

Boldini

Pleasures and Days

29 March to 24 July 2022



Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 a.m to
6:00 p.m
Late opening on Friday until 9:00 p.m

Information and booking :
petitpalais.paris.fr



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Miss Bell*, 1903,
oil on canvas, Villa Grimaldi Fassio, Civica Raccolta Luigi Frugone (Musei di Nervi), Italy
© Musei di Nervi, Raccolte Frugone

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and the Italian Embassy in Paris.



This exhibition is supported by Dior.

DIOR



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Press Release

The Petit Palais is devoting a major exhibition to the Italian artist Giovanni Boldini, whose last retrospective in France goes back more than 60 years. And yet, the virtuoso portrait painter, also a keen observer of the high society circles he moved in and admired, was one of the brightest stars of the Paris art scene at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries.

An evocative and immersive scenography provides the backdrop for a selection of 150 works including paintings, drawings, engravings, costumes and fashion accessories lent by international museums such as the Giovanni Boldini museum in Ferrara, the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, London's National Portrait Gallery, the Musée d'Orsay, the Palais Galliera, and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs among others, as well as many private collections.

The exhibition invites visitors to delve into the pleasures of the Belle Époque through Boldini's œuvre, and delight in the scintillating atmosphere of a capital on the cutting edge of modernity.



G. Boldini, *Celebration at the Moulin Rouge*, vers 1889
Oil on canvas
Paris, musée d'Orsay, accepté par l'État à titre de donation, 2010
© Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt

Born in Ferrara, Italy in 1842, Boldini spent most of his life in Paris. He very quickly entered the art scene and became a close friend of Edgar Degas.

A protégé of the art dealer Adolphe Goupil, he made a name for himself by the choice of his subject matter that evoked modernity and the excitement of life in Paris. Boldini took full advantage of all the pleasures the French capital had to offer and went out every evening to the theatre and restaurants, his drawing utensils in tow. The dramatic lights and shadows created by new electric lighting fascinated him, as did the incessant hustle and bustle of a city that never seemed to slow down. Paintings based on his drawings such as *Party scene at the Moulin Rouge* bear witness to a city caught up in the exhilaration of modern times.

Boldini also befriended the caricaturist Sem and painter Paul Helleu, and the trio became inseparable.

But beyond his genre scenes, it was portraits that brought Boldini renown. All that Paris had to offer in the way of heiresses, princesses, dandies, artists and writers sat for him, and he rendered them in the most modern way, but going against the grain of the avant-guard. His portraits immortalised Paris high society of the Belle Époque and are the pictorial equivalents of characters of *In Search of Lost Time* by Proust, one of Boldini's greatest admirers. These works also bear witness to the painter's taste for fashion. He painted the most elegant get-ups by the couturiers Worth, Paul Poiret, Jacques Doucet and many others in broad strokes, and developed, over the course of his commissions, a unique style that became his signature: a rapid brush stroke, attention to the sitter's pose, and the serpentine line of his sitters' bodies.

Through the works presented, the exhibition offers a compelling and moving glimpse of a long-lost Paris.



G. Boldini, *Promenade in the woods*, about 1909, oil on canvas, Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini
© Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini



G. Boldini, *Conversation at the café*, 1879
Oil on panel
© Francesca Dini Archive, Florence

Exhibition Curators :

Servane Dargnies-de Vitry, curator of 19th-century paintings at the Petit Palais
Barbara Guidi, director of museums Bassano del Grappa

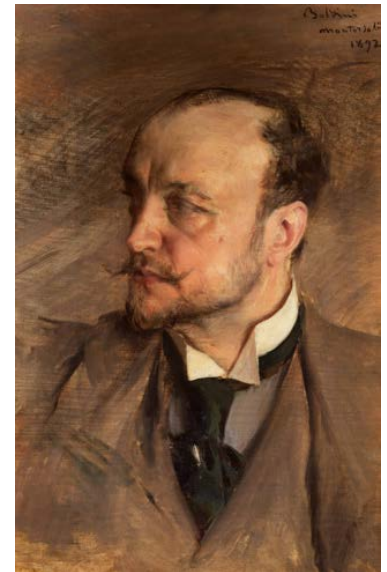
The exhibition

Prologue

Recognized as one of the great portrait painters of his time, Giovanni Boldini captured the vitality and effervescence of an epoch, while demonstrating considerable technical skill. Whether his paintings depict 1860s' Tuscany, the Paris of the Third Republic or the frivolous high society circles of the Belle Époque, he was the painter of a vibrant age. Like author Marcel Proust, Boldini rubbed shoulders with the society he painted, thereby providing an ample testimony to its characters, tastes, mores and pleasures.

