

Sarah Sophia Beale



A view of Heidelberg, Germany

Reference: 10801

Dimensions:

Height: 34.50 cm / 13⁵/₈ in

Width: 60 cm / 23⁵/₈ in

Signed and dated l.r.: SOPHIA BEALE/1869, watercolour heightened with bodycolour and gum arabic

34.5 x 60 cm; 13 ³/₄ x 23 ¹/₂ inches

Provenance

Brightwell's, Leominster, 12 January 2004; where purchased by

Paddy Docker-Drysdale (1929-2020);

By descent until 2022

This substantial landscape of Heidelberg is a fine example of a detailed Pre-Raphaelite landscape. The skillful use of bodycolour applied with a dry brush creates a pleasing richness which combined with the play of dappled sunlight on the

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mossy rocks in the foreground and the careful selection of colours elevates the view well above topography.

Beale was born in London to Frances, née Smith, and Lionel John Beale, a surgeon. Her sister, Ellen Brooker Beale, was also an artist with whom she collaborated. Sophia and Ellen Beale went to Queen's College School, London and took art lessons at the popular Leigh's Academy run by the artist Matthew Leigh. They copied extensively after the Old Masters and antiquities in the National Gallery and British Museum.

From 1860 to 1867 the two sisters shared a studio on Long Acre in Covent Garden. In 1869 Sophia Beale travelled in Germany and France, when the present work was drawn, and in 1872 she returned to Paris, where she took classes run for women at Charles Joshua Chaplin's (1825-1891) studio (where Mary Cassatt also studied), financing her studies by working at M. Bertin's studio. On her return to London, Beale used the money she had earned in Paris to open an art school in Albany Street, near Regent's Park, teaching the latest Parisian techniques.

Beale was a feminist and in 1889 among the two thousand signatories to the 'Declaration in Favour of Women's Suffrage' formulated by the Central Committee for Women's Suffrage. Beale also advocated for the Royal Academy and the universities to allow greater access for women.

The artist exhibited extensively during her lifetime at the Society of British Artists in Sussex Street, where she showed around thirty works, while she also had four works accepted by the Royal Academy between 1863 and 1887. Between 1868 and 1882 she exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy and with the Society of Women Artists from 1860 to 1881. She published four books, A guide to the Louvre (1883), The Amateur's Guide to Architecture (1887), The Churches of Paris from Clovis to Charles X (1893) and her autobiography, Recollections of a Spinster Aunt (1908). She also wrote articles including a review of the 1894 exhibition 'Fair Women' at the Grafton Gallery in London for The American Architect and Building News (1876-1908), Boston 45, no. 975 (see Meaghan Clark, Fashionability, Exhibition Culture and Gender Politics: Fair Women, 2021, p. 21).