



Johan Barthold Jongkind
(1819-1891)

In the Environs of Nevers
(Aux environs de Nevers)

*signed and dated bottom right:
"Jongkind 1861"*

oil on canvas

h 24.7 cm x b 32.8 cm

WRM Dep. FC 666





Brief Report

This little painting of a rural scene was doubtless a preliminary study for the later work *Ferme à Saint-Parize-le-Chatel*, 1862 [see Stein 2003]. It is a particularly open-mesh weave, which was primed after stretching. On this light-coloured ground, Jongkind first, without any discernible underlying sketch, established the light and shadow areas of the scene in the underlayer with brownish to greenish tones, which he then, as the painting proceeded, worked out in increasingly greater detail. Under the microscope, all the edge regions of the painting reveal blue fibres embedded in the paint layer and in some cases covered by subsequent layers of paint (fig. 11). Comparative microscopic inspection reveals a great similarity between this material and the fibres of what is known as “indigo paper”. These fibres got here before the painting was finally completed. It is conceivable that the work was started in the open air and was wrapped in indigo paper in order, for example, to be carried to the studio. Especially near the edges, the fibres were pressed into the paint layer while it was still wet. Presumably the painting was finished in the studio. From start to finish it was executed quickly, and the covering over or correction of minor elements in the picture also speaks for a rapid working method.

An unusual feature is the stencilled company mark verso, whose orientation and position correspond to the horizontal use of the picture support of the standard size 4 (portrait). In spite of great similarities with the traditional trade-marks of producers and retailers of artists’ supplies, this is the mark of a company which, as Beugniet Ad., first traded as a frame-maker at 18 rue Lafitte in 1847 before moving a few doors down the street to new premises at no. 10 [cf. Constantin 2001, p. 51]. The Beugniet company consisted of a number of family members, and the new address provides evidence for their activity as art dealers, and the inscription “Tableaux Aquarelles” on our trademark could also be an indication that this painting was first offered for sale by the artist through them, and that the stamp was applied in this context. However the possibility cannot be totally excluded that the Beugniet company, given its activities in the field of restoration (which can be documented from 1862), restored Jongkind’s picture (which the artist had signed in 1861) and/or provided it with a frame, and applied their stencil verso in this connexion.



Picture support canvas

Standard format	F4, (33.0 cm x 24.0 cm) horizontal; size no. stencilled on canvas (fig. 2)
Weave	loose open tabby weave
Canvas characteristics	vertical 13 (warp), horizontal 14 (weft) per cm; selvage present on left
Stretching	as a result of a later restoration and a strip lining, the original stretching was abandoned; original stretch marks can still be discerned (especially at the top and right-hand edges)
Stretcher/strainer	strainer with covered corner joins; strainer is provably original in spite of subsequent alteration of the stretching
Stretcher/strainer depth	2.0 cm
Traces left by manufacture/processing	the bars are chamfered towards the inside down to 12 mm
Manufacturer's/dealer's marks	verso, stencilling in black paint (figs. 4, 6) "Beugniet Père Fils & Cie 10, Rue Laffite, Paris"



Ground

Sizing	pieces of the skin of the size are clearly discernible between the threads, the sizing was presumably applied in the form of gelatine (fig. 10)
Colour	off-white
Application	presumably applied with a palette knife; the use of this implement is suggested by the lack of any sign of running or dripping on the turnover edge and by the fact that at the edges the applications are not flush with each other (fig. 9)
Binding medium	presumably oil
Texture	the surface appears smooth, although the structure of the weave can be discerned in the surface of the priming (fig. 7)

Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique	not discernible
Extent/character	brownish underpainting with coarse pigmentation and semi-transparent application; this paint was apparently used in later stages too, but then mostly applied more thickly
Pentimenti	IR-reflectography reveals small changes in the composition in two places: to the left of the house at the height of the roof, the plants are continued further into the area occupied by the sky; this was reduced at a later stage by covering with the colour of the sky; to the left of the cart a further draught animal may have been painted over



