

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

Washington, D. C. April 30, 1969. Paintings by John Constable (1776-1837) from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, the second exhibition in a series devoted to individual British artists, will open at 3 p.m. today at the National Gallery of Art. The series originated last autumn with the paintings of Constable's contemporary, J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851).

In his foreword to the catalogue, John Walker, Director of the National Gallery observes: "It was Constable's recording of the sky, the fields and meadows, and the rivers of England that is the principal glory of English painting."

Of special importance in this collection of 66 pictures is Hadleigh Castle, "a scene of melancholy grandeur as moving as the most sublime poem by Wordsworth." According to Mr. Walker, "One of the last great achievements of Constable's life, Hadleigh Castle is a fitting climax to the present exhibition."

Constable observed the magnificent ruin while on a sketching tour of Essex in the summer of 1814. He described it in letters to his fiancée and made several studies before completing this final version in 1829.

Mr. and Mrs. Mellon's collection is widely representative of British art of the past three centuries. The painting section alone contains the work of more than 200 artists with important groups by Gainsborough, Stubbs, Devis, Wright of Derby, Rowlandson, Bonington, Blake, and Palmer -- as well as Turner and Constable.

For students of Constable, the National Gallery exhibition covers the full range of his marine and landscape painting, and includes as well one of his most successful portraits, Miss Mary Freer. The group of 19 cloud studies, many with careful weather and wind notations, illustrates the artist's interest in the new science of meteorology.

The collection is rich in landmarks of the artist's life: Dedham Mill and Lock, where Constable worked for his prosperous miller father; Osmington Village, with the Church and Vicarage, scene of his honeymoon; several views of his summer home at Hampstead; and Coast at Brighton, Stormy Day, where he vacationed with his family. There are three views of London, including one that may be a sketch of the burning of the Houses of Parliament on October 16, 1834.

The fully illustrated catalogue, with notes by Ross Watson, is available at \$2.50. The exhibition closes after November 2, 1969.

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Black-and-white photographs, catalogues, and color transparencies on loan for purposes of publication are available from William W. Morrison, Assistant to the Director, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565, Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 225.