

**An Examination of *La Ferme de la Californie*,
Attributed to Eugène Boudin**



Virginia Nouwen, Postgraduate in the Conservation of Easel
Paintings

Kathryn Walter, MA Art History

Introduction to the Project

This report has been written as part of the 'Painting Pairs: Art History and Technical Study' project, which is supported by the Sackler Research Forum, the Courtauld Gallery and the Department of Conservation and Technology. In order to encourage collaboration between technical and art historical study, students completing postgraduate study in art history are partnered with students from the easel paintings conservation postgraduate program to undertake in-depth study on one artwork. This allows for the combination of a range of research methodologies such as historical, archival and biographical study, alongside technical and visual analysis. The observations and discoveries made throughout this study are testament to the value of collaboration.

The focus of this study is this small painting that depicts an agricultural scene. A painted inscription on the verso, and a small label, identifies the location as a farm named "La Californie." The painting has been signed "E. Boudin 1855," likely related to the French nineteenth century artist Eugène Louis Boudin (1824-1898), an early pioneer of the 'plein air' movement who produced countless outdoor sketches.¹ Although initial assessment of this painting found that it bore only a slight resemblance to the later works by Eugène Boudin within the collection of The Courtauld Gallery, a first point of reference for comparative images, a deeper exploration into the painter's oeuvre, biographical material and technique shows that Eugène Boudin and *La Californie* may be closely related after all. The wealth of information provided on the verso of the image, as well as the connection to this well known but under-studied artist made this a good candidate for the Painting Pairs project. Two presentations concerning the research project were given in January and May 2017; this article aims to summarize the results of the investigation.

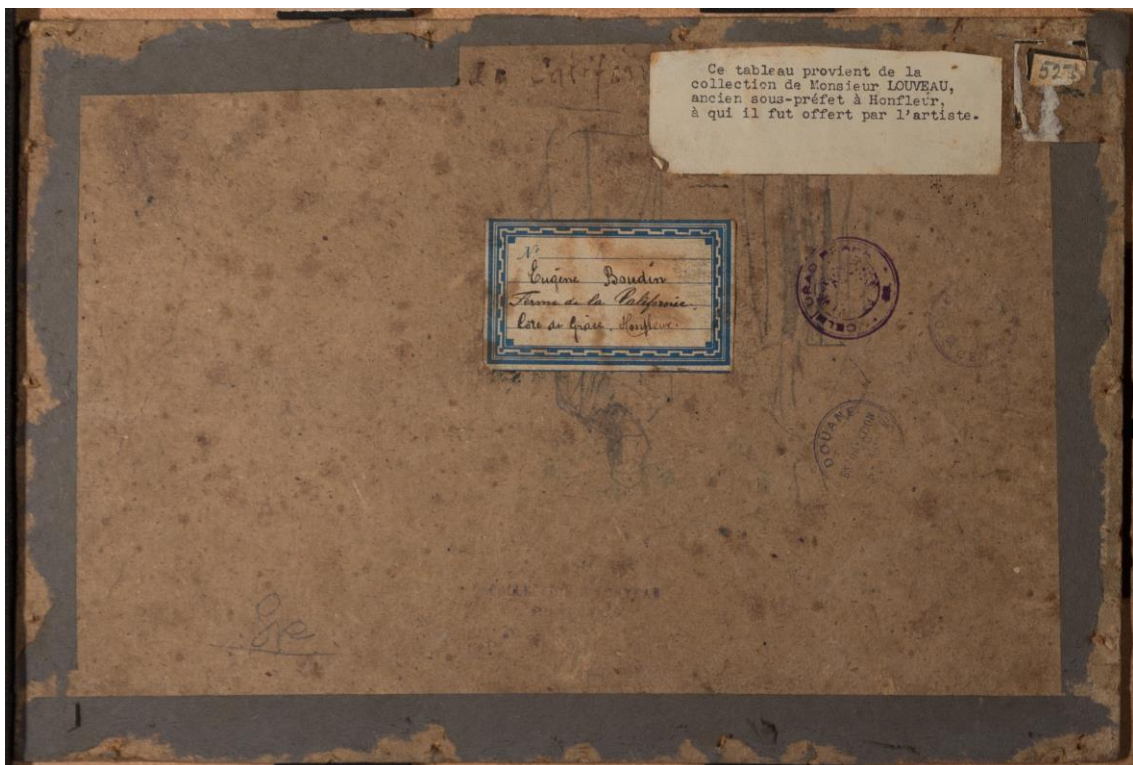
¹ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, Thames and Hudson, London, Trans. Tisall, C., 1968, 1969, p.12

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction to Eugène Boudin</u>	p.4
<u>Introduction to the farm 'La Californie'</u>	p.6
<u>The Painting; Placement in the 19th Century</u>	
Support	p.8
Analysis of the Paint	p.9
<u>The Painting; Comparison to Boudin's Technique and Composition</u>	
Colour Mixture and Paint Application.....	p. 11
Underdrawing	p.16
<u>Eugène Boudin; Comparative Technical Analysis</u>	p.18
<u>Eugène Boudin; Technique according to Biographical Material</u>	p.20
<u>The Role of Sketches</u>	p.21
<u>Eugène Boudin; Change of Style</u>	p.24
<u>Conclusion</u>	p.25
<u>Bibliography</u>	p.26
<u>Acknowledgements</u>	p.28



Attributed to Eugène Boudin, *La Ferme de la Californie*, 1855, oil on millboard, 221x328mm, Private Collection



VERSO, Attributed to Eugène Boudin, *La Ferme de la Californie*, 1855, oil on millboard, 221x328mm, Private Collection

Introduction to Eugène Boudin

The painting has been signed and dated at the bottom right corner. This, along with the labels on the verso, connects the painting to the Honfleurais artist Eugène Boudin.

Born in Honfleur on Rue Bourdet, Boudin began his artistic journey at ten years old during his time as a cabin boy aboard the *Polichinelle*, drawing in the margins of a volume of Abbé Raynal's *Histoires Philosophique*.² In 1851 Boudin joined Alphonse Lemasle's stationary/frame firm in Rue des Drapiers as a clerk. His employer, upon seeing him drawing one day, gave him his first box of paints.³ Boudin stayed in Lemasle's employment until he was eighteen, when he helped to set up a stationary shop with Archer, one of Lemasle's foremen, in 1844 in Rue de la Communauté.⁴ It is here that Boudin was able to meet other established artists: Eugène Isabey, Constant Troyon, Thomas Couture and Jean-François Millet.⁵ These artists would all come to influence Boudin's artistic development. It was Millet, for example, who recognised Boudin's early attempts and "corrected" them.⁶ Boudin left for Paris in 1847, spending his time alone at the Louvre, learning through sketching images of the old masters.⁷ Upon his return to Normandy in 1852, at twenty-eight years of age, Boudin became a pensioner of the town of Le Havre.⁸ At this point in his career, Boudin was said to have produced an "incalculable" number of sketches.⁹ This research will investigate whether *La Californie* may be counted amongst one of these early sketches.

