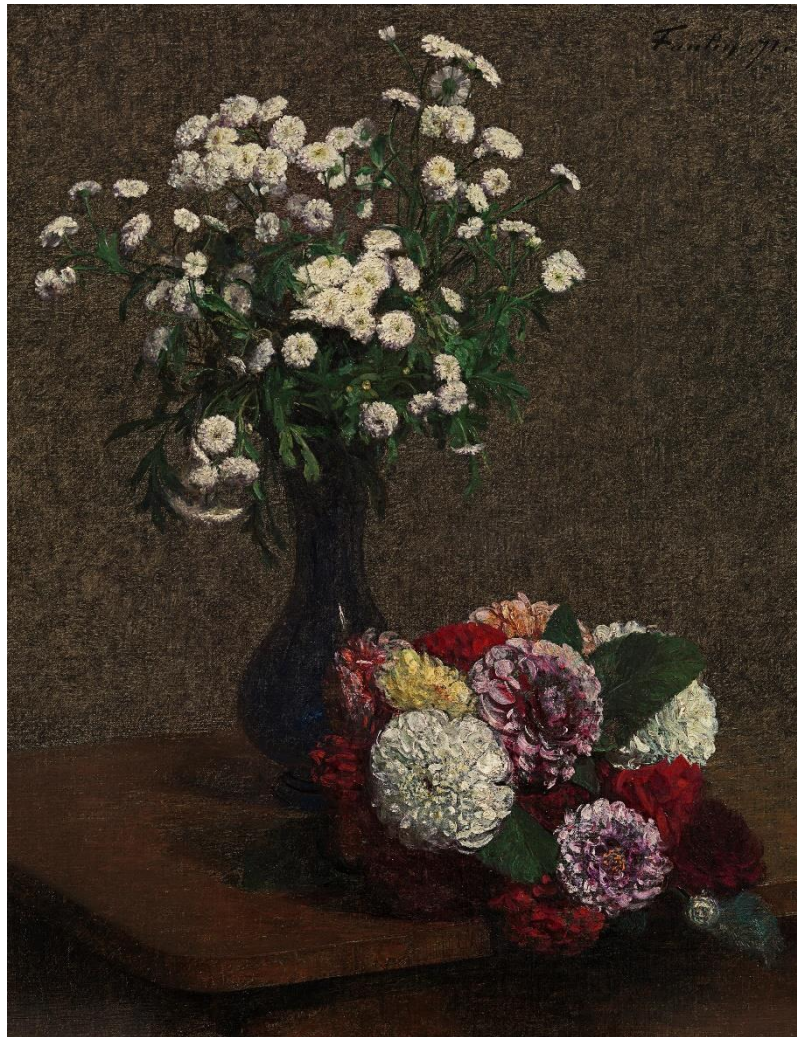


HENRI FANTIN-LATOURE

Grenoble 1836 - 1904 Buré

Ref: BZ 158

Fleurs: camomille et dahlias



Signed and dated upper right: Fantin . 71
Oil on canvas: 22 x 17¼ in / 55.9 x 43.8 cm
Frame Size: 31 x 26 in / 78.7 x 66 cm

In an antique carved and gilded Louis XIV frame



RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

Provenance:

Edwin Edwards, London
Obach & Co., London
F & J Tempelaere, Paris
JP Schneider Jr, Frankfurt, 1907
Müller Collection, Baden, Switzerland, 1989 (label on the reverse)
Frederick A Klingenstein (1931-2019), Rye, NY;
by descent

Exhibited:

Frankfurt, JP Schneider Jr, *Schneider's Kunstsalon*, November 1907, no.12

Literature:

Madame Fantin-Latour, *Catalogue de l'Oeuvre Complet de Fantin-Latour 1849-1904*, Paris 1911, p.65, no.541

To be included in the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of the paintings and pastels of Henri Fantin-Latour currently being prepared by Galerie Brame & Lorenceau

James Abbott McNeill Whistler was surely thinking of his friend Henri Fantin-Latour when he wrote that an artist 'looks at [Nature's] flower, not with the enlarging lens, that he may gather facts for the botanist, but with the light of one who sees in her choice selection of brilliant tones and delicate tints, suggestions of future harmonies'¹.

Flower painting was an important part of Fantin's oeuvre from the early 1860s into the 1890s. In 1862 the sculptor and art critic Zacharie Astruc called him the 'visual poet of flowers'. Fantin combines a realistic observation of nature with a delight in the tactile qualities of paint, casting a spell of deep feeling reminiscent of his hero Chardin, with whom he was often compared.

