

bernard jacobson gallery

Bram Bogart

Monochrome

30th June – 30th July 2011

"We always think that a painting is ahead of its time. This is not true, it's the public that is behind the times. The painter is always influenced by his time, at the moment he lives." - Bram Bogart

In celebration of Bram Bogart's 90th birthday Bernard Jacobson Gallery is proud to present an exhibition that spans the 6 decades of the artist's distinguished career.

The exhibition will focus on a recurring theme in Bogart's work, the monochrome painting. Following early experiments with cubism and figuration, the 1950s saw the artist working in thick impasto. During this period, he was working on very close, toned paintings and by 1955 had produced a true monochrome painting. This however was not the reductionist monochrome of Klein but a highly textured surface in white – an approach that can be likened to the white reliefs of Ben Nicholson or Robert Ryman's minimalist canvases. In 1960 Bogart produced large-scale monochromes; *Lina-Abelina* (exhibited here) is a 2.5 metre high painting of blue white. By now the texture has been reduced and the painting has the appearance of a snowy landscape seen from the air. Brush marks and drips recall abstract expressionist all-over painting, the single colour accentuating it.

Subsequently Bogart, although perhaps more famous for his multi-coloured works, has continued to work in monochrome. This is true of the work he produced throughout the '60s, with more minimal highly structured paintings such as *Horizontaalwit* (1968). By the '70s the paintings were thicker sculptural reliefs, and had to be made on specially constructed wooden supports. This technique proved to be hugely successful, as Bogart went on to exhibit widely in Antwerp and Ghent, and later represented Belgium in the 1971 Venice Biennale. He would develop this style further, in beguiling works such as *Mystère* (1994) or *March* (2002) with their cement-like abstraction. *Vendredi-soir* (1999), a pure black painting, weighs in at a full 300 kilos and projects 30 centimeters from the wall, while *Hommage à Turner* (1996), a large flesh tone painting named after the great English painter, demonstrates Bogart's deep interest in colour. *Rouge-Rouge* (2007) is another, more recent example of this (illustrated above).

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As the exhibition shows, Bram Bogart has pioneered a form of abstraction that quite literally stands out. His thick, gestural application of paint presents the viewer with works that are more sculptural than anything easily recognizable as “painting.” As the artist turns 90, this exhibition is a testament to the tremendous contributions Bogart has made behind the times, ahead of the times, and at the present moment.