

## BOUDIN - EMPRESS EUGENIE - 35.45



### CAPTION ONE

Boudin was one of the most important precursors of Impressionism. It was he who encouraged the young Monet to abandon working in the studio and to paint outdoors. Boudin worked regularly at Trouville, popular in the second half of the nineteenth century as a seaside resort. The Beach at Trouville -The Empress Eugenie is one of his earliest paintings recording the elegant summer visitors.

Although there is no documentary evidence to prove that the painting shows the Empress and the ladies of her court there is no reason to doubt the traditional title. The strong light highlighting the figure in white suggests that the small panel commemorates a visit by the Empress to the fashionable resort. The Empress loved sea-bathing and Trouville was frequented by other members of the court, including the Due de Morny, who was half-brother and adviser to the Empress's husband Napoleon III.

### CAPTION TWO

Like most of Boudin's paintings of the beach at Trouville this small work is painted on a wooden panel. These panels were easily portable - so Boudin could work outside directly from nature - and allowed for spontaneity of touch. Here we see Boudin's ability as an observer and recorder of nature. Although he preferred painting groups of people to painting individuals, he succeeded in capturing the characteristic gestures, movements and costumes of the individual figures with astonishing accuracy.

The artistic challenge presented by the subject was not only the representation of movement, colour and light but also the successful incorporation of the human figure into the landscape. At their best, as here, Boudin's beach scenes vibrate with subtle nuances of light, colour, shade and movement, tiny and hasty specks of pure colour simultaneously dramatising the surface and bringing the whole into harmony.

### CAPTION THREE

It was Boudin's small beach scenes which brought him financial success and are what he is famous for today. As the critic Castagnary wrote: 'Boudin has made the Normandy coastline his speciality. He has even invented a genre of seascapes which is his alone and which consists of painting the beach and all those exotic figures from high society which summer brings to our coastal resorts.'

Castagnary continued, 'They are viewed from a distance but what finesse and liveliness in these figures which, standing or sitting, move on the sand. How good they look in their picturesque surroundings and what a good picture the ensemble creates. The clouds move in the sky, the tide rises, the breeze plays with flounces and skirts. This is the ocean and you can almost smell the salty fragrance.'