

# Unrecorded Constable landscape sketch comes to North Yorkshire saleroom

by Alex Capon

An early and previously unrecorded sketch by John Constable (1776-1837) has emerged at auction house Tennants.

Consigned to the Leyburn saleroom from a private family collection also in North Yorkshire, the small landscape is estimated at £150,000-200,000 on March 15.

*Dedham Vale looking towards Langham* has been dated to c.1809-14 and is described by Tennants as “an impressive and vigorous early plein-air sketch of the countryside surrounding Constable’s childhood home of East Bergholt on the Suffolk/Essex border”.

Painted onto millboard laid onto canvas, the 12 x 15½in (31 x 39cm) oil has a provenance to Ann Durning Holt (1899-1980), either acquired by her on the art market during her lifetime, or possibly to her by



**Left:** *Dedham Vale looking towards Langham* by John Constable, estimate **£150,000-200,000** at Tennants.

descent from her father Sir Richard Durning Holt (1868-1941), nephew of the distinguished Liverpool collector, George Holt (1825-96); then by descent to the current owner.

The work dates from a time when, having completed his studies at the Royal Academy Schools in 1802, the young

Constable returned to his native Suffolk and began to create plein-air sketches as he travelled among the fields and byways.

These works demonstrate how he developed a highly expressive oil sketching style which often, as was the case here, shows dramatic handling of light and shade, depicting

rays of sunlight bursting through the clouds and sharply illuminating stretches of the Vale.

Constable would use his quick on-the-spot sketches, often years later, when he was in his London studio planning new paintings for exhibition.

Indeed, the current sketch is believed to be the basis of *Dedham Vale* (c.1825) which is now in the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen Neue Pinakothek in Munich. The full-sized landscape has been extended into a more expansive view of Dedham Vale with figures and animals inserted, but it retains the dramatic sun bursting through the cloud.

Director and auctioneer

Jane Tennant said: “We are delighted to be handling the sale of this lively and expressive landscape. Oil sketches, much like drawings, have an immediacy – a direct link to the mind and working practices of an artist.

“It was executed when he was just starting out on his extraordinary career. He has managed to imbue the sketchily painted landscape with such vitality with his deft handling of dramatic light and shade.”

## Others sold

A number of sketches by Constable have made significant sums at auctions outside London in recent years.

A previously unpublished oil sketch depicting a quarry in Hampstead hammered at £410,000 at Woolley & Wallis in Salisbury in September, while a rediscovered oil sketch of Willy Lott’s House made £200,000 at Martel Maides in September 2023.

## Simon Phillips appointed as Treasure House chairman

London summer event *The Treasure House Fair* has appointed Simon Phillips of Mayfair gallery Ronald Phillips as chairman of the fair and the advisory board.

Phillips, a specialist in English 18th century furniture, has stood at *Treasure House* since the event opened in 2022.

He will advise Thomas Woodham-Smith (fair director) and Harry Van der Hoorn (owner of *Treasure House* and *Stabilo International*).

According to the fair, the appointment comes as the event “enters a new and dynamic era nurturing and developing both domestic and international trade”.

### Major player

Phillips has been a major player in both the previous leading summer fairs in



**Above:** Simon Phillips.

London. First he was chairman of the *Grosvenor House Antiques Fair*. After that closed, he became a founder and a board member of *Masterpiece* (Woodham-Smith and Van der Hoorn were also founders).

Frances Allitt

For more recent art trade appointments see page 47

## Tributes paid to silver dealer and TV star Michael Baggott

Tributes from across the world of art and antiques were paid to *Flog It!* star and silver antiques expert Michael Baggott who died aged 51 following a stroke and heart attack.

The sad news was announced on his Instagram account on January 28 by his family.

In the message it said: “Heartbroken to share that Michael died yesterday in hospital of a heart attack following a stroke in October. He was a dearly loved son, brother, nephew and uncle who will be deeply and profoundly missed. There will be a memorial service in the coming weeks, the details of which will be shared here.”

Among the tributes, Woolley & Wallis’ Jeremy Lamond described Baggott as a “wit, a scholar, a font of knowledge (generous with it).



**Left:** the late Michael Baggott.

Such true masters of their subjects are as rare as the objects he hunted down.”

Others paying tribute included Dawson’s Jonathan Pratt and LAPADA’s Freya Simms. More than 200 messages were posted to his account within hours of the news being announced.

Baggott rose to fame as an expert on BBC’s *Flog It!* while within the trade he was well known for his silver expertise,

his vocal objections to the Ivory Act and his subsequent founding of The Antiques Rescue Centre (ARC), to look after banned antique items containing ivory.

He wrote a number of books, including a memoir published last year titled *As Found: A Lifetime in Antiques* and produced videos via Instagram and You Tube sharing his love and knowledge of silver.

Laura Chesters