Sunday Afternoon

William Henry Hunt

Sold

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Description

William Henry Hunt O.W.S. (1790-1864)
Sunday Afternoon

Signed lower right on the chest: W HUNT
Watercolour heightened with bodycolour and scratching out
29.3 by 33.4 cm., 11 ½ by 13 in.

The present watercolour demonstrates the artist's technical virtuosity, building up layers of watercolour and dryly applied thick bodycolour, as well as employing fine stippled brush strokes of both bodycolour and pure pigment. He has also employed scratching out to create patches of light and shadow. The artist James Orrock (1829-19130) recorded Hunt's working with a knife to scrape back pigment and reveal the surface of the sheet, which he either left as a highlight, or would dot the scrapings with pure colour 'like mosaic work' (John Witt, p.69).

The figure of the young woman is probably the artist's wife Sarah. Not much is known about her - she was a much younger cousin on his mother's side. She was just 18 when the couple married in September 1830 and is described as being kind and gentle. They had one daughter, Emma, who was born either in 1831 or 1832. Hunt appears to have been close to his in-laws, his father-in-law was a miller and farmer in Bramley, near Basingstoke and he often stayed with them as a child, to escape to a cleaner and healthier environment. From 1851, Hunt rented a farmhouse nearby and the family spent their summers there where he seems that many of his later interior subjects were painted. Following Sarah's death in November 1857, her sister kept house for the artist, until his death.

The chest of drawers, table, mirror and bed all appear in several other interior watercolours, including Girl reading at an window, dated 1832, in the collection of the Duke of Norfolk, Arundel Castle and Sunday Morning in the collection of the Huntingdon Library, San Marino.

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