

# S P H I N X F I N E A R T



**John Frederick Herring Jnr (Doncaster 1815 - Doncaster 1907)**

## **Feeding Time**

signed 'J.F. Herring' (lower left)

oil on canvas

36 x 50.8cm (14 x 20 in)

*Feeding Time* gracefully captures the tranquil rusticity of a summer's day on the farm. Three horses, one a beautiful chestnut mare, stand placidly beneath the shade of an oak tree as an inquisitive group of pigs forage around their hooves. The same composition can be seen in another of John Frederick Herring Jnr.'s works. The chickens and a lone cockerel next to them peck enthusiastically, seeking grain or seedlings amongst the unkempt grass. The complementary positioning of the three pigs mirrors that of the horses and leads the viewer's eye further into the picture towards a shallow, silvered puddle with yet another group of horses beyond that.

The scene is framed by the muted green tone of the trees and grass. Herring Jnr.'s use, in general, of a simple colour palette allows the dappled sunlight in the bottom right hand corner of the work to mingle with the green and create a sweep of colour from right to left, leading the eye towards two low-thatched outbuildings and opening up a wide vista.

Herring Jnr. was the eldest surviving son of John Frederick Herring Snr. (1795-1865). He specialised mainly in farmyard scenes, collaborating occasionally with other artists such as Alexander F. Rolfe. This was unsurprising given that he was married to Rolfe's sister, Katherine. Known to the rest of his family as Fred, he signed his earliest work, J. Fred Herring, sometimes adding Jnr. to his signature. He began to exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1863 where he presented: *The Farm - Autumn* (1863), *Farm-yard* (1864), *Watering the Team* (1869), *The Homestead* (1871) and *A Farm Yard* (1872) among others. His clear love of depicting unspoilt English landscapes complete with their traditional farm animals, especially horses, is showcased in this present work.

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Herring Jnr. continued to paint, in the tradition of his father, sporting and animal pictures, however, as his artistic prowess developed his style changed - he began to favour looser brushwork and a widening of his panoramas. The placement of farm animals at the banks of a stream or in a farmyard, were characteristic of his work.

## **Provenance:**

Anonymous Sale, Christie's, London, 5 June 1998, lot 54

## **Artist description:**

John F. Herring, Jr. was born to the well-known 19th century artist John F. Herring, Sr., who at the time, was considered one of England's great sporting and equestrian artists, patronised by the English aristocracy. The father's mastery of the brush, and popularity with the nobility, served his son, Herring, Jr., well. Early on, John, Jr. was exposed to fine painting and wealthy patrons.

Recent reference books state that Herring, Sr.'s first child was named "John Frederick Herring, Jr." and was born on June 21, 1815, later baptized on October 22, 1815. However, another child was born in 1820 and also named "John Frederick Herring, Jr." (baptised in 1821). The assumption is that the first Herring child died and the second, born in 1820, is the artist we know of today.

John Herring, Jr. developed a love for painting, a passion also shared by his brothers Charles and Benjamin. Three of the four brothers became artists, painting in the same style as their father, often collaborating on a single painting.

In the years after 1836, Herring, Sr., feeling threatened by the teenage John Herring, Jr.'s ability and growing popularity, began incorporating the tag "SR" at the end of his signature.

John Herring, Jr. continued painting, in the tradition of his father, the sporting and animal pictures; however, as his artistic prowess improved, his style changed: he loosened his brushwork and widened his landscape views. The placement of farm animals along the banks of a stream or within a farmyard were characteristic of the work of John F. Herring, Jr.