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Sotheby's EST. 1744

Important Constable Rediscovered After 50 Years

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A recently rediscovered landscape by John Constable (1776–1837) will be a highlight of the [Old Masters Evening sale](#) in London on 6 December.



JOHN CONSTABLE, R.A. (1776 – 1837), *DEDHAM VALE WITH THE RIVER STOUR IN FLOOD FROM THE GROUNDS OF OLD HALL, EAST BERGHOLT*. OIL ON CANVAS 51 X 91.5 CM.; 20 1/8 X 36 IN. FROM [OLD MASTERS EVENING SALE](#). ESTIMATE £2–3 MILLION.

Dedham Vale with the River Stour in Flood, which was painted between 1814 and 1817, belongs to a small group of Constable's early Suffolk paintings remaining in private hands and will be offered with an estimate of £2–3 million.

Speaking about the discovery, Julian Gascoigne, Senior Specialist, British Paintings at Sotheby's said: "Constable's views of Dedham Vale and the Stour valley have become icons of British art and define for many everything that is quintessential about the English countryside. *Dedham Vale with the River Stour in Flood* was long mistakenly thought to be by Ramsay Richard Reinagle (1775–1862), a friend and contemporary of Constable's, but recent scientific analysis and up-to-date connoisseurship has unanimously returned the work to its rightful place among the canon of the great master's work and established beyond doubt its true authorship. It is without question one of the most exciting and important additions to Constable's oeuvre to have emerged in the last 50 years."

This rare masterpiece depicts the area of the Stour Valley around Dedham Vale, on the border between Suffolk and Essex where Constable spent his boyhood years and which has become synonymous with the great painter. Famously known around the world today as 'Constable Country', the area has inspired the artist's most famous paintings, from *The White Horse*, 1819 ([Frick Collection, New York](#)) to *The Haywain*, 1821 ([National Gallery, London](#)) and *The Leaping Horse*, 1825 ([Royal Academy, London](#)).

The works belong to a group of paintings similar in size and style that Constable painted between 1814 and 1817, all of which are views of the Stour Valley and the area surrounding East Bergholt. These works were painted partly on the spot and show the artist's commitment to naturalism at its most faithful.

Whilst the painter's later works tended to be purchased either by Constable's great friend John Fisher or by patrons or dealers with metropolitan or international connections, the earlier Suffolk paintings tend to have closer associations with patrons or friends in the local area. This painting is thought to have been commissioned by Thomas Fitzhugh as a wedding present for his future wife, Philadelphia Godfrey, the daughter of Peter Godfrey who lived at Old Hall, East Bergholt and was a near neighbour and friend of the artist's family. The view is taken from the bottom of her parent's garden, looking out over the valley with the river in flood, a symbol of fecundity, and was intended as a memento of her childhood home for her new married life in London.

Dedham Vale with the River Stour in Flood by John Constable (1776–1837) will feature in the [Old Masters Evening sale](#) in London on 6 December