

**True To Nature:
Open-air Painting
1780 – 1870**

We have tried to make this exhibition experience calm and contemplative by keeping text to a minimum.

For more information about the artists whose works are featured please scan this QR code or visit: fitz.ms/ttnbios



From the late eighteenth century, painting outdoors, en plein air, became an integral part of an artist's training.

The influential 1799 treatise, Elements of Practical Perspective, by French landscape painter Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, encouraged artists to look slowly and paint quickly. Plein air painting subsequently became widespread among northern European artists, enshrined in the art academies of Paris and Copenhagen and taken up enthusiastically by painters such as Jean-

Baptiste-Camille Corot, Simon Denis and John Constable.

By engaging first-hand with nature, attention was shifted from the general to the particular, and a fascination was nurtured for natural phenomena such as skies, trees, atmospheric effects, bodies of water and the texture and structure of the earth. This practice of observing and recording nature ‘in the field’, was mirrored by developments in the natural sciences. Just as geologists and botanists formed collections of minerals, rocks and botanical specimens, so painters amassed outdoor studies to keep their direct experience of nature fresh in their minds and authentic.

The thrill of these painters’ encounters with nature is palpable in their work. We feel their wonder as they observe storm-torn skies, limpid rockpools, the dappled shade of a tree or the awe-inspiring sight of an erupting volcano.

The directness of their observations resonates with us. Nature remains a constant yet is increasingly fragile. Landscapes painted more than two centuries ago have changed, sometimes beyond recognition. We relish their beauty as we sense their vulnerability.

Throughout this exhibition, scientists, conservationists, writers, curators, children and others reflect on some of the paintings, inviting us to understand the different truths they see.

Eugène Decan

(Paris 1829 – 1893 Paris)

Corot at His Easel, Crécy-en-Brie

1873

Oil on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,

The John Tillotson Bequest

PD.132-1985

VIEWPOINT ON

Eugène Decan

Corot at His Easel, Crécy-en-Brie

John Fanshawe

BirdLife International & Cambridge

Conservation Initiative

Smoking a pipe, dressed in his blue smock, and balancing on a slender-legged folding chair, Corot epitomises the plein air tradition. As an ornithologist accustomed to gathering detailed species' data, the painter's concentration is familiar. It is easy to imagine the chorus of bird songs and calls that must have enveloped Corot, and I wonder, standing in the still silence of the gallery, how those sounds would have influenced his brush strokes.

Painted in 1873, Decan's sketch records a time when the architecture of contemporary nature conservation was almost unimaginable. Sixty years after Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' was published, a revolutionary call to action to protect wildlife, bird song drains from habitats all over Europe. Conservation gains exist, of course, and an astonishing network of more than 27,000 protected breeding sites for birds now covers 18% of the land and

7% of marine areas under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

At the same time, the 2021 Red List of European Birds revealed that 13% (71 of 544 species) are threatened, including many migrants. It is hard not to listen for their voices echoing through the Fitzwilliam.

Paintbox of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

In use c.1822 – 1875

Oil on wood

Kunstmuseum, The Hague

Inv no MHO-000-0011.7

This small paintbox is typical of the portable and versatile equipment that was available to plein air artists of this period. The collage of tiny oil sketches, painted by Corot over a number of years and pasted inside the lid, demonstrate the plein air artist's aim—to capture nature as a snapshot.

**Landscape Painters in the Forest of
Fontainebleau: Study after Nature by a
Merchant of Umbrellas and Parasols, in
L'illustration, journal universel**

(14, no. 352, 24 November 1849, p. 208)

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

Inv no 84-S259

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

(1796 – 1875)

**French landscape painter,
outdoors at his easel**

c.1860

Everett Collection

Materials: Making their mark

Painting out of doors meant using materials that were small, lightweight, and easily transported on foot: a smaller palette, a limited range of brushes and colours and a support - mainly paper and canvas, or occasionally panels - that were small and relatively inexpensive.

Most artists gathered their supplies in a wooden or metal box, like Camille Corot's. This could double as an easel, placed on the knees, with clips attached to the inside of the lid to secure the canvas, paper or board. Others went equipped with a collapsible stool, folding easel and umbrella - protection from rain and the sun's glare.

Painting quickly demanded improvisation. Coloured or textured paper grounds, left untouched by paint set an overall tone for the picture, while rags or sponges soaked with diluted paint were used to cover large surfaces in a single gesture.

Deft brushwork described forms in an expressive, painterly shorthand, sometimes using the wooden end of the brush to create light-reflecting ridges or to scratch a signature from the paint. But the artist's most useful tool remained in their fingertips, in the infinite range of effects made possible through touch.

Louise-Joséphine Sarazin de Belmont
(Versailles 1790 –1870 Paris)

Views of the Pyrenees

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

Private collection

Italy – Rome and the Roman Campagna

From the seventeenth century, Rome and the surrounding countryside were a magnet for artists, drawn by the natural beauty of Italy and its antiquity.

Spectacular monuments testified to the classical civilisations of the past, and the city itself had a unique picturesque appeal. Haphazard buildings, extended over time, fascinated painters such as Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, Christoffer Eckersberg and Raymond Montvoisin who perceived them as near organic assemblages of ‘irregularity and symmetry, incoherence and harmony, madness and reason’.

Beyond Rome’s walls lay the Campagna, a part-wetland that became the most painted landscape in Europe. Nineteenth-century artists were familiar with this region through the luminous, classicising works of French seventeenth-century artists Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain. This new generation of landscapists visited many of the same sites as their predecessors – Hadrian’s Villa, the Ponte Nomentano, Tivoli, Olevano and Lake Nemi – but their studies are more partial and fragmentary, infused with a poetic feeling of place.

François-Marius Granet

(Aix-en-Provence 1775 – 1849 Aix-en-Provence)

**View of the Church of San Giorgio in
Velabro and the Arch of Janus, Rome**

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

(Paris 1796 –1875 Paris)

**The Island and Bridge of San Bartolomeo,
Rome**

1825/28

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC,

Patrons' Permanent Fund

Inv no 2001.23.1

Louis Dupré

(Versailles 1789 – 1837 Paris)

**View of Santa Trinità dei Monti in Rome,
c.1817**

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, gift of Jacques
and Brigitte Gairard, Lyon**

Inv no 2016-S.24

André Giroux

(Paris 1801–1879 Paris)

Santa Trinità dei Monti in the Snow

1829 or 1830

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Chester Dale Fund

Inv no 1997.65.1

VIEWPOINT ON

Louis Dupré

View of Santa Trinità dei Monti in Rome

and

André Giroux

Santa Trinità dei Monti in the Snow

Mary Morton

Co-curator, True to Nature,

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

These two young French artists lived in the Villa Medici, the seat of the French Academy in Rome that housed and trained advanced students. Both artists are looking out of a window on the villa's side, perhaps from their bedrooms, at the church that stands above the famous Spanish Steps. Dupré paints the scene in full summer sun, while Giroux paints the same scene under a thin blanket of snow, a very rare event in Rome. One imagines the artist waking up to find a familiar view transformed and, with great excitement, hurrying to transcribe it before the sun melts it all away.

Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg

(Blaakrog, Denmark 1783 – 1853 Copenhagen)

View of the Cloaca Maxima, Rome

1814

Oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Victoria and Roger Sant

Inv no 2004.75.1

Fleury François Richard '(Fleury-Richard)'

(Lyon 1777 – 1852, Rhône)

An Artist in Renaissance Costume Sketching in the Arena of Nîmes

1822(?)

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Raymond Monvoisin, known

as Quinsac-Monvoisin

(Bordeaux 1790 – 1870 Boulogne-sur-Seine)

View of the Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome Seen From the Janiculum Hill

c.1821 – 25

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.14

Carl Blechen

(Cottbus 1798 – 1840 Berlin)

View of the Colosseum in Rome

1829

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, promised gift

**Continue behind you
on the left**

Claude Lorrain

(Chamagne 1604 – 82 Rome)

**Pastoral Landscape with Lake Albano
and Castel Gandolfo**

1639

Oil on tin

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, purchased with the

**assistance of Miss I M E Hitchcock's bequest,
L D Cunliffe, the National Art-Collections Fund, and the
Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, 1963
PD.950-1963**

VIEWPOINT ON

Claude Lorrain

Pastoral Landscape with Lake Albano and Castel Gandolfo

Jane Munro

**Co-curator, True to Nature,
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge**

Claude Lorrain's light-infused landscapes had a huge influence on open-air painters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. French by birth, he spent most of his life in Italy, routinely painting and drawing in the countryside around Rome. To help him 'penetrate' nature, he would lie in the fields 'before the break of day and until night in order to learn to represent very exactly the red morning sky, sunrise and sunset'.

