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AN ARTIST'S COLLECTION: IVON HITCHENS





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Ivon Hitchens was one of the most original British painters of the twentieth century. His landscapes are immediately recognisable for their long horizontal canvases, assured brushwork and extraordinary command of colour. Yet their enduring appeal lies in something less easily defined: the sense that a familiar place can be discovered anew each time we look at it.

An Artist's Collection: Ivon Hitchens brings together seven paintings held in a private collection since the late 1970s. Painted between 1942 and 1978, they trace Hitchens' career from his early wartime landscapes in Sussex to the brilliant colour and greater freedom of his late work. Presented together exclusively at House 50, Burlington Arcade, after nearly fifty years in private hands, this exceptional collection offers a rare opportunity to consider the breadth of Hitchens' oeuvre, and to make a part of this remarkable history one's own.

The collection's particular significance lies in the discerning eye of its owner, the landscape artist Kenneth Webb, whom Gladwell & Patterson have had the honour of representing for many decades. Kenneth had admired Hitchens' work since his student years, and its influence became particularly evident in his paintings of the mid-1970s. The two first met at Hitchens' eightieth birthday party in 1973, forming a firm friendship sustained by regular meetings and a shared enthusiasm for the possibilities of painting. Their artistic exchange extended beyond admiration: Kenneth introduced Hitchens to the experimental possibilities of acrylic paints, adding a further dimension to the creative bond that gives this collection its distinctive character.



Kenneth's own career as a landscape painter has been defined by an intense response to the natural world and a constant desire to find new ways of expressing it. Colour has always been central to his work, but rather than simply recording the landscape before him, Kenneth has sought to capture the sensations, rhythms and emotional responses that a place evokes. From the richly wooded landscapes of the Forest of Dean to the rugged terrain of the West Coast of Ireland, the places in which he has lived and worked have continually shaped the evolution of his painting. Hitchens' example was particularly important to Kenneth's developing artistic language, demonstrating how the observed landscape could provide a starting point for something freer and more expressive. Hitchens offered Kenneth a way of seeing; an understanding that colour, gesture and abstraction could convey an experience of landscape beyond its physical appearance.

Hitchens and Kenneth shared areas of commonality within their artistic approaches; their paintings were neither entirely abstract nor completely figurative, and the immediate landscape of their surroundings was integral to their creativity. Hitchens' inspiration was firmly rooted in the quiet, gentle landscape around Petworth in Sussex, while Kenneth found inspiration first in the Forest of Dean and, increasingly, in the rugged West Coast of Ireland near Connemara. There, his delight in the primitive landscape of rock and desolate bog would ultimately lead him towards the distinctive and increasingly individual approach of his later years.

These paintings therefore tell two stories at once: the development of Hitchens' art and the enduring admiration of a fellow artist. Gladwell & Patterson's association with Kenneth over many decades makes it a particular pleasure to present *An Artist's Collection: Ivon Hitchens* at House 50, Burlington Arcade this October.



Kenneth Webb, Ivon Hitchens and Molly Hitchens, 1973



Kenneth Webb in his studio in Devon, 2022

IVON HITCHENS: LIFE AND WORK

Born in London in 1893, Ivon Hitchens studied at St John's Wood Art School and the Royal Academy Schools. He became part of the progressive artistic circle in Hampstead that included Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, and was closely associated with the Seven and Five Society. His commitment to experiment was established early, even as the landscape remained a constant source of inspiration.

The decisive change in Hitchens' life came in 1940. Following bomb damage to his London studio, he moved with his wife Mollie and their young son John to woodland at Lavington Common, near Petworth in West Sussex. They first lived in a caravan; a studio and house followed on the site they named Greenleaves. For almost four decades, its six acres of wooded garden, together with the surrounding heathland and countryside, formed the centre of Hitchens' working life. He painted outdoors in all seasons, returning to places he knew intimately as light, weather and growth altered their appearance.

The seven works in this exhibition share Hitchens' characteristic horizontal format. He used its length to encourage the eye to travel across a painting, encountering one relationship of colour and form after another. A branch might direct that movement; an area of unpainted canvas could give neighbouring colours greater force. Hitchens sometimes described the experience of looking at his pictures in musical terms, asking viewers to attend to the rhythms and intervals within a composition. The landscape was always present, but its forms offered him the means to create something beyond a record of a particular view.

