

French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor



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Henri Fantin-Latour, *Annual Chrysanthemums*, 1889

Artist	Henri Fantin-Latour, French, 1836–1904
Title	<i>Annual Chrysanthemums</i>
Object Date	1889
Alternate and Variant Titles	<i>Chrysanthèmes; Chrysanthèmes d'été; Fleurs diverses dans un vase; Flower Piece; Coreopsis</i>
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions (Unframed)	27 1/4 x 25 in. (69.2 x 63.5 cm)
Signature	Signed and dated upper right: Fantin.89
Credit Line	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 33-15/2

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Catalogue Entry

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When Henri Fantin-Latour painted his first floral still life in 1854, France's traditional hierarchy of artistic genres was in flux.¹ For centuries, history painting had reigned supreme, followed, in descending order, by portraiture, genre scenes, landscapes, and, at the very bottom, still lifes. The latter two categories were held in low esteem by the Académie des Beaux-Arts because they lacked human figures. During the nineteenth century, however, French artists upended these rankings by favoring the very genres that the establishment had long belittled.² Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) and Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) experimented with floral compositions in the 1840s and 1860s, respectively, and many of the Impressionists did likewise between the early 1860s and mid-1880s. Claude Monet (1840–1926), for one, produced at least twenty-two flower pictures between 1878 and 1885, several of which were ambitious in scale and sold well with collectors.³ However, the combined output of all these artists paled in comparison to that of Fantin-Latour, who painted somewhere between five hundred and 850 floral still lifes during his career.⁴ Rather than dabbling in flower pictures like some of his peers, Fantin-Latour made them a cornerstone of his production, and he owed much of his success to their commercial appeal.



Fig. 1. The gardens at Buré, 1900, photographic prints on Aristotype paper from silver gelatin dry plate glass negatives, in the album *Recueil: Fantin-Latour à Buré* [Collection: *Fantin-Latour at Buré*], 1887–1905, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, Paris, 4-NA-337

The collectors most receptive to Fantin-Latour's floral works were members of the English upper middle class. During the 1860s, American expatriate painter James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) and Surrey-based dealers Edwin (1823–1879) and Ruth (1833–1907) Edwards stoked demand for Fantin-Latour's flower pictures in England. They corresponded regularly with Fantin-Latour in Paris, sharing tips about interested buyers and requesting still lifes with particular dimensions. Whistler, for example, wrote to Fantin-Latour on February 3, 1864, saying, "You must do two flower pictures the same size, as those you have just done for Mr. Ionides—you will get 150 frs. for each."⁵ Thanks to these efforts on his behalf, Fantin-Latour built up a steady clientele across the Channel and earned much-needed income from the sale of his floral compositions. By 1871, he had formalized his business relationship with the Edwardses and designated them as his official agents in England.⁶ This mutually beneficial partnership persisted for more than fifty years, with Ruth handling all sales of Fantin-Latour's work in England after Edwin's death in 1879.

Annual Chrysanthemums is a mature still life created explicitly for the English market. Like most of Fantin-Latour's late flower pictures, it took shape in the Norman town of Buré, on a family estate that his wife and fellow still-life painter, Victoria Fantin-Latour (née Dubourg, 1840–1926), had inherited from her uncle in 1880.⁷ Small and bucolic, with a population of fewer than 250, Buré offered the couple a pleasant escape from the hubbub of Paris during the summer.⁸ Their property included a lush garden with several arched trellises and a large variety of plants, as seen in a pair of photographs taken there in 1900 (Fig. 1).⁹ This outdoor haven provided Henri Fantin-Latour with a constant supply of blooms for his paintings. According to portraitist Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861–1942), who visited the Fantin-Latours at Buré, his friend began each day in the same manner: "Immediately after breakfast, the artist, in an old straw hat, his neck wrapped in a summer scarf, and always wearing his slippers, went to the flowerbeds and picked the more colorful flowers that had blossomed during the night."¹⁰ After making his selection, Fantin-Latour would choose a vase from among the receptacles given to him by Ruth Edwards for this express purpose, arrange the bouquet with a practiced eye, and finally place it on a table against a neutral backdrop. He always prepared his canvases the night before, allowing him to start work straightaway. A photograph of Fantin-Latour in his studio at Buré, seated with a blank canvas before a bouquet of freshly cut peonies, attests to this working method (Fig. 2).¹¹ Due to the ephemeral nature of Fantin-Latour's motifs, he endeavored to finish his still lifes within one working day.¹²

In addition to being a master of efficiency, Fantin-Latour was adept at depicting different species of flowers. The multicolored blossoms in the Nelson-Atkins painting are all examples of *Chrysanthemum carinatum* or *Ismelia carinata*, known colloquially as the annual chrysanthemum or painted daisy.¹³ An annual plant native to Morocco, *Chrysanthemum carinatum* blooms from summer to fall and is widely cultivated in temperate parts of the world, including France. Due to the distinctive, ring-like pattern of its disc and ray florets, it has long been a popular ornamental plant. Indeed, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European monarchs grew painted daisies in their palace gardens. Saxon king Frederick Augustus I (1750–1827), for one, cultivated them at Pillnitz Castle and commissioned botanical illustrator Jacob Friedrich (German, 1746–1813) to produce a hand-colored engraving of the flower (Fig. 3).¹⁴ In Friedrich's rendering, the central stalk is crowned

by three blooms with crimson centers and concentric bands of yellow and white, closely resembling several of the flowers in Fantin-Latour's picture. The other color combinations in the Kansas City bouquet are also accurate, for painted daisies come in a medley of colors. Although Fantin-Latour painted various species of chrysanthemums and other related plants in the Asteraceae family with some frequency,¹⁵ he seldom portrayed *Chrysanthemum carinatum*: in fact, the Nelson-Atkins still life is the sole example known to this author.