This painting pairs a vase of camomile daisies, with their pure white, button-shaped flowers, and a bouquet of dahlias. The blooms cascade down from top left to bottom right, celebrating nature in all its abundance. Fantin creates a sense of space around the flowers by employing a neutral, textured grey-brown background and placing vase and bouquet on a wooden desk, which blends into the shadows. The dahlias stand out jewel-bright. Fantin revels in the complexity of their ruffled petals, whipping up crusts of impasted pigment and painting wet-in-wet so that the colours elide into one another. A river of red and purple dahlias cleaves between the white flowers, creating a harmonious chain of hues. In a letter of 1868 to Fantin, James Whistler noted the 'ravishing patterns' in Fantin's work, with colours reappearing 'like a strand of thread in a piece of embroidery'².

¹ Quoted in Paris, Grand Palais/Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada/San Francisco, California Palace of the Legion of Honor, *Fantin-Latour*, 1983, p.128.

² Quoted in Paris/Ottawa/San Francisco, *Fantin-Latour*, *op. cit.*, p.118.

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The flowers chosen by Fantin were popular garden staples, rather than the delicate exotics beloved of some seventeenth century Dutch flower painters. Dahlias were discovered in Mexico by the Spanish Conquistadors and introduced into European gardens from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when double varieties were bred. By 1871, when this painting was made, hybridization had produced thousands of new forms and colours.

The first owner of this work was Edwin Edwards (1823-1879), an English lawyer and amateur artist whom Fantin had met through Whistler on his visit to London in 1861. Edwin and his wife Ruth acted as Fantin's agents in Britain, disseminating an enthusiasm for his work among the garden-loving nation. The Edwardses also shared with Fantin a passion for music, particularly Wagner; Mrs Edwards was a fine pianist. Fantin commented in 1871: 'I am able to live quietly...doing what I please, thanks to Edwards'³. This was especially crucial during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, when Paris was besieged. During this terrifying time Fantin lodged with his father and withdrew into his world of flower painting. When the war ended, Edwards bought all the paintings that he had produced. Gazing at *Fleurs: camomille et dahlias*, one would never suspect the era of turmoil in which it was created.

³ Quoted in *Fantin-Latour*, *ibid.*, p.256.

HENRI FANTIN-LATOURE

Grenoble 1836 - 1904 Buré

Henri Fantin-Latour was renowned for sensitive flower still lifes, portraits and romantic figure subjects which explored myth, history and opera. He studied with his father, Jean-Théodore Fantin-Latour, from 1846 and with Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran at the Petite Ecole de Dessin in Paris from 1850 to 1856, copying Old Masters. For some months in 1861 he studied with Gustave Courbet, but eschewed his Realism for a gentler style.

In 1858 Fantin met James McNeill Whistler and was encouraged by him to make several trips to England (1859, 1861, 1864, 1881), learning to etch from Whistler's brother-in-law Seymour Haden. Fantin sold some of his first flower still lifes through his friends Ruth and Edwin Edwards, who popularized them in England. A friendship with Edouard Manet led Fantin to exhibit at the Salon des Refusés in 1863, but he refused to take part in the first Impressionist show in 1874. He exhibited at the Salon from 1861 to 1899.

Like the Impressionists, Fantin was interested in contemporary life and from 1864 exhibited group portraits of the artistic and intellectual circles in which he moved. Edouard Manet and Charles Baudelaire, for example, are depicted in *Homage to Delacroix*, 1864 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). The figures are genially interlinked, but occupy their own contemplative psychological space. The supremely elegant single portrait of *Edouard Manet*, 1867 (Art Institute of Chicago) breathes penetrating intelligence but also retains the subject's mystery.

Although Fantin's brushwork was painterly and sensuous in approach, he disliked painting *en plein air*, instead studying his flowers in the studio, against a plain background. In 1876 he married his pupil Victoria Dubourg (1840-1926). The couple spent summers at Victoria's family home at Buré in Lower Normandy, drawing inspiration from its abundant garden.

Parallel to Fantin's poetic but precise observation of flowers are his imaginative figure pieces, painted and lithographed in a soft manner, full of chiaroscuro. He took themes from the Romantic music of Schumann and Berlioz and particularly the monumental, mythic operas of Wagner, in works such as *Scène première du Rheingold*, 1888 (Kunsthalle, Hamburg), inspired by his 1876 visit to Bayreuth. Fantin-Latour died at Buré in 1904.

The work of Henri Fantin-Latour is represented in the Louvre, Paris; the Musée d'Orsay, Paris; the National Gallery, London; the Royal Collection, London; the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Philadelphia Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.