

JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A Saddled Grey standing in a Landscape

ABRAHAM COOPER

Sold



Description

ABRAHAM COOPER R.A. 1787-1868 English School A Saddled Grey standing in a Landscape Oil on canvas 63 x 75.6 cms 24 3/4 x 29 3/4 ins Overall framed size 72 x 84 cms 28 3/8 x 33 ins Provenance: Private Collection purchased from Ackerman early 1970s "He must be admitted to the first rank of animal painters of his age" is how J C Wood summarises his entry for Abraham Cooper in his Dictionary of British Animal Painters and Sally Mitchell in her fine Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists writes that he was a: "...sporting artist of outstanding ability".

He was born on 8th September at Red Lion Street, Holborn, London, and was the son of a tobacconist who later became an inn keeper. At the age of 13 Cooper became an assistant at Astley's Circus, run by his uncle William Davis. This circus was a highly popular nineteenth century attraction which combined a stage and a circus ring enabling plays to be put on featuring horses and armoured knights. This probably formed the background to his later career as a painter in which horses played a large part.

Cooper had an aptitude for drawing, turning his attention at an early age to the study and painting of the equine form and becoming highly proficient. His uncle recognised this great ability and introduced him to the eminent horse painter Ben Marshall when Cooper was twenty-two and he became a pupil of the master for a while. Marshall was so impressed with his new pupil's ability and enthusiasm that he gave him free instruction. Even so, he can be considered largely self-taught. Within two years he was producing work for The Old Sporting Magazine and during his lifetime contributed 189 pictures to this publication as well as the New Sporting Magazine. This work rapidly secured his reputation as a painter of dogs and horses and he earned himself the sobriquet "Horse" Cooper.

Abraham Cooper worked mainly in oil and sometimes in watercolour and normally signed in monogram. The influence of Benjamin Marshall is particularly apparent in his racehorse portraits which are of very good quality and the subjects of the picture are always placed in well-painted landscape settings and these landscapes were soft and atmospheric which skilfully contrasted with the figurative and equine subjects of his work.

He became greatly in demand to portray the winners of the Classic races. One of his most esteemed works is the portrait of "Adonis", George III's favourite Arab charger and many consider it the equal to James Ward's dramatic portrayal of the same subject. In 1813 Cooper painted his first picture for the Duke of Portland who was to become one of his major patrons and over the course of his career, Cooper's paintings commanded the highest patronage, including the Prince Regent, Queen Adelaide and Queen Victoria, and high prices for his scenes of combat, mostly involving horses.

He first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1812 and his first painting exhibited at the British Institute: "The Battle of Waterloo" in 1816...