

JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

VP5038 ex CS0414

JAN BRUEGHEL THE ELDER
Brussels 1568 - 1625 Antwerp

The edge of a village with people dancing on a riverbank, a fish seller and Jan Brueghel conversing with a friend

Signed and dated lower left: *BREVGHEL 1616*
FECIT

Copper: 10 x 14 ¾ in / 25.5 x 37.5 cm



PROVENANCE:

Johann Wilhelm, Kurfürst von der Pfalz (Elector Palatine) (1658-1716), located in one of the two Gemäldekabinetten in the Schloss at Düsseldorf;
his brother Karl III Philipp, Kurfürst von der Pfalz (1661-1742), at Düsseldorf, and at Mannheim from 1730 when recorded there in the inventory of that year; illustrated in the 1731 drawing of the *cabinets* in the Mannheim Palace;
his nephew Karl Theodor von Pfalz-Sulzbach (1724-1799), Kurfürst von der Pfalz from 1743 and Kurfürst von Bayern from 1777, Mannheim and from 1798/9, Munich;
his successor Maximilian IV Joseph, Herzog von Zweibrücken, Elector Palatine and Elector of Bavaria, from 1806 König von Bayern;
by descent in the Bavarian Royal Collection by 1810, when housed at Schleissheim, according to von Mannlich's inventory (see Literature); otherwise probably housed in Lespilliez's Gallery in the northern wing of the Hofgarten;
by descent in the Bavarian Royal Collection, Munich, subsequently Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, kept in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich from 1838 (when inv. 205; from 1884 inv. 696) until 1923, when sold by exchange to Julius Böhler, Munich;
by whom sold in August 1923 to Hans Mettler (1876-1945) of Sankt Gallen, Switzerland;
sold by order of his Beneficiaries, Christie's London, 29th June 1979, lot 12;
with David Koetser, Zurich, from whom acquired by a European private collector in 1979-80
Sale Sotheby's 9th July 2008 (lot 19)
With Richard Green, London
With Johnny Van Haeften, London
Private Collection New York, 2009 - 2022

EXHIBITED:

Brussels, Musée des Beaux-Arts, *Bruegel. Un dynastie de peintres*, 18th September-18th November 1980, no.130, illus.
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Breughel-Brueghel*, 7th December 1997-14th April 1998, no.63, illus.
Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, *Breughel-Brueghel*, 2nd May-26th July 1998, no.59, illus.

LITERATURE:

Detail des Peintures du Cabinet Electoral de Dusseldorf, printed but undated (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek), no.2
Inventarium über die in Ihrer Churfürstl. Dhlgt. beijden Cabineten zu Düsseldorf beffundere rahre gemäl,....welche von Gülich und Bergischen HoffCamerRathen Karsch...., MS, 1730 (Karlsruhe, Generallandesarchiv), no.2: *Ein bauern Tantz von F. Brugel*

Cabinets de Son Altesse Serenissime Electorale du château de Mannheim, l'an 1731, 1731, where reproduced in the lower left corner of the drawing of the fourth wall (Paris, Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie, MS 409)

J van Gool, *De Nieuwe Schouburg der Nederlandsche Kunstschilders en Schilderessen*, The Hague, 1750-51, vol. II, p.559

Detail des Peintures des deux Cabinets Electoraux à Mannheim, undated MS (Munich, Geheimes Hausarchiv, inv. 882 v g), no.194

C von Mannlich, *Beschreibung der Königlich-Baierischen Gemälde-Sammlungen. Dritter Band. Enthaltend die Gemälde zu Schleisheim und Lustheim*, Munich 1810, p.180, no.2224, as one of a pair with no.2225, 'Johann Breughel. Zwey Landschaften mit Figuren. Wägen und ländlichen Gebäuden. Auf dem ersten Bilde die See mit Fischerbooten, ein Fischmarkt und tanzende Bauern und Bäuerinnen....Auf Kupfer. – H. 9,6. Br. 1,1', as both hanging at Schleissheim

G von Dillis, *Verzeichnis der Gemaelde in der königlichen Pinakothek zu München*, Munich 1838, p.564, no.205 (reprinted in Böttger below)

