

## **Scottish Colourists from The Fleming Collection**

**19 January - 1 April 2010**

The artists now known as the Scottish Colourists, Samuel John Peploe (1871-1935), Francis Campbell Boileau Cadell (1883-1937), George Leslie Hunter (1877-1931) and John Duncan Fergusson (1874-1961), have in the past thirty years excited more interest than they ever did during their lifetimes. They have been recognised as key players in the introduction of modern art to Britain, and among the most forward-thinking British artists of the early 20th century.

The Colourists did not develop as a group, but pursued independent careers; indeed, the descriptive name was not coined until 1948, when only Fergusson was still alive. Although the four exhibited together only three times during their lifetimes, the name has now been widely accepted as the title for a group of artists who, following in the footsteps of their predecessors, the Glasgow Boys, assimilated contemporary developments in continental art and brought a new approach to painting in Great Britain.

France figured largely in their lives. All were attracted by the lively artistic life of Paris, spending varying periods there. Peploe and Fergusson studied in Paris in the 1890s, returning there regularly throughout their early careers, settling for a time in the French capital where they were part of the community of international artists known as the School of Paris. Between 1909-1912 Fergusson and Peploe were leading members of the Anglo-Saxon group of Fauvistes based in Paris and were on friendly terms with many of the avant-garde artists there, including the young Picasso. On their return to Britain before the First World War, they were undeniably among the most advanced British artists of their time and ready to develop their mature individual styles.

Hunter and Cadell, also spent their formative years abroad. Hunter grew up in California and began his life as an artist in the bohemian San Francisco artistic community. Working as an illustrator he was first and foremost a draughtsman, learning the skills of his trade from fellow members of the Californian Society of Artists. Hunter first visited Paris in 1904 and settled back in Scotland in 1907, his interests varied widely, from 17th-century Dutch and Flemish Old Masters through Chardin to Cézanne, Chabaud and Braque. Cadell was first encouraged to become an artist by a friend of his parents, the celebrated Scottish watercolourist, Arthur Melville. Cadell, like Fergusson and Peploe, came from a middle-class Edinburgh background and, like the other Colourists, studied art abroad, first in Paris and then in Munich, where his family was living between 1906 and 1908.

Visiting London and Paris regularly and spending time on the Côte d'Azur, where most of the avant-garde artists who had settled in Paris in the early 20th century had moved, the Colourists were more aware than most British artists of the latest developments in art, a fact reflected in their work.