

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



The Mall in St. James's Park

Thomas Gainsborough (British, 1727–1788)

Date ca. 1783

Medium Oil on canvas

Dimensions 47 1/2 x 57 7/8 in. (120.7 x 147 cm)

Credit Line Henry Clay Frick Bequest

Accession Number 1916.1.62

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 7, Dining Room

Commentary St. James's Park was near Gainsborough's London residence, Schomberg House, in Pall Mall. The long tree-lined avenue called the Mall, which runs south of St. James's Palace, was a fashionable place for strolling in the eighteenth century. This composition is unusual among the artist's later works and recalls, as several contemporary critics remarked, the *fêtes galantes* of Watteau. The feathery foliage and rhythmic design led one observer to describe the painting as "all aflutter, like a lady's fan." Another reported that the artist composed the painting partly from dolls and a model of the park. The large proportion of the canvas devoted to the setting testifies to Gainsborough's abilities as a landscape painter and to his pioneering interest in the picturesque. Attempts to identify the ladies in the central group as the daughters of George III and the background figure under the tree at right as the artist himself are attractive but unsubstantiated. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Mrs. Gainsborough. Elwin. Howe (or Home). George Frost, Ipswich. S.H. Kilderbee, Ipswich. His sale, May 30, 1829, Christie's, Lot 126, sold for £183 15s to Bone. Neeld family, Grittleton House, near Chippenham, Wiltshire. The Hon. Mrs. C. Hanbury. Bought from her by Agnew in February, 1916. Duveen. Frick, 1916. Source: *Paintings in The Frick Collection: American, British, Dutch, Flemish and German. Volume I*. New York: The Frick Collection, 1968.