

RICHARD GREEN

WINIFRED NICHOLSON

Oxford 1893 - 1981 Brampton

Ref: CD 192

Flowers - Sutton Veny



Signed and inscribed on the stretcher: *SPRING FLOWERS / BY WINIFRED NICHOLSON*

Oil on canvas: 30 x 27 in / 76.2 x 68.6 cm

Frame size: 35 x 32 in / 88.9 x 81.3 cm

Floated in its original rustic washed pine frame

Painted between 1923 and 1926



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Provenance:

Beaux Arts Gallery, London
Dorothy Forster Hodgkin, then by descent
Private collection, UK

Exhibited:

London, Beaux Arts Gallery, *7th Exhibition of Pictures and Sculpture by the "Seven and Five" Society*,
4th-22nd January 1927, cat.no.10
London, Beaux Arts Gallery, *Winifred Nicholson*, 20th April-7th May 1927, cat.no.33

Literature:

Drawing & Design, vol. II, 1927, illus.

The introduction to Winifred Nicholson's exhibition at the Beaux Arts Gallery in April 1927 described her painting as 'full of growth and freshness – delicate, keen, inward in spirit and vision, soft and rounded in execution.' And continued, 'It is the loving grasp...of what has been for ever familiar and dear, that moves us to such an enchantment in spring...and in works of true imagination, however lowly and fragile, when they spring fresh and directly form the human heart and understanding.' Alongside *Window sill – Lugano*, 1923 (Tate) and *Cyclamen and primula, circa 1923* (Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge) also in the exhibition, this quote, ascribed to HCS, but written by Jim Ede, who founded Kettle's Yard, encapsulates the charm and essence of *Flowers – Sutton Veny*.

Sutton Veny was the house in Wiltshire that William Nicholson, Winifred's father-in-law, had moved to in 1923 with his second wife Edie, and was to prove an inspiring place for Winifred to paint. William first wrote to Winifred two days before her marriage to Ben Nicholson in 1920, 'My Dear Winifred, I am so sure that Ben will have a perfect wife that I must send you my love tonight and a line to tell you how happy I am about everything. See you at breakfast!!! Yours affectionately, William Nicholson', and so started a fruitful painting conversation. William and Ben had not had the easiest of relationships, but by Christmas 1924 they had repaired their differences and Ben and Winifred subsequently made a number of visits¹. Here there were discussions about painting, 'Yellow ochre is a good highlight,' said Father William, 'don't you think so Rosie?' I had not yet spoken but I lifted my voice at that – 'I use Yellow Ochre for my dark.'² Not only did they discuss painting, but William and Winifred painted the same jug of flowers, each from a different side,³ in what Winifred described as a memorably happy time: 'William and Ben made jokes that fly and one never remembers. I cannot recall one of them, and yet they sparkled with wit and laughter all around us.'⁴ This atmosphere was clearly conducive to painting as Winifred made a number of other pictures while staying at Sutton Veny, including *Dressing table, Sutton Veny*⁵ and a

¹ See Patricia Read, *William Nicholson, Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, Modern Art Press, London 2011, pp. 409, 423, 436.

² See Winifred Nicholson, 'Yellow Ochre - William Nicholson', *Unknown Colour, Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson*, Andrew Nicholson (ed.), Faber and Faber, London, 1987, pp.77-80.

³ See Jovan Nicholson, *Art and Life; Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis, William Staite Murray, 1920-1931*, Philip Wilson Publishers, London 2013, pp.62, 63.

⁴ *Unknown Colour, op. cit.*, p.77.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 67.

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portrait of William Nicholson,⁶ as well as *Wylie Valley No.1* and *Wylie Valley No.2* (the latter two both untraced).

The first owner of this picture was Dorothy Forster Hodgkin who was Helen Sutherland's oldest friend. Helen Sutherland was Winifred Nicholson's (and Ben Nicholson's) most important collector⁷ and after the breakup of her marriage had been more or less adopted by the Hodgkin family and introduced by them to north Northumberland where she settled in 1929. It must have been Helen Sutherland who introduced Dorothy Hodgkin to Winifred's work, although she was extremely generous to her friends and it is possible that *Flowers – Sutton Veny* was a gift.⁸

Jovan Nicholson, author of *Winifred Nicholson: Liberation of Colour* (Philip Wilson Publishers, 2016) and grandson of Ben and Winifred Nicholson.

⁶ *Unknown Colour, op. cit.*, p.78.

⁷ See *Helen Sutherland Collection: a pioneer collection of the 1930s*, Arts Council, 1970-1.

⁸ See E.C. (Teddy) Hodgkin's, *A Memoir of Helen Sutherland*, Tate Gallery Archive 958.1.

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