

In the Barn: Youth and Age

William Henry Hunt



Description

William Henry Hunt O.W.S. (1790-1864)
In the Barn: Youth and Age

Signed lower left: W. Hunt
Watercolour and bodycolour
40.5 by 30.5 cm., 16 by 12 in.

Provenance:
Peter Popham

During the 1830s Hunt turned increasingly to interior subjects, both domestic and rustic, including barns, stables, workshops, sheds and mills. This was probably partly driven by the artist's mobility becoming increasingly restricted as he got older and partly the technical range that such subjects afforded him. The complexity of capturing the contrasting textures of brick, stone, slate, straw, wooden beams, doors even farm implements clearly engaged the artist and his delight in employing his full artistic range is evident. The extraordinary realism and attention to detail that characterise these works must have been quite startling to his contemporaries. The bold colours and small brush strokes working up the picture surface which mark the watercolours of his artistic maturity are very different from the watercolours of his early years.

John Ruskin in his 1859 lectures on Unity of Art wrote: 'In the particular gifts of colour, there are only one or two of the Pre-Raphaelites and William Hunt of the Old Water-Colour Society who would be safe guides... William Hunt is as right as the Venetians, so far as he goes, and what is more, nearly as inimitable as they'. He continues that the 'simplicity and intensity both of the highest character - simplicity of aim and intensity of power and success are involved in the man's unpretending labour' (Cook and Wedderburn, Vol. XIX, pp. 315-6).

Amongst the various rustic interiors, Hunt exhibited two barn interiors at the Old Watercolour Society; one in 1832 and the other the following year.