

French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, Editor



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The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art | French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945

Vincent van Gogh, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières*, 1887

Artist	Vincent van Gogh, Dutch, 1853–1890
Title	<i>Restaurant Rispal at Asnières</i>
Object Date	1887
Alternate and Variant Titles	<i>Vue d'Asnières, avec Marronniers en fleurs; Le restaurant Rispal à Asnières</i>
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions (Unframed)	28 7/8 x 23 5/8 in. (73.3 x 60.0 cm)
Credit Line	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Gift of Henry W. and Marion H. Bloch, 2015.13.10

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Catalogue Entry

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In this sunny scene in Asnières, France, Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) has depicted a simple riverside restaurant with vibrant complementary colors. A tall, creamy building, set diagonally to the picture plane,

dominates the scene. Its name, Restaurant Rispal, is spelled out in blue capital letters on its gabled side, while two orange signs in the shaded depths to the right of the building repeat the establishment's name and advertise "VINS" (wines). The restaurant is capped by four red-and-orange chimneys and punctuated by ten windows framed with light green shutters. Verdant green cypress and chestnut trees border the building. Strolling along the golden street in the foreground are several patrons; one in a white shirt and straw hat heads toward the restaurant door, and another in a dark blue suit and top hat struts awkwardly toward the viewer.

The artist's unusual choice to turn the canvas vertically for a landscape subject better frames the three-story structure and allows the blue, cloud-filled sky to dominate half the scene. Always with a mind toward salability, Van Gogh may have hoped to inspire city-dwellers to buy his airy painting.¹ Van Gogh enlivened the scene with dynamic strokes of paint, varying the direction of the brushstrokes to contour and define each subject. In the sky, the artist used long, horizontal strokes of blue, aqua, and white paint. The shaded restaurant wall is composed of crosshatched dashes of yellow, peach, aqua, and lavender, while the street is rendered in diagonal stripes of yellow-orange and pale

blue. Van Gogh painted the trees impressionistically in short dabs of creamy white, tints of green, and accents of burnt sienna. Throughout the painting, complementary colors predominate: yellow-orange and blue in the road, lavender and yellow in the building, red and green in the adjacent buildings and trees. This technique, combined with Van Gogh's modern application of paint, is indicative of his formative move away, both literally and artistically, from Dutch tradition.

Having decided at the age of twenty-seven to become an artist, Van Gogh committed wholeheartedly to the endeavor. He spent most of his life as an itinerant painter, living off an allowance from his art dealer brother, Theo (1857–1891), to whom he sent all of his artwork. After two years living in Neunen—a town in the Netherlands—and in Antwerp, Van Gogh somewhat suddenly moved in with Theo in his small apartment in Paris in 1886.² The move was formative for Van Gogh's artistic career, as he became friends with young French artists like Émile Bernard (1868–1941) and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) and visited important shows like the Eighth Impressionist Exhibition.



Fig. 1. Vincent van Gogh, *Vase with Chinese Asters and Gladioli*, August–September 1886, oil on canvas, 24 x 18 1/8 in. (61.1 cm x 46.1 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), s0177V1962

However, as Ella Hendriks has shown, Van Gogh's development from his dark Dutch pictures to his bright, colorful Parisian ones was a gradual, calculated shift—contrary to the common narrative of him having taken a sudden leap.³ While working in the Netherlands, Van Gogh admired the Hague School painters Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824–1911) and Anton Mauve (Dutch, 1838–1888), who took as their subjects the everyday lives of peasants and the Dutch landscape, painting them in a muted palette with gray tints. Van Gogh adopted the same palette and subjects in his early work (for example, see *Study of a Peasant's Head*; 1885). At the same time, Van Gogh aspired to incorporate more color into his paintings, in the style of the Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863).⁴ When Van Gogh arrived in Paris in 1886, he spent the first year practicing his color theory by painting floral still lifes in the manner of Adolphe Monticelli (1824–1886), a Provençal painter who experimented with bright color and thick impasto. Yet Van Gogh's early paintings, while thickly built up with a loaded brush, are still suffused with dark shadow (Fig. 1).



Fig. 2. Vincent van Gogh, *Square Saint-Pierre, Paris*, 1887, oil on canvas, 23 3/8 x 32 in. (59.4 x 81.3 cm), Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, Gift of Henry R. Luce, B.A. 1920, 1958.59

Van Gogh's sunnier paintings finally appear in early 1887.⁵ Their development was partly stimulated by the Impressionists, whose use of color the artist found dismaying at first, and then inspiring.⁶ However, Van Gogh was not a member of their inner circle; instead, he adopted the younger avant-garde painters as friends and colleagues. At the end of 1886, Van Gogh began to have regular contact with Bernard and Toulouse-Lautrec, and early the next year he painted with Paul Signac (1863–1935). Van Gogh probably also visited the second

exhibition of Société des Artistes Indépendants in late summer of 1886, where he would have seen Neo-Impressionist works by Georges Seurat (1859–1891), Camille Pissarro (1831–1903), and Signac, including *The Château Gaillard*, 1886. Van Gogh experimented with their pointillist technique of tiny dots of color (Fig. 2), but he did not wholeheartedly adopt it. Instead, as is apparent in the Nelson-Atkins painting, he quickly transitioned to using varying dashes of color to describe each object, thereby giving his paintings an overall sense of frenetic movement.

In the late spring of 1887, Van Gogh walked the one-hour journey from his apartment at 54 rue Lepic, Paris, across the River Seine to Asnières, a Parisian suburb popular with daytrippers and boaters. Both Bernard and Signac had family homes in Asnières, and they remembered painting with him in the town that spring. Signac recalled, “We painted on the banks of the river and ate in a country café, and we returned to Paris on foot, through the streets of Saint-Ouen and Clichy. Van Gogh wore a blue zinc worker’s smock and had painted colored smudges on the sleeves. Pressed closely against me, he walked along, shouting and gesticulating, waving his freshly painted oversize canvas, smearing paint on himself and the passersby.”⁷

Asnières was popular for boating and swimming, and known for the industrial modernity of the factories across the river at Clichy, but Van Gogh chose not to depict those subjects in this painting. Instead, with his back to the Seine, Van Gogh painted the heart of social life for lower- and middle-class visitors and residents of Asnières: a restaurant. This suburban scene was a modern subject for an artist of the time; it was not an industrialized landscape, like those of the Impressionists a generation earlier, nor a forested scene like those of the Barbizon painters before them, and it was certainly not an academically sanctioned subject from the Bible, history, or mythology.

