



Mary Nicol Neill Armour (1902-2000), "Still Life with Pomegranate", 1947.

Ref. 1977.611 McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock. © The Artist's Estate / Bridgeman Images

Mary Armour (née Steel) was born in Blantyre, South Lanarkshire in 1902. She was encouraged by the artist Penelope Beaton (1886-1963) to study simultaneously at Glasgow School of Art and at Jordanhill Teaching College, which she did between 1920 and 1925. However, her teaching career was curtailed when she married fellow artist William Armour (1903-79) in 1927 due to the Education Authority Marriage Bar, which prevented married women from holding full-time teaching positions. Nonetheless, she continued to paint and in 1953 became a lecturer at Glasgow School of Art after the legislation was repealed. The Armours settled in Milngavie where they were founding members of the Milngavie Art Club in 1927 and continued to live for twenty-six years. During a long and prolific career, Armour exhibited regularly in solo and group shows and received many honours, including being elected a full member of the Royal Scottish Academy and being made Honorary President of Glasgow School of Art and of the Royal Glasgow Institute.

Still Life with Pomegranate is a fine example of her work in this genre. Painted from above, the colours and handling of paint are equally rich, with an emphasis given to texture and surface. A complicated arrangement of objects leads the eye from the leaves at the lower right to those at the upper left. Passages such as the reflection of a pomegranate in the jug and the light shining on the beer in the tankard reveal Armour's mastery of her profession. Tones of red, orange and brown underpin the composition, which layers up from table-top to newspaper, red cloth, pewter dish to tankard and apple. The work recalls seventeenth-century Flemish still-life painting, whilst maintaining a sense of modernity and freshness.

It was given by the Trustees of the Stuart Anderson Caird Bequest to the museum in 1947, not long after it was painted.

More info can be found here: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/still-life-with-pomegranate-183155>