

NOVEMBER 30, 2020

Acquisition: Jan Brueghel the Elder Wooded, "Landscape with Travelers"



Jan Brueghel the Elder

Wooded Landscape with Travelers, 1610

oil on wood panel

overall: 37 x 58 cm (14 9/16 x 22 13/16 in.)

framed: 72.39 x 73.98 x 3.49 cm (28 1/2 x 29 1/8 x 13/8 in.)

National Gallery of Art

The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund

2020.26.1

The National Gallery of Art has acquired *Wooded Landscape with Travelers* (1610), an exquisite example of one of Jan Brueghel the Elder's (1568–1625) most popular landscape themes: a well-traveled road winding through woodland. This painting simultaneously reflects the traditional compositional structure developed by 16th-century Netherlandish artists and, through its

compositional structure developed by 16th-century Netherlandish artists and, through its

increased naturalism and celebration of the everyday, prefigures subsequent developments in landscape painting. This work joins two paintings by the artist—*Flowers in a Basket and a Vase* (1615) and *River Landscape* (1607)—in the collection.

One of the most versatile and acclaimed Flemish painters of the 17th century, Jan Brueghel the Elder is known for his flower still lifes, intricate allegories, elaborate gallery paintings, and small-scale landscapes and coastal scenes filled with animated detail. He was the son of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525/1530–1569), the renowned Flemish painter of landscapes, allegories, and scenes of everyday life. Brueghel forged an artistic identity distinct from that of his father and was a close friend and frequent collaborator of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), as well as other Flemish artists.

In composing *Wooded Landscape with Travelers*, Brueghel adopted techniques developed by earlier Flemish landscape painters such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Joachim Patinir (c. 1485–1524) for simulating spatial perspective by using specific color families: warm browns in the immediate foreground, cool greens in the middle ground, and misty shades of blue in the far distance. Brueghel's gently rolling landscape provides a welcoming environment for farmers with loaded carts, herdsman coaxing their livestock, country folk resting and conversing, and more prosperous travelers in a covered carriage. A rustic tavern, a small village with a church tower, and the city view on the distant horizon help to situate the scene in the countryside of Flanders.

This painting was previously owned by Max Stern (1904–1987) of the Galerie Stern, Düsseldorf, before he fled the Nazi regime in December 1937 and emigrated to Canada by way of England. Before the National Gallery acquired the painting, the Swiss art dealer David Koetser (of David Koetser Gallery) and The Dr. & Mrs. Max Stern Foundation, Canada, the heir to Stern's estate, reached a friendly settlement resolving any and all of the Foundation's claims to the painting. The National Gallery acquired the painting from Koetser through the generosity of The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund. The Gallery is also grateful for the careful provenance research conducted on this work by the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich.

Press Release

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