While not much is known specifically about the Restaurant Rispal,⁸ it is clear that Van Gogh ate, visited with colleagues, and even exhibited paintings at restaurants around Paris and its suburbs. In early 1887, Van Gogh organized an exhibition of Japanese prints at Le Tambourin, the restaurant in Montmartre managed by his girlfriend, Agostina Segatori. Later in November, he would organize an exhibition of the “Painters of the Petit Boulevard” at the Restaurant du Châlet. His works also hung on exhibition at Le Tambourin.⁹ In at least one instance, he even decorated a restaurant’s daily menu

with a busy city street scene (Fig. 3). Restaurants and cafés served as convenient places for hot, cheap meals, especially for a bachelor artist, and they offered a meeting location for artists to swap ideas. Restaurants were also a place to imbibe; Restaurant Rispal advertised wines, but Van Gogh was particularly fond of absinthe.

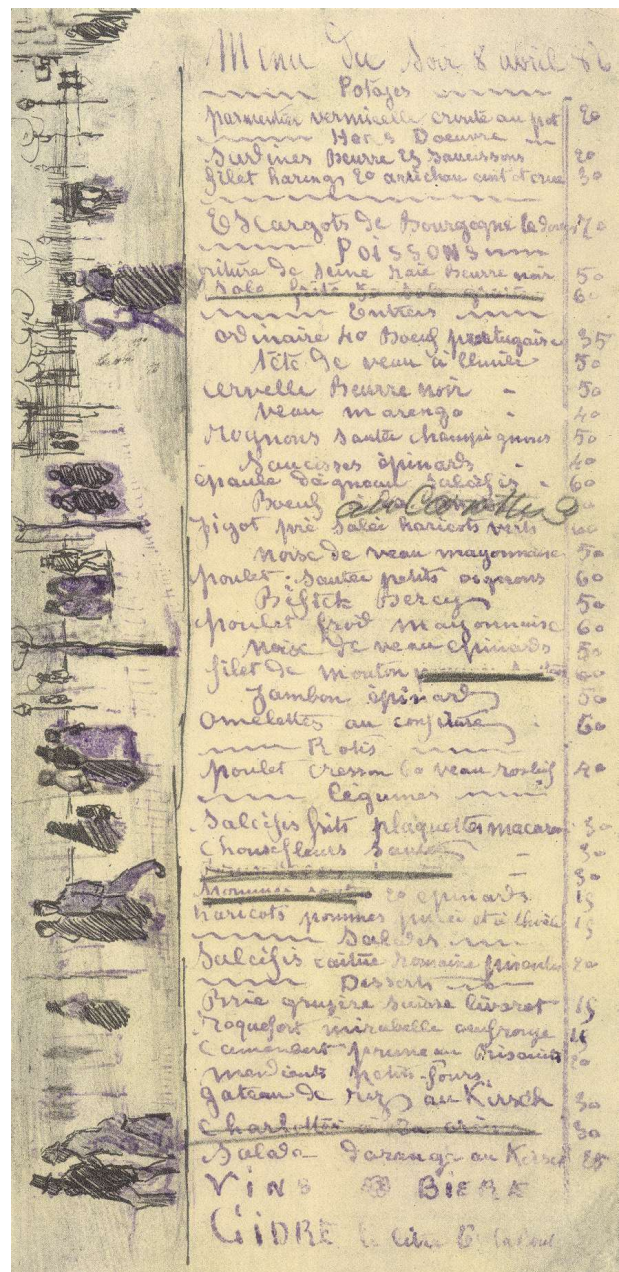


Fig. 3. Vincent van Gogh, *Restaurant Menu*, April 1886, pencil, pen and ink on paper, 4 7/16 x 9 3/16 in. (11.2 cm x 23.3 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), 00150V1971r

Indeed, Van Gogh often ended his day at a café, where, according to Signac, “the absinthes and brandies would

follow each other in quick succession."¹⁰ This lifestyle was new for Van Gogh. While living in the Netherlands, he aspired to an ideal of a sober and industrious life. But after his move to Paris, Van Gogh adopted a bohemian existence—smoking, drinking, carousing with courtesans, and visiting the cabarets and cafés of the city.¹¹ In fact, Van Gogh confessed to Paul Gauguin that he was “very, very upset, quite ill and almost an alcoholic through overdoing it.”¹² Some of his experiences he saw reflected in Realist novels, like Emile Zola’s *L’Assommoir* (1877), which describes an entrepreneurial laundress whose life is ruined by drunkenness.¹³ Van Gogh may have had the novel in mind when he depicted the street in Asnières with the Restaurant Rispal. In fact, he admitted the correlation between the book and his painting, *The Yellow House* (Fig. 4), which he completed a year later in September 1888.¹⁴ The two paintings are strikingly similar, with their green-shuttered buildings set obliquely to the picture plane, the large expanse of blue sky in juxtaposition to the yellow road, and the villagers strolling in front. In both pictures, Van Gogh portrayed a real-life location of prime importance to his own world as well as the towns’ social fabrics.



Fig. 4. Vincent van Gogh, *The Yellow House (The Street)*, September 1888, oil on canvas, 28 3/8 x 36 in. (72 cm x 91.5 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), s0032V1962

The first historical reference to the painting is in the inventory made by Theo’s friend, Andries Bonger, in 1891, after both Vincent’s and Theo’s sudden deaths, where it appears as number 307, *View of Asnières, with Flowering Chestnut Trees*.¹⁵ Interestingly, Bonger did not title the painting after the prominently displayed name of the restaurant.¹⁶ Instead, he pointed viewers’

attention to the trees on the right side of the building. The white and yellow dashes at the tops of the trees must be what Bonger saw as the blooms of a chestnut tree. In comparison to another painting of a chestnut tree by Van Gogh from the same year (Fig. 5), the flowers in the Nelson-Atkins painting are much larger, suggesting that the blooms were more fully opened. In 1887, the French weather service recorded the first blooms on the chestnut trees around Paris on May 11, and the blooms would have lasted for two weeks.¹⁷ Since the surrounding foliage is so verdant and full, we may assume that the painting of the Restaurant Rispal was made in late May, before the blooms faded, but certainly no later than July, when scholars assume that Van Gogh stopped painting in Asnières.¹⁸



Fig. 5. Vincent van Gogh, *Horse Chestnut Tree in Blossom*, 1887, oil on canvas, 22 x 18 5/16 in. (55.8 cm x 46.5 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation), s0126V1962

In any case, Bonger was more attracted to the trees than to the name of the restaurant when inventorying the painting. He must not have been averse to acknowledging the modern subject, though, since he identified several other paintings with their restaurant subjects.¹⁹ Perhaps with the name *View of Asnières, with Flowering Chestnut Trees*, Bonger wanted to emphasize

the painting as a suburban landscape that might appeal to collectors.

