

DUKE STREET GALLERY
INFORMATION SHEET



JOHN SARGENT NOBLE RBA (1846-1896)
OTTERHOUNDS

Oil on canvas, signed lower left,
30" x 25"

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1846-1896

During his career, Noble was elected to the Society of British Artists (1872) where he exhibited no less than 96 of his works. He also showed regularly at the Royal Academy between 1871 and 1896 (46 works). Noble also enjoyed working in watercolour and many of his subjects were reproduced. On occasion he combined his talents with other artists; Walter Foster being a notable example of such collaboration. Their "Otter Hunting on the River Lowther, Westmorland" was exhibited at Suffolk Street and two further subjects "Partridge Shooting" and "Wild Duck Shooting" were published as lithographs in 1886. Noble also collaborated with J.C. Waite on two subjects which were exhibited at the R.B.A in 1885.

Noble's subject matter varied enormously, but he excelled at animal portraiture and the Otterhound was his favourite speciality. Today he is regarded as the leading artist in the depiction of that particular breed and works of that genre are to be found in Galleries and Museums around the world.

The Otterhound is now quite rare; probably there are less than 1500 in the U.K and the U.S.A today. This is due in part to the otter almost becoming extinct in the 1970s. That situation was not the result of over hunting, but pollution caused by pesticides used by farmers and gardeners. The toxic chemicals seeped into the rivers and lakes poisoning fish and causing infertility in the male otters. This state of affairs has been improved in recent years and the re-introduction of the otter into its natural habitat is proving successful. But the Otterhound is now redundant except as a rather indolent but very faithful companion. Who can say? Perhaps that wonderful "shaggie dogge" might itself have been facing extinction after eight hundred years of service, but for the interest and talents of John Sargent Noble?