

Albert Maennchen, Female and male skiers near St. Moritz, c. 1906/07, oil on paper, not signed, 34 x 67 cm, several smaller folds, parts with traces of usage and smaller missing parts
The picture was provided – in museum quality – with a new passe-partout and a new frame (60 x 80 cm) with museum glass (anti-reflective, very high UV protection, anti-static, abrasion resistant) of the company HALBE.

Albert Maennchen (1873 Rudolstadt – 1935 Berlin) received his first drawing and painting lessons from his brother, who was 12 years his senior, the well-known landscape and genre painter Adolf Maennchen (1860–1920). After working successfully as a painter's assistant and master painter, he studied ornamentation, decorative painting, sculpture, art history, and architecture at the Royal Arts and Crafts Museum in Berlin from 1896, and later also briefly at the Berlin University of the Arts. During his main creative phase before the First World War, Maennchen won numerous important commissions for paintings in Rudolstadt, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Danzig, Paris, Turin, and St. Louis, among other places, and received awards such as the French State Medal for Art at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900 and the Italian and American State Medals (1902 and 1904, respectively). He died of lung cancer in 1935.

Between 1899 and 1906/07, Maennchen continued to further his education through study visits lasting several months at the Académie Julian in Paris. He probably created the painting on offer here after the last of these trips. The sheet may be part of a series of works grouped around Maennchen's tempera painting "Winter bei St. Moritz" (Winter at St. Moritz), which was exhibited for sale at the Berlin Künstlerhaus on October 9, 1907. It can therefore be assumed that this and the other sheets were created in St. Moritz in the winter of 1906/07. Some of the works in the series were distributed worldwide by the London publisher Raphael Tuck & Sons as oilette postcards in the "Sport in the Alps" series.

Painted depictions from the early days of skiing are quite rare. Even rarer are those that also feature female skiers. The large-format sheet shows several female skiers in front of a winter mountain backdrop, painted in an oil sketch style with broad brushstrokes quickly thrown onto the paper over underdrawings. Interestingly, they are waving downhill toward the male skier, who is struggling uphill and casting a large shadow, suggesting strong sunshine. Typical of the time, he is still equipped with simple wooden skis and poles and wears black knee-length pants over black boots and gaiters, as well as a white upper garment that merges into a white cap with a visor. Since special ski clothing for women did not become available until the 1920s – until then, pants were taboo for women and showing one's legs while playing sports was considered frivolous – the women here appear in long skirts (red or blue). Although the latter were very cumbersome for skiing, from an artistic point of view they emphasize the exhilaration of movement all the more. With just a few brushstrokes, Albert Maennchen manages to capture the impression of such a wonderful day of skiing.