Self-Portrait aged Twenty-seven

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer

Sold



REF: 2013

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Description

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Sir Edwin Henry Landseer, R.A. (1802-1873)
Self-Portrait aged Twenty-seven

Inscribed lower left: Edwin Landseer sketched by himself in 1829.
Pen and brown ink on laid paper
22 by 17.6 cm., 8 ½ by 6 ¾ in.

Provenance:
Private collection, UK since c. 1970;
Thence by descent

Landseer found early success both socially and artistically and the present self-portrait illustrates the artist's self-confidence and good looks. Landseer was clever, amusing, an accomplished raconteur and enormously sociable. All of these traits, coupled with his love of sports, particularly hunting, shooting and fishing, as well as dancing, made him a popular figure, able to move in the highest of social circles. He became Queen Victoria's favourite artist and was knighted in 1850.

The present drawing shows the artist in Highland dress, his bonnet resting on a rock next to him. The dress and pose are highly romantic and demonstrate the influence of Sir Walter Scott on the young artist. Landseer met Scott in London at the age of 22 and was invited to stay with the writer at his baronial home, Abbotsford in the Scottish Borders. Landseer spent about ten days there in early October 1824, and this visit proved of lasting influence, not only on the subject matter and emotional content of his work, but also introducing Landseer to the landscape of Scotland. For the rest of his life, Scotland proved a source of inspiration, retreat, relaxation and restoration to the artist. Much of Landseer's work from 1824 onwards, articulated his deep emotional response to Scotland, through the animals, people and landscapes that he depicted.

Scott's works like the Lady of the Lake (1810), Waverley (1814) and Rob Roy (1817) had a seminal impact on the creation of Scotland's national identity, along with the work of poets, including Wordsworth, Byron and James Macpherson. Landseer played an equally important role, as one of the first artists to give a visual expression to the romantic notions of the Highlands.

During the 1820s it was just beginning to be fashionable for the aristocracy to take hunting lodges for the autumn months and Landseer became a regular visitor to Blair Atholl and to the Bedford's lodge, The Doune, near Aviemore, as well as to Glenfeshie, the rustic retreat built by the Duchess of Bedford. The Royal Family also became enamoured by Scotland and Landseer's images of them in Highland settings were amongst the most important visual images of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

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