However, Boldini was a victim of his own success. Too exuberant for some, too sophisticated for the avant-garde, too easy or too fashionable for others, he was criticized for repeating the same formula over and over and for deriving personal and economic gain from it, far from the traditional image of the bohemian artist. In reality, Boldini did not conform to any rules. An indefatigable innovator, he proved himself sensitive to the masters of the past while capturing the frenetic energy of modernity, thanks to his twirling brushstrokes. Through his choice of an individual and independent art, he retained an absolute originality throughout his career.

Thanks to the exceptional support of the Museo Boldini in Ferrara, the Petit Palais can present the Italian artist in all his facets, from his early days in Florence to his long Parisian career, from his genre paintings to his portraits of socialites, as well as his more personal works, carefully guarded in his studio during his lifetime. This exhibition invites visitors to discover Boldini, the painter of elegant ladies but also reveals his more intimate, lesserknown production.



G. Boldini, *Self-Portrait at Montorsoli*, 1892, oil on canvas, Firenze, Gallerie degli Uffizi
© Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture degli Uffizi, Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura

Section 1 – Boldini before Boldini (1864-1871)

In 1864, Boldini moved to Florence, which at that time, was the centre of Italian cultural and artistic life. Two painters, Michele Gordigiani and Cristiano Banti, quickly took him under their wing, introducing him into artistic circles and high society, which allowed him to obtain a certain number of commissions. For a time, Boldini also frequented the Macchiaioli, a group of initiators of modern Italian painting. He executed several portraits of the group members. His innovative way of treating the background, by representing the walls of his own studio rather than depicting his figures against neutral backgrounds, struck his contemporaries.

Gradually, Boldini was noticed by the critics. An extremely wealthy Englishwoman, Isabella Robinson Falconer, convinced of his exceptional talent, introduced him to the affluent Italian and foreign families who lived in Florence or who spent the winter on the French Riviera. This ease of access to the bourgeoisie and aristocracy earned him an ever growing success and a greater number of commissions.

Boldini's penchant for indoor portraits distanced him from the Macchiaioli, who preferred landscape painting and outdoor scenes. Unlike his compatriots Giuseppe De Nittis and Federico Zandomenighi who would attempt to get closer to the Impressionist painters in Paris, Boldini would choose a different path.

Section 2 – Boldini's Parisian debut (1871-1880)

On 23 October 1871, Boldini arrived in Paris for a brief stay. Peace had just been restored to the French capital after the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. While he planned to return to London, where he had been living since May of that year, the painter allowed himself to be caught up by the promise of an exciting life in Paris and a great artistic career. Thus began Boldini's French adventure, which would last almost sixty years.

His business sense led him to approach the merchant Adolphe Goupil. He set aside his vocation as a portrait painter in order to devote himself to "fashionable art", in the manner of Ernest Meissonier and Mariano Fortuny. This style was characterized by genre paintings of small dimensions, with characters in 18th-century clothing that met favour with the new entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Boldini's young companion and muse, Berthe, with her gentle face and innocence tinged with sensuality, became the protagonist of dozens of scenes. In his landscapes, Boldini was particularly drawn to places popular with high society, such as Étretat, which would soon become a fashionable seaside town. If painting outdoors allowed him to capture fleeting visual impressions, he nonetheless reworked his paintings at length in his studio, in an effort to achieve the ideal composition.

Success came quickly. Boldini was soon recognized as a landscape painter and genre painter, both in France and abroad. His paintings reinforced the image of a peaceful, happy and harmonious French society in the collective imagination, far removed from the troubled days of the Commune.



