



FERDINAND HODLER

(Bern 1853-1918 Geneva)

The Orator from 'Unanimity' 1913.

Oil on canvas.

Signed lower right: F. Hodler.

126 x 77 cm.

Provenance: - Berner Kunstsalon Fritz Brand, 1918. - Gewerbekasse Bern, 1923. - C. Garnier, Bern, 1927. - H. Kupper, Erlenbach, 1928. - Thence by descent to the present owner, private collection, Switzerland. Literature: - Carl Albert Loosli: Generalkatalog in: Ferdinand Hodler. Leben, Werk und Nachlass, Suter 1921–24, no. 355, with ill., as 'Einstimmigkeit (Studie zum Redner), 1913'. - Werner Y. Müller: Die Kunst Ferdinand Hodlers. Gesamtdarstellung. Volume II, Reife und Spätwerk 1895–1918, Zurich 1941, p. 234,

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491, with ill., no. 192, as 'der Redner zur 'Einmütigkeit', um 1913/14'. - Jura Brüscheweiler: Ferdinand Hodler und sein Sohn Hector, in: Neujahrsblatt der Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, 1966–1967), Zurich 1967, p. 55 f., 121, with ill., as 'der Redner (Hector Hodler), um 1912'. - Hans Georg Gmelin: Zur Entstehung von Ferdinand Hodlers Wandbild 'Einmütigkeit' in Hannover, in: Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte, 7 (1968), p. 234, with ill., as 'Redner für die hannoversche Fassung'. - Oskar Bätschmann and Paul Müller: Ferdinand Hodler. Catalogue raisonné der Gemälde, vol. III, Die Figurenbilder, Zurich 2017, p. 454 f., no. 1532 (with ill.). In January 1911 Ferdinand Hodler was officially requested, on the recommendation of Max Liebermann, to create a mural for the assembly hall of the Neues Rathaus (New Town Hall) in Hanover, Germany (see ill. for Lot 3058). The contract was signed in early 1912. The subject had been predefined. Hodler was to depict the historic oath of the citizens of Hanover to the Protestant doctrine on 26 June 1533. For the project, he was bound by the architectural spatial conditions, which presented a particular compositional challenge due to the door lintel that projected into the scene in the centre of the wall. Hodler brilliantly resolved this challenge by filling the reduced height in that area with a single figure standing on a podium, towering above all the others. Hodler added a sense of dynamic to the oath-taking groups flanking the orator by arranging five individual male figures standing before the crowd on each side (see Lots 3037 and 3058). Concurrent with the execution of the painting in Hannover, in 1912-13 Hodler worked on a second, slightly smaller version of the same subject that was intended for the exhibition in Paris. Today it is located in the Kunsthaus Zürich. In preparation for the two versions in Hanover and Zurich, Hodler produced many smaller and larger studies both of the individual figures and of the entire composition in various techniques. There exist a total of fifteen more or less detailed studies of the orator, for which Hodler's son Hector initially posed as a model. The five large versions, which all measure approx. 125 cm in height, have the character of independent works of art. The present work, which has been in the same private collection for nearly one hundred years and has not been presented to the public since then, has thus far

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only been known to research through an early black and white photograph. After the rediscovery of the painting, it became clear that this is the first large-format composition of this figure and is fundamentally different from all other versions. It directly relates to the mural in Hannover and shows the orator with a leg position parallel to the picture plane. In the later versions, which were produced with regard to the second version in Zurich, or in reference it, Hodler gave the figure a sense of dynamic by spatially extending the orator's left leg forward.

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