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The Cover

Some critics have called François Boucher (1703-1770) the complete rococo artist, in style of painting and personal life-style, and the eager-eyed boy in *Young Boy Holding a Carrot* (cover) already heralds the paintings of the artist's next decade, which would establish him as one of the most famous painters of nudes.

His father owned a small art shop near the Louvre (then a royal palace and not yet a museum), and Boucher spent most of his life in Paris. He attained success early, winning a Grand Prix for painting in 1723, and gaining acceptance to the Royal Academy of Art in 1731. He also made a good living with his brush, starting as a chronicler of everyday life and street scenes. The nudes came later, after Madame de Pompadour proclaimed Boucher her favorite artist and commissioned him to cover enormous canvases with mythical scenes, usually featuring Venus, Diana, and various other goddesses and nymphs. The style of *Young Boy* hints at these; but this boy looks more middle-class than upper-class, illustrating Rocheblave's assessment of Boucher as "the painter of scantily attired mythological figures and nude Cupids galore [who] possessed a taste and feeling for real life, and he depicted it with a success which surprises only those who have not studied his other paintings with sufficient attention."—JAAN KANGILASKI

(*Young Boy Holding a Carrot* [Portrait of a Young Boy], 1738. Pastel. 30.8×24.5 cm [12½×9¾ in]. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.)

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