
Boudin, (Louis-)Eugène

(b Honfleur, July 12, 1824; d Deauville, Aug 8, 1898).

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French painter. The son of a mariner, he served as a cabin boy on his father's coastal vessel and thus became familiar with the moods and atmosphere of the sea, which, with the Normandy grazing lands, was his main subject-matter. After a year of schooling in Le Havre in 1835, Boudin worked with a local printer and then with a stationer and framer who displayed paintings by visiting artists; thus he became acquainted with Théodule Ribot, Thomas Couture and Jean-François Millet (ii), as well as Constant Troyon and Eugène Isabey, who were important influences. By 1844 he had set up his own stationery business from which he withdrew in 1846 after spending all his money on buying a conscription substitute. In 1847 he decided to become a professional painter and went to Paris, where he was stimulated by the landscapes, marines and still-lives of the 17th-century Dutch school and contemporary Barbizon paintings. He copied Old Masters, some of which he did for Baron Isidore-Justin-Séverin Taylor, who subsidized Boudin's travel in northern France and Belgium in 1849. In 1851 Boudin was granted a three-year scholarship by Le Havre Municipal Council to work in Paris, Rouen and Caen, as well as locally. In 1854 he made wider contacts with the group of artists who frequented the Ferme Saint-Siméon, near Honfleur. His visit in 1855 to Quimper aroused an interest in local costume (e.g. *Breton Festival*, c. 1864; priv. col., see Jean-Aubry, 1968, p. 34); a second, extended Breton tour in 1857 enamoured him of the landscape and yielded an important sequence of monochrome drawings reflecting Barbizon influences. At an exhibition of the Société des Amis des Arts du Havre in 1858, Boudin met Claude Monet to whom he offered substantial encouragement, stressing particularly the primacy of working directly from nature. In 1859 Boudin's *Pardon of Ste-Anne-la-Palud* (1858; Le Havre, Mus. B.-A.) was accepted at the Paris Salon, where it was praised by Charles Baudelaire. In the same year Boudin befriended Gustave Courbet, the style of whose largely studio-painted sea and sky pictures he raised to a new pitch of naturalism.

In 1861 Boudin worked briefly with Troyon in Paris, squaring up larger subjects and occasionally painting the skies. He encountered Camille Corot and Charles-François Daubigny, whose works had already impressed him, the former appropriately designating him 'le roi des cieux'. From 1863 to 1897 he exhibited regularly at the Salon, usually a single work or pair of paintings; he was also represented in the First Impressionist Exhibition of 1874. In 1864 Boudin met Johan Barthold Jongkind, with whose art his has many affinities. In 1881 he signed a contract with the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, with resulting American sales.

Boudin's life followed a consistent pattern of annual travel to his favoured sites in Normandy and Brittany, as well as Bordeaux, and in the 1890s the French Riviera. He inscribed his works with both location and date. During the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) he visited Belgium and the Netherlands, and he extended his later tours to Brussels, Antwerp, Dordrecht, Rotterdam and Scheveningen. From 1892 to 1895 he regularly visited Venice and depicted traditional views with a cool, resonant luminosity, as in *Venice* (1895; Washington, DC, Phillips Col.).



Eugène Boudin: *On the Beach at Trouville*, oil on wood, 10 x 18 in. (25.4 x 45.7 cm), 1863 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Amelia B. Lazarus, 1907, Accession ID: 07.88.4); photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/110000182>

Boudin's reputation was forged on his scenes of harbours, rivers, estuaries and coasts and their shipping, but he also made some inland landscapes and a long series of still-lives in the tradition of Jean-Siméon Chardin (e.g. *Still-life with Lobster on White Cloth*, c. 1862; Atlanta, GA, High Mus. A.); these culminated in the decorative panels of exotic birds, fruit and flowers painted in 1869 for the Château de Bourdainville. His figure subjects range from studies of peasants at their festivities or devotions to marketing scenes and washerwomen; however, his most famous sequence is his depictions of beach scenes (1860–94), prompted by Isabey, showing the bourgeoisie and aristocracy at recreation on the sands of Deauville and Trouville (e.g. *Beach Scene at Trouville*, 1880; Philadelphia, PA, Mus. A. and *On the Beach at Trouville*, 1863; New York, Met.).

Boudin prefigured Impressionism with his acute and subtle awareness of atmospheric luminosity, with particular emphasis on passing effects of wind-blown cloud and sea. His penchant for cool, silvery lighting and blond tonality is often enlivened with brilliant touches of colour in costumes, flags or bunting, while a richer intensity of hue is seen in his warmer, southern seascapes. Despite a generalization of forms, broken contours, an impasto of splintery brushstrokes of broadly suggestive immediacy and an overall instantaneity of vision, he never pushed as far as the Impressionists in the visual analysis and optical blend of colour divisions; nor did he attempt the mix of short or scrolling brushstrokes of his unofficial pupil, Monet. He did not paint the same subjects consecutively under varying atmospheric conditions but often returned at longer intervals to a favourite motif such as the Etretat cliffs or Trouville jetties. Although Boudin's stylistic development is neither extreme nor dramatic, his tendency to greater emptiness and animated effects became exaggerated in his last decade to a wild and broken handling and severe formal austerity.

Throughout his career Boudin made bright, lively and schematic pastels, and he filed for reference a vast oeuvre of watercolours revealing a sparse skeleton of chalk or graphite over which float broad, approximate washes of vibrant yet delicately transparent colour. At the end of his life he made one original lithograph and a brilliantly vital, if technically flawed, marine etching that indicate the ability if not the inclination to become an important printmaker.

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