The painting remained unsold for many years. Van Gogh's sister-in-law, Johanna Van Gogh-Bonger (1862–1925), became the artist's de facto dealer after his death in 1890 and Theo's in 1891. She and her son, Vincent Willem (1890–1978), exhibited the painting at least seventeen times before it found a buyer in Nathan Charles Beechman (ca. 1861–1935), a British collector, in 1927. A few years later, the Jewish German dealer Hugo Moser (1881–1972) purchased the painting for his personal collection. Moser and his family fled the Nazis in 1933, sending the painting ahead of them to the United States. In 1979, Midwestern collectors Marion and Henry Bloch bought the painting from the Moser family at auction and hung it prominently in their home, where it provided a sunny spot of color over their fireplace. In 2015, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art accepted the generous donation of the Bloch family collection, a star of which is *Restaurant Rispal*. The painting serves as an important visual bridge from Van Gogh's darker Dutch campaign to the bright, Post-Impressionist phase of his career, in which he successfully incorporated strokes of complementary colors and a modern subject into a sparkling reminder of a spring day in Asnières.

Meghan L. Gray
July 2018

Notes

1. Van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo about other Asnières landscapes on view at his friend "Père" Tanguy's shop, "I'm well aware that these big, long canvases are hard to sell, but in time people will see that there's open air and good cheer in them. Now the whole lot will make a decoration for a dining room or a house in the country." Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, between about Saturday, July 23, and Monday, July 25, 1887, published in Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, eds., *Vincent Van Gogh: The Letters*, online edition (Amsterdam and The Hague: Van Gogh Museum and Huygens, 2009), no. 572, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let572>. All English translations are from this publication.
2. See Vincent van Gogh, Paris, to Theo van Gogh, on or about Sunday, February, 28, 1886, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, no. 567, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let567>.
3. See Hendriks's chapter on "Developing Technique and Style" in Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings*, vol. 2, *Antwerp and Paris 1885–1888*, Van Gogh Museum, trans. Michael Hoyle (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2011), 146.
4. See Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Saturday, April 18, 1885, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, no. 494, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let494>.
5. Theo van Gogh to Elisabeth van Gogh, Sunday, May 15, 1887, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, <http://www.vangoghletters.org/vg/documentation>. "Vincent is still working hard and is making progress. His paintings are becoming lighter, and his great quest is to get sunlight into them. He's an odd fellow, but what a head he has on him, it's enviable."
6. See Vincent van Gogh, Arles, to Willemien van Gogh, between Saturday, June 16, and Wednesday, June 20, 1888, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, no. 626, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let626>; and Vincent van Gogh, Paris, to Horace Mann Livens, September or October 1886, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, no. 569, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let569>.
7. Gustave Coquiott, *Vincent van Gogh* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1923), 140 (repr. in English in Jan Hulsker, *The Complete Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches* [New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1980], 282.)
8. Restaurant Rispal was located beside the river at 117 Boulevard de la Seine (now Quai Aulagnier). Joachim Pissarro notes in his entry on this painting that the Restaurant Rispal might have been entirely forgotten had Van Gogh not immortalized it in paint. Richard R. Brettell and Joachim Pissarro, *Manet to Matisse: Impressionist Masters from the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection*, exh. cat. (Kansas City, MO: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2007), 114.
9. Many of Van Gogh's flower still lifes that were on view at Le Tambourin in late July were sold in an auction when that business went bankrupt. See Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Paris, between about Sunday, July 17, and Tuesday, July 19, 1887, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, no. 571, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let571>.

10. Hendriks and Van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings*, 2:319.
11. Louis van Tilborgh, "The Bedroom," in Gloria Groom, ed., *Van Gogh's Bedrooms*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2016), 56–57.
12. Vincent van Gogh, Arles, to Paul Gauguin, Wednesday, October 3, 1888, in Jansen, et al., *Letters*, no. 695, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let695>.
13. Vincent van Gogh, Paris, to Willemien van Gogh, late October 1887, in Jansen, et al., *Letters*, no. 574, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let574>.
14. Vincent van Gogh, Arles, to Theo van Gogh, on or about Saturday, September 29, 1888, in Jansen et al., *Letters*, no. 691, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let691>. Van Gogh mentioned that "Zola did a certain boulevard at the beginning of *L'Assommoir*." Part of the description in Zola's novel is reminiscent of the Nelson-Atkins painting: "The hotel was situated on the Boulevard de la Chapelle, to the left of the Barrière Poissonnière. It was a building of two stories high . . . with shutters all rotted by the rain. Over a lamp with starred panes of glass, one could manage to read, between the two windows, the words, 'Hôtel Boncœur, kept by Marsoullier,' painted in big yellow letters, several pieces of which the mouldering of the plaster had carried away." Emile Zola, *The "Assommoir": (The Prelude to "Nana"): A Realistic Novel* (1877; English repr. London: Vizetelly, 1884), 10.
15. Andries Bongers, "Catalogue des œuvres de Vincent van Gogh," 1891, Brieven en Documenten, b 3055 V/1962, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, no. 307, as *Vue d'Asnières, avec Marronniers en fleurs*.
16. In fact, the painting would not be titled with the name of the restaurant until 1920, when it was exhibited at *Vincent van Gogh Exhibition*, Montross Gallery, New York, October 23–December 31, 1920, no. 58, and even then, the name "Rispaal" was misread as "Cristal."
17. Relevés Météorologique, Parc de Saint-Maur, May 1887, Paris, Météo-France, cited in Hendriks and Van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings*, 2:379.
18. Hendriks and Van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings*, 2:387. Hendriks and Van Tilborgh suggest that *Restaurant Rispaal* was painted in the summer rather than the spring. They base their assumption on a letter from Van Gogh to his brother, dated between about Sunday, July 17 and Tuesday, July 19, 1887, where Van Gogh says, "Because remember when I started working at Asnières I had lots of canvases and Tanguy was very good to me." Jansen, et al., *Letters*, no. 571, <http://vangoghletters.org/en/let571>. Hendriks and Van Tilborgh state: "Since we know that he was painting on top of rejected canvases until around the middle of May [editor's note: two are *Square Saint-Pierre, Paris, 1887*, Yale University Art Gallery; and *Horse Chestnut Tree in Blossom, 1887*, Van Gogh Museum]. . . , his first excursions to the village must have taken place after that." However, the blossoms of the trees in *Restaurant Rispaal* point to a date of May 11 to 25. Indeed, Van Gogh painted the subject on a reused canvas (see the accompanying technical entry by Diana M. Jaskierny). It seems very possible that Van Gogh began the Nelson-Atkins painting on one of those discarded canvases from mid-May that Hendriks and Van Tilborgh reference.
19. See, for example, F313, which he entitled *Restaurant de la Sirène à Asnières*; F321, *Devant le restaurant à Asnières*; and F549, *Restaurant populaire*. F numbers refer to the catalogue raisonné: J.-B. de la Faille, *The Works of Vincent van Gogh: His Paintings and Drawings*, rev. ed. (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1970).

