



PRESS RELEASE 2021

Ben Nicholson: From the Studio

26 June – 24 October 2021

Pallant House Gallery is pleased to announce *Ben Nicholson: From the Studio*, a major exhibition of the celebrated Modern British artist Ben Nicholson OM (1894 – 1982), which will open in Summer 2021. The exhibition will explore the importance of still life and the studio within Nicholson's art – from his early highly-finished paintings to the abstract reliefs that secured his international reputation. It will provide the unique opportunity to see over 40 paintings, carved reliefs and works on paper alongside the still life objects that inspired them, including his distinctive striped jugs, mochaware mugs and glassware. These objects were a vital presence in the numerous studios Nicholson inhabited during his life and were of central importance in his still life paintings. During a career spanning six decades, Nicholson used the humble still life as a vehicle for experimentation and at the same time reinvigorated the genre within modern art.

The exhibition will include loans from private and national collections including Arts Council Collection, British Council Collection, Kettle's Yard, and Tate, as well as several works from National Galleries Scotland and Pier Arts Centre, supported by the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund.



Ben Nicholson, *1946 (still life – cerulean)*, 1946, Oil on canvas over board, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (Kearley Bequest, through Art Fund, 1989) © Angela Verren Taunt. All rights reserved, DACS 2021

Although Nicholson regarded the still life theme as an 'inheritance' from his father, the Edwardian artist William Nicholson, he strove to break with his traditional style of painting. In a letter to a friend, Nicholson recalled 'I owe a lot to my father [...] not only from what he made as a painter, but from the very beautiful striped and spotted jugs and mugs and goblets, and octagonal and hexagonal glass objects he collected. Having those things in the house was an unforgettable early experience for me.' The objects were a vehicle for formal experimentation and Nicholson frequently incorporated them as subject matter in his paintings. The exhibition will bring together

striking examples such as a 19th century striped ceramic jug that Nicholson painted both in an early representational still life, *1914 (the striped jug)* and a decade later, in one of his earliest forays into abstraction *1924 (painting-trout)*, in which the jug's distinctive pattern remains, but its form is reduced to a flat rectangular plane.

The exhibition will also explore the impact of the personal and artistic relationships Nicholson established during his life, notably his relationships with Winifred Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. Ben and Winifred Nicholson married in 1920, and for the first years of their marriage they lived in Switzerland at Villa Capriccio, where they established a simple domestic environment that captured their desire for a modern way of living. The couple returned to England in 1923 and soon set up home at Banks Head, a farmhouse in Cumberland where Nicholson developed a faux-naïve approach to painting, as can be seen in *1925 (jar and goblet)*. In 1928 on a visit to St Ives with painter Christopher Wood, Nicholson met the Cornish fisherman artist Alfred Wallis. The work of Wallis, often painted on irregular pieces of cardboard, confirmed Nicholson's interest in the materiality of his work and a playful sense of lived experience, as can be seen in *1929 (fireworks)*.

By March 1932, Nicholson had begun a new relationship with the sculptor Barbara Hepworth and was sharing her studio at 7 the Mall, in Hampstead. This new relationship was important to Nicholson's working and thinking about art. He stated that 'working-together in the same studio in those days was vital to my understanding of form'. Nicholson and Hepworth were considered pioneers of avant-garde British art and during visits to Paris spent time with Constantin Brâncuși, Hans Arp, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. It was during this time that Nicholson developed an interplay of different planes within a work and the conflation of space and depth. His

work also took on a biographical viewpoint in his still life paintings, as can be seen in works such as *1932-33 (musical instruments)*, which features the quasi-figurative form of two interconnected guitars, a reflection on his new relationship, and *1933 (piquet)*, which depicts two fish served on a dish, a bottle and cup, reflecting his enjoyment of a trip to France with Hepworth in the previous year. Nicholson made his first abstract carved reliefs in late 1933 including *1933 (six circles)*, which will be on display. These reliefs were initially carved free-hand and painted with muted colours, but by early 1934 they had developed into the celebrated white painted reliefs, featuring rectangular and circular forms, including *1936 (white relief)*. The balance of circular forms and rectangular areas, set within different planes, is a continuation of formal interests Nicholson had explored in his still life paintings.