Fig. 2. Henri Fantin-Latour in his studio at Buré, 1898, photographic print on Aristotype paper from silver gelatin dry plate glass negative, in the album *Recueil: Fantin-Latour à Buré* [Collection: *Fantin-Latour at Buré*], 1887–1905, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, Paris, 4-NA-337



Fig. 3. Jacob Friedrich, *Ismelia carinata*, hand-colored copper engraving, 20 1/4 x 14 in. (51.4 x 35.5 cm), plate 188 in *Plantae selectae vivis coloribus depictae*, vol. 2 (1800), Sächsische Landesbibliothek: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, SB146

Compositionally, the Kansas City painting is simple and nearly symmetrical, with the vase centered attractively in the picture space. This clarity of structure is consistent with Fantin-Latour's late work. Whereas during the 1860s and early 1870s he often painted complex arrangements of flowers, fruit, drinking vessels, and utensils, by the 1880s he preferred sparer still lifes with fewer objects.¹⁶ The stone shelf on which the Nelson-Atkins bouquet rests also appears in other pictures by Fantin-Latour from earlier in the decade, such as *Roses in a Cup* (1882; Musée d'Orsay, Paris), and the dark green pedestal vase resurfaces—its appearance slightly altered—in both *Still Life with Roses in a Vase* (1888; Philadelphia Museum of Art) and *Larkspur* (Fig. 4). The latter demonstrates Fantin-Latour's willingness to play with form when it suited his aesthetic aims. Although the vases in *Annual Chrysanthemums* and *Larkspur* have nearly identical bases and lower stems, their openings are noticeably different. In the Kansas City work, the

vase tapers inward toward the top, cinching the flowers, but in the Glasgow still life it widens further, giving the larkspurs more breathing room and their arrangement a fan-like shape.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the paintings are more alike than not. A single, wilted flower has fallen from both bouquets, giving the pictures a mildly melancholic air, and their balanced, pared-down compositions have much in common.



Fig. 4. Henri Fantin-Latour, *Larkspur*, 1892, oil on canvas, 27 x 23 5/8 in. (68.6 x 57.9 cm), Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, Bequeathed by William J. Chrystal, 1939, no. 2139

When *Annual Chrysanthemums* debuted at London's Royal Academy of Arts exhibition in May 1890, critics responded enthusiastically to Fantin-Latour's brushwork, palette, and realism. A writer for *The Athenaeum*, having enjoyed a sneak preview of the show two days before its public unveiling, pronounced Fantin-Latour's three floral still lifes "delightful."¹⁸ In another review three weeks later he referred specifically to the painting now at the Nelson-Atkins: "M. Fantin's *Chrysanthèmes d'Été* is pure and brilliant as painted flowers ought to be."¹⁹ Harry Quilter, an arts journalist for *The Universal Review*, was equally impressed. "Few things are more perfect in the present gallery than the chrysanthemums painted by M. Fantin against a plain gray background," he wrote. He praised Fantin-Latour's "quiet fidelity to nature" and

compared the picture favorably to Sir John Lavery's (1856–1941) *The Bridge at Gretz*, also on display that year.²⁰ A third critic was disappointed by Fantin-Latour's Wagnerian painting, *The First Scene of "The Rhinegold,"* but extolled his floral compositions as "absolutely unrivalled."²¹ French visitors to the London exhibition also expressed admiration for Fantin-Latour's still lifes, with Parisian commentator Paul Leroi describing them as "very successful."²² The reaction was overwhelmingly positive, a testament to the widespread appreciation of Fantin-Latour's flower paintings in nineteenth-century England.

Following the Royal Academy exhibition, *Annual Chrysanthemums* passed through several private collectors and dealers, beginning with Ruth Edwards, before landing with gallerist Étienne Bignou (1891–1950) by the early 1930s. Bignou lent the picture to a thematic exhibition organized by Knoedler Galleries in New York called "Flowers" by French Painters in November 1932. The American public responded just as warmly to *Annual Chrysanthemums* as their English counterparts had forty years earlier. Critic and Metropolitan Museum of Art researcher Margaretta Salinger complimented Knoedler on choosing the still lifes "with so much good taste and discretion" and singled out the "two very charming vases by Fantin-Latour" for special notice.²³ She selected *Annual Chrysanthemums* to illustrate her article (Fig. 5), as did Ralph Flint in his own effusive review for *Art News*. Flint waxed poetic about "the brilliant galaxy of French pictures . . . illustrating the Gallic genius in flower painting" and declared Fantin-Latour's floral contributions "precise and stately and delicately rendered."²⁴ The timing of this exhibition, and the critical support for Fantin-Latour that it engendered, brought *Annual Chrysanthemums* to the attention of the Nelson-Atkins trustees, who acquired it soon after. When critic Minna K. Powell announced this purchase in the April 1, 1933, issue of the *Kansas City Star*, she emphasized that the museum board had secured "one of the loveliest canvases in the recent 'Flower Show' at the Knoedler Galleries" and highlighted its "graceful arrangement, sense of tonality, and the dewy freshness of its flowers." Her article whetted readers' appetite to see the Fantin-Latour picture themselves at the museum's grand opening eight months later.²⁵