Technical Entry

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Jaskierny, Diana M. "Vincent van Gogh, *Restaurant Rispaal at Asnières, 1887*," technical entry. *French*

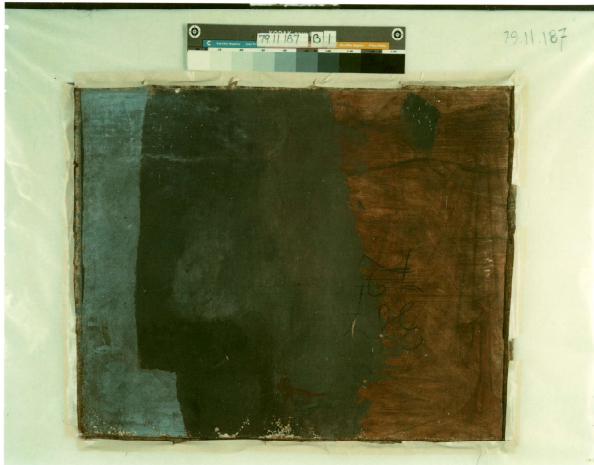


Fig. 6. Photograph of original canvas reverse, captured before the 1980 lining, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

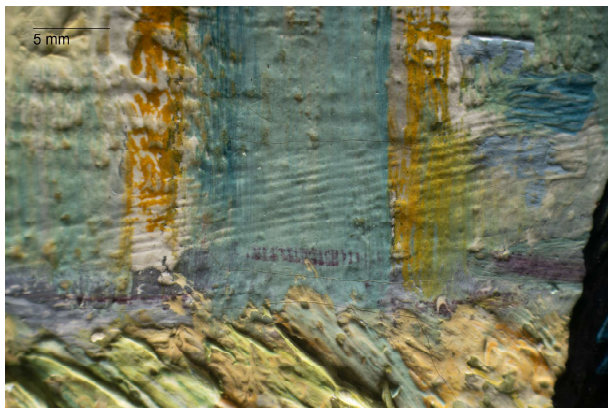


Fig. 7. Photomicrograph in raking light of the serrated ground layer texture, located on the door of the restaurant, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

During his brief period in Paris and the surrounding towns, Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) completed *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* using vibrant colors, applied with thick impasto and directional strokes that amplify the perspective of the composition. The painting was executed on a plain-weave canvas, with dimensions corresponding to a standard-format no. 20 *haute paysage*, though rotated 90 degrees. In comparison to other moments in Van Gogh's career, less is known about his specific supply purchases during his Paris period,¹ but he frequented several artist suppliers² and was given some materials by friends and acquaintances,

such as "Père" Tanguy.³ Complicating matters, it was not uncommon for Van Gogh to reuse canvases for financial reasons while in Paris, specifically in the first half of May and last half of July, 1887.⁴ Such is the case here, as a photograph of the canvas reverse reveals the beginning of another composition, which includes painted blocks of color and a drawn sketch of drapery (Fig. 6).⁵ The paint of this unfinished composition extends to the turnover edges but not on the tacking margins, indicating that the canvas was not resized between uses.⁶ Additionally, as *Restaurant Rispal* was painted on the original reverse of the canvas, the street scene covers any possible artist supplier markings. Regardless, the reuse of canvas combined with climate records documenting the arrival of blossoms that season indicates that this painting may have been completed late in May.⁷

While the original obverse may have been commercially prepared,⁸ the ground layer beneath *Restaurant Rispal* was applied by hand and does not extend across the tacking margins. If the unfinished composition originated with Van Gogh, it is possible that the hand-applied ground layer beneath *Restaurant Rispal* was completed by the artist after he reversed the canvas. White and opaque, the ground layer appears to have been brushed on relatively smoothly. Interestingly, in several locations the ground was textured with what appears to have been a serrated tool. These marks are mostly visible in areas of exposed ground or thin paint, such as within and around the door and windows of the restaurant (Fig. 7).⁹

Directly above the ground layer, a carbon-based underdrawing was found through infrared reflectography and microscope examination. The majority of this underdrawing forms the linear perspective and details of the Restaurant Rispal (windows, doors, and chimneys), with fewer lines marking the more distant structures to the right (Fig. 8). Additional drawn lines exist beneath other passages, unrelated to the linear perspective. Within the cypress trees to the left, upward lines sketch out the branches of the trees and are visible where there are gaps in the paint. Similarly, within the trees to the right there are few drawn lines, mostly forming the basic shapes of the trees and rough placement of the trunks (Fig. 9).

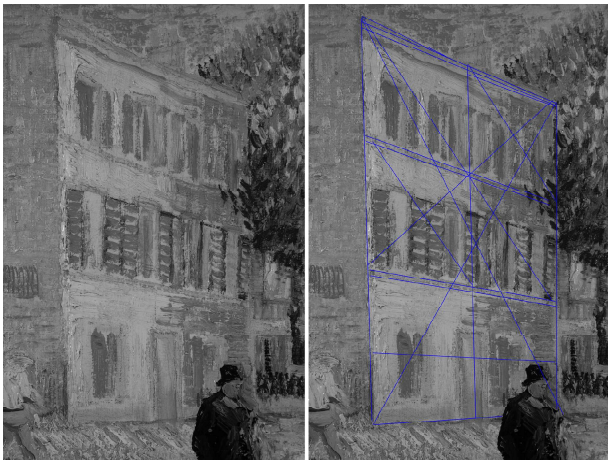


Fig. 8. Reflected infrared digital photograph (left) and detail with blue lines illustrating detected perspective underdrawing lines (right), *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

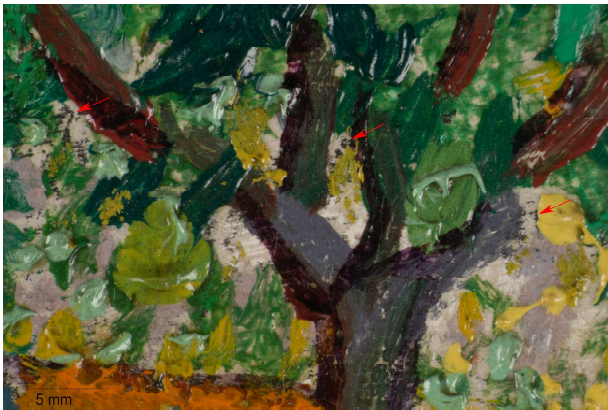


Fig. 9. Photomicrograph of underdrawing in trees on right side, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

Unlike other compositions in which Van Gogh utilized a perspective frame—a wooden frame with a grid made from string that aided in sketching perspective—the Nelson-Atkins painting illustrates his use of traditional two-point perspective. Early in his artistic career, Van Gogh struggled with perspective. Starting in 1882, he regularly used a perspective frame to assist in his drawings; however, by 1888, Van Gogh was no longer relying on this tool.¹⁰ The absence of a grid in the underdrawing, an indicator of this tool, underscores Van Gogh's increased confidence in his ability with perspective.

