

Boldini

Pleasures and Days

29 March - 24 July 2022



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

Information
petitpalais.paris.fr

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.

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.



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

Press Contact

Mathilde Beaujard
mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr
+ 33 1 53 43 40 14 / + 33 6 45 84 43 35

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.

The exhibition benefited from support from the Italian Ministry of Culture.



This exhibition is supported by Dior.

DIOR

The auditorium's programming around the exhibition is made possible thanks to the generous support of Mrs. Natalia Logvinova Smalto, founder of the Fondation Signature – Institut de France.



G. Boldini, *Party scene at the Moulin rouge*, about 1889, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay ©Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt



G. Boldini, *Promenade in the woods*, about 1909, Gallerie d'arte moderna et contemporanea- Museo Giovanni Boldini

Exhibition curators :

Servane Dargnies-de Vitry, curator of 19th-century paintings at the Petit Palais

Barbara Guidi, director of museums Bassano del Grappa