

**PRESS RELEASE****Craigie Aitchison***Recent Work*

29th November - 22nd December 2006

Monday – Friday 10am-6pm  
Saturday 10am-1.30pm

Bedlington, Purple Mountain 2006

Waddington Galleries and Timothy Taylor Gallery, are pleased to announce an exhibition of new works by Craigie Aitchison.

The exhibition, to be held at Waddington Galleries consists of over thirty paintings including still-lives, portraits and three large Crucifixions.

The artist's admiration for Piero della Francesca and earlier Renaissance methods of dealing with space, before the invention of perspective, gives his work a two dimensional quality, characteristic of icons. This flattening of space can be seen in 'Bedlington, Purple Mountain' 2006. A solitary Bedlington terrier stands with quiet dignity in a landscape that appears both in focus and blurred with a hazed dryness. The tonal arrangement of purple and blue-greens is reminiscent of the Mediterranean and of the dried pigments of sun bleached frescoes; there are no hard edges. Aitchison paints each motif by beginning from the centre and working outwards, leaving space around the edge to create a haloed effect of light. Horizon line becomes mountain line becomes skyline.

Aitchison's considered interplay of geometry and colour can also be seen in 'Portrait of Francis Fry, Montecastelli' 2002. Its arrangement of soft interlocking triangles, that travel through the shoulders, neck and hair are stabilised by a horizontal umber beard. Before starting the portrait, a screen of pink was hung behind the sitter to immediately create tonal contrast. This 'permanent rose' pink background is used in all of the exhibited portraits.

Almost a third of the paintings in the exhibition are of an intimate domestic scale measuring approximately six by five inches. 'Dead Bird (October)' 2005 depicts a bird that Aitchison found frozen on his windowsill and thereafter became included in his repertoire of motifs. The fragile weight of the creature is given graceful form, its small chest shaped like the hull of a boat, its wing an outstretched oar grounded in a field of green.

Aitchison's crucifixions are set in personal territory – whether in the bleak, heather-tinged scrubland of the Isle of Arran or the softer groves of Italy where in 1975 he acquired a house and chapel near Sienna, called Montecastelli. In 'Crucifixion, 2006' a crucifixion is centrally placed in an austere nocturnal landscape, symmetrically balanced on either side by a Cypress tree, echoing the presence of the two thieves. A glowing light radiates from the central Christ figure, as if a lighthouse of the spirit amidst the dark scumbled impasto of sky and land.

Craigie Aitchison initially read law at Edinburgh University and Middle Temple, London, before enrolling at the Slade to study painting. There he became friends with Myles Murphy, Euan Uglow and Michael Andrews. He has exhibited widely in the UK and overseas, including a major retrospective in 2003 entitled 'Out of the Ordinary' at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. His work is held in many public and private collections including the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Tate Gallery. In 1994 he was awarded the Jerwood prize for painting. In 1998 he was elected a member of the Royal Academy and was commissioned to paint Calvary altarpieces for Truro and Liverpool Cathedrals.

A fully illustrated catalogue with an introductory text written by Paul Levy accompanies the exhibition.

**Please contact Louise Kybert for further information and images**