

Basic Detail Report



Homage to Clonfert

Date

1965

Primary Maker

Louis le Brocquy

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

96.5 x 146 cm

Description

'Homage to Clonfert' is part of le Brocquy's 'Ancestral Heads' series of the 1960s. It was initially inspired by a visit to the Musée de l'Homme, Paris where he saw a collection of Polynesian skulls which interested him not only visually but also because of their ritualistic importance in providing access for the living to the spirits of their ancestors. Although le Brocquy was by this time settled permanently in the South of France he visited Ireland regularly and remained keenly aware of his Irish and Celtic heritage. Further inspiration came when he discovered a Celtic cult of heads at Entremont and Roquepertuse in southern France and the carved Romanesque heads above the entrance to Clonfert Cathedral in Ireland. In 'Homage to Clonfert' the images appear to emerge from within the white matrix of the painted ground, as in his Presences, but here he has reduced the human image to the head alone and has tried to evoke not only the spirit of the individuals but also an image of our shared past. The heads are depicted collectively in a rigid diagonal grid pattern as they are at Clonfert, but at the same time they remain isolated from each other. Visual embodiments of the ancient Celtic belief of the head as a magic box in which the spirit resides. (Catalogue Entry [59]: A Century of Irish Painting - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997, p. 160)