This view of Lake Albano overlooked by Castel Gandolfo was clearly painted in the studio, but is infused with effects of soft, hazy light and colour that Claude would have recorded at first-hand. Like him, the painters in this exhibition kept their open-air sketches as reference material to help them inject a degree of naturalism into their finished painting: their studies became repositories of observation, memory and feeling.

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

(Paris 1796 – 1875 Paris)

**View of the Convent of Sant'Onofrio
on the Janiculum, Rome**

1826

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, gift
of Captain Stanley William Sykes, OBE.**

MC, PD.1-1960

Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes
(Toulouse 1750 – 1819 Paris)

View of Rome

c.1782 – 85

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2013-S.17

André Giroux

(Paris 1801 – 1879 Paris)

A View of Rome

Before 1831

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,

**bought by the Friends of The Fitzwilliam Museum PD.101-
1978**

Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny

(Chaumes 1798 – 1871 Lyon)

View of Olevano

1827

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

VIEWPOINT ON

Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny

View of Olevano

Alice Goldet

Collector

In late April 1827, Caruelle d'Aligny travelled to this dramatically situated hill town in the company of his friend, Camille Corot. Both created wondrous oil sketches and drawings, their easels planted either on opposite sides of the hill or together. Four sets of thumb tacks attest to the fact that Caruelle d'Aligny returned to the site several times to finish his sketch, daring to plant a chestnut tree bang in the middle of the composition, no doubt influenced by Corot, but painted with a more fluid, light touch and a more restrained palette. Such a luminous vision!

Jules Coignet

(Paris 1798 – 1860 Paris)

View of Lake Nemi

1843

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Mrs John Jay

Ide in memory of Mr and Mrs William Henry Donner
Inv no 1994.52.2

Léon Fleury
(Paris 1804 – 1858 Paris)

The Tomb of Caecilia Metella
c.1830

Oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
DC, gift of Frank Anderson Trapp Inv no
2004.166.16

Jean-Joseph-Xavier Bidault
(Carpentras 1758 – 1846 Montmorency)

Mountainous Landscape, Italy

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard
Private collection

Simon Denis
(Antwerp 1755 – 1813 Naples)

View of Tivoli at Night

Oil on paper
Private collection

Achille-Etna Michallon

(Paris 1796 – 1822 Paris)

View of Santa Scolastica in Subiaco

1818

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2011-S.18

Janus La Cour

(Thimagard 1837 – 1909 Odder, Denmark)

Olive Trees Near Tivoli

1869

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2012-S.7

VIEWPOINT ON

Janus La Cour

Olive Trees Near Tivoli

Nick Koenig

Botanist, University of Cambridge

Before reading, take a look once more at the painting and contemplate what you notice first. To me, I notice the gnarly and tangled trees as I imagine most do. But my next thoughts are filled with the characteristics of old trees. The slow taper of the tree trunk going upward and the serpentine-like movement of the branches through the air are features that jump out to me. When hiking through a forest ecosystem, looking for monolithic forest dwellers similar to the olives depicted here, I am drawn to these ecosystems. Here organisms exist in rough environmental conditions for other life-forms yet persevere for centuries. This is a type of existence in the world that keeps me in awe of botanical life.

**Johann Martin von Rohden
(Kassel 1778–1868 Rome)**

**View of Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli, the Tiber Valley and the Sabine Hills in the Distance
Before 1810**

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.23

**Attributed to Franz Ludwig Catel
(Berlin 1778 – 1856 Rome)**

**The Ponte Nomentano, the
Sabine Hills in the Distance
1830**

Oil on paper

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.15

Michel Dumas

(Lyon 1812 – 1885 Lyon)

**Fontanile in the Roman Campagna
c.1838 – 40**

Oil on canvas, mounted on wood panel

Private collection

Jean-Joseph-Xavier Bidault

(Carpentras 1758 – 1846 Montmorency)

**Sunrise in an Italian Landscape
1785 – 91**

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris,

**gift of John Harvey Bergen and Alexandra van Nierop,
Amsterdam**

Inv no 2016-S.31

Johan Thomas Lundbye

(Kalundborg, Denmark 1818 – 1848 Bedstedt, Denmark)

View of the Roman Campagna

1845

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, bequest of
Carlos van Hasselt and Andrzej Niewęłowski, Paris**

Inv no 2010-S.16

Edgar Degas

(Paris 1834–1917 Paris)

View of the Quirinal

c.1856 – 59

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2021-S.1

**Continue behind you
in the enclave.
Circulate clockwise.**

Capri and the Amalfi Coast

Capri became a centre of attention for early nineteenth century artists as the island recovered from economic decline following the Napoleonic Wars.

Situated at the southern end of the Bay of Naples, its dramatic scenery is marked by towering limestone cliffs, pierced at sea level by caverns carved out by the action of the water.

Until the advent of steamships in the 1860s, travel there was perilous. Many, such as the great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, avoided this 'dangerous rocky island' and sailed on to Sicily. Passage to its small harbour was protected by the Faraglioni, three famous rock stacks that became a favourite motif for visiting painters.

The ‘discovery’ in 1826 of the Blue Grotto fuelled the imaginations of painters, who tried to capture the magical reflections that illuminate this cavern. Others relished the hot, blue summer skies and the deep shadows cast under the pergolas that offered shelter from the burning sun.

Vilhelm Kyhn

(Copenhagen 1819 –1903 Copenhagen)

View of Capri

1851

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

August Kopisch

(Breslau, now Wrocław 1799 –1853 Berlin)

View of the Faraglioni at Capri

Oil on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.25

Anton Sminck Pitloo

(Arnhem 1790 –1837 Naples)

Study of a Pergola, Capri

c.1820

Oil on paper

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.18

Thomas Fearnley

(Frederikshald, now Halden 1802 – 1842 Munich)

Loggia in Sorrento

1834

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel Fondation

Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2011-S.9

Anonymous French, 19th century

A Terrace on the Isle of

Capri

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.10

Anton Sminck Pitloo

(Arnhem 1790 –1837 Naples)

A Boy Sitting Under a Pergola, Capri

c.1820

Oil on paper

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.17

Gustaf Wilhelm Palm

(Härlöv, Skåne 1810 – 1890 Stockholm)

View of Capri with Mount Solaro

1841

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Private collection

August Kopisch

(Breslau, now Wrocław 1799 –1853 Berlin)

View of Capri

Oil on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.24

Continue behind you and to the right and circulate clockwise

Skies and effects

Recording transient atmospheric effects was a huge challenge for open-air painters. Speed was of the essence, and so was an assured handling of paint. An outdoor painting session should begin with the sky and last no more than two hours, Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes advised, otherwise the freshness of the original observation would be lost.

John Constable was fascinated by the sky, aligning it with a keen interest in the new science of meteorology. In the 1820s, he made a series of sky studies in oils, many painted on London's Hampstead Heath, his 'natural observatory'. Constable also recognised the emotional power of the sky. For him, clouds were a source of feeling as much as they were natural

phenomena. The sky was ‘the chief organ of sentiment’ in a painting.

Clouds give shape and form to a skyscape and take on an extraordinary range of colours. They can be hot-orange at sunset, pink-tinged, lemon yellow and lurid mauve in the dwindling daylight, hues so vivid as to seem almost anti-naturalistic: being ‘true to nature’ meant accepting its extremes.

Jean-Honoré Fragonard
(Grasse 1732 –1806 Paris)

Mountain Landscape at Sunset

c.1765

Oil on paper

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Chester Dale Fund

Inv no 1997.22.1

Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes
(Toulouse 1750 –1819 Paris)

Study of Clouds Over the Roman Campagna

c.1782-85

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, given in honour of

Gaillard F Ravenel II by his friends

Inv no 1997.23.1

John Constable

(East Bergholt 1776 –1837 London)

Cloud Study: Stormy Sunset

1821–22

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC,

gift of Louise Mellon in honour of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon

Inv no 1998.20.1

John Constable

(East Bergholt 1776–1837 London)

Sky Study with a Shaft of Sunlight

1822(?)

Oil on paper

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,

bequeathed by John Eric Bullard, 1961

PD.222-1961

VIEWPOINT ON

John Constable

Cloud Study: Stormy Sunset

and

Sky Study with a Shaft of Sunlight

Rebecca Kilner

Director, Cambridge Museum of Zoology

I look at these clouds and I think instantly of the fens and the vast skylscapes that dominate them. I'm taken back to summer days in the late 1990s when I worked with ecologist Nick Davies at Wicken Fen, so much so that I can hear the chirrup of reed warblers, and the cuckoos calling, and smell the damp of the earth. We studied the behaviour of the cuckoo chick, back then, to work out how this monster in the nest could fool its reed warbler hosts into caring for it. Nick did the hard work, finding the reed warbler nests. My job was to record and edit begging calls that we broadcast through small speakers affixed to the reed warbler's nest.

