

Basic Detail Report



Cows in Field

Date

c. 1895

Primary Maker

Walter Frederick Osborne

Medium

Oil on board

Dimensions

30.5 x 38 cm

Description

Osborne's boyhood painting lessons in his father's studio fostered in him a love of animal painting and of landscape and genre painting generally. His earlier exhibited works at the RHA were of animals and his decision to study under Charles Verlat, Professor of Painting at Antwerp and a renowned animal painter, bear out this marked interest. Although his love of landscape painting never wavered, his interest in animal subject matter diminished towards the end of his career. His early studies in Antwerp and his familiarity with The Hague School to a large extent confirmed his natural choice of subject matter but influenced his technique and use of subdued tones. 'Cows in a Field' was painted after 1892 when Osborne had returned to Ireland. Its rural theme and low key but lively palette make it reminiscent of his 'plein-air' paintings of the mid to late 1880s but its handling is freer, and more bold. Maybe it is a sketch of a more finished work or perhaps it is due to the fact that by this time the mainstay of his painting in Ireland was no longer landscape but portraiture and as such demanded a more virtuoso rapid approach. Interestingly, while Osborne's English rural views often include horses, sheep, pigs, dogs and chickens, cows rarely feature. Perhaps it was due to the influence of his friendship with Nathaniel Hone, whose North County Dublin coastal scenes so frequently included cattle, that Osborne was inspired to do the same. (Catalogue Entry [15]: A Century of Irish Painting - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997, p. 146)