

The background of the cover is a detailed 19th-century painting of a storm at sea. The sky is filled with heavy, dark, and turbulent clouds, with some light breaking through near the horizon. The sea is dark and choppy, with white-capped waves crashing against a sandy beach in the foreground. Several large sailing ships with multiple masts and sails are visible on the horizon, some appearing to be struggling against the waves. The overall mood is one of intense drama and historical significance.

**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,
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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Details:

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possibly no. 240, as one of *Buying Flowers; and three studies of flowers*); Thomas J. Barratt (probably from 1892, d. 1914);¹⁰ Baron Kojiro Matsukata (c. 1914–c. 1930, sold to private collection); private collection, Japan (c. 1930–1954, sold to Mizushima); Tokuzo Mizushima (1954–1983, his anon. sale, Sotheby's, London, 2 Mar. 1983, no. 72, ill., bought in); sale Sotheby's, London, 14 Mar. 1984, no. 103, ill.; sale, Christie's, London 24 Apr. 1987, no. 49, ill.; sale Christie's, London, 14 July 1994, no. 42, ill., sold to Nahum; [Peter Nahum, London, sold to Manton, 26 Jan. 1996]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1996–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS New York 2000; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

REFERENCES Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, p. 194, no. 28.20, vol. 2, pl. 697; Forte (UK) Ltd. 1995, p. 175, ill.; Parris 1998, pp. 22–23, no. 50, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a twill-weave canvas with a thread count of 19 threads per cm in both directions. The warp threads run horizontally, and the diagonal twill pattern is visible in the upper left corner. All edges are roughly cut, probably from a larger piece of canvas, and the shape is not square along the left and right edges. The canvas has been glue-mounted to a mahogany panel 1.1 cm thick. The wood has given the combined supports a slightly convex warp, but the mounting seems stable. There are vandalism scratches and gouges in the shape of an “X” and curved lines in the right third of the picture that have been there for some time. The damage includes dents to the canvas and panel, loss of paint and varnish, and graphite marks. There are other small, scattered losses in the surface. Shallow vertical cracks in the paint and varnish may be the result of the canvas having been rolled before its use as a support. There is some frame abrasion and shattered varnish around the edges. The present natural resin varnish is brittle with age and has deposits of grime and old varnish residues lying below. The gloss is even, with some weave impression from the mounting.

The visible layer of ground is gray and was probably commercially primed. There seem to be one or two black lines under the paint in the upper right quadrant that are unrelated to the final image. The paint handling shows loose strokes of paste consistency applied in broad washes. The palette uses only a small array of five or six colors. The brushstrokes imply the use of bristle brushes 0.6–1 cm long as well as sables for the smaller details.

1. R 28.14.
2. R 28.15.
3. R 28.17–19.
4. R 28.16.
5. Parris 1998, p. 23. Parris mistakenly writes that the sale took place at Christie's.

6. R 14.1.
7. R 27.5.
8. Frith 1888, vol. 2, pp. 228–29.
9. These were all sold at Sotheby's, London, 2 Mar. 1983, nos. 71–76 and included similar inscriptions, which in the sales catalogue were read as “Thomas Banall.”
10. The early provenance comes from an inscription on the reverse of the panel which reads: “Sketch / by / John Constable RA / Bought at Christie's / at the sale of Isabella Constable / Thomas J. Barratt.” In the sale catalogue of 1892, this work might be identifiable as one of three included under no. 240, although an annotation in the copy at the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague, indicates that the lot was sold to “A. Smith.”

60 | Willy Lott's House c. 1812–13 (recto);
Landscape Sketches with Trees and Church Tower c. 1811–13 (verso)

Oil on canvas, 34.9 x 43.5 cm
Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton
2007.8.24

Known best as the resident of the small farmhouse that is prominently featured in two of Constable's exhibited paintings—*The Ferry* (1814; private collection) and *The Valley Farm* (1835; Tate Britain, London)¹—Willy Lott (1761–1849) himself does not appear in any of Constable's paintings. Places and not people were Constable's overriding concern. Nevertheless, the idea that people draw their identity from a particular place is clear from Charles Robert Leslie's reference to Willy Lott and his house. Leslie recounts that the farmer “was born in it; and it is said, has passed more than eighty years without having spent four whole days away from it.”² Compared to Lott, then, Constable was well traveled. Aside from a reference to the failure at auction of the property in a letter from Abram Constable to his brother in 1824,³ little more is known about the tenant farmer.⁴

This work is one in an extended series of depictions of the cottage, indicating how tirelessly Constable examined the structure and its setting from multiple angles. The viewpoint of this sketch of *Willy Lott's House*, executed around 1812–13, shows the mill-stream of Flatford Mill to the left of the house, which



60 recto

is shaded on the right by the trees on the small island called the Spong. This island is more clearly delineated in Constable's earliest depiction of the house (private collection), which is of similar dimensions and orientation, but which places the house at the extreme left of the picture plane.⁵ Likewise, the millstream is foregrounded in the painting (Ipswich Museums and Galleries Collection) that, in turn, became the basis for David Lucas's mezzotint, the thirteenth plate in *English Landscape* (1831).⁶ In this painting, a red-vested boy, perched on a wall, angles his fishing rod over the stream. His position on the south bank of the Stour is probably close to that from which the artist painted the sketch now under consideration.

