



## Self-Portrait in Blue Hat

### Date

1965

### Primary Maker

Brian Bourke

### Medium

Oil on canvas

### Dimensions

127 x 114.4 cm

### Description

Brian Bourke has steadfastly adhered to his own style of painting without being swayed by contemporary developments. He spent a year at the National College of

Art in Dublin but dismissed formal art education and felt that he could learn more from studying the work of other artists in museums and galleries. In particular, he admired the handling of colour and composition by fifteenth-century Italian and German painters and he was also impressed by Roderic O'Connor and Francis Bacon. This is one of the earliest in a series of self-portraits in which the artist depicts himself wearing incongruous headgear. In this case he wears a blue top hat introducing an absurd element in to what is otherwise a serious work. The modelling of the body in brown and beige hues is in stark contrast with the matt grey and black background. It serves to heighten the definition of the figure and to focus all attention on him. Francis Bacon's influence is evident in the placement of the figure in an unidentifiable spatial setting and the way the figurative element of the work is built up with thicker applications of paint. The painting also calls to mind the early self-portraits of Van Gogh. BRIAN BOURKE b. 1936 Self-Portrait with Blue Hat - 1965 Oil on Canvas 130 x 117 cm Prov. purchased 1982 Since the mid-1960s Bourke has been recognised as one of Ireland's most significant contemporary artists. While much of his work has been devoted to the repeated study of particular landscapes under different conditions, such as his back garden in Dublin, scenes in Bavaria, Switzerland, Galway and more recently in the South of France, the portrait has held a continuing fascination for him. Self-Portrait with Blue Hat is in keeping with the best of Bourke's work in its uncompromising directness and characteristic irony and humour.