JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A Still Life of Dead Game

GEORGE STEVENS R.B.A.

Sold



REF: 374763

Height: 25 cm (9.8")

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London, England

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Width: 20 cm (7.9")

Description

George Stevens was a competent and prolific painter of birds, animals, game, fruit and occasional portraits and mostly in oil paint, some of which were large, but he also produced drawings and was involved with the early stages of photography. Grant writes of him that "…his works being numerous and valued by connoisseurs of those subjects".

Stevens exhibited two hundred and forty-six paintings at the Royal Society of British Artists, where he was elected a member in 1825, Treasurer in 1828, and ultimately President in 1833. Stevens exhibited a further twenty-one paintings at the Royal Academy and seventy-five at the British Institute and his first exhibited painting, Dead Hare, was in 1810 at the R.A. Over the course of his career, these exhibits were sent from a variety of London addresses, among which was at first, 2 Northumberland Street and later others at Camden Terrace, Manor Place South in Chelsea, Abbey Road in St John's Wood and Albert St in Regent's Park.

Apart from these addresses which accompanied his admissions to the major London exhibitions and the paintings that survive him, little is known about his personal life or where he undertook his artistic training. His less well known portraits and genre scenes cover European locations and depict Italian, French, Spanish, Greek and Dutch subjects so he almost certainly travelled to those countries, making sketches and notes as he went. However there is one journey which was notably unusual for the mid-19th century: the National Library of Australia holds records of Stevens arriving in Sydney in 1849 and he had with him a collection of his paintings and engravings which he exhibited at the Royal Hotel from 20th August in that year.

The collection was mostly comprised of still-lifes of fruit or game and genre paintings such as Italian Boy with hurdy-gurdy which was priced at 45 guineas and the most expensive was The Fruit and Game Stall which was on offer at 150 guineas. The latter was apparently the remaining one from a pair that had been exhibited previously at the Manchester Institution but ended up being separated to be sold individually. It seems that the majority of the oil paintings had been previously exhibited at the RBA in London except for several landscapes of the English countryside for which Stevens was not known for producing at home so presumably were done specifically to appeal to the expats resident in the colony.

The paintings were well received in the press and the art critic of the Sydney Morning Herald was particularly enamoured with the genre paintings writing of Stevens that he was: "…even more successful in his delineations of the human form…" than in still-life and described The Pet Dog - Affection (which was a half-length, life-size portrait of a woman petting a spaniel) as "…a very sweet picture", and writing of The Beggar's Petition - Pity the Sorrows of a Poor Old Man : "If this painting were dirtied and cracked, and declared to be the work of an eminent artist of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, it would be valued at an immense sum".

Despite the positive press reception however, the exhibition did not prove to be financially remunera...

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