The signature is below a layer of varnish, so the painting had been signed before receiving this coating. This, however, does not guarantee that the artist himself signed the painting. A visit to Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux (Le Havre) and Musée Eugène Boudin (Honfleur) allowed for closer study of Boudin's sketches and paintings contemporary to the date indicated in the bottom right corner of *La Californie* and from later in the painter's oeuvre. Although oil sketches on board were emerging as marketable commodities in the 1850s¹⁰, it was noted that Boudin's sketches were very rarely signed in contrast to the paintings likely completed in the studio. Isolde Pludermacher, one of Boudin's biographers, describes the artist as someone who could never be satisfied by the artworks he produced and who found it difficult to promote his "studies" to the

² Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, Thames and Hudson, London, Trans. Tisall, C., 1968, 1969, p.11

³ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.12

⁴ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.12

⁵ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.12

⁶ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.12

⁷ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.12

⁸ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.149

⁹ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.12

¹⁰ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism: Painting technique and the making of modernity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, p.29

rank of “finished” works.¹¹ This may be why so few of his paintings in the collections at the Musée d’Art Moderne André Malraux and the Musée Eugène Boudin have been signed. Pludermacher also highlights Boudin’s humble ambitions; he considered rewards for artistic merits “baubles,” and hoped instead only to make a living from his paintings.¹² Perhaps this philosophy also factored into his decision to leave many of his early paintings unsigned.

Despite this, it is clear in Pludermacher’s text that Boudin was concerned with his artistic legacy. He states in correspondences to friends how upset it made him to see paintings by anonymous artists mixed in with the “bric à brac” of the Musée des Beaux-Arts du Havre.¹³ He also placed great value on the opinion of his peers on his artworks, celebrating his belonging to an artistic community who he considered the only legitimate judges of art.¹⁴ These factors may tie into why this painting, if indeed by Boudin, was signed. The label that identifies the painting as a gift from Boudin to M. Louveau is perhaps significant here. Gustave Cahen, Boudin’s biographer, notes that it was not unusual for the artist to give away his sketches to his friends and acquaintances, particularly those whose opinions he valued highly. He cites an instance where Boudin had gifted one of his early sketches to Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, contemporary artist and friend to Boudin, who treasured the sketch until his death.¹⁵ Although the Salon did not accept Boudin’s paintings until 1859, it is possible that, by signing paintings that were circulating the artistic community as gifts, Boudin had found a way to ensure his artistic legacy.

While a painting’s signature often implies secure attribution, this discussion about Boudin’s possible motives for signing *La Californie* puts its legitimacy into question. Other connections must be explored to solidify the relation between this artist and this painting.

¹¹ Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.19

¹² Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, pp.24-25

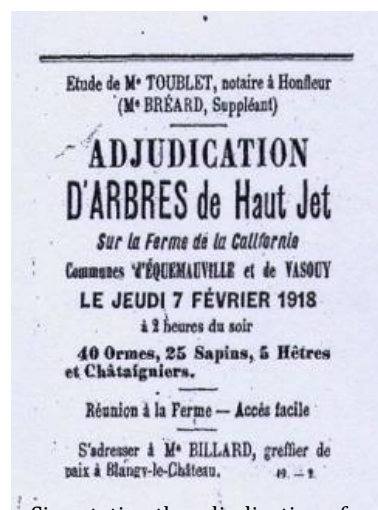
¹³ Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.25

¹⁴ Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, pp.25-26

¹⁵ Cahen, G., *Eugène Boudin, sa vie et son oeuvre*, préface par Arsène Alexandre, H. Floury [pub.], 1900, p.36

Introduction to the farm 'La Californie'

The subject matter of the painting, the farm called *La Californie*, seems to further encourage the connection between both Boudin and M. Louveau, and as such strengthens the notion that it may have been intended as a gift. The farm, identified on the verso of the painting and on the frame as "La Ferme de la Californie," was located outside of a small village named Vasouy- a moderate walk away from the inn at Saint-Siméon. A couple of entries in the *Dictionnaire de Honfleur et son canton* places the farm as an active business in the nineteenth century. In 1854, for example, a M. Jean Brunet is authorised to place a sign on an ash tree advertising the sale of fruit brandies, wine, cidres and drinks at the farm 'La Californie.'¹⁶



Sign stating the adjudication of trees taller than the hedgerows on the California farm, Thursday 7 February 1918

In 1854, Boudin began to frequent the inn at Saint-Siméon for a pension of 40 francs per month, bed and board, and it is here that he painted his first studies.¹⁷ It should be noted that St. Siméon, like 'La Ferme Californie,' was at the time a small farm located mid-way up the Côte de Grâce to which artists flocked.¹⁸ Cahen called this informal artists' colony the "Barbizon of the Normand hills."¹⁹ Delvau recounts the inn and its environment in 1865, how one would pass 'by small rustic homes...and at left, ...apple trees' where 'fishermen merrily come running to down pitchers of sparkling cider.'²⁰ It is indeed the cider that Boudin recalls fondly in a letter to Troyon, addressed 1864.²¹ It is thus tempting to imagine Boudin visiting La Californie to taste the cider sold there, perhaps on one of his daily excursions to paint or draw in the open air, as was his habit.²² M. Désiré Louveau (1843-1913), a cider merchant,²³ and municipal advisor of Honfleur and personal friend of many artists operating in Honfleur,²⁴ may have had a professional interest in the farm La Californie. It is possible that it was from one of several local growers and producers whose product he would market. He may have also had a personal interest in the landscape- as a man who

¹⁶ Archives département du Calvados, *Dictionnaire de Honfleur et son canton*, republished by Pierre, J., 2016

¹⁷ Cahen, G., *Eugène Boudin, sa vie et son oeuvre*, 1900, p.90

¹⁸ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin, d'après des documents inédits, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, 1922, p.43

¹⁹ Trans. from Cahen, G., *Eugène Boudin, sa vie et son oeuvre*, 1900, p.62

²⁰ Delvau, A., *Le Figaro*, Paris, p.12

²¹ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin, d'après des documents inédits, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, 1922, p.63

²² Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin, d'après des documents inédits, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, 1922, p.22

²³ <http://www.marquesdecollections.fr/detail.cfm/marque/8156> [accessed December 2016]

²⁴ Cahen, G., *Eugène Boudin, sa vie et son oeuvre*, 1900, p.181

was keen to gather and record “souvenirs” of “old Honfleur”²⁵ with a particular eye on local dress, costume and custom.

