NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE

VOLUME ONE

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,
Simon Kelly, Richard Kendall, Kathleen M. Morris, Leslie Hill Paisley,
Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Designed by Susan Marsh
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Index by Kathleen M. Friello
Proofread by June Cuffner
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his legal career between 1832 and 1833 to move to London and devote himself to painting. This attempt proved unsuccessful, and he moved back to his family, his law practice, and art collecting, while still continuing his own painting.[3]

A founding member of the Ipswich Society of Professional and Amateur Artists, as well as of the Society of Painters in Water Colours, Churchyard became the secretary of the Suffolk Fine Art Association when it was established in 1850, and contributed ten oils and six watercolors to its inaugural exhibition. His activities in these local and London exhibitions point to the proliferation of such venues in the first half of the nineteenth century.[4] EP

PROVENANCE [Ernest Leggatt, London, given to Johnson, 1899]; [Percy Johnson, London, from 1899]; [Oscar Johnson, London, his son, by descent, d. 1965]; [Peter Johnson, London, his son, by descent, sold to Manton through Oscar & Peter Johnson, Ltd., London, Feb. 1979]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, London (1979–2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES Fleming-Williams and Parris 1984, p. 221, pl. 128; Parris 1994, pp. 103–4, no. 34, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a brown wood-pulp board about 0.2 cm thick. It has a complex warp, possibly due to a former restrictive swivel-mount frame. The corners have old dents, and a deep crease has caused a V-shape to the warp, forming a convex bulge on the recto and a distortion on the verso. There are a few small dents in the lower right quadrant of the verso image. The recto image has old shattered and retouched areas on all four edges, and ages cracks that run primarily in the vertical direction. There are small losses on both sides, although they are more numerous on the verso. Several large areas of the recto sky and many small sites on the verso image are retouched. Old lifted plates of paint on both sides include part of the wood-pulp surface. There are old brown varnish and grime residues in the impastos of the darker portions of both images, while the sky areas on both sides have been more thoroughly cleaned. The varnish on the recto side is glossier, but coatings on both images have the glassy fractured appearance of old natural resin varnish.

The recto has a commercially applied off-white ground layer, but the verso is painted directly on the darkened brown pulp-board surface. In infrared light, sketchy outlines can be seen on the recto image, following the distant tree placements. This light also enhances a graphite date on this main image, inscribed into the wet paint of the lower right corner, reading "July 2[6 or 8]". The paint on the recto side is very fluid, with wet-into wet applications of varying thicknesses, possibly after the sky colors were allowed to set first. The paint on the verso is thinner, more even in thickness, and drier in application.

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1. Peter Johnson to Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, 20 Feb. 1979, in the Clark's curatorial files.
2. Fleming-Williams and Parris 1984, p. 221.
3. The details of Churchyard's life are recounted in Morfey 1986.
4. See Fawcett 1974 and Altick 1978.

Attributed to Thomas Churchyard

51 | **Ruins in a Landscape** 19th century

Oil on beige laid paper, lined with Japanese tissue, 11 x 15.3 cm
Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton
2007.20.2

There is little about this small oil depicting a ruin obscured by overgrown trees to link it to the hand of Thomas Churchyard, the amateur painter and avid collector of works by his fellow East Anglians. Although the poor condition of the work necessarily contributes to its overall awkwardness, the infelicities in composition point to the work of an inexperienced painter. Nevertheless, the subject of ruins, a motif associated with Romanticism, demonstrates how widely the theme of loss and decline was adopted by painters, professional and amateur alike.

The presence of ruins in British art and architecture dates back to the middle of the eighteenth century and a number of publications by Englishmen who had traveled extensively in Italy and Greece. Robert Wood's *Ruins of Palmyra* was published in 1753 to be followed by his *Ruins of Balbec* four years later. Of even greater importance was James "Athenian" Stuart and Nicholas Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens*; although the publication was initially announced in 1751, its first volume appeared only in 1762 and the second in 1780. Scottish architect Robert Adam was similarly entranced by Roman ruins during his trip to Italy and the Dalmatian coast in the 1750s. The results of his study were

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published as the *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* in 1764.

These publications, among others, were all instrumental in the adoption of Neoclassicism as the dominant architectural style of the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain. As Robert Rosenblum has shown in numerous publications, however, the line between Neoclassicism and Romanticism is blurry at best.[1] The trope of ruins encapsulates the crossover of interest in antiquity and interest in the heightened emotional states suggested by stormy skies, windswept moors, and decaying buildings.

