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EUGÈNE BOUDIN

1824 Honfleur - Deauville 1898

Paysage normand

Oil on paper, laid down on canvas; c.1892-96.

Stamped with the monogram lower right in blue: E. B [the artist's estate sale (Lugt 828)].

25.3 x 35.9 cm

PROVENANCE: Gérard, Paris – Sale: Hôtel Drouot, Paris, June 13, 1980 – Mr and Mrs Robert Schmit, Paris – Thence by descent

LITERATURE: Robert Schmit, *Eugène Boudin 1824-1898, Catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint, Premier supplément*, Paris 1984, no. 3814, p. 71 (repr.)

« En vérité, mon cher, vous êtes un séraphin, il n'y a que vous qui connaissiez le ciel. »¹

In 1844, Eugène Boudin and a partner set up their own paper and frame shop in Le Havre, where they specialized in selling sketchbooks and paper for pastels, thereby attracting a regular clientele of artists. It is not known when Boudin first started drawing, but 1847 he set off for Paris where he received a study grant for a period of three years to study painting.

From 1855 onwards, he adopted a particular rhythm of life, spending his winters in Paris and his summers in Normandy.²

Eugène Boudin is rightly recognized as having played a vital role in the history of French landscape painting, in particular in having been one of the first artists to work consistently *en plein air*. Throughout his career he painted both land and seascapes: most of Boudin's landscapes include water and extensive skies. He attached great importance to the sun, clouds and sky and their changing effects on the moving landscape.

Boudin is one of the immediate precursors of Impressionism: his early studies, concentrating more upon light and colour than upon the subject, influenced the new generation of painters.

He was admired by many of the artists of his time. Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot called him *le roi des ciels*. Claude Monet, who had met Boudin in 1858, felt great affection for him and considered him as his 'master'.

Already in the 1870s Boudin had painted views of the river Touques and distant views of the beach and sea from the hill above Trouville. It was only in the later 1880s that Boudin regularly painted the fertile pastures inland from Trouville along the banks of the river Toques [Fig.1]. By this time he had

¹ „In truth, my dear, you are a seraphim, only you know the sky“, Gustave Courbet talking to Eugène Boudin, cited in: Anne-Marie Bergeret-Gourbin, *L'Atelier de la lumière*, in: *Eugène Boudin. L'atelier de la lumière*, exhib. cat., MuMa, 16 April – 26 September 2016, Le Havre, p. 83 (Jean Aubry, 1922, p. 39).

² Vivien Hamilton, *Boudin: An Introduction*, in: *Boudin at Trouville*, exhib. cat., Glasgow Museums, Glasgow, 20 November 1992 – 28 February 1993, Courtauld Institute Galleries, University of London, London, 15 March – 2 May 1993, p.10

firmly established himself as a painter of the beach and port of Trouville and was possibly in search of new challenges.³

Although his stylistic development was neither radical nor dramatic, in the last decade of his life Boudin shows a growing tendency towards impressions of emptiness coupled with a display of technical exuberance. His handling of paint grew increasingly uninhibited and his brushwork cursory, while achieving extraordinary formal austerity: The paint surface is much thinner, the brushstrokes dry and directional [Fig.2, 3].⁴

Our beautiful painting is very representative for the last decade of Boudin's œuvre.

The artist seems here to play with the canvas: he applies fluid colour with sweeping brushstrokes to paint the fields and hills, and renders the cloudy sky with vigorous brushstrokes.

This painting comes from the collection of Robert Schmit (1920-2008).

An eminent specialist of 19th and 20th century painting, in 1964 he established the Galerie Robert Schmit at the rue Saint-Honoré, quickly becoming one of the most important in Paris. He established a bridge between the great masters of the second half of the 19th century, who presaged the titans of Impressionism and related schools. A much-valued voice of discerning taste, Schmit became a renowned arbiter for collectors worldwide, many of the paintings he sold still in collections of museums the world over. Schmit published several *catalogues raisonnés*, the first being dedicated to Eugène Boudin, the "king of skies" and Schmit's favourite artist.



Fig.1: *The Dunes at Tourneville*, 1880

oil on canvas.

40.3 x 54.1 cm.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Québec
(Inv. 1920-16)

³ Vivien Hamilton, *Landscapes*, in: op. cit., p.127 ff.

⁴ Harley Preston, in *The Dictionary of Art*, edited by Jane Turner, London and New York 1996, IV, p. 524.



Fig.2: *Paysage normand*, c.1888-95
oil on cardboard, laid down on panel.
25 x 36.5 cm.
Private collection



Fig.3 : *Étude de nuages sur un ciel bleu*, c.1888-95
oil on panel.
37 x 46 cm.
MuMa/Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux, Le Havre
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