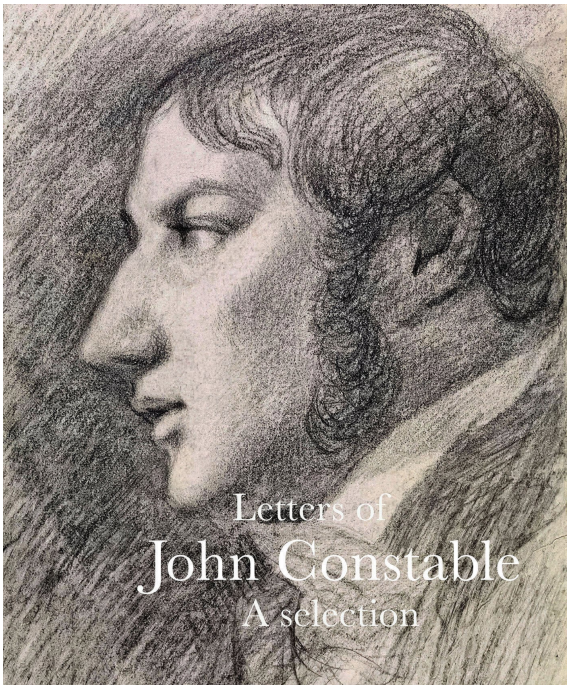
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Letters of John Constable

A Selection

Edited by Anne Lyles

By (artist) John Constable

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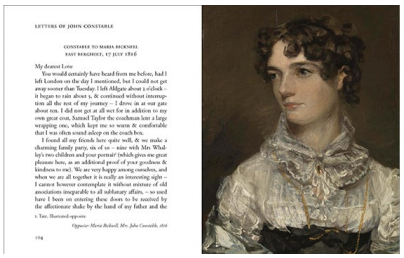
- Constable's letters selected and edited into a coherent narrative
- An unparalleled insight into a pioneering creative mind
- Richly illustrated and with an extensive introduction

John Constable (1776–1837) is England's best-loved landscape painter, and the familiarity of his images can disguise how revolutionary he really was. His passionate concentration on the truth of the natural world influenced not just other painters but the whole course of romanticism, and the spontaneity and energy of his vision and technique remain as fresh today as ever.

It was a long journey for this sensitive, not very sociable man, a journey whose fascinating twists and turns we can trace through his many vivid letters, where Constable shared his developing ideas and practice with a small group of friends and patrons. To read his letters today is to gain unparalleled insight into a pioneering creative mind. For the first time, these letters have now been selected and arranged into chronological order to create a coherent narrative. The editor is the leading expert on Constable, Anne Lyles, and she has also written an extensive introduction.

Anne Lyles worked at the Tate for over 25 years, specialising in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century landscape painting, in particular the work of John Constable, J. M. W. Turner and the British watercolour school. She has written extensively on these subjects and organised exhibitions throughout the UK and abroad. She is a trustee of the Constable Trust.




LETTERS OF JOHN CONSTABLE

CONSTABLE TO MARIA BICKNELL
EAST BERGHOLT, 17 JULY 1816

My dearest Love

You would certainly have heard from me before, had I left London on the day I mentioned, but I could not get away sooner than Tuesday. I left Aldgate about 2 o'clock – it began to rain about 3, & continued without intermission all the rest of my journey – I drove in at our gate about ten. I did not get at all wet for in addition to my own great coat, Samuel Taylor the coachman lent a large wrapping one, which kept me so warm & comfortable that I was often scarcely aware of the coach box.

I found all my friends here quite well, & we make a charming family party, six of us – nine with Mr. Whalley's two children and your portrait! (which gives me great pleasure here, as an additional proof of your goodness & kindness to me). We are very happy among ourselves, and when we are all together it is really an interesting sight – I cannot however contemplate it without mixture of old associations inseparable to all sublunary affairs, – so used have I been on entering these doors to be received by the affectionate shake by the hand of my father and the

1. Tate. Illustrated opposite

Opposite: Maria Bicknell, Mrs. John Constable, 1816

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