Together we sat hidden in the reeds for hours each day, one of us watching the nest to count feeding visits by parents, the other taking notes, working the tape recorder and watching the sky intently for signs of any rain.

Anonymous French, 18th century

Clouds Passing Through a Valley

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.7

Anton Sminck Pitloo

(Arnhem 1790–1837 Naples)

Sunrise in a Landscape

c.1811–19

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris,
gift of Gerhard and Dineke Greidanus, Amsterdam**

Inv no 2016-S.34

Johann Jakob Frey (Basel

1813 – 1865 Rome)

Cloud Study (1)

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Johann Jakob Frey (Basel

1813 –1865 Rome)

Cloud Study (2)

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Johann Jakob Frey (Basel

1813 –1865 Rome)

Cloud Study (4)

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Johann Jakob Frey (Basel

1813 –1865 Rome)

Cloud Study (3)

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Anton Sminck Pitloo

(Arnhem 1790 –1837 Naples)

Sunset in a Landscape

c.1811–19

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris,
gift of Gerhard and Dineke Greidanus, Amsterdam
Inv no 2016-S.35**

**William Holman Hunt
(London 1827–1910 London)**

**The Thames at Chelsea, Evening
1853**

**Oil on panel
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
gift of Charles Fairfax Murray
No 868**

**Alexandre Calame
(Vevey 1810 –1864
Menton)**

**Storm at Handeck
1838**

**Oil on canvas
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
bought from the Pollock Fund
PD.38-2004**

VIEWPOINT ON

Alexandre Calame

Storm at Handeck

Natalie Lambert

**Cambridge Nature Network Officer,
Cambridge City Council**

An excellent capture of the forces of nature brewing and reminiscent of the powerful storms that struck the UK at the beginning of the year. Although demonstrating the impending ferocity of the natural world at times, to me, a serene sunbeam is more forthcoming – that light is just around the corner.

Anton Melbye

(Copenhagen 1818 –1875 Paris)

Skyrim (Kongsberg, Norway)

1846

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Private collection

Georges Michel

(Paris 1763 –1843 Paris)

View of Paris Seen From Meudon

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.2

Jean-Charles-Joseph Rémond

(Paris 1795 –1875 Paris)

Misty Mountain Landscape (or View of Monticelli, Near Tivoli)

1829

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Rosa Bonheur

(Bordeaux 1822 –1899 Thomery)

Misty Landscape

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Private collection

Charles Nègre

(Grasse 1820 –1880 Grasse)

Nocturnal View From the Quai du Louvre in Paris

c.1850

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.20

Case labels From left to right

Cirro-Cumulus Seen From the Nile, Thirty Miles From Cairo

**Albumen photograph from a drawing by Elijah
Walton in Elijah Walton (1832–1880), *Clouds, Their
Forms and Combinations***

London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1868, Fig 36.

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library

Eb.11.49

**Birmingham-born artist Walton was fascinated by
atmospheric effects and made a special study of cloud
formations during his extensive travels in Europe and
North Africa. Unlike northern Europe, skies in Egypt
often remained cloudless for months on end, which is**

why he wrote, so ‘their approach is hailed with joy’. This study of a cirro-cumulus cloud was made on an excursion on the Nile in 1862.

Forms Assumed by Clouds When Gathering for a Thunderstorm

Lithograph by R Williams in Luke Howard (1832–1880),
Essay on the Modifications of Clouds

London: John Churchill & Sons, 3rd edition,
1865 [1803] Title page

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library
IV.14.32

How to attach a name to the intangible and transient in nature? The words we use today to describe cloud types – cirrus, stratus, cumulus, nimbus—were introduced in 1802 by the chemist and amateur meteorologist Luke Howard. His *Essay on the Modification of Clouds* became the first successful way to classify them, as they were previously thought too changeable to fit a scientific system.

Screens to the right

VIEWPOINT

Rowan Frame

Paintings conservator

Open-air painting

With a brush, some oil paint, and paper pinned to the lid of a box on my knees, I sketched the clouds in front of me. This was the way John Constable repeatedly sketched skies in the 1820s – an activity he called ‘skying’. Using paper pre-primed with a layer of colour, as Constable did, helped with sketching fast enough to keep up with the moving clouds. Nevertheless, capturing the unbounded space of changing light, colour and cloud in static, two-dimensional form was remarkably hard, and gave me an even greater appreciation for the skills of artists such as Constable who painted cloudscapes from nature.

**Continue into the
next gallery.
Doors are behind you.**

Turn right on entry.

Built environment: rooftops, windows, gardens and ruins

Traditionally, painters added humans to landscapes as ‘animation’ for their pictures. Artists working en plein air, however, frequently focussed on unpeopled tracts of nature, in open countryside or even in the city.

Often, human presence is implicit, even if invisible. Cultivated fields, tree plantations, smoke rising from fires and chimneys, gardens, domestic pets and laundry on washing lines all remind us that these landscapes are inhabited.

Houses, bridges and farms, and their building materials – bricks, stone and rubble – had rich pictorial potential of their own. Using sharp angles of vision and high viewpoints, artists created intimate ‘snapshot’ views of city corners inviting us to see afresh, in-part but indepth. They help us see understated details of the built environment: an overgrown wall, the intersecting planes of rooftops, crumbling paintwork on a façade.

Auguste-Xavier Leprince

(Paris 1799 –1826 Nice)

Interior of a Courtyard

c.1820

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2011-S.15

John Constable

(East Bergholt 1776–1837 London)

View of Gardens at Hampstead, with an Elder Tree

c.1821–22

Oil on cardboard

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.58

Théodore Rousseau

(Paris 1812–1867 Barbizon)

Village Near the River Moselle

c.1830

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.8

Robert Léopold Leprince
(Paris 1800 –1847 Chartres)

Farm Courtyard

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2013-S.30

Augustus Leopold Egg
(London 1816 –1863 Algiers)

The Farmyard

Oil on board

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
bought from the Fairhaven Fund

PD.38-1980

Théodore Rousseau
(Paris 1812–1867 Barbizon)

Panoramic Landscape Near the River Moselle

c.1830

Oil on canvas

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, bought from the
Anne Pertz and Charles Brinsley Marlay Funds
PD.49-1956**

**Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny
(Chaumes 1798 –1871 Lyon)**

**Young Man Reclining on the Downs
1833 – 35**

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, The John Tillotson
Bequest
PD.119-1985**

Continue behind you from right to left

**Frederik Rohde
(Copenhagen 1816 –1886 Copenhagen)**

Rooftops

Oil on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris
Inv no 2014-S.41**

Attributed to Eugène Isabey
(Paris 1803 –1886 Montévrain)

Ruins of the Théâtre-Italien After the Fire of 1838

1839

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.14

Frederik Sødring
(Aalborg 1809 –1862 Hellerup)

The Monastery of Alpirsbach Near Freudenstadt (Black Forest) late 1830s

Oil on paper, mounted on board

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2012-S.6

Constantin Hansen
(Rome 1804 –1880 Copenhagen)

View of Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2013-S.35

Baron François Gérard

(Rome 1770 –1837 Paris)

**A Study of Waves Breaking Against Rocks at
Sunset**

Oil on millboard

Private collection

Heinrich Reinhold

(Gera 1788 –1825 Rome)

Waves on the Sorrento Coast

1823

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

VIEWPOINT ON

Heinrich Reinhold

Waves on the Sorrento Coast

Richard Hamblyn

Environmental writer and historian

To stand on a shoreline, watching the waves as they rise, change colour, fold into themselves and collapse, is to witness one of nature's most remarkable processes, in which something apparently integral, with defined shape and volume, is transfigured into something formless and chaotic.

When an incoming wave breaks on the shore it appears as though the water has come to the end of a long journey, when in fact the water itself has hardly moved. Wind-driven sea waves like these transmit kinetic energy, not water, and the turbulence in the swash zone – which is what we are looking at – is the result of that energy encountering an obstruction (the shelving sea floor, along with the rocks on the left), against which it noisily dissipates.

Reinhold has painted a moment of elemental transformation, when energy-transporting waves of oscillation become water-moving waves of translation, otherwise known as 'surf'. It is an image of inexhaustible energy.

