

CHRISTIE'S

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**AT AUCTION FOR THE FIRST TIME:
THE LAST RENDERING IN PRIVATE HANDS OF
CONSTABLE'S ICONIC VIEW
SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE BISHOP'S GROUNDS
London, 7 December 2021**



John Constable R.A.
Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds, 1823
Estimate: £2,000,000-3,000,000

London – *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds*, 1823, by John Constable will be offered at auction for the first time in Christie's *Old Masters Evening Sale* on 7 December, as a highlight of *Classic Week* in London (estimate: £2,000,000-3,000,000). This quietly beautiful landscape is a full-scale compositional oil sketch for a finished painting at the Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, California. Having remained in the artist's family until the late-nineteenth century, where it was fondly referred to as *The Vision*, it is the only rendering of Constable's celebrated view to remain in private hands. It is currently at Christie's New York until 11 November, before being exhibited in Hong Kong from 25 to 29 November, ahead of the pre-sale London exhibition which will run from 3 to 7 December.

Clementine Sinclair, Head of Old Masters Evening Sale, Christie's London commented:
"Depicting the majestic building of Salisbury Cathedral with its soaring spire, this wonderfully fluid oil sketch forms part of a body of work executed during the 1820s for Constable's most significant and enduring patron, John Fisher (1748-1825), Bishop of Salisbury, at a time when Constable's biographer C.R. Leslie considered the artist's art: 'never more perfect, perhaps never so perfect'. We are thrilled to be offering this important work to the market for the first time."

CONSTABLE AND SALISBURY

Constable was primarily drawn to subjects that held strong personal resonance and it is noteworthy that, aside from his native Suffolk, there are more paintings and drawings of the cathedral city of Salisbury, and the places he came to know through his friendships there, than of any other part of England. Around 300 works survive, far outnumbering those executed in Brighton or Hampstead. His associations with Salisbury through his principal patron, Bishop Fisher, were further strengthened by his close friendship with the Bishop's nephew, Archdeacon John Fisher (1788-1832), who acted as his uncle's chaplain in the Bishop's Palace and subsequently lived at Leadenhall in the Close.

THE COMMISSION

Although the Bishop had followed Constable's artistic development with great encouragement and interest, he waited until the painter's career was well established before commissioning a work from him. His chosen subject was this transcendent view of the cathedral seen from his own grounds, as captured in an *en plein air* oil sketch that Constable executed during his 1820 visit, which is preserved at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The commissioned painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1823 and now hangs at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Dr. Fisher commissioned a second version of the subject as a wedding gift for his daughter and the present full-scale compositional sketch being offered for sale in December was executed in preparation for that painting. Constable made numerous subtle changes and improvements in the sketch that were then translated into the finished painting, which is now at the Huntington. Two years later, Bishop Fisher commissioned yet another version of the subject, with a less stormy sky, the sketch for which is at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and the finished painting is at the Frick Collection, New York.

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