

# Basic Detail Report

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## The Sheepfold

**Date**

1887

**Primary Maker**

Giovanni Segantini

**Medium**

Charcoal and chalk on paper

**Dimensions**

32 x 45.5 cm

**Description**

'The Return to the Sheepfold' is one of two drawings from Segantini's Savognin period in the Gallery's collection. Both it and 'The Shepherd Asleep' (see Object number 185) were left to the Gallery as part of the Hugh Lane Bequest 1915. Like Millet, Segantini was fascinated throughout his career with the subject of sheep. The motif of the return to the sheepfold was treated in a number of compositions of the 1880s and 1890s and the Dublin drawing reproduces an oil painting of 1881 (private collection). Although the drawing is identical to the painting in virtually all details, the mood is totally different. In the earlier work the scene is treated in a straightforward realist manner, devoid of any subsidiary content, while in the Dublin drawing of six years later, Segantini's growing mysticism can be seen in the intense and moving treatment of light which appears to transform the image of the lowly stall into a symbol of the Nativity. Amongst the several related works there are two drawings (Bodmerian Library, Cologne 1886-88, and Albertina, Vienna, 1891) in which the staffage is arranged in a similar manner while the direction from which the sheep approach is reversed. However, the drawing to which it is closest is in the Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen, which, while being somewhat larger work, has a more condensed and simplified composition with fewer sheep and without the figure of the shepherdess on the right. The overall effect of this pairing down and reduction in the St. Gallen drawing is to intensify further the symbolism and mystery of the image, which affirms its later date of 1891-92. Thus the Dublin drawing, together with its related works, can clearly be seen as an indication of the artist's development during his most important period of transition from Realist to Symbolist. (Extract from 'Images and Insights', Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin, 1993, p. 228)