



**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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1. London 1991b, p. 15.
2. See, for example, Rosenthal 1983, pp. 95, 100, 115, and Cormack 1986, p. 102.
3. John Constable to Maria Bicknell, 13 July 1815, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 2, p. 146.
4. Maria Bicknell to John Constable, 20 July 1815, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 2, p. 148. She refers to Constable's having spent much of his time immediately before leaving London painting the landscape background for George Dawe's portrait of Eliza O'Neill in the character of Juliet. This portrait (R 15.51) was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1816 (no. 199).
5. John Constable to Maria Bicknell, 27 Aug. 1815, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 2, p. 149.
6. *Ibid.* Maria wrote to Constable on 20 July and then again on 9 Aug. before the artist responded on 27 Aug.
7. Maria Bicknell to John Constable, 9 Sept. 1815, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 2, p. 151.
8. John Constable to Maria Bicknell, 14 Sept. 1815, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 2, p. 152.
9. Maria Bicknell to John Constable, 18 Oct. 1815, in Beckett 1962–80, vol. 2, p. 155.
10. John Constable to Maria Bicknell, 19 Oct. 1815, in Beckett 1962–80, vol. 2, p. 156.
11. R 11.2.
12. R 12.1.
13. See, for example, R 16.3–6.
14. R 15.1.
15. R 14.38.
16. R 14.1.
17. *The Farmer's Boy* was first published in 1800 and, by 1820, was in its fourteenth edition.
18. Leslie 1845, p. 314.
19. New York 1998–99, p. 390.
20. Rosenthal 1983, pp. 202–3.
21. Barrell 1980, p. 155.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
23. Leslie 1845, p. 13.
24. *Repository of Arts* 1816, p. 358; reprinted in Ivy 1991, p. 71.
25. Ivy 1991, p. 40.
26. Hunt 1817, p. 140; reprinted in Ivy 1991, p. 71.
27. Morris Cheston may not have held sole ownership; his son-in-law, Raul Betancourt, Jr., also seems to have represented the family interests at times.

65 | Sketch for *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge Seen from Whitehall Stairs, June 18th 1817*

c. 1819

Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 23.2 cm

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

2007.8.48

66 | Waterloo Bridge Seen from Whitehall Stairs

c. 1829

Oil on canvas, 61 x 99 cm

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

2007.8.49

The three-day Battle of Waterloo in June 1815 marked the final defeat of Napoleon and the end of more than twenty-two years of war between France and Britain. The almost fifteen years it took Constable to complete his commemoration of the opening of Waterloo Bridge represented his personal battle with the challenges of monumental historical landscape painting. The two oil sketches of Waterloo Bridge in the Clark collection—one probably executed in 1819 and the other about ten years later—allow us to track the unprecedented period of gestation of Constable's 1832 *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge seen from Whitehall Stairs, June 18th 1817* (Tate Britain, London),¹ his most unusual six-foot canvas.

Although it is not known definitively whether the artist attended the opening ceremony led by the Prince Regent, Constable doubtless witnessed the preparations for the festivities on his daily visits to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1817. The annual exhibition was held at Somerset House, which fronts the Thames just east of the bridge and is visible in both sketches at the north end of the new bridge. Although the close geographic link between the Neoclassical edifice erected between 1776 and 1786 and the bridge designed by John Rennie is shown in Constable's oil sketch *Somerset House Terrace from Waterloo Bridge* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven),² the artist chose a location further west along the Embankment to view Waterloo Bridge starting with his earliest conception of the present subject.

Three drawings that Graham Reynolds has dated to

1817³ place Constable at Whitehall stairs, the location from which his view of Waterloo Bridge of about 1819 is taken. With its flurry of activity in the foreground, the *repoussoir* tree at left, the river and the flotilla of boats leading the eye through the middle distance to the structural point of interest of the sketch—the rhythmic arches of the bridge spanning the Thames and the cannon smoke that signaled the start of the opening ceremonies—the sketch follows the compositional requirements of the classical landscape.

The features of Clark's earlier sketch match the description of the "auspicious" day recorded in *Leigh's New Picture of London*, which provides an additional explanation for Constable's choice of viewpoint: "Flags were seen flying in all directions. The river between Westminster and Waterloo Bridges was literally covered with boats filled with genteel and well-dressed company. . . . The cannon commenced firing precisely at three o'clock, announcing the embarkation of the Prince Regent, the duke of York, the duke of Wellington and the great officers of state, in the royal barges, near Fife House."⁴

The view from above of the gardens of Fife House, the residence of Lord Liverpool, the prime minister, places the artist on the upper floor of 5 Whitehall Yard.⁵ Rapid brushstrokes, laden with pigment, convey the excitement of the throng on the second anniversary of the historic victory. The dominance of mood over detail in the sketch contrasts sharply with the precision of a pencil drawing (Victoria and Albert Museum, London)⁶ that depicts the same view from the same height without any of the specific activities of the opening ceremony.

