



**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

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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
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their shadows play a prominent role.³ This interest in the effect of light on trees is often seen in the work of Lionel.

A measure of Lionel's success in learning from his father's views of the English countryside is that within a generation even his family members could not distinguish between his paintings and those of his father. In 1899, the firm of Leggatt's Gallery staged an exhibition of nearly one hundred oil paintings and one hundred drawings by John Constable bought primarily from the Royal Academician's grandson Hugh, Lionel's nephew. The exhibition was a testament to the growing appreciation of the artist's work. Among these paintings were works now known to be by Lionel. A Leggatt label on the stretcher of the Clark sketch indicates that this work was catalogued as number 75 under the title *Dedham Water Meadows*. However, there exists another, smaller sketch of the same subject purported to have a Leggatt label, contributing to the confusion surrounding clear identification of the exhibition history of works now given to Lionel.⁴ As we have seen in the case of Lionel Constable's *Cottage* (cat. 79), the 1899 exhibition was not only a milestone in the public perception and understanding of John Constable, but also the source of misidentifications and confusions that remain to this day. EP

PROVENANCE Hugh Golding Constable, the artist's nephew, by descent; [Leggatt's, London, 1899, possibly sold to Young and Agnew's, 1899]; [Alexander Young and Agnew's, London, sold to Wallis, 6 May 1909];⁵ [Wallis & Son (The French Gallery), London, from 1909]; John Edward Taylor; Lt. Col. A. G. Penchen;⁶ sale, Parke-Bernet, New York, 7 April 1966, no. 59, as *Dedham Water Meadows*, by John Constable, sold to Manton; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1966–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark, as *Meadow Scene "Dedham Water Meadows"*); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS Possibly London 1899b, no. 75, as *Dedham Water Meadows*, by John Constable.

REFERENCES Fleming-Williams and Parris 1984, pp. 228–29, pl. 138, as "*Dedham Water Meadows*"; Parris 1994, pp. 107, 109, no. 36, ill., as *Meadow Scene ("Dedham Water Meadows")*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a thin (0.1 cm) wood-pulp board, glue-mounted to moderate-weight linen with a weave of 19 threads/cm. The mounting is slightly off-square and the stretcher is a five-member mortise-and-tenon design. There are a small straight-line lump or blister in the lower left corner, a small lump in the center right sky between the two

supports, and scattered debris both above and below the paint film. Old lumpy repairs can be seen in the far left shrubbery and the trunk of the large tree. Frame rebate pressure marks show along the upper edge, and there is a furrowed scratch in the upper left sky which occurred when the paint was still wet. The painting was cosmetically treated in 1990 by John Bull of London. There are no old varnish residues, and the new surface coating has a moderately matte reflectance. Three fairly large retouches are visible in ultraviolet light along the right edge.

The ground layer is white, with a pebbly texture possibly induced by the large pigment particles. One pin mark in the upper right suggests that the support was pinned to a board for painting purposes. The presence of a beige or brownish wash or imprimatura layer suggests that the artist may have prepared or adjusted the ground layer himself. The toned ground is visible in the sketchy lower left foreground. There was no detectable underdrawing. The sky seems to have been painted and set first, and much of the tree foliage was produced by using wet-into-wet brushwork. Bristle brushes up to 1.3 cm wide were used in the sky, and small sables were used for much of the landscape, with scattered brush hairs embedded in the paint.

1. Fleming-Williams and Parris first published the attribution of this sketch in Fleming-Williams and Paris 1984, p. 228.
2. An account of this division is related in Fleming-Williams and Paris 1984, p. 61.
3. R 09.8, 14.47, and 29.40.
4. See Sotheby's 1987, p. 123, no. 90. Leslie Parris writes that the work in the Sotheby's catalogue "is said to carry a Leggatt label on the back." See Parris 1994, p. 109.
5. Young and Agnew's owned the work in half shares.
6. The ownership of the work by Taylor and Penchen is mentioned in Parke-Bernet 1966, no. 59.

82 | *Tree in a Landscape* c. 1850

Oil on cream wove paper, mounted on panel, 33.5 x 26.1 cm (sheet size), 34.3 x 27.2 cm (panel size)

Gift of the Manton Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton
2007.8.62

A relatively early acquisition by Sir Edwin Manton, who purchased the sketch in 1971 as by John Constable, *Tree in a Landscape* is now considered to be by his youngest son, Lionel Bicknell Constable. Charles



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Rhyne, whose research formed the basis for the volume of early paintings of the Constable catalogue raisonné, first published the new attribution in 1981. In this article, Rhyne grouped the Clark oil sketch with a series of drawings of single trees executed by Lionel: *A Tree at Great Wenham* (1846; Executors of Lt. Col. J. H. Constable), pages from an 1870 sketchbook (Musée du Louvre), *Ash Trees* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven), and *Elm Trees* (private collection, formerly with William Darby). Rhyne demonstrated that Lionel also explored the theme of the single tree across media, as in his watercolor *A Large Tree in a Summer Landscape, a Horse Standing at the Base* (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven) and the oil *A Tree in a Summer Landscape, a Low Hedge on the Left and Distant View to the Right* (private collection), which he described as “the first highly finished large vertical canvas to be published as by Lionel.”¹

