

AUGUST FISCHER

1854–1921

30. *Canal Scene from Nuremberg, Pegnitzufer Near Spitalbrücke, Looking Toward the Synagogue, 1904*

(*Kanalscene fra Nürnberg, Pegnitzufer ved Spitalbrücke, set mod Synagogen*)

Oil on canvas, 17²/₃ x 23¹/₃ in. (45 x 59 cm)

Signed and dated lower left: Aug. Fischer 1904

PROVENANCE: Arne Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 525, 1989, lot 87, ill. p. II.

LITERATURE: Harald Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen in Deutschland*, Hamburg, 1981; *Die Architektur der Synagoge*, catalogue, Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, 1988.

The motif by the River Pegnitz at the center of old Nuremberg was one of which Fischer painted several variants. An old photograph from the place shows that the many picturesque houses on the right are correctly reproduced topographically. On the other hand, the area on the left, which seems to be situated on the island of Schütt, is different in this and another larger painting of 1891 (25²/₅ x 36¹/₄ in., or 64.5 x 92 cm), now in a private collection. Both the riverbank and the trees in the background differ in various respects. The spire on the left, seen in both, is part of the Heilig-Geist-Spital, founded in 1331.

A large building with a dome in the right background forms a contrast to the small burghers' houses with overhangs and external galleries. It is the city's synagogue, built 1864–1870 in German Romanesque style with A. Wolff (1832–1885) as its architect. The far side overlooks one of the central squares of the city, the Hans-Sachs-Platz. In that period, the Jewish communities in Germany manifested themselves with synagogues that in size and style—in this case historicism—could equal Christian churches and thus display the status they represented in the society of the day.

Before World War II, Nuremberg was one of the German cities with the greatest number of houses surviving from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance periods. Its huge significance for German history inevitably led the National Socialists to regard it as archetypically German and thus an important symbol, so in 1938 the synagogue was demolished to great popular jubilation. During the winter of 1945, 90 percent of the Old City of Nuremberg was destroyed in Allied bombing raids. The network of streets has been preserved, and many buildings have been reconstructed, but not this site, where a students' hall of residence now stands. So August Fischer's painting reproduces an idyll that today has been lost.

Aarhus Kunstmuseum owns a smaller, but beautifully finished, picture of Nuremberg by Fischer (inv. no. 289, 11 x 14¹/₂ in., 28 x 37 cm), a bequest from the prominent Århus merchant and margarine manufacturer Otto Mønsted (1838–1916). It is dated 1896 and shows a different view of the river, with the characteristic houses and a woman washing clothes in the river water.

E.F.