

JEAN-FRANÇOIS HEIM  
FINE ARTS

**ANDRÉ GIROUX**

Paris 1801 – id. 1879

French School

**VIEW FROM CASAPROTA IN THE SABINA**

Oil on canvas

H. 1,50 m; W. 2,00 m

Signed and dated lower left on the rock: *A. Giroux / 1830*

DATE: 1830

PROVENANCE:

Private collection

EXHIBITIONS:

Paris, 1831 Salon, no 921 (gold medal): ‘Vue prise à Casaprota, dans la Sabine. Un jeune berger raconte à des pèlerins la mort d’un pasteur tué dans ce lieu par la foudre. [A young shepherd tells pilgrims about the death of a shepherd killed in this place by lightning]’

Douai, 1835, Exposition de la Société des Amis des Arts de Douai, *Vue prise dans la Sabine aux environs de Casa Prota* (lithographed by Félix Robaut, published in *Souvenirs de l’Exposition de Douai. Salon de 1835*).

RELATED WORKS:

Probably *Forêt à Casaprota*, card laid down on canvas, H. 0,30 m; W. 0,42 m, André Giroux sale, Hôtel Drouot Paris, 27 April 1970, no. 92.

**André Giroux, who was especially famous for his photography, excelled first as a landscape painter and was showered with awards in this domain. Today he is recognized as one of the main representatives of early 19<sup>th</sup> century landscape art, who made the transition from neoclassical landscape to a more naturalist style.**

**Giroux the Elder: Painting Restorer and Important Dealer**

André Giroux (1801-1879) entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1821 as a pupil of his father, Alphonse Giroux (1776-1848). He also spent time in the studio of the landscape artist and architect, Jean-Thomas Thibaut (1757-1826), who specialized in perspectives. The elder Giroux,<sup>1</sup> a pupil of David, had been the official restorer for the chapter of Notre Dame Cathedral. This led him to restore seventeen “Mays” between 1806 and 1837. These were large paintings donated during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Paris goldsmiths’ guild. He was also an ambitious dealer under the company name of “Alp. Giroux & Cie” that regularly expanded its business. This included exhibiting old master paintings after restoration, copies of religious and

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<sup>1</sup> Nathalie Volle et al. (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique des restaurateurs. Tableaux et œuvres sur papier. Paris, 1750-1950*, Paris, 2020, p. 435-438; Marie-Christine Maréchal-Couvreur, *Les choix de la maison Giroux face aux révolutions de la peinture au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et l’influence d’André Giroux, peintre de paysage*, Paris, Ecole du Louvre, thesis for the 1st year of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, supervised by Olivier Meslay, 2006, 2 vol. (not consulted).

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landscape paintings and also modern pictures that he rented out or sold. He also sold artists' materials, decorative arts, furniture and paper. His love of painting was reflected in his collection of pictures from the Dutch, Italian and French schools.<sup>2</sup>

### **Institutional Recognition as a Painter**

André Giroux exhibited at the Salon for the first time in 1819, when he was only 18 years old. The figures in the pictures he showed had been painted by Auguste-Xavier Leprince (1799-1826), who doubtless passed on his interest in the realism of the Dutch and Flemish schools. Giroux was awarded a second class medal at the 1822 Salon for his submission of five realist landscapes including a study from nature. The same year, he won a gold medal at the Lille<sup>3</sup> Salon and then in 1825, he was awarded the Grand Prix de Rome in the "historical landscape"<sup>4</sup> category, for *The Hunt of Meleager* (Paris, École des Beaux-Arts).<sup>5</sup>

As a *pensionnaire* at the Villa Medici in Rome from 1826 to 1829,<sup>6</sup> Giroux painted large numbers of studies in oil directly from nature. He joined a group of young landscape artists that included Edouard Bertin (1797-1871), Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny (1798-1871) and Léon Fleury (1804-1858). He also lived, from January to May 1826, with Camille Corot (1796-1875), but their probable relationship is not documented. His oil sketches appear nevertheless to relate to the ones Corot painted during the same years and depict the same sites.<sup>7</sup>

### **Daring to Exhibit his Sketches at the Salon**

In 1827, Giroux sent an Italian landscape painted in the studio to the Salon, to which he added more spontaneous studies painted from nature in the Roman countryside.<sup>8</sup> This was an innovation because these oil sketches created *en plein air* by many painters had until then only been shown to intimates and were often exhibited in their studios as a source of inspiration.<sup>9</sup> Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes had written, "It is true that these studies are not paintings, but we keep them in portfolios to consult them and when needed to use them."<sup>10</sup> Corot for example, showed two finished landscapes at the 1827 Salon, which had been made in the studio. His famous painted sketches which were so admired by the artists of his circle<sup>11</sup> would only be

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<sup>2</sup> Dispersed at an auction on 24 and 25 February 1851 in Paris, Alphonse Giroux's collection included *La Pourvoyeuse* by Jean Siméon Chardin, Paris, Musée du Louvre.

<sup>3</sup> Giroux exhibited in Lille in 1822, 1825 and 1834, Douai in 1823, 1833 and 1835 and Valenciennes in 1835.

