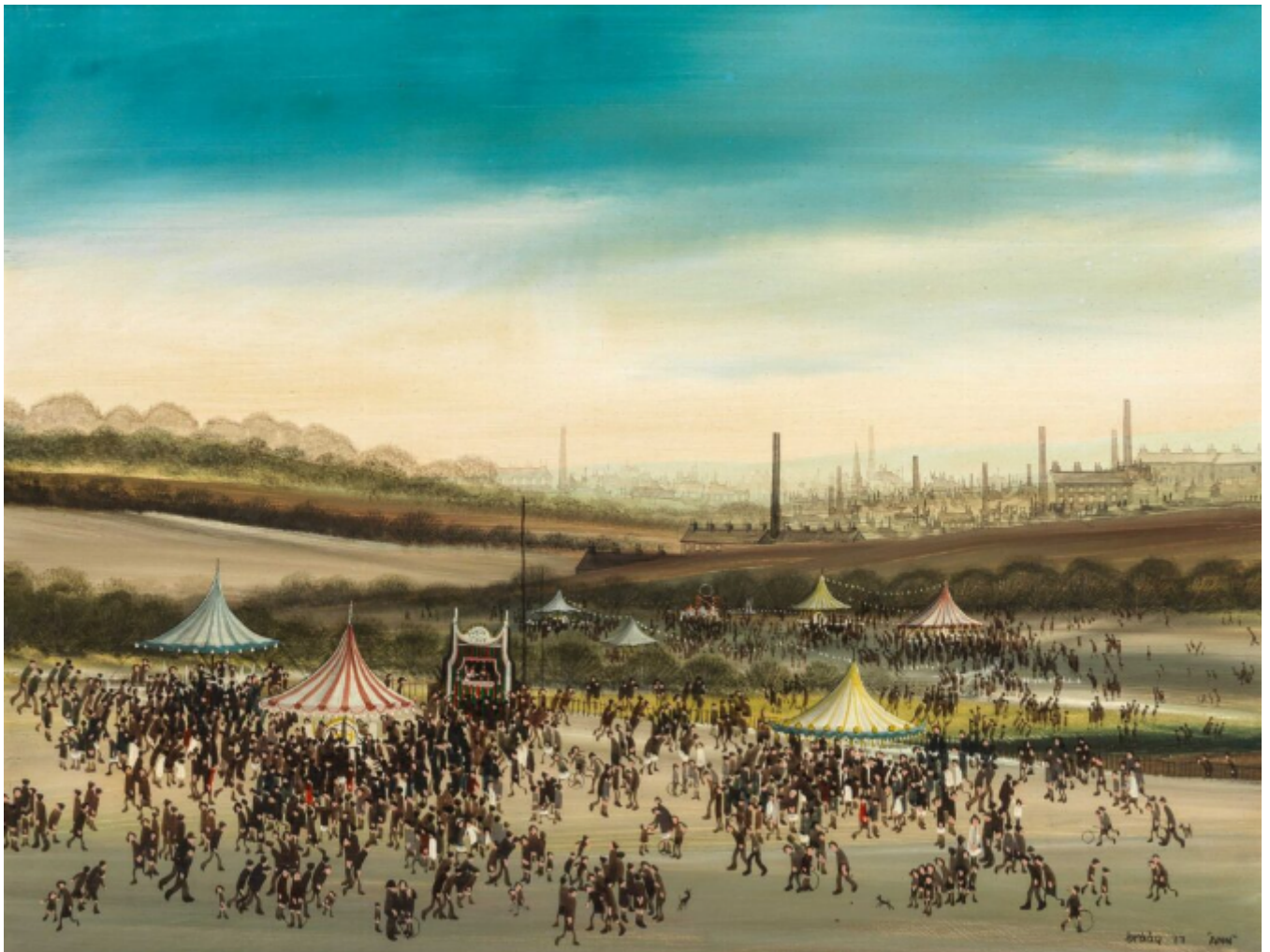


A day at the Fun Fair

Brian Shields "Braaq" (1951-1997)



REF:

Description

Oil & pencil on panel Signed & dated Braaq '77 "Ann" (lower right) 44 x 59 cm (17 x 23)

Provenance: Acquired by the family of the present owner in the 1980's Thence by descent Private Collection U.K.

Brian Shields was born in Liverpool in 1951 and is well known for his industrial paintings of northern Britain. His father was an artist but could not support his large family from painting alone. Shield's work is often compared to L.S. Lowry and Helen Bradley but it is not clear if he obtained his unique style before knowing of their work. He was given the nickname "Braaq" at school, due to his artistic talents, after the French artist George Braque. Shields had no formal training as he believed this would "take the honesty out of one's own painting". Shields took inspiration from his life and in particular, humorous memories from his childhood. The name of his late mother, Agnes, is seen in graffiti in some of his paintings. From the mid 1970s, he would usually put the name Ann after his signature as seen in "A day at the funfair". This was a dedication to his sister, who died at the age of 21. Ann also appears in some of Shield's works painted alongside him. He often portrays himself in wellingtons and wearing a black and white striped jumper which he remembered as one of the few new items of clothing he received as a child. He spent most of his adult working life as a chef at a hotel in Harrogate. It was there that Shields decorated the walls to cheer up the rather drab interior, with murals and signed them Braaq. This set about a search to find out who was responsible for the murals. After five weeks, Shields was exposed as the artist by a journalist. This was a turning point in his career and he had his first exhibition in 1974. In 1977, he held the first of four exhibitions in London, which led to The Times describing him as "one of the six most successful artists in England". He also had a sell-out show in the Lake District. Although Shields did achieve success, he often faced financial difficulties. He was declared bankrupt towards the end of his life. Shields died of a brain haemorrhage in 1997, at the age of just 46.