



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

**VOLUME ONE**

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

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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

*Nineteenth-Century European Paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute* is published with the assistance of the Getty Foundation and support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



The Getty Foundation



ART WORKS.  
arts.gov

Produced by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute  
225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267  
www.clarkart.edu

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Production by The Production Department,  
Whately, Massachusetts  
Printed on 135 gsm Gardapat Kiara  
Color separations and printing by Trifolio, Verona

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Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London  
P. O. Box 209040, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-9040  
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Italy  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

Nineteenth-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute / 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, Fronia E. Wissman.

volumes cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-935998-09-9 (clark hardcover : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-300-17965-1 (yale hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Painting, European—19th century—Catalogs. 2. Painting—Massachusetts—Williamstown—Catalogs. 3. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute—Catalogs. I. Lees, Sarah, editor of compilation. II. Rand, Richard. III. Webber, Sandra L. IV. Title. V. Title: 19th-century European paintings at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

ND457.S74 2012

759.9409'0340747441—dc23

2012030510

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of Ireland, Dublin)<sup>3</sup> also makes more explicit in its title Constable's vantage from a window looking outward.<sup>4</sup> This sketch shows a more earthbound Constable interested in the details of the trees and houses beyond the close. The artist of the Clark sketch, while clearly looking in the same direction, has taken flight, depicting the terrain of Wiltshire in macrocosm.

Sir Edwin acquired this sketch in 1958, making it one of his earliest acquisitions. EP

**PROVENANCE** [Leggatt's, London, sold to Manton 10 Sept. 1958]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1958–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

**EXHIBITIONS** New York 1988, p. 45, pl. 18; London 1991b, pp. 261–62, no. 142, ill.; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

**REFERENCES** Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, p. 208, no. 29.39, vol. 2, pl. 739, as *Harnham Ridge*; Parris 1994, pp. 62–63, no. 21, ill.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a beige wove paper with an original crushed and creased right edge. The paper seems to be quite lightweight, and the ground and paint layers were applied after the paper was crushed. The paper is lined with an aqueous adhesive to a moderate-weight linen having a thread count of 16 x 19 threads per cm. The age of the lining suggests that it may have been done just prior to the 1958 sale to Manton. The supports show some undulation, with bulging in the center section due to slackness. One heavier vertical thread has pressed upward into the paper and there is some lumpiness due to the mounting. There are pinholes in all four corners where the paper was pinned to a solid surface to hold it flat during painting. Scattered debris in the surface may be related to carrying the wet picture with others in a paint box. The impastos are squashed from the lining pressure. In 1990, John Bull cleaned the painting of grime and varnish, but some old varnish residues remain around the impastos, and there may be scattered abrasion throughout. In ultraviolet light, there is some fluorescence in the foreground, related to a thin layer of coating left in place or possibly the underlying pigments. There is almost no inpainting.

The ground layer is a pale pink color and skips over the folds and creases in the paper, suggesting that it was applied by the artist. Massive amounts of pink ground are visible throughout, due to the very sketchy nature of the image. There is no underdrawing. The paint was applied very quickly, wet-into-wet, and is particularly thin in the sky. The foreground colors are only slightly more substantial.

1. For example, on the reverse of another oil sketch on paper, Constable wrote in pencil: "Fisher's—Library—Salisbury Sunday July 12. 1829 4 o'clock afternoon" (Victorian and Albert Museum, London; R 29.14).
2. Although Graham Reynolds had only recently learned of the sketch when he catalogued Constable's later works in 1984 and described it as one of the "views of Harnham Ridge which Constable made in 1820 and 1829" (Reynolds 1984, p. 208), in New York 1988, p. 45, the date of 1829 is given with greater confidence. Parris and Fleming-Williams likewise give the later date in London 1991b, p. 261, and Parris repeats this opinion in Parris 1994, p. 63.
3. R 29.34.
4. The title of this work derives from the catalogue for Isabel Constable's 1892 sale at Christie's, in which it was called *Salisbury: from my bedroom* (Christie's, London, 17 June 1892, no. 258).