<sup>4</sup> The "paysage historique" genre had been recognized officially in 1816, when the Académie created a Grand Prix de Rome, awarded every four years from 1817 to 1863. This was a composed landscape that combined the most beautiful elements observed in nature to which figures were added.

<sup>5</sup> *The Hunt of Meleagre*, oil on canvas, H. 1,14 m; W. 1,46 m, Paris, École des Beaux-Arts (inv. PRP 66); Philippe Grunchev, *Le Grand Prix de peinture. Les concours des Prix de Rome de 1797 à 1863*, Paris, 1983, p. 184-185 and 187.

<sup>6</sup> Annie and Gabriel Verger, *Dictionnaire biographique des pensionnaires de l'Académie de France à Rome 1666 – 1968*, volume II, Dijon, 2011, p. 714 (arrival on 14 January 1826, departure on 31 December 1829).

<sup>7</sup> Vincent Pomarède, exh. cat. *Paysages d'Italie – les peintres du plein air (1780-1830)*, Paris, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 3 April to 9 July 2001, p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> 1827 Salon, no. 460 "Études faites d'après nature dans l'ancien Latium, maintenant appelé la Commarque"

<sup>9</sup> Philip Conisbee, "The Early History of Open-Air Painting", exh. cat. *In the Light of Italy. Corot and Early open-air painting*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1996, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, *Réflexions et conseils à un élève sur la peinture et particulièrement sur le genre du paysage* (1800), ed. La Rochelle, 2005, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny apparently referred to Corot as "notre maître" as early as March 1826, on the basis of a single plein air study (*View from the Farnese Gardens, the Coliseum*, oil on paper laid down on

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discovered from the middle of the century when he exhibited a small number of them. Most, however, only appeared at his posthumous sale, in 1875, although interest in these works truly dates only from the 1930s.<sup>12</sup>

### **A Painting Awarded a Gold Medal at the 1831 Salon**

Giroux showed three large landscapes executed in the studio at the 1831 Salon<sup>13</sup> (including our picture), as well as a series of oil studies from nature, as he had done in 1827.<sup>14</sup> Our painting was awarded a gold medal at this event.<sup>15</sup> The importance of this distinction from the Paris Salon, the central dominant institution of the art world, cannot be exaggerated. This precise moment marks the summit of his career as a painter.

Our painting was also shown in 1835 at the exhibition of the Société des Amis des Arts in Douai where again it was met with great success: “View in the Sabina around Casa Prota. This is not the first time that Mr. Giroux appears with honour at the Douai Salon, we remember the lovely landscape<sup>16</sup> that he had sent us two years ago, and which a happy coincidence brought to our museum, the painting which we illustrate here seems to be greatly superior to it and allows us to hope for a lot from this excellent landscape artist. This is a large canvas of more than 6 feet for which Mr. Giroux has used all the resources of his work. [...] We would like to give a sketch of the other small studies by this painter, in all of them we find rare liveliness and skill.”<sup>17</sup>

### **A Romantic note in a classical landscape**

In the very structured composition of our painting, Giroux has illustrated the Sabina region. From the village of Casaprota, on a hill 45 km north east of Rome, our gaze is led into the distance, passing a series of medieval villages typical of this region, either lit by the last rays of the afternoon, in the shadows, or fully against the light. The principal hill visible in the background is Mount Soratte, an isolated mountain in the Tiber Valley which stands out in the Roman campagna.

With many nuances of colour, Giroux shows he was an acute observer of light and of weather phenomena. It appears to be raining in the left distance, while the sun is shining in other areas of the background. The intense warm colour harmonies in the central area form a contrast with the blue-grey shades of the background, which gradually become lighter and mistier. This use of atmospheric perspective should be associated with the sensitivities of the Romantic

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canvas, H. 0,31 m; L. 0,48 m, Paris, Musée du Louvre, the painting Corot exhibited at the 1849 Salon), see Théophile Silvestre, *Les Artistes français, études d'après nature*, Paris, 1878, chapter “Corot”, p. 261-276.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Galassi, *Corot en Italie. La peinture de plein air et la tradition classique*, London, 1991, French translation, Hong Kong 1991, p. 1-9.

<sup>13</sup> No Salons were held between 1827 and 1831. The Salon only became annual from 1833.

<sup>14</sup> 1831 Salon: no. 921 *Vue prise à Casaprota, dans la Sabine* (our painting); no. 922 *Vue prise à Civitella, près Subiaco*; no. 2571 *Vue prise à l'Arco Scuro, près de Rome*, 1829, oil on canvas, H. 0,44 m; L. 0,61 m, Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse (Inv. 160); no. 923 “Etudes faites en Italie”.

<sup>15</sup> Lorenz Eitner, *French Paintings of the Nineteenth Century. The Collections of the National Gallery of Art*, Part I, Washington, 2000, p. 264; Guyot de Fère, “Artistes de la capitale”, *Annuaire des artistes français*, Paris, 1832, p. 81. Some authors repeat Lydia Harambourg who seems to have confused the extraordinary fact of exhibition sketches and receiving the gold medal at the same Salon. Lydia Harambourg, *Dictionnaire des peintres paysagistes français au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Neuchâtel, 1985, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> *Vue d'Arco Scuro*, 1829, Oil on canvas, H. 0,44 m; L. 0,61 m, Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse (inv. 160).

