



Study of Trees, Viceregal Lodge

Date

c. 1870

Primary Maker

Augustus Nicholas Burke

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

51 x 33 cm

Description

Study of Trees, Viceregal Lodge, although not signed or dated, clearly dates to the 1870s when Burke was at the height of his career. The vigorous style of broad diagonal brushstrokes, representing the thick foliage of the tall trees, and the strong contrast of bright sunlight and dark undergrowth are similar in feeling to some of the artist's more finished Breton scenes of this period. The setting for the study was the grounds of the Viceregal Lodge in

Dublin's Phoenix Park, the home of the British Viceroy in Ireland. That Burke had access to the Lodge, which since independence has become Aras an Uachtarain, the residence of the Irish President, indicates the artist's privileged position in Irish society at the time. This was due to the fact that his brother Thomas Henry Burke was under-secretary for Ireland, an important job in the civil service. There is a grim and disquieting irony in the fact that the site of Burke's lively and cheerful study of trees was also to become the scene of the tragic death of his own brother Henry who together with Lord Frederick Cavendish, the Chief Secretary, was brutally murdered by members of an extremist nationalist group called the Invincibles, five of those responsible were executed and Augustus and his sister Dorothy left Ireland and settled in London. (Catalogue Entry [2]: A Century of Irish Painting - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997, pp. 141-142)