

The Tuileries Gardens: An Evolution of Parisian Landscaping and Public Use

The High Museum had a three-floor exhibit that explored Parisian landscaping and how it developed from private to public use. The Tuileries Garden was originally erected as a private royal space designed in the Florentine style for Italian-born Queen Catherine d'Medici. Bernard Palissy, a celebrated French potter, was endorsed by her to create decorative elements for her garden, including fountains and terracotta sculptures. After King Henry II's death, Catherine d'Medici commissioned architect Philibert Delorme to build her a retreat adjacent to the Louvre. The newly built palace was a place for politics, was the theater for Louis XIV, and was where Louis XVI's family was detained during the French Revolution. The gardens fell into disrepair by the late 16th century, and King Henry IV renovated and improved the grounds. It was home childhood playground of the Sun King's father. The space remained vacant from 1671 until 1715, when Louis XV, the son of the Sun King, took residency there. In 1789, King Louis XVI was forced from the Palace of Versailles to the Tuileries Palace, symbolically shifting power back to the capital of France. After the French Revolution, all of the leaders of France ruled from the Tuileries until until the start of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. During the World's Fair of 1867, Napoleon III extended the, at the time, privately-used palace to the public by welcoming international visitors to its area. By the end of the century, the public had full reign of the Garden.

The Tuileries was one of the first royal gardens opened to the public. Over time, restrictions on status entry were lifted and the Garden became accessible to the general public. The Garden served as a place for public and private meetings, expositions, political events, and demonstrations of new technological developments. In fact, the launch of the first passenger-carrying hydrogen balloon in 1783 by Jacques Charles occurred here. These attractions intrigued and recruited spectators, while the addition of advanced irrigation methods and portable chairs made the Garden more comfortable for the escalating number of visitors. Louise Daguerre introduced photography, a new technology, to the public in 1839. The site quickly became a favorite subject for photographers at the time, where modern history of the Tuileries was captured on camera for the world to see. Rather than having artists focus on the artistic expression of the area as seen in earlier works, photography allowed people to see the Garden for its openness, realism, and its central position in Parisian landscape and history.

