



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

**VOLUME ONE**

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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,  
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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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was exhibited in 1899 is that while the Sedelmeyer label remains on the back of the Johnson painting, the late-nineteenth-century label from Leggatt's, which identified paintings purchased from Constable descendants, does not. There is, however, a small blue-trimmed label inscribed with the number 12168, which R. B. Beckett associated with Leggatt's. Jennifer Thompson of the Philadelphia Museum of Art kindly provided this information.

3. For a complete list of Lionel's exhibited works, see "Chronology" in *London 1982*, pp. 20–21.
4. Both the original sale from the Constable family to Leggatt's and the ownership of the American private collector come from labels on the back of the work.

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**80 | Extensive Landscape with Clouds** c. 1850

Oil on wood-pulp board, mounted on panel, 24.3 x 39.1 cm  
 Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin  
 and Lady Manton  
 2007.8.59

The faded condition of this oil sketch, identified by Graham Reynolds as depicting Sussex Downs, makes a secure attribution to John Constable problematic.<sup>1</sup> In 1996, Reynolds compared it with *A View on the Sussex Downs* (private collection).<sup>2</sup> The identification of the site of this sketch as the area near Brighton was made at the time of its sale in 1981. At that time, Reynolds

noted that the inscription on the back ("Charles Peel Feb 18 48 4/6") linked the sketch to the Constable family, in this case Charles Golding Constable.<sup>3</sup> The association of the Clark sketch with Isabel Constable was published at the time of its appearance at the sale of H. L. Fison at Christie's in 1959, where it was described as a work by John Constable.<sup>4</sup> Anne Lyles, however, in her review of Reynolds's 1996 catalogue, noted that Ian Fleming-Williams believed it was "almost certainly by Constable's son Lionel," an opinion that Lyles herself endorsed.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Sussex resort town of Brighton provided Constable with a subject for his six-foot *Chain Pier, Brighton* (Tate Britain, London),<sup>6</sup> exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1827, the artist made clear his dislike of the fashionable seaside resort in an often quoted statement. Writing to his confidant John Fisher, Constable laments that "Brighton is the receptacle of the fashion and offscouring of London. The magnificence of the sea . . . is drowned in the din & lost in the tumult of stage coaches . . . and the beach is only Piccadilly."<sup>7</sup> In addition to painting scenes on the well-populated beach and pier, Constable also sketched the nearby Sussex Downs. On the back of one such sketch in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,<sup>8</sup> he described the landscape as "Hideous masses of unfledged earth called the country."<sup>9</sup>

Comparison with this securely dated and attributed sketch allows us to see why both the authorship and the location of the Clark sketch have been cast

into doubt. Although both works are similarly desolate and nearly monochromatic, the dense foliage of the foreground in the Clark sketch is more summarily indicated, and the middle ground and dull sky are more hesitantly painted than the fluid yet more precise Victoria and Albert work, with its sky filled with rapidly moving but individuated clouds. Just as authorship by John Constable is unlikely, so too the identity of the location is uncertain. As we have seen repeatedly, the subjects painted by Lionel all too often received their titles based on the false assumption that they were the work of his father. Given that Lionel probably produced this sketch, however, a date of about 1850 is likely as this was the period of his most sustained activity. EP

**PROVENANCE** Isabel Constable, the artist's sister, by descent (d. 1888, probably her sale, Christie's, London, 17 June 1892, no. 233, 234, or 238, as by John Constable, sold to Shepherd Bros.);<sup>10</sup> [Shepherd Bros., London, probably from 1892]; Victor Rienaecker, London;<sup>11</sup> H. L. Fison (until 1969, his sale, Christie's, London, 6 Nov. 1969, no. 19, as *A View in Sussex*, by John Constable, sold to Agnew's); [Agnew's, London, from 1969]; Mrs. A. Mackinnon; private collection (until Nov. 2000, sold to Salander-O'Reilly); [Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, sold to Manton, 30 May 2001, as *The Sussex Downs*, by John Constable]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (2001–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark, as *The Sussex Downs*, attributed to John Constable); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

**EXHIBITIONS** None

**REFERENCES** Reynolds 1996, vol. 1, p. 246, no. 24.78A, vol. 2, pl. 1409, as *The Sussex Downs*, by John Constable; Lyles 1999, p. 183.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The primary support appears to be a thin (0.2 cm), brown wood-pulp board. It has been glued to a secondary hardwood panel, either mahogany or walnut, which has two inserted oak battens running vertically across the panel's horizontal grain. There is a slight possibility of an intermediary third layer, possibly an early canvas lining. The edges have been extended by oak strips. The whole support assembly has a complicated warp, running concave from left to right and convex from top to bottom. An area of lifted paint and support material is visible at the bottom edge, 7.6 cm from the lower left corner. There is extensive solvent abrasion throughout which allows the white ground layer to show. There are still old brown varnish residues scattered in the surface, and in ultraviolet light, patches of old natural resin varnish can be detected in the foreground. There is recent retouching over the present varnish in the large dark cloud and scattered in the landscape. There may also be older

retouching hidden beneath the varnish layers. The red in the sky may have faded to the present pale pink. The broad cream-colored bands at the upper edges and in the lower left sky may be later additions, along with the ocher-colored bands in the left middle ground. The surface has an even low-gloss sheen.

The ground layer is an unevenly applied white layer, possibly applied by the artist. It has a pebbly fibrous texture, either from the surface fibers of the board or from accidentally incorporated dust. There was no visible underdrawing, but a small round shape near the center lower edge has been painted over. Infrared examination may also reveal some figures near the center and another tree form in the middle ground at the left center. The entire paint layer is very thin and sketchy, with almost no color in the lower right corner and upper sky.

1. The sketch was not included in Reynolds 1984. When, in 1996, he added an appendix of newly accepted later works to *The Early Paintings and Drawings*, Reynolds included the Clark sketch; however, he misidentified the support as canvas rather than wood-pulp board. See Reynolds 1996, vol. 1, p. 246.
2. R 24.24.
3. Sotheby's 1981b, p. 100, no. 185. Reynolds repeats this conclusion in Reynolds 1984, vol. 1, p. 139. According to Reynolds, the label is a stock mark of John Peel to whom the Constable family sent works to be relined.
4. Christie's 1959, p. 13, no. 19.
5. Lyles 1999, p. 183. I am grateful to Dr. Lyles for our discussion about both this work and Constable more generally.
6. R 27.1.
7. John Constable to John Fisher, August 1824 (postmarked 29 August), in Beckett 1962–70, vol. 6, p. 171.
8. R 24.17.
9. Reynolds 1973, p. 169, no. 268.
10. The Fison sale, 1969, notes that the picture had been in the collection of Isabel Constable, and a label on the back of the painting states that it was bought by Shepherd Bros. at one of Isabel Constable's sales. This probably indicates the 1892 sale, in which eight lots, some with multiple items, were sold to Shepherd. This work was most likely included in either no. 233, "Studies of Landscapes, etc.," no. 234, "Five studies of Landscapes and Clouds, in two frames," or no. 238, "Hampstead: evening, 1823; and a Landscape."
11. The Fison sale, 1969, and a label on the back of the painting state that it was owned by Rienaecker.