RUNDĀLES PILS MUZEJS

JOHANN HEINRICH BAUMANN
“STILL LIFE WITH CRAYFISH” - RESTORATION CONCEPT,TECHNIQUES AND THE COMPARISON OF ARTISTIC STYLE

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ABOUT JOHANN HEINRICH BAUMANN

Johann Heinrich Baumann (1753- 1832) is a Baltic-German painter. He studied in Erfurt under Jakob Samuel Beck (1715-1778), who was one of his most important teachers. From him Baumann learned about painting wild animals, domestic animals, birds, and, also, portraits. Unlike his teacher, J.H. Baumann was a hunter and it is visible in his work.

The J. H. Baumann’s body of work throughout his life has been clearly influenced by J.S. Beck. Baumann strongly kept to the technique and painting style that he had learned. According to the monograph on J. H. Baumann by E. Schmidt and P. Day, Baumann has possibly used J. S. Beck’s painted samples of animals and plants. Although the works of the teacher and student are thematically very close, the dominating theme in Baumann’s work is the hunt, e.g. hunting dogs with game, weapons in some pieces, and forest animals. Also, his painted portraits mostly depict people dressed in hunting gear.

According to sources, Baumann has painted more than 1700 oil paintings, however, only less than 50 are known today (research by E. Schmidt). Most have perished and the location of others is unknown.

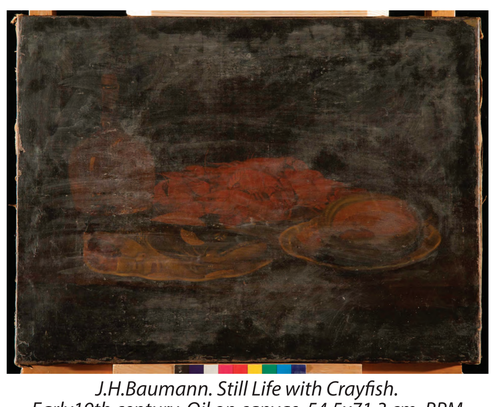
DESCRIPTION

“Still Life with Crayfish” is the only known still life by J.H. Baumann. The work is signed. Different nuances in the signature turned the focus on comparing the author’s technique and painting style in the work “Still Life with Crayfish” with other works signed by J.H. Baumann.

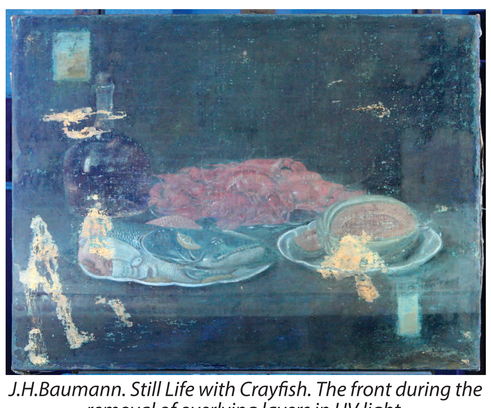
Previously, similar technical problems were observed when restoring Baumann’s paintings. Usually the paintings were largely overpainted, just as “Still Life with Crayfish”. After examining the artworks, it was revealed that all of them have a thick, fragile yellow ochre ground layer.

Over time, a fine network of craquelure and fall-outs have appeared on the ground layer. The base layers of the multi-layered painting are applied in a thin, translucent way. Textured brush strokes in areas depicting light. Baumann’s thin paint layers, although being traditional, are distinctly thin. It can be concluded that the works have been overpainted due to technological problems and thin paint layers. During this period, there wasn’t sufficient knowledge on strengthening the ground layer, thus it was decided to “fix” the fine network of craquelure and fall-outs by covering them with paint. The chemical analysis revealed that the ground layer consists of ochre pigment and oil. The proportions are not well thought out as the ground layer is crumbly. Also, the analysis reveals pronounced varnish layers between the paint layers. Each paint layer is covered with varnish containing natural resins. An interesting discovery was made, that instead of white pigment Baumann used chalk mixed with oil and natural resins. Research continues.

Signatures are different. Even the four paintings belonging to the Rundāle Palace Museum each have a different signature. It may have a full name, first letter of the names or surname, or the three first letters combined as is the case of the painting “Still Life with Crayfish”, which also has a small hunting horn painted next to the signature.



J.H.Baumann. Still Life with Crayfish. Early19th century. Oil on canvas. 54,5x71,3 cm. RPM 10907.The front before restoration.

