

# Exceptional and rare photographs by André Giroux

## 25 salt prints, circa 1855

Landscapes & picturesque subjects  
Auvergne, Central Region, Dauphiné and South-Eastern France

Acknowledged as a painter as early as age 18, a Prix de Rome winner in 1925, André Giroux travelled all his life looking for picturesque landscapes.

In the 1850s, the only decade when he was known to work as a photographer, his contemporaries were stunned by the artistic quality of his prints. With an exceptional talent for composition and artistic feeling, he used painting techniques for retouching negatives, thus producing prints which come out as eternal artworks.

So far only some 60 photographs by André Giroux were known.

Therefore, the discovery of 25 prints, at auction on 2013 December 13th, stands out as an event of greatest significance in the history of photography.

### Historic and biographical landmarks

- 1801** : Born in Paris on 30<sup>th</sup> April.
- 1819** : His works were exhibited at the Paris Salon
- 1821** : He was admitted at the Fine Arts School.
- 1825** : He won the Prix de Rome for historic landscapes and thus became a king's guest at the Villa Medici in Rome, and, produced a number of landscape shots of the Italian countryside.
- 1827-1874** : His works were exhibited in various Salons in Paris (twenty or so).
- 1829-1833** : In his Diorama in Paris, Louis Daguerre showed a view of Thiers (Saint-Jean Bridge and the paper drying racks hanging over the factories), which received great acclaim. At the time Auvergne was a romantic fashion place for painters and illustrators looking for scenic spots. This view was published as a lithographic print (plate number 120 of the Auvergne and Velay part of the " Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France", supervised by Isidore Taylor and Charles Nodier).
- 1837** : 9<sup>th</sup> August : Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.
- 1838** : His father, Alphonse Giroux made Louis Daguerre's camera. In the same year, he bequeathed his two sons his business firm which was famous at the time for its painting, art marketry and woodworks restoration workshops and sale shops. Alphonse Gustave took over as manager of the firm with André Giroux, his brother's partner acting as artistic consultant.
- 1839** : Alphonse Giroux et Cie, rue du Coq-Saint-Honoré 7, a company "specialised in camera making", published "l'Historique et description des procédés du daguerréotype et du Diorama, par Daguerre" (A description and history of daguerreotype and Diorama processes by Daguerre ). The cameras were also sold by Giroux et Cie.
- 1850-1857** : Is the only period in which André Giroux is known to have worked as a photographer. He went back and reconsidered the places and subjects which had inspired him in 1830-1850s, for his drawings and paintings: the Dauphiné, the Alps, Auvergne, the waterfront factories, Paris surroundings and more particularly the Isle-Adam, the Seine et Marne with Nemours and Fontainebleau. However, only 80 prints out of his photographic output have been revealed including the recent discoveries.
- The quality of the prints which are known to have survived give true evidence of his technical and artistic command, specifically revealed in perfect composition, finely wrought skies on negatives, and exceptional quality prints.
- In the 1850s**, Encouraged by the development of paper negative, collodion and glass negative new processes, many photographers travelled all over France hunting for picturesque landscapes, and so did André Giroux. Auvergne was particularly toured by Gustave Le Gray (Moulins en Auvergne, 1850) ; Édouard Baldus (Le creux d'enfer à Thiers et Village de Murols, 1854 - maisons aux toits de chaume) ; Fortuné-Joseph Petiot-Groffier (Papeteries en Auvergne 1854) ; Fortuné-Joseph Petiot-Groffier et Edouard Baldus (Torrent et moulins en Auvergne 1854)...
- 1855-1858** : André Giroux's work was nominated and received several awards. Ernest Lacan, the art critic, was the first one to promote his photographic works: "About two years ago, when the prints were revealed by this artist, they stirred up a great deal of amazement. Their beautiful skies, transparent waters and general neatness were so strikingly different from what had been seen so far that we could have thought a new process had been devised that outmatched any other ones that that might have been created before. But the key to this enigma was very quickly found: it was established that M. Giroux's landscapes had been skillfully edited on the picture itself. and that the clouds had been hand drawn and that the painter's skill had a lot to do with the extraordinary effect of those prints".

## Exhibitions of photographic works

**1856** : Edimburgh: Auvergne landscape.

**1857** : Second exhibition of Société Française de Photographie: 7 views taken in the Bouches-du-Rhône, Aveyron and Lozère.

**1870** : Ninth Exhibition of the SFP: display of 11 views taken in the 1850's in Auvergne, Aveyron, Isère, Lozère, Rhône, Seine et Oise.

## Collections

Eminent artists and photographers collected some of André Giroux's photographs, like Fortuné-Joseph Petiot-Groffier (1788 - 1855) and the Prix de Rome painter Romain Étienne Gabriel Prieur (1806-1879).

About thirty prints by the artist are still held by some fifteen French and foreign institutions, and a same number of prints are likely to be treasured by private collectors.

**The discovery of the 25 prints put up for sale on 13th December 2013 stands out as a major event in the history of photography.**

## Reading List

"**Primitifs de la photographie, le calotype en France 1843-1860**" by S. Aubenas, M. Durand, P-L. Roubert, N. Le Guern et M. Frizot, Paris, Gallimard-BnF, 2010, page 280.

"**André Giroux 1801-1879**" introduction by V. Pomerède, essays by A. D. Grishin et D. Canguilhem, London, Wertheimer Foundation, 2004. See catalogue and reading list page 175 to 192.

"**Jouets de Princes 1770-1870**" Musée national des châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau, 16th October 2011 – 28th January 2002, Exhibition catalogue, Paris, RMN, 2001.

"**Une passion française, photographies de la collection Roger Théron**" foreword by P. Apraxine, catalogue drawn by A. de Mondenard, Paris, MEP, 1999, pages 136 and 326.

"**Nouvelle histoire de la photographie**" by Michel Frizot, Paris, Adam Biro, 1995, page 154. «À côté de la topographie proprement dite, les Études de nature, déjà chères aux calotypistes, alimentent le marché des épreuves destinées aux artistes et amateurs. Louis Robert et Alphonse de Brébisson prolongent le genre dans les années 1860-1870, tandis que le peintre André Giroux (1801-1879) expose et vend ses paysages réalistes fortement retouchés, aux ciels tourmentés, au moins jusqu'en 1858. »

"**The Art of French Calotype**" by A. Jammes and E. Parry Janis, Princeton University Press, 1983, pages 183-185.

"**The era of the french calotype**", International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1982, plate 141 page 40.

"**Les ébénistes du XIXe siècle 1795-1889, leurs œuvres et leurs marques**" by Denis Ledoux-Lebard, Paris, Les Éditions de l'Amateur, 1965, page 223.

## Comments on the quality of the prints

These prints by André Giroux's are striking and stand out by the exceptional quality of their shades of colour.

They are shown in the very state in which they were discovered and have neither been cleaned or restored.

They were printed at the time by the photographer from paper negatives. Some of them were lightly albumin coated and gold toned.

Some prints present the imperfections which were current on the XIX<sup>th</sup> century photo prints: light chemical stains, low yellowing marks and small alterations around. Those flaws do not affect image quality; the most apparent marks are described in the prospectus.

YVES DI MARIA, Photo Expert.