



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME ONE

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,
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Kelly Pask, Elizabeth A. Pergam, Kathryn A. Price, Mark A. Roglán,
James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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Vincent van Gogh

Dutch, 1853–1890

155 | Terrace in the Luxembourg Gardens 1886

Oil on canvas, 27 x 46 cm

1955.889

At the end of February 1886, Van Gogh arrived in Paris, having left his parent's home in Nuenen in November 1885 and spent the intervening few months in Antwerp. His work up to that point is best characterized by his most ambitious early painting, *The Potato Eaters* (1885; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam), an image of peasant life painted in broadly brushed, dark, almost monochromatic tones.¹ Van Gogh's move to Paris and his first direct observations of Impressionist paintings, as well as his interactions with French artists, marked a turning point in his career.

Vincent stayed with his brother, Theo, who worked as an art dealer at the firm of Goupil and lived in an apartment in Montmartre. During his two-year sojourn in Paris, Van Gogh drew most of his subjects from his immediate or nearby surroundings. Besides interiors and still lifes, many drawings and paintings therefore depict the windmills of Montmartre, the areas of unbuilt land that covered much of the neighborhood, and the border areas at the edge of the city and the northern suburbs beyond. *Terrace in the Luxembourg Gardens*, in contrast, shows a more central location. Early in the painting's history the park was identified as the Tuileries Gardens, a logical site for Van Gogh to depict since it is directly next to the Louvre, which he frequently visited. As many recent writers have noted, however, two tall columns topped with statues, visible in the distance behind the trees at the right and center of this painting, are a feature found only in the Luxembourg Gardens. A number of drawings from the same period similarly show figures strolling in parks whose leafless trees suggest that they were made shortly after Van Gogh's arrival in the capital at the end of winter, and perhaps a month or two before the present painting. One drawing in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam that relates closely to this painting depicts the same tall columns and can therefore also be identified as the Luxembourg Gardens (fig. 155.1).²

In both *Terrace in the Luxembourg Gardens* and the related drawing, as well as in a small sketch made along one side of a restaurant menu,³ Van Gogh seems



Fig. 155.1 Vincent van Gogh, *Luxembourg Gardens*, 1886. Pencil on laid paper, 9.7 x 15.8 cm. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation; d 127v / 1969)

to be exploring a particular type of spatial composition. Each work is anchored by a single tree that divides the image approximately down the center, behind which parallel rows of trees, viewed obliquely, form a wedge shape that opens out as it recedes back into space. This space is animated by strolling figures placed at regular intervals among the ranks of trees and, in the menu sketch, street lamps. While the formally planted park and its visitors probably appealed to Van Gogh as a typically Parisian subject—and a journal illustration of the Luxembourg Gardens by Auguste-André Lançon (1836–1887) that Van Gogh owned further underscores his interest—he seems to have used the site as the basis for an exercise in pictorial construction as much as for its picturesque qualities.⁴

The painting's unusually light palette and short, quick-looking brushstrokes further suggest that Van Gogh was already beginning to absorb the lessons of the new type of art he was seeing in Paris. In a letter written to an English artist that probably dates to early fall of 1886, Van Gogh noted, "In Antwerp I did not even know what the Impressionists were, now I have seen them . . . I have much admired certain Impressionist pictures—Degas nude figure, Claude Monet, landscape."⁵ Indeed, shortly after his arrival in the capital, Van Gogh most likely saw the Eighth Impressionist exhibition, which ran from 15 May to 15 June and included work by Degas, Pissarro, and Seurat (though not by Monet, who that year had chosen to exhibit instead with the dealer George Petit). While many of the paintings he made during this period,



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such as *Roofs in Paris* (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam), *The Moulin Le Radet* (Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo), and a series of flower still lifes,⁶ still employed somewhat subdued, even somber, colors and heavier paint application, the clear light and spring green trees the artist depicted in *Terrace in the Luxembourg Gardens* seem particularly to reflect his exposure to Impressionism.