While it is tempting to accept this narrative, there remain too many uncertainties regarding the connection between *La Californie* and Eugène Boudin. The connection to M. Louveau is maintained as late as 1973 in Robert Schmit’s *Catalogue Raisonné on Eugène Boudin’s oeuvre*. An image of *La Californie* is placed alongside a related painting, *Honfleur, Ferme de Vasouy*, and information regarding its provenance is given up to the point where the painting entered a private collection.²⁶ However, both paintings fail to appear in the later editions of the *Catalogue Raisonné*, published 1984 and 1993 respectively. While this does not signify with any certainty that Boudin was not responsible for the production of *La Californie*, it does imply that a deeper analysis into the archival, visual and technical evidence is necessary in order to more securely find a place for *La Californie* amongst Boudin’s oeuvre.

²⁵ Cahen, G., *Eugène Boudin, sa vie et son oeuvre*, 1900, p.92

²⁶ Schmit, R., *Catalogue Raisonné de l’Oeuvre peint d’Eugène Boudin*, Galerie Schmit, Paris, 1973, p.44

Placement in the 19th Century

The historical and technical analysis of materials used in the creation of *La Californie* can help to expand the narrative connecting the painting to Boudin's oeuvre by investigating its correlation to materials used by artists in the nineteenth century.

Support

The painting's support- *carton* or millboard- is certainly consistent with the lightweight sketching material available to artists from the end of the eighteenth century.²⁷ Artists' colourmen, recognising the growing market for amateur painters who sought lightweight and inexpensive alternatives to the existing supports available, began to introduce millboards of various sizes and thicknesses.²⁸ These boards were usually available pre-primed with oil and lead white, coloured surfaces or textured priming. (The latter was noted in Boudin's *Princess Pauline Metternich on the Beach*, ca. 1865-67, Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA, but may have been artist applied.^{29,30}) The support for *La Californie* was not prepared with a priming layer; rather, the paint had been applied directly onto the sized board, leading some of the binding material from the paint to bleed into the board. While sized but unprimed boards are mentioned in the literature, for example in Pierre-Louis Bouvier's 1827 artists' treatise, the large variations and inconsistencies in the methods used to produce these boards mean that it is difficult to identify a singular manufacturer for the support used for *La Californie*.³¹

Bouvier and his contemporaries were also familiar with the inherent defects of the *carton* support. He noted that the panel had a tendency to 'dent, buckle or warp.'³² It seems that Boudin was aware of the issues inherent in *carton*. He writes to his friend, cotton merchant and amateur artist M. Ferdinand Martin, in 1865 to advise him against the use of *carton*, which he claims costs as much as primed wood or stretched canvas, and has the tendency to soak up oil medium.³³ Despite this issue it seems that French nineteenth century artists, Boudin included, continued to make use of this support for outdoor sketching. The support used in *La Californie* thus finds itself comfortably situated in the context of the nineteenth century.

²⁷ Katlan, A., *American Artists' Materials, vol.II. A Guide to Stretchers, Panels, Millboards, and Stencil Marks*, Sound View Press, Boston, U.S., 1992, p.262

²⁸ Katlan, A., *American Artists' Materials, vol.II.* 1992, p.262

²⁹ Katlan, A., *American Artists' Materials, vol.II.* 1992, pp.262-263

³⁰ Bailey, C.B., Rishel, J.J., Rosenthal, M., 'Cat.14, Eugène Boudin', *The Annenberg Collection: Masterpieces of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009, p.13

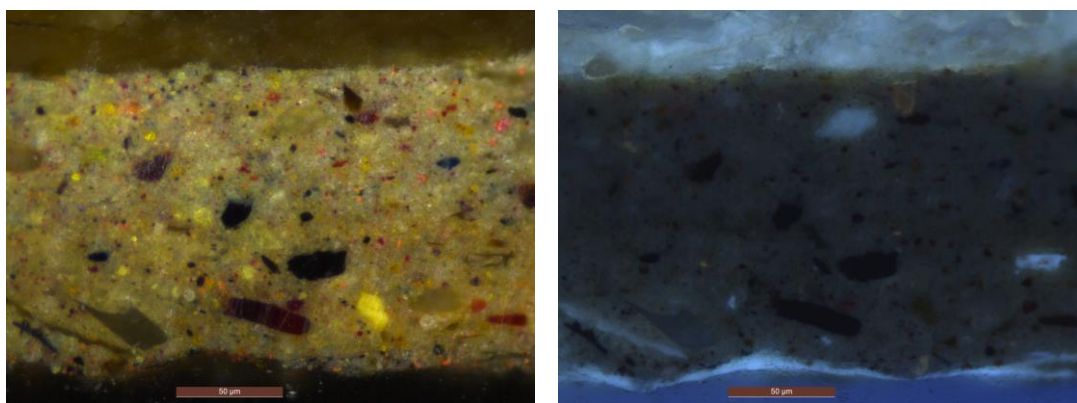
³¹ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism: Painting technique and the making of modernity*, 2000, p.28

³² Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism*, 2000, p.28

³³ Translated from letters addressed from M. Boudin to M. Martin, November 1865 in Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.104

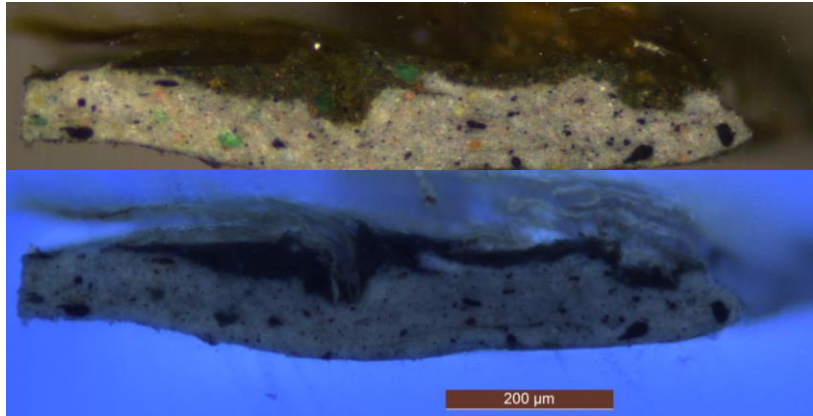
Analysis of the Paint

To further expand on this analysis, samples were taken from *La Californie* in order to discern the artist's method and to place the painting within the context of other nineteenth century palettes. A combination of Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) and Electron Dispersive X-ray (EDX) elemental analysis conducted on a cross-section taken from an area of sky in *La Californie* showed that the colour had been achieved within a single paint layer, composed of Prussian blue, lead white, bone/ivory black, vermilion and earth pigments, as well as the extenders barium sulphate and silica.



