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## JAN BRUEGHEL THE ELDER

Brussels 1568 - 1625 Antwerp

*A landing stage near a village with shipping and figures.*

Oil on Copper, 26 x 36 cm

Signed and dated lower left: *BRUEGHEL 1601*



*Provenance:* Hjelm collection, Stockholm, before 1937;  
Einar Gustaf Samuel Perman (1893-1976), Stockholm;  
with P. de Boer, Amsterdam, 1963, where acquired, and by descent to the  
present owners;  
Heirs of Franz Koenigs, Sweden.

*Exhibited:* Laren, Singer Museum, *Modernen van Toen 1570-1630: Vlaamse  
schilderkunst en haar invloed*, 15 June – 1 September 1963, no. 34;  
Amsterdam, Gallery Pieter de Boer, *Collection of Old Pictures*, no. 8,  
illustrated.

*Literature:* F. Klauner, "Zur Landschaft Jan Brueghels d. Ä.", *Nationalmusei Årsbok*,  
Stockholm, 1949-50, pp. 14-16, fig. 7;  
K. Ertz, *Jan Brueghel d. Ä. Die Gemälde mit Kritischem Oeuvrekatalog*,  
Cologne 1979, pp.184, 186 and 568-569, no. 68, fig. 213;  
J.A. Welu, *The Collector's Cabinet: Flemish Paintings from new England  
Collections*, exhibition catalogue, Amherst, Worcester Art Museum, 1983, pp.  
32 and 34-35, under no. 7, fig. 7c;  
K. Ertz, *Jan Brueghel der Ältere (1568-1625)*, Lingen 2008, Vol. 1, no. 112,  
pp.254-256, illustrated.

First published in 1949, when owned by the Swedish collector Einar Perman, this lively river scene is situated in Jan Brueghel the Elder's oeuvre at a moment of evolution for the river landscape in the years around 1600. At this point, his construction of depth no longer relied on the specific delineation of area; instead, his deft handling of colour unified fore- and background, drawing in the viewer's gaze through his increasingly animated compositions. The elevated viewpoint of this riverscape was inherited from the *Weltlandschaft* tradition that grew from the work of earlier artists, such as Joachim Patinir, and was taken up by the artist's father, Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Though the works of these fifteenth-century artists often included religious or historical staffage, Jan Brueghel's world is that of the everyday. On the

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shore fishermen offer their catch for sale, sacks are unloaded from the boats and a group of peasants can be seen dancing outside an inn, while a soberly dressed preacher addresses a small crowd beneath the trees. Breughel's staffage stems from the newly popular category of genre painting, which became increasingly prevalent as the century progressed. With their flashes of yellow and red, they act as a counterpoint to the subtle modulation of the waters from the green-brown of the foreground to the ethereal pallor of the horizon. This interweaving of influences was an important development in landscape painting that would be highly influential to later artists, such as Rubens.

Brueghel is known to have re-used certain stock motifs in his work and in this example the central grouping of four boats recurs in his *Port Scene in Venice*, again of circa 1600 (Private collection, USA). There are several differences in the figures within these, for instance the reclined figure in white seen here on the back right boat is more prominently placed in the Venetian scene at front right. In the same vein, the packed rowing boat at lower right corresponds exactly with an ink and wash drawing in the Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-T-1919-34.). A copy of the Koenigs picture, attributed to the artist's workshop, is in the collection of the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (inv. no. 1898).