

Basic Detail Report



The Coast of County Clare

Date

c.1890

Primary Maker

Nathaniel Hone

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

61 x 91.5 cm

Description

Hone was fascinated by the sight of the sea, often in stormy weather. He painted many seascapes around the Irish coastline, often showing waves breaking in the centre of the composition, and rolling in towards the shore. Yet this is one of his most expressive, and perhaps abstract seascapes. He conceived his picture as a whole, painting in broad, bold strokes, and relating light and tone in different parts of the picture. Hone made a visit to Kilkee, County Clare, perhaps in the late 1880s or in 1890, making watercolour studies of rocks and sea from which he made a number of powerful oil paintings. The present painting may date from this visit. He enjoyed standing on a beach, on rocks or cliffs, or being in a boat on the sea on a gusty day watching waves break, an approaching storm, or the wind blowing, beneath heavy clouds. Here he shows a bare headland in the background. The dark cloud seems almost to lower to the waves while scuffed brushstrokes beneath it suggest a squall of rain above the sea. A flight of seabirds skimming above the waves in the foreground suggest the fragility of life in the face of powerful Nature, yet also their sense of hardy survival. As is characteristic of Hone, he creates a feeling of elemental Nature: land, sea, waves, clouds, sky and birds, light and shadow, as if we are part of it. Hone may have been influenced by the tradition of seascapes and breaking waves painted by artists of the Romantic and Realist generations, such as Constable, Delacroix, Isabey and Courbet, particularly the powerful series of 'Wave' paintings by the latter artist. But Hone observes the sea in an Irish setting, with its light and sudden changes of weather, and creates his own identity as a seascapist. (From: The Collection Revealed: Nathaniel Hone, p. 581)