The first two images show details of Sample 1, taken from an area of sky in the top left corner of *La Californie*. With these images it is possible to identify the pigment mixtures used to create the shade of purple-blue used in *La Californie*. The blue pigment particles are identified through FTIR as Prussian blue, mixed in the paint with small orange-red particles of vermilion, dark bone black particles, and burgundy/red coloured red iron oxide pigment, and an inorganic yellow, possibly zinc chromate. The identification of the yellows within the nineteenth century palette is made more complicated by the presence of certain extenders or additive agents, such as barium sulphate, perhaps added by the paint manufacturers, found within this cross section appearing as large clear/translucent inclusions).³⁴

³⁴ Leighton, J., Reeve, A., Roy, A., White, R., 'Vincent Van Gogh's 'A Cornfield, with Cypresses'.' in *National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, Volume 11, 1987, p.54



Sample 2, shown in visible light (above) and UV illumination (below) similarly depicts the composite materials of blue and green paint passages. This sample was taken from an area where the colours had been mixed directly on the board. The intermingling of colours at the interface between the two layers demonstrates that the dark paint layer was applied while the white layer below was still malleable, therefore suggesting that the paint was applied quickly. The top layer is composed of earth colours, bone black, vermilion and emerald green, while the bottom is composed of earth pigments, Prussian blue, bone black, vermilion, silica and barium sulphate.

Oil paint manufacturers regularly added extenders such as these in order to be able to reduce pigment content without reducing the body or viscosity of the paint.³⁵ Prussian blue, also identified in the matrix of *La Californie*, was a pigment available in the eighteenth century that remained popular among early nineteenth-century landscapists.³⁶ Its darker greenish-blue colour had a high tinting strength and as such would allow the artist to use it economically.³⁷ While its use was rarer in the later nineteenth century, its presence has been noted in paintings by Oscar-Claude Monet (1840-1926), Boudin's pupil, for example in the dark blue of the bathers' costumes in *The Bathers at la Grenouillère* (1869).³⁸ The identification of emerald green within the bright grass and tree colours of *La Californie* also helps to place it within the context of nineteenth century artistic practice. The colour first appeared under commercial listings in 1842 as *endre vert* and subsequently featured quite heavily in the Impressionist palette.³⁹ Its use is noted both in the work of Monet, again found in *La Grenouillère*, but also in the work of Corot, for example used to highlight a tree's

³⁵ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism*, 2000, p.100

³⁶ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism*, 2000, p.149

³⁷ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism*, 2000, p.149

³⁸ Wilson, M., Wyld, M., Roy, A., 'Monet's 'Bathers at la Grenouillère', in *Plein-air to Impressionism: Monet at La Grenouillère*, by Wilson, M., National Gallery Technical Bulletin Vol. 5, 1981, p.9

³⁹ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism*, 2000, p.146

bark in *The Oak in the Valley* (1871).⁴⁰⁴¹ Vermilion was also identified both within the matrix of the sky paint and as a key component in the paint mixture used to denote flesh in *La Californie*.⁴² Though known since ancient times, vermilion and the red earths were equally key components of the Impressionist palette.⁴³

⁴⁰ Wilson, M., Wyld, M., Roy, A., 'Monet's 'Bathers at la Grenouillère', in *Plein-air to Impressionism: Monet at La Grenouillère*, by Wilson, M., National Gallery Technical Bulletin Vol. 5, 1981, p.10

⁴¹ Herring, S., 'Six Paintings by Corot: Methods, Materials and Sources', in National Gallery Technical Bulletin 30th Anniversary Volume, 2009, p.13

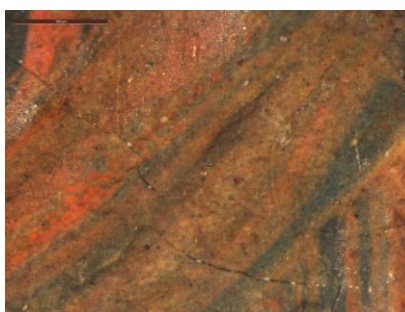
⁴² Vermilion was identified within the sky paint using SEM-EDX and in the flesh through X-ray Fluorescent Reflectography (XRF) and microscopic examination.

⁴³ Callen, A., *The Art of Impressionism*, p.148

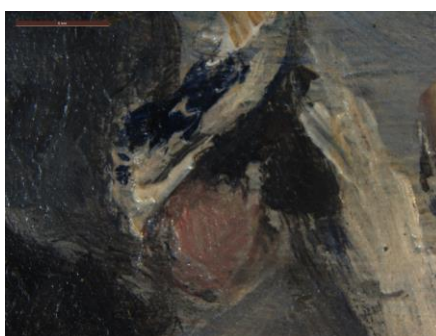
The Painting: Comparison to Boudin's Technique and Composition **Colour Mixture and Paint Application**

It is worth investigating the paint mixtures used by the artist to attain certain colours such as the flesh tone in *La Californie*, as they are arguably a characteristic feature of the artist's habitual practice and thus could be compared to Boudin's typical working methods.

Despite disparities in subject matter and an alleged 20-year time period separating the two works, similarities in pigment combination and application were identified between *La Californie* and The Courtauld's *The Beach at Trouville* (1875). Comparisons can be drawn between the seated women in the mid-ground space of both images. The motif of the downturned profiles has been noted on numerous paintings and sketches by Boudin. The profiles in both cases seem to have been created through the admixture of thin strokes of vermilion and red iron oxide, lead white and blue.⁴⁴ Although it is clear that the paint application in *The Beach at Trouville* is more considered, it may be argued that *La Californie* represents a younger, more hurried hand.



Detail of vermilion, white and blue paint mixture in woman's face, Attrib. Eugène Boudin, *La Ferme de la Californie*, c.1855, oil on cardboard, 221 x 328 mm, private collection.