Hitchens represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1956 and was appointed CBE in 1958. Recognition continued throughout his later years, when his handling of paint became increasingly free and his colour more adventurous. Prolific to the end of his life, he found continually renewed possibilities in the landscape around Greenleaves. The freshness of those paintings, the immediacy of their marks and the vitality of their colour, speaks to collectors today as powerfully as it did to those who first encountered them in his lifetime.



FELLED TREES NO. 3 PAINTED IN 1942

Oil on Canvas
51 x 84 cms / 20 x 33 inches
Signed & Dated 'Ivon Hitchens 42' (lower left)

Provenance

Artist's Studio.
Waddington Galleries Ltd., London.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired in the 1970s.

Exhibitions

The Arts Council of Great Britain, London, *British Painters 1939-1945*, 1947-1948.
The Arts Council of Great Britain, London, *Ivon Hitchens Tour*, 1979, catalogue number 16.
Royal Academy of Arts, London, *Ivon Hitchens: A Retrospective Exhibition*, 1979, number 24.





Felled Trees No. 3, 1942

Felled Trees No. 3 was painted in the midst of the Second World War, only two years after Hitchens left bomb-damaged London for Sussex. Although the woodland offered the artist and his family a place of refuge, the war also shaped the wider landscape. Timber was urgently needed throughout Britain for the war effort, and the Women's Timber Corps was formed in 1942 to help meet that demand, therefore *Felled Trees* acquires a particular resonance in the year of its making.

The painting's restrained colours deepen the impression of Britain at War. Muted blues, browns and greens are interrupted by pale openings and a small, insistent note of yellow. Dark, curving lines cross the lower half of the canvas, suggesting fallen trunks and branches without describing each one in full. The eye follows their movements into the wood, only to be turned back by another stroke or a sudden change in tone. Hitchens conveys the close, disordered experience of the scene while holding its varied parts in a carefully judged composition.

This exceptional painting from Hitchens' wartime period, was exhibited during the artists' life time with both the Arts Council and at the Royal Academy of Arts where it was shown as part of the 1979 Hitchens Retrospective, the year of the artist's death. Set beside the later works in Kenneth's collection, *Felled Trees No. 3* reveals the strength of the pictorial ideas Hitchens would continue to develop throughout his career.

APRIL HAZE, NO. 3 PAINTED IN 1957

Oil on Canvas
43 x 109 cms / 17 x 43 inches
Signed & Dated 'Hitchens 57' (lower left)

Provenance

Artist's Studio.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired from the above in the 1970s.





April Haze, No. 3 was created during one of Hitchens' most celebrated periods, between representing Britain at the 1956 Venice Biennale alongside Lynn Chadwick and receiving his CBE in 1958. Trees and cottages emerge from a panoramic sweep that appears, at first glance, almost abstract, an effect characteristic of Hitchens' mature work. He kept the painting in his studio for over a decade before Kenneth acquired it directly from Hitchens in the early 1970s.

The number in its title points to Hitchens' practice of returning to a subject in successive paintings. A motif was rarely exhausted by a single interpretation: each version allowed Hitchens to reconsider the balance of shapes, the movement across the canvas and the effect of one colour upon another. Here a substantial yellow form rises near the centre, dividing passages of cool blue and grey from smaller marks of green and ochre. Soft pinks and violets seem to hover over the scene. The trees and cottages move in and out of recognition, much as forms might appear through the changing light of an April haze.

The painting's breadth is essential to this experience. Hitchens leads the eye from one grouping of marks to the next, allowing the landscape to unfold gradually rather than presenting it as a fixed view. Webb's direct acquisition preserves a close connection to the artist's studio. The wide, pale frame that has remained with the painting further enriches that history and the way in which the work is seen today.



April Haze No. 3, 1957

LAKE, "O HURRY WHERE BY WATER AMONG TREES"
PAINTED IN 1968

Oil on Canvas
51.5 × 105.5 cms / 20¼ × 41½ inches
Signed 'Hitchens 68' (lower left)

Provenance

Artist's Studio.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired from the above in the 1970s.





