LOT 22
PROPERTY FROM THE COLLECTION OF DR. EMIL HAHNLOSER
VINCENT VAN GOGH
1853 - 1890
PEOPLE STROLLING IN A PARK IN PARIS
Signed Vincent (lower right)
Oil on canvas
18 1/4 by 15 in.
46.5 by 38 cm
Painted in Paris in the fall of 1886.

ESTIMATE 5,000,000-7,000,000 USD
Lot Sold: 9,717,700 USD

The authenticity of this work has been confirmed by the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.
PROVENANCE
Lodewijk Cornelis Enthoven, Voorburg (and sold: Frederik Muller et cie, Amsterdam, May 18, 1920, lot 238)

Dr. Emil Hahnloser, Zurich (likely acquired at the above sale)

Thence by descent

EXHIBITED
Basel, Kunsthalle, Vincent van Gogh, 1924, no. 11

Zurich, Kunsthalle Zürich, Ausländische Kunst in Zürich, 1943, no. 712 (titled Au Bois de Boulogne)

Basel, Kunsthalle Basel, Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890, 1947, no. 27 (titled Bois de Boulogne)

London, Tate, The EY Exhibition: Van Gogh and Britain, 2019, n.n., illustrated in color in the catalogue

LITERATURE

Jacob-Baart de la Faille, The Works of Vincent van Gogh: His Paintings and Drawings, Amsterdam, 1970, no. F224, illustrated p. 118 (titled In the Bois de Boulogne)


Giovanni Testori & Luisa Arrigoni, Van Gogh: Catalogo completo dei dipinti, 1990, no. 271, illustrated p. 122 (titled Il Bois de Boulogne con figure che passeggiano)


Margrit Hahnloser-Ingold, La Collection Arthur et Hedy Hahnloser. Un regard partagé avec les artistes, Lausanne, 2011, illustrated in color p. 36 (titled In the Bois de Boulogne with image reversed)

Ella Hendriks & Louis van Tilborgh, Vincent van Gogh Paintings, vol. II, Amsterdam, 2011, fig. 4, illustrated in color p. 41 (titled Scene in a Park)

CATALOGUE NOTE
The year 1886 marked one of great growth and experimentation for van Gogh. The budding artist moved from Antwerp, where he’d spent his days frequenting museums and studying works by Northern masters like Hals and Rubens, to the bustling bohemian haven of Paris, where he’d soon encounter the French avant-garde. The two years that van Gogh spent in the French metropolis would prove pivotal in the artist’s career, taking his works from the heavier, fuliginous compositions inspired by Dutch masters to the lively and prismatic works for which the artist is best remembered (see fig. 1).

After securing lodging with his brother Theo in February of 1886, van Gogh sought further artistic study in Paris and soon enrolled in the Atelier Cormon. Though the temperamental artist would find little satisfaction in his instruction there, it was at Cormon’s studio that van Gogh would encounter and befriend Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Signac and Émile Bernard, forever altering the trajectory of his career. Shortly after leaving Cormon’s studio, van Gogh shifted his attention from drawing to painting and indulged his newfound lust for color. Writing to British painter Horace Mann Livens, van Gogh recounted: “as we said at the time in COLOUR seeking LIFE, the true drawing is modeling with colour.” He reported that he had completed “a dozen landscapes too, frankly green, frankly blue,” by the fall of 1886 (reproduced in L. Jansen, H. Luijten & N. Bakker, eds., Vincent van Gogh: The Letters. The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition, vol. III, New York, 2009, p. 364). In this same letter, van Gogh conveyed his great appreciation for Paris and its artists: “In Antwerp I did not even know what the Impressionists were, now I have seen them and though not being one of the club yet I have much admired certain Impressionist pictures—DEGAS, nude figure–Claude Monet, landscape” (ibid., p. 364).

