

The Studio of Alphonse de Neuville by Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn acquired by Orsay

Didier Rykner — Monday 28 August 2023 — All the versions of this article: English , français

28/8/23 - **Acquisition - Paris, Musée d'Orsay** - Although Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn is a little known artist, the fame of Sarah Bernhardt, to whom the Musée du Petit Palais devoted an exhibition that has just ended (see article), helped to make some of his works famous. This landscape painter gave painting lessons to the tragedienne, and painted his studio in watercolour on several occasions. It is another of his watercolours (*ill. 1*), also showing a studio, but this time by the painter Alphonse de Neuville, that the Musée d'Orsay has just purchased from Drawings-online, a gallery that operates solely on the internet [1].



1. Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn (1839-1912)

Alphonse de Neuville dans son atelier

Aquarelle - 36,7 x 54,1 cm

Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Photo : Drawings-online

👁 See the image in its page

Even if the subject were not identified on the reverse, the characteristic profile of the painter seated in the middle of the room drawing on a large table covered with a coloured tablecloth would make it possible to recognise him without too much difficulty, his face being widely disseminated by painting, photography (*ill.* 2) and engraving.

Born in Saint-Omer, after a brilliant schooling Alphonse Deneuville (his real name, which he changed to "de Neuville") hesitated between a career in the military and a career as a painter. His father thwarted his wishes and, after a year of preparatory studies at the Brest naval academy, sent him to Paris to study law; After obtaining his law degree, he became a pupil of François-Édouard Picot at the École des Beaux-Arts, on the recommendation of the battle painter Hippolyte Bellangé. He finally chose to combine his two passions by becoming a military painter, and at the Salon of 1859 began a successful career as a painter as well as an illustrator and painter of panoramas in collaboration with Édouard Detaille.



2. Ferdinand Mulnier (active between 1854 and 1890)

Alphonse de Neuville, c. 1865

Photomechanical print (photoglyptie) pasted on a printed sheet - 12 x 8,5 cm

Paris, Musée d'Orsay

Photo: RMN-GP/A. Brandt

👁 See the image in its page

The large work by Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn acquired by Orsay is very attractive. The walls are covered with paintings that are not necessarily all by Deneuville, who was also - as his after-death sale testifies - a collector of works by his contemporaries and friends such as Detaille and Théodore Gudin. Also noteworthy is the abundance of weapons, helmets, flags, trophies and military instruments that decorate the studio as much as they probably served as models for the painter.



3. Marie-Désiré Bourgoïn (1839-1912)

Sarah Bernhardt's Studio, 1879

Watercolour and gouache, graphite - 67.8 x 53.1 cm

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

👁 See the image in its page

The same technique and taste for the exuberance of this studio can be seen in the watercolours executed by Bourgoïn in Sarah Bernhardt's home, one of which, at the Metropolitan Museum was presented in the Petit Palais exhibition (*ill.* 3) and another at the Musée de la Vie Romantique (<https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-de-la-vie-romantique/oeuvres/atelier-de-sculpture-de-sarah-bernhardt#infos-principales>) in Paris.

Although the Musée d'Orsay has not previously held any works by this artist, it does have a large number of sketchbooks and drawings, as well as four paintings by Alphonse de Neuville.