Paint layer

Paint application/technique and artist's own revision

the work was executed in three stages:

1. semi-transparent underpainting
2. lay-in of the colour areas and coarse composition of the pictorial elements
3. detailed treatment of e.g. the crown of the tree, placing of further pictorial elements, e.g. woman and child (fig. 8), placing of contour lines and accents; the thickness of the paint layer is highly variable, as shown by a photograph in transmitted light (fig. 4)

Painting tools

brushes

Surface structure

overall the surface structure is varied and lively (fig. 7); depending on the thickness of the paint, the structure of the canvas comes across more strongly than the brush-strokes

Palette

hues revealed by visual microscopic examination: white, pale yellow, orange, red, dark blue, green, brown, black (only as admixture)
VIS spectrometry: cobalt blue, prussian blue(?), chrome or cadmium yellow(?), iron-oxide yellow, yellow ochre, vermilion(?), iron-oxide brown

Binding mediums

presumably oil

Surface finish

Authenticity/condition

the current surface finish is not original, there are isolated signs in the paint layer of residues of an older, yellowed layer of varnish; the picture may be presumed to have been originally varnished



Signature/Mark

When?	during the execution of the picture (figs. 5, 7)
Autograph signature	in colour and consistency, the paint used for the signature matches a green used in various layers of the whole picture; the thickness of the paint layer and the manner of application correspond with those of the painting; the signature matches that found on other works by this artist
Serial	–

Frame

Authenticity	not original
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State of preservation

At some unknown point in time the picture was reinforced at the edges to stabilize the original badly damaged strainer; the form these measures take and the signs of aging suggest this was done some time ago; here and there, raised areas show all-over signs of abrasion, which presumably occurred when the surface was cleaned and/or when the varnish was removed; abrasion marks are also apparent all around the edges of the painted surface; repairs and retouchings are present to a small degree (fig. 3); remains of old paper stuck to verso along with a red seal with the letter A, which cannot be identified in any more detail (figs. 2, 12).

Additional remarks

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Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud Cologne, 8. September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 64, p. 162 f., with ill.
- Stein 2003: Adolphe Stein, *Jongkind Peintures I*, Paris 2003, p. 136
- Constantin 2001: St phanie Constantin, *The Barbizon painters: A guide to their suppliers*, *Studies in Conservation*, vol. 46, no. 1, p. 49–67

Source of illustrations

All illustrations and figures Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud

Examination methods used

- | | |
|--|--|
| ✓ Incident light | ✓ VIS spectrometry |
| ✓ Raking light | – Wood identification |
| – Reflected light | – FTIR (Fourier transform spectroscopy) |
| ✓ Transmitted light | – EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis) |
| ✓ Ultraviolet fluorescence | – Microchemical analysis |
| ✓ Infrared reflectography | |
| – False-colour infrared reflectography | |
| – X-ray | |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy | |

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Date: 06/2005
Date: 05/2010



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Fig. 1
Recto



Fig. 2
Verso





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Fig. 3
Recto under ultra-violet
radiation

