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Giraud Eugène Pierre

1806-1881

Italian Customs at Simplon

Oil on canvas / signed and dated 1880 lower left

Dimensions : 140 x 197 cm

Dimensions : 55.12 x 77.56 inch

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Biography

Eugène Giraud's father was a modest infantry officer who nevertheless hoped to give his son the opportunity to make good studies through a grant. By a good combination of factors, he met Empress Marie-Louise d'Autriche who was charmed by the personnality of the young boy and offered him the possibility to go study in a good college. That is how the young Giraud studied in Orléans until his fourteen.

At this time, he already made many drawings of his friends and his teachers. When he came back home, his father was first hesitant but finally accept that his son joined Louis Hersent's studio.

In 1820, he enrolled in the studio of Joseph-Théodore Richomme. Then Giraud entered the Fine Arts School at the end of 1821, where he studied engraving. The pupil was hard-working and attentive so he was very soon awarded and gained the engraving section's Great Prize of Roma in 1826.

Although Eugène Giraud felt designed to painting and wished to abandon engraving, he had to find a way to earn his living in order not to worry his old father. That was how he began his career by sending drawings and portraits to editors. He also realised some engravings for the state, of whom a reproduction of the painting The Virgin with green cushion by Andrea Solari.

This was after his father's death in 1832 that Giraud decided to devote himself to painting. He began to execute portraits and gained a 3rd class medal at the Salon of French Artists in 1833 where he was exhibited five portraits of whom Jules Janin's and Hérold's.

Giraud began to be known as a portrait painter and gained many orders from the gentry. He also gave some painting's lessons ans liked to make caricatures (some are now in the Louvre Museum). He was a very good pastellist recognized by critique to have brought this technique up to date during the 1834's Salon. In this way we can cite Louis Auvray at the 1864's Salon " Mr Eugène Giraud didn't exhibit any pastel, genre that he made relive in France and in which he equalled and even surpassed what was made before ".

In 1836, he gained a 2nd classs medal for his painting representing Charles the Dauphin, Duke of Normandy saved from Parisian by the officer during the captivity of the King Jean.

He was a skilful artist who mixed with the great 19th century figures, of whom the writers Flaubert and Balzac. He also travelled a lot with his brother in Spain, America, Algeria, Egypt, Hungary, Switzerland, Constantinople and Athens.

At the end of the 1840's, he met Princess Mathilde with who he stayed friend until his death in 1881. When she settled in Paris in 1846 at the end of Louis-Philippe's reign, she used to invite many artists and writers in the Louvre. Keen of art and also a painter herself, she considered Giraud as her master. This one benefited from her protection for fifteen years and he worked in her home almost every day. She converted a room into a studio in her home situated in Saint-Gratien where he met many people and the Emperor of whom he realised a portrait.

As Giraud had a great taste and knowledge in costumes, he realised many sketches for playwrights like Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo.

This attirance for costumes has been filled during his stay in Spain and he came back from there with many of them. They gave him inspiration for his Spanish paintings " The death of the toreador " and " Dance in a posada in Grenade ".

In 1851 Eugène Giraud was named Chevalier of the Legion of Honour and then was promoted Officer in 1866.

Museums

Compiègne, musée national du château de Compiègne.
Paris, Musée du Louvres
Paris, Bibliothèque François Mitterrand

Bibliography

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GABET, Charles, Dictionnaire des artistes de l'école française, au XIXe siècle peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, lithographies et compositions musicales, Paris, chez Madame Vergne librairie
GAUTIER, Théophile, Abécédaire du salon du 1861, Paris, E. Dentu, 1861, 417 p. GAUTIER, Théophile, Les Beaux Arts en Europe 1855, s.l., M. Levy frères, 1856.
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