SARAH COLEGRAVE
FINE ART

Apple Blossom

Frederic James Shields

Sold



REF: 210808

Height: 74.93 cm (29.5")

Sarah Colegrave Fine Art
London & Oxfordshire
+44 (0)77 7594 3722 sarah@sarahcolegrave.co.uk

Width: 135.89 cm (53.5")

Framed Height: 111.76 cm (44")

Framed Width: 172.72 cm (68")

Description

Shields was born in Hartlepool and brought up in extreme poverty with most of his family succumbing to TB. Employed by a commercial engraver he studied at evening classes in London and then in Manchester, where he settled in 1848. He was greatly impressed by the works of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which he saw at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857. The quality of his illustrations for Defoe's History of the Plague (1862) and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (1864) brought him to the attention of Ruskin and Rossetti, who invited him to visit him in London. He became a close friend of Rossetti and Madox Brown and settled in London in 1876 and Rossetti offered him spade in his own studio and helped and encouraged him with his work. A close friend of the whole Rossetti family, he was commissioned by Rossetti's mother to design two windows in memory of her son in All Saints' Church, Birchington. He was also asked to make a drawing of Rossetti on his death bed. Shields painted mainly in watercolour and exhibited at the Society of Painters in Water Colours, becoming an ARWS in 1865. He was also a fine illustrator, mural decorator and stained glass designer. The present work is believed to have been painted at the request of Rossetti who needed a study of blossom for his painting A Vision of Fiammetta, 1878 (private collection). At the time Rossetti's growing ill health led him to make increasing requests of his friend. In a letter of 1877 he wrote to Shields: "Thanks for the apple stem study, I have been much bothered with the blossom, some of which I have repainted since you saw it. As to stem, I had a bad one in my garden, and with the help of your study I might manage." (E Mills, The Life and Letters of Frederic Shields, 1912, p.212. Two small watercolour studies of apple blossom, attributed to Shields, are in the collection of the Samuel and Mark R Bancroft Collection at Delaware Art Museum.