Katalog der Gemälde-Sammlung der Kgl. Älteren Pinakothek in München. Mit einer historischen Einleitung von Dr. Franz von Reber, Munich 1884, and revised ed. 1886, p.143; 7th ed. 1898 and 8th ed. 1901, p.158, and 1908 ed., p.150, no.696 (no.797 in the Marggraff catalogue), 'Volksbelustigung vor einer kleinen an einem Fluss liegenden Stadt. Inscribed lower left: BRUEGHEL 1616. FECIT. Copper. 0.25 m. high, 0.36 m. wide. From the Gallery at Mannheim. (Room (cabinet) XIII)'

A von Wurzbach, *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon*, vol. I, Vienna/Leipzig 1906, p.205

Y Thiéry, *Le Paysage Flamand au XVIIe siècle*, Brussels 1953, p.176

P Böttger, *Die Alte Pinakothek in München. Mit einem Anhang: Abdruck des frühesten Gemäldeverzeichnisses der Pinakothek aus dem Jahre 1838 von Georg von Dillis. Nach den heutigen Inventarnummen identifiziert von Gisela Scheffler*, Munich 1972 (republishing von Dillis's inventory)

K Ertz, *Jan Brueghel der Ältere*, Cologne 1979, pp.52, 55, 58, 78, 169, 222, 446 and 608, cat. no.305; figs. 27 (colour) and 538 (detail)

K Ertz in P Roberts-Jones (ed.), *Bruegel. Un dynastie de peintres*, exh. cat. Brussels 1980, no.130, illus.

K Ertz in *Breughel-Breughel*, exh. cat., Vienna 1997, pp.228-30, no.63, illus.

K Ertz in *Breughel-Breughel*, Antwerp 1998, pp.190-2, no.59, illus.

E Korthals-Altes, 'The collections of the Palatine Electors: new information, documents and drawings', *The Burlington Magazine*, March 2003, pp.212-13, no.2

M Klinge in M Klinge and D Lüdke, *David Teniers der Jüngere 1610-1690....*, exh. cat., Karlsruhe 2005, p.32-3, fig. 5

This outstanding painting is one of the finest landscapes on copper by Jan Brueghel the Elder, nicknamed 'Velvet' Brueghel for the delicacy of his brushwork. By 1616, when this work was made, Brueghel was court painter to the Habsburg Regents of the Netherlands, Archduke Albrecht VII and the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia. His paintings were collected by royalty and aristocracy throughout Europe in his lifetime, and like those of his father, Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525/30-1569), demand for them never waned. *The edge of a village with people dancing* was acquired by Johann Wilhelm, Kurfürst von der Pfalz (1658-1716) before 1716 and remained in the Palatine/Bavarian Royal Collection until sold from the Alte Pinakothek in 1923.

Jan Brueghel developed over several paintings the theme of a riverbank village with strong diagonal recession from right to left and human bustle on the left bank contrasted with the tranquillity of the watery world on the right. The forerunner of the group is the painting of 1606 in the Duke of Wellington's collection at Apsley Houseⁱ. The first of the true series, in which the viewpoint is lower and more intimate, the figures nearer and more numerous, is the painting in Bonn, dated 1611ⁱⁱ. Following this is the larger picture in Vienna, dated 1614ⁱⁱⁱ. Brueghel also painted the composition in reverse, with the village on the right, such as the 1615 painting in Munich^{iv}. This is on a copper plate of

identical size to the present work and shares with it a Mannheim provenance, although they are not likely to have been conceived as a pair. With each work Brueghel attained a greater degree of pictorial sophistication, particularly in the arrangement of the figures. The present painting of 1616 is the culmination of the series, with its extraordinary delicacy, fluidity and sense of space. It is also the most elegant of the series, with the figures arranged in a balletic diagonal which leads the eye deep into the background of the picture.

Brueghel depicts the village on a market day, with well-dressed locals arriving by boat or covered waggon. In the foreground is a fish seller with a housewife bargaining for his wares. The exquisite fineness of Brueghel's brushwork is apparent in this foreground group, with his understanding of every fold in the housewife's golden dress and the intricacies of the green cloak of the man with his back turned to us. In the centre, a knot of peasants dancing in an impromptu *kermesse* lends whirling vitality to this focal point of the painting. Beyond them, a crowd in the shade of a tree listens intently to a man reading from a broadsheet; in the days of limited literacy, this was how most people received news of the outside world. In the left distance, the leafy village street is irradiated with soft sunshine. To the right is the harbour, with the shimmering, blue river and distant white sails enveloped in a Paradise-like haze.

