NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS
Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Meindert Hobbema
Dutch, 1638 - 1709

Hut among Trees

c. 1664

oil on canvas
overall: 96.5 x 108 cm (38 x 42 1/2 in.)
Inscription: lower left: M Hobbema
Widener Collection 1942.9.30

ENTRY

Hobbema was a master of rearranging frequently used compositional elements in his paintings. One encounters time and again familiar vistas, houses, groupings of trees, and figures who wander along meandering paths that pass through wooded landscapes. He built his scenes along established compositional principles, which included leading the viewer gently into the distance, either along paths or by means of alternating zones of light and dark. Remarkably, though, Hobbema's delicate touch and ability to suggest the varied light conditions of a partly cloudy day invariably transmit the feeling of a scene painted directly from life.

Three other versions of this composition exist, none of them dated. [1] Slight differences in the shape and position of the houses and in the treatment of light suggest that the Washington painting is the earliest of the four. It is the only instance in which the house on the right is so dilapidated, with large portions of its thatched roof missing. In all the other versions the house is less oblique and lacks the small addition on the side. In these paintings the path swings slightly to the left and a large broken tree trunk in the lower left arches upward, whereas in *Hut among Trees* the path continues diagonally to the right and the tree trunk is less substantial.

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Because Hobbema's compositions tended to become more open during the course of the 1660s, the comparatively dense band of trees that stretches across the middle ground in this work adds further support to the idea that it is the earliest in this sequence of related scenes. In the version now in the Mauritshuis [fig. 1], the trunks are comparatively thinner and the view into the distance is less obscured than in the Washington example. [2] Since *Hut among Trees* is slightly more open than A Wooded Landscape, which is signed and dated 1663, and less so than A View on a High Road, signed and dated 1665, one can ascribe to it a tentative date of about 1664. To help confirm this date, a similar comparison may also be made among the respective structures of the trees in these three works. The trees in this painting are less compact and dense than the ones in *A Wooded Landscape,* but more so than those in *A View on a High Road.* This approximate date is also consistent with the distinctive light gray green color of the trees that Hobbema used in 1663 and 1664.

The painting is in excellent condition, except for the figure group and the area surrounding them. In 1984 it was discovered during conservation treatment that the mother and child figures as they then appeared were not original and were probably nineteenth-century creations. At that same time, the vestiges of two other figures, slightly larger and somewhat to their left, were discovered under the additions. The old remains were then reconstructed. More figures, including a horse, may once have accompanied them. Why these original figures were at some point physically removed and replaced is not known. The original staffage painter has not been identified.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

April 24, 2014

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

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fig. 1 Meindert Hobbema, *Huts under Trees*, c. 1664, oil on panel, Mauritshuis, The Hague

NOTES

[1] The location of one of these is not known (Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols. [Esslingen and Paris, 1907–1928), 4:410, no. 114; Georges Broulhiet, *Meindert Hobbema (1638–1709)* [Paris, 1938], 209; formerly Robarts Collection, England). The other two are in London (National Gallery; John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*, 9 vols. [London, 1829–1842], 6:133, no. 63; Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols. [Esslingen and Paris, 1907–1928], 4:427, no. 162; Georges Broulhiet, *Meindert Hobbema (1638–1709)* [Paris, 1938], 269) and The Hague (Mauritshuis; Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols. [Esslingen and Paris, 1907–1928], 6:434, no. 184).

[2] For a discussion of the Mauritshuis painting and its relationship to *Hut among Trees,* see Ben P. J. Broos, *Meesterwerken in het Mauritshuis* (The Hague, 1987), 208–211.

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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support, a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined twice and the original tacking margins have been removed. The fabric was prepared with a double ground consisting of an upper dark gray layer over a white or off-white layer. Diagonal trowel marks, presumably from the application of the ground, are visible in the X-radiographs.

The paint was applied fluidly with vigorous brushmarking and refined with transparent glazes.[1] After an initial freely painted sketch, more detailed layers were applied. Infrared reflectography (vidicon)[2] shows tree trunks and branches blocked out first, then dense foliage applied, followed by individual outer leaves. Scattered small losses are found overall. The figures were severely damaged at some point by an apparently intentional attempt to remove them.

The painting was treated in 1964 when a lining was added and losses were inpainted. The painting was treated again in 1983-1985, at which time it was discovered that the central foreground, including the two standing figures had been entirely repainted during a previous restoration. Removal of the discolored varnish and repaint/overpaint, revealed vestiges of the original rendering of the woman and child, as well as a ghost image of an additional horse and rider. The figures of the woman and child were reconstructed based on the remnants, but the additional horse and rider were not, because the trace amounts that were found were insufficient.

[1] The pigments were analyzed by the NGA scientific research department using X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy and polarized light microscopy (see reports dated April 4, 1984, May 3, 1984, and August 16, 1984).

