



**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

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



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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74 | Sketch for *Dedham Vale* c. 1827

Oil, ink, and graphite on canvas, 60.7 x 50.8 cm
Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin
and Lady Manton
2007.8.43

This sepia-toned *Sketch for "Dedham Vale"* is unique in Constable's oeuvre. No other remaining example of Constable's preliminary sketches for a major exhibition piece shows the leap from a drawn composition to the fully worked-up, nearly six-foot canvas. Here, Constable has drawn in pen and ink the compositional elements of what was to become the vertical *Dedham Vale* (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh).¹ He

then used washes of brown and white oil, very thinly diluted, to establish areas of light and shade. From the squaring up of the composition in pencil and the absence of any other sketches or drawings related to *Dedham Vale*, it is possible to conclude that Constable completed his contribution to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1828 solely on the basis of this sketch.² Although several details that appear in the final painting, such as the cottage at the far right of the framing trees, are not present in this sketch, the two works share their compositional construction.

As Leslie Parris has observed, the abbreviated preparations for *Dedham Vale* followed the pattern of Constable's exhibits of the previous two years.³ For both his 1826 *The Cornfield* (The National Gallery, London)⁴ and his 1827 *The Chain Pier, Brighton* (Tate

Britain, London),⁵ Constable painted a single, half-size sketch. Both of these sketches (private collection, on loan to the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham [UK]; and Philadelphia Museum of Art, Johnson Collection),⁶ however, are worked up in oils using the full range of the palette.

In fact, as is known from the two earlier oil sketches in the Clark collection (cats. 56 and 58), Constable had spent many hours throughout his career studying Dedham, its church, and the surrounding fields. While the panoramic *Dedham Vale: Morning* (W. H. Proby collection)⁷ of 1811 takes full advantage of the horizontal orientation of the canvas, Constable had already, in 1802, framed the tower of Dedham Church with four towering trees in the vertical canvas of *Dedham Vale* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).⁸ As with that early work, the immediate association prompted by the upright composition sketched in the Clark work is to Constable's ongoing response to the work of Claude Lorrain, in particular, *Landscape with Hagar and the Angel* (1646; The National Gallery, London), and by extension, his relationship with the painting's owner, Sir George Howland Beaumont (1753–1827).

Beaumont, Constable's mentor, had died on 7 February 1827, and Parris has suggested that Beaumont's death and the gift of his paintings to the recently established National Gallery may have been a spur to the artist in his choice of composition.⁹ It is equally significant that in the autumn of 1827, Constable had returned for a visit to East Bergholt. Not only was this his first trip since 1823, but it was also the first time he took his two eldest children, John Charles and Minna. In the intervening years, Constable had been much occupied with finding more healthful locations for his ailing wife. The recognition of this passage of time is registered in the altogether stormier atmosphere evoked by Constable's 1828 finished painting when compared to the more placid work from 1802. EP

PROVENANCE [Heinemann Gallery, Munich, 1906–10, sold to Buhl, 16 Aug. 1910]; Dr. Franz Buhl, Deidesheim, from 1910, returned to Heinemann; [Heinemann Gallery, Munich, sold to Desclosières, 20 July 1911];¹⁰ R. Desclosières, Paris (from 1911); Desclosières heirs, by descent, sold to Van Haeften, 1994; [Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., London, sold to Manton, 1994, with Deborah Gage (Works of Art) Ltd., London, as agent]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1994–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS New York 2000, ill.

REFERENCES Parris 1998, pp. 32–35, no. 55, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a moderate-weight linen with an uneven thread count of 13 x 16 threads/cm. The picture has an old glue/paste lining with a thread count of 16 threads/cm and possibly retains the original four-member pine mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The back of the lining may have a light paint layer. The back of the stretcher is covered by a wide self-adhering black paper. There is a small dent in the lower left quadrant. The lining was apparently applied to treat tears whose locations are now visible due to old discolored oil paint retouchings. These damages are scattered across the upper left quadrant and above the left horizon line. Exposed losses in the ground and paint remain in a line along the left horizon. There are diagonal age cracks in the upper right quadrant. Ultraviolet light fluorescence shows the retouchings that are located below the thin, somewhat yellowed natural resin varnish layer and that were probably applied directly on the original paint. The surface gloss is uneven over some untouched passages as well as over the retouched areas.

The ground is an off-white commercially applied layer. There seem to be a few graphite lines for the image, but the principal drawing is executed with pen and black ink. The ink may be diluted, as the tone varies from one stroke to the next. There are thin blue oil washes and thicker white clouds in the sky, and the landscape elements are toned with several brown oil colors. A graphite grid of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines was drawn over the painted image.

1. R 28.1.

2. At the Royal Academy annual exhibition of 1828, Constable exhibited two works with the title *Landscape* (nos. 7 and 232). One of these paintings has been identified as *Hampstead Heath: Branch Hill Pond* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London; R 28.2). It is not known which catalogue number refers to which painting. See Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, pp. 189–90.

3. Parris 1998, p. 33.

4. R 26.1.

5. R 27.1.

6. R 26.2; R 27.3.

7. R 11.2.

8. R 02.7.

9. Parris 1998, p. 35.

10. This information comes from the Galerie Heinemann Online website, <http://heinemann.gnm.de/en/artwork-2099.htm>, where this work is recorded as "Dedham Vale, Grisaille," acquired 22 Apr. 1906, stock no. 8868. According to Parris 1998, p. 32, there is a Heinemann Gallery label on the back of the work with the number "8868." This label is either no longer present, or it may be hidden underneath the adhesive paper covering the back of the work.