JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

Chickens and ducks in a river landscape

FRANCIS BARLOW

£ POA

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REF: 374861

Description

FRANCIS BARLOW1626-1704English SchoolChickens and ducks in a river landscapeOil on canvas, partially signed F. Barl and dated 16..91.5 x 117 cms36 x 46 insOverall framed size 111 x 136.5 cms 43¾ x 53 ½ins Ex Collection: Apsey House, Batheston, (according to a label on the reverse) The influence of Flemish painting on the nascent English sporting and animal painting was highly significant and at the court of James 1 there were connoisseurs who were particularly enamoured of the magnificent hunting scenes by Rubens. This influence preceded that of the more specific Dutch Golden Age bird painters such as Melchior de Hondecoeter (1636-1695) and animal painters such as Abraham Hondius c.1625-1695. Francis Barlow was the first native-born artist to concentrate on the depiction of sporting subjects and animals, emerging during the Interregnum. Barlow was a painter and etcher of birds, animals and sporting subjects and lived and worked in London. In the frontispiece of his Multae et diversae avium species published in 1671, the artist states that he is “Indigenam Londinensum” but there were some who believed that he was originally from Lincolnshire and in Peck’s Desiderata Curiosa, published in 1732, the artist is referred to as Barlow of Lincolnshire. He had been apprenticed to the Drury Lane based Court portrait painter William Sheppard while very young and it is has been suggested that he may have visited The Hague between 1645 and 1650, one indicator being that his horse painting shows significant influence of the early masters of the Low Countries. His horses are rounded with strong rear quarters and impressively arched necks with flowing manes and in 1649 an engraving was published in The Hague of Princess Elizabeth. The following year, having completed his apprenticeship, he was admitted to the freedom of the Company of Painter-Stainers.His first recorded work was a drawing of David slaying the Lion dated 1648 which is now in the collection of the British Museum together with another 51 works by him. By 1652, Barlow had set up a studio at the Drum Inn and then had a shop in New Street which he named the Golden Egg which was ideal for selling his own publications like Aesop’s Fables. Francis Barlow has been called a kind of English Hondecoeter as there are similarities in subject matter in some of his paintings of fowl but as M H Grant writes of the former in his Old English Landscape Painters: “For him, the skies and meads existed for the display of huge and numerous birds…very masterly, one and all, are these presentiments, displaying powers in draughtsmanship and imagination, in grouping, …” Two fine examples of this, from the collection of Lord Onslow (now at Clandon Park, National Trust), are The Farmyard and The Decoy which are both crowded with birds. He had an ‘earthy’ understanding of his subject matter and his animated scenes of birds, shooting and fishing subjects, often in a large format and utilising a dark palette, were painted in more naturalistic surroundings than his predecessors in EuropeHe was a keen...

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