G. Boldini, *Peaceful Days or Young Woman crocheting*, 1875, oil on canvas, Williamstown, The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
© Image courtesy Clark Art Institute. clarkart.edu

Section 3 – The rhythm of the city

Towards the end of the 19th century, Paris was the epitome of the modern metropolis with its major traffic arteries, general omnibus company and its electric lighting, which earned it the nickname "City of Light". Boldini, in synergy with the world around him, took inspiration from the city and its pleasures that so fascinated foreigners. Cafes, theatres, teeming squares and streets traversed by horse-drawn carriages became the painter's favourite subjects, forming a record of Parisian life, rich in originality.

To capture the speed and rhythm of the city, the painter made use of skilled compositions marked by unusual points of view, audacious framing techniques and multiple vanishing points, all of which anticipated the cinematic gaze. An admirer of Meissonier and Degas, and Eadweard Muybridge's experiments in the field of chronophotography, Boldini devoted himself to the study of the representation of horses, which, at that time, "[we]re more interesting to him than women", as he wrote to his friend Banti.



G. Boldini, *Omnibus on Place Pigalle*, vers 1882
Oil on panel
© Private Collection

Boldini was also a great music lover. Like his contemporaries, he was passionate about nightlife and Parisian high society, of which he depicted several facets in his paintings. In his work, we attend impromptu parties around the piano in his studio with friends, musicians and dilettantes, we meet opera dancers, composers and conductors, and we crowd into cafe-concerts. His *Scène de fête au Moulin Rouge* depicts a venue that had just opened but was already legendary, thanks to the cancan, a symbol of the belle époque in itself.



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Emiliana Concha de Ossa*, vers 1888
Pastel on paper mounted on canvas
© Private Collection

Section 4 – Personal and official portraits (1880-1890)

From the 1880s onward, the so-called “Goupil paintings”, named after the fashion merchant, were in decline. Boldini, who was far from a bohemian artist, was sensitive to market fluctuations, and gradually removed genre paintings from his catalogue. He returned to a more personal vocation: the portrait. Thanks to the help of Countess Gabrielle de Rasty, who introduced him into Parisian high society, the number of his commissions increased rapidly. He developed an ardent passion for the countess, who became his muse, lover and protector. Boldini became increasingly interested in ancient art, which warranted his aspiration to “great” painting. He admired his American colleague John Singer Sargent, whose portraits merged the influence of El Greco, Van Dyck and Velázquez. The works of the painter Frans Hals, discovered during a trip to the Netherlands, convinced him to dare to use blacks against dark backgrounds, with very vibrant whites. Boldini became a veritable “colourist of black”.

By the late 1880s, Boldini’s stylistic evolution had come full circle. He met with great success at the Exposition Universelle of 1889, where he presented twelve paintings, including the *portrait of Emiliana Concha de Ossa* called *Le Pastel blanc*. He was now officially recognized as a great portrait painter, on a par with Sargent, Whistler and Zorn. However, Boldini retained a form of absolute originality, through his choice of an individual, personal and independent art.

Section 5 – The artist’s laboratory

In Paris, Boldini occupied three different studios over the course of his lifetime. The first was at 12 Avenue Frochot near Place Pigalle; the second was on the same square, and the last at 41 Boulevard Berthier, in the Plaine Monceau district. The painter’s studio was first and foremost a place of life, creation and conviviality, filled by the artist’s bric-a-brac and works in progress, as well as various items of furniture and objects with which he liked to surround himself.

The studio was also the place where Boldini brought his unique touch to his portraits: the painter almost always asked his models to pose in his studio, where he tirelessly repeated the same mise en scène. The solitary figures in a closed space, with their unbalanced postures and sometimes artificial lengthening, evoke the “serpentine” line of the Mannerist painters from the 16th century, as well as certain exaggerated touches in portraits by Ingres. Behind them, a few quick brushstrokes were enough to suggest the studio space, usually represented by a single detail: a sofa, bergère, chair, panelling or a door frame.

In his laboratory, the painter, like an alchemist, developed his own exuberant language, where his ever more impetuous touch illuminated and unfolded over the surface of the canvas like fireworks. Although he kept his distance from the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century, Boldini was sensitive to the modernity that surrounded him, especially the effects of speed and electricity. Some of his most experimental works seek to translate the unfolding of an action over time.



