



### Eugène Boudin

(1824-1898)

### Beach Scene in Trouville

(Trouville, scène de plage)

1881

*signed bottom right: "E. Boudin"*

*located and dated bottom left:  
"Trouville 81"*

*Oil on poplar wood*

*h 14.1 cm x b 26.5 cm*

*WRM Dep. FC 735*





## Brief Report

This little panel shows a section of the lively beach at Trouville-sur-Mer on the coast of Normandy. It was a motif to which the artist turned a number of times in and around 1881 [Schmit 1973, vol. 2; Koella 2000, cat. nos. 8, 15, 27]. The poplar panel with its white ground does not correspond to any standard contemporary format. In Boudin's work, however, there are other panels with almost the same dimensions and also in other uniform sizes, suggesting that the artist liked and standardized certain formats [Schmit 1973, vol. 2]. Boudin first laid in the main areas of the beach, sea and sky, applying the paints largely wet-in-wet, as indicated by numerous details, including the ships, which were applied on wet paint (fig. 9). After a certain time being allowed for drying, the groups of people were added, their dimensions getting smaller from foreground to background, thus determining the perspective composition of the scene. In the area of the figures the paint is more impasto. In highly varied brush-strokes, he skilfully models the figures.

Fine, almost semi-transparent accents give a precise look to the brisk brushwork (figs 6-8). Traces of pressure in the wet paint all around the periphery and others on the bottom edge point to the use of a painting case, as was usual for *plein air* painting. The signature was added some time after the painting was finished, for the initial "E" is superimposed on a loss in the paint-layer (fig. 5). Even so, this signature appears to be authentic. Possibly it was added later on the occasion of the sale of the panel, which may already have shown signs of damage. An extant sales list dating from 1881 includes more than 60 works by Boudin which went to the dealer and gallery-owner Durand-Ruel, including two paintings titled "Trouville" [Koella 2000, p. 128]. Unfortunately the picture has been subject to substantial restoration and inexpert cleaning in the past, suffering damage in the process, and in places considerable areas have been overpainted; some nuances of the airy scene have thus been irretrievably lost (figs 11, 12).



### Picture support panel

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Standard format                       | not a standard format   |
| Thickness                             | original thickness can no longer be ascertained, as the panel has been thinned  |
| Type of wood                          | poplar ( <i>Populus sp.</i> )   |
| Panel structure                       | consists of one board   |
| Grain direction                       | horizontal  |
| Cut of panel                          | not determined  |
| Traces left by manufacture/processing | the edges of the panel are smooth; the top edge has saw-marks on the left, which could however derive from later restoration work |
| Manufacturer's/dealer's marks         | none present  |

### Ground

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Sizing         | not determined  |
| Colour         | white   |
| Application    | very thin, single-layer brush application in a horizontal direction; on the left and right edges the ground extends in places beyond the edge of the picture, indicating that there has been no change of the panel format in the breadth |
| Binding medium | presumably oil  |
| Texture        | the thin ground barely fills the crevices in the structure of the wood  |



### Composition planning/Underpainting/Underdrawing

Medium/technique cannot be determined

Extent/character –

Pentimenti –

### Paint layer

Paint application/technique  
and artist's own revision

the painting, which comes across as brisk and sketch-like, was executed in two stages; first the large areas of the sky, beach and sea were laid-in in predominantly horizontal and diagonal brush-strokes, smooth and wet-in-wet; Boudin also painted the ships on the still-wet paint-layer; all this was followed after a brief drying period by the execution of the figures in a number of impasto layers; the details of the scene were made more precise with fine semi-transparent dark-grey accents (fig. 8); in the middle of the painting to the right of the man there is an impasto patch of white with blue paint on top of it, presumably a later correction

Painting tools hair brushes varying in width between 2-4 mm in the area of the figures; for the larger areas broader hair or bristle brushes were used

Surface structure major restoration measures have resulted in compression of the surface, making any statement difficult; the surface appearance of the painting is strongly influenced by small pits and vertical groove-like crevices in the panel (fig. 3)

Palette microscopic inspection reveals: white, pale yellow, yellow ochre, pale red, medium green, medium blue, dark blue, black; the hues are used both pure and in blends, the latter above all in the flesh-tints and greys;  
VIS spectrometry: chrome yellow (?)/ cadmium yellow(?), iron-oxide yellow, vermillion, cobalt blue, ultramarine

Binding mediums presumably predominantly oil; in some places in the area of the figures paint-applications with a “pearl effect” are discernible, possibly pointing to an aqueous binding medium (fig. 10)



## Surface finish

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Authenticity/Condition | the present varnish derives from the last restoration; no statement is possible concerning any older or original varnish |
|------------------------|--|