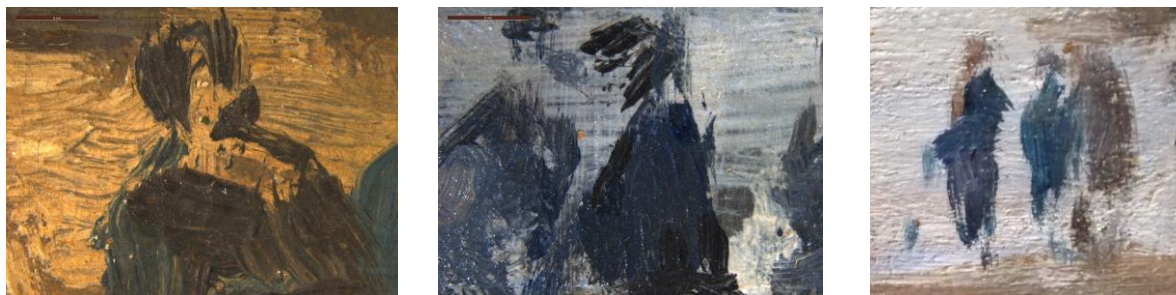


Detail of vermilion, white and blue paint mixture in woman's face, Eugène Boudin, *Beach at Trouville*, 1875, oil on wood, 245 x 125 mm, The Courtauld Gallery, London, UK

Further, comparisons can be made between the figure standing in the doorway of *La Californie*, with the figures present in the backgrounds of his beach scenes, namely: *The Beach at Trouville* (Courtauld, 1875), *Fishcart at Berck* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1880), and *Beach Scene, Trouville* (National Gallery, London, 1870-4). Boudin, famously able to "evoke the human form" with a single

⁴⁴ Curatorial note made in the file related to the 1866 drawing by Boudin, *Women on a Beach*, Prints and Drawings Collection, The Courtauld, p.2

line, seems to do so to represent background figures in each of the images mentioned above.⁴⁵ In *Fishcart at Berck* they can be seen in the far left of the composition, depicted in admixtures of black and blue pigments, and also in the background of *Beach Scene, Trouville* and the Courtauld beach scene.



(Left) Detail of background figure, *La Ferme de la Californie*, 1855. Private Collection. (Middle) Detail of background figure, *The Beach at Trouville*, 1875, The Courtauld Institute of Art. (Right) Detail of background figures, *Fishcart at Berck*, 1880, Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge.

Further observations could be made when access was granted for the study of some of Boudin's early agricultural oil sketches, remainders from Boudin's studio housed at the Musée d'art moderne André Malraux, Le Havre. Paintings such as *Cour de Ferme*, *Vieux Pommiers* (1854-9), *Bâtiment de Ferme* (1854-9), and *Trois Chevaux* (ca.1865-1875) were earmarked for comparison not only due to their compositional similarities, but also due to their matching supports- the *carton* that is also observed in the case of *La Californie*.



Eugène Boudin, *Bâtiment dans une ferme*, c.1853-59, oil on cardboard, 181 x 275 mm, MuMa, Le Havre, France



Eugène Boudin, *Cour de Ferme, vieux pommiers*, c.1853-59, oil on cardboard, 185 x 274 mm, MuMa, Le Havre, France

It was noted that in *Cour de Ferme*, *Vieux Pommiers* and *Bâtiment de Ferme*, the foregrounds had been treated in a similar manner through the application of side-by-side horizontal strokes of very bright green alongside yellow ochre and raw sienna coloured passages. The application of paint to denote buildings, with each beam picked out with individual singular brushstrokes, bears similarities to the design of the farm in *La Californie*. Further similarities are found between the

⁴⁵ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, 1968, 1969, p.149

way the highlights of leaves are picked out in *Cour de Ferme*, and the way that the red apples have been applied in *California*.



Details from (left) *Bâtiment dans une ferme*, c.1853-59, MuMa, (middle) *La ferme de la Californie*, 1855, Private Collector, (right) *Cour de ferme, vieux pommiers*, c.1853-59, MuMa



Detail of foreground from (top) *La ferme de la Californie*, 1855, Private Collector, and (bottom) *Cour de ferme, vieux pommiers*, c.1853-59, MuMa



Detail of impasto from (left) *Bâtiment dans une ferme*, c.1853-59, MuMa, and (right) *La ferme de la Californie*, 1855, Private Collection

Further evidence of similar working practices between the artist of *La Californie* and Eugène Boudin can be noted. As in *La Californie*, the paint in *Trois Chevaux* is applied directly onto the unprimed board. The pinhole in the centre of the composition may again relate to a method of transporting the still-wet painting or hanging the study in the artist's studio. The most rewarding observation was the revelation of a sketch on the verso of *Trois Chevaux*, much in the same spirit as the sketch on the verso of *La Californie*. While they are not directly comparable- the sketch on the verso of *Étude* appears to depict a landscape rather than a study of figures- it is the kind of idiosyncratic detail that helps to place *La Californie* within Boudin's oeuvre.



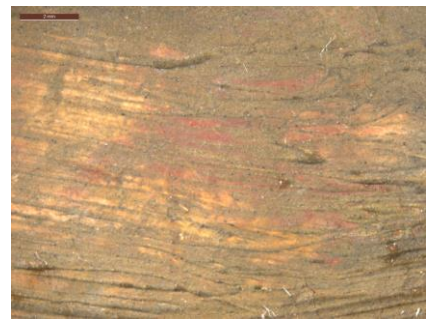
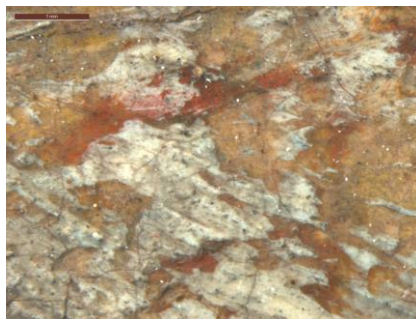
ABOVE: RECTO, BELOW: VERSO Eugène Boudin, *Trois Chevaux*, ca.1865-1875, oil on card, 120 x 2280 mm, MuMa, Le Havre, France

Underdrawing

The removal of a dark and a yellowed layer of surface dirt which obscured the bright palette of *La Californie*, revealed very finely painted red lines beneath the surface of the painting. It is difficult to relate these lines to the painting's composition. The marks are most evident in the foreground landscape and in the open sky.



layer of surface dirt
varnish layer, both of



Details showing red underdrawing beneath surface paint, from Attrib. Eugène Boudin, *La ferme de la Californie*, 1855, Private Collector

Comparisons with the painting and drawing practices of Eugène Boudin may help to make sense of these markings. The artist placed great emphasis on the importance of the preparatory stages for the construction of a painting's composition. In correspondence to his friend M. Ferdinand Martin, cotton merchant and amateur artist, Boudin describes that the best method by which to capture a scene is by drafting it in "black crayon/charcoal" before applying colour.⁴⁶ This is particularly evident in his watercolour and pencil sketches, which he often annotated with one-word descriptions of the colours that would perhaps later make up the final painting. An example of this can be seen in Boudin's *Women on the Beach* (1866), a drawing in graphite and watercolour

