

Vacationers on the Beach at Trouville 1864 by Eugene-Louis Boudin (1824 - 1898)

French.

Introduction

In the *Vacationers on the Beach at Trouville*, (1864) Eugene Boudin portrayed contemporary French life with relative objectivity, including French ritual of sociability at resorts on the Normandy coast. This piece is shown with Impressionist art because Boudin was an influence to Monet and others, particularly in relation to painting out of doors - *plein aire* painting. He has been called "An Initiator of Impressionism" in the *Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin*.

This scene is painted on the horizontal elements of the landscape. The scene is painted as it would strike the eye close to the ground without any effort to exaggerate perspective for dramatic or storytelling effect. Boudin achieved the sense of vast space simply by his treatment of the sky, where the brush's reference is primarily to atmosphere rather than the tangible substance of water and earth.

This painting was the first that was purchased by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts for our collection. It is by an artist who was painting at the time the impressionists began and made an important contribution. He encouraged Monet and others to paint out of doors. At the time they began their work most painters did so indoors, usually in a studio, or perhaps in the home of someone. This was very important because the Impressionists became known for painting with a lot of light, which enhances rich colors.

About the Artist

Eugene-Louis Boudin was born at Honfleur in 1824. His father was pilot of the steamship "Francois" of Havre and his mother was the stewardess on the same ship. Eugene-Louis spent most of his childhood on board, serving as a cabin boy after he was deemed old enough. When Boudin was 14 years old his father set up a stationery shop in Havre, where Boudin had more time for his painting. There Millet discovered his pastels and he and another painter sent him to Paris to study. Boudin lived a life of poverty doing a variety of work to keep afloat. He once worked as a day laborer. He had to resort to burning furniture to keep warm. He exhibited his works, but sold only a few. When he was 65 he was awarded a gold medal. The government bought one of his paintings in Luxembourg in 1888, and another a few years later. In 1896 he received the ribbon and cross of the Legion of Honor. He died two years later.

The personality of Boudin shines through his canvasses. He was a man whose quiet persistence was never undermined by the long life of poverty and disappointment, which devotion to his art involved. He received almost no recognition for his work until he was an old man, except from those who were influenced by him.

Corot said of Boudin he was “King of the skies.” Courbet, after watching him paint a canvas exclaimed, “Truly you are one of the seraphim, for you alone understand the heavens!” Monet in a letter to him in 1889 wrote, “in recognition of the advice which has made me what I am.”

He was especially close to Claude Monet and Boudin’s influence on him is clear. At the age of 17, Monet was indebted to Boudin, the Le Havre frame-shop owner turned landscape painter, for the advice which launched him on his career. In his youth he had won notoriety for his pungent caricatures of local people and, highly independent in his ways, seemed to be determined to follow no other counsel than his own, least of all Boudin’s, whose paintings he disliked.

But Boudin’s sincerity, his warm admiration for Monet’s talent and his gentle admonition that he would soon have enough of caricature, that he should “study, learn to see and to paint, draw, make landscapes,” won him over and a Monet himself reported, “my eyes were finally opened and I really understood nature; I learned at the same time to love it.”

Vacationers on the Beach at Trouville: Gallery Label - Current
Eugène Boudin was one of the most important precursors to Impressionism. This characteristic beach scene was the first painting purchased by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts after it opened in 1915.

Key Points about Vacationers on the Beach at Trouville

There are three planes of the picture, the sky makes up more than half, the people on the beach and the sand of the beach

The colors are heavily blue, with a variety of colors on the clothing. Tones of blue, gray, white for the huge sky.

There are impressions of people, but not detailed or photographic.

There is sun, breaking through the clouds. The lighter “sea” is affected by the light. The darker clouds create a darker sea.

The beach may reveal patterns in the last part of the 19th century with fully dressed people taking in the sea air.

Most of Boudin’s work was landscape related to the sea and beach.

Key Questions

What is happening in this painting?

Where are the people in this painting? Do you think they could be painting? Or swimming? Or sun bathings? Is this what you wear to the beach?

How would you describe the colors in the painting?

What gives the impression of sun light in the painting and how does it affect the sea?

What are the brushstrokes like?

There are three sections of the painting. What is in the largest portion of the painting?