
Martin, Henri(-Jean-Guillaume)

(b Toulouse, Aug 5, 1860; d La Bastide-du-Vert, Lot, Nov 1943).

Taube G. Greenspan

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French painter. After winning the Grand Prix at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse, he moved to Paris (1879) to study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts there under Jean-Paul Laurens, who encouraged his interest in Veronese and other Venetian painters. The literary inspiration of his early work was reflected in such paintings as *Paolo de Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini in Hell* (1883; Carcassonne, Mus. B.-A.) based on Dante, for which he won a medal at the Salon of 1883. During his subsequent study in Rome, however, on a fellowship awarded to him at the Salon, he was attracted both by the brilliant Italian light and by the paintings of Giotto and his contemporaries.

On his return to Paris (1889), Martin experimented with pointillism, which he sometimes applied to allegorical subjects, for example *Festival of the Federation* (1899; Toulouse, Mus. Augustins). In the 1890s his work showed links with Symbolism and the themes of dreams and reverie. A Baudelairean pessimism fills such paintings as *To Each his Chimera* (1891; Bordeaux, Mus. B.-A.), *Man between Vice and Virtue* (1892) and *Towards the Abyss* (1892; both Toulouse, Mus. Augustins); for his idealized images of women as nymphs or muses, for example *Muse* (c. 1898; Paris, Mus. A. Déc.), the ethereal figures were literally dematerialized by the use of a pointillist technique. He exhibited eight paintings in the first Salon de la Rose+Croix (1892), the acclaimed showcase for mystical art.

Parallel with his production of small oil paintings, Martin worked on large-scale decorative commissions including a series of decorative panels for the Salle des Illustrés in the Capitole of Toulouse, followed by murals for the new Hôtel de Ville in Paris (1895–6). In the latter, particularly in his treatment of Apollo and the muses in the Salle d'Introduction, he combined official portraits with allegorical figures in a dreamy landscape that incorporated pointillist brushwork and techniques of academic drawing. These idyllic themes culminated in *Serenity* (1898; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay), a large easel painting. After 1900 Martin employed allegory in his murals only within the context of a celebration of nature, as in *Mowers* (1903; Toulouse, Capitole), in which the sun-drenched fields and the brilliant vegetation of the Midi were praised for their representation of the timelessness of ordinary labour and humanity's harmonious co-existence with nature. The triptych format alludes to the interrelationship between the cycle of the seasons and the passage of man's life, a popular theme at the end of the 19th century.

Martin was much in demand as a muralist in the early 1900s, and he was cited by some as heir to Puvis de Chavannes. His work includes panels in the Mairie of the 10e arrondissement, Paris; the Hôtel Terminus, Lyon; La Caisse d'Epargne, Marseille (1904); and the Sorbonne (1908), the Palais Royal (1914) and the Conseil d'Etat (1922) in Paris.

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See also

Marchand, Jean

Mural, §1(i): Europe, c 1810-c 1930

External resources

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