

Anton von Werner, *The 70th Birthday of Commercial Councilor Valentin Manheimer* (1887)

Abstract

This portrait of the Jewish entrepreneur and commercial councilor Valentin Manheimer (b. 1815) was painted by the Hohenzollern court painter Anton von Werner (1843–1915)—and therein lies much of its significance, for it conveys the extent to which Jews had entered the ranks of the upper classes in Berlin and had thus become, in one sense at least, “court worthy.” Werner was commissioned to paint Manheimer’s 70th birthday celebration, which took place in the fountain house in the garden of his villa at Bellevuestraße 8 in Berlin. We see Manheimer’s wife Philippine (third from left, in the black dress), as well as his daughters and grandchildren. That Frau Manheimer commissioned the famous painter of Prussian historical scenes and imperial royalty to document this event, and that he accepted, suggests the esteem that even a milliner of women’s clothing could command in the new Berlin. Manheimer had arrived in the city in 1836; he started his textile business, according to the firm’s legend, with only the money he had won in a state lottery. Even before the founding of the empire, Manheimer’s talent for industrial production and international marketing had allowed him to amass a considerable fortune. By the 1880s, his firm employed around 8,000 people, but it went bankrupt during the Great Depression, which began in 1929.

Source



Source: Anton von Werner, *Der siebzigste Geburtstag des Kommerzienrates Valentin Manheimer* [*The 70th Birthday of Commercial Councilor Valentin Manheimer*]. Oil on canvas (1887). Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, Inventar-Nr. 1991/1848.

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