G. Boldini, *Firework*, 1892-1895, oil on canvas, Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini
© Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini

Section 6 – Artistic and literary circles (1890-1900)

After the Exposition Universelle of 1889, Boldini cultivated his success by choosing to paint the leading figures of his time. Under his brush, an extraordinary gallery of portraits was born, allowing us to admire the cosmopolitan, frivolous and decadent protagonists of Parisian high society, described by Marcel Proust in *Pleasures and Days* in 1896 and later in his novel, *In Search of Lost Time*.

This high society flocked to Parisian evenings or to Versailles, for celebrations inspired by the reign of Louis XIV. There were writers and dandies like Count Robert de Montesquiou and Marquis Boni de Castellane, but also rich heiresses and aristocrats such as Countess Greffulhe, Proust's famous model for his character of the Duchess of Guermantes. There were also artists, the composer Reynaldo Hahn, dancer Cléo de Mérode and even Madeleine Lemaire, illustrator and salon holder. Thanks to his cultured sophistication, Boldini mingled easily with this decadent society, where the cult of the individual was key.

According to Proust's aesthetics, "it is by plunging into the depths of individuality" that one can understand the human soul. Like the writer, Boldini sought to capture in his portraits the unique essence of the individual. Therefore, while most of the names of his models are forgotten today, they nevertheless evoke this "lost time" so dear to Proust, those "pleasures" and "days" of such a singular epoch.



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Lady Colin Campbell, née Gertrude Elizabeth Blood*, 1894, oil on canvas, London, National Portrait Gallery
© National Portrait Gallery, London



Sem (Georges Goursat, known as), *Album Tangoville-sur-mer : Le Noble Faubourg*, 1913, Album of chromolithographs, Private Collection
© Association Sem

Section 7 - Helleu, Sem and Boldini

After studying to be an illustrator at Périgueux, Bordeaux and Marseille, Georges Goursat, known as Sem, arrived in Paris in 1900. He quickly conquered the Parisian public with the publication of his comic book *Le Turf*, a portrait of the racing world, and his sardonic drawings in *Le Rire* and *La Revue Blanche*. With his sketches of socialites, Sem's objective was not so much to make people laugh as to create stereotypes. The likeness of his figures came not from a sum of details but instead from his understanding of the deeper reality of individuals, which he expressed with elegant strokes.

Sem rapidly befriended Boldini and painter Paul-César Helleu, who served as Proust's inspiration for the character of Elstir. These two fashionable portrait painters, who met in 1894, were already firm friends. Sem, in turn, would never leave their side. Numerous photographs from the period show the three men as irreverent observers of Parisian social life: in the streets of Paris, at the cafe or at the races at Longchamp.

With his instantly recognizable style and his two-dimensional, shadowless figures, Sem drew many caricatures of his two friends. In them, Boldini appears as small and unsightly, alongside Helleu, or filiform elegant figures who seem to have come straight from their canvases. Likewise, the painter from Ferrara painted several times, and in a masterly fashion, the portrait of his two acolytes and their relatives.

Section 8 - « I've painted all genres »

From 1890 onwards, Boldini decided to present only his portraits of socialites to the public, with the rest of his production remaining hidden in his studio. The painter's attention was focused on interiors, which he particularly liked and which appeared as places conducive to introspection and dreaming. In these works, often small in size, colour is an essential instrument for conveying emotion.

In the years leading up to World War I, Boldini's style gained in energy. His palette became brighter, his vehement touch even fierier, and, in the works he kept secret, almost aggressive. Everything inspired him and lent itself to pictorial experimentation: women's faces, bouquets of flowers, still lifes, nudes and landscapes swishing together in a strange fantasy of lines and colours. Certain paintings, almost abstract, took as their subject fragments of reality that served as mere pretexts for pieces of pure painting.

But this astonishing frenzy of life and movement was also accompanied by a melancholy streak, very noticeable in the twilight landscapes of Venice, marked by decadence and the irreversible passage of time. These intimate paintings perfectly capture Boldini's ambiguity, already evident in his large portraits of socialites, vacillating between agitation and melancholy.