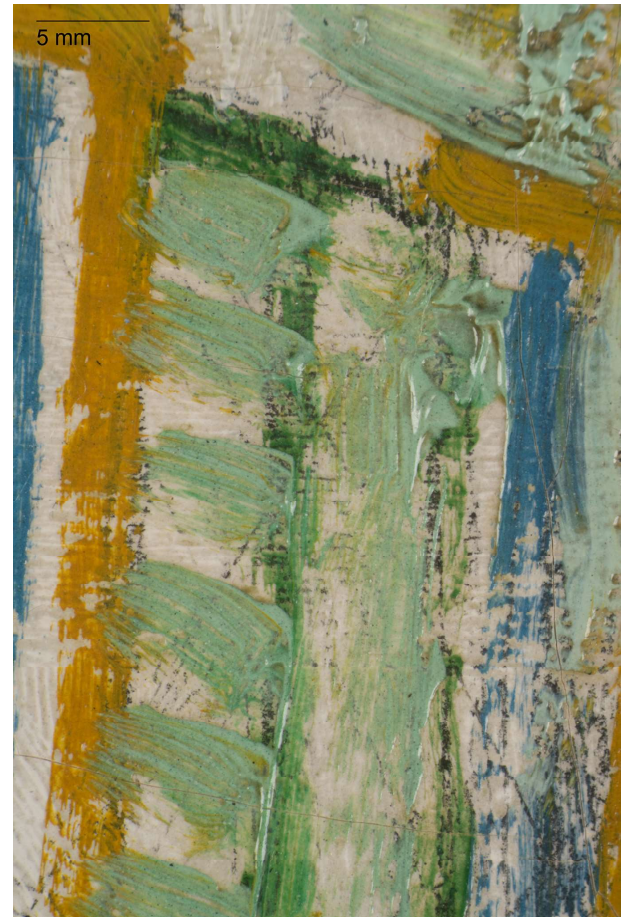


Fig. 10. Photomicrograph of underdrawing in a window of the restaurant, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

The transversal perspective line is found on the nearest edge of the restaurant, and the vanishing points fall beyond the picture plane. Many of the guidelines within the windows remain clearly intact, possibly indicating the use of oiled vine charcoal (Fig. 10).¹¹ The artist's careful perspective is broken, however, where two tree trunks cross the orange awning. With the trees connecting to the ground within the same distance from the viewer, having one trunk in front of the awning and one behind contradicts the perspective.

Van Gogh's Paris period is sometimes referred to as his turning point stylistically. In the winter of 1886 and 1887, the artist began experimenting with various techniques, such as brightly colored *peinture à l'essence* and pointillism, inspired by Toulouse-Lautrec and Seurat and Signac, respectively.¹² In *Restaurant Rispal*, vibrant colors and short, animated brushstrokes are clearly dominant; however, by this stage, Van Gogh had returned to the use of heavy impasto. Throughout the painting, Van

Gogh used this impasto to vary the textures of each compositional element, enhanced when viewing the painting in raking light (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Raking light digital photograph, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)



Fig. 12. Detail image of hatching on the restaurant, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

Within the foreground, the grass is painted with diagonal, directional strokes, further emphasizing the two-dimensional perspective. This technique is continued on the restaurant, though more subtly. On the building side reading “Restaurant Rispal” the texture is created with low impasto in vertical and horizontal hatching, breaking from the perspective and instead

flattening this plane of the composition (Figs. 11 and 12). The trees on the left mimic this parallel brushwork, while the trees on the right are painted more haphazardly. Simultaneous contrast—the violets and yellows in the restaurant, greens and oranges in the foreground, and, to a lesser extent, the reds and greens in the trees, placed in close proximity¹³—amplifies these varied directional pulls.



Fig. 13. Detail image of the foreground with pale green underlayer visible below the yellow and orange diagonal brushstrokes, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

Throughout the painting, Van Gogh used a loaded brush to place brushstrokes adjacent to one another or to create wet-over-wet layering. Wet-into-wet applications are present in the clothing of the two larger figures and throughout the sky, softening this region. In the foreground, it appears that a pale, cool green layer was placed in first. Once this was mostly dry, contrasting parallel strokes of yellows and oranges were layered on top, alongside more pale greens and blues, slightly blending where the brushstrokes meet (Fig. 13). Within

this composition, blocking in a lower layer appears to be isolated to the foreground. Within the buildings and rightmost trees there does not appear to have been any distinct underpainting, as exposed ground peeks between elements and brushstrokes. Similarly, while beneath the perimeters of the cypress trees to the left, blue paint from the sky is visible, in the centers of the trees exposed ground again peeks through.



Fig. 14. Photomicrograph of outlines around figures, *Restaurant Rispol at Asnières* (1887)

Thin, fluid strokes of a translucent purplish-blue outline the figures to the right (Fig. 14) and enhance some of the tree trunks and branches. While these appear to be the final touches applied to the figures, further details were added to the trees, such as the orange highlights on the trunks (Fig. 15). Few artist changes are present in this composition, with the most substantial ones being simple adjustments of the chimneys and the right-side profile of the central figure in blue (Fig. 16).

The painting is in excellent condition. In 1980 a full conservation treatment was completed, including a wax lining¹⁴ and the addition of a glossy synthetic varnish, now slightly discolored. The painting has few losses and minimal retouching.¹⁵

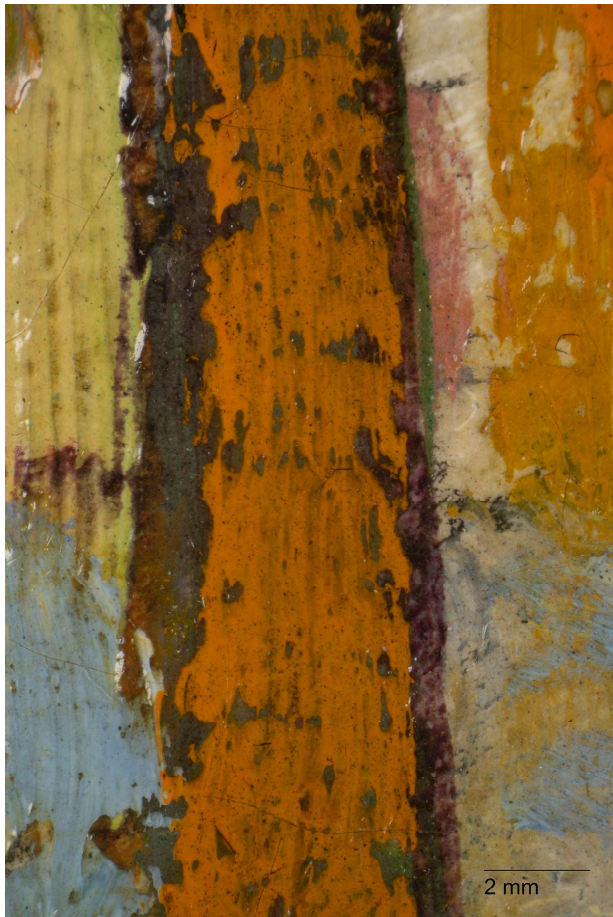


Fig. 15. Photomicrograph of trunk illustrating outline under orange highlight, *Restaurant Rispol at Asnières* (1887)



