

Basic Detail Report



58 × 78 cm

The Village, Twilight

Date

1902

Primary Maker

Henri Eugene Augustin Le Sidaner

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

Description

Petit-Fort-Philippe is a small fishing village between Calais and Dunkerque, where the artist spent his youth. The compositional arrangement is careful, showing Le Sidaner's distance from the spontaneous works of the Impressionists, and is found on horizontal and vertical lines. This emphasis on structure reflects his academic training. A preparatory study for this painting, probably a more realistic depiction of the square, is further evidence of his being at variance with the Impressionists. He is concerned with the structure of the image rather than a realistic depiction of the scene. The strong vertical form of the lamp, for example, was not in the original work but was added later to give a focus to the foreground. The position of the group of figures was also changed. The scene is predominantly painted in the pink and orange tones of evening, with the courtyard lit by the last rays of the sun. The glowing lights of the central building appear particularly welcoming in contrast to the unlit lamp and dark houses. These twilight colours are similar to those used by such plein-air painters as Bastien-Lepage. 'The Village Twilight' shows Le Sidaner's use of the Neo-Impressionist technique. This style, developed by Seurat and Signac, was a controlled and scientific method of painting based on the earlier discoveries regarding colour, which the Impressionists had used in their work. This pointillist technique is confined to the foreground areas where the cobblestones are painted in horizontal strokes of green, grey, pink, and lilac, while the sky is treated in a more naturalistic way. As in the work of Utrillo, the human element is distant, or totally absent from Le Sidaner's streetscapes. The cobbled square is almost deserted apart from a group of tiny figures silhouetted against the central building and they are not portrayed in any detail. The long evening shadows, together with foreground shadows of buildings not visible in the painting create an atmospheric image. His wish to record the scene is tempered by his desire to create nostalgia and this poetic mood links him to the Symbolists. (Extract from 'Images and Insights', Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1993, p. 232) "La Place" was the most important work the artist painted in May-June 1902, in Petit-Fort-Philippe, where he spent a holiday with his family. The painting represents the "Maison des douanes" of Petit-Fort-Philippe, which was destroyed in 1940 during the Second World War.