

FELIX & SPEAR

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Press Release
January 31, 2022

CONVERGENCE

PAINTINGS BY JOHN HITCHENS

18 Feb 2022 – 27 Mar 2022

London, January 31, 2022 – Felix & Spear Gallery is delighted to present *Convergence* the gallery's second exhibition of paintings by John Hitchens (b. 1940). The majority of paintings selected are being exhibited for the first time.

John Hitchens makes us think carefully about our relationship with the land. The intensity with which he has absorbed the rhythms and pitches of the natural world, and the utter completeness with which he has made that relationship his way of living, is extraordinary and beautiful. He has found a whole language of marks and lines, colour and light, to talk about nature through his art – about land, wood, water, weather - but his work also reveals how absorbed an artist can be with his subject, how at one they can become...



John Hitchens *Convergence* 2001

The works shown here, from the first decade of the century, include some potent examples of the artist's explorations with canvas shapes. Hitchens has talked about the process of how these come about. 'The ... shape comes always first, the idea for a painting comes later. I would make a series of them and just draw the shapes with charcoal on the plywood, cut them out and store them for the time it takes to prime them, a couple of months, or six years, or whenever. I've always had a library of unused canvases stretched and ready.'...

Hitchens' paintings from the first decade of the 2000s do shine a light on many of the ideas and passions ubiquitous to his work over different periods. However, that decade is a crucial time in the story, and these works have an exceptional role to play. It was at this time that Hitchens made fundamental changes in his practice, beginning to work far more regularly in the studio rather than painting outdoors; also at this time advancing his collecting of natural objects, which became a source of inspiration as well as a remarkable installation. The works of this decade respond to these new contexts, and are permeated with new energies, ideas and influences; there is an underlying quest for creativity, even into materials and structure, that becomes a new standard for the artist's explorations in the ensuing years...

Sandy Mallet, November 2021 (Extracts from the essay Osmosis published in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition 'Convergence, Paintings by John Hitchens')

About John Hitchens

Born 1940 in Sussex, England

Lives and works near Petworth, Sussex

John Hitchens was born the son and grandson of painters, Ivon Hitchens and Alfred Hitchens respectively. He studied Fine Art at Bath Academy of Art in Corsham from 1958 until 1961 and gained early recognition for his work through solo exhibitions in London, notably at the Marjorie Parr Gallery, 1964–76, and Montpelier Studio, 1982–88.

Having grown up and lived for many years in the Sussex countryside, Hitchens draws deeply upon the landscapes, materials, and objects found on the South Downs and Sussex coast. Over the course of more than fifty years, his approach to the subject has evolved. As he recalls, ‘the early paintings were an intuitive response to the landscape that I saw before me. During the past thirty years, this has led me to use a wider visual vocabulary to explore the creative possibilities offered by the subject.’

A major retrospective of John Hitchens’ work was shown at the Southampton City Art Gallery in 2020, and one of his recent paintings, ‘Land Quest’, was acquired for the gallery’s permanent collection.

His pictures are held in private and public collections such as the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne; British Steel Corporation, London; Imperial Health Charity Art Collection; and the University of Oxford. Further work in other collections is displayed online by ART UK.

The monograph John Hitchens: Aspects of Landscape was published by Sansom in 2020.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Gallery address: **Felix & Spear, 71 St. Mary’s Road, London W5 5RG**

Exhibition Opening Hours: Wed – Fri 11.00 – 18.00, Sat - Sun 12.00 – 15.00

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact 020 8566 1574 / press@felixandspear.com

Images of paintings and the artist are available on request for publication in connection with this exhibition.