Study of the Head of a Moorhen

Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A.



REF: 3194

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Description

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Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A. (1775-1851)
Study of the Head of a Moorhen

Watercolour over traces of pencil heightened with bodycolour and scratching out on laid paper
8.9 by 11.5 cm., 3 ½ by 4 ½ in.

Provenance:
Given by the artist to Amelia Hawksworth (1808-1885), the niece of Turner's patron Walter Fawkes (1769-1825);
By descent until sold at Cheffin's, 25th November 2015, lot 462, where bought by the present owner

This is one of a group of watercolours of birds drawn by Turner between 1815 and 1825 for Walter Fawkes and his family. Walter Fawkes (1769-1825) was one of Turner's closest friends and most important patrons between 1803 and Fawkes's death in 1825.Turner was a regular visitor to Fawkes's house at Farnley Hall near Otley in WestYorkshire from 1808 and there was a room reserved there for his own use whenever
he wanted it. Fawkes's collection of Turners eventually numbered around 200 in all.Between 1816 and 1819, Turner produced almost forty finished watercolours of thehouse, grounds and neighbourhood, which are still at Farnley Hall. There are also anumber of sketchbooks of drawings executed at Farnley and the surrounding areanow in the Tate Gallery.

Turner produced twenty drawings for Fawkes's five volume Ornithological Collection which included details relating to over 250 species of birds, many accompanied by awatercolour illustration. Others are illustrated by engravings taken from other booksor bird feathers. It was put together by members of the Fawkes family between 1815and 1820. Turner's drawings were removed from the albums on the advice of John
Ruskin after Turner's death in 1851 and remained at Farnley until they were sold toLeeds City Art Gallery in 1984.

This present watercolour is part of a group of bird studies which were drawn for other members of the Fawkes family, in this case Amelia Hawksworth, Walter Fawkes's niece. She is known to have owned two game studies by Turner (see Ann Lyles, Turner and Natural History - the Farnley Project, exhibition catalogue, 1988, nos. 59 and 63) and three studies of bird's heads (op.cit., nos. 36, 37 and 61). Amelia, the daughter of Walter's brother Francis Hawksworth of Barmbro Grange near Doncaster, is known to have helped Turner collect feathers. Amelia married Captain George Hotham in 1844 and died in 1885.

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