Fig. 5. Margarett Salinger, "On View at the New York Galleries," *Parnassus* 4, no. 6 (November 1932): 9. © Taylor & Francis Ltd, <http://www.tandfonline.com>

Created by the most esteemed and prolific French still life painter of the nineteenth century, *Annual Chrysanthemums* is a prime example of Fantin-Latour's mature approach to flower pieces at Buré. It showcases not only his command of color and composition but also his knack for representing all manner of plants. More than ninety years after its acquisition, it remains the only floral picture and the only work in oil by Fantin-Latour in the museum's collection.

Brigid M. Boyle
April 2024

Notes

1. Fantin-Latour's first recorded still life is *Flowers*, 1854, oil on canvas, 18 3/16 x 16 5/16 in. (46.2 x 41.4 cm), Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent, Belgium, Inv. 1914-AY, <https://www.mskgent.be/en/collection/1914-ay>.

2. For this history, see Mitchell Merling, "The Path to the Modern Floral Still Life: Academy to Avant-Garde," in Heather MacDonald and Mitchell Merling, *Working Among Flowers: Floral Still-Life Painting in Nineteenth-Century France*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 15–27.
3. Sylvie Patry, "Impressionist Flower Paintings and the Market," trans. Chris Miller, in MacDonald and Merling, *Working Among Flowers*, 35.
4. Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier estimates that Fantin-Latour made between 750 and 850 flower paintings, while Laurent Salomé suggests a range of five hundred to six hundred. See Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, "Fantin-Latour, peintre de fleurs," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 113, no. 1442 (March 1989): 138; and Laurent Salomé, "La vie avec les fleurs," in Laure Dalon, *Fantin-Latour: À fleur de peau*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2016), 41. A more accurate tally may emerge when Sylvie Brame and François Lorenceau publish their revised catalogue raisonné of Fantin-Latour's oeuvre.
5. Whistler to Fantin-Latour, January 4–February 3, 1864, Pennell-Whistler Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, PWC 1/33/15. Transcribed and translated in Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort, and Nigel Thorp, eds., *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855–1903*, online edition, University of Glasgow, 08036, <https://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/cid=8036&year=1864&month=01&rs=1>. "Il faut que tu fasse encore deux bouquets de la meme [sic] grandeur, que ceux que tu viens de faire pour M. Ionides—On te les paie 150. fs. piece [sic]." Emphasis in the original. Translations by Brigid M. Boyle unless otherwise noted.
6. Douglas Druick and Michel Hoog, eds., *Fantin-Latour*, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada for the Corporation of the National Museums of Canada, 1983), 216.
7. For Victoria Fantin-Latour's life and career, see Elizabeth Kane, "Victoria Dubourg: The Other Fantin-Latour," *Woman's Art Journal* 9, no. 2 (Fall 1988–Winter 1989): 15–21.

8. For census data, see Claude Motte and Marie-Christine Vouloir, "Buré," *Des villages de Cassini aux communes d'aujourd'hui*, Laboratoire de démographie historique, Centre national de la recherche scientifique, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, accessed April 3, 2024, http://cassini.ehess.fr/fr/html/fiche.php?select_resultat=6306. Buré had 234 residents in 1881 and 204 residents in 1886. Its population dwindled throughout the 1900s, falling below one hundred in 1975. The town is a modest 565 hectares, or 2.2 square miles.
9. For a painting of this space, see Victoria Fantin-Latour, *The Garden at Buré*, 19th century, oil on canvas, 12 5/8 x 15 15/16 in. (32 x 40.5 cm), Musée de Grenoble, MG 2511, <https://www.navigart.fr/grenoble/artwork/victoria-fantin-latour-nee-victoria-dubourg-le-jardin-de-bure-orne-60000000005285>.
10. Jacques-Émile Blanche, *Propos de Peintre: De David à Degas* (Paris: Émile-Paul frères, 1919), 42. "Le peintre, sous un vieux chapeau de paille, le cou enveloppé d'un foulard d'été, toujours chaussé de pantoufles, dès après son petit déjeuner va cueillir dans les plates-bandes ce que la nuit a fait éclore de plus coloré."
11. For more on Fantin-Latour's working method, see Blanche, *Propos de Peintre*, 42–48.
12. Per the testimony of Fantin-Latour's Parisian dealer, Gustave Tempelaere. See Druick and Hoog, *Fantin-Latour*, 270.
13. I am indebted to Craig Freeman, senior curator of botany at the KU Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum, University of Kansas; and Lena Struwe, director of the Chrysler Herbarium and Mycological Collection and professor at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Rutgers University, for this identification and the description that follows.
14. Friedrich's engraving was part of a large, multi-artist project begun in 1785 and completed in 1840 under the aegis of Frederick Augustus II (1797–1854), successor to Frederick Augustus I. For a brief overview, see R. G. C. Desmond, "Some Early Cultivated Plants," *Kew Bulletin* 22, no. 3 (1968): 392.
15. See, for instance, *Still Life with Chrysanthemums*, 1862, oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 21 7/8 in. (46 x 55.6 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978-1-16, <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/72087>; *Chrysanthemums*, 1874, oil on canvas, 21 3/4 x 25 1/2 in. (55.2 x 64.8 cm), The Burrell Collection, Glasgow, no. 35.260, <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=37412;type=101>; *Yellow Chrysanthemums*, 1879, oil on canvas, 24 x 19 1/16 in. (61 x 48.4 cm), Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, no. 1795, <https://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=166784;type=101>; and *Large Bouquet of Chrysanthemums*, 1882, oil on canvas, 24 1/2 x 22 in. (62.2 x 55.9 cm), High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 2019.147, <https://high.org/collection/large-bouquet-of-chrysanthemums-grand-bouquet-de-chrysanthemes/>. My thanks to Pegeen Blank for her assistance with this research.
16. Druick and Hoog, *Fantin-Latour*, 257.
17. Laurent Salomé was the first to note this exercise of artistic license. See Salomé, "La vie avec les fleurs," 44.
18. "Fine Arts: The Royal Academy (First Notice)," *Athenaeum*, no. 3262 (May 3, 1890): 575.
19. "Fine Arts: The Royal Academy (Third and Concluding Notice)," *Athenaeum*, no. 3265 (May 24, 1890): 680. The Nelson-Atkins painting was exhibited as *Chrysanthèmes d'été* (*Summer Chrysanthemums*) in reference to the plant's primary growing season.
20. Harry Quilter, "The Art of England: The Royal Academy," *Universal Review* 7, no. 25 (May 1890): 45. For Lavery's painting, see *Impressionist and 19th Century Art Pt. 1*, Christie's, London, December 8, 1998, lot 17.
21. "Royal Academy," *Observer* (London), May 11, 1890, 5.
22. Paul Leroi, "Chronique des Expositions: Les trois principales Expositions de Londres," *Courrier de l'art* 10, no. 27 (July 4, 1890): 214. "Très réussis."

