

This article includes information provided by J.H. Scheltema for the Melbourne weekly Table Talk in 1888.

The original article did not have a headline so it may have been thought to belong to the article before it. Few will have read it, and nobody referred to it over the following 135 years, as its information was not used anywhere in Australia, until now. Where the text above presents items that are inconsistent with those in the following article, the latter article should be preferred.

“Few things indicate more truly the progress of a country than its growing approbation of the fine arts, since that very interest betokens intellectual advancement and enlightened minds must have the best effect upon the general improvement of a people. It must be to a recognition of our finer perceptions that Melbourne is indebted for the settling in our midst of artists of repute, who can be expected to help us forward in our artistic aspirations.

The latest addition to the number of artists now living amongst us is Mr. J. H. Scheltema, a Dutch painter of high repute. He was born 27 years ago at the Hague, Holland, and like many other celebrated painters, at an early age displayed those tendencies which were afterwards to shape his whole career. As soon as his youthful fingers could handle a pencil, and before he had received a single lesson in drawing, he produced very ambitious, but of course immaturity conceived and necessarily faultily executed drawings, in which the child-genius fancied he depicted the leading incidents in the whole world's history.

A second series, scarcely less ambitious followed, in which the young painter, taking a more circumscribed canvas, strove to illustrate the history of his own land, giving particular attention to terrible accidents, all sorts of street scenes and shocking events of various descriptions. Crude though these efforts were and wanting in artistic value, they had a claim upon attention from the strong power of dramatic expression they indicated as among the developable characteristics of the young painter.

More advanced in years, young Scheltema went to Rotterdam, under the care of Mr. Bergsi, a very conscientious painter of rural interiors, by whose advice and with whose assistance he engaged on an intricate study of native and natural objects, casting off forever the nonsensical outbursts of the past and considering the basis upon which he had previously worked so many years, oblivious in the earnest study of realism.

Mr. Scheltema is an enthusiastic advocate of that part of his art which seeks the illustration of nature as its principal aim, and in his early days a robust constitution enabled him to indulge in many extended rambles about his native land in search of the picturesque and beautiful. In this manner he traversed the woods, plains and marshes in his own country and many parts of North Germany, Belgium and France as a true pioneer of art, discovering many a hitherto unknown spot, and in summer and winter seeing much that was valuable in after hours of reflections and development with no other companion than his paint box, and his "Edda" the sublime Norse Saga, and sketched and studied the traces even of the deer in the first fallen snow. Many a summer night night (sic) he spent *a la belle etoile* in Sherwoods or on the elegiac heath with some Celtic stone cave for shelter, watching his greatest charm - the rosy morn.

He had several teachers among whom were Mr. Bertelman an idealist of the romantic school, who made him copy very extensively from engravings after Le Brun and Poussin, illustrating the Alexandrine wars, the only advantage he acknowledges from that course of instruction being that he acquired

some in-sight into the "draperie", while it also gave this impressionable painter a strong disgust for historical composition. He then went to the Hague Academy under Mr Koelman, an eminent painter of figures and an able sculptor, from whom he imbibed his first sound principles of art. He also expresses his indebtedness to Mr. Alphonse Lang, of Vienna, who was also a professor there. From the Hague, the painter went to the Academy at Rotterdam, where he was under Mr. Striening, a master who never touched his pupil's work, but freely hinted improvements. For five years after this period Mr Scheltema enjoyed a subsidy from the King of Holland, which enabled him to prosecute his studies very comfortably.

Proceeding to Antwerp the painter met Mr. Verlat, an eminent artist, who excelled in general work, and who proved a rude but excellent master, and who is now famous for his "Defense du Troupeau", as well as other clever works. At Antwerp the young painter found too many artists, the struggle for life being too keen. He, however, managed to obtain some commissions, and remained years in that city, leaving then for Paris and London, and coming eventually to Melbourne.

As an artist, Mr. Scheltema has established himself in a studio in Sydney Terrace, Wellington Parade, East Melbourne, and, while devoting himself particularly to portrait painting, he is yet an accomplished and successful worker in landscapes, animal genre and architectural paintings”.

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