Section 9 – The age of elegance and high society

By the late 19th century, Paris had become the international benchmark for elegance and fashion. Boldini was hailed as the “painter of women” in the first issue of the review *Les Modes* in January 1901. He selected the prestigious creations worn in his portraits directly from his models' wardrobes: dresses by Worth, Laferrière, Poiret, Doucet and Callot. Under Boldini's brush, we can glimpse the glittering world of princesses and countesses, as well as the demi-monde of actresses and dancers. Fashion was no longer simply the preserve of aristocrats.

Far from being just a fashionable painter, Boldini was avant-gardist in that he dictated fashion. The most famous belle-époque figures paraded through his studio: Lina Cavalieri, Luisa Casati, Marthe Régnier, Geneviève Lantelme, and many others. With their large playful eyes, their serpentine bodies, backswept hairstyles and made-up faces, the women celebrated by Boldini became an archetype, to the extent that some even started dressing “à la Boldini” or embarked on weight-loss cures to help them resemble this ideal.

However, far from the complacency sometimes attributed to him, Boldini's celebration of women is not without cruelty. The painter relished his role as demiurge by imposing his own gaze, sometimes fierce, on his subjects. Critics like Arsène Alexandre and Camille Mauclair saw him as one of the few artists to have expressed the vanity, spiritual coquetry and the neurosis of those decadent times or “all that is not essential to life”. It is precisely for this that Boldini was the true painter of his time.



G. Boldini, *A Walk in the Bois de Boulogne*, vers 1909, oil on canvas, Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini
© Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini

Press visuals



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Lady Colin Campbell, née Gertrude Elizabeth Blood*, 1894

Oil on canvas
London, National Portrait Gallery
© National Portrait Gallery, London

For Boldini, Gertrude Elizabeth Blood, an Irish aristocrat made famous by her scandalous divorce from Lord Colin Campbell, was the embodiment of the femme fatale. In this frontal portrait, he depicts her seated, wearing a beautiful black dress that highlights her slim waist and pale complexion. She looks at the viewer with a defiant, almost intimidating glare. Her pose, her head supported by her arm leaning against the armrest of a daybed, would become typical of the Boldinian repertoire.



G. Boldini, *Berthe smocking*, 1874

Oil on panel
Private Collection, courtesy Concezione Ltd

In a composition reminiscent of *The Lascaraky Sisters* (Ferrara, Museo Giovanni Boldini), Berthe is captured in the intimacy of the couple's daily life. Half-lying on a sofa, smoking a cigarette, she testifies to the comfortable lifestyle to which a large part of the population of the Third Republic could now aspire. Paintings of this type soon entered European and American private collections, nurturing the image of a freer and more sophisticated French society.



G. Boldini, *Peaceful Days or Young Woman crocheting*, 1875

Oil on canvas
Williamstown, The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
© Image courtesy Clark Art Institute. clarkart.edu

Despite its apparent spontaneity, this scene was carefully crafted in the artist's studio. The refined costumes of the figures and the accessories—cushions, rugs, and cello carelessly scattered on the floor—allow the painter to make use of a wide variety of textures likely to please collectors. When it was sold in New York City in 1893, this painting received the title *Peaceful days*, reflecting the cheerful and optimistic nature of Boldini's paintings.



G. Boldini, *Omnibus on Place Pigalle*, vers 1882
Oil on panel
© Private Collection

Boldini often left his studio to paint and draw scenes from Parisian life and views of his neighbourhood, especially around Place Pigalle and Place de Clichy. He sought to capture the rhythms and pulse of the modern metropolis. What is striking in this painting is the audacity of the composition: the horses appear in the foreground from the back, as if Boldini were challenging himself in his representation of the animal.



G. Boldini, *Conversation at the café*, 1879
Oil on panel
© Francesca Dini Archive, Florence

Sitting at the terrace of a Parisian café, two elegant women seem to indulge in a pleasurable gossiping session. On the right, Berthe, the muse in Boldini's early Parisian paintings, displays a shy and reserved smile. On the left, Gabrielle de Rasty, a sensual young socialite who would introduce the painter into high society, leads the discussion. Together, this contrasting duo of the blonde and the brunette embody the past and the painter's sentimental and professional future.