23. Margaretta Salinger, "On View at the New York Galleries," *Parnassus* 4, no. 6 (November 1932): 9.
24. Ralph Flint, "Knoedler Holds Important Exhibit of French Flower Paintings Under the Auspices of Étienne Bignou," *Art News* 31, no. 7 (November 12, 1932): 10.
25. M[inna] K. P[owell], "In Gallery and Studio," *Kansas City Star*, April 1, 1933, 5. The Nelson-Atkins opened its doors on December 10, 1933.

Technical Entry

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The painting *Annual Chrysanthemums* by Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904) is one of over five hundred floral still-life paintings made by the artist between 1864 and 1898.¹ Information about the original canvas is limited, as the tacking margins have been removed and the outer edges are now covered by retouching. The x-radiograph does not show any cusping along the outer edges, suggesting that the canvas was cut from a larger piece of primed material. The painting is lined, obscuring the reverse of the original canvas, along with any colormen stamps or inscriptions that may be present.²

The plain-weave canvas was commercially prepared with a white ground, visible on the peaks of the canvas weave texture, between brushstrokes in the background, and along the bottom edge of the canvas. Microscopy examination indicates that the ground layer was first covered with a transparent beige imprimatura. Fantin-Latour typically applied a medium-rich pigment layer to

seal the absorbent ground of his commercially primed canvases, which provided a base color for his compositions.³

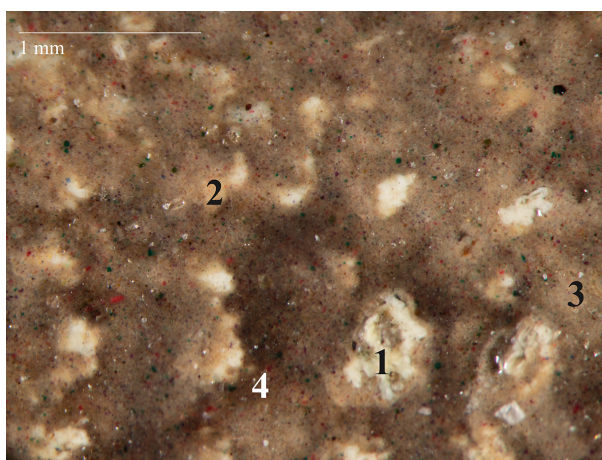


Fig. 6. Photomicrograph of *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), showing the layered structure of the background with numbers corresponding to the order of application: ground (1), flesh-colored imprimatura layer (2), pinkish-gray paint layer (3), and brownish-gray paint layer (4)



Fig. 7. Detail of the streaky brushstrokes of the pinkish-gray paint in the background of *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889)

Over the imprimatura, Fantin-Latour blocked in the background of *Annual Chrysanthemums* with pinkish-gray

paint, composed of coarser pigment particles than the underlying layer. This pinkish-gray paint continues beneath the green vase and the stone shelf, indicating that this layer was applied overall. In addition, medium-rich brown paint was selectively applied to areas of shadow for the vase and stone shelf prior to painting these compositional elements (Fig. 6).

