

RICHARD GREEN

SIR WILLIAM NICHOLSON NPS IS

Newark-on-Trent 1872 - 1949 Blewbury, Berkshire

Ref: CD 216

Bunch of flowers



Inscribed by Winifred Nicholson on a board attached to the reverse:

Painted by / William Nicholson / at Boothby /

Given to Kate Nicholson / 1961

Oil on canvas: 17 ³/₄ x 15 ³/₄ in / 45.1 x 40 cm

Frame size: 24 x 22 in / 61 x 55.9 cm

Painted *circa* 1937



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Provenance:

Gifted by the Artist to his daughter-in-law, Winifred Nicholson,
Then by descent to Kate Nicholson, 1961
Private collection, UK

Literature:

Lillian Browse, *William Nicholson*, Rupert Hart-Davies, London 1956, no.518, p.114
Patricia Reed, *William Nicholson Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings*, Modern Art Press & Yale University Press, London and New Haven 2011, no.809, p.605

Bunch of flowers, which William Nicholson gave to Winifred Nicholson, his daughter-in-law, has a significant connection with her life and work. Painted at Boothby, Winifred Nicholson's parents' house in Cumberland and where Winifred spent her summers at that time, it reflects on a long and fruitful painting conversation between William and Winifred.

William first wrote to Winifred two days before her marriage to Ben Nicholson in 1920, William's eldest son: *'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.'*

When Ben and Winifred stayed at Sutton Veny, William's house in Wiltshire, in the early 1920s, 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."¹ Not only did they discuss painting, but William and Winifred painted the same jug of flowers, each from a different side. Winifred described the visit 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."² About this time Winifred made a portrait of William, as well as a number of paintings while staying at Sutton Veny, including *Flowers – Sutton Veny* and *Dressing table, Sutton Veny*, which both have notably large areas of white paint. These works had a marked influence on William whose works became lighter at this time.³

There are many similarities between William and Winifred's work. Both painted quickly, economically and with great fluency, often completing pictures in one sitting. Both loved to paint flowers, which for Winifred held 'the secret of the universe,' choosing simple everyday scenes whose simplicity belies their hidden meaning. And both their paintings have a serene timeless quality. These qualities are all present in *Bunch of flowers*, and with its inclusion of wild flowers and predominantly white palette comes close to Winifred's own painting.

Bunch of flowers, which until now has been unpublished, is a significant work amongst William Nicholson's late still lives, which are widely considered to be his finest pictures.

Jovan Nicholson

¹ See Winifred Nicholson, *Yellow Ochre - William Nicholson, Unknown Colour, Paintings, Letters, Writings, by Winifred Nicholson*, ed. Andrew Nicholson, Faber and Faber, London 1987, pp.77-80.

² *Ibid.*, p.77.

³ See Duman Robinson, *William Nicholson: Paintings, Drawings and Prints*, Arts Council, 1980, p.13.

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