

The Retrieval

GEORGE DENHOLM ARMOUR

Sold



Description

GEORGE DENHOLM ARMOUR O.B.E. 1864-1949 Scottish School The Retrieval Oil on board 26.5 x 36.5 cms 10 3/8 x 14 3/8 inches Overall framed size 38.5 x 48 cms 151/8 x 187/8 ins
G D Armour was a painter and illustrator in oil, watercolour, pen and ink and pastel and was "...one of the outstanding artists of his period".

He was born in Waterside, Lanarkshire on 30th January 1864 but spent his early life in Liverpool before going to Fife to be educated followed by university at St Andrews, and his father, an enthusiastic member of the Lanark and Renfrewshire Hunt, was a cotton broker. Although he was destined to inherit his father's interest, his calling lay with art and consequently he studied at the Edinburgh School of Art and the Royal Scottish Academy from 1880 to about 1888.

During his time at the RSA, where he won most of the available prizes, he met the leading animal painter Robert Alexander who became a significant influence of the young painter and also a friend. The two of them travelled to Tangier to paint and hunt and also purchase horses

Initially, he began his career with oil paintings of animal life - which he had started to show at Scottish exhibitions in the latter half of the 1880's - which were deemed to be amongst the most promising works of their type. Some of these paintings were narrative works with a painting such as "Sympathy" which portrays a small dog watching a terrier with a bandaged leg, while others such as "The Lion's Den" were more serious animal studies and still others were of a humorous nature, a genre of painting which he developed and for which he is best known today.

He left Scotland in 1888, going to London to work as a painter and illustrator and it was there that he became increasingly influenced by the artist Joseph Crawhall whom he had met and befriended on another trip to Tangiers. Crawhall was a highly accomplished observer and painter of animals, whose work represented the break from the Victorian tradition of painting. Armour developed a similar clarity of drawing which enhanced the expressiveness of his work but he "...in the economical and expressive use of line...evolved a very charming manner of his own, instinct with subtly suggested or realised form of character, full of character, full of action, and very pleasing in the delicate sweep and finish..." (Caw).

Through his work for Punch, the Daily Graphic, Tatler and others, Armour's reputation increased with his depiction of horses, racing, hunting, fishing and shooting, the majority imbued with an amusing nature which appealed to the English character and transcended social classes. The pursuit of these field-sports was often portrayed in wet and muddy conditions which added to their appeal. Linen was often the medium for his colour pictures which suited his subtlety and these were utilised in books such as two volumes of "Thoughts on Hunting" by Jorrocks and Beckford.

Armour was a fine horseman and had a parallel career as a hors...