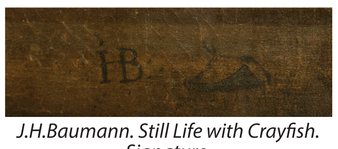


J.H.Baumann. Still Life with Crayfish. The front during the removal of overlying layers in UV light.

J.H.Baumann. Still Life with Crayfish. The fragment during the removal of overlying layers.

J.H.Baumann. Still Life with Crayfish. The front after removing the overlaying layers.

J.H.Baumann.Still Life with Crayfish. The front after restoration.



J.H.Baumann. Still Life with Crayfish. Signature.

RESTAURATION VARNISH LAYER Contails oil, natural resin
VARNISH LAYER Contains natural resin
COLOUR LAYER Contains lead white, green earth, organic black pigment, red ochra, pigment containing iron (III) ions, oil, calcium carbonate in certain samples.
PRIMER LAYER Contains yellow ocher, oil

J.H.Baumann. Still Life with Crayfish. Layer analysis.

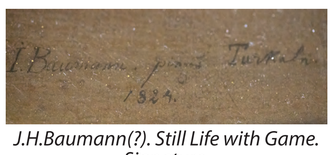
J.H.Baumann. Birds (Hazel Grouses).1804. Oil on canvas. 38,5x54,8 cm. RPM 11152

J.H.Baumann. Birds (Hazel Gouses). Signature.

VARNISH LAYER Contails natural resin
COLOUR LAYER Contains brown pigment containing iron (III) ions, green earth, lead white, oil.
PRIMER LAYER Contains calcium carbonate, lead white, yellow ocher, grains, oil.

J.H.Baumann. Birds (Hazel Gouses). Layer analysis.

J.H.Baumann(?). Still Life with Game. 1824. Oil on canvas. 71x104 cm. RPM 1918.



J.H.Baumann(?). Still Life with Game. Signature.

VARNISH LAYER Contails natural resin
THIN COLOUR LAYER Contains lead white, brown pigment containing iron (III) ions , red ocher , organic black pigment , oil.
THICK PRIMER LAYER Contains lead white, brown ocher , brown/orange pigment containing iron (III) ions , red ocher grains , oil.

J.H.Baumann (?). Still Life with Game. Layer analysis.

J.H.Baumann. Dogs. 1810. Oil on canvas. RPM 5668.

J.H.Baumann. Dogs. Signature.

VARNISH LAYER Contails natural resin
COLOUR LAYER Contains pigment containing iron (III) ions , red , yellow ocher , lead white , oil.
PRIMER LAYER Contains lead white, yellow ocher , oil.

J.H.Baumann. Dogs. Layer analysis.

J.S.Beck . Still Life with Pheasants. Second half of the 18th century. Oil on canvas. 55x74,8 cm.RPM 9481.

J.H.Baumann. Capercaillie in the forest. Oil on canvas. RPM 5320.

VARNISH LAYER Contails oil, natural resin
THIN COLOUR LAYER Contains brown pigment containing iron (III) ions , green earth , red ocher , calcium carbonate, oil.
YELLOW/BROWN PRIMER LAYER Contains yellow ocher , lead white , calcium carbonate in small amount, oil.

J.H.Baumann. Capercaillie in the forest. Layer analysis.

THE RESTORATION PROCESS

J. H. Baumann’s painting “Still Life with Crayfish” was previously restored, during which it was lined and the format was slightly reduced. Lining is of good quality, although it could be more visually appealing. No sign of flaking. The surface was covered by a layer of overpaint, which in some places was up to 1,5 mm thick. The overpaint covered approx. 70% of the surface. After making the stratigraphic exposure, it was found that the restoration ground layer not only covered the damage, the author’s ground layer and places with a loss of paint, but also rather large areas of the original painting. (See the poster for more about restoration). Due to these overlying layers, the artistic quality of the painting could not be assessed; therefore, it was decided to remove them and emphasise the author’s painting.

It was recently decided to carry out the most needed processes, keep the lining and not change the stretcher. Dust and surface dirt has been removed and it has been disinfected. During restoration, overpaint has been removed. The work was carried out carefully by gradually thinning the overpaint layers in order not to disrupt the author’s thin paint layer. The process was controlled using UV light and a microscope. The ground layer made during previous restoration was corrected, the one covering the author’s paint layer was removed, the remaining one was levelled and in areas of fall-outs it was added. Surface was covered with a thin layer of dammar resin varnish. Inpainting was carried out.

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