

BOUDIN - THE JETTY AT TROUVILLE - 35-43



CAPTION ONE

With the exception of a few early works showing the jetties at Honfleur and Le Havre, the only scenes of jetties that Boudin painted were those of Trouville-Deauville. These jetties, built to shorten and deepen the narrow channel leading in to the port, were accessible from the beach and became part of the ritual promenade of Trouville's visitors.

Here, especially on windy days, the visitors enjoyed watching as the fishing boats, the Le Havre steamer and three-masted vessels fought against the swell and attempted to navigate the narrow channel. In *The Jetty at Trouville* against a vast expanse of cloudy sky, groups of fashionably dressed figures chat, hang on to their hats, walk or watch the fishing boats heading out to sea.

CAPTION TWO

In this painting Boudin delights in suggesting the contrasting textures of the silk dresses, the hard quayside, the foaming, frothy, wind-swept waves and the softer clouds. He enjoys playing with the light on the sails, contrasting the deep shadow of the sail of the vessel closest to us with the light striking the sails of those further out to sea. Boudin's masterly understanding of how to depict a boat sitting in the water was commented upon by his contemporaries.

The diagonal line of the Deauville jetty on the extreme left echoes the direction of the boats and gives an impression of depth, an effect opposed by the frieze-like line of figures to the right. The strong notes of blue, green, red and yellow bring the predominantly grey-blue tonality to life. The small brushstrokes and areas of rich impasto enliven the painting's surface and make a harmony of the whole.

CAPTION THREE

As in Boudin's beach scenes, most of the figures are seen from behind, with the exception of the man walking towards us who looks extremely cold. His obvious discomfort is heightened by his gesture - holding his coat to his face - and by the fact that Boudin has not tried to suggest the roundness of his form, choosing instead to convey the feeling of the man being literally flattened by the wind.

Boudin exhibited regularly at the Salon. He did exhibit at the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874 but his works are Pre-Impressionist rather than Impressionist. Why? Although his subjects were drawn from everyday life and were largely painted outside directly from nature, he never adopted the Impressionist use of reflected light and rarely used the Impressionist brushstroke. Although he never commanded high prices his works sold well. The dealer Durand-Ruel organised a one-man show of his work in 1883.

CAPTION FOUR

In a letter of 1868 Boudin wrote that he had just been congratulated for 'daring to paint contemporary people and objects, for finding a way of making the man in an overcoat and the lady in waterproofs acceptable by means of the form and presentation.'

He continued, 'these middle-class people walking on the jetty towards the sunset - have they no right to be caught on canvas, to be brought to the light? Between you and me they are often seeking rest after working hard in their offices. There may be a few parasites among them, but they are also people who have done their jobs.'