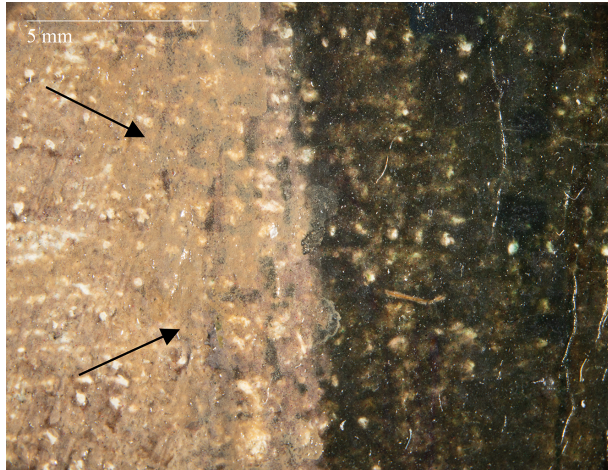


Fig. 8. Photomicrograph of a few lines at the edge of the vase obscured by retouching in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889)



Fig. 9. Photomicrograph of *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), showing the painted lines of a flower petal that was left unpainted

Using a coarse-bristled brush and short stipple-like brushwork, Fantin-Latour produced a softly textured pinkish-gray atmosphere to contrast with his still life (Fig. 7). He achieved an even greater tonal effect in the background through scraping the paint surface to reveal the white ground and the pronounced texture of the canvas.⁴ A penknife may have been used to scrape the

partially dried paint, evident by the soft edges of the diagonal incised lines.⁵ This painting technique has been observed in the background of *Gladioli and Roses* (ca. 1880) in the Guildhall Art Gallery.⁶

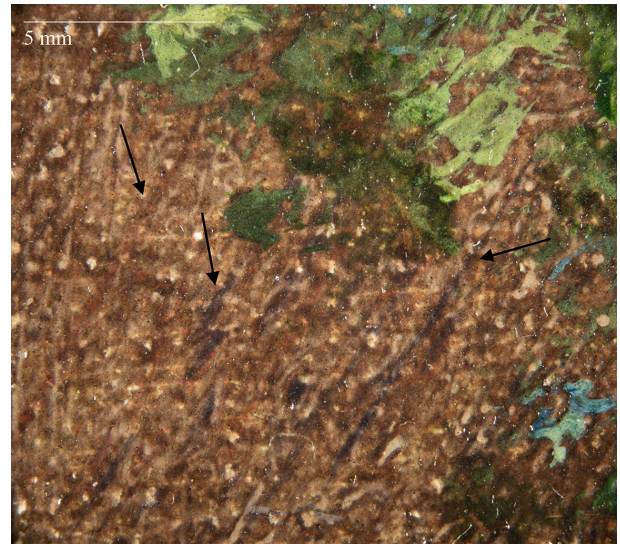


Fig. 10. Photomicrograph of *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), showing painted lines that extend below the foliage



Fig. 11. Photomicrograph of the vase in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889)

Although no underdrawing was detected with infrared reflectography, dark brown paint strokes mark the silhouette of the vase, now partially obscured by retouching (Fig. 8). In the bouquet, a few finely painted lines correspond to the placement of an absent petal in a

white chrysanthemum (Fig. 9). Similarly, dark bluish-purple and glazy pink lines of paint may have been used to position the foliage along the outer right edge of the bouquet (Fig. 10). Fantin-Latour's minimal use of sketch lines points to his confidence in rendering the Nelson-Atkins composition, likely drawing on his experience of painting floral still lifes for over two decades.⁷



Fig. 12. Detail of the vase in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889)

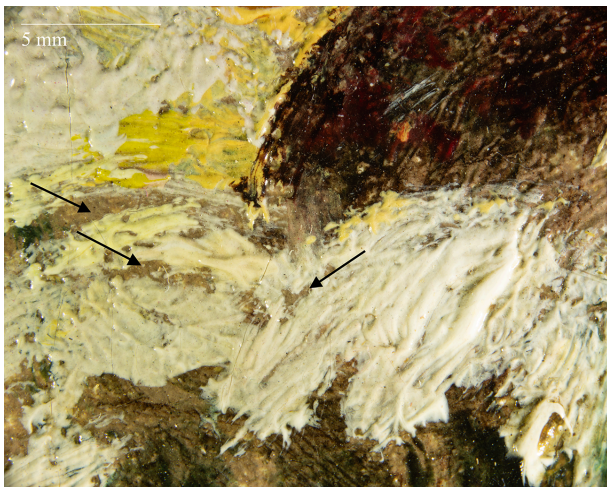


Fig. 13. Photomicrograph of the reserve left for a white chrysanthemum in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889). Black arrows point to the pinkish-gray background that is visible below the white petals.

Fantin-Latour used a diverse range of brushwork techniques to execute his floral arrangement, including thick strokes of impasto, fine glazes, scumbles, and dabs of paint. For the vase, he layered semitransparent green and brown paint over the pinkish-gray background to emulate the translucence of the glass vase (Fig. 11). He blocked in the shape of the vase with thin washes of dark green paint. A few dabs of opaque brownish-green paint established the mid-tones, and a few dabs of thick white paint were carefully placed to highlight the reflective stem of the vase (Fig. 12). Final strokes of fluid dark brown paint strengthen the contours of the vase.



Fig. 14. Photomicrograph of the bouquet in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), showing wet-over-wet paint application



Fig. 15. Details of the bouquet in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), with the left image in normal light and the right image in UV. The bright orange-red fluorescence in the red flowers is characteristic of madder lake.

