

power. Victory owed as much to German exhaustion as it did to an AEF whose fighting power did not yet match its fighting qualities.

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*In the Mainstream: The Art of Alexis Jean Fournier (1865-1948).*

By Rena Neumann Coen. (St. Cloud, Minn.: North Star Press, 1985. Pp. 99. Illustrations, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

To rediscover a fine artist, to dust off years of neglect, and to restore him to the position he once occupied are among the great pleasures of art scholarship. Thanks to Rena Neumann Coen, professor of art history at St. Cloud State University, Alexis Jean Fournier can now be added to the list of rediscovered. In this fully illustrated, well-documented account, Coen tracks the painter from his birth to French Canadian immigrants in frontier Minnesota through his struggle as a marginally trained artist to Paris and Venice in the 1890s, to East Aurora, New York, as the art director of the Roycroft arts and crafts community, and finally to South Bend and Brown County, Indiana, in the 1920s.

Coen relates a romantic tale, and the urbane and intelligent Fournier emerges as a likely hero. Lacking an artistic background and inspirational masters or masterpieces in Minneapolis and armed with only the rudiments of formal training, Fournier progresses from a sign writer in 1883 to a full-fledged artist in 1888. He makes the requisite pilgrimage to Paris in 1893 for his first formal training at the Academie Julian where he comes under the influence of Henri Harpignies, the inheritor of the pastoral landscape tradition founded by Charles-François Daubigny, Camille Corot, and Charles Emile Jacques. Fournier returns home in 1895 armed with sixty canvases glowing with French atmosphere. The French side of his patrimony dominates the next twenty years as six return trips to France continually restoke the fires. Fournier becomes much more his own man when he stops going to France, gets out of his studio, loosens his brush stroke, confronts nature with his own eyes, and applies his considerable talents to the hills of western New York and Brown County. It is disappointing that the book goes dry at this point. Only thirteen of the ninety-nine pages and eleven of the eighty-three color illustrations cover the last half of his sixty-year career.

Fournier's is a true midwestern success story, told cautiously by Coen who relies heavily on the only readily available primary source material, that found among the clippings of the artist's scrapbook. Unfortunately, this dependence on articles from a tub-thumping local press leads inevitably to bias in favor of the home-

town-boy-made-good. To suggest that Fournier's accomplishments are singular achievements does the artist a disservice and raises him to a position that he cannot maintain. In fact, his experiences are not terribly different from those of his two friends from Paris days, Adolph Shulz and Adam Emory Albright, with whom he entered the Indiana scene of the 1920s.

Not only was Fournier not an isolated phenomenon, in many ways he was the stereotypical midwestern artist of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. His remarkable metamorphosis from advertising drudge to brilliant painter was repeated by many regional artists. Although this pattern of success satisfies a nostalgic notion of a rustic, isolated, unsophisticated Midwest, it is proving to be a myth. In Minneapolis, Indianapolis, and every other city and sizeable town, there appears in the 1880s a core group of art enthusiasts whose zealous purpose was to bring culture to the prairie. Their art societies led to art exhibitions, art schools, art collecting, and art museums in short order. Local artists were the direct beneficiaries of this new interest. Fournier, like T. C. Steele and William Merritt Chase before him, counted on this local patronage to finance their study abroad, and many artists returned home to its reembrace. As a result of such patronage the possibility of remaining close to home and painting familiar scenes was open to the midwestern artists for the first time.

Coen's study of Fournier adds an intriguing chapter to the story of this midwestern artistic context. For the artist himself, it is the first rather than the last word.

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Martin F. Krause, Jr.

*Great River: An Environmental History of the Upper Mississippi, 1890-1950.* By Philip V. Scarpino. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985. Pp. viii, 219. Notes, map, table, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$24.00.)

In this fine work on the environmental history of the upper Mississippi River from 1890 to 1950, Philip V. Scarpino clearly dispels the widely held opinion that environmental issues are post-World War II phenomena. The author describes in detail in this volume how man-made changes prior to the war radically altered the environment of the area and produced articulate spokespersons and groups who advocated policies and programs that affected their interests.

The rapid urbanization and industrialization of the upper Mississippi River valley created the need to adapt the river to the changing needs of the inhabitants of the area. The decline of the white pine industry cleared the way for the development of electric power through the construction of a hydroelectric plant at Keokuk, Iowa. This project, which provided electric power for a broad area