



Figure 1961, oil on canvas, 90 x 92 cm

PRESS RELEASE

WILLIAM CROZIER Works 1958-1964 16th October – 15 November 2013

This Autumn (16 October – 15 November) **Piano Nobile** embarks on its first one-man show of the early works of **William Crozier (1930-2011)**, to celebrate the gallery's representation of this period of painting from the artist's estate. Many of the works have not been shown since first exhibited in the 50's and 60's, when they caused something of a sensation. Over half a century later the interest remains, and the artist's unique response to his era acknowledged, as demonstrated by the recent acquisition of works from this period by The National Gallery of Ireland and Tate Britain.

The show comprises a selection of 20 paintings from 1958 to 1964, and focuses around his early Essex landscapes and the development of the skeletal figure motif that he worked on for almost two decades. Visitors will be struck by the consistency in Crozier's art, seeing a continuum between the emotional tenor of this early work and the luxuriantly colourful landscapes and still life's painted after 1984. Yet Crozier's work is almost invariably inspired by a sense of alienation, sometimes by the exquisite ache of exile. In these early works his concern with the human condition is raw and explicit; it is the very object of the image.

By 1961 Crozier was widely seen as one of the most exciting artists in London. He had his first one-man exhibition that year at Arthur Tooth and Son which toured to the Kunstverein in Hannover the following year. His intellectual and painterly concerns were closely aligned to the adventurous group of abstract artists which included his close friends Roger Hilton and Terry Frost. In 1964 the Arts Council included his paintings in the exhibition *Six Young Painters* with David Hockney, Peter Blake, Allen Jones, Bridget Riley and Euan Uglow. In 1975 Crozier was grouped alongside Francis Bacon in the important exhibition *Body and Soul* at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.



Commenting to the Keeper of the Scottish National Gallery, in relation to the museum's acquisition of Burning Field Essex, Crozier explained: 'It is the custom in Essex for farmers to burn the stubble in the fields after harvest. . . making them black and dark against the skyline. It was reminiscent of those magnificent photographs of the battlefields in France and Flanders during the First World War. I have always found a fascination in this kind of desolate and ravaged landscape.'

A visit to Bergen-Belsen in the 60's left an indelible mark, and as Philip Vann has commented; for Crozier, 'The skeleton is still very much a sentient human being: vulnerable, dignified, alone and abandoned in a landscape of astonishing beauty.'

Paris and Existentialism marked William Crozier for life. He had immersed himself in Sartre and Surrealism while at Glasgow School of Art where he studied from 1949-53 and he visited Paris as a student and young graduate, drinking in the atmosphere of St Germain and finding in Existentialist philosophy, art and politics the paradigms for his emergent art as much as a personal moral compass. Moving from Scotland to England, Crozier held a maverick position in the London art world of the 1950s, an artist at the forefront of avant-garde British art.

WILLIAM CROZIER
Works 1958 – 64

15th October – 16th November 2013

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