Eugène Isabey

(Paris 1803 –1886 Montévrain)

View of the Fort de Bertheaume

1850

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2011-S.1

Théodore Gudin

(Paris 1802 –1880 Boulogne-sur-Seine)

Seascape During a Storm

Seen From the Ship “Le Véloce”

1839

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel Fondation

Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.25

Carl Frederik Sørensen

(Besser, Samsø 1818 – 1879 Copenhagen)

Rough Sea Beside a Jetty

1849

Oil on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,

bought from Bartlett Fund

PD. 219-1994

VIEWPOINT ON

Carl Frederik Sørensen

Rough Sea Beside a Jetty

Children from Arbury Primary School, Cambridge

White, puffy clouds above the shore

Crashing waves you can't ignore

The unstoppable sea fading into the horizon

The jaggy rocks split the gigantic, frothy waves in two

Raging oceans, gurgling water, solidified spectators

Powerful waves, so strong and bold

Amazing scenery before our wide eyes!

Year 4, Class 9, age 8/9

A long, never-ending, emerald ocean

A faraway, rippling wave stands on end

**A frightening, space-black sea, waiting for its turn,
determined to damage**

The strong, ear-splitting, whistling winds whip up waves

**An inky-black, hunting ocean, hungry to permanently
scar the shore**

**Lots of explosively chaotic waves morph into a giant,
swirling whirlpool**

**Hundreds of white-tipped, dancing waves twirling
around forever**

The clouds are dark and scary

The stormy thunder roars through acidic orange clouds

**The pungent, nose-pinching algae, as smelly as a scared
skunk**

So many slippery, rigid, filthy rocks

The salty sea air and cold, driving rain stick to my face

**The waves are crashing into each other and you know
there's danger**

A clunking ship flails and hundreds of squawking seagulls

haunt the jade green kelp

Year 4, Class 10, age 8/9

Auguste Bonheur

(Bordeaux 1824 – 1884 Bellevue Seine-et-Oise)

Sartre Waterfall near Apchon (Cantal)

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2012-S.24(II)

Christian Ernst Bernhard Morgenstern
(Hamburg 1805–1867 Munich)

Waterfall in the River Traun, Upper Austria
1826

Oil on paper

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.16

Jean-Joseph-Xavier Bidauld
(Carpentras 1758–1846 Montmorency)

View of the Waterfalls at Tivoli
1788

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC,
gift of Fern and George Wachter

Inv no 2005.140.1

Bodies of Water

The explosive power and agitated states of water offered painters a multi-sensory thrill: storm-tossed seas, waterfalls, waves pummelling rocks. In contrast, motionless and becalmed water - lakes and rock pools could take on the quality of 'oily liquid', Valenciennes

wrote, producing limpid reflections and complex bands of colour on their glinting surfaces.

Coasts are the places where water and land interact. Once considered uninviting destinations, they attracted an increasingly diverse range of people in the nineteenth century, including the painters, Johann Neumann, Carl Blechen and Eugène Isabey. They travelled to the Northern French and Baltic coasts to paint tracts of lightreflective sands and rocky cliffs sculpted by waves. These unremarkable stretches of shoreline, devoid of human presence, evoke a sense of reverie and melancholy; we have reached the end and face the unknown.

Odilon Redon

(Bordeaux 1840 –1916 Paris)

Village on the Coast of Brittany

c.1880

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.4

Richard Parkes Bonington

(Nottinghamshire 1802–1828 London)

Desenzano, Lake Garda

1826

Oil on millboard

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, purchased with the assistance of the Fairhaven Fund with contributions from the Victoria and Albert Museum Grant-in-Aid, and the National Art-Collections Fund

PD.2-1983

Johan Carl Neumann

(Copenhagen 1833 –1891 Copenhagen)

Sand Dunes at Skagen Beach

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.4

Carl Blechen

(Cottbus 1798 –1840 Berlin)

View of the Baltic Coast

1834?

Oil on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.40

Vilhelm Kyhn

(Copenhagen 1819 –1903 Copenhagen)

Rocks in Low Water

1860

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2012-S.17

Eugène Isabey

(Paris 1803–1886 Montévrain)

Rocks at Cran Aux Œufs near Calais

1832

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.15

Louise-Joséphine Sarazin de Belmont

(Versailles 1790 –1870 Paris)

Rocky Coast with Bathers

1835

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.6

Louise-Joséphine Sarazin de Belmont

(Versailles 1790 –1870 Paris)

Grotto in a Rocky Landscape

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Jean-Baptiste Adolphe Gibert

(Guadeloupe 1803 –1883 Nice)

Interior of a Cave

Oil on paper

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2019-S.7

Martinus Rørbye

(Drammen 1803 –1848 Copenhagen)

Hunter in a Grotto in Cervara

1835

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2011-S.16

Vilhelm Kyhn

(Copenhagen 1819 – 1903 Copenhagen)

**Landscape in the Haute-Savoie, with
an Artist Working in the Open Air**

1850

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Private collection

VIEWPOINT ON

Vilhelm Kyhn

**Landscape in the Haute-Savoie, with
an Artist Working in the Open Air**

Liz Hide

Director, Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences

My eye is caught by the rock in this picture, although my friends would say that's nothing new. The rock is carefully observed by the artist, just as a geologist might sketch a scene to capture characteristic features and disposition. In the shadowy foreground we see creamy, well-bedded marls or sands, overlain by a blocky grey limestone. The high cliff, a more massive

limestone, hints at the mountains beyond. Even the vegetation, favouring some rock layers over others, can give us clues to understanding the origins and history of these rocks.

This painting captures so much of the geological history of this part of the French Alps, where sediments accumulated on the bed of a warm sea were scraped up, stacked up and folded like a crumpled rug as Africa and Europe collided.

**Alexandre Calame
(Vevey 1810–1864
Menton)**

Boulders by a Lake

1857– 61

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

**Joseph-Désiré Court
(Rouen 1797–1865 Rouen)**

Study of Rocks

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Jules Coignet

(Paris 1798 –1860 Paris)

View of Bozen with a Painter

1837

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Mrs John Jay
Ide in memory of Mr and Mrs William Henry Donner**

Inv no 1994.52.1

Carl Wilhelm Götzloff

(Dresden 1799–1866 Naples)

Limestone Rocks, Sorrento

1858

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2016-S.30

Anonymous French, 19th century

The Weeping Rock, Franchard Gorge, Fontainebleau Forest

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Private collection

Rocks and grottoes

Earth was once thought to be an unshifting mass, solid as a rock. But nineteenth-century geologists proposed it had been shaped dynamically by millennia of tectonic plate movements, volcanic activity and water erosion.

The resulting awareness of the vastness of geological time prompted the notion – troubling for many – that human life on Earth was incidental, fleeting. This new vision fired the imagination of painters working ‘in the field’. Geological theory offered new ways of seeing, understanding and representing ‘truths’ about the natural world.

Artists such as Vilhelm Kyhn made meticulous studies of the geological formations that defined landscapes, and spoken of their great age. Others, such as Carl Götzloff, found beauty in the defiantly unpicturesque, seeing the rich colouration of an otherwise nondescript outcrop of weathered limestone.

There were hidden worlds in the dark recesses of caves and grottoes. Caves were understood as protective natural shelters, but also places of mystery, fear and adventure, gateways to the underworld.

Jean-Charles-Joseph Rémond

(Paris 1795–1875 Paris)

Eruption of Stromboli, 30 August 1842

1842

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Private collection

Giuseppe de Nittis

(Barletta 1846 – 1884 Saint-Germain-en-Laye)

Eruption of Vesuvius

1872

Oil on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.2

Johan Christian Dahl

(Bergen 1788 –1857 Dresden)

**The Neapolitan Coast with Vesuvius
in Eruption**

1820

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,

bought from The Gow Fund

PD.43-1986

Louis Léopold Robert

(Les Eplatures, Switzerland 1794– 1835 Venice)

View of Naples with Vesuvius

1821

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris, bequest of
Carlos van Hasselt and Andrzej Niewęglowski, Paris**

Inv no 2010-S.7

André Giroux

(Paris 1801–1879 Paris)

View of Vesuvius Seen From the Ruins of Pompeii

c.1827

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.1

Anicet-Charles-Gabriel Lemonnier

(Rouen 1743 – 1824 Paris)

Vesuvius in Eruption

1779

Oil on paper

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
bought from The Gow Fund PD.11-
1997**

Thomas Jones

(Trefonnen, Wales 1742 – 1803 Pencerrig, Wales)

**The Crater on the Summit of Mount
Vesuvius**

c.1778

Oil on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris
Inv no 2019-S.61**

