

Biography

Born in Nantes on February 27, 1824, Henri Picou is a perfect example of the French neo--classical school of painting of the second half of the 19th century . A student of Paul Delaroche in Paris, he befriends the artists Gérôme and Gleyre and his style will show their influence.

A painter of historical subjects, allegories and " genre scenes ", from 1847 onwards he becomes a regular exhibitor at the French Salon where he will be rewarded twice, in 1848 and 1857. He presents works of allegorical and mythological scenes that he 's been painting in his huge studio located Boulevard Magenta in Paris, mainly representations of half-naked or naked women among classical antique settings. In 1853 he will be awarded the Prix de Rome.

He is also commissioned by the Church to work on very large scale projects of religious scenes . In Nantes for Notre Dame du Bon Secours and in Paris, for the Saint Roch church where, today, one can still admire two of his grand mural paintings ornating the walls of the Chapelle des Saints Apôtres. " The preaching of Saint Paul " and " Peter receiving the keys ", dated 1854.

These compositions which artistic style goes between Courbet's Naturalism and the Symbolism of Puvis de Chavannes forecast of his most typical work to come " An Allegory to Nature ", dated 1895, and today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Nantes.