



**William Nicholson (1872 – 1949)**

**Judd's Farm, 1912**

**Oil on wood panel. Acquired by Towner 1986 with the assistance from the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, National Art Collections Fund and Friends of the Towner**

**Dimensions 31.5 x 39.5 cm**

This work has been chosen to support 'Our Place' – Annual Schools Exhibition 2015 - celebrating the built heritage of the South Downs.

Towner Gallery in partnership with South Downs National Park Authority, Worthing Museum and Art Gallery and the Flora Twort Gallery Petersfield

## About the artist

Nicholson was a landscape, portrait and still life painter. He studied at the Académie Julian in Paris, where he met James Pryde and married Pryde's sister Mabel with whom he had a son, the artist Ben Nicholson.

Nicholson began his career in advertising and woodcutting but this proved largely unsuccessful, and he moved his focus to painting. He went on to gain considerable success, particularly in his portraiture work for which he received a knighthood in 1936. However, it was landscape and still life that brought him the most pleasure.

Until the First World War, Nicholson lived in Rottingdean just outside Brighton. Most of his landscapes depict his surroundings in Sussex, to the extent that Nicholson became known as 'the painter of the Downs'.

Nicholson's style was typically Edwardian; he used muted tones and applied paint with soft fluidity, as in this work, **Judd's Farm**, which depicts an isolated farm on the 650 acres of land which was rapidly developed in the 1920s to become Peacehaven. Normally extremely reticent about talking about his works, Nicholson notably discussed **Judd's Farm** in *The Artist*: "the horizon divides the panel into nearly equal parts; an odd place to find it but the pattern manages to adjust it all right. The colours – few, but inevitable; my subject – so simple that I could finish it in my head before releasing the paint ... The tones – three ... Simplification in tone is a secret of great value".

## Understand & Evaluate

Nicholson has written that the horizon divides this work into nearly equal parts. What are these parts called?

The foreground is divided into two further sections depicting the land and sea. What portion has Nicholson given to the land? Why do you think that is?

Where has the artist placed the buildings? Does this draw our attention to them? What type of buildings do you think they are?

Nicholson has said that he has used just a few colours. What effect does this have on the overall artwork? Do the colours suggest a location to you? Do you have any idea of the time of year? Look at the shadows. Do these give you any sense of the time of day?

The total effect has been achieved with paint and brushstrokes rather than detailed drawing or mark making. For example, look at the green paint around the base of the farmhouse. What does this suggest to you? Look at the paint and marks at the windows and doors. What do you think the artist is showing us?

Look at the mix of colours within the land, sea and sky. If you were to paint a scene like this, what mixture of colours would you use?

The artist has written about simplification in tone. What effect does this have? Do you prefer a work like this or do you prefer something with more detail?

## Explore and create

Take cameras onto the South Downs and collect images of shadows created by buildings or the natural environment. Make a note of the season, weather and time of day and the colours that you see in the landscape. Think about how the position of where you are standing changes the shadows that you see. Also, look at the shadows and note how their location changes as the day moves forward.

Back in the classroom create a montage of the images that you collected. Using a limited choice of paint colours, create a palette which reflects the colours you saw on the Downs – remembering the details of season, weather, and time of day. Think about how you can create a 3D representation of the shadows which you collected, e.g. wire drawing, cardboard shapes, recycled material.

As a class, create a 3D scene and use the palettes of colours to paint the scene. Once built, use torches or lamps to create different shadows. Record the position of these shadows using the wire drawings, cardboard shapes or recycled material.



## Further links to the National Park

Use the South Downs National Park Learning zone to explore <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/>.

[Learning outside the Classroom](#) including links for health and safety and practical support in planning your work away from the classroom.

[About the National Park](#) The South Downs National Park is the newest of the National Parks established in 2009. All national Parks are special places that are recognised for their stunning landscapes, amazing wildlife and rich heritage, as well as providing fantastic opportunities for enjoying and learning about what makes them special.

[Geology and landscape](#) Judd's farm was located on the site of what is now Peacehaven. It is in the Open Eastern Downs which are characterised by wide open spaces and smooth rolling hills revealing hidden valleys and broad rivers. To the east the downs meet the sea creating the white cliffs of Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. Find out more about the different landscape types across the South Downs by looking at the [Sense of Place](#) toolkit that includes fantastic maps and information about each distinctive area.

[Farming and Land management](#) Farming and land management have shaped the South Downs over the centuries and help sustain many of the special qualities for which the National Park was designated. The proportion of grassland to arable has varied throughout history although since the Second World War the area of chalk grassland has significantly reduced while the percentage of crops has increased. Judd's Farm was located on agricultural land at the time that Nicholson painted it.

[Habitats and wildlife](#) Compare grassland diversity on the chalk downland to that in your school grounds, linking to your science and geography curriculum. Chalk specific plants are a great way to give your students a sense of local identity and learn about how important the downland is to conservationists. Scrub bashing with pupils from your school is a great, practical way to demonstrate how the chalk downland is managed to control the succession of more invasive species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and silver birch and can contribute to a [John Muir Award](#) in the South Downs National Park.

[Culture and heritage](#) These farm buildings were constructed using materials sourced from the local area and are typical of the local vernacular. For more information about the building materials used across the national Park see the presentation on [Buildings in the South Downs Landscape](#).

[Access and recreation](#) To see the landscape that inspired Nicholson, you can walk part of the 100 mile long National Trail, the South Downs Way, particularly the stretch around Southease which passes to the north of the town of Peacehaven. To find out more about the South Downs Way, see: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way>

[Economy and industry](#) The land surrounding the location of Judd's cottage was agricultural downland and this remained the case until 1917 when the new town development of Peacehaven came about. The aim was to create a seaside resort based on the Australian grid pattern style. Unfortunately the town became a sprawl of development on the downland landscape. This well-known spectre of Peacehaven was used to illustrate the threat to downland during the proceedings of the 1934 South Downs Preservation Bill.