



The Family

Date

before 1968

Primary Maker

Peter Behan

Medium

Oil on board

Dimensions

Framed: 183 x 122 x 2.5 cm

Description

Typical of Peter Behan's work, this painting portrays a group of three figures, rendered as heads attached to tubular limbs in a dark interior. The figure on the far left appears to be male has two sausage like limbs protruding from his head. Around one of these is a piece of black twine knotted in a bow. Leaning against this figure is a female figure, which has two bulbous breasts attached to two short and stocky limbs. The final figure on the right

has three tubular limbs, akin to octopus legs, coming from its head. They appear to be in front of a train or bus window, considering the shape of the object, which looks out on the façade of a building. Sections of four windows on the façade are visible. The following extract is taking from an exhibition catalogue 'recent paintings by Peter Behan, 11 March to 7 April 1966, Roland, Browse and Delbanco, 19 Cork Street, London W1': 'Since Peter Behan's first one-man show in 1964, the theme of which was his 'obsession' with the Mad O'Casey Woman in Phoenix Park, his attitude has undergone a very precise and definite change. Then he was more or less concerned with 'mind over body', the absolution of his soul from his haunting childhood guilt of the persecution of this demented woman. Now he has come out into the open with more formal, more painterly aims. His approach is still to some degree a literary, an intellectual one, but now it is the power of the body, biologically to produce and reproduce itself in 'shapes and limbs with a personality of their own'. He says'... it is marvellous fun manipulating the paint into new organic shapes. The Creative process neatly takes me over when I paint like this whereas before I controlled it'. Behan is acutely aware of the aggressive aspect in his work, an aspect, so much part of today's scene that it cannot be ignored by any really contemporary painter. He says 'As I am part of the young generation, I am myself aware of the exciting relief of pressure when an aggressive act is undergone.... By this I don't only mean physical assault but creatively behaving in an aggressive way. ...One can do so much in a painting one couldn't do in everyday life. In my case I do chopping up and devouring in my painting but as well as aggression this

has an exaggerated organic realisation packed into it. This attitude of mine when taken to extremes seems funny, hence the satirical side of my work.'