G. Boldini, *Celebration at the Moulin Rouge*, vers 1889
Oil on canvas
Paris, musée d'Orsay, accepté par l'État à titre de dation, 2010
© Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt

The Moulin Rouge, inaugurated in October 1889, immediately became the temple of Parisian nightlife. Workers, artists, bourgeois and aristocrats, attracted by the shows of all kinds, rubbed shoulders here in an atmosphere of frivolity. Boldini did not use this cabaret venue for the spectacle that took place on stage, but instead for that which occurred in the hall, amongst the audience, around the tables and chairs. In other words, the artist was drawn to the "real" spectacle, that of customers drinking, smoking and courting women.



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Emiliana Concha de Ossa*, vers 1888
Pastel on paper mounted on canvas
© Private Collection

In 1888, Boldini did six pastel portraits representing different members of the Chilean Subercaseaux family. Very happy with his work, the painter never wanted to part with this portrait of the young Emiliana, known under the title of *Pastel blanc*, and gave his model a perfect replica, presented here. The slightly lowered point of view highlights the slender figure of the young woman, and Boldini does not hesitate to elongate the arms and especially her hands, to the point of exaggeration. This process would become his trademark in the decades that followed.



G. Boldini, *Firework*, 1892-1895
Oil on canvas
Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini
© Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini

This imposing canvas, one of the artist's most famous, represents an unknown woman with large dark eyes and black hair in a bun. The portrait owes its title to the large, light-colored brushstrokes that surround the figure, used by the artist to dematerialize his model's dress and envelop her silhouette in a vaporous halo. The audacity of the colours and composition, together with a touch that veers towards abstraction, expresses a formal freedom unusual for the time.



G. Boldini, *Self-Portrait at Montorsoli*, 1892

Oil on canvas

Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi

© Galleria delle Statue e delle Pitture degli Uffizi,

Su concessione del Ministero della Cultura

This self-portrait by Boldini was done in Montorsoli, Tuscany, while the artist was staying with his friend Banti. It was the fruit of a hurried commission from the director of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence who wanted to increase the gallery's collection of self-portraits. Thus, at the age of fifty, Boldini joined the elite masters deemed worthy of entering this famous collection, which today comprises over 1,600 paintings acquired down through the centuries. Boldini's large forehead and inspired gaze give his physiognomy a certain noble air, and the brushstrokes remove some of his imperfections.

G. Boldini, *Portrait of Count Robert de Montesquiou*, 1897

Oil on canvas

Paris, musée d'Orsay, don d'Henri Pinard au nom du comte Robert de Montesquiou,

1922 Photo (C) RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

An aristocrat, poet, intellectual, collector, aesthete and dandy, Robert de Montesquiou inspired both the Baron de Charlus in Proust's writing and the character of *Des Esseintes* by Huysmans in *Against Nature*. He was the personification of the artistic and socialite circles of the time. In this portrait with shades of grey, Boldini does not hide the count's impertinence and vanity. Sitting sideways with his legs crossed, and his haughty profile turned towards his scepter-like cane, he seems to encapsulate the essence of the following line from his collection *Les Chauves-Souris* [Bats]: "I am the sovereign of transitory things."



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Lawrence Alexander "Peter" Harrison*, 1902

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, Larry Ellison

© Private Collection, Larry Ellison



Sem (Georges Goursat, known as)

At Voisin's, 1904

Print

Paris, musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris

© Paris Musées / Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris



Sem (Georges Goursat, known as), *Album Tangoville-sur-mer : Le Noble Faubourg*, 1913

Album of chromolithographs, Private Collection

© Association Sem



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Rita de Acosta Lydig seated*, 1911
Oil on canvas

Collection Mr and Mrs James O. Coleman

A patron and collector of ancient art, Rita de Acosta Lydig was one of the most eccentric protagonists of the belle époque, famous for her extensive wardrobe and her collection of 150 pairs of luxury shoes by Pierre Yantorny. Her light silk dress from the house of Chéruit is raised above her ankles here to reveal the famous shoes. The painter creates an undulating movement from the model's swan-like neck, passing along her long arms and ending in the twisted angle of the legs.



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Georges Goursat, known as Sem*, 1902

Oil on canvas

Paris, MAD – Musée des Arts décoratifs

© MAD, Paris / Jean Tholance

This portrait shows the caricaturist Sem in a confident pose: a front view, standing solidly, his hands on his hips, revealing a certain impertinence. Very elegant in his coat and grey suit, his cane and bowler hat, he espouses the style of British dandies. This portrait demonstrates Boldini's talent for rendering naturalness and immediacy: Sem seems to have been captured on canvas when he came to collect the painter from his studio for a social outing.



