Stephen Ongpin Fine Art

Eugène BOUDIN (Honfleur 1824 - Deauville 1898)

Sky Study

Oil on brown paper.

Stamped with the atelier stamp E.B. (Lugt 828) in blue ink at the lower left.

Indistinctly inscribed in pencil at the lower left and in the centre of the sheet.

124 x 161 mm. (4 7/8 x 6 3/8 in.)

Eugène Boudin was particularly drawn to the sky, and he produced numerous studies of clouds and skies. As he wrote in one of his notebooks, 'To swim in the open sky. To achieve a cloud's tenderness. To suspend those background masses, far off in the grey mist, and break up the azure…What delight and what torment!...Did they do better in the past? Did the Dutchmen achieve that poetry of clouds I seek? That tenderness of the sky which even extends to admiration, to worship: it's no exaggeration.'

Writing in 1859, Charles Baudelaire noted of that he had recently seen a large number of Boudin's 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…'

A group of comparable sky and cloud studies by Boudin, drawn in oil on paper, are in the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux in Le Havre, while other examples, mainly in pastel, are in the Musée Eugène Boudin in Honfleur.

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.