And yet there is evidence that makes it likely the oil sketch was executed two years after the event it depicts. Because of the height from which the view is taken, the sketch is considered to be the work Constable showed his mentor, the landscape painter and diarist Joseph Farington, on 11 August 1819. In his diary entry for that day, Farington noted his advice to Constable: "I objected to his having made it so much a '*Birds eye view*' and thereby lessening [the] magnificence of the bridge & buildings.—He sd. he would reconsider the sketch."⁷ A year later Constable brought a new sketch of Waterloo Bridge to Farington, who recommended this time that he continue the success of his second six-foot exhibition painting, *Stratford Mill* (The National Gallery, London),⁸ with another Suffolk scene.⁹

It is, therefore, in the context of the artist's first forays into large-scale landscape paintings that this



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small but powerful sketch should be understood. That Constable saw the triumph of engineering on the River Thames and the triumph of the British over the French as a potential subject for a six-foot canvas is clear from the repeated references in his correspondence over the years until his eventual display of the 1832 painting. That he found the execution of an urban subject an almost insurmountable challenge is also clear from both the visual and the documentary record. For example, in 1824, Constable wrote to John Fisher: "I have no inclination to pursue my Waterloo. I am impressed with an idea that it will ruin me."¹⁰ Charles Robert Leslie summarized his friend's thirteen-year struggle with the subject in a passage that astutely points to the features of the scene that worked to the strengths and challenged the weakness of the artist's practice: "It was often taken up and as often laid aside, with many alterations of hope and fear. The expanse of sky and water tempted him to go on with it, while the absence of all rural associations made it distasteful to him."¹¹

The 1991 Tate exhibition addressed in detail the different sketches and corresponding references in the documentary record of the years leading up to Constable's final campaign of about 1829–32.¹² In the 2006 exhibition devoted to Constable's six-foot paintings, Anne Lyles was able to reassess the artist's preparatory material based on technical analysis establishing that Constable had, in fact, begun the Anglesey Abbey large-scale sketch—catalogued by Reynolds as the "full-scale sketch"¹³—as early as



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1820.¹⁴ In any case, 1826 remains a pivotal year in the artist's rethinking of the subject.

The breakthrough occurred, as Constable himself informed Fisher, that summer when he was given access to the terrace of Lord Pembroke's town house.¹⁵ The second Clark sketch allows us to see how this new perspective altered the composition, with the addition of, in Constable's words, "two feet to my canvas."¹⁶ The artist has moved even farther west of Waterloo Bridge, gaining more room to detail the activity of the boats and barges that carried the Prince Regent and other dignitaries from Fife House on the north bank of the Thames to the south bank.

The sketch (and the final exhibited painting) includes the building from where it has been supposed that Constable first painted the scene, the bow-fronted 5 Whitehall Yard. In contrast to the rapidly executed early sketch, where the geometry of the bridge is accentuated by the contrast between the white pigment representing the Cornish granite of the bridge and the dark semicircles defining the shadows of the bridge's arches, the later sketch portrays the bridge as a ghostly presence. There is no sign of the cannon smoke that is critical to the immediacy of the early sketch (and the 1832 exhibition piece). Rather, this later work witnesses the artist working out the details of the foreground that his new vantage point allows.

The existence of this sketch in addition to a similarly scaled sketch at the Yale Center for British Art¹⁷ has led to speculation about the role each of these

(and the Anglesey Abbey sketch) had in this last campaign toward the completion of the 1832 painting. Reynolds confidently states that the Clark sketch is preparatory to the British Art Center version—"a rough laying-in"¹⁸—and that the latter was the basis for David Lucas's mezzotint for *English Landscape Scenery*.¹⁹ The Yale sketch, although half the size of the final version, is closest to Constable's Royal Academy painting. Both include the cannon smoke and the tall white tower on the south bank of the Thames. This tower, erected in 1826 as a factory for lead shot, or rather its absence in the Anglesey Abbey sketch, allowed Leslie Parris and Ian Fleming-Williams in 1991 to propose that the Anglesey Abbey sketch was not the full-scale sketch for the 1832 painting.²⁰

Charles Robert Leslie's verdict on that final painting, recorded in his biography of Constable, is instructive: "When at last it came forth, though possessing very high qualities,—composition, breadth, and brightness of colour—it wanted one which generally constituted the greatest charm of his pictures—*sentiment*—, and it was condemned by the public; though perhaps less for a deficiency which its subject occasioned, than for its want of finish."²¹ The younger artist is sensitive to the fact that as a painting of the pageantry of royalty in an urban setting, the six-footer lacks the emotional associations with which Constable infused his renderings of his native Suffolk environment. In recording the public response to the painting, Leslie repeated the criticism that was often

made on the occasion of Constable's Royal Academy exhibits: that his broken brushwork contravened the conventional high gloss finish of academic painting, such as the marine paintings of Sir Augustus Wall Callcott (1779–1844).²²