Not only did Constable repeatedly change the position from which he viewed the various elements of stream, island, and cottage, but he also experimented with different canvas formats. Thus, the Clark sketch represents both a shift in viewpoint from a series of three upright oil sketches now in the Victoria and Albert Museum and a return to the horizontal orientation of his first engagement with the subject.⁷ The shifting back and forth between horizontal and vertical formats of his oil sketches and paintings is embodied in the pencil drawing related to the Clark sketch. This drawing, in the Witt Collection of the Courtauld Institute Galleries, is composed of a central, nearly

square, sheet, to which are attached two additional strips, one to each side, converting the upright format into a horizontal one.⁸ Leslie Parris presents two possibilities for the relationship between the drawing and the sketch. The first is that Constable completed the drawing in its entirety, adding the strips when he opted for a horizontal orientation. Parris's alternative theory is that only the central portion of the pencil drawing preceded the oil sketch and that after completing the sketch, he added the strips to the drawing to reflect the horizontal sketch.⁹ The unresolved left side of the sketch—is it a clump of trees or tall grasses?—when compared to the distinctly delineated tree of the drawing, would lend support to Parris's first theory.

Constable's propensity to examine a subject from all sides, angles, and orientations is reinforced by the sketches discovered on the reverse of the Clark canvas. On the removal of an old lining in 1992, two landscapes were revealed.¹⁰ A horizontal landscape, to which the ash tree on the far right belongs, is overlaid by a vertical view of a church tower seen beyond an overarching tree. Although neither of these sketches can be associated with a finished painting, they confirm Constable's process of intensive on-site study of the Suffolk landscape at this period in his career.

Willy Lott's house made its first appearance at the Royal Academy in 1814 in *The Ferry*. Differing from

the Clark sketch in its vertical orientation, it displays enough similarities in the position of the house, the tree branches, and the fall of light to be considered a direct relative of the sketch. Although in the exhibited painting the lower branches of the shading tree are angled more artfully and obscure the whitewashed walls of the house to a greater extent, both works share the smaller tree with its light-speckled leaves in front of the extension of the house. Constable enhanced the effect of the direction of the sun in this painting, but the source of the sunlight is clearly visible in the sketch, where the clearing to the left of the house is indicated by a fluid bright green stroke, highlighted above with ochre. This stretch of land is shown at the same angle in the painting, but is expanded, suggesting the presence of a path. The rays of the sun in the sketch replicate this top right source of light and show the red-brown ground Constable employed.

It was in the context of the preparation of *The Ferry* for the Royal Academy annual exhibition that Constable made an important statement about his painting process. Writing to John Dunthorne at the end of February 1814, he began the letter expressing his usual anxiety over the translation into a larger format of the necessary balance between detail and overall effect. Later in this letter, he wrote: "I am determined to finish a small picture on the spot for every one I intend to make in future. But this I have always talked about but never yet done—I think however my mind is more settled and determined than ever on this point."¹¹ The appearance of Willy Lott's house from various angles in various formats and media over the entire course of Constable's artistic life allows us to understand the ever-changing and intricate relationship between those works Constable produced in front of the motif and those he painted in his studio in London. In detailing these depictions of Willy Lott's house and its immediate environs, the artist seems to have been inching, so to speak, along the banks of the Stour, studying the house, the millstream, the Spong from every possible angle, inexhaustible in his pursuit of an aesthetic ideal based on empirical observation. EP

PROVENANCE Sale, Sotheby's, London, 25 Sept. 1974, no. 35, as *A Sketch of the Valley Farm*, sold to a private collection, Seattle; private collection, Seattle (from 1974); [Deborah Gage (Works of Art) Ltd., London, sold to Manton 2 Feb. 1993]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton (1993–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.



