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Visit to a German Chess Artist



In late summer Andreas Saremba paid a visit to the German chess artist Elke Rehder – here is his short report.

Even if remarkably many chess historical works of high quality have been published in the past ten to fifteen years, we miss one very painfully: A really comprehensive presentation of the development of chess journalism in the 19th century – first as chess columns in the daily press and other periodicals, then in the specialized chess press as well. Yes, there are the commendable publications by Ken Whyld (*Chess Columns – A List*) and Gino di Felice (*Chess Periodicals*), but these are pure listings – valuable as reference works, but nothing where chess historically interested people would like to bury themselves in with relish.

Surprisingly, a step in this direction stems from a woman (this alone is rather unusual in the male-dominated chess world) who was known to experts more as an artist and an illustrator of bibliophilic books up to now. Elke Rehder has dealt with the game of chess in varied ways as a paintress and a graphic artist, her extensive web sites (elke-rehder.de and schach-chess.com) report comprehensively about these and other activities.

As I went for private reasons on a journey to North Germany anyway, I seized the opportunity in late summer to meet Mrs. Rehder in person; my "self-invitation" met with a kind response, and just as cordially was the welcome by the Rehder couple in the rural idyll just outside Hamburg. The artist's workshop belonged to the dwelling, and so Marie-Theres and I not only received an impression of the working atmosphere, but we could also peer a large part of the works devoted to chess at the same time. The photograph shows the exhibition spontaneously arranged for us, with the artist on the right. Though the lady on the left looks, due to her clothes, like an integral part of the pictures, she consists of flesh and blood and has only to do something with chess insofar as she is married to me.



Previous to our visit I was not aware of how intensely Elke Rehder is dealing with the subject books – although you can actually look it up at great length on the net (www.schach-chess.com/Schachbuecher.htm). She shrugged my ignorance off and presented us her works (unfortunately to a large part out of stock), enriched with background information, inter alia memories of Ernst Jünger. Also her husband (no active chess player, but a most knowledgeable antiquarian) proved himself to be excellently familiar with the topic.

It would stand to reason that you have to make certain compromises as the author of a book on "chess in newspapers of the 19th century" – after all the potential readership is not elitist, but small. Naturally Elke Rehder had much more material at hand than she could finally include in the preset volume, and she had also wished for a different get-up – the paperback cover is vulnerable to damages and seems inadequate to the book and its price. But in the end the content is decisive, and this has as its self-chosen motto "This book should serve as an amusement and should provide information on the history of development of chess". In my view both requirements are met by the book – I have personally learned lots of new things in an entertaining way, particularly about less known characters of chess history and chess journalism. Those who expect a work in the style of van der Linde, von der Lasa, or Murray will not be satisfied. All others, like me, will regard this book as a considerable gain.

Andreas Sarembo

[Translation: Ralf Binnewirtz]



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Excerpts from the book at

www.schach-chess.com/Schachzeitschriften.htm.

You can order from

[Saar-Schach-Agentur](#) Homburg or other chess dealers.

Price: 29.80 € + postage

Further links:

- [Website Elke Rehder](#)
- [Chess books – current offers](#) by Elke Rehder
- [Ausgelesen! \[5\]](#) – review & interview by Franz Jittenmeier
- ChessBase article: [Frühgeschichte der Schachspalten](#) by Peter Muender