

Folder

The Opal Coast Painters

Exhibition from 29 June to 15 December 2013

Departmental Maison

Boulevard de l'Impératrice

Etaples

About the Exhibition

The exhibition, for the first time, is presenting the works of art fund of the Department of Pas-de-Calais, core of the collection of the future Departmental Museum of Etaples. The 31 assembled works, reflection of the production of 17 painters of different nationalities, evoke the diversity of the artistic community that blossomed on the Opal Coast at the end of the 19th century.

The exhibition shines a particular light on the town of Etaples and recalls the attraction that it exercised from 1885 to 1920 on a significant number of artists, not far from two hundred in total, American, Australian, Norwegian, German, and British. Their stay lasted a few months, sometimes a few years. They found a remarkable location on the banks of the Canche, sheltered from the incipient industrialisation which the rest of the territory was experiencing at that time, and one that was capable of nourishing their work. The development of an artistic hotbed at that place also corresponded to the rise of outdoor painting which encouraged artists to leave their studios in order to paint the subject matter directly.

The themes however do not remain limited to the landscape but also relate to the activity of the port and the lives of the fishermen. This preoccupation with the daily life of the fishermen and their families joined the growing interest in the working classes, a characteristic manifestation of the end of the 19th century.

Among the artists' colonies that arose in Europe during the period, the phenomenon specific to North and North-West of France, Etaples and the Opal Coast occupy an important place. Although its current fame does not equal that of Pont-Aven or Barbizon, this territory no less remains a preferential land of experimentation for artists. Most of them, on the strength of their training acquired on the shores of the North Sea, were then to perfect it elsewhere, enriched by the contact of the artistic friendships forged in Etaples, Berck or Le Touquet.

One of the aspects which the exhibition is particularly seeking to emphasise concerns the decisive role ensured by the Opal Coast period in the careers of those artists. Transitory stage for some within a marked out course of journeys in Normandy or Brittany, veritable installation for others, the Etaples interlude appears, in every case, to be a key period in their careers.

Themes Addressed

Three sections separately articulate the course in order to report the principal subjects treated by the artists:

1- The Sea and the Land

This section testifies to the importance of the landscape in the formative process of the majority of the painters who chose the Opal Coast as a subject of study. Maritime landscapes or views of the hinterland underline the common denominator of a fair number of them, the existence of the landscape being the starting point for a variety of pictorial experimentations.

2- Etaples

A second part is intended to evoke the crucial role played by the Port of Etaples as a preferential place of welcome. The proximity of Paris by train, the reasonableness of the rents facilitating the installation of studios, the existence of a cheap hotel, and the presence of easily available models all constituted the necessary ingredients for the creation of an artistic hotbed. Furthermore, the beauty of the location together with the interest in the fishermen's activity contributed to the place's attraction and sphere of influence.

3- The Fishermen

Most of the artists that were there were particularly sensitive to the lives of the fishermen and their families. The hardness of their living conditions, and the dangers with which they were confronted and which put their intrepidity to the severest of tests, were the subjects of several paintings. Portraits or scenes of life, far from picturesque of which romantic painting was so fond, the pictorial production was enshrined in the social vein that developed in or around 1890.

Exhibition Curatorship

Michèle Moyne-Charlet
Cécile Rivière and Véronique Andrault

Practical Information:

Opening Hours: Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Times: 10:00-13:00 / 14:00-18:00

Free Entrance

Telephone: 03 21 21 47 37

Expositions.maisonduport@cg62.fr

Address: Bd de l'Impératrice, 62630 Etaples-sur-Mer

Publications

Exhibition Catalogue: *Painters of the Opal Coast in the 19th Century* through the Department's collections under the management of Michele Moyne-Charlet and with the contribution of the National Navy Museum: EUR 10

Around The Exhibition

Guided Tours on Saturdays and Sundays at 15:00

Workshops for school and associative groups on reservation (contact: Esther Hacquel)

First Section: The Sea and the Land

But also: Harry Van der Weyden, Dunes, Herbert Hugues Stanton, Landscape of Equihen, Eugène Chigot, Houses by the Seaside, The Bay of Canche 1895, Henry Golden Dearth, View of the Port of Boulogne taken from the Louvre Hotel around 1913, Georges Ricard Cordingley, Fishing Return, Georges Ricard Cordingley, Goélette de face, Georges Ricard Cordingley, Holed Twilight, Jan Lavezzari, Une quille en l'air, Eugène Chigot, Study for the Bay of Canche.

Second Section: Etaples

But also: Isobel Rae, The Etaples Crucifix, Jan Lavezzari, La Canche at Etaples, Augustus Koopman, The Etaples Fishing Fleet, Gaston Balande, Port of Etaples, Eugène Chigot, View of Etaples, Albert Lebourg, The Port of Etaples.

Third Section: The Men and the Women:

And: Augustus Koopman, The Pious Sailor, Léon Jacquet, Marine Scene, William Lee, Etaples Market Scene, William Lee Hankey, Courtyard, Walter Gay, The Vegetable Garden.