

Alessandro Magnasco, called Il Lissandrino  
(Genoa 1667 – 1749)

and

Antonio Francesco Peruzzini  
(Ancona 1643/46 – 1724 Milan)

*A wooded landscape with travellers and washerwomen by a stream, a fortified town in the background*

*A wooded landscape with travellers resting by a stream, a fortified castle in the background*  
A pair, oil on canvas, 117 x 175.5 cm.

### Expertise

Anna Orlando, March 2011.

Previously unpublished, these canvases constitute a significant addition to the *oeuvre* of Alessandro Magnasco and his long-time collaborator Antonio Francesco Peruzzini.

Alessandro was the son of the Genoese painter Stefano Magnasco, but following his father's early death he was sent to Milan to train with the artist Filippo Abbiati. Influenced by the Lombard tradition, embodied by artists such as Francesco Cairo and Giovanni Battista Crespi, il Cerano, Magnasco's compositions are characterized by strong *chiaroscuro* gradations and a dramatic sense of movement and narrative, conveyed through thick, impressionistic brushstrokes. Towards the end of the 17th Century, Magnasco started collaborating with Peruzzini, executing the figures in the latter's landscapes. Between 1703 and 1709, the two artists were at the court of Ferdinando de' Medici, Grand Prince of Tuscany, where they had the opportunity to study first-hand one of the most famous collections of paintings in the peninsula. Having returned to Milan in 1709, Magnasco established himself as a successful painter of genre scenes, receiving commissions from some of the most prominent Milanese patrician families.

Conceived as a pair from the start, these well-preserved canvases display mirroring compositions that feature a stream running through the center flanked on either side by trees that guide the viewer's gaze into the scene. In both, the intense blue sky is animated by clouds, created with quick brushstrokes, while the trees, seemingly agitated by a light wind, are illuminated with specks of white impasto and stand out against the sky in a *chiaroscuro* characteristic of Peruzzini. In both canvases nature takes center stage, while the silhouettes of towers and towns are only visible in the distance.

Immersed in the landscape, Magnasco's figures are occupied with their everyday lives, some watching their sheep, others washing clothes, resting or reading. In both canvases, nature is the element essential to human activity, which is structured around it and orchestrated by

Magnasco in a rhythm that is unique to his compositions and also reveals the perfect harmony between Peruzzini's and Magnasco's hands. The latter paints the figures with quick, yet detailed brushstrokes, creating highlights with touches of white impasto.

Anna Orlando, who confirms the attribution to Magnasco and Peruzzini in full, suggests dating the present works to the late 17th Century, the beginning of the collaboration between the two painters. Indeed, upon comparison with their more mature work, such as the pair of landscapes now in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, dated by scholars to 1719-20, the handling of the brush in the present pair appears more descriptive and the figures more defined. Thanks to the excellent state of conservation of both canvases, the colours have remained rich and the loaded brushstrokes can still be picked out, giving texture to the painted surface.