Nicholson's studio settings and surrounding environments are often referenced in his work and form a central theme in the exhibition. In 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Nicholson and Hepworth moved to St Ives where he was to stay for nineteen years. It was in Cornwall that he painted his 'still life-landscapes', of which *22 July 1947 (still life - Odyssey 1)* and *1946 (still life-cerulean)* will be on display. In 1949, following a move to a large studio behind Porthmeor Beach, Nicholson began to undertake some of his important and large-scale still life paintings, which reference specific places in Italy including *March 1950 (still life - Castagnola)* and *Sept 8-54 (Torcello)*.

The final section of the exhibition will look at Nicholson's years in Switzerland, where he moved in 1958. The dramatic landscape informed his carved reliefs that once again became a central part of his work, and the now familiar forms of his still life objects of jugs and goblets found new expression in his linear drawings and series of etchings.

These will be shown together with the glassware that inspired several of his late works. Nicholson returned to England in 1971, settling in London and making his last studio at 2b Pilgrim's Lane, Hampstead, where the studio objects, many of which had been with him since the beginning of his career, once again inspired his practice. The objects left in Nicholson's studio will be presented, including a set of spanners, a table and draughtsman's tools, providing a remarkable insight into the lifelong inspiration the still life objects in his studios provided him.

Sophia Weston, Trustee of the Garfield Weston Foundation, said: "The Weston Loan Programme is the first ever UK-wide funding scheme to enable smaller and local authority museums to borrow works of art and artefacts from national collections. We are delighted that the programme will support the loan of six important works from Scotland. It will enable these to be brought from Stromness and Edinburgh to Chichester to significantly illuminate this timely and comprehensive exploration of Nicholson's work."

ENDS

Exhibition Supporters and Sponsors:



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Notes to Editors

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Ben Nicholson: In the Studio will open on 26 June and run until 24 October 2021.

The exhibition is curated by Louise Weller and Dr Lee Beard

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully-illustrated new book *Ben Nicholson: From the Studio* featuring essays by artist Edmund de Waal on Nicholson's pots; Prof. Louise Campbell on Nicholson and the studio; Dr Lee Beard Co-editor of the Ben Nicholson Catalogue Raisonné; with an overview by Louise Weller, Head of Exhibitions and an introduction by Simon Martin, Director. It is published by Pallant House Gallery and distributed by Yale University Press.

Pallant House Gallery in Chichester is a leading UK museum that stimulates new ways of thinking about British art from 1900 to now. As well as an original and critically-acclaimed exhibition programme and a public programme with inclusion at its heart, the gallery houses one of the best collections of Modern British art in the country – all within the distinctive setting of an 18th century townhouse and a 21st century gallery. pallant.org.uk

Garfield Weston Foundation

Established over 60 years ago in 1958, the Garfield Weston Foundation is a family-founded, grant-making charity which supports causes across the UK and gave over £88million last year. It has donated well over £1billion to charities since it was established. One of the most respected charitable institutions in the UK, the Weston Family Trustees are descendants of the founder and they take a highly active and hands-on approach. The Foundation's funding comes from an endowment of shares in the family business which includes Twinings, Primark, Kingsmill (all part of Associated British Foods Plc) and Fortnum & Mason, amongst others – a successful model that still endures today; as the businesses have grown, so too have the charitable donations.

From small community organisations to large national institutions, the Foundation supports a broad range of charities and activities that make a positive impact in the communities in which they work. Around 2,000 charities across the UK benefit each year from the Foundation's grants.

Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund has made £2 million in adapted funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 130,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. In a unique edition of the prize for 2020, Art Fund responded to the unprecedented challenges that all museums are facing by selecting five winners and increasing the prize money to £200,000. The winners are Aberdeen Art Gallery; Gairloch Museum; Science Museum; South London Gallery; and Towner Eastbourne
www.artfund.org

Opening Hours

Please note that due to coronavirus (Covid-19), the Gallery will have revised opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 5pm (last timed entry at 4pm)
Sundays/Bank Holidays: 11am – 5pm (last timed entry at 4pm)
Mondays: Closed

Ticketing

Visitors are encouraged to pre-book timed tickets to ensure the Gallery adheres to Public Health England's Health and Safety measures. Tickets include full access to the house and temporary exhibitions programme.

Please visit pallant.org.uk to book your tickets, or call the gallery on +44 (0) 1243 774557

The Pallant Café will be open during opening hours with socially distanced tables inside and in the courtyard garden.

Please go to pallant.org.uk ahead of your visit to check for daily updates to opening hours

Pallant House Gallery

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