Thomas Jones

(Trefonnen, Wales 1742– 1803 Pencerrig, Wales)

Scene near Naples

1783

Oil on paper

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
bought from the Paintings Duplicates Fund
PD.21-1954**

Simon Denis

(Antwerp 1755–1813 Naples)

View Near Naples

c.1806

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Chester Dale Fund

Inv no 1998.21.1

Jean-Joseph-Xavier Bidault

(Carpentras 1758 –1846 Montmorency)

View of the Bridge and the Town of Cava, Kingdom of Naples

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,

bought from the Gow Fund

PD.32-2006

Edgar Degas

(Paris 1834 –1917 Paris)

Castel Sant'Elmo, from Capodimonte

c.1856

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, purchased with the assistance of The Gow, Cunliffe and Perceval Funds, with contributions from the National Art-Collections Fund and

**the Museums and Galleries Commission /
Victoria and Albert Purchase Grant Fund PD.18-2000**

**Louise-Joséphine Sarazin de Belmont
(Versailles 1790 –1870 Paris)**

**The Roman Theater at Taormina
1828**

Oil on paper on canvas

**National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC,
gift of Frank Anderson Trapp**

2004.166.33

Volcanoes

**Little in nature was thought to rival ‘the most terrible
and the most magnificent spectacle’ of a volcanic
eruption.**

**For painters, it provided highly dramatic pictorial
opportunities by day and night, with streams of
burning lava, flashes of lightning, and rock ejected to
great heights. Dormant, the mountain might appear
deceptively peaceful, swathed in tinted smoke and
‘vapours’.**

Mount Etna, Mount Stromboli, and especially Mount Vesuvius were magnets for thrill-seekers across Europe. Vesuvius was almost continuously active from 1631 until the mid- twentieth century, subject to six severe eruptions between 1707 and 1794. From the end of the eighteenth century, it also became an outdoor laboratory for the emerging science of volcanology, attracting Europe-wide networks of geologists and mineralogists to exchange knowledge and specimens. The most significant volcanic event of the nineteenth century was one no European painter could witness. The explosion of Mount Tambora in Indonesia, in April 1815, led to crop failure, famine and disease across the world.

Case labels

**Circulate clockwise from
case in front of
Volcano film**

Clive Oppenheimer
The Living Earth

Lava bomb, Mount Etna, Italy

Basalt

VIEWPOINT ON

Summit lava dome of Mount Merapi, Java, Indonesia

Plate X, Nordseite Des Merapi, lithograph by E Baensch Junior from a drawing by Emil Baensch, in Dr Fr [Franz Wilhelm] Junghuhn (1809–1864), Reise Durch Java, Magdeburg: Emil Baensch, 1845

Clive Oppenheimer

Volcanologist, University of Cambridge

Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn (1809–1864) was a German botanist and physician who spent most of his adult life in Indonesia, where he is renowned for his role in establishing cinchona plantations for quinine production. His eyes were said to be his most striking aspect, bright and sharp like a raptor's, and he empowered them further with aid of a telescope to survey Java's prolific volcanoes.

Junghuhn's exuberant, visual works—several books and an album of coloured lithographs—reveal great passion for his subject and a unified vision of nature.

He first climbed Mount Merapi in 1836, and the volcano features prominently in Reise Durch Java (1845) and in

the Java Album (1856), a collection of 11 lithographs. Both include remarkably faithful depictions of Merapi's lava dome, its crown edged with spiny protrusions and billowing fumaroles whose diverging plumes portray the convoluted airflow at the volcano's summit.

Top row from left to right

1. Lava bomb

Erebus, Antarctica, erupted in 2005

Phonolite

2. Pumice

Minoan eruption of Santorini, erupted mid-2nd millennium BCE

3. Breadcrust lava bomb

Vulcano, Italy, erupted in 1889

Rhyolite

4. Obsidian (natural volcanic glass)

Afar region of Ethiopia

Rhyolite

Bottom row from left to right

5. Peridotite xenolith in basalt

Lanzarote, Spain

6. Sulfur

Kawah Ijen, Java, Indonesia

7. Peridotite xenolith in basalt
Massif Central, France

From left to right

Lava, Scoria, and Pumice Stones of Mount Vesuvius

Engraving with hand colouring by Peter Fabris in Sir William Hamilton (1730 – 1803) and Peter Fabris (active eighteenth century), editor, *Campi Phlegraei: Observations of the Volcanoes of the Two Scilies as they have been communicated to; the Royal Society of London...*

Naples: [s.n.], 1776–79, Plate LI

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, bequeathed by Richard,
7th Viscount Fitzwilliam, 1816**

PB 22-2021

Not long after Sir William Hamilton took up residence as British Ambassador to the Kingdom of Naples in 1764, Mount Vesuvius began to show signs of activity. Hamilton made over 50 trips to the summit, often acting as a guide to visitors. His collection of letters documenting the eruptions takes as its title the local name for the area, Campi Phlegraei or ‘fields of fire’.

Top row

1. Scoria, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.12.3

Second row, from left to right

2. Mineralised iron lock, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.5

3. Window glass, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.9

4. Scoria, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.12.2

Third row, from left to right

5. Lava, stamped tablet, Vesuvius

Italy, Vesuvius

Osmond P Fisher (1817–1914)

CAMSM 17040

6. Lava with coin, Vesuvius

Italy, Vesuvius

Osmond P Fisher (1817–1914)

CAMSM 17041

7. Scoria with coin, Etna

Italy, Sicily, Etna

CAMSM 17039

Bottom row, from left to right

8. Carbonified bread, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.15

9. Mineralised iron chain, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.7

10. Scoria, Vesuvius 1794

Italy, Vesuvius, Torre del Greco

CAMSM 17038.12.1

William Fitzwilliam (1712– 97)

A Journey to France and Italy

(in English and French)

England, London(?), 1777

Autograph manuscript, ink on paper

The Fitzwilliam Museum, bequeathed by Richard,

7th Viscount Fitzwilliam, 1816

MS 3-2021, fol. 56r

William Fitzwilliam's encounter with Mount Vesuvius – and the intrepid amateur volcanologist Sir William Hamilton – took place a few years after the major eruption of 1767. Vesuvius was a popular destination for wealthy tourists, like Fitzwilliam, who were undertaking the Grand Tour. This manuscript is a presentation copy of his original travel diary, written between 1769 –70.

From left to right

Veduta Dell'eruzione del Vesuvio... 8 Agosto 1779 [View of the Eruption of Vesuvius, 8 August 1779]

**Etching and aquatint by Louis Boilly (1761–1845)
from Pierre-Jacques Volaire (1729 – c.1802) in
Michele Torcia (1736 – 1808), *Relazione Dell'ultima
Eruzione del Vesuvio: Accaduta Nel Mese Di Agosto
Di Questo Anno 1779*, Napoli: Presso I Raimondi, [1779]
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library
CCC.28.60**

**This engraving was made from a painting by the French
artist Pierre-Jacques Volaire, who enjoyed a
Europeanwide reputation for his dramatic
representations of Mount Vesuvius. It is a more
conventional view of the eruption of August 1779, also
depicted in Lemonnier's painting displayed nearby.
Royal Academy archivist Torcia describes the unusually
liquid consistency of the lava, flowing with alarming
speed, 'as if spurting from the veins of a strong man'.**

**Plate 5A, Profile of Vesuvius after the
Eruption of 26 April, 1872, from a
Photograph Taken Near the Observatory**

**Wood engraving, in Luigi Palmieri (1897–1896), *The
Eruption of Vesuvius in 1872; with notes and an
introductory sketch of the present state of knowledge
of terrestrial vulcanicity, the cosmical nature and***

relations of volcanoes and earthquakes by Robert Mallet

London: Asher, 1873

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library

MF.35.14

In April 1872, Vesuvius erupted in one of its most significant outbursts of the century. Land, crops and buildings were destroyed by the lava flows and ash deposits, and the death toll was high. Within a year of the eruption, the physicist Luigi Palmieri, Director of the Vesuvius Observatory, published this detailed account of the volcanic activity, having witnessed the episode first hand from the observatory.

From left to right

‘Common Garnet’

**From William Phillips (1775 – 1828) An Elementary Treatise on Mineralogy: Comprising an Introduction to the Science (5th edition). From the 4th London edition by Robert Allan: Containing the Latest Discoveries in American and Foreign Mineralogy, by Francis Alger Boston [Mass.]: W.D. Ticknor & Co., 1844, pp. 20 – 21
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library**

8365.c.92

Aimed at students, Elementary Treatise collects observations of a wide range of mineral characteristics. First published in 1816, it went on to become the standard textbook on the subject. The naturalist Charles Darwin had a copy with him on his exploratory voyage of The Beagle; John Constable also owned a copy, probably acquired to foster his son's interest in geology and mineralogy.

