

RICHARD GREEN

IVON HITCHENS CBE

London 1893 - 1979 Petworth

Ref: CE 149

Warnford water, pool and dark distance



Signed lower left: *Hitchens*; signed and inscribed on the artist's label attached to the stretcher: "*Warnford Water*" / (*Pool and dark distance*) / *by Ivon Hitchens / Greenleaves / Petworth Sussex*
Oil on canvas: 18 x 43 in / 45.7 x 109.2 cm
Frame size: 25 x 50 in / 63.5 x 127 cm
Floated in a silvered hollow frame
Painted in 1959

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Provenance:

Waddington Galleries, London

Howard Bliss, London

Compassion in World Farming, Hampshire, by 1970

New Art Gallery, London;

Michael Gleeson-White AO, Sydney, acquired from the above in 1984, then by descent

Exhibited:

London, Waddington Galleries, *Ivon Hitchens: The Warnford Water Series and Five Other Paintings*, June 1960, cat. no.10, illus. in colour as *Pool and Dark Distance*

Literature:

N Wallis, 'At the Galleries: Lagoon and Forest', *The Observer*, London, 5th June 1960, p.17

Peter Khoroché, *Ivon Hitchens*, Andre Deutsch Limited, London 1990, illus. in colour pl.60, p. 270

It was on a fishing-expedition to Hampshire that Hitchens discovered a quiet, tree-fringed lake on a private estate. He soon returned to paint it. From the spot where he set up his easel he was faced with the competing claims of four elements: to his right the lake itself, stretching away into the distance; in the foreground a low waterfall tumbling into a trout pool; and to the left a stream meandering away from the pool in the shadow of tall trees. The subject inspired a series of eight paintings in 1959 and a further eight the following year, and it is a measure of his own estimation of them that he chose to show as many as five together at his retrospective at the Tate in 1963.

That Hitchens chose so often to paint a series of variations on a subject is a key to appreciating his art: not the subject itself but its myriad facets and the (re-)ordering of these into an aesthetically convincing composition—this was the challenge. Season, time of day, weather and, not least, the artist's mood were all factors demanding a series of paintings, not just one. And though each is intended to be self-sufficient, to see and compare a group is an enhancement.

The title of this variation sums up its working: the dark distance of the lake on the right drives the eye back to the pool in the foreground and from there it seeks to escape to the clearing of light on the left. Hitchens' art is one of time as well as of space, with movement from one motif to the next guided by colour and depth of tone. The design of each painting evolves in time like a musical composition.

Peter Khoroché author of *Ivon Hitchens* (Lund Humphries, 2021).