As with the vase, Fantin-Latour applied washes to indicate the placement of the foliage. It is evident that reserves were left for a few of the white

chrysanthemums, as the pinkish-gray background is clearly visible below the flowers, and the washes are slightly beneath the edge of the petals (Fig. 13). However, it is unclear how systematic this underpainting is throughout the bouquet. The foliage consists of dark washes, followed by thick applications of opaque paint for individual stems and leaves. The extent of wet-over-wet paint applications in the bouquet indicates that the foliage and flowers were painted concurrently (Fig. 14). The flowers consist of thick painterly strokes of impasto for the individual petals, followed by dabs of opaque and semitransparent paint. Examination of *Annual Chrysanthemums* with ultraviolet (UV) radiation revealed a bright orange-red fluorescence in the flowers, which is characteristic of the organic pigment madder lake (Fig. 15).⁸

During the painting process, Fantin-Latour reinstated the background color in the foliage by dabbing pinkish-gray paint on top of the green layers (Fig. 16). There are several instances where the artist used brushstrokes of green paint to obscure flower petals that were no longer part of the composition. Additionally, a few petals were abandoned during the painting process, resulting in incomplete flowers (Fig. 17).



Fig. 16. Photomicrograph of the flowers and foliage in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889). Black arrows point to the few dabs of purplish-gray paint on top of green paint.

Fantin-Latour rendered the form of the single flower and stone shelf with great economy, using the pinkish-gray background as a base color. With dry brushwork, he applied thick scumble-like applications of white and light

blue paint with occasional streaks of partially mixed dark purple, bright blue, and yellow. Without magnification, the presence of these vivid colors that echo those of the bouquet is too subtle to discern (Fig. 18).



Fig. 17. Photomicrograph of the bouquet in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), showing a few white petals left as an incomplete flower

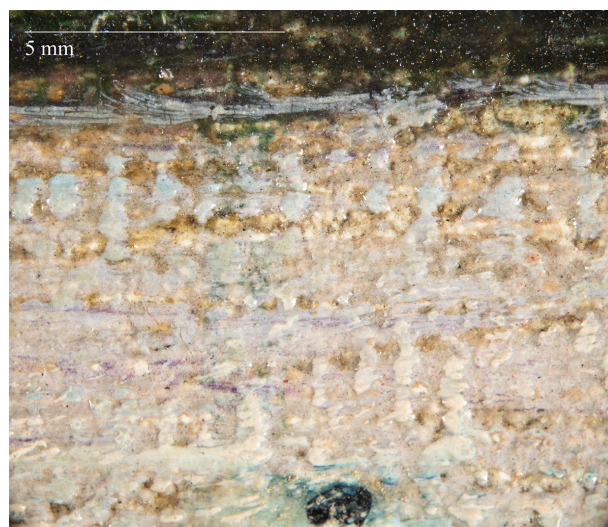


Fig. 18. Detail of the table in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), showing the paint application

The painting is in good condition. In 1959, the piece was wax lined, and the original auxiliary support was replaced with a four-member, expansion-bolt stretcher.⁹ As a result of the lining process, the horizontal weave of the original canvas is more pronounced. Paint abrasion has occurred along the bottom edge, yet the impasto of the flowers does not appear to have been flattened from

the lining process. A few age cracks have formed in the impasto. The painting has a degraded, yellowed natural-resin varnish that fluoresces green when examined with UV light. In addition, there are localized areas of dark, non-fluorescing retouching, predominantly along the outer edges of the composition.



Fig. 19. Details of the artist's signature near the upper right corner of *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), with the top image in normal light and the bottom image in UV

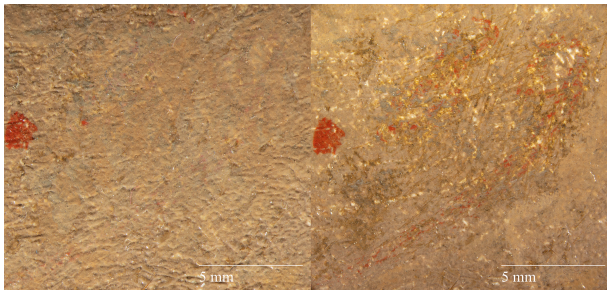


Fig. 20. Photomicrograph of the painting's date in *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889), with the left image taken before and the right image taken after cleaning

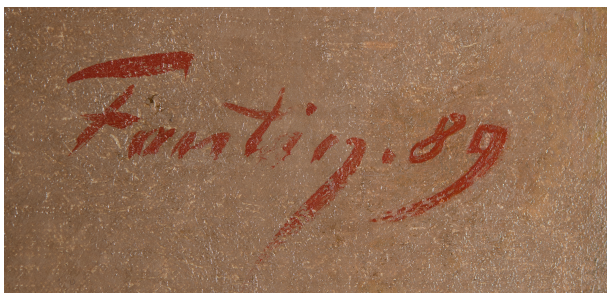


Fig. 21. Detail of the artist's signature and date after treatment, *Annual Chrysanthemums* (1889)

Prior to the recent 2024 treatment, *Annual Chrysanthemums* was believed to bear only the signature "Fantin" in bright red paint in the upper right corner. In an October 17, 1949, letter to Nelson-Atkins director Paul Gardner, the dealer Julien Tempelaere stated: "Fantin-Latour signed and dated it [the painting], but the date, which was just following the signature, has been taken off by one of the owners."¹⁰ Although the owner's motives are not explicitly stated, it is possible that they intended for the painting to be perceived as an earlier still life by Fantin-Latour, thereby increasing its financial value. The extent of overpaint present in this area was confirmed with ultraviolet (UV) radiation (Fig. 19), and selective cleaning of the varnish and overpaint revealed the damaged remnants of the date "89" and some residual light gray and brown overpaint (Fig. 20).¹¹ Archival images verify that these changes to the date occurred after the painting's completion in 1889 and before its acquisition by the Nelson-Atkins in 1933.¹² Nearly a century after its acquisition, the painting is displayed in the museum's gallery with its original date now carefully retouched and restored (Fig. 21).

