Windermere

Ivon Hitchens

Sold

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REF: 10999

Height: 89 cm (35")

Width: 122 cm (48")

Description

Signed 'IH' & dated lower right '1974'
Oil on canvas

PROVENANCE : Artist's Estate
EXHIBITED : Probably shown at Waddington in 1976.
RELATED TO : Sybilline Courtyard, 1974, Courtauld Gallery, London

Canvas height 122 cm., 48 in., Length 89 cm, 35 in
In a black and gilded frame. Frame height 148.5 cm., 58 ½ in., 116 cm., 45 ½ in.

'I paint life as I see it, hear it, feel it, smell it, and think it - but above all see it……my pictures are painted to be listened to.'

Whilst the title Windermere appears to refer to the town/lake in Cumbria, the nature of this work is a fundamentally abstract floral composition. The use of a broad range of bright colours recalls another predominant theme in Hitchens' late oeuvre, still-life and flower compositions. The motif on the top left of the picture, in red and purple, evokes the shape of a flower, perhaps a rose while the small shapes in the lower part of the picture recall fruits or objects from a still-life. The tones of these objects are then recalled again in the colour patches that Hitchens uses to frame the picture. The recourse to repetition is typical of Hitchens' use of a painterly language that recalls musical abstraction.

Throughout his career Hitchens had frequently referred to his painting in musical terms. As early as 1933 he had declared his interest in the 'musical appearance of things' rather than their solid external reality. For example here, his division of the canvas into segments can be seen as a parallel to musical rhythms and variations. In late works such as this, his use of heightened colour comes closest to musical abstraction. Also, fellow painter Patrick Heron argued that, across these Hitchens' canvases, 'colour is light, and light is space', giving his work the illusion of a further dimension beyond the usual two of painting.

IVON HITCHENS (1893-1979)

Ivon Hitchens was the pioneer of the abstracted vision of the landscape that is one of the key ideas of British Modernism in the 20th Century. He was a founder member of the Seven & Five Society, the influential group of painters and sculptors, that was responsible for bringing the ideas of the European avant-garde to London in the 30s.

Hitchens became part of the circle of artists known as the London Group. Hints of his mature style can be found in his work from as early as the 1930s, which was influenced by Braque, but he also experimented with pure abstraction, as in his work Coronation (1937; London, Tate). After his house was bombed in 1940 he moved to a patch of woodland near Petworth, W. Sussex, living at first in a caravan which later acquired numerous outbuildings. He worked there for the next 40 years, distanced from the predominantly literary currents of British modern art. In his commitment to colour and open brushwork he was closer to the modern French masters, especially in his Fauvist orange nudes set in sunlit interiors. He painted mostly outdoors, however, and his technique developed from a tonal treatment that recalled the informality of Constable's sketches.

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Hitchens neither painted landscape as a detached observer, nor did he abstract forms from nature, and he valued ...

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