



Samuel John Peploe (1871-1935), Still Life, c.1917, McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock

Samuel John Peploe (1871-1935) is one of the four artists known as the Scottish Colourists, the others being F. C. B. Cadell, J. D. Fergusson and G. L. Hunter. Born in Edinburgh, Peploe studied at the Académie Julian in Paris and at the Royal Scottish Academy in the Scottish capital. He returned to live in Paris between 1910 and 1912, where he was able to see the latest developments in French painting at first hand. Declared unfit to serve in World War One due to ill-health, Peploe continued to develop his practice during the conflict.

Still Life of about 1917 was painted towards the end of the war. It comes from an important series in which Peploe took inspiration from the Post-Impressionist artist Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). Peploe is known to have gone to painstaking lengths to arrange the objects he wished to depict. His niece Margery Porter recalled 'My uncle would arrange and re-arrange these groups for perhaps three days before he was satisfied that the balance and construction were perfect, then he would paint them quite rapidly.'

In this case, Peploe orchestrated apples and oranges amidst items of white china, a black wine bottle and draped material. The table on which they are displayed is flanked by a black chair, over which more material has been placed. The composition is tight – three of the table corners are cropped – and the space is shallow – with an ambiguous, roughly painted background visible just behind the chair. The oranges, reds and yellows of the fruit sings out amongst the low tones used on the majority of the canvas. Reflections in the jug, bottle, ginger jar and table-top are carefully realised, whilst form is often outlined in black and volume is emphasised by shadow.

The overall effect is of calm majesty in a work given to the museum by the Trustees of the Stuart Anderson Caird Bequest in 1929.

Find out more at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/still-life-183431>