History of Animals in Art Review

Animals have been a subject for artists since men first began to paint. The first known examples date back at least 17000 years. When the cave paintings of Altamira, in northern Spain came to light they were, quite literally a revelation. Nobody had any idea that our ancestors were capable of producing the kind of work that was discovered in the caves.

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (1802-73) is an English painter, born in London, the son of the engraver John Landseer (1769-1852). Trained by his father to sketch animals from life, he began exhibiting at the Royal Academy (RA) when only 13; the same year (1815) he received a silver medal from the Society of Arts for his drawing of a hunter. Success came easily and early. By the age of 16 he was a constant and active exhibitor at the RA, already patronized by leading collectors and talked about as a rising star.

The strain of keeping up his career, of satisfying his patrons, and of maintaining his social position cost Landseer more effort than he cared to admit. In May 1840, at the height of his powers and reputation, he suffered a severe nervous breakdown. In the face of all his personal and professional problems, Landseer continued to paint pictures of high quality, which enhanced his popularity.

Landseer was the most famous English artist of his generation, and he was mourned throughout the nation. He was accorded the honor of public funeral, and he was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral alongside Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Thomas Lawrence, and J.M.W. Turner.

Dignity and Impudence. 1839. Oil on canvas. Tate Gallery, London, UK

Hawking. 1832. Oil on canvas. Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood, UK

Scene in the Olden Time at Bolton Abbey. 1834. Oil on canvas. Duke of Devonshire, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, UK

Eos, A Favorite Greyhound, the Property of H.R.H. Prince Albert. 1841. Oil on canvas. Windsor Castle, Royal Collection, UK

Macaw, Love Birds, Terrier, and Spaniel Puppies, Belonging to Her Majesty. 1839. Oil on canvas. Buckingham Palace, Royal Collection, UK

The Monarch of the Glen. 1851. Oil on canvas. John Dewar & Sons Ltd., UK

The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner. 1837. Oil on canvas. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK

Information found at http://www.abcgallery.com/L/landseer/landseerbio.html