

Basic Detail Report



Boy on Shore

Date

1886

Primary Maker

Walter Frederick Osborne

Medium

Oil on board

Dimensions

15.3 x 22.8 cm

Description

Osborne moved from Brittany to England in about 1884 where he continued to paint landscape and genre subject matter in small rural communities, particularly in the area of East Anglia. Though influenced early on by the 'plein-airism' and square brush technique of Bastien-Lepage, Osborne frequently abandoned the latter's employment of even, grey light for sunshine and dramatic shadow and adopted a more fluid form of naturalism such as appears in 'Boy on a Shore' of 1886. This oil study was most likely painted while the artist was at Walberswick, a small coastal town in the northeast of England. There he sometimes worked in the company of other painters, including Edward Stott, Blandford Fletcher and fellow Irishman Nathaniel Hill. The latter, like Osborne, may have chosen to work at Walberswick because their former teacher at the Royal Hibernian Academy School, Augustus Burke, was working there during that period. Wilson Steer recalled meeting Hill and Osborne in Walberswick in the 1880s. Their work of the period, in theme and composition is remarkably similar. Throughout his life Osborne delighted in portraying children and, even if they were not the main focus of his composition, often included them in the foreground as a means of leading the viewer into the painting. Here the little boy is portrayed stretched out on the sand basking in the sunshine. The fluid, impressionistic manner in which the artist has sketched the scene strongly evokes the light and warmth of the atmosphere. (Catalogue Entry [14]: A Century of Irish Painting - Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1997, p. 146)