

RICHARD GREEN

IVON HITCHENS CBE

London 1893 - 1979 Petworth

Ref: CE 129

East Bay no.1



Signed lower left: *Hitchens*; signed, dated and inscribed on the artist's label attached to the stretcher: "*East Bay No 1*" 1965 / by IVON HITCHENS / *Greenleaves . Petworth . Sussex*
Oil on canvas: 18 ½ x 56 ½ in / 47 x 143.5 cm
Frame size: 64 x 26 in / 162.6 x 66 cm



RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

Provenance:

Private collection, UK;
Richard Green, London, 2006;
private collection, UK, 2006

Exhibited:

London, Waddington Galleries, *Ivon Hitchens*, 24th May-25th June 1966, cat. no.12

Early in 1965 Ivon Hitchens and his wife Mollie took a short holiday at Selsey on the Sussex coast south of Chichester. Walking along the shore one day, they noticed a bungalow for sale at the easternmost end of Selsey Bill and on the spur of the moment decided to buy it. From this, their new outpost, the sweeping view across the mouth of Pagham Harbour was to inspire a number of paintings, of which this is one of the earliest.

The huge sky, the expanse of sand and shingle and, close by, the open sea adazzle with sunlight—one could hardly imagine a greater contrast with the criss-cross of branches and tunnels of leaves surrounding their home on the other side of the Downs which for so many years had provided the motifs for Hitchens' woodland paintings.

Whether or not consciously chosen for the purpose, this new location marked the beginning of a new period in the artist's career. Already for some time he had been seeking to expand his colour range to full intensity—the logical development of his colour-based theory. He had long outgrown the limitations of a descriptive, naturalistic basis and now wanted the freedom to use any colour that would express with the greatest immediacy, what he saw and felt.

The effect of this liberation is dramatically seen in *East Bay no.1*. In the suitably panoramic format the ratio of height to width is 1:3, the canvas being divided vertically into four compartments, ABBC. The predominant blue and purple of the central compartment, BB, is violently juxtaposed with the yellow and acid green of the right-hand compartment, C. This might have been prompted by a change of light in the bay itself but more importantly it provides a strong contrast within what would otherwise have been an over-bland composition. In his later years Hitchens became more and more concerned with the demands of the picture itself as an independent object for aesthetic contemplation and less and less with the so-called subject of the painting. He had always considered himself as essentially an abstract painter and this was the culmination of his particular form of abstraction.

Peter Khoroché author of *Ivon Hitchens* (André Deutsch, 1990; new, revised edition by Lund Humphries, 2007, reprinted most recently in 2021).

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