Garnet

**Courtesy of Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge
CAMSM 17043**

Minerals

'At that time the person was nothing, the stone was everything...Everybody mineralogized!' Johann Gottfried Herder, 1796

Once the pursuit of Europe's ruling families, collecting minerals became a 'fashionable science' from the late eighteenth century, alongside botany and geology.

Public museums throughout Europe created galleries devoted to mineral displays, while private individuals formed substantial collections. Johan Wolfgang von Goethe assembled a group of 18,000 rocks, minerals and fossils. In Britain, Sir Abraham Hume, also a notable art collector, owned an important collection of minerals, rich in diamonds, acquired by the Sedgwick Museum in Cambridge in 1841.

Artists, too, owned and displayed elements of nature collected in the field. Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes formed a 'cabinet of mineralogy' that included rare specimens from across the globe, such as a piece of the Krasnojarsk meteorite, found in Siberia in 1749. John Constable's interest in minerals began in the 1830s, buying books to help him learn more and collecting them alongside his son.

Top shelf from left to right

1. Orthoclase

Locality unknown CAMSM
17033

2. Agate

India?

Hume Collection, CAMSM 10754

3. Malachite

China

Hume Collection, CAMSM 16733

4. Goethite

Locality unknown Hume
Collection, CAMSM 17035

5. Hessonite garnet on quartz

USA, California

CAMSM 17042

6. Krasnojarsk meteorite

Russia, Siberia, Yeniseisk

7. Clinoclase and liroconite

England, Cornwall, St Day

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17030

8. Diaspore

Locality unknown

Brooke Collection, CAMSM 15241

9. Gypsum

France, Montebras

Hume Collection, CAMSM 11136

10. Gold

Hungary

Hume Collection, CAMSM 10510

11. Celestine

Italy, Sicily, Girgenti

Carne Collection, CAMSM 17032

Second shelf from left to right

12. Lapis lazuli

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17034

13. Diaspore

Slovakia, Banská Štiavnica

Brooke Collection, CAMSM 15243

14. Hematite

Italy, Elba

Hume Collection, CAMSM 15289

15. Chalcedony

India, Gujarat, Cambay

Hume Collection, CAMSM 16282

16. Beryl

Russia, Adun Tschilon

Hume Collection, CAMSM 10080

17. Baryte

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 14859

18. Silver

Germany, Fürstenberg

Wiltshire Collection, CAMSM 11816

19. Axinite

Switzerland, Val Medels

Hume Collection, CAMSM 15693

20. Beryl

**Northern Ireland, County Down Carne
Collection, CAMSM 10082**

21. Agate

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 15391

22. Quartz

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 10397

23. Beryl

**Locality unknown CAMSM
17036**

24. Quartz

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 15447

25. Chalcopyrite

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 14871

26. Apatite

Germany, Saxony, Ehrenfriedersdorf

Hume Collection, CAMSM 10611

Third shelf from left to right

27. Quartz

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 13902

28. Jasper

Guyana, Demerara

Hume Collection, CAMSM 15423

29. Fluorite

England, Derbyshire

Hume Collection, CAMSM 16984

30. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.6

31. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.3

32. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.5

33. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.1

34. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.2

35. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.4

36. Stone tile

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17037.7

37. Chalcedony

Locality unknown

Hume Collection, CAMSM 14822

38. Opal

Slovakia, Presov, Cervenica

Hume Collection, CAMSM 14733

39. Cassiterite

Germany, Saxony

Hume Collection, CAMSM 14815

40. Topaz

Russia, Siberia, Adun-Chilon

Hume Collection, CAMSM 17031

41. Calcite

**Germany, Lower Saxony, Harz Hume
Collection, CAMSM 11244**

42. Sardonyx

India, Gujarat, Cambay

Hume Collection, CAMSM 15464

Bottom shelf

43. Fluorite

England, Cumbria, Cumberland

Hume Collection, CAMSM 10600

**Courtesy of Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences,
University of Cambridge**

From the left

**Cornelius Varley
(1781–1873)**

Near Bangor

c.1802

Graphite on paper

The Fitzwilliam Museum,

**purchased from the Fairhaven Fund, 1972 PD.78-
1972.f.15**

This panoramic view of the mountain Moel Hebog ‘in the clouds’ was sketched on the spot during Varley’s first trip to Wales in 1802, in the company of his brother John and the architect and geologist Thomas Webster. Varley

has concentrated on mapping out the contours of the range of peaks laid out before his eyes, adding very little other detail.

**Adam Sedgwick
(1785 – 1873)**

**Stratigraphy, Dorset
1821**

**Graphite, watercolour and pen and ink on paper
Courtesy of Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences,
University of Cambridge
ADSW 01/02/01 (Box DDF 824)–Isle of Wight, 1820/1821**

Natural sciences, like art, depend on close observation and the ability to record significant detail in visual form. Here, Adam Sedgwick, one of the founders of modern geology, depicts the composition and relative positions of rock strata in the Dorset coastline –‘a succession of rugged precipices of varied forms’– in order to determine their geological history.

**Adam Sedgwick
(1785 – 1873)**

**Field notebook
Wales, 1843
Graphite on paper**

**Courtesy of Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences,
University of Cambridge
ADSW 01/01/38 (Box DDF 828)–Wales, 1843**

Sedgwick made a special study of the geology of north Wales. He took several field trips there from 1831, the first in the company of his student, Charles Darwin. Like painters working in the field, he was often plagued by bad weather: during his trip of 1843, he had to contend with ‘wetting and drying, and soaking, and wringing’, he recalled.

Pele’s hair lava, characterised by thin, glassy strands, and named after the Hawaiian goddess of volcanoes, Pele.

From Kílauea volcano, Hawai’i, erupted in 2018.

Basalt

Lava stalactites

Mauna Loa, Hawai’i

Basalt

**Continue into the
Adeane gallery**

Trees

Of all the features of the natural world, trees were considered the most difficult to paint. Too often, they became the artist's 'stumbling block'.

Most have trunks, branches and foliage, but beyond that vary greatly in character. Trees also change with age, the seasons and under different weather conditions. Each is inescapably eccentric. Correctly representing details of branching (ramification), bark, leaves and 'tufting' – the way leaves are attached to a branch or a twig – was crucial if a painted tree were to be more than 'a stem, with some crooked waving poles stuck in it'. Above all, trees needed to be seen to 'breathe', with light and air circulating around trunk, branches and leaves.

Painting en plein air allowed artists such as Robert Leprince, André Giroux, Fritz Petzholdt and Janus La Cour not just to see, but to experience, trees at first hand. Their paintings are about sensation as much as appearance: flickering light, the cool shade of a canopy, the sound of wind in the branches, the scent of aromatic foliage or sun-baked bark.

Wall Case:

Above

**John Robert Cozens
(1752 – 1797)**

**Aspin, From the Series, Delineations of the
General Character, Ramifications and Foliage
of Forest Trees**

1789

**Soft-ground etching with hand colouring on paper,
proof before the addition of aquatint**

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, bought from the Fairhaven Fund
with the aid of a grant from the MGC/V&A Purchase Grant
Fund,**

1998

P.66-1998-3

**Cozens's landscape watercolours influenced a younger
generation of landscape painters and were copied
assiduously by JMW Turner. John Constable declared
Cozens's sentimental portrayal of trees in particular to
be 'all poetry'. Cozens's depiction of the aspen is
typically expressive. A second trunk bends forwards,**

with arm-like branches outstretched, leading the eye to the humans seated below.

Below from left to right

Morus Nigra, 'Common Mulberry'

Engraving with hand colouring by A. Bailey after J. Hart, 1824, in Peter William Watson (1761 – 1830), *Dendrologia britannica: or, trees and shrubs that will live in the open air of Britain throughout the year. A work useful to proprietors and possessors of estates, in selecting subjects for planting woods, parks and shrubberies: and also to all persons who cultivate trees and shrubs*

London: printed for the author and sold by John and Arthur Arch, Cornhill, 1825, 2 vols; vol. 2, pp. 158-9, Plate 159.

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library

CCC.47.313

During the nineteenth century, a growing preoccupation with tree planting and collecting across Europe led to the publication of a number of key scientific works devoted to the study of trees. Issued in 24 parts, *Dendrologia Britannica* by the botanist and landscape painter Peter

William Watson (1761 – 1830) was the first systematic English-language work devoted to arboriculture.

The black mulberry was imported from France into Britain in the seventeenth century.

