

# bernard jacobson gallery

## Ben Nicholson

9<sup>th</sup> January – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007

Ben Nicholson is undoubtedly one of the most important figures in the development of British abstraction. Born in 1894 into a family of painters, Nicholson made a conscious decision to paint seriously with the death of his mother in 1918. During the 1930s Nicholson established friendships with many European artists including Arp, Braque, Mondrian and Giacometti.

Nicholson managed to combine the internationalism of the avant-garde with a very British attitude towards light and its effect both within the painting as well as on the surface of the artwork. It was this reconciliation of both traditions, which was to make him a seminal figure in British art of the twentieth century.

This exhibition will include paintings and drawings from all periods of his life, starting with the drawing 'Cafe Robinson, St Remy' from the early thirties, going through to a 'White Relief' from 1936 and then the hard edged geometrical paintings of the early forties.

Nicholson regarded abstraction and representation as two sides of the same aesthetic coin with their cross-fertilisation presenting rather than restricting possibilities. Always mindful of his beloved Piero della Francesca as much as of Mondrian, he did not feel the need to break with tradition in order to be avant-garde. Rather he saw the role of the avant-garde as an extender to the tradition.

The range of surface textures and planes in his paintings is as complex as it is varied. Whether a white relief, relying on the surrounding light for its form and surface, or a simple pencil and wash drawing on paper, Nicholson treated each with a lightness which nevertheless leaves an indelible mark on the mind's eye.