

Frederick Judd Waugh (1861 - 1940)

Still Life, circa 1925

Signed “Waugh” lower right

oil on panel

14” x 18”

Frederick Waugh was born in Bordentown, New Jersey and was the only child of painter Samuel Bell Waugh (1814-1885) by his second wife, who painted miniatures. With an upbringing in the atmosphere of an artist’s studio, both he and his half sister became painters.

He trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1880 to 1883 and studied with Thomas Eakins (1844 - 1916). He continued his studies at the Academie Julian in Paris and exhibited at the Paris Salon. He returned to Philadelphia in 1885, the year his father died, and remained until 1892. There he painted portraits and landscapes, while doing commercial work for the firm of Dakin and Petrie. In 1892, he married Clara Eugenie Bunn, whom he had met at the Pennsylvania Academy, and in that same year, they began a fifteen-year sojourn in Europe. They lived primarily in London from where he did many paintings of the Channel Island of Sark and at St Ives, Cornwall. He also produced illustrations of the Boer War for Lord Northcliffe, the publisher of the *London Daily Mail* (1).

In 1907, after two of his seascapes were rejected by the Royal Academy, the couple returned to the United States. Ironically, these paintings became an instant success in America and “was acclaimed the finest marine painter of his time” (2). In 1929, he won the Palmer Memorial Marine Prize of the National Academy of Design. His figurative compositions and still lifes, such as this one, also demonstrate his gift for observation and design that earned him his reputation as a highly skilled marine painter.

Waugh began painting still lifes after his arrival in Kent, Connecticut in 1915, where he became a senior member of the art colony that had formed there in the Litchfield Hills. His wife Gene had a sizable flower garden on the couple’s seventy-five acres of land, from which he would pluck flowers to paint in his studio (3). Removed from the sea, floral still lifes became a prominent part of his body of work produced in this period of his career.

Still Life displays an assured virtuosity in paint application, rendering, and composition. The juxtaposition of complementary tones – soft reds and greens of the flora, the burnt oranges and green-blue of the table and vase – brings a striking vitality to the work. Waugh’s use of light in *Still Life* animates the surface and creates a sense of space that is nearly three-dimensional. A shadow cast on the cream-colored wall behind the floral arrangement lends a sense of depth to the composition, while the vegetation sprawls in every direction, including a few blossoms which advance into the viewer’s space.

Provenance: From a private Connecticut collection to the gallery.

Bibliography:

1. Askart.com. Information contributed by Waugh scholar Peggy Frazier.
2. Jane Curtis, Will Curtis, and Frank Lieberman, *Monhegan: The Artist’s Island* (Camden: Down East Books, 1995), 112.
3. Robert Michael Austin, *Artists of the Litchfield Hills* (Waterbury, Connecticut: The Mattatuck Historical Society, 2003), 66.