In the right foreground, two elegantly dressed men in black discourse animatedly. The left-hand figure is a self-portrait of Jan Brueghel the Elder, easily recognisable from the fine 1612-13 portrait by Rubens of Jan and his family in the Courtauld Institute of Art, London^v. The inclusion of the portrait suggests that this painting was made for a particularly favoured patron, with whom Jan was on terms of intimacy. Perhaps he is even the other black-clad figure in this work. There is only one other self-portrait in Jan's oeuvre: in the 1614 painting in Vienna, cited above. To the right of the chatting gentlemen is a dazzling group of women and children wearing the finest lace and millstone ruffs, a symphony of blue, ochre, pink, green, yellow and red. Klaus Ertz has suggested that this strongly-lit group represents Brueghel's family^{vi}. If the lady in green is Jan's second wife, Catharina van Marienberghe (d.1627), the little girl in blue could be their daughter Catharina (b.1610). However, there was no baby at the breast in 1616: Maria Brueghel was born in 1611 and Ambrosius (the painter) in 1617.

A smaller, exact copy of this painting in the Galleria Sabauda, Turin bears a signature and date of 1603 (or 1608), but is not of good enough quality to be autograph^{vii}.

NOTE ON PROVENANCE

This superb Brueghel was acquired by Johann Wilhelm, Kurfürst von der Pfalz (Elector Palatine) (1658-1716) for the Electoral Gallery in Düsseldorf at some time before his death in 1716. He was a major collector, patronizing contemporary artists such as Eglon van der Neer, Adriaen van der Werff, Rachel Ruysch and Jan Weenix. He also collected the work of masters of the previous generation, amassing a huge collection of paintings by Rubens which is in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

This Brueghel is not in Gerhard Karsh's 1719 printed catalogue of the Düsseldorf Gallery, which omits the two hundred or more cabinet pictures kept in two private cabinets and thirty-four works in the Elector's bedroom^{viii}. It is however listed as no.2 in the printed but undated catalogue entitled *Detail des Peintures du Cabinet Electoral de Dusseldorf* (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek)^{ix}. Johann Wilhelm's brother and successor, Elector Karl III Philipp (1661-1742), moved parts of the Düsseldorf collection to his new capital at Mannheim in 1730, where this picture is recorded in the inventory of that year as *Ein bauern Tantz von F. Brugel* (the F stands for *Fluweelen*, 'Velvet' Brueghel)^x. It is recorded again in the last of four anonymous drawings made of the walls of the Cabinets of the Mannheim palace in 1731 (Paris, Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie, MS 409)^{xi}. It hung on the bottom

row, one of six similarly sized pictures by Jan Brueghel the Elder divided into two sequences of three (flanking a larger, joint work by Rubens and Brueghel), the middle work of the left hand row. The 1615 Munich painting, on copper of the same size, a variant of the present composition but in reverse, is in the middle of the right hand row^{xii}. Both works were stated to have been at Mannheim in the 1884 and subsequent Alte Pinakothek catalogues.

The entire collection of the Wittelsbach Elector Karl Theodor was brought in 1798/9 to Munich, where the present painting is listed in the inventory of 1810 compiled by the Gallery director Christian von Mannlich, as one of a pair, hanging in the palace at Schleissheim. After 1836 it was in Leo von Klenze's newly built Alte Pinakothek, where it is included in the 1838 catalogue by George von Dillis, and where it was last listed in 1908^{xiii}. It is not listed in the 1912 catalogue and may well by then have been transferred to one of the Filialgalerien, or kept in the vaults. Brueghel's *Edge of a village* remained in the Bavarian Electoral, Royal and State picture collections until 1923, when it was sold by exchange to the Munich dealer Julius Böhler. The Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen made a number of sales, usually by exchange, in the 1920s and 30s, deaccessioning works from areas in which it was strong, such as Dutch and Flemish art, to acquire paintings from less well represented sections, such as Spanish art. Despite the loss of this wonderful *Edge of a village*, the Alte Pinakothek still has one of the finest collections of Jan Brueghel the Elder's work in the world.

Julius Böhler sold *Edge of a village* in 1923 to Hans Mettler (1876-1945), who joined his father's textile firm in Sankt Gallen, Switzerland in 1900, becoming a junior partner in 1912. He amassed an important collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, starting with a work by Ferdinand Hodler in 1915 and ending with a Cézanne *Baignade* in 1929. In the 1930s Mettler's collecting largely ceased, and this Brueghel was probably his only major Old Master. Upon his death in 1945 he left a life interest in the paintings to his wife; after her death the Impressionists were sold at Christie's London in July 1979, and the Brueghel on 29th June of that year.

