



DUNCAN GRANT (1885-1978)

Still Life in the Garden Room at Charleston

c. 1918

Oil on canvas
28 x 24 in. (71 x 61 cm)

PROVENANCE

The artist;

Private collection, acquired from the above, and thence by descent;

Sotheby's, London, 3 December 2003, lot 6;

Richard Green, London, acquired from the above;

Private collection, acquired from the above;

Philip Mould and Company, London, acquired from the above 2026.

PHILIP MOULD

& COMPANY

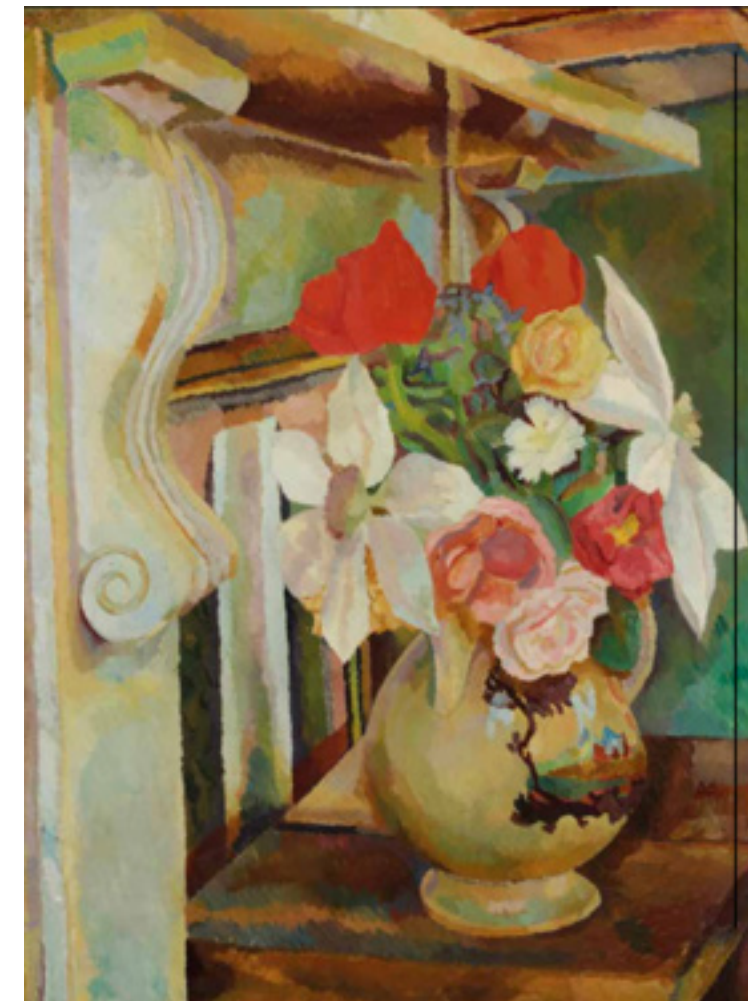


Fig 1 | Duncan Grant, *Still Life with Flowers*, c. 1918
The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge

We are grateful to Richard Shone for his assistance with this catalogue note.

Painted at Charleston during the artist's most radical decade, this notable still-life by Duncan Grant reveals the characteristic fusion of colour and texture for which his best works are known. Grant's importance to the development of modern art in Britain cannot be overstated: his ability to synthesise European artistic trends with a uniquely British sensibility helped pave the way for a truly avant-garde modernism in the UK.

Wartime England curtailed outdoor painting, so Grant returned repeatedly to the still-life genre at this date. Vanessa Bell and Grant filled Charleston with objects both old and new, transforming the house itself into a richly layered work of art and a constant source of inspiration. Ensconced at Charleston, Grant painted some of his best-known works during this period, and the present work exemplifies this moment at its most adventurous.

Painted in the Garden Room (or the living room, as Grant would have known it), this work shows the bold stylistic traits that underpinned his reputation as a leading modern artist. The impact of Roger Fry's exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* on Grant and his generation is hard to overstate. This first meaningful exposure to modern French art – seen firsthand and not through black and white illustrations – resulted in a change of mindset, with caution and convention giving way to experimentation with colour and form. An intense period of production followed, in which established rules of design fell away and Grant sought to translate his subject as he interpreted it, with broken perspectives and patchworks of colour.

A group of wartime still-life works were exhibited in his first one-man exhibition at the Carfax Gallery in early 1920. One of these works was acquired by John Maynard Keynes and is now at King's College, Cambridge [fig. 1]. It follows the present composition, but it is painted in a more conventional style without the playful perspective

and the modulation of brisk blocks of colour. This was common for Grant at this date, who would sometimes paint two or three versions in order to explore various aspects of design in compositions he found interesting and engaging.

Here, Grant pushes these experiments considerably, including the very boundaries of polychromatic and spatial possibility. Compared with the more naturalistic related composition, Grant abandons descriptive colour and coherent recession almost entirely. The coffee pot, likely bought back from Italy by Grant or Bell and still in Charleston's collection today, is so freely reimagined in colour as to bear only a loose relation to its actual appearance, and the surrounding elements are compressed into a shallow arrangement of interlocking planes.

The present work was acquired from the artist by a collector, in whose possession it remained until it was sold in 2003. Having remained in a private collection since then, and never before exhibited, it represents a fascinating opportunity to study firsthand a work from this important period of Grant's oeuvre.



Coffee pot, early 19th century, glazed ceramic, maker unknown, Italy.

In possession of Duncan Grant by 1915,
Charleston, East Sussex, CHA/C/29a.

