Constable’s Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows



John Constable’s Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows, exhibited 1831 John Constable’s Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows, exhibited 1831

This major ‘six-footer’ oil painting, one of the greatest masterpieces of British art, has never been exhibited in Suffolk before, where Constable was born in 1776. It will make its debut in the county at Christchurch Mansion’s Wolsey Art Gallery along with its preparatory sketch from the Tate collection and will complement Ipswich’s outstanding collection of Constables and Gainsboroughs, the most significant body of work by these masters outside London.

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows was secured by Tate for the British public through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), The Manton Foundation, the Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation) and Tate Members. Its Ipswich display is part of Aspire, a five-year partnership project between five partner institutions supported by HLF and the Art Fund to enable the work to go on almost constant view across the UK.

Many of Constable’s landscapes feature the Suffolk countryside, now often referred to as ‘Constable country’, where he grew up and where he sketched from nature for some of his best-known exhibition paintings. It is fitting that this great piece should join these in a place of such importance to the artist.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: "Our grant of £15.8million came with the condition that *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* was shared in perpetuity by Tate and four partner museums, including Colchester and

Ipswich Museums. Constable was truly a man of the people who believed that art was for everyone - not just the select few - and so it's fitting that the innovative approach of the 'Aspire' project is helping many more people around the country see and enjoy this precious Constable painting."

Councillor Bryony Rudkin, culture portfolio-holder at Ipswich Borough Council, which owns Christchurch Mansion, said: "We are delighted to be hosting this true masterpiece of British art here at the Mansion. We are proud to be part of the Aspire programme, which makes the work widely accessible to audiences across the UK - something which Constable himself sought. There will be a special education programme to support the display and we hope this will encourage audiences to learn more about this painting and this artist, who had such close links with Ipswich and the surrounding area."

On 23 May, Constable's Gardens: 200th Anniversary Exhibition will showcase star works from the Ipswich collection. Painted 200 years ago, Golding Constable's *Kitchen Garden 1815* and his *Flower Garden 1815*, of Constable's father's gardens, will be the centrepieces of an exhibition of Constable works drawn from Ipswich, the Fitzwilliam, the V&A and Tate.

Constable was an inspiration to generations of artists and Lucian Freud frequently cited him as one of his early influences. Two Freud works from Tate's collection, *Man with a Thistle* (self-portrait) 1946 and *Standing by the Rags* 1988-9 will travel to Ipswich to be shown with the six-footer in September.

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows depicts Salisbury Cathedral under both a heavy cloud and a striking arched rainbow viewed from across the River Nadder. The scene has been interpreted as a metaphor for political pressure felt by the Church of England as well as the emotional turmoil Constable was feeling after the death of his wife.

Notes to editors

Aspire: National Network for Constable Studies

Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* 1831 was secured for the British public though major grants from HLF, The Manton Foundation, the Art Fund (with a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation) and Tate Members.

Aspire is a five-year partnership project between Tate Britain, National Galleries of Scotland, National Museum Wales, The Salisbury Museum and Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Art Fund, which will enable this work to go on almost constant view at these venues. Each partner will display the work in the context of their collection, alongside an inspiring programme of activities enabling audiences of all ages to enjoy and learn more about the work of John Constable (1776 -1837).

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows was on view at The National Gallery on long-term loan from 1983 until 2013 when it was acquired by Tate. It was on display in the Constable Room at Tate Britain before starting its UK tour in Cardiff in March 2014. It returned to London for the V&A's Constable exhibition and is now going on the next leg of its journey, to Ipswich. The work will also be displayed at the National Galleries of Scotland and The Salisbury Museum.

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows is one of a series of monumental 'six footer' canvases painted by the artist. This was the scale he reserved for his finest compositions - the paintings he wished to make a great impact in the crowded, competitive hang of the Royal Academy exhibitions. This work is the most visually spectacular of all the six footers, the

most loaded in meaning and the one of which he was most proud. Constable called it "The Great Salisbury" and once wrote "I am told I got it to look better than anythingI have yet done".

The Art Fund

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art, helping museums to buy and show great art for everyone. Over the past five years it has given over £26m to help museums and galleries acquire works of art for their collections and placed hundreds of gifts and bequests, from ancient sculpture and treasure hoards to Old Master paintings and contemporary commissions, with 25% of grants going towards works by living artists. Italso helps museums share their collections with wider audiences through supporting a range of tours and exhibitions, including the national tour of the ARTIST ROOMS collection and the 2014 tour of Jeremy Deller's English Magic, the British Council commission for the 2013 Venice Biennale. Its support for museums extends to the Art Guide app – the comprehensive guide to seeing art across the UK, promoting a network of nearly 700 museums and galleries throughout the country, and the £100,000 Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year – an annual celebration of the best of UK museums, won in 2014 by Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield. It is independently funded, the majority of its income coming from over 107,000 members who, through the National Art Pass, enjoy free entry to over 220 museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

Further information

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