Fig. 16. Detail of the central figure with pentimento around profile, *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières* (1887)

Diana M. Jaskierny

October 2021

Notes

1. While in Paris, Van Gogh resided with his brother Theo, but when he relocated to the south of France, correspondence between the brothers included discussion of specific canvases and pigments that document many of his materials. Original letters at Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; published in Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, eds., *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, online edition (Amsterdam and The Hague: Van Gogh Museum and Huygens, 2009), <http://vangoghletters.org/vg>.
2. During this period, Van Gogh was more concerned with the locations of his suppliers than the quality of materials he purchased. Ella Hendriks, Stéphanie Constantin, and Beatrice Marino, "Various Approaches to Van Gogh Technical Studies: Common Grounds?," in *Reporting Highlights of the De Mayerne Programme*, ed. Jaap J. Boon and Ester S.B. Ferreira (The Hague: NOW, 2006), 80.
3. Van Gogh's letter detailing how Tanguy was "very good" to him indicates that canvases were donated to the artist until Tanguy's wife "objected." Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, between about Sunday, July 17, and Tuesday, July 19, 1887, published in Jansen et al., *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, no. 571, <http://www.vangoghletters.org/en/let571>. For more information and lists of the identified suppliers Van Gogh used while in Paris, see Ella Hendriks, with scientific analysis by Muriel Geldof, "Van Gogh's Working Practice: A Technical Study," in Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, *Vincent Van Gogh Paintings*, vol. 2, *Antwerp and Paris 1885–1888*, Van Gogh Museum, trans. Michael Hoyle (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2011), 93–4, 527–530.
4. Hendriks and Van Tilborgh, with Margriet van Eikema Hommes and Monique Hageman, *Vincent Van Gogh Paintings*, 2:387.
5. The photograph of the original canvas reverse, captured before the 1980 lining, is in the Nelson-Atkins conservation file, no. 2015.13.10. In most cases, Van Gogh painted directly over his earlier compositions, with few examples in which he reversed the canvas. Hendriks et al., "Van Gogh's working practice: a technical study," 112.
6. When Van Gogh reused canvases, he often retained the original size. In some instances the canvas was rotated, as it appears to have been here. Ella Hendriks, Luc Megens, and Muriel Geldof, "Van Gogh's Recycled Works," in *Van Gogh's Studio Practice*, ed. Marije Vellekoop, Muriel Geldof, Ella Hendriks, Leo Jansen, and Alberto de Tagle (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 310.
7. Relevés Météorologique, Parc de Saint-Maur, May 1887, Paris, Météo-France, cited in Hendriks and Van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings*, 2:379. For a more in-depth discussion, see accompanying catalogue entry by Meghan L. Gray.
8. If the unfinished composition was the work of Van Gogh, it is likely that this side of the canvas was

commercially prepared, as this was the artist's preference in materials.

9. Soon after his time in Ansières, Van Gogh began experimenting with texture, specifically twill weave canvases. It is possible that the serrated marks on *Restaurant Rispal at Ansières* were an early experimentation with texture. Ella Hendriks, "Developing Technique and Style," in Hendriks and Van Tilborgh, *Vincent Van Gogh Paintings*, 2:154–55.
10. Devi Ormond, Teio Meedendorp, Muriel Geldof, Luc Megens, and Kathrin Pilz, "Interpreting Van Gogh's *Plein Air* Painting Practice: Written Sources Versus Painted Image," in *The Artist's Process: Technology and Interpretation*, ed. Sigrid Eyb-Green, Joyce H. Townsend, Mark Clarke, Jilleen Nadolny, and Stefanos Kroustallis (London: Archetype Publications, 2012), 177.
11. Oiled vine charcoal has stronger binding properties than compressed charcoal, allowing for its possible preservation through restoration or conservation campaigns. Paul Goldman, *Looking at Prints, Drawings and Watercolours: A Guide to Technical Terms* (London: British Museum Press, 2006), 20.
12. Hendriks, "Developing Technique and Style," 148–50.
13. While the reds in the trees appear to be red lake, it is unclear if any fading has occurred, as has been seen in other Van Gogh paintings. No elemental analysis or sampling was conducted for this examination. For more information on fading red lake, see Mary Schafer and John Twilley, "Vincent van Gogh, *Olive Trees*, June/September 1889," technical entry in Aimee Marcereau DeGalan, ed., *French Paintings, 1600–1945: The Collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art* (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.37764/78973.5.738.2088>.
14. Due to this lining, the reverse of the canvas is no longer accessible.
15. Forrest R. Bailey, January 19, 1980, treatment report, Nelson-Atkins conservation file, no. 2015.13.10.

Documentation

Citation

Chicago:

Meghan L. Gray, "Vincent van Gogh, *Restaurant Rispal at Ansières*, 1887," documentation in *French Paintings and Pastels, 1600–1945: The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, ed. Aimee Marcereau DeGalan (Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.37764/78973.5.736.4033>.

MLA:

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Provenance

With the artist, Paris, 1887;

To his brother, Theo van Gogh (1857–1891), Paris, 1887–January 25, 1891;

Inherited by his widow, Johanna van Gogh-Bonger (1862–1925), Bussum and Amsterdam, The Netherlands, stock no. 307, as *Vue d'Ansières, avec Marronniers en fleurs*, by 1891 [1];

By descent to her son, Vincent Willem van Gogh (1890–1978), Laren, The Netherlands, by 1925–1927;

Purchased from Vincent Willem van Gogh through Leicester Galleries, London, by Nathan Charles Beechman (ca. 1861–1935), London, February 9, 1927—at least 1928 [2];

With Alex Reid and Lefèvre Ltd., London, stock no. 146/29, as *Restaurant Rispal à Ansières*, on joint account with C. W. Kraushaar Art Galleries, New York, stock no. 24707, and on joint account with Bignou Gallery, New York, stock no. 1596, as *Le Restaurant Rispal à Ansières*, by July 19, 1929–January 30, 1930 [3];

Purchased from Alex Reid and Lefèvre by Gérard Frères, Paris, January 30, 1930 [4];

With Galerie Georges Bernheim, Paris;

With Hugo L. Moser (1881–1972), Berlin, Zurich, Heemstede, The Netherlands, and New York, by

December 1930–until at least 1970 [5];

Transferred to his wife, Mrs. Hugo L. Moser (née Maria Werner, 1893–1987), New York, by the late 1960s–November 7, 1979 [6];

Purchased from the Moser Family Collection sale, *Impressionist and Modern Paintings and Sculpture*, Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc., New York, November 7, 1979, no. 541, as *Le Restaurant Rispol à Asnières*, through Richard L. Feigen and Co., New York, stock no. 16435-C, by Marion (née Helzberg, 1931–2013) and Henry W. (1922–2019) Bloch, Shawnee Mission, KS, 1979–June 11, 2015 [7];

Given by Henry W. and Marion H. Bloch to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, 2015.

