



**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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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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In addition to its evening setting, the Clark sketch also includes elements that do not appear in the other sketches. The cattle and herdsmen, though depicted with the bare minimum of strokes verging on abstraction, are clearly retained in the final painting. The figure to the right, hunched and leaning on his walking stick, is not. Thus, for his first major exhibition picture, Constable turned back time with his crystalline view of the Dedham valley. Rather than the somber mood evoked by the end of a long, hard day, Constable decided to light his exhibition piece with the more uplifting morning sun, by which the men, woman, and animals begin their traversal of the Suffolk countryside. EP

PROVENANCE Private collection, sold to Lloyd and Day; [Lloyd and Day, Effingham, Surrey, sold to Manton, 22 June 1983]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton (1983–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS New York 1988, pp. 36, 198, pl. 9; London 1991a, pp. 70–73, 75, no. 10, ill., as *Dedham Vale*; London 1991b, pp. 14–15, pl. 4, as *Dedham Vale*.

REFERENCES Rosenthal 1983, pp. 52–53, fig. 54; Parris 1994, pp. 28–30, no. 6, ill.; Reynolds 1996, vol. 1, p. 155, no. 11.3, vol. 2, pl. 887, as *Dedham Vale from the Lane to Flatford: Sunset*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The original support layer is a moderate-weight canvas with a thread count of 16 threads per cm. The support has been described as paper, but the canvas threads are clearly visible at the edges and in all the losses, and the canvas pattern is quite prominent on the surface in reflected light. The small scrap of primed fabric is irregularly cut, probably from a larger canvas, leaving the lower edge somewhat tapered. The picture had been mounted to a gray laminate cardboard 0.3 cm thick and then glued to a double layer of mahogany or walnut 1.3 cm thick. In 2009, the wood and cardboard supports were removed and a new linen lining was applied using Beva 371 sheet film. The yellowed varnish layers were removed, and old unfilled losses of paint and ground, as well as abrasions, were filled and inpainted. A layer of synthetic resin varnish was also applied.

The ground layers are comprised of a gray layer beneath the visible salmon-colored upper layer. One or both layers may have been commercially applied, as both were on the surface at the time the small piece of canvas was cut for this painting. Examination in normal and infrared light revealed a series of six vertical graphite lines, some running from the bottom edge up into the sky. These are too unevenly spaced to be a grid formation and do not appear to be related to the final image. The paint-layer brushstrokes are applied in

a rather loose manner using paint of paste-like consistency. Some brushwork visibly skips across the tops of the canvas threads. Several large yellow-brown areas in the foreground display the characteristics of the gum-based pigment gamboge, more commonly seen in watercolors, but occasionally evident in oil paintings.

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1. R 11.2.
 2. Rosenthal 1983, p. 52
 3. R 09.40, 11.4–6.
 4. New York 1988, p. 15.
 5. Reynolds 1996, vol. 1, p. 156.
 6. London 1991a, p. 71.
 7. R 11.4.

59 | Study of a Burdock c. 1810–14 or c. 1828

Oil on canvas, mounted on panel, 18.4 x 27.8 cm
(panel size)

Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton
2007.8.45

Numerous anecdotes in Charles Robert Leslie's *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable* and passages in Constable's correspondence reinforce the visual evidence of Constable's entire oeuvre: the pursuit of the accurate depiction of his landscape surroundings. In other words, Constable's role as an early advocate of visual naturalism, a concept closely tied to the Romantic movement of the early nineteenth century, has been the prevailing interpretation of his career from soon after his death. Although paintings such as *The Wheat Field* (cat. 64) are replete with details of the rural life of East Anglia, Constable only rarely isolated small details in his studies.

The Clark *Study of a Burdock* is a rare exception in Constable's practice and has been grouped by Reynolds with a number of other small-scale studies of foliage and flowers. Dating of this group hinges on the inscription of *Study of Docks and Grasses*, which reads: "Brighton July 24th 1828."¹ A second *Study of Dock Leaves* is inscribed: "July 25, 1828."² Both these studies are executed in oil on paper. Three other studies of trolius blossoms are oil on card.³ A *Study of Ivy Geranium* is, like the Clark work, executed on a canvas with slightly smaller dimensions.⁴



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Citing the lighter background of the *Study of a Burdock*, as well as stylistic differences with the dated studies, Leslie Parris tentatively endorsed an earlier date, first proposed when the work came up at auction at Sotheby's in March 1983.⁵ At that time, the study was likened to plants in the foreground of *A Summerland* (private collection).⁶ A stronger comparison, however, can be made with the riot of foliage in Constable's mid-career *Gillingham Mill, Dorset* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London),⁷ enhancing the case for the later date.

In an inscription on the back of the panel onto which the Clark canvas is mounted, an early owner of the work, Thomas J. Barratt, recorded that he acquired the study "at Christie's at the sale of Isabella Constable." None of the titles of the oil paintings and sketches catalogued for her 1892 sale, however, is immediately identifiable as the Clark work, although it may have been included in lot 240 as one of "three studies of flowers &c." Lot 242, catalogued with the title *Study of Weeds, Brighton, July 1828*, must refer to either of the inscribed studies at the British Museum. That small, preparatory works were not included in the artist's posthumous 1838 auction, but were deemed salable and desirable half a century later, is a marker of the evolving public understanding of Constable's practice between the time of his death and the succeeding generation.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, Constable's reputation as a master realist whose large-scale depictions of the minutiae of life on the rivers and fields of Suffolk were based on sustained

and acute observation was institutionalized by the Isabel Constable bequest to the South Kensington Museum. Published anecdotes of Constable's practice reinforced the view of the artist's commitment to depicting the natural world. For example, the Victorian painter William Powell Frith (1819–1909) recounted that Constable's studio contained "a piece of the trunk of a tree . . . some weeds, and some dock-leaves," and that the "great landscape painter" advised Frith "never do anything without nature before you."⁸

Thomas J. Barratt (1841–1914), the husband of the great-granddaughter of the founder of Pears Soap, was renowned for his marketing skills, using artworks such as John Everett Millais's *Bubbles* (1886; Unilever collection, on loan to Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight) to advertise his company's products. Although that iconic painting remains in the collection of the company (now owned by the conglomerate Unilever), it is likely that other works from his personal collection of British art were sold on Barratt's death in 1914. It was in this decade that Baron Kojiro Matsukata (1865–1950), son of Japanese Prime Minister Count Masayoshi Matsukata, and an executive at the Kawasaki Shipping Company, began collecting Western paintings. Although best known for his collection of Impressionist works (some of which became the core collection of the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo), Matsukata also owned a number of works by Constable or his son Lionel.⁹ EP

PROVENANCE Probably Isabel Constable, the artist's daughter, by descent (her sale, Christie's, London, 17 June 1892,

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