



Charles Euphrasie Kuwasseg (Draveil, 1833 – Paris, 1904)

View of Antwerp, 1874

Oil on canvas, 56.5 x 100 cm

Signed and dated lower left

This view of Antwerp was painted in 1874 by the French artist Charles Kuwasseg. Adopting the city's iconic viewpoint since the 17th century, he presents a painting that blends Romantic and realistic elements, in keeping with his characteristic style.

Charles Euphrasie Kuwasseg (Draveil, 1833 – Paris, 1904)



The French painter Charles Euphrasie Kuwasseg was born in 1833 in Draveil, in the Essonne department, twenty kilometers southeast of Paris. He was the son of Karl Joseph Kuwasseg¹ (1802–1877) (fig.1), an Austrian landscape painter who settled in Paris in 1830 and became a naturalized French citizen; he gave the artist his first lessons. He later studied under two renowned marine painters, Jean-Baptiste Henri Durand-Brager (1814–1879) and Eugène Isabey (1803–1886) (fig. 2). From the former, he appears to have adopted the clear, luminous tones seen in some of his early works (fig. 3), while from the latter, he seems to have drawn a certain spirited energy and a warm palette. Like his masters, he favored maritime subjects - indeed, he was a sailor himself for a time. Yet, more than the open sea, his paintings focused primarily on coastlines, harbors, and rivers flowing through the heart of cities (fig.4). While the water is often calm, softened further by the light of day's end, Kuwasseg also painted stormy weather and rough seas (fig. 5), following the example of his masters. Influenced by the Barbizon School, he practiced *plein-air* painting along the coast and in the countryside (fig. 6). To enrich his work, Kuwasseg traveled to Brittany and Normandy, as well as to Belgium and the Netherlands (fig. 7), and likely to Venice, where his works evoke the style of Félix Ziem (1821–1911) (fig. 8). Although his work was shaped by Realism, it still employed the stylistic devices of Romantic painting. It is also worth noting that he collaborated, most likely painting the landscapes, on the panoramas that brought success to Théophile Poilpot (1848–1915).

¹ He is also known as Charles Joseph Kuwasseg. It is worth noting that Charles Euphrasie is often listed in exhibition or auction catalogues as "Kuwasseg fils" (Kuwasseg the Younger). Charles Euphrasie's mother was named Marie-Victoire Lebrun. His sister, Eugénie Augustine Rosa Kuwasseg (born in Draveil in 1837), was also a painter.

Charles Kuwasseg exhibited regularly at the Salon in Paris starting in 1859² and would win a medal in 1892³. An acclaimed painter, he had several students—such as Emile Clavel (1848-1932), and his work was widely collected. Consequently, his paintings frequently appeared in the sales catalogues of the time. As a result, several of Charles Kuwasseg's works are held in French museums, such as those in Rouen, Fécamp, and Rennes.

View of Antwerp

Views of Antwerp enjoyed great popularity as early as the 17th century. The most frequently depicted perspective shows the city stretching along the Scheldt, viewed from *Vlaams Hoofd* (Head of Flanders), a hamlet on the opposite bank (fig. 9). This view became the city's iconic profile—a horizontal expanse dominated at its center by the cathedral spire. The vantage point highlighted the city's economic and cultural power by showcasing its vast commercial port and its rich civic and, above all, religious architecture. Painters in subsequent centuries also produced views of the city adopting this same perspective (fig. 10). Such views also served to document the urban changes affecting the Scheldt quays during the 19th century—specifically, the 1880s demolition of the neighborhood surrounding the Church of St. Walburga and the creation of broad, straight quays.

Charles Kuwasseg also painted this view of Antwerp on several occasions during the 1870s and 1880s; indeed, the artist spent time in Belgium and the Netherlands during that period⁴. Indeed, the catalogue for the 1868 Paris Salon lists his address simply as "Brussels," and the artist exhibited a work titled '*Les Bords de la Dyle, à Malines (Belgique)*' under number 1377. In addition to Antwerp, he is known to have visited and painted Bruges, Ghent, Mechelen, and Brussels (fig. 11). True to his style, he depicts the waterways of these cities in a generally tranquil atmosphere, and it is worth noting that he is not strictly a topographical painter. Drawing on his Romantic training, Kuwasseg often creates views of these cities with considerable artistic license. He even occasionally composes entirely invented scenes that nonetheless incorporate recognizable landmarks, such as the spire of Antwerp Cathedral (fig. 12). Thus, in the present view of Antwerp, the artist remains faithful to the city's general appearance without adhering to strict topographical accuracy. Thus, the proportions of the *Vleeshuis* deviate from reality. In this

² After : Base Salons 1673-1914.

³ A third medal, after : BENEZIT.

⁴ After RKD, the artist was in the Netherlands during the period 1855–1875, and in Dordrecht in 1855.

view of Antwerp, one notices that the artist, faced with a rather static vantage point, introduces dynamism through the figures on the riverbank and, above all, the vessels on the Scheldt: a fishing boat crossing the river and, notably on the right, a sailing ship flying the Dutch flag, whose verticality creates a sense of depth and a visual link to the cathedral tower. Kuwasseg also brings the painting to life through a shifting weather pattern unfolding before our eyes; while the right side sees breaks in the clouds, the left is darkening with grey storm clouds. The waters of the Scheldt have grown turbulent, and the city is bathed in a distinctive light. The result is a work typical of Kuwasseg, blending elements of Romanticism with Realism.