Beginning with the organization of the 1976 bicentennial show at the Tate, the identification of the drawings and paintings of Constable’s youngest son

occupied Leslie Parris and Ian Fleming-Williams, as well as John Constable’s cataloguers, Graham Reynolds and Rhyne. Parris and Fleming-Williams first published the results of their investigation in an article in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1978, followed by a small exhibition focusing on Lionel Constable at the Tate in 1982, and, finally, as part of their wider study, *The Discovery of Constable* (1984).² Their work, as does Rhyne’s, takes as its basis sketches and drawings still owned by the Constable family, calotypes believed to have been taken by Lionel, and samples of his handwriting, to establish a core group of works firmly attributed to Lionel.³ From this core, they have defined characteristics of Lionel’s technique that have allowed them to broaden their scope beyond the Constable family possessions. Thus, Parris and Fleming-Williams, as well as Rhyne, pay particular attention to Lionel’s depiction of trees, noting that they tend to be more decorative than the closely observed ones of his father’s. The ribbon-like branches of the tall tree in *Tree in a Landscape* conform to their observation and echo the trees not only of

A Tree in a Summer Landscape, as noted by Rhyne, but also the trees in *On the Brent* (private collection)⁴ and *Near Stoke-by-Nayland* (fig. 82.1). In all these paintings the trees cast a sharply defined shadow toward the right side of the canvas. This distinctive shadow is also seen in *Tree in a Landscape* but not in John Constable's work.

In fact, *Tree in a Landscape* and *Near Stoke-by-Nayland* not only have similar tall trees casting a shadow, succeeded by smaller, leafy trees, but also include what appears to be the same small tree at the far right whose trunk is obscured by foliage. Although the viewpoint of the latter work is taken from slightly further away, extending the canvas to include a foreground of tall grasses and additional trees to the left, the two works seem to be of the same location. As Parris pointed out, there is little evidence to support the identification of the exact location—a problem demonstrated in this case by the different sites named—since these titles are often holdovers from the old attributions to Lionel's father.⁵ EP

PROVENANCE Sale, Christie's, c. 1958, sold to Leggatt's; [Leggatt's, London, sold to Mason]; Wing Commander Keith Mason; [Oscar & Peter Johnson, Ltd., London, sold to Manton, 4 Nov. 1971]; Sir Edwin A. G. Manton, New York (1971–d. 2005); Manton Family Art Foundation (2005–7, given to the Clark, as *Dedham Vale*); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007.

EXHIBITIONS London 1971b, p. 25, no. 11, ill., as *View of Dedham Vale*, by John Constable.

REFERENCES Rhyne 1981, pp. 397, 421n24, as *View of Dedham*; Parris 1994, p. 105–6, no. 35, ill., as "*Dedham Vale*".

TECHNICAL REPORT The primary support is a sheet of brittle, cream-colored wove paper, with an irregular, possibly deckled, left edge. The remaining edges are squarely cut. The paper is mounted to a mahogany panel with chamfered back edges and a vertically oriented grain. The slight convex warp indicates previous wood movement, which may be the cause of a group of vertical blisters and compression wrinkling in the paper and paint running down through the right sky. There are two old paper tears in the trunk and a lower left branch of the large tree. These damages contain losses in both the support and the paint, and are probably the reason for the solid secondary support. Some paper in the lower left corner is missing, and there are new scuffs in the paper at the center of the left and top edges, probably from framing hardware pressure. Additional frame abrasion is visible on the top and bottom edges. Deposits of wood fiber and debris are pressed into the thinly painted surface from the



Fig. 82.1. Lionel Bicknell Constable, *Near Stoke-by-Nayland*, c. 1850. Oil on canvas, 35.6 x 44.5 cm. Tate, London

mounting process. There appear to be old brown varnish residues in the sky and the present natural resin varnish is very yellow and brittle, with a cluster of dents in the lower right corner. The ultraviolet light fluorescence is very dense, blocking an accurate assessment of the amount of retouching and suggesting that the varnish is quite old. Under low magnification, however, extensive solvent damage is visible, especially in the thinly painted dark passages, so an extensive restoration is suspected.

The paper support appears to have yellowed, possibly enhanced by the aging mount glue. Paper fibers are visible below the sky, and although the paper appears raw and ungrounded, there may be a thin off-white layer. Deposits from the charcoal line underdrawing occur at the edges of some foliage and along tree limbs. Infrared examination detected very sketchy outlines for the foliage shapes in the shrubbery near the tree trunk and for a few lower tree limbs. The paint is very thinly applied, with some washes seemingly embedded in the paper fibers, almost like a watercolor painting. There are occasional low rounded impastos. The cleaning abrasion is so extensive that it allows the paper color to break through in many passages and reduces the overall tone of the image.

1. Rhyne 1981, pp. 396–400.
2. Parris and Fleming-Williams 1978, London 1982, and Fleming-Williams and Parris 1984.
3. Some of these family-owned works were exhibited as part of the 1954 *Exhibition of the Works of the Constable Family—Five Generations*, the first time since his Royal Academy entries that works by Lionel were shown under his name. The exhibition was held at Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich and subsequently traveled to the South London Art Gallery and Sunderland. See Ipswich–London–Sunderland 1954–55.
4. For a reproduction of this work, see London 1982, no. 18.
5. Parris 1994, p. 106.