[2] Infrared reflectography was performed with a Hamamatsu c/1000-03 vidicon camera and a Kodak Wratten 87A filter.

PROVENANCE

Probably Hugh Hammersley [1774-1840]; (his estate sale, Alexander Rainy, London, 21 August 1841, no. 57); (Charles J. Nieuwenhuys, Brussels and London).[1] William Bingham Baring, 2nd baron Ashburton [1799-1864], Grange Park, Hampshire, by

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1854;[2] by inheritance to his brother, Francis Baring, 3rd baron Ashburton [1800-1868], Grange Park; by inheritance to his son, Alexander Hugh Baring, 4th baron Ashburton [1835-1889], Grange Park; by inheritance to his son, Francis Denzil Edward Baring, 5th baron Ashburton [1866-1938], Grange Park; jointly purchased 1907 by (Thos. Agnew & Sons, Ltd., Arthur J. Sulley & Co., and Charles J. Wertheimer, all in London); sold 1909 by (Arthur J. Sulley & Co.) to Peter A.B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; inheritance from Estate of Peter A.B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; gift 1942 to NGA.

[1] The name is cited as "H. Hammersley" in John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French Painters*, 9 vols., London, 1829-1842: 9:729; and Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, 8 vols., trans. by Edward G. Hawke, London, 1907-1927: 4:433. Although the title page of the sale catalogue does not provide the seller(s) name(s), The Getty Provenance Index Databases record for Sale Catalogue BR-15070 indicates the sellers as Skammers and Hammersley. The sale is listed in Frits Lugt, *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes*, 4 vols., The Hague, 1938: 2:no. 16295, where the seller is given as Skammers. Hammersley (sometimes spelled Hamersley) was a member of a prominent banking family in London. The annotated copy of the sale catalogue held by the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague, provides the buyer's name.

[2] Lady Marian Jervis-White-Jervis, *Painting and Celebrated Painters, Ancient and Modern*, 2 vols., London, 1854, 2:344. The painting is not listed in Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Works of Art and Artists in England*, 3 vols., London, 1838, or Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain: being an account of the Chief Collection of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, and Illuminated Mss.*, 3 vols., London, 1854-1857.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

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1890 Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters, and by Deceased Masters of the British School. Winter Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1890, no. 85, as Landscape.

2013 Verso Monet: Storia del paesaggio dal Seicento al Novecento, Palazzo della Gran Guardia, Verona; Basilica Palladiana, Vicenza, 2013- 2014, no. 5, repro.

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1854 Jervis-White-Jervis, Lady Marian. *Painting and Celebrated Painters, Ancient and Modern*. 2 vols. London, 1854: 2:225, 344.

1859 Thoré, Théophile E. J. (William Bürger). "Hobbema." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 4 (October 1859): 34 (either *Hut among Trees* or Ashburton's other Hobbema is mentioned).

1890 Royal Academy of Arts. *Exhibition of works by the old masters and by deceased masters of the British School: including a collection of drawings and models by Alfred Stevens*. Winter Exhibition. Exh. cat. Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1890: no. 85.

1891 Cundall, Frank. *The Landscape and Pastoral Painters of Holland: Ruisdael, Hobbema, Cuijp, Potter*. Illustrated biographies of the great artists. London, 1891: 157.

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1923 *Paintings in the Collection of Joseph Widener at Lynnewood Hall*. Intro. by Wilhelm R. Valentiner. Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, 1923: unpaginated, repro.

1931 *Paintings in the Collection of Joseph Widener at Lynnewood Hall*. Intro.

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by Wilhelm R. Valentiner. Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, 1931: 56, repro.

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1960 MacLaren, Neil. *The Dutch School*. Text. National Gallery Catalogues. London, 1960: 170, n. 1 to no. 995.

1965 National Gallery of Art. *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. Washington, 1965: 68.

1968 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings and Sculpture, Illustrations*. Washington, 1968: 60, repro.

1975 National Gallery of Art. *European paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. Washington, 1975: 176, repro.

1983 Wright, Christopher. *Dutch Landscape Painting*. Exh. cat. Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne. Newcastle, 1983: 65.

1984 Walker, John. *National Gallery of Art, Washington*. Rev. ed. New York, 1984: 295, no. 386, color repro.

1985 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. Washington, 1985: 203, repro.

1986 Broos, Ben P.J., et al. *De Rembrandt à Vermeer. Les peintures hollandais au Mauritshuis de La Haye*. Exh. cat. Galeries nationale du Grand Palais, Paris. The Hague, 1986: 262-275, no. 34c, repro.

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1991 MacLaren, Neil. *The Dutch School, 1600-1900*. Revised and expanded by Christopher Brown. 2 vols. National Gallery Catalogues. London, 1991: 1:182, fig. 43.

1995 Keyes, George S. "Meindert Hobbema's Wooded Landscape with a Water Mill." *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin* 67 (1995): 48, fig. 8.

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