

THE ART OF Watercolour

THE ART MAGAZINE FOR WATERCOLOURISTS

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A Mill at Stoke
near Ipswich.
1814. 12.1 x 17 cm.
© V & A Images/Victoria and
Albert Museum, London



James Gardner, John Constable RA at the age of twenty.
1796. Tempera on oil, 58.4 x 45.7 cm.
© V & A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London

John Constable

Precursor of Romanticism

MUCH LIKE TURNER, JOHN CONSTABLE WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST 19TH CENTURY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTERS. WHY DID THE PAINTINGS OF THE PLACES WHERE HE GREW UP HAVE SUCH AN INFLUENCE ON THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS OF PAINTERS?

KEY DATES

- 1776** John Constable is born in East Bergholt, Suffolk, England.
- 1799** He enters the Royal Academy School.
- 1811** First visit to Salisbury. The cathedral and the surrounding countryside would become a recurring motif in his paintings.
- 1816** He marries Maria Bicknell.
- 1819** Constable sells his first large painting which will lead to a series of large paintings known as the 'six-footers'.
- 1828** After the birth of their seventh child, his wife dies of tuberculosis.
- 1829** Constable is elected to the Royal Academy.
- 1837** Constable dies and is buried next to his wife in Hampstead cemetery.

Unlike his contemporary Turner (1775-1831), John Constable (1776-1837) never travelled much. Turner's many journeys took him to France, Italy and Scotland and helped him shape his tumultuous paintings. Constable on the other hand painted almost exclusively the landscapes of his native Suffolk. Turner's paintings undoubtedly foreshadow the Romantic movement and yet the same is also true of Constable's work: his approach, which is nothing short of revolutionary, influenced later generations of painters. It was not until the last years of his life that Constable came to fame in England. As it were, it was in France that his paintings first made a lasting impression at the Salon of 1824. It is said that after seeing Constable's landscapes for the first time, Delacroix proceeded to repaint the background of his painting, *Massacre de Scio*. Paul Huet, a French painter and friend of Delacroix, sums up the effect that Constable's paintings had on their audience: "In the history of modern painting, the appearance of Constable's work in 1824 was a noteworthy event."

A FONDNESS FOR THE LANDSCAPES OF HIS CHILDHOOD

Constable's career is somewhat out of ordinary. Although recognition did not come early – he sold his first oil painting at the ripe old age of 43 – today he is considered one of the foremost British landscape painters. Lucian Freud, curator of the Constable exhibition held in Paris in 2002, remarked that John Constable's paintings have crossed the boundaries of fine art to become icons of their own; the proof being that they now adorn beer mats and table sets.

John Constable for the most part did not travel during his lifetime. He grew up in the village of East Bergholt in the county of Suffolk, South East England, under the reign of King George III. The area has not changed much even today: the bucolic countryside, strewn with fields and thickets of trees is irrigated by the meandering River Stour. Its name, derived from old Celtic, means powerful. This is how Constable described his attachment to his native region: "The beauty of the surrounding

Dean Mitchell

Simple life painting

DEAN MITCHELL INJECTS HUMANITY INTO HIS PAINTINGS. REGARDLESS OF HIS SUBJECT, THE 'SIMPLE LIFE' SHINES THROUGH. HIS PAINTINGS ARE MADE UP OF ORDINARY PEOPLE IN ORDINARY POSES AND EVERYDAY ARCHITECTURE, WITH SOCIAL COMMENTARY UNDERNEATH.



Small Town Mechanic. 2010. 38 x 25.5 cm.



Pieces of Yesterday. 25.5 x 38 cm.



SWAN HARMONY No. 3

78 x 108 cm.

Liu Yi

LIGHT AND GRACE

HIS GREAT MASTERY OF WET WATERCOLOUR TECHNIQUES AND HIS ETERNAL QUEST FOR BEAUTY HAVE MADE THIS ARTIST THE NEW IDOL OF CHINESE WATERCOLOUR. MOVING WITH EASE FROM LANDSCAPE PAINTING TO THE SECRETIVE WORLD OF CLASSICAL DANCERS, HIS LAST SERIES TO DATE, HIS PAINTINGS CONVEY THE IMPRESSION OF A DREAMLIKE GENTLENESS THAT BORDERS ON PERFECTION.