

Heinrich Frauberger

By Nisya Allovi



Heinrich Frauberger, photo: Internationale Kunstausstellung, Kunsthistorische Ausstellung, Grosse Gartenbau-Ausstellung, 1904, Bagel, Düsseldorf, 1905

Heinrich Frauberger, born in Oberndorf (Austria) in 1845, died in Hinterstein in 1920, was the first director of the Düsseldorf Kunstgewerbemuseum, founded in 1882. In his almost 40-year management time, he campaigned for the establishment of museum collections. He created the textile collection and the collection of oriental works of art.

Frauberger's concern for the preservation of Judaica is said to have stemmed from a personal incident: In 1895 he was consulted about the design for a railing around a Jewish grave, and, unable to find adequate resources to respond to the inquiry, Frauberger, although being a Catholic, determined to begin to study and collect artifacts of the Jewish cultural heritage.

Although several German museums had begun acquiring Judaica as a consequence of ethnographic studies and a general interest in religion, Frauberger's plan was much more ambitious.

In the 1890s, art historians and scholars throughout Europe were increasingly interested in the research and display of Jewish ceremonial and artistic objects.

In 1895, the Society for the Collection and Conservation of Jewish Art and Historic Monuments was established in Vienna. Thirteen years later, Frauberger rated the first exhibition of Jewish ceremonial objects in Germany and founded the Society for Research of Jewish Art Monuments in Frankfurt. Frauberger was amongst the first trained art historians and museologists to have an interest in Jewish art.

In 1901 Frauberger established in Frankfurt the Gesellschaft zur Erforschung Jüdischer Kunstdenkmäler, which engaged a number of Jewish scholars (mainly Rudolf Hallo and Erich Toeplitz), and issued an illustrated periodical, edited and largely written by himself.