Sterling Clark perceived an even earlier reference point for this work, calling it “Van Gogh under Corot[’s] influence” in a diary entry of 1939.⁷ While Van Gogh certainly knew Corot’s work, and occasionally mentioned him in his letters, the Dutchman was more actively engaged with the artists living and exhibiting in Paris when he arrived, and is therefore less likely to have drawn direct inspiration from Corot for this painting. Instead, the qualities Clark noted—the painting’s naturalism, light tonality, and relatively delicate handling—served to distinguish it for him from Van Gogh’s later, more radically forceful work, which was less to his taste. When Clark lent this painting to an exhibition at Durand-Ruel in New York, he reported one of the dealers there as commenting that visitors felt it was “a pity [Van Gogh] ever went to Arles and changed his manner,” a sentiment Clark clearly agreed with.⁸ Finally, *Terrace in the Luxembourg Gardens* has an unusual history within the collection, for Clark had intended to buy it in June 1934, but Knoedler’s London branch inadvertently sold it to Mrs. Chester Beatty after Clark had already agreed to purchase it.⁹ Clark

refused to patronize Knoedler for the next several years, but in 1937 the dealer successfully reacquired the painting and it entered Clark’s collection. 51

PROVENANCE Probably Theo van Gogh (by 1890–d. 1891); Johanna Gesina van Gogh-Bonger, Amsterdam, his wife, by descent (1891, until at least 1914); [G. Tanner, Zurich]; [N. Eisenloeffel, Amsterdam]; [Leicester Art Galleries, London, in 1930]; [Knoedler, London, sold to Beatty, June 1934]; Mrs. Chester Beatty, London (1934–37, sold to Knoedler); [Knoedler, London, sold to Clark, 10 Nov. 1937, as *La Terrasse des Tuileries (Place de la Concorde)*]; Robert Sterling Clark (1937–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Amsterdam 1905, no. 447, as *Tuin van de Tuilerieën*; Paris 1908, no. 8, as *Jardin des Tuileries*; Munich 1908, no. 25, as *Garten der Tuileries*; Dresden 1908, no. 25, as *Garten der Tuileries*; Frankfurt 1908, no. 27, as *Garten der Tuileries*; Zürich 1908, no. 19, as *Tuileriengarten*;¹⁰ London 1930b, no. 6; New York 1939c, no. 5; Williamstown 1981a, no cat.; Paris 1988, pp. 44–45, no. 3, ill., as *Terrasse au jardin du Luxembourg*; Tokyo–Kagawa–Nara 1992–93, p. 121, no. 12, ill.; Brescia 2005–6, pp. 124–25, 128, 133–34, 361–62, no. 70, ill., as *Passeggiata al Jardin du Luxembourg*.

REFERENCES Colin 1925, pl. 11, as *Place de la Concorde*; Faille 1928, vol. 1, p. 67, no. 223, vol. 2, pl. 62, as *La Terrasse des Tuileries*; Landau 1930, p. 64, ill.; Furst 1930, p. 76; Faille 1939, p. 282, no. 388, ill., as *La Terrasse des Tuileries*; Elgar 1958, no. 60, ill.; Faille 1970, p. 620, no. 223, ill., as *The Terrace at the Tuileries*; Roskill 1970, pp. 88, 135–36, pl. 69; Lecaldano 1971, vol. 1, pp. 108–9, no. 254, ill.; Welsh-Ovcharov 1976, pp. 148, 231, fig. VIId; Hulsker 1980,

pp. 243–44, no. 1111, ill.; Sutton 1986a, p. 318; Wolk 1986, pp. 293–94, fig. 348 (English ed., p. 294, fig. 348); Feilchenfeldt 1988, pp. 84, 146–47; Bonafoux 1990, p. 150, no. 19, ill.; Hulsker 1996, pp. 242–43, no. 1111, ill., as *Terrace of the Tuileries with People Walking*; Kern et al. 1996, pp. 112–13, ill.; Lurie 1996, pp. 132–33, ill.; Van Gogh Museum 1996–2007, vol. 3, p. 92, fig. 228b; Beaujean 1999, p. 35, ill.; Walther and Metzger 2001, p. 157, ill., as *Lane at the Jardin du Luxembourg*; Williamstown–New York 2006–7, pp. 80–81, fig. 74.

