



ArtSleuth Professional Analysis Report

The Village Lawyer by Pieter Brueghel the Younger

Report date: April 21, 2026



ARTSLEUTH
STUDIO



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BASIC INFORMATION

Title	The Village Lawyer
Artist	Pieter Brueghel the Younger (95.0% confidence)
Authentication	Copy/Reproduction
Based on	The Village Lawyer by Pieter Brueghel the Younger
Similarity	99%

VALUATION SUMMARY

Value type	Estimated range
If authentic / original	Not available
If copy / reproduction	Not available

DETAILED ANALYSIS

PAINTING IDENTIFICATION

Likely Title: The Village Lawyer (also known as The Tax Collector's Office or The Payment of Tithes).
Justification: This is one of the most recognizable compositions in 17th-century Flemish art. The specific arrangement of the lawyer behind the desk, the line of peasants with poultry, and the walls covered in bags is unique to this work. Original Artist: Pieter Brueghel the Younger (c. 1564–1638). Copy Technique: This appears to be a period workshop version . Pieter Brueghel the Younger operated a large studio that specialized in producing multiple versions of popular compositions. The technical analysis confirms 17th-century materials (wood panel, period pigments).



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ARTIST IDENTIFICATION

Final Attribution: Pieter Brueghel the Younger (and Workshop) Confidence Level: 95% Supporting Evidence: The composition is an exact match for PBY's known oeuvre. The technical analysis shows a wood panel support and layered oil glazing consistent with 1615–1625 Flemish production. The "staccato" rhythm of the composition and the specific palette of earth tones punctuated by vermilion are hallmarks of his workshop.

SIGNATURE ANALYSIS

Detected Mark: None visible. Analysis: While some versions of The Village Lawyer are signed "P. BRVEGHEL," many workshop versions were left unsigned or the signatures have been lost to overcleaning. The lack of a signature does not detract from the attribution, as the composition itself is a "visual signature" of the Brueghel brand.

ARTWORK DESCRIPTION

Technical Execution: The work exhibits precision brushwork, particularly in the rendering of the text on the papers and the textures of the baskets. The use of translucent glazes in the shadows provides depth, a technique typical of the period. Material Analysis: Oil on wood panel. The rigid support has caused characteristic vertical cracking along the joins of the oak planks. Assessment: This is an original 17th-century artwork, not a modern reproduction. The craquelure pattern is deep and integrated into the paint film, and the varnish shows natural oxidation (yellowing) consistent with centuries of age. Estimated Date: c. 1615–1620.

CONDITION ASSESSMENT

Overall Score: 78/100 Issues: There is a prominent vertical structural joint movement through the left-center of the panel. The varnish is significantly oxidized (yellowed), which masks the original cool tones of the blues and whites. Conservation Needs: Surface cleaning, varnish removal/replacement, and stabilization of the wooden support joints are recommended to prevent further paint loss.

STYLE CONTEXT

The style is quintessential Flemish Baroque/Northern Renaissance. It utilizes a "horror vacui" (fear of empty space) approach, filling every inch of the panel with detail. The influence of the artist's father, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, is evident in the caricatured facial expressions and the focus on the common man, though the Younger Brueghel's work is often more linear and focused on narrative clarity for the commercial market.

SUBJECT IDENTIFICATION

The painting is a biting satire on bureaucracy and the legal profession. It depicts a group of peasants crowded into a cramped, chaotic office to pay their tithes or legal fees. Rather than money, they bring "in-kind" payments: eggs, grain, and plucked poultry. The lawyer, dressed in a black scholar's cap, sits amidst a mountain of disorganized paperwork, symbolizing the confusing and predatory nature of the legal system of the time. The narrative highlights the contrast between the simple, hardworking peasants and the



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exploitative, "learned" official.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Created in the early 17th-century Southern Netherlands (Flanders), the work reflects the rise of the professional class and the increasing complexity of the law. During this period, the "Village Lawyer" became a stock character in Flemish culture—often viewed with suspicion by the rural population. The painting serves as both a genre scene and a moralizing commentary on the burdens placed upon the poor by the state and the church.

ICONOGRAPHY

Hanging Bags: These represent individual legal cases or "purses" of money, showing the sheer volume of litigation. **The Goose/Poultry:** A common symbol of a bribe or a humble offering, emphasizing the peasant's subservience. **Scattered Papers:** Symbolize the "paper trail" and the overwhelming, often nonsensical nature of bureaucratic red tape. **The Calendar:** Often visible in these versions, it grounds the scene in the reality of tax deadlines.

VALUATION

The market for Pieter Brueghel the Younger remains robust, as he is a "blue-chip" name in Old Master paintings. The Village Lawyer is his most commercially successful subject. Prices depend heavily on whether the work is considered "autograph" (entirely by the master) or "workshop" (executed by assistants under his supervision).

Comparable Sales:

The Village Lawyer , Sotheby's London (2020): Sold for approx. \$480,000 (Workshop version). The Village Lawyer , Christie's New York (2015): Sold for \$845,000 (High-quality version). Lesser workshop versions with condition issues often sell between \$150,000 and \$300,000 .

Price Estimation Summary (USD)

Minimum Auction Estimate: \$250,000

Lower Price Boundary: \$350,000

Upper Price Boundary: \$750,000

Most Likely Sale Price: \$450,000

Note: These estimates assume the work is a period workshop version. A definitive "autograph" designation by Dr. Klaus Ertz would significantly increase these figures.

FAMOUS ARTWORK SIMILARITY CHECK

This artwork is a version of the famous composition "The Village Lawyer" by Pieter Brueghel the Younger. It is not a "copy" in the modern sense of a forgery, but rather a contemporary replica produced within the artist's own professional circle to meet market demand. It is virtually identical in composition to versions held in the National Museum of Art of Romania and the Louvre . **POTENTIAL MATCHES:**

The Village Lawyer by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (Workshop)

Year: c. 1615-1620 Museum: Various (Private Collections / National Museum Bucharest) Probability: 95%

Similarity: 0.99 (Exact compositional match)



STORY CONTEXT

No information available for this section.

FURTHER RESEARCH OR AUTHENTICATION STEPS

No information available for this section.

Similar artworks & influences

This composition exemplifies the Northern Renaissance genre painting style, closely mirroring the intricate, satirical interiors characteristic of Pieter Brueghel the Younger's *The Village Lawyer*. The scene is defined by a dense, cluttered arrangement of documents and sacks, a visual motif that echoes the bureaucratic chaos found in works by Marinus van Reymerswaele. The use of exaggerated facial expressions and the interaction between common folk and an official highlight a shared interest in social commentary and moralizing themes prevalent in 16th-century Flemish art. Additionally, the meticulous attention to everyday textures and mercantile objects aligns with the realism and detailed observation established by artists like Quentin Matsys.

REFERENCED URLS

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