



Carl Cowen Schirm  
*View of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, 1884*

C.C. Schirm. 1884.

CARL COWEN SCHIRM

(Wiesbaden 1852-1928)

*VIEW OF AL-AQSA MOSQUE IN JERUSALEM, 1884*

Signed and dated lower right: "C.C.Schirm 1884."

Oil on panel

55 x 37.5 cm; 21 1/2 x 37 1/2 in.

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Provenance

Private Collection, Germany.

*Big Christmas Auction: 19th Century Paintings*, im Kinsky, Vienna, December 2022, Lot. 338;

*The Orientalist Sale*, Sotheby's London, April 2022, Lot. 5;

Private Collection, France.



In a very bright atmosphere, characteristic of Carl Cowen Schirm's confident and original treatment, the north façade of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is revealed between the trees at the end of the paved path where the ablution fountain, Al-Kas, is located, animated by a few figures. The geometric rigour of the paving contrasts with the organic suppleness of the trees. The shadows cast and the overwhelming heat of the sun accentuates the warm tones of the façade and the stones of the fountain. The framing and the shot, with the Dome of the Rock in the background, are striking in their almost photographic quality. Indeed, the artist was very interested in photography: we know that he took a camera with him on his trip to Syria and Palestine in 1880-1881. Like many artists, Schirm drew on his memories and most likely on his own photographs to create this painting, dated 1884, in the landscape painting studio he ran in Warsaw, Poland.

Carl Cowen Schirm came from the middle class of Wiesbaden in Hesse and studied chemistry and physics in Bonn before entering the Karlsruhe Art Academy in 1874, where he was a pupil of the Norwegian landscape painter Hans Fredrik Gude. There he met Eugen Bracht and Adolf Meckel, who, like him, were among the most interesting Orientalist painters in Germany. In 1876, Carl Schirm and Eugen Bracht went on a study trip to the Luneburg Heath, where they found beautiful moorland and woodland landscapes to inspire them. Two years later, Carl Schirm joined his teacher in Scotland and Wales where they explored other landscapes.

The idea of a trip to the Orient took shape between the three friends at this time, and in 1880 they set off for Syria, visiting the shores of the Caspian Sea and Mount Sinai, which provided them with extraordinary new motifs. In contrast to Bracht and Meckel, Carl Schirm's Orientalist works occupied only a small place in his landscape corpus, but the quality of the works from his Orientalist period is remarkable and "they are among the most impressive works in German painting of the late nineteenth century" according to the specialists M. Haja and G. Wimmer.

After his return from the Orient in June 1882, Carl Schirm was invited, together with Eugen Bracht and other artists, to take part in the creation of the huge historical Panorama de Sedan commemorating the great Franco-Prussian battle. During this period of intense work, he married the daughter of his beloved teacher and took over the management of a painting studio in the museum in Breslau (today, Poland). In 1889, he moved to Berlin, where he devoted himself to photography, in which the former chemistry student had always been interested. He had some success in this growing field, travelled again to Jerusalem and returned to painting around 1907. His work was then influenced by Impressionism, and his main motif became the Luneburg Heath. He retired to this remote area until his death. Schirm's artworks are represented in some of the most important collections in Germany.

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