



Eugène Boudin

1824-1898

Boats and barges in the inner harbor of Rotterdam, Holland

Oil on canvas signed and dated 1881 lower right

Dimensions : 48,5 x 74 cm

Dimensions : 18.90 x 29.13 inch

Literature : Brame & Lorenceau certificate

Eugène Boudin Archives

Origin : Marlborough Fine Art, London

Private collection



Dimensions with frame : 63,5 x 90 cm
Dimensions with frame : 24.80 x 35.43 inch

Biography

It was my dream to make great skies... but the painter proposes and the sky opposes it.

Eugène Boudin was born in 1824 in Honfleur into a modest background, as his father was a merchant seaman on the Le Havre-Hamburg shipping line and his mother a chambermaid on merchant ships. When the family moved to Le Havre in 1835, the young Eugène was 11 years old and became a ship's boy on a ship sailing from Le Havre to Honfleur.

This introduction to the life of a sailor was short-lived. From 1836 onwards, he was employed as a clerk by the Le Havre printer Joseph Morlent and then by the paper and framer Alphonse Lemasle. This activity did not displease him and in 1844 he decided to create his own paper-framing business with a partner, Jean Acher. The business was frequented by writers, painters and musicians. But it was the graphic arts that attracted the young man, who began to draw. Jean-François Millet, himself from Normandy, passing through Le Havre, encouraged him, as well as Thomas Couture, a great master of academicism and respected teacher.

In 1846, Boudin was 22 years old. He gave up his share of the business to devote himself entirely to his art. He enrolled at the Municipal School of Drawing in Le Havre and painted genre scenes, still lifes and a few portraits for the local bourgeoisie. In 1848, he travelled to Belgium and the Netherlands and discovered the great Flemish and Dutch masters.

Thanks to the support of the curator of the museum of Le Havre, Adolphe-Hippolyte Couveley, who was also a marine painter, Thomas Couture and Constantin Troyon among others, Eugène Boudin obtained a scholarship for three years. In June 1851, the young painter arrived in Paris and enrolled in the studio of the painter Eugène Isabey as well as in the Louvre Museum as a copyist. In addition to his copies of the Flemish masters in the Louvre, Boudin continued to paint and sell still lifes to supplement his income.

From 1855 onwards, Eugène Boudin travelled a lot. He alternated between Paris and Honfleur, where he stayed at the Saint-Siméon farmhouse inn. There he rubbed shoulders with Troyon, Millet, Rousseau and Corot, whose sketches painted on the ground influenced his aestheticism. Little by little, he turned towards his vocation: the representation of sea shores, boats and ports. The ever-changing skies and the fleeting lights of the Seine estuary forced the young painter to transcribe his outdoor observations onto his canvases as quickly as possible.

The first Boudin's exhibition took place in Paris in 1857. The same year, he sold thirty paintings of local landscapes at auction in Le Havre. In 1858, he met a young man in the Le Havre paper shop of Gravier who was exhibiting caricatures. This was Claude Monet, then 18 years old. Boudin's influence on Monet was to be decisive. He took the young caricaturist to watch him paint in the vicinity of Le Havre, and it was then that Claude Monet understood painting. "I looked at him more attentively, and then it was suddenly like a veil being torn: I had understood, I had grasped what painting could be."

In 1859, Boudin exhibited for the first time at the annual Salon organised by the Academy of Fine Arts. In his review of the Salon, Charles Baudelaire was enthusiastic about Boudin's pastels, which helped to bring him his first success. In the same year, he met Gustave Courbet and took him to Honfleur, where he painted several canvases. Along with Monet, Boudin also met the Dutch painter Johan Jongkind, the precursor of Impressionism. The support of such personalities could only strengthen the artist's resolve to pursue a path that nevertheless allowed him to live only modestly.

But at the beginning of the 1860s the fashion for sea bathing appeared. The Parisian aristocracy and upper

middle class travelled to the Normandy coast in the summer. Deauville and Trouville became very popular resorts. Boudin began to produce small paintings, captured on the spot, depicting the walks, conversations and activities of these wealthy people. Although the public often remained indifferent to this exquisite but too innovative painting for their taste, the critics immediately noticed the young painter and applauded him. Boudin began to dream of fortune and wrote in 1863: "People like my little ladies on the beach and some people claim that there is a goldmine to be exploited there."

In January 1863, Eugène Boudin married Marie-Anne Guédès, whom he had met in Hanvec, a Breton commune near Brest. The wedding took place in Brittany, but the couple moved to Paris in February.

Boudin was now able to make a living from his work as a painter. The critics took notice of him and Zola himself, an advocate of Claude Monet, praised him. He participated in the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, but did not consider himself as a member of the movement. His financial ease enabled him to travel to Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. He exhibited regularly in Paris. In 1886, the great art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel organised an exhibition in New York to promote the Impressionists in the United States. Several paintings by Boudin were selected.

At the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889, his paintings *Les lamaneurs* and *Coucher de soleil* won the gold medal. The death of his wife in the same year affected him deeply. The last decade of his life, however, remained very productive. He spent the winters in the South of France and worked in the open air. In 1895, he visited Venice. In 1898, ill, he asked to be taken to his villa in Deauville where he died on 8 August. According to his wishes, he was buried in the Saint-Vincent de Montmartre cemetery.

Boudin's skies, often heavy with humidity, were admired by the greatest. Among them, Corot called him "the king of skies".

Museums

Musée Eugène Boudin, Honfleur

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Musée des Beaux-Arts André Malraux, Le Havre

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Montréal Québec

National Gallery, Londres

Bibliography

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Collectif, Eugène Boudin en Normandie, Editions Anthèse, 1998

Laurent Manoeuvre, AM Bergeret, E. Boudin, la magie de l'air et de l'eau, Editions A Propos, 2016