Watercolour - Vauxhall Gardens

Object: Watercolour
Place of origin: London (probably, painted)
Date: ca. 1784 (painted)
Artist/Maker: Thomas Rowlandson, born 1756 - died 1827 (artist)
Materials and Techniques: Pen and ink, with watercolour and graphite pencil, on paper
Credit Line: Purchased with Art Fund support
Museum number: P.13-1967

Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, room WS, case R, shelf 25, box L

Public access description
Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) loved to depict high and low life in England at the time. Many of his drawings and watercolours are on a comical theme.

The Vauxhall gardens were a fashionable resort, just south of the Thames in London. Here visitors could eat, drink, dance, listen to music, take a stroll and enjoy the sculptures in the open air.

In this drawing it is possible to identify many well known people. They include Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), author of the famous 'Dictionary', the writers James Boswell (1740-1795), Mrs Thrale (1741-1821) and Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), and society figures - the Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806) and her sister Lady Duncannon; the Prince of Wales (1762-1830), who became king as George IV in 1820, and his mistress, the actress Mary 'Perdita' Robinson (1758-1800); and Admiral Paisley.

Descriptive line
Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827), 'Vauxhall Gardens'. Pen and ink, with water-colour and graphite pencil, on paper. About 1784.

Physical description
The scene is an alfresco concert at Vauxhall with the singer Mrs Weichsel accompanied by a group of musicians entertaining the audience from the Orchestra where performances were held in fine weather. Below them are the supperboxes. The two ladies holding court under the central tree are said to be the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire and her sister Lady Duncannon, and among their entourage are plausibly identified Captain Topham, gossip writer to The World who quizzes them through a glass; Admiral Paisley with eye patch and wooden leg; to the right of the tree, James Perry, editor of The Morning Chronicle in highland dress.

Dimensions
Height: 42 cm, Width: 58.4 cm, Height: 680 mm Gilt frame, Width: 840 cm Gilt frame

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URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17299/vauxhall-gardens-watercolour-thomas-rowlandson/