## Signature/Mark

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| When? | the signature “E. Boudin” was executed in reddish-grey paint with a fine hair brush some time after the completion of the painting and apparently following damage to the picture, because part of the letter “E” lies above a loss in the paint-layer (fig. 5); as the paint of the signature can also be found in the painting, we may assume that the signature was added by the artist himself, for example on the occasion of the sale of the picture (see above, Brief Report) |
|-------|--|

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Autograph signature | the handwriting displays significant similarities with known autograph signatures by Boudin |
|---------------------|---|

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Serial | – |
|--------|---|

## Frame

|              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| Authenticity | not original |
|--------------|--------------|

## State of preservation

The painting has been heavily worked over; first the original panel was thinned down to app. 1–2 mm and then transferred to a plywood board with an additional cradle before being stained dark (fig. 2); whether the panel was reduced at the top and bottom edges in the course of this procedure cannot be excluded with certainty owing to the damage to the ground and paint-layer on these edges; the paint-layer was heavily reduced by solvents, which led in turn to subsequent overpainting over large areas: the characteristic structure and divergent coloration of this overpainting gives the picture a restless appearance (figs 4, 11, 12); the signature has been reduced by the use of solvents and retraced in a transparent ochre (fig. 5); the cradling has resulted in flattening of impasto areas.



### Additional remarks

On the right-hand edge, following the lay-in of sky, beach and sea, a piece of cloth was pressed into the wet paint leaving blue fibres in the paint layer; at the edge of the painting are various impressions, which may derive from fastening the painting in a painting-case; the surface appearance of the painting is strongly marked by pits and vertical groove-like crevices in the panel (fig. 3).

### Literature

- Budde/Schaefer 2001: Rainer Budde, Barbara Schaefer, *Miracle de la couleur* (exhib. cat. Cologne Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud, 8 September - 9. December 2001), Cologne 2001, cat. no. 11, p. 44, with ill.
- Koella 2000: Rudolf Koella, *Eugene Boudin: Impressionist der ersten Stunde* (exhib. cat., Stiftung Langmatt Sidney und Jenny Brown), Baden 2000
- Schmit 1973: Robert Schmit, *Eugène Boudin, 1824–1898*, 2 vols, Paris 1973

### Source of illustrations

All illustrations and figures: Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Fondation Corboud



### Examination methods used

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ✓ Incident light                       | ✓ VIS spectrometry                       |
| ✓ Raking light                         | ✓ Wood identification                    |
| – Reflected light                      | – FTIR (Fourier transform spectroscopy)  |
| – Transmitted light                    | – EDX (Energy Dispersive X-ray analysis) |
| ✓ Ultraviolet fluorescence             | – Microchemical analysis                 |
| ✓ Infrared reflectography              |  |
| ✓ False-colour infrared reflectography |  |
| – X-ray                                |  |
| ✓ Stereomicroscopy                     |  |

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Author of examination:  | Martina Pfeiffer |
| Author of brief report: | Hans Portsteffen |

Date: 12/2006

Date: 05/2008





Eugène Boudin – Beach Scene in Trouville  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 1  
Recto



Fig. 2  
Verso, plywood board  
with flat cradle, stained  
dark







Eugène Boudin – Beach Scene in Trouville  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 3  
Raking light



Fig. 4  
UV fluorescence





Eugène Boudin – Beach Scene in Trouville  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 5  
Details of the location/  
date and signature, the  
reddish-brown paint  
of the letter “E” in the  
signature overlaps with  
a small loss in the paint-  
layer (right), microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 6  
Detail, execution of the  
figures





Eugène Boudin – Beach Scene in Trouville  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition



Fig. 7  
Detail, execution of the  
figures



Fig. 8  
Lively brushwork in the  
area of the head and torso  
of a female figure in the  
foreground, microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)





Eugène Boudin – Beach Scene in Trouville  
Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 9  
Wet-in-wet paint  
application in the area  
of the ships in the  
background, microscopic  
photograph (M = 1 mm)



Fig. 10  
Individual applications  
of paint do not adhere  
well to the underlying  
paint-layers and pearl  
off, maybe pointing to  
an aqueous component  
in the binding medium,  
microscopic photograph  
(M = 1 mm)







# Eugène Boudin – Beach Scene in Trouville

## Brief Report on Technology and Condition

Fig. 11

Detail with extensive overpainting in the foreground; the mapping (top right) notes all the overpainted areas and retouching (blue = pale overpainting, green = grey overpainting with characteristic pigmentation, orange = semi-transparent overpainting)



Fig. 12

Excessive cleaning measures with solvent have resulted in many details of the painting now displaying clear reductions or abrasions, microscopic photograph (M = 1 mm)

