



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

**VOLUME ONE**

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With an essay by Richard Rand  
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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Raymond Needler; sale Sotheby's, London, 13 Nov. 1996, no. 100, as by Lionel Constable, sold to Ackermann & Johnson; [Ackermann & Johnson, London, sold to Manton, 25 Nov. 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** London 1899b, no. 72, as *A Rainy Day*, by John Constable.

**REFERENCES** Parris 1998, pp. 51–52, no. 60, ill.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The original support appears to be a sheet of wove paper attached to very thin acidic pulp cardboard, giving a total thickness of less than 0.1 cm. The top edge is ragged, with the paper layer cut away by a visible knife cut, and the paper and cardboard layers are separating in the upper left corner. The painting has been mounted to a mahogany panel 1 cm thick, with chamfered back edges 2.5 cm wide. The grain runs horizontally, and the wood extends past all four original cardboard edges. The whole package has a very slight convex warp. Some delamination of the cardboard layer from the wood panel is occurring along the right and bottom edges and the center of the upper left corner. The exposed cardboard at the ragged top edge has been toned, and there is gesso fill and flaking repaint along the lower edge. Some graphite marks are visible along the edges. Wrinkling in the upper paper layer, from the initial pasting to the cardboard, can be seen near the left edge and the center right area. Shattered paint and varnish can be seen along the lower right edge. Some impastos are flattened from the mounting process. Old varnish residues were detected in most dark passages, probably indicating a partial cleaning. The matte surface reflectance may be due to the absorbent nature of the raw paper and cardboard supports. In reflected light, the surface is lumpy due to the irregular cardboard layer, with several round bumps in the left half of the image.

The painting is executed on unprepared paper. Under low magnification, the paper fibers can be seen throughout the surface, and the color of the paper seems to be turning rather orange or hot in tone. This may indicate that the paper is of poor quality or that it is being discolored by the cardboard substrate. A few broad strokes and zigzag-shaped underdrawing lines in what may be charcoal were detected in the clouds using infrared reflectography. The darker paint colors were laid in with thin blended washes, and the lighter colors with thicker, distinct strokes. The tree line in the foreground was painted over the edge of the sky.

1. See especially Parris and Fleming-Williams 1978 and London 1982. Charles Rhyne's invaluable contribution to the current state of knowledge of Constable and his family should also be acknowledged.

2. See, for example, cats. 81–82.

## 79 | Cottage c. 1850

Oil on wood-pulp board, mounted on canvas, 22.5 x 28.3 cm

Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton  
2007.8.61

Sir Edwin's purchase of *Cottage* in 1984 as a work by Lionel Constable marks the progress made by Constable scholars in separating paintings executed by the son from his father's oeuvre. The awkwardness in the treatment of the titular cottage confirms that the work is indeed a product of an artist who had not yet fully mastered architectural perspective. The open casement of the dormer window falls precipitously into space; the poorly defined roofline curves upward. The tree that emerges from behind the awkwardly positioned hayrick has a single, ribbon-like branch similar to the calligraphic branches in both *Tree in a Meadow* and *Tree in a Landscape* (cats. 81–82), both works now given to Lionel. Furthermore, the smudgy trees and the unfinished foreground point to a general lack of resolution to the work.

A Leggatt label on the back, dating to about 1959, states that the sketch was in the 1899 exhibition of John Constable's paintings and drawings held at their galleries in London. The work exhibited at that time as number 71 in the catalogue was titled *Cottage on the Stour, Flatford*.<sup>1</sup> But the existence of a similar sketch in the John G. Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art complicates the identification of the Clark sketch as the one in the 1899 exhibition. This slightly larger work, which passed through the French dealer Sedelmeyer before being acquired by Johnson by 1911, approaches a cottage with a pitched roof from farther away and from a different angle. Two tall leaning trees, which extend beyond the edge of the paper, dominate the right half of the work with just the top part of the cottage visible in the middle distance.<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not the Clark *Cottage* was, in fact, the painting exhibited in 1899, its title is once again a case of a location being identified purely on the basis of the sites associated with John Constable. There is no reason to believe that this cottage is, in fact, on the Stour. None of the paintings Lionel exhibited at the Royal Academy or the British Institution between 1849 and 1855 was catalogued as a Suffolk subject. Lionel produced drawings and paintings on his visits



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to Somerset (1846), Cornwall (1850), the United States (1850), Scotland (1851), and Devon (1852). In 1855, he exhibited his last two works at the Royal Academy, including one titled *A barn, in Sussex* (no. 271). After this date, there is no further evidence that Lionel continued to draw or paint, though he did continue to take photographs. The reason for the abridgement of his career as an artist is unknown.<sup>3</sup> EP

**PROVENANCE** Constable family, by descent, sold to Leggatt's; [Leggatt's, London]; private collection, U.S.A., in 1959;<sup>4</sup> private collection; sale, Phillips, Edinburgh, 2 Dec. 1983, no. 85; sale, Phillips, London, 11 Dec. 1984, no. 60, as *Cottage on the Stour, Flatford*, sold Oscar & Peter Johnson, as agent for Manton; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1984–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark, as *Cottage on the Stour*); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

**EXHIBITIONS** Possibly London 1899b, no. 71, as *Cottage on the Stour, Flatford*, by John Constable.

**REFERENCES** Fleming-Williams and Parris 1984, pp. 96, 254n8; Parris 1994, pp. 108–9, no. 37, ill., as "*Cottage on the Stour, Flatford*."

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a pressed wood-pulp board (0.2 cm thick), which has been mounted to a moderate-weight linen with a weave of 19 threads/cm. There is also a second lining linen of the same weight fabric which holds the mounted painting to the five-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher. The combined support layers have a slight con-

cave warp. The paint surface has been flattened and looks dimpled in reflected light due to small impastos moated into the surface, from the face-down lining pressure. The brown wood-pulp support has darkened and shows through below the sky and the foreground. There is an old, inpainted vertical crease down the entire board running through the sky and the building, and the upper left corner is creased and totally overpainted. There is considerable retouching in the sky, in several old scratches, as well as in the right and center tree foliage. In infrared light, much of the building's roof looks thin, possibly overcleaned and reglazed. There appear to be two levels of retouching, both above and below the existing varnish. There are visible fills along the right edge, and some flaking paint in the brown color at the lower right. The varnish is slightly discolored natural resin, and the retouches in the sky have darkened and look blotchy.

There is no ground layer. Under low magnification, chips of the rough brown wood fiber that make up the board are visible, in some cases due to cleaning damage. There is no visible underdrawing. There may be a mid-toned brown color applied below the right tree and part of the central trees. The paint was applied in thin loose vehicular strokes. The sky was painted first, with reserves left for the trees. The lower half of the image has much wet-into-wet detailing, with a few flattened impastos in the white areas.

1. London 1899b, no. 71.
2. Like the Clark sketch, the Johnson *Cottage on the Stour* (Johnson cat. 852) is oil on paper, laid on canvas, but measures 25.4 x 41.4 cm. See Philadelphia Museum of Art 1994, p. 7, and London 1982, pp. 68–69, no. 20. A further obstacle to determining which of the two *Cottages*



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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