JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A portrait of a boy on his pony, a terrier running beside

GEORGE COLE

Sold

London, England

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REF: 374757

Height: 40 cm (15.7")

Width: 51 cm (20.1")

Framed Height: 55.2 cm (21.7")

Framed Width: 66 cm (26")

Description

GEORGE COLE RBA
English School
1810-1883

A portrait of a boy on his pony, a terrier running beside

Oil on canvas, signed and dated 1843 and signed, inscribed and dated on reverse

George Cole was a portrait, landscape, animal and occasional still-life painter who was the first of three generations of artists, firstly with his sons George Vicat Cole R.A. (1833-93) and Alfred Benjamin (exhib.1867-83) succeeding him in landscape painting and then his grandson Reginald Rex Vicat Cole R.O.I. (1870-1940) continuing the family tradition.

He was born in Portsmouth on 15th January 1810 and he was self-taught as an artist and obtained an apprenticeship as a ship's painter at the Royal Naval Dockyards in Portsmouth. His first works as an artist were portraits but the proprietor of Wombwell's Menagerie allowed him to make animal studies from life which so impressed the owner that the young Cole obtained a commission to paint advertisements for the business. One of these was a large canvas which depicted a tiger hunt with elephants in a jungle setting and measured twenty feet square. It suffered significant damage in a storm soon after it was erected at the Weyhill Fair in Hampshire but was reassembled and taken to the Great Barthelmy Fair in London to promote the menagerie's involvement there.

The plaudits that the young aspirant artist won for this commission encouraged him to pursue the depiction of animals more seriously and naturalistically and to this end he travelled to Holland to study the work of the Dutch Masters and upon his return to Portsmouth he devoted himself for several years to animal painting. There is an anecdote of this time in Portsmouth that he was commissioned to paint the portrait of a Dutch merchant, who, upon seeing the completed work, complained that as it was not representative of him so he would not pay for the work. Cole was undeterred however and added wings to the man's figure and placed it in a shop window with a label bearing the title The Flying Dutchman. The merchant's friends saw the painting and reported the joke to him and the debt was promptly settled.

George Cole exhibited his first painting A farm yard at the Royal Society of British Artists in 1838 when he was living at Green Row in Portsmouth and in 1839 sent his first work to be shown at the British Institution. It was the start of a long association with the London exhibition venues which endured until 1883 and included thirty-five at the British Institution, sixteen at the Royal Academy and two hundred and nine at the RBA.

He had married Eliza Vicat in 1831 and they had their first child, George Vicat, in 1833 and had five children in all. Cole had numerous commissions from influential figures such as Admiral Codrington, General Yates and Sir Robert Peel - for whom he painted his dog Cato - and horse and hunting pictures and racing portraits such as Mr Sadler's 'Decisive' held by his trainer with John Day on his back at Stockbridge; Orlando, a bay racehorse, held by a trainer, in a stable, Meet of the Calpe Hunt in the Cork Woods and

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John Peale on his favourite hunter. Around 1850, Cole resolved to concentrate more on landscape painting although animals did continue to feature extensive...

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