Notes

[1] Although, formally speaking, Vincent Willem van Gogh (1890–1978) was joint owner of the Van Gogh collection from 1891, his mother, Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, managed the collection until her death in 1925. See the inventory of van Gogh's works then in van Gogh-Bonger's collection: Andries Bonger, "Catalogue des œuvres de Vincent van Gogh," 1891, Brieven en Documenten, b 3055 V/1962 (document), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, no. 307, as *Vue d'Asnières, avec Marronniers en fleurs*. See also photograph of the verso of the painting before its relining in 1980, with the inscription reading, 307/72; copy in NAMA curatorial files.

[2] The date February 9, 1927 is from Walter Feilchenfeldt, *Vincent van Gogh: The Years in France; Complete Paintings 1886–1890: Dealers, Collectors, Exhibitions, Provenance* (London: Philip Wilson, 2013), 84. Feilchenfeldt, 30, 33n53, notes that V. W. van Gogh sold the painting through Leicester Galleries on the occasion of the second exhibition at Leicester Galleries in November–December 1926. It is possible that the sale to the next constituent was not finalized until February, well after the exhibition closed. The catalogue raisonné (J.-B. De La Faille, *L'Œuvre de Vincent Van Gogh: Catalogue Raisonné* [Paris: éditions G. Van Oest, 1928], no. 355) has the painting in Beechman's collection in 1928.

[3] See letter from Alex Reid and Lefèvre to Kraushaar, July 19, 1929, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Kraushaar Galleries Records, 1885–2006, Series II, Incoming Letters, Re General, 1929, box 14, folder 23. See Alex Reid and Lefèvre stock book entry, Tate Britain, London, Alex Reid and Lefèvre archives, TGA 200211, p. 290. See also email

from Alexander Corcoran, Lefèvre Fine Art, to MacKenzie Mallon, NAMA, March 18, 2019, NAMA curatorial file. See also Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Kraushaar Galleries Records, 1885–2006, Series 6.4, Financial Records, 1885–1957, Purchase Journal, 1928–1940, Box 74, Folder 7, page 63. See also Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Bignou archive, Albums BIGNOU ODO 1996-29, N°24, Boîte 31, Van Gogh, Clichés 294–295; and The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives, New York, Bignou Gallery Albums, MS.024, Album 24: Post-Impressionnistes. The Bignou Gallery albums at the Frick contain photographs and descriptions of artwork that passed through the hands of the Bignou Gallery (New York) during the 1930s and 1940s, but it is also possible that Bignou only provided a new frame for the painting rather than owning a half share. See letters cited above. Also according to Reid and Lefèvre's stock book entry, they owed an "additional cost" to Bignou. For the relationship between Bignou and Reid and Lefèvre, see *Alex Reid and Lefèvre 1926–1976* (London: Lefèvre Gallery, 1976), 17–21.

[4] See record of sale to Gérard in Alex Reid and Lefèvre stock book, Tate Britain, London, Alex Reid and Lefèvre archives, TGA 200211, p. 290. Although the stock book lists "Raphaël Gérard" as the purchaser, the dealer did not establish "Galerie Raphaël Gérard" until 1932. Before that, Raphaël and his brother, Christian Alfred Valère Gérard, ran "Gérard Frères" in Paris (1911–1932). See "Bio and History," in "Galerie Félix Gérard and Galerie Raphaël Gérard Records, ca. 1899–1959," Wildenstein Plattner Institute, New York and Paris, <https://digitalprojects.wpi.art/archive/detail/453312-galerie-felix-gerard-and-galerie-raphael-gerard-re>.

[5] Possibly Moser stock no. L.64.23.2. Moser was an art dealer in Berlin until 1933, when he and his family fled the Nazis, first living in Zurich and then in Heemstede, The Netherlands. In February 1940, just before the Nazis' invasion of The Netherlands, they crossed through France, Italy, Spain, and Cuba before finally arriving in New York. Prior to their flight from Europe, they sent their art collection from The Netherlands to the Baltimore Museum of Art, which arrived at the museum on May 1, 1939. The present painting appears on the wall of the Moser apartment in New York City in a photograph published in *Aftonbladet* on January 24, 1953. Letter from Ann Moser, Hugo L. Moser's daughter-in-law, to Meghan Gray, April 21, 2015, NAMA curatorial files.

[6] The painting was sent on long-term loan to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, from February 16, 1968

until April 28, 1976, and then was transferred to the Baltimore Museum of Art. It remained on loan in Baltimore until it was transported to Sotheby's on September 14, 1979, where it was sold by Maria Moser on November 7, 1979. All of Hugo L. Moser's paintings were transferred to his wife, Maria Moser, in the late 1960's when his health was failing. See emails from Ann Moser to Meghan Gray, April 21, 2015 and May 6, 2015. See also email from Mary Allen, Assistant Registrar, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, April 22, 2015, and email from Caitlin Draayer, Assistant Registrar, Baltimore Museum of Arts, April 22, 2015, to Meghan Gray, NAMA curatorial files.

[7] While Maria Moser was the primary owner of the painting, she gave a portion of each painting in the collection to her two sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren each year. By 1979, the present painting was collectively owned by the Moser family. Email from Ann Moser to Meghan Gray, April 30, 2015, NAMA curatorial files.

Richard L. Feigen and Co. was purchaser as agent for the Blochs. See email from Ann Moser to Meghan Gray, April 30, 2015, NAMA curatorial files. Richard L. Feigen and Co. purchased the painting at Sotheby's on behalf of Henry and Marion Bloch. See email from Emelia Scheidt, Richard L. Feigen and Co., New York, to Meghan Gray, April 13, 2015, NAMA curatorial files.