Constable's display of the painting at Somerset House has provided one of the most often retold incidents in the history of his rivalry with J. M. W. Turner. The latter, renowned for the amount of work he conducted on his submissions during the days prior to the exhibition's public opening—the so-called varnishing days—added a bright red buoy to his *Helvoetsluys* (Tokyo Fuji Art Museum).²³ Turner's painting, which was in a gray-blue key, had been placed next to Constable's uncharacteristically red-infused contemporary history painting. Constable's reaction—"He has been here and fired a gun"—shows that in the artist's mind the competition between professional artists was as significant and bloody as the decades of war between countries.²⁴ EP

PROVENANCE Cat. 65: Possibly Edward Beaumont Venn, Freston Lodge, Freston, Ipswich (d. 1857); Lawrence E. Venn; sale, Sotheby's, London, 30 Nov. 1960, no. 122, sold to Leggatt's; [Leggatt's, London]; private collection, by descent (until at least 1991, given to Christ's College); Christ's College, Cambridge (by 1995, until 1997);²⁵ private collection; [Spink, London, sold to Manton, 26 Oct. 1999]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1999–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

Cat. 66: [Leggatt's, London, sold to Hardy, c. 1940]; Lee Hardy; John Hardy, his son, by descent (until 1988, sold to Leger);²⁶ [Leger Galleries, sold to Manton, 2 Mar. 1989]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1989–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark, as *Sketch for "The Opening of Waterloo Bridge seen from Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817"*); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS Cat. 65: London 1977b, no. 50, ill., as *A Bird's-eye view of the Thames and Waterloo Bridge*; New York 1983a, pp. 152–53, no. 55, ill.; London 1991a, pp. 206–11, no. 102, ill.; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

Cat. 66: New York–Bloomington–Chicago 1987–88, pp. 137, 226, no. 222, fig. 128, as *Waterloo Bridge from Whitehall Stairs*; London 1989, pp. 174–79, no. 31, ill., as *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge, seen from Whitehall Stairs*; New York 2000; Williamstown 2007a, no cat.

REFERENCES Cat. 65: Probably Farington 1978–84, vol. 15, p. 5396; Hoozee 1979, pp. 112–13, no. 262, ill.; London 1989, p. 176, fig. 139, as *The River Thames with Waterloo Bridge*; Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, pp. 34–35, no. 19.22, vol. 2, pl. 86; Cormack 1986, p. 215.

Cat. 66: Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, p. 213, no. 29.64, vol. 2, pl. 765; Leger Galleries 1992, pp. 148, 153, ill., as *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge*; Parris 1994, pp. 67–69, no. 23, ill., as *Sketch for "The Opening of Waterloo Bridge"*; London–Washington–San Marino 2006–7, p. 187.

TECHNICAL REPORT Cat. 65: The support is an off-square fragment of slightly coarse linen with a weave of 13 threads per cm. It is glue-lined to finer fabric with a weave of 19 threads per cm and mounted to a four-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The edges of the original fabric look hand cut by scissors, probably from a larger piece of pre-primed fabric. The lower right corner is missing, and a raised lip along the right edge may indicate part of an earlier fold-over edge. Vertical cracks suggest that the canvas was rolled, possibly prior to its use here. There are also age cracks in the ground and paint layers and some wrinkling in the surface due to the rather thick paint application. There is a deposit of undissolved and discolored natural resin in the sky, and much old brown varnish is trapped in the paint texture, which fluoresces more densely in ultraviolet light. Retouches are visible in the lower right corner, right edge, and a few internal locations. Raw canvas is painted out where it shows when the picture is framed. A chunk of blue paint with red flecks, seen at the far left in the water, may be part of an old repair or debris transferred to the surface during the lining.

The ground is comprised of several commercially applied off-white layers. There was no detectable underdrawing in normal or infrared viewing. The paint was thickly applied in a vehicular paste consistency, and was laid on wet-into-wet. Some strokes in the sky have the smooth character of palette-knife work. The thickness of the paint suggests that there may be more than one paint layer present.