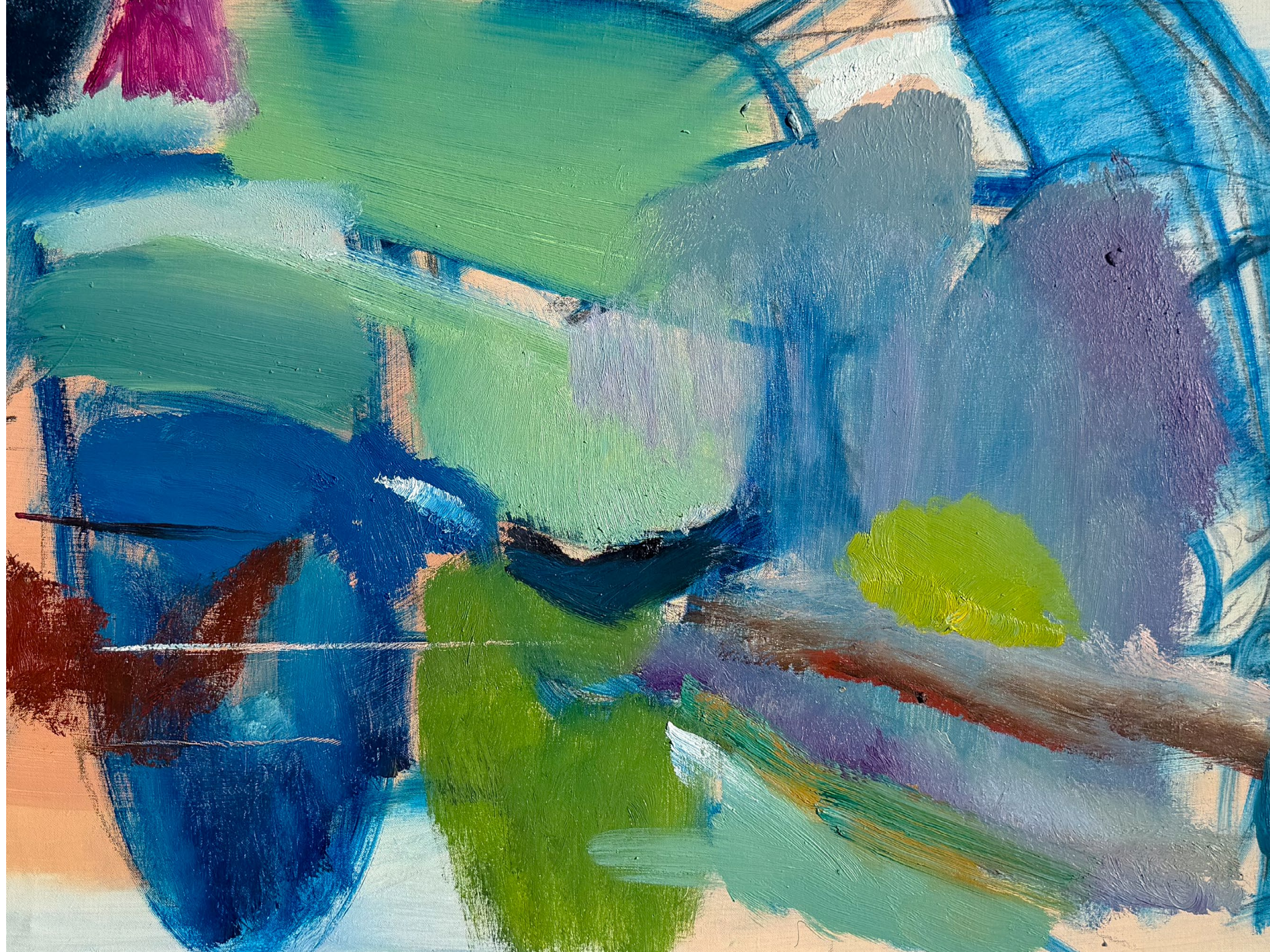
Painted in 1968, *Lake, "O Hurry Where by Water Among 'Trees"* takes its evocative title from the opening line of W. B. Yeats's poem *The Ragged Wood*, first published in *In the Seven Woods* in 1904. Yeats conjures an enchanted landscape in which water, woodland and reflected images become inseparable – imagery that finds a remarkable visual counterpart in Hitchens' own lifelong exploration of the Sussex landscape.

