



Thérèse Schwartze, *Mother and Her Children in Church*, 1886, oil on canvas, 195.6 x 139.7 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Thérèse Schwartze (1851–1918) was a Dutch portrait painter and daughter of artist Johan Georg Schwartze (1814–1874). She is best known for her portraits of the nineteenth-century Dutch *beau monde* and members of the royal family, rendered in a flamboyant, decidedly un-Dutch

style that contributed to her fame and wealth. In addition, Schwartze occasionally painted staged scenes of desolate peasant life. The style of this genre work was influenced not only by French academic painting, but also by contemporary artists of the Hague School, such as Jozef Israëls (1824–1911). Situated in the Hague between 1860 and 1890, the Hague School was greatly inspired by the realist painters of the French Barbizon school. In this work, a peasant woman sits with her three children against the back wall of a church. The mother holds her infant protectively under her coat while she clasps her sleeping daughter's hand in her own. Her son stands behind her with a book in hand, presumably the Bible or a related religious text. A bulletin on the left wall, dated February 1886, is most likely a call for charity. Schwartze's portrait idealizes the daily lives of the common people. These figures are in fact models, wearing costumes the artist used in other works such as *Poor yet Rich* (1887). Contributing to the emotive impact of this painting is the absence of a father, which is very likely the reason the destitute family waits to receive charity.

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