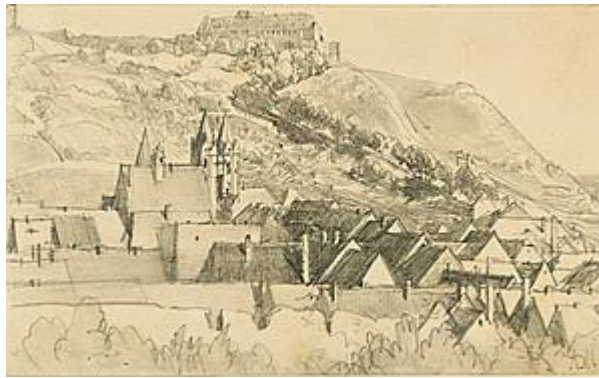


# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Adolph MENZEL (Breslau 1815 - Berlin 1905)**

**A View of Freyburg, with Schloss Neuenburg**

Pencil, with stumping.

Signed with the artist's initials A. M. at the lower right.

95 x 154 mm. (3 3/4 x 6 in.)

This small drawing, which may be dated to 1865, is a view of the town of Freyburg in the German state of Saxony-Anhalt, dominated by the 11th century castle of Schloss Neuenburg, perched on a hill in the background. The prominent church with two towers in the middle distance is the Romanesque-Gothic Sankt Marien Kirche, built in the 13th century and partially rebuilt in the 15th century. At the extreme upper left edge of the drawing may be seen a small part of the castle keep or fortified tower, known today as 'Dicker Wilhelm', which is part of the Neuenberg castle complex.

The present sheet may be compared stylistically with another pencil drawing by Menzel of the castle of Neuenburg seen from a different angle, of identical dimensions, from a small sketchbook of 1865 now in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin.

The first known owner of this drawing was the German industrialist and politician Walther Rathenau (1867-1922), who served as foreign minister during the Weimar Republic. After his assassination in 1922, his collection, including the present sheet, passed to his nephew, Ernst Rathenau (1897-1986), a director of the publishing house Euphorion Verlag in Berlin. Rathenau wrote and published catalogues of the prints and drawings of such German Expressionist artists as Erich Heckel, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Oskar Kokoschka and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. He emigrated to America in 1938, leaving his collection in the care of his cousin F. J. Sedlmayr, and settled in New York. He became a naturalized American citizen, changing his first name to Ernest, and eventually returned to publishing. After the Second World War much of Rathenau's collection, which had been seized by the Nazis from Sedlmayr in Amsterdam, was returned to him.

**Artist description:**

Adolph Friedrich Erdmann von Menzel began his career working in his father's lithography shop in Breslau (now Wroclaw in Poland) and later in Berlin, where his family moved in 1830. A brief period of study at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin in 1833 seems to have been the sum total of his formal training, and he is thought to have taught himself how to paint. At the outset of his career he worked as an illustrator, his activity in this field perhaps best exemplified by a series of some four hundred designs for wood engravings produced to accompany Franz Kugler's History of Frederick the Great, published in instalments between 1840 and 1842. During the late 1840's and 1850's he was occupied mainly with a cycle of history paintings illustrating the life of Frederick the Great.

In 1861 Menzel received his most important official commission, a painting of The Coronation of King William I at Königsberg, on which he worked for four years. In the following decade, his lifelong interest in scenes of contemporary life culminated in what is arguably his masterpiece as a painter; the large canvas of The Iron Rolling Mill, painted between 1872 and 1875 and immediately purchased by the National-Galerie in Berlin. The last three decades of his career saw Menzel firmly established as one of the leading artists in Germany, a prominent figure in Prussian society and the recipient of numerous honours including, in 1898, elevation to the nobility. In the late 1880's he began to abandon painting in oils in favour of gouaches, although old age meant that these in turn were given up around the turn of the century. Yet he never stopped drawing in pencil and chalk, able always to find expression for his keen powers of observation. A retrospective exhibition of Menzel's work, held at the National-Galerie in Berlin a few weeks after the artist's death in 1905, included more than 6,400 drawings and almost 300 watercolours, together with 129 paintings and 250 prints.

A passionate and supremely gifted draughtsman, Menzel was equally adept at watercolour, pastel, gouache and chalk. He was also able to draw with either hand, although he seems to have favoured his left. An immensely prolific artist (over four thousand drawings by him, together with 77 sketchbooks, are in the collection of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin alone), it is said that Menzel was never without a sketchbook or two in his pocket. His friend Paul Meyerheim described the artist's appearance: 'In his overcoat he had eight pockets, which were partially filled with sketchbooks, and he could not comprehend that there are artists who make the smallest outings without having a sketchbook in their pocket...an especially large pocket was installed...to hold a leather case, which held a pad, a couple of shading stumps and a gum eraser.' Menzel was widely admired as a draughtsman by his contemporaries, both in Germany and abroad, and Edgar Degas, for one, is known to have owned at least one drawing by him.