

Discover Constable & The Hay Wain

National Gallery, Sunley Room, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN
www.nationalgallery.org.uk
October 17, 2024 until February 2, 2025

Discover the origins of Constable's iconic canvas, *The Hay Wain* (1821). Considered one of the all-time greatest artworks, it's also ranked amongst Britain's top ten favorite paintings.

In America you can see his paintings at the Smithsonian and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Cleveland Museum of Art; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC.

Constable (1776 – 1837) is famous for his landscapes, mostly of Suffolk where he was born, although in later life he notably visited and painted Salisbury and the West Country.

Depicting the English countryside of his childhood, he painted his 'six-footer' canvas, *The Hay Wain*, over five months. Featuring Willy Lott's house and Flatford Mill by the River Stour, this painting, Constable said, was, "founded on original observation of nature".

The artist didn't give the *The Hay Wain* the title we all know. It was originally called *Landscape: Noon*. Its new nickname was fixed by his close friend, Archdeacon Fisher. When exhibited at the Royal Academy, in 1821, it was sympathetically recognized for its skillfulness, but failed to sell. He had more success with it when exhibited at the Paris Salon, in 1824, receiving a gold medal from the French King, Charles X. French Realists and Barbizon School artists, including Delacroix and Géricault, said they were hugely inspired by

Constable's Romantic Realist landscapes.

The artist was also a familiar figure on Hampstead Heath in North London, drawing in his sketch pad with his pencil. It's thought that some sketches of the hay cart (wain) may be sketched in Whitestone Pond, by his home in Hampstead. And meteorologists have said his 'Hay Wain' clouds could be Hampstead clouds.

Of the most peaceful and picturesque panoramas, *The Hay Wain* is about capturing the fleeting moments of nature on a warm summer's day. Showing Constable's love for the countryside and working farmers, their saddled-up horses and collie dogs surrounded by scythes, pitchforks and red brick chimneys. As he said, "painting is but another word for feeling".

Surprisingly, when painted, *The Hay Wain* was considered pretty radical! Today, some 200 years later, it's recognized as a fairly traditional image of quintessential lush green English countryside, a much-loved image, familiar on jigsaw puzzles, toffee tins and tea towels. It's even been reinterpreted by photomontage artist Peter Kennard as an anti-nuclear weapon of propaganda. Plus it's been vandalized by climate change Just Stop Oil protesters, and Fathers4Justice activists.

This National Gallery exhibition embraces other printmakers, politicians, painters and poets, including William Blake, trumpeting the changes to the rural landscape as a result of the Industrial Revolution's advancements of steam power.

A visit to Suffolk's 'Constable Country', not far from London, makes for a fascinating experience. You can see Flatford Mill, visit Willy Lott's House – the original site of *The Hay Wain* painting – and walk with the National Trust around the vicinity where Constable was inspired to paint other masterpieces, including *The Cornfield* and *The Leaping Horse*, Flatford, East Bergholt, Suffolk CO7 6UL. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/suffolk/flatford

In London, you can then join 'Walk Constable's Hampstead', to see where Constable finished painting *The Hay Wain* – in the back shed of his home. You're invited to join Estelle on a guided tour showing you where he lived, loved, walked and worked painting his masterpieces. Tickets on Eventbrite 'Walk Constable's Hampstead – Estelle Lovatt' www.estellelovatt.eventbrite.com



John Constable, *The Hay Wain*, 1821, Oil on canvas, 130.2 × 185.4 cm
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Renaissance: Scotland and Europe 1480–1630

National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW
www.nls.uk
Until April 1, 2025

Staff dressed up to celebrate the National Library of Scotland's 'Renaissance moment' PHOTO: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND



If you hear the word 'Renaissance', where do you think of? Italy? France? The Netherlands? Maybe England? But Scotland? Prepare to have your preconceptions blown.

The curators at the National Library of Scotland are seeking to establish the UK's northernmost country among the big players in the Northern Renaissance with a new exhibition, 'Renaissance: Scotland and Europe 1480 to 1630'.

The exhibition explores life at court, Scotland's literary, religious and scholarly connections with Europe, and showcases some of the people of the time. Visitors can see books, manuscripts, maps and beautifully crafted objects from this cultural, intellectual and artistic movement, try their hand at some of the crafts of the era, and can contribute to a collaborative embroidery project.

National Librarian Amina Shah says: "Scotland emerged from the Middle Ages alongside its Continental cousins in a flurry of science and innovation, poetry, craft, music and philosophy. This activity, combined with international connections, breathed new life into towns and cities across the country. We welcome people of all ages and knowledge levels to visit the Library and get up close to some of the literary treasures and artefacts from this time".

One highlighted artist is Esther Inglis, whose 400th anniversary takes place this year. A true Renaissance woman, she was the daughter of Huguenot refugees whose exquisite craftsmanship is demonstrated in calligraphy and embroidery. Her connection to the court of James VI ensured she and her family prospered. You can also see poems written by King James VI and his mother Mary, Queen of Scots among the books and other artefacts.

Hélène Binet: Discovering Jewish Country Houses

Strawberry Hill September 19, 2024 until January 8, 2025
www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk

Waddesdon Manor March 19 until June 22, 2025
www.waddesdon.org.uk

The twenty works on display by Hélène Binet (b.1959) unusually capture an extraordinary group of houses, owned, built or renovated by Jews. The exhibition was inspired by a new book, *The Jewish Country Houses* (Profile Books, 2024), which sheds new light on a previously overlooked category of country houses and other buildings owned, renovated, and/or built by Jews and individuals of Jewish descent.

Country houses are powerful symbols of national identity, evoking the glamorous world of the landowning aristocracy. Jewish country houses add an extra layer of complexity, of prejudice and integration, difference and connection.

Binet was commissioned to create photographic essays about nine houses, two mausoleums and a synagogue, to capture their extraordinary and varied exteriors, gardens and interiors. The featured properties encompass a remarkable stylistic range, from the playful historicism of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire and the gothic castle of Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham to a reinvention of an ancient Greek villa with Villa Kérylos on the Côte d'Azur and the modernist masterpiece of Villa Tugendhat in the Czech city of Brno. Some of the houses are celebrated tourist destinations, others are little known.

In the UK, Waddesdon Manor was built at the end of the 19th century by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898) in the style of a French 16th century château. Baron Ferdinand was an inspired collector, and the house was designed to showcase his exceptional collection of English portraits and Dutch 17th century paintings, French 18th century furniture, Sèvres porcelain and other decorative arts.

Strawberry Hill was created by renowned writer Horace Walpole (1717-1797) and was later owned by Frances, Countess Waldegrave (1821-1879), whose father John Braham was an internationally famous Jewish opera singer; and Herbert Stern, 1st Baron Michelham (1851-1919), who belonged to a European Jewish dynasty of bankers.



Strawberry Hill
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