



Boulevard Raspail

Date

1907

Primary Maker

Roderic O'Connor

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

52 x 60 cm

Description

In 1904 Roderic O'Connor moved to Paris from Brittany, and set up a studio on Rue du Cherche-Midi in Montparnasse, a district of Paris much favoured by artists. The subject is unusual in O'Connor's oeuvre as during his years in Paris he tended to focus on indoor scenes, particularly still life subjects and the female nude. Even in this view of the city, he avoided the more picturesque elements of Paris and has painted what appears to be a construction site, the criss-cross of the cranes outlined against the blue night sky and a pile of rubble at the centre of the image. Boulevard Raspail is the main road through Montparnasse and would have been very close to O'Connor's studio. Despite the date of 1907 on the painting, this work was actually exhibited in Paris at the Salon des Indépendants in March 1906, where it would have been viewed in the company of paintings by Matisse, Rouault and Braque. This image is painted using fluid paint applied in long directional brushstrokes, the long verticals of the background dwarfing the two-silhouetted figures in the foreground. The spread of light from the street lamp is suggested by radiating strokes of yellow paint, and curving paint also defines the mound of rubble. For a city street scene, there is little activity apart from the cloaked figures in the foreground. Their silhouetted forms add to the mysterious atmosphere of this work. (Catalogue Entry [18]: A Century of Irish Painting - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997, pp. 147)