



Adrien-Joseph Heymans (1839 - 1921)

View of 'De Keizer' in Wechelderzande

Oil on canvas.

585 × 780 mm.

Signed lower right.

Note

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Gasthof De Keizer had become an important gathering place for plein-air painters working in the northern Campine region of Belgium. With a history dating back to the seventeenth century, the inn evolved into a thriving artists' colony frequented by Impressionist painters such as Adrien-Joseph Heymans, Théodore Verstraete van de Velde, Jacques Crabeels, Isidore Meyers, and Guillaume Rosseels. This circle of artists later became known as the School of Wechelderzande, celebrated for its direct observation of nature and its atmospheric depictions of the Campine landscape.

Exhibitions

Hammelburg, *Adrien-Joseph Heymans (1839–1921), “De Keizer” und der Pleinairismus in den Kempen* (“De Keizer” and Plein-Air Painting in the Campine), 25 September – 15 November 2009, illustrated in the exhibition catalogue (p. 33).

Artist description:

Adrien-Joseph Heymans (1839–1921) was a Belgian landscape painter and one of the leading figures of the late nineteenth-century Belgian school of naturalism. Renowned for his atmospheric depictions of rural scenery, he played a pivotal role in the development of the Kalmthout School, a group of artists inspired by the heathlands and forests of the Belgian Campine region.

Born in Dendermonde, Heymans studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in his hometown before continuing his training at the Academy in Brussels. Early in his career he painted in a Romantic style, but exposure to the French Barbizon School and to plein-air painting led him toward a more naturalistic approach that emphasized the changing effects of light and atmosphere.

From the 1860s onward, Heymans worked extensively in the region of Kalmthout Heath, where he became one of the principal artists associated with the Kalmthout School. His landscapes—depicting heathlands, marshes, forests, and quiet country roads—are characterized by restrained compositions, subtle tonal harmonies, and a sensitive observation of nature. In the 1880s his palette became lighter and his brushwork freer, reflecting contemporary developments in Impressionism while retaining his distinctive poetic realism.

Heymans exhibited regularly at major salons in Belgium and abroad and enjoyed considerable critical and commercial success during his lifetime. He was elected a member of the Royal Academy of Belgium and received numerous official distinctions, confirming his status as one of Belgium's foremost landscape painters.

Today, Adrien-Joseph Heymans is regarded as a key figure in nineteenth-century Belgian landscape painting. His work bridges the traditions of Romanticism and Realism while anticipating aspects of Impressionism, and his evocative views of the Belgian countryside remain among the finest examples of the nation's naturalist art.