Sophia Boosalis
September 2024

Notes

1. For the estimated number of floral still-life paintings by Fantin-Latour, see the accompanying curatorial essay by Brigid M. Boyle.
2. Colorman stamps of Hardy-Alan (1859–1909) have been noted on the reverse of Fantin-Latour's paintings dating from 1873 to 1892. Documentary evidence indicates that the artist purchased primed canvases, stretchers, and tubed paints from Hardy-Alan from 1861 to 1904. Barbara A. Ramsay, "A Note on Fantin's Technique," *Fantin-Latour*, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1983), 55.
3. Fantin-Latour preferred to apply imprimatura layers ranging from pale grays to browns and dark reds. Ramsay, "A Note on Fantin's Technique," 55.

4. Joyce Hill Stoner refers to this surface aesthetic as “weavism,” where rubbed-down paint reveals the canvas weave as part of the visual effect. Joyce Hill Stoner, “Materials for Immateriality,” in *Like Breath on Glass: Whistler, Inness, and the Art of Painting Softly*, ed. Marc Simpson, Wanda M. Corn, and C. Hartley, exh. cat. (Williamstown: Clark Art Institute, 2008), 92. Christina Young, “History of Fabric Supports,” in *Conservation of Easel Paintings*, ed. Joyce Hill Stoner and Rebecca Rushfield (New York: Routledge, 2012), 141.
5. According to Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861–1942), Fantin-Latour “scraped the background with his penknife, as if to suggest the trellis, the shaky and misty atmosphere.” English translation found in Eduardo Lourenço, Olivier Meslay, and Vincent Pomarède, *Henri Fantin-Latour, 1836–1904*, exh. cat. (Lisbon: Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, 2009), 258. For the French text, see Jacques-Emile Blanche, “Fantin Latour,” *La Revue de Paris*, May 15, 1906, 310: “Il gratte le fond de la pointe du canif, comme pour suggérer le treillis, le tremblé, la buée de l’atmosphère.”
6. Observations made during the treatment of *Gladioli and Roses*; see Claire Shepherd, “Conservation of ‘Gladioli and Roses’ by Henri Fantin-Latour,” *City of London*, February 15, 2024: <https://www.thecityofldn.com/article/conservation-of-gladioli-and-roses-by-henri-fantin-latour/>.
7. See the accompanying curatorial essay by Brigid M. Boyle.
8. Madder lake is an organic pigment made from the madder plant and used in dyes. Madder has been identified in Fantin-Latour’s paintings such as *A Basket of Roses* (1890) and *The Rosy Wealth of June* (1886). Jo Kirby, Marika Spring, Katherine Higgitt, “The Technology of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Red Lake Pigments,” *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 28 (2007): 91.
9. James Roth, “Department of Conservation,” in *Annual Report for 1959*, Nelson-Atkins Archives, Kansas City, MO, RG-98, series II, box RG98.05, folder 5, p. 109.
10. Julian Tempelaere (1876–1961) knew Fantin-Latour personally, since his father, Gustave, was one of the artist’s key dealers late in his life. Letter from Julien Tempelaere to Paul Gardner, October 17, 1949, NAMA curatorial files. The author is grateful to Brigid M. Boyle, Bloch Family Foundation Doctoral fellow, who first raised questions about the date. Brigid M. Boyle to Mary Schafer, April 22, 2024, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, 33-15/2.
11. Sophia Boosalis, August 30, 2024, treatment report, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, 33-15/2.
12. Correspondence from Sylvie Brame to Brigid M. Boyle, April 23, 2024, Nelson-Atkins curatorial files, 33-15/2.

Documentation

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Provenance

With Elizabeth “Ruth” (née Escombe, 1833–1907) Edwards, London, by August 14, 1890—at least 1891 [1];

Barr Smith, Adelaide, Australia, possibly by June 1924 [2];

Sold by Lockett Thomson, Barbizon House, London, 1932 [3];

Mrs. John D., New York, before October 15, 1932 [4];

With Galerie Étienne Bignou, Paris, stock no. 2059, and Bignou Gallery, New York, as *Les Marguerites* and *Chrysanthèmes d'été*, by October 15, 1932–February 13, 1933 [5];

Purchased from Bignou, through Knoedler and Co., New York, by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 1933 [6].

Notes

[1] Ruth Edwards and her husband Edwin Edwards (1823–1879) were patrons of Fantin-Latour and acted as art dealers for him in London. After her husband's death in 1879, Ruth Edwards continued to act as his agent, selling his works from her London house in Golden Square and submitting works to the Royal Academy and Society of French Artists. See William Gaunt, "Fantin-Latour: In the Maturity of His Art," *Connoisseur*, no. 152 (January–April 1963): 220–22.

