



Niall's Pony

Date

1997

Primary Maker

Basil Blackshaw

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

138 x 123 x 2.5 cm

Description

Basil Blackshaw's rural upbringing and his lifelong dwelling in the countryside of Northern Ireland

reverberate throughout his painting. From 1948-51 he

attended Belfast College of Art and income from his paintings of horses contributed to the cost of his art education. In 1951 he was awarded a government scholarship enabling him to travel to Paris and London. Blackshaw has consistently painted subjects that reflect his everyday life, particularly the farming community to which he belongs. Both his father and brother worked with horses, and dogs and cockerels are also recurring themes in his art. While valid subjects in their own right, occasionally his paintings of animals or landscapes additionally express human psychological conditions. His diverse artistic influences include Edgar Degas who had a similar love of horses, Francis Bacon, Gustave Courbet and Mark Rothko. Blackshaw's oeuvre, which encompasses portraits and figurative painting as well as illustrative work for Field Day Theatre Company, oscillates between representation and abstraction. The expressive and painterly style of Niall's Pony together with its richly glowing colour invests the work with remarkable vitality. The work is also typical in the way the focus is on a single motif placed against a simple, though thickly painted background. (JO'D) BASIL BLACKSHAW b. Co. Antrim 1932 Niall's Pony 1997 Oil on canvas, 138 x 123 cms Purchased 1998 Accepted into art college at a very young age, Basil Blackshaw attended the Belfast College of Art between 1948 and 1951. His talents were recognised very early in his career and at the age of only twenty-three he had his first solo exhibition in the Belfast Museum and Art Gallery. Blackshaw grew up in the Ulster countryside where his father was a horse trainer and it is from these surroundings that he has consistently drawn his inspiration. As well as portraits and nudes, a recurring theme in his work is the racing and sporting life of Ulster. In all of Blackshaw's work there is an energy and vitality which is due to the both the primacy of subject matter and a richness of colour and texture. We can also see a shift in emphasis from more realistically rendered subjects to a simplified and sensuous Expressionist style, as in Niall's Pony, but his basic imagery has remained unchanged over the years and is still firmly rooted in the rural life of Ulster.