G. Boldini, *Portrait of Miss Bell*, 1903

Oil on canvas

Gênes, Raccolte Frugone – Musei di Nervi

© Musei di Nervi, Raccolte Frugone

This unknown woman, seated in an Empire-style chair, displays a casual pose and sophisticated aloofness. From the slightly high-angle perspective, the young woman seems to offer herself to the viewer. The model's physique, of which the artist seems to caress every detail, is typical of Boldini's taste. The young woman's bosom is highlighted by the slenderness of the waist, the lace border that emphasizes the neckline, and the big black bow, placed like a gigantic butterfly on the bodice.



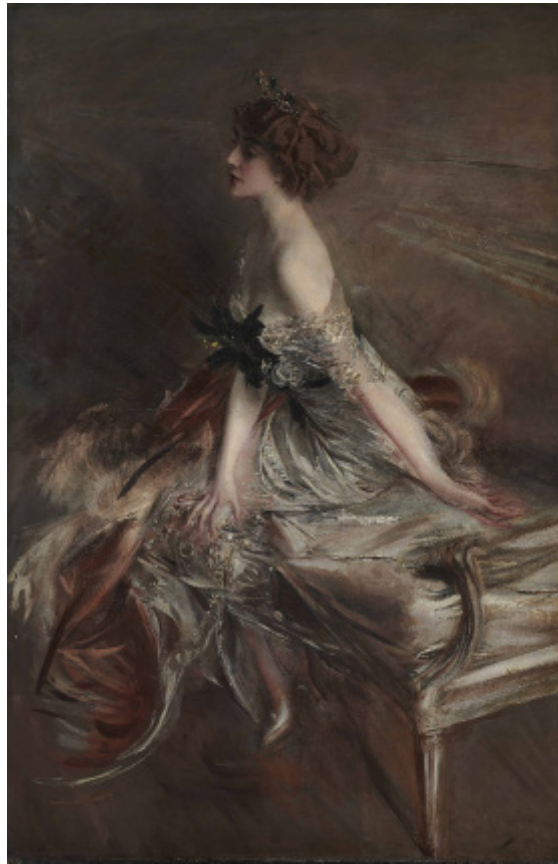
G. Boldini, *A Walk in the Bois de Boulogne*, vers 1909

Oil on canvas

Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini

© Ferrare, Museo Giovanni Boldini

American lady Rita de Acosta Lydig posed several times for Boldini between 1904 and 1911. The artist shows her here while walking in the Bois de Boulogne with her second husband, the British captain Philip Lydig. She walks majestically before him like a queen heading for her throne. Presented at the 1909 Salon, this painting aroused the jealousy of the young Luisa Casati, who had posed for the painter around the same time.



G.Boldini, *Portrait of Princess Marthe-Lucile Bibesco*, 1911

Oil on canvas

© Collection particulière

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The historian and woman of letters of Romanian origin, Marthe-Lucile Bibesco met Boldini shortly before 1910. She later recalled that the ladies of the time “dressed à la Boldini” and were required to undergo slimming treatments in order to “resemble the ideal woman according to the canons of Boldinian beauty”. Sporting a sumptuous swirling black and silver evening gown, Ms Bibesco’s body is traversed with a fiery energy. However, despite the princess’s enthusiasm, the canvas was refused by her husband, who deemed her cleavage unseemly.



Visit App

A tour of the exhibition will be available on the Petit Palais mobile application, in French and English, on iOS and Android.

It will enable visitors to discover in depth the key works in the exhibition and to gain a better understanding of Boldini's career, the personalities close to him and his sources of inspiration, thanks to each theme. This tour will be enriched with various bonuses: musical extracts, testimonies and archives.

A fun section will allow you to become Sem or Mademoiselle Lanthelme yourself, both painted by Boldini, using the phone's camera mode, and to keep a souvenir of your visit.

2,99 euros





Paris Musées, a museums network

Administratively grouped together as Paris Musées, the fourteen museums and heritage sites of the City of Paris possess collections that are as exceptional for their diversity as for their quality.