‘Asp or Aspen Tree’

Populus Tremula, in Henry Phillips (1775 – 1838), *Sylva Florifera: the shrubbery historically and botanically treated, with observations on the formation of ornamental plantations and picturesque scenery*

London: printed for Longmans, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1823, 2 vols in 1, pp. 102-3

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library B.14-49

A well-known botanist and landscape gardener, Henry Phillips published a number of books on horticulture in the 1820s. His text reflects his sentimental attachment to nature as much as his scientific standing. John Constable, who befriended Phillips in 1824, owned a copy and considered it ‘delightful’. Phillips advised that, with its quivering leaves ‘in perpetual motion’ and changeable colours, the aspen was best planted alone, with space around it.

The Green Dale Oak at Welbeck

Lithograph by Jacob George Strutt, 1826, in Jacob George Strutt (1790 – 1864), *Sylva Britannica: or, portraits of forest trees, distinguished for their antiquity, magnitude, or beauty.* Drawn from nature and etched by Jacob George Strutt

**London: printed by A.J. Valpy. Published by J.G. Strutt; and Colnaghi and Co., 1822. Title page,
The Syndics of Cambridge University Library
MH.7.17**

The notion that trees mirrored human existence was commonplace at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this volume celebrating notable ancient trees in Britain, Strutt refers to them as, ‘silent witnesses of the successive generations of men, to whose destiny they bear so touching a resemblance, alike in their budding, their prime, and their decay.’

John Constable was an acquaintance, and one of the subscribers to the book.

Continue on the wall behind you from the right

Edmé-Adolphe Fontaine

(Noisy-le-Grand 1814–1883 Versailles)

Isidore Dagnan at his Easel in the Open Air

Oil on canvas, mounted on wood panel

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.39

Wall Case:

Above

Max Hauschild

(Dresden 1810–1895 Naples)

Vines Seen through a Window

Oil on paper

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2014-S.2

Top

1. **Lava tree mold, Kílauea volcano, Hawai‘i**

Bottom left to right

2. **Impressions of olive tree leaves in ash from Minoan eruption of Santorini, Greece**

Mid-2nd millennium BCE

3. **Branch of tree engulfed by pumice during the 946 CE millennium eruption of Mount Paektu**

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

4. **Remains of vegetation in ash from Minoan eruption of Santorini, Greece**

Mid-2nd millennium BCE

**Artwork displayed on
6 central columns**

Simon Denis

(Antwerp 1755 – 1813 Naples)

Trees in Front of a Valley

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2017-S.18

Anonymous French, first half of the 19th century

Study of a Tree

On paper, mounted on cardboard

Private collection

André Giroux

(Paris 1801–1879 Paris)

Forest Interior with a Painter, Civita

Castellana

1825–30

Oil on paper

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Mrs John Jay

Ide in memory of Mr and Mrs William Henry Donner

Inv no 1994.52.3

VIEWPOINT ON

André Giroux

Forest Interior with a Painter, Civita Castellana

Jane Munro

**Co-curator, True to Nature,
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge**

Painting outdoors could be a solitary activity, communing directly with the natural world. But it could also be a sociable one, with groups of artists painting together on the same site.

Civita Castellana, a medieval town north of Rome, was a popular destination for painters from the late eighteenth century onwards, including several of Giroux's contemporaries, such as Camille Corot.

Here, apparently alone in nature but for his dog, the artist has set up an easel in front of his chosen motif. Dappled sunlight picks out the contours of his shoulder and illuminates the rock beyond. But there is an unseen presence: the artist (Giroux) who painted the painter painting.

Not everyone welcomed the growing trend to paint outdoors. Edgar Degas, for one, thought that plein-air

painters were misled in their attempts to depict the impossible: 'the air one sees in paintings... is not the air we can breathe', he insisted.

Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes
(Toulouse 1750 – 1819 Paris)

Study of a Tree in the Bois de Boulogne

c.1790

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris,
gift in lieu of inheritance tax Jérôme Binda, Tinos (Greece)**

Inv no 2018-S.30

Robert Léopold Leprince
(Paris 1800 – 1847 Chartres)

Study of Trees

c.1820

Oil on paper, mounted on canvas

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt,
Paris, gift of Catherine Sterling, Paris**

Inv no 2018-S.28

**Anton Sminck Pitloo (Arnhem
1790 – 1837 Naples)**

Study of a Fallen Dead Tree

c.1820 – 1830

Oil on paper, mounted on cardboard

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2011-S.4

VIEWPOINT ON

Anton Sminck Pitloo

Study of a Fallen Dead Tree

Mike Maunder

**Cambridge Conservation Initiative,
University of Cambridge**

On first observation, this painting is quite sombre, stark and honest. The carcass of a fallen tree, the bark long sloughed off, and the wood bleached, cracked and probably patterned with a calligraphy from beetle larvae and fungal strands. Such fallen trees are a vital part of the physiology of a forest. While declining but still a living tree, they support a huge range of mosses, lichens, and beetles, the crevices host roosting bats, and the woodpeckers excavate nesting cavities. Once they fall the carcass eases back into the soil, riddled by fungi that transform dead dry wood back into life.

European forests are, in part, defined by the dead, both as markers of an ancient process of renewal and as victims of pollution and disease. As a child I remember the carcasses of elm killed by Dutch elm disease. Now the pattern is being repeated with ash dieback, oak decline and oak sudden death. The first signs of climate

change in Europe – drought, storm and fire – will scythe and reshuffle Europe’s forests. The forests where Pitloo painted have changed and will continue to change as the dynamics of conservation and restoration interact with climate change, pollution and tree disease.

Left wall of gallery

John Constable

(East Bergholt 1776 –1837 London)

Salisbury

1829(?)

Oil on canvas

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
bequeathed by Frank Hindley Smith**

No 2383

John Constable

(East Bergholt 1776 – 1837 London)

East Bergholt

1808

Oil on millboard

**The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge,
bequeathed by Sidney Ernest Prestige**

PD.15-1968

Joseph Mallord William Turner

(London 1775 – 1851 London)

**A Beech Wood with Gypsies
seated in the Distance**

c.1799 – 1801

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

PD.24-1981

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, purchased with the assistance of the Fairhaven Fund, with contributions from the Victoria & Albert Museum, Grant-in-Aid, the Chase Charity, the Leche Trust, the Pilgrim Trust and the National Heritage Memorial Fund

Joseph Mallord William Turner

(London 1775 – 1851 London)

A Beech Wood with Gypsies

Round a Campfire

c.1799 – 1801

Oil on paper, mounted on wood panel

PD.25-1981

VIEWPOINT ON

Joseph Mallord William Turner

**A Beech Wood with Gypsies Round a
Campfire**

and

A Beech Wood with Gypsies seated in the Distance

Participants in the Fitzwilliam Museum's Age Well initiative, supporting older people's wellbeing through cultural connections

It depicts humans' relationship with nature.

The canopy is providing protection, looking up and losing oneself in it.

The strong verticals – the roots are going far down – sense of incredible strength and power.

I was reminded how much we need trees – they are an essential part of our lives. There is a reason why we feel sad when we see a fallen tree. Where would we be without them?

I am in awe of my surroundings.

I felt at home.

Trees feel like signs of new beginnings, for new routes.

Trees grow everywhere in any environment – can give hope, can put down roots anywhere whatever trauma is going on around them.

I see their majesties, the energy of trees. They are living things like us.

Achille-Etna Michallon

(Paris 1796 –1822 Paris)

The Oak and the Reed

1816

Oil on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, purchased with the assistance of the Gow Fund with contributions from the Museums and Galleries Commission / Victoria & Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund and the National Art Collections Fund

PD.180-1991

VIEWPOINT ON

Achille-Etna Michallon

The Oak and the Reed

Cambridge Canopy Project

Nature and nurture

Urban trees could be dismissed as an artificial display of nature. However, people have been adorning their settlements with them through time, speaking perhaps to the truth of our own nature. As we travel along our streets to work or school or relax and play in our parks and gardens, we often do so in the company of trees. They protect us from the heat of the sun, from deluges by a heavy storm and they cleanse the air we breathe. We delight in their spring blossom, autumn colours and bird song emanating from amongst their branches. Collectively they form an urban forest, sharing the city's spaces with us, growing along our roads and between our buildings, unconcerned by ownership. We tend to perceive them as permanent landscape features, and because of their longevity, envisioning their life-cycles can be an effort of our imaginations.

As with the oak in this picture, a symbol of strength and durability, which has twisted, turned, bent and broken in the wind, trees are vulnerable, and by extension, so are our treescapes.