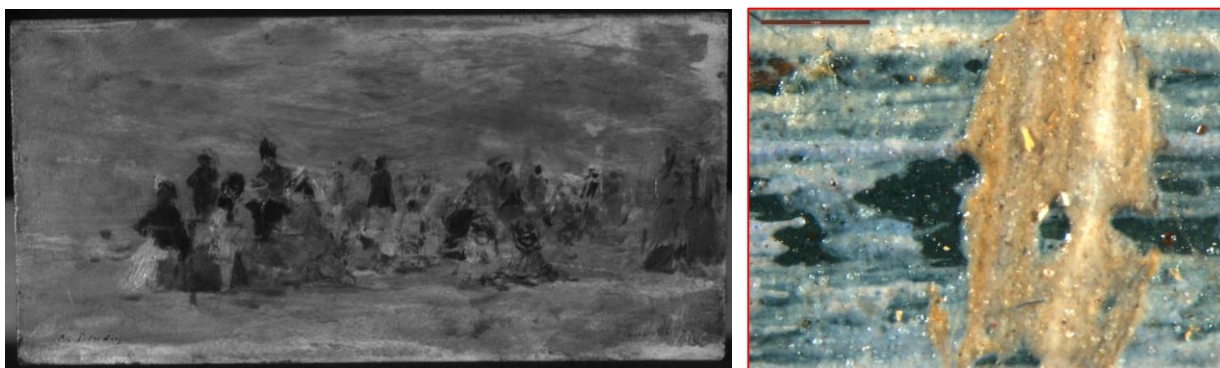


Detail from Boudin, *Women on the beach*, graphite and watercolour, Courtauld Institute of Art

⁴⁶ Translated from letters addressed from M. Boudin to M. Martin, February 1866 in Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.111

held at the Coutauld's Prints and Drawings Collection. The word "rouge" has been inscribed beneath the red of one woman's skirt. While no graphite-based underdrawing was visible on *La Californie* during examination using infrared, it is possible that the red markings relate to this method of demarking the composition.

Alternatively, the red marks beneath the paint surface may relate to an *ébauche* layer. In a letter dated April 3rd, 1886 Boudin advises M. Martin to prepare his oil compositions by first applying an *ébauche* layer of burnt Sienna, while cooler aspects of the design should be applied in a green *ébauche* layer (February 1886).⁴⁷ While the cooler green *ébauche* layer may have been identified in the Courtauld's *The Beach at Trouville*, visible both microscopically and through infrared imaging beneath the white sky paint, it is perhaps this burnt Sienna layer that can be identified in *La Californie*.



OSIRIS Infrared image (left) and microphotographic detail (right) showing infrared absorbent green underlayer of *The Beach at Trouville*, 1875, Courtauld Institute of Art

Libby Sheldon, in her 1995 technical analysis of *La Prougastel* (1871), attributed to Eugène Boudin, comes to a similar conclusion in noting the red underlayer present in cross-sections taken from the painting.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, pp.110-114

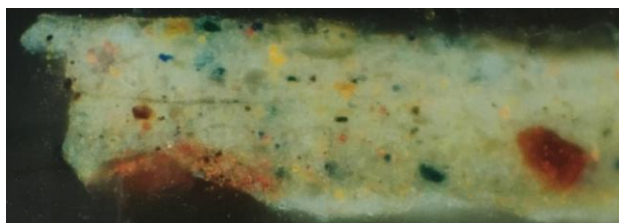
⁴⁸ Sheldon, L., Report: *Technical examination of Prougastel, attributed to Eugène Boudin*, UCL, 1995, p.1

Eugène Boudin: Comparative Technical Analysis

Due to the scarcity of technical studies focussing on the oeuvre of Eugène Boudin, Libby Sheldon's analysis of *La Prougastel*, although painted at a later date, provides valuable information regarding the materials used in Boudin's palette and his technique of applying these materials. She notes the presence of the following pigments in *La Prougastel*: red earth or vermilion, bone black, French ultramarine, Prussian blue, yellow ochre, [prismatic] lead white, and viridian, and elsewhere "a little crimson lake".⁴⁹ All of these pigments are contemporary to the time of Boudin's activity, and most have also been found in *La Californie*. She also notes that while the paint layer structure is fairly simple (only comprised of one/two layers), the mixture of pigments within each layer is very complex, with some paints examined believed to contain at least seven different pigments.⁵⁰



Sample 1, from area of sky
Attrib. Eugene Boudin, *Prougastel*,
1871, oil on panel, 230 x 328 mm,
Private Collector



Sample 3, from earth coloured
foregroundAttrib. Eugene Boudin,
Prougastel, 1871, oil on panel, 230 x
328 mm, Private Collector

In addition to the technical analysis executed by Sheldon, comparable material demonstrating Boudin's palette was also provided through the analysis of cross sections taken from Boudin's *Marine, Effet de Lune*, of an unknown date, housed

⁴⁹ Sheldon, L., Report: *Technical examination of Prougastel, attributed to Eugène Boudin*, UCL, 1995, p.2

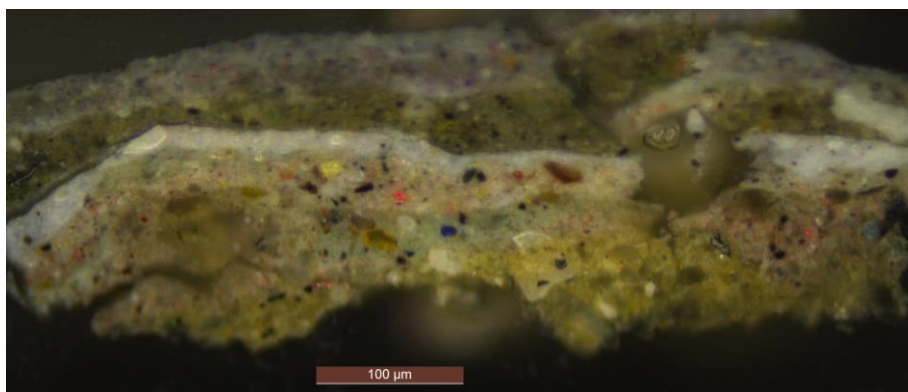
⁵⁰ Sheldon, L., Report: *Technical examination of Prougastel, attributed to Eugène Boudin*, UCL, 1995, p.2

