



## ALFRED MUNNINGS (1878-1958)

*Gorse and Grass*

1912

Oil on canvas  
50.8 x 61cm

Signed and dated 1912 lower right

### PROVENANCE

Christie's, London, 8 June 1984, lot 129 [as 'Gorse and grass, Norfolk'];  
Frost & Reed, London [as 'Landscape with Gorse Bush in the Foreground'];  
Private collection, Guernsey;  
Bonhams, London, 20 March 2024, lot 96;  
Private collection;  
Adam's Auctioneers, Dublin, 28 April 2026, lot 495;  
Philip Mould & Company, London acquired from above.

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—  
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“*The gorse was in bloom; to hesitate was foolish.*”[1] – Alfred Munnings



Painted in 1912, *Gorse and Grass* belongs to a particularly experimental period in Alfred Munnings’s early career, when he turned his attention to the effects of sunlight on the English landscape. Although celebrated principally for his paintings of horses, Munnings was equally committed to landscape painting, and his studies of flowering gorse are among his most vigorous explorations of colour and painterly texture. Painted with remarkable freedom, these works reveal an aspect of his practice far removed from the carefully observed equestrian portraits for which he later became best known.

During his expeditions to the Ringland Hills near Norwich in 1910 and 1911, Munnings became particularly fascinated by the brilliant yellow of gorse in flower, a subject he recalled enthusiastically in his autobiography, *An Artist’s Life*: “*I developed a passion for the gorgeous, blazing yellow of gorse in bloom*”.[2] In 1911 he settled in Lamorna Cove where he painted an impressionistic series of blossoms as a means of exploring the effects of changing sunlight light on the subject, many of which are now held in the Munnings Museum, Dedham. The present painting belongs to this broader period of experimentation and is among the most expressive of this group.

Unlike these more expansive compositions, *Gorse and Grass* concentrates almost entirely on the vegetation itself. Thickly applied passages of yellow, olive green and russet brown are interspersed with flashes of blue, while the delicate white blossom provides a striking contrast to the dense undergrowth. Only a narrow strip of open countryside and an overcast sky offer spatial relief. The restless movement of Munnings’s



Alfred Munnings, *Spring in a Cornish Valley*, 1912.  
The Munnings Art Museum, Colchester.

brushwork lends the foreground an almost abstract character, particularly remarkable in the work of an artist who would later become an outspoken opponent of modern art. Yet such painterly freedom was entirely consistent with Munnings’s instinctive approach to painting from nature, and reveals the extent to which his early landscapes were informed by the innovations of Impressionism.

[1] Alfred Munnings, (1950) *An Artist’s Life*. London: Theodore Brun Limited, p. 213.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 212.