JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

Taking the Water - A Steeplechasing Scene; a set of four

SAMUEL HENRY ALKEN

Sold



REF: 165539

1

Description

London, England

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SAMUEL HENRY ALKEN 1810 - 1894English SchoolTaking the Water - A Steeplechasing Scene; a set of four

Oil on board10 x 24 cms

Henry Alken Jnr.'s Christian name was Samuel Henry Alken, but he is probably better known as the former. He was born on August 22nd, 1810, as the first son of Henry Alken, a major sporting painter of the 18th century and a member of this renowned dynasty of seven sporting artists. The Alkens were originally of Danish descent with Sefferein Snr coming to England in the late 1730's and working as a stone and wood carver. Henry Alken Jnr was his great-grandson.

He was batised at St Clement's Church as Samuel Henry but his family always called him Henry Gordon but little is known of Alken's personal life other than that he married Martha Dormer and is recorded as receiving parochial relief in 1891. When he died in 1894, he was residing in Polar Workhouse in southeast London.

Alken's work, in both oil and watercolour, is strikingly similar to that of his father. It is unclear whether the son was imitating his father, or whether he had simply been taught by him. Alken Jnr. is characterised as having a less developed sense of draughtsmanship but as paying closer attention to detail than his father. His horses are also less angular and more rounded than his father's animals. It is possible to come across paintings by Alken Jnr. with women hunting sidesaddle, which was probably not a prevalent pastime in his father's day.

Alken painted hunting, coaching, steeplechasing, fishing and shooting scenes in both oil and watercolour and his style is sometimes similar to that of Landseer in terms of sensitivity and smoothness. He often painted bay, chestnut, and grey horses together in the same picture. Artists such as E.B. Herbert went on to copy this aesthetically pleasing formula.

Titles include, "The Last Steeplechase Held at the Hippodrome Racecourse, Kensington", "Going to the Derby", "Sefton Winning the Derby 1878", "The Road from Tattenham Corner, the Epsom Derby, 1879", "The Ipswich to London Coach" and 'Tally ho.'

Bibliography:

Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists- Sally Mitchell

Dictionary of British Landscape Painters - M H Grant

Dictionary of Victorian Painters - Christopher Wood

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