Kuwasseg's other views of Antwerp generally employ the same vantage point but under varying weather conditions and at different times of day (fig. 13); he might depict the city bathed in stormy light or, conversely, at sunset (fig. 14). The sailing vessels also offer a variety of compositional arrangements. It is also worth noting that the cathedral tower does not always appear identical. One view painted in 1875 stands out within Kuwasseg's body of work depicting Antwerp (fig. 15). It is a panoramic view of the city—not from the opposite bank, but from the harbor, that is, from the west. This type of vantage point had also been used by 17th-century Antwerp painters (fig. 16). Finally, Kuwasseg sometimes produced multiple variations of the same composition; for instance, there is a painting similar to ours, executed in 1882, which was sold by Christie's in June 2002 for €27,920 (including the buyer's premium) (fig. 18).

Charles Kuwasseg exhibited some of his Belgian views at the Salons. In Paris, for instance, he showed '*Les Bords de l'Escaut, à Anvers*' (n° 1321) in 1869, '*Port d'Anvers (Belgique)*' (n° 892) in 1872, and both '*Vue de Gand (Belgique)*' (n° 826) and '*Vue du Grand-Canal, à Bruxelles*' (n°827) in 1873. During the same period, he exhibited only twice at the Belgian Triennial Salon of Fine Arts: in 1874 in Ghent with '*Une vue de Gand, quai aux herbes*' (n° 769), and in 1875 in Brussels with two paintings, including '*L'Escaut*' (n° 687) (fig. 18). It is worth noting that his father was also exhibiting on this latter occasion.

Previously unstudied, the link between Charles Kuwasseg and Belgium nonetheless appears rich and reveals interesting works.

Illustrations



Fig.1 : Karl Joseph Kuwasseg, *Tyrol Landscape*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

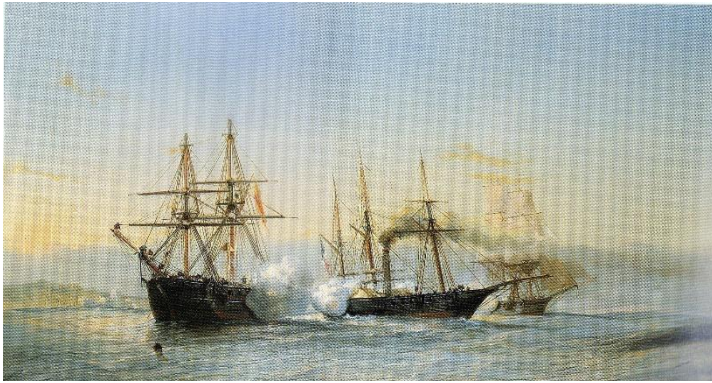


Fig.2 : Henri Durand-Brager, *Combat naval devant la côte marocaine*, c.1845 / Eugène Isabey, *L'Arrivée du duc d'Albe à Rotterdam*, 1844, Paris, musée d'Orsay.



Fig.3 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Le bateau à roue reliant Honfleur à Trouville*, 1856, Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, Musée maritime de l'Île Tatihou.



Fig.4 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Vue de Pornic*, Rennes, Musée des Beaux-arts / Côte normande.



Fig.5 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Coup de vent à Fécamp*, Fécamp, Musée des Pêcheries.



Fig.6 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Coup de mer à Fécamps / Bord de mer près de Morgat (Bretagne)*.



Fig.7 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Canal à Amsterdam*, 1873.



Fig.8 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Venise*.



Fig.9 : Jan-Baptist Bonnecroy, *View of Antwerp*, 1658, Anvers, MAS.



Fig.10 : Robert Mols, *La rade d'Anvers en 1870, 1878*, Anvers, KMSKA.



Fig.11 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Bruges / Vue de Gand*, 1873, Anvers, MAS.



Fig.12 : Charles Kuwasseg.



Fig.13 : Charles Kuwasseg, Views of Antwerp d'Anvers.



Fig.14 : Charles Kuwasseg, Views of Antwerp.



Fig.15 : Charles Kuwasseg, *Le Port d'Anvers*, 1875.



Fig.16 : Sébastien Vrancx, *View of Antwerps Kranenhoofd*, 1622, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Charles Euphrasie KUWASSEG
(1833/38-1904) Follow

View of Antwerp (1882)

Lot # 112

Painting

Oil/canvas

58 x 100.5 cm

Hammer price: € 23,364 (€ 15,000)

Price including buyer's premium: € 27,920 (€ 17,925)

Estimate: € 23,364 - € 31,152 (€ 15,000 - € 20,000)

19TH CENTURY EUROPEAN ART INCLUDING OTTOMANS AND ORIENTALISTS

20 jun 2002

Christie's

London, United Kingdom



Fig.17 : Artprice.

KUWASSEG, à Paris.

769 Une vue de Gand; quai aux herbes. — G.

KUWASSEG (C.) fils, à Paris.

686 Vue de Lyonville. —

687 L'Escaut. —

Fig.18 : Catalogue of the 1874 Ghent Salon and the 1875 Brussels Salon.

Resources used

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SCHURR (Gérald), *1820-1920, Les petits maitres de la peinture valeur de demain*, Paris, Les éditions de l'amateur, 1975.

Charles Kuwasseg, in : Gallica (gallica.bnf.fr), Invaluable (invaluable.com), POP (Plateforme ouverte du Patrimoine) (pop.culture.gouv.fr), Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (rkd.nl), Wikipédia.

Karl Joseph Kuwasseg, in : Wikipedia.

Base Salons 1673-1914 (salons.musee-orsay.fr/).

Iconographie

STEVENS (Laurent), *Attribué à Erasmus de Bie (Anvers, 1629 – Anvers, 1675), « Scène de foire sur l'Escaut gelé devant Anvers »*, c.1670, Antwerp, de Beukelaer & de Busschère Fine Arts, 2021.