This small painting in oil on paper places a Romanesque ruin at the edge of a body of water, allowing the artist to practice the effects of reflection. In keeping with the subject of a ruin, it is difficult to distinguish exactly what type of building is depicted and where the building ends and the surrounding foliage begins. It is similarly difficult to assign this work to the hand of Churchyard, whose landscapes draw upon the dual influences of Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1778) and John Constable (1776–1837).[2] The Suffolk-based amateur painter was sufficiently confident of his skills as an artist to give up his law practice in 1832 to move to London and live entirely by means of his art. Although he returned to Suffolk a year later, he continued to paint, and his works were accomplished enough to be misidentified as the work of Constable, as exemplified by another work in the Clark collection, *River Valley* (cat. 50). EP

PROVENANCE Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (d. 2005); Diana Morton, his daughter, by descent (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS None

REFERENCES None

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a thin sheet of beige paper with vertical laid lines. It appears that an original secondary paper backing was partially removed and the support lined with very lightweight Japanese tissue. The back also looks stained and uneven. A small portion of the old paper backing was retained to save an old iron-gall ink inscription reading "JH." The lining is not strong enough to hold flat the various old breaks and tears on the original support. The color of the paper may have become hotter and darker over time, and may also be toned by the discolored coatings. The painting has clearly been flexed numerous times, creating losses in the brittle paint in the upper left and central portions of the image. These losses have shattered the upper layer of color to reveal other greens below. The flaking is active and has disrupted image details in various locations. Traction cracks occur in the foliage, and some dislodged paint chips are held in place by the restoration varnish layer. There is solvent abrasion in the trees at left, and the visibility of the paper's laid lines in the sky suggests that this area has been overcleaned. In ultraviolet light, the sky appears to have been cleaned more thoroughly than the rest of the image. The varnish is yellow and shiny, and has shattered separately in some places. There are small mismatched retouches below the varnish, and a wax layer has also fogged the coating.

There is no obvious ground layer between the paper and paint, although there may be an invisible glue-size layer. A very sketchy but complete underdrawing, possibly in graphite, is detectible only with infrared light. Small loops and zigzag lines indicate the foliage closest to the ruin, which seems to have several smaller arch shapes drawn inside the main arch. The taller trees to the left and right do not seem to have much, if any, underdrawing. The image is painted using very thin washes and rounded vehicular strokes with small brushes. Although the sky may have been set before the scene was painted, there is evidence of wet-into-wet brushwork in the lower half of the image.

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1. See, for example, Rosenblum 1967.
2. See Morfey 1986 for an overview of his paintings.

William Collins

English 1788–1847

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52 | **Children on the Beach** c. 1815–20

Oil on canvas, 23.2 x 30.8 cm
1955.682

Children on the Beach displays two features for which William Collins was renowned in the nineteenth century: a group of children and a seaside setting. The winning combination of a charming anecdote of resourceful children examining their catch or preparing their fishing equipment provided Collins with a theme that brought him popular success, leading to the *Art Journal*'s praise that he was the "foremost among . . . sunshine painters."[1] Taking as his primary subject children in outdoor settings, Collins's paintings are distinguished by their light palettes, in contrast to the dark and often depressing Scottish interiors of his contemporary Sir David Wilkie. Although the Clark painting is not dated and does not appear in either Collins's incomplete account book[2] or the listing of his pictures in his son's memoir,[3] it is likely that it was painted in the second phase of Collins's early career.

The son of a struggling picture-dealer, Collins was exposed early to the world of art. First taught by his father's friend, the dissipated but prolific painter of shipwrecks and rustic life, George Morland (1763–1804), he entered the Royal Academy schools in 1807 and began exhibiting at the annual exhibition just four years later. His reliance upon public displays at the Academy, as well as the British Institution, to develop a popular reputation was paired with support from important patrons of contemporary British painting, including William Wells of Redleaf, Sir John Leicester (later Lord de Tabley), Sir Robert Peel, and Henry Pelham-Clinton, the fourth Duke of Newcastle.

A year after being elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, Collins visited the Norfolk shore at Cromer (1815). His sketches from this summer provided the basis for numerous pictures that depicted the East Anglia coast, including, most likely, *Children on the Beach*. Collins's conscious response to the perennial artistic need for economic, as well as popular, success is described vividly in the *Art Journal*'s 1855 article, in which his decision to specialize in sea coast scenes is dated to 1816. Noting his father's death and the low prices his early works received, the writer commented that Collins "began to consider whether a class of pictures hitherto comparatively unknown to the public might not find greater popularity than that he had as yet attempted."[4]

Although the *Art Journal* went on to discuss his larger pictures, such as *Scene on the Coast of Norfolk*, purchased by the Prince Regent (later George IV) at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1818, *Children on the Beach* represents an equally important strand of Collins's output—works on a small scale with infinitely variable elements. Thus, the elder boy, standing with his left hand in his pocket and a fishing rod and net in his right, is recognizable from other similar works by Collins, as is the girl seen from behind bending over a basket.[5] The grouping and pose of the three children together is also seen in *Figures on the Seashore* (Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth). In this case, the smallest boy leans over the basket of fish and the girl kneels between the two boys. This repetition of a pleasing vignette can be seen as one response by Collins to his time-consuming method of painting.

This process is described in detail in the biography written by his son, published in 1848, a year after the artist's death. Wilkie Collins, who later made his reputation as a writer with the hugely popular *Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868), emphasizes in the first volume of this panegyric the care with which his father approached his paintings.[6] The son extends his praise for his father's attention to nature and his portrayal of children: "Under his pencil, children retained their play-ground clothes, preserved their play-ground occupations, and were connected visibly