To open up and share this significant cultural heritage, they have adopted a new visitor experience policy, moderated prices for temporary exhibitions, and focus on providing access to members of the public who traditionally lack access to cultural offerings.

Their permanent collections, which are free*, and the temporary exhibitions and varied cultural programming reached 3 million visitors in 2018.

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It entitles the holder to reductions in the bookshop-boutiques and the cafe-restaurants, and to receive prior information about events in the museums.

In 2014, the card was bought by 9000 people.

Information is available at the Museum ticket offices or on **parismusees.paris.fr**.



*Except the archaeological Crypt under the forecourt of l'île de la Cité and the Catacombs.

The Petit Palais



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Built for the Exposition Universelle de 1900, the Petit Palais building is a masterpiece by architect Charles Girault. In 1902, it became the City of Paris Museum of Fine Arts and presents a very beautiful collection of paintings, sculptures, furnishings and art objects dating from Antiquity to 1914.

Among the museum treasures are an exceptional collection of Greek vases and a very large group of Flemish and Dutch paintings from the seventeenth century, displayed around the famous Self-Portrait with Dog by Rembrandt. A magnificent collection of French paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries includes major works by Fragonard, Greuze, David, Géricault, Delacroix, Courbet, Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Cézanne and Vuillard. The museum is also very proud of a very beautiful collection of sculptures by Carpeaux, Carriès and Dalou. The collection of decorative art is especially noted for objects from the Renaissance and the 1900s, including glasswork by Gallé, jewelry by Fouquet and Lalique and a dining room designed by Guimard for his private mansion. Finally, the museum has an outstanding graphic arts room featuring complete series of engravings by Dürer, Rembrandt and Callot and a rare collection of Nordic drawings.



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Since 2015, the collection presentation has been extensively reworked. It has been enriched by two new galleries on the garden floor level, one of which is dedicated to the Romantic period. In one gallery, restored large-format paintings by Delaroche and Schnetz are surrounded by works of artists such as Ingres, Géricault and Delacroix. In the second gallery, decorative paintings by Maurice Denis are interspersed with works by Cézanne, Bonnard, Maillol and Vallotton. In the fall of 2017, the collection of icons and Eastern Orthodox arts, which is the largest one in France, will benefit from a new museographic presentation. An area will also be dedicated to sketches of the major nineteenth-century Parisian settings. Early in 2018, these new presentations will be complemented in the North Gallery by collections of monumental sculptures from the nineteenth century.

The program of temporary exhibitions at the Petit Palais alternates ambitious major subjects like *Paris romantic*, *Paris 1900*, *Les Bas-fonds du Baroque (Baroque Slums)* and Oscar Wilde with monographs that allow rediscovering forgotten painters such as Anders Zorn, Albert Besnard or George Desvallières. Since 2015, contemporary artists (Thomas Lerooy in 2015, Kehinde Wiley in 2016, Andres Serrano in 2017, Valérie Jouve in 2018, Yan Pei-Ming in 2019, Laurence Aëgerter in 2020 and Jean-Michel Othoniel in 2021) have been invited to exhibit in the Petit Palais permanent collections in order to create a dialog with these paintings and reveal links between their works and those of the museum.

petitpalais.paris.fr



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Information

Boldini Les plaisirs et les jours

29 March to 24 July 2022

Tarifs

Full rate : 14 euros

Reduced rate : 12 euros

Reservation of a recommended visit time on
petitpalais.paris.fr

Opening Hours

Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Late opening on Friday until 9:00 p.m.

Closed on 1 May and 14 July.

Petit Palais

Fine Arts Museum of Paris

Avenue Winston Churchill, 75008 Paris

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Accessible to people with disabilities

Access

Metro

Lines 1 and 13: Champs-Élysées Clemenceau

Line 9: Franklin D. Roosevelt

RER

Line C: Invalides

Bus

Lines 28, 42, 72, 73, 83, 93.

Vélib'

Petit Palais station n°8001

Auditorium

Information on petitpalais.paris.fr

Café-restaurant *Le Jardin du Petit Palais*

Open from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Late opening on Friday until 8 pm

Bookshop

Open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm,

Late closing at 9 pm