## Imitator of John Constable

### 77 | River View 19th century

Oil on canvas, 30 x 45.8 cm

Lower left: [C]onstable 1819

Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton

2007.20.5

This painting was Sir Edwin Manton's first art purchase. He acquired it as *A View on the Stour, Suffolk* by John Constable when it was auctioned in March 1949 as part of the collection of the late Oscar Bondy. Having dismissed the attribution to the artist, Leslie Parris also noted that "there is little reason to think that the river depicted is in fact the Stour."<sup>1</sup> Although signed at the lower left "Constable, 1819," the composition and technique provide counterpoints to this false signature. The lack of clarity in the foreground and the poor grasp of perspective make it clear that this painting could not have been executed by the artist who in that same year was engaged in his path-breaking, six-foot canvas of *The White Horse* (The Frick Collection, New York).<sup>2</sup>

The 1949 description of the painting, however, is useful to quote as it repeats the characteristics associated with the English artist in the middle of the twentieth century. In a passage that could describe any of Constable's depictions of Willy Lott's cottage, the



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cataloguer first emphasizes the simplicity and primitiveness of the scene, which is a “vista of rustic landscape overgrown with grasses, a rude plank bridge at left leading to a red-roofed cottage half-hidden by a copse of trees in deep green foliage.” The Constable-esque elements of water, small-scale figures, and boats supplement this description: “A limpid stream flows to the right, and tiny figures are visible, one in a rowboat near the shore, others on the far bank.” To cement the attribution, the cataloguer notes that “the sky beyond is massed with cumulous clouds, a gray cloud threatening rain at upper right.” The transcription of date and signature add supposedly incontrovertible documentary evidence of the authorship by one of the greatest English landscape painters.<sup>3</sup>

No doubt, the fact that the painting had belonged to the Viennese collector Oscar Bondy was, at the time of the 1949 sale, further proof of its authenticity. Bondy (1870–1944), whose collection was seized in 1938 with the Anschluss, was a Jewish businessman and wide-ranging collector.<sup>4</sup> Labels and marks on the back of the canvas, including one reading “LINZ / KUNSTMUSEUM / (ehem Österr. Galerie) [formerly Austrian Gallery] / BONDI No. 1318,” are evidence of the painting’s seizure and its intended destination at

Hitler’s Führermuseum in Linz. Remarkably, the collection was restituted to Bondy’s widow, Elizabeth, in the years after the end of World War II. Other works that had been in the Bondy collection include Giovanni di Paolo’s *The Adoration of the Magi* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and the early fourteenth-century sculpture of *Saint Michael Weighing Souls* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). That Bondy’s collection included an example supposedly by Constable points to the Englishman’s Continental reputation. While few other British artists were known across the Channel, let alone collected, Constable was admired. Although his influence on Continental artists has been examined primarily in the French context, there can be no doubt that his reputation extended beyond Paris. Bondy’s “Constable” was not, in the end, an authentic work, but its misattribution demonstrates the limits of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century connoisseurship of British art. EP

**PROVENANCE** Oscar Bondy, Vienna and New York (by 1938–d. 1944, seized by Nazi forces, 1938, recovered by the United States Fine Arts Commission and restituted to Bondy’s widow);<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth A. Bondy, his wife, by descent and restitution (1944–49, Bondy sale, Kende Galleries, New York, 3 Mar. 1949, no. 75, as *A View on the Stour, Suffolk*,

by John Constable, sold to Manton); Sir Edwin A. G. Manton (1949–d. 2005); Diana Morton, his daughter, by descent (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

**EXHIBITIONS** None

**REFERENCES** Parris 1994, pp. 9, 114, no. 40, ill.; Lillie 2003, p. 222, no. 5, as *Flusslandschaft, Haus m. rotem Dach*, by Constable.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a moderate-weave linen, having a thread count of 16 threads/cm. It has been glue-lined to a coarser canvas of 13 threads/cm and has a replaced five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. Several of the painting's corners are separating from the lining. A piece of debris caught under the lower stretcher has caused an area of shattered ground and paint. The painting was partially cleaned, showing serious solvent abrasion throughout the lighter passages but extremely thick, discolored, and heavily fissured varnish on the rest of the image. There are numerous broad retouches in the sky, all turned brown and now matte in reflectance. The varnish is foggy in areas and shattered in the lower left corner, revealing the depth of the coating, as well as its serious discoloration.