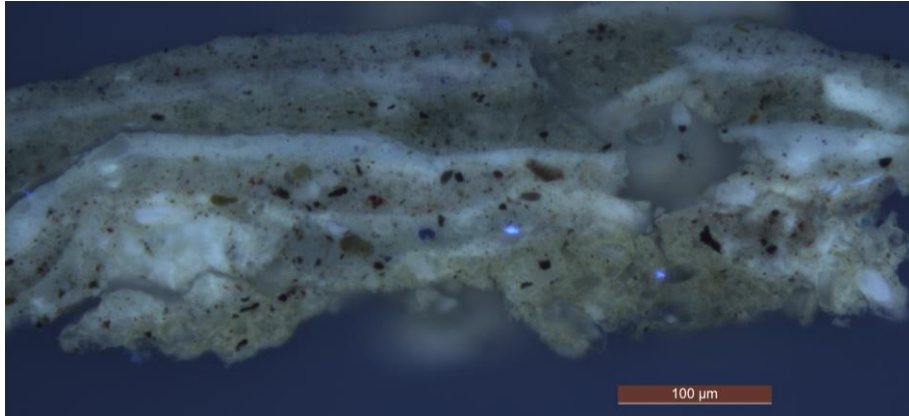
in the collection of Southampton City Art Gallery. The samples were shown to have a more complex system of paint layering than was seen on those from *La Californie*. This is perhaps related to the context of their production- it has been argued that *La Californie* is a sketch, while *Marine, Effet de Lune* is a painting completed in the studio.

In both cases, paint passages were shown to contain large barium sulphate and silica inclusions- indicating that the paints used in both paintings had been produced by manufacturer(s) who added very similar extenders. As with *La Prougastel* and *La Californie*, it was found that the mixture of pigments used in *Marine, Effet de Lune* for single passages of paint were very complex. For *La Californie* and *Marine, Effet de Lune*, this complicated mixture of paints has been shown to be composed of Emerald green, vermilion, lead white and chrome yellow, as well as many earth pigments. Unfortunately, the palettes used for *Marine* and *Californie* are not comparable on the basis of the identification of the blue pigments. While the large blue inclusion in the centre of Sample 3 of *Marine* has been identified as ultramarine and the paler green/blue sample to the right of the same sample as cerulean blue, neither has been positively identified on *La Californie*. Further, without further analysis by Fourier-Transform Infrared spectroscopy, there is no reliable way to establish the presence of Prussian blue in *Marine, Effet de Lune*. Despite this, it is clear that the paintings do share similar palettes.



Eugène Boudin,
Marine, Effet de Lune,
oil on canvas, 305 x
465mm,
Southampton City Art
Gallery





Sample 3, from an area of grey-blue sky. Sample is composed of the following pigments: bone black, lead white, vermilion, chrome yellow, cerulean blue, ultramarine, earth pigments, silica and barium sulphate, with lead white interlayers

Eugène Boudin: Technique according to Biographical Material

It is fortunate that comparisons can be made between the artist's palette in *La Californie*, Boudin's palettes in *La Prougastel* and *Marine, Effet de Lune*, and Boudin's own description of his painting methods. In his letter dated April 1886, Boudin describes his method of attaining colour for the depiction of sky, 'White, black and a little Prussian blue.'⁵¹ In the same letter, he describes his method of producing earth colour, 'the greens, are made with yellow ochre, and Veronese green.'⁵² Veronese green, now labelled "Viridian" is typically composed of hydrated chromium (III) oxide, noted in *Prougastel*, but it is also known in some literature as "Emerald green", seen in both *La Californie* and *Marine, Effet de Lune*.⁵³

However, the information gleaned from Boudin's letters on his working practice must not be taken fully at face value, as he appears to disregard his own advice in several instances. In one letter addressed to M. Martin in December 1865, he warns his friend against the use of 'tons sales,' that is "dirty" tones, or colours that "lack freshness".⁵⁴ Analysis of cross-sections taken across these three paintings, as well as surface microscopic examination, shows that there are few passages where the colours have been used pure or in simple mixtures. Also study of Boudin's palette, taken from his studio directly into the collection of M. Louveau, shows the dominance of the colour black, with most other colours on the palette mixed into a complex matrix thereby muddying the pure colour. Also, mentioned earlier, he warns his friend away from the use of *carton* as a support,

⁵¹ Translated from Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.114

⁵² Translated from Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.114

⁵³ Eastaugh, N., Walsh, V., Chaplin, T., Siddall, R., *Pigment Compendium: A Dictionary and Optical Microscopy of Historical Pigments*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Elsevier, 2008, p.155

⁵⁴ Translated from Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.106



The Role of Sketches

but continues to use it himself. Moreover, in one letter written in 1869 he warns his friend away from the use of oil paints entirely, citing the heavy and cumbersome nature of the paraphernalia necessary for painting in oils.⁵⁵

Eugene Boudin, *Palette*, oil on wood, size unknown, Musee Eugene Boudin, Honfleur, France

Boudin's preference for lightweight drawing media over "cumbersome" oil seems to indicate that he was a man who preferred sketching outdoors with alternative drawing media such as pastel, watercolour and pencil. Boudin's biographers certainly encourage this notion. Jean-Aubry describes how the artist's early talent, his 'rare and delicate virtues,' were evident most assuredly in his sketches.⁵⁶ He explains that Boudin could be more daring in his depiction of skies in oil, only by virtue of knowing and understanding the effects he could achieve through his use of pastel.⁵⁷ Pludermacher suggests the strength of his drawings by describing how fellow artists often readily and quickly bought them up, while his paintings found less success.⁵⁸

Boudin's preference for drawing media and the success of his early studies may explain why *La Californie* seems so at home amongst Boudin's early pastels, unlike Boudin's later oeuvre. We can certainly identify some visual similarities between Boudin's early studies of the environment around Saint-Siméon and *La Californie*. The two-toned figures appear more undefined and unrefined than their later painted counterparts. The brighter colours offered by pastels are comparable to the colours present on *La Californie*, which were found to be much brighter upon the removal of a very dark layer of surface dirt and a yellowed varnish. Further, the dryness of the brush used to apply the paint in *La Californie*, which leaves a broken and textured brushmark, may be compared to the broken line left by the pastel as it catches on the fibres of the support.

