Eugène BOUDIN (Honfleur 1824 - Deauville 1898)

The Seine Estuary: A Study of Sea and Sky

Pastel on blue paper, laid down.
Stamped with the atelier stamp E.B. (Lugt 828) at the lower right.
149 x 220 mm. (5 7/8 x 8 5/8 in.)

Writing in 1859, Charles Baudelaire noted of that he had recently seen a large number of Boudin's pastel studies, 'improvised facing sea and sky', in the artist's studio. He noted that 'M. Boudin, who might pride himself on his devotion to his art, shows his curious collection with great modesty. He knows full well that it must all become a painting, by means of the poetic impression recalled at will: and he does not pretend to pass of his notes off for paintings…These studies, so swiftly and accurately sketched, after what, in terms of force and colour, are the most inconstant, the most fleeting of things, after waves and clouds…all these clouds with their fantastic, luminous shapes…' The writer Alexandre Dumas also admired Boudin's sky studies, writing to the artist, 'Vous m'avez promis aussi un grand ciel…'
The attribution of this pastel has been confirmed by Manuel Schmit, who dates the sheet to the first half of the 1860's. A group of comparable sky and cloud studies in pastel are in the collection of the Musée Eugène Boudin in Honfleur, while another similar example is in the Louvre.

Provenance:

The studio of the artist
Probably the Boudin atelier sale, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 20-21 March 1899
Paul Lanoë, Nantes
Thence by descent to a private collector.

Artist description:

The son of a sailor, Louis-Eugène Boudin established a small stationery and framing shop in the port city of Le Havre. Encouraged by some of the artists living or working in the area, whose work he sometimes exhibited in his shop, he took up painting himself in 1847. By the early 1850's he had established a modest career as a landscape painter, working in Le Havre, Rouen, Honfleur and Paris. Praised by contemporaries such as the critic Charles Baudelaire, Boudin began painting marine scenes that attracted much favourable comment when he began exhibiting regularly at the Salon from 1859 onwards. He travelled extensively around France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and made yearly visits to favourite sites in Normandy and Brittany, in particular the fashionable seaside resorts of Deauville and Trouville. Much of Boudin's work was small in scale, and was shown both in Paris and in provincial exhibitions around the country. He found a ready market for his paintings and, from 1881 onwards, enjoyed a fruitful relationship with the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, who sold his works in France and in America.

Boudin's paintings and lively watercolours, with their interest in capturing effects of light and colour, were an important early influence on Claude Monet, who was his pupil. Some six thousand drawings, watercolours and oil sketches – most of the contents of Boudin's studio at his death - are today in the Louvre, while other significant groups of drawings and watercolours were given by the artist or his descendants to the museums of Le Havre and Honfleur.