The ground is composed of one or two off-white layers, probably commercially applied. A deposit of ground along the right edge may suggest that the original stretcher was slightly smaller. Using infrared light, some lines were visible, either as drawn or painted outlines, in the fence rails at the left and the barn roof. Otherwise no complete underdrawing was detected. The paint is applied in a moderate paste consistency with some impasto work in the clouds. Many areas display the blending typical of wet-into-wet strokes. However, the tree line was painted after the sky colors were set.

1. Parris 1994, p. 114.
2. R 19.1.
3. Kende Galleries 1949, p. 55.
4. See "Oscar Bondy, Zuckerfabrikant" in Lillie 2003, pp. 216–45.
5. Between 1938 and 1945 this picture had a very complex history, reflected in a number of labels and marks on the back of the painting. The label "Oscar Bondy Wien No. 538" attached to the canvas probably reflects Bondy's own numbering system. In May 1938, Bondy and his wife fled via Switzerland to the United States, where he died in 1944. The work appears as no. 5, *Flusslandschaft, haus m. rotem Dach* (River Landscape, House with Red Roof) by Constable in a list of items (dated 3 April 1939) seized from Bondy's home. See Lillie 2003, p. 222. The painting next went to Kremsmünster, Austria, where it was labeled on the stretcher with the number K 1687. It therefore appears to have been designated, along with much of the rest of Bondy's collection, as going to

Hitler's planned Führermuseum in Linz, although it was not ultimately chosen for inclusion. It does not appear in the photo albums published in Schwarz 2004 or in the Deutsches Historisches Museum's database of Linz objects (<http://www.dhm.de/datenbank/linzdb/indexe.htm>). Three labels now removed from the painting reflect the property inventory number assigned by the Nazis, 1318 O.B. It appears to have been stored by the Nazis at Alt Aussee, then entered the Munich Central Collecting Point on 17 Oct. 1945 as no. 9883, to be restituted by American forces, and was turned over to Austria (under control of the U.S. Fifth Army) on 25 Apr. 1946. The number 111403, written on the stretcher in the same red pencil as "USFA" (U.S. Fifth Army), has not been identified. For information on the Munich Central Collecting Point, see [http://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm\\_ccp.php?seite=9&lang=en](http://www.dhm.de/datenbank/ccp/dhm_ccp.php?seite=9&lang=en). It was then returned to Mrs. Bondy in New York.

## Lionel Bicknell Constable

English, 1828–1887

### 78 | *Cloud Study* c. 1850

Oil on beige wove paper, mounted on wood-pulp board, mounted on panel, 23.5 x 30 cm (sheet size), 24.5 x 31 cm (panel size)

Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton

2007.8.60

*Cloud Study*, a work that remained in the possession of the Constable family until it entered the art market at the end of the nineteenth century as the work of the father, epitomizes how John Constable's artistic personality was misconstrued just seventy years after his death. The 1899 exhibition of the works of John Constable held at Leggatt's Gallery in London marked a watershed in the public perception of the work of arguably the most important interpreter of the English landscape of the first half of the nineteenth century. As can be seen from the history of attribution of *Cloud Study*, that perception was slightly misleading, with a number of works bought directly by Leggatt's from the artist's grandson wrongly ascribed to the Royal Academician rather than to his children.

The removal from the accepted oeuvre of the artist of those works that were, in fact, executed by his sons, followers, and imitators is largely attributable