Hitchens returned to the same poem as inspiration into the 1970s. His repeated invocation of Yeats suggests a particular affinity with a poem whose imagery of woodland, water and reflection so closely echoes the subjects that preoccupied Hitchens at Greenleaves, his secluded home near Petworth. Woodland pools, rivers and millponds offered an endlessly changing interplay of surface and reflection.

Yeats's opening stanza describes lovers encountering their images in water beneath the trees; Hitchens similarly dissolves the boundaries between woodland, water and reflection. Broad passages of turquoise, cobalt, violet and green appear to turn back upon themselves, so that it becomes deliberately difficult to distinguish solid form from reflected form. Water is therefore not simply represented within the landscape, but becomes a means through which Hitchens could destabilise and reorganise pictorial space. Forms appear to double and turn back upon themselves, suggesting both the upright presence of trees and their unstable reflections below. Rather than establishing a fixed horizon, Hitchens allows the eye to travel laterally through the long canvas, experiencing landscape as a succession of sensations.

The painting's panoramic format is fundamental to this effect. Hitchens had long favoured an extended horizontal canvas as a means of resisting the single, static viewpoint of traditional landscape painting. Here, it allows the composition to unfold almost musically: passages of colour answer one another across the surface, while the sweep of the brush carries the eye from one end of the painting to the other. Water becomes less a discrete subject than a means of destabilising space itself — allowing earth, vegetation, sky and reflection to coexist within a single field of colour.

Created at the height of Hitchens' mature career, *Lake, "O Hurry Where by Water Among 'Trees'"* encapsulates the extraordinary balance he achieved between observation and abstraction. Yeats's poetic title adds another layer to this encounter with the landscape: a world of trees, water and reflected forms transformed through memory, sensation and colour.





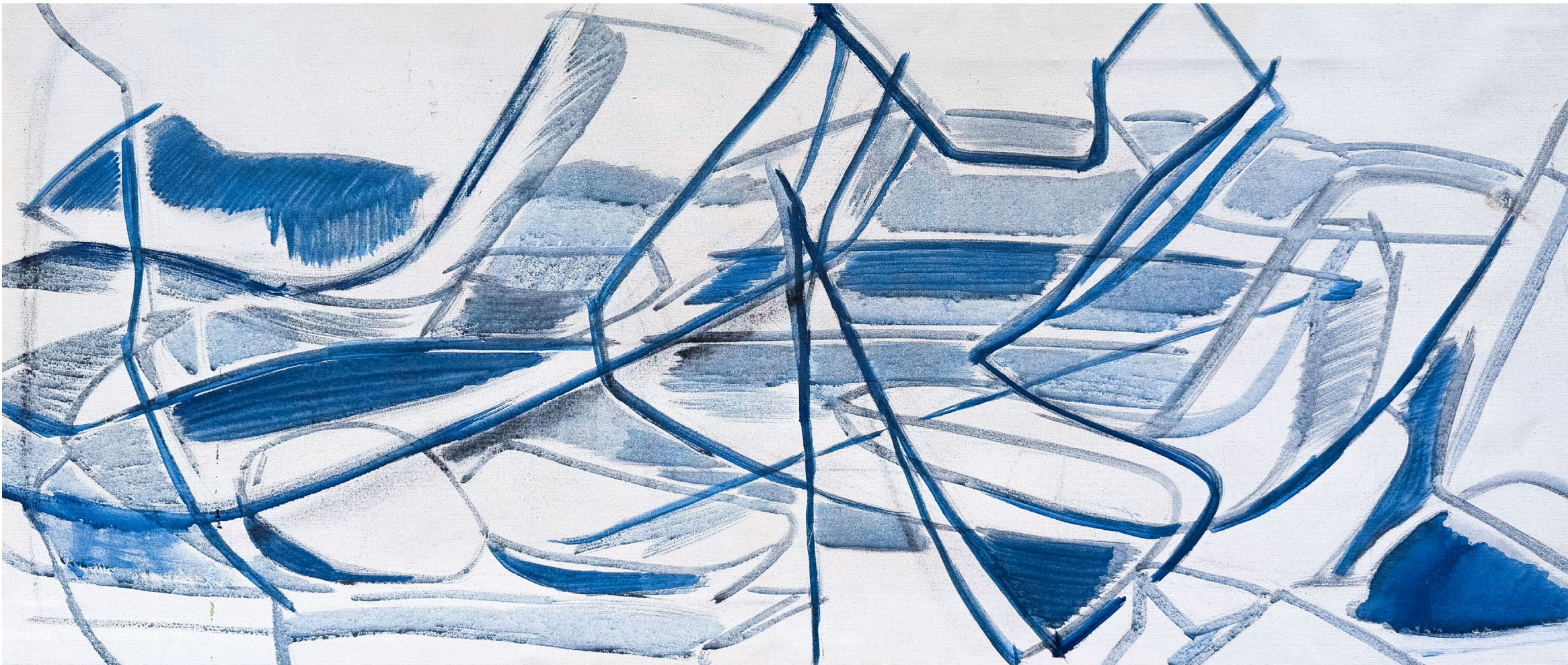
Lake, "O Hurry Where by Water Among Trees", 1968

