

Basic Detail Report



Madonna Irlanda or The Very First Real Irish Political Picture

Date

1977

Primary Maker

Micheal Farrell

Medium

Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions

174 x 185.5 cm

Description

Micheal Farrell was regarded as one of the most promising artists of his generation. In 1957 he enrolled in St Martin's College of Art, London, at that time to the forefront of contemporary art in Britain. His international reputation was enhanced by a growing number of prizes and scholarships. From 1971 he resided in France. Farrell's style oscillated between figuration and abstraction and his return to a figurative style in the mid-1970s was prompted by his desire for more direct statements relating to contemporary events, particularly atrocities linked to the troubles in Northern Ireland. Heretofore these had been articulated through his semi-abstract Pressé series. Madonna Irlanda quotes directly from François Boucher's painting Resting Girl 1752 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) which depicts Miss Louison O'Morphy, the Irish mistress of Louis XV. Farrell uses Boucher's erotically charged pose to depict a haloed and youthful Mother Ireland with her spelling book to one side observed by a lascivious male - here a self-portrait by Farrell. The idea of a young Irish state stunted by violence, immaturity and inertia is reinforced by Farrell's distortion of Leonardo da Vinci's Study of proportions, a classic symbol of harmony, into a distraught figure contorted by fear.