

JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

Hounds in a Kennel
JOHN EMMS

Sold



Description

JOHN EMMS 1841-1912 English School Hounds in a Kennel Oil on canvas, signed 51 x 81.3cms 20 x 32 ins

John Emms was one of the foremost sporting artists of the late 19th century and his dog paintings are outstanding.

He was the son of the artist Henry William Emms and was born on 21st April 1841, in Blofield, Norfolk. There were six other siblings and his elder sister married the brother of Sir William Richmond who was the president of the Royal Academy. He went to London to develop his keen interest in painting and worked in the studio of Frederick, Lord Leighton.

He soon set up as an independent artist though and his first painting was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1866 - "The Birds Nester" - and he continued to live in the Earl's Court and Chelsea areas of London until 1872 when he moved to Lyndhurst in the New Forest. His attraction to the area had come about from his work done on the fresco "The Ten Virgins" in the parish church while part of Leighton's studio.

He was a keen horseman and hunting brought him into contact with wealthy patrons and his reputation as someone who could capture the likeness of an animal spread quickly. He worked predominantly in oils and painted mainly dogs such as hounds and terriers. Horses were a significant part of his work as well though and other animals such as donkeys, foxes, cats and birds as well as figures and landscapes also appeared. His style showed how animal painting had progressed from the Landseer highly finished and rather sentimental style to a much freer and expressive palette. Emms had a deep understanding of animal anatomy and this, combined with bold brush work, resulted in highly individual and expressive works.

Following his marriage to the daughter of local gentry, Emms moved back to London for a while before returning to Lyndhurst in the mid 1880's. He was an individual man and the family was reputed to live a fairly Bohemian life. His mode of dress was apparently always an impressive hat and a long black cloak and when he sold one of his paintings, he would celebrate by taking the whole family to London where they would stay in the finest hotels and live in style until the money ran out.

At the start of the 20th century, his health declined severely restricting his ability to paint and he had to settle his accounts with local tradesmen by giving them his paintings. Things became so bad that the family became destitute and they were only saved from total ruin by a local woman who allowed them to stay in one of her houses without being overly concerned by the erratic payment of the rent. He eventually died, aged seventy-one, on 1st November 1912.

He exhibited 25 pictures at the Royal Academy, 51 at the Royal Society of British Artists among other institutions. Titles include: "Kennel Doorway", "Clumbers", "Foxhounds on the Benches", "Hawking", "His Lordship's Favourites" and "Run to Ground"

Bibliography:

The Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists - Sally Mitchell

Dog Painting 1840-1940 - William Secord

