

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



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EMIL NOLDE

1867 Nolde in Holstein - Seebüll 1956

*Herbstblumen* [*Autumn Flowers*]

Oil on canvas; painted in 1931.

Signed in the lower right: *Emil Nolde*; signed and inscribed on the stretcher: *Emil Nolde, Herbstblumen (C)*  
73.9 x 100.4 cm

PROVENANCE: Adalbert Colsman, Langenberg, by whom acquired directly from the artist by 1940 – Thence by descent – Le Claire Kunst, Hamburg – Private collection, Switzerland

LITERATURE: The artist's handlist as *1931 Herbstblumen (C)* – A letter from Colsman to Nolde, 22 May 1940, Nolde-Stiftung archives – Martin Urban, *Emil Nolde, Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil-Paintings*, vol. II, 1915-51, London, 1990, no. 118, p. 418, illustrated

EXHIBITIONS: Temporarily on loan to the Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal – *Das Schatzhaus. Werke aus der Von der Heydt-Sammlung*, Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal, 27 Feb. - 7 Aug. 2011 – Karin Schick, Christian Ring, Hubertus Gaßner [eds.], *Nolde in Hamburg*, exhib. cat., Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 18 Sept. 2015 - 31 Jan. 2016, p. 118, full-page illustration

Celebrating one of the most prominent themes of Emil Nolde's art, *Herbstblumen* belongs to a series of autumnal flower compositions which the artist executed in the early 1930s.<sup>1</sup> *Herbstblumen* exemplifies Nolde's lifelong fascination for the subject. Since his childhood, flowers had been related to his fondest memories. Recalling himself walking in the garden with his mother, he declared: *All the flowers bloomed for her pleasure and for mine*.<sup>2</sup> Among the various autumnal red tones, the yellow sunflowers add an unexpected touch of brilliance, yet perhaps hint at the summer coming to its end.

With its dense and rich colours, *Herbstblumen* illustrates the expressive dimension of Nolde's flower paintings. Nolde had first painted flowers in 1906, on Als Island. *The colours of the flowers attracted me irresistibly, and almost instantly I was painting them*, he later remembered.<sup>3</sup> The bold colours of those earlier pictures grabbed the attention of the artist Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, who saw in Nolde's 'tempests of colour' the work of an artist akin to the Brücke painters. That year Nolde discovered the expressive power of colour through flowers. This was a feature that his later works would continue to explore, as *Herbstblumen* illustrates. Painted with quick and charged brushstrokes, the work almost dissolves into abstraction, capturing the emotional profusion of an autumnal bouquet left on a table.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Urban lists four paintings of this title in his *Catalogue Raisonné*, painted in 1931, numbered by Nolde from A to D. See, M. Urban, op. cit., p. 418 f.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Manfred Reuther, 'Nolde and Seebüll', in *Emil Nolde*, exh. cat., London, 1996, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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Adalbert Colsman together with his wife Thilda was a prolific collector for art by the German Expressionists such as Nolde, Lehmbruck, Rohlf, Feininger, Schmidt-Rottluff and Klee. His sister Gertrud married Karl Ernst Osthaus, an important industrial business man who supported the arts of the Modern founding the Folkwang Museum in Essen together with his wife in 1902. Adalbert Colsman was mainly influenced by this movement and purchased his first picture in 1906. During these early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century he also met Ada and Emil Nolde developing a close friendship within the following decades. This relationship was very important for the Noldes during the “Entartete Kunstaktion” by the Nazis since 1937. Although the regime banned Nolde from work, Colsman still acquired works from the artist by 1940. He also kept pictures by him in storage hiding them from the Nazis. This main support preserved a lot of Expressionist art including the present painting which is among the most impressive pictures by Emil Nolde of this kind.



Emil and Ada Nolde in the Seebüll garden, 1941