



**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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**75 | Salisbury Cathedral from the River Nadder**

c. 1829

Oil on beige wove paper, mounted on laminate cardboard,  
19.8 x 27.8 cm

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

2007.8.46

With the gift of the Manton Collection, the Clark possesses two sketches of Salisbury Cathedral, each representing a bookend for the eventful decade of the 1820s. While the sketch bought by Robert Sterling Clark (cat. 68) was painted on site in 1821, there are reasons to believe that the Manton sketch, *Salisbury Cathedral from the River Nadder*, dated to about 1829, was produced in Constable's studio as part of the artist's preparation for his six-foot *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* (private collection, on loan to The National Gallery, London).<sup>1</sup> Much had changed in the artist's life in the intervening years: from a happily married father of three, in 1821, eight years later the artist was a widower with seven children under the age of thirteen. In 1821, Constable had been an associate of the Royal Academy for two years; in February 1829, he finally secured enough votes for full-member status.

As in the earlier sketch, the cathedral is placed at a distance, just right of center. In both sketches, the trees on the left of the sheet dwarf the fourteenth-century spire. Constable undermines the conventions of classical landscape composition, making the water feature less a conduit for the spectator's eye to the middle distance of the image and more an obstacle. The River Nadder, a tributary of the River Avon, runs alongside the western side of the cathedral and can be seen on the left side of the 1821 sketch. In the 1829 sketch, the Nadder curves into the composition from the right and functions as a mirror for the sky.

Unlike the earlier sketch, which views the cathedral from the southwest and did not result in a large-scale finished painting, the slightly larger later sketch was one of a series of preparatory works that culminated in an exhibition piece. When visiting Archdeacon John Fisher in July or November 1829, Constable drew in pencil three views of the cathedral from the western "Meadows," each from a slightly different location. Of these three pencil sketches, the one at the Yale Center for British Art<sup>2</sup> is closest to the Manton sketch, while the Fitzwilliam Museum's drawing<sup>3</sup>

is closest to the Hart Collection *Sketch for "Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows,"*<sup>4</sup> which like the drawing brings the viewer closer to the cathedral and thus closer to the composition of the painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1831.

Reynolds takes the similarity of these two sketches to their respective drawings to argue that the sketches were executed when Constable returned home from his Salisbury visits.<sup>5</sup> Parris refrains from giving such a definitive verdict, preferring to state that the sketches "were made on or shortly after Constable's July visit."<sup>6</sup> In the most recent analysis of the exhibition piece, Franklin Kelly skirts the question of when and where the oil sketches were executed, discussing only the larger Tate sketch (Tate Britain, London) and the full-scale sketch now at the Guildhall Art Gallery, London.<sup>7</sup>

As Reynolds has observed, that a mere two years elapsed between the artist's execution of pencil drawings and his submission of the final six-footer to the Royal Academy was unusual for Constable.<sup>8</sup> The genesis of the finished painting points to the relationship the artist had with his friend and patron Archdeacon Fisher: during July 1829, Fisher and Constable discussed the choice of the cathedral as a subject for an exhibition painting; Fisher encouraged Constable to pursue the subject in front of the motif.<sup>9</sup> Thus, while Constable's earlier series of *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds* records the artist's relationship with the uncle, the later painting—to which the Manton preparatory sketch is related—stands as a monument to the all-important friendship between the artist and the nephew.

The sketch's history, in its own way, suggests the importance of friendship in the Constable family. Isabel Constable, the artist's last surviving child, gave the sketch to her life-long friend Alice Fenwick.<sup>10</sup> Both were daughters of landscape artists: Fenwick's father was Harry Pollard Ashby (1808–1892), and their friendship dates back as early as 1836, when the Constable children visited the Ashbys's home in Wimbledon. The five oil sketches that constituted Isabel's gift descended through three generations of the family before being sold in 1982. EP

**PROVENANCE** Isabel Constable, the artist's daughter, by descent, given to Fenwick, probably in 1880s; Alice Ashby Fenwick (d. 1893); Dora Fenwick (D. H. Maffett), her daughter, by descent (from 1893); Major C. W. Maffett, her son, by descent (d. 1982); Trustees of the Mrs. D. H. Maffett Will Trust; Christie's, London, 19 Nov. 1982, no. 44, sold to Oscar and Peter Johnson, Ltd., as agent for Manton; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton



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(1982–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

**EXHIBITIONS** Possibly London 1889a, no. 302, as *Sketch for "Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows,"* lent by Mrs. Fenwick;<sup>11</sup> London 1991a, pp. 360–62, no. 207, ill.; London 1991b, p. 68, pl. 71; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

**REFERENCES** Fleming-Williams 1983, pp. 34–38; Parris 1983, p. 223, fig. 37; Cormack 1986, p. 204; Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, no. 31.3, vol. 2, pl. 794; Parris 1994, pp. 64–66, no. 22, ill.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a sheet of wove paper mounted to gray laminate cardboard 0.5 cm thick. The left and right edges have been board trimmed right through the paint. The mount is slightly concave. The lower left corner is dog-eared and missing the upper layer of its paper, and the lower right is cut very close to the edge. There are scattered old losses in the thick white clouds, down to the lower color, caused by flexing of the paper support. Age cracks appear in the blue sky. Various paint and wood debris and old smudges make the sky looked flecked with spots. There are many areas where the wet paint was disturbed, probably from working and carrying the picture outdoors. The varnish looks blanched in a number of locations, a condition that seems to be associated with a dark gray paint color. This may be the result of poor cleaning or a varnish layer that is releasing from the paint film. The varnish looks very pebbly due to a poorly applied spray coat. There are retouches in the dark foreground, in some trees, and along the right edge. The painting may have been cleaned prior to the 1980 sale. Areas of cleaning abrasion are visible in the thinly applied dark colors, where more paper surface is exposed.

There is no proper ground layer, but there may be a reddish wash that barely covers the paper surface. Buff-colored paper fibers are visible in many locations in lower magnification, but the reddish wash provides a slightly warm tone to the image. No underdrawing was seen under normal or infrared light. The paint was applied wet-into-wet using vehicular strokes, some applied over washes. The fibrous nature of the paper surface gives a fuzzy character to the paint film.

1. R 31.1.
2. R 29.42.
3. R 29.43.
4. R 31.4.
5. Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, pp. 226–27.
6. Parris 1994, p. 65. When the Manton sketch first resurfaced, Parris took the view that because the Mellon and Fitzwilliam drawings are squared for transfer, the oil sketches were produced in the studio. See Parris 1983, p. 223.
7. R 31.5 and R 31.2. See London–Washington–San Marino 2006–7, pp. 178–81.
8. Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, p. 226.
9. John Fisher to John Constable, 9 Aug. 1829 and 3 Sept. 1829, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 6, pp. 250–51, 252–53.
10. See Parris 1983 and Fleming-Williams and Parris 1984, p. 89.
11. While it is unknown which picture was exhibited, it seems more likely that the exhibited work was the Hart Collection's *Sketch for "Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows"* (R 31.4) and not the Clark picture.