Like his father and teacher, the famous Jacob Grimmer, Abel Grimmer used the theme of the twelve months of the year several times, including for a complete series painted in 1592, now in the church of Notre-Dame de Montfaucon in the Haute Loire in France. The five panels here belong to a series now in the Drouhot collection at Villersexel in the Franche Comté. Unusually preserved as a complete series for nearly four centuries, the set was divided up in the last few years through an inheritance. Six panels were sold last June at Sotheby’s in Paris for €819,000 – the second highest price overall for the Flemish artist. The five others (one painting was stolen and never recovered) are now up for sale in Dijon with the Sadde auction house (Cabinet Turquin). Each panel refers to holy texts and parables from the Gospels, such as the one for February, which features verses from Mark 1, the calling of the first disciples, and that of March, referring to Matthew 21 and the planting of the vines from the parable of the wicked tenants. Abel Grimmer painted this series of the twelve months in 1609. He was at the peak of his powers, rivalling his contemporary Jan Brueghel the Elder. Yet his style is actually closer to that of Pieter Brueghel the Elder, from whom he borrows rustic details and the palette of browns, yellows and greens, with an occasional touch of pink. Here he uses the tondo format as he had done in 1592 with the series from the former Schloss collection. The drawing evinces a tender simplicity in both landscape and detail, giving Abel Grimmer’s painting its own particular charm.

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