The painting was submitted by Edwards to the *Eighth Autumn Exhibition* at the Corporation of Manchester Art Gallery in 1890 and on August 14, the sub-committee selected it for exhibition. See GB127.M901/Art Galleries Committee: Art Sub-Committee/2–Oct 1888–Mar 1900, Manchester Central Library. Special thanks to Michelle Owen, archives officer, Archives and Local History, Manchester Central Library. Edwards also submitted the painting a year later to *The Sixty-Fifth Autumn Exhibition*, Royal Birmingham Society of Artists.

[2] "Barr Smith, Adelaide" is cited in the provenance published in Douglas Druick and Michel Hoog, eds., *Fantin-Latour*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1982), 266.

The constituents were probably Robert (1824–1915) and Joanna (1835–1919) Barr Smith, and/or their son, Australian financier and philanthropist, Thomas Elder Barr Smith (1863–1941). Thomas Elder was reported in June 1924 to own two Fantin-Latour flower pieces, although it is unclear which two these may have been. See Howard Ashton, "Our Southern Collections," *Art in Australia* 3, no. 8 (June 1924): unpaginated. Thomas Elder had a significant art collection, some of which he had acquired with his wife, Mary Isobel Mitchell (1863–1941), and some of which had been passed down by his parents, Robert and Joanna. The elder Barr Smiths owned five paintings by Fantin-Latour, including four flower pieces that were acquired from the artist through their English friends Edwin and Ruth Edwards. See Sarah Thomas and Angus Trumble, *Vive La France!: Hidden Treasures of French Art (1824–1945) from Adelaide*

Collections, exh. cat. (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 1998), 49.

[3] Lockett Thomson (1898–1990) was the director of the art firm Barbizon House, London, which he took over from his father, art critic and dealer David Croal Thomson (1855–1930), after his death. Their art magazine, *Barbizon House: An Illustrated Record*, reproduced some of the paintings and drawings that were sold from the gallery each year. In the 1932 issue, the Nelson-Atkins painting, entitled *Coreopsis*, is listed among the works sold from Barbizon House.

[4] According to a handwritten note on a photograph of the painting in the Bignou Gallery albums, the painting was in the "collection Mrs. John D. New York." See Frick Art Reference Library Archives, New York, Bignou Gallery Albums, MS.024, Album 1: Boudin, Fantin-Latour.

It is possible that Mrs. John D. is Abigail "Abby" Greene Aldrich Rockefeller (1874–1948), wife of American businessman John Davidson Rockefeller Jr. (1839–1937), whom she married in 1901. Mrs. Rockefeller was an avid art collector and the driving force behind the foundation of the Museum of Modern Art, which opened in November 1929. She often lent works anonymously to the Museum of Modern Art under the name Mrs. John D.

[5] See Frick Art Reference Library Archives, New York, Bignou Gallery Albums, MS.024, Album 1: Boudin, Fantin-Latour; and Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Albums BIGNOU ODO 1996-29, Bobine N°20, Boîte 11, Fantin-Latour, Clichés 235–36. For the beginning date of ownership, see letter from Étienne Bignou to M. Knoedler and Co., New York, October 15, 1932, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, M. Knoedler and Co. records, approximately 1848–1971, Series VI.A. General correspondence, 1879–1971, box 568. The letter includes a list of paintings being sent from Bignou in Paris to Knoedler in New York for the "Flowers" by *French Painters* exhibition, which opened in November 1932.

[6] The painting appears in Knoedler's Foreign Consignment Book, which records consignments from foreign firms that were received by the Knoedler office in New York. This seems to indicate that while Knoedler was responsible for the sale to the Nelson-Atkins, the painting was still the property of Bignou. See Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, M. Knoedler and Co. records, approximately 1848–1971, Series III Commission books, 1879–1973, box 110, Foreign consignment book 2, 1915 November–1936 October, p. 68, stock no. 838, as *Fleurs diverses dans un vase*; and Series II. Sales books, box 75, Sales book 15, 1928 January–1944 December, p.

159, stock no. F-838, as *Fleurs diverses dans un vase*; and box 274, Daybook 1932–33, p. 35, which records the sale and shipment of the painting to the museum in January and February 1933. Thank you to Karen Meyer-Roux, Sally McKay, and Mahsa Hatam of the Getty Archives for their research on our behalf.

Related Works

Henri Fantin-Latour, *Roses in a Cup*, 1882, oil on canvas, 14 3/8 x 18 1/8 in. (36.5 x 46 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, RF 1961 25.

Henri Fantin-Latour, *Summer Flowers*, 1882, oil on canvas, 21 x 24 1/2 in. (53.3 x 62.3 cm), private collection.

Henri Fantin-Latour, *Still Life with Roses in a Vase*, 1888, oil on canvas, 17 1/4 x 18 in. (43.8 x 45.7 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978-1-16.

Henri Fantin-Latour, *Larkspur*, 1892, oil on canvas, 27 x 23 5/8 in. (68.6 x 57.9 cm), Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow, 2139.

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The Sixty-Fifth Autumn Exhibition, Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, UK, 1891, no. 144, as *Summer Chrysanthemums*.

Possibly *The One Hundred and Thirtieth Exhibition*, The Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1898, no. 251, as *Chrysanthèmes d'été*.

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Exhibition of Nineteenth-Century French and American Paintings, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, April–June 1938, no cat.

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Fantin-Latour: À fleur de peau, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, September 14, 2016–February 12, 2017; Musée de Grenoble, March 18–June 18, 2017, no. 70, as *Chrysanthemums*.

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