John Brett - Portrait of William Alfred Foster

John Brett

£3,600



REF: 3090

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

Description

JOHN BRETT, ARA(1831-1902)
Portrait of William Alfred Foster
Inscribed on a label on the reverseWatercolour, circular
12.5 cm., 5 in. diameter(frame size 30.5 by 30.5 cm., 12 by 12 in.)
Provenance:The family of Sir Michael Foster and thence by descent;David Pike Collection.
Literature:The late Charles Brett included this work in the Addenda to his Yale University Press catalogue of John Brett's work. (no.1509).
Brett studied under Richard Redgrave before entering the Royal Academy School in 1853. Influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites and inspired by Ruskin's teaching to make close and details observations of nature he exhibited The Stonebreaker in 1858 and established his reputation. Ruskin immediately took him up and sent him to Italy to paint his masterpiece, Val d'Aosta, in 1859 and he thereafter he became one of the foremost Pre-Raphaelite landscape painters. Brett's portraits are relatively little know, they date to early in his career and were largely executed for personal reasons and depicted his close friends and family.
The sitter of this portrait, William Alfred Foster, was a younger brother of Sir Michael Foster, first Professor of Physiology at Cambridge, and a lifelong friend of John Brett. William Alfred was born in 1846 and probably died young. Although the label on the reverse dates the portrait to circa 1862, it is more likely to date to about 1860 when the sitter was about 14 years old.
The portrait is in one of Brett's own frames, which probably dates to c.1881. This may explain the misdating on the label and could be the time when Brett gave the portrait to the Foster family.