Related Works

Vincent van Gogh, *Exterior of a Restaurant in Asnières*, May–June 1887, oil on canvas, 7 7/16 x 10 5/8 in. (18.8 x 27.0 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Vincent van Gogh, *The Restaurant de la Sirène at Asnières*, June–September 1887, pencil and chalk on paper, 15 11/16 x 21 1/4 in. (39.8 x 53.8 cm), Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Vincent van Gogh, *The Restaurant de la Sirène at Asnières*, summer 1887, oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 25 13/16 in. (54.5 x 65.5 cm), Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Exhibitions

Possibly exhibition [organized by Vincent van Gogh], Grand Bouillon-Restaurant du Chalet, Paris, November 1887, no cat.

Possibly paintings by Vincent van Gogh, Theo van Gogh's apartment, 8, Cité Pigalle, Paris, end of 1890, no cat.

Tentoonstelling van Schilderijen en Teekeningen door Vincent van Gogh, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, July–August 1905, no. 78, as *Gezicht op Asnières met bloeiende kastanjes*.

XI. Jahrgang: IX. Ausstellung, Werke von Paula Modersohn-Becker, Regina Mundlak, Vincent van Gogh, Galerie Paul Cassirer, Berlin, May 1909, no cat., as *Blühende Kastanien in Asnières*.

Vincent van Gogh, Kunsthaus Brakl, Munich, October 7–December 1909, no. 13 [or 9 or 11], as *Asnières*.

Vincent van Gogh, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, January 1910; Galerie Ernst Arnold, Dresden, February 1910; Kunstaussstellung Gerstenberger, Chemnitz, Germany, April 1910, no cat.

Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh, Larensche Kunsthandel, Amsterdam, June 1911, no. 27, as *Avenue te Asnières met bloeiende kastanjes*.

Galerie Commeter, Hamburg, November 1911, no cat., no. 8/78, as *Asnières met figuur*.

Ausstellung Vincent van Gogh, 1853–1890, Galerie Ernst Arnold, Breslau [Wrocław], Poland, and Dresden, February 1912, no. 23, as *Asmeres [sic]*.

Vincent van Gogh Exhibition, Montross Gallery, New York, October 23–December 31, 1920, no. 58, erroneously as *Restaurant Cristal, Paris*.

Possibly *Vincent van Gogh Exhibition*, Montross Gallery, New York, February 8–28, 1921.

Probably *Vincent van Gogh Exhibition*, Montross Gallery, New York, 1923, no cat., erroneously as *Restaurant Cristal, Paris*.

Vincent van Gogh, Kunsthalle Basel, March 27–April 21, 1924, no. 18, erroneously as *Restaurant Cristal, Paris*.

Vincent van Gogh, Kunsthaus Zürich, July 3–August 10, 1924, no. 18, as *Restaurant Rispal, Asnières*.

Austellung Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), Württembergische Kunstverein, Kunstgebäude, Stuttgart, October–November 1924, no. 6, as *Garten in Asnières*.

Exposition Rétrospective d'Œuvres de Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), Galerie Marcel Bernheim, Paris, January 5–24, 1925, no. 15, as *Le Restaurant Rispal*.

Vincent van Gogh, Pulchri Studio, The Hague, March–April 1925, no cat., no. 20, erroneously as *Restaurant Cristal*.

I. Allgemeine Kunst-Ausstellung: Künstler-genossenschaft, Secession, Neue Secession, Glaspalast, Munich, June 1–early October 1926, no. 2067, erroneously as Restaurant Cristal.

An Exhibition of Works by Vincent Van Gogh, Leicester Gallery, London, November–December 1926, no. 13, as Restaurant Rispal.

An Exhibition of Pictures by Modern French Masters, Arthur Tooth and Sons, London, April 2–May 3, 1930, no. 18, as Le Restaurant Rispal à Asnières.

The Art and Life of Vincent van Gogh: Loan Exhibition in Aid of American and Dutch War Relief, Wildenstein, New York, October 6–November 7, 1943, no. 19, as The Restaurant Rispal.

Work by Vincent Van Gogh, Cleveland Museum of Art, November 3–December 12, 1948, no. 6, as The Restaurant Rispal (Restaurant Rispal, à Asnières).

Van Gogh: Loan Exhibition for the Benefit of the Public Education Association, Wildenstein and Co., New York, March 24–April 30, 1955, no. 26, as The Restaurant Rispal.

Van Gogh and Expressionism, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, July–September 1964, unnumbered, as The Restaurant Rispal.

The Bloch Collection, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, June–August 1982, no cat.

Manet to Matisse: Impressionist Masters from the Marion and Henry Bloch Collection, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO, June 9–September 9, 2007, no. 21, as Restaurant Rispal.

Van Gogh à Paris, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, February 2–May 15, 1988, no. 45, as Le Restaurant Rispal à Asnières.

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R-th. [Alwin Rath], "Die Mai-Ausstellung bei Paul Cassirer," *Berliner Volks-Zeitung* 57, no. 215 (May 9, 1909): 3 [repr. in Bernhard Echte and Walter Feilchenfeldt, eds., *Kunstsalon Paul Cassirer, vol. 4, Die Ausstellungen 1908–1910: "Ganz eigenartige neue Werte"* (Wädenswil: Nimbus, Junst und Bücher AG, 2013), 213], as *blühenden Kastanien zu Aßniereß* [sic].

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Vincent van Gogh, exh. cat. (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 1924), 7, erroneously as Restaurant Cristal, Paris.

Vincent van Gogh, exh. cat. (Zürich: Buchdruckerei Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1924), 15, as Restaurant Rispal, Asnières. Listed as for sale.

Vincent van Gogh, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Kunstverein, 1924), no. 6.

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Vincent van Gogh, exh. cat. (The Hague: Pulchri Studio, March–April 1925), no. 20.

I. Allgemeine Kunst-Ausstellung: Künstler-genossenschaft, Secession, Neue Secession, exh. cat. (Munich: Knorr und Hirth, G. m. b. H., 1926), 77, erroneously as Restaurant Cristal.

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J[acob]-B[aart] De La Faille, *L'Œuvre de Vincent Van Gogh: Catalogue Raisonné* (Paris: Éditions G. Van Oest, 1928), no. 355, pp. 1: 100, 2pt1: pl. XCV, (repro.), as *Restaurant Rispal, à Asnières*.

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Almanach für das Jahr 1931, special issue, Omnibus: eine Zeitschrift (December 1930): 83, (repro.), as *Café Raspail* [sic] in *Asnières*.

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- Henri Perruchot, *Het Leven van Vincent Van Gogh* (Utrecht, The Netherlands: Prisma-Boeken, 1965), 192.
- Paolo Lecaldano, *L'opera pittorica completa di Van Gogh e i suoi nessi grafici*, new series, vol. 1 (1966, 1971; repr., Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1977), no. 395, pp. 116–17, (repro.), as *Il Ristorante 'Rispal' (ad Asnières)*.
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- Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent Van Gogh: His Paris Period, 1886–1888* (Utrecht: Editions Victorine, 1976), 234, as *Restaurant Rispal at Asnières*.
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