

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds

John Constable (British, 1776–1837)

Date 1826

Medium Oil on canvas

Dimensions 35 x 44 1/4 in. (88.9 x 112.4 cm)

Credit Line Henry Clay Frick Bequest

Accession Number 1908.1.23

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 11, Library

Commentary Constable painted several views of the south façade of Salisbury Cathedral for his intimate friends Dr. John Fisher, Bishop of Salisbury, and the Bishop's nephew Archdeacon John Fisher, who had purchased The White Horse. Constable's first version of the Cathedral, done for the Bishop (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum), had a dark, cloudy sky. In response to the owner's objections to its ominous atmosphere, Constable painted this version with a sunnier sky and a more open composition. As in the earlier canvas, Constable included the figure of the Bishop pointing out the Cathedral's spire to his wife, and beyond them a young lady holding a parasol, presumably one of their daughters. The Bishop had died by the time the picture was completed, but it was acquired by his family. Two favorite subjects of nineteenth-century artists — a medieval ecclesiastical monument and a dramatic landscape — are particularly well united through the arrangement of tree trunks and branches echoing the rising lines of the Cathedral spire. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Probably Mrs. Fisher, widow of Bishop Fisher. J.C. Mirehouse or Mrs. Pike-Scrivener. Misses Fanny and Emma Mirehouse. Sold to Agnew in 1894. Sold by him to Stephen G. Holland. His sale, June 25–26, 1908, Christie's, Lot 12, sold for £8,190 to Knoedler. Frick, 1908. Source: *Paintings in The Frick Collection: American, British, Dutch, Flemish and German*. Volume I. New York: The Frick Collection, 1968.