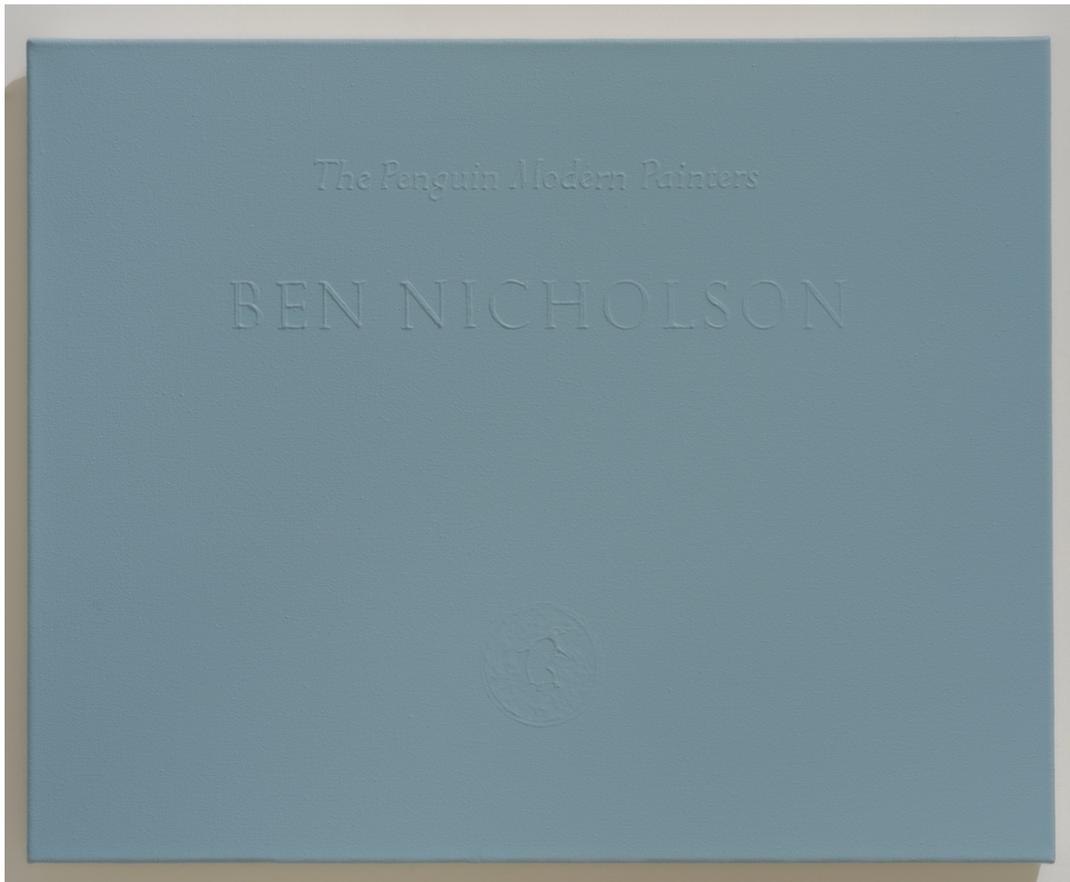


ART FIRST

SIMON MORLEY
'MODERN BRITISH'

21 February – 28 March 2024
Wednesday – Friday, 11am – 6pm
Private View 21 February, 6 - 8pm



Simon Morley, *Penguin Modern Painters. Ben Nicholson (1948)*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 66x53x4cm

Art First is pleased to present a new series of paintings by the British artist and writer Simon Morley. In most of the paintings in the exhibition one at first sees only a coloured rectangle, but on moving closer a text written on the painted surface is legible which is almost the same colour as the ground of the painting and is built up by hand in painted layers to produce a relief effect. In one group of four paintings, the text derives from the cover designs of *The Penguin Modern Painters* series, published between 1944 and 1948, and feature Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, Victor Pasmore, and Stanley Spencer. There is also a suite of

paintings based on the cover or title page designs of first editions of works by British poets and novelists from the first half of the twentieth century to the 1950s, including W. H. Auden, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, and Virginia Woolf. In addition, the exhibition presents a large new work on paper in which Morley has directly painted over the verses on all the pages of T.S. Eliot's famous poem 'The Waste Land'.

Morley's new exhibition at Art First relates to the one he held at the gallery in 2007 entitled 'The English Series'. Since 2007, Morley has left the UK, and he now lives in South Korea and France. Thinking from a distance about 'British culture' is one of the motivations for making the new series. Concerning the monochromatic style of his 'Book Painting', Morley writes: "Because a viewer's movements in relation to the paintings' surfaces determines whether they see a coloured rectangle or a text, the effect is transitive rather than static, producing a kind of 'in-between' or slowly shifting space where nothing is definitively fixed. Perhaps my interest in evoking this elusive space is a consequence of having lived the first six years of my life in on the top floor of a block of flats directly overlooking the English Channel – a vast and ever-changing expanse of sea and sky."

Simon Morley's work has been exhibited internationally, most recently in a solo exhibition at Song Art Gallery in Seoul. He is also the author of several books, including *Modern Painting. A Concise History*, recently published by Thames & Hudson in their World of Art series.



For further enquiries and the price list, please contact Clare Cooper: clare@artfirst.co.uk

Art First, 15a St. Mary's Walk, London SE11 4UA
www.artfirst.co.uk / facebook.com/artfirstlondon/ / info@artfirst.co.uk / Tel. 07711 945098