

COLNAGHI

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María Blanchard

(Santander 1881 — 1932 Paris)

Nature Morte (Still Life)

1918

oil on canvas

47 x 27.5 cm.;

18 1/2 x 10 7/8 in.

signed and dated (lower right)

Provenance

With Galerie Percier, Paris;

Melle van der Klipp;

With Galerie Spiess, Paris (acquired in 1972);

Sale, Mme Ader Picard-Tajan, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 19 March 1983;

Private collection, France;

With Galería Jorge Mara, Madrid;

Acquired from the above by the present owner *circa* 1998.

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Literature

A. M. Campoy, *María Blanchard*, Madrid 1981, reproduced on p. 115;
L. Caffin Madaule, *Catalogue raisonné des œuvres de María Blanchard*, London 1992, vol. I, reproduced in colour on p. 203;
M. Jose Salazar, *María Blanchard 1889-1932, catalogue raisonné*, Madrid 2004, no. 86, reproduced in colour on p. 211.

Exhibited

Limoges, Museum of Fine Arts, *Hommages à María Blanchard*, 1965, no. 3.

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The flat planar surfaces, blocks of colour and disrupted contours of *Nature Morte* firmly situate the work within the aesthetic of Cubism that revolutionised the Western concept of representation. María Blanchard has evidently conceived this still life, one of the most painterly subjects, from multiple perspectives without a single vanishing point in order to refine painting down to its fundamental, formalist elements.

By 1915, having moved from Madrid to Paris, Blanchard had been introduced to Juan Gris through Jacques Lipchitz. Gris was at this time sharing a studio space with Pablo Picasso in the Bateau-Lavoir while the two experimented with this radical new aesthetic. Within no time at all Blanchard was converted and the present painting constitutes one of the few examples of her Cubist production; her slow working method and return to a figurative idiom around 1920 make such examples of her output decidedly rare.

Almost the entirety of Blanchard's *œuvre* was purchased by the dealer Léonce Rosenberg, the following quote demonstrating how canny Blanchard was in recognising her own deficiencies: 'He either gave me monthly arrears or bought my paintings in advance, i.e. virtually the totality of my production. Don't forget that I worked slowly. The American buyers, such as Gertrude Stein and her brother, or Germans like Wilhelm Uhde, Russians with Tchoukine, and the often omitted Zborowski, Modigliani and Soutine's dealer, or again the Swiss Herman Ruff, did not visit my studio, which my painter friends were cautious not to tell him [Rosenberg], i.e. Gris, Rivera, Picasso and even Lhote'.¹

Blanchard suffered from kyphoscoliosis that left her with an abnormally curved spine and this is often mentioned as a key factor of her personality; perhaps for this reason she was not as strong an influence socially as other members of the Modernist Parisian school. However, as this work demonstrates, her contribution to the Cubist idiom was both influential and unique: for example, note here the contrasting earthy and sharp colours, which are demonstrative of her personal realisation of Cubist theories.

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Footnotes

¹ M. Blanchard quoted in L. Caffin Madaule, *Catalogue raisonné des œuvres de María Blanchard*, London 1992, p. 49.

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