The Ragged Wood
William Butler Yeats

O, hurry, where by water, among the trees,
The delicate-stepping stag and his lady sigh,
When they have looked upon their images
Would none had ever loved but you and I!

Or have you heard that sliding silver-shoed
Pale silver-proud queen-woman of the sky,
When the sun looked out of his golden hood?
O, that none ever loved but you and I!

O hurry to the ragged wood, for there
I will drive all those lovers out and cry
O, my share of the world, O, yellow hair!
No one has ever loved but you and I.



STUDY FOR A GIANT OAK TREE
CIRCA 1978

Oil on Canvas
51 x 122 cms / 20 x 48 inches

Provenance
Artist's Studio.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired from the above in the 1970s.

This exquisite lineal landscape provides us with an unusually direct view of Hitchens' thinking on canvas. Lines in blue and grey cross its broad white ground, meeting brushed areas of tone and longer horizontal strokes. Some marks establish a direction in a single movement; others test its weight or alter the space around it. The exposed ground is integral to the composition, allowing each gesture to be seen clearly and each interval to retain its force. Of particular interest is the angular form near the centre. Its rising and descending lines invite comparison with the central structure in Hitchens' *Giant Oak Tree on Green Sky on Fields* of 1978, in the Collection of the Courtauld Gallery, London. In this pinnacle artwork, a complex group of marks suggests the oak's canopy and trunk, while the landscape opens towards the right. The study and the Courtauld work show a compelling kinship in their long format and the way a central form directs movement across the canvas, establishing this as a preparatory study for this painting.

Hitchens gave the study directly to Kenneth. Its presence among the finished paintings is a testament to their friendship and artistic bond. Kenneth valued this as an object that reveals the decisions behind Hitchens' expressive landscapes: the placement of a line, the space left open, and the moment when a painted gesture begins to suggest a tree or a distant field. In itself it is a vibrantly modern abstract work.



© The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust); *Giant Oak Tree on Green Sky on Fields*, 1978.
Oil on Canvas, 44 x 109 cms





BLUE DOOR, WINTER PROFUSION PAINTED IN 1972

Oil on Canvas
43 x 109 cms / 17 x 43 inches
Signed & Dated 'Hitchens 57' (lower left)

Provenance
Artist's Studio.
Waddington Galleries Ltd., London.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired in the 1970s.





The blue door of Greenleaves was one of Hitchens' most personal and enduring subjects. He painted it in the early years after settling in Sussex and returned to it in later works. It belonged to the house and garden at the heart of his working life: an everyday feature that could be seen afresh with each change of season. In *Blue Door, Winter Profusion*, painted in 1972, that familiar subject becomes the starting point for an exceptionally rich arrangement of colour.

Deep blues gather across the centre and upper part of the canvas, meeting violet, pale lilac and white. Strokes of orange and yellow bring warmth to the lower edge of this winter scene. Fine lines of white and pale blue pick out details and guide the eye between its larger forms. In places, Hitchens allows the prepared canvas to remain visible, giving the surrounding paint greater clarity and intensity.