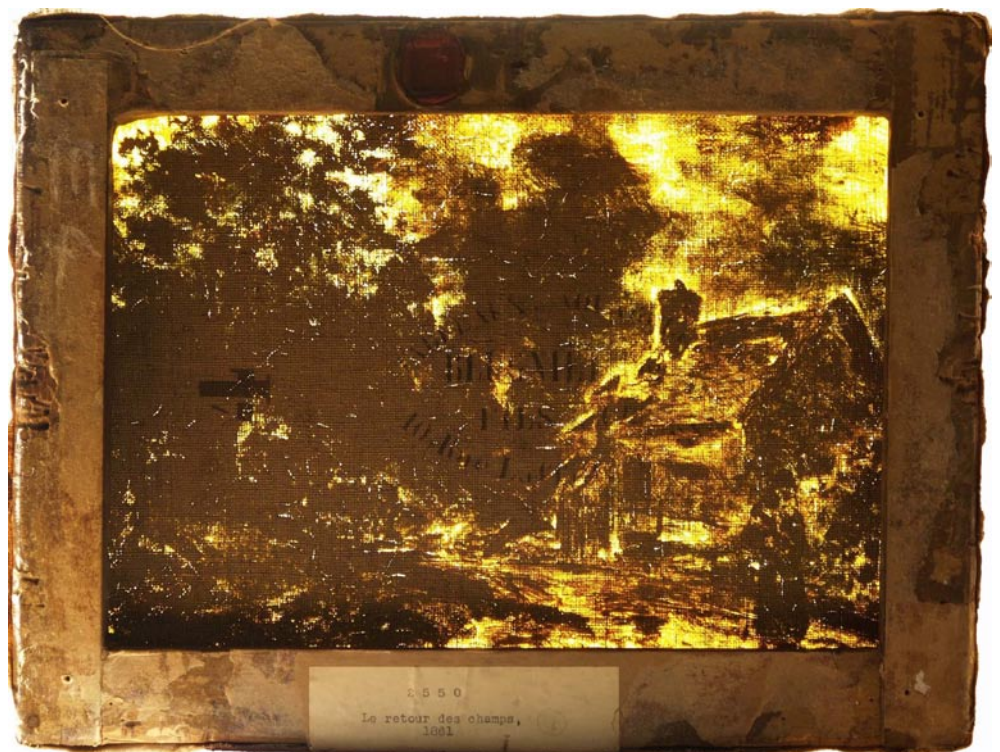


Fig. 4
Verso; the variations
in the thickness of the
different layers of paint
are visible in transmitted
light



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Fig. 5
Detail, signature and date



Fig. 6
Detail of verso,
stamp of the
art dealers
Beugnot (?)



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Fig. 7
Detail in raking light: the surface structure in the region of the signature, strongly characterized by the texture of the canvas



Fig. 8
Detail of the figure: Jongkind used contour lines for the purpose of accentuation



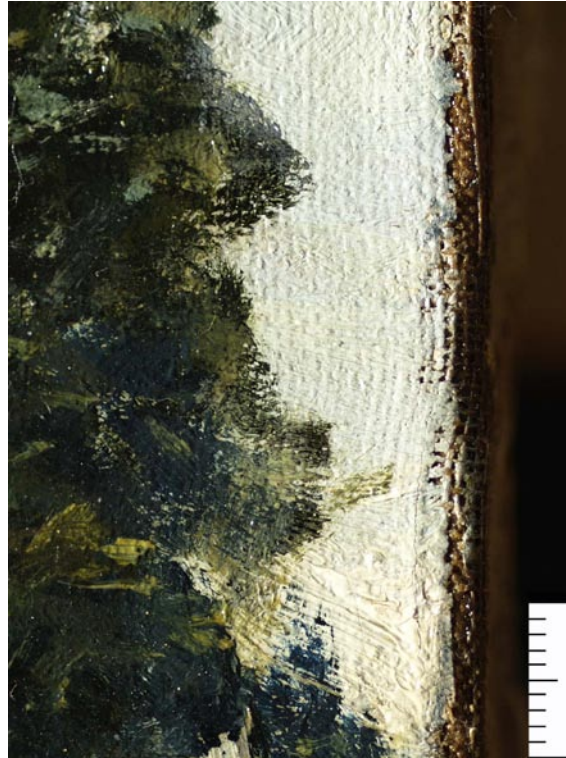


Fig. 9
Detail of the edge of the picture showing how the priming and paint layers were applied



Fig. 10
Open-mesh weave with recognizable “skin” of the sizing and priming material in the interstices between the threads, and the black ink/paint of the stencilled dealer’s mark, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 11
Blue fibres in and under the paint layers along the edges of the picture point to its having been packed in blue paper while still in an unfinished condition, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 12
Letter "A" on the otherwise unidentified seal on the upper edge of the stretcher verso, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)