it should nowhere be exhibited except at Dusseldorf; and during only five days, that it was seen there, an advance of £1,200 was already offered on the first price. The Dusseldorf correspondent of the *Augsburg Gazette*, says,—

"During the few days of public admission to Lessing's Hues, we have had one continual procession to the Academy, as well from our own city and environs as also from other towns and places on the Rhine. Nothing was spoken of but this picture; and the manner in which it was canvassed and how it was visited and seen, may with great propriety be called an artistical event. Lessing's full maturity must be ascribed to his clear and decided objective knowledge, and he is truly the painter of individualities; his figures are drawn and colored with the utmost perfection; the blood circulates—they live in complete and undisturbed vigor, and are distinguished by the greatest harmony in composition and representa-