TECHNICAL REPORT The original canvas is a very even weave linen of moderate weight (13 threads/cm) which has been glue-lined to a bleached linen. The original tacking margins were retained, and the artist’s stretcher was reused. A 1939 Beers Brothers’ treatment included lining, cleaning, and varnishing. The painting was cleaned again in 1980 to remove discolored varnish. The surface retains a thin layer of the earlier coating, which is visible in ultraviolet light. There is very little inpainting: just a few touches on one tree trunk and on the tall walking man to right of center. There are fine short fissures in the paint and ground layers running between the threads. A series of vertical indentations in the partially set paint of the lower left may have been unintentionally made by the artist, along with the deposits of charcoal dust, grime, and wood fibers seen in the slightly flattened impastos.

The ground is a commercially applied off-white layer, visible on the surface in only a few scattered locations. Tack holes in each corner suggest that the canvas was pinned to a board while the picture was being painted. This method may also account for the black border, applied by the artist possibly to tidy up the uneven edges of brushwork. The paint is applied wet-into-wet throughout. The sizes of the brushes employed range from 0.3 to 1.3 cm in width. There is no glaze work on the surface, although some transparent yellow strokes may indicate the presence of the resinous pigment gamboge. In infrared reflectography, no changes to the composition are seen; however, a close examination in infrared reflectography and under the microscope reveals a grid below the paint, located in the trees, and possibly drawn with very black graphite. There is also a drawn line following the edge of the terrace at the far left.

1. F 82.
2. F 1383.
3. F 1377.
4. The Lançon print is illustrated in Wolk 1986, p. 294, and Paris 1988, p. 45.
5. Vincent van Gogh to Horace Mann Livens, Sept. or Oct. 1886; translation from Janson et al. 2009, vol. 3, p. 364.
6. F 231, 227, 217–20, and 234–37, among others. There are three close variants of the Moulin Le Radet, F 226–28, a site that Faille may have misidentified. See Faille 1970, p. 118. Van Gogh made a large number of still lifes at various times over the late spring and summer of 1886.

7. RSC Diary, 19 Dec. 1939.
8. Ibid.
9. For a more detailed account of this incident, see Williamstown–New York 2006–7, pp. 80–81. Clark informed Charles R. Henschel, president of Knoedler in London, that “all relations between myself and Knoedler & Co. have ceased” in a letter of 9 Aug. 1934.
10. The exhibitions in Munich, Dresden, Frankfurt, and Zurich in 1908 are listed in Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 84.

Frederick Goodall

English, 1822–1904

156 | Mother and Children (The Picnic) 1851

Oil on panel, 22 x 19.2 cm
Lower right: F Goodall / 1851
1955.747

It is a measure of Frederick Goodall’s prominence in English artistic circles at the middle of the nineteenth century that the *Art Journal*, the most important English art periodical of the time, not only devoted a page-length profile to the young artist in 1850, but followed this attention with a four-page assessment as the fourth in its series of “British Artists and their Characteristics” in 1855. In these articles Goodall is praised for his “picturing the bright side of human life” and thereby appealing to popular taste.¹ The Clark’s *Mother and Children (The Picnic)* typifies the subjects of his early career, which the *Art Journal* described as “thoughtfully culled from the living masses whom he has studied and whom he so truthfully presents to us.”²

The son of the engraver Edward Goodall, renowned for his reproductions after J. M. W. Turner and other landscape artists, Frederick continued to learn from his father, even when he chose to become a painter. His trips to northern France, first to Rouen in September 1838, then to Normandy in 1839 and 1840, and subsequently to Brittany in 1841, 1842, and 1845 were important to his early work, providing him with the subject of his first Royal Academy submission of *Card Players* (location unknown), a Norman interior scene. Like William Collins, he found early encouragement through the patronage of the collector William Wells of Redleaf, who purchased one of the first two paintings he exhibited at the British Institution in 1840, and whose valuable support Goodall describes in his memoir.³