Painted just a few months after van Gogh’s arrival in Paris, People Strolling in a Park in Paris portrays a daytime jaunt in one of the city’s oldest parks and as such captures a moment in the metropolis’ historic evolution. As posited by the Van Gogh Museum in Paris, the setting of this work is likely the Parc Monceau, a small public space in the eighth arrondissement near where the van Gogh brothers lived. Originally established as a public space by the Duke of Orléans in 1778, the Parc Monceau changed hands over the course of the French Revolution and Second Empire, eventually returning to the ownership of Duke’s family. After Napoleon III declared himself Emperor of France in 1851, the monarch set out to revolutionize the French capital by appointing Georges-Eugène Haussmann as the prefect in charge of massive urban renewal campaigns. The “Haussmannization” of Paris included myriad public works programs, not least of all the allotment and design of a number of urban parks. During this time, the land allocated for Parc Monceau was divided in two, with half being sold for development of luxury properties and the other half reserved for the city of Paris. In 1861, the remaining undeveloped land would become the first new public park under Baron Haussmann in 1861. An informal, English-style garden replete with worldly features like an Egyptian pyramid, Dutch windmill and Chinese fort, the Parc Monceau served as inspiration for countless artists in the 19th and 20th centuries including Monet and Caillebotte (see figs. 2 & 3).

The present work reflects an autumnal enlivening of the artist’s palette, including hues which recall van Gogh’s earlier Dutch works and yet are supplemented with resplendent seasonal tones of sienna and ochre. It is around this time when the influences of the newly-encountered Impressionists begin to take root in van Gogh’s work. The depth and sweeping perspective of van Gogh’s earlier compositions, inspired by artists like Jean-François Millet, are here replaced by a patchwork of seemingly spontaneous directional brushstrokes, heavily impastoed and employed in the service of light and color. Painting wet-into-wet, van Gogh imbues his trees and figures with a lively, spontaneous quality which adds a sense of motion and impact to the seasonal scene.

Such qualities are perhaps what inspired the glowing review by van Gogh’s first critic, Albert Aurier, who in 1890 wrote: “In the case of Vincent van Gogh, in my opinion, despite the sometimes misleading strangeness of his works, it is difficult for an unprejudiced and knowledgeable viewer to deny or question the naive truthfulness of his art, the ingenuousness of his vision. Indeed, independent of this indefinable aroma of good faith and of the truly seen that all his paintings exude, the choice of subjects, the constant harmony between the most excessive colour notes, the conscientious study of character, the continual search for the essential sign of each thing, a thousand significant details undeniably assert his profound and almost childlike sincerity, his great love for nature and for truth—his own personal truth” (G.-Albert Aurier, “Les Isolés, Vincent van Gogh” in Mercure de France, no. 1, January 1890, pp. 24-
29.) A well-respected art critic and collector associated with the Symbolist movement, Aurier owned a very similar painting which remained in the writer’s collection until his death (see fig. 4). Van Gogh’s decadent yet harmonious use of color and great love of nature would reach a glorious pitch during his later years in Arles with incomparable works like L’Allée des Alyscamps whose verdant environs, autumnal tones, and thick, directional brushwork were predicated on catalytic works like the present (see fig. 5). Stemming from the transformative Parisian period in van Gogh’s career, the present work provides a crucial link between the artist’s earlier and final works, and was celebrated most recently in London at the monumental Van Gogh and Britain exhibition at the Tate.

Fig. 1

Vincent van Gogh, The Potato Eaters, oil on canvas, 1885, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

Fig. 2

Gustave Caillebotte, Le Parc Monceau, oil on canvas, 1877, sold: Sotheby’s, London, February 5, 2013, lot 32 for $4,117,981

Fig. 3


Fig. 4

Vincent van Gogh, Strollers in a Park, oil on canvas, autumn 1886, Private Collection

Fig. 5

Vincent van Gogh, L’Allée des Alyscamps, oil on canvas, 1888, sold: Sotheby’s, New York, May 5, 2015, lot 18 for $66,330,000