

# Carl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785 – 1843)

Carl (or Karl) Friedrich von Rumohr was born on 6 January 1785 near Dresden, Germany, into an ancient noble family. He grew up on the family estates in Holstein, and after attending the gymnasium in Holzminden, entered the university in Göttingen where he studied classical languages, history and mathematics. He also took drawing lessons, and was introduced to art history. A large inheritance after the death of his father Henning von Rumohr in 1804 enabled him to pursue his interests without financial restraints. In 1805 he went with the artist brothers Riepenhausen and writer Ludwig Tieck on a study trip to Rome, met a group of German artists living and working there, and acquired the foundation of his expertise in the classical arts.

Thereafter, he lived on his estates, and advised and promoted the training of young artists, but relationships with their much older patron who tended to impose his strong views were not easy. He also made further extended trips to Italy, and became a patron of the expatriate German painters, supporting them through publications and purchases. Despite his tetchy temperament, he was a welcome guest of the German cultural elite, and even acted as a guide to future King Christian VIII of Denmark and the Bavarian Crown Prince Ludwig. He studied the art archives in Florence, Rome, Milan and Siena, and began his critical analysis of Italian art. Living in Italy also led to works on the rural conditions there.

However Rumohr's most acclaimed and successful work was a treatise on the art of cooking, *Geist der Kochkunst* (Essence of Cooking) published in 1822 under the name of his personal chef, Joseph König. Advocating a return to simple traditional cuisine, it was republished ten years later and again after its recent rediscovery. The first two volumes on the results of his art history research, *Italienische Forschungen* (Italian Investigations) were published in 1827, followed by the third volume four years later. Some of his works were never published.

In 1841, on his final trip to Italy, Rumohr visited his favourite student Friedrich Nerly. He then applied for the position of keeper of the royal art collection in Copenhagen, and rejecting a lesser offer from Christian VIII, retired to spend his last few years on his estates near Lubeck, with his art collections. He died at Dresden on 25 July 1843, at the age of 58. His architect friend Gottfried Semper designed and Christian VIII donated his memorial tombstone, which was destroyed in World War II and restored in 2010. His art collection was auctioned in 1846.

Rumohr's interests and quest for knowledge may have led him to the Florence Museum of Natural History where botanist Giuseppe Raddi worked from 1795 to 1820. In 1819, after taking part in a scientific expedition to the Rio de Janeiro region of Brazil, Raddi described a number of ferns he had collected, including the genus *Rumohra*. The widespread Southern Hemisphere (including New Zealand) species, *Rumohra adiantiformis*, has a chequered taxonomic history, following its original description as *Polypodium adiantiformis* by George Forster in 1786.



## *Rumohra adiantiformis*

*Rumohra* are Southern Hemisphere rupestral or epiphytic climbing ferns. *Rumohra adiantiformis* ('resembling *Adiantum*') is recognised by its scaly, creeping, rhizomes, the plastic-like appearance of its fronds (giving rise to one of its common names, "butcher's fern"), and the large black sori protected by round indusia with black centres. Usually a climbing epiphyte, especially on tree ferns, more rarely on rock or on the ground, it is common in lowland to montane forest throughout New Zealand, but rarely inland in the South Island. It also occurs in Africa, Central and South America, Australia and Polynesia.