

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



HENRI-JOSEPH HARPIGNIES

1819 Valenciennes - Saint-Privé 1916

Bord de rivière (L'Aumance?)

Oil on canvas ; c.1870-75.

Signed lower left: *H y Harpignies.*

28.5 x 45.7 cm

PROVENANCE: Collection Mr. and Mrs. Robert Schmit, Paris – Thence by descent

Henri-Joseph Harpignies was one of the most skilful and prolific artists of the second generation of French landscape watercolourists. In 1852, after travels to Holland, Flanders and Italy, he established his own studio in Paris. Just a year later he began to make excursions into the countryside and the Forest of Fontainebleau in order to paint *en plein air*. On these excursions he encountered Corot, Daubigny, Diaz de La Peña, Dupré, Millet, Troyon, Rousseau and other artists of the Barbizon School. Many of these artists belonged to the French Realist movement and rejected classical academic tradition, insisting upon direct study from nature to achieve a truer representation of life in the countryside.¹

Harpignies's long life outlasted various artistic movements of the 19th century. At the beginning of his painterly development is the Barbizon school, which gave landscape painting an unprecedented importance by putting it on a par with history painting. The influence of Corot and the Barbizon masters is apparent in many of Harpignies's landscapes. He made his Salon debut in 1853 and continued to exhibit regularly thereafter.

Throughout his long career, Harpignies remained committed to a conception of landscape painting rooted in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly that of his model Corot.

In September 1869 Harpignies visited for the first time the town of Hérisson, situated on the banks of the river Aumance. Enchanted by the landscapes, the artist returned there every summer until 1879, and produced there numerous paintings and watercolours [Fig.1 and 2].

Jean-Pierre Cappoen comments the present oil: „In a landscape setting, on a cloudless day, Henri Harpignies invites us to follow a fairly wide stream that narrows, heading to the right to form a waterfall with rapid, quivering waves. You can almost hear the water rustling.

On the other side of the bank, a small figure attracted by the spectacle admires these stormy waves. The artist uses a wide range of greens here, which bring the work to life, and once again a beautiful perspective opens up to the right of the thatched cottages far behind the waterfall, giving depth to this painting.

We can date this painting to 1870-1875, a period during which the painter lived in Hérisson, a charming little village in the Allier, on the banks of the Aumance, a river which inspired this artist and was the beginning of a fine career as an artist.”

We would like to thank Dr. Jean-Pierre Cappoen for writing a comment about our painting.

¹ Chantal Georgel, *La forêt de Fontainebleau, un atelier grandeur nature*, exhib. cat., Musée d'Orsay, Paris 2007.



Fig.1: *Le Saut-du-Loup*, 1873,
oil on canvas, 143 x 180 cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Cambrai
Inv. no. : RF. 551



Fig.2 : *Bord de rivière*, 1870,
oil on canvas, 24.1 x 32 cm.
Private collection