They are susceptible to time, disease, climate change, and our interventions and whims. We should remember trees are living things with defined lifecycles and show them the respect they deserve so that our children can enjoy the same benefits that flow from them as we do. There is a role for everyone to play here in protecting and enhancing our treescape. The Cambridge Canopy Project is taking the lead in defining these roles so that collectively we can all be caretakers of these living assets.

Right wall of gallery

**Théodore Rousseau
(Paris 1812–1867 Barbizon)**

**Panoramic Landscape near the River Moselle
c.1830**

Oil on canvas

**National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Chester Dale Fund
Inv no 2003.40.1**

VIEWPOINT ON

Théodore Rousseau

Panoramic Landscape near the River Moselle

Francine Hughes

Wetland ecologist, Anglia Ruskin University

Floodplain forests are now rare but were once found along the lower reaches of most European rivers.

Because they occupied fertile land they were frequently cleared for agriculture. From the mid-eighteenth century, remaining floodplain forests began to deteriorate in response to river engineering practices such as dam construction and channelisation, which severely reduced the natural dynamics of rivers.

European black poplar has declined the most among the floodplain species, a member of the Salicaceae family that relies on river dynamics to regenerate.

This painting shows a point in time when this transition in European rivers was taking place. On the far bank there is still a typical floodplain forest succession from the river's edge, where the greenish-grey foliage of willows and young poplars can be seen, to the mixed poplar and hardwood forest behind. On the near bank

the forest has been cleared, perhaps for grazing, but ironically rows of Lombardy poplars have been planted. These distinctive narrow trees are cultivars of the European black poplar, developed in Italy during the seventeenth century and often planted to create artificial linear features in the landscape.

Fritz Petzholdt

(Copenhagen 1805 –1838 Patras)

Tree Crowns in a Forest (Ariccia?)

c.1832

Oil on paper

**Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris,
gift of John Harvey Bergen and Alexandra van Nierop,
Amsterdam**

Inv no 2012-S.29

VIEWPOINT ON

Fritz Petzholdt

Tree Crowns in a Forest (Ariccia?)

**Tom Swinfield, Cambridge Centre for Carbon Credits
and Lynsey Stafford, Keep Britain Tidy**

People have destroyed one third of all forests, one of Earth's biggest carbon stores, releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and warming our planet. To avoid the worst impacts of climate breakdown, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that deforestation must stop immediately, and one billion hectares of forest restored by 2030.

Carbon stored in forests is being tracked from the international space station, 400km above us, helping countries work towards slowing deforestation and increasing forest cover. Just as a bat echolocates to see in the dark, a laser pulse is fired at the earth, bathing the forest in light for a split second, capturing an image of the forest's structure. Two hundred years ago, Fritz Petzholdt expressed the beauty of the forest with

careful brushstrokes. Today, we paint the canopy with lasers.

André Giroux

(Paris 1801–1879 Paris)

Forest Interior with a Waterfall, Papigno

1825/30

Oil on paper

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Mrs John Jay Ide in memory of Mr and Mrs William Henry Donner

Inv no 1994.52.4

Attributed to Francois Diday

(Geneva 1802 –1877 Geneva)

Uprooted Tree

Oil on canvas

Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt, Paris

Inv no 2015-S.23

The beauty of wood anatomy

The invention of compound microscopes in the seventeenth century gave birth to the still emerging field of wood anatomical research. Although magnification

revolutionised our understanding of plant physiology and taxonomy, the relationship between the vastly diverse functional traits of wood – those aspects that define survival, development, growth and reproduction – and its aesthetic characteristics are generally ignored.

Projected here are 25 sections from a wide range of plant species from different environments, which highlight the beauty of wood. Double-stained, high-resolution, highmagnification images reveal how cells, fibres, vessels and other wood anatomical traits create a seemingly endless cosmos of colours and forms. This view of stained plant tissues confirms nature's principle of order, in which recurring patterns create reassuring depictions of evolution and survival.

The selection here not only provides exciting new insights into the evolution of plant life on Earth, but also reveals unique snapshots of the 'fascination of aging' in what must be considered our most important resource and inspiration: past, present and future.

Ulf Buentgen, ecologist and Alan Crivellaro, plant scientist

VIEWPOINT

Ulf Buentgen and Alan Crivellaro

Ecologist and plant scientist, University of Cambridge

Artworks can be compared to tree rings – the structures that record the environmental conditions in a specific moment of time. The microscopic study of wood – a material that could be described as the temporal amalgamation of cellulose and lignin – opens a largely unknown universe of art and science that was entirely concealed until the invention of optical magnification some centuries ago. Describing the myriad anatomical traits of wood and engaging with their individual and collective beauty is another way of being true to nature. Like open-air paintings, the digital display of highresolution thin sections creates memory and inspiration.

**Continue through the
doorway to the**

True to Nature & Hockney exhibition link section.

**From this room you can
continue to the Hockney
exhibition which runs
throughout the main
galleries of the museum
on this level.**

Time Travel

David Hockney (b.1937)

Woldgate Woods, Winter 2010

2010—11

Nine digital videos synchronised and presented on nine monitors to comprise a single artwork, duration: 49 minutes.

Collection of the artist

This is one of four linked works representing a journey along the same stretch of road in East Yorkshire during different seasons. These belong to a long tradition of depictions of spring, summer, autumn and winter to which the paintings in this room by Monet and Pissarro are also connected.

Hockney's seasons consist of digital videos, but they are far from being straightforward moving pictures. By making a mosaic of images, taken from differing angles and at slightly varying times, Hockney contended that he was producing an image closer to our real experience.

His objections to photography, he pointed out, were to do with its fixed, single viewpoint. He is not anti-lens, but 'anti-one lens'. What he was doing when he made these works was a form of drawing. But, he added, 'with this technique I could not only draw in space, I could also draw in time'.

iPad Paintings

David Hockney (b.1937)

20th April 2020, No. 1

iPad painting

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

17th April 2020, No. 2

iPad painting

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

20th September 2020, No. 5

iPad painting

Collection of the artist

Like Monet, Hockney arrived in Normandy to paint. He found its climate similar to his native East Yorkshire: 'They are both maritime, northern places'. Arriving in winter, he immediately began to paint trees.

Drawing — and more recently painting — with an iPad allowed Hockney to work with unprecedented spontaneity. Less viscous than oil paint and more forgiving than delicate watercolour washes, it allowed

him to 'get a marvellous flow'. In many ways the new medium became a digital successor to outdoor painting practised throughout the nineteenth century.

Motivated by the desire to depict a single motif under everchanging effects of light and atmosphere, Hockney has used the iPad to capture evanescence.

In nature and human vision, green is a background colour. In Hockney's landscape it dominates, refuses to retreat. By using his iPad to paint green, Hockney goes beyond what can be done with pigments. His astonishing range of greens are made directly from light, emitted not reflected.

iPad Paintings

David Hockney (b.1937)

28th November 2010

iPad drawing

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

30th November 2010

iPad drawing

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

6th December 2010

iPad drawing

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

7th December 2010

iPad drawing

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

5th April 2020, No. 1

iPad painting

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

5th April 2020, No. 2

iPad painting

Collection of the artist

David Hockney (b.1937)

29th April 2020, No. 3

iPad painting

Collection of the artist

The Four Seasons: Spring (Monet's Tree Canopy)

Claude Monet (1840 – 1926)

Springtime

1886

Oil on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum

**Purchased by Alex Reid and Lefevre with a contribution
from The National Art-Collections Fund PD.2-**

1953

Monet lived in Normandy for much of his life. Here he depicts his stepdaughter, Suzanne, and his son, Jean, in the orchard of his house in Giverny. However, Monet's focus is on the dense network of trees and canopy of blossom that all but obscure the sky, controlling the play of light and shadow on the vegetation and figures below.

Light was Monet's 'great subject', Hockney has said.

The Four Seasons: Winter (Leafless)

Camille Pissarro (1830 – 1903)

Piette's House at Montfoucault: Snow Effect

1874

Oil on canvas

The Fitzwilliam Museum

Bequeathed by Stanley William Sykes, 1966 PD.10-1966

Pissarro was a superb painter of snow. He relished its luminosity, as well as the varying colours it took on — warm mauve when freshly fallen, cool, slate-grey once it began to melt, slowly revealing the vegetation beneath. Montfoucault held great appeal for Pissarro. The home of his close friend Ludovic Piette, it was wild and remote:

'the true countryside' with 'no traces of man left'.

The Hockney

exhibition continues

across the hallway in

Shiba gallery 14.

Did you enjoy True to Nature?

**Share your thoughts by completing
our short survey via the QR code**



Thank you