BIOGRAPHY

Jan Brueghel the Elder, the second son of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525/30-1569), was one of the most eminent early seventeenth century Flemish masters. He became famous for flowerpieces, landscapes, genre scenes and allegories and was nicknamed 'Velvet Brueghel' because of the delicacy of his brushwork.

Jan was born in Brussels in 1568. He studied watercolour with his grandmother, Mayken Verhulst, and oil painting with Peter Goetkindt. Between 1589/90 and 1596 he travelled in Italy, visiting Naples, Rome and Milan. In Milan he was received by Cardinal Federico Borromeo, who was to become a lifelong patron. Brueghel returned to Antwerp in 1596, becoming master of the guild of St Luke in 1597 and dean in 1602. He visited Prague in 1604, gaining commissions from Emperor Rudolf II.

In 1608 Brueghel is recorded as being in Brussels as court painter to the Habsburg Regents of the Netherlands, Archduke Albrecht VII and the Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia. He kept this appointment until his death. Around 1613 Brueghel travelled to the northern Netherlands on official business with Peter Paul Rubens and Hendrik van Balen, artists with whom he often collaborated.

In 1618 the city magistrates commissioned the twelve major painters of Antwerp to produce a sample of their painterly abilities for the Archduke. Jan Brueghel oversaw a collaborative series of paintings, *Allegory of the Five Senses*, in which Rubens, Josse de Momper the Younger, Frans Snyders, Hendrick van Balen, Frans Francken the Younger, Sebastiaen Vrancx and Jan himself participated.

Admired throughout Europe, Brueghel's paintings are distinguished by a profusion of detail and painted with the delicacy of a miniature. The exquisite quality of his flowerpieces, and his fondness for Paradise landscapes, earned him the titles of 'Flower' and 'Paradise' Brueghel. He died in the Antwerp cholera epidemic of 1625, which also claimed the lives of three of his children. Brueghel's son Jan Breughel II (1601-1678) succeeded to his studio.

ⁱ Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London. Signed and dated 1606, copper 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 in / 27.3 x 40.6 cm. Ertz 1979, *op. cit.*, pp.52, 54, 69, 80, 184, 188 and 580, no.135, fig. 24.

ⁱⁱ Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, inv. 37.2-3141. Signed and dated 1611, panel 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ in / 41.5 x 60.5 cm. Ertz 1979, pp.52, 54, 69, 85, 164, 169, 222 and 597, no.235, fig. 25.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. 9102. Signed and dated 1614, panel 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 52 x 90.5 cm. Ertz 1979, pp.78, 80, 222, 332, 445-46 and 603, no.278, illus. in colour fig. 283.

^{iv} Alte Pinakothek, Munich, inv. 4891. Signed and dated 1615, copper 10 x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 25.8 x 37 cm. Ertz 1979, pp.52, 55, 78, 89, 169 and 605, no.286, fig. 26.

^v Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), The Family of Jan Brueghel the Elder, c. 1613-15. The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust).

^{vi} Ertz 1979, *op. cit.*, p.446, fig. 538.

^{vii} From the collection of Prince Eugenio di Savoia-Soissons, inv. 216. Copper 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in / 19 x 24 cm. Ertz 1979, p.608 and Ertz 1980 *op. cit.*, p.196. See also *Guida breve....*, Turin 1993, vol. 4.

^{viii} GJ Karsch, *Ausführliche und gründliche Specification....in der Galerie der Churfürstlichen Residentz zu Düsseldorf....*, Düsseldorf 1719.

^{ix} See Literature. This appears to have been the source for van Gool, 1751, who follows the same sequence of pictures.

^x See Literature.

^{xi} Illus. Korthals-Altes, *op. cit.*, fig. 98. The four drawings are preceded by a title page inscribed *Le recueil du cabinet des peintres de son Altesse Serenissime Electorale au château de Mannheim*. The drawings and the Electoral inventories are discussed at length on pp.206-18 and are illus. figs. 95-98.

^{xii} See note 4.

^{xiii} It was never at Augsburg, as has been stated by Ertz, 1979 and elsewhere.