

# Sketches and Manuscript of *Instructions for Drawing*

By John Varley, 1778-1842

Pencil and ink, about 1818



No 1. The object is to make the strongest line in the picture, in that of the 12 sketches of making the principal line of shade against the edge or frame of the picture in this of example it is particularly to be attended that it is always necessary to have a strong light between the shadow of the building to give the figure to both distance & foreground, the distance, should never be darker than middle ground in the light the figure of figures & cattle should principally be placed

No 2. <sup>one page</sup> Consider as a specimen of a picture light & dark & goes to show that the surface on which a picture is to be drawn, will be darker than that on which it is drawn, it is only shaded from its being seen in a distance or from a distance from which it can receive or lose from the sun, but in consequence of being so placed it appears with the light reflected from water & sky is what we see out of the picture the light is as the top corner is sufficient for a building in general. The shadows at the corner of the picture is, just to carry off the two shadows below the light should be in the same manner carried off.

No 3. is a specimen principally valuable, in showing that when a middle distance is in dark shadow the foreground should be still darker. & the sky should appear as so the colour of the sky, of the trees, the effect, with both ground & sky is a grey, but in the lower which often has been seen, but the effect is necessary

No 4. this is useful to show how to treat a large mass of building, which by being distant, is prevented from looking up the effect of distance. In this case the cattle is too weak to keep with a view of the trees which are in consequence, led off by the two dark birds, the effect being, to be large but rather unmeaning, only of building or ornament.

No 5. <sup>in shadow</sup> is to show above a single hill, only appears to be carried off by dark, but of sky & a figure is something else in the foreground, & makes it a picture instead of a building, for a scene.

No 6. represents a British country, where the sky is changed with clouds of clouds, to be composed for the effect of the picture, which picture is not, but in a scene, appearing to be distant objects.

This series of sketches and the accompanying manuscript were made as a teaching tool to assist artists in the skills of landscape painting. Varley published a similar guide in 1818 called *The Precepts of Landscape Drawing*.

As well as being a leading landscape painter, Varley taught many up and coming artists of the day, including William Henry Hunt. A portrait by Hunt is displayed nearby, on loan from the Courtauld Gallery.

Varley was good friends with William Blake and they worked together on the book *Visionary Heads*. A drawing associated with this group of works is also in the exhibition.

Purchased in 1946