



## Biography

Light touch, warm palette, muffled atmospheres, languid felines and lively little dogs... such are the characteristics of Henriëtte Ronner-Knip's work. Born in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 1821, Henriëtte Knip comes from a family of artists. Her mother, the first wife of her father, Josephus-Angustus Knip, a landscape painter, is Pauline Rifer de Courcelles, a painter specialized in bird figures.

Very early on, the young Henriëtte showed obvious plastic predispositions: she made a large number of studies, sketches and copies from her parents' work. However, her father, suffering from a vision problem, was losing the use of one eye. From then on, he chooses to pass on part of his knowledge to his daughter, whom he trained intensively in the technique of painting: he offers her an academic teaching.

Henriëtte exercises her hand and her glance by multiplying the subjects studied. Her precocious talent allows her to sell her first painting at the age of 15. One year later, she exhibits her work at the annual art exhibition in Düsseldorf. From then on, she regularly contributes to art events in Germany and Holland. In 1838, the artist placed her paintings on the picture rails of the Salon. Her work consists of pastoral landscapes, agricultural figures, genre scenes and portraits. However, from 1840 onwards, Henriëtte Knip, who was 19 years old, was in charge of the family's obligations and finances. Indeed, her father, who had become blind, was forced to stop practising his profession. Henriëtte's growing popularity enabled her to provide for her family.

In 1848, she was elected to a society of Dutch artists founded in 1839 in Amsterdam: *Arti et Amicitiae*. This private institution played a major role on the Dutch art scene, particularly in Amsterdam's art schools. From 1850 onwards, Henriëtte adopted the name Ronner-Knip, following her marriage to Teico Ronner, with whom she gave birth to six children. Her husband, in fragile health, was not able to ensure the survival of his family and the artist was obliged to provide the family income: she therefore increased her canvas production. On this occasion, she moves to Brussels. During this period, she multiplied the figurations of dogs presented in carts, a common means of transport for the less well-off farmers and peddlers during the 19th century. In 1860, she exhibited one of her most popular works in the Brussels Museum of Fine Arts: this event established her reputation as a painter of canine subjects. The kings of Hanover, Prussia, Portugal and the Queen of Belgium commissioned her to paint portraits of their dogs. The artist is also known for his numerous royal portraits and apartment dog figures of Marie Henriette of Austria and Princess Marie of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen.

However, from 1870 onwards, she devoted herself entirely to her favourite subjects: playful, long-haired cats in bourgeois settings. Very popular with a clientele from the Victorian bourgeoisie, figurines of these domesticated animals flourish on the walls of the apartments.

Henriëtte Ronner-Knip also chose to have a large property built, with an extension fitted out with a glass façade. She has cats, dogs and parrots there, which serve as models for her paintings. Indeed the artist manages to capture the expression of these felines, with a certain virtuosity, which she encamps in an elaborate decor. Between 1880 and 1890, the artist chose to present popular motifs inspired by Japanese and Chinese art, in her productions.

In this context, her plastic productions became particularly in demand at the Belgian Court and commissions from English notables abounded. His paintings are presented at the Palace of Fine Arts, during the Colombian World Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. They are also exhibited at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and at the National Gallery in London.

## Museums

Palace of Fine Arts - Exposition Mondiale Colombienne de Chicago, dans l'Illinois  
Rijksmuseum, à Amsterdam  
National Gallery à Londres

**Bibliography**

BENEZIT, E., Dictionnaire critique des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs, Gründ, Paris, 1999.

VAN DER HORST, Cats and Kittens at Play: The Art of Henriette Ronner-Knip, 1821-1909, ACC Art Books, 1998.