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The Sylvan Spring - Richard Redgrave (1804-1888)

8 400 EUR



Signature : Richard Redgrave (1804-1888)

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Oil painting

Width : 82.5

Height : 67

Description

Inscription verso: The Sylvan Spring
Deep and still, that gliding stream
Beautiful to thee must seem
As the river of a dream
Richard Redgrave
10 Hyde Park Gate South

Kensington
Provenance: Sotheby's, British & Irish Art, 2014
Sotheby's, 1981
Exhibited: Royal Academy, London, 1855, no.

88
Literature: Athenaeum, 1855, no. 1439, p. 623
Art Journal, 1855, p. 171
The subject matter of this work is taken from the 1842 poem Maidenhood, by the internationally renowned American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Longfellow wrote in the Romantic style that was incredibly popular in England at the time, and so his works were applauded amongst British literary and artistic circles. He was a contemporary of Redgrave, who was undoubtedly

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inspired by this poem and incorporated its symbolism into this particular artwork. Longfellow's poem centers around a young woman about to cross over a babbling brook, symbolising her transition from childhood into adulthood, and urges her to take the qualities associated with maidenhood - innocence, kindness, purity, modesty - into her new life as a mature woman. The poem draws heavily on imagery of the sun, dawn and the stream to represent innocence and transition. It is these thematic notions that Redgrave has used as inspiration for his work. Whilst not directly copying certain symbols from the poem, such as the lily flower and snow, Redgrave's choice of subject clearly still connotes feminine innocence. The scene takes place on a sunny day, likely in Spring or Summer, with the sun's rays flickering down through the branches of the forest. Redgrave has put remarkable effort into representing how the filtered light interacts with the forest floor, creating a dappled effect that contrasts areas of light and shade. The trees are verdant and the grass is green, serving to connote natural vitality that complements the ideas of youthfulness and innocence. The lady in the foreground is a youthful and lithe figure, with the bonnet on her head a symbol of the modesty and propriety of Victorian social etiquette. This lady is likely Redgrave's representation of the Maiden archetype in Longfellow's poem. The sense of innocence is further accentuated by the appearance of sheep in the work, an old Biblical motif for innocence and piety. The sheep and the lady, when seen together, hint at the use of a shepherdess motif that furthers the painting's themes of innocence - shepherdesses were seen as representations of a traditional uncomplicated existence, free from the burdens of early modern society and the ills associated with the Industrial Revolution. Besides the symbolic beauty of the work, Redgrave's attention to detail affirms why he is one of the most influential 19th century British artists. As previously mentioned, the

quality and accuracy of the light and its behaviour over the forest floor and the spring is outstanding. The physicality of the sheep and their anatomy is rendered beautifully, with visible texture to their woolly pelts. The forest appears as a sheet of green foliage, with Redgrave painstakingly detailing each leaf in their variety of green shades. One of the most understated features of the work, however, has to be the spring cascading into the small pool near to the lady - the water falls in a beautiful arc, and is marked by lines of white that demonstrate light playing over its surface and its ever-changing quality.

Richard Redgrave RABorn in London to a manufacturing family, Redgrave was a genre and landscape painter, and the younger brother of art historian Samuel Redgrave. While working as a draughtsman in his father's factory, Redgrave visited the British Museum to make drawings of the marble sculptures there and later his landscape painting *The River Brent, Near Hanwell* was selected for the 1825 Royal Academy exhibition. The following year Redgrave entered the Royal Academy Schools, after which his works were regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy, The British Institution, and the Society of British Artists. Leaving his father's firm in 1830, Redgrave continued to practice and made a living teaching art. He was elected as an Associate RA in 1840 and an Academician in 1851. Along with his brother Samuel he was a founding and life-long member of the Etching Club from 1837. These roles along with becoming an author slowed down Redgrave's production of paintings in the last decades of his life. Redgrave also became a driving force alongside Henry Cole for the reform of art education in Great Britain, holding several positions at the Government School of Design (later the Royal College of Art), developing a national curriculum for art instruction. Redgrave along with Cole also supervised the new South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) for which Redgrave designed

the innovative art gallery to house John Sheepshank's extensive collection of British art. Redgrave also organised the International Exhibition in London in 1893 and the British art section for the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1855, in which he was awarded the cross of French Legion d'honneur. In 1857 he was appointed surveyor of the queen's pictures a position he held until 1880, during which time he produced a meticulous thirty-four volume manuscript catalogue of the paintings in the Royal Collection. Redgrave was offered a knighthood in 1869, but declined and later died at home in Kensington London on the 14th of December 1888. Museums British Museum, London Royal Academy of Art, London The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Getty Museum, Los Angeles