Cat. 66: The support is a moderate-weight canvas with a weave of 16 threads per cm. The painting has an old glue lining with foxing stains on the reverse of its canvas, which is the same weave as the original. Early reports indicate the original fabric has a stamp of the supplier Newman, now hidden beneath the lining. The stretcher is a four-member mortise-and-tenon design. There is a bulge along the inner edge of the upper stretcher bar. A large shallow concentric crack system occurs in the upper center sky from an old blow; this network extends out over several dents in the sky, one of which is flaking. There are scattered areas of fine age cracks, as well as paint loss along the left edge. Wood fibers and gesso from the frame are deposited along the extreme edges. The varnish is not very old, and there are retouches covering the sky following the weave pattern, suggestive of past overcleaning. Broad areas of the sky and clouds look reworked, but these may be from the artist finishing with a different character of paint. One area of reworking near the right-most bridge arch is done in heavier paint, possibly by the artist trying to cover up something. Old residual varnish in the dark passages shows in ultraviolet light. The surface reflectance reveals some lumpiness in the lining.

The commercial ground is an off-white color, probably

applied in several layers. The surface has a striated appearance, and the ground may be varnished. In infrared light, many underdrawing lines of a very sketchy nature can be seen in the windows of the buildings, some of the soldiers, the figures standing against the left wall, various trees, and the horizon line below Saint Paul's. Graphite underdrawing details can be detected in normal light in numerous locations. The paint is nebulous overall, executed in thin vehicular washes and sketchy strokes. The sky colors are so thinly diluted that they have separated into pools, leaving a mottled pattern throughout most of the sky. Impastos in the dark foreground and foliage areas are very low, soft, and rounded. Besides the medium- to large-sized brushwork, some colors look as if they had been applied with a palette knife. A sponge may have been used in the foreground to create lighter details through the wet brown paint. There are thin sgraffito lines in the balcony, cornices, and windows of the left building. Ink applied with a brush may have been used for some details.

1. R 32.1.
2. R 19.37.
3. R 17.5–7.
4. Leigh 1818, p. 308.
5. London 1976, p. 112.
6. R 19.24.
7. Farington 1978–84, vol. 15, p. 5396, entry for 11 Aug. 1819.
8. R 20.1.
9. Farington 1978–84, vol. 16, p. 5582, entry for 21 Nov. 1820. This second conception is possibly the larger *Sketch for "The Opening of Waterloo Bridge Seen from Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817"* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London; R 19.23).
10. John Constable to John Fisher, 18 July 1824, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 6, p. 168.
11. Leslie 1845, p. 227.
12. London 1991a, pp. 206–11, 369–72. Reynolds's chronology under his entry for the final version is also useful (Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, pp. 233–34).
13. R 32.2.
14. London–Washington–San Marino 2006–7, pp. 57, 184–89.
15. John Constable to John Fisher, 7 July 1826, in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 6, p. 223.
16. *Ibid.* Anne Lyles cogently analyzes the ambiguity inherent in this statement when compared to the post-1826 sketches, none of which has been extended by that amount (London–Washington–San Marino 2006–7, pp. 186–87).
17. R 29.63.
18. Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, p. 213.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
20. London 1991a, p. 369.
21. Leslie 1845, p. 227.

22. See Ivy 1991, pp. 13, 32, 39–40, 43, 46.

23. BJ 345.

24. See Leslie 1860, p. 135.

25. The painting was offered for sale at Sotheby's, London, 12 July 1995, no. 102, ill., but was bought in.

26. The painting was offered for sale at Sotheby's, London, 29 Nov. 1978, no. 101, but was bought in.

67 | Sandbanks and a Cart and Horses on Hampstead Heath c. 1820–25

Oil on canvas, 19.7 x 25.4 cm

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

2007.8.37

To escape the polluted atmosphere of central London in the interest of protecting his wife Maria's fragile health, Constable first rented a house in Hampstead Heath at the end of August 1819. From that year until Maria's death in November 1828, the almost yearly removal of his growing family to the northern suburb became part of the artist's routine and added a new subject for his landscape studies.¹ Most famously the venue for his sky studies of 1821 and 1822, the heath itself was the object of on-the-spot studies beginning in 1819, continuing most intensively in 1821 and 1822, tapering off in the remainder of the decade. Constable exhibited four Hampstead subjects at the Royal Academy: *Hampstead Heath and Harrow* in 1821; and *Hampstead Heath and View from the Terrace, Hampstead* in 1822.² Because the locations of these paintings are today unknown, the record of Constable's activities on the heath is formed primarily from oil sketches such as *Sandbanks and a Cart and Horses on Hampstead Heath*.

Hampstead Heath, with its open air and views of central London, was celebrated for its natural beauty by poets and artists; as Constable depicts in *Sandbanks and a Cart and Horses*, however, its natural resources also provided necessary raw materials for brick-making and iron foundry casting. The geological composition of the land consisted of the sand that was essential for those industries. Furthermore, because part of the Heath was common land in the Manor of Hampstead, tenants had a right to dig for sand and gravel. There is archaeological evidence that digging and quarrying sand on the heath was conducted in the