



Bernardus Johannes Blommers, *The Mother's Joy*, ca. 1875, watercolour, black chalk with white highlights, 35.7 x 25.6 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Dutch artist Bernardus Johannes Blommers (1845–1914) belonged to the Hague School of painters, who greatly admired the realism of the French Barbizon school. He worked in lithography before attending the Hague Akademie, where he was taught by Jan (Johan) Philip Koelman (1818–1893) until 1868. Blommers's early paintings were strongly inspired by Dutch

artist Jozef Israëls (1824–1911), and were primarily genre works portraying fishermen and their wives. In the 1890s, Blommers began to experiment with a looser style. While he mainly painted maritime and genre scenes, he also partook in the idealization of motherhood typical in paintings of this era. In *The Mother's Joy*, a mother sits with her infant in her lap. She has a small toy in her right hand and with the other she firmly holds the baby's wrist. The two figures, bound together by familial ties, are conjoined pictorially by the white hats on both their heads. They engage in a private gaze, indicating the intimate joy of motherhood and the unconditional love a child develops for his or her caregiver. The smile on the mother's face explicitly communicates her joy to her child and to the viewer. The interaction seems to be a game or momentary distraction: the green pot on the left is boiling, suggesting that it is almost feeding time. The close focus on the three elements of mother, child and pot emphasize what constituted the ideal mother of the nineteenth century: domestic duties and bearing children.

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