⁵⁵ Translated from Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.202

⁵⁶ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, Thames and Hudson, London, Trans. Tisall, C., 1968, 1969, p.150

⁵⁷ Jean-Aubry, G., *Eugène Boudin*, Thames and Hudson, London, Trans. Tisall, C., 1968, 1969, p.150

⁵⁸ Translated from letters addressed from M. Boudin to M. Martin, January 1864 in Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.76



Eugene Boudin, *La Ferme Saint-Simeon*, 1854-1859, pastels on blue paper, various sizes, Musee Eugene Boudin, Honfleur, France



ABOVE Eugène Boudin, *Les Buveurs sous les Arbres*
Devant la Ferme Saint-Siméon, ca.1854-59, pastel on
paper, 150 x 212 mm, Musée Eugène Boudin,
Honfleur, France

Eugene Boudin, *La Ferme Saint-Simeon*, 1854-1859, pastels on blue paper, various sizes, Musee Eugene
Boudin, Honfleur, France

RIGHT Microphotographs [2mm] showing detail taken
before treatment , from Image. Attrib. Eugène Boudin,
La Ferme de la Californie, 1855, oil on millboard, 221 x
328 mm, Private Collection



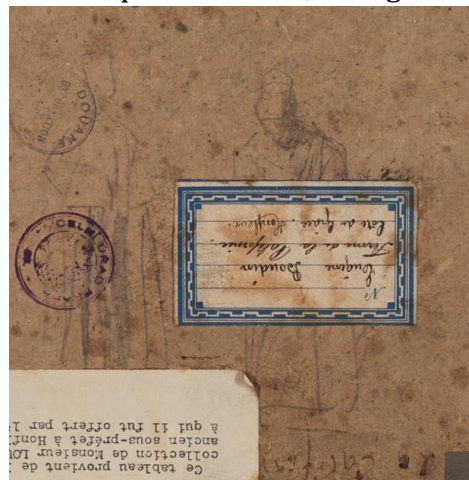
It is possible to draw comparisons between the sketch on the back of *La Californie* and the double-sided panels and watercolour sketches housed in the Prints and Drawings Collection at The Courtauld- *Studies of two female figures* (verso) and *Women on a Beach* (recto). Not only do these images share the unusual feature of being double-sided, but also one can observe several stylistic similarities. One note in the archival files describing the double-sided sketch states how Boudin would draw his figures from a stock of geometric shapes: “a rectangle or rhomboid for the head, triangle for the shoulders, interlocking triangles and trapezoids for the bodice and skirt.” The suggestion is that this is characteristic of Boudin’s style.⁵⁹ Studying the sketch on the verso of *La*



caps and figures denoted in the most minimal fashion.

Eugène Boudin, *Breton Costumes*, unknown date, pencil and wash, 137 x 185 mm, Cabinet de ses Dessin. Louvre. Paris

Californie, one can easily transpose this observation with its bowed heads and pointed chins, triangular



Detail on verso, Attrib. Eugène Boudin, *La Ferme de la Californie*, c.1855, oil on cardboard, 221 x 328 mm, private collection.



Eugène Boudin, *Women on the Beach*, Trouville, 1872, graphite and gouache on paper, 1035 x 160mm, Courtauld Institute of Art, London



Eugène Boudin, *Gossip on the Beach*, 1872, graphite and watercolour on paper, 104 x 149 mm, Courtauld Institute of Art, London

⁵⁹ Curatorial note made in the file related to the 1866 drawing by Boudin, *Women on a Beach*, Prints and Drawings Collection, The Courtauld, p.2

Eugène Boudin: Change of Style

It is interesting that there is such a disparity between the agricultural scene on the surface of *La Californie*, more commonly featured in Boudin's earlier works, compared to Boudin's later oeuvre featuring fashionable characters at the beach, while the sketch on the verso seems related to the crinoline-wearing women who inhabit these later beach scenes. One possible explanation is that Boudin, as an artist whose financial situation had a heavy bearing on his practice, tried to cater his paintings to popular demand. He confides to his mother in February 1865 that the artist ought to do his best to cater to his public.⁶⁰ It is from 1865, when Trouville (and subsequently Deauville) became popular tourist destinations that Boudin's "little dolls," the fashionable ladies who inhabit the foreground of Boudin's beach scenes, began to sell more readily⁶¹. Prior to 1865, it had been his sketches and studies that had been appreciated. It would therefore make more sense for Boudin to mimic these popular pastel sketches in oil early on in his career as he could have been sure of their success.

⁶⁰ Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.92

⁶¹ Pludermacher, I., *Eugène Boudin, Lettres à Ferdinand Martin (1861-1870)*, Volume 1., Friends of the Eugène Boudin Museum, p.89

Conclusion

Through the identification of the subject matter and the materials found within the paint, *La Ferme de la Californie* has been located within the nineteenth century. This research project has also considered the legitimacy of the painting's attribution to the French artist Eugène Louis Boudin. This has been done by referencing biographical material, investigating the signature, comparing technique and materials from more securely attributed works, and studying his early sketches.

Although the biographical material that was accessed does not make explicit reference to *La Californie*, it has been useful to consult it in order to draw conclusions about his working method, the reasons he chooses a certain material, and to offer a reason for the change in style between Boudin's early and later works. As such, it has helped to find a place for *La Californie* in Boudin's oeuvre.

While it is difficult to say with any certainty that Boudin is the artist behind *La Ferme de la Californie*, the research conducted thus far has presented it as a painting that may find itself at home within Boudin's oeuvre.

Further research may provide more comparable visual and technical material. A more complete idea of the materials and techniques used throughout Boudin's career may then help to more firmly locate *La Californie* within the oeuvre of this, as yet, under studied artist.

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Acknowledgements

Throughout this project a number of individuals have been generous with their time, resources and ideas in support of our research endeavours. We would like to express our sincere thanks to:

Professor Aviva Burnstock, Courtauld Institute of Art

Dr Elisabeth Reissner, Courtauld Institute of Art

Dr Karen Serres, Courtauld Institute of Art

Roger Buxton

Benjamin Finidier, Musée Eugène Boudin

Justine Heulard, Musée Eugène Boudin

Clémence Ducroix, Musée André Malraux

Pierre Jan, Archives Municipale de Honfleur

Rebecca Moisan, Southampton City Art Gallery

Ambrose Scott-Moncrief, Southampton City Art Gallery

Ben Hall, Southampton City Art Gallery

Alice Tavares da Silva, Hamilton Kerr Institute

Camille Polkownik, Hamilton Kerr Institute

Giovanni Verri, Courtauld Institute of Art

Lara Broecke

Alison Smith, National Trust, Hinton Ampner House & Garden

George Woods, MacLean Museum and Art Gallery, Inverclyde

Anne Moore, Berwick Museum and Art Gallery, Northumberland

Susan Keracher, the McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum, Dundee

Dana Macmillan, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Stig Evans, Brighton Royal Pavilion & Museums

Robert Wenley, Barber Collection, Birmingham
Helen Dowding, Bristol Art Museum & Gallery

Suzanne Ross, Glasgow life/Glasgow Museums Resource Centre

Fiona Green, York Art Gallery

Jon Old, The Bowes Museum