

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

MARY FEDDEN OBE RA PPRWA

Bristol 1915 - 2012 London

Ref: BX 100

Garden bunch



Signed and dated lower left: *Fedden 1988*; signed and inscribed on a

label attached to the frame: *Mary Fedden / 1 Garden Bunch*

Oil on canvas: 20 x 24 in / 50.8 x 61 cm

Frame size: 26 x 29 in / 66 x 73.7 cm

In a modern gilded composition frame



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Provenance:

New Grafton Gallery, London;

Barbara Holliday (1935-2018), The Gale, Cumbria, acquired from the above in 1988

Exhibited:

London, New Grafton Gallery, *Mary Fedden*, 20th October-12th November 1988, no.8

Fedden's refined and accomplished use of colour lies in the artist's instinctual understanding that when rendering pure, ecstatic colour, triumphant authenticity is achieved through a considered application, with exaggeration only serving to lessen its effects. In *Garden bunch*, colour is reproduced in gradients, orange is showcased through both vivid lashings of burnt blood-orange and deeper shades of vermilion and persimmon, while yellows range from the acidic chartreuse bruises of a ripening lemon to the sunshine folds of a tiger lily's speckled trumpets. Citric tones are dazzlingly set alight in the present work through an important interplay that the artist establishes between colour and monochrome, with the two extremes of intense black and brilliant white levelling Fedden's wider palette.

Christopher Andreae suggests that the boldness of form Fedden conveys in the flowers that fill her still life compositions, is reminiscent of another British painter and plantsman, Cedric Morris (1889–1982); further stating that neither artist makes their flowers 'too pretty or sentimental': 'Painted with delicacy and an obvious pleasure in their form, colour and markings, Fedden's flowers also have a convincing tactility and weight.'¹ Fedden confirmed that her still lifes were not to be associated with symbolism or allegory, she simply devoted herself to affectionately rendering the pied beauty and familiar strangeness that natural things inherently possess, 'the shape and colour of fruits; the infinite variety of flowers.'²



Mary Fedden, *Still life with blue poppies*, 1994

Oil on canvas: 77 x 92 cm

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Art Collection

¹ Christopher Andreae, *Mary Fedden: Enigmas and Variations*, (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2007), p.124.

² Mel Gooding, *Mary Fedden*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), p.36.

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Born in Bristol in 1915, Mary Fedden studied at the Slade School of Art in London from 1932 to 1936 and during the war painted sets for the Arts Theatre in Great Newport Street, London. At the end of the war, Fedden began to paint in earnest developing her own personal style which owed much to the influence of the French and Russian modernists. In 1951 she married the British artist Julian Trevelyan and they devoted themselves to art and travel. Her paintings throughout the 1950s were greatly influenced by her husband and they collaborated on a number of occasions often being commissioned to paint murals together.

By the start of the 1960s, Fedden was beginning to formulate her own unique style using pure, vibrant colours. From 1958 to 1964 she was a tutor at the Royal College of Art where her pupils included David Hockney and Allen Jones, then from 1965 until 1970, she taught at the Yehudi Menuhin School at Cobham in Surrey.

Mary Fedden was best known for her bold, vivid still lifes and her colourful views of Italy and North Africa. Her work was touched by a unique naïveté and she will remain one of Britain's best loved artists. She continued to work from the studio in Hammersmith that she shared with her husband (who died in 1988) well into her nineties.

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Biographical Chronology

- 1915 Born in Bristol on 14th August
- 1932 Commenced studies at the Slade School of Art, London, where she was inspired by her tutor, Vladimir Polunin and met Julian Trevelyan for the first time
- 1936 Graduated from Slade School of Art, London and returned to her native Bristol to teach
- 1939-44 Moved to London and joined the Land Army and the Women's Voluntary Service
- 1944 Called up and sent to Europe as a driver for the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
- 1946 Returned to London, buying a house in Redcliffe Road with Maise Meiklejohn
- 1947 First one-woman exhibition at the Mansard Gallery in Heal's Department Store, which led to a three year commission to paint the covers of *Woman* magazine
- 1949 Travelled through Europe with the artist Julian Trevelyan. On their return to London they settled together in Trevelyan's home and studio by the Thames at Durham Wharf, Chiswick
- 1951 Married Julian Trevelyan
Painted a mural for the children's section in the Television pavilion on the South Bank at the Festival of Britain
- 1958-64 Taught at the Royal College of Art, London where she was the first female tutor in the Painting School, her pupils including David Hockney, Allen Jones and Patrick Caulfield
- 1961 Commissioned to paint a mural for the P&O liner Canberra
- 1965-70 Taught at the Yehudi Menuhin School, Surrey
- 1980 Painted mural for Charing Cross Hospital with Julian Trevelyan
- 1984-88 President of Royal West of England Academy, Bristol
- 1985 Painted a mural for Colindale Hospital
- 1988 Death of Julian Trevelyan
- 1992 Elected Royal Academician in the Senior Order
- 1995 Publication of *Mary Fedden* written by Mel Gooding
- 1996 Received an Honorary Doctorate of Literature from the University of Bath
- 1997 Awarded OBE
- 2007 Publication of *Mary Fedden. Enigmas and Variations* by Christopher Andreae
- 2012 Died in Chiswick on 22nd June

Select Bibliography

- Mel Gooding, *Mary Fedden*, Scholar Press, 1995
- Christopher Andreae, *Mary Fedden, Enigmas and Variations*, Lund Humphries, 2007
- José Manser, *Mary Fedden and Julian Trevelyan: Life and Art by the River Thames*, Unicorn Press Ltd, London, 2012

Illustrated books

- Suzannah Amooore, *Motley the Cat*, Viking, London, 1997
- Jane Gardam, *The green man: an eternity*, The Windrush Press, Moreton-in-Marsh, 1998
- Mary Fedden with foreword by Mel Gooding, *Birds*, The Windrush Press, Moreton-in-Marsh, 1999

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Works by Mary Fedden can be found in the following public collections:

Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, Cumbria
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
Chelsea and Westminster Health Charity
Contemporary Art Society
Derbyshire & Derby School Library Service
Durham University
Government Art Collection
Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries and Galloway Council
Guildford House Gallery
Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry
Hereford Museum and Art Gallery
HM The Queen
Imperial College Healthcare Charity Art Collection, St Mary's Hospital, London
Lucy Cavendish Collection, Cambridge
National Gallery of New Zealand
National Assembly for Wales / Ty Hywel
National Museum of Wales / Amgueddfa Cymru, Cardiff
The New Art Gallery Walsall
New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge
Newnham College, University of Cambridge
Newport Museum and Art Gallery
Nuffield College, University of Oxford
Open University
Otter Gallery, University of Chichester
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester
Pembroke College Oxford JCR Art Collection
Peterborough Museum & Art Gallery
Reading Museum & Town Hall
Royal Academy of Arts, London
Royal West of England Academy, Bristol
Museums Sheffield
Southampton City Art Gallery
Swindon Art Gallery
Tate Britain
Tulie House Museum and Art Gallery Trust, Carlisle
Mead Gallery, University of Warwick
University of Bath
University College London Hospitals
University of Leeds Gallery Art Collection and Gallery
University of York
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath
Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester
Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Wirral
York Museums Trust

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