These intervals are as important as the painted areas. They prevent the strong colours from closing in upon one another and allow the viewer's eye to move through the composition. A sense of depth emerges through the relationships between shapes and gestures, rather than through conventional perspective. The blue door connects the work to a real and deeply familiar place, while the freedom of Hitchens' late style gives that place an expressive life of its own.



Blue Door, Winter Profusion, 1972



WILDFLOWER WOOD PAINTED IN 1975

Oil on Canvas
40.5 x 74 cms / 16 x 29 inches
Signed 'Hitchens' (lower right)

Provenance
Artist's Studio.
Waddington Galleries Ltd., London.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired in the 1970s.

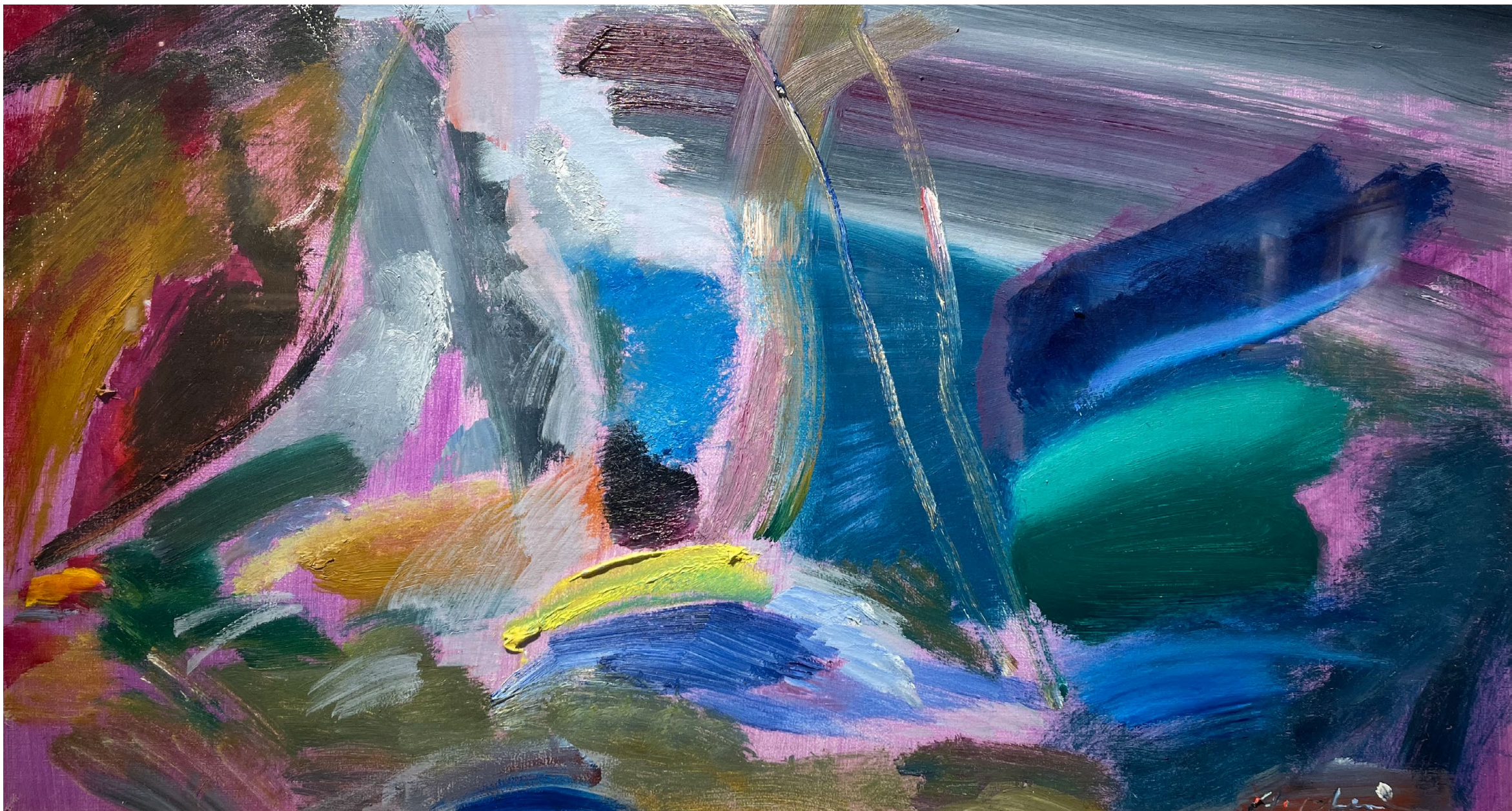




Painted when Hitchens was in his eighties, *Wildflower Wood* demonstrates the continuing inventiveness of his late work. Its colour is exuberant: saturated blue and turquoise sweep across the right of the canvas, while pink, violet and yellow animate the darker forms to the left. Shorter strokes near the lower edge suggest the scattered growth of the woodland floor. The subject is felt through the energy and arrangement of these marks as much as through the forms they describe.

A slender, triangular structure rises near the centre, interrupting the broad movements of colour around it. It recalls the angular lines of the study given to Webb and invites a further visual comparison with the central form in the Courtauld's *Giant Oak Tree on Green Sky on Fields*. Across these works, a few decisive lines can suggest a tree or branch while also establishing the structure through which the eye navigates the painting. The resemblance gives *Wildflower Wood* a valuable place in the collection's account of Hitchens' continuing exploration of form.

Here, that structure is almost immersed in colour. Hitchens' brushwork moves freely between broad, confident sweeps and quick, delicate accents; forms appear, dissolve and reappear as the eye travels across the canvas.



Wildflower Wood, 1975

POPPIES AND A GARDEN CHAIR PAINTED IN 1967

Oil on Canvas
40.5 × 86.5 cms / 16 x 34 inches
Signed 'Hitchens' (lower left)

Provenance
Artist's Studio.
Waddington Galleries Ltd., London.
The Private Collection of an Artist, UK, acquired in the 1970s.



Among the brilliant flashes of colour that animate *Poppies and a Garden Chair*, the scarlet heads of the poppies immediately command attention. Scattered across the composition rather than contained within a conventional still life, they emerge from a garden transformed into an arrangement of colour, movement and space. Although Hitchens is celebrated above all as a landscape painter, flowers remained an important subject throughout his career, offering many of the same possibilities for expressive handling, inventive colour and rhythmic structure that he explored in the landscape.