<sup>17</sup> *Société des Amis des Arts. Texte critique par Robaut. 1<sup>ère</sup> livraison*, Douai, 1831, our painting is reproduced there by a lithographed line drawing. Cited by N. Buchanec and P. Sanchez, *Salons et expositions dans le département du Nord 1773-1914*, Dijon, 2019, t. II, article André Giroux.

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movement. The sensation and internalized experience of nature takes precedence over the restraint of classicism.

### **An interest in rendering the Atmosphere**

The treatment of the distant areas, with a succession of dark and sunny zones, is also reminiscent of Dutch 17<sup>th</sup> century painting, especially Jacob van Ruisdael. Giroux made some copies after Dutch artists such as Aert van der Neer and Jan Both.<sup>18</sup> His collection,<sup>19</sup> which was dispersed over several auctions in 1904, shows his keen interest in Dutch pictures of that century. *Fishermen on the Beach* by Jacob Esselens, for instance, was in his collection.<sup>20</sup>



Jacob Esselens (Amsterdam c. 1627-1687 Amsterdam), *Fishermen on the Beach*, oil on canvas, H. 0,29 m; L. 0,35 m, Initialed, Paris, Fondation Custodia / Collection Frits Lugt (inv. 6103).  
From the collection of André Giroux.

### **The Motif of the Uprooted Tree**

Giroux has included several figures in his *View from Casaprota*. A young shepherd is describing to a group of pilgrims the drama that had taken place there, when thunder struck a tree and killed a shepherd. A pilgrim prays in front of a cross erected where the shepherd died, beside the uprooted tree. This all gives our painting a profoundly romantic feel. Giroux probably used studies from nature for the entire composition, especially for the uprooted tree which dominates the foreground. The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon has a sketch of this type<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander D. Grishin and Denis Canguilhem, André Giroux, The Wertheimer Foundation, 2004, p. 66-67, no. 16 and 17.

<sup>19</sup> Entry on André Giroux, L.5838, in Frits Lugt, *Les Marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes*, online version <http://www.marquesdecollections.fr> (consulted 13 October 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Jacob Esselens (Amsterdam about 1627-1687 Amsterdam), *Fishermen on a Beach*, oil on canvas, H. 0,29 m; W. 0,35 m, initialed, Paris, Fondation Custodia / Collection Frits Lugt (inv. 6103).

<sup>21</sup> André Giroux, *L'arbre foudroyé*, around 1826-1829, oil on canvas, H. 0,46 m; W. 0,38 m, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brigitte and Jacques Gairard donation (inv. 2015.3.4).

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André Giroux, *Tree Struck by Thunder*,  
c. 1826-1829, oil on canvas, H. 0,46 m;  
W. 0,38 m, Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts,  
Gift of Brigitte and Jacques Gairard (inv.  
2015.3.4).

The motif of an uprooted tree evokes a painting by Horace Vernet (1789-1863) made in 1833: *Hunting in the Pontine Marshes* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington<sup>22</sup>. A prolific painter showered with honours, Vernet was appointed director of the French Academy in Rome in January 1829. The first year of his term there corresponds precisely with the fourth year of Giroux's Roman sojourn. It is at this time that Vernet concentrated on landscape painting following in the wake of the Romantic generation. Compositions by his director probably inspired Giroux, as well as examples by Achille-Etna Michallon (1796-1822) in which the motif of an uprooted tree plays an important and symbolic role, especially the *The Oak and the Reed* of 1816.<sup>23</sup>



Horace Vernet, *Hunting in the Pontine Marshes*,  
1833, oil on canvas, H. 1 m; W. 1,37 m, signed,  
located and dated lower left: *H. Vernet / Rome 1833*,  
National Gallery, Washington (inv. 1989.3.1)



Achille-Etna Michallon, *The Oak and the Reed*,  
oil on canvas, H. 0,44 m; W. 0,54 m, signed and  
dated lower left: *MICHALLON 1816*, Cambridge,  
The Fitzwilliam Museum (inv. PD 180-1991)

<sup>22</sup> Horace Vernet, *Hunting in the Pontine Marshes*, 1833, oil on canvas, H. 1 m; W. 1,37 m, signed, located and dated lower left: *H. Vernet / Rome 1833*, National Gallery, Washington (inv. 1989.3.1). Its pendant, *Departure for the Hunt in the Pontine Marshes* was also exhibited at the Salon in 1831 (no. 2085) and was acquired by the National Gallery Washington in 2004 (inv. 2004.38.1).

<sup>23</sup> Achille-Etna Michallon, *The Oak and the Reed*, oil on canvas, H. 0,44 m; W. 0,54 m, signed and dated lower left: *MICHALLON 1816*, Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum (inv. PD 180-1991).

