

RICHARD GREEN

JOHN ATKINSON GRIMSHAW

1836 - Leeds - 1893

Ref: CC 204

A Golden Idyll



Signed lower right: *Atkinson Grimshaw*;
signed and inscribed on the reverse: *A golden Idyll./ Atkinson
Grimshaw*
Oil on canvas: 30 x 25 in / 76.2 x 63.5 cm

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Provenance:

Leggatt Brothers, London;
private collection, UK, acquired from the above in 1961

Redolent of autumn, Grimshaw's golden lane scenes are greatly sought after, the pale, delicate tonality of the setting sun, superbly juxtaposed with the rich, russet warmth of his tree-lined streets strewn with fallen leaves. In these serene, nostalgic images, including paintings at the Yale Center for British Art and the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Grimshaw captures the beauty to be found in the fading light of the golden season. As in his early, Pre-Raphaelite works, Grimshaw takes delight in observing the details of nature away from industrial life, carefully revealing the elegant, tapering branches and gilded, furrowed ground. Calligraphic patterns of lichen and ivy which cover the walls, brilliantly reflect the exquisite tracery of the boughs above, while dappled tufts of grass and moss in the foreground follow the road into the distance and autumn's waning glow. To further enhance the remembrance of days gone by, Grimshaw has included a figure in eighteenth century costume, a device used by many Victorian painters and novelists to evoke a happier, golden age.

The large mansion on the right, veiled by trees and the failing light, may be based on Knostrop Old Hall. By 1870, Grimshaw had become successful enough to move into a home more suitable for an important local figure. He found his ideal residence at Knostrop Old Hall, a seventeenth century mansion about two miles from the centre of Leeds, which features in many of his paintings. One of the earliest of these is *Knostrop Hall, early morning*, painted in 1870, ostensibly a fantastical celebration of the artist's new home. Grimshaw's combination of archaising architectural elements with an evocative twilight tonality seems to reflect the passage of time, inducing a contemplation of the past. Alexander Robertson, the expert on Grimshaw writes in his monograph: 'For Grimshaw, living in a real Jacobean manor house, it would seem that past and present were equally real; just as myth and legend were to be plundered for subjects, so actual and historical houses could be put together to form an archetypal mansion... Most of Grimshaw's suburban lanes tantalize the spectator by looking very familiar and yet are quite unidentifiable.'¹



John Atkinson Grimshaw, *An Autumn Idyll*, 1885
Oil on canvas: 74 x 61.5 cm
Russell Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth

¹ Alexander Robertson, *Atkinson Grimshaw*, Phaidon, London 2000, p.95.

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