60 verso

EXHIBITIONS New York 2000; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

REFERENCES Parris 1994, pp. 33–36, no. 8, ill.; Reynolds 1996, vol. 1, p. 186, nos. 13.21, 13.22, vol. 2, pls. 1080, 1081.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a moderate-weight canvas having a weave of approximately 16 threads per cm. The painting was restored in 1992 by John Bull of London. When he removed an older lining, he uncovered two sketches on the canvas reverse. He strip-lined the edges with linen of similar weight using Beva 371 adhesive to allow the back images to be viewed. Mr. Bull's examination determined that the horizontal back image (lower paint layer) was painted first, then the canvas was reversed and the front painting was completed, followed by the second back image, which falls inside the stretcher bars. The layers on the reverse are: 1. an off-white ground layer; 2. a very incomplete horizontal image with a horizon line, hills in the middle ground, and a tree at the far right foreground; 3. a more complete sketch of large trees, a castle or town, with either a sunset or a moonrise. There is no underdrawing or varnish on the reverse images. The upper color layer abrasions, possibly from removal of an old glue lining, were inpainted lightly in 2009 with watercolors.

The front image, of Willy Lott's house, shows an off-white ground layer, possibly followed by a black layer, then an upper salmon pink ground layer. The upper ground layer has

wide visible brush marks running in several directions, and the dark pink color is visible throughout the image. The front surface has very visible, wide graphite underdrawing lines. A dark horizon line starting at the top of the left trees roughly divides the surface in half, and lines in the left tree area seem to be drawn for a different image. When viewed upside down under infrared reflectography, they make some sense as a smaller scale landscape with an arched bridge and buildings. Also visible under infrared is a dark painted roof shape in the sky, to the left of the present roof, which suggests that the house was initially begun higher up and to the left of the final placement. There may be a brown wash underlying some of the foreground colors. The paint is applied in thin vehicular strokes in a sketchy manner with few details. Very little detail appears anywhere in the image, and the lower left is particularly sketchy.

There are widely spaced cupped horizontal cracks possibly caused by an early rolling and diagonal stress cracks in the two lower corners from uneven stretcher tension. There are old overlapped and abraded paint disturbances from previous flaking and consolidation. New flaking paint along the edges, in the house, and in the right sky was consolidated locally from the front with warm gelatin and a tacking iron in 2009. Old debris attached to the surface appears to have been there prior to the painting. Some overlapped edges and lifted crack sites are abraded by cleaning. Small circular marks occur in the paint, possibly either from rain or some diluent such as turpentine hitting the surface during the painting process. During the 1992 treatment, several large areas of the sky were retouched, with scratch marks to imitate the artist's brush marks and graphite lines to resemble cracks. The edges and corners are heavily retouched. The upper right corner looks like it was bent over and creased at an earlier time.

1. R 14.2 and R 35.1.
2. Leslie 1845, p. 45.
3. On 2 Aug. 1824, Abram related to John that his belief that the property was overvalued was proven correct when the farm failed to meet its reserve of £2,000 at the 17 July auction. See Beckett 1962–70, vol. 1, p. 216.
4. For a brief account of what is known about Lott, see Reynolds 1996, vol. 1, p. 162.
5. R 02.13.
6. R 14.46. There is an oil sketch for this painting at Tate Britain, London (R 14.47).
7. The three sketches are R 11.36–38.
8. R 13.20.
9. Parris 1994, pp. 33–36.
10. See Technical Report.
11. John Constable to John Dunthorne, 22 Feb. 1814, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 1, p. 101.

61 | Flailing Turnip-heads, East Bergholt

c. 1812–15

Oil on canvas, 35.6 x 44.5 cm

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

2007.8.25

The rural life of Suffolk into which Constable was born and which he knew firsthand was that of the farmer, the miller, and the lock-keeper, as well as the boatmen and carters who were involved in transporting the milled grain along the rivers. Although Constable's paintings, such as *Dedham Vale: Morning* (1811; W. H. Proby collection), *The Hay Wain* (1821; National Gallery, London), and *The Leaping Horse* (1825; Royal Academy of Arts, London), have been held up as iconic images of an idyllic East Anglian landscape, labor is, nevertheless, at the heart of these works.¹ The sketch *Flailing Turnip-heads, East Bergholt* foregrounds manual labor both in its subject matter and in the artist's working of the oil paint. Through the integration of the figures performing the labor into the surrounding landscape, Constable used technical and compositional tools to explore the relationship between identity and location, establishing a parallel between the laborers who worked the land and the artist who worked pigment. In his pursuit of the "natural painture," sketching in the fields and along the rivers in preparation for larger-scale paintings executed in his London studio, Constable replicated the seasonal rhythms of rural life, where the farmer followed a well-established schedule of planting, growing, and harvesting.

During the years 1812–15, after having spent the first half of the year in London, Constable would return to Suffolk in the summer to draw and paint extensively around his childhood home. This sketch has been dated to these years and connected to *View at East Bergholt* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven).² While the Yale painting shows the same slate-roofed building, it extends to include more of the Ryber valley, showing a minimum of human activity.³ In the Clark sketch, Constable depicts the threshing of turnip-heads in a field owned by his father, Golding. A member of the mustard or cabbage family, the turnip-head, also called rape, was cultivated for its seed, which was used to feed cattle and sheep. To ensure the collection of these seeds, the threshing