In this exquisite painting, the distinction between still life and landscape is deliberately blurred. The poppies punctuate sweeping passages of green, blue, violet, grey and earthy brown, while the garden chair is similarly absorbed into Hitchens' painterly vocabulary. Its curving structure emerges and disappears among the surrounding vegetation, so that object and landscape become inseparable. Rather than describing individual elements precisely, Hitchens allows colour and gesture to convey the experience of looking: forms are glimpsed, interrupted and rediscovered as the eye travels across the canvas. The elongated format heightens this sense of movement. Brilliant notes of vermillion lead the eye rhythmically from one side of the composition to the other, while the chair provides a loose underlying structure around which the freer passages of paint appear to circulate.

For Kenneth Webb, *Poppies and a Garden Chair* acquired a significance extending far beyond its place within his collection. The painting had a profound influence on Webb's own subsequent paintings of poppies, creating a particularly compelling dialogue between the work of the two artists. Webb did not simply live with and admire Hitchens' painting; its vivid treatment of the flower became absorbed into his own artistic imagination and found renewed expression within his own work.

Within this collection, *Poppies and a Garden Chair* therefore carries an especially personal resonance. It is at once an exuberant example of Hitchens' painting of the late 1960s, animated by brilliant colour and extraordinarily free handling, and a tangible expression of the artistic connection between Hitchens and Webb. Preserved in Kenneth's collection for more than half a century, its influence continued beyond the canvas itself, becoming part of the creative language of the artist who chose to live with it.





Poppies and a Garden Chair, 1967

Gladwell & Patterson is grateful for the opportunity to bring these seven paintings together for this exhibition at House 50, Burlington Arcade after fifty years in private hands. Their shared history offers a distinctive perspective on Hitchens' career and on the friendship between two prolific artists.



Kenneth Webb, photographed at Gladwell's Corner, Gladwell & Patterson's Stamford gallery, 2025



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