



## On the Quays, Etaples

### Date

c. 1888

### Primary Maker

Frank Joseph O'Meara

### Medium

Charcoal, or pencil on canvas

### Dimensions

111.8 x 99.1 cm

### Description

O'Meara arrived at Etaples on the Pas-de-Calais coast near Boulogne in December 1887 to join his friends Eugene Vail and Middleton Jameson. He joined a few other

artists, English, American and French, working there and like them was encouraged by the variety of motifs to paint. He painted a small study of the port of Etaples on panel. Vail and Jameson were experienced marine painters, having represented many harbour scenes and fishermen on canvas. Probably through their encouragement, O'Meara embarked on this complex composition of the quays with fishing boats in the harbour and the steeproofed houses of Etaples behind. Normally he would paint only one figure, but here there are several: the old woman and young girl in the foreground, the group of shawled women and the fishermen in a boat in the background. The barefoot girl who turns to her elderly companion adds a charming personal touch to the picture, their figures reflected in the wet quays. The elderly fishing woman is similar in appearance to the old woman in 'October' (see Object Number 240). The large size of this drawing on canvas suggests that 'On the quays, Etaples' is an underdrawing for a painting which, unfortunately, was never completed. Nevertheless it reveals much about O'Meara's working methods, for instance the care with which he drew human figures and composed background, (very different from his teacher Carolus Duran's more spontaneous methods) a methodology which is likely to have been one of the main factors contributing to the artist's relatively small output of paintings. Another important factor was his early death- he died aged thirty-five- several years after contracting malaria. O'Meara is unlikely to have drawn figures in such detail 'en plein air'. He may have studied the models in one of the studios around town. As in 'The Widow' (see Object Number 247) there is a slightly aerial perspective, giving an elegant 'Art Nouveau' flourish to the picture. (Catalogue Entry [10]: Julian Campbell, 'Frank O'Meara 1853 - 1888' - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1989, p. 49)