



Jacques-Eugène Feyen

1815-1908

The beach in Cancale

Oil on canvas / signed lower left

Dimensions : 55,4 x 79,5 cm

Dimensions : 21.65 x 31.10 inch

Biography

Portraits, scenes of rural life, seaside landscapes, young girls collecting oysters... so many subjects that Jacques-Eugène Feyen chooses to translate in his paintings. Seduced by the charm of the Brittany region, the artist puts these life-scenes at the core of his work. Treated in a variety of soft and broken colors, Feyen strives to recreate this nature still untouched by modernity.

Jacques-Eugène Feyen was born in Bey-sur-Seille, in the Meurthe region. Son of a tax collector, the artist discovered an interest in painting at an early age. His plastic predispositions pushed him to attend the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris. There he joined the studio of Paul Delaroche, the initiator of the "historical anecdote", a genre with a documentary vocation, whose dramatic sensibility met with great success. His master's work is in the vein of historical painting. He then turned to the studio of Léon Coignet, a French history painter, portraitist and neoclassical and romantic lithographer, known for his numerous lithographs. His artistic training allows him to initiate his little brother to the practice of painting. In spite of his attraction for colour, the artist nevertheless chooses to detach himself from his paintbrushes in favour of an emerging mode of expression : photography. Photography, invented in 1839, revolutionized the artistic world and competed greatly with painting. Indeed, photography brought a new vision, which engendered a totally new relationship with the model and the subjects. Jacques-Louis Daguerre's creation, presented during an official session at the Institut de France, makes possible to capture a subject almost instantaneously: it allows the development of a new mode of expression. Following in the footsteps of many of his contemporaries, Feyen devotes herself to the practice of photography and explores this new tool.

Having given up painting for a while, the artist chose to take up his brushes and colours again. His nude figures and portraits are presented on the walls of the Salon, starting in 1841. Since the end of the 17th century, this artistic event has been held in Paris. It exhibits and presents the works of artists approved initially by the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, created by Mazarin, and later by the Academy of Fine Arts of Paris. Feyen exhibits there every year. However, he will be forced to stop painting for about ten years, due to a weakness in his eyes, which prevents him from continuing his activity. From 1861 onwards, his works are again shown at the Salon until 1882. Twice the artist's work was awarded prizes: in 1866, and in 1880. One year later, Jacques Eugène Feyen was awarded the medal of the Legion of Honour.

Particularly attracted by the charm and colours of Brittany, the artist chose to leave the capital to discover new landscapes. So he settles in Cancale, during the summer months, with his brother. As a result, from 1861 onwards, Brittany subjects occupied a large part of his artistic production: his canvases are picturing scenes of rural life, the work of fishermen carrying their nets, as well as figures of women on the beach, busily collecting oysters. He also endeavours to transcribe the work in the fields. The authenticity of this region of France, still untouched by the nascent modernity animating the rest of the country, attracts a large number of artists. The painters, seduced by this raw charm and this land borrowed from a form of nostalgia, then hastened to translate these landscapes and scenes of popular life. Feyen is no exception : he too goes in search of these authentic subjects, which he puts on his canvases.

Part of his artistic production now belongs to public collections. His work is notably presented in Quimper, at the Musée Départemental Breton. In addition, three of his paintings entitled *Le Marin*, *Héroïsme*, or *Les Naufragés*, are exhibited at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes. *Le Baiser enfantin*, presented at the 1865 Salon, is exhibited at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille. His figurations of scenes of life in Brittany are also exhibited at Batz-sur-Mer, with his *Paludières*, a painting from 1872. We find some of his paintings in the museums of Nancy and Mulhouse. One of his paintings is even presented at the Historical and Diplomatic Museum of Itamaraty, in Rio de Janeiro : *Women and fishermen waiting for a boat*, made around 1860.

Museums

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes

Musée Départemental Breton

Bibliography

BRETON, Jules, Catalogue Feyen-Perrin, Exposition, Notice biographique, 1889.